

**British Council ELT
Research Papers
Volume 1**

Edited by Susan Sheehan

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British Council **ELT Research Papers**
Volume 1

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978-0-86355-698-2

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10 Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BN

www.britishcouncil.org

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Foreword

The British Council aims to develop a wider knowledge of the English Language and of the United Kingdom in the world, to encourage international educational collaboration, and to promote the advancement of education. This is why we decided in 2009 to launch a scheme to support research which will make a real practical and positive difference to the teaching and learning of English around the world. There has been a boom in the teaching of English globally over the last twenty years, and we currently estimate that some 1.2 billion people are learning English, and that some 12 million people are teachers of English. It is important that a global activity of this scale has a research base to support it. The British Council is proud to be a part of that.

More than fifty UK universities are actively engaged in English Language Teaching research and teacher training and every year hundreds of teachers and thousands of students come to the UK to benefit from the expertise of these universities and of British Council accredited English Language training providers. Each piece of research in this collection has been led by a university in the United Kingdom. In each research project, the lead university has contributed to the cost of the research, making the projects true partnerships, and we thank them for their commitment to the advancement of knowledge in the field. In many cases, the UK university has worked in collaboration with universities and researchers in other countries, and we welcome and encourage such international research collaboration.

This collection and the ELT Research Partnership scheme which underpins it, is part of a portfolio of activities in which the British Council contributes to English Language Teaching around the world. We have global websites for both learners and teachers, run a range of face-to-face and online courses, and make material available through a wide variety of technology platforms. Our Teaching Centres in many countries aim to be models of good classroom practice. Our publications, including this volume, are available online, and we aim to collect a wider body of ELT research in our Directory of UK ELT Research.

The current managers of the ELT Research partnership scheme, John Knagg and Susan Sheehan, would like to thank colleagues past and present who have contributed to the scheme, especially Mike Solly, Deborah Bullock, and Melissa Cudmore. All applications are evaluated by a panel of well-qualified ELT practitioners and we thank colleagues who have performed this vital role: Cherry Gough, Steve McNulty, Maja Mandekic, Olga Barnashova, Ronnie Micallef, Grahame Bilbow, Danny Whitehead, Anne Wiseman, Fiona Pape, Mina Patel, Ben Gray, Kim McArthur, Paul Woods, Samantha Grainger, Chris Gibson, Murray Keeler.

Above all we thank our friends and colleagues from all over the world who have participated in the research projects.

John Knagg OBE

Head Research and Consultancy, English and Examinations, British Council

Overview

Perceptions and Strategies of Learning in English by Singapore Primary School Children with Dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

Authors: L. Jin, K. Smith, A. Yahya, A. Chan, M. Choong, A. Lee, V.Ng, P. Poh-Wong and D. Young

Context and Objectives: Learners with dyslexia have difficulties in reading and writing. In Singapore there are about 20,000 primary and secondary school learners with dyslexia. This paper presents research findings on the perceptions and feelings of primary school learners with dyslexia in Singapore regarding their learning of school subjects through English, together with how they use strategies to overcome some difficulties.

Method: 46 children attending remediation classes at the Dyslexia Association of Singapore were interviewed using metaphor analysis. It is difficult to use conventional research methods (e.g. questionnaires, interviews) to find out their views and perceptions due to their difficulties in reading and writing or sometimes in expressing their thoughts orally, which demands more working memory and sequential processing. Methods of elicitation of metaphors include game playing, picture drawing, role playing and questions and answers.

Findings: 257 metaphors were elicited and classified into eight aspects of learning: (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) learning English, (4) learning a second language, (5) expression of thoughts in English, (6) learning Mathematics, (7) learning Science and (8) concepts of dyslexia. The findings help researchers and educators to understand both positive and negative perceptions of young learners with dyslexia concerning their learning of English. The paper also suggests useful ways to help these learners deal with their difficulties in learning.

Conclusion: Multilingual dyslexic learners can use metaphors to express themselves successfully if appropriate support and activities are provided, and the use of metaphor can be employed as an effective method to understand the learners better.

Investigating global practices in teaching English to Young Learners

Authors: Sue Garton, Fiona Copland and Anne Burns

This paper reports on the project *Investigating Global Practices in Teaching English to Young Learners*, funded by the British Council ELT Research Awards Scheme, 2009. Its main aims were to:

- discover what policy/syllabus documents inform TEYL practices around the world
- investigate and map the major pedagogies that teachers use
- better understand teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, including the challenges they face
- identify how local solutions to pedagogical issues can be effective and how these may resonate globally.

The project was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were collected through a survey that resulted in 4,696 responses from 144 countries, with responses emerging from all continents. Qualitative data were obtained through five observational classroom case studies of teaching practices in Colombia, Italy, Korea, Tanzania and the UAE.

The study uncovered a wide range of factors concerning the teaching of English to young learners globally from the perspective of teachers involved in implementing these programmes. In particular, it showed that many of these factors are commonly experienced by teachers across different countries and contexts.

Five key recommendations are made:

- The pre-service and in-service training of teachers to teach young learners needs to be considerably strengthened.
- Greater opportunities need to be found for sharing ideas and experiences amongst primary school teachers of English both nationally and internationally.
- For a large number of teachers, there is substantial need for English language development.
- An expanded range of materials for teaching young learners is needed.
- Educational policy developers should be provided with advice, based on current research and good classroom practice, on effective curriculum development for young learners to enhance the learning experience of children.

A global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training and career development

Author: Helen Emery

This research reports a global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training, teaching experience and career development. Data were collected via the use of an electronic survey, which gathered almost 2,500 responses and in-depth face-to-face interviews with classroom teachers and Head Teachers in nine countries around the world. Subjects represented rural and urban teachers who worked in state and private institutions. The findings indicate some global trends in areas such as the widespread nature of English Language Teaching (ELT) and the drive to introduce English to ever younger learners. On the positive side, findings indicate that class sizes are small for the majority of teachers (under 35 children). However a cause for concern is the low number of teachers with a degree, and the number of teachers who have undergone specific training to teach the age that they currently teach, or to teach English. These findings are balanced by the fact that 85% of teachers report they have undertaken some sort of professional development training since starting to teach. Teachers were overwhelmingly positive in their attitudes towards the profession, and most said they would recommend primary English teaching to others as a career. The study raises issues which it is felt should be taken up by ELT providers, and describes some solutions to problems which have been developed in certain contexts.

Confucius, constructivism and the impact of continuing professional development of teachers of English in China

Authors: Viv Edwards and Dagou Li

In this article we explore issues around the sustainability and appropriateness of professional development for secondary teachers of English in China offered by overseas providers through the lens of teachers who completed courses at the University of Reading between 2003 and 2010. We start by offering an overview of English teaching in China. We then describe the collection and analysis of interviews and focus groups discussions involving former participants, their teaching colleagues and senior management, as well as classroom observation. Evidence is presented for changes in teachers' philosophies of education directly attributable to participation in the courses; for improved teacher competencies (linguistic, cultural and pedagogical) in the classroom; and for the ways in which returnees are undertaking new roles and responsibilities which exploit their new understandings. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for both providers and sponsors of CPD for English language teachers. We conclude that the recognition of English as an essential element in the modernisation of China, together with the growing awareness of the weaknesses of traditional approaches to the teaching of the language, has opened up new spaces for dialogue concerning pedagogy and professional practice. It is clearly important, however, that new approaches to the teaching of English are presented in a way which allows teachers to decide which elements should be incorporated into their teaching and how.

Pulling the threads together: current theories and current practice affecting UK primary school children who have English as an Additional Language

Author: Clare Wardman

Provision of support for children who speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) in UK primary schools is geographically variable, due in part to a lack of centralisation of funding and resources, which is caused by EAL not being a National Curriculum subject. This paper considers a range of international and UK-based research and policy for educating children with minority languages. It reports on a qualitative study conducted in the north of England during summer 2011, which sought to analyse current practice in UK primary schools alongside the existing research findings, focusing on the linguistic and sociocultural aspects of being a bilingual learner. Participant schools were geographically widespread, providing diverse social and linguistic communities to consider. Teachers and teaching assistants were interviewed regarding their attitudes to: the provision of support for EAL pupils; the use of the first language in school; and their perception of attitudes towards immigration and bilingualism. Classroom observations and inspection data were also employed. Significant variety in provision for bilingual learners was observed; mainly due to the location of the school, the postcode of which affects the funding received, and number of bilingual learners in the schools. The decentralisation leads to: inefficiencies in funding distribution; time-wasting, due to teachers and managers repeating work already done by others elsewhere; and a lack of knowledge through a lack of an effective training programme. This deficit of training means that teachers tend to 'wing it', rather than offer an innovative approach to the education of bilingual children.

Early EFL Learning in Context – evidence from a country case study

Author: Jelena Mihaljević Djigunović

The paper describes a longitudinal research study carried out as part of the *Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE)* project. The author investigated early learning of EFL from a contextualised perspective. Data were collected from 173 Croatian YLs of EFL who were followed for three years (Grades Two, Three and Four). Processes and outcomes of early EFL are analysed considering a number of relevant contextual and individual learner factors as well as their interactions. Based on the findings it is concluded that contextualised approaches can offer a broader and deeper insight into early EFL learning.

Attitudes to English as a language for international development in rural Bangladesh

Authors: Elizabeth J. Erling, Philip Seargeant, Mike Solly, Qumrul Hasan Chowdhury and Sayeedur Rahman

The high status of English within a global economy of languages has meant that English language education is increasingly being promoted in international development initiatives. This is despite the fact that it may seem more valuable for the estimated 1.4 billion people living in poverty in the world to focus development initiatives on the lowering of infant mortality rates, clean water supply, access to electricity, and the provision of basic education, for example. A reason for the promotion of English language education in development contexts is in part a response to a growing conviction that English-language education can play an important role in helping people gain the resources to lift themselves out of poverty and increase their ability to participate in the world economic systems from which they have previously been excluded. Despite the strong associations often made between the English language and development, there is, however, only limited evidence showing a relationship between the two. A first step in understanding this impact is an understanding of perceptions and expectations of English learning for personal and national development, and this research project investigates these in two rural communities in Bangladesh. Through the use of an ethnographic survey of two rural areas, it studies the needs and aspirations of the local community in order to better understand perceptions of whether, and if so how, English language education could productively contribute to development as part of a wider programme of social and economic support.

Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices

Authors: Simon Borg and Saleh Al-Busaidi

Learner autonomy has been a key theme in the field of foreign language learning for over 30 years. Only limited space in the extensive literature available, though, has been awarded to the study of what learner autonomy means to teachers and this project addressed this gap. The beliefs and reported practices regarding learner autonomy of 61 teachers of English at a large university language centre in Oman were studied via questionnaires and interviews. The findings highlighted a range of ways in which teachers conceptualised learner autonomy, though it was commonly seen in terms of strategies for independent and individual learning. The study also shed light on both teachers' positive theoretical dispositions to learner autonomy as well as their less optimistic views about the feasibility of promoting it in practice. Teachers' views on the factors that hinder the development of learner autonomy were also explored and most salient among these were what the teachers saw as adverse learner attributes such as a lack of motivation and limited experience of independent learning. Institutional factors such as a fixed curriculum were also seen to limit learner autonomy. In addition to this empirical work, this project involved professional development workshops on learner autonomy for the participating teachers; these workshops were informed by the empirical phase

of the project and we believe that this model of linking research and in-service teacher education can be effective in supporting institutional development in relation to a wide range of issues in foreign language learning.

Using e-learning to develop intercultural awareness in ELT: a critical evaluation in a Thai higher education setting

Author: Will Baker

E-learning offers many new pedagogic opportunities as well as challenges but while it has grown in prominence, it is still far from a 'normalised' part of English Language Teaching (ELT). Similarly, the significance of the cultural dimension in ELT has also gained in importance. However, the use of English as a global lingua franca, going beyond the traditional 'native-speaker' English countries, has resulted in a need for a more intercultural approach to ELT that recognises this role for English. This study investigated the development of an online course in intercultural communication and intercultural awareness for a group of English language learners in a setting in which English predominantly functions as a lingua franca. A 15 hour independent study online course was developed and delivered to 31 students and six teachers from a higher education institute in Thailand. The interactive online materials for the course are presented and discussed in this paper as well as student and teacher feedback. The findings demonstrate generally positive responses to both the course contents and the course delivery through e-learning. However, while most of the participants gave the course positive ratings, many still felt they would have preferred a face-to-face course. In relation to the course content, the participants had very favourable attitudes and responses to learning about intercultural communication and global Englishes.

'Tanggap, tiklop, tago' (receive, fold, keep): perceptions of best practice in ELT INSET

Authors: Alan Waters and Maria Luz C. Vilches

In-service teacher training (INSET) for English language teachers is an important but often relatively ineffective aspect of large-scale English language teaching (ELT) curriculum development. Based on a synthesis of findings from the ELT and non-ELT literature on the topic, this study therefore first of all attempted to develop a 'user-friendly' theoretical model for informing 'best practice' in this area. The strength of the model was then assessed in relation to data concerning practitioner perceptions of optimal procedures in ELT INSET. The data were elicited by a variety of research methods (interviews, focus group meetings and questionnaire survey) from a cross-section of ELT trainers and teachers in a representative ELT situation (that of government schools at the basic education level in the Philippines). The findings were analysed in terms of each of the main stages involved in INSET design and delivery ('pre-', 'while-' and 'post-'), and are seen i) to confirm the validity of the theoretical model and ii) to provide a number of practical guidelines on how to maximise the potential for 'best practice' in ELT INSET.

How to make yourself understood by international students: The role of metaphor in academic tutorials

Authors: Jeannette Littlemore, Fiona MacArthur, Alan Cienki and Joseph Holloway

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of international students studying at British universities. This contributes to making universities more *universal* centres of debate, enquiry and learning, enriching the culture of our universities through numerous multicultural encounters. However, it is not always a straightforward matter to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the presence of international students in our classes. We may not for instance be sufficiently aware of the extent to which the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of international students differ from ours. An area where linguistic and cultural differences are particularly obvious is in the use of metaphor, as the understanding of metaphor often involves a sophisticated understanding of background assumptions and conventions that vary significantly across cultures and disciplines.

In this paper we study oral interactions between lecturers and international students studying at a British university and a Spanish University. We explore how metaphor and gesture are used in the different exchanges, discussing the extent to which and the ways in which the different interlocutors appropriate each other's use of metaphor and gesture, and the ways in which the interlocutors use gesture to help them structure and communicate their own ideas.

We identify a range of metaphors being used successfully and less successfully. We show that the use of metaphor has a great deal to offer in terms of its ability to develop shared understanding of difficult concepts, but that it can present problems leading at times to misunderstandings and a tendency in students to stray from the topic. In order to avoid the pitfalls of metaphor use, we make a number of recommendations for making the most of the potential that metaphor has to offer in academic tutorials.

Computers and learner autonomy: trends and issues

Author: Huw Jarvis

This paper reports on a study into the practices and perceptions of Thai and Emerati university students in their use of computer-based materials (CbMs) beyond the classroom, including in Self Access Centres (SACs). Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews in focus groups and one-to-one were utilised to gather information. The data suggests that students made regular and extensive use of a wide range of materials in both their native language and the English language. Students recognised the importance of accessing and transmitting information in the English language. They appeared to make considerable use of CbMs for exposure to and the unconscious acquisition of the English language, particularly beyond a SAC. Where conscious learning of English was reported the role of SACs appears to be highly significant. The paper concludes by proposing that we need

to go beyond traditional frameworks of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) for understanding and investigating the role of technology in language pedagogy and that the term mobile assisted language use (MALU) may be more appropriate.

1

Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

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Introduction

Few studies have given much attention to learners of English as an additional language (EAL) with dyslexia (Martin, 2005, 2009; Kormos and Kontra, 2008; Siegal, 2008). It is even more unusual to find studies about these learners' own views and their EAL learning experience (Burden and Burdett, 2007). This scarcity of studies is largely due to four factors: first, the predominant monolingual assumptions behind much research in dyslexia, although bilingual learners and learners using additional languages are equally as likely to be dyslexic as monolinguals, and notably dyslexia may manifest itself differently across different languages; second, it is only a recent development in English Language Teaching (TESOL, EFL, EAL) to research learners with special needs (Kormos and Kontra, 2008); third, the difficulties of using appropriate research methods regarding dyslexia, since learners with dyslexia commonly find it difficult to express themselves; fourth, the need to develop specific research methods which are appropriate for younger learners.

This paper reports on a project investigating the perceptions and practices of learning skills of English and other school subjects of young dyslexic learners in Singapore by using the research method of metaphor analysis. This project is believed to be the first of its kind to relate dyslexia and English (EAL) as a curriculum or academic language in a multilingual context through metaphor analysis. The term EAL means here that English is an additional language used as a medium for learning. The project aims 1) to find out perceptions of learning English and other subjects from primary school EAL learners with dyslexia in Singapore in order to understand these learners; 2) to know what methods they use to overcome their difficulties; 3) to employ the metaphor analysis method developed by the principal investigator (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999; Jin and Cortazzi, 2008; 2009, 2011), and used successfully for researching perceptions and beliefs regarding English as a foreign language (EFL) held by learners and shown to be effective with first language (L1) learners with dyslexia in Britain (Burden and Burdett, 2007). In this project, this method will be extended to young EAL learners with dyslexia (see further in the methodology section).

It is generally perceived that learners with dyslexia in Singapore would have similar needs to those in other English-speaking countries since English is the language medium for education there. However, in reality, many Singaporean learners regard Chinese as their mother tongue or home language, e.g. 32 per cent of Chinese speakers in Singapore use only Chinese (Singapore Population Survey, 2000), yet they have to learn to use English as the curriculum language in school. To this group of learners with dyslexia, English is certainly perceived as an additional language. This situation adds complications for them in coping with their difficulties with dyslexia.

Further, it is difficult to use conventional research methods (e.g. questionnaire surveys or formal interviews) to find out their views and perceptions due to their difficulties in reading and writing or sometimes in expressing their thoughts orally, which demands more working memory and sequential processing. Researchers have been trying different methods to investigate the views from these learners

and recently the use of metaphor has been successfully employed to collect this type of data with a group of British boys with dyslexia (Burden and Burdett, 2007). However few studies (Peer and Reid, 2000; Reid and Fawcett, 2004) have been carried out to find out English learning perceptions and methods from EAL children with dyslexia.

This report presents findings from an investigation of 46 children with dyslexia aged between 8 and 14 years old who attend the Dyslexia Centre of Singapore. The study uses a more recently developed and innovative research method of metaphor analysis to ascertain the perceptions, feeling and strategy use of these children regarding the following aspects of perceptions related to learning: dyslexia, English, their reading and writing skills, learning a second language, expressing thoughts in English and learning other subjects through English, such as mathematics and sciences.

Contextual background of dyslexic learners in Singapore

Learners with dyslexia have difficulties in reading and writing. These are elaborated in the following commonly agreed definition of dyslexia, 'Dyslexia is a difference in acquiring reading, spelling and writing skills, that is neurological in origin. The cognitive difficulties that cause these differences can also affect organisational skills, calculation abilities, etc. It may be caused by a combination of difficulties in phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming, sequencing and the automaticity of basic skills' (European Dyslexia Association, 2007). There is no necessary link between dyslexia and levels of intelligence and many dyslexics are seen to be creative and successful in architecture, engineering, lateral thinking and in people-related professions. On the other hand, for language learning, dyslexics may need more time, structure, practice and positive feedback.

In Singapore there are about 20,000 primary and secondary school learners with dyslexia (of a total of about 300,000 primary and 200,000 secondary students). These dyslexic learners find it challenging and feel pressurised when they face learning English as the curriculum and academic language which is the key to their present and future educational achievement (Ganschow, *et al.*, 1995; Hutchinson, *et al.*, 2004).

In Singapore, children encounter a complicated linguistic path in language learning. The main ethnic groups (about 77 per cent Chinese, 14 per cent Malay, 7 per cent Tamil) are associated with different languages; however, in this multilingual society, the four official languages of English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil are used, in addition to around 20 other community languages, as well as various dialects within these languages. Singaporeans regard their home language as their mother tongue: for around 50 per cent of the population this is Chinese, for about 30 per cent it is English, 13 per cent Malay and 9 per cent Tamil; yet, for instance, Chinese-speaking children may grow up using Hokkien, Hakka, Teochew, Hainanese or Cantonese, or combinations of these, as the main home language while learning Mandarin, especially for literacy. Further, in a shift towards English, some homes of primary pupils now use predominantly English – this is said to be up to 60 per cent of ethnic Chinese and Tamils but 35 per cent

of Malays (The Straits Times, 11 November 2010) – but if this is the case, it still leaves strong influences of other languages. Primary schools teach English and Mandarin (Moseley and Smith, 2004) or another ‘mother tongue’ such as Malay, Tamil and other Indian languages. From then on, English functions increasingly as the learners’ academic or curriculum language, through which their educational achievements are assessed. In schools, it appears that children in Singapore treat their mother tongue and English as their dual first languages, although each has a distinctive function and probably quite different scripts (e.g. English, Chinese, Tamil). Some children are particularly confused when a Romanised phonetic script (Hanyu pinyin used for bridging the transition from oral to written Mandarin Chinese) and English are taught at the same time. This adds more confusion to young learners with dyslexia (*ibid.*). For this chapter, English is referred to as an additional language (EAL), however readers should be aware of the distinctive features of the use of EAL in Singapore when this situation is compared with other countries.

Very limited research is available for understanding young EAL learners with dyslexia (Reid and Fawcett, 2004; Siegel and Smythe, 2005; Martin, 2005, 2009). There are general considerations about dyslexic learners of foreign languages (e.g. papers in Rifkin, 2009) and a few small-scale research studies of secondary-age dyslexic learners of English as a foreign language: in Poland focusing on anxiety (Piechurska-Kuchiel, 2008) and reading and spelling (Nijakowska, 2008) and in Hungary of a student learning vocabulary (Sarkadi, 2008), while the development of a pen-and-paper test of English for dyslexics learning English as a second language in Norway (Helland, 2008) remains a rare example with older primary-age learners. To conduct such research is particularly difficult, because it is less reliable to use conventional research methods (e.g. questionnaire surveys or observation) to find out how young learners with dyslexia perceive their EAL learning, since often it is not easy for them to express themselves due to both their age and dyslexia (Burden and Burdett, 2007). The development of a learner-centred approach is important for English Language Teaching (ELT) and equally important for EAL learners with dyslexia. Thus it is essential to start a first step of research by understanding these children’s thoughts, perceptions, experiences and their own strategies to cope with their learning. This is exactly the outcome this project aims to achieve.

Singapore has, in recent years, highlighted the issue of learners with dyslexia, stimulated by political and policy changes. The Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS) is said to be one of the largest centres in the region with 55 specialised teachers offering English and other subject courses in the centres to over 1000 school-age learners with dyslexia. A majority of them are primary-school age children. DAS also runs a Masters course for teachers and other professionals to specialise in specific learning differences. Many Asian countries may have a Dyslexia Association, but do not have such learning and training centres which offer specialised English and IT teaching and support to help learners with dyslexia.

Research methods explored to understand young dyslexic learners in Singapore

The main research method used for this investigation was metaphor analysis, a recently developed research method (Jin and Cortazzi, 2008, 2009, 2011), to engage these young EAL learners with dyslexia, combined with interviewing and interactive activities to elicit metaphor data. Other activities used were: role playing, games and picture drawing in order to enable these young dyslexic participants to express their views, comments and thoughts.

Metaphor analysis has been developed based on Lakoff's model in cognitive linguistics and psychology (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1993), in which "metaphors are conceptual: there are systematic 'mappings' of correspondences between sets of language expressions of everyday metaphors and underlying concepts" (Jin and Cortazzi, 2011: 72-73).

Burden and Burdett (2007) asked a group of 50 boys with dyslexia in Britain to use metaphors to reveal their views, thoughts and feelings about their difficulties. A total of 44 metaphors were produced through interviews containing further description of their metaphors. The use of images through metaphors can help these learners to reveal their inner thoughts in a more concrete way and aid them to reveal how they feel about a concept or event. Their research evidence and conclusion show that metaphors provide a way to explore 'the deep-rooted thoughts and feelings of children and young people diagnosed with dyslexia' (ibid, 77). In the present research, the principal investigator and her colleagues, over the past ten years, have been developing the use of metaphors to find out EFL learners' perceptions about learning, teaching and language, using elicited metaphors with entailments from EFL learners. This approach is more systematic to take account of underlying meanings and allow better categorisation and comparison of metaphors. This has proven to be a powerful way to ascertain the insights of these learners. By collecting thousands of similar metaphors with entailments independently produced by these learners of English, a pattern can be established to see how they perceive their learning and teachers, to investigate their expectations and methods for learning, and to ascertain underlying beliefs and values about language and language learning.

Key elements in metaphor analysis: metaphors and entailments

In metaphor research which analyses participants' metaphors, it is not enough to collect and categorise the metaphors; an analysis of the 'mappings' and entailments of each metaphor is also necessary (Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses, 2002, 2005; Jin and Cortazzi, 2011).

A metaphor has a 'target domain' (the topic, often abstract) and a 'source domain' (what is being compared to the topic, often concrete, more familiar and better understood). In the metaphor from one of the dyslexic students in Singapore, *writing is climbing a mountain*, the target domain is *writing*, which is compared to *climbing a mountain*, the source domain. 'Climbing' can be mapped onto 'writing' with systematic correspondences so that the student is seen to compare progress in developing writing to movement going upwards towards a mountain peak.

An 'entailment' is the underlying meaning of a metaphor which comes from the point of comparison and goes beyond the basic mapping. Metaphors often have clusters of related entailments and entailments may differ across cultures. Thus, '*climbing a mountain*' has the additional idea that this is '*difficult*'; it entails '*a lot of effort*' and takes '*additional time*' compared to just walking – for many dyslexic students these features apply to writing.

Including entailments is crucial because metaphors are by nature often ambiguous and are often used with a range of possible meanings. This means that there is a danger that a researcher might, perhaps unknowingly, interpret a given metaphor for its 'obvious' meaning but this meaning may be different from the one intended by the person who gave the metaphor. We also know that entailments can differ cross-culturally (Kövecses, 2005; Berendt, 2008; Jin and Cortazzi, 2010). Hence in this research, the participants were asked to give reasons (entailments) to explain their metaphors. The importance of this and the fact that metaphor meanings cannot be taken for granted can be illustrated from the present data for *climbing*. Among the dyslexic students, 'reading' was '*climbing a mountain*' which entailed that reading is '*hard*' and '*tiring*' (in the students' words); in contrast, 'expressing thoughts in English' was *rock climbing*, which 'is fun', whereas 'learning maths' was '*climbing a mountain*', meaning there was likely failure if students did not pay close attention since '*you just fall down from a hill*'. These examples show that in this research we need the participants' own entailments, since the ideas and emotions associated with the 'climbing' metaphors are not necessarily obvious and can vary in intended meaning from one student to another. If we simply take 'climbing' as the metaphor without eliciting and analysing the entailment, it risks a great loss of nuance and elaboration of meaning or simply gets the meaning wrong. Further, in this project the use of metaphors facilitates the expression of feelings and these can be ascertained through the entailments.

Elicitation methods used to collect metaphor data from young participants with dyslexia

The participants were aged between 8 and 14 years old and a majority of them were in primary school. These young learners go to their mainstream schools in normal school hours; in addition they go to the DAS for further classes with educational therapists to enhance their learning. Thus these young learners are familiar with the setting and teachers in the DAS, while the teachers there specialise in dyslexia support. The project team designed the following ways to actively involve the participation of these learners, which facilitated a larger number of metaphors elicited from these participants (See Table.1).

Age group	No. of participants	Gender		Total no. of metaphors	No. of metaphors in different topics							
		F	M		Dyslexia	English	Second language	Reading	Writing	Expressing thoughts	Maths	Science
8–9	6	3	3	55	9	6	6	9	10	7	4	4
10–11	13	6	7	73	9	8	10	9	8	10	9	10
12	14	2	12	97	14	8	14	12	14	12	14	9
13–14	13	5	8	32	7	3	3	4	5	2	5	3
Total	46	16	30	257	39	25	33	34	37	32	32	26

Table 1: Metaphors elicited from 46 young participants with dyslexia in Singapore

It was clear for the researchers (mostly educational therapists in the DAS) that these participants would not be led easily to produce any of their own metaphors, but the activities were used to encourage these young learners to engage in their metaphorical thinking processes.

First of all, these learners were given a training session involving them in verbal participation in order to 1) understand what a metaphor is, 2) follow what was asked from them, 3) produce their own metaphors with entailments (see Figure 1).

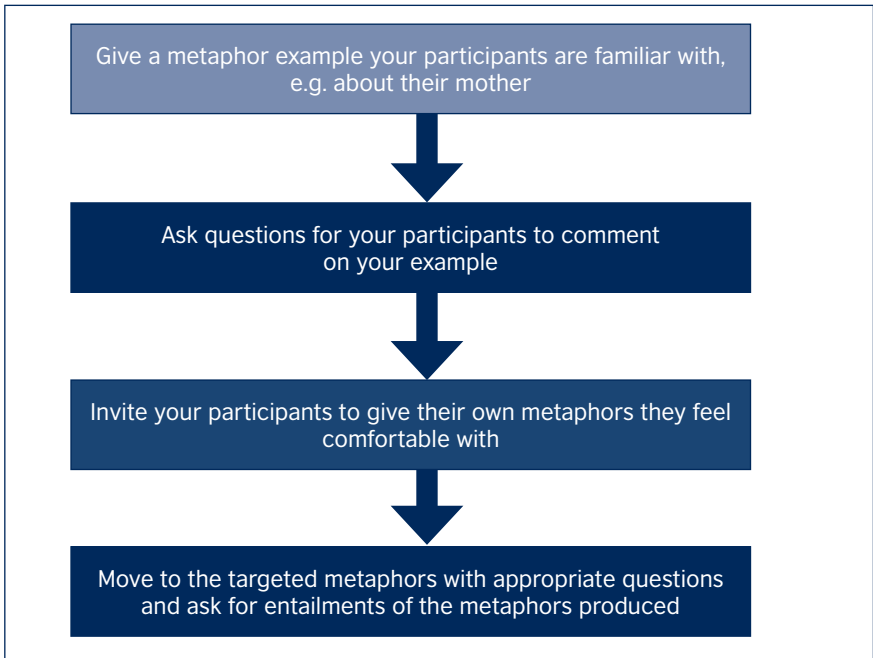
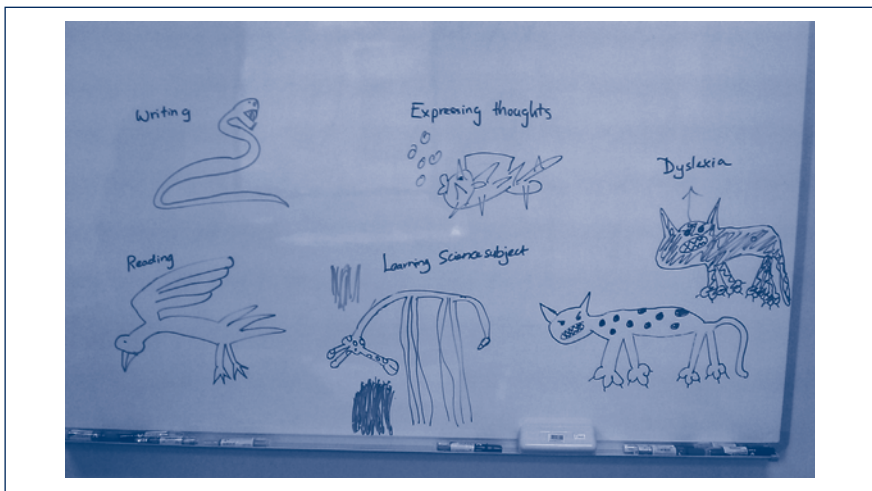


Figure 1: Procedure for involving young dyslexic learners in verbal participation with metaphors.

After being trained through verbal participation to think in a metaphorical way, the learners were given activities to help elicit metaphors. These activities included: drawing pictures; picking up objects from a pile of cards, toys, etc. and using them to express comparison and give reasons; playing a game, such as shopping, going to a supermarket, snakes and ladders; asking for their personal stories; semi-structured interviews; writing down their metaphors and entailments. For purposes of accurate transcription and data analysis, all the interview or activity sessions were audio- or video- recorded with informed parental consent and a strict ethical data-collection procedure.

Drawing was a very useful activity for these young age-groups of participants, because it fits well with their learning environment and methods. Some participants spontaneously offered to draw on blackboards or whiteboards to express their profound perceptions on the topics discussed: Drawing 1 gave a way for one child to express his views as visual metaphors. He elaborated his views orally with entailments after drawing.

In his drawing, *writing* is 'an attacking snake', shown in the drawing of an attacking snake, because writing is like 'an attack' to him, 'constant attacks', it is 'scary and gives pressure'. *Expressing thoughts* is 'a puff fish', because 'nobody understands what the fish is talking about; the fish poisons others in order to protect himself'; sometimes he finds it hard to express himself, others can't understand what he tries to say, but if others get to know him better, then they understand him better. *Learning science* is shown in the visual metaphor as 'a giraffe bending down to eat brown grass' although this is this child's best subject, because 'normally a giraffe would eat green grass, but he has to survive by eating brown grass' as if he had to be good at something since his English and math were not his best subjects. *Reading* is a goose flying, because 'a goose usually doesn't fly but when other birds fly, the goose has to follow. The birds go to a higher level, then the goose must try to follow, but will be slower'.



Drawing 1: An 11 year old boy's visual metaphors to explain his thoughts on the whiteboard.

This boy's way of expressing his concepts on dyslexia was rather unique: he said he did not know what *dyslexia* meant, but he created a visual metaphor to express his experience of it: two leopards, one with black spots on white background, the other with black spots on black background (*a panther*). He said '*dyslexia people are the same as other people, but they are like a panther, it is rare, different, but they are the same in the leopard's family*'. These metaphors not only demonstrate his profound experiential understanding of the topics discussed, but also reveal his emotional insights and some strategies used to deal with some of his difficulties. These activities thus enhanced the quality and quantity of metaphor data from young children with dyslexia and have taken advantage of the strengths of these children in visual expression.

Key findings from young dyslexic learners in Singapore through metaphor analysis

The main findings from this project are reported and analysed in overview first and then in eight aspects, which include their concept of dyslexia, key subject elements and skills of learning. These aspects are dyslexia, English learning, writing, reading, expressing thoughts in English, second language learning, maths and science. The purpose of examining these aspects is that English, a 'mother tongue' or second language (often it is Mandarin Chinese), maths and science are considered as key curriculum subjects. They are all learned through English, except the second language subject. All these subjects involve the language skills of reading, writing and oral discussion. Students in Singapore are expected to achieve well in these curriculum subjects since they are needed for entrance to higher education and give better job prospects.

An overview of findings from metaphors given by young learners with dyslexia in Singapore

A number of methods were used to analyse the metaphor data. One classification method used was to look at the polarity between positive and negative: this is potentially important because dyslexia is commonly seen by the public negatively as 'a problem' and by most teachers as 'a special need' so we need to know the characterisations of dyslexia by dyslexics themselves. All the metaphors were thus put into one of five categories: very negative, negative, neutral or containing both negative and positive views, positive and very positive. First of all, if the metaphors expressed obvious negativity such as *bully* or *a broken toilet bowl*, it was placed in the negative category; obvious positivity such as *a piece of cake* or *drawing a creative picture*, was in the positive category. The researchers also checked the entailments of these metaphors to make sure they belonged to the right category. If a metaphor did not show any obvious intention, the entailment was examined in detail to find out the participant's intention of the metaphor created, e.g. *a whole story book*, from the words, it was not easy to know the thoughts of the participant, but the entailment revealed that '*because it is hard to read and boring*'; thus this metaphor was classified as negative. *Swimming* was used to describe a participant's view on expressing thoughts in English: in her entailment, she viewed it positively: '*because swimming is easy for me and makes me happy*' so this metaphor was put into the positive category. *A roller coaster* was an example of participants recognising learning could be '*up and down*', thus this metaphor

was placed in the 'neutral or both' category. Figure 2 shows that overall, through their metaphors, these learners appear to have only slightly more negative views towards all aspects examined.

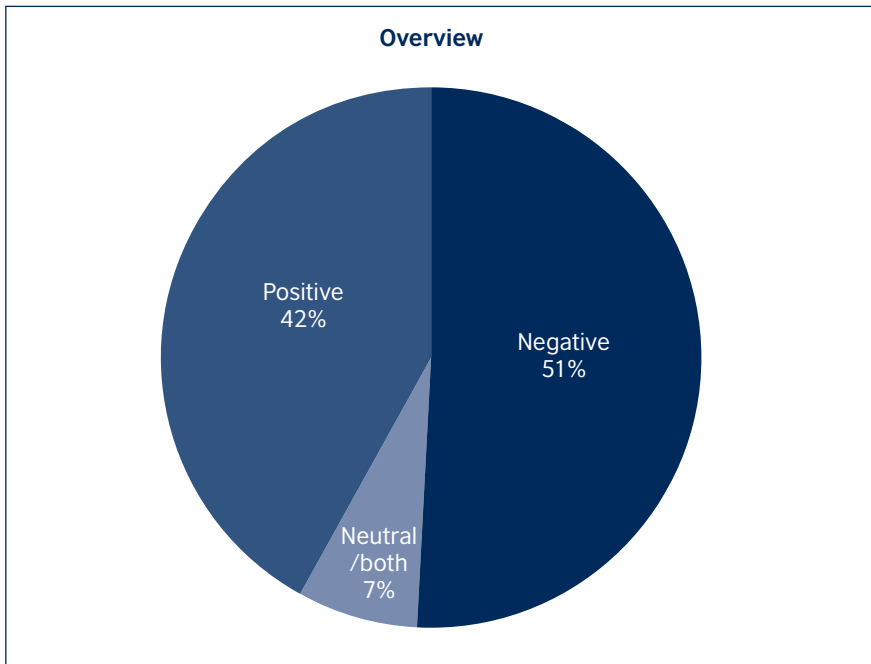


Figure 2: An overview of all aspects revealed by dyslexia participants in Singapore through their metaphors

These findings are not unexpected since there have been beliefs that dyslexic learners tend to have low self-esteem and perhaps their experience is that learning has more barriers and challenges (Humphrey and Mullins, 2002). However, what is interesting is the high percentage of positive metaphors, which is of likely significance for potential achievement in learning. Burden and Burdett (2005) argued that the motivational factor including self-efficacy and commitment to effort could be a key reason towards the success of learning by young dyslexic learners - their participants showed a more positive attitude to learning, yet, their 50 boy participants were from a British independent special school, where a better learning environment and a possibly more positive and well-motivated learner group had been established through self-selected entry to the school.

The overall finding from this present study shows a large degree of positivity towards all aspects of learning by dyslexic learners in Singapore. This is perhaps largely due to the awareness work carried out by educational therapists, special needs teachers and mainstream school teachers in Singapore to promote the understanding of dyslexia among learners, their families and in their schools.

A breakdown of eight individual aspects revealed by young dyslexic learners through metaphors

An overall summary is a way to examine what views these participants with dyslexia have towards their learning elements and skills. However, it is more beneficial for teachers and researchers to see how these views are expressed in detail with reference to aspects of learning.

Among these eight aspects, the concept of dyslexia and the learning of writing, a second language and maths were perceived as negative or more difficult by these participants. However, their metaphors and entailments show that they had more confidence and joy in learning science and English, and in expressing their thoughts in English. They expressed their views on reading skills with an equal proportion of positivity and negativity.

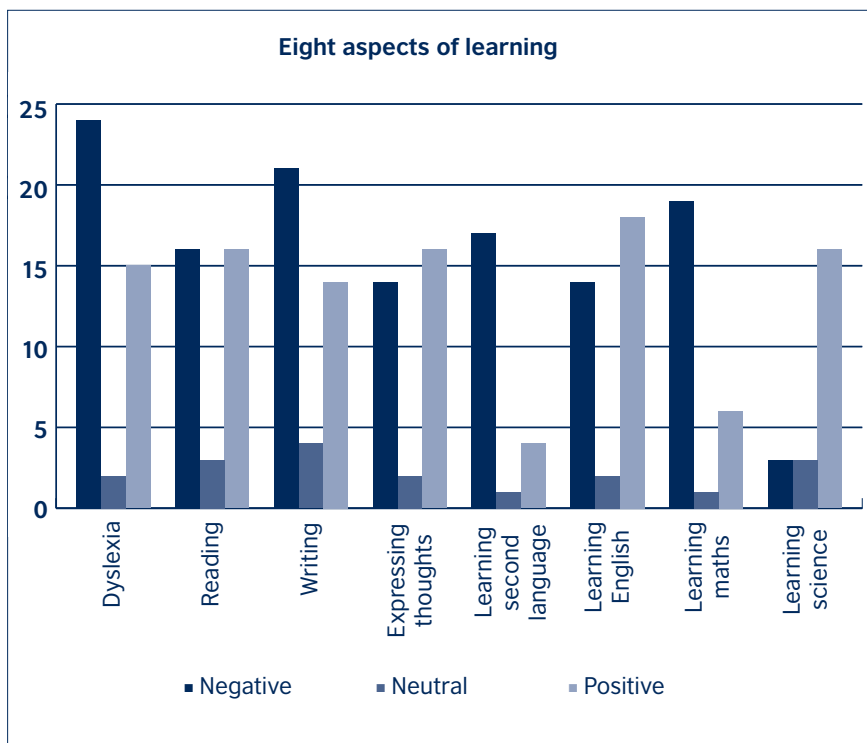


Figure 3: A breakdown of eight learning aspects by dyslexic learners in Singapore through metaphor analysis

On **dyslexia**, the participants appeared to show their self-view of the concept in a rather negative way. An examination in detail reveals that the negative views tend to have two facets: visual and emotional.

The learners seemed to perceive that dyslexia was associated with a *spaghetti shape*, question marks and untidiness: dyslexia is *'book with words that are curly and round like spaghetti, like spaghetti words, curl and round. Non-dyslexic is like so*

neat while dyslexic is like so untidy' and 'Boy doing work with a lot of questions mark on his head. That is a lot of work to do in school and I don't understand what I need to do. Don't understand what my teachers says'.

Their emotions were also related to visual images seen in their mind. Dyslexia is *'a face that is stress and scared'*, in relation to fear. It is *'a broken toilet bowl, everything leaks out,... if someone comes into your house and sees a broken toilet bowl, what would they think of you. This guy got no money uh! So stinking and disgusting,... people won't like you... I can give them a headache, like fixing a broken toilet is not easy'*. Their deep emotion of anger is shown in their metaphors like *'fire, I want to burn down dyslexia or grass that everybody steps on you'*.

Analysis of the positive views of dyslexia revealed that these students were strongly aware of their strengths, ability and strategies to deal with dyslexia and could use it to advantage. They said dyslexia was a *'hot air balloon, I'm raising'*; it was a *'cup of coffee, it doesn't really affect me'*, *'a black leopard which is normal, but rare'*, like dyslexia; *'extra magazine for a gun, if you know how to use it... teacher... fully utilise it, it gives you an advantage. Change become like normal. You get an advantage'*. These views are compatible with the success attributes identified by Raskind, et al, (2002; 2003) that it would help dyslexic learners if they have their own awareness of dyslexia, its strengths and weaknesses, and develop a pro-active attitude with a belief in their power to change their lives through perseverance and goal-setting. These learners' metaphors and entailments show that the children are developing the features of these attributes. Their positive attitudes and resilience, developed through their self-awareness of the dyslexia concept, also support the arguments from Burden's work (2005, 2008) and from the findings of Burden and Burdett's research (2005) that a positive and well-motivated self will create successful dyslexic learners and will contribute to academic success.

The next negative aspect is **writing in English** for these dyslexic learners. The participants relate their difficulties in writing mostly with stress and physical and cognitive demand. Writing is a multi-level and multi-skilled cognitive activity. It involves physical and cognitive coordination, which includes pen-holding, letter forming, graph-motor skills, hand-eye coordination and spatial ordering, as well as spelling, grammatical understanding, logical organisation of thoughts, condensed expressions in a written form and being creative. These demands are often under-recognised: Berninger et al. (2008) argue that explicit instructions should be provided to dyslexic learners for their phonological, orthographic and morphological processes of spelling instead of mainly accommodating their writing problems. Within the multi-lingual contexts in Singapore, with perhaps several different scripts, the tasks of writing can be more demanding, thus the local cultures of learning (Jin and Cortazzi, 2008, 2009) should be taken into consideration for overcoming their writing difficulties.

The metaphors showed the hardship perceived by young dyslexic learners in Singapore. They regard writing as *'walking on a mountain, going up one step at a time'*; *'climbing a mountain'* or *'climbing Mt Everest, it is hard'*; *'egg plant, it is so heavy that I will drop it. It is just like me dropping the pencil because I am so tired'*. At the same time, they feel the heavy mental demand which makes

them vulnerable and fragile, *'It's like building a card tower, because the sentence structure is hard to master, sometimes and while one mistake, just like a card tower it has this domino effect, you whole sentence is wrong. And people don't like it sometimes. But at the same time it is also fun just like building a card tower you need to have perseverance to build all the way to the top. And um, your effort maybe all destroyed if you write out of point also. It's like a card tower, everything will fall down if your base, if your foundation is not good everything would come crashing together with it'*. These participants revealed their experience of mental stress towards writing, but at the same time, they became more aware of their learning strategies and ways to overcome the problem by having a good foundation and perseverance, e.g. *'Cherry – Typing is like a cherry. Easy to eat. ... Typing is easier than writing because I've learnt how to type and use Microsoft Word brilliantly'*; *'taking a bomb into a battle field: if you know how to utilise writing, you can score a lot of marks. But if you don't know how to use it, it's like a bomb exploding right in your face'*.

However, their metaphors and entailments also tell us that educational professionals and parents need to know how they can encourage these learners by giving them fun and joy to learn, because they do not want to feel writing is like *'Volcano – all my writing explodes and come out everywhere. Teacher always say my handwriting is very bad'*. Teachers and parents need to learn to give explicit instructions which they can comprehend, with fun activities, encouragement and comprehension of the feelings of these learners.

Some of the participants appeared to have no problem with writing, they believe writing is *'singing ABC, it is easy'*; *'a light bulb, it shines imagination'*; *'jogging in the park, I enjoy it'*; *'wind, it's cool'*. These tell us we need to differentiate dyslexic learners who face writing difficulties and those who perceive they do not, and help them from their viewpoints.

The third difficult aspect is **learning a second language**. In Singapore, students are required to learn a second language; and in their case, it can be their 'mother tongue' since English is an EAL for most, and since at home they may use a dialect of a standard language. Take Chinese children as an example: at home, they may speak Cantonese, which orally is mutually unintelligible for Mandarin speakers, although the writing system is mainly the same; however, in school, Mandarin Chinese is taught and assessed. This creates some difficulties phonologically in the transition between oral and colloquial expressions and written and formal expressions.

It seems that some learners recognised as dyslexic were not allowed to learn a second language in school. They compared their experience like *'Durians. Looks bad, smells bad, tastes bad! I'm not allowed to learn Chinese or French or anything else. Because I'm dyslexic (said with a self-deprecatory look upwards)'*. Some others find it boring and hard, it was the *'biggest book. It is super boring'*; *'hiking on a hot day, it's tiring'*; *'brain damage, it's difficult'*; *'going to heaven, like dying, very hard'*; *'black smoke, I get crazy, can't understand'*; *'Running on a train track, it is hard to run away from the oncoming train'*. These visualised metaphors and entailments show us these learners' inner feeling of hardship and despair in learning a second language.

But again, some of these dyslexics love the learning of a second language. They show us pictures of the joy of learning a second language: *'winter, snow, it's fun'; 'disco ball, it is shiny, I like it'*. Some also form a visual strategy for learning a second language: *'Actually it's kind of like a Chinese mosaic.... Let's say, ok, different characters have different meanings, each with the individual meaning. But when you combine it, it forms a whole new picture just like a mosaic. You combine one picture, looks boring, if you were to put a collection of pictures you may form something. And you have to match it right so that you'll form the desired picture'*. It is significant to see how learners with dyslexia became aware of approaches and strategies to meet their learning targets, since awareness is a first step to achieve successful learning (Raskind, et al, 2003).

Learning maths is another aspect with difficulties. Some learners use the strong word *'hate'* to describe their frustration at learning maths. Their metaphors for learning maths are often associated with physical tiredness, stress and boredom: it's like *'grape, it has a hard outer layer – which is hard work, something like that. And commitment. Boredom'; 'a storm, it sucks'; 'making a fire, it's hard trying not to get burned'; 'like reading a newspaper, it's boring'; 'like climbing a mountain, because when the teacher just started teaching maths, you have to sit there and pay attention. So if you don't like it totally,... at the end you will lose out, you just fall down from a hill'*. Some other students use computers to compensate in their learning of maths and get joy out of it, *'playing computer games, it's fun'*; or maths is a *'sports car, I can go very fast'*. These more optimistic views indicate it is possible for dyslexic learners to develop higher order language and thinking skills if the teaching of maths can be made more interesting and use other technology used to enhance the learning experience of these learners.

In contrast with learning maths, **learning science** is perceived as a very positive and joyful experience for learners with dyslexia in Singapore. Their metaphors are associated with actions followed by positive emotional outcomes:

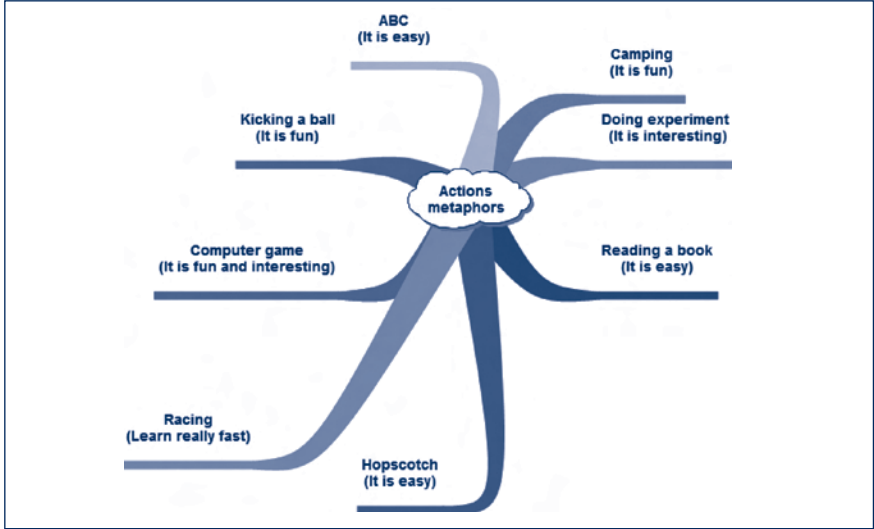


Figure 4: Metaphors with positive entailments for learning science.

It is likely that they perceived learning science as a much more hands-on subject. They could visualise what they were doing and see the results of their actions in practical experiments. These imaginary and visual metaphors show some negative views, e.g. learning science is like being *'electrocuted, it is hot, uncomfortable'*. The metaphors offer us a strong visual mental image (Littlemore, 2008) and dyslexic students may have a specific aptitude for visualisation (Cogan and Flecker, 2004). These metaphors provide good examples of analogical reasoning when ideas of images from prior knowledge of a different image can be used to create an analogical transfer (Holyoak *et al*, 2010) to generate inferences to explain a different concept. It will be useful to research further to find out how students with dyslexia like learning science in spite of the difficult scientific terms and abstract concepts.

To the surprise of the researchers, **learning English** was perceived more positively than learning some other subjects including, for many participants, learning the mother tongue. A majority of the metaphors and entailments produced are about their feelings of excitement and eagerness, the ease and fun of learning. These students found learning English was like *'mangroves, you can always find something new in it'*; *'bowling, it is interesting'*; *'pot of gold, more coins will come and come'*; *'rock climbing, it is fun'*; *'exploring nature, it's fun and calm'*; *'windows, every part of English has light with lots of things inside'*. Some students did find it hard to learn English, like other subjects. They felt stressed, bored and dragged behind with English learning: it was like *'walking in heavy snow, imagine the snow is thick and reaches the 5th storey of Jurong Point and you need to climb'*; *'like going to sleep... like watching a soccer match..., because I really don't know what the soccer are they doing or what happening'*. However, some metaphors revealed their images of overcoming difficulties and experiencing optimistic feelings. English learning is like *'baby bird learning to fly, it gets better'*; *'driving a car, learn very fast'*. Through metaphors of learning, they show that they began to understand the complexity of English, e.g. *'platypus, it's just got so many rules. And the rules always have exceptions. And the exceptions always have other rules that link into other exceptions. So it's complicated'*. This rather sophisticated awareness of language rules from a twelve-year-old shows that dyslexic learners can understand complex linguistic rules which give them a way to prepare for later learning.

Another aspect that participants found more positive is **expressing their thoughts in English** (see Fig.5.). Analysis of the metaphor data in more detail shows that almost half the participants who gave metaphors with negative meaning have a common theme relating to their personal thought processing. This seems to be in accordance with Frederickson and Jacobs, (2001) that learners with dyslexia attribute negative outcomes to internal factors and positive outcomes to external factors. The metaphors show how the students attribute the metaphors with negative meaning to themselves, *'writing on a book – I write, write, write, and people don't understand what I mean'*; *'Japanese blowfish – sometimes you don't understand what a blowfish wants to express its thoughts. Just like sometimes you can't express your thoughts'*; *'Big question mark – bored, boring, nothing to do, people don't understand me'*; *'like you are drowning so like I forgot then like you don't know what you want to know, then the person always want to tell you to remember but I cannot remember so like drowning in water'*.

On the other hand, half the students with metaphors containing positive entailments used the key word 'easy' to describe actions that are comparable to expressing their thoughts. It appears that these metaphors associated with daily life are presented for the ease they feel and are not associated with themselves. These metaphors show how the students attribute the positive metaphors to external elements, 'swimming, because swimming is easy for her...'; 'pressing the TV switch, because the switches are soft and easy to press'; 'solving an easy puzzle, it is easy to do'; 'peanuts, it is easy'; 'racing, it is fun and easy'; 'just like killing an ant, because it is so easy'.

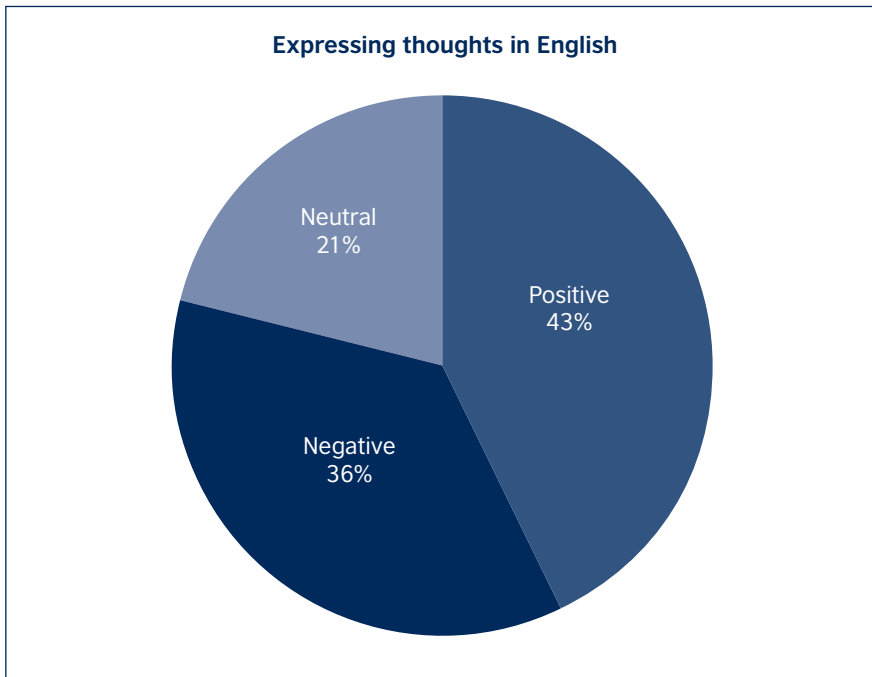


Figure 5: Metaphors showing participants' inclination towards their perception on expressing thoughts in English

Regarding **reading**, the eighth aspect examined through metaphors, this research shows that reading is perceived positively and enjoyably when the dyslexic participants view reading as a function of a pleasant experience. However, those who view reading mainly as a task find reading negative, especially if they haven't been given adequate support to experience the content of their reading. This tells us that it is important to motivate students (Gambrell and Marinak, 2009) along the right path so that they are able to access the skills they need to learn.

The metaphors from these dyslexics indicate that they viewed reading as physically hard, with obstacles to comprehension, humiliation and lack of power and choice in their learning process. Reading is a 'hard rock, because it's very hard to read and very hard to spell'; 'solving a difficult puzzle, because it's hard to get a word when you don't know how to read it'; 'teacher writing on white board, cannot

read what teacher is writing on the board'; 'bully – hate bullies makes my face red and makes me burn inside'; 'toilet roll – toilet roll can just go roll and roll and roll and roll. You can refill the toilet roll and it will go on and on and on and on'. To help with the feeling of lack of control and to give a greater sense of empowerment, teachers can give the child some avenues to choose between.

Some participants showed that they used visualisation in their reading in order to help with their understanding. Reading is like *'watching a movie, because I think the movie in my head'; 'picture frame, because when I read, it's like a photo, everything got a picture'*. Some found reading very rewarding, exciting, engaging and fun: *'sailing – fun to play'; 'roller coaster – it is fast and fun'; 'action packed movie – it is interesting'; 'it's like going through an adventure, because reading has an end um has a beginning and an story. And adventure is like reading is because at the end then you know what has happened. It's like a story, at the end you will know what will happen. In the middle is like, what's it called uh? Um, suspense? Both reading and adventure have suspense'*. These metaphors and entailments show how reading can be enjoyable for learners with dyslexia. It is useful for professionals and parents to understand that it is achievable for these learners to gain enjoyment and knowledge through reading as a skill and that reading is a way to obtain knowledge by providing a relaxing learning environment. Rather than teaching reading through testing, teachers should offer choices and empower these learners to develop their own pace of reading and learning to read.

Conclusion: learning from the findings about young learners with dyslexia in Singapore

This project shows that with appropriate support and facilitating activities young EAL learners with dyslexia can understand and produce metaphors and that these learners can create personal metaphors about themselves and their learning to express their identity and emotions. This is a significant aspect of language development: metaphors are important in everyday language use, not just as stylistic decoration but as basic features of normal understanding and expression to facilitate thinking, arguing, persuading, etc. and to handle one's own and others' emotions. Crucially, this illustrates creative abilities linking visualisation, logical thinking and language expression: given the importance of metaphor and analogical thinking for learning science, maths, English and other subjects, this is an important finding with implications for teachers and parents.

Teachers can develop their own understanding and use of metaphors (Deignan, 1995) to help dyslexic learners use and discuss metaphors and to understand key concepts in content learning, especially by discussing metaphor entailments, perhaps with drawings, actions and participatory games. Teachers can use some of the metaphors from this project to discuss dyslexia, language skills and curriculum learning with children with dyslexia to explore feelings and identities: the use of imaginative negative examples may show empathy and help children to express their difficulties; positive examples can help children to see alternatives using the experience of other children like themselves and thus, over time, move to more positive orientations themselves.

On the whole, the younger the participants were, the more metaphors they produced (see Table 1.). This may indicate a number of possibilities we need to address in future research. We need to find out if older learners are less confident or more embarrassed to produce more imaginative expressions, or are more aware of 'right' responses which they think teachers expect. Future research may consider training student peers to interview peers for metaphor elicitation and designing other activities which match teenagers' communication styles.

Methodologically, the 'same' metaphors may not contain the same meaning: everything depends on what the entailment indicates and how different participants view the topic, e.g. some participants used the metaphor 'sweet', which could usually be interpreted positively as it has a positive connotation. However, one learner regarded 'sweet' as too sweet which gave her an uncomfortable feeling such that she had to take it out of her mouth. Often, some participants used the same metaphor, e.g. *a hot air balloon*, but the entailments indicate how some participants used it in a positive way to show they have improved; others used it to indicate a negative effect, because it moves up slowly. This demonstrates the importance of entailment to better understand the metaphor instead of accepting it at face value.

Many metaphors are culture-specific, e.g. learning maths is '*a picnic under the sun*'. People from many Western countries would view this as positive, but to Singaporeans, it is negative, because in a hot climate, sun makes people tired and stressed. Some of these metaphors have to be understood from their entailments in context.

Many metaphors and entailments are associated with emotions. We can confirm that it is important to stimulate positive emotions in order to enhance dyslexic learners' learning experience and outcomes. The affective factor in learning cannot be ignored when learners perceive that they are in stressful, pressurised or tiring and boring learning environments.

Equally important, professionals and parents need to acknowledge individual needs of learning paces, preferences, styles and choices to enhance their motivation (Worthy *et al*, 1999; Dörnyei, 2001) and empower dyslexic learners (Burden, 1998, 2005) to achieve their potential. At the same time, cultures of learning (Jin and Cortazzi, 2008, 2009) should be acknowledged and attended to in a multilingual and multicultural society like Singapore (Smith, 2005). Dyslexic learners' perceptions will give us in-depth understanding of their learning styles, methods and strategies which professionals can learn from.

This research shows that metaphor analysis can be used as a *bridge* (Cortazzi and Jin, 1999) to enter the minds and hearts of young dyslexic learners for professionals to develop their teaching expertise in order to help their learners.

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2

Investigating global practices in teaching English to Young Learners

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Introduction

English is being introduced to ever more and ever younger children and in many countries around the world English is now compulsory in primary education (Nikolov, 2009a; Pinter, 2006). However, curricula and practices are often being developed in an *ad hoc* way because there is little appropriate research to inform fundamental policy decisions. As Enever and Moon (2009:5) note:

... we have yet to clarify the priorities for formulating effective language policies, for designing appropriate programmes of implementation and for meeting the very real challenge of ensuring that policy is effectively and sustainably implemented within the daily practice of classrooms.

Moreover, knowledge and understanding of teaching practices in the field of young learners are, at best, sketchy. There are a number of books that bring together worthwhile studies of small research projects, often led by local university researchers (see Moon & Nikolov, 2000; Nikolov, 2009a; Rixon, 1999) but these studies often focus on how young learners acquire particular systems, such as vocabulary (for example, Orosz, 2009) or skills, such as reading (for example, Samo, 2009). Other books recommend best practice in teaching young learners in the light of available research findings, informing and guiding both teaching and teacher education (for example, Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2006; Slattery & Willis, 2001). However, there are no studies, as far as we are aware, that examine how teachers around the world go about their everyday practice of teaching English to young learners, their attitudes to this teaching and the challenges they face. Nor is there any research which provides a detailed description, on a case by case basis, of how expert teachers in local contexts 'do' English language teaching, where this teaching is not part of a programme of innovation and change (cf. Graddol, 2006).

The overall aim of this project was, therefore, to investigate global practices in Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) aged 7-11 from macro and micro perspectives. Key aims were to:

- discover what policy/syllabus documents inform TEYL practices around the world
- investigate and map the major pedagogies that teachers use
- better understand teachers' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, including the challenges they face
- identify how local solutions to pedagogical issues can be effective and how these may resonate globally.

This report first reviews some of the existing literature on policy and practice in TEYL as this relates to the project. We then describe the research design and the data collected before summarising the key findings. Finally, we present our recommendations for future action to support teaching English to young learners.

Review of the Literature

The widespread introduction of English in primary schools has been described by Johnstone (2009:33) as ‘possibly the world’s biggest policy development in education’. Even in countries such as Poland, Hungary or Croatia, where a choice of foreign languages is offered at primary level, English is overwhelmingly the first choice (Enever & Moon, 2009; Nikolov, 2009b). There are a number of reasons for this trend:

1. The widespread assumption that earlier language learning is better (Y. Hu, 2007; Nunan, 2003).
2. The response to the ever-increasing demand for English as a result of economic globalisation (Enever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009; Hu, Y., 2007). Such a demand leads to pressure on governments from international economic forces to ensure there is an English-speaking workforce.
3. The pressure from parents in the national context who want their children to benefit socially and economically from learning English (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004; Enever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009).

The growth in teaching English to young learners has not been universally endorsed, however. The assumed benefits of an early start are controversial (see, for example, Nikolov & Mihaljevic Djigunovic, 2006; Pinter, 2006), especially in situations of minimal input, rather than language immersion (Larson-Hall, 2008). There has also been widespread criticism of policies that are generally imposed in a top-down manner and often without sufficient preparation (Enever & Moon, 2009; Gimenez, 2009; Y. Hu, 2007; Lee, 2009). As Gorsuch (2000) points out, national curriculum decisions and policies are essentially political and address curriculum content, but often fail to explain how such content should be implemented (see also Nunan, 2003). In other words, the pace of change has outrun the planning required to ensure the change is successful.

Previous studies have described the consequences and outcomes of the early introduction of English into primary schools, particularly in terms of the gap between policy and implementation (Ho, 2003; Martin & Abdullah, 2003; Pandian, 2003), both at macro and micro level. Some of the issues seem to be common across countries while others are more local. This review focuses on the policy and practice issues most closely linked to the aims of the current study (but see the chapters in Enever, Moon, & Raman, 2009; Ho & Wong, 2003a for details about individual countries).

Macro level factors

The first point to note is that there is a great deal of variation in government policy from one country to another and even within the same country (see, for example, Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004; Ho, 2003; Y. Hu, 2007; Kapur, 2009; Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009). Moreover, while in some countries, such as South Korea or Oman, the government maintains close central control over the implementation of policy (Al-Issa, 2007; Butler, 2009; Lee, 2009; Mitchell & Lee, 2003), in others, such as Brazil, few or no guidelines are offered (Gimenez, 2009). Such lack of clarity can

cause considerable confusion, particularly at regional or school level. Until 2011, the Japanese government's policy, for example, aimed to introduce language activities with the purpose of fostering, 'an introduction to foreign language and culture as part of international understanding, rather than teaching language learning per se' (Butler & Iino, 2005:40). The result has been difficulties in interpretation of the policy for schools and teachers (ibid.: 37). Y. Hu (2007) reports that in China the 2001 policy document refers to a staged and gradual introduction of English into primary schools but how this is to be achieved is not made clear. The result is educational inequality, especially between rural and urban schools and between coastal and inland areas (G. Hu, 2005a, 2005b; Y. Hu, 2007; Nunan, 2003).

Inequality of access to English at primary level, and especially the divide between urban and rural areas and amongst urban schools, has been highlighted by a number of other researchers (see, for example, Butler, 2009; Gimenez, 2009; Ho, 2003; Y. Hu, 2007; Nikolov, 2009b). The result in many countries has been a huge increase in the private sector, which in turn increases the gap between rich and poor, as wealthier parents are able to send their children to private school or for private English lessons (Enever & Moon, 2009; Hoque, 2009; Lee, 2009). This development creates both negative and positive consequences, causing on the one hand political, social, financial, and familial tensions (Lee, 2009), and on the other pressure on governments to improve state provision for early language learning (Gimenez, 2009).

So far this brief discussion has focused on the macro level and on some of the political and social consequences of introducing compulsory English at primary level. This discussion is important as it reveals the backdrop against which the primary school teachers in the current study are working. These policy decisions also have ramifications within the classroom, which are reflected in this study, and these are discussed below.

Micro level factors

Approaches to language teaching

Perhaps the biggest and most complex of the policy decisions impacting on the classroom concerns the approaches recommended for teaching English to young learners. In response to the perceived global demand for communication in English, new YL curricula have generally emphasised communicative competence. In many countries, particularly in East Asia (Ho, 2003), this has led to the introduction of some form of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Task-Based Learning and Teaching (TBLT). This is the case, for example, in Korea (Li, 1998; Mitchell & Lee, 2003), Hong Kong (Carless, 2003, 2004), China (G. Hu, 2002), Turkey (Kirkgöz, 2009) and Thailand (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008), to name just a few.

Enever and Moon (2009) point out that CLT is a method that has its origins in EFL teaching for adults in western countries where groups are small and classrooms well-equipped. It may not, therefore, be appropriate for teaching children in overcrowded classrooms with few resources and very different educational traditions (G. Hu, 2002, 2005b; McKay, 2003). Moreover, the method is very often misunderstood by teachers, who may have received little or no

training in its theoretical underpinnings and practical applications (Butler, 2005; Littlewood, 2007; McKay, 2003). Ho and Wong (2003b: xxxv) point out that CLT means different things to different teachers. The teachers in Li's (1998) study, for example, thought that CLT meant focusing solely on fluency and ignoring accuracy. Also, a lack of systematic preparation leads to uncertainty and confusion about its implementation (Butler, 2005, 2009; Li, 1998). Similar problems arise in the implementation of the more recent TBLT approach (Carless, 2004; Littlewood, 2007). CLT and TBLT are often seen as simply incompatible with local ways of learning, or what Jin and Cortazzi (2006) call 'cultures of learning' (see, for example, Baker, 2008; G. Hu, 2002, 2005b; Littlewood, 2007; Martin & Abdullah, 2003). In particular, their learner-centredness is seen as inappropriate in some educational cultures (G. Hu, 2002; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008).

The consequence of all these factors is often a gap between pedagogic policy and classroom practice (G. Hu, 2005a, 2005b; Nikolov, 2009b; Nunan, 2003). The typical pragmatic response from teachers is the adoption of weak forms of CLT or TBLT (Carless, 2003; Ho & Wong, 2003b), whereby teachers interpret the approaches according to their local context (Mitchell & Lee, 2003), using, for example, communicative activities to practise discrete language items (Carless, 2004; Mitchell & Lee, 2003; Xinmin & Adamson, 2003). Indeed, both Li (1998) and Littlewood (2007) conclude that the advice to teachers should be to adapt rather than adopt, and G. Hu (2005b:655) calls for 'an informed pedagogical eclecticism'.

However, CLT is by no means universal in YL teaching, nor is it seen as universally problematic. For example, McKay (2003) points out that in Chile recent government policy appears to be moving away from CLT in recognition of its inappropriateness to the Chilean context, while Al-Issa (2007) notes that the Omani curriculum and teaching methodology are not based on communicative practices. Kubanek-German (1998:194) in her review of primary foreign language teaching in Europe claimed that '[t]he subject of the appropriate teaching methods is the least controversial one'.

Recruitment and training

Many countries introduced English as a compulsory subject at primary school apparently without careful consideration of who was going to teach it. Some countries therefore found (and still find) themselves with a severe shortage of trained primary school teachers of English (G. Hu, 2005a; Y. Hu, 2007; Kirkgöz, 2009; Nunan, 2003; Nur, 2003), and this situation is especially acute in poorer or rural areas.

Solutions to this problem have varied both from country to country and from school to school. In China, for example, the government recommendation was that:

1. Primary school teachers of other subjects who had some English background should be trained to teach English.
2. English teachers should teach across a number of schools.
3. Retired English teachers from both primary and secondary schools should be employed.

4. Class advisors or teachers of other subjects should be used to organise students for activities such as watching English videos or listening to cassettes (Y. Hu, 2007).

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the first option has also been widely adopted in many parts of the world, although not always with a training component. Other countries 'imported' native-speaker teachers to try to fill some of the gaps (Nunan, 2003). The overall result, however, is a lack of fully qualified teachers (i.e. qualified to teach in primary schools and to teach English).

Many countries did provide some initial training when their policies were introduced. In Korea, for example, teachers were offered 120 to 240 hours to improve their language and teaching skills (Shim & Baik, 2003), while in Italy, as part of the *Progetto Lingue 2000*¹, teachers could undertake either 300 or 500 hours of training in both language and methodology.

While pre-service and in-service provision has increased in many countries since the introduction of primary level English (see, for example, G. Hu, 2005a), lack of appropriate training is still seen as problematic by many teachers (Nunan, 2003; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008). Its importance is evident in the present study too.

Teachers' level of English proficiency

The problem of teachers' low proficiency level in English or their lack of confidence in their English ability is almost universally identified in the literature (see, for example, Baker, 2008; Butler, 2004; Ghatage, 2009; Hoque, 2009; Kuchah, 2009; Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008). The perceived demands of CLT, such as teaching in the target language, lead to teachers' lacking confidence in their English ability, particularly in their speaking and listening skills (Kuchah, 2009).

However, the question arises as to what level of proficiency and fluency teachers really need in order to teach in primary schools. It may be that the real issue is not the teachers' lack of proficiency, which may well be more than adequate for TEYL, but rather a lack of confidence predicated on the belief that native-like competence is required to teach CLT successfully.

One interesting development has been the promotion in some countries, such as Korea, China and Taiwan, of technological support and multi-media packages, in the belief that these can go some way towards compensating for the lack of qualified teachers or their low language proficiency. A number of writers have argued that such resources, used appropriately, can offer much support to teachers (Y. Hu, 2007; Mitchell & Lee, 2003; Nunan, 2003), although there is the issue of unequal access to technology, even within the same country (G. Hu, 2005b).

The classroom context

There are a number of classroom-based factors that may militate against teachers following national policy. Large classes are common in many parts of the world (Ho,

2003; Wedgwood, 2007) and teachers believe this makes it difficult or impossible to introduce more learner-centred teaching because, for example, they cannot closely monitor students' language use (Li, 1998) or use pairwork and groupwork (Hoque, 2009).

Problems of control and discipline connected with learner-centred teaching in large classes have also been raised (Butler, 2005; Carless, 2004; Littlewood, 2007). Butler (2005) refers to what she calls 'classroom harmonisation', which some teachers see as particularly challenging during English classes because of the way they are expected to teach. Carless (2004) notes that there is a tension between the need to fulfil local expectations for quiet and orderly classrooms and the need to carry out oral English tasks, possibly in large classes. He (*ibid.*) concludes that teachers need to learn to be tolerant of what he calls 'constructive noise', while ensuring their pupils are on-task.

Another factor is the number of hours per week dedicated to English. According to Ho's (2003) overview of 15 countries in East Asia, the hours in primary schools varied, from only 1-2 hours in South Korea to 4-6 in Malaysia or Singapore. Teachers with a low number of hours per week believe they cannot introduce learner-centred teaching and also cover the syllabus (Carless, 2003, 2004; McKay, 2003).

Examinations and assessment

Although government policies and curricula typically advocate teaching communicatively, this approach is often incompatible with the demands of national examinations (Carless, 2003; Li, 1998; Littlewood, 2007) which continue to be grammar-based. This situation can lead to the backwash effect as teachers are under pressure to complete the syllabus and prepare for examinations (Carless, 2003; Pandian, 2003). Although the backwash effect would appear to be more severe at secondary level (Gorsuch, 2000; G. Hu, 2005b), it certainly exists at primary level too (Carless, 2003; Hoque, 2009; Inal, 2009; Nunan, 2003; Pandian, 2003). For example, Pandian (2003) reports that a study in Malaysia revealed that teachers were focusing on reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary, rather than on listening and speaking as these latter skills were not part of the Primary Schools Assessment test.

Materials and resources

The situation concerning both which materials are used to teach YLs and their availability varies greatly. In some countries there is one prescribed textbook for each grade, for example in South Korea (Butler, 2004) and Malaysia (Pandian, 2003). In other countries, there is a range of government-approved textbooks for teachers to choose from, as, for example, in China (G. Hu, 2005a) and Singapore (Mee, 2003). In yet other countries, such as Italy, schools are free to choose their own textbooks from those available on the market (reported by the case study teacher) or to not use a textbook at all, as in Abu Dhabi (reported by the case study teacher).

In many countries, teachers have found themselves with a lack of suitable materials, either because materials are not available (Hoque, 2009; Y. Hu, 2007; Mathew &

Pani, 2009) or because they do not reflect changes in the curriculum (Y. Hu, 2007; Inal, 2009; Nunan, 2003). Local textbook production has not necessarily been a satisfactory solution. As Hoque (2009) points out, in Bangladesh, for example, textbook writing committees are led by academics with little experience of teaching at primary level. The solution in China has been to use cooperation between local education departments and publishers and overseas publishers and textbooks writers (G. Hu, 2005a). Even where books do exist, they may not be available to the children (Mathew & Pani, 2009). Moreover, teachers may need training to use the new books, otherwise they continue to employ previous methods (Nur, 2003).

Where textbooks are inadequate, teachers often lack the time and expertise to develop appropriate materials (Li, 1998). Yet good materials may have an important role to play as they can become the 'de facto' curriculum. As Nur (2003:168) points out, where there is a lack of qualified teachers, 'textbooks appear to have a strong positive impact'.

The textbook is clearly not the only resource that may be lacking in primary schools. Ghatage (2009) notes that while policy in Maharashtra, India, encourages the use of audio-visual aids, such as TV and radio, these are unavailable in rural schools. The teachers in Li's (1998) study complained that there was insufficient funding for the equipment and facilities needed for learner-centred teaching, a point also made by Inal (2009).

Learners

Many teachers believe that they are limited in what they can do in the primary classroom because of learners' low levels of proficiency (Li, 1998). Moreover, learners' expectations about what to learn, such as the importance of grammar for examination purposes (Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008), and how to learn English may conflict with what teachers are expected to do (Ho, 2003). However, Carless (2003) points out that sometimes mismatches in expectations may be more to do with the teachers' lack of understanding of CLT and their ability to select appropriate tasks than with any real incompatibility with the demands of tests or the expectations of students.

Another issue frequently reported is an apparent lack of motivation and interest in English on the part of learners, who may not see any need to learn the language or simply do not see mastery of it as attainable (Li, 1998). This may be particularly acute in rural areas where learners have little contact with foreigners and therefore little perceived need to learn to communicate in English (Ho, 2003). Consequently, teacher-fronted classes with a focus on grammar and memorisation are preferred (G. Hu, 2005b; Li, 1998; Prapaisit de Segovia & Hardison, 2008).

Summary

This review has touched on some of the major issues surrounding policies and practices in TEYL. From the overview presented above, it is noticeable that, overall, the view tends to be rather pessimistic, with Nunan (2003:609) concluding that:

English language policies and practices have been implemented, often at significant cost to other aspects of the curriculum, without a clearly articulated

rationale and without a detailed consideration of the costs and benefits of such policies and practices on the countries in question. Furthermore, there is a widely articulated belief that, in public schools at least, these policies and practices are failing.

However, the more recent papers cited show a slightly more optimistic view and it may be that the situation is gradually improving, following initial difficulties. A number of the papers in Enever et al. (2009), for example, report on recent regional and national initiatives to enhance the teaching of English to young learners which have been relatively successful.

This review is by no means exhaustive. It has not, for example, discussed the possible negative effects of the dominance of English on local languages (see, for example, Bruthiaux, 2002; Kapur, 2009), nor have we considered the difficulties in transition from primary to secondary school caused by language policy (see, for example, Martin & Abdullah, 2003; Nikolov, 2009b; Qiang, 2009). Finally, we have not discussed English medium education (see, for example, Brock-Utne, 2010; G. Hu, 2005a, 2005b). The debate about English as the language of instruction in primary schools is likely to become more central at a time when not only countries with a colonial legacy of English (such as Malaysia) are struggling with their language policy, but countries traditionally considered EFL contexts (such as China) are contemplating the introduction of English-medium education. These issues have not been discussed, not because they are not important, but because they were not the focus of the research presented here. Nevertheless they undoubtedly affect many of the teachers involved in the current study.

Research Design

The methodology used for the study falls principally within an interpretive-exploratory paradigm (see, for example, Grotjahn, 1987) with the major goal of gaining an insider, or emic, perspective (van Lier, 1988; Watson-Gegeo, 1988) on the key construct of global practices in TEYL. Furthermore, given current trends towards mixed-method research designs (see, for example, Creswell, 2003; Dörnyei, 2007), drawing on both quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled a more rounded picture of these practices to emerge as well as complementary findings to be presented. The mixed-methods design adopted consisted of: i) a survey of perceptions of TEYL practices from a global sample of teachers of English; ii) detailed case studies of the contexts, practices and perceptions of five teachers in different continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, South America). Ethical approval was gained from Aston University before the survey was disseminated and the case studies were carried out, and informed consent was obtained from the schools and teachers involved in the studies.

The cross-sectional survey was provided both electronically through Survey Monkey, and via hard copy to accommodate limited or no technological access. This approach allowed for large and geographically diverse samples of data to be collected in an efficient, economic and standardised manner (de Vaus, 2002; Dörnyei, 2009). Responses were facilitated through local offices of the British Council and the researchers' professional contacts and resulted in a very large

database, numbering 4,696 responses from 144 countries. Twelve countries returned 100 responses or more: Italy (559), Brazil (293), Turkey (283), Palestine (240), Egypt (204), Columbia (183), Latvia (161), Lithuania (133), South Korea (125), Croatia (116), India (101) and Macedonia (101). A further 14 countries returned over 50 responses: Ukraine (99), Spain (98), Poland (86), China (80), Russia (77), Nigeria (70), the UAE (70), Georgia (68), Argentina (62), Taiwan (61), Tanzania (58), Bangladesh (56), Azerbaijan (53), and Jordan (53). In relation to the survey responses, which draw on non-probability 'opportunity' sampling, it should be recognised that they represent reported practices rather than provide conclusions about actual practices.

The survey items drew on the literature on survey design (see, for example, Dörnyei, 2009; Oppenheim, 1992) and were piloted with ten potential respondents in ten different geographical regions. There were six sections, which required information relating to: 1) demographics (location/type of school, qualifications/years of experience, English proficiency); 2) English teaching in the country; 3) the school; 4) the class and activities used; 5) syllabus planning; 6) teachers' opinions about challenges, improvement and change. A range of closed, ranked and open-ended items was used in order to gain mainly quantitative but also some qualitative responses².

The cross-sectional observational case studies were undertaken by the researchers with five teachers in different international locations: Africa (Tanzania), Asia (South Korea), Europe (Italy), the Middle East (the UAE), and South America (Colombia). The locations were selected to give as diverse a perspective as possible on teacher practices and approaches across the world. As the sample is opportunistic and purposive, it provides illustration rather than representation. A consistent methodology was used for all five cases.

1. Teachers were contacted either through local contacts or because they volunteered in the survey to be observed.
2. At the school site, teachers were asked in an initial interview for preliminary information about the class/students, the purpose and plans for the lesson, and for any other information relevant to the observation. Teachers also provided relevant documents (policy and syllabus documents and classroom materials).
3. Each observation was audio-recorded and field notes taken by the researcher.
4. Post-observation interviews were conducted. Transcripts were made of all the interviews.

Details of the case study contexts are as follows:

1. Colombia: one Grade 4 class was observed in a state school in a suburban location in a low socio-economic neighbourhood in the south of Bogotá. The teacher was male and in his late 50s.
2. Italy: one Grade 3 and two Grade 5 classes were observed in a state school in a medium-sized, relatively wealthy town in Northern Italy. The teacher was female and in her early 50s.

3. South Korea: a mixed Grades 1 and 2 after-school class was observed in a state school just outside the centre of Seoul. The teacher was female and in her late 40s.
4. Tanzania: one Grade 1 and one Grade 4 class were observed in a rural state primary school about eight kilometres from a medium-sized town in central Tanzania. The teacher was female and in her mid- to late 50s.
5. The UAE: two single sex (boys) Grade 6 classes were observed in a model state school in a rural location in Abu Dhabi. The teacher was male and in his mid 40s.

These cases provide a snapshot of current practices each obtained in one location on one teaching occasion. They illuminate and complement the quantitative data but cannot claim to be generalised interpretations of ongoing practices in the classrooms concerned or in the wider practices at national levels.

Main findings

In this section we first give a brief overview of the profile of the YL teachers who responded to the survey and then present a brief summary of findings in response to the aims of the research as listed in the introduction (see Appendix for the complete set of data related to the points below).

Profile of a YL teacher

Predictably, the vast majority of survey respondents were female (80.4 per cent). Most worked in state schools (68.3 per cent) in urban areas (73.9 per cent), and approximately a third were in their 30s while just over a quarter were in their 20s and a quarter in their 40s (Appendix, Figures 1,2,7,8). It is interesting to compare age with experience, as over half the teachers had been teaching English for less than 10 years and over two-thirds had been teaching English to young learners for less than 10 years (Appendix, Figures 4 and 5). This finding shows that many teachers in the survey did not start their teaching careers as teachers of English to young learners and is consistent with previous research. From the answers to the questions on nationality and on level of English (Figure 1, below), it can also be seen that around 92 per cent of the respondents do not speak English as their first language. Approximately 73 per cent are educated to university level (Appendix, Figure 3), while nearly 50 per cent report that their level of English is advanced or at native-speaker competence (Figure 1, below).

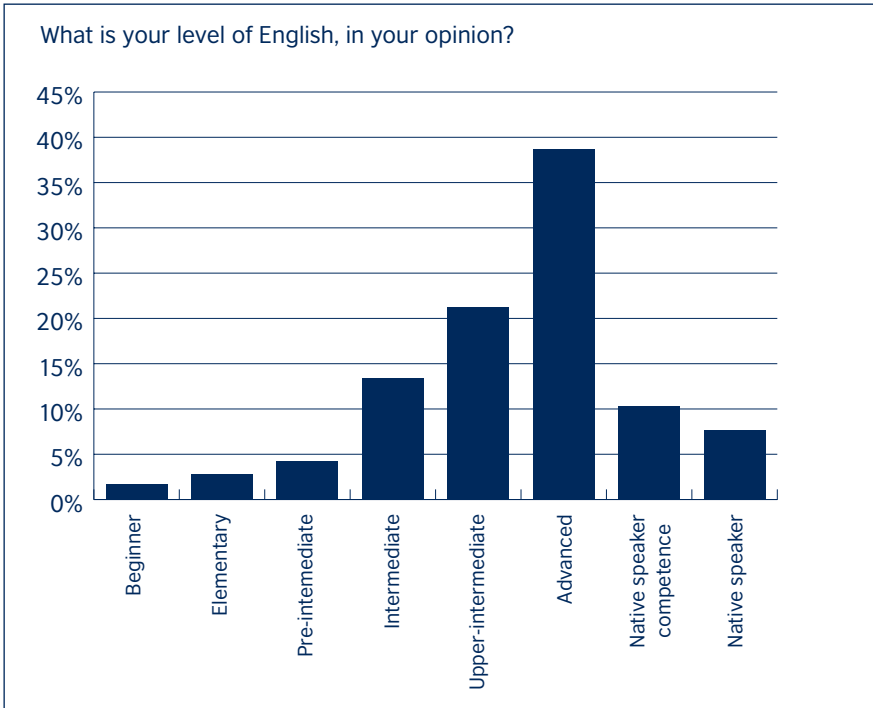


Figure 1: Level of English

In comparison to previous studies into TEYL, the level of English reported seems particularly high and both results are probably a consequence of the type of teacher who would have access to, and be able to complete, the questionnaire. Finally, 66.6 per cent of respondents report receiving pre-service training, while 73.7 per cent report receiving in-service training.

Policy/syllabus documents

Primary school teachers of English around the world are influenced by a wide range of documents including government documents and local documents, such as the school’s syllabus. The most influential document, however, was the lesson plan, with 94 per cent of respondents to the survey rating this as useful or very useful (see Figure 2 below). The coursebook was also seen as extremely important as were supplementary materials. While this finding might be predictable, what was surprising was the number of teachers who found national documents such as national curricula of value when planning: over 70 per cent rated these documents as useful or very useful.

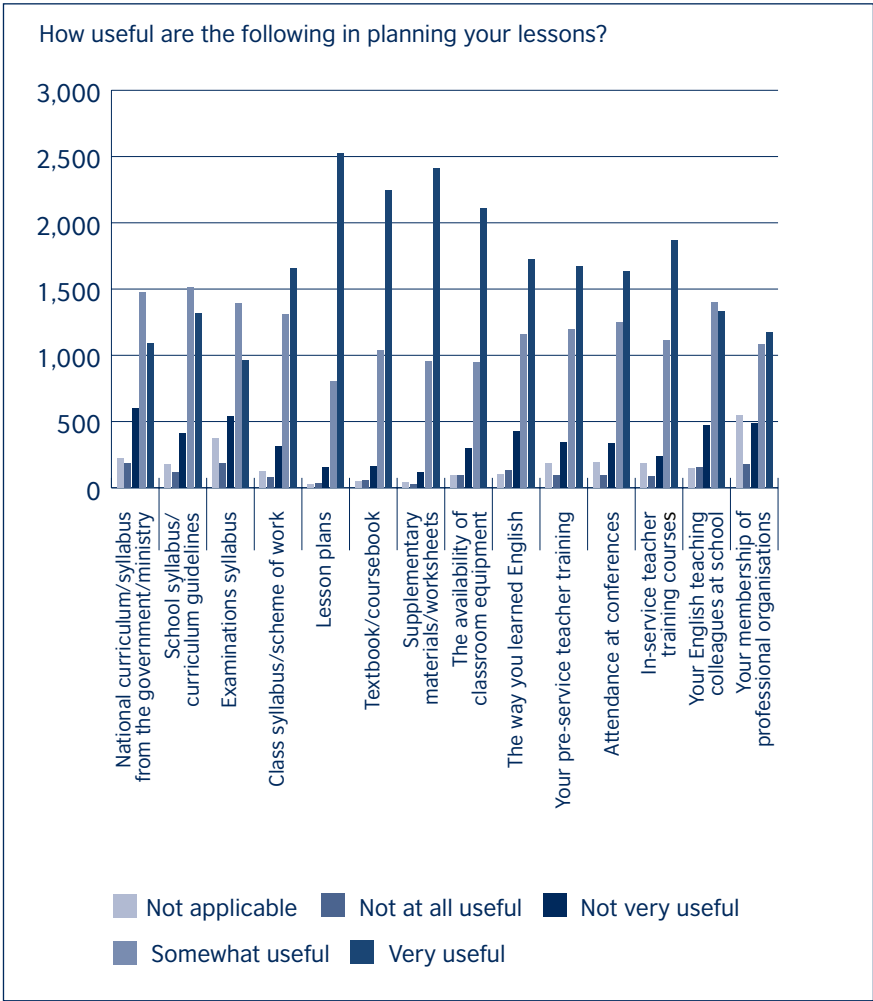


Figure 2: Lesson planning

All the case study teachers worked from a plan, which was detailed to a greater or lesser extent and the researchers were shown a range of coursebooks from which teachers worked. In the UAE the researcher was also shown national documents and their value was discussed. Four of the five teachers seemed keen to implement government policy and used national curriculum documents to support this implementation, although in Korea the strict government guidelines were seen as rather constraining. Government policy seemed to be least constraining in Italy, where ministerial guidelines have traditionally been quite general and open. The most important level of planning from a teacher’s point of view seemed to be at school level, with each school or group of schools preparing its own annual syllabus, based on ministerial guidelines but with some flexibility. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages was also mentioned by the case study teacher as influencing the syllabus.

Major pedagogies

According to the survey, teachers used a large number and wide variety of activities in their classes (see Table 1 below and Appendix, Figures 15 and 16). Perhaps surprisingly, of the list of activities provided in the survey, listening to the CD or tape recorder was the most popular activity across all responses. A number of 'traditional' activities were also popular, including repeating after the teacher, children reading out loud, filling the gaps, grammar exercises and children memorising words or phrases. However, 'creative' activities were also frequently used, particularly games and songs. Role-play was also used by the majority but role-plays can be used both for communicative, meaning-focused activities and for more drill-like accuracy-focused activities.

children repeating after the teacher	74.4%
listening to tape-recorder/CD	73.5%
children reading out loud	70.3%
playing games	69.9%
songs	66.9%
filling gaps/blanks in exercises	64.8%
role-play	60.8%
grammar exercises	56.4%
children memorising words and phrases	56.2%
handwriting exercises	52.3%

Table 1: Activities used every lesson or often by the majority of teachers

The popularity of listening to the CD or tape may be due to the fact that many teachers reported a lack of confidence in their own use of English and so may prefer to provide children with a native-speaker model via a recording. This finding is borne out by previous research, as reported above.

One very noticeable absentee from the list of frequently used activities is storytelling. Only 42 per cent of the teachers reported telling stories every lesson or often, while 17 per cent said they never or rarely tell/read stories. This is surprising given their importance in the young learner literature, particularly in books which provide practical advice to teachers (Moon, 2000; Pinter, 2006; Slattery & Willis, 2001).

Interestingly, very few activities were unpopular, with only one activity, translation, being never or rarely used by the majority of teachers, again showing the wide range of activities that teachers report exploiting in class (see Table 2 below and Appendix, Figures 15 and 16). Other activities that at least 30 per cent of teachers reported using rarely or never were a mixture of traditional and creative: computer work, watching TV/videos, children reading silently, dictation, children telling stories and creative writing. What is least surprising is the low report of children doing computer work. In many schools, computers remain a luxury and internet access is limited.

translation exercises	50.5%
activities on the computer	45.0%
watching videos/TV	39.4%
reading silently	37.3%
dictation	36.8%
children telling stories	33.5%
creative writing	30.7%

Table 2: Activities used rarely or never by at least 30% of the teachers

In the responses to the open question asking teachers to list other activities used, a major concern for teaching vocabulary was evident, particularly through games such as hangman, bingo, crosswords, card games and board games. Flashcards are also a common tool. Performance and drama activities are used frequently, from children performing actions to songs or acting out short dialogues, through to end-of-term plays for parents. A number of teachers also reported using Total Physical Response (TPR) activities, drawing and colouring and competitions, especially competitive games. Other interesting and perhaps less predictable activities listed by a number of teachers include children carrying out surveys and interviews, giving presentations (from 5 minute ‘show and tell’ activities to reports of research projects), art and craft work, dance, activities outside class (from picnics in the playground to sightseeing trips) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) work. There were also a number of more traditional activities reported, especially reading and listening comprehension and writing sentences or paragraphs, and paraphrasing,

The ‘other activities’ listed above represent only a small selection of those reported by the teachers, demonstrating an extremely wide variety of activities, from the very simple and resource-free to the more complex and resource-intensive, many of which could potentially be used by primary school teachers everywhere.

The lessons observed in the case studies bore out the findings from the survey, with evidence of teachers attempting to introduce communicative activities to fit the cultures and constraints of local contexts. For example, students in the UAE did a good deal of controlled speaking and writing, including repeating after the teacher and reading out loud. At the same time, the controlled work was delivered through an interactive game in which the pupils had to find matching sentences and pictures and pin them onto the board and through local examples, such as, ‘How many camels do you own?’. The teacher in Tanzania conducted presentation and controlled practice of grammar structures, but she made it relevant to the children by bringing realia, including clay pots, flowers and footballs, and by using examples from the local culture such as ‘Will you have ugali for lunch?’. She also asked the children to personalise their responses with reference to their everyday lives, such as buying bananas at the market.

Teachers’ roles, responsibilities and challenges

Survey responses indicate that teachers have to prepare lessons, tests, supplementary materials and homework, and they must mark tests and homework (see Figure 3 below). Fifty-four per cent can choose their own coursebook which means that for a large minority, this important lesson planning document is imposed. More worryingly, approximately 1,700 teachers pay for their own resources; these can be anything from batteries to power CD players to microphones to project over noisy classes. Nearly half are responsible for organising out-of-school activities.

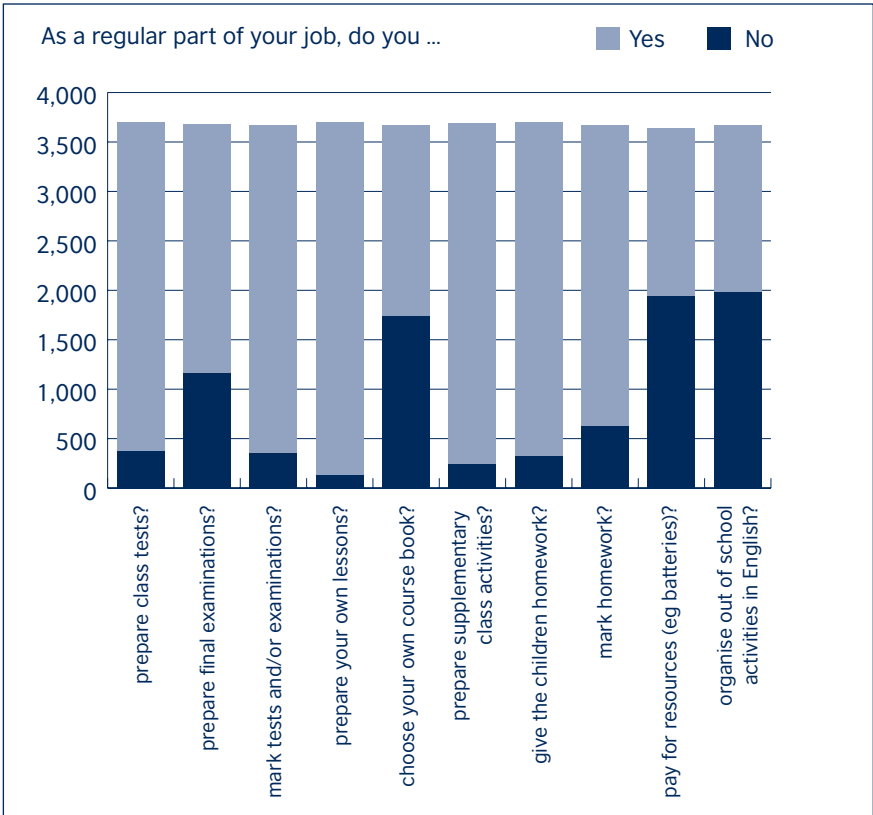


Figure 3: Responsibilities

When asked about factors that would improve learning and teaching in their contexts, training in new language teaching methodologies was ranked as the most important, followed by smaller classes and better access to new technologies such as DVDs or computers (see Figure 4 below). These issues have all been identified by previous research as reported above. However, fewer tests/examinations were ranked as the least important, followed by starting English at an earlier age. Surprisingly, given reports in previous research, improvements in the teacher’s level of English was also ranked as less important. It seems likely that this finding is a function of the questionnaire sample, whose level of English, as noted above, is probably higher than average.

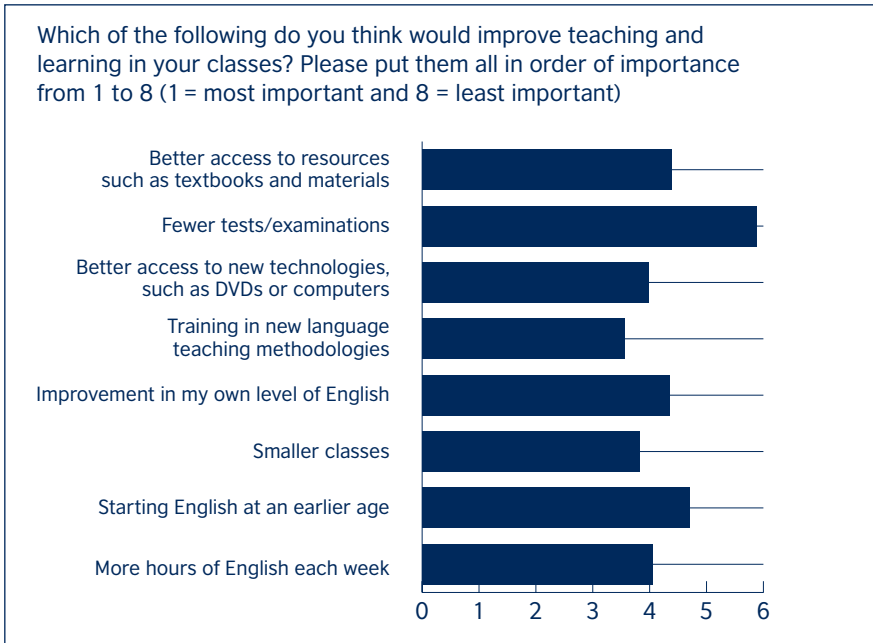


Figure 4: Changes needed to improve learning and teaching

Challenges identified by the teachers in the survey are many and varied, but overwhelmingly large class sizes and discipline issues were highlighted as problematic. Mixed-level classes were also difficult with teachers reporting that often they had to teach a class in which there were both complete beginners and students whose English was of a good standard. Many teachers also worried about working with children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Another much reported problem was how to motivate children who could see no immediate use for the language they were learning.

In terms of pedagogy, teachers stated that how to teach grammar was a great concern, in particular how to explain grammar rules to young learners and how to make grammar practice interesting for them. This finding is noteworthy and merits further research, as it is not clear from the literature what the benefits of explicit grammar teaching are to children of this age group.

Overall, our findings on this research question support much previous research, but our data also reveal challenges and issues that have not previously been identified, such as the prominence given to mixed-level classes and to children with learning difficulties or disabilities. These findings in particular deserve further attention by both researchers and teacher educators.

Solutions to pedagogical issues

Solutions were mostly identified in the case study schools. For example, in the UAE, although class size was relatively small (15 students in one case) the children were very lively and found it hard to remain in their seats for any length of time. What is more, concentration spans were limited. The teacher addressed these discipline

problems by introducing strategies to regulate behaviour, including raising a 'stop' sign when behaviour seemed out of control, and introducing a 'sleep' activity involving resting heads on hands to calm children down before the next stage in the lesson.

In the Colombian classroom the teacher enlisted the help of the regular classroom teacher, who was present throughout, to go round the class and help monitor that the children were staying on task when they were asked to complete activities in their books.

The Italian and the Korean teachers both responded to issues of discipline, mixed levels and learning difficulties by organising the children in small groups (4-6), which were usually changed once a month, and by using a reward point system. Both teachers used different grouping strategies, sometimes selecting groups themselves or operating a random selection, and at other times asking the children to select their own groups. Where the teachers observed that the groups were not well-balanced, they sometimes intervened to make changes. The reward point system, which was also noted in the UAE, was used to encourage collective class responsibility and related to good behaviour, performance in English, such as completing homework and answering questions in class, and classroom management, such as finding material quickly.

The factors the Korean teacher identified in managing mixed-ability groups related to ensuring a gender-balance, and mixing children of different abilities. The Italian teacher also identified other challenges including children whose first language was not Italian as well as those with learning or behavioural problems, such as a child who did not seem to want to learn and did little in class. She placed emphasis on peer support and peer learning to meet these challenges.

Motivation was addressed in a number of the classes observed. Generally, activities were short and had a clear purpose. For example, the teacher in Colombia had planned a series of activities to consolidate grammar-based work mandated in the syllabus. He made great effort to enliven the teaching of grammatical items by introducing engaging communicative activities. In particular, he used music and songs, visuals, and word puzzles to appeal to the children and maintain their attention. He also recycled the activities at various points in the lesson and explained that he did this so that the children would not get bored. Often an element of play was introduced, as for example, in the UAE where a child was dressed in baseball cap and sunglasses and given a camera in order to play a tourist. In Italy, the teacher had a 'birthday hat' which a child wore on his/her birthday and where the other children offered imaginary presents while repeating a well-rehearsed dialogue. The Italian teacher also moved the children around, from sitting at desks, to a reading space where they sat on mats on the floor, to all standing at the front of the class, a practice also favoured by the teacher in Abu Dhabi.

In the lessons we observed, there was little overt teaching of grammar rules and so children were not demotivated by trying to attend to teaching which might be beyond their cognitive level. The one exception was Tanzania where the lesson

was grammar-based. However, the children were particularly motivated and the teacher maintained their interest through constant elicitation and concept-checking, a lively pace and high energy. Indeed, in all the classes we observed, most children appeared very motivated and interested in learning English. Even though all the classes, with the exception of the UAE, took place in contexts where the children have little or no contact with English outside the classroom, there was no evidence of the motivational problems identified in previous studies related to the relevance of learning English. This may confirm Carless's (2003) summation cited above that pedagogical factors may be more to do with what is happening inside the class than with external factors.

Recommendations

The study uncovered a wide range of factors concerning the teaching of English to young learners globally from the perspective of teachers involved in implementing these programmes. In particular, it shows that many of these factors are shared by teachers across different countries and contexts. The following recommendations are based on the major findings of the study.

Recommendation 1

The pre-service and in-service training of teachers to teach young learners needs to be considerably strengthened. The needs of in-service teachers are particularly acute, given that many did not start their careers as teachers of English or as teachers of young learners.

Preferably, training programmes should be free, or very low cost, locally situated, of short duration, and focused. Given that the study, as well as the literature, shows that teachers often find CLT approaches and methodologies confusing, training should focus on aspects of language teaching for young learners that are highlighted as important by teachers, and on effective strategies reported in the research literature on young learners. Based on this study, these include the following areas in particular:

- Identifying strategies for managing large classes and dealing with discipline
- Dealing with multi-level classes and with learners with a range of learning disabilities/difficulties
- Developing and maintaining motivation
- Examining the pros and cons of teaching grammar to young learners
- Promoting key techniques and activities in language teaching to children, such as storytelling
- Using and expanding the use of materials and resources, including those required by the syllabus and others, that can be exploited by the teacher
- Assisting teachers to adapt pedagogic/syllabus models and methods to suit local conditions and contexts. Training should focus on the 'particularity, practicality and possibility' (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) of pedagogies, rather than the wholesale implementation of western approaches.

Recommendation 2

The interest shown in this project by a large number of teachers worldwide and the similarities in their activities and concerns demonstrate that there is a need for greater opportunities for sharing ideas and experiences amongst primary school teachers of English both nationally and internationally.

Initiatives could include:

- Local teacher development groups, run by local YL teachers
- Trainer training opportunities for YL teachers who can then support other teachers in their local schools
- An international website for teachers where teachers can share ideas , experiences and activities, preferably run by YL teachers themselves rather than 'experts'
- On-line conferences and seminars for YL teachers, with contributions mainly from YL teachers themselves
- Collaborative researcher-teacher practitioner research or reflective teaching initiatives.

Recommendation 3

The English language proficiency and skills of teachers is highly varied. There is clearly a need amongst many teachers for English language development.

Initiatives could include:

- Strengthening strategic liaisons with local universities and English language training institutions for teacher English language development courses and refresher sessions. These could include informal arrangements such as English language social events or conversation clubs
- Providing training sessions focusing on English as a classroom language and on the advantages and disadvantages of using both L1 and L2 in the classroom
- Promoting further research on the specific needs of teachers of young learners in relation to English language development.

Recommendation 4

An expanded range of materials for teaching young learners is needed. Materials development and their use should become a key area for research and development in the field. Materials need to be available in as many formats as possible to respond to local conditions. Possible formats include paper-based, CD Rom, internet and local media such as radio. As far as possible, materials should be of particular benefit to teachers working in poor schools in poor countries where resources are difficult to find and to afford.

Such materials should be:

- Resource-light to accommodate contexts where there may be limited funding, facilities or equipment
- Accompanied by full and simple instructions in order to assist teachers to use them effectively
- Imaginative, and draw on local cultural understandings
- Creative, to increase students' confidence in using English
- Aimed at motivating young learners to learn English.

Recommendation 5

In many countries access to English development is restricted in terms of the amount of input young learners receive and the examination-driven nature of many syllabi. Educational policy developers should be provided with evidence based on current research and good practice in effective curriculum development for young learners in order to enhance the learning experience of children.

Equal access to English is a concern arising from this research, particularly for children in poorer rural communities. There is noticeable disparity in the access different groups of children have to learning English and this disparity disadvantages many children from an early age, also creating difficult teaching conditions for teachers of English to young learners.

Notes

1. Circolare Ministeriale 6 agosto 1999, n. 197 http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/norme/circolari/cm197_99.html
2. A copy of the survey is available from the researchers on request.

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Appendix – Survey results

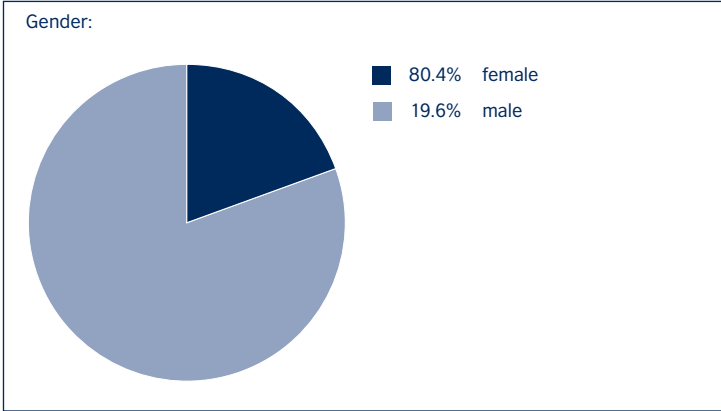


Figure 1: Gender of respondents

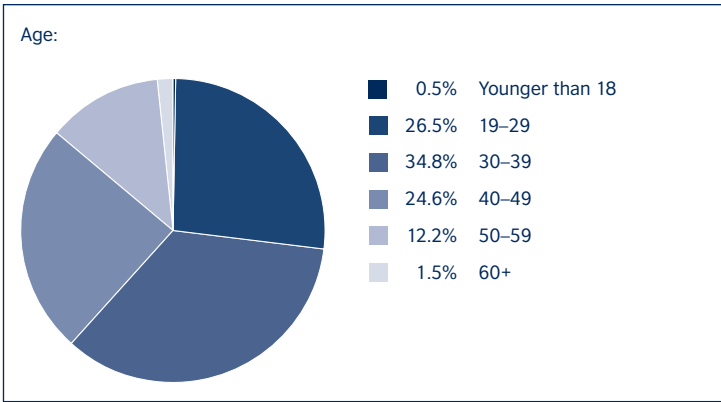


Figure 2: Age of respondents

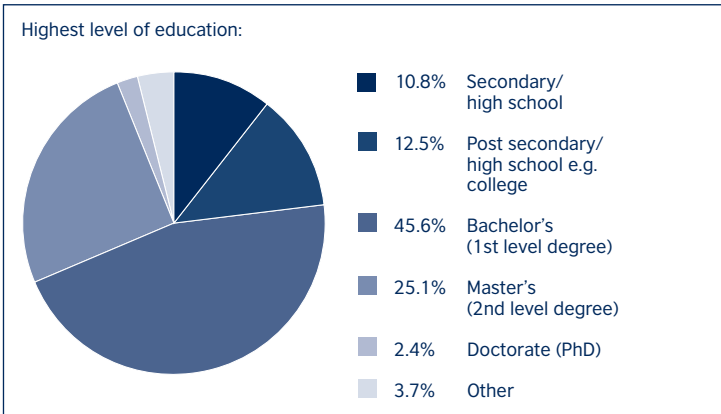


Figure 3: Level of education

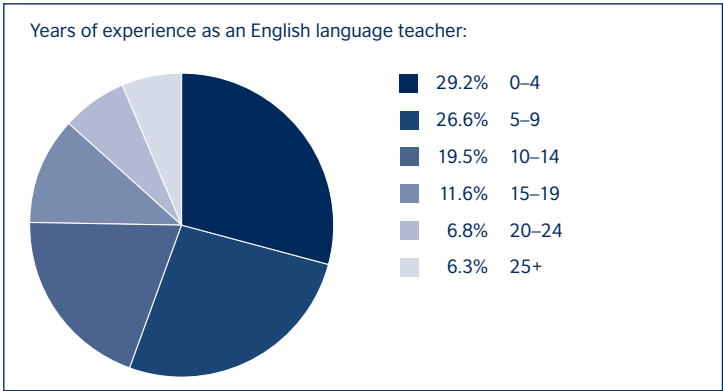


Figure 4: Experience of ELT

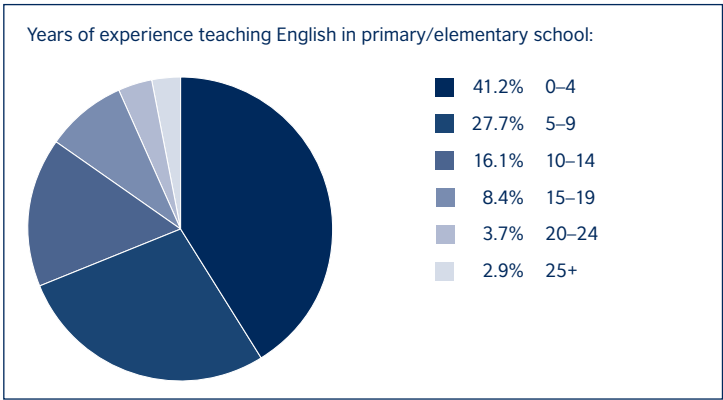


Figure 5: Experience of TEYL

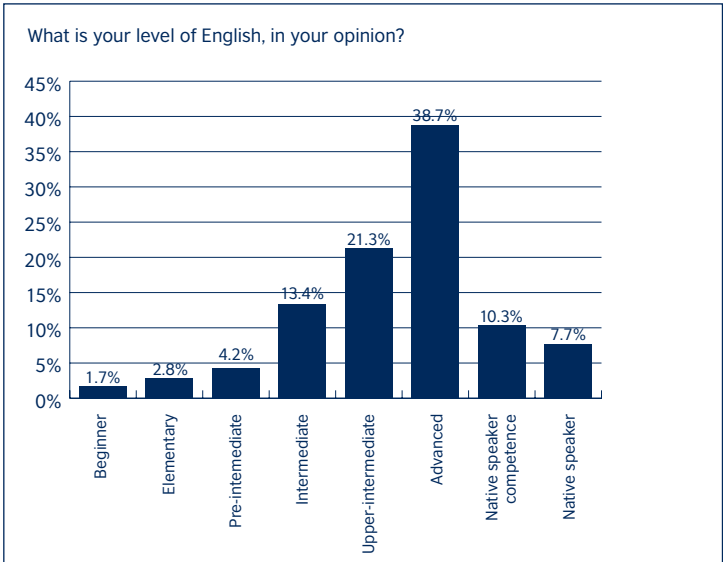


Figure 6: Level of English

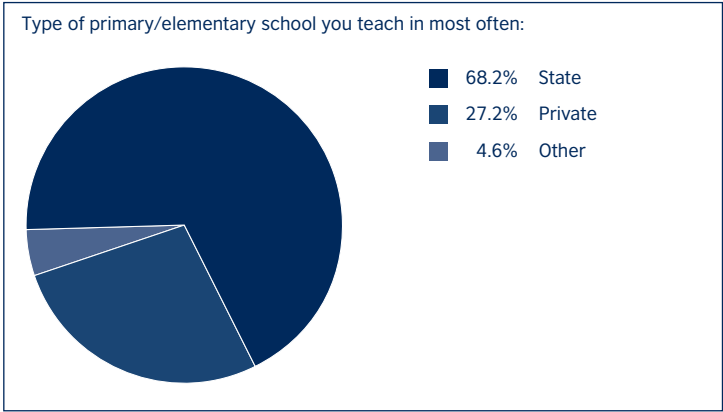


Figure 7: Type of school

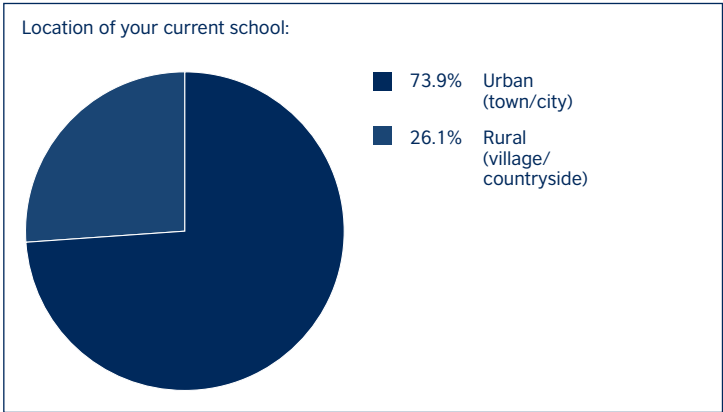


Figure 8: Location of school

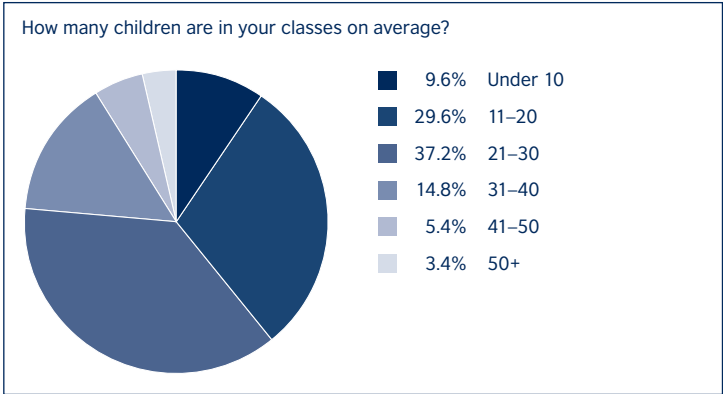


Figure 9: Class size

How is English teaching organised in your school?

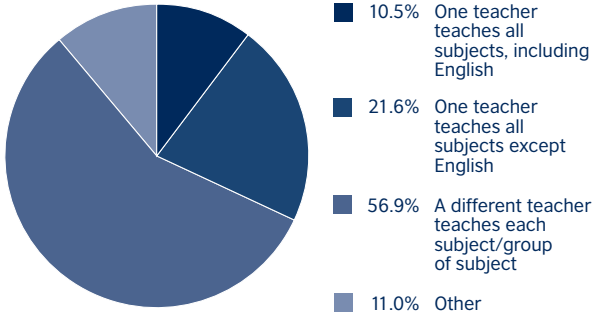


Figure 10: Organisation of English teaching

Did you receive any training in teaching English before you began teaching in primary/elementary school?

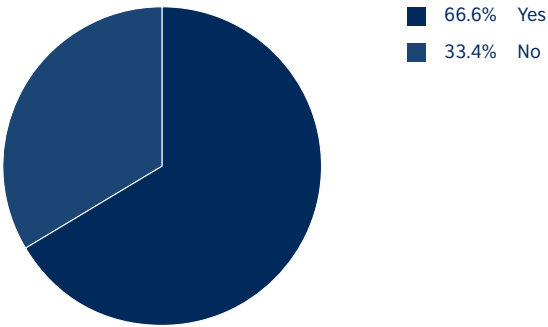


Figure 11: Pre-service training

Have you received any training in teaching English since you began teaching English in primary/elementary school?

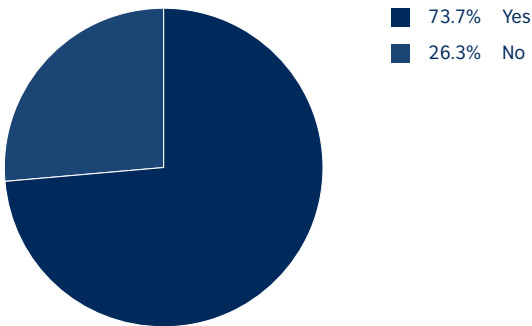


Figure 12: In-service training

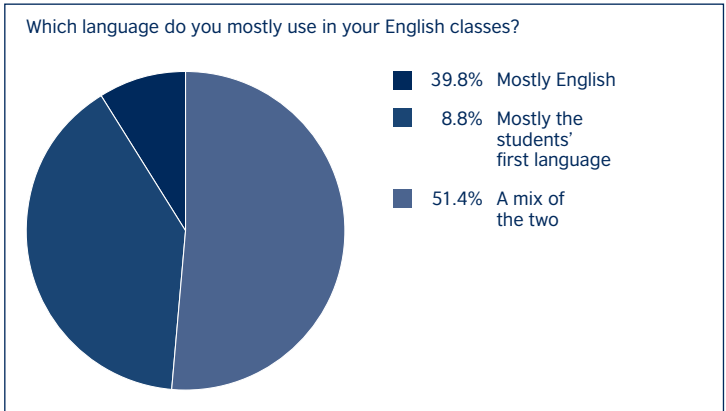


Figure 13: Language used in class

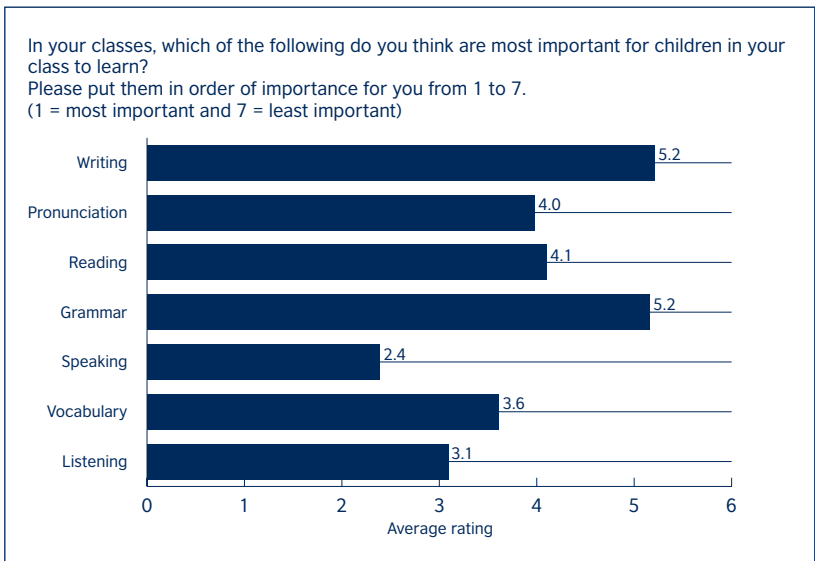


Figure 14: Importance of different skills

Here are some activities that are used in primary schools.
How often do you use these activities in the class you teach most often?

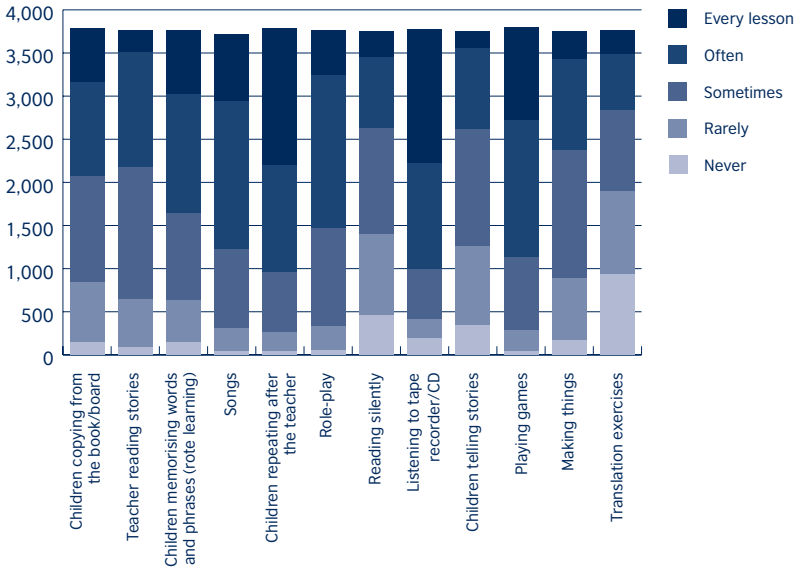


Figure 15: Frequency of activities used in class

Below are some more activities that are used in primary schools.
How often do you use these activities in the class you teach most often?

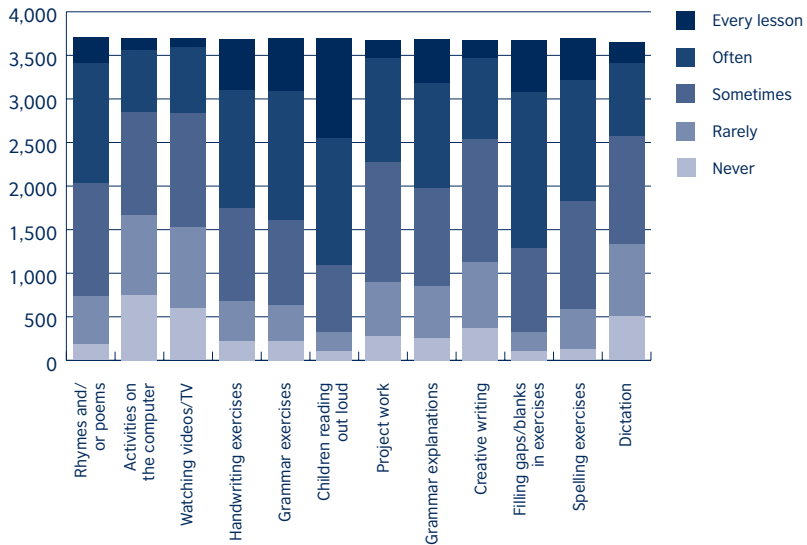


Figure 16: Frequency of activities used in class

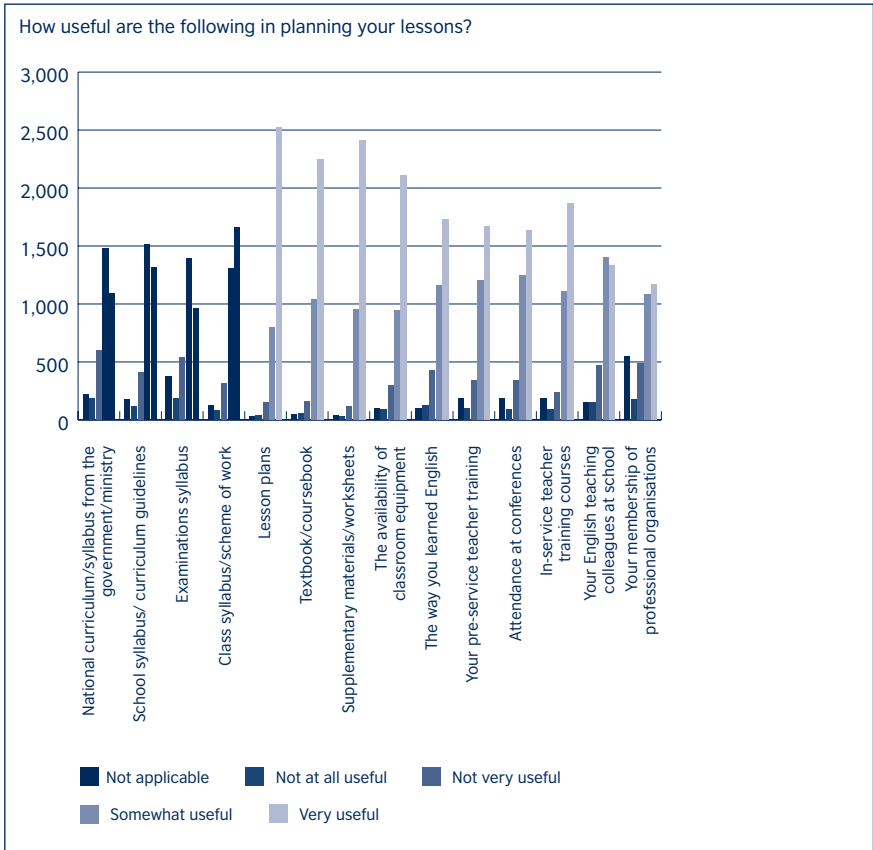


Figure 17: Lesson planning

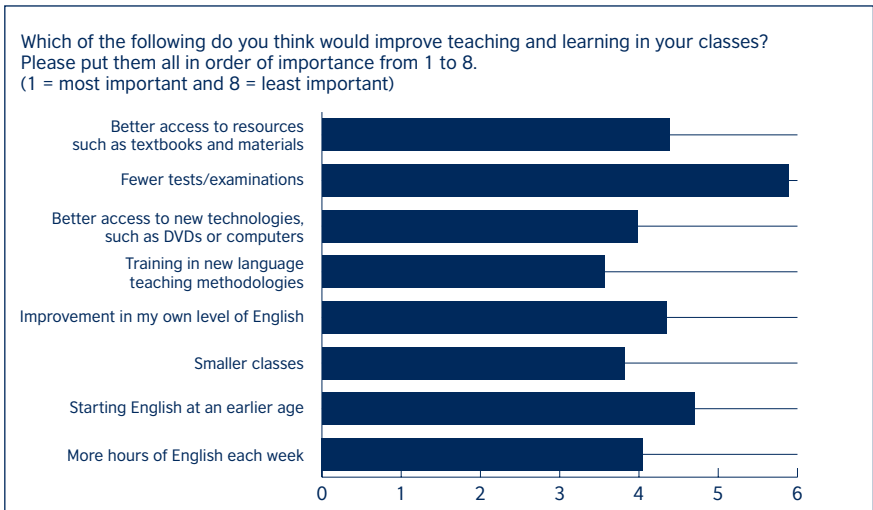


Figure 18: Changes needed to improve learning and teaching

3

A global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training and career development

Helen Emery
University of Essex

Introduction

With the progress and demands of globalisation, English is being taught to ever younger learners these days. In many cases this has been a success – for example in Maharashtra State in India where English was recently introduced to all children from Grade 1. Reports state that children with no previous background in English, now speak the language and ‘the children of maidservants and workers now use English’ (Mukund, 2009: 50). However, in some cases the implementation of English into the curriculum (or the lowering of the age where English is taught) has happened very quickly, with inadequate preparation. A recently documented case is that of Rwanda where, until 2009 French was the language of instruction in 95 per cent of primary and secondary schools. In 2009 English was introduced suddenly into the curriculum as the language of instruction for core subjects including Maths and Science – although few teachers could speak it. Teacher preparation consisted of a month of intensive English, but it is not clear whether they also received any instruction in appropriate methodologies to use, particularly with young learners (McGreal, 2009; Vesperini, 2010). Without adequate training, these teachers will not be able to teach their subjects in such a way that the learning potentials of students are maximised.

The Bangalore conference on Teaching English to Young Learners (Enever, Moon & Raman, 2009) emphasised some of the problems occurring as a result of inadequate preparation for teaching at this level: for example teachers’ inability to deal with problems that occurred in the teaching context because of lack of training, employers’ acceptance of low level qualifications to teach young learners, teachers’ inadequate English language proficiency and the fact that some teachers were required to teach English when this was not their subject specialism (Chodijah, 2008; Enever *et.al.* 2009; Graddol, 2006; 2008; Kgwadi, 2008; Wang, 2002; 2007; 2009). The inclusion of teachers who are not fully prepared to teach English at primary levels will have an impact on what can be achieved. This research study therefore aimed to find out:

- how primary English teachers in various countries around the world were trained
- the qualifications they have
- the support for professional development they receive
- the opportunities for promotion open to them
- whether they are happy in their chosen careers.

Literature review

The age factor and teaching languages to Young Learners

These days foreign language programmes in schools are starting at an increasingly early age around the world (Nikolov, 2009) and English has become the most popular second or foreign language to study. In a survey carried out by Papp (2011) 42 per cent of respondents said that English was introduced into formal education in their institution at the age of five or younger. Of the remainder, 25

per cent started learning English at age six, and 16 per cent by the age of seven. It would appear from the results of this study that children who start to learn English after the age of seven are becoming the exception. Often the pressure to start learning a foreign language early comes from parents, who are keen for children to progress. Hsu & Austin (2012) report that this trend is very prevalent in Taiwan, where parents regularly enrol young children in after-school English programmes. Vago (2005; cited in Nikolov, 2009a) reports that while Year 4 is the compulsory start for foreign language learning in Hungarian state schools, over half of learners choose to begin well before this age. Nikolov (2009b) in a comparative study of young Hungarian learners taking English or German as a foreign language, found that the students taking English were more ambitious, tended to “strive higher” and a greater number opted to take external language proficiency examinations. However, not all studies of age-related motivation have come out in favour of younger learners (e.g.: Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002); and a study by Djigunovic (2009) found that young Croatian learners were more motivated by the learning conditions than by age factors alone.

Djigunovic lists the learning conditions which may affect motivation as being: class size, number of hours of English instruction per week, having a teacher who was specially trained to teach the subject to young learners, and the type of activities that they were given. Being taught in a very large group, for only two periods a week, was found to be one of the least likely factors to lead to motivation to learn the language. Overall, we can see that there are certain conditions to be met if children are to successfully learn a second language at this level: teachers must be adequately trained, class sizes must be small and activities used must enhance the learning environment and appeal to young learners at the same time.

Different teaching contexts and the impact they may have: Teacher shortages and over-crowded classrooms

A frequently cited problem encountered by primary English teachers is that of large or overcrowded classes and the impact this situation can have on teaching and learning. Large classes have been defined as consisting of a range of pupil numbers in different contexts. Smith and Warburton (1997) define large classes in the UK as those consisting of 25-30 learners; O’Sullivan (2006) states that large classes in the USA consist of more than 35 learners and Nakabugo, Opolot-Okurut, Ssebbunga, Maani and Byamugisha (2008) define the situation in Uganda as being more than 70 learners.

Very large classes (for example, more than 65 learners) are usually found in developing countries where there is not enough money available to pay for additional teachers and build more schools. Teachers have reported large classes as having a negative impact on their teaching and students’ learning. Baker & Westrup (2000:2) list some of the problems of teaching large classes:

- desks and chairs are fixed or difficult to move
- students sit close together in rows
- little space for the teacher to move about the classroom

- not enough space for students to move during the lesson
- walls between classrooms are thin, noise will disturb other classes
- not enough textbooks for all students
- other teaching resources may be limited as well.

To this list we may add that pair and group work may well be difficult, noise levels will be high and many students may not hear what the teacher is saying (and learning will be affected) and teachers may not have time to do all the marking necessary. Overall, motivation levels of students and teacher will suffer.

Many countries are experiencing an acute shortage of primary school teachers, particularly English teachers. For many this has resulted in their employing teachers who may not be fully trained to teach young learners, or may have inadequate English themselves. Graddol (2010) believes that the scale of the problem is greater in India than in other countries, however, it is not clear to what extent this situation exists around the world.

Teachers' qualifications and training

Initial Teacher Training

The necessity of adequate training for teachers has been emphasised in several reports (e.g.: Garton, Copland & Burns, 2010; Papp, 2011; Rixon, 2000) however, different countries may view the training requirements of teachers differently. In some countries a basic educational qualification is provided by the government which is deemed sufficient for all teachers – regardless of the age they will be teaching or the subject area. In other countries, teachers are given a more specialised training aimed at equipping them with the specific requirements of their future career.

Cameron (2001) believes there are two common misconceptions related to teaching English to young learners: that teaching English is a straightforward process that can be undertaken by anyone with a basic training in ELT, and secondly, that the language taught to children only needs to be simple as cognitively, they are not as developed as adult or teenage learners. Cameron's points emphasise the necessity of specific training for primary school teachers. Howard (2012) states that in the UAE some teachers coming into primary education have a qualification to teach English to adults and 'subsequently adapt pedagogies and techniques to suit the particular requirements of young learners' (page 71), although she does not mention how this group learn to adapt their teaching. She goes on to say that other teachers are trained as primary teachers, but without specific qualifications or training to teach English language. We can see then that in certain contexts, teachers may enter the profession with different qualifications, specialisms and training experiences.

Initial Teacher Training programmes frequently include a supervised Teaching Practice element, where teachers are scored on their performance and receive post-teaching feedback. In the UK all primary school teachers are required to have undertaken Teaching Practice in order to gain Qualified Teacher Status (Skills Funding Agency, 2010). However, this is not the case in every country.

Teacher Development

Maley (quoted in Spratt, 1994) differentiates Teacher Training, referred to as Initial Teacher Training or ITT and Teacher Development, or TD. ITT is usually related to the needs of a particular course, has terminal outcomes which are pre-empted, involves information and skills transmission, has a fixed agenda and is directed in a top-down manner. TD on the other hand is a continuing process, is related to the needs of the individual teacher, has open-ended outcomes, involves problem solving, has a flexible agenda, is peer-orientated and takes place in a bottom-up fashion (Spratt, 1994:54). ITT is usually aimed at student-teachers with little or no teaching experience, whereas TD aims to further develop those with several years' experience in the field.

In some countries it is compulsory for teachers to undertake regular in-service training after they have qualified, in other countries this is provided but is not compulsory. In yet other countries, ongoing training is simply not available for teachers. Moh (2009) reports that in Nigeria, after initial training 'the teacher is left alone to recycle whatever knowledge he/she had acquired at the training college, completely oblivious to whatever research or practice might subsequently have been carried out in the field of study' (page 197). Further training may be more easily available if a teacher works in a major city, whereas rural teachers may go a whole lifetime without attending a single training course.

As teachers' careers develop, they may not receive any further training but this is when it becomes important for them to develop themselves and their teaching, to prevent becoming stale (Harmer, 2007). This development usually takes on a reflective nature; teachers are encouraged to identify a problem or an area of their teaching which could benefit from a different approach, and to seek out ways of doing this. Harmer (2007) lists several ways in which teachers can seek to develop their skills:

- being a reflective teacher
- keeping a teaching log or journal
- observing peers teaching
- recording themselves to watch (or listen to) and reflect on later
- engaging with professional literature
- through professional organisations
- carrying out action research in the classroom.

Membership of a Teachers Association

Membership of a local teachers association can be beneficial to a teacher's personal development (Edge & Garton, 2009; Harmer, 2007; Scrivener, 2009) as they often provide workshops, conferences and publications at low cost to members. Teachers Associations can be divided into those that operate globally such as TESOL, based in the US (current membership figure 12,137 in 152 countries), TESOL Arabia (current membership 1,188 in 30 countries) and IATEFL,

based in the UK (current membership figure 3,763 in 127 countries) and local teachers associations which operate mainly at the level of a particular country and its immediate neighbours.

Teacher satisfaction

Spratt (1994:80) asks teachers to rank the following list of factors, according to how important they consider them to be in contributing to their job satisfaction:

- security of tenure
- access to good school equipment and resources
- a good salary
- a good pension
- a sense of achievement through work
- long holidays
- well-motivated students
- a pleasant school building
- a supportive head teacher
- other (please specify).

Although there is no right or wrong answer for this activity, the task requires teachers to assess their current post and to discuss why they are or are not happy, and which of the criteria mentioned above are important for their job satisfaction. Being able to clarify what is important for job satisfaction is important in any career, not least teaching which is often regarded as a stressful occupation.

Spratt's list of factors contributing to teachers' happiness can be said to apply in general to all teachers, however in some contexts additional criteria may also play a part. As mentioned above, overcrowded classes can lead to high levels of stress for teachers, and research supports the fact that rural teachers often experience lower levels of job satisfaction than urban teachers (Farrel & Oliveira, 1993; Rozenholtz, 1985; Sargent & Hannum, 2003). A study by Abdullah, Uli & Parasuraman (2009) found that graduate teachers were more satisfied than non-graduates, higher-ranking teachers were more satisfied than ordinary teachers and older teachers were more satisfied with their jobs than younger teachers, however it is not clear why this might be.

Research design

The study consisted of a survey, delivered for the most part in electronic format, and in-depth personal interviews with teachers and Head Teachers around the world.

Survey design and analysis

Questionnaires are a widely used method of collecting data from a large population and this has been made easier through the development of electronic survey tools. The current study used Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) for this purpose. An online survey was developed and distributed to teachers around the world with the help of the British Council, local teachers associations and local universities. Hard copies of the survey were provided to teachers in Sudan and Cuba because of problems with internet access. The results of these surveys were loaded into the system manually by the researcher.

Questions were grouped into five broad areas: Information relating to the respondents; Respondents' current teaching context; Initial Teacher Training; Continuing Professional Development and Attitudes towards the profession. Most questions were of a fixed response nature, although some asked teachers to give additional information relating to a particular question, e.g.: *Are there any problems that you experience in your teaching which you feel training could help with?* If a respondent answered 'yes' a follow-up question asked what type of training course they would like and why.

The survey was designed in such a way that respondents did not have to answer each question in order to proceed to the next, and so response numbers vary between questions. This in itself was not thought to be a problem as the numbers involved were large (2,478 teachers took part in the survey). The survey results were analysed through the use of descriptive and where applicable, inferential statistics.

The survey returned responses from 89 countries, although the number emanating from each country varied considerably. Ten countries returned over 60 responses: Argentina (311), Croatia (240), Germany (318), Italy (295), Romania (90), Lithuania (74), Serbia (65), Spain (96), Taiwan (88) and Ukraine (69).

Interviews with teachers and Head Teachers

In-depth personal interviews were carried out with classroom teachers of English and Head Teachers at primary schools in nine countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cuba, Egypt, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates. Additionally, in India, Tibetan refugee teachers living and working in exile were interviewed. These countries were chosen as they represented different geographical regions and economies and had different historical and political reasons for the teaching of English. In each country teachers and Head Teachers were selected to interview from both state and private institutions. Some Head Teachers (and some teachers) had to be interviewed through the use of a translator as English was not their main subject.

In total, 85 interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed and analysed using a conversation analysis method. Each interview lasted between 20 and 45 minutes. Some teachers chose to be interviewed in a focus group, but the majority of participants were interviewed individually. With the exception of interviews carried out in Cameroon, all interviews were conducted by the same researcher.

Interview questions sought to probe deeper into issues raised by the survey. Although not all the teachers interviewed had completed the survey this was not judged to be important. It was hoped that their replies would help shed light on some of the major issues raised by the survey, and provide opportunities to ask open-ended questions which could not otherwise be aired.

Teacher interviews focused on:

- why or how they had come into the profession
- their qualifications, training and career development
- attitudes towards the profession
- their teaching context.

Interviews with Head Teachers focused on:

- why or how they had come into the profession
- their training and qualifications, and any specific training they had undergone to prepare them to become a Head Teacher
- issues connected to the management and running of their school, including numbers in classes, teachers' salaries, releasing teachers for in-service training
- attitudes towards the profession, including future educational directions.

Main findings and discussion

Survey participants and their teaching contexts

Survey participants

80 per cent of participants work in state schools and 20 per cent in private institutions. This contrasts with other recent surveys of primary teachers, for example Papp (2011:2) where 'almost half of respondents work in language schools' and are presumably working in the private sector, and the survey of Garton, Copland and Burns (2011) where 32 per cent of respondents work in the private sector. It can be difficult to collect data from the state sector through online surveys as in some countries government schools are not as well-resourced as those in the private sector, and teachers do not have access to computers and the internet. This is particularly apparent with teachers in rural schools.

By far the largest group of respondents are female (91 per cent) which is in line with response data from the Garton *et. al* (2011) survey – 80.4 per cent female respondents, indicating that globally primary school English teaching is a job that appeals to women. The largest group of respondents (35 per cent) were aged 31–40 and only five per cent were aged under 25, which might reflect the length of time it takes to complete teacher training. Alternatively, the low numbers of respondents aged under 25 might be partially attributable to the higher proportion of inexperienced teachers working in rural schools. As mentioned earlier, rural schools often do not have the computer and internet facilities that urban schools have, making survey response more difficult.

In terms of respondents' experience, the largest group (40 per cent) had been teaching for more than 15 years. Only 14 per cent had been teaching for less than three years. This is interesting data in that it appears to indicate that teaching is a long-term career: people who embark on the profession tend to stay with it. The data in response to the question *How many years have you been teaching English?* is less clear-cut with roughly equal numbers of teachers answering 4-8 years, 9-14 years and over 15 years. These figures indicate that many teachers probably started their career teaching subjects other than English, but more recently have taken on ELT. This may be a reflection of the current global trend for English teaching, and the fact that English is being taught to ever younger and younger learners.

When asked why they had chosen to become a primary English teacher (see Table 12 for full results) 77 per cent replied 'I like children' and 68 per cent 'It's interesting work – there are many varied activities during the day'. 29 per cent of respondents said they had chosen this field because 'It's a respectable job'; 20 per cent responded that primary teaching 'Offers secure employment', but only two per cent said they had chosen the career because it offered good promotion opportunities.

When asked if they taught other subjects in addition to English, 44 per cent of respondents said yes. Some of the subjects they also taught include a variety of other languages (too numerous to mention all of them here), maths, science, history, geography, PE, religious studies, art, health studies, music, social studies, cookery, ICT, human rights and foreign literature.

Participants' teaching contexts

In terms of class size, 92 per cent of teachers reported that they taught classes of under 35 children. Only eight per cent of teachers taught classes of more than 50. Two percent of teachers reported they taught classes of more than 65. These teachers worked in Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Cameroon, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Germany, Italy, India, Romania, Poland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Uruguay, the USA and Yemen. In each country, only one teacher reported they taught these large numbers, with the exception of India (6 teachers), Sudan (5), South Africa (3) and Italy (2). However, during interviews a different picture emerged: many teachers reported that they or other teachers in their schools had classes of over 65, and one teacher in Bangladesh said he had 150 children in one of his classes. Hoque (2009) states that the average teacher:student ratio in Bangladeshi state primary schools is 1:56 and as such, every class would be classified as *large*. It may well be that 150 students is an exceptional case.

When the researcher visited rural primary schools in Cambodia to interview teachers, she observed several classes with up to 80 children in them. Some were sitting on the floor in a line under the blackboard as there were no desks or chairs for them, and the teacher leaned over them to write on the board. The teacher in Bangladesh said that the school would not be appointed a new teacher if there were fewer than 80 children to teach. In this case the additional students would be distributed amongst the other classes. It becomes clear that whilst in some countries we talk of the *maximum number* of pupils allowed in a class, in other countries it is the *minimum number* allowable.

One reason for the relatively low numbers of teachers who said they taught large classes in the survey might be due to the fact that these teachers work in schools with computers and internet access, whereas schools with very large numbers of pupils in classes are likely to be under-resourced and their teachers may not have been able to participate in the survey.

In interviews, teachers reported many problems connected with teaching large classes: one of the main issues was cramped conditions. An Indian teacher with more than 50 students in her class said:

I cannot move about the class to check what they are doing as the desks are too close together and I may catch my sari. I have no idea what those at the back are writing in their books as I cannot see them. I have an operating space of about two or three square feet at the front of the room.

Other commonly reported problems caused by large class size were the breakdown in discipline, noise levels, resulting teacher stress levels and finally the lack of learning. Large class sizes are often attributable to a school's financial situation, and in private schools this may be determined by how much available cash the school has to pay out in salaries. The Head Teacher of a private school in India, where all classes numbered more than 50 said:

We have 2,700 pupils at this school and out of that 250 students are not paying any fees because they cannot afford it. So 92% of the tuition fees are going only for the salaries of the teachers ... we are in a very hard position. If you want to maintain the quality, you want the good teachers to stay ... it's a very old school so teachers' are on very high salaries. It's hard to make ends meet.

The shift system in schools

In interviews, several teachers reported that their schools operated morning and afternoon/evening shifts. This system enables a school to educate double the number of pupils, and is seen as an economical solution to the need for new schools to be built as the population grows. Usually the primary section or lower primary in a large primary school will be taught in the early mornings, from 7am till after lunchtime, and the upper primary or secondary school from early afternoon onwards. Some teachers interviewed said that they worked both shifts, but not necessarily at the same school. Five of the 11 teachers interviewed in Egypt said they undertook this work as they could not support their families without the extra income.

Teacher shortages

Cambodia has long experienced a shortage of primary school teachers, and from 1996–2002 the government dealt with this problem by hiring contract teachers (Geeves & Bredenberg, 2005). However the scheme was eventually wound up as it had 'raised awkward questions about teacher quality and educational efficiency' (*op.cit*, page 4). One impact of the teacher shortage in Cambodia in recent times is that NGOs and gap-year holiday companies are employing local teachers and western expatriates to teach in state institutions. An American teacher who had come to Cambodia for a two week teaching vacation said:

I'm not a certified teacher ... no ... my day-to-day job is in the corporate world. In fact I haven't received any teacher training, but I love the work. I enjoy teaching English in particular ... but I think it's important to give back to the community in any way you can. I like to do my bit to help.

A Cambodian teacher who was interviewed said that he was employed by an NGO to teach English in local state primary schools, and was paid by the hour. It was to his advantage to teach as many lessons in a day as he could, and he managed to earn up to \$400 a month doing this. This may be compared to the \$50 a month that a state primary school teacher paid by a local education authority might earn. However, this practice was not without its drawbacks, and one Head Teacher complained that teachers who were employed to teach in multiple schools often had no time to plan lessons, stay to talk to pupils after the class, set or mark homework and were not available for staff meetings or to meet parents.

An innovative response to teacher shortages

As mentioned earlier, many countries deal with teacher shortages by increasing the numbers of learners in a class. However in Cuba a different approach has been adopted. Carnoy, Gove and Marshall (2007) report that class sizes in primary schools in Cuba are small: currently about 20 pupils, however the country still has an acute shortage of teachers in rural areas, particularly English teachers. In interviews, teachers said that the Cuban government's response has been the implementation of *TV English*, English language lessons which are broadcast around the country, and can be shown to children by a teacher with minimal English. These programmes are delivered bilingually, and separate series broadcast lessons for adults before they leave for work in the mornings and for school children during the teaching day.

Age of starting to learn English

In response to the question *What age do children start learning English in your school?* 54 per cent replied at age six (Grade 1) or younger. Only four per cent responded children started learning at age ten or older. Again, this reflects the global trend for learning English at ever younger ages.

The largest group of teachers (74 per cent) teach children aged 9-10 years old, 58 per cent teach children aged 7-8 years old and 56 per cent 11-12 years old. Only six per cent of teachers teach children under five years old. First impressions of these figures may seem odd, given that the majority of respondents said children started learning English at their schools before the age of seven. However, if these figures are viewed in relation to the number of years experience that teachers have, a trend becomes clear: more experienced teachers are teaching older learners and inexperienced teachers are teaching younger learners. This theory is borne out by a cross tabulation: ($\chi^2 = 35.83$, $df = 16$, $p < 0.001$) indicating a significant difference between the ages of learners taught by teachers with less experience and those with more experience.

In interviews, several teachers said that for them, promotion meant moving out of primary classes and into secondary. Further promotion would mean teaching in the

upper secondary school and taking examination classes. This is a worrying trend, as it means that in some countries, the lower end of the learning cycle will always fall to inexperienced teachers. Undoubtedly some newly qualified teachers are very good, but this trend will deprive young learners of being taught by some of the more experienced teachers.

Teachers' qualifications and training

Qualifications held and initial teacher training

In many countries there are several training pathways open to primary teachers, and a variety of qualifications are deemed acceptable to employers. In respect of qualifications, 38 per cent of teachers reported that they held a degree and 25 per cent that they held a Masters Degree; 35 per cent said they did not have a qualification to teach primary levels, and 21 per cent reported that they were not qualified specifically to teach English. These figures are worrying given the trend in developed countries to ensure that teaching is an all-graduate profession and to find so many teachers who are not adequately qualified for the teaching they are currently undertaking. However, these figures have to be balanced with the fact that 77 per cent reported they had done Teaching Practice as part of their initial teacher training, and 26 per cent said this had lasted for more than 20 weeks. Again, this has to be balanced by the fact that 26 per cent said their Teaching Practice lasted less than four weeks in total. Whilst 20 per cent of teachers said that hardly any or none of their Teaching Practice was devoted to the age group that they currently teach, 53 per cent reported that all or most of it was. From these figures, we can see that a global picture is beginning to emerge, showing distinct differences between those teachers who are well-qualified and well-trained, and those who are not.

In Thailand one teacher reported that she had not undertaken the standard teacher training route into the profession:

I worked in a [Buddhist] temple school for two years, teaching English to poor boys ... they are training to be monks. At this time I had no qualifications, but this experience enabled me to pass the teachers training test, to do a BEd and to get this job in a [government] school.

In one country, eight out of nine state primary teachers had to be interviewed through a translator as they had insufficient English language to be interviewed otherwise. All these teachers had ELT as a designated subject in their school, and all said their initial teacher training had included a specific focus on ELT. It is not known to what extent this situation exists in other areas of the country, or in fact in other countries around the world.

Continuing professional development

In terms of their development since qualifying, 85 per cent reported that they had undertaken some sort of training course. Most teachers said the courses had been organised by their Ministry of Education (54 per cent), with local teachers associations coming second (29 per cent). Of the teachers who had not undertaken any post-qualification training courses, 79 per cent responded that

they would like to attend further training courses or workshops should they be available. Some of the reasons they said they would like further training include:

- to learn about classroom management and dealing with discipline issues
- new methods of teaching
- to focus on group work and group management
- to learn how to use technology
- children's psychology and how they learn at different ages
- to keep up to date
- I need extra practice with primary classroom
- teaching methods for large classes
- it is good to meet other teachers at workshops to share experiences and ideas
- training sometimes helps me find solutions to my problems
- to sustain contact with real English language
- to learn how to motivate students
- to refresh ideas
- I want to learn how to deal with parents
- I would like to improve my speaking ability
- I want to know about CLIL
- to help me enrich my knowledge
- my students are always changing – I need to know how to teach them
- without training I could be left behind
- a good teacher is a life-long learner.

Only 30 per cent of teachers said they were a member of a teachers association, and 67 per cent were not convinced that there were clear cut benefits to joining. This seems strange given the fact that 29 per cent of their teacher development courses and workshops had been provided by local teachers associations, with only the Ministry of Education providing more. One possible reason for the difference in opinion relating to teachers associations may be due to cost. A primary school Head Teacher interviewed in Cameroon said that he would love to be a member of his local teachers association, but that joining would cost him two weeks' salary and as he had a family to support, joining was not possible.

Opportunities for promotion

Thirty-six per cent of respondents believe there are opportunities for career development as a primary school English teacher in their country. This is a fairly low figure, but might not in itself be an issue for the profession. During interviews, many teachers said they were happy to remain in the classroom as this is why they had chosen to go into the profession in the first place.

Becoming a school Principal one day appealed to 21 per cent of teachers in the survey. Nearly all teachers interviewed said they would not like to become a Principal or Head Teacher because of the administrative burden the role would involve. Most said they loved teaching and wanted to stay in the classroom. Some said they would like to become a Head of Department if it was possible, but others said that promotion for them involved moving out of primary teaching and into the secondary section of their school.

Teacher satisfaction and attitudes towards the profession

What makes a good primary English teacher?

Teachers were asked to rank a list of personal and professional qualities in response to the question *What makes a good primary school English teacher?* (see Table 32). The largest number of participants put *Good English language skills* as most important, and *Having children of your own* as least important. Other qualities deemed important were: *Teaching experience*, *Teaching knowledge*, *A kind and understanding personality*, and *Good qualifications*. Areas that teachers regarded as being of less importance were: *Knowledge of the syllabus and exam system*, *Ability to keep discipline*, *Knowing the rules of English grammar* and *The Ability to play games and sing songs*.

Teacher satisfaction

Are teachers happy? Less than two per cent of primary school teachers said they were unhappy in their chosen profession, and 44 per cent said they were very happy. 69 per cent said they would like to stay in this job, and only nine per cent said they would like to leave teaching and take up another job. During interviews, one of the main reasons teachers gave for wanting to leave the profession was money. A great many of the teachers interviewed said they did not earn enough, and this was particularly acute with male teachers who had a family to support.

It was reported above that only eight per cent of survey respondents taught classes of more than 50. Of this group, 88 per cent responded that they were 'happy' or 'very happy' they had become a primary school English teacher; 12 per cent said they were 'not so happy' and nobody responded they were 'unhappy' or 'very unhappy'. Although the sample size in this case is small, if tested on a larger scale, it may indicate that large class size is not a determining factor in job satisfaction for primary school teachers.

When asked if they would recommend a career in primary English teaching to young people today, 65 per cent said yes, they would. During interviews, one of the main reasons given for not wanting to recommend primary teaching as a career was the low salaries on offer compared to those in other professions.

23 per cent of respondents said they gave private tuition after school hours; ten per cent said they worked in more than one school and seven per cent said they had another job which was not connected to school teaching. In interviews, the most frequently given reason for taking on additional work was to supplement a teacher's income. Male teachers in particular were more likely to take on additional work. However this was not a trend that was borne out by the survey data: a chi square test did not indicate significant differences between numbers of men and women who said they gave private tuition after schools hours, or who had an additional job ($\chi^2 = 4.74$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.19$).

Sometimes teachers found themselves working very long hours to make enough money to support their families. Of the male teachers interviewed in Egypt (all were from the state sector) one said he had a full time job as a primary school English teacher and worked for an additional four hours a day, seven days a week, as the manager of a small private hospital. Other teachers said they gave private lessons after school hours for up to five hours a day, or worked at two schools – one in the mornings and the other in afternoons/evenings.

Teachers' pay as a contributory factor to their happiness

The survey did not ask about teachers' pay for the reason that direct comparisons between countries are difficult because of differences in the cost of living and the perks that some teachers receive in addition to their salary. However, low salary was a problem that affected many of the teachers who were interviewed, and was the most commonly cited reason for dissatisfaction within the profession. A newly qualified primary school teacher in the state system in Egypt would expect to earn LE 300 per month (£33). In Cuba, newly qualified teachers reported they earned 400 Pesos per month (about \$16) and they said they could earn much more by working as waiters or taxi drivers in the tourism sector. This appeared to be an attractive prospect for some of the younger teachers interviewed, and according to Carnoy, Gove and Marshall (2007) is becoming an increasing problem for Cuba.

The Tibetan teachers living and working in exile in India reported they earned less than a third of what the Indian teachers working in private institutions did. However, for this group salary did not seem to matter: they were the happiest of all teachers interviewed. A recent article in *The Sunday Times* (Oakeshott, 2012) reports on a study by the Institute of Economic Affairs which found that the most important indicator of happiness in the population is wealth. However, this may not be true for all cultures and the Tibetans seem to buck the trend in this respect. The Dalai Lama believes happiness is internal and 'can be achieved through training the mind' (H.H. The Dalai Lama & Cutler, 1998). He believes it is particularly important that people 'reach out to help others' by 'endowing the seed of compassion' for others, and lessening their self-interest. The world of the Tibetan teachers reflects this belief: they teach longer hours than other teachers around the world (currently six days a week) and receive less pay, but are supremely happy. The teachers reported that their happiness comes from their belief in the Dalai Lama's teachings. It may also be due to training their minds as he suggests.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has indicated that certain global trends exist in the training, professional development and teaching careers of primary English teachers around the world. Some trends are extremely positive, for example that so many teachers reported they are very happy they chose the profession and would not want to leave it for another type of job. However, not all the trends are positive, and the profession needs to get to grips with certain issues if high quality English teaching is to be offered to all learners. The recommendations which follow have arisen from the findings of the study.

Recommendation 1: Conditions for learning

Conditions for learning in some primary English classes are not ideal. Measures need to be taken to reduce class sizes where possible, and to deal with teacher shortages. This could be done by:

- Adopting a shift system of teaching in schools, so that classes can be split.
- Training and hiring more teachers.
- Investigating the use of technology in place of a teacher where none is available.

Ideally, schools should only hire English teachers who are proficient in the language. This could be done by interviewing teachers in English, or asking them to provide certificates showing that they had been specifically trained to teach the subject.

Recommendation 2: Initial Teacher Training

Many teachers have not been specifically trained to teach English, or to teach the level that they currently teach. This will impact on children's learning and may also lead to teachers feeling stressed in their jobs. One specific finding that arose from the study was that younger or inexperienced teachers tended to teach the early grades, and more experienced or older teachers taught the upper grades. In some contexts promotion for a teacher means moving up the school to teach the higher levels. It is strongly recommended that education providers recognise that teaching younger learners is a worthy profession and not just a starting point for newly qualified and inexperienced teachers.

- Teachers of early years need specific training to teach this age group.
- Teacher training needs to focus on the level to be taught by a teacher when they qualify, and training providers are encouraged not to continue with the current system of providing a generic teaching qualification, which does not focus on a particular age range or level of learner.
- Teachers of English language need to be specifically trained to teach this subject.
- Students should only be selected for training as an English teacher if they

have a good knowledge of the language, or if their training provides adequate instruction for them to acquire this knowledge.

Recommendation 3: Professional Development for teachers

Teachers like professional development and see it as an essential part of their job. However many teachers are still not receiving any in-service training. In some cases Head Teachers have said that they find it difficult to release teachers for these courses as there is nobody to take their classes while they are away. More in-service courses and workshops need to be made available for teachers, and these need not cost a great deal of money.

- Heads need to recognise that in-service workshops provide valuable professional development for teachers, and this has to be taken into consideration when allocating staff timetables.
- Alternatively, workshops could be organised at weekends so that teachers do not have to miss classes to attend them. However, a balance has to be found between work time and teachers' home life. Introducing more non-teaching days into the curriculum could be a solution to this problem.
- Attendance at professional development sessions could be legitimised by linking participation to promotion.
- Experienced teachers could be encouraged to present workshops at their school which would be open to teachers within their district.
- Good teachers could be identified and asked to teach model lessons to a group of students, so that other teachers might watch and learn from them.
- Teachers need to be encouraged to carry out action research projects in collaboration with others. Findings and recommendations could be beneficial to the school or wider education community as a whole.

Recommendation 4: Promotion opportunities for classroom teachers

Only a third of teachers think primary English teaching offers any sort of promotion opportunities. If the profession wants to attract high quality applicants and retain the best that it has, then efforts have to be made to offer more promotion opportunities. This might involve organising training courses in educational leadership for teachers selected by their school. Once a teacher had taken part in the leadership programme they would be eligible to apply for posts of responsibility either at their current school or at another one. Leadership posts should carry additional salary increments to incentivise them.

Recommendation 5: Teacher satisfaction

Most primary English teachers are happy they went into the profession and do not want to change their job. In order to maintain this level of satisfaction, employers are going to have to work hard. The profession is marked by poor levels of pay in

some cases, and the global spread of tourism is increasingly offering other more lucrative work opportunities for people with a good level of education and high levels of English. If the profession is to retain its best teachers, then efforts have to be made to keep teachers happy. Keeping teachers happy could be achieved through the implementation of the recommendations made above. The current study did not seek to find out exactly which aspects of their job make teachers happy, however it did uncover some interesting findings in this respect. Access to good quality training and development is valued highly; earning enough money to support your family is also rated as important, but money on its own is not the driving force behind a teacher's job satisfaction.

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Appendix 1 – Survey respondents



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Private		428 20%
2	State		1,663 80%
	Total		2,091 100%

Table 1. What type of school do you currently work in as your main job?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Rural		659 27%
2	City / town		1,809 73%
	Total		2,468 100%

Table 2. About your main job. Is this a rural or city school?





#	Answer	Response	%
2	No		1,241 59%
4	Yes - I give private tuition		490 23%
3	Yes - I work part time in another school (please say what type of school this is)		213 10%
5	Yes - I do another type of job (please say what this is)		154 7%
	Total		2,098 100%

Table 3. Do you do any other paid work apart from this job?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Male	218	9%
2	Female	2,206	91%
	Total	2,424	100%

Table 4. Are you male or female?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Under 25	113	5%
2	26 - 30	447	18%
3	31 - 40	849	35%
4	41 - 50	643	26%
5	Over 50	384	16%
	Total	2,436	100%

Table 5. How old are you?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Less than 1 year	67	3%
2	1 - 3 years	265	11%
3	4 - 8 years	531	22%
4	9 - 14 years	572	24%
5	15+ years	970	40%
	Total	2,405	100%

Table 6. Your teaching history. How many years have you been a teacher?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Less than 1 year	102	4%
2	1 - 3 years	341	14%
3	4 - 8 years	701	29%
4	9 - 14 years	594	25%
5	15+ years	663	28%
	Total	2,401	100%

Table 7. How many years have you been teaching English?

Appendix 2 – Respondents teaching contexts

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Under 5 years old	139	6%
2	5 - 6 years old	654	26%
3	7 - 8 years old	1,435	58%
4	9 - 10 years old	1,830	74%
5	11 - 12 years old	1,374	56%

Table 8. What ages of children do you teach? (you can tick more than one box)

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Less than 20	835	34%
2	21 - 35	1,465	59%
3	36 - 50	118	5%
4	51 - 65	17	1%
5	66 - 80	16	1%
6	More than 80	18	1%
	Total	2,469	100%

Table 9. How many children are in the main class you teach?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Under 5 years old	444	18%
2	5	186	8%
3	6	699	28%
4	7	430	17%
5	8	413	17%
6	9	208	8%
7	10	54	2%
8	Older than 10	39	2%
	Total	2,473	100%

Table 10. What age do children start learning English in your school?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	No, I teach English only	1,356	56%
2	Yes, I teach other subjects (please say what)	1,050	44%
	Total	2,406	100%

Table 11. Do you teach any other subjects (in your school) besides English?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	It's a good career	463	19%
2	It has good pay or pension	88	4%
3	There are lots of teaching jobs available	132	5%
4	It offers secure employment	480	20%
5	I like children	1,868	77%
6	I wasn't qualified to do anything else	60	2%
7	You have a short working day	128	5%
8	The job is not too difficult	28	1%
9	It's interesting work - many varied activities during the day	1,651	68%
10	There are good promotion opportunities	47	2%
11	I chose it instead of doing military service	3	0%
12	Opportunities to travel	117	5%
13	Not a lot of other jobs were available at the time	121	5%
14	Somebody recommended teaching as a career	137	6%
15	You get a house with the job	10	0%
16	You have long holidays	304	13%
17	The training was easy	20	1%
18	It's a respectable job	691	29%

Table 12. Why did you become a teacher? (please tick three reasons)

Appendix 3 – Initial teacher training and qualifications held






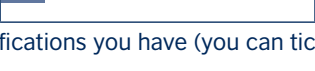
#	Answer	Response	%
1	Secondary school leaving certificate		727 31%
2	Teaching certificate		1,248 53%
3	Bachelors degree		901 38%
4	Masters degree		574 25%
5	Post-graduate teaching certificate or diploma		467 20%
6	Other (please state what)		321 14%

Table 13. Please tick the qualifications you have (you can tick more than one box).



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		1,530 65%
2	No		815 35%
	Total		2,345 100%

Table 14. Do you have a qualification specifically to teach primary education?



#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes - please say what this is:		1,839 79%
2	No		479 21%
	Total		2,318 100%

Table 15. Do you have a qualification specifically to teach English?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		666 29%
2	No		1,664 71%
	Total		2,330 100%

Table 16. Are you currently studying for a further qualification?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Bachelor's degree		110 17%
2	Masters degree		152 24%
3	Post-Graduate certificate or Diploma		110 17%
4	CELTA/ DELTA/ Trinity certificate		31 5%
5	Doctorate		44 7%
6	Other - please say what		193 30%
	Total		640 100%

Table 17. If you said yes, what is this?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		1,801 77%
2	No		525 23%
	Total		2,326 100%

Table 18. Did you do teaching practice in a school as part of your training or qualifications?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	2 weeks or less	155	9%
2	2 - 4 weeks	291	17%
3	4 - 8 weeks	396	23%
4	8 - 12 weeks	272	16%
5	13 - 20 weeks	172	10%
6	More than 20 weeks	453	26%
	Total	1,739	100%

Table 19. If you answered yes to the previous question, how long did your Teaching Practice last for?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	All of it	724	41%
2	Most of it	368	21%
3	About half of it	376	21%
5	Hardly any of it	149	8%
4	None of it	148	8%
	Total	1,765	100%

Table 20. How much of your Teaching Practice was devoted to teaching English?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	All of it	401	23%
2	Most of it	523	30%
3	About half of it	489	28%
4	Hardly any of it	160	9%
5	None of it	193	11%
	Total	1,766	100%

Table 21. How much of your Teaching Practice was devoted to teaching the age group that you currently teach?

Appendix 4 – Professional development since qualifying

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		1,939 85%
2	No		342 15%
	Total		2,281 100%

Table 22. Have you received any training since qualifying as a teacher?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		277 79%
2	No		11 3%
3	Unsure		62 18%
	Total		350 100%

Table 23. If you answered NO to the previous question, would you like to attend further training courses or workshops?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Ministry of Education or other government organisation		1,029 54%
2	British Council		429 22%
3	Local teachers association		548 29%
4	The school where you work		475 25%
5	Other (please say who)		321 17%

Table 24. If you have had further training since qualifying, who provided it?

#	Answer	Response	%	
1	No problems		1,152	52%
2	Yes, I would like a training course because		1,061	48%
	Total		2,213	100%

Table 25. Do you experience any problems in your teaching which you feel training could help you with?

#	Answer	Response	%	
1	Yes		679	30%
2	No		1,556	70%
	Total		2,235	100%

Table 26. Are you a member of an English teachers association?

#	Answer	Response	%	
1	Yes definitely		722	33%
2	Sometimes		833	38%
3	No I don't think they do		108	5%
4	I am unsure		535	24%
	Total		2,198	100%

Table 27. Do you think English teachers associations provide any useful benefits?

#	Answer	Response	%	
1	Yes		410	19%
2	No		1,795	81%
	Total		2,205	100%

Table 28. Have you ever won a teaching award or prize?






#	Answer	Response	%
1	Ministry of Education		177 32%
2	Your school		171 31%
3	British Council		35 6%
4	Teachers Association		49 9%
5	Other (please say who)		120 22%
	Total		552 100%

Table 29. If so, who awarded the prize?




#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		781 36%
2	No		804 37%
3	Not sure		592 27%
	Total		2,177 100%

Table 30. Do you think there are opportunities for career development as a primary school English teacher in your country?




#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes		451 21%
2	No		1,169 54%
3	Not sure		542 25%
	Total		2,162 100%

Table 31. Would you like to become a school principal one day?

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Responses
1	Good English language skills	940	435	290	193	116	66	43	23	13	7	2,126
2	Having children of your own	39	140	53	65	67	75	112	141	213	1,221	2,126
3	Knowledge of the syllabus and exam system	19	104	222	172	215	211	291	306	407	179	2,126
4	Good qualifications	195	272	261	326	187	232	215	178	185	75	2,126
5	Teaching experience	234	341	368	342	369	200	119	89	51	13	2,126
6	A kind and understanding personality	314	203	231	228	277	360	214	186	86	27	2,126
7	Ability to play games and sing songs	32	110	128	201	248	317	416	303	276	95	2,126
8	Knowing the rules of English grammar	12	98	118	133	157	240	291	494	393	190	2,126
9	Teaching knowledge	289	332	308	268	252	153	132	145	190	57	2,126
10	Ability to keep discipline	51	90	147	197	238	271	292	262	312	266	2,126
	Total	2,125	2,125	2,126	2,125	2,126	2,125	2,125	2,127	2,126	2,130	-

Table 32. In your opinion, what makes a good primary English teacher? Please rank in order of importance. 1 = most important, 10 = least important.

Appendix 5 – Teacher satisfaction

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Very happy		957 44%
2	Happy		987 46%
3	Not so happy		191 9%
4	Unhappy		10 0%
5	Very unhappy		11 1%
	Total		2,156 100%

Table 33. Are you happy you became a primary school English teacher?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	I would like to stay as a primary school teacher		1,498 69%
2	I would like to teach in another type of organisation (please say what)		474 22%
3	I would like to leave teaching and take up another job (please say what)		189 9%
	Total		2,161 100%

Table 34. In the future, would you like to stay as a primary school teacher, or move into some other kind of work?




#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		1,410	65%
2	No		200	9%
3	Not sure		551	25%
	Total		2,161	100%

Table 35. Would you recommend a career in primary English teaching to young people today?

4

Confucius, constructivism and the impact of continuing professional development on teachers of English in China

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Introduction

Competence in English is an essential element in the modernisation project in the People's Republic of China (PRC). Here, as indeed in many other countries, English is seen as facilitating economic, technological, educational and cultural exchange with other parts of the world. Much like the economy, English language learning in China is making the transition from liberalised to globalisation (Zheng & Davison, 2008). New policies which underscore the relationship between modernisation and education have created many opportunities for the English language teaching industry as the so-called 'inner circle' countries (Kachru, 1985) compete for market share in materials development, the provision of expertise and also the training of teachers.

In this article, we look at just one of these issues – the continuing professional development (CPD) of English teachers – through the lens of seven years' experience of providing three-month courses at the National Centre for Language and Literacy (NCLL) of the University of Reading for more than 500 teachers from the PRC. Our main interest, however, is not in evaluating changes in teacher knowledge or attitudes observed during the course of the programme, but rather in assessing the impact of participation on their return to China. Our aim, then, is to identify issues which will help us and other providers to deliver CPD which is both sustainable and the best possible fit for purpose.

Evaluation is a well-established element in most CPD programmes (Weir & Roberts, 1994), encouraging reflection on what trainers are trying to achieve, how far they are succeeding, and where improvement or change is needed. Yet both within and beyond English Language Teaching (ELT), the focus in most cases is on the learning experiences of participants *during* professional development rather than on what happens afterwards. The international literature on teacher CPD (see, for instance, Harland and Kinder, 1997; Joyce and Showers 1988; Day, 1999; Ingvarson et al., 2003) has often grappled with this issue and the picture which emerges is sometimes discouraging. There is ample evidence, for instance, of the failure of attempts to implement change (Fullan, 2001) and of the superficial nature of the gains achieved (Cooley, 1997). Guskey (2000: 32) reminds us that many teachers perceive CPD to be irrelevant to their needs and of the fact that we still know relatively little about its impact. Hu (2005: 694) makes a similar point in relation to CPD for teachers in China:

Although there is some evidence attesting to the impact of individual in-service programs on professional growth ... the overall picture suggests, at best, only limited effects of formally organised in-service education on teachers' continuing development.

Like most providers, NCLL undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of all aspects of all courses. The programme for secondary teachers of English is based on what we believe to be a realistic assessment of needs and has always sought to incorporate feedback from participants. While this feedback has been consistently positive, we have also been mindful that we have very limited knowledge of the impact of this training on teachers' return to China. Yan (2008: 587) underlines the importance

of the sustainability of initiatives in CPD and of the need to ‘help them become acclimatised to and firmly embedded in the local environment, evolve healthily and strongly, and further induce more fundamental changes’. Our decision to examine this issue in relation to our own courses reflects these concerns.

In order to provide the context for discussion, we offer a brief overview of English teaching in China and the recent educational reforms, and explain how we set about designing and collecting data for the study. We present evidence for changes in teachers’ philosophies of education; for the application of improved competencies (linguistic, cultural and pedagogical); and for the ways in which participants have discharged new roles and responsibilities on their return. Finally, we discuss the implications of these findings for both providers and sponsors of CPD for English language teachers.

English teaching in China

English was first introduced as a compulsory subject in middle schools in China in 1902 and so is by no means a new development (Zheng & Davison, 2008). Although Russian emerged as the preferred foreign language during the early years of the PRC, its importance diminished following the breakdown in diplomatic relations with the former USSR in the early 1960s. Teaching of languages during the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976 was decentralised and sporadic but focused mainly on English, which has remained the most widely taught foreign language since that time. By the new millennium, close to 80 million secondary school students were studying the language (Hu, 2002). Initial training and CPD needs are therefore on a huge scale. In 2002 an estimated 470,000 teachers were involved in the teaching of English at the secondary level (Wang, 2007); this number will have risen substantially since that time.

Rigid teaching methods, shortages of qualified teachers and examination-driven instruction have all been identified as obstacles to high quality ELT; dissatisfaction with the outcomes has led to far reaching reform. Writers including Hu (2002), Wang (2007) and Zheng & Davison (2008) describe the profound changes that have taken place in recent decades. Emphasis has shifted over time from grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods, to more functional-structural, communicative and task-based learning approaches. Syllabuses and textbooks currently incorporate an eclectic pedagogy which aims to accommodate both Chinese and international approaches. For instance, teachers are encouraged to actively develop the cognitive skills often associated with the west, such as reasoning, imagination, and creativity, alongside the traditionally valued Chinese skills of observation and memorisation. However, as Hu (2002: 36) points out:

While [the more recent] textbooks have clear advantages over the more traditional ones ... the big challenge for the educational authorities is to train a large contingent of teachers to use them effectively in a short time. Without adequate training, it is very likely that the new textbooks will be taught in old ways.

Since the implementation of the revised curriculum in 2005, there has been a

growing expectation that teachers move from the traditional role of ‘knowledge transmitter’ to ‘multi-role educator’, from ‘learning to use’ to ‘learning by using’. This transformation requires them to develop new skills ‘for motivating learners in language learning ... developing their learning strategies ... [and] designing more task-based, co-operative and problem-solving activities in order to make students the center of learning’ (Wang, 2007: 101). In addition, they are expected to learn to use formative assessment, to adapt textbooks to meet the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of learners, and to use modern technology in their teaching. Fundamental to these new requirements is the need to improve their own English language proficiency.

CPD has been receiving high priority at national level for some time (MOE, 2000a, 2000b) and there is a growing awareness among teachers of the importance of career-long learning. There are currently three main providers: education colleges run by provincial and municipal educational authorities; tertiary teacher education and other institutions of higher learning; and overseas institutions and organisations. In some instances, the overseas provider has worked in collaboration with Chinese partners to deliver courses in China, as in the case of the Department for International Development (DfID) ELT projects which ran from the late 1970s to 2001 (Yan, 2008). On other occasions, delivery has taken place partly in China and partly in English-speaking countries.

It was against this background that NCLL first started to develop three-month courses for teachers of English at the University of Reading in collaboration with the China Scholarship Council (CSC), a non-profit organisation affiliated to the Ministry of Education. Participants up to the age of 45 are selected by the CSC as part of a highly competitive process; places are either funded jointly by the CSC and the local education authorities or, in some cases, with a small contribution from the participating teachers’ schools. The programme is based on the premise ‘that professional learning is more likely to improve student learning outcomes if it increases teachers’ understanding of the content they teach, how students learn that content and how to represent and convey that content in meaningful ways’ (Ingvarson et al., 2003). The courses form part of China’s Great Western Development Strategy which targets six provinces (Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, and Yunnan), five autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet, and Xinjiang), and one municipality (Chongqing), which comes directly under Central Government control (see Figure 1). They should also be seen in the context of the 1986 Nine-year Basic Education Law, which sets out to provide basic education in three phases: first, the richer seaboard areas, then the industrial hinterland, and finally the remote rural areas (Adamson & Morris, 1997). As Hu (2002) has indicated, considerable effort and resources are needed to improve the delivery of ELT in these areas in order to achieve parity with colleagues in more economically developed parts of China.



Figure 1: Map of the Western provinces [Source: Gelb, C. & Chen, D. (n.d.)]

The NCLL approach is consistent with that of many other teacher education and professional development programmes. The focus in delivery is on constructivism rather than transmission: instruction is student-centered, interactive, and inquiry-oriented. The three-month courses have four components: language teaching methodology; a one-week school placement which allows participants to situate in actual classroom practice many of the issues covered in the methodology component; English language development; and a social and cultural programme which, alongside life in British host families, exposes them both to new experiences and allows them to apply newly acquired skills and knowledge.

Methodology

We used case study as our framework, a blend of the ‘connoisseur’ approach which draws on researchers familiar with a subject or a programme to critically characterise and appraise it (the ‘insider’ perspective; see Weir and Roberts, 1994), and the client-centred approach which addresses concerns and issues of practitioners and other clients in a given setting (Stufflebeam & Webster, 1980).

Purposive sampling was used to identify schools representative of those sending participants on our programme. We had identified various factors at the outset which might influence the outcomes. It was possible, for instance, that there might be differences between schools in large municipalities and smaller cities and from one province to another. It would therefore be important to achieve a good mix

and also a good geographical spread. An unexpected complication was the unrest in Xinjiang, which supplies in the region of 30 per cent of teachers for our courses, immediately prior to the fieldwork. Prudence dictated that this autonomous region should not be included. Fieldwork was ultimately conducted at four sites (Guiyang, Zunyi, Chongqing, and Chengdu) in three provincial capitals or municipalities in Southwest China (Guizhou, Sichuan, and Chongqing) in March 2010. School A in Zunyi and School B in Chongqing formed the main focus: here we interviewed former participants, head teachers and heads of English departments and colleagues who had not participated in the Reading programme. In these and the other locations (Guiyang and Chengdu), we also spoke to a wider range of other participants as well as educational administrators.

Our study was undertaken as part of a joint evaluation of our courses with the CSC. Our own interest related to the teachers in the schools; the CSC responsibility was for administrative aspects of teacher recruitment. This co-operation had both advantages and disadvantages. CSC arranged access to all schools, engaging in complex negotiations with education authorities at provincial and district levels. We provided details of the schools we wished to involve and the people that we wanted to see within the time available. CSC then liaised with the schools and, wherever possible, timetabled meetings in response to our requests. This *modus operandi* allowed us to bypass the gatekeepers who would normally have been involved in permitting access to schools. As a result, we were able to achieve in the space of two weeks what might otherwise have taken many months. The disadvantages, of course, included the need to compromise on some aspects of the original research design, and the limited time available for reflection and follow-up, reduced still further by the sometimes conflicting demands of CSC responsibilities in the evaluation.

We used three main methods of data collection (see Table 1). The first was open ended, semi-structured interviews with former participants in schools A and B, and with head teachers and heads of the English Department. The second was focus group discussions with two different groups: colleagues in the English Department in the A and B schools who had not taken part in the programme; a wide range of former participants from across the region who had responded to an invitation from CSC to join us in all four locations. Finally, we undertook a number of classroom observations of both former participants and non-participants. The aim, then, was to increase the validity of our findings by triangulating both the methods used – interviews, focus groups and observation – and the sources of information – participant and non-participant teachers and members of the senior management team. By drawing on these additional sources, the hope was to produce evidence which would either support or contradict the views expressed by teachers who had completed training.

Method	No of interviews	Numbers of focus groups	Numbers of classroom observations
Former participants	10	5	5
Non-participants	0	2	2
Headteachers/ heads of section	10	0	0

Table 1: Data collection methods and participants

We were acutely aware of the disadvantages of our ‘insider’ status as researchers trying to evaluate a course which we played a key part in designing and delivering. People who had known and worked with us over a period of three months might well find it difficult to be frank in assessments of their experience. We took a range of measures to counteract these effects. Semi-structured interviews with the teachers in the Zunyi and Chongqing schools and focus group discussions with the teachers in the four schools in Chengdu were undertaken by a research assistant who had previously been a participant on the course but who was unknown to the teachers in the study, schools with teachers who had attended the same course having been deliberately excluded. Daguo Li was responsible for the interviews and focus group discussions with non-participants. He was, however, at the request of the CSC, jointly responsible with colleagues from the CSC for four of the five discussions with the wider groups of former participants. All data collection was undertaken by Chinese native speakers, thereby eliminating cultural issues that might have arisen in interviews either in English or with English speakers.

While we are conscious of the potential weaknesses of our data, the findings which we report below suggest a high level of reflection and critical awareness on the part of interviewees and focus group discussants, leading us to believe that attempts to reduce the effects of our insider status were successful.

Focus group discussions and interviews were transcribed and classroom observations were recorded using field notes. Data were then imported into NVivo8, a specialist software package for qualitative analysis. Analytical categories were allowed to emerge from, rather than being imposed on, the data.

Findings

The impact of the programmes on teachers’ return to China can be grouped under three main headings: changes in philosophy; improvement in competencies; and new leadership roles. Each will be considered in turn.

Changes in philosophy

Hu (2005: 667) sums up what happens in Chinese classrooms in terms of an ‘expository, teacher-centered pedagogical approach’ where ‘teachers are expected to be virtuosos of learning’ whose priority is ‘the selection, mediation, and transmission of authoritative knowledge’. Commentators on teaching and learning in China usually explain these expectations in terms of the deep-seated influence of Confucian philosophy on all aspects of Chinese social and cultural

life. Confucianism provides a hierarchical structure which stresses mutual respect and harmony; its influence is particularly evident in the hierarchical relationships between students and teachers (Biggs, 1994; Chan, 1999). Students owe respect to those who provide knowledge and the authority of teachers is such that only they – and not the students – should initiate interactions in class. Such expectations are, of course, at odds with the requirements of communicative language teaching.

The tutors on our programme operated according to very different principles; participants also witnessed a very different pattern of teacher-pupil relationships during their school placements. This exposure made a deep impression. As Li Yan observed:

The relationship between the [course participants] and the trainers was very equal. [The trainers] could kneel down to talk to you or answer your questions ... During teaching, students and the teacher should have more eye contact, maintain level eye contact, rather than make students look up at you. And the class ritual of asking all the students to stand up at the start of a lesson [as is the usual practice in schools in China] is not necessary in my view.

Participants raised a wide range of closely related issues, including student-centredness, differentiation and enjoyment in learning, which flow from the philosophy which underpins both our programme and British education more generally. Many perceived these issues in terms of ‘quality education’, a concept they had been introduced to in China but had only begun to fully understand following their exposure to education in the UK.

According to Collins and O’Brien (2003):

Student-centered instruction [SCI] is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, materials, and pace of learning. This learning model places the student (learner) in the center of the learning process. The instructor provides students with opportunities to learn independently and from one another and coaches them in the skills they need to do so effectively.

‘Student-centredness’ and ‘active learning’ are often used more or less interchangeably in western educational discourse; the effectiveness of this approach is well established (Michael, 2006). Some participants interpreted student-centred teaching in terms of a refusal to spoon-feed pupils. This understanding was apparent, for instance in Hou Meili’s comment on her observation of a biology lesson:

The teacher didn’t teach the things the students already knew but only focused on what the students did not know ... There were only about ten students in the class ... and they were not well-behaved, but the teacher was able to conduct the lessons based on the needs of the students ... The teacher asked them to design a poster, writing down the various uses of the vitamin ... the students needed to write some of them down themselves and the teacher did not simply give the answer ... This greatly inspired me.

Zhang Huilin also expressed approval for this approach to teaching:

What impressed me most during the school placement was the shadowing experience, that is, following a student for a day. Their music lessons are totally different from those in China. Their music room is more like our computer room. For example, their students didn't just sit there listening to the teacher singing a song. They were composing by themselves ... Obviously what they were trying to do is to really develop students' basic composing skills and other practical skills. ... I feel we lag behind.

Differentiation has been an essential element in student-centred learning in the west for the last two decades. It allows for differences within a teaching group, and is designed to result in optimum learning outcomes for individual pupils (Battersby, 2002). This issue had clearly captured the imagination of course participants who commented on ways in which 'potential' in Chinese education was often defined in terms of examination outcomes. The British programme, in contrast, had alerted them to the importance of a broader understanding of potential. Li Mei commented on British children's experience of education in the following terms:

You may not like the education at school, for instance, in terms of knowledge, but you like acting. No problem, I will teach you how to perform. You like cooking: there is a dedicated food technology room and the teacher teaches you how to cook interesting food. You like innovation or mechanics, there are also such special skills rooms – you can make things and there is a teacher on site to guide you. I feel these are good for the development of students' individuality.

Similarly, in applying this new understanding to her own situation, Dai Han highlighted the importance of 'respecting students as individuals, as every student is different – their intelligence, their learning styles, and their methods of study are all different'.

One activity during the programme which had clearly made a strong impression involved drawing a pen. Predictably, the end products were very varied. Fan Daoming, summed up what he had learned from this experience:

[The trainer] emphasised a key concept, that is, to look at the pen from different perspectives ... therefore, in terms of students, as a teacher, we should also look at things from their perspective, trying to be inclusive and encouraging ...

This approach was in marked contrast with what he considered to be normal practice in China. Reflecting on what he would have done prior to the course, Fan Daoming commented:

Before I would probably ignore these types of students, those who really did not want to learn. After I returned [from the UK], I felt there might actually be other reasons why these students did not want to study.

In a similar vein, Sun Lian remarked that the 'humanistic spirit of the Reading programme' had helped her to look at things from a different perspective.

The notion of learning for fun also attracted comment. Educational policy in the west increasingly stresses the importance of enjoyment in education, both as a right and as a support for learning (Lumby, 2010). The emphasis on learning as an enjoyable experience in the CPD programme and in schools had clearly made an impression on participants. This impression was reinforced by observation of family life. According to Lin Shuting:

I sometimes observed how the children of the home stay family and those in the neighbourhood learn. I felt then British children were as if living in paradise [compared with Chinese children]. After the comparison, I told myself I wanted to make sure my students wouldn't regard English learning as a kind of suffering.

Impact on practice

Expressions of approval for the constructivist thrust of much western education do not necessarily translate into changed practice. In the case of the Reading teachers, however, there was ample evidence that exposure to new ideas was influencing at least their self-reported approach to teaching on return; these reports were reinforced by classroom observation. Wan Ling, for instance, claimed that she no longer dominated classes to the same extent so that 'students did more and we teachers became a guide'. And according to Li Yan:

After I came back, I was nicer to my students and more approachable. ... I was also careful in my use of words, for example, I would no longer tell them 'If you have questions, you should ask me, you should ask me for advice'; instead, I would say, 'If you have questions, you can raise them and we can discuss them'. So the students also felt they were closer to you ... and you could now discuss with them, consult them.

There was similarly evidence of greater differentiation and a willingness to support students in achieving their potential. As Shen Na explained:

Before I participated in the programme, when I tested my students on their vocabulary, I thought I was going to find out who didn't do the homework I had left and punish those who didn't do it. Now it's different, ... I remember ... [in Reading, the trainer] was preparing us for the assessment, asking us to imagine how we would answer the question, what would the question look like...? I felt it was important to give us such a support or help before the assessment. So now in my own teaching, I give my students a lot of such support before their exams.

In a similar vein, Shen Na outlined her new approach to dictation:

I offer students two choices. They have the same material but with different words taken out. For the stronger students, I take out a word every four words; but for the weaker students, I take out a word every eight words... I use this kind of activity to enable students to discuss among themselves, for example, the comparative and superlative forms of the adjectives.

Participants also expressed excitement about the student response to innovations. Typical comments included:

When I came back ... I was teaching a unit called News Media. I asked my students to make a blackboard poster based on their own interests. They needed to collect their own materials. And the students did really well. They made a blackboard poster themselves and we put it up. It is still there and very beautiful. Hou Meili

I asked the students to talk about an Unforgettable Experience ... They immediately got interested ... Once they are interested, you can achieve good results. Even if the weakest students did not understand, they would ask the students sitting next to them what the teacher had just said, or they would ask you directly what it was about. I felt that was very successful. Wan Dawei

The gains reported for CPD in the wider literature include improved teacher confidence and self-efficacy or enhanced belief in their ability to make a difference to their pupils' learning; a greater commitment to changing practice; and willingness to try new approaches (EPPI, 2003). Such gains were evident in the self-reports of participants in the Reading programme, as summarised by Fan Daoming:

Before I went to the UK, I wasn't really sure about some of my teaching methods and strategies. After being in the UK ... I feel more confident about their theoretical foundation and practical relevance. ... After the training, I feel I can do [what is required] so I am able to carry on more publicly without having to worry about anything. ... I made action plans in the UK. Since I came back, I have designed my lessons using the action plan as scaffolding, that is, I have no longer used the traditional lesson plans ... This is because I have found the theoretical support for myself and I have become more confident.

Improvement in competencies

Participants reported improved competencies in several areas of importance for their professional development as teachers: proficiency in English, lesson planning and delivery, and cultural understanding.

Proficiency in English

Wang (1999; 2007) points to the great variation in the quality of teachers in terms both of language proficiency and teaching ability. The low levels of proficiency in English attained by secondary school pupils have attracted considerable critical comment in China. Wei (2001), for instance, highlights the fragmentary knowledge of grammar and inadequate vocabulary of most children. The 2005 National Curriculum requires teachers to make considerable changes in the professional practice, from knowledge- to competency-based teaching, and from transmitter of knowledge to facilitator of learning. However, unless teachers improve their own levels of proficiency in English, it is unrealistic to expect them to perform these new roles.

Participants in the Reading programme commented on their improvement in speaking and understanding English. They reported that input both on their own pronunciation and approaches to the teaching of pronunciation had greatly improved their intelligibility. By hearing authentic English speech in class, in their

host families, in the community and on TV, as well as having opportunities to practice in a wide range of situations, their knowledge of vocabulary and idiomatic expressions had also increased. As Han Ding commented:

I feel that now you are in the country yourself, you hear both standard and non-standard pronunciations ... When I did not have lessons, I liked to watch football and seek opportunities to talk with people. The elderly British like to talk with others ... I like this vivid, real, 'pure English', 'authentic English'.

Dai Han made a similar point:

I feel sure there was improvement because, at the start, I had to think in advance about what to say next, what comes first and what follows. But later on, no matter what, we speak as we like, not having to think too much. Even if it's just a word, once it's said, people could understand.

Wan Dawei summarised the benefits of a three-month stay thus:

What I feel most strongly is my linguistics skills have improved. To be honest, before that I wasn't sure about many things. The three-month study has given me confidence in my own language ... Before that I wasn't certain about some of what I said and did not feel confident about what I told my students ... But now I am very confident and can explain what they are. The good thing is, when I feel more confident, I am better able to influence my students.

Lesson planning and delivery

There is a disjunction in the initial training of teachers in China between, on the one hand, English language proficiency and knowledge about the language and, on the other, the pedagogical skills required to teach English. As Hu (2005: 674) points out:

The language skill courses are not generally concerned with how target language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and communication strategies can be developed in the secondary classroom; the language knowledge courses tend not to give any attention to how secondary students can best be helped to master specific language systems (e.g., pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary).

For this reason, the focus of the programme is not simply improving participants' proficiency but also on extending their repertoire of teaching methods and there were strong indications that this approach has been successful.

We have already commented on more general changes related to the Confucian philosophy underpinning their teaching. There was also evidence of change related more specifically to the teaching of English. All the participants highlighted the practical teaching techniques, skills, and strategies that they had learned on the course. Examples of how they had been able to put this learning into practice included the use of active learning strategies, such as correction codes in student writing as a way of not only improving students' active learning, participation and autonomy, but also reducing teacher workload; mind maps in the learning of

vocabulary; and songs and storytelling in order to engage and motivate students. Frequent reference was also made to project work and co-operative learning (e.g. group work), clear indications of a significant move from the more traditional transmission model of teaching. Interestingly, participants such as Wei Wen reported that this approach was effective not only with younger students but also with the more examination-oriented senior classes:

For example, a specific aspect of grammar: during revision, I can ask the students to form groups to discuss this first. If students do not understand any aspect of the grammar, they can learn from the stronger students, who can offer help to them. After the students have a better understanding by learning from each other, the teacher can then follow up.

Cultural understanding

Growing importance has been paid to cultural understanding in English for some time (Wang, 2007). One of the goals of the syllabi introduced in 2000 to both junior and senior secondary schools, for instance, is to 'instil in students a respect for meritorious cultural traditions of other nations and an understanding of, as well as love for, Chinese culture' (Hu, 2005: 36). Significantly, lessons in the most recent textbooks are topic-based, focusing not on linguistic structures but on culture-specific activities and introducing cross-cultural information (Hu, 2005: 39).

Participants stayed with host families, were able to observe daily routines, rituals around food, and leisure activities. They reported a significant increase both in their cultural understanding and their ability to apply this understanding in the classroom. They were struck by what they perceived to be the courtesy of British drivers to pedestrians, British people's habit of queuing and their respect for their historical and cultural heritage. Travel in the UK and school placements also helped participants to build a much more sophisticated appreciation of British culture which increased their confidence in dealing with cultural issues in the textbooks they were using. Chen Shaohua summed up the significance of these experiences in the following terms:

With home stay, we were able ... to see what their daily life is like, through observing, listening, learning, and experiencing. Then we also had a school placement, observing how the teachers teach and how the students behave, even to see how they use punishment ... We also visited some sites ... These are useful for cultural understanding and knowledge and skills ... Almost all the reading materials we use relate to cultural background. So when we explain to the students, it's more accurate.

Wan Ling made a similar observation:

When you have had direct experience of British culture, you feel very confident in the classroom. When I talk about British culture, I feel it's easy and my students are very interested.

Lang Fangfang characterised her current teaching as more lively in relation to British culture, an observation with which many participants agreed:

In terms of teaching, ... it was very flat before, but now I feel it's very live or multi-dimensional. Here is a specific example: one unit in the textbook of Senior Two is about the British Isles. There is a map to go with the text. I had taught the unit before. Such a map is very flat even if it's downloaded from the internet, as it's very abstract even to myself. But after I stayed in the UK for three months, I can draw my own even with my eyes closed – piece of cake. Besides, when I taught that unit again, I tried to relate to culture and my own life experiences there. The students no longer found it boring; on the contrary, they felt it was very vivid.

As a result of studying and living for three months in the UK, some participants were able to reflect on their own culture and have developed a better awareness of the Chinese society and culture.

With their increased competencies in the English language, pedagogical practice and cultural awareness and understanding, the vast majority of the participants expressed a noticeable increase in self-confidence in their professional life, which in many cases also seemed to have had a positive impact on their lives more generally.

Constraints

The intellectual appreciation of the benefits of new approaches and new competencies, of course, can find itself in an uneasy tension with the structural demands of the workplace on return and, in particular, the examination system (Wu, 2001; Hu, 2005). The *Gaokao* or National College Entrance Examinations (NCEE) is widely recognised as a major obstacle for reform, particularly in the teaching of English. For many years, they have been characterised by multiple-choice and blank-filling, with a heavy emphasis on discrete-point knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and linguistic accuracy. Gradual transformation of the English test since the late 1990s has resulted in some lessening of pressure on teachers. However, this issue was identified by participants in our study as the greatest constraint on their ability to introduce innovation. As Wan Ling explained:

After being on the Reading programme, I feel I should emphasise communications more. But we are severely constrained by Gaokao – teaching in China revolves round Gaokao, just like a conductor's baton. [For example,] if listening is not tested on Gaokao and we ask our students to practise listening and speaking every day, they don't want to do it. And their parents wouldn't be happy for us to do it that way either. So if we don't get good exam results, we won't be accepted by society. So we feel a bit confused sometimes.

Not all former participants, however, felt as negative. Many reported success in implementing the new ideas, methods and techniques, even at Senior Three when the pressure of examinations was looming. Han Ding, for instance, describes his use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in large classes in the following terms:

I demonstrated it in the class I just taught [referring to the lesson the researchers had observed slightly earlier]. Group work, ... pair work ... I demonstrated all these to you. ... I think CLT is possible in large classes. ... [Some

asked] can you still use CLT at Senior Three? I said why not? The essence of it is encouraging students to communicate and interact.

Other examples of new approaches being used with older students included techniques for motivating students, and for responding to writing; and the use of activities during exam revision. Significantly, these initiatives did not involve blindly copying what they had learned; instead, they were integrated into current practices.

New leadership responsibilities

Participants have assumed a wide range of responsibilities since their return with significant numbers becoming subject leaders, research project leaders, heads of department, key teachers, mentors for young teachers, or leading figures in local English Associations; many have received awards since their return in competitions for teachers at provincial, municipal and district levels. There is evidence that they have been a driving force in teaching reform, research and school management and development; they have also played an important role in teachers' professional development through various kinds of cascade training.

Cascade training

It should be acknowledged at the outset that the cascade model is by no means unproblematic: when those involved in the delivery of the training are not sufficiently experienced or have not yet achieved a full understanding of the relevant issues, their ability to replicate course content is inevitably limited and complex concepts can be reduced to overly simplistic dichotomies (Chisolm, 2004). However, given the urgency of the modernisation project, it is not surprising that the stakeholders – the CSC, the local education authorities and individual schools – should expect that returning participants cascade the learning which has taken place in the UK.

School-based CPD in China has a long and respectable history (Lo, 1984). There is a strong tradition of sharing and collaboration with teachers organised into teaching research groups composed either of all the teachers of a given subject in the school, or a sub-group of all the teachers of a subject for a given year group. Members of a teaching research group share a common workspace or room where teachers do their marking, discuss their teaching and their students, and undertake collective curriculum and lesson planning. Observation of lessons is another common activity. Lessons take three forms: ordinary, demonstration, and competition and teachers are required to undertake a set number of observations. Teachers also present end-of semester reports at group meetings where members reflect on aspects of their teaching. As Hu (2002: 681) points out, activities of this sort represent 'a form of continuous, job-embedded professional development'. The receptiveness of teachers in Chinese schools, then, to the cascading of knowledge, skills and strategies is far greater than might be the case in many other settings.

Examples of many of the activities discussed above were offered by returning teachers. Sun Lian, for instance, commented: 'I have always thought that a teacher should be good at reflecting on and reviewing their own teaching, not just simply

be a teaching technician... We ... should reflect, and also guide other teachers to reflect'. In a similar vein, Shen Na explained:

Every time we had a teaching and research activity, I would have a focussed topic. I would give out the University of Reading handouts to my colleagues and then we would discuss as a group their relevance for our own situation. We now have a teaching group, or a feedback group. ... I give about two public lessons every month. ... After the lessons, I explain what the theories are behind what I've done, and then my colleagues offer their comments and opinions.

Teachers who had not participated in the Reading programme confirmed that they had benefitted from their colleagues' overseas-based CPD. Based on the lessons they had observed participants delivering on their return, they commented on their breadth of vision, confidence and the benefits of exposure to authentic language and culture. Such comments were offered in the context of their own desire to break out of the professional rut in which they found themselves. Ms Wu expressed her frustrations thus:

Our current teaching... is executed step by step based on what we have pre-planned, very routinised. So what is pressing for me is wanting to develop a new way of thinking, or a new model. At the end of the day there need to be changes for things, including language teaching. So I really need some new information, particularly from overseas. So far we have only been following local perspectives ...

The cascade training was not, however, limited to participants' immediate colleagues. Participants both drove and actively participated in various CPD activities beyond their own school. Considerable numbers had been involved in programmes for key teachers of English, organised by provincial, municipal, and district level education authorities. In their role as leading members of local professional associations, many were also involved in CPD activities at county or township level, such as the "Bring-lessons-to-rural schools" programme conducted by the Huanghuagang English Association.

It would seem, however, that the extent of this involvement was variable. Zhang Shengli, for instance, commented that, although she had benefitted in terms of her own professional development, she had reservations about the extent of her influence. Several participants expressed a strong desire for more organised follow-up activities which would ensure more effective cascading, including workshops, and the formation of an association where returnee teachers could pool ideas and experiences.

Research

Reflections from a number of the participants confirmed the growing interest in empirical and action research which has been flagged by writers such as Hu (2002). Several had been involved in research projects on teaching reform before they went to the UK and had used the experience of their study abroad as a platform for research activities upon return. Some, for instance, have been actively involved in investigating the reform and practice of English language teaching in

rural areas of Shaanxi province. Li Hongyan, a teacher trainer based at an Institute of Education, had identified various obstacles to the implementation of the 2005 curriculum standards and ways of helping teachers in rural areas by applying the theoretical understandings acquired during training. Sun Danye, for her part, had been involved in action research in her own school:

When I was studying there [at Reading] ... my school was in the very early stages of exploring [project work], but there was a wide interest. At that time ... I had no idea how to do it. During my study there [at Reading], ... the handouts suddenly gave me a lot of ideas. ... I felt, ah, project work is like this. When I came back, I mobilized all the [year groups] to participate in the projects in English ...

Leadership roles

Participants also identified personal gains associated with successful completion of the course: several had been promoted to leadership roles including head of department and deputy director of studies. They were therefore able to play a more important role in curriculum decisions such as the setting of teaching objectives and the adaptation of materials, as well as in the collective planning of lessons. They were also able to organise and drive teaching and research activities, research groups, teaching competitions and English contests. Some were also able to make a significant contribution to the international dimension in the work of their school. The following accounts offered by head teachers on the value-added dimension of teachers on their return were typical:

Zhang Dazhi was an ordinary teacher when he went to Britain. But now he is the Head of our English Department. Sun Lian was already our Head of English Department when he went. But his experience of study in the UK, particularly the broadening of his international perspective, has been very useful ... Since he came back, in addition to being outstanding in his own teaching, he has had more responsibility for educational research at our school and, more importantly, he has been invited to be a supervisor for Masters students at Sichuan Normal University. These are clear examples of the changes and the progress they have made since their return.

Ms Liang was sent out in 2006. When she returned from her three months' training, the school had clear and high expectations of her. First of all, from the perspective of management, when we had a re-shuffle of our administrative team, we asked her to join the team. She is now the Deputy Director of Studies at our Dufu Campus ... She is mainly responsible for the management of Senior One and Senior Two.

Impact on students

Teachers' own reflections, the comments of senior management and colleagues who have not participated in the Reading programme and our own classroom observation all attest to the impact of the overseas-based CPD on participants' classroom practices and professional development. Assessing the impact of this experience on students, however, is more difficult. As Goodall et al. (2006) point out: 'The vast majority of evaluation practice remains at the level of participant reaction and learning. The impact on student learning is rarely evaluated and

if done so, is rarely executed very effectively or well'. Our own study is no exception to this general trend: we would have required considerably more time and resources to investigate this issue. We were, however, able to collect indirect evidence of the positive effects on students.

Teachers offered many examples of students having been both impressed and motivated by the fact that they had spent time in the UK. Li Mei, for instance, reported that her teaching was now considered more authentic, citing the student who had observed: 'I could never have imagined that this lady with an Oriental face could teach us in this very westernised style!' The most frequent argument advanced by teachers for the effectiveness of their CPD, however, was improved examination results and performance in student competitions. The following comments were typical:

In our school, we have targets for first tier and second tier of the top universities. All 51 students in my top set were accepted by top universities ... For the next set, I had 22 more accepted than the target. If you want a typical example, take Liang Li in the top set. His parents said his best score in English before was 74 [out of 150]. He was in my Senior Two class when I took over. I applied the philosophies and ideas I learnt at Reading ... He got 116 on the national university entrance exam and was accepted by Nankai University [one of the top universities in China].

When I came back, I organised my students to participate in the English Skills Competition of Guizhou province and all the top three prizes in Zunyi were in my class.

While teacher reports do not constitute reliable evidence of a positive impact on student outcomes, they do, of course, indicate perceptions that this is the case. It is also interesting to mention that, during the fieldwork, when we invited their comments on the 'indirect' influence on students, some participants corrected, insisting that they were reporting the 'direct' impact on their students.

Lessons to be learned

Our aim in this study was to move beyond the routine end of course evaluations to take a critical look at the actual impact of our courses on teachers' return to China. Based in our reading of the literature on CPD for teachers, we had been conscious that teachers might fail to see the relevance of our courses for their work (Guskey, 2000; Yan, 2008). In addition, where teacher educators and teachers work at 'cultural boundaries' (Roberts 1998: 3), as is the case in any partnership between overseas providers and Chinese clients, there is a real danger that providers are constrained by their inability to see beyond the prism of their own experience. When we embarked upon this study we were very mindful of the possible gap between our aspirations and the expectations of the teachers following the programme. In the event, our fears were ill-founded. There was no evidence, for instance, of the teacher apathy or resistance widely documented in investigations of CPD (Guskey, 2000). Although the momentum for the programme was top-down, participants were still enthusiastic about their experience up to seven years

after their return. Non-participating colleagues also expressed a strong desire to broaden their outlook through similar programmes.

Our attempts to assess the impact of the programme on their return can be summarised in two parts: first, in relation to individual teachers; second, in relation to colleagues in their own and other schools.

On an individual level, participants' philosophies of life and learning had undergone significant change. They demonstrated a heightened awareness of the central role of students in teaching and learning. Their linguistic skills and ability to design and conduct lessons, and their cultural awareness and insight had improved significantly. As is often the case with effective CPD, their confidence had increased considerably and, consequently, they perceived their teaching to be more effective. These perceptions were confirmed by colleagues and the senior management of their schools and validated both by provincial and, occasionally, national rewards and by outstanding performances on the part of some of their students. Also on the level of the individual, many of the returning teachers have now joined the senior management team, and are actively involved in the reform of teaching in their schools.

Perhaps one of the most surprising findings of our study was the enormous impact of the one-week school placement on participants: a large proportion of the reflections offered in interviews and focus group discussion referred to what they had observed in schools. The importance of the placement can no doubt be explained in terms of the opportunities it offered for situated learning, allowing teachers to make links between the content of their university-based learning and actual classroom practice. Our own experience, then, reinforces the conclusion of Yan (2008: 597) and other writers that 'successful innovation depends on the generation of realistically grounded knowledge relating to specific social, political and cultural contexts'.

The other evidence of impact related to work with colleagues: cascading effects were felt both within the participants' own school and beyond. Predictably, participants were able to play an important role in English language teaching in their own schools through mentoring or encouraging less experienced colleagues and leading teaching and research activities. Although overdependence on such cascading can be problematic, the highly collaborative teaching culture within Chinese schools has provided fertile ground for new ideas. But participants have also been able to cascade their learning beyond their own schools, for example, through teacher training or other teaching and research activities at the municipal, provincial or even national levels. They clearly have a mission: by integrating new perspectives and techniques in their own practices, they see themselves as helping to implement the new curriculum in the Western Region.

This enthusiasm should not, of course, be taken to imply that teachers accepted new ideas uncritically. Nor would we wish to suggest that implementation of new approaches is unproblematic, particularly in an examination-driven education system where assessment has not kept pace with curriculum reform. Significantly, the common thread running through the experience of many participants, and

reflecting the imperatives of the new curriculum, was the desire to integrate more recent international developments with more traditional practices. Of course, the extent to which returnees are influencing English language teaching is variable. We acknowledge that those offering accounts of their practice are likely to give the best possible gloss on their achievements. The picture which emerges is, however, consistent: the overseas-based CPD has, directly and indirectly, made an impact on the practice of large numbers of teachers in schools in western China.

We are also very conscious that while the data collected through interviews, focus groups and observation present a consistent and persuasive picture of the impact on actual teacher practice, assessments of the impact on student outcomes is well beyond the scope of the present study. The perceptions of participating and non-participating teachers, as well as head teachers and senior management are that returnees are making a real difference in terms of student performance. It should be stressed, however, that these observations are impressionistic rather than objective; the measurement of student outcomes is a highly complex issue, especially when curriculum and assessment may be out of step.

The recognition of English as an essential element in the modernisation of China, together with the growing awareness of the weaknesses of traditional approaches to the teaching of the language has opened up new spaces for dialogue concerning pedagogy and professional practice. It is clearly important, however, that new approaches to the teaching of English are presented in a way which allows teachers to decide which elements should be incorporated into their teaching and how. The role of research in this process should not be underestimated. As Zheng & Davison (2008: 180) point out:

Most teaching programmes attach great attention to transmitting subject matter knowledge to teachers ... In future, training programmes should include more information about the latest pedagogic innovation and change and academic research both inside and outside China in order to help teachers to carry out more action research-based study so that they can explore their pedagogic spaces and reflect their beliefs and practices.

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5

Pulling the threads together: current theories and current practice affecting UK primary school children who have English as an Additional Language

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Introduction

The study of issues related to the linguistic and social support offered to children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) remains in its infancy in the UK. Consequently, UK policy has tended to draw on large-scale and well-known research from other countries, while the specific situation facing the UK is often not fully acknowledged. Although Oates (2010) argues against borrowing policies from other nations, research-informed decision-making in the UK is hampered by the fact that much of the recent UK-based research in the field of EAL is relatively small-scale and limited in its scope. As a result, researchers and practitioners often fail to find agreement on the provision for bilingual children in UK schools. An important example is the concept of withdrawal from the classroom for language study. This practice is not officially sanctioned, with children being expected by government (since the publication of the Swann report in 1985) to be taught in a whole-class teaching environment within a mainstream school for the entire teaching day. Many schools operate some withdrawal provision, however, despite its use being mentioned as a real cause for concern by some researchers (e.g. Franson, 1999), from both cognitive and social, as well as linguistic perspectives.

This report aims to pull together international and UK-based theories of best practice concerning the education of children who have English as an Additional Language (EAL). The report is split into three main sections. The first comprises a review of the research literature, focusing on two key aspects: that of the *linguistic* nature of bilingual education, and of the *socio-cultural aspects* of being a language learner in a mainstream classroom. The second part of this report presents the findings of an investigation into current practice in the provision of support for bilingual children in primary schools across northern England. The data is examined with reference to the theories highlighted in the first section. The third and concluding section of the report draws implications and makes recommendations for UK policy-makers, local authorities, teachers, and support staff.

A note on terms

The term EAL is commonly used in mainstream UK education to describe children who speak one or more languages in the home and who are learning much of their English in an educational setting. It has been adopted widely in research literature as one of the more inclusive of the acronyms in current use (Hawkins, 2005), although Carder (2008) notes that use of this term only persists within the UK, with the term ESL (English as a Second Language) used more widely internationally. There has been criticism of the term ESL for the implication that English is primary and because of the fact that for many children it is actually the third or fourth language. EAL / ESL children are often also known as 'bilingual'. For the purposes of this report, the term 'bilingual children' has been adopted to mean children who have at least two languages in their repertoire but who may not use both with full competence (Gibbons, 1991) although Chen (2007:38) points out that 'emergent bilingual' may be a better term for those children who have yet to attain any level of competence in English, such as new arrivals into the UK.

Review of literature

This literature review will be organised thematically, considering first aspects related to the nature of bilingual education itself, and then issues around both the linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of being a bilingual child in a monolingual *habitus*.

The definition and development of bilingual education

Defining bilingual education

Our first challenge lies in defining the concept of *bilingual education* itself. Baker (2006:213) considers it a 'simplistic label for a complex phenomenon' and before we go any further, we need to briefly consider the varying types of education which involve two or more languages. This will allow us to reflect on the challenges posed by the sheer diversity of the UK population (cf. Craig *et al*, 2010 for a review of the situation in the northern English city of York, where the diversity of the school population has grown enormously in recent years). Beginning with the challenge of defining bilingual education will also help us to understand why, traditionally, the UK has not practised bilingual education in a truly meaningful way. Rather it has been more a case of educating bilinguals than offering bilingual education. Furthermore, a consideration of the varying types of education which involve more than one language provides a context for the growing interest in the debate around the cognitive benefits of being brought up bilingual. This debate has recently been taken up by the national media, prompted by research by, for example Bialystok *et al*, (2009) and Wodniecka *et al* (2010).

Internationally, a range of typologies and continua classifying different approaches, aims, and markers of success in bilingual education have been proposed over the years (cf. Mackey, 1970; Baetens-Beardsmore, 1993; Brisk, 1998; Hornberger, 2008), taking into consideration aspects such as the type of school, home situations (socially and linguistically), the status of the minority language, and national political educational aims. Some of the key features of bilingual education programmes are presented in Table 1 below. In UK mainstream schools we typically find submersion and transitional models, thereby sitting very much towards the 'less multilingual' end of Hornberger's (2008) spectrum, with true bilingual education only really provided in Wales (Baker, 2006), and to some extent in Scotland and on the Isle of Man. In England, a bilingual education pilot study in Bradford (Fitzpatrick, 1987) was not taken up with much interest, with many teachers very negative about the use of the first language (L1). Research has shown that, even if bilingual support is offered, many bilingual staff are 'untrained and unqualified' (McEachron and Bhatti, 2005). But there are some success stories involving small-scale projects and strong-willed individuals making a difference (cf. Kenner, 2000; Conteh, 2003; Mellen Day, 2002) although minority languages are rarely being used as the medium of instruction, which is important for the academic and linguistic development of bilingual children (cf. Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty, 2007; Cummins, 2000; Osborne *et al*, 2009),

Type of programme	Support for L1	Elite/folk	Primary orientation
Submersion	None	Folk	Language as problem
Transitional	Temporary, until dominant language is mastered	Typically folk	Language as right
Maintenance	Strong, although mixed access to quality materials and well-trained teachers	Mixed	Language as right and resource
One-way immersion	Varies, but L1 not denigrated or threatened	Typically elite	Language as resource
Two-way immersion/dual	Strong	Elite/folk	Language as resource
Community language teaching	Strong, particularly at secondary level	Folk	Language as resource
Heritage language education	Pupils' L1 is often a dominant language	Elite/folk	Language as resource

Table 1: Key features of bilingual education programmes (taken from Hall, Smith and Wicaksono, 2011)¹

Historical and current aspects of bilingual education internationally

Canada is one of the most oft-cited examples of how to get bilingual education right, principally known through the work of Jim Cummins (1984) and Virginia Collier (1992; 1997). There is, however, a great danger of generalising the results from the successful Canadian language programs internationally. Much of the research coming from Canada does not deal with immigrant communities and Carder (2008) notes that the programmes to address the language needs of immigrants remain underdeveloped. The bilingual programmes known globally for their success concern two major international languages, namely English and French, so issues of status between the languages are less relevant. Bilingual education is part of a national ideology and there is mutual respect for home language and culture. Additionally, it should be noted that it is optional, with a relatively homogeneous group of children, all at a similar level linguistically in their L2, with enthusiastic teachers and parents of a mainly middle class background (Romaine, 1999; Baker, 2006). All of these factors must be taken into consideration when looking at the UK situation, with its diversity of languages, and social and political differences.

The Australian model only began to develop after 1971 with the establishment of the Child Migrant Educational Policy (CMEP). The CMEP, despite being a deficit model, did lead to a move away from assimilation, unlike policies in the UK (Carder, 2008). A push to educate bilingually, motivated by the country's long-standing

commitment to language rights (Tollefson, 1991), has caused a focus on the exoticism of the 'heritage', leading ultimately to ineffective bilingual teaching. This translated into a mainstreaming pattern in the 1980s, as in the UK. Since then, however, specific goals for ESL learners (EAL learners in UK terms) have ensured that parallel, rather than 'withdrawal' classes provide a programme of support for all bilingual learners (Davison, 2001). Furthermore, two nationwide awareness-raising and skills-training courses that many teachers have now taken mean that staff are better equipped to work effectively as ESL teachers.

In the USA, there has been less focus on the terminology attached to English language learners, which may explain the status-loaded term 'Limited English Proficiency', which was authorised by the USA equivalent of Every Child Matters ('No Child Left Behind') and is still the term used in the USA for funding purposes (Carder, 2008). Historically, bilingualism was treated very negatively in the USA; the first language census in 1910 considered everyone born in the USA to be an English speaker and would only note another language if the person responding to the census questions was unable to speak English (Baker, 2006). *Lau v Nichols* in 1974 remains the most influential language minority ruling in the USA, essentially providing a mandate for the Education board to initiate bilingual education in at least 500 districts across the USA. Bilingual Education has since had a chequered history, culminating in the 1998 California Proposition 227, which essentially said that English was the language of the 'American Dream' and that, since bilingual programmes had demonstrated limited success in improving literacy rates amongst immigrant children, and since children attain fluency rapidly with enough exposure, all children were to be taught English as quickly as possible (Carder, 2008). This was despite studies by Krashen (1999), who found that 'strong' bilingual education decreased drop out rates amongst Latino children in the USA.

In the rest of the European Union countries, second language work sometimes involves the teaching of English, but naturally this mainly reflects the teaching of the official language of the country involved to the speakers of the heritage languages of immigrants and settled communities with minority languages. There are some innovative multilingual programmes in operation around the EU, with some significant successes being recorded. In the Basque country, for example, Basque-speaking children did better than the Spanish non-multilingual educated children in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results of 2006 (Cenoz, 2009). This result was held in all subjects, leading to researchers suggesting that the use of the minority language as the medium of instruction results in more balanced bilingualism. Luxembourg is a particularly multilingual country but the languages being introduced are, for the most part, high status (French and German) and it is inclusive (Mick, 2011) so it is difficult to draw comparisons with the UK.

Research perspectives on the linguistics aspects of bilingual education

Even if the first language (L1) is used for instructional purposes in the UK, the monolingual nature of the country currently dictates that it is seen as transitional, as 'programmatic' (Alanis, 2000:229) so that the child can be assimilated into the majority language (i.e. English) as quickly as possible. Mainstreaming and transitional models are considered to be less effective in developing a child's

thinking. Some researchers claim that this means children sometimes end up as semi-lingual, having lost some of the native language ability or never really reaching potential linguistically or cognitively in English. There is some evidence to suggest that immersion in second language education environments does not necessarily lead to the loss of the first language. Some suggest that there is a lag in the development of the L1 while early total immersion children are educated in the L2 but after approximately six years they tend to catch up again (Genesee, 1983), but Dutcher (1995) concluded that the very use of the mother tongue assists in the learning of English and, as far back as 1953, a UNESCO report on 'The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education' strongly advocated the use of the first language in education (Baker, 2006). Teachers are often fearful about allowing children to communicate in a language they themselves do not speak (Hélot, 2011), but a number of small-scale studies have highlighted the increase in motivation and the impressive grasp of language awareness that young bilingual children demonstrate when encouraged to speak with each other, whether they are communicating in one language, for example, Bengali, as in Kenner's (2010) research in southern England, or in three, as Martin's (2003) study in Brunei showed.

Baker (2006:110) suggests that code-switching may be the most 'personally efficient manner' of communicating for bilingual children but despite recent research demonstrating how useful it can be it is often not accepted by teachers in the classroom and policy-makers (Moodley, 2007; Hélot, 2011, Willans, 2011). Trans-linguaging and transliteracy projects often demonstrate the benefits of working heteroglossically (with more than one language or variety at a time) and are perhaps more reflective of the way that bilingual children actually use language outside the classroom (Mick, 2011). Careful planning of classroom language use was found to be critical by Pérez and Ochoa (1993) in their study of Hispanic-English bilingual programs in the USA. The importance of planned classroom interactions (whether in the L1 or L2) was further highlighted by the teacher working with Mellen Day (2002) in her ethnographic work. She noted that teaching multilingual children requires more planning, more breaking down of language and structures, and more repetition. The importance of effective classroom teacher and peer interactions for bilingual learners has also been addressed by others (Smith, 2006; Hardman *et al*, 2008; Wardman, in press).

Of course, provision for bilingual children is not limited to in-classroom situations. Outside the classroom, parents are essential for successful bilingual and multilingual education. Research has shown that using parents as resources, building strong relationships between schools and families, and understanding how literacy works in the home are all key components for success (Riches and Curdt-Christiansen, 2010). Brisk (1998) went further in claiming that success in dealing with bilingual children could only come from focusing on all of five key areas: linguistic, cultural, economic, political and social. Having considered some of the linguistic aspects above, it is to the remainder that we now turn.

Summary

So, taking into account research perspectives on the linguistic aspects of bilingual education we might expect to find the following features in a classroom offering strong provision of support for children in the UK:

- Enthusiastic teachers who are positive about the benefits of L1 use in the classroom and aim to prevent language loss (Mellen Day, 2002).
- Children being allowed to be silent (Krashen, 1985).
- Using the L1 more extensively in Foundation and Key Stage 1, especially in schools with a majority of one heritage language (Collier, 1992).
- Lots of one-to-one interaction in the classroom (Conteh, 2003).
- Planned peer activities (Mellen Day, 2002).
- Good resources available (Baker, 2006).
- Planning L1 use carefully and strategically for instructional purposes (Pérez and Ochoa, 1993).
- Trained and qualified staff (McEachron and Bhatti, 2005).

Research perspectives on the socio-cultural aspects of being a bilingual learner

Much of the research conducted into bilingual education effectiveness in the 1970s and 1980s has been criticised. Two meta-reviews of the research (Baker and de Kanter, 1983; Dulay and Burt, 1978) have come to very different conclusions, possibly implying that the reviewing process was subjective but also that, potentially, the original studies being reviewed did not clearly state the effectiveness of particular programmes, and were narrow in their focus, i.e. usually on high-stake outcomes (testing, etc.) rather than more socio-cultural outcomes such as self-esteem and identity issues (Baker, 2006). The Ramirez report (1991) was one of the most famous studies undertaken in the USA. It was mandated by Congress but has been heavily criticised for failing to consider the full range of educational options for bilinguals. For example, withdrawal from the mainstream was not included (which means drawing comparisons with the current UK situation is difficult, as that model is so prevalent here). Additionally, outcomes or success measurements were limited, with no focus on attitudinal, self-esteem or cultural heritage issues (Baker, 2006).

As Vygotsky (1978) tells us, language learning cannot be seen as a general phenomenon but rather as dependent on the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs, meaning that the process may well be different for each child. A one-size-fits-all strategy to the development and inclusion of children who have EAL is therefore unlikely to be effective. Furthermore, Vygotsky's socio-cultural model shows that interaction between 'expert' and 'novice' is key in learning, which has more recently led to a focus on the benefits of dialogic teaching for bilingual children (Haneda and Wells, 2010).

Inclusion has been the focus of the current approach to EAL, as well as for a range of other issues presented by children in schools, including Special Educational Needs. The 'rhetoric of inclusivity' that can be found in some institutions (Barwell, 2005:318) is challenged in others which adopt an approach akin to that found in the work of Lave and Wenger (1991). Their framework of 'legitimate peripheral participation' mirrors the efforts made by schools which successfully deal with diversity in their populations. They ensure that everyone within the 'community of practice' has a voice, often with regularly changing membership requiring that new viewpoints be absorbed.

Identity in language learning is a growing area of interest for researchers, with many choosing to consider adult learners and the impact of life changes and learning new languages on their identities, for example Peirce (1995) and Dornyei (2009). Mellen Day (2002) also points out that children can often be embarrassed to speak the L1 even if the teacher didn't do anything to particularly encourage English or discourage L1. It is something that just seems to happen to some children over time, although not to all and it is simply part of making a decision regarding one's identity (Peirce, 1995). Of course, it is possible that these decisions are made by children to avoid racism and social problems including bullying, and Creese (2003) considered the challenges faced by teachers in dealing with these kinds of problems. Reported cases should be handled sensitively despite differing opinions amongst teachers of meaning that 'one person's racist incident is another's inconvenient break time squabble, not serious enough to warrant the additional paperwork' (Coles, 2008:90) since, if badly dealt with, they can adversely affect pupils and their communities for many years.

International research focusing on identity development in children and adolescents has often been focused on the African American communities (Brice Heath, 1983; Sellars *et al*, 1998; Chavous *et al*, 2003) although Phinney (1989) broadened the scope with her model of racial identity development, that used the terms developed by Tajfel and Turner in their Social Identity Theory of 1979. Caldas (2008) offers an intimate study of his own children's development of identity as bilingual learners, with the non-too-surprising results that they 'grew into it'. Cummins (1996) talks of the classroom as an important place for identity building and employs the now well-used term 'negotiating identities' to describe what teachers should be doing with bilingual learners. UK research is currently limited to relatively small-scale pieces of ethnographic research (cf. Conteh, 2003; Kearney, 2005; Basit, 2009), which is beginning to build an encouraging picture of successful projects on bilingual children's self-concept and self-esteem.

The importance of using the L1 in the classroom is made clear through a number of studies, which highlight that it can enhance the children's sense of identity, self-esteem and self-concept (Duquette, 1999; Johnstone *et al*, 1999; Krashen and McField, 2005). Mellen Day (2002) talks about the experience of secondary school teachers positively reinforcing the importance of her L1 for her identity and she remembers liking this and feels it now shapes who she is. For many teachers, knowing how to do this may be one of the key problems. A teacher sets norms in the classroom and the wider school and if those norms are established through their own cultural lens, then perhaps what happens more often is a subconscious

‘symbolic domination’ (Bourdieu, 1991). Some children use their L1 as part of their linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1977) to subvert the power dynamics of the school or classroom (Martin, D., 2003) in order to gain back some of that relinquished control.

Mellen Day (2002) points out that many bilingual learners of English are quiet in class but do not seem particularly unhappy. This may be associated with the ‘silent period’ that is widely understood as a common reaction for bilinguals (Krashen, 1985), and acknowledged within many of the governmental guidelines on supporting bilingual children (DfCSF, 2007).

Summary

So, research perspectives on the socio-cultural aspects of being a bilingual learner would lead us to expect to find a successful classroom teacher:

- Offering personalised approach to provision of support – acknowledgement that there is no one-size-fits-all (Vygotsky, 1978).
- Allowing and encouraging the use of the L1 (Duquette, 1999; Johnstone *et al*, 1999; Krashen and McField, 2005).
- Allowing silence and not worrying about children being quiet (Krashen, 1985).
- Actively avoiding stigma when a child needs support (Baker, 2006).
- Discussing language and cultural values from a young age (Martin, D., 2003)
- Providing teachers working openly on positive social and racial attitudes (Creese, 2003).
- Offering something more than tokenistic gestures towards inclusivity (Barwell, 2005).
- Encouraging peer support and socialisation through mentoring and buddy schemes (Vygotsky, 1978; Lave and Wenger, 1991).
- Creating a community with a positive attitude towards (or at least an acceptance of) immigration (Brisk, 1998).

The research study: current practice in northern England

The research questions

This study was conducted to consider the following research questions (RQs):

- 1 What are teachers’ current and past experiences of working with EAL children in terms of a) provision of support, b) L1 use, and c) attitudes towards bilingualism?
- 2 To what extent are teachers aware of, and making use of, research findings in the field of EAL research?
- 3 If research findings are not being put into practice, are there explanations for this, which could, in turn, inform research practice in the field?

Methodology: data collection and analysis methods

The current paper presents a qualitative study, with the results triangulated through a mixed methods approach which involved the use of semi-structured interviews and informal conversations, classroom observation field notes and inspection documents.

Eight primary schools took part in the study, ensuring that there was a good geographical spread of settings from across northern England. Details on the participating schools can be found in Appendix 1. Forty-one individuals were involved in the study. The key participants were usually the headteacher and/or the EAL coordinator, a class teacher, an EAL teacher and an EAL support staff member in each school. For more detailed information on the staff involved and their level of involvement, see Appendix 2.

The semi-structured interview was divided into the three broad themes highlighted in RQ1: provision of support for EAL children, an assessment of attitudes towards bilingualism, and the use of the first language in the classroom. These tie in with the over-arching themes of this investigation into the linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of EAL provision. Whilst acknowledging that the connection between families and schools is a very fertile area for research, it falls outside of the scope of this study, which will focus on in-school aspects. The interviews were audio-recorded, as were informal conversations when possible, and then subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. Some transcription data is included in later sections. Transcription conventions have been kept to an absolute minimum, with the only symbols used being (.) and (...) to indicate a hesitation and a longer pause respectively.

Classroom observations were also possible in most of the schools and field notes were taken during these sessions to allow the researcher to draw links between observed behaviours and interviewees' responses or research findings, when any were observable.

All schools and individuals were assured anonymity to encourage full and open participation. A numbering approach has been adopted when talking about participants (i.e. P1. is participant one) in order to avoid the issues of researcher subjectivity that are possible when using pseudonyms. A consent form was obtained from each participant interviewed regarding limitations on what would happen to the recorded data.

There were, of course, sampling limitations in this study. In common with much of the research into bilingualism and bilingual education, the sample is small and essentially non-generalisable, although effort has been made to take data from as wide a demographic of schools and provision as possible across the north of England to offer a range of findings. This means that findings are likely to be *transferable* to some extent to many other settings. Attempts have been made throughout this report to 'interrogate the context' to such an extent that the data offered is *dependable*, in Guba and Lincoln's (1985:13) terms.

Research that focuses heavily on interview data, such as this study, must also acknowledge that the interview process itself has the potential to be flawed, if the interviewer is not aware of the idea of an interview as social practice, meaning that participants' contributions should not necessarily be taken at face value at the analysis stage (Talmy, 2010). The analysis of interview data here adopted a fairly traditional thematic approach with the themes being drawn from the interview guide as well as from the data itself.

Having considered the methods adopted for this study, findings are now presented followed by a discussion of their implications. Interview data is principally summarised in the following section, with some additional verbatim responses presented in Appendix 3.

Findings and discussion

The provision of support for bilingual children, L1 use in school, and attitudes towards bilingualism were all key themes raised in the interviews that are relevant to an exploration of the links between research and current practice in northern England.

We shall first consider the provision of support available for EAL children across the participating schools, attempting to draw conclusions about regional differences in terms of the nature of the *bilingual education* being offered.

Provision of support for bilingual learners

Taking a look back at the summaries of the linguistic and socio-cultural research perspectives, we might expect to find the following in our schools:

- trained and qualified staff
- good resources available
- a personalised approach to the provision of support, with one-to-one interaction common
- actively avoiding stigma when children need support.

Appendix 1 shows that the EAL population varies hugely across the eight schools and we might expect this to have a bearing on the level of support and knowledge found in each school. Most schools in this study had one nominated staff member as a co-ordinator for the provision of support for bilingual learners, but this was not always clear-cut and differed across the schools, as shown in Table 2.

School	Responsibility for EAL
S1, S2, S8	EAL co-ordinator but no staff management responsibility
S3	Deputy Head, who is Inclusion Manager and SENCo
S4	Headteacher, as there is no defined provision (her response regarding who is responsible was “everybody and nobody”)
S5	Unclear but most staff refer to the specialist TA from the Local Authority (LA)
S6	Inclusion/ SEN Manager
S7	No co-ordination; individual class teachers’ responsibility

Table 2: Staff responsibilities for EAL in the participating schools

As McEachron and Bhatti (2005) note in their report on language support, many staff supporting bilingual learners are not qualified teachers, and their finding is borne out by this current study, with teaching assistants providing the bulk of personalised support for bilingual children across all the schools. This growth in the role of the teaching assistant has been prevalent across the country (Blatchford *et al*, 2009; Wardman, in press) so it is no surprise we find it here. What does differ between the schools is the level of training on issues pertaining to second language acquisition and teaching provided for their teaching assistants, as well as for the teachers. This is where the local authority provision comes into play and it is where some significant differences can be found. All schools were aware of the services offered by the local authority, although some had clearly found it to be limited, especially in the two north eastern schools, where ‘somebody came to visit [new arrivals] initially. I don’t think there was a follow-up visit or anything like that (.) I think we were just told to get in touch if I thought there was a problem’ (nursery teacher, S7).

There were six local authorities involved in this study, with the level of support varying from the occasional translator being provided on request (mentioned particularly by teachers in schools 3 and 7 in two different Local Authority regions) to the regular provision of teaching or support personnel (most prevalent in schools 5 and 8). This level of support was generally provided through the now-limited EMAG funding (Rutter, 2008). There was a strong sense in most schools that financial cuts were reducing the support offered by local authorities, and this was mentioned in most interviews, with an accompanying sense of worry about the future, particularly in S1 and S4.

Teachers in schools 1 and 2, which are in the same Local Authority (LA) region in North West England, benefit from an extensive and popular accredited training programme currently offered by the local authority. This follows decisions taken at the time of devolution of funding to the schools, which lead to all of the teaching and support staff employed by the authority being re-employed by individual schools. This training and individualised support of staff from the local authority has had a significant effect on the confidence of staff here to deal with bilingual learners, one of whom reported that she feels like she has learnt a lot. She said: ‘it’s changed my style of teaching and the way I perceive things in school is very different (.) you [the class teacher] carry on teaching whatever you’re teaching

and she [the EAL LA advisor] builds up on the skills that she's got and helps you develop them in whatever you're teaching' (class teacher and EAL co-ordinator, S1). The teachers and bilingual assistants in this LA all described themselves as 'lucky'. However, even here where the support seems strong, there are issues of under-resourcing from the perception of co-ordinators and managers.

The sense of injustice about not receiving what feels like a fair amount of funding is widespread, whether this is due to a growing school being historically classified as 'small' (S1), or because a school located in a fairly affluent suburb receives less funding, despite the fact that nearly all the pupils travel from a far more deprived area to get to the school (S6). In a number of northern towns and cities, the fact that the population of bilingual learners has grown very quickly is something that LAs have not necessarily been able to keep up with (Craig *et al*, 2010) and this has affected provision in S5 and S8.

In S6, it was observed that there were classroom assistants in each room, although it was unclear from observation whether they were full time (as the head in S1 said they would like to see). Observations showed that the staff in S4, a junior school in the North East of England, would have been grateful for that level of TA support however, whether monolingual or bilingual, since they have only three TAs altogether. They have, in the past, had limited support from the LA for extreme cases but most bilingual children 'didn't have a lot of extra support (.) they were thrown in the deep end ...' (class teacher, S4). The provision offered by staff in S7 is similar and they acknowledge that it is lucky that the children they have seen through the school have been well supported by parents and fortunate enough to be intelligent enough to cope.

In terms of the resources for bilingual learners and their teachers, there is a mixed picture across the region. There are schools where obtaining resources, such as dual language books, from the LA is easy, as in S2, but this is not usually the case, where the school needs to take responsibility for the purchasing. This can be difficult when staff do not have the expertise or the patience to deal with the suppliers (as mentioned by both key participants in S1). Materials and resources have been provided in the past through government initiatives into schools but they have often been under-used or have had to be heavily adapted. Staff often report these materials to be low quality ('drivel', as the headteacher from S4 said), prescriptive and impractical, with referenced story books not being provided, and extra planning time being required to adapt the resources (particularly noted by a TA in S3).

Across all schools, individual staff members had created materials that better suit their particular learners and settings. The headteacher in S4 points out that 'the staff now go into a classroom and they're on the whiteboard and they're producing glorious things'. The specialist LA-provided EAL teacher in S8 brings in her own resources, including very personalised realia, like a classical guitar. This demonstrates a real focus on children as individuals and an attempt to personalise the curriculum and acknowledge that 'there's not a panacea that'll work across the board' (headteacher, S1). Resources need to be suited to the settings, the staff and the children, as when they are not, or when good training in how to use them is

not forthcoming, they remain unused and gather dust. This seems especially true of resources such as dual language books. When teachers were asked about their use of these books, the responses ranged from an embarrassed acknowledgement that they existed in the school but had never been used, or they couldn't have been located by the staff member being interviewed, to claims that they were on display in the library but not used as extensively as they might be (S2, S3 and S4). Only in S1 were these books being actively used with events such as 'a reading morning recently where they had all the parents in and read the dual language books with them' (teacher, S1).

In the majority of the schools visited, personalisation of the curriculum is seen as extremely important. One-to-one and small group support is offered to most children, and so the stigma that Baker (2006) is concerned about bilingual children feeling is not considered to be an issue in most of the schools visited. It was only in S4 that any sense of the embarrassment about being taken out of the classroom was mentioned by the class teacher. There has been a move away from withdrawal provision for EAL in some of the schools, with teachers in the North West acknowledging that children 'need to listen to the other children in the class, they need the good role models, so I think that's what happens a lot more than it has ever happened before' (EAL coordinator, S1)

However, away from the North West, withdrawal is practised more commonly for those who 'can't [cope in the classroom environment... with the noise levels and trying to concentrate]'. They do 'go out and practice vocabulary and sentences and those types of things' (class teacher, S3).

The official line from school management can be that withdrawal from the classroom does not happen. In schools more accustomed to dealing with EAL, there seems to be a growing awareness that inclusion can offer the role models and the socio-cultural development opportunities required and that withdrawal can take away from curriculum knowledge, as we can see from S3 above. However, despite the insistence from the headteacher in S5 that the specialist TA works in the classroom, observations in the school showed that this is not always the case. Withdrawal is often felt to be the most practical option, especially in schools where the support is provided by external teachers (who, moreover, have their sense of status to protect) and TAs through local authority provision, as the hours offered are limited.

First language use in school

The summaries detailing research perspectives have suggested that in a school dealing effectively with bilingual children we would expect to find:

- Enthusiastic teachers who are positive about the benefits of L1 use in the classroom and aim to prevent language loss
- Children being allowed to be silent
- Using or allowing the use of the L1 more lower down the school, especially in schools with a majority of one heritage language

- Planning L1 use carefully and strategically for instructional purpose, with peer activities to use L1 role models
- Something more than tokenistic gestures towards inclusivity and the L1.

The opportunities for children to use the first language differ greatly across the eight schools in the current study, and also within the schools themselves. S1 and S2, both schools with a high proportion of children with the same L1, function quite differently from the others in this respect, with S1 having a bilingual teacher employed for all classes bar one and the L1 being employed extensively in the Foundation and Early Years' classrooms in both schools. Classroom observation in the S2 nursery picked up on a story being told bilingually between a teacher and bilingual TA and it is used as a matter of course in S1 too, with the EAL co-ordinator saying 'in my normal day to day teaching anything I can say in Panjabi whether it be a story or whether it be telling them what to do next or explaining a concept I try to use as much of it as I possibly can'.

The EAL co-ordinator in S2 noted that there was a strong awareness of the way that the L1 should be used in the classroom, but highlighted the differences between S1 and S2 by commenting 'it should be that it's said in the first language first but obviously you're teaching a science lesson you can't do that because the bilingual assistant is translating what the teacher's said'. This led on to a comment about the trust that teachers need to have in the teaching assistants to express the concepts clearly enough.

Even in these schools that so strongly encourage the use of the L1 in the Foundation and Early Years stages, there was acknowledgement that this changes further up the school, with staff in both schools mentioning that children can get embarrassed to use the L1 from around Year 5. There was little discussion of the reasons but it is possible that it stems from the attitudes of the staff towards spontaneous and informal use of the L1, since it was claimed that 'they've got to learn to use it appropriately so in our school at the moment there isn't a culture (.) of children being allowed to use it [the L1 in Key Stage 2] without there being a bilingual member of staff there to sort of oversee it' (EAL co-ordinator, S2)

Schools with greater diversity find things even more difficult. The staff are less likely to speak other languages, the L1 is rarely used for instructional purposes and there is a greater confusion over the benefits or reasons for using the L1 in the classroom. Many of the staff fear allowing children to speak in a language they do not understand, as previous researchers have acknowledged (Kenner, 2000; Hélot, 2011). The Inclusion Manager at S6 reported that the L1 was only used for translation and on-the-spot difficulties and that only happened in Foundation and Key Stage 1 as there was no bilingual support further up the school. This ad hoc and non-curriculum related use of the L1 is echoed in many of the other schools, with discussion of various ways of using the L1, including:

- children speaking 'a mixture of some English words(...) and some of [their] own language' (class teacher, S3)

- 'get[ting children] to say good morning, good afternoon and [teaching] the class how to say goodbye and that kind of thing' (class teacher, S4)
- creating 'a like a Polish area with a table and things [and] sett[ing] up an area with a table and things like that' (teacher, S7).

It was acknowledged by a number of respondents that their pupils 'could have had more support' or that it could have been 'made more of a two way thing' rather than the children simply learning the English language and culture and following an assimilation model (teacher, S7).

Most teachers agree that language loss is to be avoided if possible but curricular ideas about ways of developing additive bilingualism are limited, mainly involving teachers thinking they should be 'trying to learn a little bit of it and trying to show that it's you know not one over the other' (class teacher, S3). Teachers regularly express a sincere wish to be able to speak the languages of the children in their care. The nursery teacher in S8 says that she wants to learn Polish and searches for nursery rhymes on the internet for the child in her group. Another very common theme is the admiration expressed for bilingual children and, to some extent, a sense of jealousy at the skills that those children have had the chance to develop (particularly noted in S1 and S3).

Apart from S1 and S2, other schools use the L1 within certain curriculum areas in order to develop bilingual children's self-esteem and self-concept. A good example was in S8, where the observer could see poems by the children in heritage languages on the wall, which has been used to great effect in a number of studies on the literacy of multilingual children (Mick, 2011). This was also said to happen in S7.

The use of the L1 around the schools differed greatly, with some schools (S4) acknowledging that it was essentially tokenistic and, in fact, was increased strategically around the time of an Ofsted visit. Other schools genuinely believe in the importance of such displays, especially for the purpose of making parents feel welcome (S2), with displays 'fit [ting] in with the bigger holistic picture' (headteacher, S5), although sometimes the displays' purposes can get a little lost, amongst vague comments about the multicultural benefits.

The class-teacher in S1 noted the importance of careful planning of language in the curriculum for bilingual children (whether it be English or the L1), and discussed the fact that this was a very time-consuming task. Producing resources in the L1 for specific children in their care was something that a number of teachers mentioned doing. The nursery teacher in S8 talks of making her own materials, and searching for Polish language resources on the internet outside of class time. However, this reinventing of the wheel could be said to be a waste of the limited time that staff have for EAL provision.

Attitudes towards bilingualism and immigration

As the earlier summary on research perspectives suggests, a school dealing effectively with bilingual children would typically provide:

- A community with a positive attitude towards (or at least acceptance of) immigration
- Teachers working on social and racial attitudes openly, through discussion of language and cultural values from a young age
- Encouragement of peer support and socialisation through mentoring and buddy schemes.

When asked about their perception of school, local and national attitudes towards immigration and bilingualism, many participants drew a very clear distinction between the positive attitudes of the school community and a more negative view amongst the wider community, especially on a national level (this was explicitly stated by staff in S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5, and implied elsewhere). Staff are highly aware of the pressures that are put on children to assimilate into British culture and feel that they play an important role in offering transition. However, all the schools felt that they projected a very positive outlook on immigration and bilingualism and many felt that their immediate communities shared this, with the exception of S2, S4 and S7, where there was either mention of racism experienced locally (S2 and S4) or a sense of isolation from multiculturalism (in the case of S7). The headteacher in S1 said that he felt that the national direction on multiculturalism has been ‘very woolly’ and that there needs to be more focus on the nature of the different minority communities and the effect that this has on community engagement, which he feels has an enormous impact on the aspirations and achievement potential of the children in his care.

Most staff expressed pride in their record on social and racial matters, with few such problems reported. Most of the schools have an open approach to talking about social and racial attitudes, often using literacy lessons as a tool for this (S5 and S7 noted this particularly) although the S7 Ofsted report (2011, p.5) noted that ‘not all pupils have enough understanding of other cultures and all forms of diversity’ so there is probably some work to do to ensure that the discussions are fully developed.

Establishing relationships with other children, specifically native English-speakers, is mentioned frequently as being a positive action, but this is not without its difficulties since there are cases when ‘the indigenous white children also have unenriched language so their role models are poor’ (headteacher, S1). There were frequent comments made about how well integrated bilingual children become into the class group and how well both teachers and TAs understood the importance of this, both socially and linguistically.

The concept of official mentors seems not to have been picked up in many of the schools, with the exception of S1. A class teacher in S3 suggested that anybody and everybody would be performing this function in the Year one class that a new arrival had recently joined, saying that having a new arrival with limited or no English ‘brings out the best’ in the rest of the class and that they find it to be a ‘real learning experience’. This idea of mutual benefit for both bilingual and native English-speaking children was echoed across a number of the schools, although, as

we have seen, it only occasionally was used linguistically. However, when children are encouraged to use the first language, staff comment on how much confidence it gives them, when, for example, ‘we used to get it [Russian] wrong and he’d be like no you’re saying it all wrong (laughs) (...) all the children loved it you know they were saying what can you teach me what can you teach me’ (teacher, S3).

This acknowledgement of the power of the L1 and the confidence gained in using it generally only seems to extend as far as the children teaching the class ad hoc words (also evidenced in S4). However, it does lead to both bilingual and native English-speaking children gaining in awareness of linguistic and cultural issues and is found to some extent in all the schools (although significantly less often in S4 than the remainder). A more typical approach to a formal mentor and buddy was to use a fellow L1 speaker, whether this be from the same year group or not. This has positive and negative repercussions, as the TAs from S3 acknowledged, when they discussed their worries for a Russian girl who was missing some of her own class time to translate for a younger boy. This practice was opposed strongly in S5, with the headteacher there being concerned that ‘when they first come here if you’ve got two Spanish-speakers together they will still be Spanish-speakers and their minds and ears will not be open to absorbing the language’. This, along with many of the discussions above, highlights the differences in approaches taken across the diverse schools of northern England, and their lack of certainty and knowledge about what best practice might be.

Implications and recommendations

In considering provision of support for bilingual children, the use of the L1, and attitudes towards immigration and bilingualism, we have seen that the schools in this study adopt different approaches to the challenges they face. This is unsurprising given EAL’s lack of a position within the curriculum and the consequential lack of centralised support or strategy. Some of the opinions expressed by participants in this study reflect the monolingual *habitus* (to adopt Bourdieu’s term) of the UK education system, and are not likely to change in the foreseeable future. However, it is possible to draw recommendations for action from this study.

- 1. Initial Teacher Education should train new teachers on EAL issues and more appropriate CPD and training is needed for existing teachers and TAs, to ensure that all staff responsible for EAL have an understanding of Second Language Acquisition processes, research in the field of EAL, and an understanding of the importance of using the first language in the classroom***

Most teachers in this study remain convinced that they have not received adequate local authority training in dealing with bilingual children (with notable exceptions in S1, S2 and S5). TAs feel significantly worse in this respect, especially in S3, although the TAs in S1 and S2 have benefitted from more training than many of the teachers elsewhere have received. This is clearly related to the number of bilingual children in the local area but there may well be lessons to be learnt from the North West in terms of an efficient approach toward the provision of support

for teachers and children. Forthcoming funding cuts will potentially further erode the already minimal training on offer.

Additionally, training more sensitive to the needs of either particular settings or teachers could lead to more inclusive practice, such as that seen in some of the research projects mentioned earlier. For example, teachers could seek to find ways to make EAL children feel comfortable, rather than ‘embarrassed’ (as some of the participants in this study reported) as bilinguals. By learning to employ a more heteroglossic approach in the classroom, better trained teachers could facilitate pupils being able to embrace their own identity as bilingual rather than as two monolinguals within one body (Hélot and Ó Laoire, 2011; Rice, 2008), which is important in that it may well prevent some of the potential alienation that the headteacher in S1 spoke of. This approach would take into account the positive results of research into the benefits of trans-languaging and code-switching for all children in the classroom and, furthermore, is important since ignoring the first language competence of bilingual children could well be considered as being discriminatory (Hélot and Ó Laoire, 2011). The fear that many monolingual teachers have over blurring the boundaries between languages has been shown to be unfounded and unhelpful (Mick, 2011) and working more freely with other languages may help break down these barriers.

2. The dialogue between schools which have similar requirements should be enhanced to limit the time- and money-wasting inherent in a decentralised approach

The lack of centralised control or forums for dialogue has a negative effect on provision for children and staff. Organisations disseminating information and research on EAL do exist, such as the National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum, who do sterling work in making the voices of bilingual children and their teachers heard at a national level. However, they do seem to struggle to reach the class teacher, possibly due to the financial cost of membership. This means that many school staff report a general sense of ‘winging it’, against a background of not enough money, time or knowledge. A co-ordinating force to link schools with similar needs across regions could share best practice and materials, thereby tackling to some extent the key problems of time-wasting and lack of knowledge, which would avoid teachers feeling isolated in dealing with the challenges this group of pupils presents.

3. The terminology used around the issues pertaining to bilingual children should be reconsidered and streamlined, to avoid social stigma

It is worth considering the effect of standard labels such as ‘support’ that the system in the UK currently adopts, and indeed that the present report has therefore adopted. ‘Support’ is a term that implies sympathy or pity, and is often a temporary state related to getting over an injury or illness. It is perhaps, therefore, not ‘support’ that bilingual children need, but rather a ‘programme’ (cf. Carder, 2009) in order to avoid potential social stigma within schools. The discussion on the labelling of the children themselves was briefly dealt with at the beginning of this report but is also something worthy of review given the fact that it is really

only the UK and Ireland which adopts the term EAL, which may be limiting the options in terms of disseminating and finding research work in the field.

4. *The policy of previous and continuing funding cuts in EAL provision needs reconsideration in the face of increased need for support and the potential consequences of an unsupported generation*

Funding cuts, of course, are key in most of the participants' discussions within this study, as well as within the wider public sector at the moment, but some of the concerns expressed about the potential long-term alienating effects within UK communities if EAL is not dealt with effectively at the school level are worthy of further consideration. With all headteachers being increasingly aware of an existing and forthcoming programme of cuts, there is a sense of worry about what the future holds. Given the media interest in the cognitive benefits of bilingualism (Guardian, February 2011), it is important that the public is made aware that these benefits cannot possibly be realised if the provision for these emergent bilinguals is not adequate.

5. *Further research is required*

The scope of this report is necessarily limited, as the issue of EAL provision is complex and multi-faceted. There is an urgent need for further research into the effect of funding cuts, as well as more contributions to the growing body of research on the benefits of using the first language in and out of the classroom. Testing and assessment of bilingual children is an area ripe for research too, especially discussion of the appropriacy of testing children in relation to monolingual norms (cf. Grosjean, 1997). Finally, further research into the importance of connections between schools and families, as well as local community involvement with schools, is urgently required.

Notes

1. The majority of bilingual learners in UK primary schools would be classified as 'folk' learners by Romaine's (1999) terms adopted in this table, contrasting with the 'elite' learners that have formed much of the research into bilingualism to date, for example, those learners in Canada opting to learn a second (also high prestige) language in well-resourced schools.

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Appendix 1 – Participating schools

School	Location	Number of pupils	Ofsted rating
S1	Lancashire	141 (2006)	Good (2006)
<p>Ofsted descriptor: <i>'The vast majority of pupils are of Asian Pakistani origin and a high percentage of pupils live in homes where English is not the mother tongue... [H]igh number of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual admission or transfer to secondary school. When children start in the nursery, the majority have skills and knowledge that are well below national expectations for children of their age, many starting school with little or no spoken English.'</i></p>			
S2	Lancashire	441 (2009)	Good (2009)
<p>Ofsted descriptor: <i>'The proportion of children who come from homes where English is not the first language is high and has increased since the previous inspection. The majority of children are of Pakistani heritage but almost a third are White British.... More pupils join and leave the school at different times in the school year than is usual.'</i></p>			
S3	West Yorkshire	196 (2011)	Satisfactory (2011) *
<p>Ofsted descriptor: <i>'This is a slightly smaller-than-average sized primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups. A minority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.'</i></p>			
S4	North East	330 (2009)	Satisfactory (2009) *
<p>Ofsted descriptor: <i>'The school is larger than average. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than that found nationally. Although there are increasing numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups, most pupils are from a White British background and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.'</i></p>			
S5	North Yorkshire	209 (2008)	Good (2008)
<p>Ofsted descriptor: <i>'The school is situated in a village on the outskirts of [city], very close to the university. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average.... Many of the pupils are from families connected with the University (...) and many of these are from overseas. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is high and so is the proportion speaking English as an additional language. A higher than average proportion of pupils enters or leaves the school at times other than the usual.'</i></p>			

School	Location	Number of pupils	Ofsted rating
S6	West Yorkshire	384 (2010)	Good (2010)
<i>Ofsted descriptor: 'This is a larger-than-average size primary school. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average and the majority of these speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just above average. A lower than average proportion of pupils has special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of pupils on roll has increased recently and this has affected the organisation of some class groupings.'</i>			
S7	North East	444 (2011)	Outstanding (2011)
<i>Ofsted descriptor: 'The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average but increasing. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs.'</i>			
S8	North Yorkshire	405 (2011)	Satisfactory (2011)*
<i>Ofsted descriptor: 'This larger-than-average school serves a diverse area to the west of (...) city centre.... Most pupils are of White British heritage, but there is small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language.... A very small proportion of pupils is looked after by the Local Authority.'</i>			

Table 1: Demographic and audit information pertaining to participating schools

* Ofsted ratings may now not be comparable between pre- and post- 2009 following changes to the audit process.

Ofsted reports for the participating schools have not been fully referenced in order to protect the anonymity of the individuals and institutions involved in the study

Appendix 2 – Full list of participating staff members, indicating school affiliation and level of participation in the study

School	Participants		Nature of participation
1	P1	EAL Co-ordinator	interview
	P2	Class teacher	observation
	P3	Headteacher	interview
2	P4	EAL Co-ordinator	interview
	P5	Bilingual Learning Assistant (BLA)	group interview/ observation in community project
	P6	BLA	group interview
	P7	BLA	group interview
	P8	BLA	group interview
	P9	Class teacher	interview
	P10	Nursery class teacher	observation
	P11	Headteacher	interview
3	P12	Class teacher	group interview
	P13	Class teacher	group interview/ observation
	P14	Headteacher	interview
	P15	Teaching Assistant (TA)	group interview
	P16	TA	group interview
	P17	TA	group interview
	P18	TA	group interview
	P19	TA	group interview

School	Participants		Nature of participation
4	P20	Class teacher	interview
	P21	Class teacher	observation
	P22	Class teacher	observation
	P23	Headteacher	interview
5	P24	Local Authority EAL TA	informal conversation/ observation
	P25	Class teacher	interview
	P26	Class teacher	observation
	P27	Headteacher	interview
6	P28	Class teacher	observation
	P29	Class teacher	observation
	P30	Deputy headteacher	interview
	P31	SEN Co-ordinator	group interview
	P32	Family Liaison Manager	group interview
7	P33	Nursery teacher/ member of Senior Management team	interview
	P34	Class teacher	interview
	P35	Class teacher	interview
	P36	Class teacher	observation/ informal conversation
	P37	Bilingual TA	informal conversation
8	P38	Class teacher	observation
	P39	Local Authority EAL teacher	observation/ informal conversation
	P40	Class teacher	observation
	P41	Nursery class teacher	observation/ informal conversation

Appendix 3 – excerpts of relevant transcription data

Comments on: *Training and Local Authority support*

“I feel like I’ve learnt a lot and it’s changed my style of teaching and the way I perceive things in school is very different ... you carry on teaching whatever you’re teaching and she builds up on the skills that she’s got and helps you develop them in whatever you’re teaching” (class teacher and EAL co-ordinator, S1)

“I don’t know that many authorities have anything like our support (.) we’re very lucky to have it so one or two of our teachers have had people working alongside us to develop things further you know” (EAL co-ordinator, S2).

“and I’d entered this academic year hoping that every class was gonna have a full time classroom assistant which to us is a luxury because [LA] has historically been fairly under-resources as regards pupil ratio number money so we’re playing catch up (.) until recently we were classed as a small school which has impacts on how much money you’ve got to spend on things” (headteacher, S1).

“we can always borrow things from the [LA service] so occasionally especially during that story telling week we did borrow loads of books you know different languages” (EAL co-ordinator, S2).

“she’s [the local authority advisor] made me realise that isn’t how it works [withdrawal from the classroom]. They need to listen to the other children in the class, they need the good role models, so I think that’s what happens a lot more than it has ever happened before” (EAL coordinator, S1)

Comments on: *Government EAL resources*

“it came in a plastic box because it was for a project (.) I can’t remember whether I threw it out in the last clear out (.) you’re welcome to borrow that ... we’ve plodded through it and it was such drivel (.) the quality of the stuff is not very high” (headteacher, S4)

“We’ve got a big EAL [LA] file that’s been passed down through the school which kind of tells you what you should be doing the first unit was All About Me that’s got lesson plans and it’s got worksheets (.) but the thing I was finding difficult is that it was saying get such and such book and I was thinking well I’ve got an hour to plan the whole week I don’t have time to go to the school library for the book so I try and use different stories” (TA, S3)

Comments on: *Dual language books*

“we do have a lot of dual language books they’re put in there as a main area where teachers can go over and get them (.) they had a reading morning

recently where they had all the parents in and read the dual language books with them” (teacher, S1)

“we haven’t got that many I don’t know why (.) it depends on the story because they [the bilingual language assistants] can’t all read it you see ... I’m not sure how much they’re used and how many there are in KS2” (EAL co-ordinator, S2)

“we put them (.) they’re out in the reading corner but I’ve never read any of them” (class teacher, S3)

“I think we’ve got quite a lot of them in the library area but I possibly couldn’t just go and put my hands on them (...) I couldn’t honestly tell you [if the children use them]” (headteacher, S4)

Comments on: *‘Winging it’ and producing own materials and resources*

EAL children “didn’t have a lot of extra support they were thrown in the deep end ...” (class teacher, S4).

“the staff now go into a classroom and they’re on the whiteboard and they’re producing glorious things” (headteacher, S4)

“there’s not a panacea that’ll work across the board” (headteacher, S1).

“those who can cope in the classroom environment and then the others with the noise levels and trying to concentrate some of them can’t do it can they and with EAL that do go out and practice vocabulary and sentences and those types of things” (class teacher, S3)

Comments on: *Using the first language*

“in my normal day to day teaching anything I can say in Panjabi whether it be a story or whether it be telling them what to do next or explaining a concept I try to use as much of it as I possibly can” (EAL coordinator, S1)

“it should be that it’s said in the first language first but obviously you’re teaching a science lesson you can’t do that because the bilingual assistant is translating what the teacher’s said” (EAL co-ordinator, S2)

“they’ve got to learn to use it appropriately so in our school at the moment there isn’t a culture of it [using the L1 in Key Stage 2] (.) of children being allowed to use it without there being a bilingual member of staff there to sort of oversee it” (EAL co-ordinator, S2)

“sometimes they like like Khaled will sometimes I think it’s almost like a mixture of some English words he’ll slip in there and some of his own language and some of it is it sounds to me like what he thinks English sounds like” (class teacher, S3)

“I think that’s fallen by the wayside I think because I haven’t felt this year that I’ve needed to there was a few years ago when I made more of an issue of it when I was in year three erm there was a couple of boys who I felt would they

liked that you know they wanted to speak in their language so I would just get them to say good morning, good afternoon and they taught the class how to say goodbye and that kind of thing” (class teacher, S4)

“I don’t think they did [speak in L1] we did a erm I think with Mrs M we did a like a Polish area with a table and things cos he used to go and see his family for maybe three or four weeks and the same with Jenny did that we asked them if they’d bring some things back with them and we’d set up an area with a table and things like that but I must admit no we didn’t really we said hello and goodbye in their language and things but as a whole no (.) I’m really you know in hindsight really we erm maybe sh- could have had more support on made it more of a two way thing rather than them just learning the English language and cul- and fitting in with us really” (teacher, S7)

it’s good to “try to learn a little bit of it and trying to show that it’s you know not one over the other” (class teacher, S3)

Comments on: *Attitudes towards bilingualism and bilingual children*

“I think they’re great they’re miles better than me (.) I always tell them that brazenly you’ve got so many more skills than I’ve got I wish I was like that” (headteacher, S1)

“I think it’s sort of admired by like everybody (laughs) (.) we’re very ignorant we can’t (.) it’s like when we go on holiday you expect people to speak English you don’t learn Spanish to go on holiday and so you (.) I feel it’s very important that they keep who they are but then they do have to (.) learn English to be part of the social network in the school area (class teacher, S3)

Comments on: *Peer support*

“the indigenous white children also have unenriched language so their role models are poor” (headteacher, S1).

“if they become friends with children with different languages and abilities it will bring them right round so it is important” (teacher, S3).

“another boy in the class who spoke Russian at home (.) he used to teach us sort of words every now and then (.) we used to get it wrong and he’d be like no you’re saying it all wrong (laughs) (...) all the children loved it you know they were saying what can you teach me what can you teach me” (teacher, S3).

“when they first come here if you’ve got two Spanish speakers together they will still be Spanish speakers and their minds and ears will not be open to absorbing the language” (headteacher, S5).

6

Early EFL learning in context – evidence from a country case study

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Introduction

From popular beliefs to research approaches

Early language learning (ELL) is a phenomenon that has been attracting a lot of attention for quite some time now. Three approaches to it can be observed. First, there is the popular belief that children can pick up a second language (L2) effortlessly, successfully and fast. This has led to ELL programmes mushrooming all over the world (Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović, 2006). In more recent times, however, the high enthusiasm for the ‘the younger, the better’ position has met with critical overtones voiced by some experts (e.g., Muñoz, 2006; Nikolov, 2002), who point out that early starters are not necessarily faster or more efficient language learners than later starters. The second approach is connected to the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) research, which is considered to represent the theoretical underpinnings of ELL. According to insights from the CPH-focused studies, children acquire languages with greater ease and higher success because they can rely on natural acquisition processes that are not available to adults. In their language learning children make use of procedural memory and develop implicit competence, while older learners need to resort to declarative memory and explicit learning processes (Paradis, 2004). In spite of a large body of empirical findings concerning the age factor, the impact of age on language learning is still hotly debated: some experts support the CPH (e.g., DeKeyser and Larson-Hall, 2005; Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson, 2001; Long, 2005), while others claim there is no critical period (e.g., Bialystok, 2001; Birdsong, 2005; Moyer, 2004). The third approach to ELL can be discerned in studies of experts whose focus on the complexity of the issue prevents them from taking an exclusive position on the impact of age on language learning (e.g., Johnstone, 2002; Muñoz, 2006; Singleton and Ryan, 2004). Thanks to the growing body of research into ELL programmes in different contexts, this new perspective on ELL has emerged as one that not only offers theoretical insights into this topical subject but can also inform teachers, parents and policy-makers about the key issues in ELL. What characterises this third approach is the awareness that contextual factors may play an essential role. Thus, in foreign language learning (FLL) contexts, as opposed to second language acquisition (SLA) contexts, children’s reliance on natural implicit learning processes is highly limited. Insights into early FL classrooms show that in most situations ELL is based on form-focused teaching (DeKeyser and Larsen-Hall, 2004) and that young learners are exposed to ‘minimal input situations’ (Larsen-Hall, 2008). Nikolov (2009) also points to the frequently low L2 proficiency of teachers who cannot secure native-like levels in their young learners, which are often unrealistically expected by parents and policy-makers.

Following the third approach described above, in this paper we focus on early learning of English in a particular FLL context from the perspective of a number of key contextual factors that, in our opinion, determine both the processes and the outcomes of early EFL learning. We consider these in relation to individual learner factors and look into their interactions as well.

Early EFL learning in Croatia

Background

The study described below was carried out as part of the Early Language Learning in Europe (ELLiE)¹ project (www.ellieresearch.eu). It is a transnational longitudinal project whose aim was to look into early FLL in seven country contexts in Europe in order to see what are realistically possible outcomes of formal school language learning in Europe. The countries involved were: Croatia, England, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden. Early learning of English was investigated in all countries but England, where project participants were learners of French and Spanish. The project lasted for three years (2007-2010) but was preceded by an exploratory scoping year², the year in which participants began their FLL. The sample included over 1,400 young learners. This was a convenience sample made up of young learners drawn from six-eight schools per country. During the three years investigations were carried out simultaneously in all seven countries using the same measuring instruments.

The Croatian context

Early FLL has a long tradition in Croatia (Vilke, 2007). Its beginnings can be traced back to the first half of the 20th century and it has been characterised by constant lowering of the starting age at which it was introduced into the national school curriculum. Previously, the start age was 11, then ten, and since 2003 the FL has been a compulsory subject for all learners from the age of six-seven (Grade One of primary school). The popularity of different foreign languages taught in Croatian schools kept changing, but in recent decades English has been by far the most popular. Currently over 85 per cent of first graders learn English, over 10 per cent start with German, while Italian and French are represented in very small numbers (Medved Krajnović and Letica Krevelj, 2009). English also has a special status in the curriculum: those learners who do not start learning English in Grade One must be offered an opportunity to start with it in Grade Four (age ten), so that no learner ends primary education without having had English classes. A second FL is offered at different points during formal education and the Croatian education policy follows recommendations of the Council of Europe aiming at two FLs for everyone. Attitudes to FLs are highly positive and, as a country whose economy is based on tourism, FLL is high on the priority list of policy-makers. Unfortunately, this is not followed by equally high investment into language learning. Out-of-school exposure to English is quite high. Foreign programmes shown on Croatian national TV channels are not dubbed and neither are foreign films. EFL learners can listen to music with lyrics in English. Most of the computer software that learners use is also in English. Contact with foreigners is quite high too: many foreign tourists communicate with local people in English, and the same is true of business people visiting Croatia.

What also characterises the Croatian early FLL context is decades of research into early learning of FLs. Studies in the field of ELL have been carried out since the 1970s (e.g., Vilke 1976). The best well-known internationally are those made as part of a ten-year national longitudinal experimental project (1991-2001) that looked into the early learning of English, French, German and Italian of three generations of young learners throughout their eight-year primary education (Mihaljević Djigunović and Vilke, 2000; Vilke and Vrhovac, 1993, 1995; Vrhovac,

2001). The main aim was to find the optimal age for introducing the FL into the primary curriculum in the Croatian socio-educational context. The conclusion of the project was that the optimal age was the beginning of formal education (Grade One) provided that three conditions were met. The conditions included: intensive FL teaching in the first few grades (five class hours per week), small groups of learners (not exceeding 15 learners per group) and FL teachers who were specifically trained to work with children. Although the Ministry of Education sponsored the project and welcomed the findings, when the FL was introduced in the national curriculum, none of the three conditions were met. Thus, Croatian children start FLL in Grade One but with only two class hours per week, they are taught in large groups (up to 30 learners per group) and, often, their FL teachers are not specially trained to work with children.

Currently, in their teaching of EFL, schools are following the Croatian National Curriculum and the Croatian National Educational Standards, two documents that centrally regulate teaching EFL in primary and secondary education in the country. According to these documents, early teaching of FLs should be communicatively oriented, holistic and multisensory. It is specifically stressed that grammatical explanations and metalanguage should be totally excluded. The aims are expressed in terms of the Common European Framework (2001) levels: by the end of Grade Four learners are expected to reach the A1 level of communicative language competence.

Classes in Croatian primary schools are generally monolingual, except for schools in areas that are close to the border.

EFL teachers who teach YLs in lower primary can acquire their qualification in two ways. The traditional pathway implies a university degree in English language and literature (teaching stream). In the past 15 years or so it has also been possible to qualify by obtaining a university degree in 'early education with a minor in English'. There are, however, still some (older) EFL teachers who have a college degree in English that earlier used to qualify teachers for teaching in primary schools only.

The study

Aims of the study

In this study we wanted to get an insight into early EFL learning using a country case study approach. By investigating a number of contextual and individual factors involved in ELL in Croatia, as well as their interplay, we hoped to contribute to a deeper understanding of processes and outcomes of early EFL learning. We focused on the following research questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of the Croatian context relevant to early EFL learning?
2. Which individual learner factors contribute to linguistic outcomes of early EFL learning?
3. How do contextual and individual factors interact with linguistic outcomes in early EFL learning?

Sample

A total of 173 young EFL learners participated in the study. They were drawn from seven schools: two metropolitan, two small town and three village schools. In each school one class was followed during Grade Two, Three and Four. A smaller subsample was also selected for the purpose of more intensive investigations. The subsample ('focal learners') was composed of six learners from each class. These were selected on the basis of their EFL teacher's report about their language-learning ability: in each school focal learners included two high-ability, two average and two low-ability learners. Comparisons of focal learners' performances to non-focal learners on tasks administered to whole classes showed that they could be considered representative of the whole sample.

Instruments

All the instruments used in the study were designed by the ELLiE team (www.ellieresearch.eu). YLs' attitudes and motivation, linguistic self-confidence, home support and out-of-school exposure to English were measured by smiley questionnaires and individual oral interviews. Data on the socio-economic status, type and amount of out-of-school exposure were elicited by means of the parents questionnaire. Information about school setting contexts was obtained through interviews with school principals. Relevant data on EFL teachers were gathered by means of teacher questionnaires and interviews with teachers. Insights into the classroom teaching that YLs were exposed to were obtained through classroom observation. Listening comprehension was used as a measure of linguistic outcomes throughout the three years. The listening tasks administered consisted of multiple-choice items that each included three drawings. To measure YLs' progress from year to year some items were kept while others were added to follow the expected levels in different grades. A later addition included a second part: a picture of a room in which YLs had to find the right people and objects.

Procedure

Classroom observation was carried out three times per year on average. The observed classes were audio-recorded and transcribed. Principal interviews were carried out at the beginning of the study and again at the end. Teacher interviews were done at different points in the school year depending on teachers' available time. Teacher questionnaires were filled in during the researcher's school visits. Parents questionnaires were filled in at home and handed in to class teachers. All other instruments were administered towards the end of school years.

Findings

School level contextual factors

The seven schools had a lot in common. They all followed the central curriculum for EFL and used teaching materials approved by the Ministry of Education. All except one school were attended by local children, as is common practice in primary education in Croatia. The exception – School 77³ – was a metropolitan school that was considered prestigious because it was also attended by children of foreign diplomats and businessmen who followed an international curriculum. Many of the Croatian pupils there were not local children and were being taken to school by

their parents from different parts of the city. A summary of school characteristics is presented in Table 1 below.

School 71	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a small town school with over 600 pupils; average class size: 25 pupils - offers English and German - early FLL offered long before it became mandatory in 2003 - very positive attitudes to FLL; German highly popular too (many families with someone having worked as guest workers in German-speaking countries) - involved in international ecological projects - EFL teacher – one was a class teacher with a minor in English, two replacements were unqualified teachers - well equipped by Croatian standards: video and CD player, a computer room with software for FL teaching (but not used with lower primary classes), interactive whiteboard in IT classroom; library equipped with authentic books for children and simplified readers in English
School 72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a very modern small town school with around 800 pupils, average class size: 25 - offers English and German - early FLL offered long before it became mandatory in 2003; local community had covered the costs - very positive attitudes to FLL; German highly popular too (many families with someone having worked as guest workers in German-speaking countries) - EFL teacher - class teacher with a minor in English - very well equipped: one computer with FL software in each classroom, interactive whiteboard in IT classroom, video and CD player; authentic English books for children in the library

School 73	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a village school with around 600 pupils; average class size: 25 pupils - offers English and German - moderately positive attitudes to FLL - moderately equipped: CD player, a few computers in the building but not used for language classes; some authentic English books for children in the library - EFL teacher – an unqualified teacher in Grade One and Two, a class teacher with a minor in English in Grade Three, a specialist teacher with a degree in English language and literature in Grade Four; the school had difficulty with finding qualified staff for many subjects - ELLiE was the first project the school was involved in - low primary classes on a separate floor
School 74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a village school with 150 pupils; class size varied between 9 and 21 - offers English and German - high enthusiasm about early FLL - moderately equipped: video, CD player, nine computers in a separate classroom; two English dictionaries but no English books for children in the library - EFL teacher – class teacher with a minor in English
School 75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a village school with over 440 pupils; average class size: 25 pupils - offers English, German and Hungarian - very positive attitudes to early FLL; school regularly visited by Americans (international help), ELLiE pupils having contact with native speakers - moderately equipped: ten computers with FL software in a separate room, CD player; authentic English books for children in the library - EFL teacher – primary (only) specialist teacher of English (college degree)

School 76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a metropolitan school with close to 1,000 pupils situated in a working class area; many pupils of low socio-economic status; average class size: 27 pupils - offers English and Italian - traditionally considered a good school thanks to highly qualified teachers - very positive attitudes to FLL - participated in a ten-year YL national research project on early learning of Italian - EFL teacher – a specialist teacher with a university degree in English language and literature - well equipped by Croatian standards: video and CD players, an LCD and two laptops, a computer room with 16 computers; authentic English books for children in the library
School 77	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a metropolitan school with over 700 pupils; average class size: 25 pupils - offers English, French and German - considered a prestigious primary school; besides usual primary education programmes, offers international programmes in English for foreign children as well as Croatian national curriculum in English - involved in a great number of national and international projects, promotes holistic learning, critical thinking, life skills, development of self-confidence and multicultural communication - EFL teacher(s) – class teachers(s) with a minor in English - extremely well equipped: video, CD player, interactive whiteboard, each classroom with at least one computer with English software, English corner display area, self-access area with EFL readers/ games, class library with books in English, authentic books for children, children’s dictionaries in the school library

Table 1: Project school characteristics

As can be seen from the listed characteristics, in all schools there were generally positive attitudes to learning English. In most schools the languages offered were English and German. Italian was offered in a school that used to be involved in a project with early learning of Italian. Hungarian was offered in a school that is close to the Hungarian border. Only one school offered French in addition to the usual English and German. Village schools were less well-equipped than small town or city schools. Their principals often complained that not enough was invested in village schools. Interestingly, small town school principals seemed to manage to engage the local authorities in investing in their schools and somehow turned the local community into a stakeholder.

In all schools except one village school (School 73) young learners were taught by qualified teachers. In School 73 the teacher was finishing her studies towards a teaching degree in Croatian and was employed to teach English because of a lack of available people who would know English well enough to be able to teach it. In only one case (School 76) English was taught by a specialist teacher with a university degree in English language and literature. In four schools teachers had a university degree in primary education combined with a minor in English. In one, the EFL teacher had a college degree in English.

What EFL teachers think about teaching young learners

All teachers believed that Grade One was the appropriate time to start FLL and agreed that an even earlier start would be a good idea. Most saw the greatest advantage in easy acquisition of good pronunciation and intonation and in more natural learning processes that children are capable of. Some stressed that early FLL was a good investment for later learning.

Teachers were also aware of some difficulties. 'YL groups can be very heterogeneous because some YLs have a higher language aptitude than others' (Teacher 71). One teacher pointed out difficulties in pronunciation: 'Pronunciation is a bit difficult because most first graders are missing front teeth. This problem is usually solved by speaking in chorus.' (Teacher 77) She also stressed difficulties with writing: 'Writing can also be a bit of a problem since YLs are still struggling with controlling their fingers and with writing in their mother tongue.'

Most teachers reported liking teaching YLs, while some could not make up their minds about which age group they preferred: teaching YLs was considered enjoyable because children are interested in everything but it was also very hard work; teaching older learners was less exhausting but older learners are difficult to motivate because they find most things boring. One teacher said: 'I am happy when I come to school every morning; I think that says everything.' (Teacher 77) Some liked their jobs but at the same time had some reservations: 'I like teaching English to young learners but I find it very exhausting too. Still, I'm quite happy since there are good sides to teaching as well: I have a lot of free time, even though sometimes it takes me ages to prepare some of my classes.' (Teacher 71) One of the things some teachers complained about was that they felt their English was getting rusty. As one of them said: 'My English has been deteriorating. I wish I could teach one generation throughout all the eight grades of primary school. It would force me to brush up my English.' (Teacher 72)

Looking inside YL classrooms

As mentioned earlier, the Croatian National Curriculum and the Croatian National Educational Standards advocate the age-appropriate communicative approach to teaching YLs. Classroom observation carried out on a regular basis (three times per year on average) throughout the three years of the study offered interesting insights into teaching approaches, types of tasks young learners engaged in during lessons and into participants' classroom exposure to English. The following excerpts illustrate our findings.

Excerpt 1:

<p>T: Daisy, Daisy se kupa [<i>Daisy is having a bath</i>]. Pa što joj sve treba za kupanje [<i>So what does she need</i>]? Er.. Helena?</p> <p>S1: Shampoo.</p> <p>T: Shampoo. Mhm. So this is a shampoo. Mhm, dobro, što joj još treba [<i>good, what else does she need</i>]?</p> <p>(T show a flashcard with a shampoo)</p> <p>S2: Ja, ja! [<i>Me, me!</i>] Soap.</p> <p>T: Soap. Tako je [<i>That's right</i>]. Treba joj soap [<i>She needs soap</i>]. So this is a ...</p> <p>(T shows a card with a soap in it)</p> <p>SS: Soap.</p> <p>T: Mhm. Onda treba joj, Damir [<i>Then she needs, Damir</i>]? Što joj treba još za kup... [<i>What else does she need for a bath</i>]?</p> <p>S3: Toothbrush.</p> <p>T: Toothbrush. Tako je [<i>That's right</i>]. Što će raditi sa toothbrush [<i>What will she do with it</i>]?</p> <p>S3: Prati zube [<i>Brush her teeth</i>].</p> <p>T: Damir?</p> <p>S3: Prati zube [<i>Brush her teeth</i>].</p> <p>S2: I ja znam [<i>I also know</i>].</p> <p>T: Tako je prati zube. Tako je. [<i>That's right, brush her teeth. That's right</i>]</p> <p>S2: Učiteljice [<i>Teacher</i>]? I ovaj shampoo [<i>This shampoo too</i>]. Shampoo.</p> <p>T: To smo već rekli. [<i>We have already said that</i>]. Što nismo još rekli, Jana [<i>What haven't we said yet, Jana</i>]?</p> <p>S2: Mogu ja [<i>Can I</i>]? Duck.</p> <p>S4: Hairbrush.</p>	<p>T: Hairbrush. Što će raditi sa hairbrush [<i>What will she do with the hairbrush</i>]?</p> <p>S4: Češljati kosu [<i>Brush her hair</i>].</p> <p>S3: Duck! Prati kosu [<i>Wash hair</i>]! Duck! Duck! Duck ! Duck !</p> <p>T: Sh...sh...sh...</p> <p>S5: Duck!</p> <p>T: Rea, što još treba [<i>Rea, what else does she need</i>]?</p> <p>S6: Duck.</p> <p>T: Duck. Što će raditi sa duck [<i>What will she do with the duck</i>]?</p> <p>S6: Igrati se [<i>Play</i>].</p> <p>T: Igrati se [<i>Play</i>]. (noise and shouting) Što nam još treba [<i>What else do we need</i>]? (noise) I što nam je ostalo [<i>What are we left with</i>]? Što nismo još rekli [<i>What haven't we said yet</i>]?</p> <p>(noise).</p> <p>SS: Towel!</p> <p>T: Nećemo svi u jedan glas [<i>We shall not speak all at once</i>]!</p> <p>SS: Towel!</p> <p>T: Nećemo svi u jedan glas [<i>We shall not speak all at once</i>]!</p> <p>(noise)</p> <p>SS: Towel!</p> <p>T: Martina?</p> <p>S7: Towel.</p> <p>T: Towel tako je [<i>That's right</i>]. Ajmo staviti na ploču ali moramo staviti i riječi, jel da [<i>Let's put this on the board, but we need to put the words too, don't we</i>]?</p> <p>SS: Da [<i>Yes</i>]!</p> <p>(T puts up cards with pictures and cards with words on the board).</p> <p>(Teacher 71)</p>
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Excerpt 2:

<p>T: Yes it's a tiny, tiny, tiny yellow line. Yes, come here please... no, no, no, no, no, she's going to come. Come, Dora, yes. Put it on the left too. (pause) Thaaank you! Good! Waait a second. T: (...) What's this? (murmur) Oh!</p> <p>S1: Apple!</p> <p>T: It's an apple. Je l' to samo jedna ili ih ima više? [<i>Is it just one or are there more of them?</i>]</p> <p>SS: One. Jedna.[<i>One</i>] One.</p> <p>T: Only one. Kako znaš? [<i>How do you know?</i>] Osim što vidiš sliku? [<i>Apart from seeing the picture?</i>]</p> <p>S1: Zato što je- [<i>Because it's-</i>] (pause)</p> <p>S1: Apple!</p> <p>T: Apple! A kako bi rekao recimo Fran da imaš four? [<i>And how would you, Fran, say if you had, say, four?</i>]</p> <p>SS: Apples!</p> <p>T: Apples. Što dodamo? [<i>What do we add?</i>]</p> <p>SS: ssssssss...</p> <p>S1: S! S!</p>	<p>T: Mhmm...Ok this is very easy. Yes, come here Petre, put it on the right... here you are...</p> <p>S: Thank you.</p> <p>T: You're welcome.</p> <p>(pause)</p> <p>T: Good! What's this?</p> <p>S2: Pear! [pi:r]</p> <p>SS: Pear! Pear! Pear! ([pi:r] [pi:r] [pi:r])</p> <p>T: (short laugh)w, w, w, wait, wait, wait... (...)</p> <p>S3: Ti kažeš [<i>You say</i>] pear. [pi:r]</p> <p>S2: Yes. Pear. [pi:r]</p> <p>T: Well it's wrong.</p> <p>S2: Ne! [<i>No!</i>]</p> <p>T: No, no, no, no...</p> <p>S2: Je! Je! [<i>Yes! Yes !</i>] (...)</p> <p>T: It's a pear [peə]. Aaaa s kojom se riječi rimuže pear? [<i>Aaand which word does pear rhyme with?</i>]</p> <p>(short pause)</p> <p>S2: Bear.</p> <p>T: Bear! Ok. What colour is this pear?</p> <p>S2: Yellow. (short pause)</p> <p>S: Bear.</p> <p>(Teacher 77)</p>
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Excerpt 3:

<p>T: Ok. And now. Sit down. Ok. Look here. This is a duck.</p> <p>(some children repeat the word several times)</p> <p>T: Now. Can you see a duck here? Can you see a duck?</p> <p>(T points to a set of pictures).</p> <p>SS: Yeeees.</p> <p>T: Yes. Right here. Look! Ok. This is a toothbrush. Can you see a toothbrush?</p> <p>SS: No. No.</p> <p>T: This is a hairbrush. Can you see a hairbrush?</p> <p>SS: Yes.</p> <p>T: Yes?</p> <p>SS: Yes.</p> <p>T: Ok. Then, put a tick here. Ok. Put a tick for a hairbrush. What's this? This red thing. What is it? What's this?</p> <p>S1: Bag.</p> <p>S2: Bag.</p> <p>T: It's a ...?</p> <p>SS: A bag!</p> <p>T: It's a schoolbag. That's right. Can you...? Can you see only schoolbag?</p> <p>SS: Yes.</p> <p>T: Yes. Ok. Put a tick for a schoolbag. What's this?</p> <p>S3: Book.</p> <p>S4: A book.</p> <p>T: It's a book. It's a book. Can you see a book?</p>	<p>SS: Yes.</p> <p>T: Put a tick for a book. What's this?</p> <p>SS: A ruler.</p> <p>T: That's right. Can you see a ruler?</p> <p>SS: Yes.</p> <p>T: Yes. Ok. And what's this?</p> <p>S5: Pencil.</p> <p>S6: A pencil.</p> <p>SS: Pencil.</p> <p>T: A pencil. That's right. Can you see a pencil?</p> <p>SS: Uhuh!</p> <p>T: Uhuh! Put a cross for a pencil. (T writes a tick and a cross on the board) You can't find a pencil here. What's this? It's blue and yellow and it's a..?</p> <p>SS: Drum. A drum.</p> <p>T: A drum. That's right. Can you see a drum?</p> <p>SS: Yes.</p> <p>T: Ok. Put a tick. Tthis is a shoe. This is a shoe. Can you see a shoe?</p> <p>SS: Yes. Yes. Yes.</p> <p>T: Put a tick for a shoe. What's this yellow...?</p> <p>SS: Balloon.</p> <p>T: A balloon. Can you see a balloon?</p> <p>SS: Yes. Yes.</p> <p>T: Put a tick.</p> <p>S7: Da l' mi to trebamo bojati? [<i>Do we have to colour this?</i>]</p> <p>T: That's right.</p> <p>(Teacher 72)</p>
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The three excerpts illustrate three teaching approaches observed in Croatian YL classrooms. They all show how teachers elicit vocabulary that they want to review. In Excerpt 1 the vocabulary relates to bathroom objects, in Excerpt 2 the teacher revises fruit vocabulary, while in Excerpt 3 the teacher elicits words for different objects in order for YLs to fill in a textbook exercise.

The first teacher carries out the activity relying on visual material (flashcards) in order to elicit vocabulary from learners. She uses L1 all the time, both when focusing on language and when trying to manage the class. Learners either provide the elicited word in English or resort to L1. All her questions are closed questions requiring single word answers. The teacher in Excerpt 2 also uses visual material to elicit vocabulary. Her talk is characterised by some code mixing. It seems that by mixing L1 and L2 she is trying to make the L2 material more salient. The questions she asks are both open and closed, and require learners to think and make conclusions. She draws learners' attention to linguistic aspects by focusing on the meaning of structures (e.g., four for plural) and by directing learners to the phonetic characteristics of English (e.g., rhyming of words). The third excerpt shows the teacher using the visual stimuli in a more communicative way: she uses 'wrong' words (*toothbrush*), or asks YLs to guess the object on the basis of a description (*balloon*). Although all her questions are also closed and result in single L2 words as answers, her consistent use of English during the activity gives the impression that these learners are immersed, to use Chomsky's words, in a 'rich linguistic bath'.

Out-of-school exposure to English

According to their parents' reports, YLs in this study had considerable contact with English outside school. This is not surprising because English seems to be omnipresent in everyday life in Croatia through undubbed foreign TV programmes, the internet, and contacts with English-speaking people who visit Croatia as tourists or for business purposes. YLs' parents reported that over 20 per cent of YLs spent two hours per week on average watching programmes in English, and a little over one third spent five or more hours per week watching films, TV series or cartoons in English. Almost two thirds played computer games or watched videos in English. Exposure to English through listening to music in English was also very frequent: over 70 per cent of YLs spent between one and four hours a week listening to music. About 60 per cent of learners engaged in reading English books or comics for an hour a week on average. About a quarter of YLs had no chance of speaking to someone in English, but over half of YLs would spend about an hour a week speaking English to someone. Over 70 per cent used the internet to engage in the activities mentioned above.

In Grade Two half the YLs reported having met a foreigner; in Grade Four close to 80 per cent had a chance to meet someone who did not speak their L1. Over 60 per cent said they could say something in English to them, and 80 per cent reported that they were able to understand what the foreigner was saying.

Very few YLs reported having English storybooks or dictionaries at home or that they ever used them.

Parents' support

In Grade Two all YLs claimed that their parents were happy with their progress in English. In Grade Four only two learners reported that their parents were not happy about their English and this was because they had low grades in English.

Parents or other members of family (mostly older siblings) helped YLs with their English. This was reported by 97 per cent of learners while in Grade Two, and 87 per cent in Grade Four. We assume that with growing competence in English some parents who themselves did not speak English could not help any more. The help consisted mostly in explaining things the YL did not understand, revising what was done in class, checking homework and the like.

Most parents claimed that their children regularly told them about their English classes (89.2 per cent) and showed them what they learned in class (88.5 per cent). They also reported that they practised English at home (88.6 per cent) and asked their parents or another family member for help with homework (87.1 per cent).

YLs' perspective

Attitudes and motivation

YLs are generally thought to have positive attitudes to FLs and to be highly motivated. During the three years of the project smiley questionnaires and oral interviews were used to find how much our young participants liked learning English. Below we first present results that show how motivation developed over the three years (Figures 1 and 2).

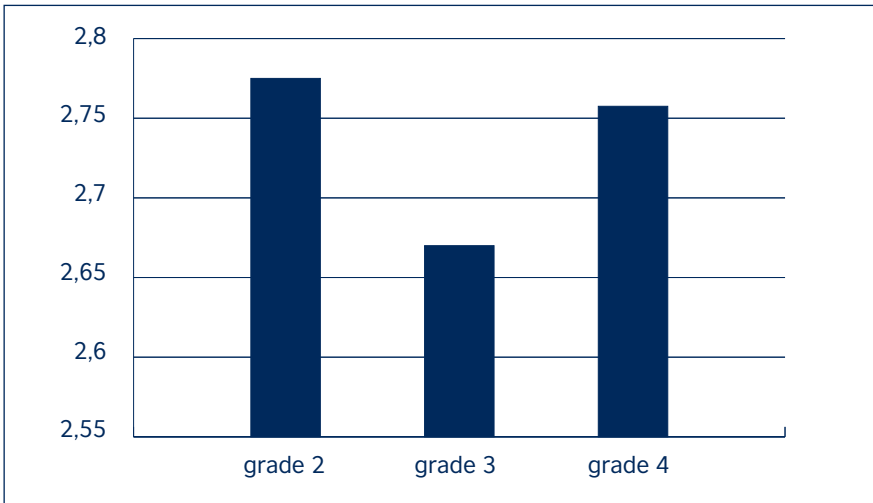


Figure 1: YLs' scores on smiley item: How do you like learning English this year? (scale range: 1-3)

As is clear from Figure 1, YLs' motivation was high throughout the three years but it cannot be considered a stable phenomenon. Some experts (Nikolov, 1999) have already pointed out that YLs' motivation is initially high but can decrease with

time. At the very start of early FLL the teacher and classroom processes play a key role (Vilke, 1993; Nikolov, 2002), but with growing age their impact changes and other sources seem to direct the ups and downs of YL motivation. In this study the high motivation in Grade Two dropped in Grade Three and increased again in Grade Four. We assume that by Grade Four many YLs had experienced a feeling of achievement and this boosted again their motivation for EFL learning. With an increased knowledge of the language they could make better use of it when watching the many English language TV programmes and films, or when using the internet.

Inquiries into first graders' motivation during the ELLiE project scoping year (Szpotowicz, Mihaljevic Djigunovic and Enever, 2009) showed that of all classroom activities they engaged in YLs were most motivated for learning new FL words. Thus we continued measuring Croatian young EFL learners' attitudes to learning new English words during three years. As shown in Figure 2, motivation for learning new words remained high throughout the three years but decreased a little in Grade Four. Judging from the activities YLs reported as favourite (see below), in Grade Four new activities – such as reading – became very popular too and competed with learning new vocabulary.

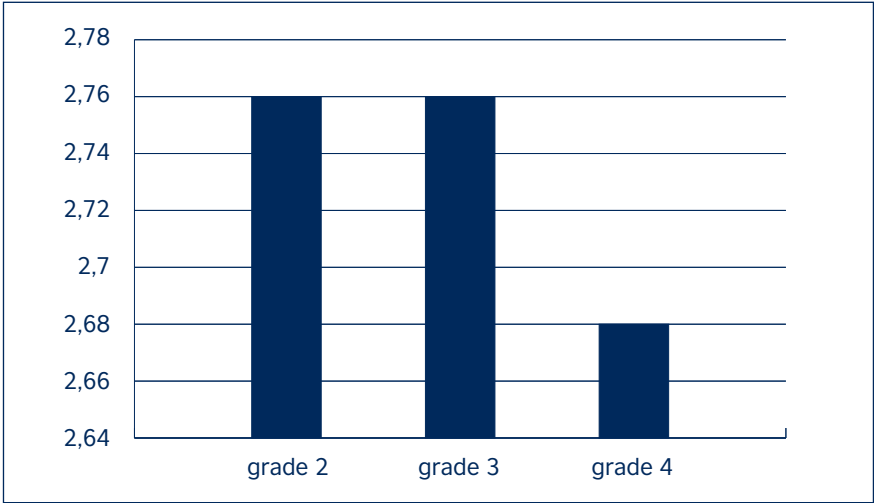


Figure 2: YLs' scores on smiley item: How do you like learning new English words this year? (scale range: 1-3)

YLs' attitudes to EFL classes were looked into as well. Their preferences for different classroom activities in Grade Two were compared with those in Grade Four (Figure 3).

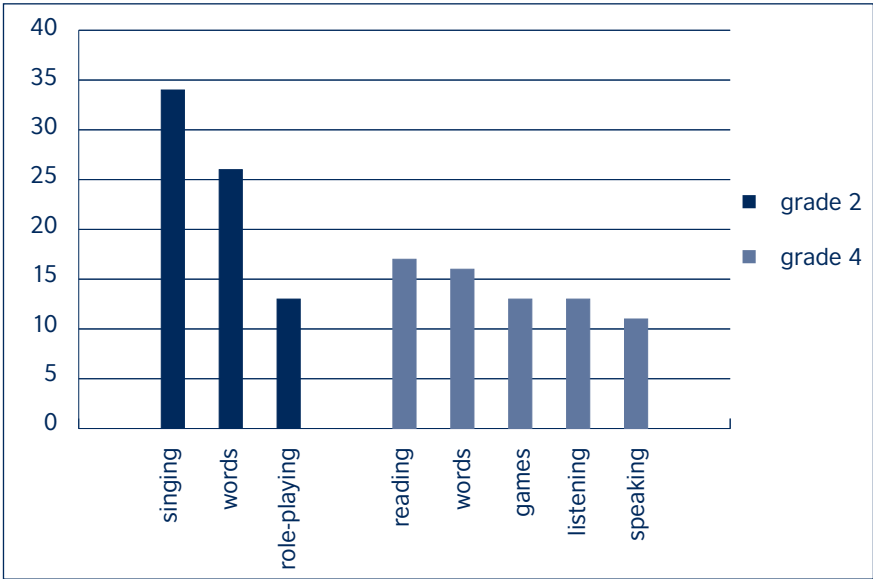


Figure 3: Favourite classroom activities as reported by more than 10 per cent of YLs

Interesting changes over the three years can be noticed. In Grade Two, out of three top activities two involved physical movement (both songs and role plays were usually accompanied with actions). In contrast, in Grade Four, out of five top activities four referred to typical language learning activities. YLs varied in their explanations of why a particular activity was a favourite one: 'I like it' (reading), 'I'm good at it' (learning new words), 'It's fun' (speaking).

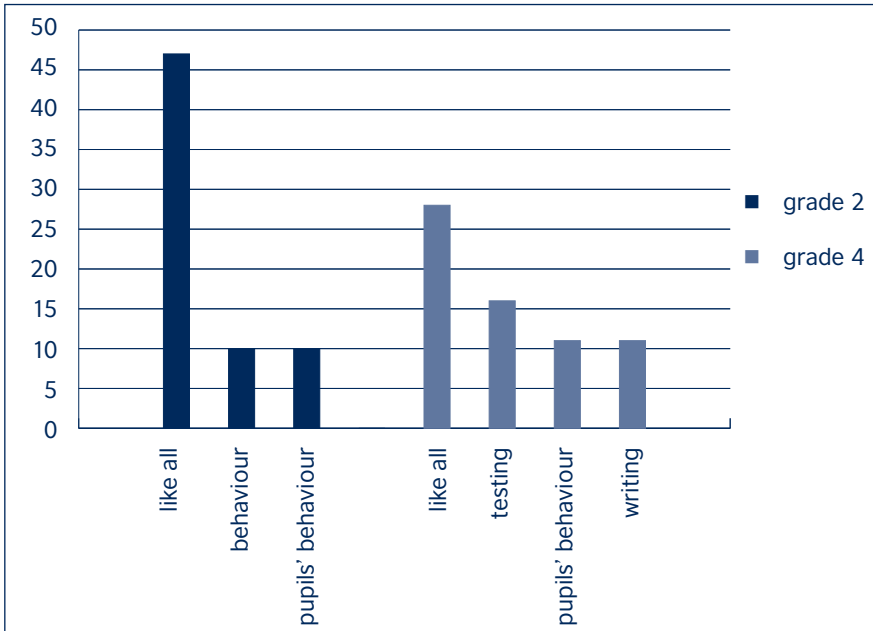


Figure 4: Dislikes reported by more than 10 per cent of YLs

YLs' answers to the question about what they disliked offered interesting insights too. As can be seen in Figure 4, almost half of Second Grade focal learners found nothing to dislike. Less than a third liked everything in Grade Four, however. The most frequently mentioned things second graders disliked confirm that the teacher and classroom processes are very important to YLs. At the age of 8 they complained about their EFL teacher not paying as much attention to them as they wanted, disliked it 'when the teacher writes something but there is not enough time to copy everything'; they also complained about their fellow students fighting among themselves, arguing and interrupting games. In Grade Four their dislike of some peers' behaviour remained but complaints about the teacher were not frequent. However, new things appeared: fourth graders disliked writing activities claiming that it was hard and their hand hurt if they had to do it for a longer time. This indicates that physicality can impact on YLs' disposition for FLL. Tests, as well as other forms of learner assessment, emerged as a frequent cause of YLs' concern, probably as a source of language anxiety. Such impact of tests was observed in an earlier study on Croatian EFL learners (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2003).

Participants' attitudes to FLL and teaching were also measured indirectly by having each focal learner look at four pictures depicting four different classroom arrangements: a traditional teacher-fronted classroom, one in which group work was going on, one in which YLs and their teacher were sitting in a circle on a carpet, and one that looked disorderly.

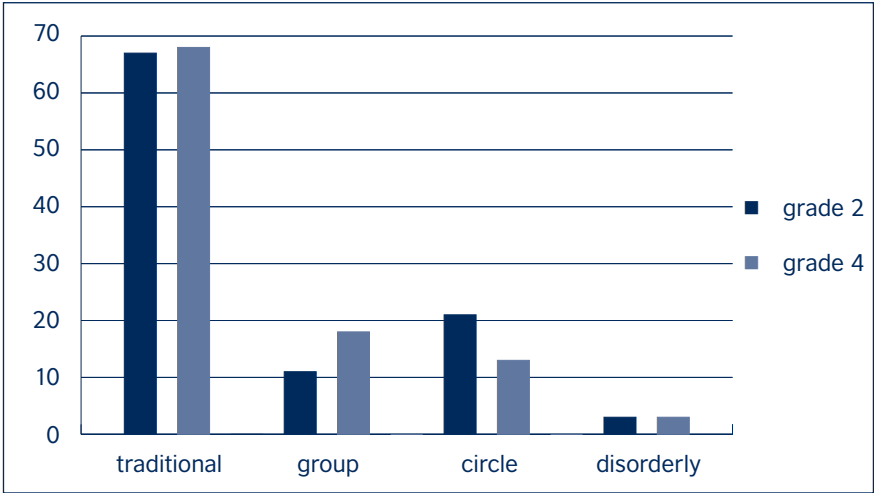


Figure 5: Replies to the question: 'In which classroom would you learn English best?'

Results presented in Figure 5 clearly show that most learners preferred the traditional teaching arrangement both in Grade Two and in Grade Four. They offered interesting explanations for their choices: 'Desks are all neat and kids are listening to their teacher, and they are not fighting', 'Nobody jumps or shouts', 'There is peace and quiet'. It is interesting to note that learners who chose the traditional arrangement came from all the seven school contexts, and their choice did not reflect their own classroom reality. It seems that YLs generally prefer organised

classes under the teacher's control. Hence a negligible number of YLs who selected the disorderly class as the best for learning English.

YLs' linguistic self-confidence

Linguistic self-confidence is considered to be an important factor in early FLL (Mihaljević Djigunović, 2009). Our findings (see Figure 6) show that at the start of FLL the majority of children view themselves very positively. With growing experience as language learners, YLs seem to get more critical in their self-perception. This is reflected in seeing themselves more frequently as being at the same level as their peers. It is very interesting to see what they base their perception on. For illustration, here are a few examples of YLs' explanations.

- being better than others in class:

I think I am good because I got an A just like Ivona, who is the best ... so I am better than others. (Group 76)

I go to extra English lessons and I learn more. (Group 77)

Often, when I put down my pen, I see everyone else is still writing. (Group 73)

- being at the same level as others:

I know the same as others, except for Ivana and Nataša, who are very smart and get only As. (Group 75)

I raise my hand as much as others and have the same grades as others. (Group 75)

- being less good than others:

I get bad grades in English. (Group 74)

It's more difficult for me this year, I can't really understand English. (Group 73)

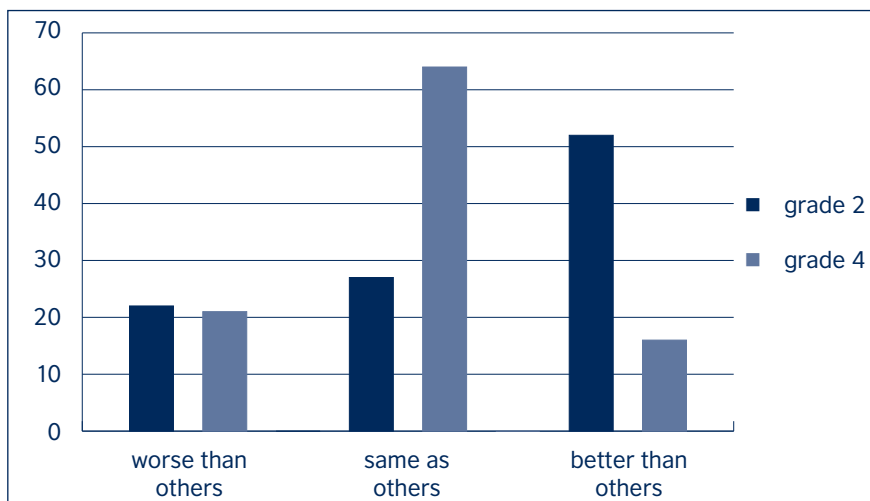


Figure 6: YLs' comparison with peers

As these explanations clearly show, YLs tend to compare themselves to their peers in class as well as take into account the grades they are assigned by their teacher.

Linguistic outcomes – YLs' listening comprehension in English

Scores on listening comprehension tasks administered at the end of each school year offer interesting insights into YLs' linguistic outcomes. Taking the score of 500⁴ as the dividing line between low and high performance on these tasks, we could see that in all the three years over 80% of YLs in this study scored higher than 500. The Croatian sample means were 544.99 and 544.44 in 2008 and 2010, respectively. These quite high listening scores can probably be attributed to being exposed to a lot of listening materials in English classes in school and to a rather high exposure to English outside school. Besides, oral skills are insisted upon during the early years of FLL.

Interactions

As stressed in the introductory part of the paper, deeper insights into early FLL can be obtained not by investigating individual variables on their own but by looking into their interactions. Thus, in order to answer our third research question, we looked into the interplay of the different variables included in this study. Applying both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data we collected over three years of the study we found a number of interactions that threw more light on processes and products of early EFL learning.

Thus, linguistic outcomes interacted with both contextual and individual factors we examined. Significant differences in listening comprehension were found among different groups of YLs, thus making school and class environments salient contextual factors. In Grade Two, groups 71 (a small town school) and 73 (a village school) scored significantly lower than some of the other groups ($F=7.027$, $p<.001$). In both of these school contexts learners were reported to be less exposed to English outside school and hardly any YL took private lessons in English because there were no private language schools nearby. Also, both groups were taught by beginner teachers and, in the case of group 73, the teacher was unqualified as well. This was combined with an exceptionally high level of L1 use by both teachers and learners which, we believe, contributed to slow development of listening comprehension. In Grade Four, however, a significant difference in scores was found only for group 71: these learners performed significantly worse than groups 76 and 77, both from metropolitan schools ($F=5.967$, $p<.001$). Group 73 had in the meantime changed teachers twice, each time the replacing teacher was a qualified teacher of EFL. In group 71, on the other hand, the second grade teacher was replaced too but by unqualified and even less experienced teachers. Such circumstances, combined with generally lower out-of-school exposure to English of village and small town YLs, may be the probable cause of low listening comprehension.

How much YLs enjoyed learning English correlated with listening comprehension in Grade Four only ($r=.237$, $p=.002$). The impact of motivation on linguistic outcomes seems to appear when differences in motivation among learners start to appear. At the very beginning of ELL, there is very little variance in motivation and it becomes larger as learners grow older and language material becomes

more complex. Thus, as YLs progress with their language learning, their motivation interacts with outcomes in different ways.

Another interesting interaction was found between listening comprehension and linguistic self-confidence. These two variables showed significant correlations ranging from $r = .373$ ($p = .021$) in Grade Two to $r = .576$ ($p < .001$) in Grade Four. The different levels of significance suggest that interactions between these two variables change with time, increasing in intensity. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in linguistic self-confidence among different groups of YLs, indicating that school level and class level influences were not decisive in the case of this learner variable. What proved to be more relevant was having met a foreigner with whom the YL could use English. YLs with such experiences displayed higher linguistic self-confidence. Here the association with confidence decreased in time (Grade Two: $p = .006$; Grade Four: $p = .016$).

Using the internet was significantly correlated with listening scores in Grade Two ($p = .019$) but not in Grade Four ($p = .251$). It can be assumed that fourth graders who did not use the internet watched TV more and built up their listening comprehension that way.

Listening comprehension interacted with YLs telling their parents about their English classes. However, this interaction was significant only in Grade Four: those fourth graders who discussed their English classes with parents scored higher on listening tasks than those who did not ($t = 2.525$, $p = 0.013$).

Socio-economic status, as measured by mother's and father's education level, also interacted with linguistic outcomes. Although correlation coefficients were not very high, they were significant in both Grade Two and Grade Four. It is interesting to note that correlations with father's education were higher than those with mother's education, and that both were higher in Grade Four than in Grade Two. It can be assumed that with YLs' progressing knowledge of EFL, the role of the socio-economic status becomes more important. As parental education levels were not associated with helping children with learning EFL, we assume that what is at work here is the so-called passive role of parents (Gardner, 1985). This role implies that parents can influence their children's attitudes and motivation in subtle and sometimes totally unconscious ways through their own attitudes to FLs or FLL, and without actively engaging in their children's learning.

Below we present graphically the described interactions of contextual and individual variables with linguistic outcomes.

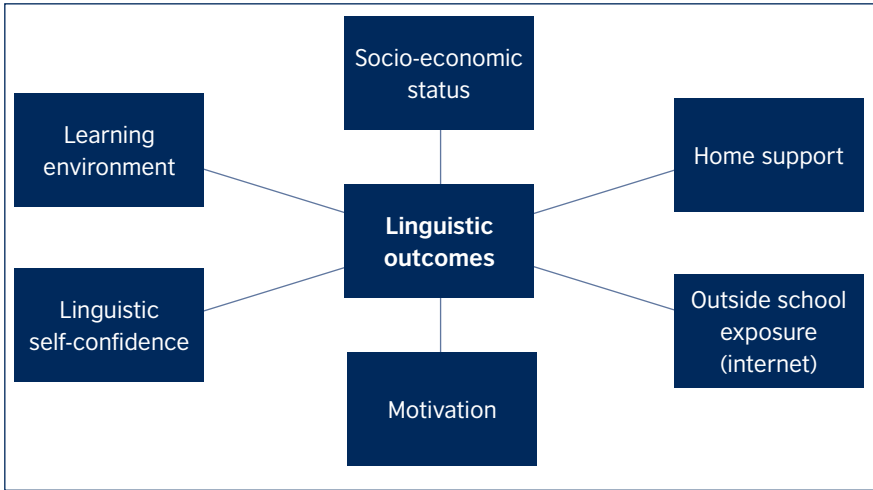


Figure 7: Interactions in early learning of EFL

Conclusions

Our study clearly shows that the context in which Croatian YLs acquired EFL was generally favourable. Their teachers had positive attitudes to teaching YLs even though they were aware of a number of difficulties and professional challenges involved in their work. Out-of-school exposure to English was found to be considerable in most of the investigated school contexts, and the same was true about parents' support. YLs' attitudes, although generally positive over the three years, proved to be unstable: they changed from highly positive to less positive to more highly positive again in Grade Four. Preferences for classroom activities changed over time too: activities comprising strong physical elements gave way to those in which formal learning elements were more pronounced. YLs' self-perception changed from overly positive to more realistic with the growing experience in EFL learning and with accumulating evidence of their language performance. On the other hand, YLs' attitudes to the immediate learning environment remained rather stable: the traditional classroom arrangement continued to be preferred over the three years, suggesting that structured settings are more desirable in early EFL learning.

In terms of linguistic outcomes, our findings point to the impact of a number of relevant relationships among the factors we investigated. Lower language learning outcomes were shown to be related to learning contexts in which out-of-school exposure to English and teacher qualifications or teaching experience were lower. The impact of motivation and linguistic self-confidence on learning outcomes proved to be stronger in Grade 4 than in Grade 2. The same was found about some elements of the socio-economic status of YLs: as YLs' knowledge of EFL increased so did the interaction of the socio-economic status and linguistic outcomes.

Following the third approach to ELL (outlined at the beginning of this paper) enabled us to get a broader and deeper insight into early learning of EFL.

Contextual factors presented themselves not only as relevant but often as key variables in explaining this phenomenon. The interactions they entered with individual learner characteristics and with linguistic outcomes threw more light on both the processes and outcomes of early EFL learning. Of special significance is the finding that all the examined factors and their interactions changed with time, thus creating highly dynamic relationships.

Extending such studies to other contexts and including larger samples would make it possible to form research-based generalisations that could inform EFL teachers, policy-makers and young EFL learners' parents worldwide about what can realistically be achieved in early EFL learning and how to go about it.

Notes

1. This research has been supported by a European Commission grant under the Lifelong Learning Programme, Project n°. 135632-LLP-2007-UK-KA1SCR. An additional British Council grant supported the Croatian team.
2. The scoping year was partly sponsored by the British Council.
3. Project schools were number coded (for coding consult Table 1). The same numbers are used for teachers and classes (groups) in respective schools.
4. This score was calculated on the basis of scores for seven-country ELLIE sample in 2008 and 2010.

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7

Attitudes to English as a language for international development in rural Bangladesh

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Introduction

The focus of this report is the status of English and English-language education as part of international development initiatives in Bangladesh¹. The learning of English has had a central and often contentious role in the educational curriculum of many developing countries throughout much of the 20th and early 21st centuries (Erling and Seargeant, 2012). Sometimes the pressure for the teaching and learning of English within a country has come from outside of the country itself. Sometimes it has been the result of cultural aspiration and a desire for the acquisition of cultural capital, as well as for other broadly political reasons. However, in the last two decades there has been a significant shift in the stated reasons for learning English, with a growing emphasis on English as a global language and its perceived role in providing access to both economic and social development. In line with shifts in approaches to development – with the improvement of people’s lives being a more general goal rather than economic growth alone – there has been a focus on the role of English learning in accessing information, technology, jobs and education. The increased status of English within a global economy of languages has meant that English-language education is being promoted as an important factor in international development initiatives like ‘English in Action’ in Bangladesh and the British Council’s ‘Project English’ in India and Sri Lanka. The discourse adopted to promote such projects and embedded in many of their policy documents often assumes a positive relationship between language and development to be self-evident (Seargeant and Erling, 2011), with an assumption that the perceived economic and social advantages that would flow from language learning would also be self-evident to learners and their parents, even in remote or rural communities. Hard evidence about whether and, if so how, English language development initiatives can support the other development activities spelt out in the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (2000) – such as ending poverty and hunger, providing basic education to all, and improving child and maternal health – remains, however, difficult to capture (though see the recent collections of essays in Coleman, 2011 and Erling and Seargeant, 2012).

Promoting access to educational opportunity and literacy in rural communities has long been a key focus of development initiatives, and several research studies in the last ten years have explored the role of literacy in processes of poverty reduction, and its importance to people’s capabilities and wellbeing (e.g. Basu, Maddox and Robinson-Pant, 2009; Street, 2001; UNESCO, 2005). Recent research has also begun to explore the link between language use and development and how the languages that people speak (or do not speak) can influence their economic status (e.g. Djité, 2008; Harbert *et al.*, 2009). Much of this research has focused on the economic value of learning English (e.g. Chakroborty and Kapur, 2008; Graddol, 2010), while other studies have examined the symbolic functions that English has for people in development contexts as part of their aspirations for the future (e.g. Hornberger, 2002; Tembe and Norton, 2011; Vavrus, 2002).

Recognising the symbolic allure of English, Tembe and Norton (2008) argue that language learning projects in development contexts must be carefully aligned with community needs and aspirations. They suggest that ethnographic research approaches can be used to align education programmes with local ideologies and

learners' aspirations. Such approaches have been explored in recent adult literacy education initiatives in several development contexts, including Bangladesh. The architects of such programmes argue that by taking into account community knowledge and practices, such initiatives are more effective in increasing people's access to resources, as they combine literacy teaching with the acquisition of other relevant skills for community livelihoods (e.g. saving and credit, health and family planning) (Street, Rogers and Baker, 2006; Rogers, Hunter and Uddin, 2007). In line with recent approaches which conceive of development as freedom (cf. Sen, 2001), these initiatives aim to empower participants to be agents of their own development. The research reported upon in this study explores how these ethnographic approaches used in literacy education might be adapted to the context of English language teaching in rural Bangladesh.

Bangladesh (and particularly rural Bangladesh) does not as yet have the same marketable skills as neighbouring India in terms of providing the labour for international industries like call centres. This has been attributed in part to the lack of English competence among its population (see, for example, Khan, 2010). As has been noted elsewhere, it is often rural communities who are in most need of development assistance, and are least likely to have skills in English and opportunities for economic development (cf. Graddol, 2010). Since the 1990s there has been a renewed interest in the role of English in Bangladesh's economic development and several education initiatives have sought to improve English learning across the country, for example the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP), which ran from 1997 to 2008, and English in Action (EIA), which is scheduled to run from 2009-2017. The goal of EIA is 'to significantly increase the number of people able to communicate in English to levels that will enable them to participate fully in economic and social activities and opportunities'; it also aims to target rural communities (EIA, 2010). Baseline studies conducted for the project found that 84 per cent of the participants surveyed wished to learn the language, while 87 per cent believed it would help them earn more money (EIA, 2009; this study surveyed 8300 Bangladeshi about their perceptions of learning English). Evidence of this sort gives a clear picture of a strong general interest in English language education and a belief that English language learning leads to economic development. However, at present little is known about the purposes for which members of rural communities want to learn the language or whether in fact improved skills in English will necessarily provide the imagined opportunities that the participants perceive for themselves. It is for this reason that the current research project investigated the perceived need for and attitudes towards English in rural communities, with the intention being to evaluate the ways in which top-down development initiatives (such as English in Action) are viewed in such contexts, and, if English language learning opportunities are to be provided, what sort of issues these projects need to take into consideration in order to best suit the requirements of such communities.

The research explores the perceived need for and beliefs about English in two rural communities. Building up knowledge of the desires and aspirations of people in a rural development context provides insights into whether and how English language education can best assist the most disadvantaged. Wedell (2008: 628)

has remarked that the type of English promoted in development contexts is often largely unsuitable for the priorities and sociolinguistic realities of the communities at which it is targeted. If English language teaching is to remain a focus of development initiatives, because of the perceived need for it, the long-term aim of undertaking such research is to develop a means of English language teaching that has at its core the achievement of real-life goals, set by the participants, which would enhance other development initiatives and have immediate socio-economic benefits on their lives and communities.

The current research also explores a means of gaining insight into community needs and beliefs about language. Language learning programmes rooted in an understanding of the local community can help participants gain awareness of language issues in society which will support them in making the sort of choices that can offer them the greatest opportunities for their own development.

Context: Rural Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a South Asian country with a population of approximately 142.3 million (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Due to its geography, the country frequently experiences natural disasters such as cyclones and floods, and is also threatened by climate change and global warming hazards. It is a mainly rural nation, with recent statistics indicating that 76 per cent of the population reside in the countryside and 24 per cent in urban areas, though the number of people living in urban areas is rising (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2009). It has an agricultural peasant economy, with 75 per cent of the total population involved in farming (Gunaratne, 2000: 41). 88 per cent of the people are Muslim, with Hinduism being a significant minority religion (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2009).

In terms of its developmental context, Bangladesh has acute poverty, a lack of sustainable socio-economic infrastructures, and a low literacy rate (52.7 per cent for women, and 59.4 per cent for men). Although several development initiatives have taken place at both governmental and non-governmental levels, the country still ranks 146th out of 187 in the UNDP Human Development Index, and 50 per cent of the population live below the international poverty line, measured at US\$1.25 per day (UNDP, 2011; UNICEF, 2010).

Regarding the linguistic situation, Bangladesh was historically born from the tragic struggle over the language politics centred around Bangla nationalism. The vast majority of the population (85 per cent) are classified as speakers of the national language, Bangla (Lewis, 2009), but there is also a significant number of minority variety speakers, particularly in rural areas and among Bangladesh's ethnic minorities (Hossain and Tollefson, 2007: 243). Bangla acts as a strong marker of secular national identity due to the nation-binding role it had in the pre-independence era, and since independence in 1971 the country has attached great importance to the language (Thompson, 2007). However, English has continually had a presence in the country due to British colonial history in the area, and the language's subsequent emergence as a global force with a high instrumental value in various domains (Imam, 2005). The status of English in the

country can either be characterised as that of a second or foreign language, depending on the domains in which it is encountered (Kachru, 1994). Crystal (2003: 62) estimates that there are approximately 3,500,000 English speakers in Bangladesh, which works out to be 2.66 per cent of the total population. English is a compulsory academic subject from primary to higher secondary level and, in some cases, in higher education as well (Rahman, 2005).

The country is presently aiming to promote a shift in its economic structure from agriculture to manufacturing and to deepen integration with global markets (World Bank, 2007). Such developments call for a sound proficiency in English (Rahman, 2005). People who live in rural areas under or around the poverty line are likely to find such requirements particularly challenging due to the poor quality and limitations of education (including English teaching) in such areas. It is within this context, therefore, that the present study aims to survey and analyse the perceptions of members of two geographically and linguistically different rural areas about the role of English in their lives and its perceived contribution to economic and social development.

The two rural communities: Toke and Shak Char

The two areas that the study focuses upon are Toke and Shak Char. Both are what are known as 'Unions', and are under the jurisdiction of the Kapasia Upazila (in the Gazipur District) and Lakshmipur Sadar Upazila (in the Lakshmipur District) respectively (an upazila is a subdistrict in the administrative division system of Bangladesh) (see Figures 1 and 2 for the location of these districts within Bangladesh and the location of these upazilas within their districts). The Bangladesh government defines 'Union' as the 'smallest administrative rural geographic unit' (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011: 6). Both Toke and Shak Char are viewed as rural according to the government's administrative criteria. The discussion below will further elucidate the ways in which they lack the required socio-economic amenities to be called urban.

Toke

Toke is situated in the middle-eastern part of Bangladesh. The Union is 80 kilometres away from the capital city Dhaka and 19 kilometres from the higher administrative unit, Kapasia Upazila. The total population of Toke is 37,669 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001). The area depends on agriculture for its economy and has hardly any industry. Most of the people are farmers who grow rice, jute, sugarcane and oil seeds, though poultry farming is also increasing in popularity. There are also some fish traders, potters, blacksmiths, rickshaw-pullers, van-pullers and small-scale merchants and grocers. Currently, white collar work opportunities are very rare, except for professions such as teachers, NGO workers and bankers. However, given that Toke is fairly close to Dhaka, people often go there in pursuit of better work opportunities, for example in the garment industry. Finally, a large number of local people have emigrated to various middle-eastern and European countries where they work and send remittances to their families.

The overall educational situation in Toke is similar to Bangladesh as a whole, with a literacy rate of 44.02 per cent. There are twenty-one primary schools, seven secondary schools and one college for higher-secondary education in the area.

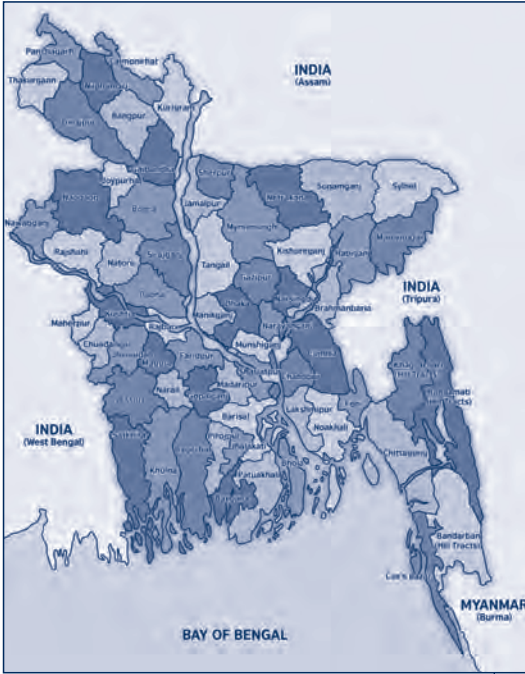


Figure 1: Map of Bangladesh

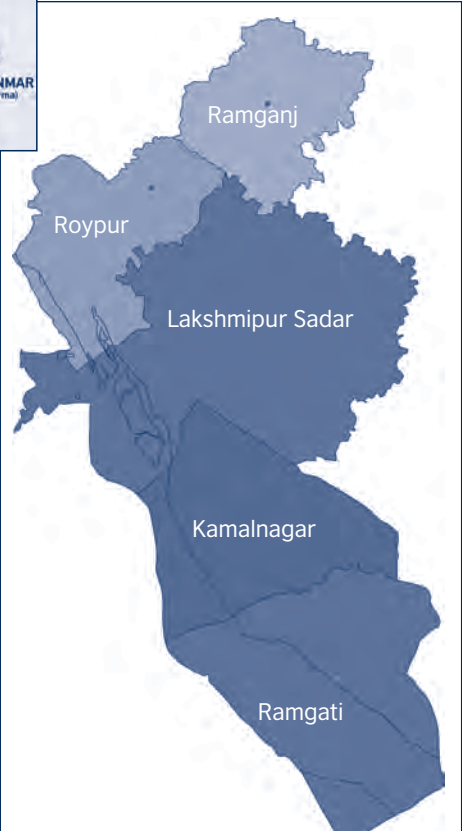


Figure 2: District Map – Gazipur



Figure 3: District Map – Lakshmipur

In addition there are several madrasas which provide Islamic religious education. Students who wish to pursue higher education go either to Gazipur district town or to Dhaka. Even though the enrolment rate for educational institutions has looked encouraging in recent years, the dropout rate is high. Literacy initiatives undertaken either at the governmental or non-governmental level are minimal. Other NGOs operating in Toke such as BRAC, ASA, Proshika and Grameen Bank work for poverty reduction mostly through their micro credit schemes, but currently have very few educational initiatives.

The socio-economic infrastructure of Toke is very limited. Houses are mostly made of clay, straw and bamboo; most of the roads are mud roads, and people usually rely on walking for most journeys. People often use three-wheeler, non-motorised vehicles such as rickshaws for commuting. There are three banks and a few NGOs which operate their businesses in the area. There are eight market places where people buy and sell essential commodities. Mobile phone servicing centres and computer/internet shops have recently mushroomed in these market places. Market places, and especially their tea-stalls, also provide people an opportunity to meet up and chat with each other (see Figure 4 for a photo taken in Toke Noyon Bazar).



The role that English plays in the area at present is limited almost entirely to the academic domain. The main language in Toke is Bangla, and there is no other dominant regional variety. English teachers from different educational institutes offer private tuition at their homes and/or in coaching centres. Everyday discourse is in Bangla except on the few occasions when local people need to talk with foreigners (mostly the donors and officials from NGOs). One can hear some English words being mixed with Bangla in daily conversation, either for the purposes of better communication or to convey symbolic prestige. English words are also used extensively on signage. For example, one can see signs such as ‘Renaissance Multimedia School and Coaching Centre’, ‘A Four Rent-A-Car’, ‘Ekram Multipurpose Co-operative Society Limited’ and so on (see Figure 5 for examples). Children learn Arabic for religious purposes at the Maqtabas, which are usually mosque-based Arabic and Islamic religious tuitions centres. Hindu temples similarly offer religious education. Most people understand at least some Hindi, as Hindi programmes from Indian TV channels as well as Bollywood movies are very popular.

Figure 5: Use of English in shop signs in Toke



Shak Char

The second area in which the research was carried out was Shak Char, a Union under Lakshmipur Sadar Upazila in the south-eastern part of Bangladesh. Shak Char is 14 kilometres away from Lakshmipur Sadar Upazila and 198 kilometres from Dhaka. It has a population of 50,349 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2001). Its proximity to the River Meghna and its geographical position make it vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones and floods: in 1991, 2007 and 2009 it was severely affected by major cyclones in the area, and is regularly affected by flooding.

Shak Char is socio-economically behind Toke in many respects. Agriculture is the basis of the economy, and farming is thus the major occupation. The main crops are rice, betel nut, betel leaf, coconut, bananas and seasonal vegetables. Other occupations include potters, blacksmiths, fishermen, bus drivers, and Imams (priests), and there are fewer white collar work opportunities than in Toke.

Shak Char is characterised by underdevelopment, a lack of infrastructure and poor health and sanitation facilities. The only major establishments with a presence there are the Union Parishad Office and a few NGO offices; there are no banks or other financial organisations. The roads are mostly made of mud, and except for some three-wheeler auto-rickshaws there are no public transportation facilities (see Figure 6). Most of the houses are made of coconut leaves, betel nut leaves, bamboo and clay. NGOs such as BRAC, Grameen Bank and Proshika work to eradicate poverty by providing microcredit loans to the local people. Unlike Toke, there are very few mobile phone/computer shops, and people are less exposed to new technologies.

Figure 6: Street view of the road to Shak Char



The overall picture in terms of literacy and educational initiatives is dismally poor in Shak Char. The literacy rate is 33.53 per cent. Along with this low rate, there is also a lack of educational institutions. In total, there are five primary schools, one lower secondary school, one secondary school and one madrasa in the area. Students who wish to proceed to higher secondary education or further education depend on Lakshmipur Sadar or, in a few cases, Dhaka.

Religion appears to be an important part of the culture of Shak Char. Lakshmipur and its neighbouring district Noakhali are generally known to observe Islamic practices very strictly. During the fieldwork, the researchers recorded that most of the women wore the *hijab* and the men covered their heads with *tupi* caps.

Most people speak in a local dialect common to south-eastern Bangladesh (Lewis, 2009, Maniruzzaman, 1994). They use this with friends and relatives both in the home and at the bazaar. Priests in the mosques also give their sermons in this variety. Bangla is spoken in formal domains like schools, courts and offices, however. There is less use of English in everyday settings than there is in Toke, and there is also a limited presence of English on signs. There are no English language training or coaching centres either as part of governmental or non-governmental initiatives. However, in some cases local English language teachers offer private tuitions from their own homes. Given that there is a lack of English language teachers in Shak Char, a good number of students also travel to Lakshmipur Sadar to take private tuition. As in Toke, children learn Arabic at the *maktabs* and many people understand Hindi.

In summary, then, even though Toke and Shak Char share a great deal in terms of a common socio-economic and demographic background, they are also marked by different geophysical, educational and sociolinguistic features. Toke has the better infrastructural and socio-economic development and a higher literacy rate, while Shak Char is more poverty-stricken and at greater risk from natural disasters. Taken together, however, the two places are representative of rural and semi-rural Bangladesh and for this reason were chosen as the context for the research project.

Methodology

In this section we detail the methodology used in collecting and analysing the data. For this research we adopted an ethnographically-based approach in order to create local case studies which create a picture of the status of English within the targeted communities. The case studies were built using the following techniques: (1) field notes, (2) semi-structured interviews with members of the community, and (3) photographs. The two locations outlined above were selected on the basis of their having different language ecologies and environmental contexts, and also posing a different set of developmental challenges. Undertaking the study in two distinctly different rural areas of Bangladesh thus provided indications of the divergent factors that affect attitudes across the communities, and the strength of those factors as they manifest at a local level. The two Bangladeshi researchers collected data in multiple ways during an extended field visit of five days in each site, where they also recorded their insights into the geographic, socio-economic,

cultural and linguistic particularities of the community. Below we summarise some of the key elements that were involved in the collection of the data.

Establishing rapport

The two-person Bangladeshi-based research team had a pre-existing familiarity with the linguistic and socio-economic characteristics of rural Bangladesh, and both members had been brought up close to one of the research areas. Their cultural knowledge of the environment, along with their verbal repertoire in standard Bangla and the local dialects helped them to communicate with the community members. To the participants, being interviewed and recorded by strangers was a new experience and therefore it was very important for the field researchers to establish a good rapport with them, and to reassure them about the nature and purpose of the research process. The following are select examples of how the researchers undertook to do this.

In Toke on the first day, a cricket match was taking place on the local college field. The occasion gave them a chance to introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the research, and during the event they met many potential participants. Following on from this, daily informal conversations with local community members helped them to familiarise themselves with the setting of the area. Furthermore, the researchers' profession as teachers (they both have positions in universities in Bangladesh) was another advantage, as in most rural villages teachers (*mastersaab*) are usually held in high esteem.

The experience in Shak Char was markedly different, and in many ways it was more challenging. The locals appeared both curious and suspicious of the researchers' actions when taking pictures, writing notes and interviewing people. The local guide was from a distant area and had no real influence in the community and did little to explain the reasons for the researchers' visit. On the first day little progress was made. The researchers surveyed the area and found the local market place where people of all professions gather in the evening to talk and read the newspaper over a cup of tea. The following day they returned there and sought out the local leader, who became the first person to participate in the interviews. As time went on, the process became easier. By the second day they were no longer being viewed as strangers, and the research process could begin in earnest.

Semi-structured interviews

The main element of the research was the interviews with members of the two communities. The interviews were structured around a number of key topics derived from an analysis of discourse of English as a language for international development in Bangladesh, which has shown that English is often equated with economic value, technology and education (Seargeant and Erling, 2011). These topics included the participants' perceptions of and attitudes towards the importance of education in general and English language learning, and the significance this has for individual and community development (see Appendix for a copy of the interview schedule).

Certain ethical considerations were important in approaching the interviews, as in both communities many of the participants had low incomes. Considering that many of the participants live below the poverty line, it seemed unethical not to

give them a small token of appreciation. While all efforts were made to ensure that such tokens did not distort the research or the community, the researchers were aware that taking part in the interview process meant time spent away from work. A rickshaw-puller, barber or fisherman, for example, would lose out on the income he would accrue during that hour in which the interview was taking place. The tokens of appreciation did not in any sense compensate for the participants for the loss of income during this time, and yet, despite that, those who volunteered were generous with their time and keen to participate.

Gender issues also needed to be taken into consideration in the research process. While there was an attempt to have equal representation of male and female participants in the data, this proved to be a challenge. In rural communities, women generally prefer not to interact with strangers, which thus raised ethical considerations of privacy and respecting local culture. All interviews with female participants were therefore organised in their home environments and took place in the presence of a male adult family member. Interviews for the rest of participants were conducted in their place of work. Finally, since the education and literacy rates of participants were generally very low, the research relied on oral interviews, and all statements of informed consent were explained orally. Informed consent for use of the data has been confirmed by all participants, and pseudonyms have been used to protect anonymity.

The participants

In total, 28 people were interviewed, 23 male and five female participants. They ranged in age from 22 to 62. These participants were chosen in order to represent a range of people in terms of the following variables: profession, age, social class, gender and religion (see Figures 7 and 8). Interviews were undertaken with leaders and representatives of the local community in both areas, as well as people in more 'marginal' positions in society. There was extreme variation in the education levels of the participants, with some of them reporting very limited formal education and virtually no literacy skills apart from the ability to sign their names. Others reported achieving various levels of primary school (grades 1-5), secondary school (grades 6-10) or higher secondary (HSC) (grades 11-12). Several had higher degrees, such as a Diploma, a Bachelor's (BA, BBA, BBS, BSS, BEd) or a Master's (MA, MSc, MBA, MPhil). The religious scholars tended to have completed their education in religious institutes (e.g. *madrrasah*, *maqtab*, etc.)

Name	Profession	Age	Gender	Education
Gias Uddin	Banker	28	Male	BBA, MBA
Niranjan Sheel	Barber	50	Male	Grade 8
Talib Ahmed	College principal	48	Male	MSc
Ranu Islam	College teacher (Bangla)	42	Female	MA, MPhil
Polash Das	College teacher (English)	35	Male	BA, MA(English)
Faruk Karim	Chairman (elected union representative + politician)	46	Male	HSC
Moshiur	Farmer + village police + seasonal rickshaw puller	36	Male	Grade 7

Name	Profession	Age	Gender	Education
Monish Dev Barman	Fisherman	51	Male	Limited formal education
Ferdousi Begum	Housewife	32	Female	Secondary School Certificate
Maulana Kalim Uddin	Imam + teacher at maqtab (religious school)	40	Male	Primary + Madrasah
Mufti Abdul Hasan	Imam + Mufti	45	Male	Highest religious degree
Sumon Miah	Rickshaw puller	22	Male	Grade 7
Rafiq	Mobile phone store + poultry business	28	Male	HSC + Certificate in Electronics
Shanto Hawlader	Mobile salesman	28	Male	BBS
Sohel	Student	28	Male	BSS, MSS

Figure 7: Profiles of the Toke participants

Name	Profession	Age	Gender	Education
Devika	Cleaner	35	Female	Grade 8
Harun Khan	Chairman (elected union representative+ politician)	48	Male	BA
Momin Khan	Farmer	45	Male	Limited formal education
Shafi Islam	Farmer	62	Male	Limited formal education
Suleiman Shahid	Farmer	60	Male	Limited formal education
Habib Rahman	Fisherman	50	Male	Limited formal education
Maulana Mohammad Golam	Hafez (priest)	27	Male	Equivalent to HSC
Abdul Quddus	Head of junior school	55	Male	BA, BEd
Monohora Rani	Housewife	40	Female	Limited formal education
Minhaz Udiin	Social leader	58	Male	Grade 5
Fakir Ali	Teacher (Islamic Studies) + part time farmer + salesman	30	Male	Equivalent to BA
Saidul Islam	Headmaster of High School	55	Male	BA, BEd
Sushma Bose	Teacher (Agriculture)	27	Female	HSC, Diploma in Agriculture

Figure 8: Profiles of the Shak Char participants

Field notes and photographs

In addition to the interviews, field notes and photographs were taken. Since one of the focuses of the research was to find out and assess how, where and why English was being used in the two rural communities, the researchers took notes whenever they found instances of English on signboards, on t-shirts, in the home, or in people's general conversation (i.e. that which was not recorded as part of the interviews). The taking of photographs helped them capture the material manifestation of English in the lives of the people in the two areas. Both the field notes and the photographs also proved to be a useful *aide memoire* for researchers when it came to organising and archiving the data.

Data analysis

In analysing the transcribed and translated semi-structured interviews, qualitative content analysis was used (Silverman, 2006). In a first phase, the different sections of the interview schedule were used as broad categories for analysis of the data. Following a grounded approach, we identified thematic connections and patterns across the dataset. In a second phase of analysis, the themes set out in the interview schedule were refined according to the emergent data, and the translated interview transcripts were manually coded accordingly. This manual analysis did not reveal any major differences between the opinions of the community members in the two geographic sites, Toke and Shak Char.

The four major themes explored in the interview data were as follows:

- 1. English and access to global systems.** This included issues about English and economic value, economic and geographic mobility, employment opportunities and access to the global knowledge economy.
- 2. English and cultural value/identity.** This included issues regarding the politics of the English language in Bangladesh and the relationship between local and global culture/identities.
- 3. English and social status.** This included issues about the role of English and the social status of the individual and the nation.
- 4. Other issues.** This included topics not mentioned in the above three categories, including issues about access and infrastructure.

In this report we discuss these four themes in turn, and provide examples from the data of the opinions and attitudes of the members of the community where the research was undertaken. For each there is a brief summary.

Limitations

When undertaking the data analysis, it became obvious that at times the participants' responses may have been limited by the types of questions that were asked and the ways they were framed. In addition, the data provide only partial insight into other compounding issues along with lack of English that may impede development, such as lack of literacy in the national language. This was likely due in part to the fact that the interview questions were necessarily concentrated on the focus of the study, i.e. perceptions of English, and thus excluded other issues.

Research Findings

English and access to global systems

English was almost universally viewed among the entire cohort as being related to the global knowledge economy and important for employment prospects – both in the local area and elsewhere. There seemed to be no variation in this view, regardless of the location or occupation of the participant. A commonly-voiced reason for learning the language was in order to go abroad to work, not only in Anglophone countries, but also in the Middle East. English was particularly associated with information technology, especially mobile phones and the internet, and also for accessing information about medicines and pesticides, all of which is apparently written in English. Knowledge of English was often equated with knowledge of the Roman script and thus with transliterated Bangla, as well as a familiarisation with the Arabic numeral system and basic numeracy.

English and employment

Regardless of the participants' professions, it was generally seen as accepted wisdom that knowledge of English is needed to get a good job, and that proficiency in the language can bring improved job prospects, and therefore better lives for those living in rural areas:

... no matter what the profession is, if you have a better knowledge of English you can improve your lifestyle. (Niranjana Sheel, Barber, Toke)

There was the impression that knowledge of English can help someone gain employment, particularly in the new industries that are springing up, e.g. office work, technology-related businesses.

You have a better grasp of English then you can get jobs in all the offices that are run in English ... Many offices are springing up in our Lakshmipur also. The knowledge of English is going to be a big help. (Shafi Islam, Farmer, Shak Char)

There was a sense that knowledge of English allows people to gain more 'respectable' jobs, and jobs that are easier or require less manual labour and thus provide a more comfortable existence in rural areas:

... people would get better jobs if they knew English. No one would then do the job of digging the earth. People would do mobile business and computer related business etc. Then they would not have to work so hard. (Sumon Miah, Rickshaw-puller, Toke)

English was seen as something that can enable people in rural areas to move to Dhaka, where there are presumed to be more employment opportunities and more comfortable living standards:

People would have better work opportunities if they knew English. They could have got better jobs in Dhaka. (Devika, Cleaner, Shak Char)

English was also associated with higher level jobs and positions of authority:

I could be a 'supervisor' or an 'in-charge' if I knew English. Usually, people who

know English become a team leader of 4/5 persons. (Moshiur, Farmer, Toke)

Conversely, a lack of English can be seen as inhibiting further business expansion for those living in rural areas:

He who sells fruit does not know English. That's why his income is very limited. If he knew English, then he could do mobile phone related businesses or computer related businesses or could do jobs. (Sumon Miah, Rickshaw-puller, Toke)

These responses equate the learning of English with economic progress. Questions about who would sell fruit to locals if everyone were to become a mobile phone salesperson and what would happen to rural areas if everyone were to move to Dhaka for their livelihood remain unexplored. The responses also reflect a sense of socio-economic inequality and a lack of opportunity among certain members of the population. There is a sense that knowledge of English would somehow rectify this imbalance and there is no recognition of the fact that the plight experienced by marginalised people is most probably not caused by their inability to speak English but more likely due to a lack of other skills or because the way that society is structured (Coleman 2011: 15).

English for working abroad

Most participants felt that knowledge of English aided geographical mobility and many of them gave examples of people they know who went overseas to work. English was seen as the main language needed for working and living abroad, even in countries like the UAE and Malaysia, where other languages function as the national language:

Everyone speaks in English abroad. Everything is in English abroad... Even if you don't know Arabic, if you speak English, local people will understand you. (Momin Khan, Farmer, Shak Char)

There was some recognition of the fact that if someone goes abroad to work, a lack of English knowledge could have severe consequences:

In foreign countries, if you do not know English, you will starve (Suleiman Shahid, Farmer, Shak Char)

There was a recognition that Bangladeshis who do not speak English and go abroad end up earning less than those who speak English, and doing the lowest level jobs and living in poor conditions:

... people who know English get 'square' work so that they can nicely do their work wearing shirts and pants. If they do not know English, they need to do the filthiest work. If they knew English, they could have earned more. They could have been happy on all sides. (Devika, Cleaner, Shak Char)

While there was a sense that English would provide a practical lingua franca abroad, the need to learn languages like Arabic or Malay for work was not given much prominence in people's replies, which suggests a lack of awareness of the importance of local languages in succeeding abroad (see Chiswick, 2008).

The use of English in local industries

Although the majority opinion was to view English as important for employment prospects, some doubted that any real opportunities for economic betterment presented themselves in the local environment, especially for agricultural workers. For example, Minhaz Uddin, the social leader in Shak Char, says:

... people who are farmers and work in the fields don't need English. Even if they don't know English, they don't have any problem to do their work.

Likewise there were some views expressed that English is not needed for the jobs available in rural areas, only in large businesses located in the capital or abroad:

No, one cannot do anything in this area by knowing English. But English knowledge plays role when one goes to Dhaka, America or Japan. (Devika, Cleaner, Shak Char)

However, many of the participants working in these occupations (particularly farming) made special mention of how knowledge of English would be useful for them, above all in understanding and applying pesticides:

When the company gives us pesticides there is a paper with instructions written in English with it. If I knew English, I could have followed the instructions properly ... If we put in too much in field, the crop will be harmed and if we put in too little, the diseases will not be cured ... [In regards to two farmers in the area who are educated:] They get better crop yields than the other families here. We can also get a good crop with hard work but they can get a good crop using their education. (Moshiur, Farmer, Toke)

It is also reported that English is needed to gain access to prescriptions:

When the cattle get sick, then the doctors prescribe medicines. What happens is that if you don't English, you won't know when the date of use of a given medicine expires. Again, when I go to the pharmacies, I face some problems for lacking English. I don't have any option other than bring the medicine home which the vendor gives me. I don't know if this is a good medicine or not. Sometimes the vendor gives wrong medicine ... there are lots of dangers if one does not know English. (Momin Khan, Farmer, Shak Char)

Other participants mentioned particular things in the community for which knowledge of English was needed. These included user manuals, shop signs, and information and prices and information on packets for various products.

It is clear that access to such information is vital for the survival and success of people in rural communities. However, instead of insisting that such information should be provided in the language of the majority of the population, Bangla, in most cases people mentioned the need for English. Only Momin Khan (Farmer in Shak Char) noted: 'if doctors wrote in Bangla, then everyone could understand.' But even the provision of such information in Bangla would not help those participants with limited literacy skills in Bangla.

English for computing and mobile phones

The majority of the respondents across the sample associated an ability to operate technology with knowledge of English. This knowledge was often equated with familiarisation with the Roman script and the Arabic numeral system. As the Chairman of Toke Union explains, knowledge of the Roman script is required for most computer use, as it is common to use transliterated Bangla² as well as Arabic numerals³ for typing and texting:

If people do not have English literacy, then they will not even know the operations of a computer. Even if they want to use the computer in Bangla, they have to do it through English. (Faruk Karim, Chairman, Toke)

There was also an understanding that access to technology equals access to a wealth of knowledge and also to employment, as the following examples show:

If you know about computers, you do not have to wait for a job ... Nowadays you can know anything by using computer. If you know English, you can easily understand computer. You should not face any problem. (Monohora Rani, Housewife, Shak Char)

Minhaz Uddin, the social leader from Shak Char, was clear that a lack of knowledge of English hinders usage of increasingly ubiquitous IT products (such as mobile phones) and he explained how his own English has aided others in comprehending aspects of mobile phone usage.

There were, however, those who noted that one can still operate technology without English:

There are many persons who don't know English but can still do the work in mobile phones as they have memorised the applications ... After using mobile phones for a long time, one starts understanding these... but if one is educated, then it becomes easier. (Momin Khan, Farmer, Shak Char)

Monish Dev Barman, a fisherman in Toke, is a good example of someone who can operate technology without having basic literacy. As he reports, he has a mobile phone but does not send or receive text messages, as he cannot read them in whatever language they are in (regardless of whether it was Bangla, transliterated Bangla, or English). If he receives text messages, he cannot read them and has to go to someone else for help in reading them, but as he does not like to do this, these messages remain unread.

While more sophisticated computer applications using Bangla script exist, these are difficult to operate within the constraints of commonly available technology. So what is perceived as a need for English by many of the participants is actually a need for gaining multiliteracies in Bangla as well as familiarity with technology. In a similar way, the English language is often equated with knowledge of Arabic numerals: for example, Suleiman Shahid (Farmer in Shak Char) reported that vendors at the market take advantage of those who don't speak English by charging more than the standard price printed on a product's packaging. However, it is not necessarily English but knowledge of Arabic numerals (and the

ability to equate them with Bangla numerals) that would prevent someone like Suleiman Shahid from being at a disadvantage when buying products at the local market.

Summary

In summary, the perception across the cohort was that knowledge of English offers access to global systems, including technology, better employment opportunities, and work abroad. In addition there are several perceived specific needs for English in the local community, including its use to understand the application of pesticides and medicines, the need for knowledge of Roman script and Arabic numerals for understanding prices on packaging and shop signs, and the sending and receiving of text messages in transliterated Bangla. However, many of the examples cited may indicate, not a need for English, but rather a need for further access to literacy and numeracy in general, or a need for the provision of essential information in the national language. Despite this, even in those professions where some people voice doubts about the usefulness of English (e.g. farming), many of the people actually working in these fields express a desire to learn the language, for practical or other reasons (see below).

English and cultural value/identity

The second category focused on the relationship between local and global culture and identities among the participants, including whether the presence of English in society is perceived to have a detrimental effect on Bangla language or on local cultural and religious values. Again, opinions about the relationship between English and cultural values were almost unanimous across the cohort, with no one suggesting that the language was harmful to the local culture. No perceived problems in learning English were expressed and no sense of fear that the national language, culture or religion would be lost or corrupted by learning English, as this example demonstrates:

... we are Bangladeshi. We speak Bangla. For job, technology, and for going abroad English helps a lot; however it does not have any negative effect on our language. (Shanto Hawlader, Mobile salesman, Toke)

There seemed to be a very strong confidence in the nature and integrity of the local national culture, and the role that Bangla plays in this:

Monish: *We all are Bangladeshi. We always speak in Bangla. We have to speak in Bangla regardless of how much English we have learnt.*

Researcher: *Is it possible to forget Bangla?*

Monish: *No, it's not possible [smile].*

Researcher: *Why?*

Monish: *We have always spoken in Bangla. English comes later but Bangla is before everything. (Monish Dev Barman, Fisherman, Toke)*

Or:

Bangla is our language. No one will be able to take it away ... (Shafi Islam, Farmer, Shak Char)

There was also the idea that English can be used as a medium for promoting the local culture:

If we know English, we can invite the foreigners into our local cultural programmes. Then the foreigners can know about our culture. We can present our culture to the rest of the world through English. (Rafiq, Mobile phone sales, Toke)

English as an Islamic language

There were similar opinions expressed about religion, with the majority of respondents saying that the increasing presence of English in society would have no negative influence on religious practices and beliefs. This was nicely expressed by Suleiman Shahid (Farmer, Shak Char):

If you are true, then your religious practices will not be negatively influenced.

Some respondents mentioned that such attitudes might have been commonly found in the past, but they no longer are:

A very small group of people once thought that English can have debilitating effect on our religious practices and cultures. But now such attitudes no more can be found. Now even a madrasa [Islamic school] student knows that there is no way but to learn English. (Faruk Karim, Chairman, Toke)

There was also a sense expressed that 'every language is an Islamic language' (Maulana Mohamma Golam, Hafez, Shak Char).

In fact, especially amongst the Islamic practitioners (Imams and teachers) there was an emphatic sense that English can be used to serve Islam, and it allows people to engage with other Muslims throughout the world and to spread the word of Allah:

It would rather work as a plus point. Because when an aalim [scholar] goes preaching, he will be able to speak in both Bangla and English. (Fakir Ali, Teacher and part-time farmer, Shak Char)

Certain of the participants extended the argument to suggest that in fact the threat to society comes from not learning English, and that anti-English attitudes in Bangladesh were a historical mistake that had resulted in the Bangladeshis as well as the Muslims in India lagging behind in economic development:

In British period, many Hindus learned English and they progressed much while the Muslims thought that if they learn English, then their religion will be negatively affected and they would become Christian. As a result, the Muslims detached themselves from learning English. Actually this is the reality. This is the reason why we are lagging behind. (Harun Khan, Chairman, Shak Char)

Concern for Bangla

While there was overwhelming support of the need for Bangladeshis to learn English, occasional concerns were voiced about there being a little too much use of English words in Bangla:

We know that many people have laid down their lives for this language. The way that we use English now, it devalues Bangla to an extent. More Bangla should be used in day-to-day conversations. It's not that I won't learn English. I'll have to learn English to gain knowledge. But we can't exclude our native language. (Maulana Mohammad Golam, Hafez, Shak Char)

Also, several respondents mentioned the importance of keeping up both languages:

It is very bad if you forget your mother tongue ... Nothing is left if you forget your mother tongue. (Monohora Rani, Housewife, Shak Char)

Summary

The attitudes grouped together in this category were overwhelmingly – perhaps even naively – positive about the learning of English for Bangladeshis, and also showed an overall confidence in the integrity of the Bangla language and Islam. In fact, knowledge of English was even considered to be a positive factor in the way that it allows Bangladeshis to share their culture internationally and help Muslims participate in a global Islamic community. While historically there may have been a sense that English had to be rejected as part of emerging Bangladeshi nationalism and in order to reinforce the strength of Bangla as the national language, English is now perceived as being necessary for the development of the country. However, it is made clear by many participants that if the use of English were to come at the expense of Bangla, views would be very different.

English and social status

The focus in this section is on the relationship between English and perceived social status, as well as the esteem and value for the community that is thought to come with skills in English. As in the previous categories, there was a general consensus here: that knowledge of English does indeed lead to enhanced social status:

A person who knows English is respected everywhere. (Sushma Bose, Teacher, Shak Char)

There were only occasional counter-opinions to this discourse, such as:

There is no relation of language with getting honour or not. One might have much wealth, but might not have value. Whether a person will get value or not depends on one's behaviours. If a person is a good human being and his behaviour is nice, then he will get respect from people. It does not have any relation with knowing a language or not. (Harun Khan, Chairman, Shak Char)

But in general, knowledge of English was associated with many esteemed professions (e.g. teachers and doctors) and with going abroad and engaging with

highly respected people – all things which award someone with higher respect and greater social status:

Someone who knows English and does teaching in a school gets respect from people. A doctor gets respect from people and it is because he could become doctor as he knows good English. Again, someone who lives abroad and knows English get respect from people as they live abroad. ... People who know English can hang out with good people, can talk worthy and behave well with people. These give them special respect. (Sumon Miah, Rickshaw-puller, Toke)

There was also the impression that some knowledge of English can enhance the social status of even the educationally disadvantaged:

So, it happens that someone who is not that educated, but knows English will be considered as educated in the civilized society. (Ranu Islam, College teacher, Toke)

This view was echoed in the personal testimony given by the uneducated social leader in Shak Char, Minhaz Udiin, who elaborates on how he uses his knowledge of English to create an esteemed identity for himself:

Minhaz Udiin: *Sometimes, in some contexts, I prefer to mix Bangla and English. I feel good to do that.*

Researcher: *Why do you like that? Do you think that people give you more respect if you do that?*

Minhaz Udiin: *I revealed you very frankly about my educational qualification. Now, in other places people can't find out my educational qualification by talking with me.*

Researcher: *So, as you speak some English, people don't really think that you did not study much, right?*

Minhaz Udiin: *Yes. How would someone know about my educational qualifications? He hasn't taken any interview with me like you.*

Some of the participants with limited formal education thought that they would gain more respect in the community if they knew English, and that this is another reason for why they regret not going further with their education:

it would have been better. I could go to superior places. I could talk with good 'sirs' if I had some more proficiency in English ... I could mingle with anyone anywhere ... I would have been highly evaluated. (Devika, Cleaner, Shak Char)

Several people also valued English and had high aspirations for the power it has to make their children's lives better and offer them opportunities that they did not have:

I have kept an English teacher for them. I make my children learn from anyone who knows something about English. If they can learn a bit now, then in higher

classes there will not be any problem for them. In this way I am planning their studies. ... If English is known to them then there will not be any problem for them. From every aspect they will be alright, they will not face any problem anyway. They will not face any problem like mine. (Monohora Rani, Housewife, Shak Char)

For those respondents who have a family member who speaks English, this is something that they are very proud of and that provides them with esteem, particularly because of the associations of the language with numeracy and access to technology. For example, Devika, a cleaner in Shak Char, mentions that she is 'adored by my daughters' father for knowing English' and that she is very proud of her daughter because she speaks English and because she is recognised for this in the community:

Even many elder persons respect her ... many people bring their electricity bill to her and say ... 'can you see the bill and say where should the money be paid and by when?' ... when someone falls in trouble and visits a doctor, she comes to my daughter with the prescription and says, 'can you please see when I should have which medicine?' (Devika, Cleaner, Shak Char)

Here a knowledge of English was linked to respect because of the value Devika's daughter has in the community, due to her ability to perform certain tasks which require English language skills. Similarly, the following quote demonstrates that while knowledge of English can offer people various freedoms, a sense of prestige and self-sufficiency, a lack of English means that one is reliant on the help of others and therefore ashamed.

Suppose someone has a poultry business. Lots of information on the poultry medicine is written in English. If he would have read and understood by himself, he would not have asked for someone's help, he could try to read and understand by himself. When you go to someone for help but he's not at home, then many problems can occur. ... I know someone like this ... He is illiterate, he cannot do anything. He has a poultry business and goes to a lot of people when he cannot understand. He would not need to go to someone if he knew English. You will be ashamed after going to someone for one or two days, then you will stop going. (Ferdousi Begum, Housewife, Toke)

Lack of English, therefore, was seen as something that inhibits people's capabilities and contributes to their lack of status. Without English, people are reliant on others for access to the sort of information that they need to successfully run their businesses, and they are blocked from positions of prestige. Knowledge of English was seen as a something that would give them freedom to act on their own and make more informed decisions and choices, and also a prestigious role in the community from which they could help others.

Summary

As noted above, here again there was overall consensus in the associations between English and enhanced social status. Knowledge of English was associated with education in general, and often a good education, with higher level

professions, and with providing a service to the community. For those reasons, many of the participants wish that they had better skills in English and they make every effort to see that their children have opportunities to learn the language. In some cases, knowledge of English was unrealistically perceived as a general panacea that can make people's lives better by enhancing their livelihood and standing in the community.

Other issues: Access and infrastructure

As a final point, it is worth mentioning that while there was overall recognition of the fact that English can be a useful skill, both within the community and beyond, there was also a sense that it is something that is beyond the capabilities of most people in rural communities. A common opinion is that English cannot be learned because of a lack of money and access to resources:

Many people have [an interest in learning English] but they cannot as they lack the money. (Monish Dev Barman, Fisherman, Toke)

Moreover, in some cases respondents contextualised English language learning within wider development issues and felt that it was just one of a number of significant factors in the process of poverty reduction:

... I am not denying the importance of English learning. There are many advantages of learning English. But prior to this, it is necessary to widen general education. (Harun Khan, Chairman, Shak Char)

To achieve success in any educational initiative, including improved language education, there was a recognised need for larger change:

... to benefit from speaking English for common purposes, we need to develop the infrastructure. (Gias Uddin, Banker, Toke)

These voices remind us that, while English language education may have some role to play in development, educational issues are embedded within a wider web of development needs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The opinions collected in this study clearly indicate that there is both a perceived need and desire to learn English among representatives from several occupations in rural Bangladesh. There is also strong evidence that English is associated with modernity and high social status. English is seen as providing access to global information and international communities, as well as to better employment opportunities, both abroad and in the local communities where the studies were set. Within the study, speakers of English were viewed with much esteem, partly due to the value of the tasks that they can perform, and this provides further impetus for people to learn the language, and to ensure that their children learn it. And while attitudes may have differed in the past, English is not seen as presenting any particular danger to local languages, culture or religion. There is no strong evidence of English being perceived as what Imam (2005: 474) calls 'a displacer of national tradition, an instrument of continuing imperialist intervention, a fierce

coloniser of every kind of identity.' It should be stressed, of course that the study has focused on attitudes and beliefs, and as such does not provide information about actual uses of English in various community domains, or of the power issues that result from the history of English in the region. (A topic of this sort would be a productive focus for future research.)

At first glance, the perceptions of the participants in this study indicate a need for further opportunities to learn English within rural communities. However, upon reflection, some of the data suggest that what is perceived as a need for English may also indicate a need for further access to literacy in general, a need for the provision of essential information in the national language or a need for multi-literacies in the national language. Moreover, as was noted above, it is important to recognise that this study is based on people's *perceptions* and *attitudes*, and it is not possible to determine whether these perceptions are rooted in real experiences or are more the product of myths, and whether their attitudes capture actual opportunities or merely aspirations. In some cases, attitudes certainly seem to stem from the participants' real-life experiences and suggest that wider access to English language education (and/or wider access to information in Bangla) would allow more people in the community to profit from knowledge of the language and would increase their options and choices and lessen the need for them to rely on others for important information and access to resources.

Another necessary limitation of the study is that it does not address other forms of cultural or social capital that may be needed to gain resources and positions of esteem and authority in these communities. While the participants *perceive* English as strongly associated with better quality of life and more respectable positions in society, this may say more about their frustrations and dissatisfaction with their current situation than their actual need for English.

The strong associations between English and development, however, suggest there exists:

- a marked need to engage in a process of awareness-raising about English-language education projects.

And that within this context, it would be advisable for:

- English language teaching projects in development contexts to promote realistic views about what English can offer people as one of the (many) tools that can assist in international development; and that
- they communicate realistic messages based on hard evidence about the role of English in development.

To be able to do this, detailed empirical studies of how knowledge of English correlates with economic value in rural Bangladesh are needed. Future research could explore issues like the potential role of English in developing rural economies, or the value of English language skills for migrant workers who often provide repatriated funds in rural areas.

And while there may be a need for more realistic messages about the role of English in development, if people in rural areas strongly feel that learning English will improve their status in life and offer them greater opportunity, then access should not be denied. Beliefs about the role played by English can be part of the envisioned success that is required in order for actual development to occur. After all, achieving success despite the odds is clearly possible for the disadvantaged (see Erling, Hamid and Seargeant, 2012). Moreover, Vavrus (2002: 373) found that economic hardship among the students in Tanzania was tempered by their optimism, as they felt that English was valuable as a means of connecting them to the wider world and providing access to better jobs – if not now, then perhaps in the future.

Given that there are wider development and educational issues to be considered in rural Bangladesh, such as universal access to basic education in the national language, if the English language is going to continue to be promoted as a tool for international development, then it seems that such programmes should be:

- specialised and functional, and
- practically based in the needs of the community.

Ethnographic approaches such as those which inspired this study have proved to be effective in adult literacy education initiatives in development contexts, as they combine literacy teaching with the acquisition of other relevant skills for community livelihoods (e.g. saving and credit, health and family planning) (see Street, Rogers and Baker, 2006; Rogers, Hunter and Uddin, 2007). Such approaches could be adapted to the context of English language teaching in rural Bangladesh in order to gain an understanding of how English language education might complement local and national literacy initiatives and better contribute to development. By exploring the needs and aspirations of the local community, research studies such as this could be used as a basis for community language learning projects. In this way, participants could take ownership and control of their language learning, which could then open up a wealth of opportunity and information to them.

And finally, if English language and literacy education is to be provided, there is a need to ensure that:

- Bangla (or local language) literacy should remain as the first step in general literacy provision;
- any English language learning should reinforce Bangla literacy; and
- English education should have as its aim the use of the language to engage in a global community with the purpose of sharing and promoting local values and identities.

It is hoped that this study has contributed to the growing area of research on English as a language for international development, and to the broad aim of gaining a better understanding of how English language education might best

assist development projects. In addition, it is hoped that the methods used in this study can provide a means for embedding ethnographic research into community initiatives for English language and literacy education in development contexts, so that participants can take ownership and control of their learning.

Notes

1. In this report we use the term 'international development' to refer to internationally planned, funded and/or executed projects (i.e. those involving two or more countries), while we take the term 'development' to refer to locally or nationally planned, funded and executed projects (see Seargeant and Erling, 2012, for fuller discussion of the distinction).
2. The Bangla writing system is an *abugida*, a non-Roman script in which consonant-vowel sequences are written as a unit.
3. Bangla has its own numeral system which differs from Arabic numerals.

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Appendix: Interview schedule

Questions about background

Occupation

Family situation

Educational background

[other?]

Questions about English

Do you speak English? If so, how did you learn it?

Do you use it much? If so, for what purposes? (e.g. reading, writing, speaking, listening)

Do you know of people in your community who speak English well? If so, who are they? What do they do? For what purposes they use it?

Do you think that people in the community *want* to learn English? If so, why do you think they want to learn it? For what purposes?

What kind of employment opportunities are there in your community?

Do you think people's employment opportunities are improved if they can speak English? If so, why do you think this is?

Do you think the learning of English improves the livelihoods of people in the community? If so, how? (e.g. reading knowledge, access to information/media, communicate with people from other countries, etc.)

Do you think that learning English would help you/others:

Get better job?

Grow the business?

Work abroad?

Earn more money?

Access to higher education?

Have access to technology?

Other motivations?

What effect do you think that learning English has on people within the community? (e.g. does it have any impact on the way they act, the traditional culture, the other languages they speak/ learn, etc.?)

Do you have any concerns that the learning of English by people in your community would change people in some way? (e.g. interfere with the local culture, religion, language)

What are the benefits of learning English?

Do you think it has any particular benefits in terms, for example, of social standing?

What kind of skills or education (in addition to or apart from English) do you think would benefit people in your community most?

e.g.: do you think that education/literacy is helpful for people in your community to get better jobs? How?

What kinds of development projects are there/ have there been in your community in recent years? (e.g. literacy development for adults, school improvement, water, environmental sustainability, etc.) Have they benefited you/ the community in any way? If so, how?

Are there any literacy development projects for Bangla or for other community languages? Have you ever taken part in these? What are your views about them?

8

Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices

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Introduction

Learner autonomy has been a major area of interest in foreign language (FL) teaching for some 30 years. Much has been written about what learner autonomy is, the rationale for promoting it, and its implications for teaching and learning. In terms of its rationale (see, for example, Camilleri Grima, 2007; Cotterall, 1995; Palfreyman, 2003) claims have been made that it improves the quality of language learning, promotes democratic societies, prepares individuals for life-long learning, that it is a human right, and that it allows learners to make best use of learning opportunities in and out of the classroom. Teachers' voices have, however, been largely absent from such analyses, and little is actually known about what learner autonomy means to language teachers. This is a significant gap given the influence that teachers' beliefs have on how they teach, and, of particular interest here, on whether and how they seek to promote learner autonomy. This study addressed this gap by examining what 'learner autonomy' means to language teachers in a large university English language centre in Oman. Additionally, these insights into teachers' beliefs were used to design and deliver teacher professional development workshops about learner autonomy.

Theoretical Background

Learner Autonomy

A large literature on autonomy in language learning now exists, with Holec (1981) commonly cited as a seminal contribution to the field. Benson (2011) provides a comprehensive analysis of key issues in learner autonomy, while there have also been a number of edited collections dedicated to the topic (Barfield & Brown, 2007; Benson, 2007b; Benson & Voller, 1997; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2003; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Pemberton, Li, Or, & Pierson, 1996; Pemberton, Toogood, & Barfield, 2009; Sinclair, McGrath, & Lamb, 2000; Vieira, 2009). Our analysis of this work highlights a number of key and often interlinked themes:

- The nature of learner autonomy – how to define it and what it involves
- The rationale for promoting learner autonomy in FL learning
- The role of the teacher in learner autonomy
- Institutional and individual constraints on learner autonomy
- The meanings of learner autonomy in diverse cultural contexts
- Individualistic vs. social perspectives on learner autonomy
- The kinds of learning opportunities that foster learner autonomy.

It is not our intention here to enter into a detailed theoretical discussion of these issues. However, a broader commentary will suffice to illustrate the complexity which characterises discussions of learner autonomy and the implications this has for teachers' own understandings of this concept. To start with definitional matters, Holec's (1981: 3) early and still influential definition of learner autonomy was 'the

ability to take charge of one's learning ... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning' and the specific decisions he listed were:

- determining the objectives
- defining the contents and progressions
- selecting methods and techniques to be used
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition
- evaluating what has been acquired.

As Benson (2006) notes, variants on this definition appear in the literature, with 'ability' sometimes replaced with 'capacity' (for example, in Little, 1991) and 'take responsibility for' or 'take control of' substituting for 'take charge of'. Some definitions (e.g. Dam, 1995) also include the notion of 'willingness' to stress the point that irrespective of their capacity, learners will not develop autonomy unless they are willing to take responsibility for their learning. These broad understandings of what learner autonomy is, then, seem to be well-established in the literature (but see also Benson, 1996 for an analysis of the complexities involved in defining what learner autonomy means); additionally, following Little (1991), some accounts of learner autonomy start by defining what it is *not*; Esch (1998: 37), for example, states that

it is not self-instruction/learning without a teacher; ... it does not mean that intervention or initiative on the part of a teacher is banned; ... it is not something teachers do to learners; i.e. a new methodology; ... it is not a single easily identifiable behaviour; ... it is not a steady state achieved by learners once and for all.

Any consensus in the literature about what learner autonomy is or is not, however, does not imply that teachers will necessarily hold analogous understandings of the concept; in fact, given the limited knowledge we have of such understandings, we find questionable some of the pronouncements in the literature about the existence of generally accepted views about learner autonomy. Holec (2008: 3), for example, suggests that the following list of issues in learner autonomy have been 'provisionally settled':

does self-direction simply mean that the learner will do here what the teacher does in traditional other-directed learning environments? What new roles for teachers are defined in the approach? What should materials suitable for self-directed learning look like? How can learners be adequately trained to achieve learning competence? How can teachers be trained to adequately play their roles? What are the defining features of self-evaluation? What are the appropriate representations on language and language learning that both learners and teachers should base their actions on?

Sinclair (2000) similarly suggests 13 aspects of learner autonomy which 'appear to have been recognised and broadly accepted by the language teaching profession'

1.	Autonomy is a construct of capacity.
2.	Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning.
3.	The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate.
4.	Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal.
5.	There are degrees of autonomy.
6.	The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable.
7.	Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent.
8.	Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process – i.e. conscious reflection and decision-making.
9.	Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies.
10.	Autonomy can take places both inside and outside the classroom.
11.	Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension.
12.	The promotion of autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension.
13.	Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures.

Table 1: Defining learning autonomy (Sinclair, 2000)

We would agree, to qualify the above claims about consensus, that such understandings are generally accepted by academics and researchers working in the field of learner autonomy; the extent to which teachers also embrace such positions remains, however, unknown; there is actually some evidence (albeit limited) that teachers may hold positions about learner autonomy which are at odds with those listed above. Benson (2009), for example, notes that misconceptions identified by Little (1991) persist, especially that autonomy is synonymous with self-instruction and that any intervention on the part of the teacher is detrimental to autonomy (see also the conclusions of Martinez, 2008, which we discuss below).

Palfreyman (2003) does acknowledge the gap that may exist between theoretical discussions of learner autonomy and teachers' own understandings of the concept and makes the point with specific reference to the manner in which learner autonomy has been conceptualised from technical, psychological, and political perspectives (see Benson, 1997) and, additionally, from a socio-cultural perspective (Oxford, 2003). Each of these perspectives is seen to be underpinned by different theoretical assumptions; for example, while a technical perspective focuses on the physical settings of learning (often outside formal educational settings), a psychological orientation is concerned with the mental attributes that permit autonomy; and while a political (or critical) perspective focuses on issues of power and control, a socio-cultural perspective has a central interest in the roles of interaction and social participation in the development of learner autonomy. Palfreyman (2003: 4) notes that 'while it is useful to distinguish the different perspectives mentioned above ... in real educational settings such perspectives are not black-and-white alternatives'.

One key argument for us here, then, is that although there has been substantial theoretical discussion of learner autonomy in the field of FL learning, and even though this has generated some broadly accepted understandings of this concept, what learner autonomy means to teachers remains largely unstudied. This, of course, is not to suggest that the volume of existing literature available did not contribute to this project. It played a central role in allowing us to define key issues in the field of learner autonomy and in suggesting topics that we could explore from teachers' perspectives.

Teachers' Beliefs

The second strand of our theoretical framework draws on research in the field of language teacher cognition, which is defined as the study of what teachers think, know and believe (Borg, 2006). In her review of trends in language teacher education, Johnson (2006) described teacher cognition as the area of research which has made the most significant contribution in the last 40 years to our understandings of teachers and teaching. It has been a very productive field of research in language teaching since the mid-1990s and this work has established a number of insights about the nature of teachers' beliefs and their role in language teaching and teacher learning which are now widely accepted (for a summary of these insights, see Phipps & Borg, 2009). For the purposes of this study, two particular points are important. Firstly, teachers' beliefs can powerfully shape both what teachers do and, consequently, the learning opportunities learners receive. Therefore the extent to and manner in which learner autonomy is promoted in language learning classrooms will be influenced by teachers' beliefs about what autonomy actually is, its desirability and feasibility. Secondly, teacher education is more likely to have an impact on teachers' practices when it is based on an understanding of the beliefs teachers hold (Borg, 2011). Understanding teachers' beliefs about autonomy is thus an essential element in the design of professional development activities aimed at promoting learner autonomy (one goal of this project, as we describe later, was to design such activities).

Only a few studies addressing language teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy were available when we embarked on this study and we will comment on each of them in turn. Camilleri (1999) presents questionnaire data collected from 328 teachers in six European contexts (Malta, The Netherlands, Belorussia, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia). The instrument used consisted of 13 items each asking about the extent to which learners, according to the teachers, should be involved in decisions about a range of learning activities, such as establishing the objectives of a course or selecting course content. Although this project was supported by the European Centre for Modern Languages, it is unclear what proportion of the participating teachers actually taught languages (some in the Netherlands sample, for example, taught Economics). In terms of the findings, teachers were found to be positive about involving learners in a range of activities, such as deciding on the position of desks, periodically assessing themselves and working out learning procedures. In contrast, teachers were not positive about learner involvement in the selection of textbooks and deciding on the time and place of lessons. The latter findings are hardly surprising given that many respondents worked in state schools. Camilleri Grima (2007) replicated this study with a group

of 48 respondents made up of student teachers and practising teachers of modern languages in Malta. She compared her results to the Malta cohort in the original study and found much similarity both in terms of the positive overall views expressed by teachers as well as in the specific aspects of autonomy they were more and less supportive of. The more recent group of teachers, though, were seen to be more positive than those in the earlier study towards particular aspects of autonomy, such as learners setting their own short-term objectives, their involvement in the selection of materials, and self-assessment.

The instrument from the above studies was used once again by Balçıkınlı (2010) to examine the views about learner autonomy of 112 student teachers of English in Turkey. Additionally, 20 participants were interviewed in focus groups of four teachers each. The results suggested that the student teachers were positively disposed towards learner autonomy – i.e. they were positive about involving students in decisions about a wide range of classroom activities, though, again, they were less positive about involving students in decisions about when and where lessons should be held. Rather uncritically perhaps, given the limited teaching experience the respondents had and the typically formal nature of state sector schooling in Turkey, the article reports that ‘these student teachers felt very comfortable with asking students to make such decisions’ (p.98). More realistically, though, the study does conclude by asking about the extent to which respondents’ positive theoretical beliefs about promoting learner autonomy would actually translate into classroom practices. This observation reminds us that in using self-report strategies such as questionnaires and interviews to study teachers’ beliefs we must always be mindful of the potential gap between beliefs elicited theoretically and teachers’ actual classroom practices.

Al-Shaqsi (2009) was another survey of teachers’ beliefs about learner autonomy. This was conducted with 120 teachers of English in state schools in Oman. A questionnaire was devised specifically for this study and it asked respondents about (a) the characteristics of autonomous learners (b) their learners’ ability to carry out a number of tasks (each of which was assumed to be an indicator of learner autonomy – e.g. deciding when to use a dictionary or identifying their own weaknesses) and (c) how learner autonomy might be promoted. The three characteristics of autonomous learners most often identified by teachers were that they can use computers to find information, use a dictionary and ask the teacher to explain when they do not understand. The teachers in this study also assessed their learners positively on all of the indicators of learner autonomy they were presented with, with the three most highly rated being asking the teacher to explain when something is not clear, giving their point of view on topics in the classroom and using the dictionary well. Finally, teachers made several suggestions for promoting learner autonomy; what was interesting about these is that in several cases the connection between the pedagogical activity being proposed and learner autonomy was not evident; for example, teachers suggested that they could use different types of quizzes and challenging tasks, increase learner talking time or reward learners for good performance. Interviews would have been useful in this study to explore the connections that teachers felt there were between such activities and the development of learner autonomy.

The final study we discuss here is Martinez (2008), who examined, using a predominantly qualitative methodology, the subjective theories about learner autonomy of 16 student teachers of French, Italian and Spanish. These students were studying at a university in Germany and were taking a 32-hour course about learner autonomy at the time of the study. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations during the course; copies of the instruments were, though, not included with the paper and it was not possible therefore to critique or draw on these in our study. Results showed that the student teachers had positive attitudes towards learner autonomy and that these were informed largely by their own experiences as language learners. The conceptions of autonomy held by the student teachers generally reflected the view that (a) it is a new and supposedly better teaching and learning methodology; (b) it is equated with individualisation and differentiation; (c) it is an absolute and idealistic concept; (d) it is associated with learning without a teacher. Such perspectives do not align with those currently promoted in the field of language teaching (and actually reflect several of the claims Esch, 1998, above, made about what learner autonomy is not).

Methodologically, none of the studies of teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy reviewed here provided any firm direction for this project. The sole qualitative study generated interesting findings but did not publish the instruments used. The remaining four studies were based on questionnaires which were rather limited, methodologically; that used in three of the studies seemed particularly prone to generating socially desirable responses rather than insights which reflected teachers' classroom practices (and it did not actually ask any questions about what teachers do). For the purposes of our study, therefore, although we consulted the instruments available, a new questionnaire was developed. Additional sources, such as Benson (2007a), entitled 'Teachers' and learners' perspectives on autonomy' and a collection called 'Learner autonomy: Teacher and learner perspectives' (Benson, 2007b) were also initially consulted but were found to be largely lacking in empirical data about what learner autonomy means to teachers.

To conclude this discussion of the theoretical background to this study, then, the points we want to emphasise are that:

1. Learner autonomy is established as a central concept in the field of FL learning.
2. There is a large literature on learner autonomy which, though, awards limited attention to FL teachers' beliefs about this concept.
3. Understanding such beliefs is central to the process of understanding and promoting changes in the extent to which teachers' promote learner autonomy in their work.

It is also worth noting here that since we conducted this study some additional literature on teachers' perspectives on learner autonomy or facets of it has appeared. Bullock (2011) is a small-scale study of English language teachers' beliefs about learner self-assessment which highlights a gap between teachers' positive theoretical beliefs about this notion and their beliefs in its practicality. Yoshiyuki (2011) compares English language teachers' (positive) theoretical views

about the value of learner autonomy with their (less positive) reported classroom practices (and finds a substantial gap between the two). Both these studies, then, add to existing concerns in the literature that learner autonomy is a notion around which theoretical ideals and pedagogical realities may not always concur. A third recent paper here is Reinders & Lazarou (2011), which examined, via interviews, the beliefs about autonomy of teachers working in 46 self-access centres in five countries. We return to this study later when we summarise the findings of our project. These recent studies are encouraging in that they suggest a recognition of the point we made above regarding the need for more empirical attention to what learner autonomy actually means to teachers. Finally, a recent special issue of *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* (Vol. 5, Issue 2, 2011) was also dedicated to learner autonomy, and although the papers are predominantly learner-oriented in their focus, there are also some interesting qualitative insights into the work of teachers seeking to promote learner autonomy (e.g. Burkert, 2011; Kuchah & Smith, 2011)

Context for the Study

In addition to the theoretical motivation for the study discussed above, this project was also driven by a concrete practical need – i.e. a desire, in the institution where this project was conducted, to promote learner autonomy more consistently. The institution involved here was the Language Centre (LC) at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman. This centre employs 200 teachers of over 25 nationalities who teach English to around 3500 Omani students preparing for undergraduate study at the University.

In common with similar university-based language centres around the world, the LC at SQU offers both foundation pre-sessional general English language courses as well as post-foundation EAP courses. The foundation courses follow a skills-based curriculum covering the four language skills together with study and research skills. These courses are taught in six levels ranging from beginner to upper intermediate. Each level lasts eight weeks and (at the time of the study) consisted of 20 weekly contact hours. Assessment involves a range of formative and summative measures. The post-foundation courses are tailor-made based on the requirements of each college in the University – e.g. English for commerce.

One of the goals of the LC is to support the development of autonomy in its learners and a curriculum document used in the LC states that many 'students come to the University with limited study skills, and with an over-dependence on the teacher for their learning. We therefore need to equip students with the skills and techniques which will enable them to develop more independence and become more effective learners' (English Foundation Programme Document 2010-2011, p.4). Activities for promoting learner autonomy, such as independent study projects and portfolios, are built into LC courses. However, there was a concern, among both the management and the teachers, that existing strategies for promoting learner autonomy were not achieving the desired results. This provided the stimulus for our project.

Methodology

Research Questions

This project addressed the following questions:

1. What does 'learner autonomy' mean to English language teachers at the LC?
2. To what extent, according to the teachers, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?
3. How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?
4. To what extent do teachers feel their learners are autonomous?
5. To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?
6. What challenges do teachers face in helping their learners become more autonomous?

Additionally, it was our goal here to use the insights obtained through systematically studying these issues as the basis of a series of professional development workshops for the LC teachers. We discuss this latter component of the project later in this report.

Two strategies for data collection were used – a questionnaire and interviewing.

The Questionnaire

As noted earlier, our review of existing studies of teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy did not point to the existence of a robust instrument which we could adopt for this study. We therefore developed our own instrument. Questionnaires are, mistakenly, often seen to be an easy option for collecting data in research with teachers. It is true that they offer several advantages compared to, for example, interviews: questionnaires can be administered relatively economically, can reach a large number of participants in geographically diverse areas and can be analyzed quickly (see Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010 for a discussion of these and other benefits of questionnaires). Such benefits, though, are pointless if the questionnaire is not well-designed. We thus invested a significant amount of time (over two months) at the start of the project on developing the questionnaire and throughout this process we were guided by a number of principles. In terms of content, we needed to ask questions relevant to our research questions; technically, it was essential for items to be well-written (avoiding many of the design flaws noted, for example, in Brown & Rodgers, 2002); and in terms of the user experience, we wanted the instrument to be relevant, interesting, professional-looking and easy to complete. The final version of our instrument is in Appendix 1 and below we explain the stages we went through in developing it.

a. Reviewing the literature

We engaged with the literature on learner autonomy in FL learning in order to identify the kinds of themes which characterised debates in this field (we listed some of these earlier). As a result of this process we started to draw up lists of topics that our questionnaire might address and to organise these under headings.

One immediate challenge that emerged here was that the list of potential issues that could be covered was very long; it was clear from the outset, then, that we would need to be selective about questionnaire content.

b. Drafting questionnaire items

In order to explore teachers' beliefs about what learner autonomy entails, we wanted to include questionnaire items which addressed the different perspectives on autonomy highlighted in the literature. One set of distinctions that we worked with was that related to technical, psychological, socio-cultural and political views of learner autonomy that we noted earlier. In addition, we also drafted items which addressed various other debates in relation to learner autonomy, such as the following:

- Institutional and individual constraints on learner autonomy
- The role of the teacher in learner autonomy
- The relevance of learner autonomy to diverse cultural contexts
- The extent to which autonomy is influenced by age and proficiency
- The implications of learner autonomy for teaching methodology
- Individualistic vs. social perspectives on learner autonomy
- The contribution of learner autonomy to effective language learning
- The extent to which learner autonomy is an innovative trend
- Learner autonomy as an innate vs. learned capacity
- The role of strategy training in promoting learner autonomy.

These issues were included in Section 1 of the questionnaire, which, by our third draft, consisted of 50 Likert scale items on a five-point scale of agreement. Additionally, in this draft, we included a section on the desirability and feasibility of learner autonomy; teachers were asked, for example, how desirable it was to involve learners in decisions about course objectives and how feasible they thought, in their context, it was to do so. A further section in our draft asked teachers more specifically about how autonomous they felt their learners were and about the extent to which they, as teachers, promoted learner autonomy in their teaching. Spaces were included for teachers to explain their answers to these questions (e.g. to give examples of how they promoted learner autonomy).

Throughout the process of drafting the questionnaire items we were guided by a number of principles. In terms of content, we needed to ask questions relevant to our research questions; technically, it was essential for items to be well-written (avoiding many of the design flaws noted, for example, in Brown & Rodgers, 2002); and in terms of the user experience, we wanted the instrument to be relevant, interesting, professional-looking and easy to complete.

c. Critical review

We asked an academic colleague with experience of working with questionnaires to review draft 3 of the questionnaire and their comments contributed to its continuing development. One important point they raised concerned the extent to which the 50 Likert-scale items in Section 1 of the questionnaire formed one or more scales. A scale, as defined by Bryman (2008: 698) is a 'multiple-indicator measure in which the score a person gives for each component indicator is used to provide a composite score for that person'. The question for us, then, was whether we saw the Likert-scale items as 50 individual and conceptually unrelated items or whether sub-groups of items addressed common concepts.

d. Further drafting and review

We thus returned to Section 1 of the questionnaire in order to be explicit about the concepts we were covering and the items that related to each. As part of the process, several items were rewritten and others deleted; the result, in draft 4, was a list of 54 items covering the following constructs (the numbers in brackets indicate the number of items in this draft that addressed each construct):

1. Technical perspectives on learner autonomy (5)
2. Psychological perspectives on learner autonomy (5)
3. Social perspectives on learner autonomy (7)
4. Political perspectives on learner autonomy (9)
5. The role of the teacher in learner autonomy (6)
6. The relevance of learner autonomy to diverse cultural contexts (3)
7. Age and learner autonomy (3)
8. Proficiency and learner autonomy (3)
9. The implications of learner autonomy for teaching methodology (5)
10. The relationship of learner autonomy to effective language learning (3)
11. Learner autonomy as an innate vs. learned capacity (4)
12. The extent to which learner autonomy is an innovative trend (1)

This version of the questionnaire was once again reviewed by our academic colleague, whose comments directed us to think further about the extent to which the items in some of the above groups were actually addressing the same underlying construct.

e. Piloting

Following further revisions to the instrument (by which point we had arrived at draft 7), there were 42 Likert-scale items in Section 1, addressing concepts 1-10 in the list above. Section 2 focused on teachers' views about the desirability and feasibility of various learner abilities (e.g. self-evaluation) and learner involvement

in language course decisions (e.g. in setting objectives). Section 3 focused on teachers' beliefs about how autonomous their learners were and on the extent to which they promoted autonomy in their teaching. The final section asked teachers for demographic information.

At this point we were ready to pilot the questionnaire and were assisted in this process by colleagues working at a university English language centre in Turkey. Despite the different geographical setting, this institution fulfilled a purpose (as a university preparatory school) similar to that of the LC at SQU and similarly employed staff from a range of international contexts. The pilot questionnaire was completed by 18 teachers.

The analysis of these teachers' responses and suggestions led to considerable further revision of the instrument; in particular, our analysis of the ten scales described earlier showed that in several cases the items in each scale were not addressing a common underlying concept (and thus did not provide a valid measurement of this concept). The statistic that is commonly used to assess the extent to which scales display 'unidimensionality' is Cronbach's alpha and according to Bryman & Cramer (2005), 0.8 is the alpha level which indicates a good level of conceptual relatedness among items (see also Field, 2009 for a discussion of this statistic). Thus, for example, while the three items in the pilot questionnaire on the relationship of learner-centredness to learner autonomy produced an alpha of 0.83, that for the three items related to the cultural universality of learner autonomy was only 0.40. Although we were mindful that the statistical results here would have also been influenced by both the small number of items in each scale and the small pilot sample, these results nonetheless stimulated us to engage in further revision of the Likert-scale items in Section 1 of the questionnaire.

f. Preparing the final version

The final version of Section 1 consisted of 37 Likert scale items, covering the same ten concepts in learner autonomy addressed in the pilot study, though with several changes to the individual items. Sections 2-4 were as previously described, while Section 5 asked teachers to volunteer for the second phase of the study. Once this version was finalised, it was also converted into a web-based format, using SurveyMonkey. Before the web-based version of the questionnaire went live, it was trialled independently by each of us and revised further; an additional colleague was also asked to work through it online.

g. Administration

The population of respondents for this study consisted of all 200 teachers of English in the LC at SQU in Oman. Before being invited to complete the questionnaire, the teachers were primed – i.e. they were sent an e-mail with information about the study and told that they would be receiving a request to complete a questionnaire. This request followed a few days later and teachers were given the option of completing either the web-based version of the questionnaire or a version in Word which they could return as an e-mail attachment. They were asked to respond within ten days. Two days before this deadline, the response rate was 16% and teachers received a second email to thank those who had responded and to

remind those who had not. Two days after the deadline, the response rate was 25 per cent and a further e-mail of this kind was sent. The questionnaire was closed a week after the original deadline, with a response rate of 33.5 per cent, which was later revised down to 30.5 per cent (i.e. 61 responses) when questionnaires which were substantially incomplete were discarded. The vast majority of respondents completed the web-based version of the questionnaire.

Interviews

Phase 2 of the study consisted of follow-up interviews with teachers who had completed the questionnaire and volunteered to speak to us. The purpose of the interviews was to explore in more detail teachers' responses to the questionnaire. Teachers who agreed to do an interview wrote their names at the bottom of their questionnaire and we were thus able to personalise the interviews by asking teachers about their own individual questionnaire responses.

Of the 61 questionnaire respondents, 42 volunteered to do an interview. Given that we were seeking to conduct semi-structured interviews lasting around 30 minutes each, it was not feasible (given our resources) to interview all of these volunteers and we decided to speak to 20. These 20 teachers were selected using criteria from two specific questionnaire responses: (a) teachers' beliefs about how autonomous their students were and (b) teachers' years of experience in ELT. Interviewees were then chosen using stratified random sampling (see Bryman, 2008). In a stratified sample the criteria for selection are represented in the same proportions as they are in the larger group the sample comes from.

The next stage in preparing for the interviews was to develop an interview schedule. Our aim was to use teachers' individual questionnaires as prompts for the interviews, and in this sense each schedule was, as noted above, personalised. We, did, though, develop a common framework of questions which could then be tailored in each interview depending on what the teacher said in the questionnaire (i.e. whether they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement). An example of an interview schedule is included in Appendix 2.

The 20 interviews took place over a month; ten were conducted by phone from the UK and ten face-to-face in Oman. All interviews were, with teachers' permission, audio recorded. We recognise the socially co-constructed nature of interviews (for a recent discussion of this issue in applied linguistics, see Mann, 2011) and acknowledge that teachers' interactions with us will have been shaped by their perceptions of our agenda in conducting the project. The positions held by the interviewers – one was the teachers' manager and the other was a UK-based academic – and the different forms of interview (face-to-face vs. telephone) will have also influenced (perhaps in distinct ways) how teachers' responded to our questions about learner autonomy.

Data Analysis

The closed questionnaire data were analysed statistically using SPSS 18. Descriptive statistics (i.e. frequency counts and percentages) were calculated for all questions. Inferential statistics were also used to examine relationships between variables and differences among them.

The open questionnaire responses and the interview data (after they had been transcribed in full) were categorised through a process of qualitative thematic analysis (see, for example, Newby, 2010). This process involves reading the data carefully, identifying key issues in them, and then organising these issues into a set of broader categories. The questions in the questionnaire and the interview schedule provided an initial structure within which specific answers could then be further categorised. For example, one of the interview questions asked teachers about their views on the contribution of learner autonomy to L2 learning. The question itself thus constituted the broad category within which answers (i.e. about the different contributions of learner autonomy) were then analysed.

Given the mixed methods nature of this study, data analysis also involved a comparison of the questionnaire and interview data; this allowed us to corroborate particular conclusions from two perspectives, to illustrate quantitative findings with qualitative examples, and to obtain a more meaningful understanding of why teachers answered particular questionnaire items in the ways they did.

Ethics

The study was approved by the first researcher's institutional ethics committee. Participants were provided with enough information to make an informed decision about whether to take part in the study, participation was voluntary, and the data collected were treated confidentially and in such a way to protect respondents' identities. The results of the research phase of the study were fed back to the participants in the form of professional development activities, thus giving them an opportunity to benefit from the project; this was a particularly positive ethical dimension of this work.

Results

Profile of Respondents

The respondents constituted a non-probability sample of 61 teachers of English working at the LC in SQU (30.5 per cent of the teacher population there). Ten nationalities were represented, almost 59 per cent of the respondents were female, over 81 per cent had a Master's and 8.5 per cent a Doctorate. Experience in ELT varied from four years or less to over 25 years, with 15-19 years being the largest group (25.9 per cent).

Some of the key findings from this study have been reported in Borg & Busaidi (2011) and we will elaborate on these here. In addition, descriptive statistics for the closed questionnaire items in Section 1 are included in Appendix 3. We earlier listed the six research questions for this study and we now will summarise our results in relation to each.

RQ1: What does 'learner autonomy' mean to English language teachers at the LC?

There are various ways of answering this question. One is to consider whether questionnaire responses revealed a tendency to favour any one of the four orientations to learner autonomy discussed earlier. Of course, the strength of any conclusions here depends on the extent to which the Likert-scale items

representing each orientation functioned effectively as a scale. Using Cronbach's alpha, as described earlier, the results for the four scales were as follows: technical (0.57), psychological (0.63), social (0.51) and political (0.53). What these figures suggest – although they represent a marked improvement on those achieved in the pilot – is that these scales would benefit from further development (including, perhaps, increasing the number of items in each). In terms of the support expressed by the teachers for each perspective, the results are shown in Figure 1.

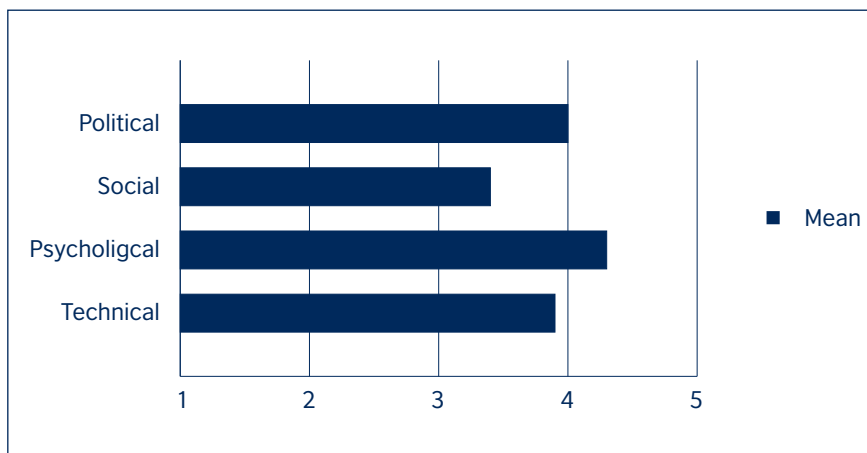


Figure 1: Mean levels of support for four orientations to learner autonomy

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 reflects strong disagreement with a position and 5 reflects strong agreement, this figure shows that, while there was support for each orientation, that most supported was the psychological orientation (with a mean of 4.2); this was represented in the questionnaire by the following statements:

- Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.
- The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.
- To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.
- Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.
- Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.

These statements focus on individual learner mental attributes. A critical look at these items suggests that those about confidence and motivation do not address the same underlying concept as the first three; in fact, if we focus on just these three, the Cronbach alpha is actually 0.81. This points to ways in which this particular scale could be improved and this is an example of the kind of further review and development that each of the scales used here would benefit from.

The political orientation was the second most supported (mean = 4.2), followed by the technical (3.93) and finally the social (3.3). The relatively low mean on the social dimension of learner autonomy reflects uncertainty among the teachers here about the role that co-operation and social interaction (as opposed to individual work) play in promoting learner autonomy. This may point to an underlying individualistic view of learner autonomy (in contrast, for example, Dam, Eriksson, Little, Miliander, & Trebbi, 1990: 102, define learner autonomy as 'a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person').

One answer to our first research question, then, is that, overall, teachers' notions of learner autonomy were most strongly associated with a psychological orientation – particularly one that relates to 'learning to learn' (on the individual items, the statement 'Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy' did in fact receive the joint highest level of agreement from teachers – see Appendix 3); political notions of learner autonomy – i.e. associated with giving learners choice in decisions about their own learning – also received considerable support (for example, 95.1 per cent agreed that autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn). We are not arguing that in agreeing or disagreeing with particular questionnaire items teachers were consciously advocating, for example, psychological or political notions of autonomy – it is very possible that teachers were in many cases unaware of the various conceptions of autonomy implied in the beliefs they were expressing. In fact, our sense from the interviews is that where teachers were advocating, for example, the idea that learners should be given the freedom to make choices about aspects of their learning, such views were not explicitly ideological and there were no references, for example, to learners' human right to autonomy or the development of democratic societies. Teachers' beliefs seemed to have a more immediate grounding in the positive impact that, for example, choice would have on learner motivation and subsequently on their learning.

Further insight into teachers' views about learner autonomy emerged from the interviews where, as Appendix 2 shows, our opening question invited teachers to elaborate on what learner autonomy meant to them. Five concepts which recurred in the teachers' answers were responsibility (6 mentions), control (5), independence (5), choice (4) and freedom (4). The comments below from different teachers illustrate the prevalence of these ideas:

I believe the learner must be given a lot of freedom to develop his own style.

Learner autonomy to me means giving independence to students, to learners. Also giving chances to learners to choose the kinds of materials they want to use, the kinds of objectives they want to achieve.

... for students to be able to take responsibility for their own learning, to function independently as learners. Make their own decisions about their learning, their own choices.

... not depending exclusively on the teacher for your learning and your learning outcomes, but to take responsibility yourself and decide what it is that you need to learn.

it's just trying to help students take charge of their own learning, it's as much as possible. Helping them being more independent and developing their own strategies.

autonomy for me is an opportunity to work independently.

The recurrent concepts noted here are common, as noted earlier, in the literature about learner autonomy and in this sense the teachers' views were well-aligned with this literature. A bias towards individualist views of learner autonomy was again evident here, though.

RQ2: To what extent, according to the teachers, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?

In the questionnaire, 93.4 per cent of teachers agreed that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner, while 85.2 per cent agreed that learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would. Overall, then, the teachers expressed strong positive views about the contribution of learner autonomy to language learning. In the interviews we asked the teachers to elaborate on these positive views and they suggested a number of relationships between learner autonomy and successful language learning. These are listed below with a supporting quote after each.

■ Autonomous learners are more motivated:

I think it's very important and I think it has a huge effect on motivation. And, the more autonomous the learners are, the more motivated they are. And then of course that affects their ability to learn the language, to learn the language well.

■ Autonomous learners are more committed:

rather than the teacher just imposing on the students what they thought, that actually involving the students meant that they were more committed to it, that they could identify with what they were doing because they'd decided it.

■ Autonomous learners are happier:

So, I think if the learner is in charge they know what they're doing and on a day-to-day basis, or task-by-task basis understand why they're doing something, why it's important to them, then they're going to be happier learners and they're going to be more motivated, and more willing to do what's necessary to reach their goals.

■ Autonomous learners are more focused:

language learners who are independent, they're the ones who are very focused

■ Autonomous learners benefit from learning opportunities outside the classroom:

I know that classroom time is not enough, and if I use some additional opportunities outside the classroom, like watching TV, reading books, reading the website, and just communicating with people, just involving myself in

different activities, so just working autonomously, it will have a more positive effect on me as a language learner, so definitely it will bring me to a successful career as a language learner.

■ Autonomous learners take more risks:

and they often were much more risk taking ... they would decide to do things that maybe the teacher would never have dreamed that they could do, and they would make a stab at it, maybe it wasn't perfect, but they would, it showed that in the long run they seemed to have, develop a much more sophisticated use of the language.

A number of the benefits of learner autonomy noted here have been discussed in the literature; the link between learner autonomy and motivation is one in particular that has been the focus of much discussion. Benson's (2001: 86) review of this issue concludes 'the link between autonomy and motivation is well-established at a theoretical level', although the precise nature of this link is a focus of on-going empirical activity (see Ushioda, 2011 for a recent discussion).

RQ3: How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?

Section 3 of the questionnaire addressed two issues. The first was the desirability and feasibility, according to the teachers, of involving learners in a range of language course decisions. Figure 2 summarises the teachers' responses and shows that in all cases teachers were more positive about the desirability of student involvement than they were about its feasibility. On three of the items (objectives, assessment, and materials) these differences were statistically significant (as shown by the Wilcoxon signed ranks test¹). Student involvement in decision-making was seen to be most feasible in relation to materials, topics and activities and least feasible (and indeed not particularly desirable) in relation to choices about objectives and assessment.

The second part of this question asked teachers how desirable and feasible they felt it was for their students to develop a range of abilities that are commonly seen as indicators of learner autonomy. Figure 3 shows the results for this comparison. Once again, desirability was consistently higher than feasibility here and in all cases the differences between the two ratings were statistically significant. In contrast to the previous set of items, though, all those listed here were considered desirable for learners. Reasons why teachers did not feel it was feasible to develop in their learners the abilities listed in Figure 3 are discussed under RQ4 and RQ6 below.

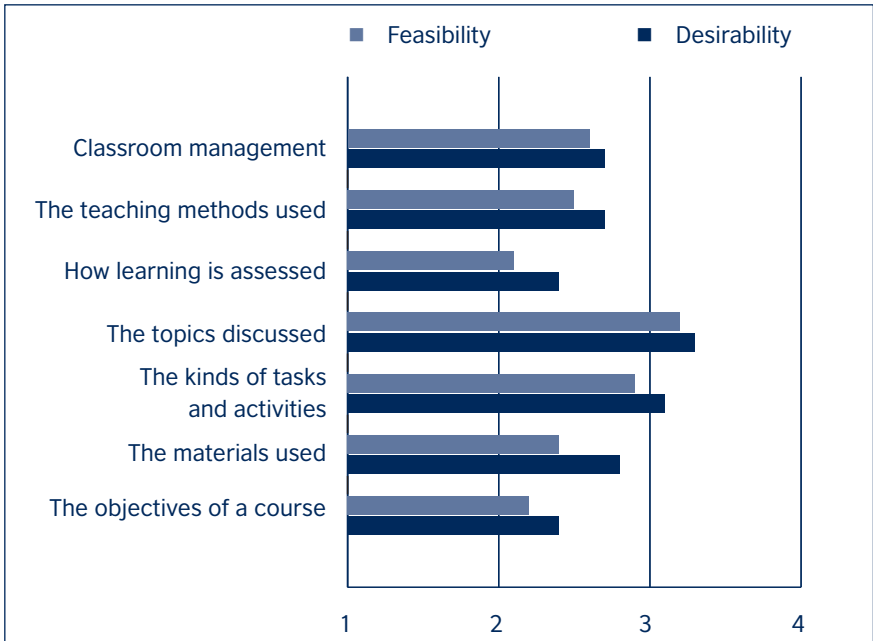


Figure 2: Desirability and feasibility of student involvement in decision-making (1=undesirable/unfeasible; 4=very desirable/feasible)

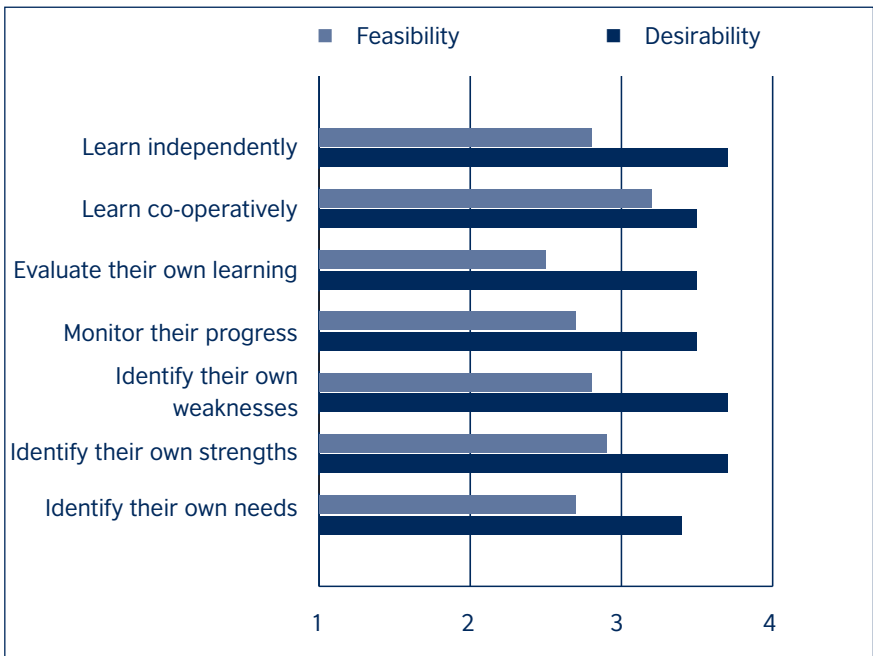


Figure 3: Desirability and feasibility of learning to learn skills in students (1=undesirable/unfeasible; 4=very desirable/feasible)

RQ4: To what extent do teachers feel their learners are autonomous?

In the questionnaire we asked teachers about the extent to which they feel their students are autonomous. We avoided a yes/no approach to this question (i.e. are your students autonomous?) given that, as Nunan (1997) argues, autonomy is not an absolute concept but, rather, can exist in different degrees. Our prompt thus asked teachers whether they felt their students had a fair level of autonomy. Also in this question, because we were aware that the teachers taught students on different programmes at the LC, we asked them to respond to this question with reference to the programme they worked on most.

The results here were interesting: 41.7 per cent of the teachers disagreed that their learners were autonomous, 18.3 per cent were unsure, and 40 per cent agreed. Also, teachers' opinions did not correlate with the level of learners they taught. These findings suggest that the teachers had differing expectations of what autonomous learners were able to do and there was also some evidence of this in the interviews. One teacher, for example, explained that she felt her students demonstrated some autonomy because

At least, they're aware of the ideas, whether it's 'Ok, I need to make my own schedule', or 'I need to plan', things like this. Or 'I need to be doing more outside of the classroom than just the required homework'. I see students that are at least aware of that, and at least they claim to be doing those things, even though maybe not all of them surely are.

In this case, the teacher felt that autonomy was manifest through the awareness students displayed of what they needed to do (even if they did not actually do it). Another teacher cited more concrete evidence of her students' autonomy:

Once you have introduced skills like skimming and scanning and getting the meanings of vocabulary and you give them certain approaches to the way you can do it, some like looking up the difficult vocabulary first, introducing them, others like just reading and guessing the vocabulary at the end. So I have given these possibilities to them and so what I do is, because different students have different ways of doing it, I would put them into groups and say, 'Ok who likes to study the vocabulary first and then read?' and, so I find that students are able to make decisions like that. It is because they have seen how best they can operate with certain abilities.

In this example, the teacher's judgement that her students had some autonomy came from their willingness and ability to make choices about how to carry out classroom activities. The activities themselves were defined by the teacher, but the students had some say in the procedures they adopted.

One final example here of the evidence teachers' cited to support the view that their students had some autonomy was the following:

I would say, with Level 5 because that's the level of class that I have experience with, students do have [autonomy], because they're doing the presentations and they're doing some of the essay writing choosing the topic. They weren't

able to choose the main topic, the main structure I chose that but then they had the freedom to choose within that something that interests them and so there's some structured autonomy there. And with the Moodle [an on-line learning environment] it's a lot heavier than the Level 2 so there's a lot of extra stuff that if they feel they want more practice with lectures or something else then they can get that. So there are a lot of services there.

This example, like that before it, describes student autonomy which occurs within a structured environment – ‘structured autonomy’, as the teacher calls it. In this case, students had some say in the specific issues they write essays about even though the general theme is chosen by the teacher. Here, too, the teacher refers to opportunities for independent learning that their learners have via Moodle, and an association is implied between these opportunities and learner autonomy. It is important to remember, though, that *opportunities* for independent learning neither guarantee the development of nor constitute evidence of learner autonomy.

As noted above, though, almost 42 per cent of the teachers did not feel their learners had a fair degree of autonomy. Here are examples of how they explained their view:

I teach second and third year students who are already in college but their level of autonomy is really low. They don't like to do things on their own. They 'expect' to cover everything in class and most of them indeed struggle with tasks to be carried out in small groups, let alone homework assignments ... assigned by the teacher to be carried out by individual students! It's the learning culture the students here are used to.

Most of students come to us without having sufficient background in independent learning. That's why we have to start with the very basic ideas of this notion.

Most of the students wait to be spoon fed by the teacher. About 50 per cent of them don't have the incentive to develop.

SQU students still expect to 'absorb' a lot of language from their teacher and their teacher's instruction. The majority do not seem to initiate new ways of improving their language skills, and most are not that motivated to really strive to engage with this language in meaningful ways. Most see it as an unfortunate requirement rather than an opportunity which will be an asset throughout their lives.

The learning outcomes which must be covered and the length of the block, especially when there are holidays and piloted tests, etc, which take time away from learning do not leave time to mentor students' learning to be autonomous.

These comments highlight factors which teachers felt contributed to what they saw as a lack of autonomy in their learners: a lack of motivation, expectations of the roles of teachers and learners that were incongruent with learner autonomy, and prior educational experience which did not foster independence. The final comment also cited curricular constraints which meant time for fostering autonomy in learners was limited.

One of the comments above also suggested that students' learning culture presented a challenge for developing learner autonomy. In the questionnaire we did ask teachers about the extent that the feasibility of autonomy was a cultural matter: almost 69 per cent of the teachers agreed that 'Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds' while over 86 per cent disagreed that 'Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners'. Overall, then, the teachers did not believe that autonomy was only achievable by learners from particular cultural (i.e. national or ethnic) backgrounds (see Palfreyman, 2003 for a collection of papers exploring this issue). What they did often believe, though, was that the learning cultures of secondary schools in Oman did not promote learner autonomy.

RQ5: To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?

Teachers were also asked about the extent to which they feel they promote learner autonomy in their own work. In response, 10.2 per cent of the teachers disagreed that they promote LA with their students, 79.6 per cent felt they did and 10.2 per cent were unsure. Teachers who felt they did promote learner autonomy were also asked to give examples of the kinds of strategies they used to do so. Our analysis of these activities (for a list see the materials for Workshop 2 in Appendix 4) suggested five broad strategies through which the teachers felt they encourage autonomy. These are listed below, with an illustrative teacher quote for each:

- talking to students about autonomy and its value ('I mainly focus on explaining and demonstrating to my students why it is important for them to be autonomous learners.')
- encouraging learners to engage in autonomous behaviours ('Encouraging students to go the extra mile and not be afraid to make mistakes, goes a long way in making them confident to work by themselves.')
- getting learners to reflect on their learning ('give them assignments that encourage them to reflect on their goals, needs, progress, weaknesses, values.')
- using activities in class which promote autonomy ('I try to give my students frequent opportunities for independent (student-centred) learning in class, usually in small groups or pairs.')
- setting activities out of class which promote autonomy ('I assign students tasks that require them to use internet sources outside the class time.')

These options were not presented by teachers as being exclusive and in several cases teachers suggested that they were seeking to promote learner autonomy using a range of strategies. Overall, both the percentage of teachers who felt they (at least to some extent) promoted learner autonomy in their work and the range of examples they gave of how they sought to do so was further evidence that (even given the limited manner in which some teachers defined learner autonomy) the teachers were positively disposed to the concept.

The small percentage of teachers who did not feel they promote learner autonomy in their teaching generally explained their position with regret and with reference to the constraints they felt that were imposed by the structured system they worked in. A typical comment here was the following:

Sadly, at the moment I feel I do not do this enough. Although I take them to the lab to introduce them to the language learning possibilities available there and actively encourage weekly discussion in the Moodle discussion forum, it is not enough. I choose their graded readers for them ... I assign tasks to complete outside the class room ... I decide the lesson plan ... To encourage more autonomy, teachers need less pressure from pacing schedules and from testing.

RQ6: What challenges do teachers face in helping their learners become more autonomous?

To counterbalance the above analysis of the ways in which the teachers said they promote autonomy, we also invited them to comment on the challenges they felt they faced in seeking to do so; unsurprisingly, they identified several adverse factors, some of which have already been signalled above:

- Limited space within the curriculum
- Learners' lack of previous experience of autonomous learning
- Lack of incentive among learners
- Learner reliance on the teacher
- Limited learner contact with English outside the classroom
- Learners' focus on passing tests
- Lack of relevant resources for teachers and learners
- Lack of learner ability to exploit resources
- Limited learner proficiency in English
- Prescribed curricula and materials
- Lack of teacher autonomy
- Teachers' limited expectations of what learners can achieve.

Such factors reflect three sets of concerns related to learners, the institution, and teachers. Although the teachers felt strongly that institutional factors (e.g. the curriculum) did hinder the extent to which they could promote learner autonomy, most of the limiting factors they identified pointed (as also indicated in the discussion of RQ4 above) to what they saw as problems with learners' attitudes, abilities, knowledge and motivation. Additional examples of such teacher views are:

I can't say that current system at the LC gives students chances of self-regulated or self-directed learning nor that students have necessary skills for this.

Students are strongly advised to follow up on grammar points on their own, however most never do this. With regards to the vocabulary book, students never pick it up on their own unless the teacher discusses the words in class.

I try to promote this [autonomy] as much as I can, but the desire of students may not be there.

As noted above, some teachers suggested a connection between learners' proficiency in English and their ability to develop as autonomous learners (as one teacher explained, 'It depends on the students' proficiency level: the higher it is, the more autonomy the students' have'). Three questionnaire items addressed this issue: 82 per cent disagreed that 'It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners', 70 per cent disagreed that 'Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners', while fewer than 58 per cent of the teachers agreed that 'The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy' (over 26 per cent disagreed). Overall, these figures lend some weight to the view that autonomy was associated with higher levels of proficiency. Replacing 'harder' with 'easier' in the first of these three items may have provided added clarity on this issue.

Summary

The insights reported here into language teachers' beliefs and reported practices regarding learner autonomy are a valuable addition to the literature. As argued earlier, despite a substantial volume of research over some 30 years, research on learner autonomy has paid limited attention to the sense teachers make, theoretically and in practice, of this concept. Yet, without such insights, we lack a basis for understanding how teachers interpret the notion of learner autonomy and, where necessary, for encouraging them to make it a more central aspect of their work. Below is a summary of the salient findings to emerge here:

1. The teachers were positively disposed (as in Bullock, 2011; Camilleri, 1999; Yoshiyuki, 2011) to the notion of learner autonomy and to its benefits specifically for language learners; less evident in teachers' comments were references to the broader and longer-term advantages (e.g. in contributing positively to society) that learner autonomy has been argued to have.
2. Teachers' definitions of learner autonomy reflected those prevalent in the literature, with recurring support for concepts such as freedom, control, responsibility, choice and independence. There is some overlap here with the notions of autonomy identified by Reinders & Lázaro (2011) in their interviews specifically with teachers who worked in self-access centres, although differences in the two studies were also evident. For example, our teachers did not (unlike the self-access teachers in the above study) discuss autonomy as a process of seeking equality and respect between teachers and learners.
3. The 'learning to learn' (i.e. psychological) orientation to learner autonomy was that which received most overall support in teachers' questionnaire responses. Many of the teachers' comments on learner autonomy implied that they viewed

it as a set of skills or abilities that learners need to master in order to learn independently.

4. There was a significant gap between the extent to which teachers felt it was desirable to involve learners in a range of decisions about their learning and teachers' beliefs about the feasibility of doing so, particularly in relation to objectives, assessment and materials. Such a gap between theory and practice confirms insights from other studies of FL teachers' beliefs about autonomy (Bullock, 2011; Reinders & Lazaró, 2011; Yoshiyuki, 2011).
5. Similarly, there was a significant gap between the extent to which teachers felt it was desirable for their learners to develop a range of abilities associated with autonomy and their beliefs about the feasibility of doing so.
6. The teachers had diverging views about the extent to which their learners were autonomous; such views were underpinned by different conceptions of what counted as evidence of autonomy in their learners. Teachers often associated autonomy with opportunities for independent learning, irrespective of whether learners engaged with these.
7. The majority of the teachers believed that they promoted learner autonomy in their teaching. Their descriptions of how they did so highlighted a range of pedagogical strategies from advocacy and awareness-raising to independent out of class language learning activities.
8. The teachers highlighted a range of factors which limited the extent to which they felt they were able to promote learner autonomy. These related to learners, the institution and teachers, though learner-related factors were those most widely cited by the teachers. Again, there are parallels here with the findings of Reinders & Lazaró (2011), where teachers felt that learners did not understand the importance of developing autonomy, lacked the skills to learn independently, and were not accustomed to being asked to take responsibility for their learning.

Overall, then, what emerges here is a picture of a group of well-qualified and mostly experienced English language teachers who are, in theory, positively disposed towards learner autonomy and familiar with key concepts commonly used in defining it. In relation to their working context, though, these teachers are much less positive about the extent to which autonomy can be productively promoted with their learners. Opportunities for learners to exercise their autonomy do exist, it was felt, both within and outside the institution; however there was a general sense that the learners lacked the capacity and willingness to take advantage of these opportunities. Teachers also felt hindered by a full curriculum in which content and assessment were centrally defined. Nonetheless, the majority of the teachers felt that they did, to some extent, promote autonomy in their work. It is clear, though, the practices they adopted in doing so varied significantly as did their judgements about what constituted evidence of learner autonomy among the students they worked with.

Limitations

Before we move on to discuss the professional development phase of this project, we would like to acknowledge some of the limitations of the research reported above. We have already noted the need for further development of the scales in the questionnaire through which teachers' beliefs about different orientations to learner autonomy were assessed. We must also acknowledge, of course, the fact that we did not observe teachers' classroom practices and for this reason had to rely on their reports of whether they promoted learner autonomy and how. The response rate to the questionnaire, too, was not as high as we had hoped for, though we feel that there was little more we could have done here to secure a greater level of voluntary participation. Notwithstanding these factors, we believe that the study is methodologically sound, that the instruments we developed provide the basis for further research of this kind, and that the findings will be of general interest in the field of FL learning.

Professional Development Materials

As we explained earlier, this project was motivated by a desire within the institution studied to promote learner autonomy more effectively. In the final phase of this work, therefore, we used the results of the research as the basis of a series of professional development workshops about learner autonomy. In using local research findings in this manner, our work was underpinned by a number of principles relevant to teacher professional development and institutional change derived from the literature (e.g. Goodall, Day, Lindsay, Muijs, & Harris, 2005; Wedell, 2009) and our own experience. These principles (which we listed in Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2011) were:

1. Instructional change needs to be driven by teachers themselves.
2. The change process is likely to be more effective if it involves teachers in collaborative forms of reflection and action.
3. Collective change is facilitated when teachers have a shared understanding of the change desired (e.g. of what learner autonomy is and why it is important).
4. Lasting change in what teachers do cannot occur without attention to the beliefs teachers have in relation to the change desired.
5. For this reason, top-down directives for change (e.g. simply telling teachers how to promote learner autonomy) will have limited impact on what they do.
6. Proposed changes need to be feasible and grounded in a clear understanding of the context in which they are to occur.
7. Effective institutional change depends not just on creating initial enthusiasm but on sustaining this momentum over the longer term.

Five workshops in total were conducted², and details of them are listed in Table 2 below.

Workshop	Topic	Goals
1	What is learner autonomy?	To engage teachers in defining LA in ways which are contextually feasible.
2	Learner autonomy in the Language Centre	To enable teachers to learn about LA practices used by their colleagues
3	Implementing learner autonomy	To introduce teachers to a framework for describing LA; to engage them in using it to analyse activities for promoting LA.
4	Developing a strategy for promoting learner autonomy	To discuss obstacles to LA in the LC and ways of responding to them productively; to identify strategies for sustaining the work started through these workshops.
5	Teacher research on learner autonomy	To introduce teacher research as a strategy through which teachers can explore learner autonomy in their own classrooms.

Table 2: Focus of learner autonomy workshops

These workshops followed the principles listed above by giving teachers opportunities to explore their understandings of learner autonomy and, equally importantly, of how the concept might be defined in a way that was of practical use to the institution (Workshop 1). The workshops also gave teachers the chance to share ideas about how they promoted learner autonomy (Workshops 2 & 3) as well as to focus on the challenges involved and responses to them (Workshop 4). The focus of the final workshop was on how teachers might, individually or in groups, explore learner autonomy in their own classrooms through teacher research. While not devoid of theoretical input, the workshops had a primary focus on teachers' practices and beliefs in relation to learner autonomy.

The handouts used in all five workshops are enclosed in Appendix 4. One key feature of these is that data from the prior research phase of the project were used as a stimulus for the workshop activities. In this manner, a strong link was made between this prior research and professional development and we believe that this is a productive model for designing contextually-relevant in-service teacher education. Clearly, the research dimension in this model needs to be rigorous and to generate data which are credible and trustworthy, while the professional development phase is likely to be most effective when it reflects the principles we outlined above (as opposed, for example, to input sessions in which teachers are presented with the research results).

Another feature of the workshops was that ideas generated by teachers early in the sequence were incorporated into later sessions, thus creating a clear sense of direction, coherence and momentum in the work we were doing. For example, in Workshop 1 the teachers drafted definitions of learner autonomy that they felt would be workable within their centre; in Workshop 4 we fed these back to the teachers for further analysis and discussion.

Teachers' written feedback on the workshops was very positive. They appreciated the opportunity to discuss their beliefs and practices with one another and found it interesting that very different views were being expressed by colleagues in the same organisation. For example, after Workshop 1, one teacher wrote it was 'Interesting to see and hear how different we are in one place, doing the same job'. Another reflected that 'when you discuss a problem you have a chance to see a different view'. For Workshop 2, a teacher felt that the activities 'inspired new ideas for promoting learner autonomy' and another noted that it was 'amazing to see just how many practical possibilities there are to encourage learner autonomy'. Less positively, one recurrent point teachers made in their feedback was that they needed more time for further discussions of the kinds they were having in the sessions – but we would also construe that as positive feedback on the value the teachers felt such discussions had.

For logistical reasons, the first four workshops were conducted over a period of five days, with the final workshop some months later. The intensive phase worked well in terms of creating energy among the group, though there are also good arguments for a more staggered schedule of workshops so that teachers have opportunities to make concrete connections between the issues being discussed and their classroom practices.

The professional development phase of this project, then, was an integral part of it. It extended far beyond telling teachers about the results of the prior research phase and used these results as the basis of interactive sessions in which teachers were able to reflect, individually and collectively, on their own beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. We acknowledge that without concrete evidence of changes in these beliefs and practices we cannot claim that the workshops had a demonstrable impact on the teachers or on their learners. However, we feel that the model we adopted here for combining research and professional development provides a strong basis for such impact. Institutions adopting such a model, we would advise, should also build in space for the kinds of ongoing support and review that will allow for judgements about impact to be made.

In conclusion, we thank all the teachers who took part in this project for making it a success. We trust that language teaching colleagues around the world will find this report helpful both in further research into teachers' understandings of learner autonomy and in the more practical activity of supporting teacher development for learner autonomy.

Notes

1. The Wilcoxon signed ranks test is used to compare differences on two sets of data from the same respondents. It is the non-parametric equivalent of the dependent t-test (see Field, 2009).
2. In our earlier report of this work (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2011), four workshops were described; the fifth workshop was conducted after that paper had been written.

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Appendix 1: The Questionnaire

English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy

This questionnaire is part of a study about learner autonomy in ELT being funded by the British Council and which is being conducted by Dr Simon Borg, University of Leeds and Dr Saleh Al-Busaidi, Sultan Qaboos University. The goal of the study is to support the development of learner autonomy within the Language Centre at SQU and the first stage in the project is exploring what 'learner autonomy' means to Language Centre staff. Participation is voluntary and all teachers of English in the Centre are being invited to contribute. Your responses are important as they will inform the later stages of the study, culminating in a series of workshops on learner autonomy. There are no right or wrong answers here – what we are interested in are your views about learner autonomy. Thank you.

It will take about 20 minutes to complete this questionnaire. To answer, please use your mouse to click on grey boxes (click a second time if you change your mind) or type into grey spaces.

Section 1: Learner Autonomy

Please give your opinion about the statements below by ticking **ONE** answer for each. The statements are not just about your current job and in answering you should consider your experience as a language teacher more generally.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
9.	It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13.	Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23.	Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24.	Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25.	Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26.	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Statement		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
29.	Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30.	Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31.	Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32.	The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33.	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34.	The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35.	The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
36.	Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37.	To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2: Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Below there are two sets of statements. The first gives examples of *decisions* **LEARNERS** might be involved in; the second lists *abilities* that learners might have. For each statement:

- First say how **desirable** (i.e. ideally), you feel it is.
- Then say how **feasible** (i.e. realistically achievable) you think it is for *the learners you currently teach most often*.

You should tick **TWO** boxes for each statement – one for desirability and one for feasibility.

	Desirability				Feasibility			
	Undesirable	Slightly desirable	Quite desirable	Very desirable	Unfeasible	Slightly feasible	Quite feasible	Very feasible
<i>Learners are involved in decisions about:</i>								
The objectives of a course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The materials used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The kinds of tasks and activities they do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The topics discussed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How learning is assessed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teaching methods used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Learners have the ability to:</i>								
Identify their own needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify their own strengths	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Identify their own weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitor their progress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluate their own learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn co-operatively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learn independently	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Your Learners and Your Teaching

This section contains two open-ended questions. These are an important part of the questionnaire and give you the opportunity to comment more specifically on your work at the Language Centre at SQU.

1. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer:

“In general, the students I teach English most often to at SQU have a fair degree of learner autonomy”.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
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Please comment on why you feel the way you do about your students’ general degree of autonomy:

2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer:

“In general, in teaching English at SQU I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy”.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
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Please comment. You may want to explain why and how you promote autonomy, if you do, or to explain why developing learner autonomy is not an issue you focus on in your work:

Section 4: About Yourself

Please tell us about your background.

1. Years of experience as an English language teacher (Tick ONE)

0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25+
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2. Years of experience as an English language teacher **at SQU** (Tick ONE)

0-4	5-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25+
-----	-----	-------	-------	-------	-----

3. Highest qualification (Tick ONE)

Certificate	Diploma	Bachelor’s	Master’s	Doctorate	Other
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4. Nationality:

5. Gender (Tick ONE)

Male	Female
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6. At the Language Centre, which English programme do you teach most hours on? (Tick ONE) :

English Foundation Programme (Levels 1, 2, or 3)	English Foundation Programme (Levels 4, 5 or 6)	Credit English Programme
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Section 5: Further Participation

1. In the next stage of the study we would like to talk to individual teachers to learn more about their views on learner autonomy. Would you be interested in discussing this issue further with us?

Yes	No
-----	----

2. We are also planning to run a series of training workshops on learner autonomy for teachers at the SQU Language Centre. Would you be interested in attending these workshops?

Yes	No
-----	----

If you answered YES to questions 1 and/or 2 above, please write your name and e-mail address here.

Name:
e-mail:

Thank you for taking the time to respond.

Appendix 2: Sample Interview Schedule

1. Let's start by talking about what 'autonomy' means to you. In a few words, how would you sum up your views on what learner autonomy is?
2. What for you are the key characteristics of an autonomous language learner?
3. In item 36 – 'Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner' – you agreed. Can you tell me a little more about how you see the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning?
4. How have you come to develop the views you hold today about learner autonomy and its value?

[Prompt as required – the aim here is to explore the roots of their current views on learner autonomy]:

- a. Is it an issue you have focused on in your training as a language teacher?
 - b. Have you worked in other contexts where autonomy has been considered an important issue to develop with learners?
 - c. What about your own experience as a language learner – do you feel autonomy was/has been an issue you were aware of?
5. Focus on Section 2: Desirability and feasibility of learner autonomy.
 - a. In terms of decision-making, you were quite positive both about the desirability and feasibility of learner involvement. But to what extent are learners actually involved in such decisions?
 - b. You were also positive about the feasibility and desirability of learners having certain abilities. Again, does this mean you have a positive view of the situation you work in?
 6. Focus on Section 3 Question 1 – "In general, the students I teach English most often to at SQU have a fair degree of learner autonomy".
 - a. Your answer to this question was strongly agree. Could you say more about why you feel this way?
 - b. What is it that learners do to make you feel that they have a fair degree of autonomy?
 - c. Are there any other particular factors at the LC that hinder learner autonomy?

7. Focus on Section 3 Question 2 – “In general, in teaching English at SQU I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy”:
 - a. Firstly, what role, if any do you feel the teacher has in promoting learner autonomy?
 - b. Your answer was strongly agree. Can you say more about what you do to encourage autonomy in your learners?
 - c. What changes in the way the LC operates would allow you to promote learner autonomy better?
8. As part of this project we will be running some training workshops on learner autonomy for LC teachers. Do you have any suggestions for the kinds of issues the workshops might cover?

Appendix 3: Descriptive statistics for Section 1 of Questionnaire

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	3.3%	11.5%	9.8%	44.3%	31.1%
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	1.6%	1.6%	11.5%	49.2%	36.1%
3. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	.0%	4.9%	11.5%	45.9%	37.7%
4. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	.0%	1.6%	3.3%	57.4%	37.7%
5. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	1.6%	16.4%	21.3%	49.2%	11.5%
6. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	.0%	27.9%	19.7%	42.6%	9.8%
7. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	.0%	.0%	6.6%	60.7%	32.8%
8. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	8.2%	62.3%	18.0%	9.8%	1.6%
9. It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.	32.8%	49.2%	11.5%	4.9%	1.6%
10. It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.	1.6%	1.6%	8.2%	67.2%	21.3%
11. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	1.6%	6.6%	13.1%	47.5%	31.1%
12. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	1.6%	3.3%	9.8%	47.5%	37.7%

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
13. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	.0%	4.9%	26.2%	39.3%	29.5%
14. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	.0%	1.6%	1.6%	59.0%	37.7%
15. Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms.	3.3%	31.1%	23.0%	32.8%	9.8%
16. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	.0%	3.3%	4.9%	67.2%	24.6%
17. Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.	6.6%	47.5%	9.8%	31.1%	4.9%
18. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher	3.3%	44.3%	9.8%	37.7%	4.9%
19. Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.	.0%	3.3%	16.4%	62.3%	18.0%
20. Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.	31.1%	60.7%	6.6%	1.6%	.0%
21. Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.	.0%	4.9%	4.9%	67.2%	23.0%
22. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	3.3%	16.4%	29.5%	45.9%	4.9%
23. Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	39.3%	47.5%	4.9%	8.2%	.0%
24. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	13.1%	75.4%	8.2%	3.3%	.0%
25. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	.0%	3.3%	4.9%	63.9%	27.9%

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
26. Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	13.1%	57.4%	26.2%	3.3%	.0%
27. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	.0%	6.6%	21.3%	57.4%	14.8%
28. Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	.0%	.0%	13.1%	67.2%	19.7%
29. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	.0%	3.3%	.0%	45.9%	50.8%
30. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	3.3%	24.6%	18.0%	34.4%	19.7%
31. Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.	.0%	.0%	13.1%	60.7%	26.2%
32. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	.0%	3.3%	4.9%	50.8%	41.0%
33. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	1.6%	4.9%	6.6%	44.3%	42.6%
34. The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	6.6%	19.7%	16.4%	44.3%	13.1%
35. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	.0%	.0%	.0%	57.4%	42.6%
36. Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.	.0%	.0%	6.6%	42.6%	50.8%
37. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	.0%	3.3%	1.6%	60.7%	34.4%

Appendix 4: Workshop Materials

Workshop 1: What is Learner Autonomy?

Objectives

Through this workshop participants will:

- gain insight into the views about learner autonomy held by teachers at the SQU Language Centre
- compare these views about learner autonomy with one commonly cited in the literature
- draft a definition of learner autonomy which has potential practical value for the work of the Language Centre.

Task 1: A ‘Classic’ Definition of Learner Autonomy

“the ability to take charge of one’s learning ... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning,

i.e. - determining the objectives

- defining the contents and progressions
- selecting methods and techniques to be used
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking
- evaluating what has been acquired”.

(Holec 1981:3)³

What are your views about the suitability of this definition as one which can guide your work as teachers in the Language Centre?

Task 2: Giving Learners Choice

Here are some results from our study of language centre teachers’ views about learner autonomy:

- **96%** of teachers agreed that learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.
- **93%** agreed that involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.
- **95%** agreed that autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.

Here are some teachers expressing similar views:

“to me, learner autonomy means the ability of an individual to self direct their learning, and to make decisions about how they will learn, what kinds of things

they will learn, for what reason they are learning”.

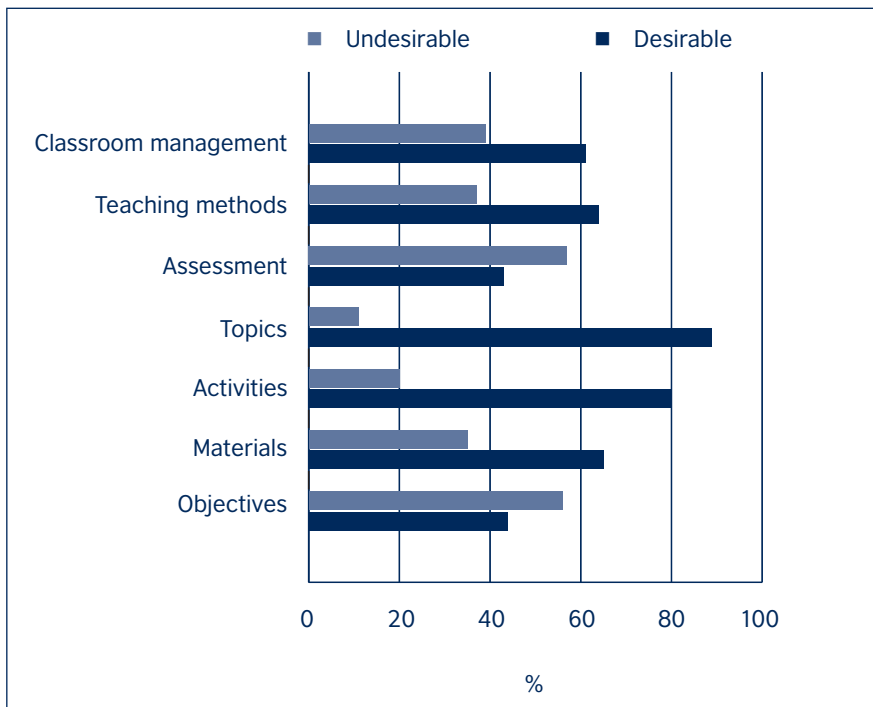
“learner autonomy means that the learner has full responsibility and right to choose what to learn how to learn and when to learn, and to be able to assess”.

- a. How do you feel about these results?
- b. To what extent is allowing learners some choice of content and activities feasible in the language centre?

Task 3: Involving Learners in Decision-Making

We asked teachers to say how desirable it was for students to be involved in certain course decisions. The chart shows the percentages of teachers who felt student involvement was desirable for each course area.

- a. How do you feel about these results?
- b. Which course areas do teachers feel student involvement in is desirable?
- c. What do these results suggest about the ways in which learner autonomy might be usefully defined in the language centre?



How desirable is it for learners to be involved in decisions about these issues?

Task 4: Teacher Role

Dam (2003:135)⁴ says that “it is largely the teachers’ responsibility to develop learner autonomy”.

100 per cent of survey respondents also agreed that the teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy. How might we define that role in the context of your work in the language centre? Complete this stem with some options:

“In order to better promote learner autonomy in the LC, teachers need to”.

Task 5: Defining ‘Learner Autonomy’ for the Language Centre

Autonomy is not an absolute concept. There are degrees of autonomy, and the extent to which it is feasible or desirable for learners to embrace autonomy will depend on a range of factors to do with the personality of the learner, their goals in undertaking the study of another language, the philosophy of the institution (if any) providing the instruction, and the cultural context within which the learning takes place. (Nunan 1996:13)⁵

On the basis of our discussion so far, draft a definition of learner autonomy which you feel has **practical potential for the work of the language centre**. It should be **aspirational yet feasible**.

Workshop 2: Learner Autonomy in the Language Centre

Objectives

Through this workshop participants will:

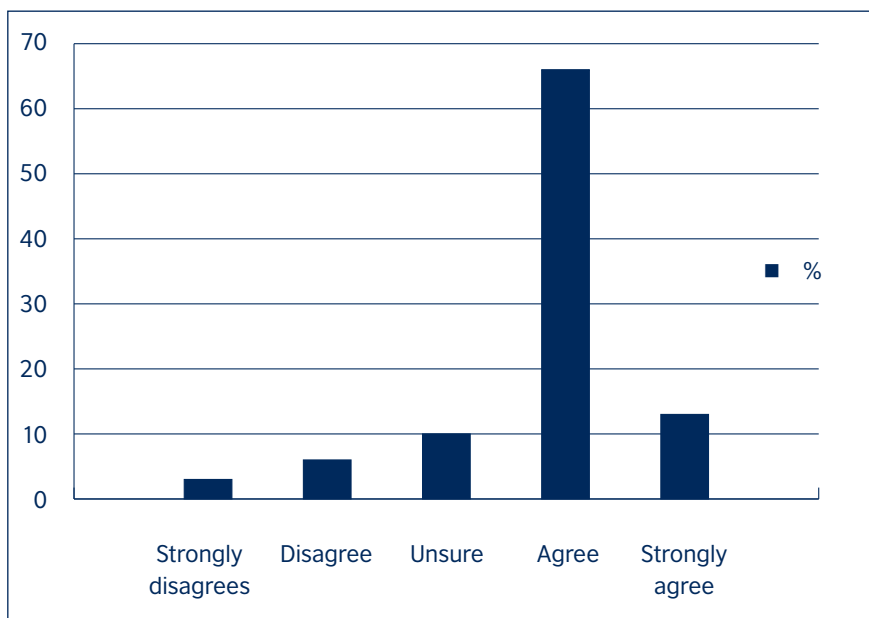
- learn about the extent to which teachers at the SQU Language Centre feel they promote learner autonomy
- become aware of strategies that teachers say they use to promote learner autonomy at the Language Centre
- discuss the extent to which such strategies can be applied to the work of the Language Centre more generally.

Task 1: Learner Autonomy in the Language Centre

In the study, we gave teachers this statement to respond to:

“In general, in teaching English at SQU I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy”.

Below is what the teachers said. What are your reactions to these results?



Task 2: How LC Teachers Promote Autonomy

We also asked teachers who said they promoted learner autonomy to give examples of how they do so. They highlighted different approaches to autonomy which involve:

- a. talking to students about autonomy and its value
- b. encouraging learners to engage in autonomous behaviours

- c. getting learners to reflect on their learning
- d. using activities in class which promote autonomy
- e. setting activities out of class which promote autonomy.

Here are 20 practices LC teachers said they use to promote autonomy. Quickly go through them and decide which of the groups A-E above each belongs to. If you feel that you need to create or rename a group, you can.

1. Going to the library, doing Moodle assignments are part of learning that develops autonomy.
2. Co-operative and peer learning is promoted where ever possible.
3. Encouraging students to go the extra mile and not be afraid to make mistakes, goes a long way in making them confident to work by themselves.
4. Encouraging them to be more responsible about what they do in class.
5. I actively promote learner autonomy in my lessons using worksheets.
6. I ask students to tell me the mark they hope to get in their presentations and how they can get that mark.
7. I ask them to find out about certain topics and be ready to discuss them in the next lesson.
8. I constantly give homework and tasks to be completed and brought back to the classroom.
9. I do my best to involve my students in reflection into their individual learning preferences and strategies.
10. I encourage them to further their learning of English in situations outside the classroom without help from any teacher.
11. I have the class choose which activities they want to do in some cases.
12. I negotiate with students on deadlines for assignments, topics for presentations and speaking as well as readers (they can change a reader assigned to them if they don't like it).
13. I spend quite a lot time with my students explaining the benefits and the different ways of developing autonomy.
14. I talk to them regularly about why we are doing what we are doing and the bigger picture.
15. I tell them that knowledge is always available around you, but all that you need are the incentive and the method to find it.

- 16. I try to promote it by not answering the questions they have sometimes and by telling them to go find the answer themselves.
- 17. I usually encourage them to visit the library and practice different tasks on extensive reading.
- 18. Independent Learning Projects in the courses I have taught are good examples of promoting the learners' autonomy.
- 19. Peer assessments of students' work at classroom level is encouraged.
- 20. Sometimes (specially on Wednesdays) I ask students to tell me what they have learned during the week, what they have found, easy, difficult, and what they should do to improve.

Task 3: Your Practices in Promoting Learner Autonomy

- 1. Do you use any of the practices listed above to promote autonomy in **your** classes? If yes, what exactly do you do? How effective do you find these practices in encouraging learners to be autonomous?
- 2. Are there any additional ways of promoting learner autonomy that characterise your teaching? If yes, explain what you do.

Task 4: Feasible LA Practices in the LC

Looking critically at the list above, and at any items you added in Task 3, which practices are likely to be most feasible in promoting learner autonomy in the LC? Choose FIVE practices and consider how they contribute to LA.

Practices	Contribution to LA

Workshop 3: Implementing Learner Autonomy

Objectives

Through this workshop, participants will:

- gain insight into a framework for developing learner autonomy
- critically evaluate the effectiveness of common learner autonomy activities
- compare the activities with those used in the Language Centre.

Task 1: Analyzing a framework for implementing learner autonomy

Nunan (1997, p. 195)⁶ proposes a framework for developing autonomy among learners in a language program. The framework is based on the assumption that learner autonomy is not an absolute concept and that there are degrees of autonomy. The five levels are divided into two domains, content and process.

Level	Learner action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Raising learners' awareness of the pedagogical goals of the materials used.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a list of alternatives given.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are take part in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the program.	Learners adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between what they learn in class and the outside world.	Learners become teachers and researchers.

To what extent might this framework guide the way learner autonomy is promoted in the Language Centre?

Task 2: Strategies for implementing learner autonomy

Below is a list of strategies for promoting learner autonomy.

1. Which of these are familiar to you and which are new?
2. Which of these opportunities for promoting learner autonomy are available in the Language Centre? To what extent are they used effectively?

3. Using the above framework, what kinds of learner action do the opportunities for learner autonomy available in LC promote?
4. If an activity is not available in the Language Centre, do you think it should be introduced? Why or why not?
5. Are there additional ways of promoting LA in the LC which might be added to the list below?

List of Strategies

1. Reflective activities/journal (in and out of class, individually or with others)
2. Learner training (e.g. learning strategies, study skills)
3. Project-based learning
4. Self access centre with appropriate materials and guidance/training
5. Writing centre
6. Tutorial centre
7. Teacher-student conferences during office hours
8. E-learning tools
9. Alternative assessments
10. Learner generated materials

Workshop 4: Developing a Strategy for Promoting Learner Autonomy

Objectives

Through this workshop participants will:

- identify (perceived) challenges which exist in the Language Centre to the development of learner autonomy
- consider feasible ways of responding to these challenges
- review definitions of learner autonomy developed in Workshop 1 in the light of issues covered in subsequent workshops
- discuss ways of sustaining the development of a strategy for the promotion of learner autonomy in the Language Centre.

Task 1: Challenges in Promoting Learner Autonomy

In the study, Language Centre teachers highlighted a number of challenges to promoting learner autonomy. These can be grouped into three broad categories:



Here are some examples of what teachers said. Discuss your reactions.

"I teach second and third year students who are already in college but their level of autonomy is really low. They don't like to do things on their own. They "expect" to cover everything in class and most of them indeed struggle with tasks to be carried out in small groups, let alone homework assignments, self-study components or course work which is assigned by the teacher to be carried out by individual student! It's the learning culture the students "here" are used to".

"Although I take them to the lab to introduce them to the language learning possibilities available there and actively encourage weekly discussion in the Moodle discussion forum, it is not enough. I choose their graded readers for them (to prevent cheating), I assign tasks to complete outside the class room (to consolidate course material), I decide the lesson plan (to cover the pacing schedule) etc. To encourage more autonomy, teachers need less pressure from pacing schedules and from testing".

"Students who wish to take charge of their own learning are able to do so, but there is little effort to promote this".

"I don't feel students like to be independent in their learning. I think it is because of the general culture of learning that most Arab students have".

"because of their low level, they are not able to do anything alone".

A strategic approach to promoting learner autonomy in the Language Centre needs to be based on an understanding of these kinds of issues. For example, is it really the case that Omani students do not like to be independent?

Task 2: Responding to Challenges in Promoting Learner Autonomy

One challenge to LA commonly mentioned by teachers was the 'pacing schedule'. Let's use this as an example here:

1. How exactly does the current pacing schedule hinder the development of learner autonomy?
2. What responses to this challenge are available? Think big initially, then consider which options are most feasible in your context.

Task 3: Revisiting Definitions of Learner Autonomy for the LC

In Workshop 1 teachers drafted some definitions of learner autonomy with particular reference to the work of the Language Centre. We will circulate these in full for further discussion. For now, here are some extracts:

Which particular elements of these extracts might be usefully incorporated into a working definition of learner autonomy which can guide the work of the Language Centre?

1. Learners have to be conscious of why they are in LC and what goals they have to achieve.
2. Learner autonomy involves conscious and deliberate efforts to develop individuals who have ability to participate to some extent in all aspects of their studies.
3. Learner autonomy is taking some responsibility for one's learning in order to develop into a life-long learner.
4. Learner autonomy refers to learners' ability and willingness to make use benefit from the teacher's input/expertise/institutional knowledge and take it beyond the prescribed plan/curriculum/material/methodology to improve his/her learning.
5. Autonomy involves the learner taking responsibility of one's own learning while enjoying the freedom of choice in a classroom setting where the teacher as a facilitator controls the trajectory and promotes a gradual process of independence and inter-dependence.
6. Learner autonomy is the ability to "take charge" of one's learning, to a reasonable extent, through relevant decision-making concerning some aspects for language learning.

7. Learner autonomy entails creating a learner-centred environment where the learning outcomes and learning process are negotiated by students and teachers with learners assuming more and more responsibility for their own learning.
8. Learner autonomy is an attitude and a philosophy which are gradually developed among teachers and learners in the LC in which they both have a shared perspective to decide on responsibilities, choices and ways of implementing them in the process of assessing needs, monitoring progress and continuing to learn.
9. Learner autonomy involves helping learners to (a) understand the learning outcomes of the course (b) identify their own weaknesses and (c) work independently to overcome their weaknesses and (d) realistically self-evaluate themselves.

Task 4: Sustaining Momentum

The ELT Conference and the workshops have created some momentum around the discussion of learner autonomy in the Language Centre. It is important to sustain that momentum.

1. What suggestions do you have for keeping teachers engaged in discussions of learner autonomy in the months ahead?
2. What would seem to be realistic goals for the Language Centre to achieve regarding learner autonomy in the next three, six and 12 months?

Workshop 5: Doing Teacher Research on Learner Autonomy

Key Questions

1. What is teacher research?
2. What kinds of questions about learner autonomy can teachers research?
3. What research strategies can teachers use to explore such questions?
4. How can teachers do teacher research collaboratively?

1. What is Teacher Research?

Teacher research is *systematic inquiry* conducted by *teachers*, individually or collaboratively which aims to deepen their understandings of some aspect of *their own professional context* and which is *made public*.

Given this definition, in what ways is teacher research similar and different to the following forms of research?

- a. Action research
- b. Classroom research
- c. 'Academic' research

2. Investigating Learner Autonomy

- a. We can break the research process down into three phases:
 - *planning* research
 - *conducting* research
 - *reporting* research
- b. An important part of the planning phase is defining the focus of the study. Our broad topic is learner autonomy in foreign language learning, but within that what kinds of more specific issues might you be interested in exploring?

Defining the focus of teacher research on learner autonomy

- c. The focus will normally be expressed as a topic; the next stage is to express our interest in that topic through one or more questions that we would like the research to answer. For example:

Focus: learners' attitudes to self-access centres

Research questions: How often do learners (at a certain level) visit the self-access centre? What do they do when they visit the self-access-centre? If they do visit, to what extent do they feel the self-access centre supports their learning? if they do not use the self-access centre, why not?

Now look back at the topics defined above and define research questions for them.

- d. Research questions allow us to be clear about the purpose of our study. They are, however, difficult to write and normally need to be revised several times. Here are some criteria you can use in evaluating research questions (see Bryman, 2008)⁷. Are they

- Clear?
- Specific?
- Researchable/answerable?
- Worthy of your time and effort?
- Linked (where there is more than one)?

Beware of questions of the 'what is the effect of X on Y?' variety because in classroom-based educational research it is practically impossible to control variables in a way that permits conclusions about causality.

3. Collecting Data

- a. A wide range of options (qualitative and quantitative) are available for collecting data:

- Classroom observation
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Documentary evidence (e.g. students' work)
- Forms of assessment (e.g. test scores)
- Reflective writing (e.g. learning journals)
- Visual methods (e.g. photographs).

A key question for us is: **how do we decide which methods to use?**

- b. However we collect data, we must maximise the likelihood that the information we get is **trustworthy** (i.e. reliable and valid). Poor quality data – even large amounts of it – can never lead to a good quality study.
- c. The same applies to the analysis of our data. We need to conduct the analysis in a way that gives us confidence in the findings. Some suggestions for enhancing analysis are:
 - using respondent validation
 - avoid subjective interpretations
 - using appropriate statistical tests
 - avoiding poor coding of qualitative data
 - avoid inferences and generalizations not supported by evidence
 - avoid equating correlation and causes.⁸
- d. Ethics also needs to be considered when we are doing research in our own context. What kinds of ethical issues might arise when we are doing research in our own classrooms?

4. Collaborative Teacher Research

A collaborative approach to teacher research offers various benefits:

- The workload can be shared.
- A sense of isolation can be avoided.
- The group creates a community with a shared purpose.
- Peer support can sustain motivation.
- Individuals may feel greater responsibility to the group.
- Data collected from different classrooms on a similar theme can be compared.
- Group discussions can be more productive in creating ideas about how to take the research forward.

Collaborative work can of course create challenges too. To minimise these it helps if the group draw up clear guidelines to support their work together.

5. Next Steps

If you would like to take the work we have done today forward here are some issues to consider:

- Decide whether you would like to do an individual or collaborative teacher research project on learner autonomy.

- Identify your topic. For example, are there particular issues in your teaching that you want to explore? Do you need to do some reading to help you define your focus?
- Specify your targets for presenting the results of your work. The next SQU ELT conference? A professional away day? Start with your target then plan backwards.
- Develop a timetable for the study, ensuring it is feasible.
- Do some reading on research methods to help you with the design of your study.
- Create mechanisms through which different research groups can share resources, provide mutual support, and meet periodically to provide updates on their work.

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9

Using e-learning to develop intercultural awareness in ELT: a critical evaluation in a Thai higher education setting

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Introduction

This paper provides an overview of a research project which aimed to investigate how the intercultural dimension of ELT can be incorporated into an e-learning framework in an online independent study-based course. The paper begins by giving a brief overview of the place and relevance of culture and intercultural communication in ELT. This is accompanied by a short summary of the role of e-learning, or as it is sometimes referred to CALL (computer aided language learning), in ELT and its relationship to developing intercultural communication skills and knowledge. The methodology used for the study is then explained including the setting and participants. This is followed by a presentation of the findings in terms of development of the course, participants' evaluation of the course and the influence the course had on the participants' approaches to intercultural communication through English. Materials from the course are also presented in the Appendices. Finally, the implications of the study are presented in relation to e-learning, intercultural communication and global Englishes.

Theoretical background, contextualisation of the study and research questions

Culture, intercultural communication and ELT

While culture has always been part of language teaching (see Risager 2007 for an overview), it has gained in prominence over the last few decades as influential monographs and studies such as those by Byram (1997; 2008) and Kramsch (1993; 1998) demonstrate. These writers suggest that L2 use should be treated as intercultural communication with an emphasis on the importance of the cultural background of participants and context of communication. This involves examination of the language learners' culture and its influence on communication, knowledge of other cultures, the ability to compare and contrast cultures, to predict areas of miscommunication, to mediate and negotiate between cultures and an awareness of the relative nature of cultural norms. This is combined with a more 'critical' understanding of languages and cultures in intercultural communication as existing in 'third places' (Kramsch, 1993), which are neither part of users' L1 or a target language.

However, the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) for global communication has problematised a view of the English language as tied to any specific context or culture. In 'expanding circle' (Kachru, 2005) contexts, where English is used as a contact language or lingua franca, such as the setting of this study (Thailand), 'native speakers' of English are outnumbered by 'non-native speakers' by as much as four to one (Crystal, 2008). For English used in such international contexts more fluid notions of language and culture need to be adopted (Canagarajah, 2007; Pennycook, 2007; Baker, 2009b). Many approaches to culture and language teaching have been based on the assumption that there is a defined relationship between the language being taught and a target culture with which it is associated, even if it is acknowledged that learners may not conform to the norms of that culture. However, given the multiplicity and fluidity of cultural contexts and participants in English communication today, learners could never be prepared with knowledge of all the 'cultures' they are likely to encounter

through English. This has resulted in a call for ELT which reflects the reality of global Englishes and lingua franca communication and moves away from native English speaker model domination (Baker, 2009a; 2011; Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004). The appropriateness of focusing on a single variety of English with a specified grammar, vocabulary and phonology in the face of the plurality of Englishes is becoming hard to sustain. Instead there is a need to negotiate the diversity of Englishes through developing the skills and knowledge associated with multilingual, intercultural communication such as accommodation, code-switching, negotiation and mediation. Intercultural awareness (ICA) (Baker, 2009a; 2011) is an attempt to specify what some of these skills and knowledge might be.

ICA builds on the earlier approaches to intercultural communicative competence (for example Byram, 1997) in viewing successful intercultural communication as a process which goes beyond vocabulary, grammar and phonology. However, whereas cultural awareness has tended to deal in cultures as definable entities, ICA recognises the *intercultural* nature of the socio-cultural context of lingua franca communication through English. This involves an understanding of cultures as fluid, hybrid and emergent in intercultural communication, and the relationship between a language and its cultural context and references as being created in each instance of communication, based both on pre-existing resources and those that emerge in situ. ICA is defined as follows:

[Intercultural awareness] is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices and frames of reference can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication. (Baker, 2011)

The types of skills, knowledge and attitudes¹ ICA entails move from basic awareness of the role of cultural contexts in communication and meaning-making in particular reference to one's own culture, to the ability to compare one's own and other cultures, to an understanding of the complexity of cultures and finally an awareness of the fluidity of cultural frames of reference in which the line between 'own' and 'other' cultures is broken down. This involves an ability to negotiate between different frames of reference and to move quickly beyond cultural generalisations to manage the emergent and dynamic cultural contexts of intercultural communication. How ICA is developed is still a matter of investigation but we may expect learners of English to have developed different degrees of ICA depending on their proficiency as intercultural communicators.

The relevance of ICA to classroom practice has been discussed with a number of suggestions made such as:

- exploring the complexity of local cultures which should lead to an awareness of the multi-voiced nature of cultural characterisations
- critically exploring images and cultural representations in language learning materials
- exploring the traditional media and arts through English to critically evaluate the images of local and other cultures

- exploring IT/electronic media through English to investigate cultural representations
- using cultural informants including non-local English-speaking teachers and local English teachers with experience of intercultural communication and other cultures
- and engaging in face-to-face and online intercultural communication (Baker, 2008; 2011).

These offer opportunities to develop and put ICA into practice, and provide materials and experiences to reflect on in the classroom that can aid in the development of ICA. However, as of yet the discussion has been exploratory and further empirical investigation is needed. This is the first focus of this project.

New technologies, e-learning and intercultural communication

The use of new technologies and particularly the internet is one possible means of bringing a greater cultural dimension into the classroom in a manner that reflects the complexity of English use in global contexts. There has been much discussion concerning the potential for technology to aid in the process of language learning particularly through offering learners access to a wide range of resources (Chapelle, 2009). Furthermore, Laurillard (2002) highlights technology's and e-learning's role as integral parts of teaching and learning in higher education contexts. Despite this potential, at the present time technology has not been integrated fully into language teaching within higher education and is far from being a 'normalised' part of the education process, fitting seamlessly with other learning and teaching techniques (Chambers and Bax, 2006; Chapelle, 2009). Both Laurillard (2002) and Chapelle (2009) have highlighted the need for more critical and qualitative studies of technology in language learning which go beyond development and deal in a substantive way with the learners' experiences and course evaluation.

Nevertheless, Laurillard's 'conversational framework' (2002: 87) has been influential in e-learning at the University of Southampton (www.elanguages.soton.ac.uk), and this influence is seen in the development of e-learning materials, which attempt to incorporate key elements of the framework such as 'discussion', 'interaction', 'adaptation' and 'reflection' into 'learning objects' (Watson, 2010). While there are many definitions of learning objects (LOs), the definition that will be followed here is 'activity-driven LO in which a pedagogic task or tasks forms the basis for the learning. A single asset or combination of assets support the task(s), and might include video, audio, graphic or textual assets' (Watson, 2010: 42). It is this model for learning object development and delivery, grounded in Laurillard's framework, which formed the basis of the materials used in the intercultural communication course in this project.

Of particular relevance to the aims of this research is the potential of these new technologies to enable intercultural exchanges through access to authentic texts from a range of cultures and perhaps most significantly allowing intercultural communication with members of other cultures through the internet. In practice, the most popular applications have involved the notions of telecollaboration and tandem

learning (for example Belz and Thorne, 2006; O'Dowd, 2007a; b) in which language learners in different settings and cultures communicate via the internet using tools such as e-mail, synchronous chat, discussion forums, and social networking sites 'in order to support social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange' (Belz, 2003:2). Most of these studies have focused on the development of intercultural competence through engaging in intercultural communication. However, they have not utilised e-learning to teach about the relationships between language and culture and the processes of intercultural communication, i.e. to develop linguistic and intercultural awareness and reflection. Other studies have to a lesser extent examined the possibilities of e-learning for such teaching (for example Furstenburg et al, 2001; Rogerson-Revell, 2003; Liaw, 2006) with generally positive results. As yet though this is a relatively underexplored area and there are no studies explicitly examining the delivery of a course focused on intercultural communication, ICA and global Englishes or using the e-learning LO framework detailed previously. This forms the second focus of this project.

These two foci of the project: e-learning and intercultural communication through English can be formalised through the following research question and sub questions:

To what extent can an online course in intercultural communication influence English language learners' perception of intercultural communication and aid in the development of intercultural awareness in an expanding circle university setting?

- Is it possible to translate the conceptions of successful intercultural communication envisaged in intercultural awareness theory/research into teaching materials?
- Is an online course an effective manner of delivering such intercultural training?
- What are participants' attitudes towards and evaluations of such a course?

Research Methodology

The context chosen for the study was a higher education institute in Thailand for a number of reasons. Firstly, Thailand provides a setting typical of increasing numbers of expanding circle countries, where English is used in a wide variety of contexts both for communication with native speakers and non-native speakers (Wongsothorn et al, 2003). Although English does not have official status, it is the 'de facto' second language, used as a lingua franca to communicate in the region (for example as the official language of ASEAN) and globally (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Therefore, Thailand is a site where we might expect the cultural references English is used to express to be dynamic and multifarious (Baker, 2009a; 2009b), making the relevance of intercultural awareness high. Furthermore, the use of new technologies is seen as going hand-in-hand with English in Thailand's development (Wongsothorn et al., 2003). E-learning is also recognised as an important part of education, in both education policy and practice (Suktrisal, 2004). Additionally, a higher education context was chosen due to the use of English as the lingua

franca of academia (Jenkins, 2007), the increasing internationalisation of higher education and the growth in online e-learning in higher education.

The research participants were a group of volunteer English major students at a Thai university. These formed the most suitable participants since, given their higher level of English and experiences of intercultural communication, they were most likely to see the relevance of, be receptive to and engage with a course in intercultural communication. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the course could be adapted to other levels of proficiency. In total 31 participants undertook the course. six of the participants were male and 25 female, which reflects the gender balance of their classes. They were aged between 20 and 23. The average length of time for which they had studied English was 14 years. The majority of participants reported using English outside of their class and using English online. The majority also reported using English with both non-native speakers of English (including other Thais) and with native speakers. All the participants took part in the research voluntarily and ethical protocol for the University of Southampton and Silpakorn University were followed. The principal researcher was from the University of Southampton but had previous experience of teaching and researching in this setting hence making access and gaining 'insider' perspectives easier. He was supported by two research partners from Silpakorn University.

The research participants were asked to take part in an online course in intercultural communication which involved around 15 hours of independent study over the course of a semester at their university, which is described in detail below. The initial data gathering phase involved a paper-based questionnaire to collect background data about the participants including their experiences of and attitudes to learning English and importantly their attitudes to intercultural communication through English (Appendix 2). This questionnaire was adapted from one employed successfully in a previous study (Baker, 2009a). During the course, data was collected through tracking activity in the online course to monitor students' participation in the course. Data was also collected from the students' contributions to the discussion tasks and chat sessions. At the end of the course a questionnaire was given to the participants regarding their experiences of and evaluation of the course (Appendix 3). The participants also completed a questionnaire containing the same questions as the initial questionnaire in relation to intercultural communication to determine if any changes in their attitudes had occurred. Both questionnaires were offered either electronically using Survey Gizmo or in paper-based form dependent on the participants' preferences. The participants were allowed to complete the final questionnaires anonymously to ensure they would not feel pressured to report overly positive responses. Although this meant it was not possible to compare the initial and final intercultural communication questionnaire on an individual level, it was still possible to do so at the group level; a compromise that was necessary to ensure anonymity.

Interviews were conducted with 17 of the participants at the end of the course. This was to gain further information about their experiences of the course and their attitudes towards e-learning, intercultural communication and global Englishes. Semi-structured interviews were used in which all interviewees received questions about the same topics but the wording and order of the questions were adapted to suit

the 'flow' of each interview. The researcher was also free to ask follow-up questions depending on the participants' responses. This yielded qualitative data which was used to triangulate the quantitative data from the questionnaires.

Data was collected from six of the English teachers at Silpakorn University. Four of the teachers were Thai L1 speakers and two were English L1 speakers. four were female and two male. Their teaching experience ranged for two years to over ten. They were given access to the course and asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating the course and reflecting on its relevance to their teaching (Appendix 4). The format to this questionnaire was similar to that administered to the student participants and yielded predominantly quantitative data. Four of the teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview to gain further qualitative data on their impressions of the course, intercultural communication and global Englishes.

Data analysis of the questionnaires involved descriptive statistics including tabulations of responses, averages, percentages and mean scores as this was the most suitable approach for this number of participants (see Cohen et. al. 2007). Participants' responses in the interviews were coded for emergent themes (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and those that related to the research questions. While this inevitably involved a degree of quantitative analysis in identifying the most frequently arising themes, it also made use of 'critical incidents' in which particularly representative, articulate or interesting examples drawn from the participants own responses were used to support or offer counter examples to the researcher's identification of prevailing themes. The coding was carried out using QSR NVivo 8 software for qualitative data analysis.

The course – Intercultural communication and intercultural awareness



Image 1: Homepage for course

The course aims were, as stated at the beginning of this paper, to use online learning objects for this group of English language learners to develop

knowledge and understanding of the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication, the role of English as the global lingua franca of intercultural communication and an understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with intercultural awareness and its role in intercultural communication through English. This was communicated to the learners through the course aims in the course overview (Appendix 1).

The course was delivered through the Moodle VLE (Virtual learning environment). The course comprised ten topics containing interactive online learning objects (Appendix 1) based on key aspects of intercultural communication, ICA and global Englishes. There were also seven asynchronous discussion tasks related to the topics and three synchronous chat sessions. The ten topics are listed below.

1. Defining culture
2. Intercultural communication
3. Cultural stereotypes and generalisations in communication
4. The individual and culture
5. English as a global language
6. Exploring my own culture
7. Intercultural communication and the Internet
8. Comparing cultures: Politeness
9. Globalisation and transcultural global flows
10. Intercultural Awareness

These topics covered key areas of intercultural communication such as the relationship between culture and language, what intercultural communication studies have brought to our understanding of this relationship and, in particular, the hybrid and fluid nature of culture and language in intercultural communication. Students were asked to explore their own culture in more detail to gain a greater awareness of the complexities of culture and language in a setting familiar to them. Alongside this, students reflected on their own personal relationship to their culture and the role this had in the way they constructed their identities. They were asked to consider the negative impact of stereotyping on intercultural communication but also the necessity of generalisations and how to approach these in a manner that did not deny the complexity of others. Students were also introduced to the notions of global Englishes including varieties of world Englishes such as Indian English, Nigerian English and Hong Kong English as well as English as a lingua franca. Other issues that were dealt with on the course included the growing role of online intercultural communication, the use of English to create and transmit hybrid cultural artefacts and practices in ‘transcultural flows’ and the relationship between Englishes and globalisation. Finally, the students were asked to explore the role of the types of skills, knowledge and attitudes envisaged in

intercultural awareness in intercultural communication for them. The students were allowed around 15 weeks to complete the ten topics. They were not expected to do the tasks each week as a degree of flexibility was needed to allow the students time for exams, course work deadlines and holidays; however, it was recommended that they followed the order of the syllabus. They were asked to contribute to five of the discussion forums and the chat sessions were optional². In total it was expected that the course would take around 15 hours.

In relation to pedagogy, the course was primarily designed for independent study with each of the topics containing a learning activity or object (LO) which the students completed by themselves. These LOs included reading tasks, podcasts, reflective activities, note-taking and comprehension checks which were scaffolded through contextualisation, interactive activities and extensive written feedback (see Appendix 1). An online glossary of key terminology was also provided. Support was provided from an online tutor who the students could contact through an online course forum and e-mail. Staff at Silpakorn University also provided support and the option of talking to someone face-to-face. The interactive elements of the course were further complimented by the discussion forum where students could discuss their ideas with other students and with the course tutor. The students also had the option of taking part in three synchronous one hour chat sessions. This involved a discussion with the tutor, other students and in the case of the final session with three students from the University of Southampton who were studying intercultural communication. Both the discussion forum and the chat sessions provided an opportunity for students to extend their understanding of key ideas on the course through sharing ideas with both the tutor and other students.

Course participation

Student No.	Topics contributed to	LOs	Discussion	Chat
1	10	10	11	2
2	10	10	9	-
3	10	10	7	-
4	10	10	3	-
5	10	10	1	-
6	10	10	-	-
7	9	9	8	-
8	9	5	8	-
9	9	4	7	3
10	8	8	8	2
11	7	6	6	-
12	7	7	4	-
13	6	6	3	1
14	6	4	3	-

15	5	5	2	1
16	5	5	1	-
17	5	4	1	-
18	4	1	6	1
19	4	3	2	
20	4	4	1	-
21	4	4	1	-
22	3	3	3	-
23	3	3	3	-
24	3	1	3	1
25	3	3	2	-
26	3	3	2	-
27	3	2	2	-
28	3	3	1	-
29	3	3	-	-
30	2	1	2	2
31	2	-	2	1
Average	6	5	4	2

Table 1: Course participation

Of the 31 participants, Table 1 shows that they undertook an average of six of the ten topics either through the LOs, the discussion forum or in many cases both. For compulsory assessed courses students in this institution were expected to attend 80 per cent of classes, so an average of 60 per cent for an optional independent learning course is quite a high participation rate. There was a lot of variation within this though, with six of the students contributing to all the topics and ten of the students contributing to three or less of the topics. All of the students, except one, undertook at least one of the LOs, and all of the students, except two, contributed to the discussion forums. Again there was variation with some students preferring to undertake the independent LOs and others preferring the discussion forum. Only nine of the students contributed to the chat sessions. The low rate of participation for the chat sessions is not surprising as they were offered as an optional activity which was not integral to the course. Many of the students explained in the interviews that the times of the chat sessions had not been convenient for them. Similarly many of the students who made minimal contributions to the course reported in the interviews that they had not had enough time during the semester to adequately participate in the course. Although a case might be made for removing those students with minimal participation in the course from the research, it was felt that it was important to gain the impressions and opinions of those students to investigate why they had not participated.

Students' course evaluation

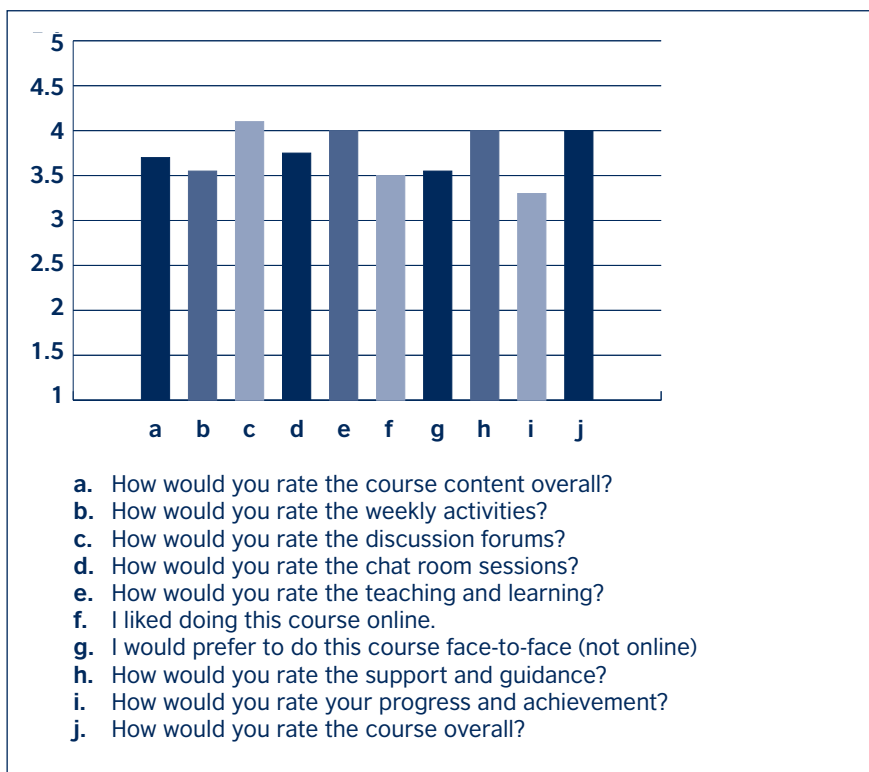


Table 2: Students' course evaluation

The student evaluations for the course are shown in Table 2 with a score of 5 being 'excellent' and 1 'awful'. Twenty-two of the students completed the evaluation. As can be seen, overall the students' evaluation was positive. All of the categories received an average rating of better than 3 (neutral) with many around 4 (good). Those areas which were rated most highly were the discussion forum, the teaching and learning, which included explanations, course organisation and opportunities for student contribution, the support and guidance and the course overall. The lowest rating was for progress and achievement which may represent modesty on the part of the students and is usually the area which is rated lowest on similar questionnaires used for other online courses in e-languages. It may seem contradictory that students gave similar ratings to 'I like doing this course online' and 'I would rather do this course face-to-face'. Yet, as the interviews revealed, many students reporting that they enjoyed the course online but offered a choice between doing it online or face-to-face they would choose face-to-face.

Alongside the quantitative data presented in Table 2 qualitative data was collected through the interviews. This data offered an explanation of some of the evaluations given in Table 2 as well as providing a more complex and richer picture of some of the participants' attitudes towards the course. A number of salient themes

emerged from coding of the data and these are presented and discussed here, together with representative examples. In terms of positive attitudes to studying online many of the students reported enjoying the convenience and the flexibility the medium offered. They liked that they could access the course from anywhere with internet access, not only the university, and that they could choose their own time to study and so manage their time themselves.

Extract 1³

Pat⁴: I like that the course online is a course that I can come to learn anytime I like ... so I can manage time to learn anytime I like

However, many of the students also reported a negative side to this in that it was harder to motivate themselves.

Extract 2

Pin: I don't have self control to do the course online and I prefer doing in the class like @ face-to-face and teacher er will score me and will urge me to @ to do it. where in here. I I have to. control myself and tell myself to do it @ and sometime there there another temptation

Furthermore, as one student explained, online courses can be seen as convenient when time is an issue but face-to-face courses may be preferable if there is more time.

Extract 3

Nit: this year I have a lot of busy time (?) online course is better for us but if we have time I prefer the course in face-to-face with teacher

A number of the students also commented on their positive attitudes to online communication in that they felt that online discussions were preferable to classroom discussions and that online communication was easier than face-to-face.

Extract 4

At: if we are talking face-to-face this sometimes we might feel like a little bit more nervous or cannot be able to express our feeling directly or truthfully I mean when we doing something online we don't know whoever in the other side of the computer and we can do things more freely

However, not surprisingly, other students had more negative attitudes towards communicating online such as the lack of spontaneity, the restrictiveness of the medium of communication (typing) and also worries about the grammatically of what they wrote.

Extract 5

Nun: I prefer er face-to-face (to) online because er you can see how they express you can see their face and how they feel you know instead of just you know typing and replying comments ... I think it's sometimes difficult ...

sometimes I don't know how to explain or you know. or say it or write it or maybe part of it because I am kinda like aware that I would make mistake on grammar

In relation to the teacher support online there were very few positive or negative comments. However, as with online communication in general some of the students appeared dissatisfied with the lack of immediate response.

Extract 6

Pat: when I wonder about something in jargon in definition or something I can ask ask the teacher in the class immediately but when if we learn in the course online we can can't do it we must wait

Only one of the students seemed to have had technical problems with the course but some of the students asked for more sophisticated technical content and in particular video.

An area of the course that many of the students expressed particularly positive attitudes towards was the discussion forum. Students felt that this was a very good way to exchange opinions and also to learn new things both from the tutors and from other students.

Extract 7

Pat: we will have different ideas about many things so I think discussion is the great way to exchange this idea and make make make us under- understand each other

Pin: sometimes I don't really stand- understand it until I go to the discussion room...yeah. and see other people talk and then I will much understand

There were almost no negative comments in relation to the discussion forum apart from the already expressed concerns over the difficulty of online communication.

In relation to the learning objects (LOs) or weekly activities there were far fewer comments. Most of the comments were related to the actual content of the materials and will be discussed in relation to intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes. Regarding the chat sessions, as already commented on, many of the students were not able to attend at the times offered but the few comments that were given related to the positive aspects of having synchronous communication and that they were 'real' examples of intercultural communication.

Extract 8

Or: I like the chat se- session better because um we can er have a real intercultural communication. and I feel like we can share the opinions face-to-face more than er just answer in the er discussion group

Teachers' course evaluation

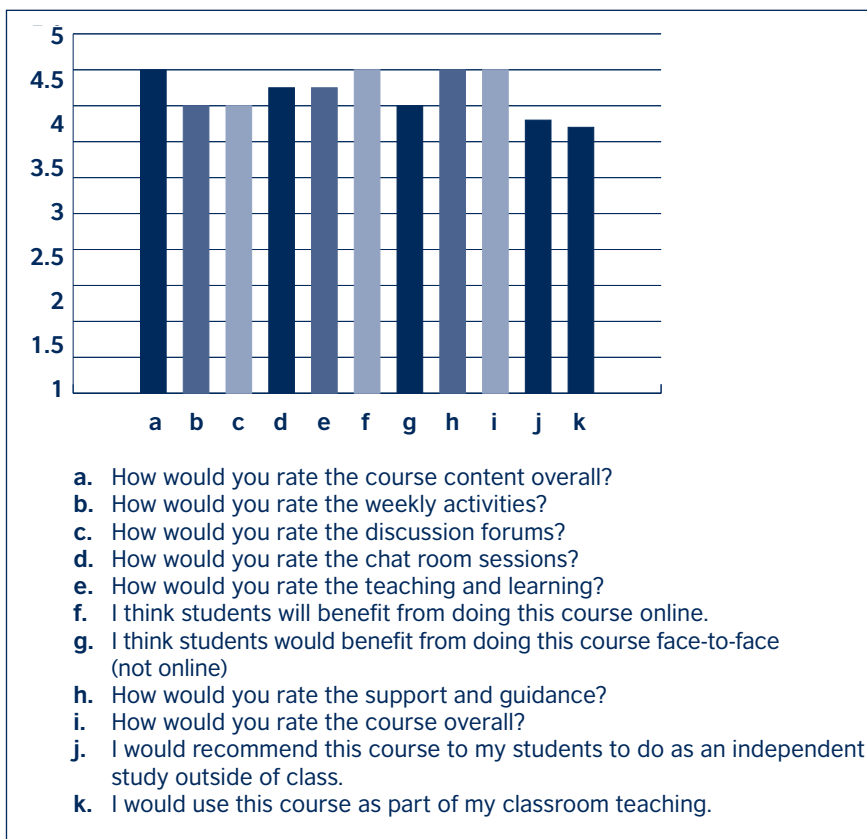


Table 3: Teachers' course evaluation

As with the students' evaluation, the teachers were asked to rate aspects of the course. In total six teachers completed the evaluation. However, two of the teachers only completed the final three questions. As their responses were quite different to the other teachers in being generally negative about the course, it was felt important to include their data. Similar to the students' responses, the teachers' attitudes towards the course appear positive but are generally slightly higher than the students with most scored 4 (good) or above. In particular the teachers gave higher ratings to the course being online as opposed to face-to-face. The lower ratings for the final two questions can be explained by the negative attitudes the two teachers who only completed the final three questions had to using this course with their students.

These responses were explained in detail by the teachers both through the interviews but also by written responses to open-ended questions in the teachers' questionnaire. As with the students, the teachers felt that an online course was convenient. They also felt that online learning gave students a chance to learn in different ways through independent activities and again the discussion forum was frequently commented on positively.

Extract 9

Niti: *it will be useful ... I've looked at the what the discussion board I think that's where they really exchanged ideas about about the topics and in that way they they learn by sharing experience that's nothing like lecturing and you know things that you really have to read and memorise and highlight for example it's a it's a completely different way um from doing it in in college so I think I think yes they learn but it's just a different way and they they they just have to realise that you know by discussing by um doing activities that's that's another way of learning*

Another important point raised by some of the teachers was that the course gave different students a chance to participate.

Extract 10

Niti: *the fact that you don't have to go to the lecturing room there are some students who are quite shy to speak in class so this this is good like when they do a discussion um for example if I am too shy to speak up in class or suggest my opinion I can you know have my time to think and rephrasing my sentence then put it there so that I can share with other people*

Overall, many of the teachers thought the course would make a useful addition to their teaching.

Extract 11

T1:⁵ *The course looks friendly and more casual and it is different from academic/ lecture stuff that the students have to do in class. So it gives students different feelings and atmosphere. It's a great supplement. Much better than homework from textbooks, exercises or reports*

However, it was interesting that the two native English speaking, older teachers were less positive and felt they were unlikely to use the materials in their teaching.

Extract 12

T5: *It is always a good thing for the students to have access to knowledge in any form, but this is so far removed from my teaching methodology that I cannot see that it would become part of my teaching.*

T6: *Doing any course outside class requires self-discipline and commitment. Because of the lack of face-to-face interaction the students may quickly become bored with the topic.*

Summary and discussion of course development and evaluation

In relation to the first part of the research questions, 'Is it possible to translate the conceptions of successful intercultural communication envisaged in intercultural awareness theory/research into teaching materials?' the development of the

materials for this course illustrate one possible approach to this. The materials covered a range of topics specifically related to ICA such as exploring the complexity of languages and cultures, making comparisons between cultures, but also recognising the limitations of such comparisons, and viewing communication and culture in intercultural communication as hybrid and emergent. In particular this was explored in relation to communicating through English since this was the participants' subject of study. This resulted in an emphasis on English used as a global lingua franca to communicate across a variety of cultures rather than on 'native speaker' English and cultures.

Much of the third part of the research questions, 'What are participants' attitudes towards and evaluations of such a course?' is answered through the course evaluation. Firstly, both groups generally evaluated the course positively, although the teachers more so than the students, and with caveats. Almost all of the participants approved of the flexibility and the convenience of being able to study the course anywhere and at any time. There appeared to be few issues with the technology, although some of the students would rather have had more multimedia content. In its present form the course was predominantly text-based and it may be that a future version of the course would benefit from more podcasts and synchronous voice or video communication. Nevertheless, delivering a course online was also seen as opening up different mediums of communication, by both students and teachers, which might favour students who do not always contribute well in classroom situations and also helps all students with their written communication skills.

One aspect of the course that seemed to be viewed particularly positively was the discussion forum. Both the students and the teachers felt that the discussion forum acted as a good medium for exchanging and learning new ideas from tutors and other students. It is therefore suggested, following influential theories of e-learning such as Salmon (2004), that such discussion forums, which provide students with an opportunity to reflect on and further explore what they learn in other parts of the course, are an integral part of such an online course. The other course materials seemed to have also been generally positively viewed, however, the chat sessions had not been at a convenient time for many of the students and were less successful.

Although the students appeared to enjoy the course, many felt that they would rather have studied the course face-to-face if they had the option. Some of the most frequent reasons for this were that they preferred the immediacy of face-to-face communication and also wanted instant teacher feedback and support. In contrast, most of the teachers viewed the online course as an interesting alternative method of teaching and learning that made for good independent study. These different opinions may be explained by the teachers feeling that this medium encouraged more independent students, whereas the students did not feel as confident about studying independently, but this would need further investigation. Finally, many of the participants mentioned that motivation was key to such a flexible independent programme of study and that without sufficient discipline students were unlikely to participate in or get much out of the course.

Intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes

While the previous section of results dealt with the participants' attitudes to the online course and e-learning, this section will focus on the content of the course, although inevitably there is a degree of overlap between the two areas. Data is presented and discussed from the two intercultural communication questionnaires. The first questionnaire was completed by 27 participants and the final by 17 participants. This is supported by qualitative data from the 17 interviews on related themes.

Attitudes towards using English in intercultural communication

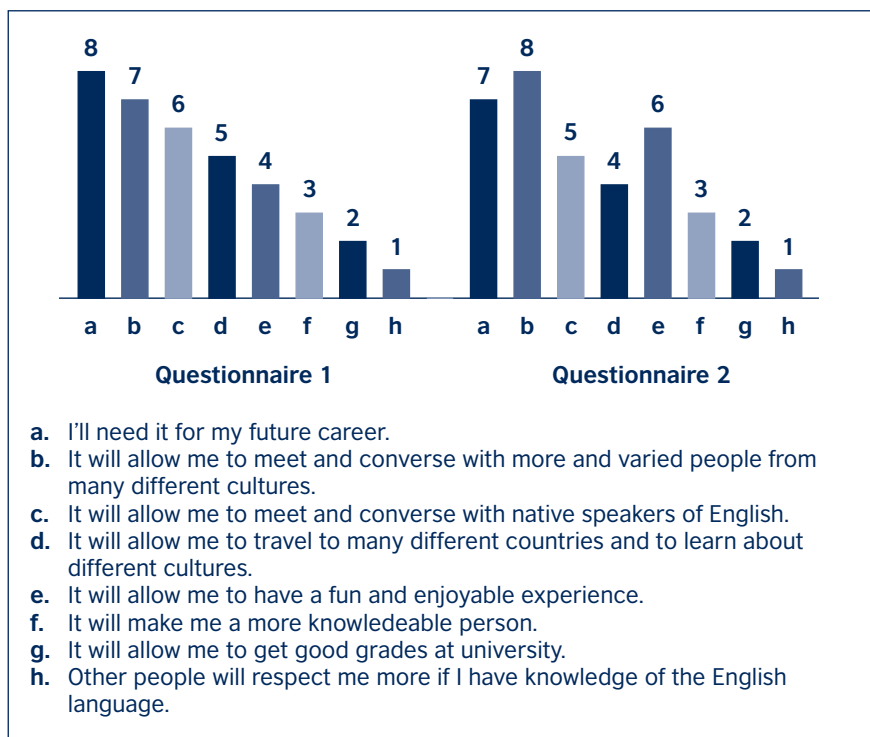


Table 4: Ranking reasons for studying English

Background data on the participants' reasons for studying English illustrated in Table 4 show that using English for careers and communicating with people from many different cultures ranked highly with the use of English with native speakers below this (8 is the highest rank and 1 the lowest). The follow-up questionnaire (2) results show that using English to communicate with different people from different cultures moves up to the first reason (perhaps not surprisingly given the focus of the course) and that English use with native speakers is ranked a place lower, suggesting that this is not high in the students' motivation.

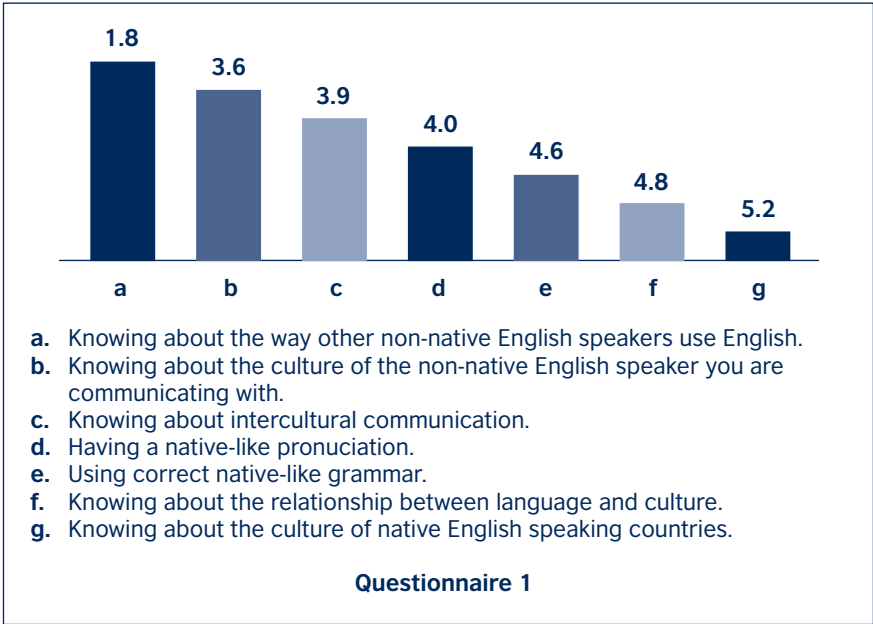


Table 5: Ranking factors that help in intercultural communication through English initial questionnaire



Table 6: Ranking factors that help in intercultural communication through English final questionnaire

Tables 5 and 6 are important in illustrating participants' responses to statements concerning factors that might help in successful intercultural communication between interlocutors who do not use English as a first language. The results show the rankings with a lower mean score (shown at the top of each bar) representing a higher level of importance (1 = most important – 6 = least important). The results between the initial and final questionnaire are quite similar but there are a number of differences that are worth discussing. In terms of similarities in both questionnaires, the respondents rated knowledge of how other non-native speakers of English use English as the most important factor. It should also be noted that knowledge of native-speaker-like grammar and knowledge of native-speaker cultures was rated quite low, again suggesting that native-speaker-like English and communicative norms are not of particular relevance or interest to these participants.

However, there is also some ambiguity here in that native-like pronunciation was rated as an important factor in the final questionnaire. While this may be an anomaly, Table 7 suggests that this is a feature of the participants' attitudes and one that changes little over the course. Participants generally rated English spoken in the traditional native-speaker countries of the US, UK and Australia as most standard. There was general disagreement that English spoken in the 'expanding circle' countries, where it does not have an official status, was standard.

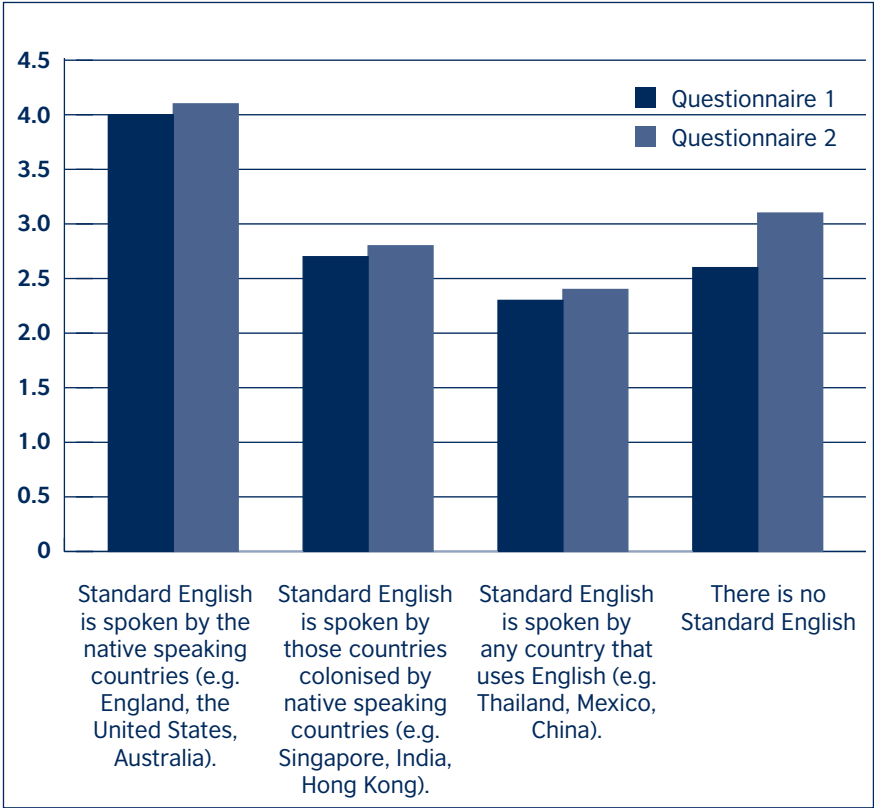


Table 7: attitudes towards different types of Englishes

This somewhat contradicts the earlier responses (Table 4) which suggested that speaking English to native speakers was not high on the participants' list of reasons for learning English. Such ambivalent attitudes towards different varieties of English are further reinforced by the interview data. Extract 13 illustrates what appears to be a general awareness among the students that English is not 'owned' by the original native speakers of the language and that there are a range of Englishes, but at the same time extract 14 suggests 'native English' is viewed as most prestigious even when used with other 'non-native speakers'.

Extract 13

Tima: Nowadays English becomes like the official language in many countries not only in the UK or the US and. each country have their own culture so even though they are using English they have some things that something that are different from in the US or in the UK so if if we got to learn all of them I think we will. I think we it can make us like open up our mind like better

Tip: Nowadays English is truly global language and people in many nationalities in the world use English to communicate and I think it's interesting. to to learn about English much more than in English in the UK or in the United States

Extract 14

Nun: Singapore they have their own English and something I think it is ok it's part of the way they communicate yeah ... I don't feel bad about them but sometime it just not quite nice or beautiful as beautiful as err the native speaker

Tima: English is from basically from the UK right and then to the US so are they are like the what to say the origins of English so if we basically talk about English in Asian countries then it might give a weird feeling to me

The participants were asked to rate their agreement with a range of statements related to features of intercultural communication (the full statements can be seen in Appendix 2). As Table 8 shows the results were very similar between the two questionnaires with the mean score for the first questionnaire being 4.1 and for the final 4.0. This represents agreement with the statements with no statement dropping below a neutral rating (3). There was strong agreement that languages and cultures were linked and that learning about culture was part of language learning. There was also strong agreement that cultures can be interpreted differently by different individuals and that others should not be judged by the supposed standards of one's own culture. Finally participants rated a number of questions comparing cultures, Table 9. Here the responses were largely neutral or negative which suggested the participants had a good sense of the relativity of cultures and that such comparisons were not possible or were negative.

While the questionnaire does not suggest a change in attitudes over the course, the participants reported having a greater awareness of a number of aspects of intercultural communication as a result of the course in the interviews. In particular many students discussed having a greater awareness of the danger of stereotyping others and being 'open minded' in their approach to communicating with others.

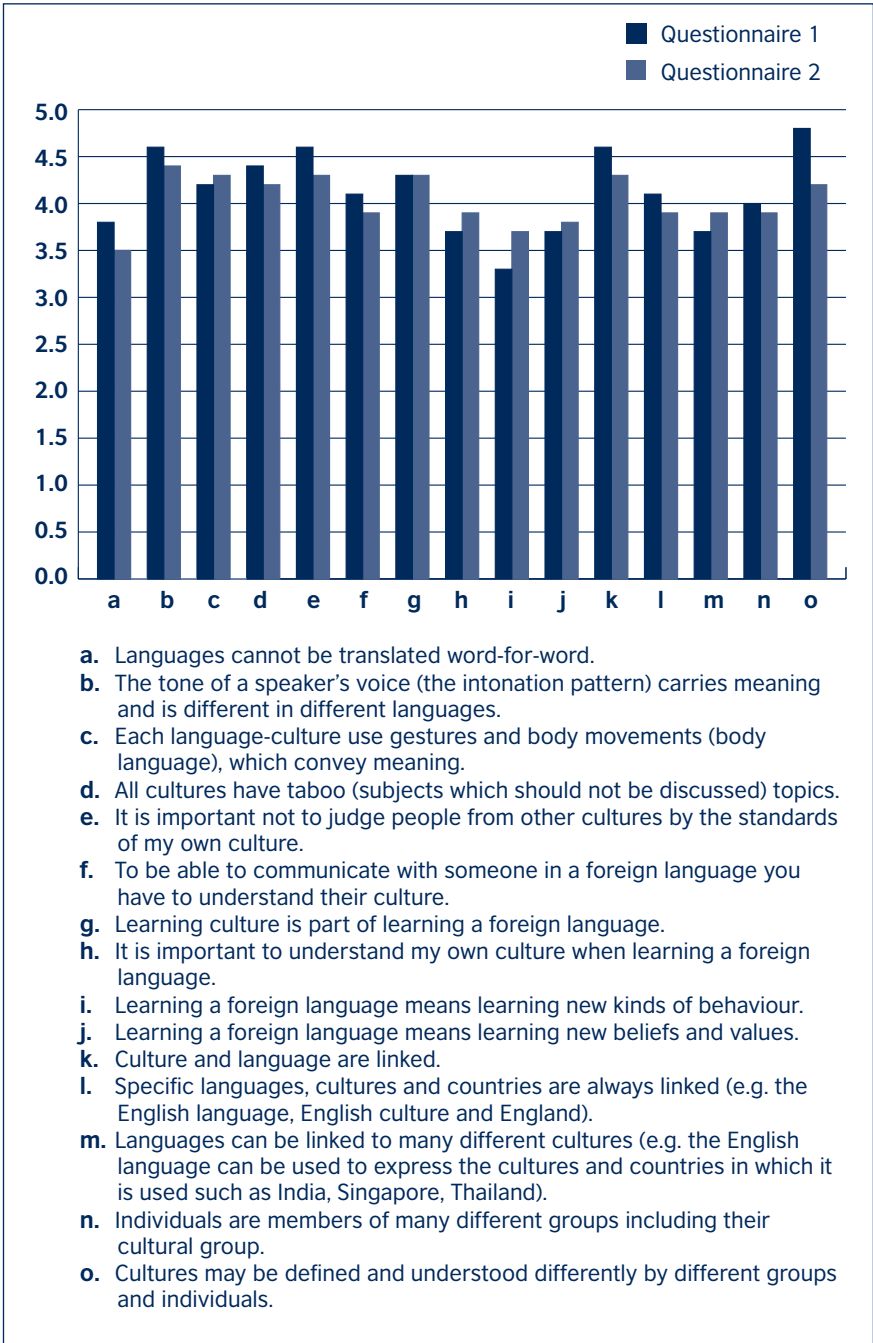


Table 8: Attitudes towards intercultural communication

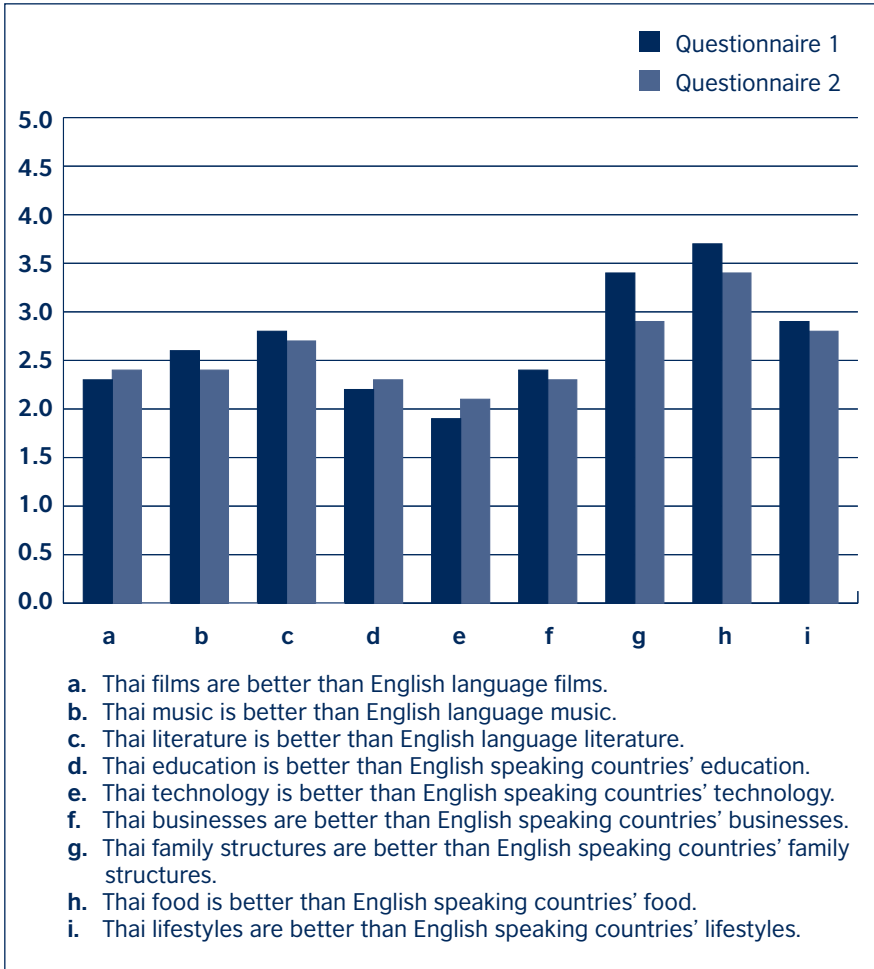


Table 9: Attitudes towards own and other cultures

Extract 15

More: I have never heard of er intercultural awareness ... lead me to think about the stereotype of Thailand and the generalisation of cultures in the world and about the. about. um about our my country our Thai culture

Gai: I learn that people should be open minded when they communicate to each other because we will raise from um different background and it's not like people from certain country will be the same because um family background are not the same they don't go to the same school so um we must be really open when we communicate with people even people in my own er country er we use the Thai language but everybody's different

Furthermore, in the interviews the participants frequently discussed how the course had given them a greater awareness of their own culture and the ability to compare it with other cultures, but in a way that avoided simplistic or stereotypical comparisons (see also Extract 15).

Extract 16

Chit: I think I can know the different perceptions of culture include in Thailand culture so you can see that there are many different things about peoples thoughts towards their cultures of our culture or foreign culture ... your course made us to clarify about our culture first ... about the language and about the culture that is something that concerned together ... and we can compare our culture with others

Summary and discussion of intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes

The data above addresses the second part of the research question 'Is an online course an effective manner of delivering such intercultural training?' and, in combination with the course evaluation, the third research question 'What are participants' attitudes towards and evaluations of such a course?' As with the course evaluation, the majority of participants revealed positive attitudes towards course materials that dealt with intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and intercultural communication. This suggests that the learning objects in the weekly activities, which were the primary means of delivering the contents of the course, were effective. Overall, participants seemed to feel that the cultural dimension to language learning and use were important and formed a relevant part of their language learning experiences. They also seemed familiar with and favourable towards many of the concepts related to global Englishes. This was demonstrated in both the questionnaire responses and interview data.

The questionnaire responses also revealed that many of these positive attitudes to intercultural communication and global Englishes existed prior to the course. As the participants are reasonably advanced English language learners and almost all of them have experience of intercultural communication this is perhaps not surprising. This may also offer an explanation as to why there does not seem to be a great change in the participants' attitudes between the pre- and post-course questionnaire. Nonetheless, the interviews with the participants suggested that there were changes to their approaches or understanding of intercultural communication which had occurred as a result of the course. In particular many of the participants reported having a more complex knowledge of their own culture, a better understanding of stereotyping and an ability to compare between cultures and explain their own culture in a less stereotyped way. However, there appears to be little evidence in the participants' interviews or in their contributions to the course of knowledge or use of the elements of ICA (intercultural awareness) which relate to hybrid and fluid communicative practices which are not related to any particular culture. In the data in this study the focus seems to be more on the level of ICA in which the participants explored the complexity of different cultural characterisation, but which still distinguished between an 'our culture' and 'other

culture'. However, based on previous research (Baker, 2009a) it may be that longer ethnographic studies are needed to reveal such complex communicative practices and attitudes towards them.

In specific relation to global Englishes, the participants consistently revealed that they viewed English as a global language that they would, or already did, use in a variety of contexts with a range of users. Many of the participants already seemed to be familiar with and accepting of the notion of World Englishes and a variety of forms of Englishes. In keeping with many approaches in intercultural communication the participants expressed the view that communicating effectively was more important than native-speaker-like language. While this did to an extent suggest that native-speaker language norms were less influential in this context, the pull of such standardising forces was still apparent. A number of the participants appeared to have conflicting attitudes to English, on the one hand accepting the plurality of Englishes but on the other feeling that native-speaker English was preferable in some way either in its 'correctness', 'comprehensibility' or as the original 'source' of the language. Such conflicting attitudes towards English have been reported in other studies related to lingua franca uses of English (see for example Jenkins, 2007), and might also be expected given the continuing influence of native-speaker English in the teacher materials and examinations these students use.

Implications

Before detailing the implications of this research a number of limitations should be addressed. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the small number of participants and the single setting make generalisations to other contexts difficult. Furthermore, the uniqueness of each teaching context means that it is unlikely that all of the findings here will be relevant to other contexts. However, through providing a range of data covering a wide variety of features of this course it is hoped that there will be aspects of the findings which will be informative to other interested researchers and teachers. Nonetheless, future studies with multilingual groups, as opposed to the monolingual group studied here, may produce different results. Moreover, the relative shortness of the course and of the data collection limits the findings. Second language learning and intercultural communication comprise a wide range of knowledge, skills and attitudes which are developed over a long period of time. It should also be recognised that the format of the course as an optional, non-assessed, independent study course will impact on the manner in which the learners engaged with it. A compulsory and/or assessed course would likely facilitate a different approach and different learning outcomes. Other limitations include the subjectivity of the researcher and the data, although a range of data sources has been utilised to counter balance the subjectivity of the data. Finally, it must be acknowledged that the data from the participants comes from meta-discussions of intercultural communication rather than examples of the participants actually engaged in intercultural communication. This is of course a limitation of much pedagogic research in ELT which seldom deals with data from participants use outside the classroom.

Despite these limitations there are a number of implications which can be drawn from this investigation. Firstly, this project demonstrated one approach to building knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication through e-learning which adds to previous studies of different approaches in this area (for example O'Dowd, 2007b). The relative ease through which online learning can link students and teachers around the world and connect with cultural representations of many different cultures on the internet makes e-learning an excellent medium for intercultural communication studies. Furthermore, the positive attitudes towards the course by both students and teachers showed that, in this context, e-learning is an appropriate and relevant part of language learning. However, there was a degree of ambivalence towards the course on the part of some of the students, with many reporting that given the choice they would still prefer a face-to-face course. This suggests that e-learning is still not 'normalised' (Chambers and Bax, 2006) in this setting and that further exploration would be needed to establish to what extent students and teachers would be willing to accept e-learning as part of their everyday learning and teaching experiences. Nevertheless, it is significant that the younger teachers had very positive attitudes towards e-learning.

Another advantage to e-learning emerging from this study is that it opens up new mediums of communication expanding on those traditionally associated with classroom teaching. Discussion forums in particular (as noted by Salmon, 2004) provide an interactive, constructivist learning medium which may also benefit students with different learning and communicative styles who are less able to express themselves in classroom settings. Furthermore, the increased independence may also be more suited to some students' learning styles; however, as many of the participants noted, a high degree of motivation is needed to complete such a flexible course. Future studies might also want to consider including more mediums of communication such as 'real time' synchronous voice and video communication which may benefit students with a further range of learning and communication styles.

As the course was not assessed, it was difficult to establish the extent to which the course had resulted in the participants gaining in competence in intercultural communication through English. Moreover, as the participants began with very positive attitudes towards intercultural communication it was also difficult to establish, from the questionnaires at least, if there had been a change in attitudes as a result of the course. However, the interview data and the data from the students' postings in the discussion forums suggest that the participants had gained a further understanding of intercultural communication as a result of the course. Perhaps the most important implication of the research, as regards intercultural communication, is that the participants began with such positive attitudes. This would suggest that due to the relevance the participants attached to knowledge of and training in intercultural communication this should be a more prominent feature of ELT.

Similarly the participants demonstrated a high degree of awareness of global Englishes and generally positive attitudes towards different varieties of English both before and after the course. Again this made it difficult to establish the influence the course had had. Nevertheless, as with intercultural communication, the key implication of this is that global Englishes are clearly of relevance and

should be a more significant part of ELT. This would bring into question the continuing focus on native-speaker English and inner circle cultures in the majority of ELT pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2005; Jenkins, 2007). Given the extent to which inner circle communicative norms feature in ELT, it is not surprising that many of the participants still rated this as of higher prestige than other varieties of English. It is interesting to speculate if English language learners would still hold 'native' English in such high esteem, if they were exposed to the plurality of global Englishes to the same extent in pedagogy.

Conclusion

In answer to the stated aims of this research; to investigate if e-learning was an effective medium for teaching intercultural communication and awareness, the course was well received by both students and teachers and the students discussed a number of changes in their understanding of intercultural communication that had occurred as a result of the course. However, there are caveats to these positive responses. Firstly, many of the students still felt that a face-to-face course would be preferable, suggesting that the role of e-learning and its relationship to classroom teaching in intercultural communication education needs further investigation. It was also difficult to judge the precise influence the course had on the participants' attitudes to intercultural communication, intercultural awareness and global Englishes, as they had positive attitudes before the course began and there was no course assessment. Nevertheless, it was clear from the participants' responses that these are areas of relevance to their English language learning. Considering the current use of English as the foremost global lingua franca for intercultural communication, this is perhaps not surprising. However, the extent to which this situation has been recognised in ELT pedagogy is questionable, particularly with its continued focus on native-speaker communicative norms. For ELT to be of most relevance to users of English it needs to incorporate knowledge of global Englishes and intercultural communication education and this e-learning course offers one example of how this can be delivered.

Notes

1. Awareness in this definition, following previous definitions of cultural awareness, has been extended to include skills, knowledge and attitudes.
2. Students were also asked to complete a learning diary, however only a few of the participants seemed willing to do this, so this was abandoned.
3. **Transcription conventions:**
Punctuation: Capital letters are used for pronoun 'I' and proper names.
Apostrophes are used for abbreviations e.g. don't, haven't. No other punctuation is used.
(xxx) - uncertain that word is correctly transcribed
@ -laughter
. - pause (un-timed)
- - indicates unfinished word or sound
. . . - indicates a section of dialogue not transcribed
4. Pseudonyms are used throughout
5. These comments were submitted anonymously as part of the teachers' evaluation form.

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Appendix 1 – Intercultural communication and intercultural awareness course

Intercultural communication and intercultural awareness

Course overview and outline

Course aims

This course aims to provide an introduction to intercultural communication through English and the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to successfully do this.

- By the end of the course you have an understanding of the relationship between language and culture in intercultural communication.
- The role of English as the global lingua franca of intercultural communication.
- An understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with intercultural awareness and its role in intercultural communication through English.

Please remember that this course is not a test of your English, so do not worry about making mistakes. The most important thing is to communicate and take part in the course.

Course structure and timetable

Learning in this course will take place online through Language House which is the name given to the University of Southampton's virtual learning environment.

You have **10 weekly topics** to cover which contain interactive activities for you to complete with feedback. The weekly topics should take between 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete. *

You also have a **discussion forum** where you can share your ideas about the topics you have completed with other students on this course and with your tutor. There will also be special guest appearances from students at the University of Southampton. The discussion forum should take about 30 - 45 minutes to complete. You are expected to contribute to five of the discussion forums. This means you do not have to post every week; although, you can if you would like to.

There will be a number of live **chat sessions** as well where you can also discuss ideas with your tutor and other students. This will last around 1 hour.

You have also been asked to keep a **learning journal** where you record your experiences of studying this course. Your journal entries should take around 20 -30 minutes a week.

It is probably easiest if you follow the order that the topics are presented in here. However, you can try some of the topics in a different order if you wish and you do not have to do just one a week. You can do more if you prefer, or miss a week if you are busy and catch up later. The discussion tasks will need to be started in the weeks suggested so that everyone can contribute, but they never close so you can add more thoughts later if you wish. In total the course should take around 15 hours and will finish just before the end of term in February next year.

When you have successfully finished the course, including contributions to the discussion forum, you will receive a **certificate from the University of Southampton** indicating that you have undertaken a course in intercultural communication and intercultural awareness.

*There is a glossary (a list of difficult terms and their definitions) for the topics. Click on the link for any word or phrase in blue to go to the glossary and see the definition.

Topics and discussion tasks

1. Defining culture

Culture is generally something we all feel we know something about, whether it is our own culture or another culture we are familiar with. However, arriving at a definition of culture is difficult. In these activities you will be introduced to some of the different elements of culture and a range of definitions.

Week 1 discussion task – Based on the definitions of culture given in the activities try to write your own definition of culture.

2. Intercultural communication

What is the relationship between culture and language? What does this mean in intercultural communication? That is, what is the relationship between languages and cultures when people from different cultural backgrounds are communicating using the same language? In these activities you will consider the relationship between language and culture, with a focus on the English language, and what we mean by intercultural communication.

3. Cultural stereotypes and generalisations in communication

What do we mean by stereotypes and generalisations? How do they affect intercultural communication? We all have ideas and impressions of our own and other cultures, are they stereotypes or generalisations? Do they help intercultural communication or cause problems? In these activities you will distinguish features of generalisations and stereotypes and consider some stereotypes about the UK and Thailand.

Week 3 discussion task – Have you ever heard or experienced any stereotypes about Thailand? Are there any stereotypes that you may have had about other cultures?

4. The individual and culture

When you communicate in intercultural communication you are communicating with another individual. It is individual people who communicate not cultures (Thai culture does not speak to French culture!). What is the relationship between an individual and their culture? In these activities you will compare your own behaviour to some common generalisations about Thai culture and explore all the different groups that you belong to alongside being Thai.

5. English as a global language

English is not just the language of the UK and USA. English is the official first language of 75 territories throughout the world. Furthermore, English is the most commonly spoken lingua franca on a global scale. In these activities you will be introduced to the wide range of English speaking countries, you will also consider some of the ways of categorising the different types of English and you will explore some of the features of the many varieties of English around the globe.

Week 5 discussion task – Are there any examples of other varieties of English you know? Do you think other forms of English (e.g. Hong Kong English) from the traditional native-speaker Englishes are ‘standard’ English? What type of English do you think students of English should learn? Why?

6. Exploring my own culture

To be able to communicate effectively in intercultural communication it is important to understand different ways of communicating. To do this you must first be aware of your own culture and also the complexity of this. In these activities you will consider the reasons for different types of communicative behaviour in Thailand and also explore the variety and complexity of different dialects and languages in Thailand.

Week 6 discussion task – Think about the languages and dialects you are familiar with. What languages or dialects do you speak at home and at the university? Do you speak any other languages? If yes, when and where? Does anyone in your family or any of your close friends speak a different language or dialect?

7. Intercultural communication and the internet

The internet provides an important source of opportunities for intercultural communication and contact through English. Many cultures and countries are represented through English on the internet. However, how much can we really learn about another culture from the internet? In the first activity you will consider the different ways you can interact with people and information from other cultures through the internet and in the second activity you will examine some representations of culture on the internet.

Week 7 discussion task – Find your own representation of another culture on the internet. What aspects of this other culture are represented on the website (think of the areas you looked at in this week’s activities)?

8. Comparing cultures: Politeness

To be able to communicate successfully in intercultural communication it is necessary to be able to make comparisons between cultures. In these activities

you will consider why comparisons between cultures are important for intercultural communication and you will make comparisons between Thailand and the UK in relation to politeness.

9. Globalisation and transcultural global flows

The benefits of having one language, English, that is so dominant in the world has been controversial. Is English inevitably linked to Western culture and dominance or is it, as we have seen, changed and adapted to many different cultures and uses? In these activities you will consider the benefits and disadvantages of English as a global language. You will then analyse some examples of local (Thai) uses of English and how they relate to globalisation and the idea of transcultural global flows.

Week 9 discussion task – Can you think of any other examples that mix global and local cultures in a similar way to the instances you explored in this week's activities e.g. language, music, video, films or personal experiences?

10. Intercultural Awareness

Successful intercultural communication in English involves more than native-speaker-like grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. One way of describing the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for intercultural communication is intercultural awareness. In these activities you will be introduced to some of the competencies needed for intercultural communication and consider the importance of different elements of intercultural awareness.

Week 10 discussion task – Based on what you have learnt about intercultural communication on this course and in particular the skills, knowledge and attitudes of intercultural awareness (ICA), what do you think are the most important things to learn about when studying English? For example, native-speaker-like English grammar or pronunciation, experience of other cultures, bilingual communication, knowledge of your own cultures and languages, comparing cultures, globalisation. Do you think ICA should be part of English teaching and learning?

Contact information

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Appendix 2 – Initial intercultural communication questionnaire (paper form)

Intercultural communication questionnaire

Instructions

Thank you for your help in this questionnaire.

*Please make sure you have completed **all** of the following questions. There are **four** pages.*

Part 1

Section A

Name and Student number

1. Which English do you want to learn? *Tick the relevant items (you may tick as many as you need).*

British English

Thai English

American English

Indian English

Australian English

Chinese English

Other (s) (Please specify): _____

Part 2

Section B

*Decide which of the reasons given below is the most important and least important for you. You must rank them 1 to 8 with **1 being the most important** and **8 the least important**. You must rank all the items. You can use each number only once.*

Studying English can be important for me because ...

A. It will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people from many different cultures. _____

- B. It will allow me to meet and converse with native speakers of English. _____
- C. It will make me a more knowledgeable person. _____
- D. It will allow me to get good grades at university. _____
- E. It will allow me to have a fun and enjoyable experience. _____
- F. Other people will respect me more if I have knowledge of the English language. _____
- G. I'll need it for my future career. _____
- H. It will allow me to travel to many different countries and to learn about different cultures. _____

Section C

When you have a conversation with a **non-native speaker in English** (e.g. Chinese, German) which of these items help you two understand each other?

*Decide which of the items given below is the most important and least important for you. You must rank them 1 to 7 with **1 being the most important** and **7 the least important**. You must rank all the items. You can use each number only once.*

- A. Having a native-like pronunciation. _____
- B. Knowing about the way other non-native English speakers use English (e.g. their accent and vocabulary). _____
- C. Knowing about the culture of the non-native English speaker you are communicating with. _____
- D. Knowing about the culture of native English-speaking countries. _____
- E. Using correct native-like grammar. _____
- F. Knowing about the relationship between language and culture. _____
- G. Knowing about intercultural communication (communication between people from different cultures). _____

Part 3

How much do you agree with the following statements in sections E, F and G? Rate them 1,2,3,4, or 5, 5=maximum score (strong agreement) to 1 = the lowest score (strong disagreement) as shown in the scale below.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

There are no right or wrong answers since many people have different opinions.

Please give your immediate reactions to each of the following items. Don't waste time thinking about each statement. Give your immediate feeling after reading each statement. On the other hand, please do not be careless, as it is important that we obtain your true feelings.

Example

Thai footballers are better than Malaysian footballers. _____ 3 _____

If you strongly agree with this statement, you would mark it 5. If you strongly disagreed with this statement, you would mark it 1. If you had neutral feelings about it, you would mark it 3.

Section D

- 1. Standard English is spoken by the native-speaking countries (e.g England, the United States, Australia). _____
- 2. Standard English is spoken by those countries colonised by native English-speaking countries (e.g. Singapore, India, Hong Kong). _____
- 3. Standard English is spoken by any country that uses English (e.g. Thailand, Mexico, China). _____
- 4. There is no Standard English. _____

Section E

- 1. Languages cannot be translated word-for-word. _____
- 2. The tone of a speaker's voice (the intonation pattern) carries meaning and is different in different languages. _____
- 3. Each language-culture use gestures and body movements (body language), which convey meaning. _____
- 4. All cultures have taboo (subjects which should not be discussed) topics. _____
- 5. It is important not to judge people from other cultures by the standards of my own culture. _____
- 6. To be able to communicate with someone in a foreign language you have to understand their culture. _____
- 7. Learning culture is part of learning a foreign language. _____
- 8. It is important to understand my own culture when learning a foreign language. _____
- 9. Learning a foreign language means learning new kinds of behaviour. _____
- 10. Learning a foreign language means learning new beliefs and values. _____

11. Culture and language are linked. _____
12. Specific languages, cultures and countries are **always** linked (e.g. the English language, English culture and England) _____
13. Languages can be linked to many different cultures (e.g. the English language can be used to express the cultures and countries in which it is used such as India, Singapore, Thailand). _____
14. Individuals are members of many different groups including their cultural group. _____
15. Cultures may be defined and understood differently by different groups and individuals. _____

Section F

1. Thai films are better than English language films. _____
2. Thai music is better than English language music. _____
3. Thai literature is better than English language literature. _____
4. Thai education is better than English speaking countries' education. _____
5. Thai technology is better than English speaking countries' technology. _____
6. Thai businesses are better than English speaking countries' businesses. _____
7. Thai family structures are better than English speaking countries' family structures. _____
8. Thai food is better than English speaking countries' food. _____
9. Thai lifestyles are better than English speaking countries' lifestyles. _____

This is the end of the questionnaire
Please check you have answered all the questions
Thank you for your help

Appendix 3 – Students’ course evaluation questionnaire (online)

This questionnaire gives you the opportunity to express your views about this course, although your responses will be totally anonymous. We will use the results as part of a process of assessing the effectiveness of the course and to improve its quality.

Please answer all the required questions otherwise your responses cannot be used. Some optional questions are given for you to write your ideas. It is not necessary to complete these, although if you can that would help us. There are ten required questions and five optional questions.

The questionnaire should take between five to ten minutes.

Thank you for your help.

Course content

How did you rate the course content? Indicate your response from the choices below.

1. How would you rate the course content overall?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

2. How would you rate the weekly activities?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

3. How would you rate the discussion forums?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

4. How would you rate the chat room sessions?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

5. What did you gain from this course in terms of knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication and intercultural awareness? How did you feel about the level of difficulty and the previous knowledge required? Note: This question is optional.

Teaching and learning

6. How would you rate the teaching and learning? For example clarity of explanations, organisation, opportunities for student contribution.

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

7. I liked doing this course online.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

8. I would prefer to do this course face to face (not online).

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

Student support and guidance

9. How would you rate the support and guidance? For example how useful was the course documentation? How clear were the aims of the course overall and the individual topics? How helpful were the teachers/staff involved in the course?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

10. What were the benefits of doing this course online? Note: this question is optional.

11. What were the disadvantages of doing this course online? Note: this question is optional.

Your progress and achievement

12. How would you rate your progress and achievement?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

13. How far did you feel challenged by this course? How satisfied were you with your participation in the course discussion forums, chat rooms and your progress? Note: this question is optional.

Overall evaluation

14. How would you rate the course overall?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

15. Are there any other comments you would like to make? Note: This question is optional.

Thank You!

Appendix 4 – Teachers’ course evaluation questionnaire (online)

Intercultural communication course teacher evaluation questionnaire

This questionnaire gives you the opportunity to express your views about this course, although your responses will be totally anonymous. We will use the results as part of a process of assessing the effectiveness of the course and to improve its quality.

Please answer all the required questions otherwise your responses cannot be used. There are 12 required questions and five optional question.

The questionnaire should take between five to ten minutes.

Thank you for your help.

Course content

How did you rate the course content? Indicate your response from the choices below.

1. How would you rate the course content overall?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

2. How would you rate the weekly activities?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

3. How would you rate the discussion forums?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

4. How would you rate the chat room sessions?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

5. What do you think students gain from this course in terms of knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication and intercultural awareness? How did you feel about the level of difficulty and the previous knowledge required?

Teaching and learning

6. How would you rate the teaching and learning? For example clarity of explanations, organisation, opportunities for student contribution.

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

7. I think students will benefit from doing this course online.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

8. I think students would benefit more from doing this course face to face (not online).

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

Student support and guidance

9. How would you rate the support and guidance? For example how useful was the course documentation? How clear were the aims of the course overall and the individual topics? How helpful were the teachers/staff involved in the course?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

10. What do you think are the benefits of doing this course online?

11. What do you think are the disadvantages of doing this course online?

Overall comments

12. How would you rate the course overall?

Excellent Good Ok Not so good Awful

13. I would recommend this course to my students to do as an independent study outside of class.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

14. Please give the reasons for your response above.

15. I would use this course as part of my classroom teaching.

Strongly agree Agree No opinion Disagree Strongly disagree

16. Please give the reasons for your response above.

17. Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Note: This question is optional.

Thank You!

Thank you for taking our survey. Your response is very important to us. If you have any questions you can e-mail us on w.baker@soton.ac.uk.

10

‘Tanggap, tiklop, tago’ (receive, fold, keep): perceptions of best practice in ELT INSET

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Introduction

In recent years, large-scale curriculum reform has become a hallmark of national educational systems all over the world, as countries everywhere strive to keep abreast of global trends (Fullan, 2005). This is especially so with respect to growth in the teaching and learning of English as an international language (Nunan, 2003).

Much of this activity is aimed at improving learning by attempting to put the learner at the heart of the learning process (McGrath, 2008; cf. Nunan, 1999). However, the quality of *student* learning depends to a great extent, of course, on the quality of *in-service teacher* learning. This is because new teaching ideas are translated into practice primarily by serving teachers, since they form the ‘front line’ in innovation implementation. But they are only likely to master novel teaching ideas if there are effective systems of in-service teacher training (INSET) to help them do so.

It is therefore vital that we understand how INSET can be made to work as effectively as possible. Unfortunately, however, it is clear that INSET, in practice, in all subject areas, tends to fall well short of the mark (Adey, 2004; Wedell, 2009). The primary cause of this state of affairs appears to be a lack of awareness of and commitment to what is involved in planning for, implementing and sustaining meaningful teacher learning of this kind (Fullan, 2007: Ch. 14).

This occurs despite the existence of a reasonably extensive literature concerned with why INSET frequently fails and possible remedies for the problem (see, e.g., Joyce & Showers, 1980; Harland & Kinder, 1997; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005). However, much of this literature is academic in nature, is not readily accessible outside higher education circles, is spread across several areas of study, and is rarely situated in teaching situations of the kind in which most ELT takes place. As a result, it does not seem to have made the impact that it might on INSET in general and ELT INSET in particular.

One of the purposes of the study described in this report, thus, is to attempt to provide a ‘holistic’ outline of the main features of the existing literature, by synthesising its primary elements into an overall conceptual framework. By this means, it is hoped, a straightforward, basic theoretical ‘model’ for effective INSET can be formulated, one which is relatively simple but not simplistic, as an aid to conceptualising everyday practice. Another main aim has been to attempt to present a clear indication of what the practical implications are of adopting such a framework in terms of all the main stages – design, delivery and ‘institutionalisation’ – that INSET typically involves. It is hoped that this kind of information will also help to make the study as practitioner- and policy-maker-‘friendly’ as possible. Finally, as another way of attempting to maximise its potential for practical relevance, it was also felt important to choose a setting for the study – state sector basic education in a non-Western context – which was representative of the world of ELT. In this way too, thus, it is hoped that the findings will resonate as widely as possible with the large number of personnel ‘on the ground’ working in similar situations around the world.

In what follows, thus, we first explain the theoretical model of (ELT) INSET which informed our study, and then describe our research approach. The remainder of the report – the lion’s share – consists of a presentation and discussion of the main findings from the study, as well as a related set of recommendations for ELT practitioners and policy-makers.

Literature review

The literature of relevance can be seen as comprising a variety of main strands. Thus, for example, there are studies which label themselves as directly concerned with ‘INSET’ (e.g., Rudduck, 1981; Hopkins, 1986; Veenman, van Tulder & Voeten, 1994; Hayes, 1997; Van den Branden, 2006), those which are associated with terms such as ‘continuing professional development’(CPD), ‘teacher development’ and so on (e.g., Eraut 1994; Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Richards, 1998; Hall & Hord, 2001; Adey, 2004), studies with a focus on ‘school improvement’ (e.g., Fullan, 1999; Hopkins, 2001; Fullan, 2007), those emanating from innovation studies (e.g., Havelock & Huberman, 1977; Marris, 1986; Kennedy, 1988; Kelly, 1980; Markee, 1997; Wedell, 2009) and still others of relevance, such as Trowler, 2003 (educational policy-making), Ajzen, 2005 (the psychology of behaviour in social situations), Waters, 2005 (expertise studies), and so on.

Space prohibits describing any of these items in detail, and, in any case, the primary goal here is to delineate the composite picture which they evince as a whole, since, as already explained, it is the absence of sufficient clarity in this respect which is seen to be the most important issue¹. Thus, as discussed in Waters, 2002 and 2006 and Waters & Vilches, 2000, 2001 and 2008, this body of work is seen to indicate in overall terms, as shown in Figure 1 below, that the key to effective INSET (whether ELT-specific or otherwise) is the successful integration of two main ‘dimensions’, viz., i) course-based vs. school-based teacher learning opportunities, and ii) educational system vs. ‘school system’ priorities².

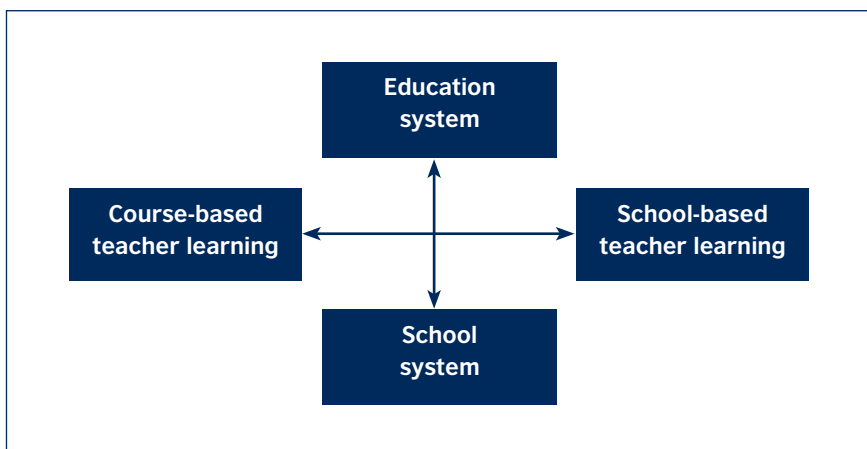


Figure 1: A ‘best practice’ framework for INSET

Thus, the literatures mentioned above, particularly the INSET part of them, are regarded as indicating that, while course-based INSET ('seminars', etc.) has certain important strengths – primarily the acquisition of 'propositional' ('theoretical') knowledge about a teaching idea – it is only school-based teacher learning which can provide the necessary 'hands-on' practical understanding ('procedural' knowledge) needed for implementing new teaching ideas; and that, furthermore, for the two kinds of teacher learning to successfully reinforce each other, they need to be linked closely together. Similarly, other parts of the same literatures, especially the sections concerned with innovation studies, can be seen to argue that, while the educational management system will, in most situations, have overall responsibility for the generation and promotion of new teaching ideas, the effective uptake and implementation of such ideas depends on a sound understanding of what is practicable at the school level, and on making available to the school system the resources needed for learning about and implementing the ideas. In addition, for this kind of integration to be achieved, a balanced and interactive partnership between the educational and school system levels is seen as necessary.

Finally, as Figure 1 is also intended to indicate, the perspectives which have just been outlined can also be seen as implying that the 'teacher learning' and 'system' dimensions in the diagram should intersect and co-ordinate meaningfully with each other as well, in order to create the potential for an organic, holistic approach to meeting in-service teacher learning needs. In other words, in such a way it can be seen as possible to maximise the potential for INSET to function effectively both in terms of its content (derived from the 'system' dimension) and its training methodology (derived from the 'teacher learning' axis).

In practice, however, as the ELT literature on the topic in particular indicates, in-service teacher learning is frequently primarily or only course-based, and that even when school-based learning opportunities are provided, they tend to be insufficiently resourced, and the linkage between the two is often tenuous (see, e.g., Ingvarson et al. 2005; Waters & Vilches, 2008). Similarly, there is also widespread evidence that the kind of teaching ideas which a good deal of ELT (and other) INSET are required to focus on are generated without sufficient consideration of 'grass roots' realities, and are implemented mainly in a one-way, top-down manner (see, e.g., Karavas-Doukas, 1998; Goh, 1999; O'Sullivan, 2004). There is therefore a considerable gap between the theoretical ideal and the typical reality in this area. The study described in the remainder of this report was devoted to addressing this issue. It was concerned, in other words, with attempting to increase understanding of how 'best practice' in (ELT) INSET can be achieved as effectively as possible 'on the ground'.

Research design

The overall approach chosen for undertaking such a study was to attempt to tap into the 'collective wisdom' of a representative selection of those involved in the 'front end' of ELT INSET. The main research question that the investigation focused on, therefore, was as follows:

What do those with experience of delivering and/or receiving ELT INSET feel are the ways in which it can be made to work as well as possible?

The setting chosen for attempting to generate answers to this question was the state school, basic education sector of the Philippines national education system. This type of situation was selected, as indicated earlier, because it was regarded as representative of the kind of location in which the majority of ELT is practised (cf. Holliday, 1994), in terms of i) geographical location (outside the Anglophone West), ii) type of institution (government-funded) and iii) educational level (primary and secondary). In this way it was hoped that the relevance of the study would be maximised. The choice of the Philippines in particular as a location of this kind was because of the researchers' extensive prior involvement with a number of INSET and research projects there (see, e.g., Waters & Vilches, 2008).

Four Department of Education (DepEd) administrative Divisions within the Philippines – two metropolitan and two provincial – were selected for data-gathering. This mixture was chosen in order to attempt to take into account the way in which experiences and perspectives can typically differ within a national context in terms of these two types of locale (O'Sullivan, 2004).

The research participants in all of these sites comprised a cross-section of personnel with experience of receiving and/or providing ELT INSET – viz., elementary and secondary English teachers, ELT trainers, school Principals, heads of department, and so on – and were identified by DepEd according to criteria provided by the researchers.

Data were generated in approximately equal quantities across the four locations by a mixture of qualitative as well as quantitatively-oriented methods, in order to attempt to multiply and triangulate perspectives, as follows:

By semi-structured interviews with:

- 4 x Elementary School English teachers
- 4 x Secondary School English teachers
- 6 x ELT Trainers
- 4 x Elementary School Principals
- 4 x Secondary School ELT Heads of Department
- 4 x DepEd headquarters personnel with particular responsibility for INSET provision

By focus group meetings with:

- 4 groups of Elementary and Secondary school English teachers
- 5 groups of ELT trainers

By questionnaire survey involving:

- 239 Elementary and 154 Secondary School English teachers.³

The interview protocol consisted of a series of questions relating to perceptions of effective ELT INSET, in terms of its planning, delivery and follow-up.⁴ The focus group meetings (involving an average of five participants each) were structured around questions and activities relating to perceptions of what was thought to work best/least well in ELT INSET in general, as well as views concerning a number of fundamental aspects of ELT INSET practice (e.g., use of demonstration lessons). The questionnaire consisted of several main sections, each containing a number of detailed questions, and covered the same areas as the interviews and focus group discussions. All three instruments underwent various piloting procedures before being finalised, the questionnaire in particular being further developed and refined in the light of the pattern of responses emerging from the interviews and focus group meetings. Normal ethical procedures regarding anonymity, confidentiality and so on were observed throughout all of the data-gathering. English was used as the main language of communication.

The interview and focus group data were audio-recorded, transcribed and then coded using the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis programme. ‘Micro’-, and, subsequently, ‘macro’-level codes for these data were generated primarily in a ‘bottom-up’ manner, informed (but not constrained) by ‘top-down’ theoretical understandings. The questionnaire responses were entered into and analysed with PASWStatistics 18.

In what follows, the data obtained from each of the instruments are presented and analysed in terms of the main categories they evinced, arranged in order of the typical overall sequence of events underlying the development and running of an INSET programme, i.e., what can be thought of as the ‘pre’-, ‘while’- and ‘post’-seminar stages.

Main findings

Data relating to the ‘pre-seminar’ stage

Logistics

The fundamental importance of appropriate logistical preparation for the training, prior and in addition to more ‘academic’ considerations about training content, and so on, was a frequently-mentioned part of the data for this area. Views elicited by the questionnaire concerning this aspect were as shown in Table 1 below.⁵

As can be seen, the means for these data indicate that the respondents felt it was important to have sufficient advance notice of the training (Q.1), for the right trainees to attend it (Q.2), and for it to take place at an appropriate venue (Q.3). The kind of thinking behind the third of these views was explained in one of the teacher interviews thus:

Of course, it is important that the place is conducive, because [chuckles] we have attended last time, like a seminar – I would not mention the seminar [chuckles] – where the place is too hot and the teachers are very uneasy. And we cannot learn

because the sound system is not functioning well. So we cannot hear, and it's a mass training, and everybody gets uneasy and everything. There is a tendency not to listen to the speaker anymore because of the place. So the place is very important. And make sure that everybody gets to be as comfortable as they can, but not too comfortable, or else they'll sleep [STEI – 3: 151⁶]

No.	Question	Mean	SD
1.	Trainees should be given information about all the main features of the training well in advance of it.	3.70	0.479
2.	It is important to ensure that the trainees who attend the training are the ones whom it is intended for.	3.68	0.484
3.	It is important for the training venue to be comfortable (well-ventilated, good facilities, etc.).	3.85	0.356
4.	It is fair to expect teachers to pay their own expenses in connection with the training.	2.24	0.995
5.	The period in the school year when the training takes place is likely to have an important effect on its success.	3.51	0.545
6.	The number of trainees attending the training is likely to have an important effect on its success.	3.56	0.546

Table 1: Before the training – logistics

On the other hand, as the mean for Q.4 shows, views were divided about the idea that teachers should have to pay their own expenses to attend training, with the majority opposed (c. 40 per cent of responses fell into the ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ categories, but c. 60 per cent into the ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ ones). The means for Qs.5 and 6 indicate that the timing of the seminar within the school year was thought to be an important factor, as was the question of the number of trainees attending. Regarding the former, the issue was seen by one of the interviewees as one of too little time being allowed between the training and having to put the teaching ideas into practice (cf. responses to Q.53 below), as follows:

- I⁷: Not just –
 R: Before the –
 I: – three days before class opening, and the teacher will have to implement it in the classroom.
 R: I see.
 I: I think that was too short a time. [SI-4: 297-301]*

Also, regarding Q.6 (numbers attending a seminar), an illustration from one of the focus group discussions of experiences affecting views about this topic was as follows (cf. responses to Q.39 below):

- FG4⁸: Because when you're too crowded in a seminar, minsan [sometimes]⁹ you cannot situate yourself comfortably. So...
 FG3: Yeah, I attended a national seminar... and I agree with Ma'am that too many delegates will – you wouldn't be able to understand what those speakers are talking about, because you are at the back. [TEFG4: 167-168]*

Training needs

As the data in the previous section indicate, attending to various types of logistical arrangements were seen as important aspects of 'best practice' pre-seminar planning. However, in the interview and focus group data, the most frequently-mentioned aspect of seminar preparation related to the importance of basing the training on the needs of the trainees:

FG4: ...if they are only sent there because of specific topic or specific training and these are not their needs, then they will just occupy the seats and do not participate. ... And they will just have these three T's ...Tanggap [receive], ... Tiklop [fold], Tago, and this is to put them aside, hide it (laughter). So there are several compilations of hand-outs, actually.

FG3: Without reading.

FG4: Without reading, yes. Although the seminar itself is very, very good. The teacher – the lectures are very, very good, but if the teachers felt that these are not their needs, these are not their felt needs, then these are not important. [TRFG4: 267-271]

The questionnaire responses likewise confirmed the importance of this perspective, as can be seen by the means for Qs.7 and 11 in particular in Table 2 below. However, as its mean indicates, it is noticeable that there was rather less wholehearted support for the proposition in Q.7 (the importance of basing training on an analysis of teachers' needs) than for all the other ones (in Qs.8-11). This may be because of a perception that other factors, in addition to teacher needs, should also act as a basis for seminar design. Thus, as it was put in one of the interviews, pupil needs were also seen as important to take into account:

I: – I think it [i.e., the basis for the training] should be the needs of the pupils.

R: Needs of the pupils, too.

I: The needs of the pupils, too. What do they need? In some schools – some schools are – the catchment area of some schools are the above-average – the middle-income group. So they are exposed to the computer, the video games, etc. But in some schools also, there are schools which are – which have catchment area located in depressed areas, so these are the pupils who really need to be given more inputs in terms of books and the computers, the video – video clips. [EPI-4: 349-354]

In another of the interviews, in addition to teacher 'problems', test results were also mentioned as a basis for ascertaining training needs:

They have to survey the problems maybe of the teachers, then maybe also based on the achievement tests that they are conducting. [STEI-1: 121].

No.	Question	Mean	SD
7.	Only training which is based on an analysis of trainees' needs is likely to be successful.	3.19	0.709
8.	Having trainees complete a training needs checklist is a good way to find out their needs.	3.58	0.499
9.	Classroom observation by trainers and others is a good way of finding out trainees' needs.	3.34	0.653
10.	The effectiveness of previous training is important to take into account when designing further training.	3.60	0.501
11.	Training should be as specific as possible in terms of the needs of different groups of teachers.	3.66	0.479

Table 2: Before the training – training needs

In connection with Q.8 (the use of checklists to ascertain teachers' training needs), many parts of the interview and focus group data also made it clear that training needs 'checklists' and the like were in widespread use and generally viewed favourably, although some reservations were also expressed about their reliability, such as the following (FG3 had just mentioned that the checklist being referred to had 70 questions):

FG2: And so sometimes, 'cause we cannot think anymore, we just keep on check. [chuckles]

FG3: Checking. [laughter] [unintelligible crosstalk]

FG3: Because there are so many things to – to think.

FG2: Because there are lots of – yes, ma'am. M-hm.

FG1: Or there are some apprehensions that the teachers will be sent to seminars or trainings, so they don't like that. So they check nalang those ano [so they simply check those what-do-you-call-them]. [TEFG3: 623-627]

However, the overall impression conveyed by all parts of the data concerned with this aspect of seminar planning is that, as far as possible, training should be based first and foremost on perceptions of trainee needs:

I: The first thing is, since there are so many teachers with so many needs, we really want the – we always want to establish that the training is needs-based. [HQI-1: 245]

The data in this section therefore can be seen to confirm the importance for best practice in the planning of INSET of taking into account features of the 'school system' node in Figure 1 above, that is, the needs of teachers and of the teaching situation.

Trainers

The importance of identifying trainers with the necessary qualities was also another major focus of this part of the data. Thus, views expressed in interviews and focus groups indicated that, first of all, there were three fundamental kinds of knowledge trainers need to have, viz:

- Language proficiency, e.g:

If it's an English training or seminar workshop, they always look for a trainer who has a facility in the ... English language. [EPI-1: 155]

- Relevant teaching experience, e.g:

They [trainers] should have practiced what they are preaching. That's a requirement. [SHDI-1: 289]

- Understanding of the topic, e.g:

If the participants know that this person is an authority ... when it comes to the field of whatever the topic is... Somehow we get confident ... I would consider such [a] trainer to be a qualified one. Sort of an authority in that line. [STI-4: 168]

In addition, the same part of the data also made frequent reference to three further, more 'process-oriented' attributes needed by trainers, as follows:

- Communication skills (this was not perceived to be same as language proficiency, but rather, the way in which language was used), e.g:

I mean, if they deliver their spiel ... in a boring manner... that will hinder your understanding or absorbing whatever is talked about. [TEFG4: 168-172]

- Facilitation skills (i.e., those needed for successfully handling interactive, participant-oriented parts of the training process), e.g:

The trainer ... must be sensitive [about] why this person or teacher is not listening... So, maybe he could ask a question or he could inject a humour ... maybe an activity will do also... [ETI-4: 205]

- Personality traits (the primary concern here was with those aspects of personality that would enable empathy with the trainee point of view), e.g:

A trainer has to be patient... accommodating... not easily ... irritated by questions of teachers left and right... always ready to respond to ... queries or problems. [SI-2: 95]

Perceptions of these kinds were also strongly echoed by the responses to Qs.12-15 in the questionnaire, as Table 3 below indicates.

No.	Question	Mean	SD
12.	Trainers should have experience of teaching in the same kind of situation as the trainees.	3.75	0.450
13.	Trainers need to have a high level of communication skills.	3.78	0.426
14.	It is important for the trainer to be knowledgeable about the training topic.	3.82	0.383
15.	The trainer should have an approachable personality.	3.78	0.436
16.	It is necessary for trainers to have special training on how to be a teacher trainer.	3.82	0.405

Table 3: Before the training – trainers

In addition, the mean for Q.16 shows that there was strong agreement with the proposition that trainers need to undergo ‘trainer training’. Although there were relatively few parts of the interview and focus group data that focused on this issue, perhaps suggesting it is still a somewhat under-developed area in the research locale, it was also the case that whenever such preparation was mentioned, it was regarded as a ‘sine qua non’, e.g:

There should be a training of trainers first. Because we cannot give what we do not have ... a trainer should be equipped first with the skills, with the knowledge, with the strategies prior to being a facilitator. [EPI-1: 186]

Some of this part of the data also indicates the kind of approach to trainer training that was seen as desirable. Firstly, as the following data show, it was felt valuable to provide training in both the knowledge *and* skills involved in the training being prepared for (parts of the INSET literature indicate that it is often only the former which is provided – see, e.g., Ibrahim, 1991; Waters & Vilches, 2001), and to be given the necessary training materials for achieving the right degree of understanding (cf. Vilches forthcoming, 2011; Godfrey et al., 2008):

we had professional development, then had something for content, and another for skills. So we knew what we were doing, and, you know, we knew how to go about doing it, because the trainers were already provided with the materials. [SI-4: 338]

Furthermore, the need for there to also be a further, ‘field-based’ training phase, involving trainer reflection on and learning from training practice, was also emphasised:

And in the evening, or after the session, we have facilitators and we do debriefing. We gather, we discuss, we - as we take our dinner, we discuss what went wrong, what did not work well, and what should be done. [TRFG1: 128]

Taken as a whole, thus, the findings in this section can be seen as indicating a number of the optimum qualities INSET trainers need to possess, as well as the need for adequate trainer training opportunities to be provided.

Training design

The final main part of the data concerned with seminar planning focused on the

area of 'training design', i.e., perceptions about the criteria which should guide the planning of the seminar content and activities.

No.	Question	Mean	SD
17.	The training design should build on and extend previous training initiatives.	3.66	0.479
18.	As far as possible, all the members of the training team should be familiar with all the training sub-topics.	3.73	0.451
19.	Each of the training sub-topics should be inter-connected closely with all the others.	3.70	0.465
20.	Each training sub-topic should consist of a series of steps going from trainer input to trainee output.	3.71	0.456
21.	The training design should allow for regular opportunities for reflective discussion between trainers and trainees throughout the training.	3.70	0.459

Table 4: Before the training – the training design

As can be seen in Table 4 above, there was strong agreement with all the propositions in the questionnaire pertaining to this aspect. Thus, as the mean for Q.17 indicates, it was seen as highly desirable for seminars to be based on taking into account the focus and outcomes of previous training, presumably for reasons of the kind explained in one of the interviews ('it' in the following refers to the results of post-seminar monitoring of teacher learning):

R: Monitoring the teachers as far as possible in terms of what they do with the teaching ideas. Is there anything else that you think...?

I: Well maybe studying it, or analysing it so we can connect it to future trainings, like in what way can we make sense of a new training, which actually makes sense of the previous training that we did, so everything is like connected.

R: And why would you think that's important?

I: Because if we discuss things in chunks, in isolation, I think they don't make sense, actually. So teachers tend to forget them after some time. But if we try to link one with another, I think there's more beauty in it, the teachers can see the importance of it and somehow they will remember it. [SI-6: 270-273]

Also, the importance for the training design of teamwork among trainers is affirmed by the mean for responses to Q.18, and is seen elsewhere in the data as likewise enhancing the inter-connectedness of the training:

I: OK, so as a trainer, based on experience, we also read topics of others. So that they could relate and especially when during the discussion and facilitating the conduct of the training, so we can relate one topic to the other. [EPI-1: 138]

Strong support for a third kind of inter-connectedness – between seminar sub-topics – is expressed in the response to Q.19. As one of the interviewees put it, the opposite practice causes the following kinds of problems:

I: The tendency is trainers will be repeating the same thing. Given one topic, for example, when we conducted [training for] UBD [Understanding by Design], [one of our trainers] had the first session for three hours in the morning, and he was talking a lot about UBD without taking into consideration that these topics that he mentioned would also be the same things that the supervisors would be talking about once they had their sessions. And what happened was that – what usually happens is that participants get bored listening to the same things. And sometimes there are contradicting ideas being discussed. Because the understanding of one need not be the same with that of the other trainer. Because we don't usually sit down and try to connect the topics. They're just dependent on the topic assigned. [SI-5: 125]

As the same interviewee also explained, however, to ensure seminar topics cohere in this way, the right kind of co-ordination at the administrative level is also needed, so that the people involved have the necessary time to discuss and plan beforehand (ibid: 131).

As the response to Q.20 indicates, internal coherence and logical progression at the level of how the individual seminar sub-topic is structured was also felt to be an important practice. Finally, the mean for Q.21 shows there was also widespread support for incorporating frequent discussion opportunities into the design of the seminars, so as to attempt to establish as many links as possible between the training content and the understanding of trainees – another important form of inter-connectedness. One of the interviewees explained the kinds of problems the absence of this provision can cause:

I: 'Cause sometimes, when the speaker has spoken already for a long time, and then, as a participant, sometimes there are things which are not very clear to me, and then I wish I could – how I wish I could – I could immediately clear my mind about it, but there are speakers who say, "Not this time."

R: Ah.

I: "Wait for – maybe – later."

R: The open forum?

I: Okay, the open forum. But afterwards, when her time – [laughter] yeah, when her time is – because there is time limit for them – she has or he has no more time to explain what I want to be cleared of. Because the next speaker is ready. [chuckles] [EPI-2: 169-174]

Design features of the kind highlighted in this section are something of a 'closed book' as far as the existence of literature on the topic is concerned, but as the data in this section clearly indicate, they are perceived to be important aspects of creating an optimal training plan.

Data relating to the 'while'-seminar stage

Training approach

There were three main parts to the data concerning views on how a seminar can best be implemented. The first of these concerned the preferred training approach. The views expressed by the questionnaire respondents regarding this aspect were as shown in Table 5 below.

No.	Question	Mean	SD
22.	'House rules' about punctuality and so on are important for effective conduct of training.	3.76	0.453
23.	It is important to use 'ice-breakers', humor and so on to establish good rapport between trainers and trainees.	3.75	0.442
24.	Trainer input is an important aspect of effective training.	3.72	0.454
25.	Active participation by trainees in the training process is essential for effective training.	3.74	0.442
26.	The trainer(s) should try to take the trainees' points of view about the teaching strategies into account.	3.67	0.476
27.	The trainer(s) should be able to answer the trainees' questions about the teaching strategies.	3.69	0.464
28.	It is important for the trainer to explain the rationale behind the teaching strategies.	3.73	0.442
29.	It is important for the trainer to explain how the new teaching strategies build on and extend existing ones.	3.76	0.426
30.	It is important for the training to focus on how the strategies can be made to fit the realities of the trainees' teaching situations (e.g., class size, student language level).	3.78	0.414
31.	Trainees should be encouraged to work collaboratively with each other.	3.70	0.459
32.	Output produced by trainees should be critiqued by fellow trainees.	3.36	0.636
33.	The training approach should resemble that of the teaching strategies being presented (e.g., be participant-centred).	3.58	0.520
34.	During the training, trainees should prepare action plans to guide them in implementing the teaching strategies once back in their schools.	3.48	0.554

Table 5: During the training – training approach

As can be seen, there was strong support for all the propositions in this part of the questionnaire, i.e., 'best practice' in terms of the training approach was seen to involve:

- establishing clear guidelines about trainees' expected behaviour (Q.22)
- the use of various strategies to attempt to create a positive learning atmosphere (Q.23)
- provision of trainer input (Q.24) – it seems important to note that this element is highly valued, despite what follows concerning the importance of adopting an 'interactive', 'participant-centred' approach to the training
- active involvement of trainees in the training process (Q.25) – this was the most frequently-mentioned aspect of the training approach in the interview and

focus group data, and some of the reasons why it was seen to be important were as follows:

I: When there is no activity, the concentration span is only 15 minutes, after which the teachers will not focus anymore. They will talk, they will do other things. On the other hand, when there are activities ... they will be interested; they will be inspired, they will participate. ... even old peoples are still eager to participate, and they really feel good if they have things to do and if their efforts are complimented and appreciated or affirmed. [SI-3: 201]

FG3: ...we see to it that in the conduct of the training, or in the delivery, it is more engaging and interactive ... Because we don't want that we will just – it's a one-way traffic. That it's only coming from the lecturer, or from the speaker, or from the facilitator. But rather, it will be – and a more engaging one, where the participants has to relate with the materials ... So it's –

FG4: A free interaction.

FG3: – it's a multi-process. So it's a two- or three-way process.

R1: Mm. Mm.

R2: Okay. Thank you.

FG1: And in other words, it's life-giving. [chuckles] It's life-giving.

FG2: In order to have good output, we should also need to have good input. [TRFG1: 852-858]

Also, with reference to the previous point, concerning the importance of input in the training process, these data can be seen to imply that i) however valuable it may be, if input is delivered in a lecture mode, it should be kept relatively short, and ii) it is possible (and desirable) to provide input in an interactive, participative way;

- it was also seen as desirable for the training approach to be 'participant-centred' (Qs.26 & 27), in the sense of taking trainee's points of view into account, answering their questions, and so on;
- knowing *why* a teaching idea being advocated was also regarded as important (Q.28) – the following part of the focus group data indicates that such information was seen as deepening the potential for 'ownership' of the training content:

FG4: Because you know the rationale or the reason behind why you should use that particular strategy. Because you believe that that strategy will work, will spell a difference in terms of teaching and learning process, because you believe that that was already piloted, tested, and it has a very good result. And so adhering to that belief or adhering to that principle behind will help that teacher own that kind of strategy. [TRFG3: 659]

- the training approach should attempt to show the teaching ideas interconnect with i) existing teaching practices (Q.29), and, in particular, ii) the realities of the trainees' teaching contexts (Q.30 – cf. the responses to Qs.7-11 above, and Kelly, 1980, regarding the effect of the 'feasibility' criterion on innovation adoption by teachers); as one of the participants in a focus group put it:

It [i.e., the teaching strategy being advocated] should match. It should match the class size, the level of the students, etcetera. [unintelligible] etcetera. Economic factor and so on and so forth, readiness of the teachers to implement, the knowledge of the teacher – they cannot give what they do not have [TRFG2: 737]

Also, in one of the interviews, the particular issue of ensuring a match between local circumstances and educational ideas originating from abroad was mentioned:

Well of course we always take into consideration the realities of the classroom. One of the ... weaknesses of the echo seminar, meaning coming from the main office, is that sometimes these trainings come from abroad, with a different context, with a different setting, so they try to impose something which is not applicable. So in our division-initiated trainings, we always consider the realism in the classroom. So what is plausible inside the classroom [SI-6: 279].

- collaboration among trainees should be encouraged (Q.31), including peer-critiquing (Q.32) – however, it should be noted that the relatively lower mean for responses here indicates a less strong degree of agreement regarding the value of the latter. Further light is shed on the possible reasons for such conditionality in the thorough, detailed and very interesting discussion which occurred in TRFG3: 496:585 (see Appendix B), where the point is made that peer critiquing does not preclude trainers from also adding their own feedback as well, i.e., the former should be seen as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the trainer's point of view. The wording of Q.32 may not have made it clear enough, however, that it was a scenario of this kind which was envisaged.
- the 'medium' should not contradict the 'message' (Q.33), i.e., the training approach should be in harmony with the teaching ideas being advocated (cf. Woodward, 1988).
- the seminar should also include work which involves the trainees in making plans for follow-up, school-based activities concerning the teaching ideas they have been introduced to (Q.44) – in other words, the training needs to function not just as an end in itself, but also as a means of preparing the teachers for the next, post-seminar stage of their learning (cf. Waters & Vilches, 2000).

In overall terms, thus, these data contain a clear expression of views regarding a wide range of aspects of what are seen to be optimal practices in terms of the INSET training approach.

Demonstration lessons

The second main area which the data for this part of the study clustered around was concerned with the value of demonstration lessons ('demos') as a training device, especially the pros and cons of the 'peer' type (i.e., those involving fellow trainees playing the role of learners) vs. the 'live' variety (i.e., those using 'real' learners, similar to those normally taught by the trainees).

As Table 6 below indicates, there was widespread agreement among questionnaire respondents about the value of demos as a means of providing concrete illustration of teaching ideas (Q.35), including via involving trainees in carrying them out themselves as much as possible (Q.38).

No.	Question	Mean	SD
35.	Demonstration lessons are helpful for clarifying new teaching strategies.	3.68	0.472
36.	Demonstration lessons involving trainees playing the role of students are more effective than those involving real students.	3.02	0.890
37.	Demonstration lessons need to have the same number and level of students as the trainees usually teach.	3.29	0.704
38.	It is important for trainees to show their understanding of the teaching strategies by doing 'return' demos during the training.	3.45	0.552

Table 6: During the training – demonstration lessons

However, as the mean indicates, there was something of a division of views (c. 70% 'strongly agreed/agreed', c. 30% 'disagreed/strongly disagreed') regarding which main form of 'demo' ('peer' vs. 'live') was more effective (Q.36), a divergence that was reflected in the interview and focus group data as well. In the latter part of those data, it was the live demo that was seen as preferable in overall terms, although some of the practical limitations it involves were also pointed out, such as the way in which it can also be relatively artificial (e.g., SI-2: 137), logistically complex to arrange (e.g., SI-5: 306), and so on. It seems likely that it is also issues of this kind which underlie the response to Q.37 above, i.e., issues such as the practical difficulties involved in arranging for live demos that consist of the same number of students as the trainees normally teach means that a match in terms of this factor is not viewed by everyone as a requirement for an effective demo. In addition, in some parts of the interview and focus group data, the potential advantages of the peer demo were also mentioned, such as the 'insider', learner-oriented perspective that taking part in it can offer, e.g:

[when] teachers themselves are participants or acting as pupils, they realise that, "ah, so this is the experience of the pupils"... They try to experience what their pupils are supposed to experience. And there could be more realisations and reflections. [SI-5: 323]

Taken as a whole, thus, the data here indicate that both forms of demo were seen to have their respective strengths and weaknesses, and that they are therefore

best regarded as being in a complementary relationship with each other, i.e., both, in their different ways, have a potentially valuable contribution to make to ‘best practice’ in increasing understanding of teaching ideas.

Resources

The third main focus of the ‘while’-seminar part of the data concerned aspects of the resources – human and material – that can be involved in this stage of the training. As can be seen in the questionnaire data in Table 7 below, the overall response to Q.39 indicates that although there was a good deal of agreement that the ratio of trainers to trainees should be relatively low, its strength and therefore the mean was relatively low in comparison with the others in this section and throughout the rest of the questionnaire. These results perhaps suggest that respondents may have felt that the ideal ratio might depend on the type of seminar.

No.	Question	Mean	SD
39.	The ratio of trainers to trainees should be no higher than 1 to 15.	3.36	0.599
40.	Use of information and communication technology (ICT) is likely to make the training more effective.	3.60	0.501
41.	The trainers should provide trainees with copies of sample teaching materials illustrating the new teaching strategies.	3.73	0.446
42.	Copies of output produced by trainees (e.g., ‘return’ demo lesson plans) should be provided for all trainees.	3.59	0.556
43.	All the training resources needed for trainees to be able to conduct ‘echo seminars’ after the training should be provided.	3.61	0.487

Table 7: During the training – resources

One that has a more information-imparting role, for example, might be seen as not requiring such a large number of trainers. The assumption behind the question, however, was that the kind of seminar in question was one in which trainees would not only be given information about a new teaching idea, but would also be actively processing it, attempting to apply it, and so on. In the context of the interviews and focus group meetings, when it was possible to clarify this assumption more fully, a preference was frequently expressed for a trainer-trainee ratio of 1:20 (STEI-2: 220-235), 1:15 (TRFG1: 180-206) and even 1:10 (HQI-1: 507-553). The following is a typical example of the reasoning behind these views:

FG4: In my SEDP [Secondary Education Development Project] experiences, the part which I did not like was in mass – it is a mass training. So we were not given such time to actually learn, because we are so many in groups – especially, I think, in the training which I did not like is when we are in large groups.

FG1: Yes.

FG4: When we are in large groups. Because the trainer cannot actually see each of our problem, each of our needs. That's why we just get it from – just a part of it. [Unintelligible]. So mass training for me is not good.

R1: Okay.

R2: It's not individualised enough?

R1: Yeah.

FG4: Yeah. I like small groups where –

R1: Yes.

FG4: – just like this one [TEFG3: 171-181].

Where the purpose of the training is to impart deeper understanding, thus, the data as a whole indicate that the preferred best practice is for a relatively high trainer-trainee ratio.

There was reasonably strong agreement with all the remaining propositions in this part of the questionnaire. Thus, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), such as lively PowerPoint presentations, videos of teaching, and so on, was seen by the majority of respondents as likely to enhance the quality of training (Q.40); there was likewise a good deal of agreement about the importance of providing trainees with hand-outs that illustrated the teaching ideas being advocated (Q.41), as well as copies of trainee outputs (Q.42); and it was also thought helpful to provide any additional materials needed for trainees to conduct 'echo' seminars (i.e., replica or condensed versions of the original) for colleagues in their home teaching situations (Q.43). As it was put in one of the interviews, 'Never, never do a training without materials for the teachers to carry when they go back. Never.' (HQI-3: 161), for reasons elaborated on elsewhere:

For me ... I think if the teacher during the seminar ... was able to identify already that this strategy will be used for this, it will be clearer ... [when] she goes back to the classroom, she will be able to go over those things given to her like a hand-out, or a set of materials, rather than have the seminar then you have no hand-outs, you have no materials that you will bring to the classroom. I think it will be better also. [ETI-1: 259]

The issue of 'materials that you will bring to the classroom' will be returned to in the next section.

Taken as a whole, data in this section once again point to further ways in which the while-seminar phase of INSET can be optimally conducted, in this case via the provision of a range of training resources.

Data relating to the 'post'-seminar stage Support

Data in this area fell into two main parts. Firstly, many of them testify eloquently to the importance of an appropriate post-seminar follow-up support strategy, in order

to maximise the potential for actual adoption in the workplace of the teaching ideas focused on in the training. The following focus group extract is typical:

FG3: ... Usually the good teachers are sent to the seminars. But the school administrators usually forget to make these teachers echo what they have learned from the seminars. So that would leave the other teachers who were not able to attend not to learn anything. So it's the end.

R: Right. Yeah.

FG1: The training ends there [chuckles].

FG3: The one who attended has kept the –

FG5: Kept the hand-outs to herself.

FG1: Hand-outs.

FG3: – hand-outs and so on, and so there is no follow-up, there is no continuity.

R: Right, 'cause of lack of echo.

FG3: So no – nothing. [TRFG5: 406-414]

To counter this kind of problem, the active involvement in follow-up support and monitoring of education system personnel at all the relevant levels was perceived to be crucial. As it was put in another of the focus group meetings:

Because they are behind this. We cannot do it alone. We cannot do it ourselves. So cooperation [is needed] from the higher-ups - from the school administrator to the superintendents. [TEFG3: 1341]

It was also seen as important that the involvement began with 'line managers' being sufficiently aware of the training themselves to be able to support teachers properly:

In my experience, strategies fail – INSETs fail because the ones up there do not attend. So they are not made familiar and they don't accept some of the updates or some of the latest things that we do. So there is some sort of a conflict between what they know and what is being done, or is supposed to be done. So teachers are kind of hesitant to follow, because there is such a conflict. [TRFG5: 423]

The head should be the first to be educated with that strategy [STI-2: 287]

One further form of post-seminar support 'best practice' that was very frequently mentioned in the interview and focus group data¹⁰ was the provision of *teaching materials* based on the seminar teaching ideas, e.g:

If there will be ... textbooks that will be available... designed in the new curriculum... of course this will be a very, very, big, big help to teachers. [STEI-4: 405]

No matter how much you aspire for a very effective teaching lesson, if you are short of materials, then ... that will be very difficult for you to achieve your goal ... There's no ready-made thing for you to be used in your teaching demonstrations. So you have to search first, that's very taxing on your part, 'cause if every day you do that - specially preparing all those materials, and especially if pupils do not have their own, I will be the one to structure all those materials, then it's very taxing. And then your whole day will be allotted to just doing all those things. [TEFG4: 408-419]

It seems important to note here that there is a tendency within applied linguistics for language teaching to underestimate the importance of this factor, because of a theoretical concern that textbook teaching materials may have a de-skilling effect on teachers (see, e.g., Kumaravadivelu, 2006). However, empirical research reported in Hutchinson & Hutchinson, 1996 (which, co-incidentally, was conducted in the same locale as the study being reported here) points in the opposite direction, i.e., towards the major role of published teaching materials in facilitating change in teaching practices.

The parts of the questionnaire data concerned with the same area evince a similar picture, as shown in Table 8 below. Thus, there is very strong support for the propositions in Q.45 (regarding teachers' 'line-managers' being sufficiently knowledgeable about the training ideas), Q.46 (concerning the support school authorities should provide for teachers' implementation efforts) and Q.47 (the need for appropriate teaching materials to also be provided). Taken as a whole, thus, it is clear that in both the interview and focus group and the questionnaire data here that there is extensive confirmation of two of the key features of the framework in Figure 1 above, viz: i) the need for meaningful school-based learning to complement seminar-based training, and ii) the need for the educational system to provide sufficient support to the 'school system' to ensure that this occurs.

A number of other aspects of 'best practice' in the post-seminar stage are also evinced in this part of the data. Thus, the mean for Q.44 in Table 8 indicates that the 'echo' seminar' is seen by many as a potentially helpful post-seminar strategy, although, as the mean also indicates, the strength of agreement was not quite as high as for the other responses in this section. Such an overall response may relate to problems of the kind mentioned in the interview and focus group data, such as (cf. Hayes, 2000):

Because what happens if there is only one teacher who attends, and then – and then he would try his best [chuckles] to do the same like how the five speakers in the seminar have done, it is very impossible for him. Because you know a teacher, [chuckles] a normal teacher is not all-knowing, so he cannot absorb everything and then be able to pass it on to the rest of the teachers. [STEI-3: 112]

In the remainder of the data in Table 8 there are also relatively high levels of support for the propositions in Qs.49-51, viz., that further, implementation stage trouble-shooting training should also be provided (Q.49); that success in follow-up implementation should be accorded some form of professional recognition

(Q.50); and that, once implemented, the effectiveness of teaching ideas in terms of affecting learning outcomes should also be monitored (Q.51). Finally, there was also support for the idea that teachers and others (e.g., ‘line-managers’) should meet regularly in their schools, in order to review implementation progress (Q.48). Once again, however, the mean for this item is a little lower than for most of the others in this section. This may be because, however desirable, the practicalities of, e.g., finding the necessary time for this kind of activity, given teachers’ typical workloads, are regarded as a significant obstacle (cf. Waters & Vilches, 2008).

No.	Question	Mean	SD
44.	The ‘echo seminar’ is an effective way of orienting fellow teachers in the workplace to the teaching strategies introduced in the training.	3.57	0.545
45.	It is important for school authorities (the Principal, Head of Department, etc.) to also be familiar with the teaching strategies introduced in the training.	3.72	0.450
46.	The school authorities should actively support the implementation of the new teaching strategies by the trainee.	3.68	0.473
47.	Trainees should be provided with the teaching materials and other resources needed for implementing the new teaching strategies.	3.74	0.444
48.	There should be regular school-based meetings of teachers and others to review progress in implementing the training.	3.59	0.502
49.	There should be further training to follow up on progress in putting the new teaching strategies into practice.	3.63	0.490
50.	Success in implementing new teaching strategies should be rewarded in terms of, e.g., ‘service credits’.	3.67	0.553
51.	Once implemented, the effectiveness of the teaching strategies for learning should also be monitored.	3.64	0.482

Table 8: After the training – support

Observation and feedback

The second main focus of data in this part of the study was concerned with a variety of aspects of classroom observation and feedback. Some of the features of this kind highlighted in the interview and focus group data were as follows:

- the importance of taking into account the affective dimension in giving feedback, e.g., by using a ‘sandwich’ principle:

We have this sandwich kind of feedback, positive, negative, and positive giving the feedbacks to the teachers when we observe them. [TRFG3: 410]

- the value of encouraging the teacher to self-evaluate first of all:

[The principal] would ask you first, “okay, what can you say about your class, your demonstration?” and the like... I wouldn’t think that, “oh I was critiqued, I

was downed and most of the weaknesses [are] all that the principal have seen, not my strengths.” So in other words, I myself had discovered what is wrong first, then the principal. **TEFG4: 395-400]**

- the overall role of the observe as a ‘coach’, rather than just a fault-finder:

The first thing that I need to have in my mind is to help the teacher develop professionally and personally. [ETI-4: 245]

- the issue of whether or not prior notice of lesson observation should be provided:

Our principal comes – go to our classroom once in a while, without telling us that he would come ... It’s very good. Because you have to be ready. (chuckles) our principal, if they are lax, we also become lax. (chuckles) ... It give us the drive to do. [TEFG3: 1354-1363]

Regarding the last of these items, however, it should also be pointed out that most of those who commented on this issue nevertheless said that they felt it was better for prior notice of observation to be given.

The questionnaire data regarding this area were as shown in Table 9 below. As can be seen, while there is considerable support for ensuring that there is observation of and feedback on teachers’ implementation efforts (Q. 52), the means for the responses to the remaining items, while still signalling a good deal of agreement with each of the propositions, are all relatively lower. This may in part be due to lack of clarity in some of the questions. For example, Q.53 was intended to address the issue of whether there should be a certain (relatively lengthy) period of time between attending training and being expected to implement the teaching ideas. Such a question was included because of data in the interviews and focus group meetings such as the following:

I: Well, I believe a teacher should – to effectively implement the strategies they learned, they should be given enough time. And the training should be done a months before the opening of classes.

R: M-hm.

I: Because they have the time to prepare the materials, they have the time to organize, or to improve their plans, so that they can integrate what they have learned from the trainings. Unlike if the seminar is too close to the opening of classes, there is an implementation of such, but it’s in a –I consider it not so effective. But once the teacher given enough time let’s say, after the end of the school year there’s a series of training and then they have time to prepare ... so I believe it’s –

R: Time, the time element.

I: Time element. M-hm. [EPI-1: 549-553]

However, unfortunately, no indication was provided in the question of the potential periods of time after the training and before observation and feedback that were being assumed.

No.	Question	Mean	SD
52.	Observation and feedback on trainees' attempts to apply the teaching strategies in their workplaces is important.	3.53	0.505
53.	The timing of when observation and feedback occur after the training affects the implementation of the teaching strategies.	3.37	0.575
54.	Observation which focuses on a relatively small aspect of teaching (e.g., handling of errors) is usually less effective.	3.13	0.688
55.	The trainee should be allowed to decide which aspect(s) of teaching the observer should focus on.	3.25	0.640
56.	The feedback is more effective if the observer and the trainee first clarify what actually took place in the lesson.	3.45	0.543
57.	The feedback is more effective if the trainee is allowed to take the lead in discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson.	3.38	0.578

Table 9: After the training – observation and feedback

Qs.54-57 all concern themselves with various aspects of observation and feedback management. There is first of all (Q.54) some support for the view that focusing on a relatively small area of teaching, rather than all of it, can be effective (c. 15% of respondents 'disagreed'), the majority view was that such a strategy is not as effective as focusing on a larger area. As for Q.53, Q.54 was included because of data in the interviews and focus groups, such as the following:

... if the one observing could say, "you did well, but then it could be better that the next time this will be..." okay, the strategy, how to handle this. Then the next time – you know in the classroom, there are so many aspects, like management – classroom management. How did you handle the behaviour there of the children? So the teacher is focused to a lot of things: the way you had your lesson there, the way you presented it, at the same time, you visual aids, your support instructional materials. Then you are again be focused on your evaluation. But if the observer is just focused on "today, I will focus on this thing, I will be looking for this in the classroom," so the teacher will be less burdened and threatened, I think, ma'am. [ETEI-1: 315]

Here, in other words, reducing the feedback 'information load' was seen as likely to make the teacher feel less threatened by and better able to process the observer's views (cf. Gaies & Bowers, 1990). There were no instances of this part of the data which contradicted this view. However, it may have been the case that Q.54, especially because of its 'reversed polarity' (included as a guard against 'autopilot' answering) was too complex to be properly understood, and thus the responses to it should only be 'read into' to a limited extent.

Also, as the mean for Q.55 indicates, although there was a good deal of support for the idea that the teacher might be 'empowered' to take the lead in deciding on what the focus for observation should be, the strength of agreement was, as for Q.54, on the lower side. Some of the possible reasoning in favour of the proposition emerges in the following focus group extract:

R: Why do you think its good practice to ask a teacher what she wants you to observe?

FG1: By making her –

FG5: Feel at ease.

FG1: – tell us where she would be doing well, and where she would not be doing – not very well, where she could tell us what she needs.

R: Okay, but why? Why do you think that's a good idea?

FG1: I think that would make her more prepared about the observation, and as we have mentioned, not so stressful, and so when she calls me back to observe her, she's rather prepared to have me with her inside the classroom. [TRFG5: 200-205]

There are no parts of the rest of the data where clear reasons are given for the contrary view (that the teacher should not be allowed to determine the observation focus). However, frequent mention is made in them of the need for observers to use officially prescribed observation check-sheets, and this, along with other possible issues, such the need in a large-scale system to ensure sufficient objectivity and consistency in observation, may account for the nature of the questionnaire responses.

The strength of agreement indicated in the overall response to Q.56 (the observer and trainee should first of all establish the 'facts' of what happened in the lesson) was more positive than for most of the others in this section. This perception was echoed by several parts of the interview and focus group data, e.g:

I: And when they use it [i.e., a form for recording objectively what happened in the lesson], during their feedback-giving, their post-conference with the teacher, they have a lot to say to the teacher. They were able to avoid comments like, "the teacher has good command of English," "the teacher has good rapport..."

R: So the judgement.

I: The teacher – they were able to avoid that. Because they were able to note the actual things that they saw and heard, they were able to say things which are more objective to the teacher, to mirror to the teacher

...

I: The teacher was able to see herself. The teacher was able to see himself or herself based on the

- R: So ... what has been the effect, other than the teacher saw herself or himself? Did it translate into change of behaviour?
- I: Yeah, yeah. I think so. First, the supervisor was more confident that he was really able really give good feedback, and the trust and confidence of the teacher to the observer ...
- R: Yeah.
- I: If the principal is not a major of English, it's building confidence of the principal, that "even though I'm a major of TLE [Technology and Livelihood Education], I can mentor the teacher". **[SI-5: 450-475]**

Here, such an approach to conducting observation feedback is seen as enabling teachers to obtain a clearer picture of their teaching, as well as making it possible for non-ELT specialists to also provide useful feedback.

Finally, there was a reasonable level of strength of agreement with the proposition in Q.57 (that the teacher should be allowed to take the lead in the feedback), but also a degree of reservation (c. 43 per cent 'strongly agreed', while c. 50 per cent 'agreed'). The interview and focus group data concerned with this feature were patterned in a similar way. Thus, there were several occasions where the advantages of letting the teacher take the lead were mentioned, such as the potential for increased receptivity, e.g:

FG3: ... sometimes, it [i.e., feedback coming initially from the observer] will create a negative feeling on the part of the teacher. You are the one presenting the lesson, and then this particular observer will tell you, "you have done this wrong. You have done ..." You have the tendency to – instead of taking the suggestion positively, it will create an impression, a bad impression on you that next time ... so it is much better that the reaction or feedback should come first from the teacher, so maybe the observer can say, "what do you think is the best part of your lesson? Could you think of possible ways to make ..." so more or less, it is not that hurting on the part of the teacher [laughter] – on the part of the teacher observed.

*FG1: Yes, and the observer – probably the observer can say, "you see, you can [do] better than what you just did. You still have more ideas." [crosstalk, laughter] **[TEFG1: 635-636]***

On the other hand, such an approach was not seen as of equal potential value for all teachers, such as those with less experience:

*When it comes to the evaluation of oneself, when it comes to teaching, the new one, the new in the service are having the hard time evaluating their own self. But it is through the guidance of the principal that the teachers will know her strengths and weaknesses. **[EPI-3: 223]***

Taken as a whole, this part of the questionnaire data can be seen to indicate that, while there was broad support for the importance of observing and giving feedback on teachers' post-seminar follow-up activity, some of the questions (e.g., Qs.53 & 54) about how this might best be done were perhaps insufficiently clear and comprehensible, and interpretation of responses to the remainder (Qs.55-57) needs to be mediated by findings from the accompanying interview and focus group data.

Recommendations for 'best practice'

The findings from this study are taken to have the following main implications for practitioners and policy-makers involved in the design and delivery of ELT INSET, in terms of how to achieve 'best practice' in this area.

The overall **theoretical framework** informing practice in this area needs to be of the kind represented by Figure 1 above, i.e., one involving a close integration of both course- and school-based teacher learning opportunities, on the one hand, and of the school and educational system levels on the other.

In terms of the **planning** of INSET, the findings indicate that:

- Due care and attention needs to be paid to a variety of *logistical* concerns, such as providing sufficient advance notice, securing a training venue of the right quality, choosing the optimum time within the school year, and so on.
- The training should as far as possible match the *needs* of the teachers and the teaching situation.
- *Trainers* should have the appropriate knowledge and skills, and *trainer training* provided accordingly.
- The *training design* should be developed in such a way that the potential for coherence in terms of a number of dimensions is maximised.

In terms of the **delivery** of INSET courses, the study shows that:

- The *training approach* should be 'participant-centred', i.e., actively involve the trainees in understanding, discussing and working with the teaching ideas in collaboration with the trainers and themselves.
- *Demonstration lessons* of both main kinds ('peer' and 'live') are an important means of increasing practical understanding of teaching ideas.
- *Training resources*, both human and material, should be provided at a level that is likely to maximise the potential of the training.

In terms of INSET **follow-up**, the data show that:

- Active and extensive *educational and school system support* is needed in order to ensure that teaching ideas introduced in seminars are implemented. In this connection, the provision of appropriate *teaching materials* is of particular importance.

- Systematic *observation* of and *feedback* on teacher's attempts to implement the training ideas is vital, and need to be approached in ways which take into account situational realities but which also attempt to maximise the potential for teacher learning.

Conclusion

Effective INSET is crucial to the development of improved and new ELT (and any other) curricula. Nevertheless, there is evidence that it is frequently approached in a manner which results in it being less effective than required. This study has attempted to build on existing understandings of how to remedy this problem, by combining a variety of insights into a single and relatively straightforward theoretical model of the overall conditions needed for the design and delivery of more effective INSET. It has also gathered data from both INSET 'suppliers' and 'end-users' in a representative ELT situation, in order to identify what are perceived to be the optimal ways in which a range of the main factors involved in such INSET can be configured. It is hoped that the resulting picture of 'best practice' will be of value to others working in similar situations elsewhere.

List of acronyms

CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DepEd	Department of Education, Republic of the Philippines
ELT	English language teaching
EPI	Elementary School Principal Interview
ETEI	Elementary English Language Teacher Interview
FG	Focus group participant
HQI	Department of Education Central Headquarters Personnel Interview
I	Interviewee
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INSET	In-service Teacher Training
R	Researcher
SEDP	Secondary Education Development Project
SHDI	Secondary School English Department Head Interview
SI	Regional or Division English Language Supervisor Interview
STEI	Secondary English Language Teacher Interview
TEFG	English Language Teacher Focus Group
TLE	Technology and Livelihood Education
TRFG	English Language Teacher Trainer Focus Group
UBD	Understanding by Design

Notes

1. However, summaries of many of them can be found in, e.g., Waters, 2002; Wall, 2005; and Lee, 2007.
2. By the 'school system' is meant the teaching institutions under the aegis of the educational system.

3. Please see Appendix A for further details.
4. Please contact the authors for further details of this and the other instruments used.
5. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses to each of the questions in terms of 'Strongly agree' (4), 'Agree' (3), 'Disagree' (2) or 'Strongly disagree' (1), and the means for each item calculated accordingly. Please contact the authors if you would also like a summary of the detailed results for each of the questions.
6. Please see the [List of acronyms](#) above for an explanation of the abbreviations used for the interview and focus group excerpts.
7. 'I' = interviewee, 'R' = researcher.
8. 'FG' = focus group member.
9. Square brackets indicate our interpolations.
10. It was the second most frequent of the codes in this part of the data.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire respondent details

A. DepEd Division:

Name	N	%
M1	86	21.9
M2	96	24.4
P1	128	32.6
P2	83	21.1
Total	393	

B. Type of school:

Level	N	%
Elementary School	239	60.8
High School	154	39.2
Total	393	

C. Total number of years of English language teaching experience:

No. of years	N	%
Less than 5	109	27.9
More than 5, less than 10	126	32.2
More than 10	156	39.9
Total	391	

D. Position:

Position	N	%
Teacher	343	87.9
Acting/Master teacher	29	7.4
Acting/Department Head	13	3.3
Other (not defined)	1	.3
Principal	3	.8
Coordinator	1	.3
Total	390	

E. Participation in in-service seminars on English language teaching strategies.

No. of seminars	N	%
None	22	5.6
Less than 5	212	53.9
More than 5	159	40.5
Total	393	

F. Involvement in delivering training in English language teaching strategies.

	N	%
No	295	76
Yes	93	24
Total	388	

G. Level of involvement in training of those answering 'Yes' to F. above.

Highest level	N	%
School	34	36.6
District	17	18.3
Division	33	35.5
Region	6	6.5
National	3	3.2
Total	93	

(M= Metropolitan, P=Provincial)

Appendix B: TRFG3 Transcript excerpt

- R2: So you know, typically, though, the teachers in a seminar will work together in a small group and solve a problem like this.
- FG4: Yes, oo [yes].
- R2: There will be some output from that group work, and then –
- R1: What to do with the output. What can be done with the output after problem solving?
- FG4: Then I think the output will be presented to the body in a plenary session, then some of the group will critique, and then the ones who is conducting the training will jot down the best feature of the presentation, trace similarities and differences, and after that you can input to what is really the side output of the activity. And then –
- R2: Okay. So you get a critique from the group first.
- FG4: Yes. Other group will critique the presentation of the ones presenting their output.
- R2: Or is it also possible for that group that did the output to give the first critique?
- FG4: Yes, yes. Oo [yes]. The ones presenting will critique their work, the other group – the ones listening will also critique, and probably the trainers will do the same.
- R2: Right.
- FG4: To make a maximum –
- R2: Why do you feel that it's first of all going to start with a group or another group themselves rather than the trainer in doing the critique?
- FG4: The other group?
- R1: Why – the first group.
- R2: Why do you think the participants, it doesn't matter where they're from, but the point – I think, ma'am, you said that you would start with the other participants being the ones to begin the critique.
- FG4: It's – psychologically, it's good, because they will – of course, they will – before the critiquing process will surface, of course there will be criteria to be consider. I think that group, intellectual ones, and English teachers at that, will be amenable to underscore all the criteria to be consider in critiquing, and so they will be very objective in also jotting down the good feature of their output and the weaknesses of the output.
- R2: But ma'am, why not begin – why not just have the trainer do the critique? Why have the participants do it, first of all, as you suggested?
- FG4: It's good to see your limitation first, rather others see that. But there's a saying that our eyes

cannot see our own eyes. So it's better that other people will see our mistakes.

R2: Right. But why would it be better to begin with the eyes of the other participants rather than the eyes of the trainer?

FG4: Because it is easy for you to admit your weaknesses once you see it by your own self.

R1: No, if it is, for example, this is the group that did the output. There is a group that critiques this group. So that you're saying that before the trainer does the critique, it's this group that does the critique. Why is it important to do that, instead of having the trainer do it first?

FG4: Ah, it's important because we will be considering the perspective of the co-trainers, how they perceive the presented output in their own level, because it is too highly critical for the trainer to, you know, spot, to do the critiquing first prior to the other participants.

R2: You mean it's more threatening? If the trainer – yeah.

FG4: Yes, it's more comfortable [chuckles]. It's more – you know, it's more affirming, and for me, it's –

R1: Coming from the groups.

FG4: Yeah, from the group. It's somewhat a friendly transmission of conversation.

FG3: I go along with [FG4's] idea regarding the standard. Is it the standard before the critique –

before we critique the outputs of the participants. We encourage them to critique the output first before the trainers, because you know, this is one way of – we have to process – as trainers we have to process their answers. There will be commonalities, differences, something like that. So we inculcate the knowledge and the wisdom of these participants. Because you know, before the training, they have the prior experience, e [you see].

FG4: That's [unintelligible].

FG3: So we will enhance their experiences by – basing on the outputs given by the trainers. So we can easily identify that these participants learned from your lectures or from your inputs through these activities. So the skills of the trainers should be enhanced on how to process the outputs of these participants, especially in critiquing. So we set the standard before the critiquing, then based on the standard, the participant will butt in – the final say will come from the participant, if there will be differences on the answers of the participants.

R2: Okay. Could I – so – is it the case, then, that we are saying that, first of all, you have the participants who produce the output, and then if you have other participants who start the process of critiquing, this gives the trainer the opportunity to gauge the understanding –

FG4: Yes.

R2: – not only of those who

produced the output, but also a kind – as a result of the kinds of critique which the other participants are offering –

FG4: Yes.

R2: – then this also provides the trainer with an opportunity for further guide – to provide further guidance.

FG4: One way of counter-checking if their line of thought is still the same.

R2: Yeah. Yeah. So there are two levels of learning, or learning is gradually spread out.

RG5: Yes.

R2: But then can I also ask about the last point? I think you've been saying that the trainer should still, if you like, round off or provide a kind of capstone for the end of the discussion. In other words, it's not – or is it okay if the discussion finishes only with the feedback from the other participants, or is it important for the participants to also, at the end, hear the feedback from the trainer as well?

FG3: Yeah, that is right. Both right.

FG4: Both sides.

R2: Both.

FG3: Both. Both.

R2: So it's also important to get feedback from the trainer as well.

RG5: Yes.

R2: Okay. But why?

FG1: In my own view sir ... I believe

that the trainers are expected to be expert in their topics to be discussed. That what output to be produced by the participants are trainings. They knew already the criteria, how to do this, di ba [isn't that so?]. So the trainer really plays a big role or the person who must be expert in knowing if the participants have the best output that matter.

R2: Okay. So you mean that in the end, it is likely that the trainer will have more understanding and so on than the participants, and so it's important that the trainer's voice is also heard at the end? Is that correct?

FG1: Yes, sir.

R2: Yeah. And is that the same view that the rest of you...?

FG4: It's different [chuckles].

R2: Okay, no. So what's the difference, ma'am?

FG4: For me, because we are handling – we are training – we are considering adult learning, Four A's, I think with inputs alone, our English teacher might be bored of hearing lectures to be consuming all the time, talking all the time. And it would be more engaging if we'll give engaging tasks for them. If we see that there's lacking in their presentation or outputs, that's the time for us to fill in the gap or to give more inputs. In that case, we are also boosting the morale of the participants.

R2: Yeah. Thank you. But my point was just a little bit different, if we still have time to just try and

- clarify that just a little bit more. My point was that if we are using problem-solving activities of this kind, let's assume at the moment that we've decided that [chuckles] they have got value and we are using them, and we've been talking about the participants producing the output, and there is critique by the other participants which might be moderated or guided by the trainer. But then after that, after that part of the process to give the output is completed, should the trainer give a kind of summing up?
- FGs: Yes.
- FG4: Yes.
- FG2: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- FG4: Yes. Capsulize everything.
- R2: Okay, but why? Why?
- FG4: To give the – a whole gist of the presentation, so that concepts and insights will retain in the long-term memory of the participants.
- R2: Right. So by doing that, the trainer is adding something –
- FG4: Yes.
- R2: – to the discussion which might not be seen otherwise, a kind of conclusion, or something of that kind is –
- FG4: Yes. So that it will be clear. [laughter]
- R2: Okay. Thank you. Thank you.
- RG5: It should not only be left at there are problem-solving activities,
- but there should also be –
- FG4: Processing.
- RG5: Yeah, processing from the trainers themselves, so that they will have an idea of what should be done about that strategy.
- FG4: What's the desired one.
- RG5: Yeah.
- FG2: Yeah.
- R2: Yeah. Yeah. Right. Right.
- FG3: Maybe misunderstanding, misconception, or –
- FG4: Clearinghouse [chuckles]. [some crosstalk as other participants comment on the term "clearinghouse."]
- FG3: Yeah. That is one way of clearing their minds, what is in their mind.
- FG4: Clearing doubts.
- FG3: So if the trainer would like to tell them something about that, the final words, or let's say the generalization or the summary of the training, where the participant will clear those talks.
- R2: Yeah. And in fact is it your experience that the trainees will usually expect that to be given by the trainers? Is it normally the expectation, in your experience, that the trainer will be expected to provide that kind of input?
- FGs: Yes.
- FG4: Yes. Prior to that, as trainer you can solicit – you can solicit insights, functional concepts. Say for example you have an activity, so you will ask the participants,

“what are the insights that you’ve learned from the activity itself?”
So before giving the actual meat of the – or substance, then the participants can give.

R2: Right. Right. So that’s a further stage or twist to this process of developing the thinking as a result of the problem-solving activity.

FG4: Yes. Critical thinking skills.

R2: And is it – you would certainly regard that, would you, as a best practice, ma’am?

FG4: Yes. But the trainer has the final say, the final conclusion of what is really the actual –

R2: It goes without saying ...
[laughter; crosstalk] **[TRFG3:
496-585]**

11

How to make yourself understood by international students: The role of metaphor in academic tutorials

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of international students studying at British universities. This contributes to making universities more *universal* centres of debate, enquiry and learning, enriching the culture of our universities through numerous multicultural encounters. However, it is not always a straightforward matter to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the presence of international students in our classes. We may not, for instance, be sufficiently aware of the extent to which the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of international students differ from ours. An area where linguistic and cultural differences are particularly obvious is in the use of metaphor, as the understanding of metaphor often involves a sophisticated understanding of background assumptions and conventions that vary significantly across cultures and disciplines.

What are ‘metaphors’ and how do they vary across languages?

If people are asked to think of an example of a metaphor, well-known quotations from literary texts like ‘Juliet is the sun’ or ‘All the world’s a stage’ tend to be the ones that spring to mind. We would be less likely to think of utterances like ‘They gave us a warm welcome’ or ‘He shouldered all the blame’, perhaps because the way of expressing these notions is so familiar and conventional that they do not seem to us like metaphoric uses of language. Yet, if we think about this a little, we can see that welcomes do not have a temperature that can be measured, and ‘blame’ is not something that we can literally carry about on our shoulders. But because we regularly talk about our emotional responses to others in this way (for example, ‘a cold, calculating person’) or conventionally use body part terms to denote processes that are not literally true (for example, we don’t actually ‘give’ anyone a hand when we help them, nor does anyone or anything literally ‘catch’ our eye when we notice them) they seem the natural way of expressing these notions even though they are metaphors. In fact, metaphor plays a very important role in creating new senses of words, and a word’s polysemy is often metaphorically motivated. However, there are great differences in the way that words can metaphorically extend their meaning in different languages. For example, English ‘cup’ and Spanish ‘taza’ both denote a particular type of drinking vessel, but in English the word can also be used to refer to a part of a bra, a part of an acorn, and a hip joint. In addition, the word can become a verb to describe a way of holding (something in) the hands. Yet none of these extensions are possible for the word ‘taza’ in Spanish.

What are metaphorical gestures and how do they vary across languages?

These differences are not just important for the way that people *talk* but also for the way they *think* about everyday concepts (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This is sometimes reflected in the gestures that they use (Cienki, 2008). For example, although English speakers regularly talk about the future as something in front of or ahead (for example, ‘I’m really looking forward to the holidays’) and the past as something behind them (for example, ‘When I look back, I can see I was wrong’), speakers of Chinese sometimes use the opposite orientation: the future may also be behind (because you can’t see it) and the past ahead of the speaker (because you can see what’s been). And if one observes a Chinese speaker talking in English about the past or the future, we may find that s/he sometimes uses forward- and

backward-pointing gestures that are consistent with the front/past-back/future metaphors in their speech (Littlemore and Ngan, in press; Yau, 1997), which may reflect the way s/he is *thinking* about time. The metaphoric gesture appears to give conflicting information about what is being said and this may make Chinese speakers of English more difficult to understand because of their 'gestural accent'. It is not surprising, then, to find that learners of a foreign language may find it difficult to understand and produce the metaphors conventionally used in another language, because they often do not match those they use in their mother tongue. As well as metaphors being a source of misunderstanding, gestures too can sometimes be difficult for international students to understand.

Why do people use metaphors in conversation?

Despite the difficulties they present, the conventional metaphors used by English speakers (and the gestures that accompany them) play important roles in communication, in everyday conversation as well as in educational contexts. When they use metaphor, speakers do not usually use the form SOMETHING IS SOMETHING ELSE (as in the 'Juliet is the sun' metaphor, mentioned above) when talking to each other, but rather favour verbs and verb phrases (e.g. take something in hand) or noun phrases with 'of' (e.g. the mouth of the river). In general people express their meanings metaphorically through the kind of conventional metaphors mentioned earlier, often fossilised in 'delexical' verbs like 'take' or 'go' accompanied by prepositions or particles (for example, 'go up' meaning 'increase' or 'take to' meaning 'develop a liking for') (Cameron, 2003). That is, the 'building blocks' for everyday conventional metaphors are the words most frequently used in English – a fact which is both advantageous and problematic for the non-native speaker of the language.

A significant fact about metaphor use is that metaphors are not distributed evenly across conversations, but rather occur in bursts or clusters in response to various factors (Cameron and Stelma, 2004). One of these is that metaphors are used more frequently when the topic of conversation is problematic or sensitive in some way. And analysis of conversations has also shown that metaphor fulfills important ideational, interactional and discourse functions when people talk to each other face to face. Metaphors can be repeated, reworded or challenged in the course of a conversation (Gibbs and Cameron, 2008), and are often used to 'frame' a speaker's stance towards the topic at hand. In conversation between native speakers (NSs) of English, metaphor seems to play key roles in discourse management and in expressing evaluative meanings.

Why do people use metaphors in university settings?

Metaphors are particularly frequent in academic discourse (Steen et al., 2010). Lecturers use metaphors not only to express notions important to their disciplines (for example, 'floating exchange rates' and 'trickle down effects' in Economics) but also to organise their lectures ('to wrap this up', for example) or to encourage critical or creative thinking (for example, 'think outside the box'). In tutorials, metaphors are likely to be used when talking about topics such as organising one's schedule (e.g. 'cramming' and 'struggling to keep up'), planning an assignment (e.g. 'sticking to the upper limit'), completing assignments ('meeting a deadline') or handing in work (e.g. 'turn in'), among other things.

What kinds of problems do metaphors present to international students?

It has been found that students whose mother tongue is not English often misunderstand these metaphorical uses of language, which may lead to underachievement in their academic work. For example, in previous studies (Littlemore et al, 2011) we have found that international students have misunderstood conventional metaphors such as ‘turn over a new leaf’ (thinking that it means ‘continue with what went before’), ‘attack one’s job’ (thinking that it means ‘be critical of one’s own performance’) and ‘stem from’ (thinking that it means ‘be clearly different from’). The issue is thus not limited to idiomatic phrases but extends to many common collocations. For example, they have also been found to misunderstand highly commonplace metaphors, such as ‘point’ in ‘some point over next week’ (thinking that it means ‘interesting topic’). It is nevertheless true that, if international students take advantage of the opportunity to speak to their lecturers in office hours’ tutorial sessions, some of these misunderstandings may be cleared up. Likewise, if lecturers are aware of their use of metaphor and of the areas where problems of comprehension may arise, they are more likely to be able to communicate their ideas more effectively to students in these one-to-one sessions where students seek advice or guidance on their academic work. But the extent to which the lecturer will be able to overcome such problems in communication will depend on the extent to which s/he is able to use metaphor appropriately in conversation with international students – both in the language forms used and in accompanying gestures. At the same time, however, avoidance of metaphorical language by lecturers who anticipate the problems it may cause may give rise to the use of forms which are barely idiomatic in English, and may ill-prepare learners about to embark on a period of study at a university in an English-speaking country for the challenges that will be posed by this characteristic of discourse.

Methodology

In this paper we look at various interactions between lecturers and students in office hour consultations at universities in England and Spain and use these conversations to show how lecturers may learn to become more sensitive to their own and students’ uses of metaphor, and thus to communicate more successfully with their students. In turn, learning how to pick up and use their lecturer’s metaphors effectively may help students themselves to expand the range of the ideas they wish to express in their second language.

Who is in the recordings?

A number of oral interactions were filmed between native and non-native speakers of English. The aim was to simulate as closely as possible the ‘office hour consultation’. The lecturers were therefore asked to talk to the students about their subject matter as well as more practical issues such as essay writing and exam preparation. Some of the lecturers in our study had the same linguistic and academic backgrounds as the students, others did not. The reason for including both was to allow us to study the impact of shared language and background knowledge on the use of metaphor in the consultations. The interactions filmed were as follows¹:

John and Lola (an English-speaking lecturer in Applied Linguistics working at a

British university and a Spanish Erasmus student on an undergraduate Applied Linguistics programme)

John and Tina (an English-speaking lecturer in Applied Linguistics at a British university and a British/American student of English on an undergraduate Applied Linguistics programme)

Alice and Karim (an English-speaking lecturer in International Development at a British university and Kazakh-speaking student on a postgraduate International Development programme)

Alice and Charlie (an English-speaking lecturer in International Development at a British university and Taiwanese-speaking student on a postgraduate Applied Linguistics programme)

Cristelle and Daniel (a Spanish-speaking lecturer in Spanish at a British university and an English-speaking student on a postgraduate programme in Educational management at a British university)

Cristelle and Rafael (a Spanish-speaking lecturer in Spanish at a British university and a Spanish-speaking student on a postgraduate programme in Teaching English as a Foreign Language at a British University)

Gloria and Ruth (a Spanish-speaking lecturer in English Language and Literature at a Spanish university and an English-speaking international exchange student on an undergraduate English Language and Literature programme)

Gloria and Clara (a Spanish-speaking lecturer in English Language and Literature at a Spanish university and a Spanish-speaking student on an undergraduate English Language and Literature programme)

Debbie and Helena (an English-speaking lecturer in Applied Linguistics at a Spanish university and a Polish-speaking Erasmus student on an undergraduate Applied Linguistics programme)

Debbie and José (an English-speaking lecturer in Applied Linguistics at a Spanish university and a Spanish-speaking student on an undergraduate Applied Linguistics programme)

The recordings were transcribed and the transcriptions were coded for metaphor using an identification method proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). This method involves examining every lexical unit in the text to see whether it has a more basic, concrete meaning than the meaning that it has in context. In our examples, the salient metaphors are underlined and stretches of text that were accompanied by gesture are indicated in bold.

Metaphor in Interaction

How is metaphor used by students who are native speakers of English?

In order to gain a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities that metaphor presents to international students in academic tutorials it is useful to look at how such interaction takes place between native speakers. The following extract from Ruth, an English native-speaker undergraduate student, currently spending an Erasmus year in Spain shows how native-speaking students typically use metaphor to present their ideas in tutorials:²

<http://youtu.be/WFnf0R1oufw>



Ruth	mm-hm, urm, it wasn't too <u>hard</u> ³ to talk in front of, urm, cos our class is so small and I know everyone really well, so that wasn't a problem, right, urm the <u>structure</u> wasn't too bad either because since I used PowerPoint it was, I could think about it and it was <u>laid out</u> , urm, and so I didn't in that way didn't <u>get lost in the structure</u> . I think the <u>hardest part</u> is, I like, urm, when I present I don't, I like to present the facts but also I don't wanna be reading <u>on</u> a piece of paper that has everything written down, so often I get <u>caught up in</u> talking and will forget or like realise that I don't really know the right words to say what I want to say so then I sort of <u>stumble along</u> , so I think, I guess that's probably the <u>hardest part</u> for me, because I know what I want to say but sometimes when I'm up there, I don't know how to say it.
------	--

The student is describing a fairly abstract process here, and the metaphors she uses help her to explain the difficulties she experienced. The most important metaphorical idea in describing the process of putting an oral presentation together is that of a journey (where she can 'get lost' or 'stumble along'), a very prevalent way of talking about all sorts of experiences in life. In turn, her use of a large number of metaphors makes her language sound natural and idiomatic. They also make her language sound relatively informal, which is something that some international students may feel uncomfortable with in academic settings.

How is metaphor used in interactions between lecturers and students who are native speakers of English?

Speakers don't always use metaphors in isolation, and in tutorials it is often found that the two speakers will often share metaphors, tossing them back and forth in order to share and develop their ideas. In face-to-face interaction it's natural for people to repeat words, expressions and gestures used by their interlocutor as this contributes to the building of coherence in the discourse and shared understanding between the speakers. In our tutorials, we have observed that this

sort of repetition is particularly prevalent for metaphor. Students and tutors jointly construct and share meaning through metaphor. For instance, in the following extract, in a tutorial with a native-speaking lecturer (John) and a native-speaking student (Tina), both interlocutors share the metaphor of an essay as a container. Both the student and her lecturer share their ideas by bouncing the same metaphor back and forth:



<http://youtu.be/RG5N2u9VBn4>

Tina	Like sometimes it's like <u>cramming</u> stuff in ...
	...
John	Just like <u>getting</u> the word count <u>up</u>
	...
Tina	It was 200 and something words <u>over</u> and he was like yeah and I was like how did that happen and it was 75 and it was 200 <u>under</u> the word limit like
	...
John	I think, I think it's yeah, I don't think you should worry about <u>filling up</u> the <u>whole</u> word count cos people look at the word count to check it's fair
	...
Tina	I always plan to <u>fill</u> the word limit exactly. The thing is if you <u>go over</u> the word limit you get penalised don't you?
	...
John	Yeah. If you <u>go</u> sufficiently <u>over</u>

How does the use of metaphor facilitate learning and understanding in interactions between native and non-native speakers of English?

Even where the lecturers and students did not share the same linguistic background, they were sometimes able to share and develop the same metaphors. An example of how a metaphor may be used by interlocutors to establish joint understanding of a topic can be illustrated with an extract from the conversation between John and Lola at Birmingham University, where they reach some sort of consensus on the process of turning the ideas presented in a lecture in a structured PowerPoint presentation into a coherent whole through the metaphor of a 'mak[ing] a story' out of it:

<http://youtu.be/wMBNE0x4m6A>



John	So what you have to do in the exam is you have to- you have to- so each lecture is <u>about</u> a different topic and you have to explain one of those topics, um so maybe language and gender, we talked <u>about</u> language and gender, that was last week, or this week was speech, you know, so the <u>features</u> of speech compared to the <u>features</u> of writing, um so yes, you do that
Lola	My problem is that they are not developed so they have just <u>in squares</u> , so I have to <u>joint</u> all the ideas, so the- what- this is what I have to do
John	That's the difficulty, so you have a PowerPoint, and it <u>tells</u> you this, this, this, this, and this, and you have to <u>make</u> sense of it, yes, it's difficult. It is difficult to <u>make a story</u> . Sometimes your PowerPoints they just <u>tell</u> you lots of- so we did that lecture a few weeks ago <u>on</u> genre, remember that, and that was very technical. You had a <u>piece</u> of information about this, a <u>piece</u> of information about that, a <u>piece</u> , and it's <u>hard</u> , I agree, it's <u>hard</u> to <u>make an essay out of</u> it
Lola	But in your lectures, I am very grateful of them because you can explain us, you- you do an introduction <u>before</u> , so you <u>joint</u> all the ideas, you <u>give</u> us an introduction, you <u>joint</u> all the ideas this PowerPoint <u>with this one</u> , who is this author, yeah, it's better.
John	Well I'm glad <u>about</u> that, okay, so that- I'm glad that helps, so you think <u>making a story out of</u> it helps
Lola	Yes
John	As opposed to just looking at the PowerPoint slides
Lola	Or maybe my house when I read all the PowerPoints I try to <u>do</u> a <u>story in</u> my mind and I do, like, an <u>outline</u>

This stretch of talk about how what has been learnt in the lecture hall can be written up in an exam question goes backwards and forwards between the literal and the abstract. On the one hand, there is reference to the physical world of the lecture hall, with a lecturer talking about particular topics with the visual support of a PowerPoint presentation, in which the phases of the lecture and its content is displayed – in ‘pieces’ or on different slides. On the other hand, the student and/or lecturer has to ‘joint’ (sic) or connect these pieces (‘this, this, this and this’) into a coherent whole – a creative act of reconstruction (‘you have to make sense of it’), success at which will demonstrate the student’s grasp of the concepts in an exam. John’s use of ‘make sense’ appears to trigger the metaphor he introduces (‘make a story’) to explain and at the same time show his understanding of Lola’s difficulty in finding and expressing the links between the various ideas or pieces of information she

has. Of course, the lecturer does not necessarily mean to suggest that this ‘story’ would be characterised by features peculiar to narratives (temporal sequences, for example) but rather by a thread that joins the pieces together. Interestingly, although he introduces the metaphorical idea, he actually attributes it to the student rather than himself (‘so you think making a story out of it helps’), making it clear that, for him, what he has done is simply to interpret and reword Lola’s formulation of the problem (‘you join all the ideas’). However, in this interpretation and rewording with a different metaphor, John suggests a slightly different – and academically more valuable – way of looking at the problem: ‘making’ rather than simply ‘joining’ ideas. And the metaphor is appropriated by Lola herself (‘I try to do a story in my mind’). That is, in this part of their interaction, the use of a particular metaphor seems to act as a bridge to understanding and the creation of common ground. Here, a figurative use of language can be seen to have fulfilled ideational and interactional functions, bringing about – at least at the local level of this academic consultation – the kind of understanding which will help Lola to prepare for her exams in ways that are appropriate for the kind of questions she is likely to be asked.

However, it should be noted that Lola’s additional remark (‘I will do an outline’) may be interpreted as showing that she has understood the ‘story’ metaphor somewhat differently from John, and may not have learned much in this interaction. Is making an ‘outline’ of the contents of a particular lecture consistent with ‘making a story out of it’? It could very well be so for Lola herself, though not necessarily for a native speaker of English. As can be seen in the extract from Debbie’s interview with José below, a speaker whose L1 is Spanish may confuse English compounds which appear similar (‘guideline/headline/outline’). The common feature of these compounds is ‘line’, which these students may interpret as being roughly equivalent to Spanish ‘*línea*’ or ‘*hilo*’ (‘thread’), a word that figuratively extends its meaning to signify ‘link’ or ‘join’, and is used regularly in Spanish to positively evaluate coherence in speech and text. If this is how Lola understands an ‘outline’, then this would be coherent with the ‘story’ metaphor, as well as her own concern with ‘joining’ disparate ideas.

Much of the way we talk about the setting of academic assignments involves metaphor, as can be seen in the next extract. Here, the repetition of metaphor across turns can also help the learner pick up and use a conventional way of talking about assignments. For instance, in the following extract, in a tutorial at the Spanish university, the lecturer, Debbie, uses the metaphor ‘guidelines’, which the student, José mishears as ‘headline’. Debbie responds to his use of ‘headline’ by repeating ‘guidelines’ and José repeats it too. This contributes to José’s lexical development, and also, as we see, helps him to develop the idea of a ‘guideline’ as a ‘pattern’ that he can ‘follow’:

http://youtu.be/ltg0_tTOUho



Debbie	Oh good, okay. Does it help you when you have assignments to have very clear <u>urm steps</u> to follow and <u>guidelines</u> ?
José	Yes
Debbie	Or do you prefer when you're freer to decide
José	I prefer following the <u>steps</u> that I have in the <u>headline</u>
Debbie	in the <u>guidelines</u>
José	In the <u>guidelines</u> , cos I think I work better if I <u>follow</u> a <u>pattern</u> of the, the <u>guidelines</u>
Debbie	Okay and that's true in <u>general</u> for all of your classes
José	Mm
Debbie	Okay. Do you generally receive that kind of step by step <u>guideline</u> ?
José	Yes
Debbie	When you're asked to do
José	mm-hm

What happens when there are metaphorical and gestural mismatches?

When tutors are mentoring international students, they may be well aware of the linguistic handicaps that the student has in expressing him/herself, but may not pay enough attention to the gestures that the disadvantaged speaker may use to supplement the words and phrases s/he is using. The meanings that a person may be able to express fluently in the L1 may simply not be available in English or may not be known to the non-native speaker. So, in the conversation between John and Lola, we find that this student uses a rotating gesture with her hands at several points, as in the following example:

<http://youtu.be/TLuMH5tqt3c>



Lola	Yes But now I can follow ⁴ much better the TELLING, the TELLING lectures, because now I can know better the teachers and the way they speaks,	Gestures with two hands rotating outward one over the other
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As is well known, speakers of different languages may express similar understandings of temporal events in different ways (Slobin, 1996). In a language such as Spanish (Lola's L1), the difference between the description of events which are seen as complete and those which are seen as ongoing or incomplete is marked in the verb through aspectual inflections. Although English does have the means to distinguish between perfective and imperfective aspect *per se*, it is often the context which determines whether an event is to be interpreted as complete (for example, 'He swam across the lake') or one which is seen as ongoing (for example, 'He swam with water wings when he was a child'), while a language

such as Spanish will express the difference in the verb’s inflections (‘nadó’ versus ‘nadaba’, respectively). Such differences between the temporal aspects of events are often represented lexically – rather than grammatically – in English. So, ‘know’, ‘meet/find out’ and ‘get to know’ all refer to a similar kind of mental state, but distinguish between how this occurs as an event in time. We can construe it as an unchanging state (‘know’), a punctual or bounded occurrence (‘meet’ or ‘find out’) or an ongoing process (‘get to know’). Spanish, in contrast, distinguishes these meanings through the verbal inflections of the same verb: ‘conocer’. In this regard, Lola’s use of the ‘rotating’ gesture accompanies the use of a verb which describes a state (‘know’) but which she sees as a process. That is, her gesture contributes to the sense of what she is trying to convey, making up for the lexical gap she is suffering from.

In fact, Lola uses the same rotating gesture at several points in the conversation with John. It accompanies utterances such as the following:

http://youtu.be/2W_ZWdkWOXA



Lola	Your lectures are really useful for me because <u>on</u> Thursday we can review what were we talking <u>about in</u> the first day	Gestures with two hands rotating outward one over the other
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When describing mental processes (‘know’, ‘review’, ‘think’), then, Lola’s gesture draws attention to the dynamic nature of these processes. However, although John picks up and repeats some of Lola’s words, he does not repeat her gestures, accompanying the beginning of his turn with a ‘chopping’ gesture:

<http://youtu.be/wMBNE0x4m6A>



John	So you haven’t done the revision for the exam you haven’t gone back over your- your notes to, well, of course, because the exam is <u>in</u> eight months or something	Vertical chopping gesture
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Lola has used the verb 'review' which John recasts as the more idiomatic 'revision', but both of these words are motivated by the same metaphor: 'looking backwards'. John then develops this idea with another metaphorical expression 'go back over', rewordings that pick up and expand on Lola's. However, the coherence between his contribution and Lola's is not supported by a gesture that might have drawn Lola's attention to the fact that the words he has uttered are fully consonant with hers. If John had imitated Lola's rotating gesture, it would have been plain that, like her, he is referring to mental, rather than visual processes. On the other hand his use of a different gesture emphasises the fact that there are different ways of viewing the writing process, and may thus have been very useful for Lola for different reasons as it demonstrates that there are different ways of viewing the essay-writing process. The contrast between their two sets of gestures can be seen most clearly in the following exchange:



John	So what you have to do in the exam is you have to, you have to, so each lecture is <u>about</u> a different topic and you have to explain one of those topics, urm so maybe language and gender, we talked <u>about</u> language and gender, that as last week, or <u>this</u> week was speech, you know, so the features of speech compared to the features of writing , urm so yes, you do <u>that</u>	Hands facing each other, palms flat vertical chopping motion
Lola	My problem is that they are not developed so they have just in squares , so I have to joint all the ideas , so the, what, <u>this</u> is what I have to do	Writing gesture with right hand (on 'developed'), then left hand is held palm up while right hand is held up palm out, moving as if placing objects on a vertical surface ('just in squares'), then two flat hands move in circles in vertical plane ('so I have to joint'), then palm up ('so the') then point down ('this is [what I have to do]')

In the context of this part of their interaction, John's use of an incongruent chopping gesture does not have any visibly problematic effects and may in fact have been useful in conveying his particular view of the essay writing process. However, in another extract from their conversation we can see that repetition of gestures, or the use of gestures that support and clarify the metaphorical uses of words may be very useful when words and phrases are being used metaphorically. When John introduces the idea of a 'story', their gestures start to resemble one another, with each pointing toward his/her own head and then moving outward and down.



Lola	This is that I can't say	RH stretched out to side
John	It is difficult to make a story . Sometimes your PowerPoints they just <u>tell</u> you lots of, so we did that lecture a few weeks ago <u>on</u> genre, remember that, and that was very technical. You had a piece of information about <u>this</u> , a piece of information about that, a pi, and it's <u>hard</u> , I agree, it's <u>hard</u> to <u>make</u> an essay <u>out of</u> it it	Small rotation of RH ⁵ moving down 'placing' gestures in the air with open hands palm out, moving forward
Lola	But <u>in</u> your lectures, I am very grateful of them because you can explain us , you, you do an introduction <u>before</u> , so you joint all the ideas , you <u>give</u> us an introduction, you <u>joint</u> all the ideas this PowerPoint with this one, who is this author, yeah, it's better.	Two hands rotating outward one over another ('you can explain us'), switching to inward rotation ('you do an introduction before'), to RH waving left to right ('you joint all the ideas')
John	Well I'm glad <u>about</u> that, okay, so that, I'm glad that helps, so you think making a story out of it helps	His two hands begin with index fingers pointing at his face and then rotate outward and slightly forward and down, and repeat ('making a story out of it')
Lola	Yes	
John	As opposed to just looking at the PowerPoint slides	Two hands held up in fists, slightly apart, as if holding a flat vertical object

Lola	Or maybe my house when I read all the PowerPoints I try to do a story in my mind and I do, like, an <u>outline</u>	LH palm up, RH index finger moves L to R over LH, RH changes to two fingers as if holding small object ('read all the PowerPoints'), then both hands waving on each side of her head near her temples, then RH with index finger pointing toward her forehead moves out and down ('I do, like, an outline').
John	Right	

In this extract, which immediately follows the one described above, Lola stretches her hand out to one side perhaps to indicate the linear nature of an essay. John picks up on this and along with her previous utterance in which she talks about joining ideas, and introduces the idea of a 'story'. At this point, he makes use of a small rotating gesture which echoes the small rotating gestures that she has been using throughout the tutorial. However, he immediately goes back to using the two-handed vertical chopping gestures (as if compartmentalising things) when he talks about 'pieces' of information using a series of 'placing' gestures that are in the air, perhaps because they represent abstract concepts. He appears to have picked up on her 'flow' gesture possibly because this represents 'narrative'. Lola continues to use flowing gestures, which are then used by John and the exchange ends with Lola making a rotation gesture near her temples, perhaps to indicate that the mental process in her head. John looks at her very attentively at this point suggesting that there is a close alignment between the two of them at this stage of their conversation. The 'story' metaphor (including its accompanying gestures) creates the shared space for common ground. The story is a new conception, which is a blend of her flow and his structure model. Much later on in the tutorial, Lola appears to have taken the idea of structuring an essay on board:

<http://youtu.be/yveCNusbU-0>



Lola	I will do it, I will classify my ideas, main ideas, so I <u>follow a structure</u> , for example the introduction, the body of the essay, and the conclusion	Two hands palm down, each making slight rotating motions ('I will classify my ideas'), moving to palm up open hands ('I follow a structure'), then using RH to count off on LH beginning with little finger on RH ('for example the introduction'), then ring finger ('the body of the essay'), then middle finger ('and the conclusion')
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Our interpretation of this exchange has been that up till this point, there has been a clear mismatch in the conceptualisation of essay writing that each of these interlocutors has. This is resolved by the 'story' metaphor. On the other hand, it may be the case that John was deliberately emphasising structure because that's what Lola is going to need to focus on in her essays. The 'story' metaphor may be a deliberate attempt on his part to identify common ground.

Other apparent mismatches between these two speakers in terms of their use of metaphorical gesture include those they use when talking about time. Lola constantly makes use of a left to right orientation when discussing past, present and future, whereas John's use of gesture is more varied:





<http://youtu.be/1NuILWGckAk>

Lola	and the teachers are native speakers at university teachers who are teaching me English are Spanish and they speak slow, but here the first day I saw many authors like Chomsky or many example that I didn't know, so the first day I were a bit lo-, I was a bit lost,	LH moves to left and points left with thumb ('I were a bit lo-'), LH palm up open hand repeats lateral move to left ('I was a bit lost')
John	Ok	

Lola	But when you, when you were on Thursday and you teach us in the lecture, I could understand much better .	LH moves laterally to left and back ('when you were') Later, open LH moves left to right with beats ('much better')
John	Oh, that's good, I'm glad to hear that yeah, urm, ok that's good, and this was the first time you'd come across these things like Chomsky and things like that	Open RH facing self moves outward with slight rotation (repeating on 'come across', 'Chomsky', 'things like')

Although John's use of a forward gesture to indicate a past event is incoherent with the timescale, it does highlight, through repetition, Lola's notion of a first encounter with these ideas. For Lola, the timescale appears more important and it serves more of a structuring function. This exchange reflects the fact that time is metaphorically constructed and is not something that is objectively 'out there'. When people with different conceptualisations of time come together there may or may not be misunderstandings. There do not appear to be any misunderstandings here. Finally, it is interesting to contrast John's 'bringing together' gesture in the following extract with Lola's 'joining' gesture mentioned above:

<http://youtu.be/YIKtcRwTEmo>



John	And you'll bring them together and you'll see whether you agree or disagree and compare them	Brings his two hands together so that the fingers interlock.
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The way in which John neatly brings his hands together here contrasts sharply with Lola's more complex gesture that accompanies the same concept of bringing together other people's ideas in the context of an academic essay.

Another gesture mismatch relates to the amount of gesture used by each of the interlocutors. Whereas Lola uses a large amount of gesture, John uses very little:

<http://youtu.be/d8L-UbTCUe8>



Lola	Um how do I, how do I review this, for example in my house, after the lectures,	Lola makes use of multiple gestures, while John sits with his arms folded
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Although differences in the amount of gesture used did not appear to affect the information exchange, in other contexts they may have had an adverse effect on the quality of the interaction. In this particular extract however, the fact that John has his arms folded sends out a message that he is in the role of listener (and thus not gesturing). This is emphasised by the look of concentration on his face.

What happens when the speakers’ gestures are closely co-ordinated?

Despite the differences in John’s and Lola’s ‘gestural accents’, there are times when their gestures are very closely co-ordinated and they almost seem to perform a kind of ‘gestural dance’. At this point they appear to be reaching shared understanding through their use of gesture. It is also worth noticing the degree of overlap between their speech at this point, which can indicate close rapport between speakers as they co-construct an idea:



<http://youtu.be/wuWrz3uf89Y>

John	So, what, what words have you had to look <u>up</u> . And I mean-	
Lola	Mm, I don’t know, some verbs, nouns?	
John	OK, and do they tend to be-	Both speakers produce two handed gesture with palms down, hands open, fingers slightly spread, hands wavering back and forth
Lola	General vocabulary.	
John	General vocabulary.	
Lola	Or also specific, also specific vocabulary of these subjects	

Matching one’s gestures in this way is a powerful way of building rapport. A further example of a ‘gestural dance’ we have observed was between Cristelle and David. In this example the two speakers took turns using a gesture for text as space that Cristelle introduces to the conversation. Unlike the previous example, the target for this gesture becomes developed with each use. Cristelle offers a gesture to represent the ‘essay question’ as a horizontally extended space and Daniel, perhaps recognising the labour this gesture could save, extends it to represent the ‘introduction’ of the essay. In the transcripts below, gestures produced that are not simultaneous with spoken words are marked with a caret (^).



<http://youtu.be/aBDa9Kdhr7E>

Cristelle	You know you <u>got</u> your question , your...^	Both hands open, facing outward, move horizontally out from the center (“text-as-space gesture”). Gesture is repeated once.
Daniel	Erm I think the <u>first thing</u> that I usually do, is, I <u>take the question away</u> , and... erm, I’ll work out , a sort of, Er. Steps that I need to take to answer the question. So...	Raises LH to left side, fingers bent flat 90° to palm. Moves LH downward, stopping three times.
Cristelle	Yeah	
Daniel	To do, to put a plan together , I’ll <u>put</u>	Raises RH, open, facing outwards, moves it down in a sweeping motion
Cristelle	Yeah	
Daniel	I’ll <u>set out</u> an introduction that I need to do,	Text-as-space gesture

Later Daniel uses a variation on the same gesture to represent a ‘first paragraph’:



<http://youtu.be/Dhq2tDQYs8E>

Daniel	And I’ll <u>have</u> the first paragraph <u>about</u> , what the first .. author said <u>about</u> it	Text-as-space gesture with LH more stationary and RH moving out from left to center
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The gesture that was first introduced by Cristelle is developed in two distinct stages by Daniel as he accepts and adapts the gesture for himself. This helps build up an atmosphere of shared meaning and understanding. In pre-sessional language training programmes it may be useful for teachers to encourage their students to extend and develop the metaphors that have been introduced to the conversation by their lecturers. This would provide lecturers with immediate feedback on the extent to which the metaphor and topic have been understood or misconstrued. This could facilitate progression as it would give students an opportunity to be creative with their metaphor and gesture use whilst being monitored by their lecturer within an environment of shared understanding.

What happens when metaphors are misunderstood?

Metaphor can also be a cause of confusion, although for the native speaker it may not be apparent why misunderstandings might arise. We can see this in the following extract from the tutorial with John and Lola, where both are using the verb 'look':

<http://youtu.be/RXfPqPvdWwc>



Lola	So I will look for this words on internet, and, I use them
John	Ok, you'll look at, yeah, will you look at any, because one of the strange things <u>about</u> you studying applied linguistics is that you are, you're studying what you're doing <u>in</u> a way, so a lot of people in linguistics have talked about these things. They sometimes <u>call</u> them discourse markers, yeah? They <u>call</u> them <u>linking</u> words they <u>call</u> them discourse markers so they, they've been a lot of studies <u>on</u> these. Would you consider <u>looking at</u> that kind of thing <u>looking at</u> the <u>things</u> that linguists <u>say</u> about these things or would you just look in the dictionary or internet, urm, because, so, in the, in the urm, in the last, the last lecture, you <u>looked at</u> some of the <u>features</u> of speech
Lola	Yes
John	So things like when people reformulate what they say start again and say it <u>in</u> a different <u>way</u> , and I think academic essays they have their own <u>features</u> as well as you know
Lola	For example have we do, have we got to do any essay in TELLING, not for the moment
John	Not for months
Lola	It will be okay.
John	So you're not worried <u>about</u> it
Lola	I could practice.

John	Yes, you can practice, and it sounds like it will be ok, yeah.
Lola	Also I can do it by myself because I study at home English, I watch TV every day, I'm reading books
John	Do you watch the television, do you
Lola	Yes
John	English telly what do you watch?

This extract from their conversation is curious. The conversational partners begin by talking about academic work and end up talking about the student's favourite TV programmes. What has happened? We would suggest that it is the polysemy of the verb 'look' that causes the problem. Lola begins by asserting that she will 'look for' words on internet, a use of the verb that can be interpreted as literal (she will indeed use her eyes to find the words on the screen). Her use of 'look' seems to trigger the lecturer's use of the same verb, followed by 'at'. Of course, 'look at', like 'look for' can be interpreted literally ('look at the PowerPoint slides') but John is using it here in a figurative sense, meaning 'consider', 'think about'. In the same way, he uses the verbs 'say' or 'talk about' in non-literal ways. But Lola, who is probably thinking about lectures in which students do 'look at' the visual displays used by lecturers and listen to what they 'say' and 'talk about', does not recognise these as metaphors but rather interprets them literally – which, for her, leads naturally to another source of visual and verbal information: the television. Thus, repeating and elaborating on each other's words may help provide coherence to a conversation and allow participants to develop a topic ('look for' is repeated and elaborated as 'look at'), but when this involves metaphor, the possibilities for misunderstanding are high, if interlocutors are not aware that each may be using the same words with literal rather than metaphorical senses, and vice versa.

What happens when metaphorical gestures are misunderstood?

The use of gesture to accompany one's metaphors can also cause problems, as is illustrated in the following extract from a tutorial. In this extract, the lecturer uses an upward-pointing gesture to accompany her speech when talking about 'outward-looking' organisations. In fact she uses this gesture twice to accompany the same phrase, as she is indicating the top part of a diagram on a flipchart, which represents different types of organisations:

http://youtu.be/muvL_eCEMws



Alice	some have a very <u>inward focus</u> and some have a very ^ <u>outward focus...</u>
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<http://youtu.be/gDU-5M1qg9w>



Alice	And then..the organisation which is decentralised but has a very ^ <u>outward focus</u> we can think of <u>open</u> systems...
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At a later stage of the tutorial, the student produced the expression 'upward-focused' organisations, which does not exist in English and which was not used by the lecturer. It may have been that he processed her upward gesture semantically and incorporated this into his understanding of the nature of the organisations:

<http://youtu.be/b0S5v73TBBs>



Karim	And there is another, did I mentions? which <u>about</u> the companies with decentralised and ^ <u>upward focused</u> like export orientated companies, I <u>guess</u>
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It is not always easy to know what to do about these sorts of misunderstandings as we are rarely in total control of our language and gestures and we may inadvertently be sending messages that we do not intend to send. One solution is to attend closely to the metaphors and gestures that are used by the student and to use the same or closely related metaphors and gestures when responding to their questions. Another is to attend carefully to one's own use of metaphors. It is to this area that we now turn.

Implications

How can we ensure that our metaphors are understood?

As we have seen, international students sometimes misinterpret metaphors in academic contexts or interpret them literally and misunderstandings can arise when different metaphors and gestures are used. One way to reduce the risk of this happening is to signal your uses of metaphor. This can be done either through the use of gesture or words.

Gestural signaling of metaphor use

Alice makes particularly effective use of gestures to signal the use of metaphor when speaking to international students. Her use of expansive gestures is clear

from the outset, particularly when compared with her use of gestures when speaking to native speakers. For example, in this first extract, she emphasises the words 'internal focus', by pointing her right forefinger down towards the floor. She does this just before producing the words themselves:

<http://youtu.be/vnzMzZC3Acc>



Alice	<p>and this one down here</p> <p>which is very centralised</p> <p>with a-a very kind of</p> <p>^ <u>internal focus</u>...</p>	<p>exaggeratedly points with R forefinger downwards from the centre of the body</p>
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When asked about this particular gesture, the lecturer commented that she was indeed putting in more 'effort' with him and was, to a certain extent, 'acting' at this point. Other examples of these 'exaggerated' gestures include the following, where she illustrates 'freedom' with an expansive hand movement and 'closeness' with a kind of hugging gesture.



<http://youtu.be/aBDa9Kdhr7E>

Alice	<p>we think of it as</p> <p>the human relations er type of culture where..</p> <p>people <u>have</u> a lot of freedom to do what they want...It's not so centralised..</p> <p>They've <u>got a lot of freedom</u></p> <p>But they're very <u>close</u> to each other</p>	<p>Both hands move rapidly upwards and outwards palms opening</p> <p>Arms coming together, hands overlapping</p>
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This is a good example of ‘dramatic contrast’, a rhetorical technique in which two contrasting ideas are juxtaposed for maximum impact. Although the contrast is not necessarily clear in the language, it is very clear in the gestures. Thus the gestures in this sequence contribute to the overall coherence of the discourse by emphasising the antonymic relationship between the two ideas. They are thus serving an important discourse function.

Other ‘signaling’ gestures are used to accompany potentially difficult vocabulary items, such as ‘underpinning’ in the following example:

<http://youtu.be/vnzMzZC3Acc>



Alice	motivations... motivations er involved <u>underpinning</u> these different quadrants	RH palm up, claw shape, fingers move in and out twice
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The gesture in this example enhances the dynamic nature of the metaphor as it involves movement. ‘Underpinning’ could be read either as a stationary state or as a dynamic process. This particular gesture highlights its dynamic nature.

Another signaling gesture involves the removal of a lecturer’s glasses to represent ‘looking at’ and the placing of her glasses on the end of her nose to represent ‘close detailed work’. The speaker below, Alice, does this a lot when referring to both literal and metaphorical concepts (here: mentally considering something is metaphorically construed as physically looking at it). In the following extract, the removal of her glasses co-occurs with the term ‘looking for jobs’:


<http://youtu.be/ZO2nd6GmdvM>



Alice	<p>So if we're <u>looking at</u> organisations</p> <p>^and if you're thinking <u>about</u></p> <p><u>looking for jobs</u></p> <p>it's quite a nice idea to think <u>about</u> what sort of organisation you'd want to be working for</p>	<p>Removes glasses</p> <p>Spreads hands wide, palms up</p>
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It is often the case that the students pick up on the gestures and use them themselves, as we can see in the following extract from Alice and Charlie:

<http://youtu.be/3fbPtFuOtlc>



Alice	<p>it was like money is sort of energy ..</p> <p>you know ..</p>	<p>Hands closed together</p>
Charlie	<p>Hm hm (nodding)</p>	
Alice	<p>and if you keep it moving round</p> <p>^ ..it <u>works</u></p>	<p>Expansive waving of both hands</p>
Charlie	<p>Right yeah</p>	
Alice	<p>but if you put it in a box</p> <p>and count it</p> <p>it doesn't <u>do</u> anything.</p>	<p>Hands come together</p>
Charlie	<p>Hm hm (nodding)</p>	

<http://youtu.be/sLRkRnntEWE>



Alice	<p>and for me it was so frightening to let go .. of control.</p>	giving gesture with both hands
Charlie	<p>I think .. if you let go of the control a little bit by little bit gradually I think .. you won't worry that much but if you do it suddenly just like .. you really keep control of them from you know up until fifteen ... you will worry much more.</p>	<p>Giving gesture with both hands Hands spread out palms facing each other</p>

Thus we can see that when speaking to international students, Alice uses plenty of supporting gestures and that the students appear to echo her use of both the words and the gestures when describing theories back to her. There could be several reasons students repeat words and gestures in this way. It could be that it is a part of the learning process (they are, after all learning both new language and new concepts), or it could serve an interpersonal relationship-building function, perhaps linked to the unequal power relationship between the student and the lecturer. It may also indicate a lack of confidence on the part of the students

who perhaps prefer to stick closely to the metaphoric construals provided by the lecturer.

John also makes good use of gesture to support his metaphors, as we can see in this extract where he entwines his fingers to illustrate the bringing together of disciplines:

<http://youtu.be/RFSEM3iOfx8>



John	Yeah, so that's applied linguistics, so it works quite well with your other things because you're doing translation which is a bit practical, and you're doing conversation, also practical, then you're doing TELLING, so you're learning	Fingers entwined
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In places, John uses gesture to support easily understood, literal uses of language, such as the word 'long' in the following extract:

<http://youtu.be/f8YGujB93f8>



John	An essay. Have you written long essays in English <u>before</u> ?	Hands stretched out, facing each other horizontally in a line
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In contrast, he does not always make use of supporting gestures when conveying difficult abstract concepts, such as the notion of 'view' in the following extract:

<http://youtu.be/a1QWF3CTrEc>



John	yeah, yeah, I agree the best way I think to, to, to evaluate <u>things</u> , to get a <u>view on things</u> is to compare them, so once you've studied more <u>things</u> you'll have a better <u>basis</u> for comparing <u>things</u> you'll be able to compare <u>things across</u>	No gesture
Lola	In Spain, I think here teachers teach really good	


In the opening turn, John is trying to clear up a misunderstanding that has lasted throughout a substantial part of the tutorial. He wants to convey to Lola that it is important to engage in critical thinking when writing about her linguistic subjects. She does not understand this and thinks that he is asking if she is critical of the teachers. He uses abstract metaphors (e.g. 'view on things', 'basis for comparing things', 'compare things across') to communicate these notions but Lola appears not to understand him. As we saw earlier, with John and Lola's different uses of 'look', Lola has a tendency to interpret such metaphorical uses of language literally and when John talks about comparisons in terms of space ('compare things across'), the space that the student focuses on is that between the UK and her own country: she does not grasp his intended meaning. However, it is possible that if John had supported these difficult uses of language with gesture, this might have helped. As we will see below, students who are planning to study in English-speaking universities need to be prepared for this sort of idiomatic way of talking about academic mechanisms.

The use of supporting gestures therefore appears to be important when we use metaphor in academic tutorials with international students. Furthermore, studies have shown that teachers who use a lot of gesture are more likely to be well perceived by their students than teachers who use little gesture (Sime, 2008). In order to extend our range of gestures, we could perhaps make video recordings of ourselves teaching, and use this to critically evaluate how we use gesture and whether our use of gesture can be improved.

Linguistic signaling of metaphor use


Metaphors are often signaled linguistically through the use of discourse markers such as 'like', 'kind of' and 'sort of' (Goatly, 1997: Chapter 6). These can be very useful for international students:

<http://youtu.be/ZD2bIIITDOvJ>




Alice	reas .. if you just think ^ .. let's go .. it all .. it was like money is sort of <u>energy</u> .. you know .. and if you keep it moving round ^ .. it works	hands intertwined
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http://youtu.be/89L_vJMthFc



Alice	so they don't get more money back they just .. yeah .. it doesn't <u>flow</u> . they sort of put it in a drawer .. there's that <u>thing</u> in the bible isn't there? err	points away
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<http://youtu.be/tzLq5-d9NSo>



Alice	ute. and good at getting grants .. and .. pulling in the money .. all that sort of thing. quite dynamic. and this one here .. down here .. the goal orie	pulling action
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It is interesting to note how in these examples, Alice also uses gestures to reinforce her examples.

Another way to linguistically signal one's use of metaphors more clearly is to introduce them as explicit similes. In the following extract, Alice signals the metaphor prison with the discourse marker 'like'. This helps the student to notice it and he then uses it himself:

<http://youtu.be/vvEVHZRlnIA>



Alice	So it's like a <u>prison</u> really
Karim	Ah I guess that's maybe a <u>prison</u> For the employee Yes well

Thus we have seen that metaphor can serve as a powerful source of understanding in academic tutorials, particularly when it well signaled through the use of either gestures or discourse markers. For this reason, it may be useful to prepare students to use metaphor and gesture when they go abroad. In the following section we look at how this might be done.

How can we prepare students for their year abroad at a British university?

Studies have shown that some lecturers who are experienced communicators with international students tend to avoid using a lot of metaphor. We can see this in the following extracts from the tutorial with Debbie, the American lecturer at the Spanish university and Helena, the Polish student studying at that university:

http://youtu.be/_653gXJhJm4
<http://youtu.be/FJFpctxlnaE>



Debbie	Okay, so you were all studying the same subject, all right and then you were able to ask each other questions and urm <u>clear up</u> any doubts you may have <u>had</u> . Okay, so then I'm assuming that the place where you study there's doesn't have a TV, there's no music on or
Helena	Oh, yeah, I'm not a good study when something is <u>going on</u> near me
Debbie	Mm-hm
Helena	I have to be calm and silent
Debbie	Mm-hm
Helena	Mm everything must be silent
Debbie	Okay, all right. Urm, then you found it by <u>sharing</u> your ideas after studying you were able to help each other and you understood the material better

Helena	Yes. If I had some problems then they tell about it and when I hear something from my friend I'm able to remember it better. Then, when I read by myself.
Debbie	All right, when you guys were studying together, did you speak <u>in</u> Polish or <u>in</u> English?
Helena	Mostly <u>in</u> Polish
Debbie	Okay, all right. Ur, then do you <u>have</u> a specific time of day that you tend to study, like I don't know some time <u>in</u> the afternoon or how many hours or
Helena	Weekends are the best time to study, because during the week I am very tired, but if I have to I study, but weekends are, the days that I <u>spend</u> most time for learning
Debbie	Okay and do you <u>spend</u> all day, usually, both days all day?
Helena	Mmm. Usually almost all Saturday, and part of Sunday
Debbie	Mm-hm, okay, and when you're studying do you <u>take breaks</u> ?
Helena	Yes, but not very <u>long breaks</u> , just to eat dinner because when I study I'm not able to stop studying because I feel I have to, I have to study
Debbie	Mm-hm
Helena	And I <u>have</u> remorse when I <u>go out</u>
Debbie	Okay, so you just continue studying and do you, you don't feel guilty during the breaks do you? I mean, you do have to eat?
Helena	Ah, no, no

There are a number of ways of naming the different learning activities students can engage in: they can 'go over' or 'revise' their notes, look at them closely ('study' them), do summaries, or memorise the contents, among other things. However, in this conversation, all these processes are being called 'studying'. In Spanish, the verb '*estudiar*' is a 'all-purpose' verb to denote a number of these activities, and Debbie may well have found her students whose L1 is Spanish use the English equivalent verb to denote a wide range of learning activities. She appears to be using it here in order to accommodate to what she anticipates may be problematic uses of English for her interlocutor, and seems to be avoiding other verbs and phrases to talk about learning activities carried on outside class. This kind of speech accommodation is likely to be far from infrequent in university tutorials held in English outside English-speaking countries. The vast majority of students Debbie interacts with do not speak English as their L1, and she is used to anticipating problems in communication by avoiding what she has learnt are problematic uses of language.

At the same time, however, the avoidance of potentially obscure uses of language has two consequences. On the one hand, Debbie's use of English sounds somewhat unidiomatic if we compare it to the way the lecturers at the UK university talk. Her use of the phrase 'continue studying' sounds a little unnatural and 'go on working' might have been more appropriate, so she is not really modeling the kind of language uses this student might hear in a British university. More importantly, if one of the purposes of a tutorial such as this is to help the student to make better use of her time or to understand the study skills

she employs in order to suggest ways in which different types of activities might help in different ways, avoiding opportunities to employ the lexical richness of the target language to describe them also prevents the lecturer and the student from fully exploring these possibilities. Every micro-interaction is an opportunity for learning and students pick up what they hear. In the following extract, we see a potentially more valuable way of accommodating one's speech to a student's limited understanding is to use alternative forms to express the same idea. Here, Debbie uses the phrase 'express your opinion' more frequently than the more idiomatic (and metaphorical) 'give your opinion':

<http://youtu.be/kiU3Kz4TIFc>



Debbie	Okay. And th- the compositions that you had to write, did you have to express your opinion in any of them?
Helena	No, if I had to express my opinion it would be easier, but it was like no opinion, just writing, I don't know, I sh- how should I call it, like des- description
Debbie	^okay
Helena	Something like this, and I <u>find it harder</u>
Debbie	It's <u>harder</u> . How <u>about</u> for your other classes, your literature classes, did you have to ever write anything, prepare any, a written piece of work where you
Helena	^ urm, no
Debbie	<u>Gave</u> your opinion
Helena	We had to prepare for example some quotations from the books and we analysed it just orally.
Debbie	I see, all right so do you have in the coursework you're doing here in Spain, do you have to write anything where you express your opinion, or <u>turn</u> in a work where you express your opinion?

In contrast, in a tutorial at a British university, the native speaker lecturer does not use 'express' your opinion, but favours the more idiomatic 'give' your opinion:

<http://youtu.be/x9vqOHUmMk8>



John	I think that's very good because sometimes people, sometimes people think, I'll read this and I'll just <u>give</u> my opinion, but yes, I think it's a good idea to read as many things as possible and to try and do this.
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In the interaction between Debbie and Helena, the latter picks up and repeats 'express your opinion' rather than 'give your opinion', possibly because this is the form Debbie uses most frequently. That is, as we saw earlier in the conversation between Alice and Karim, if alternative ways of expressing an idea are used by a lecturer, students may pick up on one (possibly the less idiomatic one) and re-use it. So Karim paid attention to the gesture Alice used while uttering 'outward-focus' and later produced 'upward-focused'. In re-using their lecturers' way of expressing something, both students have shown their understanding of what has been said and that they are paying attention.

In turn, this may suggest ways for lecturers to accommodate to L2 speakers' difficulties in understanding metaphorical language uses in ways that do not involve complete avoidance of metaphor or result in impoverishment of the interaction. For example, if John had used 'think about' or 'consider' alongside 'look at' when talking to Lola, this could have alerted her to the fact that he was talking about mental processes rather than visual perception. At the same time, Debbie might have used a wider range of expressions alongside 'study' in order to develop the topic while at the same time making it clear that the possibly unfamiliar expressions ('go over your notes', for example) are related to those the student already knows. Avoidance of metaphor in response to a real or imagined difficulty in understanding is not the answer.

Recommendations

Key points to bear in mind for lecturers working at British universities

In this paper we have seen a range of metaphors being used successfully and less successfully by lecturers working at a British university when talking to international students. We have seen that the use of metaphor has a great deal to offer in terms of its ability to develop shared understanding of difficult concepts but that it can present problems leading at times to misunderstandings and a tendency in students to stray from the topic. In order to avoid the pitfalls of metaphor use, we would like to conclude with a number of tips for making the most of the potential that metaphor has to offer in academic tutorials:

- Try to use metaphors carefully and employ linguistic signaling devices, such as 'sort of' and 'kind of' as well as explicit similes to support your use of metaphor.
- Emphasise metaphoric meanings through the use of gesture where appropriate.
- Check for signs that the students may have misunderstood everyday metaphors and 'small words' such as prepositions.
- Look out for strange topic changes on the part of the student as these may indicate that he/she has interpreted your metaphor literally or in the wrong way.

- Look out for metaphors and gestures that are used by the students and try to encourage or elaborate on them as appropriate.

Key points to bear in mind for lecturers working abroad who are preparing students to study at a British university

We have seen in this paper that metaphor is often used in academic settings at British universities and it is important to prepare your students for this. In order to provide them with the maximum amount of support, we recommend that you follow these recommendations:

- Try to avoid falsely accommodating to the avoidance of metaphor by your students (use things like phrasal verbs and natural English).
- Support your students' understanding of metaphor through gesture.

Notes

1. Names have been changed throughout.
2. Speech was transcribed according to turns at talk. In general, very short pauses were indicated with a comma (,), medium pauses with two dots (..) and longer pauses with three dots (...). Words spoken noticeably more loudly were transcribed in all capital letters. Other prosodic features and overlaps in speech were not marked since the focus here is on the words themselves.
3. The salient metaphors in our examples are underlined.
4. Words that are accompanied by gestures are shown in bold.
5. In the gesture transcription, RH = right hand, LH = left hand.

References and Further Reading

A great deal has been written about metaphor and the problems that it presents to language learners. Less has been written about the advantages that it affords in cross-cultural communication. Here is a short, introductory reading list for those of you who are interested in learning more about the topic.

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12

Computers and learner autonomy: trends and issues

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Introduction

This project examines the practices and perceptions of non-native adult student speakers of English (NNS) working on computer-based materials (CbMs) in self-study contexts in their own countries. With reference to Thai and Arabic university students it asks the following questions: Which CbMs do such students access and why? To what extent do they perceive such CbMs as assisting with their language studies? Where access to material is available anywhere and anytime, where do students prefer to work and why? What e-literacy skills are employed? To what extent do students make use of social networking sites in English? Do they see computer-mediated-communication (CMC) as influencing the type of language that they use? What are the policy implications of the answers to these questions for the development and direction of self access centres (SACs)? Furthermore, what are the implications for the theory and practice of CALL today? In answering these questions the project addresses some key issues of Information and Communication Technology and new technologies; as well as aspects of teacher education; training and intercultural communication; and the social, economic and political aspects of English.

The research issues

Language pedagogy over the past 25 years has seen a significant shift from teacher to learner-centred approaches and this notion is frequently realised in SACs which have now become an essential feature for many providers. A SAC here refers to the physical location where both paper-based materials (PbMs) and CbMs are made available for students to use in order to study English by themselves. It is worth noting, however, that different centres use different terminology and in this particular study KMUTT uses the term Self Access Learning Centre (SALC) whilst ZU uses Learning Enhancement Centre (LEC). Another frequently used term is Language Resource Centre (LRC). For the purposes of this paper, henceforth, we shall use the term SAC as this is most commonly and consistently used in the literature. Typically SACs stock a range of materials, but it is CbMs such as the internet, MS Office and other dedicated language learning software materials, which tend to dominate. CbMs is a term which in a language pedagogy context was first coined by Jarvis (2004) in his study of how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) providers at British universities make use of computer applications in language teaching and learning both in and outside the classroom. CbMs cover generic software programs such as the word processor and the internet, as well as programs which are specifically dedicated to language teaching and learning and as such are characterised as having a direct tutorial function such as commercially available multi-media based packages. There is of course some overlap here; the internet for example includes a huge amount of authentic material which is not designed specifically for language teaching and learning, as well as specific websites with language practice material. The specific CbMs used in this study are listed in item 9 of the questionnaire in the Appendix. CbMs are the materials which taken together form the practical realisations of the field which has predominantly, but not exclusively, come to be known as CALL which can be defined as ‘... learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies ...’ (Egbert, 2005: 4). The links between CbMs and learner autonomy are well-

established in that students are assumed to visit a SAC and consciously work on a particular CbM in order to practise their English.

The value of learner autonomy in language learning is long established and well-documented (Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1987, 1992; Ellis and Sinclair 1989; Holec, 1980; Little, 1991; Naiman *et al.* 1978) and for the purposes of this study we shall take a broad definition of learner autonomy to include any self-directed practice and/or use of the English language. The relationship between CbMs and autonomous learning in SACs is also well-established. Schmenk (2005: 107) comments that 'The popularity of learner autonomy may be at least partially related to the rise of computer technology and the growing importance of computers in language learning environments worldwide'. Furthermore, Warschauer and Shetzer (2003: 176) observe that 'flexible, autonomous, lifelong learning is essential to success in the age of information'. For many years now most publications concerned with setting up and managing SACs include some discussion on the role of computers, (Carvalho, 1993; Esch, 1994; Gardner and Miller, 1999; Little, 1989; Sheerin, 1989) and today it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive of SACs without them.

Jarvis (2008a: 369) however, characterises the links between CbMs, SACs and learner autonomy as well-established and yet problematic '... in that there is little in the literature which examines what students actually do in such centres and why; empirical data on the practices and perceptions of learners is noticeably missing ...'. In recent years, several UK-based studies (Jarvis and Szymczyk, 2010; Jarvis and Pastuszka, 2008; Jarvis, 2008a; Jarvis, 2008b; Figura and Jarvis, 2007), with adult NNS of English studying at a British university, have attempted to address this shortfall. These studies have examined language learners' perceptions, practices and strategies when working on a range of CbMs in SACs and other self-study contexts such as the home. A number of significant issues for pedagogy and policy have arisen out of this work. Students multi-task and use both their native language (L1) and the English language (L2) when working on a variety of CbMs and 'This undermines what might be characterised as a traditional view of language learning which tends to stress an individual activity which is completed in the target language' (Figura and Jarvis, 2007: 460). The role of CbMs is important, but '... it would be a mistake for practitioners and other resource providers to slavishly follow the digitalised medium route for everything ... the potential opportunities offered by a blended approach which combines both digitalised and paper-based materials should not be overlooked and the implications for SAC design need to be addressed' (Jarvis and Szymczyk, 2010: 38). Furthermore, NNS tend to view a wide range of CbMs as helping with language learning irrespective of whether they have an obvious teaching or learning function and this has implications for our conceptualisation of CALL. The physical location of a SAC, in an 'anywhere-anytime' era, cannot be overlooked; 'where the physical worlds and the virtual worlds meet is a significant factor and one which warrants further investigation' (Jarvis, 2008b: 137). E-literacy, an ability to access, make sense of and manage huge quantities of information in digitalised mediums in English, was also found to be problematic for some students. This study makes a further contribution to these issues, but in the context of NNS working in their Thai or Arab home (L1) environment.

Historically most CALL research has tended to examine the role and value of an individual CbM as applied in a very controlled class-based context. However, as we have seen, the recent studies cited above have now begun to examine student practices and perceptions when working on a range of CbMs in less controlled situations, but surprisingly such work has not yet been conducted in countries where the vast majority of students actually learn the English language i.e. in their native country. The studies by Jarvis and his colleagues were all conducted in the UK amongst NNS studying English whose exposure to a variety of forms of English, including face-to-face everyday contact beyond both the classroom and the SAC was unlimited. This contrasts with the experience of most overseas learners whose access to English outside the classroom is frequently restricted to CbMs in general and internet-based interaction in particular as well as some CbMs which have been specifically purchased by the institution and are usually available through SACs or a library. Clearly, such students do not experience the same type of exposure to the English language as those who are studying in the UK.

It is against a background of huge interest and massive growth and investment in SACs that the practices and perceptions of these students warrants investigation and our key research questions, as documented in our Introduction, arise.

The research methodology

The research methodology employs both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The former is used to explore ‘the measurement and analysis of casual relationships between variables, not processes’ whilst the latter allows for a focus on ‘processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 8). The quantitative element involved asking closed-ended questions via a paper-based questionnaire, which was piloted and amended as required. The Appendix documents the questionnaire used, and for convenience purposes the fully collated data has also been added. In total 123 students were surveyed in this way. Participants from ZU were studying English at foundation level whilst those from KMUTT were studying a credit-bearing English module at undergraduate level. The language level of the students varied from pre to upper intermediate. Questionnaires were distributed across a series of classes by project facilitators and other members of staff. Data generated using such techniques arguably affords ‘a good deal of precision and clarity’ (McDonough and McDonough, 2004: 171) and allows quick and simple answers (Oppenheim, 2001). However, such techniques allow for only limited responses and to overcome this, semi-structured interviews in the form of focus groups and/or one-to-one interviews were also employed. Such techniques give participants ‘some power and control’ (Nunan, 2005: 150) and open up possibilities for discovering new and important realities by accident (Adler and Adler, 1998). These focus groups and interviews were conducted by the principal researcher whilst visiting the partner institutions in January and February 2010. Students who returned the questionnaire were given the opportunity to indicate whether they were prepared to participate in this second stage of the project and a total of 33 students opted to do so and had availability at a mutually convenient date and time. These sessions were recorded using a small digital recording device which was simply placed on the

table between the interviewer and interviewee(s). In this way, some of the usual formality of interviews could be avoided in order to hopefully put the students more at ease and allow them to feel free to speak without the worry or distraction of a microphone (Mackey and Gass 2005: 206). Responses were analysed and are, in our reported findings section, cross referenced with questionnaire data in order to develop and support pertinent issues, as required. A generic coding system is used to refer to each group of students, which helps protect individual identities. The code is according to nationality and gender and is as follows:

Thai Male = TM

Thai Female = TF

Emirati Male = EM

Emirati Female = EF.

It is felt that this combination of research techniques allows for some degree of triangulation. In reporting what students said, direct quotations are used, the English has not been corrected as meaning is clear despite a number of language errors.

Limitations

All studies have their limitations and this one is no exception. Whilst the combined research techniques adopted here have given participants a voice to report what they do when using computers in autonomous contexts, we have not attempted to empirically measure what actually occurs. This study explicitly focuses on the learners' perspective since it is felt that this is all too often neglected in the literature. However, further future studies which employ observational techniques would certainly add to this work, but it is recognised that data collection of this type is extremely time consuming and therefore costly in terms of human resource.

Research ethics

All precautions and procedures were put in place from the start, and maintained during and after data collection and analysis, in order to ensure that every effort was made to minimise any risk to the participants (Seliger and Shohamy 1989: 196). The preamble to the questionnaire itself included an explanation of the study and an informed consent section which participants were invited to sign. This section advised students that participation was entirely optional and that they would not be disadvantaged in any way should they choose not to participate. The end of the questionnaire included a section which allowed participants to indicate whether or not they were willing to participate in the second stage of the study. Furthermore, before the second stage interviews and focus groups commenced, the researcher reminded students that their participation was voluntary. Names are nowhere mentioned so that anonymity may be upheld.

Results and discussion

Our discussion of results is framed around a number of sub-headings which stem from the questionnaire itself, with data from the interviews and focus groups integrated within these sub-headings. It is felt that this approach best allows for

systematic coverage of our research questions and arising issues. The subsequent implications section then goes on to briefly discuss what the findings might mean for the field of CALL and for SACs. Here we will also offer a possible hypothesis regarding how some CbMs are being used by students beyond SACs. Finally, the conclusion considers revised ways of conceptualising the field beyond the computer in “C”ALL and the direction that further research might take.

Digital natives and frequency of computer usage

The participants in this study, as can be seen from the data in response to question 1 (Q1), were clearly at ease with computers in their everyday life. They were without exception frequent users with the vast majority (74 per cent) making use of them every day. These learners are digital natives (Prensky, 2001) in that not only have they known nothing but digitalised mediums throughout their lives but they also make very frequent use of such mediums; moreover the English language, as will become apparent, has a significant role within this. Question 3 pointed to a wide range of website applications being used particularly Google, YouTube and Wikipedia. The participants in the interviews and focus groups elaborated by talking about how they used computers in both L1 and L2 to access and transmit a wide range of information of both an academic and social nature in both text, still picture and video forms. Participants use social networking sites to chat, to post information and to play games; they download films and watch TV and regularly do so in their L1 and in the L2. The one aspect which was noticeably missing from this extensive list of activities was online shopping – none of the participants from either institution mentioned this and when asked about it typical responses were: *‘don’t trust’* (TF); *‘Thai people don’t like online shopping’* (TM); and *‘I prefer the shopping centre’* (EF).

One of the defining characteristics of the digital native is their capacity to have several applications operating simultaneously, or to multi-task, and in the context of this study such multi-tasking involved using a combination of CbMs for both academic and social purposes as typified by one EM comment *‘I do many things chatting to friends, checking soccer games, listening to music, Facebook and study’* (laughter from others in the focus group). Indeed, in questionnaire item 10a a massive 81.1 per cent reported tending to work on several applications. A TM reported typically having at least seven applications open at any one time and *‘... at least half are in English’*. When asked whether having so much going on presented any problems the overwhelming response was that it did not *‘... you get used to it’* (EM). However, there was recognition amongst some of the participants that multi-tasking prevented them from focusing on their academic work, for example one EF said *‘... sometime it prevents us from working’*. There was also considerable appreciation by these digital natives that such CbMs make things easier than was the case in a pre-internet era: TF *‘... now it’s easy because everything modern’*; TM *‘... computer is comfortable to learn everything you can link it, everything you want to know. It is a global network’*; TM *‘I think this technology is a big difference’*. However, there was also some recognition that such CbMs may be impacting in negative ways as epitomised by an EF *‘... wasting our time and we don’t sit with our families anymore’*. Such a comment is a useful reminder that the social impact of CbMs is not always seen as a positive one.

It is also worth noting here that our data sets are likely to under-represent the frequency with which digitalised mediums per se are used, as the question asks only about computers and not mobile phones and other devices. We will return to this in our discussion of further research in the conclusion.

The significance of the English Language

The significance of the English language for all students when using computers outside of their studies is clear to see from the response to Q2. A tiny 3.3 per cent indicated that they use only L1, compared to a massive combined total of 86.6 per cent who use both L1 and L2. This breaks down as mainly L1 but some English (64.2 per cent) and mainly English but some L1 (24.4 per cent). A further 8.1 per cent reported using only English. We have already noted that responses to Q3 included a number of web sites and it was references to Google, YouTube and Wikipedia which dominated the replies. Comments from the qualitative data provided more detailed insights into the significance of English for these students for example: TM *'I like games in English ... it's easy to understand games in English'*, a TF uses computers mostly in English and if she does not understand *'... I can guess and if I don't know I search online dictionary Longdo, it's pretty good, it's easy to use'*. However, the dominance of the English language on the internet can also make it difficult for some students as exemplified by a comment from an EF *'Sometimes it is a problem because we don't understand some words and we feel confused'*.

It is clear that the participants recognised the significance of accessing information in English from the internet in terms of the hegemony of the English language itself, as well as the quality of information available when compared to their L1. The use of Google to access information in English dominated but other applications were also used as typified by an EM who said *'... mostly Google, sometimes ask.com or dictionary.com'* and when asked about which language he used he replied *'... mostly English ... in English it is clear ... it will give us more research of the things we want ... if you search for a book (a reference to e-books) they don't translate to the Arabic language'*. Another TM mentioned how accessing information is easy and Google helps correct his English *'... it's not difficult, it's easy, sometimes I wrong word but Google corrects it'*. A TM stated *'In English there are many information'*. An EF reported using keywords in English *'... because in English there are more information'*, but another EF then went on to add *'... it depends on what I need'*. A third EF mentioned that *'I think in English there is specific thing, it explains more'*. A large number of focus group participants referred to Wikipedia and how much better the English version is compared to the Arabic or Thai versions. A TM noted that both Google and Wikipedia *'... can help me everything in English, in Thai it's not clear'*. As regards the quantity of information in English a TM noted *'I use the internet in English to watch something that in Thai they don't have'*. And with specific reference to Google a TM stated *'... sometimes in Thai it's junk, in English it has more information'* and that with YouTube in English *'... it's more easy to upload video, watching music video ... it's difficult to find in Thailand'*. Many students felt that access and exposure to such material was helping them, to some extent at least, to learn and practise English but there was also some recognition that access to authentic material in English on the web could be enjoyed as well

as helping with language in autonomous contexts. A TM for example reported using YouTube for *'comic show in English to relax'*. Whilst an EM said of YouTube *'... it helps us, if you find something enjoy you will get good'*. There also seems to be some recognition of the state's interference with L1-based content: a TM noted *'... in English they have more information, in Thai you cannot find it, I tried before. Thai block some sites'*.

Finally, in addition to social content there was also some appreciation of the value of CbMs for academic content in English on the web. A TF for example mentioned *'... I like to search information about homework (Engineering) by English language, sometimes both ... some topics it is necessary to use English because it have many information that Thai not have'*.

Social networking, CMC and a changing language

Item 10 g) indicates that 63.9 per cent of participants use English to communicate with friends from other countries and many reported making friends via Facebook. A typical response, in this case from an EM was, *'... they tell you about their friends and we share ... it's nice sir to see pictures, tags, send messages, games ... get your friends in a group like a soccer game'*. In item 10 d) over half (52.4 per cent) reported that they *'... use a different type of English when social networking to that which I am taught'* and there was a widespread view that such CMC made English easier; a TF said *'...it's very easy, don't have grammar ... when I type grammar it's too complex'* and an EM explained how he picks up such language *'... we practice on the internet, we learn from friend ... we find it easy so we do it ... it's better, it's easier it's shorter'*. An EF elaborated on the ways that CMC is changing English *'... by chatting they use a different language, a new one, like TYT (take your time) ... and numbers like letters'*. Comments such as these point to autonomous learners making intelligent decisions about the type of English language to use in an online social environment. Indeed, when asked if such changes presented a language problem for them most did not seem to think so, however one EF reported *'... sometimes when I write an essay I forget how to spell it, only letters like U (you)...'*

Finally, it should be noted that the value of social networking and the extent to which it helps students practise English was not universally embraced with EFs being particularly critical and the following EF comment received some endorsement from focus group classmates *'I don't like, it's silly'*.

E-literacy

The huge amount of information available with CbMs in general and the internet in particular is not without its problems and how well we access, reference, save and transmit such information is an issue of e-literacy. At first glance data from the questionnaires would suggest that students do not generally struggle with e-literacy as might be expected from such digital natives. Item 10 c) indicates that the vast majority (78.7 per cent) regularly back up their work and item 10 i) shows that over half (57.4 per cent) do not report difficulties finding information. Furthermore with item 10 j) 76.2 per cent reported knowing how to reference material in English from the internet and there was certainly some evidence from the qualitative data of reported good e-literacy practices as indicated by the following comments: EM *'I save my work on CD, it's important'*; EF *'I save in*

favourites; TF *'I have a flash drive'*. Of all the e-literacy based statements in the questionnaire arguably the most problematic for a significant minority was item 10 e) where an overall of 41 per cent reported that reading on the internet is more difficult than reading from paper, in the case of Emirati students, however, this figure was significantly higher at ET 54.4 per cent. Reading hypertext is, of course, potentially problematic because of its non-linear nature and this would probably go some way to explaining such a response, a point which was acknowledged by an EF with the comment *'... sometimes reading on the computer is confusing'*. This is certainly an area which warrants further investigation; the issues of reading in an online environment is an under-explored field and yet NNS, as this study demonstrates, do so much of their reading in precisely such contexts. Furthermore, it is suggested that reading in an online environment should not be narrowly defined to hypertext on websites as it is much broader and involves reading any number of CbMs on a computer, such as MS Office help files and many other software programs – notwithstanding Thai or Arabic versions so much of which is in English.

Despite the quantitative data pointing to few e-literacy issues the interviews and focus groups did reveal problematic areas with accessing information, as a TM pointed out *'When I use Google I type 1 word I can get 1 million websites for me, but I don't know which website is the best for me ... sometime they give the information in a different way'*. Another TM reported on a problem with managing or saving information and recently losing homework *'... last time it's just a week ago. I tried to get them back because my deadline tomorrow'*. Furthermore, there was no evidence from the discussions of more sophisticated e-literacy skills such as saving websites or files in a virtual environment (e.g. in the case of websites using Delicious.com) which allows bookmarks to be accessed anywhere, anytime and from any computer.

Integration of CbMs in language pedagogy

Bax (2003: 23-24) refers to a future where computers are *'... an integral part of every lesson, like a pen or a book. Teachers and students will use them without fear or inhibition, and equally without an exaggerated respect for what they can do. They will not be the centre of any lesson but they will play a part in almost all. They will be completely integrated into all other aspects of classroom life, alongside coursebooks, teachers and notepads. They will almost go unnoticed'*. This is characterised as the *'normalisation of CALL'* and is a key issue in any discussion of trends and issues within the field. Data from Q4 suggests that we are a considerable way from normalisation, but also that the picture is extremely varied with 44.7 per cent of students at ZU using computers in the classroom either most days (ET 13.4 per cent) or two or three times a week (ET 31.3 per cent) compared to a total of only 5.4 per cent of students at KMUTT using them most days (TT 1.8 per cent) or two or three times a week (TT 3.6 per cent). One obvious explanation for this phenomenon is availability of equipment and support, but further work in this area is needed in order to more fully identify both the opportunities and limitations associated with normalisation.

Unless and until normalisation is realised CALL will continue to be primarily associated with autonomous learning and self-study contexts and this is fully

supported by the data in Q5. A significant cluster (68.4 per cent) of students make use of computers in their English language studies outside the classroom either two or three times a week (39 per cent) or once a week (29.4 per cent) with a further 15.4 per cent doing so most days of the week. Such a phenomenon was originally identified and documented by Jarvis (2004) in a study of all types English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at British Universities. Six years on, two different contexts, and little seems to have changed in terms of associating CALL with activities based outside the classroom. It therefore seems fair to assert that the use of computers for self-study purposes in English Language Teaching (ELT) is now well-established globally.

Location in self-study contexts

The responses to Q6 and Q7 show that the vast majority (79.5 per cent) of learners prefer to work at home when using CbMs to practise or learn English in self-study contexts. However, as we will go on to discuss shortly, the preference for studying in a SAC when using CbMs with a specific tutorial function is generally stronger. Furthermore, irrespective of CbM type it is clear that in term time the majority do make some limited use of the SAC with 41.8 per cent doing so 'a few times a month' followed by 26.2 per cent doing so 'once a week'. The qualitative data reflected a somewhat mixed picture with typical responses as follows: EM '*... here (SAC) is better to read stories, use CDs, read the newspaper, speaking with my teacher*', whilst an EF said '*... sometimes I work here because we have a library but at home is better, more comfortable, no one talks to you and focus, I have a lot of time, it's a quiet place*'. Another EF went on to add '*... but I need (SAC) to ask friend or a teacher*'. One TM works at the university '*... because when I am at home I do not use (computers) too much about learning, at home I want to be relax*'. In contrast another TM's view was more common '*I prefer at home ... it's very comfortable and have more concentration*'. Some of these comments point to the importance of SACs not primarily for their computer provisions, but for other reasons such as support and language advising from a teacher, or face-to-face interaction with classmates and friends and, as we will now go on to see, the role of other resources such as PbMs.

CbMs and PbMs

Responses to Q8 clearly demonstrate the importance of a combination of PbMs and CbMs in SACs. The majority of students (53.7 per cent) make use of both types of materials, but it is also worth noting that where students reported making use of only one type of material twice as many (31.4 per cent compared to 14.9 per cent) expressed a preference for paper over CbMs. These figures suggest that PbMs are a particularly important aspect of SAC provision and whilst today's SACs clearly need to include some computer provision, it is arguably PbMs and face-to-face contact with friends and a teacher, rather than CbMs which are more important. This data echoes the recent previously cited study by Jarvis and Szymczyk (2010) which points to the importance of including both PbMs as well as CbMs in SACs and highlights the significance of SAC design features which accommodate the use of paper often in conjunction with the computer – this is sometimes a factor which is overlooked in the rush to 'go digital' and the need to be seen to be providing 'state-of-the-art' facilities. It seems to be aspects other than CbMs which bring

“added value” to SACs. Indeed, responses to item 10 b) are important here since they suggest that outside the SAC the students’ preferences change significantly with 65.6 per cent indicating that they prefer computers to books. The fact that CbMs, unlike PbMs, are not location specific appears to be significant here – CbMs can be accessed anywhere and at any time, in contrast to most PbMs in SACs which are for reference only and cannot be taken out of the centre.

However, for the vast majority, tutorial CbMs which focus explicitly on practising English remain an important aspect of SAC provision. Excluding the Emirati-specific programs of Brain pop, Selfaccess.com and SIRS, the data in Q9 for CbMs which are most valued as helping to practise or learn English are all those which have a direct tutorial function. Online dictionaries are viewed as helping with language learning by 96.2 per cent; internet sites with English practice exercises are viewed as helping with language learning by 85.6 per cent and in the case of KMUTT the commercially available specific software of Tense Buster is viewed as helping with language learning by 94 per cent; My English by 96.2 per cent; Quartet Scholar by 84.3 per cent and at ZU Focus on Grammar by 90.4 per cent. All the other more generic CbMs in Q9, which do not have this direct tutorial function, have slightly or significantly lower scores on the ‘helping to practise or learn English’ scale (the highest being other internet sites in English with 80.8 per cent, the lowest being email with 68.4 per cent). With all these non-tutorial CbMs or generic programs we consistently see less of a tendency for students to use them in a SAC.

The qualitative data indicates that students appreciate the multi-media features that are now available to them, particularly the audio and video files of these tutorial CbMs. Indeed, the shift from exclusively text-based to multi media-based CbMs is arguably one of the defining features of tutorial CALL today and there is a range of free material available such as the online dictionary <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> and the pronunciation material available from http://cambridgeenglishonline.com/Phonetics_Focus/. However, in the case of Emirati students some of the commercially available material which has been purchased by the SAC namely Brain Pop, Selfaccess.com and SIRS were certainly less appreciated than the other examples of tutorial material. When asked about this in the interviews the comment by an EF typified the feeling ‘... *we prefer to practice grammar, Focus on Grammar is better than the others*’ – such a comment is a useful reminder of the need to consider learners’ preferences and learner styles when purchasing materials for SAC. Whilst it is certainly the case that students also used tutorial material elsewhere, beyond the SAC, the data does nevertheless suggest that in an ‘anywhere anytime’ era a dedicated physical location for use of specific language learning materials in both paper and digital formats remains important.

Overall the data in Q9 points on the one hand to a widespread recognition of the value of CbMs which have an explicit tutorial function and a high tendency to use them in SACs, and on the other hand, a recognition that other CbMs without a tutorial function also help students to some extent to practise and/or learn English, but less of a tendency to use these CbMs in the SAC. Our data sets point to a number of implications and issues for CALL and SACs.

Implications for CALL and SACs

In several respects this study suggests that the practices and perceptions of NNS working with computers in self-study contexts in their own country is similar to the various findings reported by this author (and co-authors) regarding NNS in a host country such as the UK. There is considerable reported practice of autonomous learning and the nature of such practice has been impacted upon by the technology itself. All students multi-task and use a combination of L1 and L2 and this suggests that the field of CALL needs to move away from looking at individual software programs in isolation as this is no longer how students work. All students recognise the value of CbMs, but this does not exclude a role for PbMs which, if anything, in SACs are preferred by many learners. There certainly seems to be little justification for the domination of CbMs over and above other resources. This finding is particularly important for policy-makers who are looking to set up or further develop a SAC as it suggests that an eclectic mix of self-study material is the most appropriate, which in turn has implications for the design and layout of SACs. It is likely to be the case that students will be using a combination of PbMs and CbMs at any one time and design features in terms of desk space, for example, need to adequately reflect this. Significantly, if SACs are to continue to address their remit of providing a physical location where students can work on a range of materials to practise their language then a clear and important implication is that they need to fully develop the 'added value' factors which make them unique. Such factors include an appropriate study environment where students can focus on getting on with their studies, with support as required. Specifically, 'added value' factors include: SAC language advisors; posters and other wall displays; a variety of PbMs and CbMs which allow for self-correction with appropriate classification, for example, in the case of PbMs through colour-coded levels for books and worksheets, and an easy to navigate interface of menu options for tutorial CbMs. It is also important to stress that SACs are places for face-to-face contact with classmates, language advisors and/or tutors, and the qualitative data suggests that this is important for many students. The internet allows students to access English 'anywhere anytime' and many are doing precisely this. The SAC allows them to learn English in a dedicated environment and that needs to remain their primary focus.

The tendency to make use of generic CbMs beyond the SAC is significant. It seems that when learners are learning English in L1 contexts, as in this study, they appear to be bringing the target language into their life and home in ways which are arguably not necessary for learners to do in a host country, where the target language is already all around. In host countries learners are exposed to English in their day-to-day interactions in life, on TV, in their classes (which it should be noted are usually multilingual). In L1 home countries such conditions do not prevail and the internet is an important source for accessing authentic language and for communicating in English.

Conclusions

This study has generated a considerable amount of quantitative and qualitative data and our analysis and discussions have inevitably focused on the most

important generic matters arising from this, however, we have certainly not exhausted all the issues. Indeed, the data sets from each institution might be usefully used to further develop, understand and formulate context-specific policy at institutional or national level, but such specificity is simply beyond the remit here. By way of conclusion consideration of emerging new possible frameworks for the field of CALL is considered together with a note of what has been achieved in this study and identification of where further research might lead.

Whilst traditional tutorial CALL CbMs continue to be one defining characteristic within the field, particularly in the context of SACs, they do not and should not of themselves define such centres: there is more to SACs than CbMs. Equally, there is more to learner autonomy than the physical location of the SAC, a point which is accentuated by the 'anywhere, anytime' availability of CbMs. However, responses from the Emirati students in particular suggest that learner views on which tutorial CbMs work and why (Q9), probably need to be more proactively taken account of when equipping SACs. It is also clear that the traditional view of CALL as CbMs that have a direct teaching or learning function are today but one part of a much wider range of CbM applications: there are emerging trends and developments which point to a more complex picture. Students access a wide range of CbMs of both a social and an academic nature at any one time and do so from a variety of possible places and in doing so significant exposure to the English language is encountered. In language pedagogy, Krashen (1982) originally made the distinction between learning which is viewed as conscious and acquisition which in contrast is unconscious: when applied to an electronic environment, unconscious acquisition is almost certainly taking place through exposure to authentic English from a variety of CbMs. Such acquisition is arguably as important in learner autonomy as CbMs which encourage direct practice of the language. Clearly, both conscious learning and unconscious exposure to authentic language assist the autonomous learner, but not necessarily in the same ways, and learning cultures (Jin and Cortazzi, 2009) as well as individual learning styles are likely to be significant variables. For Watson-Todd (2007) the changing role of the technology in English suggests a shift from CALL to computer assisted language use (CALU). However, even this fairly recent notion of CALU may be outdated since increasingly student interactions with digitalised mediums are via a range of devices either in addition to, or as an alternative to, computers. We are broadening from a field of CALL, or even CALU, which is dominated by computers towards other additional devices which can be characterised as Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), or perhaps more accurately, if we pursue our argument, Mobile Assisted Language Use (MALU). We have already discussed some of the ways in which CMC is changing language and some of the possibilities and challenges that arise out of this. Such issues are likely to become even more prevalent within a MALU environment where access is far more instant, is usually constant, and does not even require logging in to a networked computer. As Kukulska-Hulme (2009: 161) notes 'we are living in interesting times, in which teachers and learners must try to work together to understand how portable, wireless technologies may best be used for learning'. We have already identified a need for further work around the issues of reading in English in an online environment and within any MALU framework additional challenges to the ones already identified come into play,

not least because of the screen size of many devices. This study suggests that further work is needed within revised frameworks and that reading in an online environment appears to be a particularly pressing issue.

The study has provided a number of useful, relevant insights into current trends and issues. Above all, perhaps, it has demonstrated that learners in L1 contexts make use of CbMs not only through conscious learning, but also as a rich source of authentic material which arguably facilitates unconscious acquisition. They bring English, the dominant language of technology, into their everyday lives in numerous ways; such a trend is clearly likely to be continued with other mobile devices. This suggests new issues and opportunities for developing autonomy amongst NNS, the majority of whom, like the participants in this study, learn and acquire the English language in their home country and with historically unprecedented access to CbMs which help, to varying degrees, in their endeavours.

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Appendix – Questionnaire (with collated data)

Computers and learner autonomy: trends and issues

Notes:

1. This document is amended for data presentation purposes from the original questionnaire which was distributed to participants.
2. All data is presented in percentages (%). Total numbers are also shown in (brackets). A few questionnaires were returned with incomplete section(s) but wherever possible these have been included in the presented data. The lowest completion rates were found in Question 9 (Q9) and for this reason the completion rates (CR) are documented for each heading within this question. However, even the lowest of these (Q9 Social Networking; Focus on Grammar and Selfaccess.co. Emirati total CR=77.6%) cannot be considered statistically significant.

Which course are you studying?

Returned questionnaires were received from students studying at foundation or BA level with credit-bearing English as a major or minor component

How old are you? Range from 17 to 21

Are you male or female?

Thai male = 34, Thai female = 22, Thai total (TT) = 56.
(60.7% male and 39.3% female)

Emirati male = 12, Emirati female = 55, Emirati total (ET) = 67.
(17.9% male and 82.1% female)

Total Male = 46, Female = 77, **TOTAL = 123**.
(37.4% male and 62.6% female)

Answer questions 1 to 3 below by ticking only one choice.

1. How often do you usually use computers in your everyday life?

	most days	2 or 3 times a week	once a week	hardly ever	never
TT	71.4% (40)	26.8% (15)	1.8% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
ET	76.1% (51)	23.9% (16)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
TOTAL	74% (91)	25% (31)	1% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)

2. When using computers outside of your studies which language(s) do you usually work in?

	only Thai/ Arabic	mainly Thai/ Arabic, some English	only English	mainly English, some Thai/ Arabic
TT	3.6% (2)	78.6% (44)	0% (0)	17.8% (10)
ET	3% (2)	52.2% (35)	14.9% (10)	29.9% (20)
TOTAL	3.3% (4)	64.2% (79)	8.1% (10)	24.4% (30)

3. When using computers outside of your studies which programmes do you use most often?

This section included references to various websites but Google, YouTube and Wikipedia dominated.

Answer the questions 4 to 9 below by ticking (only one choice). For questions 6 and 8 please add reasons in the space provided.

4. How often do you usually use computers inside the classroom in your English language studies?

	most days	2 or 3 times a week	once a week	hardly ever	never
TT	1.8% (1)	3.6% (2)	41% (23)	50% (28)	3.6% (2)
ET	13.4% (9)	31.3% (21)	31.3% (21)	16.5% (11)	7.5% (5)
TOTAL	8.1% (10)	18.7% (23)	35.8% (44)	31.7% (39)	5.7% (7)

5. How often do you usually use computers outside the classroom in your English language studies?

	most days	2 or 3 times a week	once a week	hardly ever	never
TT	7.2% (4)	28.6% (16)	44.6% (25)	19.6% (11)	0% (0)
ET	22.4% (15)	47.8% (32)	16.4% (11)	10.4% (7)	3% (2)
TOTAL	15.4% (19)	39% (48)	29.4% (36)	14.6% (18)	1.6% (2)

6. When using computers outside the classroom to help you practise or learn English where do you prefer to work?

	at home	on any university computer	in the self- access learning centre/learning enhancement centre	no preference
TT	78.6% (44)	8.9% (5)	10.7% (6)	1.8% (1)
ET	80.3% (53)	9.1% (6)	6.1% (4)	4.5% (3)
TOTAL	79.5% (97)	9% (11)	8.2% (10)	3.3% (4)

Reason(s)

Preferences for working from home included: comfort, ease and quietness.

Preferences for working from any university computer including the self-access/learning enhancement centre included: free internet and availability of software.

7. During the term time how often do you usually visit the self-access learning centre (SALC)/learning enhancement centre (LEC)?

	most days	2 or 3 times a week	once a week	A few times a month	hardly ever
TT	1.8% (1)	8.9% (5)	23.2% (13)	50% (28)	16.1% (9)
ET	3% (2)	24.3% (16)	28.8% (19)	34.8% (23)	9.1% (6)
TOTAL	2.5% (3)	17.2% (21)	26.2% (32)	41.8% (51)	12.3% (15)

8. When you visit the SALC/LEC which materials do you usually use?

	only computer-based materials (anything on the computer)	only paper-based materials (books and handouts)	both computer and paper materials
TT	28.6% (16)	16.1% (9)	55.3% (31)
ET	3.1% (2)	44.6% (29)	52.3% (34)
TOTAL	14.9% (18)	31.4% (38)	53.7% (65)

Reason(s)

Responses included: depends on purpose, don't like reading on a screen, can use computers at home.

9. Please complete the empty boxes by putting a tick or cross in each.

Computer-based materials – with completion rate (CR = ..%)	Do you use this material outside the SALC/LEC?	Do you use this material in the SALC/LEC?	Does it help you to practise and/or learn English?
Word Processor TT (CR=87.5%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 83.7% (41) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 16.3% (8)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 63.3% (31) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 36.7% (18)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 81.6% (40) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18.4% (9)
ET (CR=80.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 75.9% (41) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 24.1% (13)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 44.4% (24) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 55.6% (30)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 70.4% (38) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 29.6% (16)
TOTAL (CR=84%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 79.6% (82) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20.4% (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 53.4% (55) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 46.6% (48)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 75.7% (78) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 24.3% (25)
Online dictionaries TT (CR=91.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 92.2% (47) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 7.8% (4)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 78.4% (40) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 21.6% (11)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 98% (50) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2% (1)
ET (CR=99.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 86.8% (47) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 13.2% (7)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 64.2% (34) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 35.8% (19)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 94.3% (50) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5.7% (3)
TOTAL (CR=84.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 89.4% (93) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 10.6% (11)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 72.1% (74) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 28.8% (30)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 96.2% (100) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3.8% (4)
Email TT (CR=91.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 90.2% (46) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9.8% (5)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 21.6% (11) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 78.4% (40)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 70.6% (36) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 29.4% (15)
ET (CR=80.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 90.7% (49) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9.3% (5)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 53.7% (29) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 46.3% (25)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 59.3% (32) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 40.7% (22)
TOTAL (CR=85.4%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 90.5% (95) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 9.5% (10)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 38.1 (40) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 61.9 (65)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 68.4% (68) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 35.2% (37)

Computer-based materials – with completion rate (CR = .%)	Do you use this material outside the SALC/LEC?	Do you use this material in the SALC/LEC?	Does it help you to practise and/or learn English?
Internet sites with English practice exercises TT (CR=91.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 72.5% (37) <input type="checkbox"/> 27.5% (14)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 84.3% (43) <input type="checkbox"/> 15.7% (8)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 94.1% (48) <input type="checkbox"/> 5.9% (3)
ET (CR=79.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 66% (35) <input type="checkbox"/> 34% (18)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 49.1% (26) <input type="checkbox"/> 50.9% (27)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 77.4% (41) <input type="checkbox"/> 22.6% (12)
TOTAL (CR=85.4%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 69.2% (72) <input type="checkbox"/> 30.8% (32)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 66.3% (69) <input type="checkbox"/> 33.7% (35)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 85.6% (89) <input type="checkbox"/> 14.4% (15)
Other internet sites in English TT (CR=91.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 78.4% (40) <input type="checkbox"/> 21.6% (11)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 58.8% (30) <input type="checkbox"/> 41.2% (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 92.2% (47) <input type="checkbox"/> 7.8% (4)
ET (CR=79.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 73.6% (39) <input type="checkbox"/> 26.4% (14)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 39.6% (21) <input type="checkbox"/> 60.4% (32)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 69.8% (37) <input type="checkbox"/> 30.2% (16)
TOTAL (CR=84.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 76% (79) <input type="checkbox"/> 26.4% (14)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 49% (51) <input type="checkbox"/> 60.4% (32)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 80.8% (84) <input type="checkbox"/> 30.2% (16)
Social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Hi5, Bebo, MSN, Skype) TT (CR=91.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 88.2% (45) <input type="checkbox"/> 11.8% (6)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 23.5% (12) <input type="checkbox"/> 76.5% (39)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 74.5% (38) <input type="checkbox"/> 25.5% (13)
ET (CR=77.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 71.2% (37) <input type="checkbox"/> 28.8% (15)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 36.5% (19) <input type="checkbox"/> 63.5% (33)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 61.5% (32) <input type="checkbox"/> 38.5% (20)
TOTAL (CR=83.7%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 79.6% (82) <input type="checkbox"/> 20.4% (21)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30.1% (31) <input type="checkbox"/> 69.9% (72)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 68% (70) <input type="checkbox"/> 32% (33)
Tense Buster TT (CR=89.3%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 66% (33) <input type="checkbox"/> 34% (17)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 96% (48) <input type="checkbox"/> 4% (2)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 94% (47) <input type="checkbox"/> 6% (3)
My English TT (CR=92.9%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 86.5% (45) <input type="checkbox"/> 13.5% (7)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 98.1% (51) <input type="checkbox"/> 1.9% (1)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 96.2% (50) <input type="checkbox"/> 3.8% (2)
Quartet Scholar TT (CR=91.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 62.7% (32) <input type="checkbox"/> 37.3% (19)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 82.4% (42) <input type="checkbox"/> 17.6% (9)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 84.3% (43) <input type="checkbox"/> 15.7% (8)
Focus on Grammar ET (CR=77.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 67.3% (35) <input type="checkbox"/> 32.7% (17)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 65.4% (34) <input type="checkbox"/> 34.6% (18)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 90.4% (47) <input type="checkbox"/> 9.6% (5)

Computer-based materials – with completion rate (CR = ..%)	Do you use this material outside the SALC/LEC?	Do you use this material in the SALC/LEC?	Does it help you to practise and/or learn English?
Brain pop ET (CR=79.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 22.6% (12)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 22.6% (12)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 35.8% (19)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 77.4% (41)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 77.4% (41)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 64.2% (34)
Selfaccess.com ET (CR=77.6%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 32.7% (17)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 38.5% (20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 44.2% (23)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 67.3% (35)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 61.5% (32)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 55.8% (29)
SIRS Discover & Knowledge Source ET(CR=79.1%)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 37.7% (20)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 34% (18)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 43.4% (23)
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 62.3% (33)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 66% (35)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 56.6% (30)

10. Please indicate whether the following are true or not true for you (tick for true or cross for not true). If, however, you are not sure please enter NS.

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NS
When using the computer I tend to work on several applications			
TT	85.7% (48)	10.7% (6)	3.6% (2)
ET	77.3% (51)	19.7% (13)	3% (2)
TOTAL	81.1% (99)	15.6% (19)	3.3% (4)
When studying by myself I usually prefer computers to books and other papers			
TT	75% (42)	19.6% (11)	5.4% (3)
ET	57.6% (38)	31.8% (21)	10.6% (7)
TOTAL	65.6% (80)	26.2% (32)	8.2% (10)
I usually keep a spare copy of my important computer files			
TT	83.9% (47)	8.9% (5)	7.2% (4)
ET	74.2% (49)	19.7% (13)	6.1% (4)
TOTAL	78.7% (96)	14.8% (18)	6.5% (8)
I use a different type of English when social networking to that which I am taught			
TT	44.6% (25)	39.3% (22)	16.1% (9)
ET	59.1% (39)	33.3% (22)	7.6% (5)
TOTAL	52.4% (64)	36.1% (44)	11.5% (14)
Reading on the internet is more difficult than reading from paper			
TT	25% (14)	60.7% (34)	14.3% (8)
ET	54.4% (36)	39.4% (26)	6.1% (4)

	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	NS
TOTAL	41% (50)	49.2% (60)	9.8% (12)
My teachers encourage me to use computers in my spare time			
TT	69.7% (39)	19.6% (11)	10.7% (6)
ET	62.1% (41)	34.9% (23)	3% (2)
TOTAL	65.6% (80)	27.9% (34)	6.5% (8)
I use English to communicate online with friends from other countries			
TT	53.6% (30)	44.6% (25)	1.8% (1)
ET	72.7% (48)	25.8% (17)	1.5% (1)
TOTAL	63.9% (78)	34.5% (42)	1.6% (2)
I prefer books for learning English by myself			
TT	67.9% (38)	21.4% (12)	10.7% (6)
ET	39.4% (26)	54.5% (36)	6.1% (4)
TOTAL	52.5% (64)	39.3% (48)	8.2% (10)
Finding information from the internet in English is difficult			
TT	39.3% (22)	58.9% (33)	1.8% (1)
ET	39.4% (26)	56.1% (37)	4.5% (3)
TOTAL	39.3% (48)	57.4% (70)	3.3% (4)
I know how to reference material in English from the internet			
TT	78.6% (44)	8.9% (5)	12.5% (7)
ET	74.3% (49)	24.2% (16)	1.5% (1)
TOTAL	76.2% (93)	17.2% (21)	6.6% (8)

Contributors

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Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices

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Using e-learning to develop intercultural awareness in ELT: a critical evaluation in a Thai higher education setting

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Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices

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Investigating global practices in teaching English to Young Learners

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS)

Arabelle Charis Chan is a senior specialist teacher and advisory member with the Dyslexia Association of Singapore. She has trained teachers in HK and Singapore and continues to advocate Dyslexia awareness, helping teachers and children understand Dyslexia better to reach their full potential.

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How to make yourself understood by international students: The role of metaphor in academic tutorials

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Confucius, constructivism and the impact of continuing professional development on teachers of English in China

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A global study of primary English teachers' qualifications, training and career development

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Attitudes to English as a language for international development in rural Bangladesh

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Elizabeth J. Erling was the principal investigator for this project. She is Lecturer in English Language Teaching at The Open University and has been a major contributor to 'English in Action', an English-language learning and teacher education development project in Bangladesh (funded by DFID). Her research explores English as a language for international development as well as other topics in world Englishes, language policy, teacher professional development and English for academic purposes. She has published articles in journals such as *World Englishes*, *English Today*, *Language Policy* and *Innovations in Language Learning and Teaching*. She has recently edited, with Philip Seargeant, a volume on *English and International Development* (Multilingual Matters, 2012).

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Attitudes to English as a language for international development in rural Bangladesh

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How to make yourself understood by international students: The role of metaphor in academic tutorials

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Joseph Holloway is a final year undergraduate at the University of Birmingham. He is currently studying English Literature and Philosophy but after having conducted private and institutional research he is focusing on metaphor and gesture in Applied Linguistics. He is co-author of the *Moral Responsibility: a Matter of Degrees* (forthcoming) paper and *A Comparison of metaphorical language use in discussions of essay writing between native and non-native speakers of English* (in progress, with Jeannette Littlemore).

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Computers and learner autonomy: trends and issues

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

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Confucius, constructivism and the impact of continuing professional development on teachers of English in China

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How to make yourself understood by international students: The role of metaphor in academic tutorials

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How to make yourself understood by international students: The role of metaphor in academic tutorials

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

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Perceptions of best practice in ELT INSET

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Pulling the threads together: current theories and current practice affecting UK primary school children who have English as an additional language

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

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Perceptions and strategies of learning in English by Singapore primary school children with dyslexia – a metaphor analysis

Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS)

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978-0-86355-698-2

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