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The EFL Professional's Written Forum

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September 2013 Foreword

by Wen-Chi Vivian Wu

Welcome, readers, to the September 2013 issue of AEJ. This year's third issue of AEJ includes eight articles and four book reviews which cover vital topics in the field of teaching and learning English as a second/foreign language, including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, teaching writing through literature, and the learning strategies and learning beliefs of students. In addition to the importance of the various topics, themselves, this issue includes contributors from diverse geographic regions, spanning Asia, Africa, North America, and UK.

In the first paper, Ramin Akbari & Mohammad Nabi Karimi investigated personal epistemology in predicting valued academic outcomes in education. The authors assert that students with more sophisticated beliefs achieved a higher proficiency as measured by the entrance test. This article can serve as guidance for those ELT instructors who are interested in understanding the relationship between the personal epistemology of learners and their learning outcomes.

Arpine Sargsyan and Sivakumar Sivasubramaniam examined the impact of teaching through literature on teachers and students in their study, as well as the effects of applying literature to teach reading and writing. The findings suggest that teaching reading and writing through literature can be useful for student-centered pedagogies and a reliable resource for language teaching, providing Armenian EFL teachers and learners with numerous benefits.

The third article, written by Chuang Wang, Do-Hong Kim, Mimi Bong, and Hyun Seon Ahn, emphasizes the self-regulated learning strategies and self-efficacy beliefs of Korean college

student in EFL learning. The findings of their study revealed that the female students had higher self-efficacy beliefs than did the male students, made more frequent use of SRL strategies, and achieved higher proficiency levels. Additionally, undergraduates had higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs and English proficiency than graduates, but the use of SRL strategies did not differ significantly between the two groups. Pedagogical implications for English teachers who are interested in investigating the related field in EFL contexts have also been provided by the authors.

To investigate applying guided reflective journals in large classes to motivate students to improve their pronunciation independently, Dr Emmaline Lear studied Japanese EFL learners by engaging them in writing reflective journals. Results of the small qualitative study revealed that the reflective journals transformed the common pedagogical focus into promoting motivational behavior to conform to individual learner needs. In order to achieve the goal, students needed to be more independent in the language learning process.

Professor Kim conducted a review study with respect to the idea that writing is too challenging for L2 learners. Some researchers propose that writing be deferred in English language classrooms until after learners become adept in other language skills. The results of the review study showed that learners could not only write in English, but L2 writing was helpful for learning of the target language, because writing could be used for linguistic output, promoting the process of L2 learning. Thus, this article reveals the importance of writing in L2 classrooms and offers another point of view about L2 writing.

To understand the factors causing English language and study skills gaps between two different groups of learners, regular undergraduates and students in a pre-college foundation program, Muhammad Tanveer conducted an empirical study to probe learner weaknesses in English language and study skills. Results of this study revealed that there was a language proficiency and study skill gap between the two levels of learners. Moreover, the author

proposes three possible factors related to SLA, students, and the institution's academic system.

Roby Marlina analyzed three students' perspectives towards learning English as an international language because there are different varieties of English today, which should be a major component of English teaching. This case study revealed that the three international undergraduates in Australia have benefitted from learning about EIL and have encountered challenges in applying those benefits outside classrooms. Hence, this study provides English educators and scholars with recommendations for incorporating EIL into an English teaching syllabus.

The final article of this issue deals with the importance of working memory in foreign language aptitude. Recently, many scholars have proposed that working memory could be an important element in the field of FLA. Therefore, Yuncai Dai conducted a two-group design study to understand the relationship between working memory and FLA. The findings showed that working memory actually correlated with the learning of complex syntactic rules. Therefore, it can be concluded that working memory could be a potential element of FLA.

I hope you find the articles in this September 2013 issue to be interesting, stimulating, and enjoyable to read. I hope that this issue will help provide new insights that will be valuable in formulating new research studies, and will result in new innovations for EFL practitioners, so as to contribute to continuous improvements in English Language instruction around the world. Finally, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the contributors and reviewers of articles and book reviews who have made this issue possible.

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EFL Students' Proficiency Outcomes: What do Epistemological Beliefs Have to Offer?

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Bio Data

Ramin Akbari holds a Ph.D. in TEFL and is currently working as an assistant professor in post-graduate university of Tarbiat Modares, Tehran, Iran. His main areas of research include L2 Teacher Education, Critical Pedagogy, Reflective Teaching and Qualitative Research. He has published widely on these issues in well-accredited journals like System, Modern Language Journal, TESOL Quarterly. He has also co-authored a book on Teacher Education in the Middle East with Christine Coombe.

Mohammad. N. Karimi holds a Ph.D. in TEFL and is currently working as an assistant professor in Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran, where he teaches both undergraduate and postgraduate students. His main areas of research include Academic Reading, Teachers and Learners' Cognitions and Beliefs System. He has published on these issues in academic journals including Journal of Teaching Language Skills (JTLS), TESL-EJ, Australian Journal of Teacher Education, etc.

Abstract

Personal epistemology, defined as a person's implicit beliefs and assumptions regarding the nature, acquisition, structure, sources, and justification of knowledge, is believed to be of paramount importance in predicting a variety of other learners' beliefs, behaviours and valued academic outcomes in mainstream education; the concept, however, has been ignored in ELT. Given the dearth of research on this area in EFL/ESL contexts, the present study

aimed at investigating EFL students' personal epistemology with reference to their proficiency outcomes. 164 university English majors participated in the study. These participants were all applicants of the MA entrance exam for English-related programs. Their scores on the general English proficiency component of the test as part of the MA Matriculation Exam served as the measure of their proficiency. Epistemic Beliefs Inventory (EBI), developed by Schraw, Bendixen, & Dunkle (2002) was used to measure the participants' epistemological beliefs. The findings of the study indicate that students who hold more sophisticated beliefs achieved a higher proficiency as measured by the entrance test. When the participants' language proficiency outcomes were assessed against sub-constructs of epistemological beliefs, robust correlations were found between entrance test scores and the beliefs in each of the five dimensions of epistemological beliefs inventory.

Keywords: Epistemological Beliefs, EFL Students, Language Proficiency Outcomes

Introduction

Students' academic performance has been and still is one of the most popular topics of inquiry in educational research literature and is thought of as the clearest indicator of schooling effectiveness (see, for example, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Kwang, 2001; Shaha, Lewis, O'Donnell, and Brown, 2004; Wenglinsky, 2000). Research in this area has mostly concentrated on identifying the variables that affect students' academic performance, dealing with variables as diverse as teacher efficacy (Ross, 1992; Yilmaz-Tuzun and Topcu, 2008), teacher quality and classroom approach (Rowan, Correnti and Miller, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Schoen, Cebulla, Finn and Fi, 2003; Wenglinsky, 2002), teacher education level (Goldhaber and Brewer, 1997), teacher certification status (Laczko-Kerr and Berliner, 2002), students' learning approach (Trigwell and Prosser, 1991), socioeconomic status (Willie, 2001), academic self-beliefs (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 1991), motivational variables (Dembo and Eaton, 2000; Neber and Schommer-Aikins, 2002), or study strategies (Phan, 2009). Each of these variables has received its fair share of research attention in mainstream education.

Another relevant field of inquiry, which has generated interest among researchers, is students' *epistemological beliefs*, defined as a system of perceived assumptions, beliefs and implicit theories learners hold about the nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition process (Kizilgunes, Tekkaya, Sungur, 2009). These beliefs are of particular importance when it comes to gaining insights into learners' academic achievement since they widely affect students' approaches to learning, studying and problem-solving, as well as motivation and perseverance for information seeking (Tolhurst, 2007; Schraw, 2001; Kardash and Scholes, 1996). Such beliefs also impact students' learning; in addition, they create a system that conceptualizes "how individuals come to know *[something]*, the theories and beliefs they hold about knowing, and the manner in which such epistemological premises influence the cognitive processes of thinking and reasoning" (Hofer and Pintrich, 1997, p. 88).

However, while there is a rich body of literature in mainstream education, suggesting that students' epistemological beliefs have a direct bearing on their learning process and outcomes (Hofer, 2001; Buehl and Alexander, 2001; Schommer, and Walker, 1997; Schommer, Crouse, and Rhodes, 1992; Tolhurst and Debus, 2002; Schommer-Aikins, Duell, and Hutter, 2005; Schommer, 1993; Wood and Kardash, 2002; Ricco, Pierce and Medinilla, 2010), the concept of epistemological belief and its relationship with students' language proficiency has not been investigated for English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts. Language learning is a relatively different phenomenon than other types of learning, with rather disparate processes, challenges, efforts, and many other distinguishing factors; the study of how epistemological beliefs of learners interact with their learning in this area may offer valuable contributions to language education. This study, therefore, aims at investigating the possible relationship between English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' epistemological beliefs and their language proficiency.

Theoretical Framework

Epistemology, described as the theory of knowledge and knowing, is originally a sub-discipline of philosophy concerned with the limits and scope, as well as the sources and nature of human knowledge (Muis, Bendixen & Haerle, 2006). It specifically tries to explain

how knowledge is acquired by human beings and from what sources, how this knowledge is represented in the mind, and what it means for a person to know something (Muis, et al., 2006). In a similar vein, educational psychologists have conceptualized epistemology as a person's implicit beliefs and assumptions regarding the nature, acquisition, structure, sources and justification of knowledge (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997).

The introduction of this construct – often referred to as personal epistemology or more generally "epistemological beliefs" in educational psychology – into the educational sphere dates back to the seminal works of William Perry during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Phan, 2009). Since then, the educational research on defining and conceptualizing these beliefs has taken two different directions: developmental and multidimentional (Yilmaz-Tuzun & Topcu, 2008). In the developmental approach, beliefs are considered as an integrated unidirectional construct "having a rather uniform developmental trajectory" (Lodewyk, 2007, p. 308) from naïve beliefs to more sophisticated ones. In the multidimensional direction, on the other hand, personal epistemology is believed to be compose of some dimensions which develop independent of each other and may have "variable developmental trajectories of personal epistemology" (Lodewyk, 2007, p. 308).

Perry (1970) and his team of associates, who follow the developmental direction, in a now classic study investigated the epistemological growth of Harvard male undergraduate students by interviewing them in a four-year longitudinal study. Based on in-depth interviews with the participants, Perry concluded that students' epistemological beliefs go through a series of developmental stages ranging from "naïve" beliefs at the beginning of their educational process to more "sophisticated" ones as they reach the end of their educational process. Perry identified four main epistemological positions labeled as Dualism, Multiplism, Relativism and Commitment (Brownlee, 2001). In early college years, learners' epistemology is dominated by dualistic thinking which dichotomizes knowledge into absolute values – either right or wrong – which is handed down by an omniscient authority. With more accumulation of knowledge comes another stage, which is dominated by multiplicity of epistemology. Learners, in this stage, come to implicitly acknowledge uncertainties associated with some areas of knowledge (particularly when it comes to personal opinions)

but still strongly believe in the dichotomous nature of knowledge. They believe that uncertainties surrounding knowledge do not affect its nature and that uncertainty does not last long, so in the end the right answer will be revealed (Love & Guthrie, 1999). Relativism is the next stage in the development of personal epistemology, which brings about a major shift in the knowledge beliefs of learners (Brownlee, 2001). The stage is characterized by learners' recognition of diversity in knowledge claims and opinions, and the acknowledgement of the fact that knowledge is contextual and is personally constructed through analysis, reason, comparison and interpretation (Boden, 2005). At this stage, absolute truths no longer constitute an integral part of learners' epistemological profile, as "truth is considered to be relative to individuals' personal interpretations of experiences. These interpretations, however, are always validated and supported with evidence, contrary to the personal opinions referred to in the position of Multiplism" (Brownlee, 2001, p. 281). In the final position, referred to as commitment, the relativistic mode of thinking still holds but learners endorse certain beliefs more than the others. "[A]t this point, students feel the beginnings of a desire to define their personal choices, believing that to remain undefined or uncommitted would be irresponsible" (Love and Guthrie, 1999, p. 12).

Perry's (1970) unidimensional model of personal epistemology development has inspired various studies taking a similar direction. One such study is that of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986). Asking a total of 135 females from academic and non-academic backgrounds to respond to a number of open-ended questions reflecting moral, cognitive and identity development, Belenky et al. (1986) identified five positions in the development of epistemological beliefs. These positions were labeled as Silence, Received (similar to Dualism), Subjective (similar to Multiplism), Procedural (similar to Relativism) and Constructed (similar to Commitment) ways of knowing.

Another study taking a developmental direction in approaching epistemological beliefs is that of Baxter-Magolda (1993). Interviewing over a hundred college students and asking them to give short answer responses to open-ended questions in a seven-year longitudinal study, Baxter-Magolda came up with four positions of epistemological development similar to those proposed by Perry. These positions were named Absolute (Dualism), Transitional

(Multiplism), Independent (Relativism) and Contextual (Commitment) knowing (Brownlee, 2001).

As an alternative to stage-like models of epistemological development, Schommer (1990) believed self-report measures should be used for data collection; in addition, she maintained that personal epistemology, due to its complexity, cannot be captured by a stage theory (Ricco, Pierce, & Medinilla, 2010). Therefore she proposed a systemic view of personal epistemology stressing the multi-dimensionality of these beliefs – meaning that multiple beliefs form a person's epistemology – while acknowledging the more or less independency of these beliefs and arguing that they may or may not develop at the same rate (Boden, 2005). The proposed dimensions included the structure of knowledge, the certainty of knowledge, the sources of knowledge, the control of knowledge acquisition, and the speed of knowledge acquisition. Each one of these dimensions forms a continuum at the lower extreme of which naïve simplistic and at the upper end complex sophisticated beliefs are found:

> Certainty of knowledge belief ranges from personal beliefs that knowledge is static throughout time to the view that knowledge is tentative and changes over time. The structure of knowledge belief ranges from beliefs that knowledge is simply facts to the belief that knowledge is better represented as complex theories. Source of knowledge beliefs are beliefs that people hold regarding where knowledge comes from: whether it comes from those in authority to something that can be discovered and learned by anyone. The control of knowledge belief relates to the beliefs individuals hold about the ability to learn, ranging from the belief that ability to learn is fixed at birth or that the ability to learn changes throughout an individual's time. The speed of knowledge acquisition beliefs refer to the belief in how quickly knowledge can be acquired. Individuals hold beliefs that range from the perception that knowledge will only be learned in a small amount of time or it won't be learned at all to the belief that most things can be learned by most people if enough time is dedicated. These domains are proposed to be more or less independent of each other, suggesting that an individual can

> hold sophisticated beliefs in one domain and more naïve beliefs in another (Walter, 2009, p. 4).

Schommer has, since then, published a variety of articles on the topic which have been frequently cited by other researchers. The principal reason for her distinction lies in her development of an easily administered survey instrument for epistemological beliefs in her early research, known as Schommer's Epistemological Questionnaire (SEQ) (Clarebout, Elen, Luyten, & Bamps 2001). The instrument enjoys a four-factor structure – the ability to learn is innate, knowledge is discrete and unambiguous, learning is quick or not-at-all, and knowledge is certain. The content of the SEQ has been screened and approved by professionals and experts in the field of educational psychology (Bell, 2006). A 0.74 test-retest reliability and 0.63 to 0.85 inter-item correlation for items within each belief factor have been reported for the instrument (Bell, 2006)

However, following Schommer's multidimensional theory of epistemological beliefs, some researchers have tried to improve SEQ or develop new instruments (Jehng, Johnson, & Anderson, 1993; Schraw, Bendixen, & Dunkle, 2002; Wood & Kardash, 2002). One of these new instruments is Schraw, Bendixen and Dunkle's (2002) Epistemological Beliefs Inventory (EBI). The instrument is shorter, more efficient and more easily administered than the SEQ and also "[has] yielded better construct validity than the EQ" (Bell, 2006, p. 39). In a study aimed at comparing these two measures of epistemological beliefs, better predictive ability for the EBI was reported; in addition, EBI could explain more of the variance than the EQ (Bendixen & Hartley, 2003). The instrument consists of 28 Likert type items measuring epistemological beliefs in five dimensions of *simple knowledge*, *certain knowledge*, *omniscient authority*, *innate ability*, and *quick learning*. Since EBI was used for data collection in the present study, more information on the instrument is provided in the instrumentation section of the paper.

Epistemological Beliefs and Students' Academic Learning

Building on the work of Perry, educational researchers have actively pursued epistemological beliefs with reference to a wide range of pedagogical topics including students' strategy use (Schommer, Crouse and Rhodes, 1992; Tsai, 1998), cognitive processing (Kardash and Howell, 2000), attitudes towards schools (Schommer and Walker, 1990), motivational states (Buehl and Alexander, 2005), academic goal setting (Braten and Stromso, 2004), conceptual change learning (Qian, 2000), skills in argumentation (Kitchener and King, 1981), study techniques (Hofer and Pintrich, 1997), learning approaches (Lonka and Lindblom-Ylänne,1996), and intelligence (Weinstock, Neuman, and Glassner, 2006), among others. A number of researchers have also investigated these beliefs with reference to many aspects of student academic achievement and performance outcomes using both global measures of academic performance, like grade point average (GPA), as well as course specific measures (Buehl, 2003). On the whole, these investigations have demonstrated significant relationships between epistemological beliefs and students' performance.

The study of the link between epistemological beliefs and student performance was pioneered by Schommer (1990). Schommer studied the text interpretation of 266 junior college students and could establish a clear link between personal epistemological beliefs and the participants' interpretation of reading passages. The students who believed more in the certainty of the knowledge were more likely to accept inconclusive information as absolute knowledge. Similarly, learners who believed in the quickness and all-or-none nature of learning were reported to manifest a poor performance on reading comprehension assessment measures (Boden, 2005).

In a study carried out three years later, using the same questionnaire, Schommer (1993) investigated the development of high school students' epistemological beliefs and the likely influences these beliefs were hypothesized to have on participants' academic performance, as measured through their GPA. Results of the multiple regression analyses showed that all four of the factors identified in her questionnaire (i.e., Certain Knowledge, Simple Knowledge, Quick Learning, and Fixed Ability) were significantly correlated with high-school students' GPA. Specifically, she found that students who believed knowledge is composed of a set of

isolated, certain facts had an overall lower grade point average than those who believed in the tentative and changing nature of knowledge.

In another study, Bird (2005) investigated the link between epistemological beliefs and academic performance of middle school students. Administering a modified version of an epistemological beliefs questionnaire to a total of 163 seventh and eighth grade students, she found that epistemological beliefs played a unique role in students' academic performance. Beliefs in simple knowledge were found to predict performance in mathematics and social sciences, and beliefs in fixed ability were found to predict performance in science.

Tolhurst (2007), hypothesizing that "students' epistemological beliefs [have an] impact on approaches to learning and consequent learning outcomes" (p. 219), conducted a study aimed at investigating the possible influence of a new course on students' epistemological beliefs and the impact of these beliefs on their ultimate learning. The study uncovered significant negative correlations between the final grades in the course and some of the subscales on Schommer's (1990) Epistemological Questionnaire. The findings indicated that students who believed in the quickness of learning or in the simplicity and certainty of knowledge achieved significantly lower final marks in the course. On the other hand, students with more sophisticated epistemological beliefs, those who believe that learning is not a quick process, needs integration of ideas, and that knowledge is neither certain nor simple, achieved higher scores in the course (Tolhurst, 2007)

Kizilgunes, Tekkaya, Sungur, (2009) is another attempt at linking epistemological beliefs with students' performance. In their study, they presented a model which sought to explain how learners' epistemological beliefs, learning motivation, and learning approaches were related to achievement among 1,041 6th-grade students. They discovered that the participants' epistemological beliefs had both direct and indirect impacts on their achievement motivation and learning approaches. Their findings suggested that learners who believed knowledge is of an evolving nature (i.e., development) and is mostly handed down by authority (i.e., source) were more self-efficacious in their academic learning and were found to enjoy higher levels of learning- and performance-goal orientations. "Therefore, these students appeared to believe that they have [the] necessary ability to learn and perform

effectively in school settings and tend*[ed]* to study for reasons of showing their abilities to others and getting higher grades, as well as learning and understanding" (Kizilgunes, Tekkaya, Sungur, 2009, p. 251).

The link between students' epistemological beliefs and their academic learning has, therefore, been adequately documented in mainstream education, while no published data exists in second language teaching contexts. Although studies on language learners' beliefs defined as "general assumptions that *[EFL]* students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing learning, and about the nature of learning and teaching" (Victori & Lockheart, 1995, p. 224) may partially cover some aspects of epistemology, the study of epistemological beliefs as a distinct field of enquiry has not received enough attention in ELT, while these beliefs – being a part of Epistemic Cognition – act as a superordinate category of beliefs, which set the stage for other beliefs and other self-regulated learning behaviors. In Kitchener's (1983) terms "Epistemic assumptions influence how individuals understand the nature of problems and decide what kinds of strategies are appropriate for solving them" (p.222). Therefore, the present study finds this an area worthy of investigation and specifically addresses the following research question:

Is there any significant relationship between EFL students' epistemological beliefs – as a composite score – and its different dimensions and their language proficiency?

Method

Participants

The participants of the study were a total of 164 randomly selected BA graduates of English Language and Literature in Iranian universities who were sitting for MA entrance exam for English-related programs. In Iranian academic instructional programs, undergraduate students study four years, equal to eight academic semesters, to get their BAs; the participants in the present study were no exception in this regard. During these four years they studied a combination of general (e.g. grammar, reading comprehension, speaking/listening, writing, simple prose, advanced prose texts, etc) and specialized courses (e.g. literary schools, history of English literature, Teaching principles, research methodology, etc.). Of these, 93 were

female and 71 were male, with their age ranging from 21 to 26. The participants had all taken the general English proficiency test as part of the 2010 MA entrance exam for Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Translation and English Literature programs, and were expecting the results when they filled out the Epistemic Beliefs Inventory. Their scores on this general test were considered as the benchmark for their proficiency, as the test is claimed to be a test of the essential aspects of the general knowledge of English, which an EFL student is expected to possess.

Instruments

Epistemic Beliefs Inventory (EBI)

Epistemic Beliefs Inventory (EBI), developed by Schraw, et al (2002), is composed of 28 five-point Likert-format items assessing five dimensions of personal epistemology (See table one). Five of the items are reverse scored.

Table one: EBI structure and sample items

Dimensions of Epistemology	**Definition**	**Example Items**
Simple knowledge	Beliefs that knowledge is simply facts as opposed to the belief that knowledge is better represented as complex theories	Instructors should focus on facts instead of theories. Most things worth knowing are easy to understand.
Certain Knowledge	A dimension of epistemology which ranges from the personal beliefs that knowledge is static throughout time to the view that knowledge is tentative and changes over time	What is true today will be true tomorrow What is true is a matter of opinion
Omniscient Authority	Beliefs that knowledge comes from those in authority as opposed to something that can	People shouldn't question authority When someone in authority tells me what to do, I usually do it.

	be discovered and learned by anyone	
Innate Ability	Personal beliefs ranging from the view that ability to learn is fixed at birth or that the ability to learn changes throughout an individual's time.	How well you do in school depends on how smart you are. Some people are born with special gifts and talents
Quick Learning	The belief in how quickly knowledge can be acquired	Working on a problem with no quick solution is a waste of time. Students who learn things quickly are the most successful

Lower scores on the measure represented more naïve and higher scores indicated more sophisticated beliefs – in both total epistemological profile and each of the dimensions. Replicating the factor structure of the measure in a pilot study by the present researchers revealed five factors similar to the original instrument. The reliability of the instrument for the present sample using Cronbach Alpha was calculated to be .86

The Language Proficiency Test

The test by which the participants' academic language proficiency was assessed was, as mentioned earlier, the general English test given as part of the Iranian MA Matriculation Exam for the English-related fields – TEFL, Translation, and English Literature. Although the test does not cover all oral/aural aspects of proficiency, it was chosen because it is a standardized test designed by Iran's National Assessment Organization and undergoes rigorous psychometric scrutiny and enjoys a sound validation index. The test consists of 60 multiple-choice questions, 15 of which assess the MA applicants' knowledge of different aspects of English grammar, 15 items deal with the examinees' knowledge of vocabulary use and idiomatic expressions, and the 30 remaining items are designed to measure the applicants'

reading comprehension ability. A report card is issued for each participant by the National Assessment Organization after the administration of the instrument.

Procedure

Schraw, et al's (2002) Epistemic Beliefs Inventory (EBI) was, as a first step, given to the participants to complete at their leisure; 23 of the instruments were not returned at this stage. The participants were asked to write their phone numbers on the questionnaires to facilitate contacting them later when their report cards were sent to them by the Assessment Organization. At this stage also, the researchers could not have access to 18 of the participants. Overall, 181 questionnaires were returned from which 17 were discarded because they had been partially completed. After collecting the questionnaires and a copy of report cards from the participants, the scores of the participants in EBI were calculated and the results were analyzed using SPSS software, version 17.

Results

As stated earlier, the present study aimed at investigating the relationship between EFL students' language proficiency outcomes and their personal epistemological beliefs. As a first step, after calculating the descriptive statistics for the study's variables (Table 2) the correlation between personal epistemology as a composite score and the participants' language proficiency, measured through the general English test given as part of their MA entrance exam, was calculated (Table 3). The results follow:

Table 2: The descriptive statistics for the variables and their components

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students' Proficiency Outcomes	164	50.31	11.60
Students' Epistemological Beliefs (Composite)	164	85.70	26.80
Certain knowledge	**164**	**14.89**	**6.10**
Omniscient authority	**164**	**14.93**	**5.72**

Quick learning	**164**	**15.17**	**5.87**
Innate ability	**164**	**18.80**	**5.03**
Simple knowledge	**164**	**21.90**	**5.99**

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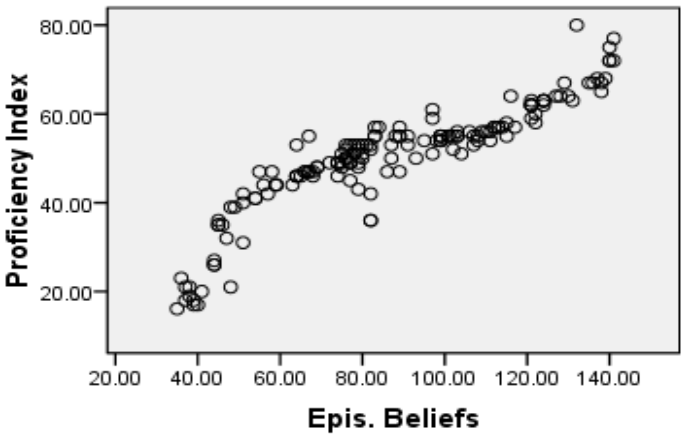
Table 3: Correlations of the Main Variables

		Students' Proficiency Outcomes	Students' Epis. Beliefs	Effect Size
Pearson Correlation	Students' Proficiency Outcomes	1.00	.866	.749
	N	164	164	

As shown in table 3, the results demonstrate a significant correlation (r = .866 with an effect size of .749) between epistemological beliefs of the students and their language proficiency outcomes. In other words, the more sophisticated the epistemological beliefs of the participants, the higher their scores in the language proficiency test. This is schematically represented in the following scatterplot.

Figure 1: Scatterplot for Proficiency and Epistemological Beliefs



Besides running correlation analysis for investigating the relationship between the participants' personal epistemology and language proficiency, at another level of analysis, the study investigated the relationship between the dimensions of students' epistemology construct (simple knowledge, certain knowledge, omniscient authority, innate ability and quick learning) and their proficiency (tables 4 to 6):

Table 4: The Regression results for the hypotheses of the study

Variables Entered/Removed [(b)]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
	Certain Knowledge Omniscient authority Quick learning Innate ability Simple knowledge (a)		**Enter**

a.All requested variables entered

b.Dependent Variable: Student Language Proficiency

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Deviation of Estimate
1	.890 [(a)]	.792	.785	5.3730

a) Predictors (Constant): simple knowledge, certain knowledge, omniscient authority, innate ability and quick learning

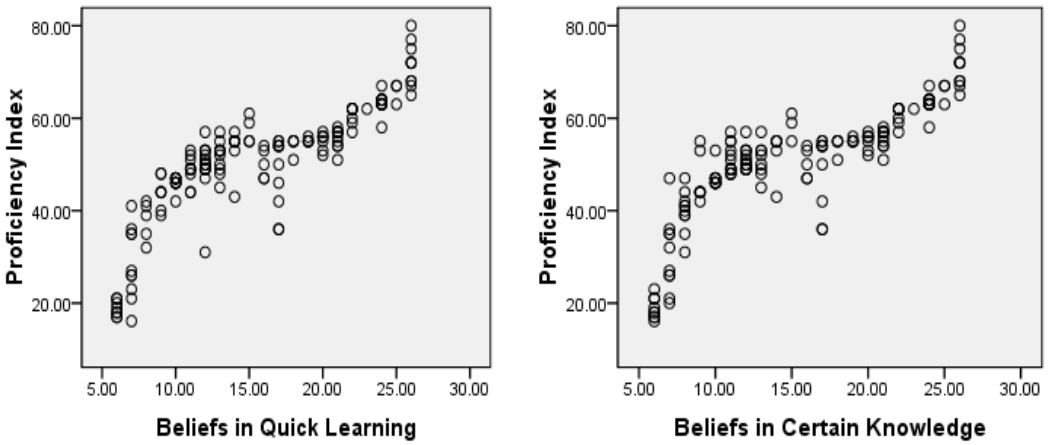
Table 6: Correlations of the Dimensions and Student Proficiency

	Dimensions	Student Proficiency Outcomes	Effect Size
Pearson Correlation	Certain knowledge	.798	.624
	Omniscient authority	.787	.608
	Quick learning	.811	.657
	Innate ability	.814	.662

Simple knowledge	.828	.685

As the results of the Multiple Regression Analysis (Adjusted R Square = .785), in table 6 show, the five dimensions of personal epistemology construct can significantly predict EFL students' proficiency outcomes. All of the dimensions show strong correlations with student proficiency level as shown by the edited table of correlations (Table 6). It is also schematically shown below:

Figures 2 and 3: Scatterplots for the Relationship between Proficiency and Beliefs in Quick Learning and Certain Knowledge



Figures 4 and 5: Scatterplots for the Relationship between Proficiency and Beliefs in Omniscient Authority and Innate Ability

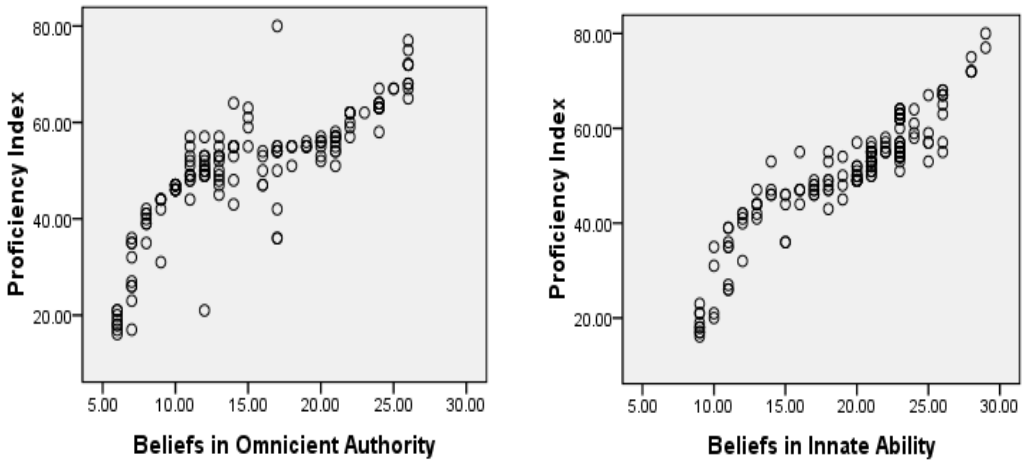
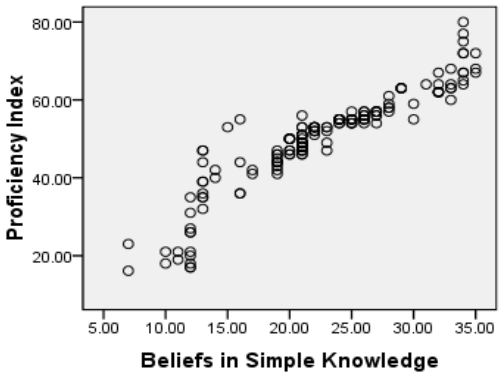


Figure 6: Scatterplot for the Relationship between Proficiency and Beliefs in Simple Knowledge



Discussion

The results of the study demonstrate that the more sophisticated the epistemological beliefs of the students, the better their proficiency outcomes would be, which are more or less in line with the patterns of findings from studies on epistemological beliefs and student learning in mainstream education (Kizilgunes, Tekkaya, Sungur, 2009; Qian and Alvermann, 1995; Tolhurst, 2007; Schommer, 1993; Schommer et al., 1992; Wood and Kardash, 2002). Sophistication of learners' epistemological beliefs has been reported to be positively associated with a variety of educational variables which are ultimately translated into students' successful academic performance. It is believed that students with more advanced epistemological beliefs use more effective learning strategies, learning tactics, and cognitive processing mechanisms, which in turn significantly contribute to their learning outcomes (Buehl, 2003). Students enjoying a more advanced epistemological stance are also reported to possess more effective academic goal orientations (Murphy, Buehl, Monoi, and Long, 2002), and use more deep study strategies and better problem solving strategies (DeBacker and Crowson, 2006; Phan, 2006). Such learners are better inclined to engage in meaningful learning experiences, and "are more likely to orientate towards effort expenditure, persistence and engagement in mastery learning" (Phan, 2009, p. 167). All these positive qualities contribute to more academic success of students enjoying more sophisticated epistemologies.

The results of the multiple regression analysis also revealed the existence of robust correlations between each of the dimensions of epistemological beliefs and EFL students'

proficiency. This appears reasonable as far as the characteristics associated with each of the dimensions of epistemological beliefs about knowledge are concerned, which may serve to promote or constrain students' cognitive resources and shape the ways they engage in academic activities (Steiner, 2007).

For example, students who subscribe to the view of "knowledge as simple" often tend to conceptualize knowledge acquisition and learning only as an exercise in memorizing rote and often isolated facts, choose study strategies that value factual learning and recall of facts and do not try to integrate what they learn into a comprehensive whole (Schommer, et al, 1992). These students are believed to seek single answers and have a tendency to avoid ambiguity (Lodewyk, 2007), and "are not likely to seek information from multiple resources or to integrate ideas" (Tolhurst, 2008, p. 220). This can have direct consequences for ELT learning contexts, which are filled with ambiguities of various kinds (Ely, 1995). For many years the pursuit of learning a language as discrete elements has been discouraged, and professionals in ELT emphasize the importance of integrating components and skills in English (Davies and Pearse, 2002). Therefore, students who view language learning as learning a series of unrelated points are less likely to acquire a high proficiency in a language.

Similarly, students who naively believe that the ability to learn is fixed at birth are less likely to put forth time and effort toward improving their learning capacity. In contrast, those students who believe in the malleability of the ability to learn (which indicates a more sophisticated epistemological stance in this dimension), are believed to have more adaptive academic motivational beliefs and tend to attribute their success or failure to the amount of effort they put into academic tasks (Kizilgunes, Tekkaya, Sungur, 2009). Such students value hard work and self-improvement, take control and ownership of their own learning process and are "convinced that they have what it takes to succeed, persevere, and regulate their effort to learn even in the face of adversity" (Bell, 2006, p. 101).

Findings of this study also suggested a strong relationship between the students' subscription to the certainty of knowledge and their language proficiency. The more students believed in the tentative, flexible and constantly changing rather than the certain and unchanging nature of knowledge, the higher their proficiency. This is mainly because "strong

certainty beliefs prevent students from engaging in in-depth processing of information" (Trautwein and Lüdtke, 2007, p. 362). Also, students holding sophisticated epistemological beliefs about the uncertainty of knowledge and learning have been reported to believe that once knowledge is learned it could be reshaped and that knowledge is subject to revision ; such learners, in addition, "have an openness to intellectual experiences; take an approach to learning that focuses on understanding and comprehension of meaning, relation of ideas and use of evidence and logic; and, have a positive attitude towards change" (Bath and Smith, 2009, p. 185).

The results also demonstrated that the more students believed in the fact that knowledge is reasoned and discovered rather than handed down by an omniscient authority, the better their proficiency outcomes. Students who believe in the omniscient authority as a source of knowledge believe that "knowledge originates outside the self and resides in external authority, from whom it may be transmitted" (Hofer, 2000, p. 381). Sophistication of students' epistemological stance on this dimension transforms their perceptions about themselves as the mere receptors of knowledge from an all-knowing holder of knowledge to an active constructor of the knowledge in interaction with others, a perception consistent with the constructivist learning approaches. Such a perception could have strong implications for EFL students' learning, as nowadays, the active role of the learner in language learning process has gained prominence in ELT and the role learners play in their own learning is viewed as much more important than that of teachers, who are traditionally viewed as the prime source of wisdom.

Likewise, students who hold the naïve belief that learning should occur quickly do not usually believe that success entails hard work. They, in contrast, believe that the process of knowledge acquisition is easy rather than effortful and are less likely, compared with those who subscribe to the sophisticated belief that learning is a gradual and cumulative process, to show perseverance in their learning, especially when they are confronted with tasks which take a rather long time to come to fruition. Such students cannot be expected to achieve a high level of proficiency in English, as learning a foreign language is described as a complex phenomenon that takes effort and time.

Conclusions and Classroom Applications

Given the fact that epistemological beliefs have the potential to influence students' learning, it is, thus, of prime importance to consider how to promote more sophisticated beliefs about the nature and acquisition of knowledge in students: ELT curricula should enhance beliefs that encourage students to step toward viewing knowledge as complex, requiring the integration and synthesis of ideas as well as task perseverance. The big question should be how to structure curricula, courses and learning environments which encourage the development of more sophisticated epistemological beliefs in learners and lead to greater personal involvement in acquiring knowledge by L2 learners themselves (Tolhurst, 2007).

The very first thing that the present study offers as an implication for classroom pedagogy is to encourage ELT professionals to design courses and prepare materials that lead students towards viewing knowledge not in terms of memorizing discrete pieces of information, like vocabulary items, but in terms of the synthesis of the various components of language. For example, reading courses could focus on sophisticated inferential synthesis of the ideas in the passage, not simply on the memorization of vocabulary items and grammatical structures.

Also, teachers should encourage the learners that language learning is a complex process which requires expending effort, time and energy. Teachers should, moreover, motivate the learners to take control of their own learning by giving them opportunities to engage in the self-exploration of the meanings in the materials. They should be led to believe that their success in learning depends crucially on themselves rather than on other people. In order to promote this epistemological stance in the learners they should be given opportunities in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning which brings in the wake of itself both commitment to self-management and development of intrinsic motivation to learn. Specifically, if teachers intend to develop such an epistemological assumption in the learners, they should encourage them to be always involved in a quest for good learning activities, to set their own learning targets and choose their own learning activities, subjecting them, of course, to discussion, analysis and evaluation, to identify individual goals, to keep a written record of their learning, and to be engaged in regular evaluation of their progress.

Along the same lines, language instructional programs should be designed in such a way that encourage the learners to take steps towards the belief that knowledge is reasoned and extracted rather than handed down by the teacher. This promotes their self-independence from overreliance on the teacher and reference books, such as dictionaries and is more in line with the target situations wherein they would have to tackle language without any recourse to any authority, be it the teacher or any reference source. As a tangible example in an ELT reading program, we may intend to free our students from dependence on a dictionary or the teacher as the informant who is available to solve any potential problem. We may want them to develop strategies for getting meaning from the text without appealing to either the dictionary or the teacher including developing the recognition that it would be possible to understand a passage without knowing every word, developing the tendency to drift away from clinging to the most familiar meaning of a word and explore other relevant options, developing the tendency to apply lexical, morphological, structural and contextual clues to extract meaning from the complex interplay of the components of the linguistic input they receive. Practices like these, if followed in the instructional programs, will lead to students jettisoning the naïve assumption that without a source – a teacher or a dictionary – understanding a text would be impossible, which is part of the early epistemologies students bring to language classes.

Limitations of the Study

The present study, like any research, is not without its limitations. The first limitation lies in the choice of the language proficiency test. Although in the present study it is intended to tap into the participants' language proficiency, the test does not include oral/aural aspects of proficiency. Therefore, it should be kept in mind, whenever the term proficiency is mentioned, it should be equated with knowledge of the components assessed by the test.

The second limitation of the study is a lack of research on personal epistemology in ELT contexts. The review of the literature has been limited to studies documenting the relation between personal epistemology and academic performance in mainstream education.

Avenues for Further Research

The present study argues for a need to expand the TESL research agenda to include a focus on personal epistemology. In the completion of this research study, attention has been drawn to an area of potentially significant value, which could initiate a new area of research in the TESL field. However, the present study has probed personal epistemology in relation to the participants' language proficiency using a correlational design. Other studies could be designed expanding the focus of the study using different approaches. For one thing, there are various conceptualizations of epistemology and its various dimensions. The present study has utilized Schommer's multidimensional theory of epistemological beliefs; other studies may be designed using other conceptualizations such as Hofer and Pintrich's (1997) theory. Moreover, other studies could adopt an experimental approach towards the effects of epistemology on various aspects of L2 proficiency, especially the oral/aural skills, which were not probed into in the present study. Studies could also be initiated exploring how personal epistemology might help EFL students in their language learning process and open up the possibilities this line of research could offer to other areas of ELT such as test construction, student assessment, syllabus design and materials preparation.

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ASIAN EFL JOURNAL
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Using Literature to Promote Language Learning: Issues and Insights for Implementation in Armenian Settings (A qualitative study)

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Bio Data

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Abstract

This study investigates literature as a resource for teaching English by focusing on the following questions: How can the use of literature in the Armenian EFL setting affect the

teachers and the students? Can the use of literature promote reading and writing skills and learner-centered pedagogies? The findings gathered at school and university settings indicate that using literature as a resource for EFL teaching can offer numerous benefits to Armenian EFL teachers and learners. It is a useful means to carry out student-centered pedagogies and a reliable resource for language teaching, which promotes reading and writing skills in multiple ways. When used in classroom pedagogies and practices, literature can make significant contributions to the Armenian educational system and open up new horizons for suggestive and open-ended practices in Armenian EFL teaching.

Keywords: Literature, suggestive practices, response, reading and writing, motivation, Armenian EFL settings

Introduction

"The universe is made of stories not of atoms"

Muriel Rukeyser

Armenia is a country where English is used and taught as a foreign language mainly through the Grammar Translation Method. Due to this, the hegemony of form focused language instruction in schools and higher educational institutions has largely remained unquestioned. In light of this, literature is very often viewed as a resource for good grammatical analysis, rather than a resource for promoting humanistic approaches to EFL teaching in Armenia.

Although in recent years Armenian EFL teachers have been exposed to communicative language teaching (CLT), their methodologies have focused mainly on the promotion of listening and speaking, much to the exclusion of their understanding of the creative, interactive and critical dimensions of language use.

The Handbook of Training for English Teachers in Armenia (Erznkyan, Hovhannisyan, Arakelyan, & Karapetyan, 2008, p. 33) states that "the further aim of foreign language

teaching in Armenia should be directed towards multicultural and democratic approaches which are first of all based on the development of well informed citizens, ready to integrate and sustain in the society". In order to serve this aim, the authors suggest "creating conditions in the classrooms when the students have a chance to develop their personality, their subjective individual understanding of things and ability to express their understanding" (Erznkyan et al, 2008, p. 35).

The aforementioned views underscore the prevalence of literary texts in the Armenian EFL setting, which can foster open-ended engagement with language through reading and writing about literature and promote language learning as an 'open dialogue' which can foster students' subjectivity (Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen & Lehtovaara, 2001). Given that literary texts contain multiple layers of meaning, they can promote classroom activities that call for exchange of feelings and opinions (Sivasubramaniam, 2006, p. 263).

Another issue that we would like to address is the development of reading and writing skills through the activities organized around literary texts. Freire and Macedo (1987) consider reading as an act of empowerment which impacts the reader, the text and the ensuing interaction between the text and the reader. They consider that reading a word means reading the world. Writing also has a huge bearing on literacy. Speaking about its importance, Smith (1982, p. 7) states that writing touches every part of our lives, and not even the illiterate escape its consequences. Indeed not being able to write is regarded as an affront to literate society, a societal and an individual inadequacy. Rosenblatt (1978, p.18) addresses the relationship between the writer and the reader as a 'transactional formulation', the human activity in which there is fusion of the individual with the social, cultural and natural elements. This is reminiscent of the view encapsulated in the opening quotation of Muriel Rukeyser. More importantly, such a view appears to resonate with the multi-voice discourse that accrues in a classroom setting where literature prevails (Bhaktin, 1981).

The Handbook of Training for English teachers in Armenia (Erznkyan et al, 2008, p. 15) focuses on several problems that still exist in Armenian EFL classrooms which need to be changed urgently:

- education focuses on the transfer of information to students, and not the development

of their abilities to use given information

- teachers and textbooks are seen as the only sources of information
- teaching approaches do not promote the education and nurture of citizens
- new and innovative teaching approaches are not used

We believe that the above mentioned issues could well serve as an impetus for investigating the dynamics and outcomes of using literature in Armenian EFL settings. Therefore we decided to conduct a study in two Armenian EFL settings - school and university, which we believed would help investigate the following research questions:

- How does the use of literature in the Armenian EFL setting affect the teacher and the students?
- Can the use of literature promote reading and writing skills by fostering students' response?

Participants and Settings

The participants of our study were schoolchildren of 9th and 10th forms (15-17 years old), second year university students (18-22 years old), and teachers of English at school and university.

In the 9th form there were 10 schoolchildren (9 females and 1 male). They had English three times per week and were very willing to participate. However, their literacy in English varied from elementary to intermediate proficiency. The teachers with whom we cooperated suggested only the best schoolchildren be chosen, but we decided to take a real classroom setting, as in any classroom there is never exactly the same literacy level between the students, and each student is unique in their identity and will react to teaching individually, showing individual results. We met this class two times a week for 90 minutes per meeting (two school hours of 45 minutes, which were clubbed at our request). We met for a total of 11

hours before winter holidays and 9 hours after them. The teacher of this class, and 2 others willingly agreed to cooperate with us.

In the literature club there were 14 schoolchildren of 9-10th form (8-10th form and 6-9th form), from which 10 were females and 4 were males. There were 6 teachers (3 Armenian, 1 Russian and 2 English teachers). The club was again situated in the same school and was founded at the beginning of the school year with the initiative of the high school teachers and schoolchildren. The club members met once a week for two hours. The aim of the club was initially to help the schoolchildren to read supplementary literature, develop the ability to discuss different literary works, write compositions, enlarge vocabulary and get acquainted with famous world literature. The club members were mostly schoolchildren who intended to enter the faculties of philology or journalism at different universities, where they had to write critical compositions on different pieces of literature. Literature was chosen and presented both by the teachers and the schoolchildren.

There was one very exciting approach in the club that greatly interested us. The materials were chosen from Armenian, Russian and English literature (though the latter was the least used) and sometimes were presented in the language in which they were written originally, without any translation. The teachers of these languages helped extensively during the meetings. The club members, however, acquainted themselves also with other pieces of world literature, of different cultures translated into Armenian. We were present at 5 club meetings, 10 hours in total.

At the university we worked with the second course group from the department of English, where there were 18 students in the course divided into two 9-student groups. We worked with one of these groups where all the students were females with different levels and proficiency of English. We taught there for 10 hours in total, 6 before winter holidays and 4 afterwards.

At the university the students took different subjects and so we had to decide which classes to take for teaching. The students passed Grammar, Lexis, Stylistics, Phonetics, Comparative Grammar of the English and Armenian languages, history of the English Language, Old English and the History of Linguistics. As we had to teach 10 hours, we had

to divide this time into 5 lessons of two hours (two of 70 minutes). According to the course curricula, the students were not going to take some of these subjects after the winter break. We decided to take 3 Comparative Grammar of the English and Armenian language and 2 Lexis lessons. The course did not have a separate strand course of English literature. The head of the English Language Department informed us that literature is primarily used for home and individual readings, translations and summaries. It is also used as new material for students during the exams.

Theoretical Issues and Insights

We will now discuss key theoretical issues and insights that underlie the use of literature in the Armenian foreign language classroom and which can be viewed as theoretical implications for practice predicated on the prevalence of literature in the educational domains of reading and writing. In light of this, we will address the following issues: the definition of literature, benefits of using literature in language teaching specifically in the Armenian setting and a personal enrichment approach and its pedagogical implications.

The Definition of Literature

We felt that it is vital to propose a definition and view of literature which we believed would provide the necessary underpinnings to our study. In light of this, we decided to use a fluid conceptualization of literature rather than look at literature in a rather conventional/ archetypal way as supported by a canonical view of literature. As observed by Shulman (1995), literature is a means of social expression, a mirror of life, and an interpretation of human experience that helps us to understand how to live and view living as a participatory/associative experience. All cultures have literature, and the impulse to form words into expressive creation, therefore, is natural.

Literature can also be seen as discourse which "serves to illustrate how a particular way of language use is intrinsic to the social, economic, technological and theoretical needs of the cultures concerned (Fowler, 1981). In this regard, Sivasubramaniam (2004, p. 109) raises

the importance of promoting sociolinguistic sensitivity among students and teachers who use literature for language education.

We believe that the preceding conceptualizations of literature can serve to illustrate how literature provides resourceful material for experiential, emotional and creative language learning in the Armenian EFL settings if it is viewed in non-archetypal way.

Benefits of Using Literature in Foreign Language Teaching

Using literature in language classroom can have multiple benefits for the Armenian classroom, which this study has set out to examine. For this aim, we consider several dimensions and implications of language teaching such as language learning, educational, motivational, social, cultural, and psychological and so on. The use of literature in language classrooms helps to develop reading and writing skills. Reading a substantial and contextualized body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of the written language - the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas - which broaden and enrich their own writing skills (Collie & Slater 1987, p. 5).

Literature fosters learner autonomy in the classroom. In a narrow sense autonomy means the learner's right to choose the level of engagement appropriate to their own situations. As a personal property, essentially it means the learner's capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independence (Kohonen et al, 2001, p. 39). When using literature in the classroom, students become deeply engaged in the events of the text and develop their subjective attitude towards the story and heroes, then reflect on it critically deciding upon right or wrong, good or bad. They make their own decisions about the story and step-by-step develop capacities to make decisions based on their own critical reflections of the text. Each learner goes through this process individually, in their own way, thus choosing the level of engagement appropriate to their own situations. Such insights, we believe, are relevant to Armenian EFL settings where students are unable to think and respond to texts for want of learning situations/ environments in their classrooms that center on their responses.

The Handbook of Training for English teachers in Armenia focuses on the importance of creating such an environment in the classroom, where each learner will individually be provided with maximum educational level according to their own capacities. In order to achieve this aim, students should be given a chance to be more independent and to take charge of their own learning (Erznkyan et al, 2008, p. 4).

Erznkyan et al (2008, p. 33) observe that, when choosing methods for EFL teaching in Armenian classrooms, it is essential "to learn and take into account students' own life experiences." The use of literature can help the teacher to learn about students' experiences and students to share it with others through comparison between the literary text and their own experiences.

Furthermore, Erznkyan et al (2008, p. 4) observe that foreign language teaching in the world moves towards multilingualism, which presupposes a strong cultural context for language acquisition. Literature provides useful materials for creating this context in Armenian EFL classrooms.

Literary texts open a route to the world literature, specifically to the literature of the Armenian Diaspora. Armenian Diaspora has very rich literature in the English language. Many novels and poems are written in English on Armenian culture and history. However, they remain unreachable to Armenian children as most are not translated into Armenian. Using these literary texts as materials for English language teaching may enable teachers to teach Armenian children the English language, and at the same time their own history and literature (Brinton & Master, 1997).

Suggesting new approaches to teaching English in Armenian EFL contexts, Erznkyan, Hovhannisyan and Pogosyan (2009, p. 4) observe that foreign language knowledge is very important in daily life, and for interpersonal and intercultural dealings. The country is undergoing a period of socio-economic change transition, which requires flexibility and skillful communication in everyday life. In light of what we have discussed so far, it is only reasonable to believe that the prevalence of literary texts in the Armenian EFL setting can have far-reaching benefits.

A Personal Enrichment Approach

In light of the issues discussed so far in this paper, we believe that a personal approach can be useful to our study as it views literature from a completely different angle. This emphasizes the importance of the students' personal appreciation of literary texts. Discussing the aim of this approach, Duff and Maley (1990, p. 5) state that it enables us to discard the dead weight of critical commentary, metalanguage, and explanation which have historically been associated with work on literary texts. Instead, by providing an emotional and intellectual engagement with literary texts, this approach fosters a personal sense of involvement in students (Sivasubramaniam, 2004, p. 133). In this approach, the key to success is based on multidimensional interactions which can occur between the student-reader and the text, the student and their peers, the group or groups and the teacher. Duff and Maley (1990, p. 5) stress that these interactions engage the students interactively with the text, with fellow students, and with the teacher in the performance of tasks involving literary texts. In so doing, students are obliged to pay careful attention to the text itself and to generate language in the process of completing the task. Thus, completing a task with literary texts becomes an experience for the student in which he/she learns to socialize with others in the group, feels emotional security and at the same time develops personal sense towards the literary texts. When their personal sense of involvement strengthens, it can promote learner autonomy so that they can make independent explorations into texts (Sivasubramaniam, 2004, p. 133).

These explorations and emotional involvement can have particular relevance to the Armenian EFL setting, which we believe can support a more participatory learning environment for the development of better citizenry in the country. In order to add further support to the theoretical framework of our study, we felt that it would be helpful to factor in the pedagogical implications of the personal enrichment approach discussed earlier.

Pedagogical Implications

The responsive process is a very strong indicator that the student is already emotionally involved in the reading process, that they are travelling in the 'secondary world', the world of an imaginative limbo, and in between a state of mind which draws upon both the unique

physic make up of an individual and the actual world that is everyone's possession (Benton & Fox, 1985, p.4). This deep involvement can encourage language-generation outside the text in contrast to a learner generated discourse to describe things within the text (Sivasubramaniam, 2004 p.160). Collie and Slater (1987) state that this approach can bring a fresh momentum into the teaching of literature, to stimulate students' desire to read, and to encourage their response.

Showing the importance of the reader's role, Selden (1989, p.132) states that 'we can no longer talk about the meaning of a text without considering the reader's contribution to it.' Every reader's response can be different relative to the individual potential of that reader. However, Benton and Fox observe that different reader's responses to a story thus have enough in common to be shared while remaining highly individual.

The views examined so far should be interpreted as intuitive beliefs and values that support our underlying pedagogies of experience and response. Therefore, it is not necessary to affirm these views as outcomes of rationalistic inquiries just for the sake of labeling them as 'objective'. As pointed out earlier, what is touted as 'objective' in language learning research has harmed our educational and social practices. Therefore, it is argued that theoretical possibilities suggesting ways of using literature should remain subjective, as literature is not an objective field of inquiry. Furthermore, as asserted by Eagleton (1983, p. 14), "the claim that knowledge should be value-free is itself a value judgment". Such an assertion not only points out the naivety of researchers who relate language learning to scientific research paradigms but also alerts us to the futility of objectifying and reifying literature in language learning research (Polkinghorne, 1988, x). It is then argued that the views in question will be used to support this paper, which is meant to examine the benefits of using literature the Armenian EFL settings indicatively, discursively and impressionistically.

Methodology

Our methodology uses an internalist position in its attempt to conceptualize the relationship between the researcher(s) and what is investigated. Such a choice is necessary

because the study needs to make value–laden judgments by allowing the researchers to become participant observers in their role as teachers and to factor the teacher in as the organizing voice to provide centrality. It is argued that research which views teaching in this way will uphold the teacher's voice and perspective to validate it. Such a position synchronizes the demand for the utilization of personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958; Toulmin, 1990) with a basis for redefining the relationship between teaching and research. By demonstrating the potential teaching has as a way of knowing, it can point to what is going on with learners in particular lessons, or from the learners' point of view. As observed by Paley (1986, p. 131):

> The classroom has all the elements of the theatre, and the observant, self examining teacher will not need a drama critic to uncover character, plot and meaning. We are all of us, the actors, trying to find the meaning of the scenes in which we find ourselves.

The points raised here have implications for the ways this research is to be reported. So, it will be useful to state them before proceeding further.

We propose to report this study as a story of lived experiences. In order to do that, we need to construct narratives based on live data collected from the classroom. It should be noted that these narratives use the live data discursively, indicatively and impressionistically to relate the story of lived experiences. Therefore, this research should not be viewed as a rationalistic/positivistic/scientific account of a phenomenon. Rather, it should be viewed as a discursive narrative in which the researchers voice autobiographical knowledge about language teaching and underlying beliefs, intuitions and values. There is support for such an undertaking in research literature. Edge and Richards (1998, pp. 334-356) have argued against quantitative interpretations that center on testing specific hypotheses related to narrow observations of linguistic or other types of human behaviour. In this connection, they have voiced support for research which by being unequivocally subjective and dialectical includes different and even opposing perspectives of the same phenomenon to investigate issues of position, voice and representation.

Their views are further supported by Duff (in Kaplan, 2002, p. 19) who has observed:

> The personal accounts and narratives of the experiences of language teachers, learners and others, often across a broader span of time, space, experience and languages have now become a major focus in some qualitative research. Evidence of this are first person narratives, diary studies, autobiographies, and life histories of developing teaching or losing aspects of one's language identity and affective orientation.

In light of the above, we position this study as an ethnographic narrative given that it will feature issues related to people, place, performance and progress- the four big Ps. It is argued that "narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and event into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13). By illustrating the identifiable features of reading and writing as social activities, the narratives serve to interpret the questions raised by this research. Furthermore, they illustrate the totalizing influence of the triangulated data in this investigation. As a result, they articulate the researchers' attempts to construct knowledge through the interpretive experiences of the participants and the context in which these experiences acquire meaning.

The research questions we posed earlier, in their turn, required us to carry out our study in three different settings: a 9^{th} form school class, a second course group at university and a literature club again at school. The choice of different age groups and different settings was aimed to gather more detailed, reliable and adequate data from the use of literature in the Armenian EFL classroom, on possible changes in pedagogies and development in language skills, in particular reading and writing.

The choice of the literature club as an alternative setting was based on the assumption that literature appeals to people, touches universal feelings and the need for the study to compare the differences and similarities between the processes that are observed when using literature in classroom for teaching and at the literature club for reading pleasure and enjoyment.

As our study is closely related to motivational, emotional, and imaginative issues we decided to have an 'insider view' from classrooms where the language was being taught

using literature, at school and university, and to participate in the meeting of the literature club at school.

Issues Related to Methodology, Instruments and Procedures

We decided to carry out research as insiders, teaching totally 40 hours (at school for 20 hours, at the university 10 hours and participated in club for 10 hours). The deep processes that take place in the classroom required a more detailed observation of specific behaviors in the classroom, with different individual identities that make the classroom a social setting. No outsider-researcher can have such engagement in classroom processes as the teachers do. Thus, our belief is that the teacher can be a very effective observer.

Instruments and Procedures in Different Settings

The elicitation of the data for this research required the use of different techniques. We applied three main techniques: questionnaires, interviews and journal writing.

At the beginning of the classes at the university and at school we delivered the students and schoolchildren pre-course questionnaires, which included open-ended questions on their attitudes towards reading literature, their experiences using literary texts during the class, and the effect of the latter on their language proficiency, and the personal and emotional growth of their identities (See appendix 1).

At the end of the courses that we conducted, we again asked the schoolchildren and the students to fill in the post-course questionnaires on almost the same issues, in order to collect the reflections of differences before and after the courses. We explained to the students that their honesty in their answers matters a lot, and there are many possible answers to the questions (See appendix 2).

However, questionnaires, no matter how open-ended, may not elicit expected answers. We believed that our research required detailed, slow but firmly-based movement through the classroom reality and modifications to it. This was why we used journal writing as an introspective tool. As Nunan (1992, p.115) states, introspection is the process of observing and reflecting on one's thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning processes and mental states.

We used journal writing based on the belief that this kind of introspective method is vital for ethnographic research, as it gives the writers opportunities to be frank, share deep values and beliefs with the reader, and show subjective reflection towards different things.

The club members also wrote journals. Initially we decided that it would be compulsory, but during the course we understood that, if compulsory, the students would be reticent to do so as it was a new process for them, and may not be honest within their ideas in the journals. Thus, we decided to ask the participants to keep the journals of their reflections only if they wanted. Further to this, journals were also seen as a means to show development in critical and comprehensive reading as well as writing.

The only group that did not do journal writing was the students group, as they were engaged in term exams and assessments and could not afford time for additional activities. As with the school children and the students, before and after the courses we asked the teachers also to complete the questionnaires to elicit their attitudes and ideas towards the use of literature, the role of participants and the possible learner centered pedagogies in the Armenian EFL classroom (See appendix 3, 4). These teachers participated in classes conducted by one of us, and we considered observations of these participants as significant to the study.

In the literature club, we participated as members and observed how enjoyable language and literature activities are carried out in a relaxing atmosphere. For the club members we decided to conduct interviews and record them. We have slightly different questions for the club members, one for the schoolchildren and one for their teachers. For the club we did not use pre- and post-interviews, but took the semi-structured interviews in the end.

This study required the detailed comparison and analyses of the use of literature in the three different settings. Thus we decided to choose materials that would be possible to use in the three settings, in order to be able to see how different age groups react on this. The selected materials included Armenian, American and World literature. We conducted the classes in to see what reactions will the same material produce with the same activities in the school and in the club, or at the university and at school.

Selection of Literary Pieces and Activities

We have included both types of literature: prose and poetry. Given the limited time to teach both at the school and at the university, we decided to use not very long texts, which the students would manage to read during this short period of time, and would have opportunity to work with them as a whole literary piece.

Prose:

- "The picture of Dorian Gray" by O.Wilde
- "Wuthering Heights" by E.Bronte

Poetry:

- "Hope is a thing with feathers", "There is no frigate like a book" by E. Dickinson
- "My Heart Leaps Up" by William Wordsworth
- "A Metaphor" by Eve Merriam
- "Annabel Lee" by Edgar Allan Poe
- " The Dream Keeper" by Langston Hughes
- "She had nothing to eat" by Michael Swan
- "What are heavy" by Christina Rozetti

Translations of Armenian writers

Prose:

- "Eternal traveler" by Gevorg Emin

Poetry:

- "I love my sweet Armenia's word" by Egishe Charents
- " To my son" by Parouir Sevak

As the literary texts are good resources for different language activities, we have chosen and used a variety of classroom tasks and activities, which include:

- Journal writing
- Summaries and reflections
- Interviewing heroes

- Role plays
- Story telling
- Peer discussion and group debates
- Clustering of the story
- Brainstorming
- Picture strip stories and poems
- Word Portraits

Language activities:

- Reconstruction of a text through splits
- Reduction of a text through shortening and removing elements
- Expansion through adding given elements to a text
- Comparison and contrast of two texts or two heroes in the same text
- Translation

Presentation and Discussion of Findings

Given the enormous amount of data collected, it is impossible to capture all of it in the limited space that this paper. Hence, we have had to make a rigorous selection. The views of Taylor and Bogdan (1998, p. 156) below support our position:

> There are no guidelines in qualitative research for determining how many instances are necessary to support a conclusion or interpretation. This is always a judgment call.

Further to the views expressed above, I understand that a single incident or instance is sufficient to build a conceptual category. By the same token, the best insights might come from quite a small amount of data. Bleich (in Cooper, Ed. 1985, p. 261) provide further support to our position:

> More is known about response and reading processes from small numbers of detailed reactions than from large numbers of one- word judgments. In this

way, the process of teaching the development of detailed subjective response is simultaneously research into the nature of response processes.

Based on the views examined so far, we have decided to use selected strands of the data that related to the particular stages of the study. Therefore, the data strands presented in the analysis should be viewed as "illustrative stretches" (Willett, 1995, p. 480) of discourse the students produced.

Questionnaires

Setting 1: School

The first setting where one of us taught for 15 hours was at school. For data collection in this setting, we used pre- and post-questionnaires for students, pre- and post-questionnaires for teachers and journal writing as an introspective tool.

On the first day of our teaching we distributed to the students the pre-course questionnaire of 8 questions to investigate their initial attitudes and ideas about using literature in their class, and their exposure to it in and out of the classroom. It also included questions on the impact of literature on their identity and personality. We guaranteed them that responses would be anonymous if they desired (See Appendix 1).

Responses illustrate, that all students love literature. Out of nine, six students mentioned that they mostly read literature in their free time. Only three of them do not read it very often as they are short of time.

Students read literature for variety of reasons. They compare what they read with what they see in reality. Some read to know what different poets wrote in their centuries. Besides the fact that literature is interesting and enlarges knowledge and imagination, the answers by two students support our belief in the literature review that reading literature is pleasant and relaxing:

I enter another world, where I stay with my own thoughts and I really enjoy it.

Students like working with literary texts during the EFL class and consider it more interesting and pleasant. They learn a lot of new words and improve their language when using literary texts. One student explains:

I like working with literary texts as in my opinion, they widen our mind and we learn a lot of new things.

Students felt positive changes in their role, participation and involvement when working with literary texts. They mention that the reasons for these changes are their active engagement, the opportunity to voice their opinion, and the relaxation and interest that motivate them. All these confirm the ideas presented in the literature review section that the language activities around literary texts provide a relaxed atmosphere for teaching, and motivate students to express their subjective understanding.

Responses also tend to support the point that literature has an imaginative, creative and emotional impact on the readers. It educates the students through the comparisons of real life and the world of the books. The findings appear to confirm the belief in the literature review that their real life experiences help them to understand the texts better:

When I read, I often meet things that happen in my life.

One of the students brought a typical example from her life writing:

I am in love and I enjoy reading love stories.

The responses appear to support our belief that every activity where the students are involved and have an opportunity to express their agency and voice is suitable for them for exploring the themes in literary texts during their EFL class.

The responses to the pre-course questionnaire for students indicate that all the students love literature. They read for various reasons: for pleasure and relaxation; or definite goals

such as improving imagination, comparing the material with the present reality, knowledge, and intelligence. They all like working with literary texts, yet mention it is not such a frequent activity in their EFL class. The analysis confirms our belief, that activities around literary texts foster students' involvement imaginatively, emotionally and provide opportunity for the students to express their subjective understanding. It illustrates the students' abilities to use their imagination and experiences to understand both, the real life and the text.

The most suitable activities for students when working with literary texts are group discussions, reading and translating. They also prefer to express their feelings for or against mostly through discussion, in some cases through writing also.

The post-course questionnaires for the 9th form students consist of 6 open-ended questions. The students filled it in during the last class. The questionnaire was meant to observe the changes and classroom dynamics that evolved at the time of my teaching. During this class one of the students was absent; therefore we were able to get only 8 responses for all the questions (See Appendix 2).

Responses appear to support our belief expressed earlier that literary texts help the students to explore their own identity and value system. We believe that the following can serve as interesting examples:

Sometimes when I read I want to compare it with me. I think, it is very good, as know what I can do to become a good person" or "It helped me to watch me from different sides and perspectives and the world in a new way.

The data appears to suggest that the students like to discuss different types of issue after reading. However, depending on the topic, the students mostly debate on hero's thinking, relations between the heroes and their character, human values, and various issues that address such themes. Only one student wrote that she prefers to write her opinions in a special notebook after reading, rather than discuss them.

Responses to questions show that students have reflected on the issues of personal interest mostly through discussion and journal writing. The following two answers are rather specific and appear to support this:

We do many interesting things to describe a poem. We write our own impressions in our reflections. Finally all this I write in my journal. Now I have many interesting things in my journal.
In our journals we write our own opinions, trying to understand what the author wanted to say.

Other responses explain that the two most popular activities for the students are journal writing and role play. We believe that the following reasons mentioned by the students can explain these preferences:

I like role-plays, as I put me in the place of the heroes.

My most favorite activity is to role play as heroes did in the books. It helps me to understand their characters.

My most favorite activity is journal writing, when I can really write what I want and it does not matter that I may make mistakes.

These statements appear to support our research premise that using literary texts in EFL classroom can promote student-centered responses.

The data from the questionnaire can help explain that the activities promoting confidence in language use include writing, reading and speaking. However, writing and journal writing appear to be the most popular. One student explains that "Although we do many mistakes, it is very pleasant and helpful". Among other writing activities, the students seem to enjoy writing their own stories, expressing their opinions about the heroes and about

the book in general. Along with these activities, the students mention discussion with friends, translations from Armenian literature into English, answering questions and reading aloud activities. All these findings appear to support our research question, as well as the issues that we presented in the literature review section. This suggests that when used in language activities, literary texts might promote reading and writing skills.

The responses to the last question further appear to confirm our belief that students perceive changes in their role and participation when working with literary texts. They become active and central participants as they are involved enough to express their opinions. The students enjoy the class when they are the center of focus. However, the active participation is also explained by the development of students' own mentality and word stock.

The responses to the post course questionnaire can support our belief that when working with literary texts, the students reevaluate their value system and identity. We think the original voices of our students' presented in this segment illustrate the deep processes of identity construction that happen within learners when working with the literary text. They are more interested in relations between people, the ways to overcome gaps and pitfalls in these relations, and ways to socialize and be a sustainable member of society. All these appear to confirm the belief discussed in the literature review that using literary texts for language teaching develops social sensitivity in students. This very aim can motivate the learners to seek ways of expressing issues of personal interest in class. They use different activities to express their identities. Hence, language becomes a vital tool in this process. The more involved they feel in all the activities and processes in the classroom, the more proficient they become in the language and the more they are able to express their subjective This suggests that languaging has not only language acquisition- related benefits but also social-cognitive benefits too.

During the course conducted at school, three English language teachers have cooperated, assisted and worked with us. They were present at some of the lessons and also have filled in two questionnaires: pre- and post-course. The aim of the pre-course questionnaire was to

determine the teachers' attitudes to using literature in general, and especially to find out if there were any changes in them after the course (See Appendix 3).

The responses illustrate that all the teachers consider the literary texts as good resources for fostering language activities. These also appear to support our research question that literary texts promote reading and writing. We wish to present them in the original voice of the teachers:

Making a connection between the literary text and its grammatical structures the students develop their skills in reading and writing.

Literary texts are the most important resources for teaching, reading and writing. They develop visual imagery which helps to compose wonderful writing.

Students may use the vocabulary and different grammatical structures which he/she has read in the text, in his her writing.

The data appears to suggest that both teacher-student and student-student interactions are dominant in class. Nearly once a week, the teachers use literary texts other than in the curriculum for different reasons. The most important goals are developing skills in reading, in particular catching new ideas, recalling and using information, discussing and retelling in the group. Other reasons are stimulating students' interest, expanding their knowledge in different spheres, educating them morally and enriching vocabulary. The criteria, according to which the teachers choose literary texts are: interesting plot, moral and events, hero's educating personality and the amount of new words. The teachers also consider the students' level of language proficiency, their knowledge, age and interest.

The responses to the last question appear to confirm our belief that during the activities organized around literary texts the teacher's role should be that of a good conductor, a promoter or an interpreter of the topic, while the students' role should be that of active investigators. The findings in this segment illustrate that all the teachers appear to understand

and value the role of literature as a strong resource for language teaching. They try to transcend the limits of the syllabus and fill in the gaps in their teaching process through applying different literary texts. Even before starting the course they state that the main role of the teacher when using literary text should be that of promoter and interpreter. They appeared to have preferred activities directed towards the development of reading skills vocabulary and debate.

After completing the course hours with the 9th form students at school, we distributed the teachers a questionnaire comprising 6 questions aimed to find out what has changed in their attitude and thinking towards using literary materials for teaching English and the pedagogies and practices that played out during the course as a result (See Appendix 4).

The data from the first question illustrate teachers' justifications for using literature in EFL teaching. Those are to raise language and general awareness, educate students morally, and help them create a new world by giving them a chance to think in their own way. As a very important feature, they value the possibility to find additional material on every language topic in literary texts.

The further analysis of data from the questionnaire indicates various student-centered activities to maintain student's interest, motivation and involvement when using literary texts in EFL. The most frequently mentioned are discussing the text, role playing the story, journal writing, thinking of another ending, debates, creating own stories, group work, improvisations, sharing opinions, as well as recalling the text and completing each other's ideas. One teacher seems to generalize all the responses by answering "all the activities, where the students are the central actors".

All these findings appear to confirm the beliefs we voiced in the literature review which said that literature raises motivation in language classrooms.

Other responses illustrate activities that the teachers suggest for using literature in the Armenian EFL classroom. They include use of short literary pieces which are interesting and engaging, as well as working with dictionaries, to help students understand new words. They

also suggest encouraging students to use their own stories and poems, reshape and change them, correlate the Armenian literary text with the English one and translate.

Teachers' responses seem to support our belief, that there are numerous advantages in using literature as a resource for EFL teaching. Connected to language skills teachers mention the improvement of abilities to read and discuss the topic in English, learning new words and grammatical structures. However, one of the teachers stresses:

Literature is a life example, it shapes the life of the students, develops personality and values, and makes students literate. Students become more intellectual and they find a new world to study.

However, according to teachers, disadvantages in using literature as a resource for EFL teaching can be noticed if there is much difference between student's skills and knowledge or interest. Students may become bored and procrastinate. The class may become passive if the text does not interest students. We think that the following response can summarize the data from these two questions:

There is not any disadvantage, if the literary text is properly chosen.

The data from the last question explains how the literary texts affect the teachers and learners in general when using it as a resource for EFL teaching. Responses confirm the idea in the literature review that teachers should promote and facilitate, while the students should explore the topic, develop and investigate their own approaches. It is possible to see, that after the course, the teachers had already developed convincing justifications for using literary texts for teaching EFL in Armenian classroom. They examined the effectiveness of different student-centered activities and put forward their own alternatives for a variety of classroom pedagogies. The data presented by the teachers appears to support our research question that using literature for teaching English in Armenian classroom can give them

opportunities for creative teaching, student-centered pedagogies, and focal changes in teachers' and learners' roles.

Setting 2: The University

At the university we worked with a group of 9 students from the department of English. The students filled in open-ended questionnaires at the beginning and end of the course. The same pre-course questionnaire used in the school setting was given to them at the end of the first class. The aim was to ascertain the students' attitudes towards literature in general and using it during the EFL class (See Appendix 1).

The responses indicate that nearly all the students love literature. However, they do not read it very often. Students read literature for their classes, knowledge, vocabulary and pleasure. We think that the following answer confirms the belief discussed in literature review that literature bridges cultures and develops intercultural sensitivity:

It is very interesting and attractive for me to learn about other cultures, nations and due to literature I learn many new and useful things about them.

The data can help illustrate the reasons why the students like to work with literary texts in class:

It is very interesting, It is useful particularly when discussing the texts with friends, It is the best way to have a class, It makes me think.

Some students mention that they mostly read for pronunciation or to learn by heart. The responses confirm our belief that students sense changes in their role, participation and involvement when the teacher uses literary texts for language activities. They all stress their activeness.

The students' responses appear to confirm the idea in the literature review, that literary texts help the students understand the real world by stimulating their imagination. The

students imagine the same situations in real life and read about things not experienced in their lives or never thought of. One student was very specific in her answer: “I think literary texts help us, because there are many stories connected with our real life. For example, love stories”. The students find advice and solutions in literary texts and use them in real world.

The data also indicate that the students’ real life experience can help them to understand the literary text better. The students explain that they understand the texts better if they have had similar experiences. One of them writes that “Sometimes, the text and my life are so alike, that I try to guess the end of the story”.

Responses to the last questions illustrate the most suitable way for the students to explore the themes in literary texts during the EFL class is discussion. They prefer discussion to express their feelings for or against a topic since while discussing they learn about their friends’ opinions. Only one student wrote that he prefers writing.

The findings obtained through the open-ended questionnaire from university students can support our belief that the students love literature and read it for educational and enjoyment purposes. However, they do not read it very often. Though most students mention they use few literary materials during the class, they like them and feel a sense of active participation and involvement. Data analysis of this segment in the study appears to confirm the concept of personalization of ideas presented in literature review, that the students understand literary pieces by correlating real life with the book, imagining different situations and seeking solutions for them. The opportunity to express and share their subjective understanding and beliefs motivates the use of language.

At the end of the course the students filled out the post-course questionnaire aimed to gather data from the effects and responses to using literary pieces as recourses for language teaching. In this part of our study, the questionnaire investigated student-centered activities, their preferences in using literature in the EFL class and the factors that interest and motivate them to use language (See Appendix 2).

Responses lead us to deduce that literary texts can help students to explore their own identity and value systems. The students can reveal and assess their own identities, develop

good characteristics and reevaluate their shortcomings. One student describes the interpersonal processes that happen within her:

I develop new attitudes towards different situations and reevaluate my life.

All these responses appear to confirm the idea that literature has an important role in the process of identity construction and human education.

The data provided by the second and third question illustrate that students are mostly interested in the relationships between heroes, human feelings and emotions, different personalities and their deeds. Some think the answer to this question depends on the material. They reflect on the issues of personal interest in class through discussion with friends and the teacher, writing reflections, and sharing their opinions.

However, responses also serve to illustrate the most popular activities: changing the end of the story before reading its original version, answering the questions, role-plays, writing reflections, discussions, scrambling the text, translating Armenian poetry into English, and writing their own poetry and stories in English.

The responses to the fifth question appear to confirm our belief that the activities promoting confidence in language use are mostly those that involve, motivate and support students' subjectivity, such as discussions, role plays, and different writing tasks. One student explains this clearly:

Sometimes we are so much involved in the discussion that we forget about the difficulties in language use.

Data analysis of the last question appears to support our view that the students become central actors in class activities and gain knowledge through it. They become active participants, get involved and interested in many different activities which motivate to speak more and express their own attitudes freely.

The analysis of the post–course questionnaire for university students can offer support for the key ideas discussed in the Issues and Insights section that literature serves as a means to construct, evaluate, reevaluate and educate students' identities. The relationships and actions of heroes, human feelings, personalities, their deeds and emotions become issues of special interest for students, which they explore through language use. The student-centered activities make the students so involved that they forget about the difficulties of language use. They become central figures in class, become engaged, speak more and express they own attitudes freely.

We would like to note that the university teachers also filled in the pre- and post-course questionnaires. The data gathered in this part of the study appears to verify our belief that literary texts are good resources for language activities and have numerous positive characteristics that impact on the teaching process and promote student-centered pedagogies. They can also serve to illustrate that all language teachers need to feel connected with the use of literary texts for teaching.

Journal Entries

Setting 1: school

As our study is concerned with the subjective and psychological dimensions of language teaching and learning, we used journal writing as an introspective tool in two settings. The 9th form students used journal writing to reflect on reading, to write and translate their own poems and stories, as well as their favorite literary pieces. We present extracts from their journals along with the students' names, as they were very keen to be referred to by their real names.

The findings in this segment appear to confirm trends found in the questionnaires for school teachers and students. The presentation and discussion of findings moderated so far illustrate that the students consider journal writing as one of the most motivating and interesting activities that allows them to express their own opinions and reflect on literary texts that they read according to their subjective understanding.

Reflections on the poem by Eve Merriam "Metaphor" show how well the students could understand the meaning of the metaphor of 'morning' and how they tie every understanding of it to their real life examples:

When I first read this poem, I understood that it is about life. The life consists of bright and dark words, and all this down, a new day comes to write on. Days come after days and go. And all this is called LIFE.

(pupil of 9th form)

Another example shows that the students not only understand the metaphorical, poetic language, but also develop creative skills, to express their understanding in their own metaphors:

I agree with the poet, that the life is like a new sheet of paper. I think we change with every page. ***The life is also like a wheel which is revolving****. New Things are represented in every sheet of paper. I want to say that I have separated the bright times and dark times in my memories.* (Text italicized and in bold shows emphasis)

(pupil of 9^{th} form)

These pieces can support and confirm our assumptions about using literature as a resource for language teaching to promote reading and writing skills. Although these are written pieces, they directly illustrate how productive the previously reading of the material has been as a strong stimuli and motivator to write.

During the course, the students read "The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde and wrote their reflections about different events in the book. Several extracts from their writings illustrate how freely they use the language, and how much effort they are willing to make in order to express their own subjective understanding of the events and heroes' deeds:

I think that Dorian was changed much more than the picture showed. His sovereign soul did not let forgive Sybil's mistake. Together with the portrait, Dorian's soul was getting old… I do not think that Dorian is an honest man and I do not think that Sybil had forgiven him.

(pupil of 9th form)

It is obvious the student has not read the continuation of the novel at the moment of writing and does not know that Sybil commits suicide, yet she continues to predicting the events of the story and will experience subsequent events. Here is another reflection on "The picture of Dorian Gray":

Through this story Oscar Wild wanted to say how a man can change and a good man can become a bad man… I think that Oscar Wild told about his feelings…When I read this book I thought "Can a good man become a murderer?"

(pupil of 9th form)

These two strands from the students' journals appear to support our belief that literature can foster critical thinking, impact on identity construction and reevaluation of personality. Further to this, several other pieces from the journals confirm our belief that literary texts might be well placed to promote creative language use. The students wrote their own poems and stories in their journals in English:

If you have been deceived by love,
If you have lost your hope,
If you are bored from
And tired of yourself,
Open a corner in your heart,
And let love in, to knit a new lain.

(pupil of 9th form)

Another short story by one pupil shows the use of metaphors, the creation of setting for events, alternatives to natural realities, and an acceptance of reality:

There were four seasons in the year: spring summer, autumn and winter. Each season lasted three months in the year. Once the seasons decided to do so, that each of them would rule only one day, and one day would be spring, the other summer, every third day- autumn and the fourth day- winter. Then again the spring would come and the other seasons every next day. But for this change, they needed first to ask their king weather. So they went to the king. The way was long. The winter got cold, the summer got thirsty, and the spring and autumn got tired. But when they reached to the king weather, he said "No" to their suggestion. The seasons got very sad, came back, and up to now, they change three months once.

On their own initiative students also translated their favorite poems into English in their journals. The choice of theme, author and literary piece was by the students. They did the translations of "with pride and belief that we are making our national values reachable and understandable to English-speaking people". Here are two translated pieces:

Anoush (a piece by famous Armenian poet H. Toumanyan, translated by a 9th form pupil)

You also, the mountainous flowering
Have a silent and hidden pain,
Eyes filled with tears
Hearts dark and sad.
Oh, the flowers in this world
Suffer always and so vain,
Rub and whither
With hearts dark and sad.

Love (by Middle Ages famous poet Nahapet Kuchak; translated by a 9th form pupil)

I am an eye and you are light, my soul,
The eyes blur without light,
I am a fish and you are water, my dear,

The fish will die without water.

When the fish is taken out from its water,

And thrown into other waters, it will live.

But if You are taken from me,

Except death, no means will be.

All these examples demonstrate how the students developed creative thinking and an ability to use the language to express subjective opinions. Literary pieces serve as strong prompts to do comprehensive reading, create their own world of imagination and demonstrate their feelings for or against to what their read through writing. Thus, we believe that journal writing can serve as a strong introspective tool in this study to show that using literary pieces in language teaching promotes the development of both reading and writing skills.

There are many other pieces from the student's journals that would open up new horizons of their thinking and their abilities of using English.

Setting 2: Literature club

We propose the use of journal writing as an introspective tool in club setting, with the belief that it promotes reflection on the emotional, psychological and motivational effects of literature. Students wrote in their journals their reflections and critical opinions on readings and discussed materials. In this segment also the students' entries are presented along with their names.

The following extracts from students' writings on the novel "Wuthering heights" by Emily Bronte reflect how they use the language to form critical assumptions:

I think that Cathy became very selfish, when she went to Linton's house, she thought that she was higher than other people. But I think that there was something good in it too. She became tidy, clean and more beautiful in appearance.

(pupil of 10^{th} form)

Frankly speaking, this part is terrible. Cathy died, and her baby remained without her mother. In my opinion it is very bad that the child is growing without her parents. I understand that death is the law of life. But life is sometimes very unfair.

(pupil of 10th form)

Another piece of reflection on the "Metaphor" by Eve Merriam reflects how the poem and its metaphors are understood:

This poem is very –very nice. It is true, that every day is a new sheet of paper. I think that when a person is very kind, life will be very interesting and beautiful in every sheet.

(pupil of 10th form)

The following piece appears to confirm our belief and the opinion expressed in the semi-structured interview for club member-students that activities surrounding literary texts give the learners opportunities to express their subjective understanding towards different events and situations. The student could express her negative feelings about events in the book "The portrait of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde:

I think that Sybil did a very bad thing sacrificing her own life as Dorian was not able to love really and value anybody's love towards him. I am very disappointed!

(pupil of 10th form)

Another reflection that we would like to represent is again written on the "Metaphor" by Eve Merriam, and reflects the students inspiration and frankness to delve into the poem, create the world of self-understanding and metaphors and express personal solutions in English.

In my opinion, when Eve Merriam wrote this poem, she had very sad mood and was unhappy. I think, that she wanted to devote her life to her dear person, but she couldn't. But she never lost her hope and belief, that tomorrow a new day will be, which will take with it all the

bad things, sadness, and negative feelings. I think it is the law of our life that all bad days will pass and tomorrow will be bright and happy. Every new page comes to replace the bad ones. Thus, the life consists of not only happy days. There will be bad days which will pass. Our life is like a flower. It whitens, but instead of it a new and fresh one grows. We will never be sad in our lives, if we understand that nothing is eternal, and we should try to live every day of our life as it is the last.

(pupil of 10th form)

There are many other pieces in the data gathered through Journal writing that confirm and support different ideas and beliefs discussed in this part of the study. The data of this segment confirms the belief that using literature as a resource for the English language teaching in Armenian EFL class can have numerous benefits for Armenian learners. Journal writings in two settings not only illustrated the motivational, emotional, and engaging effects that literature has on the students, but also supported our central premise/ research question that literature promotes reading and writing skills.

Literature Club

In the literature club, we interviewed two member teachers, three students, and two guest speakers. As an alternative tool, we again used journal writing at club. Here, the students also wrote their reflections about the materials they had read and discussed. The aim of the interviews was to understand the similarities and differences that occur when literature is used as a resource for teaching language and when it is read as a hobby or for pleasure.

The responses to the semi-structured interview for teachers appear to confirm our beliefs that in a non classroom setting also, literature can serve an educational purpose. It draws the students' attention to different linguistic phenomena, even when it is not required or intended in advance. Thus, its use in the classroom can provide the students an opportunity to study the language in a pleasurable and interesting way. Students appreciate and get motivated, when they have a right to make choices, express their subjective opinion openly, debate for or against different ideas. Accordingly, student centered activities and pedagogies built around

literary texts can be helpful in engaging the students in different language activities in the classroom setting also.

We had a chance to meet two guest speakers at the club, who had come to represent two distinguished Armenian writers Hamastegh and Hovhannes Toumanyan: Eva Mnatsakanyan (PhD in Armenian Literature and Language, National Academy of Sciences) and Margarita Khachatryan (PhD of Armenian literature, Yerevan State University). This interview aimed to understand their beliefs about the benefits of reading literature and using it as a resource for language teaching. Both interviewees were also teachers and had experience of using literature in their classes.

Concerning advantages of literary texts as useful resources for language teaching, both interviewees supported the aforementioned idea that literature helps to recognize the world. Firstly, it gives pleasure to readers, enriches their vocabulary, educates and shapes personality, simultaneously with language learning. Moreover, it develops taste and techniques of reading, promotes the correct understanding of words, develops grammatical awareness and raises awareness of different language styles.

The responses to the second question illustrate the differences between reading text for pleasure and for language learning purposes. When reading for language learning, the literary material is accepted deeply and seriously, not only in terms of grammar and lexis, but also in terms of its meaning and literary value. Using literary pieces as resources for language teaching and learning, the students combine pleasure with usefulness. One interviewee states:

When literature is read for pleasure, the issue of choice arises: What to read? When the book is read for pleasure, it is being read fast, sometimes without getting into the depth of issues. When the reader gets bored, the book can be put aside. When the book is read for studying purpose, it is read more attentively, as a concrete task is being solved. Sometimes additional tasks stand in front of the student, which he/she experiences for the first time and attempts to solve it by more efforts and in a more interesting way.

Both interviewees confirm the view presented in the literature review that reading literature for language learning purposes is much more useful than reading it for pleasure, as it makes different linguistic items more noticeable and memorable.

As criteria for selecting literary texts, the interviewees mentioned the students' age, the author of the text, the aim of the lesson, the educational value of the literary piece as well as the students' abilities. They also stress the importance of choosing a material, where "the particular language phenomenon is very expressive in terms of similarities and differences… or maybe different literary pieces, where the students could see the same phenomenon in different shapes, styles and contexts."

Addressing the issue of using literary texts to teach people of different nationalities, religions, and ages, the interviewees state that "Literature can bridge nations, cultures, religions and even ages. There is only need for careful choice". As the only problem, they mention that the teacher should be very proficient in making the right choices.

Expressing their attitude about teaching EFL in Armenia through literature by Armenian, English, American and other nationalities of writers (using the translations of non-English writers), both interviewees were enthusiastic. They suggested using, first of all, Armenian and English authors, as language is an indestructible and indivisible part of culture, and it needs to be taught simultaneously with cultural awareness. The following extract form their responses illustrate their appreciation of literature as a useful resource for language teaching:

I have a very positive attitude about using literature as language teaching resource for teaching all languages in general, as there is not a more beautiful, more profound, more diverse and talkative expression of language than literature. It shows the language with all its possibilities and life with all its realities. If we want to teach both language and life, then we should teach language through literature.

Reading literature for educational purposes is more helpful and effective than reading for pleasure. It can provide engagement and motivation and at the same time gives opportunities to observe language phenomenon in a very expressive and context-bound way.

The semi-structured interview for students aimed to find out their expectations as members from the club, the reasons for membership, their role, participation, engagement in the club and the ways of dealing with language. Responses to this interview suggest that the students have motivation, interest and freedom, when they work with literary texts in the club. Although not required, they notice and pay attention to different linguistic phenomena when reading or discussing different texts. This statement confirms the idea expressed by the guest speakers, that literature, when reading for pleasure, also has "teaching" effect. Students who read books can make interesting "discoveries" on different language phenomena on their own. Thus, if literature is used as resource for teaching with a well-informed choice of activities and instruction, it can have numerous beneficial effects on the language learning and teaching process.

Conclusions

This study has investigated the use of literature as a resource for teaching English as a foreign language and various activities and tasks organized around literary texts that motivate and foster the language learning process which bring about changes in the teacher's and learner's role. Findings appear to reinforce the premise that using literary texts can help the teachers to provide learners with various tasks and activities in a context- bound way, foster reading and writing skills and motivate the students. The teachers' role, then becomes that of a promoter and facilitator, while the students become investigators, initiators who take charge of their learning process. The findings appear to confirm that literary texts develop students' critical thinking, and their imaginative and creative language use. The study appears to confirm the idea that literature is a strong resource to develop well-informed and value-conscious citizens for society. As van Lier (in Lantolf, 2000, p. 246) states:

> Meanings become available gradually as the learner acts and interacts within and with this environment. Learning is not a holus-bolus or piecemeal migration of meanings to the inside of the learner's head, but rather the development of increasingly effective ways of dealing with the world and its meanings.

We believe this is fundamental to the prevalence of democratic citizenry which needs better readers and writers to sustain itself. The more the students read and react to reading, the better their writing can become. The study appears to support our belief that effective readers are effective writers (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1984a). As Reid (1993) states, the literary text is not merely an artifact of the writing process, but is the crucial connection between writer and reader and the world. Supporting this belief, our study appears to confirm the idea that reading and writing activities around literary texts foster student acquisition of and exposition to different language phenomena in a variety of ways.

our conclusions are purely context-based confirmations which are fundamental to pedagogical practices that the study has explored so far. The findings in the study appear to confirm our belief that using literature for language teaching in the specific EFL setting in Armenia can provide a significant contribution to the Armenian educational system. The teachers in Armenian schools, as well as the instructors at universities and other educational institutions can use the results of our investigations to make their teaching more productive and interesting. Literary texts can be used by Armenian EFL teachers to foster pedagogies that evoke students' participation. Finally, multiple layers of meaning in literary texts can provide opportunities for various classroom and home tasks, reading and writing activities that foster motivation and interest.

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Appendix 1 - Pre- course questionnaire for schoolchildren and students

1. Do you love literature and how often you read it.
2. Why do you read literature?
3. Do you like to work during you EFL class and why?
4. Do you feel changes in your role, participation, and involvement when the teacher uses literary texts for language activities?
5. How does the literary text help you to understand the real world through promoting your imagination?
6. Do you think/ believe that your real life experience can help you to understand the text better?
7. What is the most suitable way for you to explore the themes in literary text during the EFL class?

8. How do you prefer to express your feelings for or against, through discussion or writing?

Appendix 2 - Post-course questionnaire for schoolchildren and students

1. Did working with literary texts help you to explore your own identity and value system?
2. What type of issues do you like to discuss after reading literary texts?
3. Do you have an opportunity to reflect on the issues of personal interest in class and how you do it?
4. What is your most favorite activity when working with literary texts?
5. Which activity connected with literary texts is most helpful for promoting confidence in the use of language?
6. What changes in your role and participation do you feel when working with literary text?

Appendix 3- Pre- course questionnaire for teachers

1. Do you think that literary texts are good resources to foster language activities?
2. How do you think the use of literary texts promote reading and writing?
3. What type of interaction (T-SS, SS-SS) is dominant in class when you use literary texts in teaching EFL?
4. How often do you use literary texts other than in curriculum?
5. Why do you use literary texts other than those prescribed in the curriculum? Mark at least three reasons?
6. What criteria do you follow when choosing literary texts?
7. What should be the teacher's and learner's role in the activities organized around literary texts?

Appendix 4- Post- course questionnaire for teachers

1. What justifications can you think of for using literature in teaching EFL?
2. What kind of students centered activities maintain student's interest, motivation and involvement in Armenian EFL classroom?

3. What kind of ideas and procedures would you suggest for using literature as a resource for EFL teaching?

4. Mention, some advantages that you think are in using literature as a resource for EFL teaching?

5. Mention, some disadvantages that you think are in using literature as a resource for EFL teaching?

6. What should be the teacher's and the learner's role in the activities organized around literary texts?

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Korean College Students' Self-Regulated Learning Strategies and Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Learning English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulation, and English language proficiency for Korean college students. College students (n = 220) attending a major university in Korea responded to two instruments, one on their self-efficacy beliefs and the other on their use of self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies in English. Examination of the reliability and validity of the instruments was followed by a path model representing positive and significant relationships between self-efficacy, SRL strategies, and English proficiency measured by a standardized English test. Multivariate analysis of variance and t-tests revealed group differences: (a) female students reported higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs, more frequent use of SRL strategies, and higher English proficiency; (b) undergraduate students reported higher levels of self-efficacy beliefs and higher English proficiency than graduate students but their use of SRL strategies did not differ significantly; and (c) participants did not differ in their use of a test-taking strategy (reading the questions before reading the text versus reading the text before reading the questions), and this test-taking strategy did not make a difference in participants' performance on the standardized English test, either. Implications of the findings were discussed in the context of classroom teaching.

Keywords: College students, self-regulation, self-efficacy, English language learner, strategy.

College Students' Self Regulated Learning Strategies and Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Learning English as a Foreign Language

Nearly half of the world's population is studying English as a foreign language (Francis, 2010). To meet the needs of these English language learners (ELLs), researchers have invested lots of time and effort into best practices to teach English as well as best

language learning strategies for students (e.g., Chamot, 2004; 2005; 2009; Cummins & Davison, 2007; Oxford, 1990; 1996; 2001, 2011). Although language learning strategies play significant roles in the process of language acquisition, ELLs also have to manage the learning process and deal with the learning environment. According to social cognitive theory, students have to self-organize, self-reflect, and self-regulate themselves to meet the changes in the environment (Bandura, 1986). This triadic reciprocality between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors makes self-regulation essential for the success of students in the academic area. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the self-regulation process of college students learning English as a foreign language in Korea.

Theoretical Framework

Based upon social cognitive theoretical framework, this section reviews theories and previous studies in the field of self-regulation, self-efficacy, the relationship between self-efficacy, self-regulation, academic achievement, and test-taking strategies.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies are measures learners use to monitor their thoughts, feelings, and actions. These strategies involve proactive as well as reactive processes such as goal-setting, performance assessments, and self-evaluation (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2009). "Academic self-regulation processes include planning and managing time; attending to and concentrating on instruction; organizing, rehearsing, and coding information strategically; establishing a productive work environment; and using social resources effectively" (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997, p. 195). Zimmerman (2000) suggested three cyclical phases for the processes of self-regulation: forethought, performance, and self-reflection. The forethought phase refers to processes and beliefs that precede efforts to learn. Examples of these processes include students' motivation, self-efficacy, goal-setting, and planning. The performance phase refers to the processes that students focus on optimizing their performance.

Examples of these processes include attention control, keeping records, and monitoring. The self-reflection phase refers to processes associated with self-observation. One example of these processes includes self-evaluation. During this phase, students compare information about their performance with a standard or goal and ascribe causal meaning to the results. They make a judgment about whether an unsatisfactory result is due to their limited capability or insufficient effort.

Self-Efficacy

When students receive feedback about their performance, the information may enhance their self-efficacy beliefs by suggesting that they are competent and can continue to learn. Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to produce given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy is a vital process involved in self regulation and influences learners' motivation, interests, commitment, resilience to adversity, emotion, stress, and even the life choices they make (Bandura, 2006). Four major sources have an impact on learners' self-efficacy: (a) mastery or enactive experience, (b) vicarious experience, (c) social persuasion, and (d) physiological or emotional state.

Mastery or enactive experience refers to the past experience of success and/or failure. When a learner puts forth a great effort in carrying out a difficult task as perceived by the learner, success will strengthen self-efficacy considerably whereas failure will undermine it (Schunk & Miller, 2002; Voss, 2003). Students' past learning experiences "trigger expectations and beliefs, which might have a profound impact on their current perceptions, choices they make, and effort they are prepared to invest" (Boekaerts & Cascallar, 2006, p. 204). Moreover, researchers consistently report that mastery experience is the strongest predictor of self-efficacy across academic domains (Usher & Pajares, 2008). When students overcome obstacles while accomplishing the given tasks, it enhances students' self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

Students' self-efficacy beliefs are also influenced by observation of significant others. Students usually compare themselves to others such as classmates, peers, and adults as a basis

to gauge their own self-efficacy beliefs. Students tend to associate with peers with whom they are similar in many ways (Hamm, 2000; Schunk, 1987), and peers have a strong influence on students' beliefs and behaviors (Ryan, 2000; Schunk & Hanson, 1985, 1989; Schunk, Hanson, & Cox, 1987). Studies indicate that peer models are most influential for students who lack task familiarity and information to judge their own self-efficacy or have faced difficulties (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1987). Series of experimental studies investigated by Schunk and his colleagues, for example, consistently found that children with mathematics difficulties enhanced their self-efficacy through observing peer models (Schunk & Hanson, 1985; Schunk, Hanson, & Cox, 1987).

Peer influence on students' self-efficacy beliefs also develop through peer networks (Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Students in networks tend to be similar to each other and assimilate their motivation and behavior to peer groups. Peer networks change as children move from elementary to middle or high schools, and the peer pressure peaks between ages 12-16 (Kindermann, McCollam, & Gibson, 1996; Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996). With the change of their peers, student use different references when judging their own self-efficacy beliefs. Although observation of peer models led to higher self-efficacy and higher achievement in studies of Schunk and Hanson (1985) and Keyser and Barling (1981), a growing body of research suggests that peer groups may contribute to either an increase or a decline in self-efficacy (Schunk & Miller, 2002; Schunk & Meece, 2006).

Social persuasion from significant others (e.g., parents and teachers) can also raise one's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Learners who are persuaded verbally that they possess the abilities to accomplish a given task are more likely to persist longer when confronted with difficulties and develop a higher level of self-efficacy (Schunk, 1991). Shih and Alexander (2000) investigated different impacts of self-referenced feedback and social-referenced feedback on Taiwanese fourth-grade children. Self-referenced feedback refers to feedback in relation to the child's own progress while social-referenced feedback refers to feedback of the child's progress in comparison to his/her peers. Children who received self-referenced feedback demonstrated significantly higher self-efficacy to solve fraction problems than children who received social-referenced feedback. The impact of

physiological arousal on self-efficacy depends on the situational factors since environmental factors exert strong influence on how an internal state is interpreted. Nevertheless, it is not the arousal per se but the person's view of the arousal that affects one's self-efficacy. High achievers usually read arousal as challenge, and their self-efficacy is boosted. Thus, judgments of personal efficacy are affected by perceived rather than actual activation of arousal in situations involving risks (Bandura, 1997).

Mixed findings were reported in comparative studies of self-efficacy beliefs across gender. Although some studies noted no significant gender differences with respect to self-efficacy beliefs (Pajares, 1996; Smith, Sinclair, & Chapman, 2002), some other studies claimed that boys had higher self-efficacy beliefs in academic achievement (Anderman & Young, 1994; Meece & Jones, 1996). Still other studies reported that girls had higher self-efficacy beliefs in academic achievement (Britner & Pajares, 2001). In general, boys tend to have higher self-efficacy beliefs in mathematics and science but lower self-efficacy beliefs in language arts (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002; Marsh, 1989).

Other than gender differences in self-efficacy beliefs, age may be another factor to influence efficacy judgments of students. It is well known that students' beliefs about their capabilities generally decline with age (Parsons & Ruble, 1977). As students get older, they tend to evaluate their beliefs about their capabilities more critically and logically based on their achievement-related experiences and information (Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993). However, there has been less work done on the changes of young adult students' self-efficacy beliefs and its relation with SRL strategies among college students.

Relationship between Self-Efficacy, Self-Regulation, and Academic Achievement

The relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and SRL strategies is reciprocal in that self-efficacy can influence what strategies to take while manipulating SRL strategies can also change one's self-efficacy beliefs (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Self-efficacy for self-regulated learning was found to contribute to both student motivation and academic achievement (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Efficacious students tend to set challenging goals, use more SRL strategies, and to persist longer in the face of adversity (Schunk, 1996;

Zimmerman, 2002; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Specifically, self-efficacy was found to be positively related to the SRL strategy of reviewing notes and negatively related to the SRL strategy of seeking social assistance and the performance-avoid goal orientation (Pajares & Valiante, 2002; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990).

Both self-efficacy and SRL strategies are predictive of students' academic achievement (Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1988, 1990). Self-regulated learners implement various motivational strategies, including orienting oneself before working on an assignment, collecting relevant resources, integrating various theoretical viewpoints, monitoring comprehension, and assessing progress (Boekaerts & Cascallar, 2006). The subject areas in these studies were in the fields of mathematics and literacy (i.e., first language reading and writing). For example, Pape and Wang (2003) noted that middle school students who solved mathematics problems using meaning-based approaches were more strategic and solved more problems correctly than students who directly translated problems into mathematical operations. For another example, Pajares and his colleagues consistently confirmed the positive influence of self-efficacy on writing from elementary to middle schools (Pajares & Valiante, 1997, 2001, 2006). In a study of 95 freshmen from a highly selective university in the United States, Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) reported that students' perceived efficacy to manage their writing activities was positively related to their self-efficacy for academic achievement. Efficacious students were more likely to set high aspirations through personal goal setting, sustain motivation, and receive higher grades in writing. Perceived self-efficacy and personal goal setting accounted for 31% of the variance in social studies of high school students (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992) and 35% of the variance in writing course grades of college students (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994), suggesting that SRL strategies play a role in academic achievement. Students need to learn these strategies so that they can "motivate themselves for academic pursuits in the face of difficulties or attractive alternatives" (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994, p. 858).

Studies investigating these constructs in the context of studying English as a foreign language are limited (Huang, Lloyd, & Mikulecky, 1999; Li & Wang, 2010). Self-efficacy is

malleable and content specific (Klassen, 2004). Students generate self-efficacy judgments for specific tasks, and these beliefs vary as a function of tasks (Bong, 2002; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Therefore, it is crucial to study students' self-efficacy beliefs and SRL strategies in the context of foreign language learning processes.

According to social cognitive theorists (e.g., Schunk, 1994), students' learning behavior is closely related to their social experiences and interactions with teachers. Student performance has significantly improved following SRL strategy training (Butler, 1998; Neilans & Israel, 1981; O'Malley, 1987), and students trained to use SRL strategies have become more self-regulated (Travers & Sheckley, 2000). Previous studies have shown that the implementation of a variety of instructional strategies is correlated with higher levels of self-efficacy (Salili & Lai, 2003). This study therefore was designed to describe college students' self-efficacy beliefs and SRL strategies and to examine how these constructs are related to English language proficiency.

Test-Taking Strategies

College students are required to take English courses for two years. Most Korean universities require students to pass a minimum English proficiency test to graduate. Students can supply other official English test scores such as TOEFL or TOEIC as evidence of their English language skills. An English exam is typically a part of the graduate school admission test. Under pressure to do well in these proficiency tests, they are very interested in test-taking strategies. Educators and researchers have also demonstrated a great interest in this area. For example, a reading comprehension test assumes comprehension of the test precedes the answer selection process and requires the reader to efficiently and accurately extract and organize information from texts so that a coherent mental representation of the text is formed with the reader's existing knowledge (Rupp, Ferne, & Choi, 2006). Educators, however, disagree with the strategies to succeed in reading comprehension test. Green and Wolf (2000), Hinkel (2004), and Rogers (2005) recommend reading the questions first before reading the text while other scholars (Gallagher, 2000; Sullivan, Brenner, & Zhong, 2004) recommend reading the test first before reading the questions. In a study of 75 college students in the

United States, Rickards (1976) concluded that reading conceptual questions before reading the article or reading verbatim questions after the article produced higher recall than the other alternative, however, conceptual prequestions produced more organized memories than verbatim postquestions. Qualitative studies of college students' test-taking strategies have noted that some students read the test questions first in order to save time (Farr, Pritchard, & Smitten, 1990; Rupp et al., 2006).

From the perspectives of social cognitive theory, this study examines college students' self-efficacy beliefs, SRL strategies, and test-taking strategies related to learning English as a foreign language in Korea. The research questions are: (a) What are the evidence of reliability and validity of the two surveys to measure student self-efficacy and SRL strategies with Korean college students?; (b) Are there significant relationships between self-efficacy, SRL strategies, and performance on English exams with Korean college students?; (c) Are there significant differences in self-efficacy beliefs, SRL strategies, and performance on English exams between male and female students and between undergraduate and graduate students?; and (d) Are there significant differences between two groups of Korean college students by their test-taking strategy in reading with respect to their self-efficacy beliefs, SRL strategy use, and performance on English exams?

Method

Participants

Participants in the study were 220 students (167 undergraduate, 43 graduate, 10 students did not identify their status) attending a major university in Korea. The undergraduate students' data were used in another study with different research objectives (Wang, Kim, Bong, & Ahn, 2012). Of the 167 undergraduate students, 91 (55%) were females, 72 (43%) males, and 4 (2%) unknown. The age of these students ranged from 21 to 36 years (M = 24.50, SD = 1.97), and the number of years studying English ranged from 6 to 23 years (M = 12.16, SD = 3.37). Of the 43 graduate students, 34 (79%) were females, 7 (16%) males, and 2 (5%) unknown. The age of these graduate students ranged from 24 to 43 years (M = 28.35, SD = 4.34), and the number of years studying English ranged from 6 to 30 years (M = 12.78, SD = 4.97). Independent samples t-test suggested statistically significant differences between graduate and undergraduate students with respect to age, $t(200) = 8.27$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (Cohen's d = 1.14); but not with respect to the number of years studying English, $t(191) = 0.68$, $p = .50$, with a small effect size (Cohen's d = 0.15).

Instruments

An iterative process of repeated independent translation and blind back-translation recommended by Brislin (1970) was followed to ensure the congruence of meaning between the English and Korean versions of the two questionnaires used in this study. The questionnaires were administered in Korean, and it took 15-20 minutes to complete the two questionnaires. The back-translated questionnaires were compared to the originals before administration to see if there was any discrepancy in the meaning of individual items. No major discrepancy was observed except for the difference in choice of words and expressions. The minor discrepancies were adjusted, so the Korean items convey the original meaning in the most accurate and natural way possible.

The Questionnaire of English Self-regulated Learning Strategies (QESRLS) includes 67 items (Appendix A). Each item describes an SRL strategy commonly used in studying English. The context ranges from cognitive components to generally accepted English learning strategies, including strategies such as goal-setting, making adjustment, and seeking social assistance. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was .96, test-retest reliability was .88 (the interval between the two measurements was three weeks), concurrent validity was .62 (with Strategy Inventory for Language Learning developed by Oxford (1990)), and

predictive validity (for English proficiency test performance) was .57 (Wang, Wang, & Li, 2007). Students were asked to respond by circling one of the four choices: 0 = "I never use it," 1 = "I seldom use it," 2 = "I sometimes use it," and 3 = "I often use it."

The Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy (QESE) includes 32 items (Appendix B). Each item asks students to make judgments about their capabilities to accomplish certain tasks using English. Examination of the rating scale structure with Item Response Theory (IRT) showed that participants reliably distinguished response categories and the item hierarchy was consistent with the expected item order (Wang & Kim, 2011). Previous studies with Chinese and Korean college students (Wang & Kim, 2011) confirmed the four distinct factors and a second-order common factor. As a result, only one variable (average score of all 32 items) was used for perceived self-efficacy. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) was .96, test-retest reliability (the interval between the two measurements was three weeks) was .82, the concurrent validity was .55 (with the scale of "Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance" which consisted of eight items from Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire developed by Pintrich and DeGroot (1990)), and the predictive validity (for English proficiency test performance) was .41 (Wang et al., 2007). Students were asked to rate their capabilities on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (I cannot do it at all) to 7 (I can do it very well).

English proficiency was measured with the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS). The test consists of two sections: Listening Comprehension (100 items) and Reading Comprehension (100 items). The total score is calculated by adding up the scores from the two sections and ranges between 100 and 990 points. The *TOEIC Technical Manual* (n.d.) documents excellent validity and reliability coefficients ranging from .68 to .90 and from .92 to .96, respectively.

Data Analytical Procedure

Internal consistency of the questionnaires was checked with Cronbach's alpha. Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were employed to test the latent structure of QESE with LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006). Path analyses were used to explore the relationships between self-efficacy, SRL strategies, and English proficiency. In addition, participants were put into two groups by one of their SRL strategies (Item 62, which asked if they read articles before reading questions). Students who reported "sometimes" or "often" were coded as "reading articles first" (n = 76) whereas students who reported "never" or

"seldom" were coded as "reading questions first" (n = 144). Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to compare these two groups with respect to their self-efficacy beliefs, SRL strategies, and performance on English proficiency tests.

Results

Both questionnaires used in this study were found to be reliable, which means that each participant's responses within each questionnaire agree with each other. The level of consistency of all participants' responses was measured with Cronbach's alpha, which assumes a value somewhere between 0.00 and 1.00, with 0.00 representing totally inconsistent and 1.00 representing totally consistent. Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency) was .95 for QESRLS and .99 for QESE. To determine how the pattern of participants' responses matches our prediction (the hypothesized model), a group of goodness-of-fit indices from CFA was employed. Normed Fit Index (NFI), Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are often used to evaluate the gain in improved fit from the independence model (the null model) to the hypothesized model and values greater than .95 indicate good fit. CFA supported the latent structure of the QESE with a sample of college students in Korea, as evidenced by NFI = .97, NNFI = .97, and CFI = .98. Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) takes the complexity of the model into account in its assessment of goodness-of-fit and a value greater than .90 indicates good fit. With our Korean sample PNFI = .90. Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) represents the average standardized residual value derived from the fitting of the correlation matrix for the hypothesized model to that of the sample data. A value less than .05 suggests a well-fitting model. With our sample, SRMR = .05. This means that the predicted structure of QESE (Figure 1) matches the participants' responses and the pattern is consistent with a previous study with Chinese college students (Wang & Kim, 2011). CFA was not conducted for QESRL because this questionnaire was simply a list of possible strategies students might use and no theory existed to guide the structure of these strategies. Path analyses revealed statistically significant relationships between self-efficacy beliefs and SRL strategies (r = .46), between self-efficacy beliefs and English proficiency (r = .69), and between SRL strategies and English proficiency (r = .40). Since the literature suggests that self-efficacy beliefs, SRL strategies, and academic achievement are positively related to each other (Pajares & Valiante, 2002; Zimmerman et al., 1992), these statistically significant correlation coefficients from our sample supported the concurrent validity of QESE and QESRL, which means that QESE was measuring the

construct of self-efficacy beliefs that it was designed to measure and QESRL was measuring the construct of use of SRL strategies that it was designed to measure. Descriptive statistics of SRL strategies, self-efficacy beliefs, and English proficiency were presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of SRL Strategies, Self-Efficacy Beliefs, and English Proficiency

		SRL	Self-Efficacy	English Proficiency
Undergraduate (n = 167)	*M*	1.65	4.78	841.89
	SD	0.46	1.14	93.44
Graduate (n = 43)	*M*	1.61	4.29	759.17
	SD	0.41	0.84	115.09
Male (n = 42)	*M*	1.51	4.48	790.88
	SD	0.50	1.12	107.44
Female (n = 60)	*M*	1.82	5.26	862.97
	SD	0.39	0.96	82.14
Reading Articles First (n = 31)	*M*	1.68	4.96	832.32
	SD	0.49	1.26	98.06
Reading Questions First (n = 71)	*M*	1.70	4.93	833.70
	SD	0.45	1.03	100.80

Note. SRL refers to self-regulated learning strategies on a 3 point scale (0-2) and self-efficacy is on a 7 point scale (1-7).

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 suggest that, on average, participants used the SRL strategies "sometimes" as the mean scores for all groups were close to "2", which stands for "sometimes use it". The average self-efficacy scores for each group of participants ranged from 4.29 to 5.26, which means that most participants felt that they could possibly accomplish the tasks listed in the QESE but were not very positive as "6" stands for "I am able to do it". As for the participants' performance on English proficiency tests, most students had satisfactory scores as the mean scores ranged from 759.17 to 862.97. The possible maximum score was 990, so 759.17 would be a "C" and 862.97 would be a "B" on a letter scale. Independent samples *t*-test suggested that undergraduate students were more efficacious in English, $t(208) = 2.65$, $p < .01$, with a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.49$),

and had better performance on English proficiency test, $t(100) = 2.80$, $p < .01$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.80$) than graduate students. These two groups, however, were comparable in their use of SRL strategies, $t(208) = 0.45$, $p = .65$, with a small effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.09$). Since most of the participants (80%) were undergraduate students, the interaction effect was only examined between gender and test-taking strategies in MANOVA. MANOVA failed to detect statistically significant interaction effect between gender and test-taking strategies on the linear combination of SRL strategies, self-efficacy beliefs, and English proficiency, $F(3, 96) = 0.14$, $p = .94$, partial $\eta^2 < .01$. No statistically significant main effect of test-taking strategies was found either, $F(3, 96) = 0.13$, $p = .94$, partial $\eta^2 < .01$. A statistically significant main effect of gender, however, was found, $F(3, 96) = 6.74$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .17$. Tests of between-subjects effects revealed that, compared to male students, female students were more efficacious in English, $F(1, 98) = 14.09$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$, used more SRL strategies, $F(1, 98) = 10.75$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .10$, and had better performance on English proficiency test, $F(1, 98) = 13.35$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$.

Discussions of Results

Our first research question was to see if there are evidence of reliability and validity of the two surveys to measure student self-efficacy and SRL strategies with Koran students. Results from this study provided sufficient reliability for both QESE (Cronbach's alpha = .99) and QESRL (Cronbach's alpha = .95). Two types of evidence of validity were reported: (a) goodness-of-fit indices from CFA ranged from .90 to .97 and the SRMR was .05; (b) the predicted positive relationships between self-efficacy beliefs, use of SRL strategies and performance on English language proficiency test were confirmed (correlation coefficients ranged from .40 to .69). These positive relationships between Korean college students' self-efficacy beliefs, SRL strategies, and their performance on an English exam not only conformed but also expanded previous results to the population of Korean college students learning English as a foreign language (Pape & Wang, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2002; Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). These results also answered the second research question, which was to examine if there are significant relationships between self-efficacy, SRL strategies, and performance on English exams with Korean college students.

The third research question was to see if significant differences exist between male and female students and between undergraduate and graduate students with respect to self-efficacy beliefs, use of SRL strategies, and performance on English exams. Our study

revealed significant differences between undergraduate and graduate students in self-efficacy beliefs and performance on an English language proficiency test. These differences could be explained by three factors. The first factor is their different peer networks. Previous research suggest that student self-efficacy beliefs change with their peer networks as they move from elementary to high school contexts (Kindermann, McCollam, & Gibson, 1996; Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996). This study extends the period of development to college and graduate schools. Graduate students usually have more contact with their professors and high-achieving students. As a consequence, their judgment of their own self-efficacy beliefs could be measured with reference to this peer network of professors and high-achieving students. As claimed by Bong and Clark (1999), competence perceptions may be influenced by judgment of relative standing with peers.

The second factor is the difference in the rigor of admission criteria. Undergraduate admissions in this particular university are fiercely competitive with criteria known to be extremely difficult to satisfy. Compared to the undergraduate admissions, admissions into graduate programs, although rigorous, are not as competitive or demanding. The third factor is difference in age. As an emphasis placed on English communication skills in Korean society has dramatically increased in recent years, younger students start taking English lessons at earlier ages and tend to have greater exposure to English-related culture and materials. Therefore, it is not surprising that undergraduate students who successfully made it to this university and are younger than graduate students expressed significantly stronger self-efficacy in English and had better scores on the English proficiency test.

Compared to male college students, female college students in this study were found to have higher self-efficacy beliefs and higher performance on English exams with more use of SRL strategies. This result not only echoes some of previous research in language art (e.g., Jacobs et al., 2002) but also extends the age of students to college level.

The last research question that we had for this study was to compare two groups of Korean college students by their test-taking strategy in reading with respect to their self-efficacy beliefs, use of SRL strategies, and performance on English exams. Data from this study failed to detect statistically significant differences between the students who often read the article first and their counterparts who often read the questions first with respect to their self-efficacy beliefs, use of SRL strategies, and performance on the English proficiency test. These insignificant differences do not support scholars who recommend reading questions first (e.g., Roger, 2005) or scholars who recommend reading articles first (e.g.,

Sullivan et al., 2004), but suggest that it is necessary to revisit a much earlier study in which Rickards (1976) made a distinction between conceptual questions and verbatim questions. Rickards claimed that students who read conceptual questions before reading the article and those who read verbatim questions after reading the article did better than their counterparts. Our study was limited in the survey design because we could not assume our participants could distinguish conceptual questions from verbatim questions in a survey. A more rigorous design of the study, for example, a mixed method with observations of student behavior during the reading comprehension exam and a design of reading comprehension questions in both categories (conceptual and verbatim), could possibly provide for a further understanding of the relationship between test-taking strategies and student performance on English exams as well as their self-efficacy beliefs and use of SRL strategies.

Practical Implications

Previous studies have shown that instructional methods influence the motivational goals that students adopt for their learning as well as their SRL strategies (Ames, 1992; Cohen, 1994; Doyle, 1983; Maehr & Midgley, 1991; Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Wolters & Pintrich, 1998). Therefore, teachers could help students set their academic goals according to their own plans and needs and introduce effective strategies from previous studies. Students could try these strategies and select ones that work for them. In so doing, students will become more goal-oriented and self-regulated. Our study, as well as previous studies, shows a consistent positive relationship between use of SRL strategies and academic achievement, reinforcing the importance of developing self-regulated learners. Boekaerts and Cascallar (2006) posit that a teacher's clarity and pace of instruction, degree of structure, autonomy granted, enthusiasm, humor, fairness, and expectations have an effect on students' use of SRL strategies. This study suggests that English teachers should consider incorporating SRL strategies in classroom and facilitating the student's development of SRL strategies. One example is to have more group work since small group collaboration and a social constructivist's learning environment enhance students' use of SRL strategies (Boekaerts & Cascallar, 2006).

The results of this study suggest that most Korean college students think that they are possibly able to complete the English language tasks listed in the QESE survey but their self-efficacy level was not very high (an average of less than 5 with a scale of 1 to 7). Previous studies show a positive relationship between self-efficacy beliefs and academic

achievements (Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Schunk, 1990; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994) and that self-efficacy is malleable (Klassen, 2004). Therefore, it is important to enhance student self-efficacy beliefs in the English language classroom. Students' self-efficacy beliefs can be enhanced through four ways in an English language classroom: (a) providing some opportunities for students to have successful experience; (b) letting students observe their peers successfully accomplishing English language tasks; (c) providing students detailed and self-referenced feedback about their performance on English language tasks; and (d) creating a classroom environment that allows students to stay in a positive physiological and emotional state.

Although this study is significant in that it extends the literature of SRL strategies and self-efficacy beliefs to Korean college students studying English as a foreign language with conclusions that these constructs are related to each other and to academic achievement (Ainley & Patrick, 2006; Paris & Paris, 2001; Schunk, 1996; Shih & Alexander, 2000; Zimmerman, 1998), cautions should be taken when generating the results to the population of all Korean college students. The participants in this study were a select group in terms of academic excellence and majoring in education-related fields, both of which might have contributed to the results.

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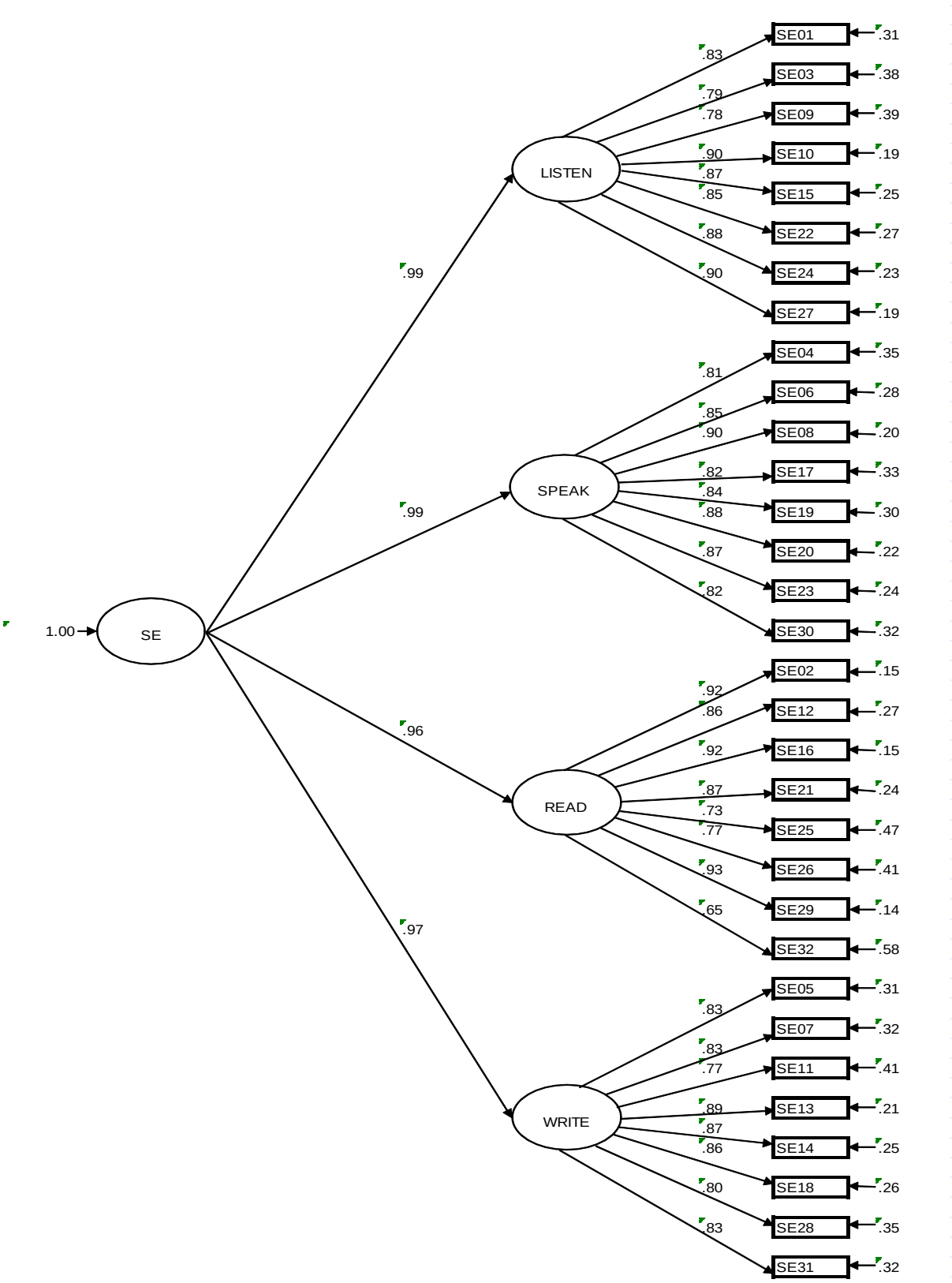

Figure 1. *Structure of Questionnaire of English Self-efficacy.*

Appendix A: Questionnaire of English Self-regulated Learning Strategies

Questionnaire of English Self-regulated Learning Strategies

0	1	2	3
I never use it.	I seldom use it.	I use it sometimes.	I often use it.

The Statement of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies				
1. Write down the mistakes I often make in the process of studying English.	0	1	2	3
2. Write an outline before writing English compositions.	0	1	2	3
3. Review English texts I have learned.	0	1	2	3
4. Take notes in English classes.	0	1	2	3
5. Keep reading when I encounter difficulties in English reading.	0	1	2	3
6. Consult teachers when I encounter difficulties in the process of studying English.	0	1	2	3
7. When a friend wants to visit me but I have not finished my homework yet, I do not let him/her visit until I finish my homework.	0	1	2	3
8. Check my English homework before turning it in.	0	1	2	3
9. Read an English article several times if I don’t understand it at the first time.	0	1	2	3
10. Make a study plan in the process of studying English.	0	1	2	3
11. Set a goal to study English.	0	1	2	3
12. Search related documents when I have difficulties in the process of studying English.	0	1	2	3
13. Write an outline after reading an English article.	0	1	2	3
14. Recite English texts in the process of studying English.	0	1	2	3
15. Reward myself when I make progress in studying English.	0	1	2	3
16. Summarize the main idea of each paragraph when reading.	0	1	2	3
17. Find a quiet place when the environment is too loud or busy for	0	1	2	3

studying.				
18. Summarize the theme of an English article when I read it.	0	1	2	3
19. Ask classmates when I have questions in my English study.	0	1	2	3
20. Listen to English audio recordings several times if I cannot understand them the first time.	0	1	2	3
21. Pay attention the English language structure when I am reading.	0	1	2	3
22. Review flash cards of new words in order to memorize them.	0	1	2	3
23. Listen to American or British radio broadcasts to improve my pronunciation.	0	1	2	3
24. Read texts I have learned several times in order to recite them from memory.	0	1	2	3
25. Guess the meaning of new words by considering the contexts.	0	1	2	3
26. Classify new words in order to memorize them.	0	1	2	3
27. Guess what people mean by reading their expressions and movements when watching an English movie.	0	1	2	3
28. Write new words many times in order to memorize the spellings.	0	1	2	3
29. Use sentence patterns just learned to make new sentences for practice.	0	1	2	3
30. Proofread my English compositions when I complete writing.	0	1	2	3
31. When I come across a new word which doesn't hinder my comprehension, I skip it.	0	1	2	3
32. When I listen to English, I pay attention to the stressed words or phrases in order to comprehend the sentence.	0	1	2	3
33. Use phrases in Korean which are similar to English words in pronunciation to memorize the English words.	0	1	2	3
34. Use the title of an English article to help understand that article.	0	1	2	3
35. When somebody speaks English, I guess what he/she will say according to what he/she has said already.	0	1	2	3
36. When I talk with somebody in English, I pay attention to his/her expressions to check if he/she can follow me.	0	1	2	3
37. When I read an English article, I imagine the scene described in	0	1	2	3

the article in order to memorize what I have read.				
38. Make a chart to summarize the grammatical points learned.	0	1	2	3
39. Send emails to friends in English on my initiative.	0	1	2	3
40. Recite similar words all together to distinguish slight differences.	0	1	2	3
41. Compare the similarities and differences between English and Korean.	0	1	2	3
42. If I cannot follow somebody's English, I ask him/her to speak slowly.	0	1	2	3
43. Read new words repeatedly in order to memorize them.	0	1	2	3
44. Memorize English words whose pronunciations are similar.	0	1	2	3
45. Memorize a new word by memorizing where I learn it.	0	1	2	3
46. Try my best to find opportunities to practice my oral English.	0	1	2	3
47. Consider how to say something in English in my mind before saying it out loud.	0	1	2	3
48. Watch English TV programs on my initiative.	0	1	2	3
49. When I listen to English, I translate it into Korean to help me understand it.	0	1	2	3
50. Memorize meanings of words by using prefixes and suffixes.	0	1	2	3
51. Review my notes of English class before examinations.	0	1	2	3
52. Listen to English radio programs on my initiative.	0	1	2	3
53. Have a break when I am tired during my English study.	0	1	2	3
54. Try to use various English expressions to express the same meaning.	0	1	2	3
55. Translate what I have read in English into my home language to help me understand it.	0	1	2	3
56. Pay attention to English speakers' tones.	0	1	2	3
57. Pay attention to the beginning and end of each paragraph in my English reading.	0	1	2	3
58. Adjust my reading speed according to the difficulty of the article.	0	1	2	3
59. Use my background knowledge to comprehend English articles.	0	1	2	3

60. Underline key points during my English reading.	0	1	2	3
61. Read questions before reading articles during English reading comprehension examinations.	0	1	2	3
62. Read articles before reading questions during English reading comprehension examinations.	0	1	2	3
63. Make sure to write a topic sentence in each paragraph in writing.	0	1	2	3
64. Make sure that the content of each paragraph supports its topic sentence in English writing.	0	1	2	3
65. When I finish my English composition, I have a rest and then read it again to check whether it should be revised.	0	1	2	3
66. Use words just learned to make new sentences on my initiative.	0	1	2	3
67. Think out a composition in Korean before writing it in English.	0	1	2	3

Appendix B: Questionnaire of English Self-Efficacy

Read the following questions through carefully, and try to asses your English language competence as accurately as possible, regardless of whether you have ever had to perform the actions described or not. The questions have been conceived in order to measure your self-perceived capabilities. There are therefore no right or wrong answers.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am totally unable to do this	I am unable to do this	I am possibly unable to do this	I am possibly able to do this	I am basically and in principle able to do this	I am able to do this	I am able to do this well

1. Can you understand stories told in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Can you do homework/home assignments alone when they include reading English texts?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Can you understand American TV programs (in English)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Can you describe your university to other people in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Can you compose messages in English on the internet (face book, twitter, blogs, etc.)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Can you describe the way to the university from the place where you live in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Can you write a text in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Can you tell a story in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Can you understand radio programs in English-speaking countries?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Can you understand English-language TV programs made in Korea?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. Can you leave a note for another student in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Can you guess the meaning of unknown words when you are reading an English text?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Can you form new sentences from words you have just learnt?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Can you write e-mails in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Can you understand English dialogues (audio recordings) about everyday school matters?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Can you understand messages or news items in English on the internet?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Can you ask your teacher questions in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Can you produce English sentences with idiomatic phrases?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Can you introduce your teacher (to someone else) in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. Can you discuss subjects of general interest with your fellow students (in English)?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. Can you read short English narratives?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. Can you understand English films without subtitles?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. Can you answer your teacher´s questions in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Can you understand English songs?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. Can you read English-language newspapers?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. Can you find out the meanings of new words using a monolingual dictionary?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Can you understand telephone numbers spoken in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Can you write diary entries in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Can you understand English articles on Korean culture?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Can you introduce yourself in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Can you write an essay in about two pages about your lecturer in English?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

32. Can you understand new reading materials (e.g., news from the Time magazine) selected by your instructor?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

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Using guided reflective journals in large classes: Motivating students to independently improve pronunciation

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Bio Data

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Abstract

The use of reflective journals is one intervention strategy that may address the problems inherent in large classes in Japan and allow both learners and teachers to position themselves better within the context of learning and teaching intelligible pronunciation. Results from this small qualitative study show that reflective journals shift the common pedagogical focus towards promoting motivational behaviour to meet individual learner needs. In order to achieve this, students need to adopt a greater independence in the language learning process. Triangulation of data from the reflective journals, interviews and a questionnaire supports the use of the action learning framework embedded within the reflective journal design to establish realistic and achievable pronunciation learning goals. With teacher guidance and support, reflective journals promote motivational action in order to independently achieve those goals. In particular, students increased their language learning strategy use in order to develop their pronunciation. While more research is needed in this area, this study recommends teachers use this cognitive tool of student reflection as an effective strategy to

increase self efficacy, focus learning objectives and develop motivational behaviour when teaching pronunciation.

Keywords: reflective journals, motivation, action learning, language learning strategies, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Communicative competence remains an essential focus of the tertiary curriculum in Japan. In particular, listening and speaking skills are considered core skills that are required to develop intelligible pronunciation. It is generally assumed that developing speaking skills implies the automatic emergence of pronunciation skills as well. In reality, this is not the case: pronunciation needs to be taught explicitly. Improving pronunciation, in the first instance, needs to be promoted in the classroom where teachers can initiate opportunities for good practice. However, universities in Japan tend to have large heterogeneous classes in which it is very hard to teach pronunciation using a student-centred and individualised approach. Another challenge faced by teachers at university is that students are largely demotivated after studying English in high school for six years (Falout, Elwood & Hood, 2009). Honna and Takeshita (2000) confirm that current Japanese EIL pedagogy can be demotivating and does not encourage the use of English in an active intra-national and international global sphere. This is despite the fact that current policy aims to develop global communicative literacy in Japanese EIL learners from primary level onwards. Therefore, the appropriate production of phonological features of pronunciation has a high degree of importance, but is undoubtedly difficult for non-native speakers of English, including Japanese speakers. Without developing pedagogy that motivates students and promotes linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness, the concomitant result may fail to yield international and intercultural educational and global communicative proficiency. In response, teachers need to find out what the students think and feel about what and how they want to learn (Nunan, 1995). This is also true for the learning of pronunciation. Reflective journals are one intervention strategy that teachers can use to identify and realistically match the learning goals and preferences of the students (Katayama, 2007; Miller, 2000). This cognitive and reflective tool could also be used to effectively diagnose, instruct, and monitor students' motivation for learning. Reflective journals may promote motivational behaviour to meet individual learner needs and independently improve

intelligibility. This suggests that the education system may benefit from an intervention strategy based on cognitive theory, such as the use of reflective journals, so that students also become confident and independent learners. This can help them interact and communicate intelligibly in a global setting.

Reflective Journals in the educational context

Reflective journals have been widely researched as a qualitative instrument. In education, reflective journals are primarily discussed with reference to practicing teachers, and as a tool used by students to "examine personal assumptions and goals and clarify individual belief systems and subjectivities" (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 695). The number of published studies in applied linguistics and second language acquisition research pertaining to reflective journals remains relatively small. Most methodological and research literature in foreign language teaching advocates the use of journal writing to explore beliefs and practices, promote learner autonomy, and increase metacognitive awareness in listening, reading, and pronunciation (Goh, 1997; Jing, 2006; Vitanova & Miller, 2002). "Diary," "log," and "journal" are terms used in research to explore affective influences, language learning strategies, and students' own observations about teaching and learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2002).

One study by Moore (1997) used reflective journals to assess native-like Japanese pronunciation and intonation. While there were weaknesses in this study, results showed that the participants had increased awareness of the learning process and as a result their intonation was greatly enhanced. The use of journals in this case was largely to communicate the experience of the repetitive task of listening to and repeating a Japanese script and rote memorisation. Both Goh (1997) and Jing (2006) investigated the use of reflective journals in China and Hong Kong respectively, using case study research to discover what metacognitive awareness Chinese learners of EFL have about learning and their perceptions of listening and reading strategies. Both these studies asked students to reflect on their learning journey in their native language. According to Goh (1997, p. 361), journal writing reveals a strong potential for an authentic curriculum that allows teachers to engage in dialogue with students and receive useful feedback for informing curriculum decisions, tracking progress, evaluation, and assessment. In addition, reflective journals offer valuable insight into the "cognitive complexities that differentiate good and poor learners" (Goh, 1997, p. 361). Canagarajah (1993) and Tsang (1999) investigated the issue of learner resistance in differing socio-cultural

and political contexts and found that the students had largely been influenced by traditional styles of learning that are largely product-oriented and teacher-centred. The implication of their study is that more communicative, student-centred approaches need to include prior instruction and alternative methods for learning to develop the skills needed for effective implementation and to penetrate persistent and dominant pedagogical values that persist.

Although their research methodology lacks descriptive depth, Vitanova and Miller's (2002) study represents a valuable contribution to the literature on pronunciation arising from the revelations of reflective journals. In particular, Vitanova and Miller (2002) identify that students need to learn necessary skills for self-assessment and self-correction in order to improve pronunciation, and to raise both teacher and student consciousness of learning preferences. The study also stresses the importance of immediate and specific feedback and comments to enhance the ongoing dialogue between the teacher and the student. Mills (2008) concurs that this dialogue process is an important element of the reflective journey, which could be extended to reflexive learning in class discussions.

Further research in Hong Kong by Chau and Cheng (2012) aimed to measure students' level of reflective L2 learning ability by developing a four-level hierarchical evaluative framework. The rich nuances of language use reveal the need for multi-modal scaffolding to develop the "culture" of reflective writing as "a process for analysing and examining behaviours and motivations" (Chau & Cheng, 2012, p. 30). While Chau and Cheng (2012) engaged both student and teacher raters, the e-portfolios generated from this study were not self-rated. We are also reminded of the subjective nature of reflective journals, and the debate of whether to address the affective and cognitive nature of the entries or to separate the content from the process. Chau and Cheng (2012) argue that the effectiveness of their proposed framework depends on "the purpose of reflection and the context in which it occurs" (p. 29). In other words, reflective proficiency may not be practicable or desirable if the goal is to promote language development. This valuable research fills a gap in the literature and provides empirical evidence for evaluating L2 related reflection.

Incorporating goal setting theory

Locke's goal setting theory (1996) suggests that goals are immediate regulators of behaviour, and that performance is closely related to an individual's goals. According to Oxford and Shearin (1994), "goals affect task performance by focusing attention and action, mobilizing

energy, prolonging persistence, and motivating the development of relevant strategies for goal attainment" (p. 19). A growing body of research shows that self-regulated learners make greater use of learning strategies and achieve better results than do learners who make little use of self directed learning strategies. Goals increase people's cognitive and affective reactions to performance outcomes because goals specify the requirements for personal success (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Dörnyei (2001) draws on social cognitive theory to highlight the importance of self-efficacy when discussing goal setting, motivation, and behaviour to achieve success, self-improvement, and growth. Self-efficacy theory suggests that people's judgement of their capabilities to carry out specific tasks will affect their choice of the activities attempted (Dörnyei, 1998). Therefore, in the L2 context, the motivation to learn a language is also the best predictor of learning strategy use (Schmidt & Watanabe, 2001). The inclusion of goal setting tasks to improve pronunciation in reflective journals may promote motivating behaviours and language learning strategy use. In addition, to guide the learning process, reflective journals can be scaffolded using an action learning framework. Although there is no evidence of this model being used in second language acquisition research, action learning is based on the same premise that learning is experiential and reflective. That is, by using concrete experience, observation, and reflection, these experiences can be tested in new situations and lead to greater understanding (Zuber-Skerritt, 1993). According to Zuber-Skerritt, reflective journals are an effective technique to implement action research and action learning on the part of the student and also incorporate goal-setting strategies. Even so, learners need to develop the necessary skills for this process; students need to be able to engage in critical reflection on their language learning goals, beliefs and expectations about language learning, and the practices, activities, and strategies that are useful in achieving their goals.

Motivation

Gardner's (1985a) seminal work in L2 motivation theory provides an initial framework from which to understand "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 10). Gardner (1985a) asserts that motivation includes four components: a goal, desire to achieve the goal, positive attitudes toward language learning and effort. Therefore, motivation is "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable

attitudes toward learning the language" (Gardner, 1985a, p. 10). All four components are necessary to describe motivation in language learning. However, motivation is not the same as motivational orientation (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), or source of motivated learning behaviour. Gardner and Lambert (1972) initiated studies in this area and assessed the various individual motivational variables using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The AMTB has been a dominant instrument used in the field of motivational research, also used in Japan to investigate motivational language learning behaviours in relation to intercultural communication and affiliation. Researchers found instrumental motivation of Japanese students is defined by exams and career (Kimura, Nakata & Okimura, 2001), and a positive orientation to foreign travel and communicating with people from English speaking countries (Johnson, 1996). According to Irie (2003), the L2 motivation of Japanese university students may be partially explained also "by the concept of mastery orientation in which a goal for learning English is to become more proficient, as well as the often counterbalancing performance orientation whose goals include meeting the expectations of significant others and feeling superior to others". As Gardner (1985b) states, "Motivation must be understood with reference to social context and in relation to the multiple changing and contradictory identities of language learners across time and space" (p. 26). Significantly, results show that motivated learners will be more successful in language production than those who are not so motivated.

In 2008, Deci and Ryan sought to illustrate motivational theory using an educational domain referring to intrinsic and extrinsic types of motivation along a self-determination continuum. On the one hand, intrinsic motivation corresponds to an activity that is carried out because of the spontaneous satisfaction derived from undertaking it inspiring feelings like self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In relation to L2 learning, Dörnyei (2001) relates intrinsic motivation to the inherent enjoyment and interest in an activity. For example, when learning pronunciation, a learner's motivation and attitudes are paramount to how well they speak, how well they hear, and how motivated they are to strive to achieve their goal (Harmer, 2007). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation is the desire to engage in an activity with the expectation of receiving a reward from an outside source (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Students who are externally motivated do not participate for enjoyment but for the instrumental value, or to attain a separate outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Following the trends in motivation research, a third motivational construct,

amotivation, is discussed in the literature. Amotivation, however, is seen as the opposite of intrinsic types of motivation. Learners are described as feeling helpless in the learning situation that is imposed on them (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This differs from demotivation which concerns specific external causes that "reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 143). As a result, students may not value the activity, do not feel competent, and do not expect that it will necessarily lead to a desired outcome. Learners are described as passive and longitudinal participation is likely to evoke anxiety, apathy, and even depression.

The present study

This study aimed to examine the use of reflective journals in the Japanese context. It is based on the premise that reflective learning and learner autonomy are constructivist student-centred approaches that are not familiar to Japanese learners of EIL, who have been largely influenced by a product- and teacher-oriented approach. This research, being part of a larger study (see Lear, 2012), focused on the benefits of reflective journals to improve motivation and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What motivates Japanese tertiary students to learn EIL?
2. How do guided reflective journals impact on language learning strategy use?
3. How do Japanese tertiary students respond to the intervention of guided reflective journals?

Method

Participants

This study draws on data from a larger study and focuses on four students studying English at one university in Japan. These students were chosen as they had completed all four reflective journals throughout the semester and had consented to participate in this study. The students had previously studied English as a compulsory component of their Japanese university course for a minimum of 1 year, 90 minutes per week. The students had also obtained intermediate level proficiency in English as a result of passing the university entrance examination and an English language proficiency examination.

Classes

The students were studying English in a large class of 25 using the core text (Peaty, 2001) and were taught using the Computer Assisted Language Laboratory (CALL) classrooms. This class was considered large, as an ideal class for teaching pronunciation would have no more than 10 students. The objective of the class was to improve spoken proficiency. The use of a natural classroom setting was preferable to a language laboratory to determine the potential for reflective journals. This provided the author with the opportunity to investigate the effectiveness of reflective journals at a typical university in Japan with participants who were actively studying English. In addition to documenting this research under normal conditions, students were required to: complete guided reflective journals, fill in a questionnaire and do interviews, which were integrated as part of the classroom program. This was believed to be a favourable environment in which I could determine whether reflective journals motivate students, and to establish whether students can use this method for independent learning beyond the classroom.

Instruments

Qualitative instruments were used to gather data for this study, including guided reflective journals, a questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Data from the instruments were thematically coded according to themes arising and to themes within the reflective journals themselves.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the semester to allow the participants the opportunity to express their opinions on their motivation and goals for learning English, their language learning strategies, and their language learning preferences. This questionnaire was adapted using Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (2004) and theoretical input (Dörnyei, 2001) to address the specific linguistic goals and cultural context of this study. The questionnaire was used as part of a larger study, but questions relating to the motivational orientation involved in second language learning were used for this purpose of the current study. For example, the following items (using a Likert scale where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree)were used for analysis to determine the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that influence language learning:

- Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if have knowledge of a foreign language.
- Studying English will allow me to communicate with people who speak English as their first language.
- Studying English will allow me to communicate with people from many different non-native English speaking countries.
- Studying English will enable me to better understand and appreciate English culture, art and literature.
- English will someday be useful for my job.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the semester to further investigate motivations for learning, language learning strategies and the student's attitudes toward reflective journals (Lear, 2012). Guiding questions were used to elucidate key themes about motivation, language learning strategies, and guided reflective journals, such as:

- Why do you want to learn English?
- What things do you do to improve your pronunciation?
- Do you find the reflective journal useful?

Reflective Journals

Prior research shows that the use of reflective journals in an Asian context has led to learner resistance, as well as the premise that such communicative, student-centered strategies need prior instruction in order to develop the necessary reflective skills to penetrate the traditional pedagogical values that persist (Canagarajah, 1993; Goh, 1997; Jing, 2006; Tsang, 1999).The aforementioned studies also emphasise the importance of acculturating the process of reflection. To address this gap in the literature, this present study provided students with the opportunity for guided practice and writing experience to develop the reflective skills prior to implementation of guided reflective journals. The homogenous group of participants in this study was also required to reflect on their pronunciation development using the L2, English. In addition, this study designed reflective journals using an action learning framework to guide the learning process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Action learning is based on the same premise that learning is experiential and reflective. That is, through observation and

reflection, experiences can be tested in new situations and lead to greater understanding and learner autonomy (Zuber-Skerritt, 1993).

Because the genre of reflective writing in English was unfamiliar (Goh, 1997; Jing, 2006) the journals were scaffolded into four discrete tasks, using a constructivist based approachwhich also incorporated key questions to guide the reflective process and a goal-setting task (see Lear, 2012) (see also Figure 1 below).Thus, this study refers to the learning journals as "guided reflective journals". Such a rigorous framework also allowed students the opportunity to set realistic pronunciation goals (Reflective Journal 1), identify and implement strategies to achieve these goals independently (Reflective Journal 2), revise learning goals as needed (Reflective Journal 3), reflect on their learning progress over the duration of the semester (Reflective Journal 4), and receive ongoing and guided support, and feedback throughout the reflective process (see Lear, 2012). These journals aligned with the four aforementioned functions of output, or production, including fluency, hypothesis-testing, metalinguistic production, and noticing (Swain, 1995) in order to independently develop concepts relating to pronunciation and achieve learner goals during class. The participants were asked to complete the journals in weeks 1, 3, 5, and 10 of the academic semester.

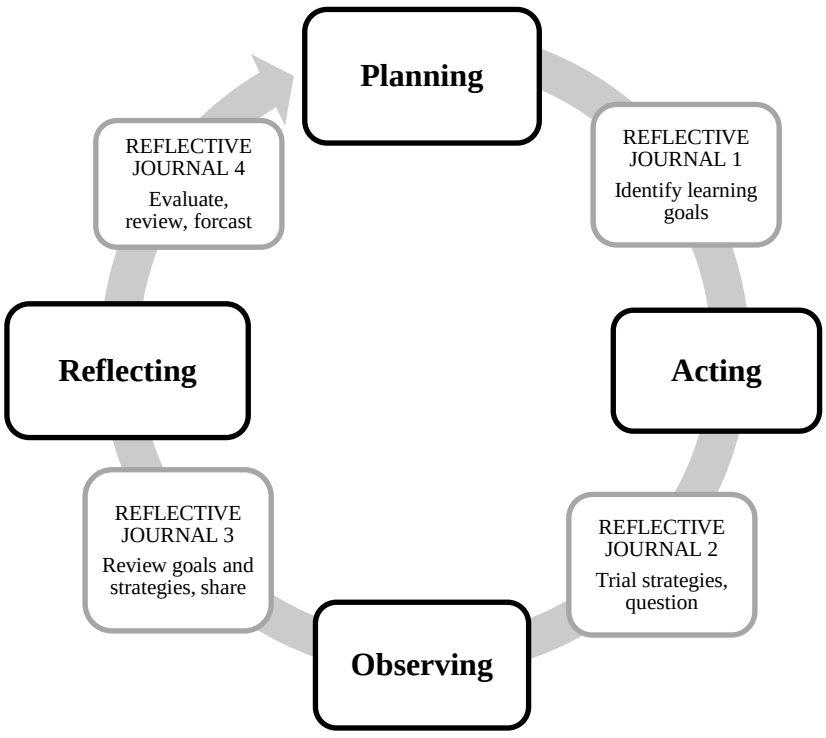

Figure 1. Action research model in education used for reflective jounals. Adapted from *Action Research* by RMIT (2009).

Results

The results in this study are presented according to key themes arising from the results and the four reflective journal objectives.

Motivation for learning

Correlating results from open-ended items in the questionnaire and the responses from the reflective journals suggest that communication, travel, understanding foreign music, the future, self-employment, and the opportunity to gain an international perspective largely motivated these participants. The theme of communication was replicated in triangulating data from the interview. The following comment shows the developmental curve of attitudes towards learning English and the diverse stages in motivation and motivational types that influence a language learner:

> *At first I started to learn in order to get a good marks and then in order to go abroad to study and finally in order to communicate with lots of people all over the world.*

Further, the fact that second language fluency has assumed growing importance in Japan influenced Daisuki in his choice of learning strategies in order to improve intelligibility:

> *I want to understand foreign music lyrics because I like foreign music. I want to understand what they say. Of course, I want to communicate with foreign people and travel abroad...communicating in English is fun ...I don't dislike English. I will use English in business or travel. English is very important and my life will become rich.*

The interview data also provided correlative evidence of the instrumental reasons for studying English:

> *If I go to graduate school I have to read papers not only in Japanese [but] also in English. And if I get a job, English will be useful for my career, promotion.*

Reflective Journal 1: Setting pronunciation goals

The participants were asked to identify a maximum of three pronunciation goals as part of Reflective Journal 1 after reflecting on their pronunciation. The pronunciation goals were reviewed by the teacher-researcher prior to implementation. Overall, the goals closely matched the participants' self-perception of their own speech and were commensurate with the perceived erroneous phonological identification.

Initially, around 60% of the identified goals related to improving stress, intonation, and pausing. The remaining 40% identified goals largely related to the intention to improve phonemic features, breath and clarity. There were also cases in which the participant's goals were not achievable and realistic within the given time frame. For example, one goal was to "Speak clearly;" another was "Pronounce English clearly and naturally." In such cases, the researcher discussed and renegotiated the goal together with the student so that it was specific and achievable within the given timeframe.

Reflective Journal 2: Language learning strategies

Motivation was also enhanced due to the reflective journals, as well as the goal-setting strategies used to improve the intelligibility of pronunciation, which inspired the greater frequency and range of strategy use. Results show that at the end of these four participants used a greater range of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, including repetition, shadowing, and technology but continued to have some communication difficulties.

The reflective journals appear to have inspired a definite increase in the type and number of learning strategies to improve pronunciation (see Table 1 below). For example, at the end of the semester, the participants increased language learning strategies to include cognitive and social affective strategies. Although the use of metacognitive strategies greatly increased, the participants used cognitive strategies as well, after using reflective journals. For example, the participants mimicked native speakers to improve their own pronunciation autonomously. Often these tasks were applied cognitively using repetition. Participants also valued the in-class activities as this gave them a chance to practice speaking and develop pronunciation. There was little opportunity to practice speaking English outside class for these Japanese participants. For example, Daisuki wrote about the importance of attending class in the following way:

> *My pronunciation has improve, especially accent and word stress have changed. This class is important for me. Speaking English with considering pronunciation in this class benefits me…I started listening to English in "Podcasts" – it is function of the iPod. I can hear news, short story and interview in native English. It is helpful for me to achieve, but I don't have a chance to speak. I need to attend this class every week.*

Table 1. ***Language learning strategies used to improve pronunciation***

Category	Specific Learning Strategy	Activity Start of the Semester	Activity End of the Semester
Metacognitive	Planning, Directing attention, Selective attention, Self-management, Self-monitoring, Self-evaluation	Listen to English music	Listen to English news, BBC learning English, music, podcasts, interviews, short stories, movies, radio, native speakers, own recorded speech
		Watch TV, American dramas	Watch BBC, movies, DVD's
		Sing	Sing
		Communicate with friends and native speakers	Communicate with friends, native speakers, father, teachers
		Study grammar and vocabulary	
		Read books	Read movie subtitles
			Use technology: ipod, mobile phone, CALL classroom
Cognitive	Repetition, Resourcing, Deduction/ Induction, Transfer		Repetition
			Imitation
			Use a dictionary, IPA
			Shadow CD's, movies
Social/ Affective	Questioning, Cooperation, Self-reinforcement		Attend class

Repetition

Data from the reflective journals also highlighted the benefit of planning and directing attention to repeat a chunk of language (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) in order to improve

intelligibility. For example, in his reflective journals, Jun wrote that watching DVDs offered the benefit "*to listen/watch again and again*". The act of repetition was applied to listening, speaking, and watching tasks for this group of students so that they could improve stress, pausing, and/or intonation.

Shadowing

Shadowing was originally used to train interpreters. This process of repeating speech while simultaneously listening is an active and highly cognitive activity used to improve listening comprehension, prosody, concentration, motivation, and natural speech (Hamada, 2012). Shadowing was used in a range of contexts to include the element of speaking for these Japanese participants. Jun wrote about his persistence to improve his pronunciation using a variety of strategies, including shadowing. For example, by independently selecting news programs or songs, Jun would "*listen carefully to their British [English], and practice. Practice many times*". Daisuki found listening to speeches and checking each word useful; then "*shadowing three times a week. Now I feel like I can make a little progress in English pronunciation*. In particular, Daisuki reflected on the benefit of this skill to improve stress and intonation.

Technology

Finally, technology was increasingly used to improve language proficiency and this was not just restricted to computers. For example, Satomi showed greatest awareness, use, and range of technological devices to improve pronunciation. In her reflective journal, Satomistated that she was conscious that her English had improved, "*The software Speak! helped me. Because I can realise clearly the bad points and good points of my pronunciation by different colour*". The importance of practice was also emphasized. Satomi also used her mobile phone when travelling on the train and buses in order to improve her listening skills. This shows that the student was aware of her most urgent needs area and motivated enough to attempt to address it in her own way:

> *The most difficult thing for me is to listening what people say in English. So, I see the movies in English in this [mobile phone]. I have many movies... I try to listening English comfortably.*

Communication difficulties

Despite her effort to make friends with people from English speaking countries or use software, Satomi explained in her journal that in order to speak English, she would mainly speak English in class, then read and listen to English at home. During the interview, this student further reflected on the importance of being involved in verbal interactions with native speakers or proficient speakers of English. Because of the lack of opportunity to do so, Satomi would continue to read and listen to the English at home. Therefore, learning strategies were also influenced by available resources.

Some teachers of Japanese background were aware of and responded to their students' desire to improve their communicative skills, and the resultant importance of exposure and opportunity to practice when learning English. Student 4 stated that one such teacher embedded these aspects into the curriculum to force students to use English in class; however, such teachers were in the minority:

> *My class teacher is Japanese but he studied for pronunciation ... he use English. Many Japanese teacher used Japanese even if they teach English. But that teacher ... impose us to speak, 2 or 3 minute speech. I think he want us to try to speak English ... many Japanese student are unfamiliar to use English ... so it is useful.*

Reflective Journal 3: Action learning process

Daisuki also commented that he "seem to be accustomed to speak English." This also shows that, this small group of participants found the reflective journal to be a motivating tool to develop awareness and improve pronunciation. For example, in her reflective journal, Satomi identified that although her goals had not completely been achieved, there was improvement in overall clarity. This student wrote, "*I think my pronunciation has become clearer than before. It is very glad for me.*"Improvements in reading, listening clarity, and accent were also expressed in the journals. Jun wrote that:

> *It seems to me that I have become a little better. For example, I think my reading rhythm is now better than at the beginning of this semester. Perhaps, listening to my own recording voice has lead me to this achievement.*

It was also evident through the process of action learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) and reflection that the participants changed their goals independently. The action learning design of the reflective journals allowed this to occur at any time. This process may have

sought to challenge old forms and assumptions about teaching and learning, allowing the participant to critically reflect on the experience and develop a course of action, act on and implement the plan, observe the results, and either change their action or adopt a new behaviour (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). As part of Reflective Journal 3, Hiroyuki wrote:

> *While attending class, I started thinking about what is important word in sentences, and can read with pronounced intonation. So, I want to change my goal. I want to be able to talk with emotion and emphasise the important points.*

Hiroyuki also wrote about the benefit of the cognitive process of reflective learning:

> *My English pronunciation has improved. I didn't care my pronunciation, but I started to think about it. After thinking, I wanted to talk with friends in English to practice my English. So, pronunciation has improved.*

Therefore, the action learning process, which incorporates goal-setting behaviours, may be an effective strategy to focus and motivate learning and promote awareness-raising of particular features of pronunciation and possible intelligibility problems. While time in class was spent developing the skills relating to the genre of reflective journals, including goal setting, it is clear that the participants may have benefited from further time and activities that aimed to develop these skills.

One participant, in particular, repeatedly read a Harry Potter script and watched the DVD in order to improve his pronunciation. On reflection, he found that this was not effective to improve his pronunciation. In retrospect, he commented that his reading had improved; however, he needed to pay more attention to the stress placement in order to "speak more impressively". In this case, the choice of learning strategy was influenced strongly by the availability of resources and past experience. Many of the participants found the language learning strategy of repetition ineffective if not accompanied by speaking practice.

Without integrating listening and speaking to improve pronunciation, the language learning strategies were ineffective to improve pronunciation alone. This point was confirmed by the participants. For example, Hiroyuki wrote,

> *Maybe my pronunciation is not improved fully. But I think my listening is improved. I tried to improve my pronunciation by listening to native speaker's pronunciation, so I didn't take much time speaking. Of course I couldn't improve pronunciation.*

This is certainly one case where the effort of reflection and using the reflective journals appears to have been beneficial and the participant was able to fully engage in the cyclical

action learning process of 'question, plan, act, reflect, observe and reflect' to make effective and autonomous changes to improve learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This participant was then able to establish another plan, which included a greater range of language learning strategies: "*Like shadowing, I should do speaking and listening at the same time".* These examples show the importance of engaging in a range of communicative acts to improve pronunciation.

Reflective Journal 4: Action in reflection

This study shows that the participants believed that the reflective journals were a positive learning experience and that they had improved pronunciation skills (see Table 2 below). Participants supported the use and benefit of reflective journals. Comments from the interview also correlated support for reflective journals as a motivating tool.

Table 2 *Views on the Guided Reflective Journal*

Participant	**Interview Transcript**
Daisuki	*Yes, [the reflective journal] is good way, I think...we can see what [we] did and recall it so, we can see what we learned...we remember the aim of the first time...it was difficult for me [to find good strategies] but it very good way.*
Hiroyuki	*I think it is [useful] because it isn't only one time. I write regularly. Regularly, I can realise my own skill or what I do or daily life I can feedback my life by the journal regularly.*
Satomi	*I realise my difficulty by using reflective journal.*
Jun	*To reflect in each time is important thing, I think. Because ordinary we don't reflect so much. We just go ahead. So, to have a chance to reflect itself is important.*

Discussion

The qualitative results from this study appear to confirm the importance of external motivating factors to learn English. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), learners who are

intrinsically motivated are genuinely interested in the target language and its associated culture, whereas learners who are extrinsically motivated are more concerned with the practical benefits of learning, such as better job prospects. Both these orientations to motivation give rise to "active, agenic states" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). While classic attitudes in research suggest that intrinsic motivation is generally considered to "yield more intensive learning efforts and a better learning outcome" (Huang, 2008), within the culture and context of this study, where it is the norm to speak the native language, Japanese, there is limited opportunity to interact with native English speakers unless the participants travel. Also, the saliency of integration in bilingual societies may not be as obvious (Huang, 2008), so teachers cannot rely on intrinsic factors alone to promote learning. That is, in Japan, students are oriented more directly to extrinsic factors, which seem to be an essential motivator for these Japanese speakers who expressed a strong desire to improve their English. Ryan and Deci (2000) state that these external factors can also trigger the capacity for autonomous and self-regulated learning.

Triangulating data from the questionnaire, interview and reflective journals showed that the participants seemed largely motivated by global communicative goals. While this could also be translated into expectancy for success and improved future job prospects, it also may be considered synonymous with attitudes of second-year university students studying a second language. In the context of this study, it was important to guide the participants so that they did not set unrealistic goals, which in turn could have demotivated them. This meant that the teacher-researcher had a specific role in mentoring the participants, ensuring that the goals of the learner were linguistically achievable and suited to the task. As a result of such an intervention, the participants revised their goals. The pronunciation goals became a learning focus from which the participants could identify appropriate strategies, reflect on their individual development in achieving the goals, and measure changes in intelligibility over the duration of the semester.

Comments from participants indicate that reflective journals might have contributed to increased motivational behaviour resulting in focused learning so that students were prepared to improve their pronunciation independently. Therefore, this present study agrees with the literature and found that the best way to improve proficiency, intelligibility, fluency, and accent was through developing independent learning strategies that encourage practice and communicative opportunities (Morley, 1991). However, further research is needed to

ascertain the relative impact on motivation when using reflective journals and how best to utilize this intervention tool to improve pronunciation. The motivation for learning English directly impacted on the choice of learning strategies. The reflective journals seemed to focus learning and direct the use of a range of language learning strategies to suit the set pronunciation goals.

The participants identified a large range of activities and learning strategies that they used to improve their pronunciation and reported on how they changed according to their learning goals and their motivation. Peacock (1998) states that learner beliefs affect the choices of language learning strategies employed by learners. As mentioned previously, it is also believed that motivational factors influence strategy choice (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). The reflective journals used in this study appear to have provided the participants from large classes with the opportunity to reflect on their learning strategies and adapt these to suit their needs and their learning preferences. Data shows that as a result of using reflective journals, the participants involved in this study were motivated to employ a range of learning strategies, activities, methods, and tasks to improve English proficiency in general, and pronunciation. This study agrees with Oxford (2008) that the participants aimed to use language learning strategies appropriate to their needs. Listening was equally the most popular language learning activity used throughout the semester. The results indicated that studying English happens in Japan based on various types of motivation, which are intertwined within the context of learning and influence the type and range of learning strategies used by participants. These results demonstrate that these learners preferred largely auditory strategies. Other language learning strategies increased; however, only a few students were recorded as engaging in social affective strategies. These strategies were mainly used to develop intelligibility of pronunciation but were also used, as mentioned, to reinforce motivational objectives.

On the whole, throughout the semester, data from the questionnaire, interviews, and reflective journals showed that learning strategies did not vary greatly regardless of the specific goal to improve pronunciation. That is, most activities replicated learned in-class strategies. This finding replicated results from O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 127) where "strategies appeared in the foreign language study that may have been used as a result of direct instruction by a specific teacher." This present study appears to support Peacock (1998) in that there is a significant disparity between learner and teacher beliefs about the use of

language learning activities. That is, the participants selected a number of learning strategies that seemed quite well ingrained; however, these may not be the most beneficial for language learning nor to address specific goals or phonological concerns of the participant. Whatever the context or method, it is important for learners to have the chance to reflect on their language learning and language learning strategy use. However, further data are needed to investigate the influence learning English and the sensitivity to the background and culture of the learner, in addition to prior language learning experiences to more accurately define language learning strategy choices. In summary, the participants in this study seemed to be naturally and actively engaged to improve their English outside the classroom.

In the situation described above, the non-native English teacher also appeared to be a driving force and a motivating factor. This is in line with Kormos and Csizer (2008) who state "language learning attitudes of younger students are primarily based on classroom experience and are largely shaped by teachers" (p. 347). However, older learners tend to have clear language learning goals and are less dependent on the teacher and experiences in the classroom. Research confirms that one's attitude toward language learning affects one's success in language learning (Kormos & Csizer, 2008). McKenzie (2008) states that learner attitudes toward the target language and its speakers play a central role in determining levels of success for the acquisition of the language. This means that learners need to "…deal with their own stereotypes, prejudices and expectations as well as the linguistic features of the language" (McKenzie, 2008, p. 66). These attitudes and motivations for learning English impact on the choice of language learning strategies, participation in and outside the classroom, and ultimately language proficiency. Reflective journals may be one strategy for the teacher of large classes to use to identify learner goals, attitudes and motivations for learning English and guide learning.

The participants noticed some improvement in their overall intelligibility after self-directing their learning, although for one it was not as obvious. In particular, the participants showed growing awareness of these changes in Journal 3 and Journal 4. At this stage of development, the participants had also gained confidence and showed interest in using this intervention strategy. Therefore, over the duration of the semester, the participants demonstrated improvement in associated skills and familiarity with autonomous goal setting. Furthermore, conscious of improving their pronunciation despite studying in large classes, the students identified increased awareness of their own pronunciation features and showed more

objective criticism of their pronunciation. It is possible that these immediate goals identified in Reflective Journal 1, at the beginning of the semester, might have been the driving motivation to improve speech production.

Conclusion

This research not only reinforces the importance of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as key factors impacting on language acquisition in L2 research but also the importance of directing that motivational behaviour to achieve realistic L2 goals through the use of reflective journals. With the aim of improving current practices, this study, therefore, advocates the use of reflective journals in large classes to motivate their learners to develop and improve pronunciation independently. The study presented here further highlights that more attention must be paid to the individual learner who studies EIL at a university in the social context of Japan to determine the factors that motivate language learners to increase language learning strategy use and improve pronunciation. Future research is also needed to investigate the impact of current theories relating to motivation, language identity and the L2 self (Dörnyei& Ushioda, 2009) in relation to the effectiveness of reflective journals and EFL.

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Do They Need to Wait Until They Get Ready? : Learning a Second Language through Writing

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Abstract

Making a case against the idea that writing is too challenging to L2 learners at some levels despite its value, the purpose of this article is to demonstrate that they can write in English before they master other modalities such as speaking and reading. This article explores research findings to investigate whether L2 writing indeed plays certain roles in L2 development and why it is as important as other modalities in English language classrooms. Firstly, I report on the roles of linguistic output in second language acquisition, followed by a discussion specifically on the potential of L2 writing. Then, the paper presents evidence against the claim that writing should be postponed in English language classrooms until L2 learners become fluent in other modalities. The exploration of this essay indicates that not only can they write in English, but L2 writing can also facilitate the process of learning the target language: Writing as linguistic output promotes the process of L2 learning, and writing mode can have potential benefits that oral mode alone may not bring to L2 learning. Thus, this article argues that teachers need to acknowledge the value of writing in L2 classrooms and provide English language learners with plenty of opportunities to write English.

Keywords: second language writing, second language acquisition, second language learning, linguistic output, learning potential of L2 writing

Introduction

"Can we teach English language learners how to write in English before they master speaking, reading, and listening in English? I doubt it. Writing is too difficult for them." These were the common responses from my colleagues when I talked about the importance of writing in second/foreign (L2) classrooms and the need for integrating a writing component in EFL settings. At that time, I taught English to middle school students in South Korea, where many English classes focused on improving reading comprehension skills and grammar. Despite an enhanced understanding of English language teaching and learning over the past decade, however, many teachers, curriculum developers, and administrators especially in Asian EFL settings still support this claim. This paper aims to provide an informed argument about this issue by exploring research findings from seminal to recent works on the potential of L2 writing.

This article investigates whether writing indeed plays certain roles in L2 development, and why it is as important as other modalities such as speaking in English language classrooms. Firstly, I report the roles of linguistic output, writing and speaking, in second language acquisition in order to examine the importance of writing in L2 classrooms. Secondly, the focus is narrowed down to "writing as a tool for language learning" (Manchón, 2011a, p. 62), along with practical reasons for the importance of writing. Finally, in response to an argument that writing should be postponed in English language classrooms until English language learners (ELLs) become fluent, the paper presents evidence which supports that language learners acquire a target language as a whole rather than discrete subsystems in a linear way and reconsiders the construct of linguistic mistakes in L2 development.

Output in Second Language Acquisition

Although humans process two modalities of speaking and writing in different ways, both forms of speaking and writing can be viewed as productive processes in that they "encode ideas into language," as opposed to listening and reading which involve "decod[ing] language into ideas" (Field, 2003, p. 93). As Ortega (2009b) reports, even recently, there has been a

misleading belief that production in a target language is beneficial only to fluency. It is imperative, however, that writing or speaking a target language involves "crucial acquisition-related processes" (Ortega, 2009b, p. 63).

While research foci vary and a target L2 language is not limited to English, studies regarding the roles of linguistic output have been conducted: the effects of input- and output-based instruction (Morgan-Short & Bowden, 2006), a role for output regarding attention to L2 structure and metalinguistic analyses of L2 structure (Toth, 2006), output as a process by which L2 learners test hypothesis and internalize linguistic knowledge (Shehadeh, 2003), and comprehension and production processes in second language learning (Izumi, 2003). The evidence from these studies for which Swain (1998) lays the groundwork by suggesting her Output Hypothesis corroborates the idea that learner output should not be viewed as merely "a sign of acquired knowledge" (Shehadeh, 2003, p. 167). Rather, it is also "a sign of learning at work" (Shehadeh, 2003, p. 167).

This paper views writing and speaking as linguistic output that involves different cognitive processes from reading and listening and that can help learners engaged in unique learning processes which input does not involve, drawing from the scholarship of Swain (1998) and Swain and Lapkin (1995). ELLs learn a target language from various forms of input such as books, movies, or a wide range of teaching materials. Unfortunately, the fact that a second language learner is exposed to certain linguistic features does not necessarily mean that he/she could acquire the features automatically. Researchers (Swain, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 1995) have doubted that ample exposure to quality input is sufficient for a second language to be acquired and turned their attention to linguistic output: speaking and writing. Swain and Lapkin observed that French immersion students in Canada who received quality input generally spoke their target language quite fluently and could function well in the academic context. However, they are "clearly identifiable as non-native speakers and writers" (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, p. 372). The researchers found that the students spoke "surprisingly little" (Swain & Lapkin, 1995, p. 372) target language. Swain and Lapkin claim that this lack of output production may be responsible for their "nontargetlikeness" (p. 372). Thus, they maintain that there are roles for output that input alone cannot play in second language acquisition process.

First of all, one of the most important roles for output in Swain and Lapkin's (1995) Output Hypothesis is that "output is one of the triggers for noticing" (p.373); noticing a

problem in turn "push[es] learners to modify their output" (p. 371). This positive relationship between noticing and learning has been supported by an increasing body of research (Adams, 2003; Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Mackey, 2006; Schmidt, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). Additionally, Swain and Lapkin point out that "even without implicit or explicit feedback provided from an interlocutor about the learners' output, learners may still, on occasion, notice a gap in their own knowledge when they encounter a problem in trying to produce the L2" (p. 373). With relevant feedback provided, however, L2 learning can be further facilitated because the absence of appropriate feedback could lead learners to reach incorrect hypotheses about their interlanguage when they modify their output (Shehadeh, 2003).

When learners recognize that their production is divergent from the form of a target language, one of the ways to search for appropriate items such as vocabulary and syntactic forms might be "through a search of learners' own existing knowledge" (Swain, 1998, p. 67). This is intertwined with an equally important role of linguistic output; output leads students to test their hypothesis about certain linguistic aspects of a target language (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Swain & Lapkin, 1995, 2002; Shehadeh, 2003). Interactions triggered by speaking or writing can be meaningful space where learners can see whether their hypothesis is correct or not. That is, if they realize that their sentences are awkward or incorrect, they will try to modify what they said or wrote. It is significant to note that this process of noticing a problem followed by efforts to search for suitable linguistic items would not be initiated by reading or listening alone. As Williams and Evans (1998) argue, "a flood of positive evidence […] may not be sufficient to get learners to notice forms in the input" (p. 141). Thus, producing output helps learners notice what they do not know, modify their output, test their hypothesis about their interlanguage, and in turn reinforce their linguistic knowledge.

Another critical role of output is that by producing output, learners' cognitive process can be directed toward a more syntactic process, which they need when they write or speak (Izumi, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). It seems evident that L2 learners cannot write or speak all the sentences that they can understand. Swain and Lapkin (1995) and Izume (2003) successfully recognize this difference in the process between comprehension and production. Izume corroborates the Output Hypothesis by looking at the psycholinguistic mechanisms that uphold this argument, drawing from the literature regarding language acquisition and cognitive psychology. For example, when you try to understand data, you can get the meaning

across by using content words without using your syntactic knowledge (Krashen, 1982). However, when you try to produce output, you need to know whether *to study* or *studying* is supposed to come after the verb *want*. Noting this disparity between the productive and receptive processes can lead to a better understanding of the frustrations of L2 learners. ELLs may feel frustrated when they try to speak or write in English even after they dedicate themselves to reading a lot of books and listening to CNN news everyday. However, feeling frustrated due to the lack of competence in a target language could be the springboard for future acquisition rather than being discouraged at events during the second language learning process, considering the distinctive roles of speaking and writing.

Finally, the Output Hypothesis also posits that producing output in a target language serves "fluency function" (Izume, 2003, p. 170) in that it helps L2 learners develop automaticity when they actually use the target language. Given the beneficial roles of output, teachers who assume misleadingly that writing instruction can be possible, or at least meaningful, 'only after' ELLs become good at reading and grammar can certainly be said to have a limited understanding of writing. To them, writing might mean simply a message to be delivered and ideas written down. However, as the evidence from research on the roles for output mentioned above convincingly indicates, linguistic production needs to be understood as "not only a message to be conveyed, but as a tool in cognitive activity" (Swain & Lapkin, 2002, p. 285). While there are a variety of factors that might affect the rate of second language acquisition, it should be acknowledged that learners' producing output by speaking and writing can accelerate the acquisition process because it allows learners to notice their linguistic problems, to test hypothesis linguistically, and to be engaged in syntactic process cognitively. Now, to elaborate on the potential of L2 writing in second language development, I narrow down the discussion to writing in the next section.

Potential of L2 Writing

Although writing is one of the valuable sources of linguistic output, a relatively large body of research on linguistic output has focused on face-to-face interaction in classrooms rather than writing (Harklau, 2002; Williams, 2008). It is necessary to pay as much, or even more, attention to writing as a form of linguistic output as speaking for several reasons. Findings from earlier research (Cumming, 1990; Swain & Lapkin, 1995) and more recent research (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Alwi, Adams, & Newton, 2012; Manchón & Roca

de Larios, 2011; Weissberg, 2000; Willams, 2008) support for the beneficial effect of writing on second language learning. This line of evidence indicates that "writing—especially collaborative writing—fosters a type of linguistic processing with potential learning effects" and that "such linguistic processing is more likely to take place in written than in spoken collaborative tasks" (Manchón, 2011a, p. 70). As Manchón (2011a) reports, however, more fine-tuned research is needed as to how learner attention can be directed to linguistic form and its relationship with the nature of writing tasks and learner variables.

L2 Writing as Linguistic Output

As early as 1990, Cumming shows that through the process of composing, learners reinforce their existing knowledge that they have, but are not yet accurate. This can increase their "control over their linguistic knowledge" (Cumming, 1990, p. 483). His valuable recognition of the connection between L2 composing and language development laid a sound foundation for research on "the language learning potential of L2 writing" (Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2011, p. 181) in subsequent years, along with Swain and Lapkin's (1995) pioneering study.

Cumming's (1990) research is significant in that the findings specifically reveal the unique role of writing in second language development which has not been recognized before. L2 writers in Cumming's (1990) research did "self-clarification and linguistic adjustments" (p. 503) in a composing process, which also mirrors noticing problems and modifying their output in speaking. Yet, this process takes place "mentally and independently" unlike in speaking (Cumming, 1990, p. 503), which can be the rationale to put more emphasis on writing and to think about the potential of writing in second language development overall. In addition, Cumming assumed that the thinking process helpful to language learning appears to take place when it is to communicate information, not decontextualized linguistic practice. In a pedagogical sense, this assumption is worth being explored further in order to help educators design writing tasks.

Another research specifically on L2 writing as a form of linguistic output is Swain and Lapkin (1995) which investigate linguistic output in classroom settings by examining the dynamics of written interaction and the effect of the writing on second language acquisition. They observed that producing output by writing triggers noticing a hole in the interlanguage and directing learner's cognitive process to syntactic mode, as noted in the previous

discussion. This study is one of the few earlier studies which unravel the role of producing writing previously assumed as simply a representation of acquired linguistic knowledge.

More importantly, it is worth noting that writing can play a distinctive role in L2 development which oral modality might not play. Research on the cognitive dimensions of focus on form (Doughty, 2001) and working memory in learning vocabulary and syntax (Ellis & Sinclair, 1996) recognize the ongoing cognitive demands in oral conversations which might prevent learners from fully engaging oral feedback on their utterances. In contrast, writing can benefit learning more because processing demands of writing are "somewhat less immediate, possibly allowing learners some much-needed additional processing time" (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008, p. 245). In a cognitive sense, as Williams (2008) also explains, citing DeKeysesr (2007), "repeated retrieval" especially in "planned production, such as writing" (Williams, 2008, p. 13) may lead learners to produce linguistic output in spontaneous settings later.

Specifically, Williams (2008) provides two potential reasons why writing modality can promote the development of general language proficiency: (1) "soon after the initial point of acquisition, as learners try out new and more complex forms or familiar forms in new contexts" (p. 13), and (2) "considerably later in the process, as they access acquired forms over which they do not yet have full control, as part of their automization" (p. 14). Additionally, studies (Adams, 2006; Manchón, 2011b; Niu, 2009) illustrate that the linguistic processes which facilitate second language learning process such as noticing linguistic problems and hypothesis testing are more likely to occur in writing than speaking modality. Although it does not seem that there has been enough empirical evidence for the relative advantages of written versus spoken output in noticing linguistic problems in learners' interlanguage, it appears evident that writing has a distinctive nature, as opposed to speaking: more chances to receive feedback, more opportunities to notice gaps, less time pressure, and safer to try out new language than spontaneous speech (Williams, 2008).

One of the empirical studies that demonstrate the potential of writing was conducted by Weissberg (2000) who investigated the acquisition of English morphosyntactic features in the second language production of five adult L2 learners over a semester. The author looks into the participants' written and spoken samples to determine where new linguistic morphosyntactic forms emerge. He analyzed the data using the concept of "syntactic innovation," which was defined as "the emergence in writing or speech of any hitherto unused

morphological or syntactic feature" (Weissberg, 2000, p. 44). He observed that some learners introduced new linguistic forms in their speech first, but others introduced new forms in their writing. Interestingly, three out of the five adults tried new linguistic forms in their writing first, not in their speaking. Based on the observation that the participants were already highly literate in their first language, the researcher guessed that they must have felt more comfortable with writing for experimenting with their second language. The researcher assumes that this may be because their writing is more advanced than their speaking modalities. Weissberg (2000) concludes that generally learners favor writing as a medium for "the emergence of new morphosyntactic forms and for the development of grammatical accuracy" (p. 37).

Different language learners may prefer different modalities when they begin to take risks by trying new morphosyntactic forms (Harklau, 2002; Weissberg, 2000). A possible explanation for the participants' preferences for written mode when they take risks in their second language is learner's personalities and varying levels of proficiency in each modality (Weissberg, 2000), along with the fact that writing can afford added processing time with less time pressure and extra chances to experiment with L2 safely (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Williams, 2008). Some second language learners remain quiet because they feel their oral proficiency of English is too low to speak in front of native English speakers who produce effortlessly well-structured sentences full of appropriately-used advanced vocabulary and meaning, let alone their perfect pronunciation. Other learners might assume that native speakers of English are not patient enough to tolerate when international students stammer in English. Though it is not her main focus of a qualitative study, Duff's (2003) descriptions of so-called silent ESL students can help us visualize how L2 learners would be like in spontaneous participation in class:

> ..but the talk was often too complex linguistically, intertextually, and interactionally for them to be able to participate…The teacher thought they were simply shy, whereas their local classmates thought that they didn't have the language skills and didn't make an effort to participate…, they often froze with fear, not knowing how to respond, afraid of being laughed at by others because of the way they sounded..…inability to make immediate connections with the prior talk. (p. 325-326)

Interestingly, Duff also noticed that even those who stayed long in an English-speaking country and had a relatively good command of English felt unwilling to participate in

discussions, far from ELLs with lower English proficiency. When L2 learners find it uncomfortable to be involved in a class discussion orally even with unsophisticated vocabulary and safe grammar, they might find it formidable to try new syntactic structures and new vocabulary during a spontaneous class discussion. These students may prefer the writing mode to introduce new linguistic forms, as Weissberg (2000) suggests, because while composing they do not need to worry about their native peers' possible impatience (Leki, 2001). While composing, they do not need to fear that they disrupt the overall flow of class discussions. For instance, Williams (2008) legitimately points to the need to consider affective factors of speaking and writing in comparing oral with written modality. As Williams explains, there is a strong possibility that "some learners are simply unwilling to try out [interlanguage] forms in such a public and vulnerable context as conversation, or they may find the notion culturally dissonant" (p. 15), and some learners would be more likely to feel comfortable with the idea of taking risks linguistically in "the safer, less public form of writing" (p. 15).

Forcing these learners to engage in speaking-based tasks alone in class may delay their valuable efforts to take risks linguistically, which is considered beneficial to second language acquisition (Truscott, 1996). Thus, to encourage learners to be involved in various literacy practices such as keeping journals or writing invitation cards and to include writing component in reading or speaking-based classroom tasks can provide them with good chances to experiment and play with their second language. Playing with a target language to make meanings is essential to go beyond using clichés and safe yet simple syntactic structures. Hence, it is significant to view written modalities as a medium for the emergence of new language items. While it remains questionable whether we can generalize based upon observations of five adults in Weissberg's (2000) research, it seems reasonable at least to argue that speaking is not the only medium for learners introducing new linguistic forms into their production. Therefore, it is beneficial to increase the number of channels to produce output by supplying learners with various occasions where they can not only speak but also write. Also taking writing to center stage from a marginalized position in classrooms (Harklau, 2002) can help already-orally-active students have more opportunities for producing output and shy students enjoy opportunities for producing output. This does not mean that we should push other modalities such as speaking and reading back to marginalized positions in

educational settings. Rather, it means that writing deserves as much attention as other aspects of a language.

Moreover, it is not difficult to find support for the unique role of L2 writing in second language development. Although the role of writing as linguistic output is not a main concern of the research, Lam's (2000) case study exploring the role of online chatting in oral proficiency provides a learner's perception about writing mode. The participant actually stated that he liked trying out features in writing before he used those features in spoken interactions. This line of argument for writing can corroborate the link between language learning and L2 writing which is rather tenuous in Weissberg (2000). Given that L2 learners in EFL contexts are more likely to be shy than English-speaking students, the potential benefits of L2 writing can be further maximized in EFL settings.

Manchón and Roca de Larios (2011) provide empirical evidence, specifically about EFL learners, on the meaningful connection between writing as linguistic output and language learning by collecting EFL learners' self-reflection journals and interviews. Taking a step further, the researchers explore 18 EFL learners' perceptions of "the language potential of L2 writing" (p. 181), acknowledging the possible link between the potential of L2 writing and especially certain types of tasks. They emphasize the positive relationship of learning outcomes of L2 writing and "complex, meaning-making, problem-solving types of writing tasks that entail a real challenge for students at ideational and linguistic levels" (p. 182).

The empirical evidence on a facilitative role of writing component in L2 classrooms can also be found in literature on adults' language learning process. For instance, Adams and Ross-Feldman (2008) examined the influence of the inclusion of writing component in L2 collaborative tasks on learner attention to form by looking at 44 ESL adult learners in a community English learning program in the United States. Specifically, they compared when the learners are engaged in tasks which involve only oral modality with tasks which involve both oral and written modalities, targeting two structures: locative prepositions and past tense morphology. Although significant differences between the two types of tasks have not been found statistically, which the researchers assume was due to the small size of the data sample, descriptive statistics clearly indicates that tasks involving writing component are more likely to push students to focus on the target structures. While it cannot be said that including writing in a task in the classroom will automatically produce better outcomes in accuracy, it can be argued for sure that "language production through writing and speaking offers learners

different language learning opportunities" (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008, p. 264). This can be a sound rationale for the need to conduct research on the significance of writing in L2 learning, in a research sense, and to integrate writing component in English language classrooms, in a pedagogical sense.

Another aspect worth noting in Adams and Ross-Feldman's study (2008) is the possibility to expand the insights obtained from this study beyond ESL settings to include EFL settings. Interestingly, the authors point out in their introduction of the participants that the adult participants are found to be similar to EFL learners in that they also had limited access to interactions with English-speaking people, and most of them mainly used their L1 at the workplace. There is a promising possibility that incorporating writing component in EFL classrooms can also yield positive outcomes in English learning, which can be a rationale for further empirical research. In sum, through the process of approximating a second language to English while writing, learners develop their second language in such a way that reading and listening instruction alone cannot afford. In addition to the cognitive benefits of L2 writing as linguistic output, it is not difficult to find other reasons for more attention to the learning potential of L2 writing.

Practical Reasons for the Importance of Writing

There are two practical reasons why writing should be valued as much as speaking; the potential of writing to address limited amount of oral interactions in classrooms and the importance of writing in L2 learners' academic success. First of all, communication in speaking mode is very limited and writing plays a critical role in school settings while the degree of the limitations might vary (Harklau, 2002; Heller, 2001; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008). After she observed many high schools in the United States, Harklau (2002) described the classrooms as places where "opportunities for output in the oral mode are often more limited in both quantity and scope than in the written mode" (p. 331). She observed that the amount of interactions of students with their teachers and their native speaker peers was quite small, and even the exchanges they had were often monosyllabic. In contrast, Harklau noted that these students' output in written modalities was "far more copious and varied" (p. 331). The printed mode plays a leading role particularly in EFL learners' L2 experiences (Bruton, 2007; Manchón, 2011a).

It is reasonable to say that writing can also serve as a viable mode of communication in places such as EFL settings where the amount of oral interaction is far more limited than in classrooms in the United States. In these non-English dominated communities, writing can function as "a salutary means for pushed foreign language output" (Leki, 2001, p. 206). For this issue, it is necessary to take the characteristics of EFL settings into account. EFL is learned in an environment in which English is not used to communicate (Tomlinson, 2005). In contrast to English language learners in the United States, most EFL learners have few occasions to communicate with native speakers of English. In other words, one of the noticeable aspects regarding EFL settings may be the limited access to the target language, which may result in scarce opportunities to produce output. Consequently, both in English-speaking and non-English speaking countries, encouraging English language learners to write in various classroom practices will be one of the feasible ways to push them to produce English output (Leki, 2001).

Finally, the ability to write effectively is crucial for academic success (Harklau, 2002; Hyland, 2004; Leki, 2001; Manchón, 2009). Harklau (2002) reports that in the American school system people are expected to be literate when they enter third or fourth grade. "From this point forward, reading and writing pass from being the object of instruction to a medium of instruction" (Harklau, 2002, p. 336). Furthermore, as Hyland (2004) explains, "what academics principally do is write" (p. 3). Considering that L2 writing instruction is relatively invisible in non-English speaking countries (Leki, 2001), it might be possible that the only English writing instruction that international students received was several months for TOEFL preparation. If this is the case, it is not surprising that the learners would be frustrated when they feel how fragmented and sketchy their accounts are in written English and how unaware they are of what the academic communities expect.

Not only in the United States but also in global academic communities, the ability to write in English has become more and more important (Hyland, 2004; Leki, 2001). The growing importance of publishing academic works and written communication forces L2 learners to become effective writers in English. They need to know how to present their arguments in an academic way, how to initiate academic discussions politely, and how to write an article in their field. Despite the discussed potential of writing in second language development so far, however, questions still can be raised as to whether writing instruction can be presented to learners with limited proficiency of English in reality.

Writing Instruction in L2 Classrooms

Despite evidence for the benefits of L2 writing in second language development, some educators might still have reservations about the idea that L2 learners with low proficiency level can benefit from writing instruction. These teachers' misgivings about this claim partly come from their assumption that when learners make mistakes in speaking, reading, or listening, it is hard for them to learn writing. However, the fact that second language writers make mistakes due to their lack of L2 proficiency does not prevent writing instruction from being implemented in the ELL classroom. Research (Edelsky, 1986; Hernandez, 2001; Hudelson, 1984, 1986; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008; Perotta, 1994) provides strong evidence to support that second language learners can write English before they reach high level of proficiency in speaking, listening, and reading. This line of research makes a case against the idea that writing should be postponed in a classroom for low level L2 learners. The body of research on early biliteracy development and L2 literacy development with adult ELLs can give us a glimpse of the potential of writing instruction in L2 learning.

Hernandez (2001) observed that some teachers assume that a second language writer who makes mistakes in basics such as punctuation or grammar will produce weak writing. However, the researcher found that the children writers who the teachers thought of as weak writers could create writing that was strong in ideas, organization, or audience considerations, as opposed to the teachers' assumptions. The fact that a second language writer uses a comma in the wrong place and a verb in the wrong form does not necessarily mean that the writer cannot write a narrative, organize a story in a convincing way, or bring his/her characters to life in his/her imaginative stories.

The assumption that ELLs should be good at the basics of writing before they learn how to generate and organize ideas in a second language classroom can be partly attributed to the perceptions of making mistakes in writing. Huldelson (1984) introduces a meaningful example of a second grader from Puerto Rico in her article. This second grader was enrolled in a public school in Florida, and her growth in English in terms of both oral and written ability was notable. She grew up as a second language writer even if she was not yet fluent in oral English. Harklau (2002) confirms this point by arguing that "even if no first language learners starts out literate, a second language learner can be and often is literate from the start…classroom-based second language learners may do exactly that" (p. 334). Interestingly,

Hudelson (1984) writes that this participant's growth as a writer was positively influenced by her teacher who believed that the participant would be able to write in English "while still acquiring and refining the language" (p. 234). More importantly, the researcher indicates that it was at the back of the teacher's mind the belief that the mistakes the participant made were not something to be ashamed of but something that is "integral" (p. 234) in the process of language learning.

Literature (e.g.,Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Shaughnessy, 1977) demonstrates the changing attitudes toward errors, which have been highly influential in shaping L2 teaching practices as noted above. Citing the landmark study by Mina Shaughnessy (1977), Bitchener and Ferris (2012) point out that "written errors made by basic writers were not, in fact, signs of carelessness, incompetence, or intellectual defectiveness, but rather rule-governed dialect variations and/or signposts of developmental stages that inexperienced writers and language learners experienced as they acquired language and literacy in academic English" (p. 31). The change in the perspective about error from "character flaw" to "developmental stage" (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012, p. 30) should be noted when we consider integrating writing component in English language classrooms. In his overview of L2 writing in the twentieth century, Matsuda (2006) also reports that controlled composition that did not allow students to make mistakes revealed limitations in helping students to write. Perotta's (1994) observation is worth noting in this regard. The researcher found out that teachers who do not permit errors ask young second language writers to write only the expressions that the children have exercised orally. Perotta goes far to a point where she maintains that this too-careful attitude toward writing may actually slow down second language literacy development in young learners.

In addition to studies targeting young learners, there has been a growing body of research on language learning potential of writing at university or adult levels as well (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2011; Weissberg, 2000), as discussed above. Moreover, against doubts as to whether L2 learners can produce meaningful texts in a second language, Hanauer (2010) shows in his empirical study on ESL undergraduate students' poetry writing how rich L2 literacy can be. He criticizes a predominant trend to compare second language to first language learners, which often ends up the "comparative fallacy" (Bley-Vroman, 1983). This refers to inappropriately comparing one language to

another in order to study a language. Since L2 speakers of English and native English speakers have their own needs regarding the language, comparing the two groups in any way cannot do L2 learners any good (McKay, 2002). By constantly comparing L2 learners' written work to one written by someone whose first language is English, one is bound to view L2 writers as committing mistakes and, in turn, lacking some features that are supposed to be in L2 production. As Hanauer legitimately argues, "defining first language writing as the target of second writers detracts from the value of second language writing by consistently seeing it in terms of absence of features found in first language writing" (p. 37). This line of reasoning provides a solid ground upon which it is necessary to reconsider how mistakes can be seen in L2 development. The fact that L2 learners make mistakes in a target language cannot and should not be a rationale for preventing them from the opportunities to write in any way in and beyond the classroom.

One example can be found in Hanauer (2010) that illustrates L2 writers can use English, although they felt frustrated at their English proficiency, as a resource to express their feelings and perceptions. He explores study abroad experiences by analyzing poems written by ESL students enrolled in College Writing course. The following poem was written by a female student from Taiwan:

Second Language
Discouraged
Disappointed
Disconcerted
It isn't as easy as I think
To make myself clear in
A second language
Eyes are staring
Waiting for
Understanding
What am I trying to
Express
Words are on the tip of my tongue
My mouth keeps silent
While my head wants to

Shout
Broken sentences
Poor pronunciation
I do my best
Faulty
Fatigued
Frustrated (Hanauer, 2010, p. 100)

In this poem, "the speaker's sense of disappointment at her command of English as a second language" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 101) is almost tangible. What should be recognized here is the fact that although her command of English is not as excellent as she would wish and probably she makes mistake in producing English, she writes in English effectively and meaningfully to make sense of her experiences and express her emotions. And she is not the only one who can do this despite so-called low level of English proficiency as shown in the collected poems for Hanauer's (2010) study. Thus, the misleading assumption that writing instruction or including writing component in English language classroom should wait until L2 learners get ready and they do not make linguistic mistakes any more should be reconsidered.

Edelsky (1986) refers to the claim that one must be fluent orally in order to write as a "myth" (p. 77) in her large scale school-year-long study by presenting counter examples. Among them are first graders who spoke "little or no English in class" (p. 77); they were able to write in English without even hesitation when they were asked to. Obviously, there seems to be an agreement among researchers such as Edelsky (1986), Harklau (2002), Hudelson (1984, 1986), and Perotta (1994) that L2 learners acquire English as a whole in a nonlinear way which is "interrelated and interdependent" (Hudelson, 1984, p. 234) between each linguistic system such as syntax and vocabulary, rather than learning in a linear way that each separate system is learned one by one. More recently, Fu and Matoush (2006) examined writing development of nonnative English-speaking middle school students from their first language to English and one of their research questions is how ELLs can write before the learners become good at basic English language skills. Specifically, they identified four transitional stages: "First language usage" to "Code-switching" to "Trans-Language Usage" and to "Approaching Standard English" (Fu & Matoush, 2006, p. 12). Of note is the fact that they recognize that ELLs' writing development is not linear, warning against misleadingly interpreting the term of 'transitions' as linear development. They indeed observed that the

participants "move back and forth among the four transitions depending upon the complexity of the topics and their particular communicative strengths and needs" (Fu & Matoush, 2006, p. 18). The students' writing portfolios attested to the "nonlinear pattern" (Fu & Matoush, 2006, p. 23). Although this study does not specifically deal with EFL students, it seems appropriate to suggest that it is essential to conduct research particularly in EFL settings in this direction, considering the insights into L2 writing development obtained from this line of research.

In light of these findings on a second language learning process of young children, undergraduate students, and adults, earlier assumptions that writing instruction should be delayed until learners get ready were being seriously undermined. Although L2 writers can be defined as "a very heterogeneous population" (Silva, 2006, p. 155) that includes from adult international students to young learners, it is premature to wait for L2 learners to become proficient in their speaking and be ready for writing instruction. On the contrary, they can learn a second language 'through' writing.

Conclusions and Implications

The exploration of this essay indicates that writing instruction is important in L2 classrooms; on the one hand, because writing as linguistic output promotes the process of L2 learning (Harklau, 2002; Huldeoson, 1984, 1986; Manchón, 2011b; Swain & Lapkin, 1995), on the other hand, because writing mode can have potential benefits over the oral mode in L2 learning (Adams & Ross-Feldman, 2008; Manchón, 2011a; Weissberg, 2000; Williams, 2008). Furthermore, the fact that the ability to write effectively in English means a lot in English-dominated academic communities (Harklau, 2002; Leki, 2001; Spack, 1998) can also support the rationale for writing instruction in second/ foreign language classrooms.

Against those who believe that writing is too challenging to L2 learners despite its value, there has been a fair body of research that refutes an argument that writing should be taught only after learners become fluent (Edelsky, 1986; Harklau, 2002; Hudelson, 1984, 1986; Perotta, 1994). This line of research provides a firm ground for the idea that writing should not be delayed after learners become competent in other modalities such as speaking or reading. More significantly, not only can they write in English, but L2 writing can also facilitate the process of learning the target language. Although further research is needed concerning specifically how L2 writing facilitates second language acquisition (Ortega &

Carson, 2010) and how the types of writing and the "depth of processing" (Manchón & Roca de Larios, 2011, p. 184) is related to L2 learning, there seems to be an agreement to a certain extent that the act of writing has learning potential. Specifically, given that writing in EFL contexts is mainly to learn L2, it is significant to add more knowledge about how L2 writing develops language (Ortega, 2009a).

Thus, teachers need to acknowledge the value of writing in L2 classrooms at any level of proficiency and provide English language learners with plenty of opportunities to write English. In doing so, language teachers can help learners to produce a target language as much as possible so that learners not only can notice their problems but also can modify their output. In addition, students can have more occasions to try new and complex syntactic structures and advanced linguistic items while they do various types of writing activities. Based on the arguments of this article, I can propose the following pedagogical recommendations:

1. Integrate a writing component into the existing English classes. For example, you can get your students to brainstorm ideas by writing before they speak in speaking class. You can get your students to write a summary or reflection on what they read in reading class.

2. Develop complex and problem-solving tasks with meaningful purposes which involve writing as well as other modalities. For example, for a project students can research by reading and listening materials, do an oral presentation on their findings, and write final reports on the project with their written reflections. For every production stages, teachers can provide the students with chances to notice their linguistic problems, modify their output, and test their hypothesis about English.

3. Encourage your students to write English as a resource to express their emotions and personal stories for meaningful purposes, not simply to practice decontextualized grammar points.

4. Help your students realize that making mistakes in linguistic output is not what they should be ashamed of, but a positive sign indicating that they learn a language. Get your students to do writing tasks such as journal writing where they do not have to worry about grammar and focus on meaning so that they can play with the language.

It is not appropriate to tell L2 learners to wait for them to be ready. On the contrary, it is time to encourage them to write since they can learn a second language effectively through writing. Writing is not the fruit that ELLs can bear only after they become satisfied with their

improved English proficiency in speaking, reading, and listening. Curriculum developers, administrators in education, and English teachers need to be aware of this beneficial connection between the act of writing and learning and, in turn, incorporate writing component in English curriculum at all levels.

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The Factors Causing English Language and Study Skills Gaps between Foundation and Undergraduate Programmes; an Exploratory Study at Majan College (University College), The Sultanate of Oman

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Abstract:

The paper presents the findings of a recent research study at Majan College (University College), Oman, which aims at exploring gaps in English language and study skills between English Foundation Programme (FP) and undergraduate (UG) level studies. This paper mainly focuses on the areas of students' weaknesses in English language and study skills after they successfully complete FP and start undergraduate courses, the possible factors behind these weaknesses and strategies to effectively alleviate them. The study used three data gathering tools: (1) it interviewed 8 UG lecturers, (2) administered a five-point Likert Scale questionnaire along with some open-ended questions with 176 students, and (3) conducted a focus group discussion with 9 English lecturers. The qualitative data were analyzed using a

coding system and quantitative data were analyzed using computer excel programme to get the highest and the lowest frequency rate of subjects' responses. The study finds that a gap in terms of English language and study skills still exists between both the levels of studies. The major gaps reported are related to *writing* and *reading* skills of students, which mainly remain underdeveloped due to their *lack of vocabulary* and *lack of exposure to English.* The paper discusses the factors that cause these gaps under three main categories: factors pertaining to (1) SLA, (2) students, and (3) the institution's academic system. The study discusses *students' inefficiency of transferring skills, limited time available to achieve the required English proficiency level for higher education, students' satisfactory approach to studies rather than to excel, and less social and personal usage of English* as the main factors causing these gaps. The study recommends a *standardized entry test prior to enrolling on undergraduate courses, reevaluation of study material or some course books, taking care of students' transition and integration needs etc.* as the main strategies to narrow down these gaps. The study concludes that completion of Foundation Certificate does not mean an end of foreign language learning. Instead, it is a continuing process which undergraduate lecturers should further build upon by activating students' prior knowledge of English language and study skills learned on the Foundation programme.

Keywords: foundation and undergraduate programmes, higher education, study skills gaps, weaknesses,

Introduction:

English, a language of global economic development and a vital means of international communication, is seen as a crucial and fundamental resource for national development all over the world. The Sultanate of Oman, realizing the importance of this phenomenon, provides economic and legislative support to English language learning and teaching in all forms of general, technical and tertiary education. English is taught as a compulsory subject in school education but is used as a medium of instruction at tertiary level. This change leaves a considerable gap between the required English language proficiency level for higher education (HE) and the level Omani students have at the time they join HE institutions, thus, posing a great challenge both for learners as well as for institutions to meet the required linguistic demands of various fields such as IT, Business, Engineering, etc.

In order to meet this challenge, HE institutions run General Foundation Programme (GFP or FP) to enhance students' linguistic competency. The programme aims to extend the English language skills of the students to enable active participation in their postsecondary or higher education studies (Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programmes [OASGFP], 2007). FP "is designed for access by students whose English language ability is very basic (Kobeil, 2005, cited in Al-Husseini, 2006, p. 36) and aims to meet their immediate academic and study needs. It is "a bridging year between the secondary school and the new specializations in which English is the medium of instruction" (Al-Bedwawi & Al-Jamoussi, cited in Al-Husseini, 2006, p. 36). In spite of substantial amount of training in such support programmes across the Gulf countries, there have been and still are general outcries about the continuous deterioration of the standards of English language proficiency of students among ELT tutors as well as university lecturers (See Abdul Huq, 1982; 2005; Zughoul & Taminian, 1984). Several complaints have been made about students' lower command of English language who fail to demonstrate any linguistic competency in order to perform well in their respective majors. Though such complaints are quite common across the region, but it is worth considering and evaluating the validity of such complaints in order to get deeper insight to further strengthen an institution's academic system and the effectiveness of English Foundation Programmes. The complaint that students continue struggling to develop their language and study skills to better cope with the demands of HE remains persistent for decades in the Gulf region, which also provides a rationale to further investigate the issue in a variety of contexts.

Majan College (University College) is the first private college in the Sultanate of Oman which runs one year extensive skills-based FP. There are total three faculties in the college, i.e., English Language, Business Management, and Information Technology which offer a wide range of programmes of studies. The Foundation Programme offers four core English language modules and four support modules in two semesters over the period of one year. The core modules include English Language Study and Academic Skills (ELSAS), Grammar in Context (GIC), Academic Writing (AW), and Academic Reading (AR) and the support modules include Basic Research Skills (BRS), Basic Mathematics and Information Technology (BMIT1 & 2), and Vocabulary in Communication (VIC). These modules cover a wide range of language, study, academic, business, IT and mathematics skills required for undergraduate studies. These skills are taught using a variety of latest teaching methodologies by highly qualified and experienced teachers from across the globe including America, Canada, Britain, India, Pakistan,

Iran, and from many other Asian and European countries. The programmme assesses students' skills through formative/continuous assessment techniques. On completion of their Foundation Certificate, students join various programmes in English, Business and IT faculties where students are further supported with some English language modules. A general perception among the teaching staff in these faculties prevail that majority of students often perform poorly due to their low English language proficiency level. It is generally complained that students' competency in English is not up to the level that is needed for tertiary education and the UG staff continuously emphasize the fact that FP should offer more solid language training at the language centre. This, in turn, serves as an indication of the existence of some gaps or weaknesses in English language and study skills which remain either undeveloped or underdeveloped on the FP. This study is an attempt to explore these weaknesses which UG lecturers continuously talk about formally and informally to the English language lecturers and insist that FP should devise some more effective strategies to alleviate these weaknesses. This also suggests that an evidence based study is required to investigate the core of the matter and find out what causes these weaknesses and subsequently come up with an action plan that would further help students to master these skills.

Rationale of Study

Much has been said and written (e.g. Rabab'ah, 2001; Zughoul, 1985) about the low English language proficiency level of Arab students but the persistent nature of the problem facing higher education institutions makes it worthy of fuller investigation using a variety of research tools in different contexts. Though "examples of general impressionistic evaluation are available in a variety of references", as explained by Zughoul in the past, but a "well documented research evidence on the competence of English major is scanty" (1987, p. 224). In another study at Yarmouk University in Jordan, Zughoul (1985, cited in Rabab'ah, 2005) concludes, based on the results of an English language proficiency test, that students are "not proficient enough to take any academic work" (p. 184). A more recent study of Rabab'ah (2001) at Yarmouk University in Jordan also supports similar view. The results of the TOEFL test administered by Rabab'ah (2001, cited in Rabab'ah, 2005) indicate "the low proficiency level of English majors" (p. 184). These studies show the seriousness of the problem faced by the Arab world.

This study takes a different and more comprehensive approach to investigate the problem in a new context. Instead of looking at the general problems students face in higher education, the study attempts to explore gaps in English language and study skills which remain, as mentioned above, either undeveloped or underdeveloped in graduates after passing a comprehensive skills-based FP from MCUC. This will also allow the data to be compared to the body of literature available in similar EFL contexts in the Arab world. The study will be highly significant with respect to its implication not only in the context of this study but also in the Gulf region and abroad as most of the universities, especially in the Middle East, offer English foundation programmes. The significance of this study also provides it a strong rationale as it will help the higher education institutions and its various stakeholders to get some insight to better prepare their students for higher studies.

Aims and Objectives

This study aims to explore the existence of English language and study skills gaps, if any, between foundation and undergraduate programmes of studies at Majan College. It intends to investigate the factors that cause these gaps. The study is exploratory in nature and attempts to identify students' weaknesses both in terms of language and study skills after they complete the Foundation Certificate and join undergraduate courses, the factors that contribute these weaknesses and the possible ways to effectively eliminate them. The study also aims to provide some deeper understanding with respect to second/foreign language pedagogy in the Gulf region, particularly in the areas where students lack sufficient command on English language.

Research Questions

The study tries to find the answers to the following research questions derived from the aims and objectives of the study.

1. What are the major English language and study skills weaknesses that students face on the undergraduate programme after they complete the Foundation Programme?
2. What are the major factors behind the English language and study skills weaknesses of students at undergraduate level after they complete the Foundation Programme?
3. How can these language and study skills weaknesses be alleviated more effectively?

Although the study addresses the Omani context, the answers to these questions should be applicable to similar EFL contexts where students struggle to pursue their higher studies due to their weak English language and study skills.

Literature Review:

Facing problems and challenges in the process of learning a second or foreign language is quite common. Past research in the field of ESL/EFL indicates that EFL learners face numerous problems in the process of acquainting themselves with the system of a new language. In this process, both researchers and linguists hold that "it is inevitable that learners make mistakes in the process of foreign language learning just like children learning their native tongue make plenty of mistakes is a natural part of language acquisition process" (Erdoğan, 2005, p. 261). This process of making mistakes can duly be interrupted through proper feedback and realization by the learners of the errors committed. However, some errors, as Ellis (1997) considers, seem to be universal. They show learners' attempts to make the task of learning and using the target language simpler. However, what remains as a matter of deep concern for language teachers is "why students go on making the same mistakes even though such mistakes have been repeatedly pointed out to them" (Erdoğan, 2005, p. 261). Erdoğan (2005) further states that "many of the teachers complain that their students are unable to use the linguistic forms that they are taught" (p. 262). This could be due to their inefficiency of transferring skills from one context to another. This also shows a major, but often tacit, assumption in education that the knowledge that students learn in one situation will transfer to a similar situation later in their academic and social context (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). "Yet despite these tacit assumptions, our education system is inefficient in ways that promote transfer" (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). In order to "have heightened transfer occurred, the content, context and process of learning should be similar from one situation to another; when any of these vary, transfer is diminished" (Knapp, 1979, p. 3). However, apart from being inefficient in transferring skills, making and sticking to the same errors also varies depending on the context where foreign language learning takes place, learning environment, culture, learning and teaching strategies, syllabus, etc. In the context of this study too, learners continue making mistakes and struggle to acquire the competence to use English as a vehicle for learning in both academic and social contexts.

The most noticeable problems, which hinder the progress of Arab students in higher education, have been attributed to the "inadequate mastery of the four language skills; namely listening, speaking, reading and writing" (Suleiman, 1983, cited in Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 186). In his recent study in Oman, Al-Issa (2006, p. 222) reports that "many students who left their secondary schools with very high marks in English have failed to achieve anything in the English speaking countries when they went to pursue their university studies". This is despite the fact that "they have studied English as a foreign language for nine years prior to enrolling in these institutions" (Al-Issa, 2006, p. 218). Many research studies in the Arab countries like Jordan, Oman, the UAE and Saudi Arabia report that English language graduates have difficulties in using English for communication (Ibrahim, 1983; Mukattash, 1983; Zughoul, 1987, cited in Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 183). "When engaged in authentic communicative situations, they often lack the necessary vocabulary they need to get their meaning across and as a result, they cannot keep their interaction going on for an extended period of time" (Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 183). This could be due to the lack of exposure to English language which is used only in the classroom. With limited exposure to English language, students get fewer chances to engage in authentic communicative situations and hence cannot develop their full confidence to speak in front of others. Whenever they are required to speak in an open forum, they feel apprehensive and anxious. This was also reported by Tanveer (2008) in his study on "language anxiety" experienced by international EFL students including some Arab students at Glasgow University in the UK. He found that students experience "a high level of debilitating anxiety when they are called upon to speak in front of others" (p. 40). He further reported that "a large number of his research subjects considered oral presentation as the most anxiety-provoking activity in the class" (p. 41). (For more details on language anxiety see Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Koch and Terrell, 1991; Young, 1990 & 1991). Similarly, Al-Toubi (1998, cited in Al-Issa, 2006, p. 223) found in his research, which included 82 English teachers of various nationalities that "curriculum in Omani higher education institutions does not provide sufficient room for spoken language and it fails to prepare the students for oral communication in English due to a lack of a variety of activities".

The proficiency level with regard to the other English language and study skills of Arab EFL students is not different. Al-Brashdi (2002, p. 5), based on her study on reading comprehension at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in Oman, reports that vocabulary is perceived as the greatest difficulty for Omani students in reading. Other comprehension

difficulties she reports are "style of writing, speed of reading, difficulty in getting the main idea of the text, and not given enough time for reading" (Al-Brashdi, 2002, p. 5). The results of another study by Amer and Khouzam (1993, p. 975) at SQU also show that the "reading comprehension of English major students, despite being in their final year of study, is strikingly low". This may be attributed to several factors. The most direct factors may be "the influence of inappropriate teaching practices (e.g. methods of teaching, text books, testing systems, etc.), the influence of inappropriate reading strategies and styles acquired in the first language and the influence of certain dominant cultural learning styles" (Amer & Khouzam 1993, p. 974).

Similarly, in his investigation on Arab students' writing difficulties, Hisham (2008, cited in Al-Khasawneh, 2010, p. 3) found that students face problems in vocabulary register, grammar and referencing. In his study on major syntactic errors of Sudanese university students, Kambal (1980, cited in Al-Khasawneh, 2010, p. 5) found that students made errors in the areas of verb formation, tense, and subject-verb agreement. He also reported redundant use of third-person singular marker and an incorrect use of verb *to be.* These errors are associated with the product-oriented and decontextualized approach to writing in the Arab universities. Al-Hazmi (2006, p. 36), in his study on Saudi EFL university students' reflections on writing in Arabic and English in a composition class room at King Khalid University, found that "the field of EFL writing in the Arab world suffers from being abstracted, depersonalized and product-oriented". As a result, "EFL learners have problems in self-reflection, in expressing themselves adequately, and in formulating critical and analytical thoughts" (Al-Hazmi, 2006, p. 37).

The past researchers argue that the continuing dissatisfaction with the performance of Arab students in English courses, which subsequently cast a deteriorating effect on their studies at undergraduate level, suggests "a lack of fundamental standards in curriculum design, testing and oral communication skills, meager development of productive skills, inadequate teaching/learning strategies…lack of target language environment and the learner's lack of motivation, etc" (Mukattash, 1983; Suleiman, 1983; Zughoul, 1983, 1987; cited in Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 185).

Apart from these factors which appear to be less effective in bridging the gap between students' level of English language proficiency and the level needed for higher education, the time allocated to learning/teaching English is also a highly significant factor to be considered in narrowing down this gap. "While Omani students receive over the nine years just under 900

hours of formal English language instructions, students need in excess of 4000 hours to reach the level of proficiency needed for university study (Nunan, Tyacke & Walton., 1987, cited in Al-Issa, 2006, p. 223). Before students are proficient enough in the academic uses of English, it is estimated that "students take 3 to 5 years to develop oral proficiency, and 4 to 7 years to develop academic English proficiency" (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000, P. 10). Students further receive intensive English language support for approximately 560 hours over the period of one year on the Foundation Programme at Majan College, which still leaves a huge gap to be bridged. After Foundation Certificate, students continue receiving this support for another 224 hours in Business Faculty and 168 hours in IT Faculty along with their undergraduate courses.

Research Methodology:

Research Site and Subjects

The study was conducted in the English, Business Management and IT faculties of Majan College (University College), the Sultanate of Oman. In order to answer the research questions, subjects were drawn from all the three faculties including both lecturers and students. One hundred and ninety three (193) subjects in total participated in the study including one hundred and seventy six (176) students who passed Foundation Certificate (FC) from MCUC and were pursuing their higher studies in various faculties, eight (8) lecturers from undergraduate programmes and nine (9) English lecturers from Foundation Programme.

In order to improve learning and teaching in higher education, learners' involvement has been emphasized in educational research (e.g., see Al-Husseini, 2004; Kormos, Kontra, & Csolle, 2002; McCallum, Hargreaves, & Gipps, 2000). Hence, their views are valuable and complement other subjects' opinion, e.g. teachers, principals and planners which help to bring improvements in higher education (Hill, 1995, cited in Al-Husseini, 2006, p. 40). Learners from Business, IT, and English faculties were selected because they had already completed the FP from MCUC and were expected to be in a better position to comment and provide enriched data on their development of English language and study skills on the FP and consequently the challenges they face on the UG programmes.

The study follows both qualitative as well as quantitative approaches of educational research to find out gaps in English language and study skills between Foundation and Undergraduate Programmes. The study addresses the issue from three different perspectives, i.e., from the perspective of (1) lecturers in Business, IT and English Language faculties, (2)

students in these faculties who completed their Foundation Certificates from MC(UC), and (3) lecturers on the FP. The subjects of these three categories were approached through three different data gathering tools at three stages. Since reservations regarding the students' required linguistic capabilities are expressed by UG lecturers in different faculties, the data gathering process was started by interviewing UG lecturers. At the first stage, a semi-structured face-to-face interview technique was used to interview 8 UG lecturers (see appendix 1). The rationale behind the use of this data gathering tool was that it allows access to what cannot be directly observed and it provides participants with opportunities to select, reconstruct, and reflect upon details of their experience within the specific context of their lives (Ohata, 2005, p. 141). This initiated the discussion by pointing out various areas of students' weaknesses and was used as a *preparation tool* to fine-tune the questions and factors behind these weaknesses that appeared in the questionnaire at the second stage (Denscombe 1998, p. 112).

At the initial stage of questionnaire design, a small group of undergraduate students was interviewed to identify adequate answer categories for the close-ended questions. A five point likert scale questionnaire consisting 36 statements ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree along with some open-ended questions at the end was administered with 176 students in various faculties (see appendix 2). A combination of both close-ended and open-ended formats was used because it gives the respondent possibility to explain the reason of his/her choice that may not have been anticipated by the researcher (Wallen & Fraenkel, 1990, p. 338). Open-ended questions were included to minimize participants' irrational fear of criticism (Stefani, Tariq & Heylings, 1997, cited in Al-Husseini, 2006, p. 40). Responses to open-questions are most likely to reflect accurately what the respondents want to say (Nunan, 1992, cited in Al-Husseini, 2006, p. 40). The questionnaire consists of five sections; reading, writing, listening and speaking, assessment and feedback and miscellaneous factors. The items presented in these sections are reflective of possible English language and study skills weaknesses of undergraduate students, reasons behind them and their possible solutions. The questionnaire was used mainly to elicit students' weaknesses and the possible reasons behind them. The students were both male and female and were approached via class lecturers to ensure maximum participation. The statements in the questionnaire were carefully crafted, piloted and pretested so that the deficiencies may be uncovered that were not apparent by simply reviewing the items (Jurs & Wiersma, 2005, p. 171).

At the third stage, a focus group discussion was held with foundation staff to lend breadth and richness to the data. Foundation staff were sent a set of questions prepared in the light of the data gathered in the first two stages prior to the focus group discussion (see appendix 3 for focus group guide). Its implication is that "participants are encouraged to talk to one another; they ask questions, exchange anecdotes, and comment on each others' experiences and views, and thus generate data through interaction" (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999, p. 4). A focus group with FP lecturers was held to discuss and clarify the concerns and complaints of UG lecturers regarding students' weaknesses that emerged in the first two stages of data collection. Hence, the tool was mainly used to collect data regarding the factors behind students' weaknesses and their possible remedies.

Data Analysis

The interview and focus-group data were tape-recorded, listened to and transcribed, which is a part of the process of data analysis and interpretation (Gillham, 2005, p. 121). These along with the data gathered through open-ended questions were analyzed using a coding system (Robson, 2000). Coding is a process of simultaneously reducing the data by dividing it into units of analysis and coding each unit (Calloway & Knapp 1995, p. 2). These units were codified by giving them suitable headings like 'reading, writing, listening and speaking, vocabulary, thrust of learning, transferring of skills, time required to achieve proficiency in a foreign language, independent learning, material evaluation', etc. The responses provided by the respondents on these issues were divided into three main categories, i.e., English language and study skills weaknesses, factors behind these weaknesses and strategies to overcome them. These categories were used to explain the phenomenon under investigation.

The close-ended questionnaire data were analyzed quantitatively. Each response was numbered ranging from strongly agree as number 1 to strongly disagree as number 5. These numbers were recorded on an excel sheet and frequency and percentage for each response were obtained. The responses were compared within and across each skill category (reading, writing, listening and speaking, etc.) based on the highest and lowest frequency rate in order to find out the weakest skill of students and the weaknesses in each skill.

Results:

This section presents the results of students' responses to the questionnaire followed by UG and Foundation lecturers' responses to the interview and focus group questions, which all were designed to elicit answers to three main research questions mentioned above. Any statement in this section presented between quotation marks and is *italicized* is quoted directly from the participants' responses.

Questionnaire Results

Students expressed high level of confidence on the FP in preparing them to pursue their higher studies. 125 out of 176 (71%) questionnaire respondents agreed and 33 (18%) somewhat agreed with the statement, *"when I completed the Foundation Programme, I felt confident to start my studies at Undergraduate level* (Q1)*".* In spite of this high level of confidence on the FP, students acknowledged that they still face a number of challenges studying on the UG programmes. 86 participants (48.9%) agreed and 71 (40%) somewhat agreed that *"I still face problems studying at undergraduate level due to my English language and study skills weaknesses* (Q2)*".*

Based on the data from questionnaire, writing appeared to be the most problematic area for UG students even after they pass the Foundation Certificate. 64 out of 176 (36.3%) students agreed and 57 (32.4%) somewhat agreed with the statement that *"writing in English is the most difficult skill for me to learn* (Q12)*".* Figure 1 below shows the weaknesses of students in writing skill. These weaknesses are focused here as they emerged with high frequency rate in the questionnaire data as compared to some other weaknesses mentioned in the questionnaire.

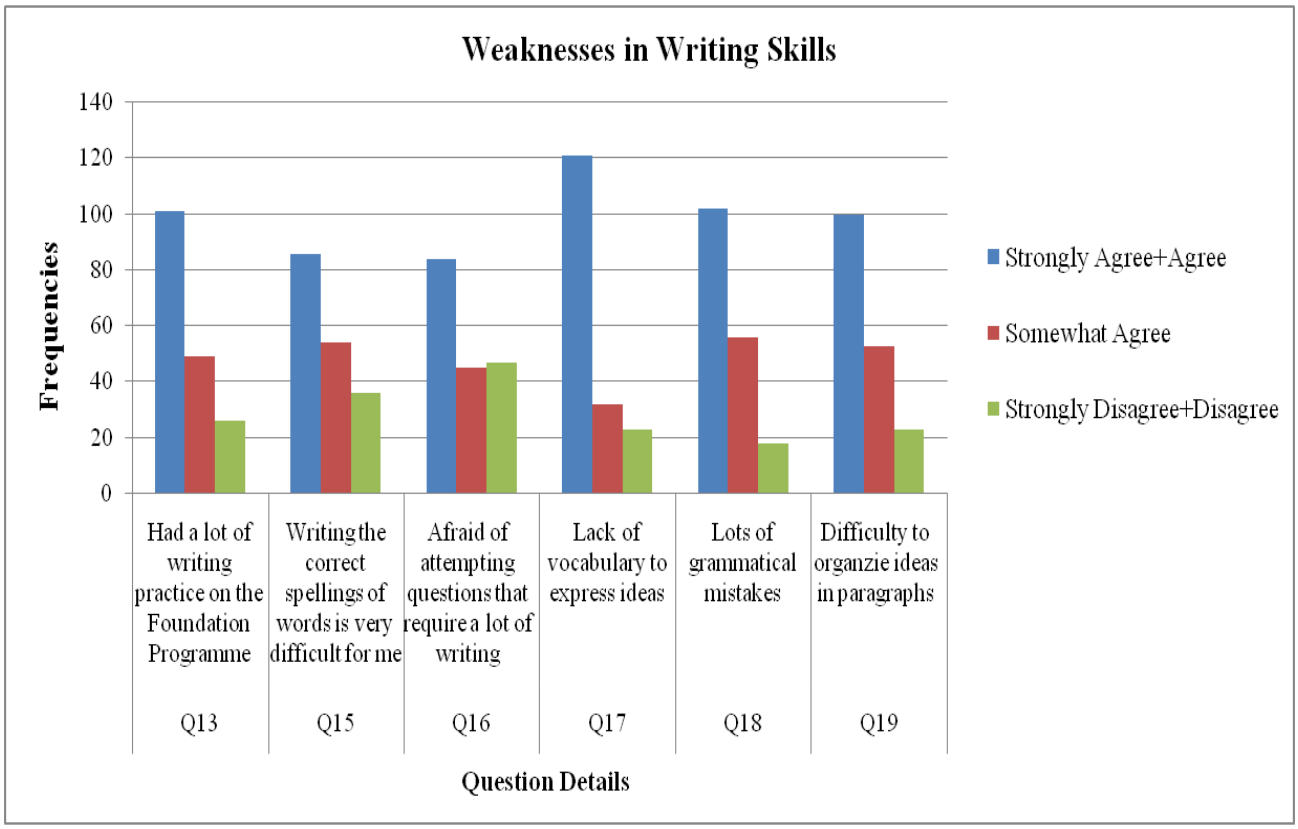

Fig: 1

Reading appeared to be the second most difficult and the weakest skill of UG students. The total number of students who agreed with the statement *"reading is the most difficult skill for me at undergraduate level* (Q3)*"* is 57 (32.3%) plus 55 (31.3%) who somewhat agreed, though a large number of students (64, 36.4%) disagreed with the statement. The reason students reported in their choice to agree or disagree with the statements on both *"reading as the most difficult skill* (Q3)*"* and *"writing as the most difficult skill* (Q12)*"* is same, i.e., lack of vocabulary. Surprisingly, an equal number of students (121, 68%) endorsed the items indicative of lack of vocabulary in both reading and writing parts of the questionnaire such as *"I try to understand the meaning of every word while reading a text in English* (Q7)*"* and "*most of the time I know the answer but I don't have enough words to write it in English* (Q17)*"*. Thus, the findings reinforced the earlier study of Al-Brashdi (2005, p. 5) that Omani students perceive vocabulary as the greatest difficulty in reading comprehension (ditto, see Literature Review section). Consequently, students tend to use dictionary excessively and find it difficult to make use of the study skills learned on the Foundation Programme such as guessing meaning from the context, "*differentiating important information from minor details while reading a text* (Q5)*"* (75, 42.6% agreed), and "*connecting ideas* (Q8)*"* (68, 38.6% agreed). However, more than half

of the respondents (95, 53.9%) agreed and 55 (31.3%) somewhat agreed that they "*can easily understand the main idea of a text* (Q4)*"*, which is in marked contrast with Al-Brashdi's findings (2005, p. 5) who reported getting the main idea of a text as a major comprehension weakness of Omani students. The following figure [2] illustrates the weaknesses of students in reading skills that emerged with high frequency rate in the questionnaire.

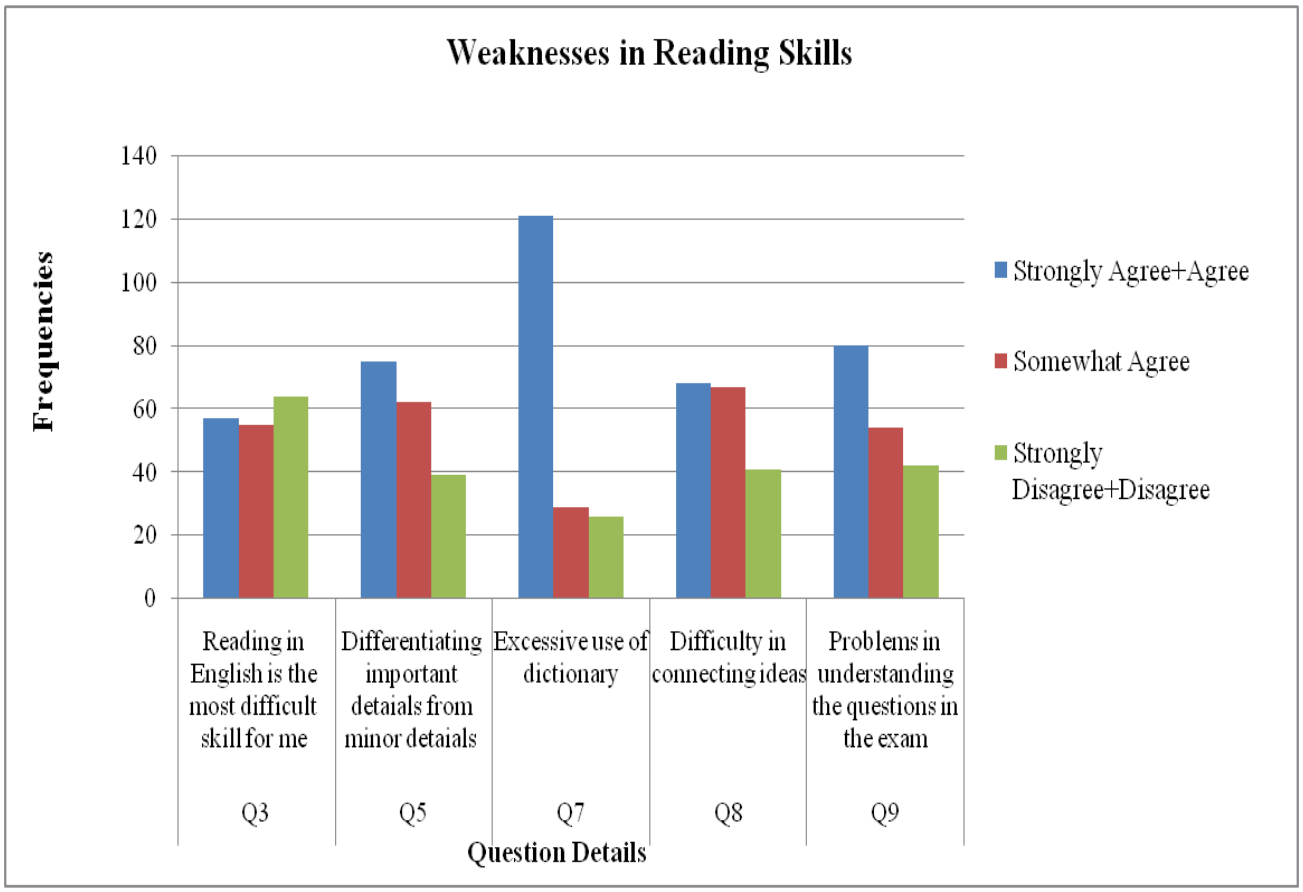

Fig: 2

The subjects did not appear to be much concerned about their listening and speaking skills as they were with their writing and reading skills. More than 50% students endorsed the statement that "I *always do a lot of listening practice outside the classroom by listening to English news channels, watching English movies, etc.*(Q27)*"* Similarly, with regard to speaking skills, 116 (65%) somehow believe that they "*can speak English fluently* (Q22)*"*. This is perhaps because they think "*they can communicate their ideas"* though *"cannot speak complete sentences* (Q23)*"* (83, 47% agreed). Thus, the findings of this study corroborate in this respect too with the results of earlier studies which found that students, as mentioned earlier, cannot keep their interaction

going on for an extended period of time" (Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 183). This could be due to the lack of exposure to English language outside the classroom. Only 51 students (28%) said that they "*practice speaking outside the classroom* (Q24)*"*. Consistent with Tanveer's (2008, p. 40) earlier study which reported that students experience high level of debilitating anxiety when they are called upon to speak in front of others (ditto, see Literature Review section), the subjects of this study (85, 48.2%) also agreed that *"they get nervous and confused when are required to speak in front of others* (Q25)*"* and *"feel shy because of their poor pronunciation* (Q26)*"* (74, 42%). The figure [3] shows students' weaknesses in listening and speaking skills with high frequency rate in the questionnaire.

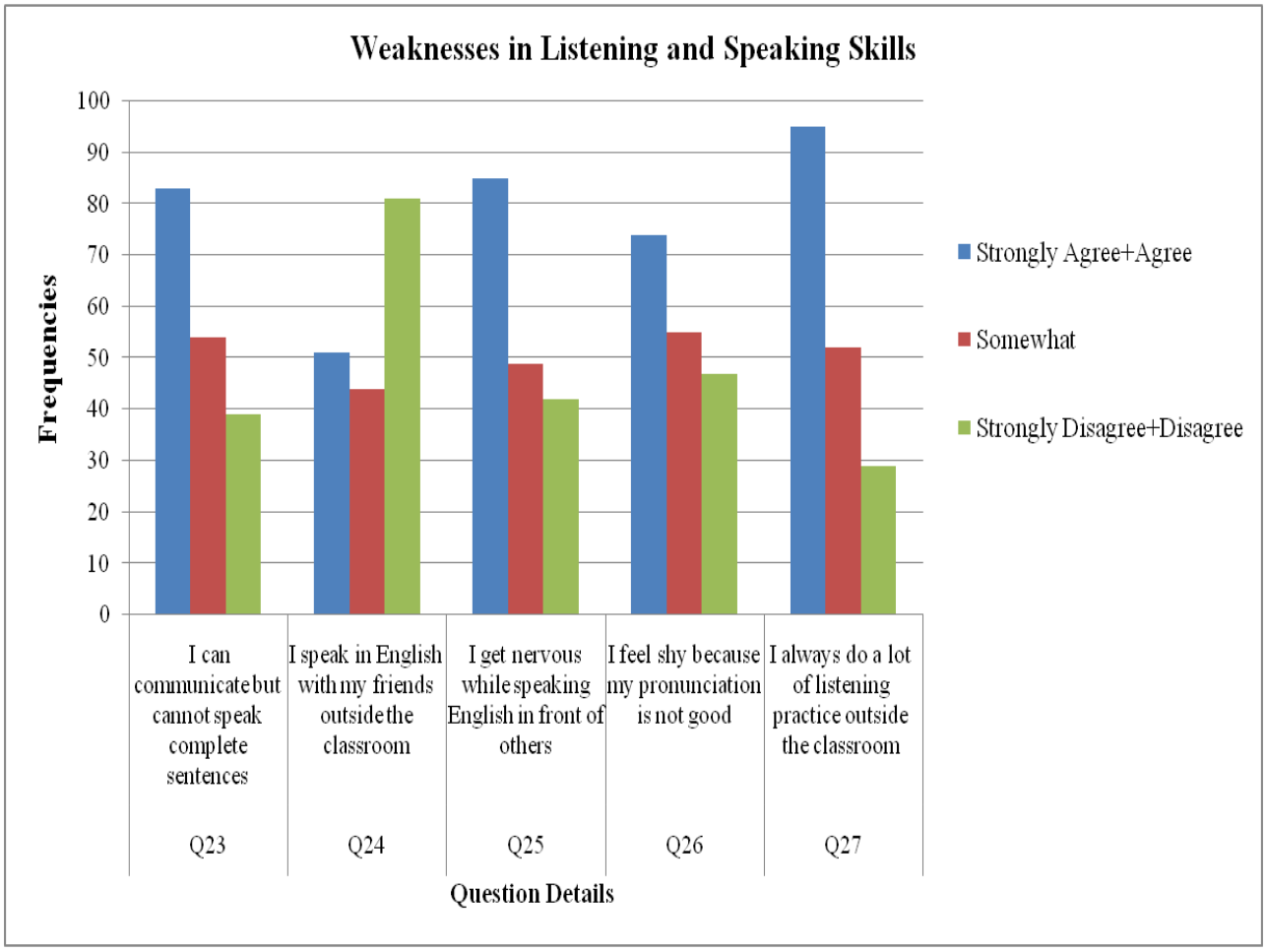

Fig: 3

Apart from these weaknesses, students reported that the reasons they perform poorly in exams are their nervousness during the exams and lack of confidence. This is obvious from their endorsement of the statements like *"I get nervous in the exam to the extent that I forget most of what I study* (Q29)*"* (80, 45% agreed) and *"I always feel doubtful about my ability to succeed*

(Q31)" (72, 40% agreed). However, contrary to a general impression among UG and English lecturers that students do not recall the skills they learn after completing a course. A good number of students (105, 59%) disagreed with the statement like "*I don't feel the need to recall the skills I learned after I pass a module* (Q34)*".* Similarly, 120 (68%) students rejected the impression that they *"do not need to excel in their studies as they still can get a job if they just pass* (Q36)*"*.

Students' response to open questions, though not very detailed, also confirmed that their major areas of weaknesses are *writing* and *reading* skills. *"Writing a paragraph in the exam is a problem for me", writing is very very problem (difficult) for me", "I don't like writing, I feel bored", "I lose marks when I have to write in the exam", etc*. are some comments of the students which show the challenge they face when they are required to write in English. They considered reading as a challenge because of their *"poor vocabulary"*, as a student wrote *"reading in English is difficult as no understanding of meaning, English words difficult and some very long"*. They recommended *"more and more reading and writing practice"* to overcome these challenges and suggested *"more time to be given in the exams"* especially where dictionaries are allowed as a lot of time is consumed while looking up the words in the dictionary instead of answering the questions.

Interview and Focus Group Results

All the UG lecturers who were interviewed hold that some students' poor linguistic competency is the biggest hurdle in performing well in their respective specializations. A business lecturer with 10 years of teaching experience in Oman expressed, *"the primary problem lies with language skills…their ability to comprehend in a foreign language (English), which stops them performing how they ought to perform".* Another IT lecturer expressed his deep concern that he teaches some groups of students whose *"English is totally zero".* However, participants of the study admitted that they have seen progress over the past few years but *"English still remains the biggest hurdle in students' progress"* as explained by another lecturer.

Complementing the questionnaire data with regard to the major areas of students' English language and study skills weaknesses (research question 1), the subjects interviewed as well as those who participated in the focus group discussion considered writing as the most problematic area for UG students even after they pass the Foundation Certificate. "*To be frank, we have problems in most of the areas…all the four skills plus the study skills…but the most,*

the most serious problem is writing, I guess". Lecturers also showed their concern about "*extremely slow reading speed"* of students and considered it another "*major gap between foundation and UG level of studies"*. When asked what is the most important factor of these major gaps in order to elicit the answer to research question 2, the lecturers commented that "*extremely limited lexical competency"* of students cause these gaps. Thus, lecturers' comments and students' responses complement each other as one of the lecturers expressed *"vocabulary…is very very very limited".* With regard to communication skills gaps, they opined that students' *"speaking skill is… average"* as they *"still can communicate…and send the message across".* However, it was reported that students fail to *"sustain for a longer period of time in a communicative situation…cannot do extended speech and speak in fragmented sentences using only the key words".* All the participants agreed that *"lack of vocabulary"* and *"lack of exposure to English language"* are two main factors of students' poor communication skills, which they put forward as a strategy to alleviate students' language and study skills weaknesses (research question3) by "*increasing both vocabulary and exposure to the target language".* Both students and lecturers also appeared to be satisfied with the listening skills of the students. *"Students have lot of listening practice because all the lecturers speak English",* commented by an English lecturer.

Apart from *"lack of vocabulary"* and *"lack of exposure" to English language",* participants pointed out a number of other factors as well as strategies in response to the second and third research questions. A highly important factor came out was "*students' inability to transfer their learning from one module to another or from one level (Foundation level) to another level (Undergraduate Level) of studies".* A highly experienced English lecturer elaborated this point as follows,

> *Yes! It's the main thing, they don't transfer their skills. This is the whole thing…for example, whatever they learn in 'English Language and Study Skills' (ELSAS) module…KHALAS ? (finish), this is a boundary…this should not go to Grammar in Context (GIC) module. Okay finished semester one, it's locked now. When they go to semester two, they don't bring anything from semester one.*

Students' *inefficiency on transferring skills* is caused, as the Foundation lecturers expressed, by *"the limited time available on the Foundation Programme for the adequate development of language and study skills of students".* An English lecturer stressed this point by saying that *"time is too short. There is a limit we can do. We cannot perform miracles in just two*

semesters". Another subject expressed, *"I am sorry, there are no short cuts. There is no way we can jump over it. It's gonna be hard and painful but that's foundation…unless they give us two years."* The subjects unanimously agreed that "*two semesters for FP are not enough and we need to find out ways to increase the dose".* Thus, the participants' comments seem to fully corroborate with the findings of earlier studies in this regard too (e.g., see Nunan, Tyacke & Walton., 1987, cited in Al-Issa, 2006. p. 223).

In response to the second research question, it emerged from subject's comments that students' "*unwillingness and lack of interest to study"* are some other major factors that cause English language and study skills weaknesses of students at undergraduate level after they complete the Foundation Programme. This was aptly termed as students' *"satisfactory approach to things rather than to excel"* by an experienced UG lecturer. She elaborated this point as follows,

> *"To take the students through this journey from a very basic to tertiary level, it is considered that the entire responsibility is on teachers with no support from the students. This could be because of the culture of the place (not of an institution) which influences a very satisfactory approach to things rather than to excel, so you are happy".*

They opined that *"education does not seem to be a priority in students' list of things to do"***.** That is the reason, as elaborated by another lecturer, *"learning starts and stops in the classroom and it rarely goes beyond the classroom"* which also shows "*lack of academic culture awareness"* in the society in general. Participants also commented on "*less social and personal usage of English"* as one of the factors causing language and study skills weaknesses. An undergraduate lecturer expressed in this regard that *"culture plays a role as you need to pull the students in the class to communicate with you…engaging in a discussion in class…this does not happen at all…may be they don't see that this is required in their work place".* As an answer to the third research question, the subjects stressed the need to *"acknowledge students' best performance by giving them some sort of awards"* and hence, use it as a motivating tool to narrow down the gaps in English language and study skills between both the levels of studies. One of the participants expressed dissatisfaction on the way the college acknowledges excellent performance of students. *"we do not put a premium on academic excellence; the way we acknowledge it…I don't think we do it extremely well".*

Another highly crucial factor that the participants suggested to be considered in order to alleviate students' weaknesses in English language and study skills (research question 3) was to *"take care of their transition from higher secondary school and integration into higher education".* The foundation lecturers argued that "*the standards of FP are pretty high and a good number of students appear to struggle in meeting the programme's expectations",* which clearly indicates that the language and study skills gap exists not only between FP and UG levels but also between higher secondary school and foundation levels. This was stated by a foundation lecturer that *"some students expect us to teach them A, B, and C",* which the foundation programme has not been designed for. This also shows that there is a need to review the skills covered on the FP as well as the materials used to develop these skills in order to cater for students' immediate study and academic needs. Similarly, UG lecturers also recommended reviewing their course books as one of the lecturers commented that *"none of the text books which our students read has been designed for non-native speakers".* He further stated that *"the language is alien and the total context is alien for students",* which makes it sometimes difficult for lecturers to contextualize some concepts. He also stressed that in order to contextualize students' learning, local context has to be added in the course books because *"ultimately most of our graduates are going to work in the local market".*

Discussion:

The findings of this study correspond to the results of previous research studies in the Gulf region in terms of prevalence of a general perception among ELT tutors as well as undergraduate (UG) lecturers that majority of students struggle to cope with the demands of higher education due to their poor and insufficient command on English language and study skills (Abdul Huq, 1982; Rabab'ah, 2005; Zughoul & Taminian, 1984). However, the highly experienced lecturers who have been teaching at Majan College (University College) for a longer period of time (more than 5 years) acknowledged that English language and study skills gap between foundation and undergraduate levels has been decreased and they have observed considerable progress over the past few years.

Possible English Language and Study Skills Weaknesses

As an answer to research question 1, the study finds a number of major English language and study skills weaknesses of students even after they complete an intensive skills-based English

Foundation Programme (FP). The areas where majority of students at the UG level really struggle in are writing, reading and, to some extent, speaking skills. A number of weaknesses of students in all these areas have been reported above in the *result section.* Listening skills are not considered as a challenge for students; perhaps this is due the fact that listening is not the part of assessments at UG level. The students as well as the lecturers consider writing and reading as the most difficult skills for students to master and speaking as an average skill in terms of its level of difficulty for them. In the light of the results of this study, FP should focus more upon developing students' lexical competency and enhancing students' exposure to English language. Students have to read extensively in order to familiarize themselves with more and more words, which would ultimately help them in their writing skills. Students also should practise speaking English with their peers outside the classroom. For this to happen, lecturers should create the environment which embeds learner in the new academic culture.

Possible Factors behind Students' Weaknesses and Solutions

This section discusses the findings with respect to research question 2, i.e., the possible factors behind students' English language and study skills weaknesses along with the discussion on how these weaknesses can effectively be alleviated, i.e., research question 3. Since the English language and study skills weaknesses discussed above (see *results* above) continue facing the UG students after they complete English Foundation Programme (FP), both UG and Foundation lecturers quite often express their worry and wonder what causes these weaknesses. Thus, to reiterate, the major purpose of this exploratory research was to investigate the factors that cause these weaknesses and consequently hinder to narrow down gaps in English language and study skills between Foundation and UG programmes (Research Question 2). The findings of this study with regard to the underlying factors causing these weaknesses seem to differ in many respects, though agreeing with some details, from the findings offered by the previous research on similar topics. The past research, as mentioned in the Literature Review section, attributed students' weaknesses to various factors such as "the influence of inappropriate teaching practices, e.g. methods of teaching, text books, testing systems, etc." (Amer & Khouzam, 1993, p. 975), "a lack of fundamental standards in curriculum design, testing and oral communication skills, inadequate teaching/learning strategies, etc." (Mukattash, 1983; Suleiman, 1983; Zughoul, 1983, 1987, cited in Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 185). The subjects of this study did not seem to relate students' difficulties in English language to inappropriate teaching methodologies,

ineffective curriculum and less productive testing system, though they agreed that these need to be continuously reflected upon, modified and improved in order to cater for the needs of students as well as those of the FP. The study found a shift of emphasis from these on factors like inefficiency of skills being transferred, integrated in and emphasized across the modules/programmes, extremely limited availability of time, students' lack of self-reliance and some other factors related to college's academic system. In order to discuss in detail, the factors have been categorized in three main areas. (The figure below shows the areas and the factors categorized in each area).

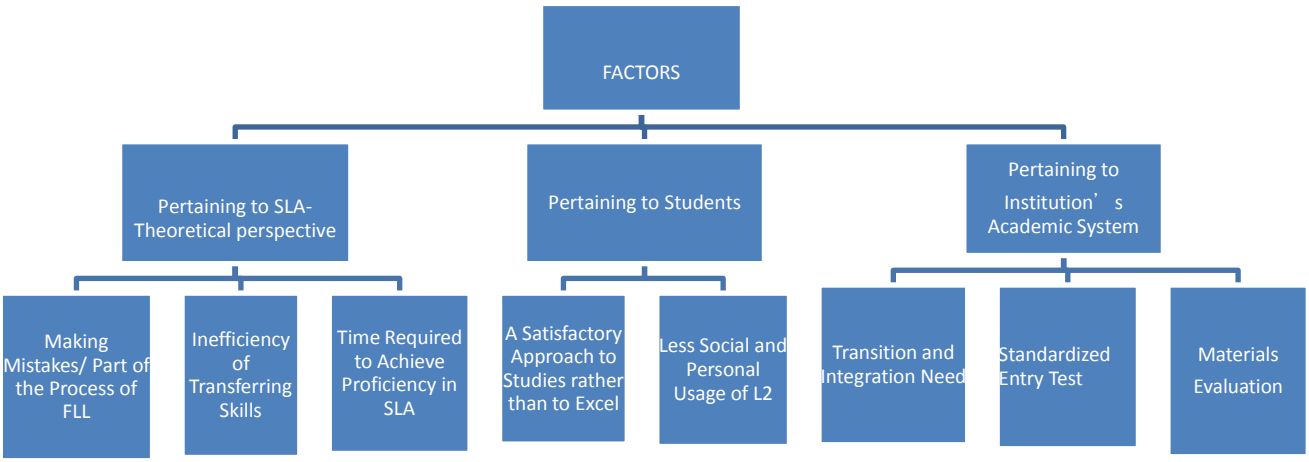

Fig: 4

Factors Associated with Second Language Acquisition (SLA):

The discussion on these factors, in the light of a brief theoretical perspective of the process of SLA, past literature and the findings of this study, will enhance our understanding why students repeatedly make mistakes and are considered to be less proficient in English to succeed in higher education.

Making Mistakes; a Part of the Process of Foreign Language Learning (FLL)

Making mistakes or committing errors (used in the same sense here) is an inevitable and integral part of the process of developing understanding with the structure of a foreign language. Some errors, as mentioned above (see Literature Review section), reflect learners' efforts to make the task of learning and using the target language simpler (Ellis, 1997). An example of such simplification or over generalization is the use of past suffix '-ed' for all verbs, e.g., *go**ed*** on the analogy of *work**ed***. The subjects of this study reported a number of errors related to various aspects of SLA such as pronunciation, spellings, prepositions, sentence structure, subject-verb agreement, use of noun and pronoun together as subjects in a sentence, etc.

An obvious pronunciation error reported was the mispronunciation of ***/p/*** sound as **/b/** and of ***/g/*** sound as **/** dʒ**/**, e.g. students say ***b**ublic* for ***p**ublic*, ***b**rivate* for ***p**rivate,* dʒ *ive* for ***g**i*ve, etc. Such errors are caused by the interference of the learners' first language (*interlingual error*) Erdoğan, 2005, p. 265) as some sounds (e.g. /p/ and /g/) do not exist in Arabic language, which cause the students to mispronounce these sounds. Examples of some other errors lecturers pointed out were: *"He **is knows** me", "**Students they** are making noise", He made me **to** cry", etc.* These errors result from "faulty or partial learning of the target language and are caused by the influence of one target language item upon another (*Intralingual errors*)" (Erdoğan, 2005, p. 266). These are also called "*developmental errors* because they occur as a result of learners' attempt to develop concepts and hypotheses about the target language from their limited experience with it" (Erdoğan, 2005, p. 266). It shows that UG students are still undergoing a developmental process and they have not completed the process of Foreign Language Learning yet. Though they have completed Foundation Certificate but it does not mean that the process of FLL has come to an end. This is a continuous process which goes on for an extended period of time. Hence, expecting that UG students should be fully conversant in English language after obtaining Foundation Certificate with their extremely limited experience of the target language seems unrealistically high.

Inefficiency of Transferring Skills

Students' inability to transfer the language and study skills learned on the FP to their specializations on the UG programmes emerged as a highly significant factor that impedes bridging the gap between both the levels of studies. Students have been reported to often fail in *'transferring the learning'* to various aspects of their studies, that is to say that they lack "the ability to apply knowledge or procedures learned in one context (FP) to new contexts (UG studies)" (Mestre, 2002, p. 3). A highly experienced English lecturer elaborated this point very clearly (see *results* section).

This suggests that *transferring the learning* needs to be stressed not only across the modules or the semesters within FP but also across the modules of all the programmes in order to make the best use of students' learning on the FP. *Transferring of learning* occurs when the tasks share the same structure. In other words, as demonstrated by some classical studies of analogical transfer, "transfer of relevant knowledge from one situation to a second where the task is isomorphic (having a similar appearance), but the context changes, is not common" (Gick & Holyoak, 1980; Hayes & Simon, 1977; Reed, Dempster, & Ettinger, 1985; Reed, Ernst, & Banerji, 1974, cited in Mestre, 2002, p. 4). Only after getting hints indicating that two "situations are isomorphic are students able to transfer relevant knowledge" (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). It suggests that for new learning to proceed rapidly, UG lecturers need to activate students' prior knowledge of English language and study skills relevant to the new learning context.

Apart from some initial acquisition of knowledge and its timely activation, research suggests several factors that hamper transfer such as lack of attention to initial learning, rote learning, attempting to learn too many topics too quickly, etc. (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). The previous research studies concluded that skills must be developed to high levels of mastery if positive transfer is to occur (Knapp, 1979, p. 3) and "many failures to produce transfer have resulted from inadequate opportunities for students to learn effectively in the first place" (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). In order to ensure that learning takes place effectively, FP needs to reflect upon and attempt to provide more adequate opportunities to the students to enhance their level of mastery of skills. One possible strategy (as part of the answer to research Q3) could be re-evaluating the number of skills covered on the FP as "covering too many skills too quickly can hinder transfer" (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). A seasoned UG lecturer and a member of Quality Assurance Committee suggested excluding research skills such as citing in-text references, writing bibliography and questionnaire, etc. in a separate module called Basic Research Skills

(BRS) and stressed including more exercises to practice language skills. The participant was of the view that these research skills can be taken care of at UG level. Hence, this way the number of skills covered on the FP can be reduced and the lecturers can focus more on developing students' language skills to the level where transferring skills from one level to another becomes easier.

Time Required to Achieve Proficiency in SLA

Time appeared to be another key factor that impedes narrowing down the gaps in English language and study skills between both the levels of studies. As mentioned above in the literature review section, students "take 3 to 5 years to develop oral proficiency, and 4 to 7 years to develop academic English proficiency" (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000, p. 10). However, Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) expects a Foundation exit level equivalent to English proficiency band 5/5.5 IELTS (500/525 TOEFL) in just one year, where Omani students, as also mentioned above (see Literature Review section), already fall short of 3100 hours of receiving formal English language instructions to reach the level of proficiency needed for higher education (Nunan, Tyacke & Walton. 1987, cited in Al-Issa, 2006, p. 223). Thus, expecting that the FP will fill the gap in English language and study skills in just one year seems somewhat idealistic.

Factors Pertaining to Students:

Students, the center of the whole learning and teaching process, are vital in determining the success or failure of any teaching methodology, prescribed course, institution's academic system, etc. If students do not seem to be motivated to learn, are unwilling to take the responsibility for their own learning and exhibit an indifferent behavior towards their learning, there is a limit that any teaching methodology, a course and an institution can do. The study finds a number of factors pertaining to students that impede to bridge the gap in English proficiency level of students and the linguistic demands of higher education.

Lack of Self-drive to excel in Academic Areas

The study finds lecturer's serious concern over a majority of students' unwillingness to take the responsibility for their own leaning, their indifferent attitude towards studies and lack of motivation which are also considered as fundamental factors causing students' low performance.

As some students tend to rely more on surface learning, they are more likely to commit, repeat and stick to the same mistakes in their academic career. Another reason for not excelling in their studies appeared to be "*lack of academic culture awareness"* i.e., the students are not used to or fully acquaint with a highly competitive learning environment where they put all their efforts together to excel. A number of measures need to be taken in order to cater for what a lecturer called *"psychological needs"* of students along with their academic needs.

One way to alleviate gaps in students' English language and study skills (Research Q3) could be more acknowledgment and appreciation of students' academic excellence both at the institutional and societal levels. Institution-wise, as stated by an experienced business lecturer mentioned above (see interview and focus group results section), *"we do not put a premium on academic excellence; the way we acknowledge it…I don't think we do it extremely well".* A more functional approach to college's policy towards awarding high achievers could be very effective in motivating and encouraging students to excel in their studies rather than to feel satisfied with their bare pass. A number of steps could be followed in this respect; for instance, awarding the high performers medals and certificates in front of other students and their parents including "Gold Medals" for exceptionally high achievers, announcing full or partial scholarships for them, giving them opportunities to represent the college in various seminars and conferences organized by students' and government organizations across the country, etc. In addition, their names should be published in national newspapers and magazines to have a broader scope of appreciation in the society. These steps will certainly create a competitive environment which leads to more learning-conducive environment, demanding students' full efforts to excel rather than to feel satisfied with a bare pass.

Less Social and Personal Usage of English

Another area where students put in minimal effort to excel is the usage of English language outside the classroom boundaries. They tend to speak Arabic with their peers both inside and outside the classroom which extremely restricts their exposure or usage of English. The lecturers related this phenomenon to the strong L1 culture of Arabic speaking students. They expressed that Arabic (L1) is very well-rooted and accepted both socially and professionally. So, a greater part of students' community does not see any premium and social status involved in learning to speak English. Thus, both English language and content lecturers need to search for

opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, to enhance students' exposure to the English language.

Factors Pertaining to Institution's Academic System:

Students' interaction with the institution's academic systems has a significant impact on college studies (Pascarella, 1985, p. 640, cited in Al-Husseini, 2006, p. 38). The discussion on factors pertaining to Majan's academic system will help diagnose the areas of improvement in the existing system to effectively alleviate weaknesses in students' language and study skills (Research Question 3).

Transition and Integration Needs

As Foundation Progamme is a transitory stage for EFL learners to integrate into higher education, the college attempts to cater for the *integration needs* of the students who exit FP by providing them various English language modules on the degree programmes. Hence, the UG lecturers, as discussed previously, are expected to build further on students' language and study skills by activating their prior knowledge gained on the FP. The study suggests arranging workshops for the UG lecturers to search for more concrete and practical methods to integrate English into subject-specific teaching (for details see language teaching methodologies like CBI (Content Based Instruction) and CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)). However, the participants felt that FP should devise, as Al-Husseini (2006, p. 35) recommended, some more "effective strategies to ensure a smooth transition of high school leavers from their previous learning context and integration into the new learning experience on the FP". This also appears in their argument, as a lecturer expressed (see interview and focus group results section) that "*the standards of FP are pretty high and a good number of students appear to struggle in meeting the programme's expectations"*. This situation becomes more challenging for adults studying as part-time students and for those sponsored by various ministries, especially as they have been away from academic studies for a long time. Consequently, the number of re-sit and retake students remain high in spite of the best efforts of the lecturers as they lack even the basics of English language. Though the programme provides support classes for weaker students, the subjects emphasized to have more structured support classes with separate and clear learning outcomes. This could be achieved by providing such students a preliminary or zero semester to help them learn the basic vocabulary, essential grammar and some basic

language skills prior to the start of their FP and hence, to effectively cope with students' language and study skills weaknesses.

In order to have smooth transition of students from high school and successful integration into higher education , students' academic needs should be thoroughly analyzed and changes should be made in order to cater for their needs as well as the programmes' requirements. This could be achieved by having a separate "Curriculum Development Unit" in each faculty comprising highly experienced and learned staff members who keep the existing syllabus updated along with the growing demands of both the students as well as the market.

Standardized Entry Test

Past research in the Gulf region and a general perception of university lecturers in the context of this study show that students perform poorly in their specializations due to their weak English language skills. The participants proposed a standardized English language entry test like IELTS or TOEFL for all students including those who exit from FP to be administered across the country prior to entering the UG studies. In order to achieve more effective results and to get more proficient intake of students in English language on the UG programmes, the test should be prepared, monitored and marked anonymously by the Ministry of Higher Education to ensure standard and consistency across the country. This will serve as an extrinsic motivator for all the students to work hard in order to succeed.

Materials Evaluation

The course books and the supplementary materials lecturers use on all the programs appeared to be another factor which needs more careful consideration. The books used on the UG programmes are said to be meant for those whose mother tongue is English, which sometimes pose a great challenge for students to comprehend the context and fully grasp the concept as well. So, it is not just the language that causes students to perform unsatisfactorily at the UG level but also the subject-contents and the context in which they are written cause their poor performance. A senior UG lecturer proposed that the course books used on the UG programmes need to be more contextualized for local learners. Considering the gravity of the issue, he stressed that this needs to be addressed at a much higher level, i.e., at the level of Ministry of HE or GCC level.

Similarly, the study suggests having a thorough analysis of students' needs on the FP and reevaluating the course books accordingly. It is further recommendable to seek assistance of expert material writers in the field of Second Language Acquisition as one of the participants expressed that *"we do our best to select the material but still we are not professional material writers".* In the light of this discussion, it seems logical to recommend having a "Curriculum Development Unit" in each faculty which should continuously re-evaluate the existing curriculum and incorporate new material into the syllabus based on the needs of both the students and those of the market. This idea can further be extended to suggest having a more comprehensive and standard English language curriculum which should be designed by experts and implemented consistently on all the FPs across the country.

Conclusions:

The findings of this study seem to strengthen and reinforce a general impression reported in the previous research studies that a majority of students in the Arab countries appear to be struggling in language and study skills required to meet the demands of higher education. This suggests a persistent nature of the problem which needs further investigation from different perspectives and in different contexts. However, unlike previous research studies, this study found a shift of emphasis from traditionally being considered as the root cause of this problems such as inapt teaching methodologies, ineffective curriculum and less productive assessment structure. On the other hand, more emphasis was placed upon factors like students' inefficiency of skills being transferred, integrated in and emphasized across the modules/programmes, time constraints, students' satisfactory approach to studies rather than to excel, etc. as the main hurdles in bridging the existing proficiency gap. The study found a number of weaknesses in students' English language and study skills even after they successfully exit the FP. Writing and reading along with various sub-skills emerged as the most problematic areas for UG students, though speaking skills competency also remained under question. The underlying reasons reported of students' weaknesses in these skills are "*lack of vocabulary and lack of exposure to English language".* These are the areas which need to be further targeted, focused and stressed upon across the modules/programmes. The study found and discussed numerous factors that cause these weaknesses under the headings of three main categories: factors pertaining to (1) SLA (2) students and (3) institution's academic system. The study concludes that the time students spend on the FP needs to be increased to bridge or at least further narrow down the gap

between both levels of studies. Due to time constraints on the FP, the programme struggles to develop students' skills to the level where smooth transfer of learning can occur to the next level of their studies. However, within these constraints, the FP should include exercises which foster transferring of skills and UG lecturers should further build on them by activating students' prior knowledge of English language and study skills.

Apart from time constraint, some students' satisfactory and in some cases rather indifferent approach towards learning, their indisposition to take the responsibility for their own development and lack of drive to excel emerged as the fundamental factors causing students' low performance. These factors have more to do with students' *psychological* rather than their *academic* needs. The college should take more measures by acknowledging and appreciating those who show outstanding performance in any of their areas of studies and hence by setting up examples for low achievers. In addition to this, FP should also enhance new entrants' involvement in the new learning environment (Wilson, 1992, cited in Al Husseini, 2006, p. 47) by ensuring transition (Hill, 1995, cited in Al Husseini, 2006, p. 47) and managing integration (Pascarella, 1985, cited in Al Husseini, 2006, p. 47).

The findings of this study are equally applicable to similar EFL contexts; especially the Arabic speaking countries which run FP(s) to equip their students to better cope with the demands of English language and study skills in higher education. Hopefully, the study will help specialists in such comparable EFL contexts, programme managers and quality assurance co-ordinators to get some insight in order to bridge the gaps in English language and study skills between Foundation and Undergraduate programmes.

Recommendations:

Given that the meager development of English language and study skills casts a deteriorating effect on students' subsequent levels of studies in higher education, it is important that both the English language and the content lecturers in all the faculties should co-ordinate more closely with each other in order to effectively address the issue. Based on the findings of this study, following recommendations can be made.

1. The English language modules on both the Foundation and the UG programmes should stress on including more vocabulary tasks to develop students' lexical competency and enhancing students' exposure to English language by encouraging them to speak English both within and outside the classroom.

2. In addition to what has been said in earlier studies in similar EFL contexts, the study found that students fail to transfer the skills they learn on the FP, the FP should include exercises which foster transfer of learning from one context to another similar context and the content lecturers on the UG programmes should not only be aware of the skills taught on the FP but also be able to activate students' knowledge of these skills when required. This means to have more effective communication and exchange of ideas regarding students' difficulties on regular basis among content and English language lecturers.
3. Research suggests that attempting to learn too many topics too quickly hampers transferring of learning (Mestre, 2002, p. 4). Applying this to an EFL context, this study adds and recommends re-evaluating the number of skills covered on the FP and stressing and practising more the key language skills needed in higher education.
4. The participants recommended excluding Basic Research Skills (BRS) module on the FP as it, though called basic, requires high level of research skills which is above the level of foundation students. This recommendation, though context-specific (Majan College), could add to the body of literature in the region where FPs attempt to teach research skills at a very early stage of language learning. The staff viewed that some other modules like English Language Study and Academic Skills (ELSAS) and Academic Writing (AW) still introduce basic research skills which do not need to be taught in a separate module, especially at a very early stage of language learning. Some UG lecturers expressed that they can take care of these skills on the UG programmes. The exclusion of BRS will give the FP more space to further focus on language skills.
5. Time appeared to be one of the major factors that impedes enhancing students' linguistic competency, the subjects unanimously agreed to find ways to increase the span of time available for the FP. In addition to what has been said in earlier studies, this study recommends that Oman Accreditation Council (OAC) should reconsider its expectation of foundation exit level equivalent to English proficiency band 5/5.5 IELTS (500/525 TOEFL) in just one year.
6. In order to integrate the secondary school leavers into higher education (i.e., FP) more effectively, the support classes for weaker students should be more structured with separate and clear learning outcomes. This could be achieved by administering a more valid and reliable placement test and sorting out the weaker students into separate

groups. These groups should be offered a preliminary semester focusing on basic vocabulary, spellings, initial grammar and basic language skills prior to entering the FP.

7. In addition to earlier studies in the region, completing a Foundation Certificate should not be considered an end of the process of foreign language learning. It is a continuous process which should be further built upon by the UG lecturers by triggering out students' prior knowledge of English language and study skills learned on the FP. This could be achieved by arranging workshops for UG lecturers and training them how to teach English language along with teaching the contents of their subjects/modules. Content Based Instructions (CBI) and Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) methods of language teaching could be useful tools in this regard.
8. In order to reduce the intensity of the challenge faced by UG lecturers, this study presents an idea (which has probably not been presented formally) in the country that a standardized English language entry test like IELTS or TOEFL should be made compulsory for all the entrants into UG courses including those who pass FP from Majan College. This could be more effective if it is conducted by the Ministry of Higher Education as it will ensure standard and consistency across the country.
9. As it is not just the language that causes some students' unsatisfactory performance at the UG level but also is the subject-contents and the context in which they are written, the study recommends contributing to the body of knowledge in the region that material used on the UG level needs to be contextualized for local learners. A more result-oriented approach to do so could be to constitute a "Curriculum Development Unit" in each faculty and to arrange workshops for the staff on developing and updating the existing material in order to meet the needs of both the students as well as the market.
10. Students' psychological along with the academic needs should be further taken care of. Their good performance should be acknowledged more openly and formally by giving them different awards, medals, certificates, scholarships, etc.

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Appendix: 1

Interview Questions for UG Lecturers

1. How long have you been teaching at Majan College (University College) and how do you feel about your experience of teaching Omani students?
2. What would you say about the level of English language proficiency of Omani students?
3. Do you feel students are not proficient enough in English to perform well in their respective fields? Please elaborate.
4. Which areas of weaknesses do you find in students after they complete their foundation programme in terms of language and study skills? Please explain with specific examples.
5. What do you find as a major English language and study skill weakness in your students at undergraduate level?
6. What would you consider as the most important factor that contributes or is a direct cause of this weakness?
7. Please point out what other weaknesses (both language and study skills) do you come across while teaching undergraduate students?
8. Please comment on the possible factors underlying these weaknesses.
9. How did you find students in learning other subjects of their respective fields (IT, Business, etc)? Are they the same kind of learners in learning other subjects as they are in learning English Language? If not, how are they different?
10. What major weaknesses have you found in students' writing skill and what could be their possible reasons?
11. What mistakes have you observed in students' communication/speaking skills? Please explain the reasons.
12. Do you think students' reading comprehension skills are good enough to meet the needs of undergraduate studies after foundation? If not, what are their weaknesses?
13. What would you suggest us to successfully cope with these challenges on the foundation programme?

Appendix: 2

Questionnaire

Objective

The purpose of this questionnaire is to carry out a research project that aims to find out students' weaknesses in English language and study skills after they complete the Foundation Programme and the possible reasons behind them. Your participation in this study is voluntary (not compulsory) and you are ensured that the information collected from you will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation will be highly appreciated. This project has been reviewed and approved by the College Research Committee.

Instructions

Read the statements below and write a letter (A, B, C, D, E) in the box given in front of each statement selecting from the given scale which ranges from A= Strongly Agree to E= Strongly Disagree.

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree-Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Scale

Q. No.	Statements	A	B	C	D	E
1	When I completed the Foundation Programme, I felt confident to start my studies at undergraduate level.					

2	At present, I still face problems studying at undergraduate level due to my English language and study skills weaknesses.					
	Part 1: Reading					
3	Reading in English is the most difficult skill for me at undergraduate level.					
4	I can easily understand the main idea of a text.					
5	I find it difficult to differentiate important information from minor details in a text.					
6	I have problems in understanding a text at undergraduate level because the concepts discussed are difficult.					
7	I try to understand the meaning of every word while reading a text in English.					
8	I find it difficult to connect ideas while reading a text.					
9	In exams, I have problems in understanding questions.					
10	I like to read a lot in Arabic.					
11	I read text books only to complete my assignments.					
	Part 2: Writing					
12	Writing in English is the most difficult skill for me to learn.					
13	I had a lot of writing practice on the Foundation Programme.					
14	I can express my ideas in writing effectively.					
15	Writing the correct spellings of words is very difficult for me.					
16	I am afraid to answer the questions that require a lot of writing in the exam.					
17	Most of the time I know the answer but I don't have enough words to write it in English.					
18	When I write a paragraph in English, I make many grammar mistakes.					
19	I have many ideas but I find it difficult to organize them in paragraphs.					
20	I understand when to use capital letters in single sentences but forget to use them appropriately while writing paragraphs.					

21	When I write, I always get confused in using punctuation marks (. , ? ; etc.) correctly.					
	Part 3: Listening and Speaking					
22	I can speak English fluently.					
23	I can communicate my ideas but I cannot speak complete sentences.					
24	I speak English with my friends outside the classroom.					
25	I get nervous and confused when I speak English in front of others.					
26	I feel shy to speak because my pronunciation is not good.					
27	I always do a lot of listening practice outside the classroom (by listening to English news channels, watching English movies, etc.).					
	Part 4: Assessment and Feedback					
28	Exams on the Foundation Programme were very challenging.					
29	I get nervous in the exam to the extent that I forget most of what I study.					
30	Whenever I submitted homework, I always got detailed feedback from the Foundation lecturers on my language mistakes.					
	Part 5: Other Factors					
31	I always feel doubtful about my ability to succeed.					
32	I just wanted to pass the Foundation Certificate rather than to improve my English language skills because it was a requirement to study on the degree programmes.					
33	I will be more motivated to learn if my lecturers praise my correct answer to a question in the class.					
34	I don't feel the need to recall the skills I learned after I pass the module.					
35	I often forget the skills learned in one module to use them in another module.					
36	I think I do not need to excel (do extremely well) in my studies as I still can get a job if I **just** pass.					

Part 6: Optional (Please use extra sheets if needed)

1. What are your **weaknesses** in English language and study skills? Please describe.

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2. What are the **reasons** of your **weaknesses** in English language and study skills? Please describe.

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3. How can we help you better to improve your English language and study skills? Please give suggestions

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Appendix: 3

Focus Group Guide

1. Lecturers on the undergraduate programmes complain that students pass Foundation Certificate with poor language skills. How would you respond to their complaints?
2. Undergraduate students' responses to the questionnaire show that they struggle with writing and reading skills the most. How would you respond to students' concerns regarding these skills?

3. Which areas of English language and study skills do you think students struggle the most with? When they are studying foundation courses? Please discuss the individual skills one by one in detail (writing, reading, speaking, listening, etc.).
4. What do you think are the main reasons of students' weaknesses in these areas? Please discuss the factors causing these weaknesses in detail.
5. What would you suggest that the Foundation Programme should do in order to address these issues and hence to bridge the gap between both the levels of studies?

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Learning about English as an International Language in Australia from three students' perspectives

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Bio Data:

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Abstract:

The pluralisation of the English language as a result of its global expansion has led many scholars to emphasise the importance of incorporating different varieties of English in today's English language teaching syllabus. Despite the extensive promotion of the importance and beneficial outcomes of learning English as an International Language (EIL) in today's globalised world, it is still unknown if students, especially those who have learnt or are still learning EIL, also perceive and experience the relevance as well as benefits of learning about EIL proposed by scholars from the field. This case study of 3 undergraduate international students from an EIL program at a university in Australia reveals that these students have to some extent benefited from learning about EIL and at the same time experience challenges in implementing those benefits outside classrooms. This study offers EIL educators and scholars modest suggestions for designing syllabus materials for teaching EIL.

Keywords: world Englishes, English as an international language, different varieties of English, syllabus.

Introduction:

The colonial and postcolonial spread of English in the world has, to a large extent, shifted the paradigm in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) over the past several decades. As extensively discussed in the literature, this shift has been driven by the following outcomes of the global expansion and internationalisation of English.

First, The birth of different varieties of English (often collectively called world Englishes - WE), which Kachru (1986) divided into three concentric circles– Inner Circle (English spoken as a mother tongue), Outer Circle (English spoken as an institutionalised language in conjunction with other languages), and Expanding Circle (English used as a foreign language). Thanks to globalisation, these Englishes have travelled across borders, settled in other 'circles', and at the same time enriched the sociolinguistic landscape of English in other circles (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008).

Second, English is now predominantly spoken and used between multilingual or bilingual speakers of English whose numbers have exceeded the numbers of speakers of Inner Circle Englishes.

Third, English is one of the languages used by today's global citizens for international communication and intranational communication within multilingual societies. As the language for intranational communication, "English becomes embedded in the culture of the country in which it is used" (Mckay, 2002, p.12) and is a vehicle for communicating one's culture, pragmatic norms, worldviews, and socio-cultural realities.

English teachers and teacher-educators have been encouraged to re-assess their teaching methodology, syllabus materials, and assessment strategies in light of the above developments (Baik & Shim, 2002; Brown, 1993, 1995; 2005; Canagarajah, 2006; 2007; Hino, 2009; Jenkins, 2003; Kubota, 2001a, 2001b; Marlina, 2010; Marlina & Giri, 2009; Matsuda, 2002, 2005, 2009; McKay, 2002, 2003; McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008l; Smith, 1983). Many programs, devoted to the teaching and learning of WE and/or English as an International Language (EIL), have been established in various parts of the world (see Baumgardner, 2006), which signals the commitment of educators in different parts of the world to change their students' perceptions of English and to prepare them for "bathing in the sea of linguistic variety" (Crystal, 1999, p.19). However, students' perspectives on the benefits of learning about EIL have not received much attention (Brown, 2012). As Bamgbose (2001) states, "far too often we publish for the attention of our colleagues and to advance knowledge" (p.361)

but “we overlook the treasure in our very own backyards: our students” (Soo Hoo, 1993, p.390).

In response to this, I conducted a case study on the benefits and challenges of learning about EIL from the perspectives of three students who had completed one year of study in the EIL program at a university in Australia. Based on this case study, I offer several modest suggestions for designing syllabus materials for teaching EIL.

Literature:

World Englishes/English as an International Language

The concepts of WE and EIL have been much cited in the literature and have been interpreted differently as paradigms or perspectives, approaches to the description and analysis of English, as the roles and functions of English, and even in terms of linguistic variety. This study, however, views ‘EIL’ as a paradigm, or as Sharifian (2009) puts it, “a paradigm for thinking, research, and practice” (p. 2).

It is sometimes mistakenly assumed as a paradigm for the teaching and learning of a variety called ‘International English’ due to the function and use of English in international context. The EIL paradigm does recognise the status of English as an international language and its predominant usage in many international arenas. However, it rejects the idea of choosing a single variety of English as the medium for international communication and as the target model or benchmark for teaching and learning English. “The use of an adjective plus ‘English’ often suggests a particular variety (e.g. Australian English or Singaporean English) and ‘International English’ can suggest a particular variety of English...being selected as a lingua franca for international communication” (Sharifian, 2009, p.2), which is not in line with the paradigm. The paradigm emphasises that “English, with its many varieties, is a language of international, and therefore intercultural communication” (Sharifian, *ibid*) and that different varieties of English are intersecting and are being negotiated by the speakers in international communicative encounters.

In addition, the EIL paradigm recognises and acknowledges the relevance of Kachruvian World Englishes, to teaching, learning, and thinking about English today (Matsuda, 2002; Sharifian, 2009). However, as the notion of WE is also interpreted differently, it needs to be made clear which interpretation the EIL paradigm recognises. WE, as varieties of English, is sometimes used to refer only to the Englishes in Outer Circle countries where English arrived

as a colonial language and later became established as an additional language (Bolton, 2004, 2005). As a paradigm that promotes English as a heterogeneous language, the EIL paradigm recognises all varieties of English at national, regional, social, and individual levels in all circles as equal. Informed by this paradigm, what should then be included in a syllabus for learning EIL/WE?

Principles of EIL materials development

There has been a wealth of studies that discuss in detail what should be included in a syllabus for teaching EIL/WE (Baik & Shim, 2002; Brown, 1995; 2005; Briguglio, 2007; Crystal, 1999; Marlina & Ahn, 2011; Marlina & Giri, 2009; Marlina, 2010; Matsuda, 2002, 2005, 2012; McKay, 2012). Generally, the syllabi for teaching EIL will need to equip students with important knowledge, attitudes, and skills to use English in today's borderless world or postmodern globalisation era in which the "communicative situations are often unknown and therefore characterised by variation in linguistic and cultural behaviour" (Xu, 2002, p.231). Specifically, drawing from a number of works by researchers and scholars in the field (Marlina & Ahn, 2011; Marlina & Giri, 2009; McKay, 2012; Matsuda, 2002, 2005, 2012), EIL teaching materials need to be informed by the following principles:

1. The materials should be relevant to the use of English in the contexts in which it is taught.
2. Examples of different varieties of world Englishes should be present.
3. Cultures and users of English from Outer and Expanding Circle countries should be more prominently represented.
4. The discourses of cultures and users of English from Outer and Expanding Circle countries should be presented in a non-ethnocentric manner.

The proposed benefits and challenges of learning EIL materials

Developing EIL materials based on the above principles results in a variety of benefits. Many scholars and researchers such as (Briguglio, 2006, 2007; Brown, 2005; Canagarajah, 2007; Crystal, 1999; Kubota, 2001a, 2001b; Li, 2007; Matsuda, 2002, 2005, 2009; McKay, 2002, 2003; Shim, 2002; Shin, 2004, Suzuki, 2010) have proposed the beneficial roles of these syllabus materials in guiding students to develop necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes for responding to the linguistic demands that the changing sociolinguistic landscape of English has brought as well as to the communicative situations that the postmodern

globalisation era has created. The knowledge and awareness of different varieties of English that students gain from learning the syllabus materials are likely to encourage them to (1) develop international understanding and the ability to communicate across cultures (Briguglio, 2005; Canagarajah, 2007; Matsuda, 2002; Sharifian, 2009); (2) appreciate and legitimately recognise different varieties of English (Li, 2007; Shim, 2002); (3) develop critical views towards practices that marginalise speakers of English from Outer and Expanding Circle countries (Shin, 2004); and (4) foster confidence in their own use of English or establish a sense of ownership of the English they speak (Shin, 2004; Briguglio, 2006).

However, while scholars have proposed these various outcomes as the benefits of learning an EIL syllabus, it is not clear whether the key consumers (the students) would share the same view. Some empirical studies, for instance, that there is a mismatch between the above proposed benefits of learning EIL syllabus and what happens at the practical level (Briguglio, 2006; Kubota, 2001b; Suzuki, 2010). For example, Briguglio (2006) and Kubota's (2001b) study showed that even after a number of lessons on World Englishes/EIL, some participants expressed appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity but others still displayed a parochial outlook, ethnocentric/xenophobic attitudes, and negative perceptions towards linguistic and cultural diversity and speakers of world Englishes. A similar case was also found in the study by Suzuki (2010) whose teacher-participants showed awareness of different varieties of English, but still held a strong belief in the superiority of and the teaching of standard variety of American English and British English, despite their exposure to one semester syllabus on varieties of English. Thus, Kubota (2001b) questions whether students can learn to challenge their ethnocentric perceptions even if the "educational interventions were implemented under optimal pedagogical conditions" (p.61). However, although Briguglio's (2006) study also produces similar results, she still believes that "much more could be achieved if the intervention were more sustained and over a longer period of time, maybe in a form of a semester unit or in the course of a degree" (p.7). In other words, students who study more about EIL are less likely to have those ethnocentric views compared to those who do not.

My critical reflections

Reflecting on the above discourse, I would like to highlight a number of limitations of such discourse. Firstly, findings such as those just discussed might trouble educators who are

committed to EIL. However, there did not seem to be attempts to further investigate why students still held such views or beliefs even after learning a syllabus that taught them about World Englishes/EIL. This is highly significant as it can inform EIL educators about what can be done to improve the syllabus. Secondly, the researchers seem to have overlooked the nature of the teaching and learning of linguistic/cultural diversity. The use of the word 'interventions' and the mindset behind Briguglio's (2006) suggestion seem to imply a perception of educating students about linguistic/cultural diversity as similar to giving medical injections to cure an illness. Students seem to be expected to completely recover from their 'illness' (ethnocentric and native-speakerist perceptions/beliefs) after having been given a number of, or more, 'EIL injections'. By stating this, I do not imply that I am supportive of students holding ethnocentric/native-speakerist views and that I do not see any use or benefits of teaching EIL syllabus. Rather, I argue that tensions and resistance are naturally experienced by students when they are learning in "an ideological environment" (Bakhtin & Medvedev, 1978, p.14), like an EIL/WE class in which their previous understanding/discourses of the English language may be in conflict with the EIL paradigm, or as Kubota (2012) termed, an anti-normative paradigm. Even though students are aware of the new perspective and of the importance of understanding it, embracing and internalising this new perspective is time-consuming (Clyne & Sharifian, 2008). They would still have something that may hold them back and with which they are still grappling, which is still under-researched. From the field of multicultural education, Sonia Nieto (1999, 2004, 2010), proposes that educators need to explore the roles of the sociopolitical context – the social, economic, and political forces operating within a society and schools in which students learn and live – in influencing student's perceptions of what they are learning. Specifically, educators may need to recognise the presence of structural inequality and the relative respect or disrespect accorded to particular cultures, languages, and dialects in their students' socio-political contexts and how this can influence their views of what they learn in the syllabus.

In the light of the above literature, the present small-scale aims to address the following research questions:

1. After having been introduced to EIL, do Expanding Circle Countries (ECC) students studying EIL in Australia experience any benefits of learning the syllabus? If so, in what ways?

2. Do ECC students studying EIL in Australia experience any challenges in implementing their knowledge of EIL? Does the sociopolitical context in which students live and study play a role in creating these challenges?

Methodology

As a case study research that explores a particular contemporary case within a bounded system or its real life context (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009), this study investigates the students perceived benefits and challenges of learning the EIL syllabus offered by a recently revamped tertiary EIL program at a university in Australia. The following provides brief descriptions of the program and syllabi that the participants of this study had completed.

The undergraduate program of EIL: EIL A and EIL B

The undergraduate EIL program offered by the faculty of Arts in an Australian university is an academic content-program that teaches about EIL and adopts the EIL paradigm to teach International/Intercultural Communication. By teaching about EIL, the program provides students with knowledge about different varieties of English, guides them to learn to appreciate and legitimately recognise those varieties, and equips them with the ability to communicate across Englishes and cultures. The program is attended by students from diverse lingua-cultural backgrounds and from diverse fields of study. EIL A and B are first-year subjects which teach students about the diversification of English and its implications for communication in the 21st century. Despite this commonality, each has its own focus and is designed on the basis of the principles of EIL syllabi development discussed in the literature above.

EIL A (English Language, Society, and Communication) provides students with basic understanding of the 'natural' process of English language variation (a view of language as a dialect with an army and navy). Students are introduced to the sociolinguistic concept of language variation, factors contributing to the diversification of the English language, and sociolinguistic discussions on the problematisation of ‘accent’, ‘Standard-English’, and ‘native/non-native’. As a learning resource, students are given a reader which is a collection of selected chapters and journal articles written by sociolinguistics and World Englishes scholars who write to instill in the readers the view of differences in English as “sociolinguistically normal, necessary, and intrinsic to language varieties” (Tollefson, 2007,

p.30). (Please refer to the list of topics and the reading list in the Appendix 1). Upon completion of this subject, students are expected to have achieved the following outcomes:

1. Demonstrate a high level of awareness and understanding of the differences in how people communicate in English;
2. Explain factors behind those differences in how people communicate in English;
3. Reflect critically on their own experiences of using English in intra/international and intra/intercultural contexts and unpack any misconceptions or pre-conceived assumptions about communication in English

In terms of teaching and assessment, students' experiences of using, learning, and teaching English are considered as invaluable learning resources in these subjects and are often used as stepping stone for further discussions. Not only are students simply sharing their experiences, but they also need to critically reflect on and evaluate their experiences in the light of the concepts covered in this subject. Students are required to engage in critical reflections and evaluations in all of the assessment tasks for this subject (Critical Journal Entry, Position Paper, Oral Presentations, and Test)

Extending the focus of EIL A, EIL B (International Communication), as the name suggests, invites students to explore what it means to communicate internationally in the light of the changing sociolinguistic landscape of English discussed in EIL A. Students are introduced to the concept of 'English as an International Language/World Englishes' and 'Interaction as Cooperation' (Kachru & Smith, 2008), and what these concepts suggest about the use of English for communication in international contexts. As English today is a reflection of diverse socio-cultural values and realities, students are guided to learn how to negotiate across diverse cultures and Englishes in both speaking and writing. After having exposed students to differences in using and communicating in English, students are provided with different models of communication in English suggested by scholars in the field and invited to critically discuss each model of communication and make a judgment as to which model is appropriate for their own contexts. Similar to EIL A, students doing EIL B are also given a collection of works written by scholars in the field. However, most of the readings for this subject are taken from a book by Kachru and Smith (2008) whose notion of 'Interaction as Cooperation' is the main theme of EIL B. (Please refer to the list of readings in the

Appendix 2). Therefore, upon completion of this subject, students are expected to have achieved the following outcomes:

1. Demonstrate a high level of critical understanding of the implications of the role of English as an international language for international communication;
2. Recognise and appreciate the diversity of cultural conventions and notions of politeness that speakers of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds bring to communication within international contexts;
3. Demonstrate a high level of understanding of the notion of 'interaction as cooperation' in international communication contexts and apply this understanding to their own contexts of communication.

The assessment requirements for this subject are similar to those for EIL A. Critical reflection and evaluations of students' language-learning, language-using, and language-teaching experiences must be shown in all of the required assessment tasks.

The participants

Three students enrolled in the undergraduate EIL program at a university in Australia volunteered to participate in this study – Cheolsoo (Daegu, South Korea), Manida (Vientiane, Laos), and Fitri (Jakarta, Indonesia; all names are pseudonyms). These students had been in Australia for a period of time ranging from three to eight years. Both Cheolsoo and Manida were students from the Faculty of Business and Economics who studied EIL as their electives. Fitri was a student from the Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines who specialised in Media Studies and chose to study EIL as her first-year sequence. They all had completed *EIL A: English Language, Society, and Communication* and *EIL B: International Communication*. Both subjects were structured as 180-minute-long seminars that met once a week for 12 weeks.

Techniques and Limitations

To explore students' perceptions, I conducted individual semi-structured interviews at the end of semester and two follow-up interviews few weeks after each (Please refer to Appendix 3 for the interview questions). This technique was chosen because it allows researchers to listen to participants' stories or voices about the contexts and/or settings in which they operate and

to obtain a complex detailed understanding of the benefits and challenges of learning about EIL through the participants' stories (Creswell, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2004). As I was one of their lecturers in the program, I conducted the interviews only at the end of the semester to avoid perceptions of coercion. After transcribing and analysing the interviews, a copy of the transcript and my analyses were sent to each of the participants for checking the accuracy of the representation of their views and for enhancing the validity of the data. In the later sessions of the interviews, participants were asked to share their thoughts about the representation of their views and to clarify vague and ambiguous points found in the first interview session.

There are several limitations to this study which are important to be acknowledged. Firstly, the results cannot be generalised beyond the immediate context of this research as it is conducted in a one particular faculty, one particular program, one particular university in Australia, and with a small number of students. The experiences and perceptions of the participants are not necessarily representative of those from the same lingua-cultural backgrounds, university, faculty, and even program. In addition, the data collection took place at the end of the semester, which was during the university examination period. Thus, there were not enough participants who were interested and committed to participate in the study. Thirdly, even though the interviews were conducted after the end of the teaching semester, it cannot be guaranteed that the perceptions shared by the students were completely objective, impartial, and unbiased. However, attempts had already been made to reduce this during the data collection stage. Detailed information on the important issues researched in the study was also obtained.

Students' Voices:

This section presents an individual report of each of the participants' views on the benefits and challenges they had experienced during or after learning about EIL from the EIL A and B subjects. Each participant has their own unique experience/view and although there were some commonalities in their views, I have chosen to present the participants' views separately to retain the individuality of each view.

Case one – Cheolsoo

Reflecting on his reason for choosing to study EIL A, Cheolsoo reported that he initially expected these subjects to teach him an inner-circle variety of English ("*how to talk like Australians or maybe Americans*") and knowing this would be beneficial for "*improv*[ing] [his] *English because I have Korean accent*". However, having been informed about the fact that EIL A did not teach what he expected, Cheolsoo still completed the subject and continued studying EIL B. When asked for his reason, he claimed that knowledge of English language variation would more likely be relevant and beneficial for him as a resident of a multicultural Australia and a student of a multicultural university:

> *I find it fascinating and important to learn more about EIL especially the diversity of English cos...the diversity of cultures and ethnicity in Australia. It's so true that I have lecturers who do not necessarily speak Australian English, but they are from China, India, Sri Lanka, and Italy who speak their variety of English…but I know it's not an Australian English*

Conversations about his experiences of studying the syllabus further revealed the number of benefits that he believed he had experienced as a result of having learned about the pluralisation of English from EIL A and B. Firstly, he believed that his theoretical knowledge and awareness of the natural process of English language variation seemed to have provided him with a better and clearer understanding of the development of his English and the way he, as a Korean, used English. This understanding can be seen in his confident explanation and justification for using "*have you had a dinner*" rather than "*how are you going*" as his preferred form of greeting in English.

> *before I learnt EIL, I thought my English is not something that reflects my worldview...but the more I study, the more I realise that, growing up in Korea and Australia, I have confronted a lot of cultural issues and that would be reflected in my English…So, for example in greetings stuff, I would actually prefer to use have you had a dinner rather than how are you going? That's important because in Korea we have been through Korean war and Korean ancestors were poor and they rarely had nice meal, so Koreans usually do greetings. So, it's about caring about someone, one already had dinner or what they did…you know different from Australian's use of 'how you're going?' or 'G'day mate', which I don't feel the 'connection'.*

Therefore, with his awareness and understanding, Cheolsoo reported that he had become critical of his initial intention to change his Korean accent and to sound like an Inner-Circle speaker of English. Specifically, he claimed that after having learned EIL A and B, he believed that "*speak*[ing] *like Australians...it's like being colonised by Australian culture and English rather than keeping our identity cos we have other cultural and racial and other backgrounds*".

He further reported that the topics on English language variation and accent debates (EIL A), being "*the most memorable classroom experiences*," seemed to have prompted him to regard effort and willingness to negotiate meanings as more crucial elements in using English in today's communicative contexts that are international in nature:

> *after those lectures…knowing different accent and different varieties…I'm so impressed…I don't think we should be like that…I have started to think that the most important thing is how you can express your thoughts and <u>try</u> to understand others' thoughts in today's international communicative settings* [Cheolsoo's emphasis].

However, despite the benefits Cheolsoo believed he had experienced from learning EIL A and B, his reflection on his experiences of having lived in Australia and South Korea seemed to have prompted him to question whether what he had learned from the syllabus could be applied in those societies. He specifically reported his uncertainty of "*EIL is going to be the mainstream and trend*." He commended on the enthusiasm of EIL scholars and lecturers in promoting differences and encouraging him to take pride in his difference, but he still found it difficult to see the practicality of it.

When asked about the reason for his uncertainty about EIL being the mainstream or trend, he shared his experiences of witnessing and observing how difference or English language variation was negatively viewed by some groups of people both in Australia and Korea. He gave a specific example of how the news about violence towards Indians in some parts of Australia had made him question whether being and sounding different from the mainstream would be viewed as positive:

> *The discrimination against Indians…like some Australians do, they bash them. They just underestimate Indians due to their appearance, due to their biased point of view towards Indians behaviours. They see Indians as rude and speaking bad or crashed English or*

something like that…so, it's out there, and diversity in English and race is seen as bad…so, not sure if it's good to be different from the mainstream.

At the tertiary institution where he was studying, Cheolsoo reported that he had been asked to "*change* [his] *pronunciation*" and been "*evaluated negatively because* [his] *English is seen as weird and not 'proficient'*". Therefore, even though he wanted to identify and to be identified as a speaker of English, "*those who are racist and who would not want to try to understand my thoughts would call* [him] *a 'learner learner' because English was not* [his] *first language and would not regard* [him] *as a speaker of English*"

Furthermore, the tension had been further caused by his observations of the attitudes of some of his fellow countrymen who support the supremacy of Inner-Circle Englishes, in particular, American English. He claimed that he was very frustrated to see how his other fellow Koreans "*worship US English and when you speak US English, you're a really a good man but if you speak other English, then it's not proper*." Therefore, even though after studying in the program he had tried to learn to view Korean English as another legitimate emerging variety of English, he reported that he still struggled to come to terms with the view. He explained that this was partly because that variety had not yet been codified, but mainly because:

Koreans themselves usually consider some localised...maybe something like that....an inferior level, and worse than American English. Koreans do not accept Korean English as variety of world Englishes.

From his experiences of learning English in Korea, many English teachers in Korea still showed a condescending and native-speakerist perception of Korean English:

make a joke about Korean English like Konglish an inferior level English. Koreans say air-con and hand-phone... teachers always teach that air-con and hand-phone are wrong. They recognise them as bad transformed English words, not independent nativised or localised words.

Reflecting on this observation, he further questioned whether Korean English would ever be perceived as a variety of English: "*when this Korean English become one single variety of English? Will it become until I die?*" Thus, he recommended that EIL educators address more

of the above controversial issues in the syllabus because he did not know and was not confident how to deal with these issues at practical level.

Case Two – Manida

Similar to Cheolsoo, Manida also enrolled with an understanding that EIL A would be teaching her a singular variety of Australian English. With a similar expectation, she also envisaged the beneficial impact learning this would have on her use of English. When asked about whether Manida had regretted undertaking the range of subjects associated with EIL, she disagreed and asserted that "*learning about the different varieties of English*" was "*even more important*" because of the diversity of speakers of English she had observed in Melbourne:

> *today's society like Melbourne is a multicultural and multilingual city…you meet and see people from different cultural backgrounds in the city who are not necessarily you know so-called 'Australians'…I have many friends and housemates from different backgrounds and they speak English differently from the one I used to learn at language school…so I need to be aware of different, for example, politeness, why they are doing the way they do, how can I respond to that?*

As a final year student of Business and Economics, she further emphasised that this syllabus had prompted her to become aware of the uncertainty of her future customers with whom she would be trading and communicating in English, and thus, to highly value the learning of English language variation.

> *like I'm studying business banking and finance, of course I will work in this industry, knowing different varieties of English and why people speak differently prepares me for communicating with customers from God knows which backgrounds because you never know who you're talking to.*

Further conversations with Manida about her experiences reveal more specific benefits she believed she had experienced after having studied EIL. She reported that the use of "*real scenarios in their* [lecturers'] *and our life*" to teach EIL had allowed her to alter the way she conceptualised her English (from '*a weird language*' to '*a dialect of English*'):

something that I appreciate the most about studying in these subjects is that I used to think that the way I speak is not 'English', it's just another weird language, but now after I study especially the first semester subject, I can see that the way I speak English can be considered a dialect of English, of course I have my accent and strategies like any other Englishes in the world.

What is even more important, she claimed, was that learning EIL A and B had provided her with necessary knowledge to learn to develop self-confidence and to recognise herself as a legitimate 'different' speaker of English. Reflecting on her own use of English, she had learned to embrace the fact that "*even though* [she has] *Laos accent and strategies of communication that are different from native-speakers of English, this is the identity* [she wants] *to keep*." She remembered that when she first came to Australia, she attempted to "*change* [her] *Laos accent like by mimicking the way Australians sound*" which she said she "*failed*." Initially, she thought that this failure meant failure to

speak English properly, but *the lessons on accent and language variation and when I observe the way my lecturers from you know different culture speak make me think… like not really. Why is there a need to change? I cannot do that…I still have some sort of different backgrounds and because we are different…how can we be the same right?*

Therefore she wants "*to be* [her]*self rather than be someone else…be* [her]*self without trying to, for example, change* [her] *accents*." She believed that this "*kind of attitude and perception were not in* [her] *mind before* [she] *learnt about Englishes*."

However, despite her clear enthusiasm for learning EIL, Manida said that she encountered one challenging and puzzling question to which she had not been able to find the answer. She reported that she was not confident about the extent to which she could apply what she had learnt outside the EIL classrooms:

My one and only challenge in studying EIL is whether we can use what we have studied into real life…whether it's applicable and how we can make that applicable.

Although she believed that "*difference itself is a good thing and that we should encourage diversity*," her observations of how English language variation was treated in Australia and in

Laos seemed to have prompted her to feel doubtful about the usefulness of what she had learned from the syllabus:

> *whether people are aware of the differences and trying to understand and appreciate the differences in the use of English is really because many people in my society or in the societies still think that no one speaks better than the owner of the language.*

When I probed as to why she perceived EIL as difficult to apply outside classrooms, she shared her experience of interacting with her other lecturers (not EIL lecturers) at the university who asked her to conform to the native speakers' conventions:

> *I want my difference in the way I speak and write to be acknowledged, but I was asked to follow the conventions things like the way native speakers are speaking. Otherwise they are going to look at you and say, 'You're weird!'*

With a frustrated facial expression and tone, she said that it would still be pointless even if she did follow the 'conventions'

> *Even if I want to have and do speak English with an Australian accent…but given the very basic thing is the physical characteristics…Of course that's the first thing people judge on when they first look at you. So, if you don't look 'Anglo' and because of that, automatically your English is not good and you got a question like, with an ironic tone 'Can you speak English?'…how can you stand that?*

Therefore, in looking back at the syllabus, she reported that the syllabus and teaching seemed to have only raised students' awareness of differences in using English and to respect difference, but they seemed to have overlooked and have failed to address the politics of difference.

> *the difference itself is a good thing, but it provides a chance for people to discriminate others and this is what EIL subjects needs to address these issues more.*

Case Three – Fitri

Having studied a similar subject (English Language) in secondary school in Australia, Fitri reported that EIL was not an unfamiliar topic to her. She wanted to learn more about EIL

because of her exposure to different varieties of English in her social and professional contexts:

> *Because I find it's useful to know more about the English language varieties because where I work, study, and live, I meet and talk with people, friends, teachers, customers, housemates who communicate in different ways, different accents, and different Englishes.*

After having completed both EIL A and B, she reported that her theoretical knowledge and awareness of English language variation had allowed her to develop a better understanding of the varieties of English used by users from outside the Inner-Circle countries. This can be seen in her experience of reading about a book on "*Japanese culture, in English, and by a Japanese author*." Prior to studying EIL, she reported that understanding the book was a challenge, and even blamed the author's English for not 'English enough':

> *I thought his* [Japanese author] *English is not English enough. But after I studied the subjects and I wanted to read it again and I did, I went back to read it again and wooooow…now I know.....why he uses honorific and some of the speech acts in the book…that's why studying EIL is very important for me*

Like the previous two participants, Fitri's understanding of English language variation seemed to have also prompted her to become critical towards her initial native-speakerist view of the way she used English to communicate her Indonesian cultural values. Her choice of the phrase "*cool to be different*" can be interpreted as her taking pride in having her own distinctive variety of English (idiolect) and therefore identity.

> *I do realise that I use English in a number of occasions to express my Indonesian cultural values…I used to think that it was very bad and I wanted to assimilate because English is the native-speaker's language, so you've got to speak like them, but now I was like 'hang on a minute, it's my English, my accent, my idiolect and my identity and I think it's cool to be different and special and I want people to see it that way*.

Despite of the beneficial outcomes Fitri believed she had experienced after learning EIL A and B, she also inevitably experienced challenges in coming to terms fully with the mindset promoted by the syllabus and applying it outside classrooms. Even though Fitri was

introduced to the notion of English language variation earlier than Cheolsoo and Manida, she tended to share more about her challenges rather than benefits in the interviews.

Firstly, although Fitri had become aware of the diversity of English and had taken pride in the uniqueness of her own variety of English, she claimed that she was very aware of the fact that her initial native-speakerist view still persisted:

> *I can't change my previous view* [the view of the so-called native-English speakers from Inner-Circle countries as the legitimate speakers of English who are the main source of knowledge of 'correct' English]...*I can, but it will take long time and lots of effort, because it's already deeply stretched in my and other people's minds.*

The above statement demonstrates that she seemed to be willing and committed to challenge her initial worldview and to learn to, in her words, "*present and assert our own voice as non-native speakers*". In fact, she did try to implement what she had learned from the syllabus by defending her 'voices' in response to the correction made by another lecturer (NOT EIL lecturer) on her writing. However, her attempt was met with an ethnocentric and native-speakerist remark:

> *I talked about recognising the voices of non-native speakers with Phil* [pseudonym], *a lecturer in the language faculty, as well, but he was like, you have to learn my language, that's my language, you have to write the way we write, that's what our language is for, and stuff like that. So, he's very strong about his opinion…And I was like, but we're not dumb you know.*

Therefore, this experience might have led her to question the extent to which the syllabus could be successfully implemented outside EIL classrooms in, what she called, "*the native speakers era where you* [the non-native speakers] *have to speak that* [the native-speakers] *way and we* [the native-speakers] *don't know yours* [the non-native speakers] *and don't care*"

Furthermore, the mismatch between the impression made about Australia and her experience of living in the country also raised doubt about the applicability of the paradigm promoted by the syllabus and the idea of being and sounding different was 'a good thing':

> *Before I came…Australia was promoted as a multicultural country and in the advertisement about this country, I could see people from different racial backgrounds*

smiling and holding hands with each other…at that time, I thought wow, I love Australia, and I don't need to hide… but the reality is completely different, like you know the news about the Indians being bashed…So, I'm confused and I'm scared…can I still be who I am? Can I speak with my accent as many readings in the subjects say?

Relating to the syllabus, she claimed that EIL A and B in fact tended to teach "*too much about differences*" and had not actually addressed the political "*experiences that* [she] *and many other students in the program had gone through*". She reported that after having been taught about differences, she had become aware of her own differences in using English as well as those of other speakers of English. However, both subjects, in her view, did not seem to adequately address an issue of how those differences are treated in the society in which she lives, and to provide her with an opportunity to discuss and explore ways of dealing with the occasions when differences are not appreciated.

EIL talk too much about we are being different, because now we are aware of the differences and know more about people, and we try to avoid failure in communication by understanding differences and by wearing their shoes, but there are lots of statements in question marks that I have which I don't think have been resolved yet. Like there are people who are not aware of this difference and don't accept like the native-speakers, they would argue that's my language, you should learn my way, write in my way, and that's what our language is for...how are we going to talk with them...So, they have their own voice and how to compromise and this is the challenge for me. I don't think this is you know....addressed enough yet. So, EIL lecturers need to give us some ideas about this…

Discussion

The benefits of learning about EIL

The benefits of learning EIL that are widely emphasised by many previous studies seem to have been experienced by the three ECC students in this study. After having studied EIL A and B, all students shared that having theoretical knowledge and awareness of different varieties of English as opposed to a singular variety of Australian English would be beneficial for their interactions with speakers of different varieties of world Englishes at home (*housemates*), at work (*customers*), and at the university (*lecturers and classmates/friends*) who reside in Australia but are not necessarily speakers of Australian English speakers. In

line with Xu (2002), one participant further emphasised that her uncertainty about the lingua-cultural backgrounds of her future interlocutors has prompted her to perceive learning about world Englishes as even more relevant and important.

Furthermore, in accord with Briguglio (2005) and Matsuda (2002), the participants in this study indicate that greater awareness and theoretical knowledge of English language variation had prompted them to better understand the ways in which speakers of world Englishes (including the students themselves) use English to project their own identities and communicate their own unique cultural values and worldviews. This is evidenced in Fitri's better comprehension of a book written in English by a Japanese author, and in Cheolsoo's explanation and justification of his preferred form of greeting in English which reflects his Korean socio-cultural values.

Supporting the claims by Li (2007), Shim (2002), Shin (2004), and Briguglio (2006), Cheolsoo's unapologetic explanation for his preferred choice of 'Korean-flavoured' greeting in English further suggests that his theoretical knowledge of English language variation seemed to have prompted him (a) to develop a view that emulating the so-called native-English speakers is a form of self-colonisation, and (b) to confidently view his Korean-flavoured English as a legitimate variety of English. This beneficial outcome of learning about EIL seemed to be experienced by other students. Fitri, as a result of her awareness of different world Englishes, has grown to appreciate and regard the Japanese author's use of English (initially regarded as "*not English enough*") and her own use of English ("*very bad*" as it reflects "*Indonesian cultural values*") as a legitimate variety of English. On the same note, Manida's awareness and understanding of the existence of other varieties of English with their own uniqueness, seems to have prompted her to re-evaluate her initial view of her English (which she termed a "*weird language*"). She has grown to regard her English as one of the "*dialect*[s] *of English*" and argues that it is perfectly natural for her to speak English differently. Therefore, with the awareness and knowledge of the diversification of English, they seem to have become more critical towards practices that only legitimise Inner-Circle varieties of English as 'English'. They have also called for their English or their "*idiolects*" (Fitri) - which acts a way to be "*myself rather than someone else*" (Manida) - not to be "*colonised*" (Cheolsoo), but preserved, acknowledged, and respected.

The challenges of learning EIL syllabus and the role of sociopolitical context

Although learning about EIL for two semesters (approximately 24 weeks) or longer (in Fitri's case) seemed to have allowed students to experience the above benefits, encountering challenges in coming to terms with the EIL paradigm is *naturally* (the author's emphasis) inevitable. Unlike the students in previous studies who had parochial outlooks, ethnocentric attitudes, and native-speakerist mindsets (Briguglio, 2006; Kubota, 2001b; Suzuki, 2010), students in this study seemed to appreciate the EIL paradigm promoted by the EIL syllabi and to some extent have taken a critical perspective on their previous Inner-Circle-English-supremacy view. At the same time, they felt uncertain about adopting the paradigm outside EIL classrooms and experienced tension in coming to terms with the paradigm.

In fact, in many of the observations they made, the participants in this study lent support to Nieto's (1999, 2004, 2010) claims about the influential role of the sociopolitical context in which they study and live in prompting them to become doubtful if they could operate in their social and educational contexts with the mindsets imparted by the syllabus. More specifically, the native-speakerist and assimilationist views and attitudes conveyed by their lecturers, English teachers, and peer groups and/or fellow countrymen that construct the participants as the "*weird*" (Manida) or culturally problematic Others (Holliday, 2005), have made them struggle to "*present and assert our non-native speakers' voices*" (Fitri) in their social and educational contexts. Some participants expressed their willingness to deconstruct themselves as the culturally problematic Others and demanded to have their "*idiolect*" and "*voices*" respectfully acknowledged (*it's cool to be different, you know we're not dumb, let me be myself and I want people to respect it*). However, they did not seem to be too confident about how it would be welcomed in their social and educational contexts. Although Manida is aware that adopting the normative views by assimilating oneself (for example, *speaking English with an Aussie accen*t) is often thought as an alternative option to avoid being labelled as the culturally problematic Other, this would not necessarily eliminate the label. It is because, as she claims, if one does not "*look Anglo and* [his/her] *English is automatically not good*." Furthermore other social and political conditions such as racial violence towards the Indian community reported on the news tend to have also caused the participants to further question whether or not being and sounding different is positively viewed and appreciated by the context in which they live. As Manida has observed, though difference is

taught as a "*good thing*" by the subjects, it does not seem to be appreciated by some groups of people within their social and educational contexts and it is often used as a way to discriminate against others. Supported by Tupas (2006), though English language variation may be sociolinguistically legitimate, they largely remain politically unacceptable by some groups of people in the society.

Therefore, from students' perspectives and experiences, the EIL syllabus materials that included different varieties of English, incorporated the voices of people from diverse cultures (Matsuda, 2002, 2005; McKay, 2010), and taught them to appreciate and legitimately recognise different varieties of English (Li, 2007; Shim, 2002) did not seem to have taken into consideration the sociopolitical contexts in which students studied and lived. In other words, the syllabus materials only taught students about differences and encouraged them to respect and appreciate differences (in fact "*too much*"), but how these differences are constructed and responded by groups of people within students' socio-political contexts which have prompted them to experience tensions/conflicts, seemed to be unaddressed. As reflected in the cases study, there did not seem to be a space for students to discuss these tensions. Even though the syllabi value students' experiences in using, learning, and teaching language, students seemed to be required to discuss only how different their use of English was from others speakers of English, but not the tensions or conflicts which naturally occur when learning in an ideological environment like a class on EIL.

Conclusions and Implications for teaching and learning EIL:

The project aims to investigate the benefits and challenges of teaching/learning EIL syllabus materials in Australia from students' perspectives. The experiences of three students ECCs studying EIL A and B, to some extent, have confirmed the relevance of knowledge of English language variation in today's multilingual and multicultural globalising Australian society. The cases studied have also shown how this knowledge has prompted them to develop understanding, appreciation, and recognition the legitimacy of different varieties of English (including their own). As beneficial as their experiences may have been, students believed that they still had not gained enough confidence to apply their knowledge due to the ethnocentric, racist, and native-speakerist behaviours/attitudes they had observed and even experienced in their sociopolitical contexts in which they live and study. These experiences

and observations that had given birth to tensions, did not seem to be visible and audible in the syllabus materials.

In light of the above, EIL syllabus materials should empower students to embrace and actually experience the benefits of being aware and knowledgeable about world Englishes. However, it is equally important to allow students to discuss resistance they may have encountered from OR to prepare students for the resistance they are likely to encounter from traditionalists who will wish to diminish students' confidence in implementing the EIL paradigm. To prepare them, EIL syllabus materials should:

Firstly, teach students knowledge and awareness of world Englishes and the fact that they are sociolinguistically normal and necessary. Rather than providing students with examples of all different national and regional varieties of English (which is a commonly suggested one), syllabus materials can start with the following questions: What is language variation? Why does language *naturally* vary? How does language vary? Who contributes to this variation? Where do you hear and find this variation? Therefore, reflections on their own (and others') use of language are crucial here.

Secondly, teach students how to communicate across Englishes and cultures. With their knowledge of variation, activities can be designed to guide develop strategies to communicate effectively and respectfully in "multifaceted and potentially confusing linguistic world" (Crystal, 1999, p.97). Scenarios and simulations of communicative encounters with different varieties of English would be helpful.

And lastly, incorporate any discussions on the sociopolitical issues such as racial/linguistic inequalities and politicisation of difference. As these are very sensitive issues, students may be reluctant to share their views. Tensions/conflicts students may experience as they learn about EIL/WE should be recognised as a natural and healthy process of learning a syllabus that is based on an anti-normative paradigm. Activities can be designed to engage students in openly discussing these tensions/conflicts and exploring ways in which students can strategically and respectfully deal with these tensions/conflicts. As Williams (1996) asserts, to deal with conflicts/tensions, "we may need to study them" (p.200)

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Working Memory as a Component of Foreign Language Aptitude

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Abstract

Although foreign language aptitude (FLA) has consistently been proved to be one of the best predictors of the outcomes of second language acquisition (SLA) among a wide range of variables, the study of traditional FLA has experienced marginalization in the past thirty years or so due to the shortcomings in its conception and construct. In order to overcome the drawbacks and keep abreast with ongoing developments and trends in SLA mainstream research, many scholars propose that working memory (WM) could be a crucial component of FLA because it is a specific ability in comparison with the composite FLA, and by which language aptitude could be linked with the learning processes. Aiming to verify this proposal empirically, the present study has administered two experiments to two groups of participants at different language proficiency levels. In Experiment One, a total of 92 Chinese students from two entire classes in the second year of junior high school received classroom instruction on English relative clauses (RCs), and were assessed by two measures, the test of RCs and a Computerized Chinese Reading Span Test. The results reveal that learners with large and medium size of WM capacity perform significantly better in the test of RCs than those with small size of WM capacity. In Experiment Two, two classes of 50 sophomores majoring in English at a Chinese university were measured by three tests, a Computerized Chinese Reading Span Test, two sections of Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), Paired Associates and Words in Sentences, and a translation test of complex sentences. The findings

indicate that WM is substantially correlated with the learning of complex syntactic rules, whereas rote memory and analytic language ability are not; besides, no significant correlations are found among WM, analytic ability and rote memory. The results of the two experiments are then discussed in terms of the underlying processes of WM, task demands as well as the nature of FLA. Based on the empirical findings and theoretical analyses, it is argued that WM could be a potential component of FLA.

Key Words: Working Memory; Foreign Language Aptitude; Learning Processes; Syntactic Rules; Reading Span Test

Introduction

FLA has been considered one of the most important individual difference (ID) variables with best predictive role in SLA. Carroll (1981) reported that the studies he carried out using the MLAT yield correlations with a variety of criterion measures in the range of r = .40-.60. This can even rise to a figure of r = .70 under favorable predictions (Skehan, 1989, p. 28). Gardner (1985) found a median correlation of r = .41 for aptitude in a review of several studies of the effects of motivation and aptitude on the learning of French in schools throughout Canada. Other studies (e.g., Bialystok & Frohlich, 1978; Ehrman, 1998; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Grigorenko, Sternberg, & Ehrman, 2000; Kiss & Nikolov, 2005; Sparks & Ganschow, 2001) reported similar range of correlations. Thus Skehan (1989) stated: “aptitude is consistently the best predictor of language learning success” (p. 38), and Gardner & MacIntyre (1992) also claimed that “research made it clear that in the long run FLA is probably the single best predictor of achievement in a second language” (p. 215).

Although it remains one of the best predictors of second language (L2) learning achievements among a wide range of variables, the study of traditional FLA is experiencing marginalization due to its drawbacks. If FLA is to come into the mainstream of SLA research, several aspects of it need to be further developed. The major problems of the traditional FLA can be summarized as follows:

(1) The traditional concept of FLA refers to composite abilities encompassing four components, phonetic coding ability, grammatical sensitivity, inductive language learning

ability and rote learning ability, whereas currently researchers tend to focus on one component. Specific cognitive abilities, such as analytic ability and WM instead of the umbrella term FLA have attracted more attention of researchers (Dörnyei, 2005; Skehan, 2002). As Sawyer & Ranta (2001) argued, "treating L2 aptitude in a monolithic way obscures the nature of the relationship between general cognitive abilities and specific linguistic ones" (p. 329).

(2) FLA measured by MLAT is thought to be more effective in predicting progress in language learning at primary stages, but it is less effective in predicting success at more advanced stages. Carroll (1990) also admits,

> It is possible that . . . an individual might be an excellent translator or a facile simultaneous interpreter by virtue of special abilities that do not come into play in early language learning stages but that do come into play at later stages. This immediately suggests that research might focus on abilities that would possibly be relevant in the later stages of foreign language attainment. (p. 25)

(3) Rote Memory (RM) measured by MLAT-V (Paired Associates) can and should be improved due to the development in the study of memory and language. After 30 years of study on FLA, Carroll (1990) still believed that there had been no much improvement for the FLA construct, but he admitted that he had never been confident about the validity of rote memory assessment in MLAT, and he recommended that research in FLA should pay close attention to the investigation of memory performances in cognitive psychology.

(4) It is thought that the traditional FLA is not associated with the internal processes of SLA, the mainstream of SLA research (e.g., Skehan, 2002; Sawyer & Ranta, 2001).

(5) Furthermore, FLA is frequently used in predicting overall L2 proficiency (e.g., Ehrman, 1998; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Winke, 2005); it is seldom used to predict syntactic processing.

According to Miyaki & Friedman (1998), there are several reasons for WM to be an apt concept for exploring language learning aptitude. First, three components of language aptitude, auditory ability, linguistic ability and memory ability, suggested by Skehan (1989) are different cognitive functions often associated with WM. Secondly, it is believed that WM is an important determinant of language proficiency in first language (L1) research (e.g., Just & Carpenter, 1992; King & Just, 1991; Osaka & Osaka, 1992). Thus, it is likely to constrain

the processing and learning of an L2 as well, and this was confirmed by several studies (e.g., Dufva & Voeten, 1999; Ellis & Sinclair, 1996; Harrington & Sawyer, 1992; William & Lovatt, 2003). Thirdly, there is some evidence suggesting that, for typical adult L2 learners, the ultimate level of attainment may be limited in some domains, such as phonology and syntax, because of maturational constraints that take place during the controversial critical period (e.g., Lenneberg 1967); as a result, L2 learning may have to rely to a greater extent than L1 acquisition on general learning mechanisms and principles.

In light of that (1) WM is a specific language ability, and the study of this specific ability in relation to L2 acquisition might be more insightful than to study the general composite aptitude (Dörnyei, 2005; Grigorenko, Sternberg, & Ehrman, 2000; Skehan, 2012), (2) it measures both processing capacity and storage capacity, and it links language aptitude with learning processes, because it might constrain noticing by limiting this capacity, and it plays an important role in the process of skill learning as well as in other controlled processes of L2 acquisition; it also serves as an arena in which the effects of other components of aptitude are integrated (Baddeley, 2003; McLaughlin, 1995; Miyaki & Friedman, 1998; Sawyer & Ranta, 2001; Waters & Caplan, 1996), (3) it has been proved to be predictive in reading comprehension and sentence processing by some scholars (e.g., Baddeley, 2003; Ellis & Sinclair, 1996; King & Just, 1991; Just & Carpenter, 1992; Williams, 1999; Williams & Lovatt, 2003), the present study proposes that WM might be an important component of language aptitude, and aims to determine the effects of WM on the processing of easy and complex grammatical rules as well as the relationship between WM and FLA by two experimental studies.

Literature Review

The Concept of WM

WM, proposed by Baddeley& Hitch (1974), refers to the immediate memory processes involved in the simultaneous storage and processing of information in real time. In their model, WM was at first divided into three subsystems, one concerns verbal and acoustic information, the phonological loop, a second, the visuo-spatial sketchpad providing its visual equivalent, while both are dependent upon a third attentionally-limited control system, the central executive; later a fourth subsystem, the episodic buffer, was raised as a storage counterpart of the central executive (Baddeley, 2003). The other WM model was proposed by

Daneman & Carpenter (1980). It focuses on the storage and processing capacity, and covers the functions of phonological loop and central executive of Baddeley's model. Daneman & Green (1986) argued that individuals with small reading spans devote so many resources to reading processes that they have less residual capacity for retaining the relevant contextual cues in WM.

Two best-known instruments for assessing WM are Nonword Repetition Test developed by Gathercole& Baddeley (1996) and Reading Span Test created by Daneman & Carpenter (1980), each of them has great influence in language acquisition research. Daneman & Carpenter's Reading Span Test is mostly used in relation with sentence processing for adults, whereas Gathercole & Baddeley's nonword repetition test is more often employed to determine its relation to vocabulary learning, particularly, for children's language learning, the adapted version of the Reading Span Test by Daneman & Carpenter is applied in the present study.

WM and Language Acquisition

A great number of studies concerning the relationship between WM and both L1 and L2 acquisition within Baddeley's model were conducted in the past 30 years including that from theoretical perspective (e.g., Baddeley 2003; Baddeley, Gathercole, & Papagno, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Gathercole, 2006) and from experimental perspective (e.g., Ellis & Sinclair, 1996; Gathercole, Service, Hitch, Adams, & Martin, 1999; Kormos & Safar, 2008; Mackey, Philp, Egi, Fujii, & Tatsumi, 2002; O'Brien, Segalowitz, Collentine, & Freed, 2006; Service, 1992; Williams & Lovatt 2003). In L1 acquisition, Gathercole et al. (1999) explored the nature and generality of the developmental association between phonological short-term memory and vocabulary knowledge in two studies. The findings of their studies favor the view that it is phonological short-term memory capacity rather than speech output skills which constrains word learning, and the view that a strong association between phonological memory skills and vocabulary knowledge exists in both teenaged and younger children. In L2 acquisition, Kormos & Safar (2008) conducted a research into the relationship among phonological short-term memory, WM, and foreign language performance in intensive language learning. Their study indicates that phonological short-term memory capacity measured by a non-word repetition test plays a different role in the case of beginners and pre-intermediate students in intensive language learning. Whereas in the case of beginners there is no meaningful

correlation between non-word repetition scores and English proficiency test result, for the pre-intermediate students they found a highly significant relationship between the uses of English, the writing test and the overall proficiency test results. The WM measured by the backward digit span test correlated very highly with the overall English language competence, as well as with reading, listening, speaking, and use of English (vocabulary and grammar) test scores. Mackey et al. (2002) examined the relationship between WM, noticing of interactional feedback and L2 development by using both nonword recall test and listening span test, the statistical analysis of their investigation indicated that the relationship between learners' noticing and their WM scores is marginally significant, besides, learners with low WM scores show most initial interlanguage change, while high WM learners show more development in delayed post-tests. O'Brien et al.'s (2006) investigation of the relationship between measures of phonological short-term memory and various assessments of oral performance suggested that phonological memory plays an important role in narrative development at earlier stages of L2 learning and in the acquisition of grammatical competence at later stages. Service (1992) investigated the acquisition of English as a second language by young Finnish children and found that children with good immediate verbal memory prove to be better at language learning than those with short memory spans, not only when measured by vocabulary, but also by acquisition of syntax. Williams & Lovatt (2003) found that the three measures of phonological memory are related to rule learning and language learning background exerts a clear and consistent influence on rule learning that is independent of memory ability. The results also indicated that the relationship between them is stronger when the rules to be learned are embedded in a language that shares no cognates with the participants' L1, such as participants from an L1 English learning an artificial language derived from Japanese, as compared with when the rules to be learned are embedded in a language that is related to the participant's L1, such as learners of L1 English learning L2 Italian (Williams, 1999).

Also, there are numerous studies carried out in the framework of Daneman & Carpenter's model (e.g., Daneman & Carpenter, 1980; Daneman & Green, 1986; Harrington & Sawyer, 1992; King & Just, 1991; Leeser, 2007; Waters & Caplan, 1996). In L1 acquisition, Daneman & Carpenter (1980) did the pioneer research on the role that the verbal WM measured by the Reading Span Test plays in reading comprehension. They investigated 20 college students by their Reading Span Test and correlated the Reading Span Test score with that of three reading comprehension measures: verbal SAT, tests involving fact retrieval, and

pronominal reference. In several experiments, Daneman & Carpenter obtained high correlations between them in the range of r = .5 and r = .6. They argued that the reading span task reflects WM capacity and that this capacity is a crucial source of individual differences in language comprehension. In addition, Daneman & Green (1986) further explored the role of WM capacity in the use of context to both comprehension and production of words. They investigated two groups of university undergraduates and found that WM capacity determined how well individuals use context because individuals with small reading spans devote so many resources to reading processes that they have less residual capacity for retaining the relevant contextual cues in WM. This result was reinforced by Waters & Caplan (1996), who measured the verbal WM capacity of 44 participants and analyzed its relationship to reading comprehension. Correlational analyses and regression analyses showed that the sentence processing component of the sentence reading span task is the best predictor of performance on the reading test, with a small independent contribution of the recall component. And the predictive value of sentence span tasks for reading comprehension abilities lies in the overlap of operations in two tasks, which require simultaneous processing and storage, rather than in limitations in verbal WM that applies to both sentence processing and recall component. With regard to the relation of WM to L2 learning, numerous researches have been conducted by using different methods or from different perspectives. In L2 acquisition, Harrington & Sawyer (1992) investigated 32 native Japanese speakers learning English as L2 on their completion of an English and a Japanese version of the Reading Span Test, together with two subsections of TOEFL (the grammar section and the reading and vocabulary section), and a cloze task. The main findings showed a correlation of r = .57 between the Reading Span Test and the Grammar section, and r = .54 between the Reading Span Test and the Reading and Vocabulary section. The results revealed that WM capacity is strongly related with L2 proficiency. Leeser (2007) examined the role of WM capacity by linking it with topic familiarity, he investigated how topic familiarity and WM capacity affect beginning Spanish learners' reading comprehension and their processing of future tense morphology, and he found that although differences in WM capacity play some role in learners' comprehension and processing grammatical form, significant findings for WM emerges depending on participants' previous knowledge about test topics. So research into the relationship between WM and SLA appears to be one of the most promising current directions in language aptitude studies (Dörnyei, 2005; Sawyer & Ranta, 2001). It could be safely concluded that modern

language aptitude testing will be improved by borrowing the memory research achievement in cognitive psychology in the past two decades.

Provided that WM can be regarded as a new component of FLA, the test of this ability measures examinees' processing and storage capacity simultaneously, thus WM might overlap with the storage capacity of rote learning ability measured by the Paired Associates section of the MLAT; in the same vein, there may be an association between WM and analytic ability measured by Words in Sentences section of the MLAT. Another problem often cited is that FLA could be more predictive to the learning of simple rules, but less predictive to the learning of complex rules (Krashen, 1981; Just & Carpenter, 1992; Robinson, 1996). This means the effect of cognitive abilities in IDs on the learning outcomes might depend on the complexity of the tasks.

Therefore, in accordance with the origin of FLA and the goals of creating language aptitude test, if WM is to be introduced as a component of FLA, it has to meet two crucial requirements, one is that it has to possess a good predictive power in the acquisition of simple and complex grammatical rules, the other is that it does not duplicate any of the abilities contained in the traditional FLA, which are generated from a large-scale factor analysis. In order to find out whether WM can be a component of FLA, the following four research questions will be addressed in the present study.

(1) What are the roles of WM in the acquisition of grammatical rules in the case of RCs?
(2) What are the relationships among WM, analytical ability and rote memory, two sections of the MLAT?
(3) What are the roles of WM, analytical ability and rote memory in the acquisition of more complex grammatical rules in the case of double embedded clauses respectively?
(4) Do different levels of WM have different effects on the acquisition of more complex grammatical rules?

Experiment 1

Method

This experiment aims to determine whether there is any relationship between WM and the acquisition of syntactic rules represented by RCs. A total of 92 students from two entire classes in the second year of junior high school (approximately 14 years of age) received classroom instruction on English RCs for one hour delivered by the researcher. After that, all

students were assessed by two measures. One is the test of RCs designed by the researcher to assess the learners' syntactic knowledge of English RCs immediately after the instruction; the other is a Computerized Chinese Reading Span Test (CCRST) to measure the capacity of the participants' WM.

Participants. Coming from a Chinese secondary foreign language school, the participants of the present study consists of two entire classes of 92 students at Grade 7 with an age ranging between 12 and 14, but only a total of 83 participants, who completed all tasks as required, were included in the final analyses. It was assumed that there was no significant difference in their English language proficiency at the time of investigation for an independent samples *t* test was computed to compare the mean scores for two classes of students, the result revealed no marked difference between their scores ($t = .58$, $p = .56$). In addition, all the participants have not received any formal instruction on the knowledge of RCs.

Target Structure Instructed. With regard to the target structure of the instruction, four types of sentence structures were taught to the participants by deductive and inductive methods including subject RC embedded in the subject position of the matrix clause (SS), subject RC in the object position of the matrix clause (SO), object RC in the subject position of the matrix clause (OS), and object RC in the object position of the matrix clause (OO). The four types of sentence structures are listed below:

A. The *people* <u>who live in Boston</u> are busy. (SS)
B. The *person* <u>who I know</u> lives in Boston. (SO)
C. I know some *people* <u>who live in Boston</u>. (OS)
D. I know the *person* <u>who you know</u>. (OO)

The instruction was delivered in the scheduled English class hours to the participants by the researcher; meanwhile, their English course teacher audited the instruction in the classroom.

Materials. The materials used in the present study include a CCRST and a self-designed test of relative clauses (TRCs), each of them is described below:

CCRST. The present study adopts the well-known instrument for assessing WM, the Reading Span Test by Daneman & Carpenter (1980). According to the test, examinees read aloud a set of sentences, and then at the end of the set they recall the last word of each

sentence. The test is constructed with 70 unrelated English sentences, 13 to 17 words in length, each ending with a different word. However, Daneman & Carpenter's Reading Span Test only measures *storage* ability because *processing* ability is not measured. So some later researchers (e.g., Leeser, 2007; Waters & Caplan, 1996), adapted Daneman & Carpenter's test to measure both *processing* and *storage*. The processing element of the new instrument is provided by the task that after reading all the sentences in a set the test-takers have to decide whether a simple sentence is true or false according to the sentence read, the storage element of the test is to recall the last word of each test sentence.

Since the participants of the present study are all Chinese learners of English, the CCRST, which was originally produced by Cui & Chen (1996) based on Daneman & Carpenter's (1980) Reading Span Test, is required. The CCRST was also operated following the procedures of Waters and Captan's (1996) test on the computer. Composed of 70 Chinese complex sentences, each of which consists of 16 to 18 Chinese words, the CCRST is arranged in five sets each of two, three, four and five sentences. Besides, each stimulus sentence in the CCRST is followed by a judgment sentence to measure participants' comprehension of the stimulus sentence while they have to retain the last word of it. Of the 70 judgment sentences, half are true, whereas the other half are false. So the two differences of the CCRST from Daneman & Carpenter's (1980) Reading Span Test lies in that the CCRST is operationalized on a PC through a pre-designed software package, and participants have to finish two tasks: word recall and sentence judgment.

In the operationalization, participants were asked to recall as many of the last words as they could. They were presented increasingly longer sets of sentences from two-sentence sets to all five-sentence sets on the computer. The maximum set size at which a subject was correct on three out of five sets was taken as a measure of his reading span. Half credit was given if the subject was correct on two sets out of five sets at a particular level. The size of the reading span was scaled into five levels.

TRCs. A self-designed TRCs was used to measure the participants' mastery of RCs after the instruction. This test was adapted from Izumi's test (2003), which consists of two sections: the Sentence Combination Task (SCT) to measure productive knowledge and the Grammatical Judgment Test (GJT) to measure receptive knowledge, and they are described as follows:

SCT. In this task, the participants were directed to combine two simple sentences together to form a complex sentence with an embedded RC in such a way that sentence B must be merged into sentence A as in the following example.

A. The man shot a soldier.

B. The man wears a green jacket.

Combined complex sentence a: The man who wears a green jacket shot a soldier. (correct)

Combined complex sentence b: The man who shot a soldier wears a green jacket. (incorrect)

Combined complex sentence c: The man who shot a soldier when he wears a green jacket. (incorrect)

The participants were prohibited from using coordinating conjoiners such as because, and, since, when, and they must merge sentence B into sentence A. The test consisted of 24 items, with 12 items for each of the two RC types: subject RC and object RC. Of the 12 items for each RC type, six were constructed so that the RC was embedded in the subject position of the matrix sentence, and six had the RC embedded in the object position. Totally, four types of complex sentence came into being (SS, SO, OS, OO).

GJT. This task includes 48 sentences, with 12 items representing each of the two RC types embedded in two different positions as in the sentence combination task. Of the 12 items for each sentence type, six were correct and six incorrect. Following Gass's (1982) classification of errors in RCs, four types of errors were woven into the incorrect items: pronoun retention, incorrect relative marker morphology, nonadjacency, and inappropriate relative marker omission. An example of each type of error is presented below:

The girl likes playing volleyball <u>who has a slim figure</u>. (nonadjacency)

I bought a *book* <u>who</u> costs me 50 Yuan. (incorrect relative marker morphology)

Tom <u>is very good at mathematics</u> likes playing basketball. (inappropriate relative marker omission)

Tom gave me a *book* <u>which he bought it</u> last year. (pronoun retention)

The TRCs was administered in the classroom immediately after the instruction, and was scored by the researcher. For the sentence combination task, one point was given for one right answer, zero for the wrong answer and the answer which did not meet the requirements, for example, if the test-taker merged sentence A into sentence B, no point would be awarded. For the grammatical judgment task, one point was given for one right answer, but if one item was deemed incorrect, the subject had to offer relevant corrections, otherwise, no point was

granted. A reliability analysis for the TRCs was computed to find out its inner consistencty, and the result revealed Cronbach's alpha is .86, which indicates that the test is fairly reliable.

Results and Discussion

First, following Waters and Captan's (1996) method, the participants' capacity of WM were divided into three levels, namely low, medium and high with each level occupying one third of the total number of participants. Those participants grouped as "low WM" represented the lowest one third of the scores, and those grouped as "medium WM" and "high WM" respectively represented the medium and highest one thirds. Then a one-way ANOVA was performed with the CCRST score as the independent variable and the TRCs score as dependent variable. The results are displayed in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the CCRST and the TRCs

TRCs	CCRST	N	Mean	S. D.	S. E.
SCT	High	28	19.82	5.56	1.05
	Medium	28	19.46	5.39	1.02
	Low	27	17.11	5.09	.98
	Total	83	18.82	5.42	.59
GJT	High	28	38.46	6.10	1.15
	Medium	28	38.11	7.30	1.38
	Low	27	32.85	7.37	1.42
	Total	83	36.52	7.32	.80
Total	High	28	58.29	10.11	1.91
	Medium	28	57.57	11.81	2.23
	Low	27	49.96	11.39	2.19
	Total	83	55.34	11.62	1.27

Table 2

One-way ANOVA for the CCRST and the TRCs

	Sum of	df	Mean	F	Sig.

		Squares		Square		
SCT	Between Groups	118.55	2	59.28	2.07	.13
	Within Groups	2289.74	80	28.62		
	Total	2408.29	82			
GJT	Between Groups	539.67	2	269.84	5.60	.01
	Within Groups	3857.05	80	48.21		
	Total	4396.72	82			
TOTAL	Between Groups	1163.02	2	581.51	4.70	.01
	Within Groups	9899.53	80	123.74		
	Total	11062.55	82			

The descriptive statistics indicated that the high WM group obtains the highest mean score in the TRCs for either SCT or GJT. But the one-way ANOVA and the multiple comparisons indicated that there is no significant difference in the score of SCT among three WM groups (F = 2.1, p = .13) on the one hand; high and medium WM groups obtains significantly higher score than low WM group in the GJT (F = 5.60, p = .01) on the other hand. If the TRCs score in two tasks are merged, low WM group's score is still significantly lower than that of the other two groups (F = 4.70, p = .01), but no substantial difference is found between high and medium WM groups in their TRCs score.

The findings of the present study suggested that WM plays a certain role in the acquisition of RCs reflected in the comprehension task. Learners of low WM usually situated at a disadvantageous position in the comprehension of RCs. This result aligns with the claim that higher reading span learners have an advantage over low reading span learners because the latter ones not only take longer to read the more complex sentences, but their comprehension accuracy is poorer than that of higher span learners (King & Just, 1991). Furthermore, the findings also indicated that when the capacity of WM reaches the medium level, no significant difference is found concerning the effect of WM on the acquisition of RCs between the medium WM group and the high WM group.

Summary

The experiment addressed the issue of the role of WM in the acquisition of syntactic rules in the case of RCs. Learners with large and medium size of WM capacity perform significantly better in the test of RCs than those with small size of WM capacity. This reinforces the findings by Daneman & Carpenter (1980), Just & Carpenter (1992), King & Just (1991), and Williams & Lovatt (2003) that WM plays a substantial role in sentence processing.

What needs further study is that the role of WM might be subject to the complexity of tasks, but the participants of the present study were only tested on simple tasks. If participants are assessed on highly complex tasks, different results concerning the role of WM in L2 acquisition might be obtained. Thereby the investigation of WM in relation to task complexity will pose a very valuable line of research. As DeKeyser (2003) suggested: "The study of the three-way interaction between aptitudes, treatments, and psycholinguistic features of the learning targets can provide much more insight into all three of these factors than the study of any one of them in isolation" (p. 337). This leads to the other experimental study in the next section.

Experiment 2

Method

Owing to the fact that WM plays a more important role in the processing of complex sentences than simple sentences, because both storage cost and integration cost are needed in great amount, and WM limits these capacities (Gibson, 1998; Just & Carpenter, 1992; King & Just, 1991), this experiment extends the previous experiment by further exploring the role that WM and FLA play in the acquisition of more complex syntactic rules, of which the acquisitional results might be different in comparison with those of simple syntactic rules, at the meantime, the relationship between WM and FLA is also investigated and verified. Though many researchers (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; McLaughlin, 1995; Miyaki & Friedman, 1998; Sawyer & Ranta, 2001; Skehan, 2002, 2012) suggested that WM can be a key component of FLA, there is a lack of the statistic analysis of the relationship between WM and the subcomponents of FLA. Thus two groups of learners were assessed on three measures, WM, two sections of FLA (Paired Associates and Words in Sentences), and a Translation Test of Complex Sentences (TTCSs), to determine the differential role of WM and FLA and their relationships.

Participants. The participants of this study consist of two classes of sophomore students majoring in English from a non-key university in China (n = 50). All of them started to learn English at Grade One of junior high school (Grade 7). The history of their English learning is quite identical with a length of seven and a half years except for a few having learnt English for one or two more years. There are several common characteristics about these students. First, they generally have high motivation in learning English language because they applied for the program of English Language and Literature after the national Matriculation Test; secondly, their score of Matriculation Test of English approached 90 out of 120 points after being singled out at the time of admission. This implies that their English was quite good when they were admitted to the program; thirdly, they have received intensive training in English language for one and half years at the university in addition to six years of English learning at their respective high school, so their English language proficiency was regarded approximately at the intermediate level when the investigation was conducted. The participants must complete all three measures, otherwise they will not be included for the statistic analyses. Because the study included three measures, which were administered to the participants in two sessions with one being arranged in the participants' spare time, and the participants can choose to take the tests or not; some participants did not compete all the tests although they were strongly encouraged to participate in the tests by their English language teachers. Subsequently, among the original 50 students, only a total of 36 participants completed all the required tests. As two participants were not skillful at typing Chinese characteristics on the computer, they spent too much time on the translation task, becoming outliers of statistics, they were also excluded from the total number; as a result, only 34 were included in the kinds of analyses.

Materials. The Materials used in this study included the CCRST (the same instrument as the one used in the preceding experiment), two subsections of the MLAT (the Paired Associates section measuring rote memory and Words in Sentences section measuring language analytic ability), and the TTCS measuring the acquisitional outcomes of complex syntactic rules, each of them is described below.

CCRST. All the participants were required to complete the CCRST almost identical with the one used in the previous experiment except that it includes a component of calculating the time spent in completing the test to determine whether the participants traded off processing and storing tasks, thereby warranting a composite WM score.

Two Subsections of the MLAT: Paired Associates and Words in Sentences. The Paired Associates section and Words in Sentences section of the MLAT (Carroll & Sapon 1999) were administered to all the participants to find out their rote memory capacity and language analytic ability.

TTCSs. The test is an English-Chinese translation task, which consists of seven sets of sentences, and each set of sentences came in four versions with the extraction condition (+extraction vs. –extraction) crossed by the phrase type (verb phrase vs. noun phrase). All the sentences, which contained exactly the same number of words, were selected from Marinis, Roberts, Felser, & Clahsen's (2005) test materials.

Data Collection and Processing Procedures. The three tests were administered to the participants at two different sessions within a month. The CCRST and the TTCSs were administered in the language lab during participants' free time (approximately one and half hours), the Paired Associates and the Words in Sentences were administered in the classroom during regularly scheduled English class time (approximately 35 minutes). Before each test, the directions, requirements and purposes of the test were delivered to the participants by the researcher. The participants' English course teacher was also present at the testing venue to help with the test. The CCRST was scored and calculated by the computer software automatically; the Paired Associates, the Words in Sentences and the TTCSs were scored by the researcher. For the Paired Associates and the Words in Sentences, one point was granted for one correct choice, and for the TTCSs, one point was given for one correct translation of the original sentence too. Since this test was used to measure participants' complex syntactic knowledge, so long as the participant could understand the syntactic structure of an original English sentence, and correctly rendered it into Chinese syntactically, one point would be awarded, while other errors such as the misunderstanding of word meaning were ignored.

As for the data processing, two raw scores (the CCRST score and the TTCSs score) were first processed in accordance with the research design. After the raw scores for the CCRST and the reaction time of the test were collected, the two test components were transformed into z-scores. Then following Waters & Caplan (1996) and Leeser (2007), a composite WM score was used by averaging the z-scores for the reading span and the reaction time. Finally, the composite z-scores for all the participants were grouped into three levels, the highest third z-scores were labeled as "high WM", the middle third as "medium WM", and the lowest third as "low WM". The participants were grouped according to high, medium, and low WM

depending on their composite z-scores. In like manner, the scores of the TTCSs and the reaction time of that test were also transformed into z-scores, and they were then averaged into composite scores as that of the CCRST. After all the data were transformed and classified, correlations and one-way ANOVAs were computed to determine the relationships and differentiations among them.

Results and Discussion

Correlations among WM, Analytic Ability and Rote Memory, and Their Respective Impact on the Acquisition of Complex Sentences

After all the raw scores were transformed into z-scores, a composite z-score was computed by averaging the CCRST score and the reaction time. It should be mentioned here that, before the transformation of the composite z-score, a correlational analysis was performed between the z-score of the reaction time and the z-score of the CCRST, a significant negative correlation was yielded between them (r = -.90), this indicated that the higher reaction time reflects not only slower response but also low accuracy, thus the z-score of the reaction time was multiplied by (-1) before it was averaged with the z-score of the CCRST. So was done to the score of the TTCSs. The descriptive statistics of the composite z-scores for the CCRST, and all types of complex sentences are provided in table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics of composite z-scores

Composite Z-score	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S. D.
Sentence with extraction	34	-2.06	2.24	.00	1.02
Sentence without extract	34	-2.16	2.40	.00	1.05
Total	34	-3.12	4.64	.00	1.92
CCRST	34	-.48	.59	.00	.23

Following the transformation of the z-scores for different types of complex sentences in the TTCSs, a reliability analysis was run for the test, and the Cronbach's alpha of the reliability is .72, which means that the test is reasonably reliable.

Continually, a correlational analysis was performed to identify the relationships among WM, analytic ability and rote memory. The detailed statistics are listed in table 4 below.

Table 4

Correlations among WM, RM and analytic ability

	WM	**Analytic ability**	**RM**
WM	1	-.03	.16
		.88	.38
Analytic ability	-.03	1	.01
	.88		.95
RM	.16	.01	1
	.38	.95	

The results indicated that neither the correlation between WM and analytic ability (r = -.03), nor the correlation between WM and rote memory (r = .16) reaches a significant level; this suggests that they are distinct abilities. It is supposed that the dissociation between WM and rote memory is chiefly attributed to that WM contains both processing and storage capacity, while rote memory only contains storage capacity. The nonsignificant correlation between WM and analytic ability also gives hard evidence to the proposal that WM is a different component of traditional language aptitude.

Finally, another correlational analysis was carried out to determine the relationships between WM, analytical ability, rote memory on the one end and the acquisition of the two types of complex sentences (+extraction condition and -extraction condition) and the sentences as a whole group by merging them on the other end. Table 5 presents the details of the multiple correlations.

Table 5

Correlations among WM, analytic ability, RM, and the acquisition of complex sentences

	Sentence with extraction	**Sentence without extraction**	**Total**
WM	.46(**)	.51(**)	.52(**)
	.01	.00	.00
Analytic ability	.09	.10	.10

	.62	.57	.56
RM	-.23	-.11	-.18
	.19	.54	.31

** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level

Significant correlations are obtained between the score of the CCRST and the scores of the TTCSs in sentence with extraction (r = .46), sentence without extraction (r = .51) and the total (r = .52) respectively. So it can be generalized that WM plays a substantial role in the acquisition of two types of complex sentences, and when the two types of sentences are merged as a whole group, WM is even more closely correlated with it.

On the other hand, no significant correlation was identified between analytic ability or rote memory and the acquisition of complex sentences (r = .10, and r = -.18). The results suggested that though analytic ability and rote memory of FLA are good predictors of learning simple grammatical knowledge at the elementary level, their prediction in the outcome of learning complex syntactic rules is not satisfactory. The results are congruous with the findings by Hummel (2009), whose regression analysis revealed that FLA did not predict L2 proficiency in the higher proficiency subgroup. It is posited that the acquisition of complex syntactic rules of a second language involves the task complexity, native language transfer, learners' L2 proficiency, and social factors etc (Gass& Lee, 2007; Juffs, 2004, 2006), and those factors interact with each other to determine the success of the acquisition in which rote memory and analytic ability may only play a minor role.

The Effects of Three Levels of WM on the Acquisition of Complex Sentences

Firstly, the WM was grouped into three levels: high, medium and low based on participants' z-score of the CCRST. Among the total 34 participants, 12 were assigned to high WM, 11 medium WM and another 11 low WM. One-way ANOVA was performed to determine whether the three levels of WM were significantly different with each other. The results revealed that the high, medium and low WM groups differed with each other significantly (F = 40.54, p < .01 for each comparison). The multiple comparisons are displayed in table 6.

Table 6

Multiple comparisons for three levels of WM

WM	WM	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
High	Medium	.26(*)	.052	.00
	Low	.46 (*)	.052	.00
Medium	High	-.26(*)	.052	.00
	Low	.21(*)	.053	.00
Low	High	-.46 (*)	.052	.00
	Medium	-.21(*)	.053	.00

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Then another one-way ANOVA was computed to identify whether there was any difference among groups with high, medium and low WM capacity in the processing of complex sentences. The results of the one-way ANOVA provide substantial differences among three groups of learners in the processing of total complex sentences (F = 5.85, p < .01). The multiple comparisons are presented in table 7 below.

Table 7

Multiple comparisons for the acquisition of complex sentences

Dependent Variable	WM	WM	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
TTCSs	High	Medium	1.92 (*)	.71	.04
		Low	2.21(*)	.71	.01
	Medium	High	-1.92 (*)	.71	.04
		Low	.29	.72	.93
	Low	High	-2.21(*)	.71	.01
		Medium	-.29	.72	.93

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The multiple comparisons revealed that the high WM learners are substantially superior not only to low WM learners in the acquisition of the complex sentences ($F = 2.21$, $p < .05$), but also to the medium WM learners at a significant level ($F = 1.92$, $p < .05$); However, the medium WM learners did not outperform the low WM learners significantly ($F = .29$, $P > .05$). The results were partly consistent with the findings in the preceding experiment in that the learners with WM at a medium or above level performed significantly better than the learners with low WM in the acquisition of simple syntactic rules. This finding implies that on the one hand, WM does have some effects on the acquisition of complex syntactic rules, on the other hand, to demonstrate the advantage of high WM, two conditions have to be fulfilled, one is that WM capacity of learners must be above the medium level; the other is the gap of WM capacity between the compared groups has to be big enough because the acquisition of complex rules has a very high demanding on the affecting factors.

Summary

This experiment investigated the effect of FLA and WM on the acquisition of complex syntactic rules in the case of sentences with double or more embedded clauses as well as the relationship between WM and FLA. The major findings of the study were recapitulated as follows:

(1) WM is substantially correlated with the learning of complex syntactic rules, whereas rote memory and analytic ability are not. This finding furthers the preceding experimental study by demonstrating that WM plays a significant role not only in the processing of simple grammatical rules but also in the very complex rules for advanced language learners.

(2) WM is not significantly correlated with rote memory and analytic ability, two subsections of FLA; this means that they are distinct abilities. Since WM is not a reiteration of analytic ability or rote memory, the study of the role of WM in SLA becomes more significant.

(3) Learners with high WM outperform low and medium WM learners in the processing of complex sentences, but no significant difference was found between medium and low learners. The result indicates that WM does have a substantial effect on the processing of syntactic rules, but the superiority of high WM capacity can only be realized on condition that it has to approach a certain level, otherwise, its role in the processing of complex

tasks must be limited.

General Discussion

As Daneman & Carpenter (1980) suggested, WM capacity is a crucial sources of individual differences in language comprehension. The quantitative differences in WM capacity as the source of individual differences assumed that good and poor readers are making the same computations, but they differ in the speed and efficiency with which they can make those computations (p. 464). They found that the analysis of readers' errors also revealed the qualitative differences in the processes of good or poor readers. How differences in WM capacity can result in qualitative differences can be exemplified in the chunking process. The good readers have more functional WM capacity available for the demands of chunking, and it is more likely that they have more concepts and relations from preceding parts of the text still active in their WM. As a result, they shall be able to detect the more interrelations among these concepts, and to note their relative importance. Subsequently the presence of different interrelations can allow different inferences and generalizations to be drawn.

Likewise, Ellis (1996) argued that SLA of grammar, lexis, collocations and idioms are all determined by individual differences in learners' ability to remember simple verbal strings in order, and the interactions between short-term and long-term phonological memory systems allows chunking and the turning of language systems better to represent structural information for particular languages. Ellis & Sinclair (1996) concluded that attainment of fluency, both in native and foreign languages, involves the acquisition of memorized sequences of language. This view is also supported by Just & Carpenter's (1992) argument:

> Individual differences in WM capacity for language can account for qualitative and quantitative differences for college-age adults in several aspects of language comprehension. One aspect is syntactic modularity: The larger capacity of some individuals permits interaction among syntactic and pragmatic information, so that their syntactic processes are not informationally encapsulated. Another aspect is syntactic ambiguity: The larger capacity of some individuals permits them to maintain multiple interpretations. (p. 122)

In other words, when lower span readers spend more resources storing new information, they have less resources processing information when the resource demands of the task exceeded the available supply, thus efficiency of the processing is reduced.

The findings also indicated that when the capacity of WM reaches the medium level, no significant difference is found concerning the effect of WM on the acquisition of RCs between the medium WM group and the high WM group. This result may be attributed to three reasons. Firstly, all learners can acquire basic linguistic knowledge either in comprehension or production so long as their WM capacity is not too low. As a component of FLA, WM plays the similar role as intelligence does. Secondly, the study of FLA has shown that there are two orientations of foreign language acquisition: linguistic-oriented acquisition and memory-oriented acquisition. Learners of the former type tend to stress the analysis of language in the course of their study, while learners of the latter type pay more attention to the linguistic module and effective memory. Therefore, learners with ordinary memory but strong analytic ability can also achieve great success in L2 acquisition, the difference lays in that they achieve L2 success in different ways (Skehan, 1989). Thirdly, the acquisition of syntactic knowledge is subject to many factors, of which WM is only one of them. As previously reviewed, the language proficiency, analytic ability and task complexity all have an effect on the acquisition of RCs. In the actual learning of language, learners may use different strategies to compensate for the inadequacy of one aspect.

The results revealed that WM, analytic ability and rote memory do not correlate with each other at a significant level; this suggests that they are distinct abilities. As they are different abilities, it is reasonable that no significant correlations among them are found. Furthermore, the distinction of WM from FLA makes the study of WM more valuable and significant. If WM is identical with the components of the FLA, its value in research would be greatly diminished. It is the nature of being predictive in L2 acquisition and distinguishable from FLA that makes WM a potential, even a crucial component of FLA in its future research as was suggested by many researchers (e.g., Carroll, 1990; DeKeyser & Koeth, 2011; Dörnyei, 2005; Miyaki & Friedman, 1998; Sawyer & Ranta, 2001; Skehan, 2002, 2012).

No significant correlation was identified between analytic ability or rote memory and the acquisition of complex sentences. The findings indicate that though analytic ability and rote memory of FLA are good predictors of L2 learning at the elementary and intermediate levels, but their prediction in the outcome of learning complex syntactic rules is not satisfactory. The results also supported Carroll's (1990) proposal that abilities for early and advanced language learning may be different, thereby he suggested that future research might focus on abilities that will possibly be relevant in the later stages of foreign language attainment like translation

and simultaneous interpretation. However, the result of the present study suggests that WM plays a substantial role in the acquisition of complex sentences. The learners with high WM not only performed significantly better than the learners with low WM in the acquisition of complex sentences, but also outperformed the learners with medium WM. The findings strengthened the notion that WM is truly an important factor affecting the acquisition of complex sentences. The chief explanation might be attributed to the heavier demanding of the capacity in the processing of more complex tasks. As was reported by Just & Carpenter (1992), performance differences among college student readers of different WM capacity are smaller when the comprehension task is easy and larger when it is demanding, and they assumed that "capacity limitations affect performance only if the resource demands of the task exceed the available supply" (Just & Carpenter, 1992, p. 145); besides, according to the resource-based theory (Gibson, 1998), more storage and integration resources will be required if the task is more difficulty. With regard to the TTCSs in the present study, it is a highly demanding task, thus WM played an important role in completing it. When the test includes more sets of sentences to be translated, the processing load of the task increases accordingly, and the reaction time may prolong simultaneously. In that case, the superiority of high WM became more evident; consequently, the high WM learners outperformed both the low WM learners and the medium WM learners remarkably.

Other more effective FLA tests need to be developed to measure the outcomes of learning complex linguistic knowledge at the advance level, as was claimed by Carroll (1990):

> In my research, high verbal ability was generally not a good predictor of early language learning success, but it is possible that it would be a good predictor of success in reaching higher levels of proficiency. Similar findings might be made for other abilities that are not good predictors of early success. (p. 24)

Owing to WM capacity substantially affecting the acquisition of both simple and complex syntactic rules according to the two experiments in the present study, it could be a key component in the construction of new FLA.

To summarize, the two empirical studies reinforced the two hypotheses that (1) WM plays a certain role in the acquisition of both simple and complex syntactic rules, and it does not significantly correlate with rote memory and analytic ability of FLA; these indicate that WM can be a crucial component of FLA, and (2) rote memory and analytic ability measured

respectively by the Paired Associates section and the Words in Sentences section of the MLAT have no substantial effects on the acquisition of complex syntactic rules, but WM does, this enhances the value of the research on WM, as was suggested by Dörnyei (2005), and Sawyer & Ranta (2001).

Conclusions

Implications for Language Teaching

There are a variety of practical reasons to research into FLA, for example, Dörnyei (2005) suggested that aptitude tests can be used to select potential language learners, allocate teaching resources, evaluating language teaching programs, and tailor instruction to learners' aptitude. In like manner, Skehan (2002) pointed out aptitude information can be applied to achieve such educational aims as selection, counseling, remediation and instructional modification; and the major potential area for educational application is instructional modification, because it offers the prospect of increasing the overall effectiveness of instruction. Two lines of investigation can be further explored in this direction: one aims to remediate learners' weaknesses by stretching their ability through training in learner sensitive instruction, the other is to circumvent the weakness by catering to learners' strengths (Sawyer and Ranta, 2001). Wesche (1981) once investigated the interaction between the type of learners and the pattern of instruction. The results of her study have demonstrated that matching aptitude patterns with certain instructional methods results in more efficient language learning in general. This leads to the assumption that learner types are suitable for different methods, just as Skehan (1986, p. 93) concluded, "The most significant generalization is that 'there are horses for courses'. The applied linguist's task is that of identifying the type of horse and the type of course which go well together."

Also, learners with strengths in patterns of task-related abilities may be more suitable for learning from or practice on one task than another, in other words, learner's FLA and WM may also interact with L2 task characteristics to systematically affect their language output, uptake and learning effect. Niwa's (2002, as cited in Robinson, 2007) research finding indicates that as L2 tasks increase in complexity, IDs in cognitive abilities increasingly differentiate performance to posit the possible relationship between them. Thus the research on the interaction between tasks and learner types based on their FLA, such as how to maximize the benefits to each type of learners by manipulating task complexity, task

condition and/or task difficulty, will be a very interesting and promising area for language pedagogy.

Limitations and Future Directions

On account of the characteristics and the context of the present study, the following limitations must be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the study.

The sample size in Experimental Study Two may be too small, so the results should be taken as tentative and worthy of further exploration. The original research design included two classes of students totaling 50 numbers, but the research consisted of three tests administered in two sessions with one session in the regularly scheduled class time and the other in free time, consequently, each time a few students were absent from the test or only finished parts of the test, therefore only 34 students' scores were put into the final analyses, future studies need to consider larger sample of participants.

The present study investigated the acquisition of simple syntactic rules and complex syntactic rules, but these rules were measured to participants in the decontextualized situation, this means that participants' contextualized ability and pragmatic competence were not covered in the study. The two abilities may play an important role in the acquisition of complex sentences as suggested by some researchers (King & Just 1991; Skehan 1989; Ying 2004). Thereby, future research might take into account the role of WM in the processing of syntactic information in relation to semantic, pragmatic or textual information.

The findings of this study came from the investigations of Chinese learners of ESL in the Chinese context. In view of the differences in native language, learning conditions and learners, the results of this study may not be observed in other learning contexts. Further studies might wish to investigate the role of learners' native language, other learner characteristics, learning conditions and their interplay.

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Collocations Extra: Multi-level Activities for Natural English

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Collocations Extra is one of the recent volumes of work within the field of vocabulary instruction that aims at developing language learners' competence of collocations. The book, primarily published for the teacher's use, highly features in the EFL/ESL pedagogical syllabus in the sense that it affords great opportunities for the production of natural-sounding speech and writing, hence contributing to the students' greater linguistic, metalinguistic, and cultural intelligibility. The book is intended to serve as a supplementary resource to prime students from elementary through advanced levels to become fluent English speakers and writers. It has been designed by the authors as a template for providing the students with the language they really need to produce with confidence.

This volume appears in 18 three-module units framed by topic and designed for three different course levels, i.e., elementary/pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced. It opens with a clear table of contents followed by a map that outlines the main sections throughout the book and closes with photocopiable word lists of collocations arranged in alphabetical order and by topic/level. The book is equipped with a CD-ROM packed with printable worksheets that allow teachers and students to create games adapted for further practice of the collocations. A table is also included right after the wordlists to facilitate game search and selection in the CD-ROM. The lessons are each presented for *circa* 45 minutes and according to a set of step-by-step plans and with a range of miscellaneous tasks and materials incorporated into photocopiable worksheets.

Collocations Extra is proud of its presentation model, offering the lessons in four developmental stages (Warmer, Input, Practice, and Follow-up). The *Warmer* stage, also

referred to as the warm-up stage, introduces the lesson topic highly building upon the pupils' declarative knowledge, seeking to engage students through pair or group work in a number of problem-solving activities typically based on the ready-made worksheets. The *Input* stage exposes students to a set of 10 to 18 common collocations throughout lessons, aiming at raising the students' awareness of the situations where these linguistic combinations are used, especially through certain teacher-directed activities. The *Practice* stage means to help students to enrich what they have already taken in by engaging in activities through controlled processing, where, as Ellis (2003) put it, the students' conscious attention is normally required to perform within the instructor's mediation. Finally, the *Follow-up*, or output, stage is assumed to involve automatic processing of the tasks; that is, the teacher provides a variety of contexts where the students go through a number of engaging activities to restructure the learnt knowledge over trials and reorganize the knowledge into new ideas and forms while minimizing his/her mediation. An important feature of all the stages is that the presentations vary in complexity as the level advances in modules.

Collocations Extra has a number of strengths. The salient feature of the book is its diversity of task types and activities through lessons, which not only permits a great deal of cognitive involvement from individual learners, but also helps them to take more roles in the construction and co-construction of meaningful performances. Provision of a CD-ROM full of adaptable activities aimed at maximizing students' awareness of the target language conventions has made it a useful material of its own kind. Another strength of the book is that the collocations appear in themes. Such a thematic approach to teaching word chunks, which serve multiple interests and needs of students, can also meet multiple objectives. It can, for example, develop students' L2 vocabulary skills, contribute to their language growth in specific topics, help them to accelerate their linguistic *and* communicative fluency, and allow for the integration of the four language skills. More importantly, the book does not require teachers to approach the units in the given order. This will probably provide opportunities for incorporating the lessons in topic and level into those in the coursebook. This will also help pupils to consolidate the knowledge of the target collocational chunks.

The book also has its own drawbacks. Most of the collocations, such as *watch a film*, *big family*, *play football*, *late for work*, *go to school*, *best friend*, etc., are predictable to the learners of the elementary/pre-intermediate level and do not need any attempts in the input stage to 'teach them in a thorough way', as the authors (p. 9) claim. These collocations can be

acquired in pre-elementary coursebooks popular in English language schools worldwide. The second shortcoming is that the authors have structured the lessons with tasks that focus only on the psycholinguistic processes inducing learners to engage in certain types of language use and mental processing in the classroom. Therefore, contrary to the authors' belief (p. 10) that students can use the collocations "in a free way", the non-realworld performances cannot lead easily to the automatization of the collocational use because collocations are culturally-driven and therefore demand more socio-cultural contexts to take effect.

Shortcomings aside, *Collocations Extra* still has the potential for meeting students and teachers' needs and objectives in different ELT programs. It can foster students' native-like linguistic and communicative competence of the co-occurring lexical items. Moreover, it can offer English teachers opportunities to contextualize the classroom activities with collocationally-structured tasks, creating a motivating and pleasing atmosphere of instruction. Since the recent corpus-based research stipulates practicing collocations in ELT classrooms (see Stubbs, 2004), it is strongly suggested that the language schools include this user-friendly volume in their regular language programs.

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1. It is explicitly acknowledged that the present review has not been previously published or is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

2. Bio Data

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Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching with Technology
Thomas, M. and Reinders, H. (2010). (Eds.). London & New York: Continuum.

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The potential synergy between task-based language teaching and learning and the use of computer technology investigating language learners' real-world target tasks in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been highlighted by recent research. *Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching with Technology*, a new edited book by Thomas and Reinders (2010) is a response to the growing need for further research into the use of task-based language teaching and learning in CALL. It provides an in-depth exploration of the synergies between second language (L2) task-based approaches and CALL. It examines methods in which CALL plays a pivotal role in task-based language learning and teaching. It seeks to provide better understanding of how to design and implement tasks with diverse technologies to foster language learning. Although not specified by the editors, intended audience can be researchers, language teachers, and graduate students interested in TBLT and CALL. The book focuses on recent research rather than practical guidelines.

The eleven chapters of the book are divided into two parts: 1) "Research on Tasks in CALL" (Part 1) "maps out the broader theoretical questions shared by L2 task-based research and their influence on computer-mediated communication"; and 2) "Applying Technology-Mediated Tasks" (Part 2) for "design, development and application" (p. 8).
Chapter 1 explains the construct of tasks and technology as an introduction and presents a justification for the whole book with a criticism of the way technology-mediated tasks have been treated in the mainstream TBLT literature.

The following five chapters (Chapters 2-6) in Part 1 lay out the diverse theoretical issues in computer-mediated task-based research. In Chapter 2, Müller-Hartmann and Ditfurth present studies on computer-mediated communication (CMC) in TBLT. In the third chapter,

studies of task design in network-based CALL are explored by Peterson. Schulze, in Chapter 4, highlights the domain of intelligent CALL (ICALL), and explores its integration with task-based design. In Chapter 5, Stockwell's study of multiple modes of CMC-based communication tasks is reported. In Chapter 6, Collentine explores the issues of task design and language learners' linguistic complexity focusing on task conditions.

Part 2 (Chapters 7-10) highlights task-design and its implementation in diverse virtual learning environments in different contexts as well as teacher development for TBLT with technology. Hampel, in Chapter 7, reviews two studies on a three-level task development model in a virtual learning environment. In Chapter 8, Raith and Hegelheimer examine the role of Web 2.0 tools in supporting teacher development. Reeder, in Chapter 9, demonstrates a case study of ICALL software which deals with virtual reality. In Chapter 10, Hauck highlights task design and implementation in TBLT based on four-way telecollaboration projects.

Task-Based Language Learning and Teaching with Technology is written in a very accessible style although those without TBLT and CALL background may have some difficulty with the various theoretical and technical abbreviations. Compared to previous edited volumes on TBLT (e.g., Ellis, 2003; Samuda & Bygate, 2008; Van den Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009), this book sheds more light on the importance of technology-mediated tasks in language learning and teaching. This book excels in providing a comprehensive look into up-to-date practice, research, and theory in task-based learning. One of its primary advantages is that it explores highly diverse environments and practices incorporating cutting edge technologies with language learning and teaching.

However, this book would have benefited from the following two areas. First, the text's strong preference for the 'weaker' definition of TBLT (p.4) over the so-called 'stronger' version as suggested by Van den Brandenet al. (2009), may help readers to recognize an already existing and developing computer-mediated activities and task in CALL. However, by widening the scope of a task definition in CALL, it gives the impression that almost anything, from an information gap activity to a fill-the-gap grammar exercise, can be called a 'task'. Second, and more importantly, this book would be enriched by adequately making the most of the 'stronger' version of TBLT in which 'task' is proposed as a primary unit to characterize the three angles of the basic educational triangle: educational goal, pedagogic activity, and assessment which can make CALL more authentic. The research topics in the book are

confined to task design environment sequencing and implementation rather than triangulating the three angles in TBLT.

Despite the minor criticisms, the book is an enlightening collection of research papers on CALL and TBLT that especially focus on task design and its implementation through the use of diverse technologies. The value of this book lies in its provision of the most recent empirical findings and theoretical foundations to realize the potential synergies of CALL and TBLT. Based on the findings from this book, I concur that the academic community will need to make every endeavor to advance technology-mediated tasks to realize the fullest sense of TBLT from 'weaker' to 'stronger' version (p. 219); from micro-level to macro-processes (p. 4) integrating computer technology, so that tasks can be more finely tuned to disciplinary, cultural, linguistic, and learner differences.

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Bio Data

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Teaching and Researching Autonomy (second edition)
Phil Benson. Pearson: Pearson Education Limited, 2011. Pp. xi + 283.

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Phil Benson's *Teaching and Researching Autonomy (Second Edition)* is a fully revised and updated follow-up to his widely read 2001 first edition, which proved to be an invaluable tool to introducing language teachers and learners to the concept of autonomous learning. The new edition, released in late 2011, boasts several new topic and research additions, as well as hundreds of new references. Although the first edition has been available for more than 10 years, this review will treat the book as a whole, covering all aspects and sections. This will ensure that both new and old readers alike can determine if this book is something that is interesting and relevant to them. Autonomous learning has seen a steady increase in exposure, research, and overall interest since the first edition was released, and so it has become necessary for an updated review of a book that serves as an introductory exploration into the past, present, and future directions of teaching and researching autonomy.

Teaching and Researching Autonomy is broken up into four major sections, which are in turn further divided into subsections and chapters that explore the various covered topics in a logical, comprehensive order. The four major sections are: a historical introduction to autonomy in both language and interdisciplinary educational fields, a summary of pragmatic approaches to autonomous language learning, an overview of learner autonomy research, and an extensive list of up-to-date references concerning autonomous learning in language education.

Section 1, "What is autonomy?" outlines the origins and history of autonomy in language learning, discusses various definitions of autonomy, explains why it is an increasingly important issue in language education, and explores notions of control and its implications as a natural aspect of autonomous learning. This section, which takes up nearly half of the book,

does a thorough job of detailing the origin and evolution of autonomous learning, and helps the reader to understand how characteristics of autonomy can be identified and defined in a language learning context. The function of the first section is to guide the reader through the historical evolution of autonomy, and provide numerous opportunities for curious researchers to branch out into various directions for more in-depth discussions of topics that interest them.

Section 2 deals with "Autonomy in practice," leading the reader through various examples of current research theory and practical application. Many different sub-fields are explored in detail: resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, curriculum-based, and teacher-based approaches are all given ample coverage. Benson offers brief accounts of a wide variety of research that informs the reader of learning materials, technologies, behavioral and psychological aspects of learners, classroom planning and evaluation techniques, and ways for implementing an autonomous atmosphere via curriculum development.

The different research angles and pragmatic approaches detailed in the second section will help language professionals find ways to integrate autonomous theory into practical applications that will mesh with his or her current situation. Each specific chapter includes examples that offer evidence for the effectiveness of various strategies aimed at providing students with more control concerning their language learning. Benson objectively demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses of each type of practical approach, leaving the reader to decide which techniques will work best for their desired goals and aims.

The final section of the book, "Researching autonomy," describes potential future directions for action research in autonomous learning, detailing six specific case studies in the hopes of demonstrating how language teachers can help to increase understanding and add to the growing wealth of information on learner autonomy. This section stresses the necessity for more practical studies that can generate data to help provide more positive evidence for the effects of autonomy on effective language learning.

Teaching and Researching Autonomy is an excellent guide for educators and researchers looking to learn more about autonomous theories and methods for practically applying them. It could be said that the book itself is more intent on covering a wide breadth of research at the expense of in-depth analysis of specific studies, but that would be missing the main point of the text. Benson's 2nd edition of *Teaching and Researching Autonomy* is aimed at providing researchers and educators with access to a wide variety of entry points that can be

followed at leisure into more exhaustive explorations of autonomy-related topics. The 27 pages of over 500 autonomy-related references in the book's index alone is worth the price of the book, and of course the discussions of the various studies mentioned in each section are valuable resources for teachers who are looking to either design their own studies or think about ways to introduce autonomous theory into their own classrooms or programs.

Benson's book is a well-organized, comprehensible collection of theories, ideas, and research related to autonomous learning. The second edition of this book does a fine job of grouping such a wide-ranging array of research into a single, accessible collection. The form and function of the book complement each other via a streamlined design that allows readers to quickly identify and access existing research in a field that is growing in size and recognition by the year. Considering its goal as a tool to be used to help introduce readers to the theories and practical applications of autonomous learning, *Teaching and Researching Autonomy* is successful. Benson's book has become a valuable text that will continue to help researchers and teachers alike in their endeavors to create educational environments and design research studies that foster autonomous learning.

This book review has not been previously published, and is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

Bio Data

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English for Professional and Academic Purposes

M.F. Ruiz-Garrido, J.C. Palmer-Silveira, I. Fortanet-Gomez. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010. 237 pages, ISBN: 978-90-420-2955-2

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English for Professional and Academic Purposes (EPAP, hereafter) aims to offer an overview of several topics within the field of discourse analysis applied to English in academic and professional domains. The volume includes13 chapters on current trends in EPAP and is concerned with two main areas: Academic purposes (EAP) and professional purposes (EPP). EAP refers to students' academic needs and EPP refers to the actual needs of professionals.

The volume is divided into three sections. Section one includes research on discourse, from very specific language features to more generic studies based on academic genres. The second centers on research and teaching practices in several professional areas, and the third highlights the application of research to the teaching and learning the language of academic and professional settings.

The first section consists of four chapters which focus on the academic writing of international researchers (non-native speakers).The first chapter compares the use of phrasal verbs in Sri Lankan English (SLE) and British English (BE) in academic and non-academic writing. The results suggest that there is a difference in the use of phrasal verbs in non-academic writing in Sri Lanka and British English. However in more formal academic writing genres, SLE remains close to British academic writing.

The second chapter is a contrastive analysis of the use of epistemic lexical verbs by NS and NNS writers in English. It has been claimed that NNS speaker may be at a disadvantage because they do not have a good mastery of frequency, function and pragmatic intentions in the use of epistemic lexical verbs. The results also show that academic English is subject to culture-specific variability.

In the third chapter, the authors present an analysis of acknowledgements in four research contexts: Venezuela, Spain, France, and the USA. The results show that acknowledgments are much less frequent and much shorter in non-English medium journals which seem to be due to cultural factors rather than academic conventions.

Chapter four deals with the contrastive analysis of academic writing in English and Spanish. The suggested approach could be applicable to research into English for research publication purposes undertaken in relation to other languages used in similar contexts.

The second section, discourse analysis within a professional framework, focuses on the fact that all the contributions have based their efforts on the study of English language arising naturally within the professional setting analyzed.

The first chapter explores the discourse of English in the professional context of Swedish industrial doctoral students. The author examined students' perceptions of the differences between the professional and academic writing environments and the varying discourses associated with them. The results show that reports need to be focused, carefully written in the 'empiricist repertoire', and explicitly meet the expectations of an international audience, and written in a 'contingent repertoire' and implicitly refer to the shared company environment.

In the second chapter, the writers examine how patients receive information on the type of medicines they have to use. The study suggests that most patients tend to rely heavily on their physicians, whereas other sources of information do not seem to lead to the same levels of adherence to prescribed medication regimens. The last chapter of this section focuses on self- reference in corporate discourse. It is claimed that identity construction is not discourse-specific, but genre-specific, and that identity is co-constructed differently depending on the specific community the genre targets.

The final section focuses on the teaching of EPAP. It contains five chapters, three dealing with academic discourse teaching, and the other two with professional English tuition. The first chapter focuses on evaluating and designing materials for ESP classrooms. It is argued that the teacher plays a role in the design, development and usage of the material. The chapter concludes with sample materials, which were designed with comments by the author to serve as a practical guide for developers of ESP materials.

Chapter two deals with academic discourse genre and how to teach it based on a recently published book. A top-down approach, moving from the macro-structure of abstracts to their micro elements, results in an analysis-awareness-acquisition sequence.

Chapter three explores the difference between textual analysis and rhetorical analysis through a pre-test/post-test experimental study. The findings highlight the complex nature of teaching the essay genre, prompting EFL instructors to draw on both results of (a) the rhetorical analysis and (b) linguistic and textual analyses when teaching writing.

The teaching of writing on discipline-specific academic courses including nursing, midwifery and social work is examined in chapter four. The chapter concludes with an examination of implications for teaching discipline-specific writing.

The final chapter of this section deals with English for science and engineering. The conclusion stresses the importance of English education in the sciences and engineering and includes some recommendations on how previous information can be successfully applied into other contexts.

In sum, the volume provides outstanding research on EPAP and its applications in hundreds of academic and professional settings. More specifically, this volume is of particular value to EPAP professionals and ESL/EFL teachers working in related settings because it offers suggestions on how to create materials, how to teach the writing of abstracts or essays better, and how to teach different genres in discipline-specific writing.

One of the shortcomings of the book is that it used highly specialized language and it assumes background knowledge on the part of the readers about the subject. In some chapters, little information on methodological procedures is provided, thus making replication studies rather problematic. Furthermore, the generalizability of findings in some studies is difficult due to their use of small corpora or case-study approaches.

The submission has not been previously published or is not being considered for publication elsewhere.

Bio Data

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