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PREFACE

The Penang English Language Learning and Teaching Association (PELLTA) organised its 9th international English language teaching conference, iELT-Con 2019 from the 17 – 19 April 2019 in George Town, Penang with the theme “English Language Learning and Teaching in The Digital Age”. It was an extremely fulfilling two and half days with many opportunities for professional discourse and social networking. Paper presentations were 30 minute-sessions while workshops were allocated 60 minutes. A total of 6 keynotes, 2 featured speaker sessions, 46 papers and 21 workshops were delivered with participants from 15 countries.

This conference proceedings contain 16 peer-reviewed full papers which were submitted after the conference and we would like to share their research findings and insights with all our readers. These articles illustrate clearly that leveraging technology in this digital era has definite benefits for learners and teachers in various contexts such as in Chapter 1 Teaching And Learning English Through The Use Of Tablets At Lower Primary Level: Insights From The Mauritian Experience by Pascal Nadal and Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen, Chapter 2 Cultivating Equity In the Digital Age: The Use of Equity Maps App In Enhancing Equitable Education by Melanie Kang Yee Sun and David C.E. Tneh in Malaysia and Chapter 5 Using Digital Storytelling To Improve English Speaking Fluency Of EFL Students in Thailand by Roongrawan Sawangwong who focused on high school students. In Chapter 16 Getting Students to Do Systematic, Effective Independent Vocabulary Study, the authors Charles Jannuzi and Robert Dykes share ideas on how they leverage the technology of smart phone apps to enhance their tertiary level students’ vocabulary in Japan.

Besides technology, some papers also foreground other non-digital approaches that contribute to effective teaching and learning. In Chapter 3 Good Practices Vs Best Practices In Teaching English From Grades 3 To 6 : An Approach To The Portuguese Setting, Ana Márcia Pires compares good and best practices in Portugal with the aim of leading schools and teachers into critical analysis of their own performance, self-review, stressing the relevance of the teachers’ collaborative practices, organization of learning resources and the classroom learning environment. Meanwhile Florence Toh Haw Ching and Agnes Liau Wei Lin, in Chapter 4 Learning Financial Literacy Through Literature, focus on financial literacy, a relevant skill in today’s world of multiliteracies. In Chapter 7 Creating Opportunities for Language Use Through Outreach Activities, Kamariah Samsuddin and Sheila Ramasamy highlight task-based activities and fun learning in their outreach programmes in rural Malaysia. And, in Chapter 12 Improving Communicative Speaking Skill Of Nursing Students In ESP Using Catur Jantra And String In Classroom Discussions, Ni Komang Purwaningsih and Si Putu Agung Ayu Pertwi Dewi share their study on using a chess game and string among their nursing students in Indonesia.

Finally, we thank all presenters for their contribution to iELT-Con 2019 and to this conference proceedings. We would also like to express our gratitude to the panel of reviewers for their time and invaluable comments in reviewing the articles. We are especially indebted to Professor Emeritus Tony Wright and Associate Professor Tamas Kiss, who not only helped us in the reviewing process but are never short of ideas to help us improve.

Rovena Elaine Capel Chair & Editor
Quah Seok Hoon Editor
This Proceedings of PELLTA’s 9th. International English Language Teaching Conference (iELT-Con) 2019 would not have materialised without the contribution of the panel of reviewers. We thank the following people for their time, effort and very helpful comments that helped the authors to improve on their papers.

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Teaching And Learning English Through The Use Of Tablets At Lower Primary Level: Insights From The Mauritian Experience

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Abstract

The teaching of English in a multilingual context where the language is spoken by barely three percent of the population and encountered mostly in the formal context of the classroom, is often a daunting task. Such is the case in Mauritius, where teachers constantly bemoan the difficulties encountered in the teaching of English due to the learners’ lack of proficiency. As part of a major educational reform – the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education – in 2015, the use of tablets as a pedagogical tool was introduced at lower primary level. This paper is based on an ongoing study that aims to examine the impact of this tool on the teaching and learning of English in Grade One. The study is being carried out in over 40 Catholic primary schools across the island. In the first phase, data was generated through questionnaires administered to all the teachers who had taught in Grade One in 2018, and focus group discussions were conducted with a smaller sample of respondents. Preliminary findings revealed that pupils greatly enjoyed the experience of learning independently and without really realising that a structured process was ongoing. Also, teachers’ initial apprehensions regarding the use of tablets were overcome as they witnessed the effectiveness of this digital device. Interesting insights into the effectiveness of tablets for the teaching of phonics, a new feature in the domestic English language curriculum, were obtained as part of the preliminary findings. These will be further examined during the second phase of the research.

*Keywords: Tablets in learning, ICT in education, tablets in Mauritius education, tablets and pedagogy*

Introduction

This paper is based on an ongoing research that explores the use of tablets for the teaching and learning of English at lower primary level in Mauritian schools. The use of tablets as a pedagogical tool is a relatively new phenomenon in the local context. It was introduced following a policy decision in the context of an educational reform – the Nine Year Continuous Basic
Education – initiated in 2015 and still underway. The study aims to generate insights into the usefulness of this tool for language teaching and learning and is driven by the following research question: How does the use of newly introduced tablets impact on the teaching and learning of English at lower primary level? Teachers from over forty Catholic schools were chosen as participants, given their role as the main agents who transact policy decisions and the National Curriculum in the classroom. Before delving into the study, an overview of the teaching of English within the Mauritian context is provided to bring out the significance of the study.

The teaching of English in Mauritius: The ‘Policy vs Reality’ Conundrum

With a population of approximately 1.3 million people, Mauritius houses a diversity of languages that results from its colonial past. In addition to Mauritian Kreol, the mother tongue of over 80% of the population, French is valorised as a prestigious language connoting high status and is spoken extensively (Statistics Mauritius, 2011). English, despite being the home language of only about 3% of the population is — as a typical instance of language as capital — the language of administration and parliament, as well as the medium of instruction. Additionally, a number of ‘ancestral languages’ (that is languages such as Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Urdu, Modern Chinese, Marathi and Arabic, brought by the forefathers who immigrated to the island) are prized for their cultural value and ethnic affiliation even if their use in everyday life is not predominant. All these languages are taught right from primary level; English and French as core subjects and the other languages as optional subjects.

The young Mauritian learners are thus exposed to a number of languages at school and in their home environment, and have to formally learn three languages – namely English, French and an ancestral language – as soon as they are initiated into schooling. The teaching of English, the focus of this study, is particularly problematic because of its relative absence from the children’s everyday lives. Most of them only encounter this language in the formal context of the classroom, where the prevailing tendency is to emphasise reading, writing and grammar due to the performance-oriented/exam-driven education system. For years, the teaching approach has remained traditional and teacher-directed. The most common reason attributed to this by practitioners is that pupils encounter many difficulties while learning English. Thus, while tablets are used to teach all subjects forming part of the primary school curriculum, we wished to focus on English, given its significant status in the curriculum and education system as a whole.

The curriculum review carried out in 2015 in the context of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education sought to propel teachers towards the use of more innovative and child-centred teaching approaches. It also emphasised the development of oral language as a significant foundation for language learning. The inclusion of oral skills as an examinable skill at the end of the primary cycle was an influential factor in reorienting the teaching of English. As part of the impetus to revamp the teaching approach and aptly cater to the needs of young learners, the teaching of phonics became a central part of the lower primary Teaching and Learning Syllabus.

Even though textbooks are written in English and exams conducted in this language, Kreol and French are widely used as support languages in the classroom – often during the English language class itself – (Sonck, 2005). This mirrors the great affinity of Mauritians in general with these two languages, as opposed to English, which is the home language of a tiny minority of individuals.
(available at http://mie.ac.mu/curriculum.html) as curriculum developers (including the authors of this paper), believed that phonemic awareness would be an invaluable aid with regards to learning English. Phonics is known to be an enjoyable and effective way to teach reading; it enables children to become autonomous and fluent readers as they tackle new words with increasing ease. The development of phonemic awareness also improves spelling thereby impacting positively on writing. Through the study, we wanted to find out how far the use of tablets was influencing language development, with particular focus on the oral skills which are crucial at the foundational stages of language learning.

**Stepping up Language Pedagogy: Tablets in Primary Schools**

Tablets were introduced in Grades 1 and 2 in 2018, and this year they are being used by Grade 3 pupils too. The resources comprise a digital version of the textbook with interactive activities that have been integrated. These activities, which were devised in close collaboration with the textbook coordinators, are either a replica of those in the textbook or have been customised to be more appropriate for the medium. For instance, pupils can see the letter, hear the ‘sound’ and carry out a ‘drag and drop’ activity to consolidate newly acquired knowledge of phonemes. Additional activities are also included to provide learners with opportunities for further practice in certain components, such as vocabulary. In short, these interactive activities supported by audio aim at enhancing the learning experience of pupils as they engage with the textbook. While the introduction of tablets was a policy decision, their use is far from prescriptive and teachers have the leeway to use them when they deem it most appropriate. This flexibility of use thus gives the teacher the authority to determine how to make optimal use of the tool in the context of his or her lesson.

*Figure 1. Grade 2 learners engrossed in a phonics activity on their tablets.*
Literature Review

As opined by Collins & Halverson (2009), technology has an impact on the lives of every human being by altering the way we think, live, and act. From the moment we wake up in the morning with the ringing of the cell phone’s alarm bell to moment we go to bed in the evening with the activation of the house’s alarm system, our daily life is punctuated by the conscious or unconscious presence of technology around us. Probably the most iconic manifestation of technological presence – some would say ‘invasion’ – around us is the mobile phone and its ever-increasing set of applications, software and functionalities. When put to good use, this technological contribution is an undeniable asset, but as for everything else, it ends up being a bane when it is overused or used for the wrong reasons.

In such a situation of technological expansion, it is obvious that the educational sphere could not have lagged behind or lagged behind for very long by foregoing the contribution that technology could potentially have on teaching and learning. Whether we refer to the teacher who simply plays educational tunes by connecting his mobile phone to a pair of loudspeakers or to the one who operates in a massively empowered classroom with specifically designed technology-driven resources for learning within virtual communities, education has been and is being strongly impacted by technology. As often, the extent of this impact is dependent upon a number of factors – the most prominent of which being financial resources (Maboe et al., 2018) – and for this reason, the recourse to technology is uneven from one context to the other.

Similarly, when the impact that technological input has or has had on educational achievements is evaluated, the results appear quite disparate. We are far from the unilateral and unequivocal acclaim of this resource that had taken the educational sphere by storm. Indeed, as pointed out by Buckingham (2007), the promises of a technological revolution in education did not yield consequential changes in terms of results achieved, and the evidence on which the validity of mobile technology as teaching/learning aid is based is still anecdotal despite massive financial investments (Herold, 2015). In cases where improvements have been noted, it is yet to be ascertained whether technology is wholly responsible for these progresses or whether it is the blending of student-led independent activities through technology with conventional teacher-led activities that brought the desirable outcomes (Isgett & Mann, 2018).

Along the same lines, Cheung and Slavin (2013) note that the promotion of educational attainment through technology remains questionable and that large-scale advances in teaching and learning practices through technology are yet to be witnessed. For this reason, and also to sustain current teaching patterns, there is often a resistance to technology as an aid in educational contexts (Collins & Halverson, 2009). Sometimes, this resistance even emanates from parents, who do not view activities like listening to sounds on tablets as ‘serious’ learning (Maboe et al., 2018), particularly when the children seem more receptive to the enjoyment inherent to the manipulation of the device.

Views, therefore, diverge greatly on this issue, between the proponents, the sceptics and those who advocate a careful balance between technological input and teacher-directed learning (Garcia, 2016). This is because, as pointed out by Wartella and Jennings (2000), every new
technology has a potential to both transform and upset the education environment. In the following sections, we proceed with a review of the major arguments brought up by the different sides.

A friendly foe called educational technology?

Far from the perspective of technological infusion that instils fear, Hultman (2011) draws a parallel between humans and nonhuman materials as part of a technological collaboration between the two agents. As such, according to Hultman, factors that are conventionally considered ‘dead’, like technological gadgets, have a close connection with humans and are directly involved in the construction of the human world. This in turn reminds us of Orlikowski’s (1992) idea that, side by side with institutional structures, technology also influences agentive action within organisations.

When transposed to a pedagogical context, these non-human factors play an equally important role for knowledge construction as human factors like culture and language. Oladunjoye (2013), for instance, notes that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) leads to developments in learning via social interaction among learners and intra-action between children and the technology they use.

Interestingly, while the literature abounds with references to technology as an agent of isolation that cuts learners off from each other (See Bonilla, 2011), we note prolific arguments in support of technology as an agent of socialisation (Beschorner & Hutchison, 2013; Clements & Sarama, 2002), particularly when interactive technologies are used (Couse & Chen, 2010). It has indeed been observed that – as they see each other’s screen while performing technology-mediated educational activities – learners often engage in talk with their peers (Beschorner & Hutchison, 2013). Moreover, touchscreen devices allow for some activities to be performed in group as no mouse is required, and whenever devices are networked, they afford even greater opportunities for real-time collective engagement in learning. In this respect, Means and Olsen (1997) argue that technology provides unparalleled opportunities for meaningful experiential student-centred learning that engages both the hands and the mind. Such a type of learning, according to Stearns (2012), affords transferability as learners are able to solve problems with concrete objects in real life after they have learnt to do so on their tablets. This echoes with the profuse literature on the enhanced relevance of technology-mediated learning (as opposed to more conventional didactic teaching styles), especially in early childhood education (See, for example, Clements, Sarama, & DiBiase, 2003).

Similar dichotomies of insights about the pertinence of devices like tablets for learning are apparent on other fronts, e.g. medical and economic. If on the one hand, the health hazards posed by prolonged exposure of young learners to tablets have been established (Cordes & Miller, 2000), yet, the benefits associated with reduced backpack weight cannot be overlooked (Maboe et al., 2018). Also, applications like audiobooks help overcome auditory and visual disabilities, as challenged learners can rely on their unimpaired sense. Besides, research has shown that

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2 As opposed to inter-action, which presupposes the construction of new entities from the encounter between two agents that maintain their independence, intra-action refers to the creation of new entities as an outcome of the blending of two agents through a collaborative process. The concept has been coined by the American theorist, physicist and feminist Karen Barad (2012).
technology improves learning for at-risk children (Blachowicz et al., 2009) and struggling learners, who often enjoy greater comfort level in the use of technology than their teachers and parents (Maboe et al., 2018).

Likewise, economic arguments are also put forward by technological believers and disbelievers altogether. While researchers like Bonilla (2011) argue that the recourse to technological gadgets stigmatises learners from low-income families who do not have access to the technology outside school, others postulate that it actually reduces the technological divide by at least providing students from underprivileged socioeconomic background with an exposure to such devices (Lemke et al., 2009; Melhuish & Falloon, 2010).

The linguistic benefits of technology

Whilst the ultimate outcome of technological infusion into language learning is still questionable in terms of learners’ achievement results, the motivation that is inherent to the use of mobile technologies is obvious (Henderson & Yeow, 2012). For the sake of conciseness, the benefits of technology to teaching and learning are represented on the diagram below.

![Diagram showing the six main benefits of technology-assisted language teaching/learning.](Image)

*Figure 2. The six main benefits of technology-assisted language teaching/learning.*
As always, does it all boil down to the role of teachers?

Over and above arguments advocating or negating the relevance of technology – particularly mobile technology – for learning in general, and language learning more specifically, a review of the literature on the present topic reveals a substantial focus on the teacher as a central character, as shown in Figure 3.

![Diagram: The teacher as central character.

As for other aspects of the profession, training and support are crucial to empower teachers to use the technology adequately and scaffold students’ learning appropriately (Lemke et al., 2009; Melhuish & Falloon, 2010). Proper professional support may have a bearing on what teachers think and feel about the pertinence of technology for teaching and learning (Albirini, 2006).

Once teachers are convinced that the potential of technology may be leveraged as an educational aid, they can then play a vital role as mediators between learners and technological resources for intra-action to occur. As opined by Garcia (2016), mediation is key in finding the right balance between technology-driven and teacher-directed lessons. In this sense, therefore, technology is depicted as a teaching add-on that may be of great value, but that will never replace the qualified teacher (NEIRTEC, 2004). Complementarity – instead of substitution – is the byword (NEIRTEC, 2004; Blachowicz et al., 2009), and as underscored by Clements & Sarama (2003), the conversation has moved from whether or not technology should be used to how it should be used.
As recalled by Isgett & Mann (2018), technology alone does not operate miracles and even the most advanced interactive devices can lead to boredom if the same applications are repeatedly used over weeks.

This review of the relevant literature has therefore allowed us to place in perspective the benefits and limitations associated with the use of technology for language teaching and learning. Moreover, it has shed light on the crucial role that teachers are called upon to play for technological devices to be real assets abetting language teaching/learning. In relation to the Mauritian context, where the comprehensive inclusion of technology at lower primary level is a new phenomenon, the insights provided above can help to better understand some of the views expressed with regard to the use of technology for language development. Notably, the present research can ascertain with greater precision the validity of technology in situations where English is a second or even a foreign language for the very teachers entrusted with the teaching of the subject/language.

Methodology

The present research is conducted as part of a wider project initiated by the Mauritian Diocesan Service of Catholic Education (DSCE) to revamp the teaching and learning of English in its schools, and particularly in the early years of the primary cycle. Different initiatives have been undertaken until now in three pilot schools and with the team of pedagogical advisors in charge of the five educational zones in which the 46 Catholic primary schools are grouped. Training in intensive English techniques has been provided and means devised to keep learners connected to English during holiday periods.

Currently, the DSCE is working on the first phase of the programme aiming at fostering the learning of English at lower primary level through the use of tablets. For the initial phase, data was collected through a questionnaire administered to all the teachers who taught in Grade 1 last year and are now working in Grade 2. This category of teachers was chosen because they are currently using the technology for the second year and can, therefore, offer insights that are based on the teaching experience gathered last year. Out of the 105 questionnaires handed out, responses were obtained from 60 participants. In a majority of cases, those who did not respond had either not worked with a Grade 1 class last year or were in charge of a grade other than Grade 2 this year. Even though primary school teachers in Mauritius normally journey with the same class along two consecutive grades, contingency situations do occur at times, for instance when transfers occur or when teachers go on extended leave. Figure 4 shows the location of the 46 Catholic primary schools, situated all around the island, thereby reflecting the representativeness of the sample from a methodological perspective.
Figure 4. The geographical location of the 46 Catholic primary schools around the island.

Known as Roman Catholic Aided (RCA) schools, the primary schools of the DSCE are public schools, in the sense that they are: i) aligned to the national education programme; ii) non-fee paying, subsidised\(^3\) by the government; iii) attended by children of all religious and ethnic backgrounds; & iv) served by a mixed staff that is representative of the Mauritian population at large. RCA schools accommodate some 18,000 pupils, representing slightly less than 20% of the island’s total primary school population, and therefore constitute a reliable sample for the present study.

Depending on the nature of information sought, participants were requested to provide answers to a mixture of close-ended (e.g. about their number of years of experience), multiple-choice (e.g. the frequency at which they teach with tablets) and open-ended questions (e.g. their suggestions for the improvement of the device content). Informal discussions and classroom observation sessions were also held in an unrepresentative sample of schools. Information will be gathered more systematically through more thorough and comprehensive focus group discussions and classroom observations during the subsequent phases of the research.

\(^3\) Thereby the use of the word ‘Aided’ in their designation.
Findings And Discussion

Positive response to tablets

All the participants, irrespective of their age (the number of years of teaching experience ranged from 5 months to 28 years4) and own degree of expertise regarding the use of technology, acknowledged the effectiveness of this resource in the teaching and learning process. Although many of the participants had not initially been enthralled by the policy decision concerning the introduction of tablets in the lower grades, some of them had welcomed their introduction due to their belief that it would boost the learners’ interest in class given that the latter would be learning through games and have the opportunity to “manipulate” the tool. The lessons, they stated, would become more “lively” due to the use of tablets which the learners were already “familiar” with in their homes. Nevertheless, the prospective use of tablets had also aroused much apprehension for a number of reasons, the most prominent ones being: i) challenges in relation to classroom management5 (especially with classes of above 30 pupils, which – in the Mauritian context – is considered a relatively large size); ii) having to take the responsibility for the tool that would be handled by young learners; iii) an increase in the workload of both teachers and pupils; and iv) doubt about the pupils’ ability to use tablets. Also, while Beschorner & Hutchison (2013) talk of the opportunities for blended language learning that mobile technology offers, certain participants viewed the use of tablets as being detrimental to the development of writing. Furthermore, 48 of the 60 participants declared being of average level in relation to the use of technology, and most of them found the training sessions aimed at empowering them “quite appropriate”. There is thus a possibility that limited know-how in the domain of technology dampened the enthusiasm of teachers and exacerbated their fears since, as highlighted in the literature (Lemke et al., 2009; Melhuish & Falloon, 2010) training has a key role. In fact, as seen in Figure 3 above, teacher training/support is the fundamental factor that sets everything else in motion. Nevertheless, despite the mixed response to the introduction to tablets, the majority of the participants (58 out of 60) stated that they would recommend the use of tablets for teaching, which reveals that initial resistance was overridden as teachers experienced the use of tablets. Interestingly, what emerges from this study, compared to other researches that have mostly shed light on the limitations of technology for language teaching/learning (cf. Collins & Halverson, 2009), less scepticism and doubt has been expressed vis-à-vis the pertinence of technology in teaching/learning.

The efficacy of tablets as an educational tool

As researchers probed into the reasons that influenced the teachers’ view of tablets, they found that this resource held advantages for both the teachers and learners. The tool was described as one that captured the interest of and motivated learners who were more involved in the lessons. With learners being more attentive and receptive to teaching, and consequently engaged in learning, the class was more “lively”. Pupils were “eager to learn while having fun” and the tool promoted “self-learning”. This finding echoes those of Lemke et al. (2009), and Melhuish and

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4 Age is considered as an important contextual variable here because, depending on whether the educators have completed their training, less than a year ago or close to 30 years from now, this may have a considerable bearing on their rapport with technology as a teaching/learning tool /contextual. This present research itself revealed that some teachers had their personal and professional habits substantially disrupted by technological innovations
5 Contrary to what the literature says about the promotion of social interaction via technology (cf. Oladunjoye, 2013), communication among learners during the technology-mediated class was solely described in a negative light (e.g. in terms of noise disturbance) by respondents in this study.
Falloon (2010), who state that tablet computers, specifically, can be used anywhere/anytime and foster individualized learning. We also note that mobile technology was deemed appropriate for the teaching of all aspects of language and that it appeals to different kinds of intelligence, an assertion that resonates with what the literature says about the pertinence of mobile technology for challenged and at-risk learners (Blachowicz et al., 2009 & Maboe et al., 2018). Finally, one participant pointed out that the use of tablets “facilitated oral classes”. The plethora of reasons listed by the participants reinforces the notion that teachers are in favour of tablets for teaching purposes. Actually, the only items on which unilaterally positive responses were expressed were those asking whether tablets had made a difference in the learning experience of pupils. One teacher even pointed out that she noticed lower absenteeism rates on days when pupils knew that tablets would be used.

**Teaching phonics through tablets**

The section above already serves as an indication of the reasons for which tablets are used to teach phonics. Additional reasons that highlight the efficacy of tablets in relation to phonics – which, as brought out earlier, is relatively new in the primary curriculum – are the opportunity for pupils to familiarize themselves with the phonemes and be exposed to the correct pronunciation of words. Knowledge of phonics also eased reading and aided with spelling. Further, the gamut of interactive activities and games on the tablets allowed pupils to practise and reinforce their newly acquired knowledge, more so as it was possible to repeat activities. The audio-visual support that the inclusion of pictures and songs provided also served to promote learning. It is here worth highlighting the fact that the need to be exposed to “correct pronunciation” is especially significant in a multilingual context where English is hardly used outside educational and administrative contexts. Further, teachers often lack confidence in the use of English – which, as in the case of their learners, is not their first language – and thus, such a resource can prove to be an invaluable support.

Here, it is worth pointing out that, even though the majority of participants was enthused about the use of tablets to teach phonics, they indicated that the resource was also used to teach other language components, such as reading (“project pictures to introduce topics”) and grammar (“songs for action verbs”). Thus, the usefulness of tablets is wide-ranging and this explains why most of the participants use tablets either “everyday” or more than once a week.

**Tablets as a language education resource: the pitfalls**

Despite the strong wave in favour of tablets that emerged from the study, it cannot be said that the picture is entirely rosy. For instance, some of the words used by participants to express their initial negative thoughts about the introduction of tablets were: “curious”, “perplexed”, “confused”, “afraid”, “against”, “doubtful”, and “challenged”. One respondent eventually described tablets as “an invaluable teaching tool but a disastrous learning tool”, echoing the view of a few others, who argued that the device should be used by the teacher only.

Participants also foregrounded factors that impinged upon the use of the technology, namely the need for more training and more activities on the tablets; the lack of technical support for the maintenance not only of tablets but also of projectors; the time wasted because some pupils have difficulties to handle the tablets and either click on other apps or “get lost” in the process; the substantial time involved in checking the tablets of all pupils; and the stress generated by the fear
that the pupils might break the tablets. During the focus group discussion held so far, some participants reiterated the inadequacies with the technology which made its use tedious. One example was the fact that, since the tablets are not networked and the textbook is not interactive, teachers have to repeat the same operation 30 times (depending on the class size) when they make the children write with the stylus, as they need to snapshot a page from the textbook and then share it individually with their 30 or so pupils. Also, views were recurrently put forward for the acquisition of full versions of applications, which are presently lacking. One participant’s statement, namely that partial technology can be worse than no technology at all, aptly conveys the shortcomings of the resource in its current format. Interestingly, one respondent remarked that even the classroom furniture – designed for children to sit at desks and write on paper – was not appropriate for the manipulation of tablets.

While participants highlighted augmented interest in lessons when tablets are used, they bemoaned the fact that pupils got distracted by the tool and chatted or took selfies instead of remaining on task. As Maboe et al. (2018) argue, children seem more receptive to the ‘enjoyable’ part of tablet use, while teachers focus more on the ‘usefulness’ part. In fact, some participants pointed to the ‘enjoyment’ part as a distractor that puts learners off-track and causes disruptions in terms of classroom management – which is why they sometimes refrain from using it. Similarly, some respondents evoked feelings of boredom on the part of pupils who grow weary of the lesson pace after some time. This reflects a similar observation made by Isgett & Mann (2018). A number of participants said they needed the support of another teacher in class, like an Assistant Teacher or the ICT Teacher, to help them manage the young pupils and the tablets. This call for additional manpower to optimally use the technology is in itself quite a surprising stand, bearing in mind the often-evoked fear that technology will replace humans!

Hence, it becomes clear that despite the efficacy of a tool, other factors that impact upon the instructional process may deter its use. In line with this observation is a noteworthy response, namely that, despite its efficacy, tablets cannot replace textbooks because it is important to develop the writing skills. This is a far cry from the stance of the teacher as a mediator between the learner and technology (Garcia, 2016). At the same time, this may be indicative of the fact that mindsets are hard to change and the deeply entrenched examination-oriented system in the local context prompts teachers to attribute more importance to reading and writing, as these carry more weighting in the exams.

Conclusion

The preliminary results of this ongoing research have brought to the fore a number of valuable insights about the use of tablets to develop language – especially phonics – for different learning profiles at lower primary level. For obvious reasons, the use of technology in classrooms is predominantly optimized in socioeconomically advanced countries, but it has been interesting to observe how Mauritius as a small island developing state from the African continent can inspire itself from achievements and pitfalls observed elsewhere in bigger and more developed countries. At the same time, the island can tell its own tale in the light of observations from the domestic context by advocating i) the appeal and usefulness of educational technology for learners and teachers alike; ii) applicability of the technology for the development of language skills at large,
and phonics in particular; and iii) the capacity to overcome initial resistance to technological use in educational contexts and progressively develop a vocabulary of adaptation.

In particular, findings from this research validate the relevance of professional development and teacher agency as potent factors that may bring about – or not – the optimization of technological resources for language learning. However, teachers in Mauritius do not seem to define their role as mediators between learners and technology. Alternatively, they tend to take as a given that learners have certain unalterable predispositions when it comes to using technology. Thus, they endure certain behaviours on the part of their learners instead of playing a more frontal role in the way that the latter perceive and use technology.

Also, we note that, in order to reap expected outcomes, educational technology should be construed as a package with all its required components being made available to teachers and learners. When this is not the case, any missing component – e.g. at the level of software, hardware, peripherals, human resource or infrastructure – can negatively impact on the whole teaching/learning process. This is especially true in contexts like Mauritius, where high-stakes examinations greatly determine the type and measure of learning that occur.

Insights obtained so far into the relevance of technological assistance for language teaching/learning will be ploughed back into the second phase of the present study to look more specifically into the development of phonemic awareness through the use of tablets at lower primary level.

References


2 Cultivating Equity In the Digital Age: The Use of Equity Maps App In Enhancing Equitable Education

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Abstract

Equity by definition implies the quality of being fair and impartial. In the context of education it implies the idea of “fairness” and that differentiating factors such as gender, ethnic origin, and family background would not inhibit the achievement of one’s own educational goals. In a similar context, Brian Matthews, the author of “Engaging Education: Developing Emotional Literacy, Equity and Co-education” concludes that there are multiple complexities in the pursuit of equity learning. While the students initially found collaborative work challenging, the concluding results indicate that pupils can learn to support one another through their social and emotional skills for a shared beneficial experience. This paper focuses on the use of the Equity Map App in a classroom setting of about twenty A-Level students on the Literature in English course. The App allows the teacher to keep track of the verbal participation of each student and record the sitting arrangement of the students. In addition, the teacher could also create a personalised icon for each student while keeping track of the talk time of each participant. At the end of the session, the teacher will be able to keep track on whether there has been an equal distribution of engagement among those who actively engage. This paper will also reveal the effectiveness of the App in relation to its effectiveness in enhancing equity education while proposing certain strategies to improve such imbalances in the Malaysian classroom.

Keywords: equity, equality, Equity Maps, apps in education, equitable education

Introduction

“Equity” is as defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary as the situation in which everyone is treated fairly. In 1992, Nina Chordas in her paper titled “Classrooms, Pedagogies, and the Rhetoric of Equality” strived to highlight the fact that this term is actually one that is undefinable, and in a collaborative classroom, this is part of the challenge encountered frequently. The very definition of a collaborative learning space:

is a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together. Unlike individual learning, people engaged in collaborative learning capitalize on one another's resources and skills (asking one another for information, evaluating one another's ideas, monitoring one another's work, etc.). More specifically, collaborative learning is based on the model that
knowledge can be created within a population where members actively interact by sharing experiences and take on asymmetric roles.

With reference to the given definition, then, it is clear that an “equitable” classroom is one where the acquisition of knowledge is a shared process\(^6\). In a modern classroom, the teacher is supposed to be a facilitator in this learning space as opposed to the traditional role of an instructor. An equal distribution of power in the classroom\(^7\) is one of the main goals in the revamping of the classroom pedagogies. What then does equity mean when applied in the classroom?

Figure 1. *Equality vs. Equity.* From Interaction Institute for Social Change. by Angus Macguire, 2016, [https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/](https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/).

Figure 1 shows an image that has been a popular representation and explanation of the differences between equality and equity. As suggested by the image, practising equality means treating everyone the same regardless of the capabilities of the individual. Clearly, we would favour equity over equality then. However, it is not until recently, the past 10 years or so, that there has been an attempt to clearly define the fine lines between this two concepts.

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\(^6\) Chordas, pg 217

\(^7\) Chordas pg 216
In her article, even Chordas uses the terms interchangeably although she realizes that the term “equality” is problematic. Her intuition made her question the term “equality” as “different sectors of society have different agendas, hence define equality in different terms.” In the same article, she calls out the problems of teachers who try to keep a classroom that promotes “equality”. Chordas asks “Equal to what? Do we mean we place equal value on each student, regardless of background? Or do we mean “equal under the law,” whereby each student is given the same rights and subjected to the same penalties for infringing the rules? Or do we mean “equal opportunity,” with each student given an equal chance to accomplish class goals?” As teachers, we will have individual preference on the aim our classrooms are trying to achieve. This presentation will focus on how I try to create my classroom space as one which promotes “equity” and “equal opportunity” where every voice is heard and the individual weakness and personal deficiency get addressed as best as possible.

![Figure 2. Equality, Equity and Freedom, by RobinB Creative, 2018.](https://artplusmarketing.com/equality-equity-freedom-55a1d675b5d8)

As it is, standardized exams promote the fact that it is fair to teach millions of students and test millions of students the same way to define their intelligence. The revolution of teaching pedagogies is a result of the rebellion and rejection of these ideas and notions.

**Equity**

Equity recognises that human equality only applies to our innate, equal value as humans. It further recognises that we all have different skills, talents, strengths & weaknesses. Equity admits the reality of people being differently skilled, abled, and privileged.  

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8 Chordas, pg 220  
9 Chordas, pg220  
10 [https://artplusmarketing.com/equality-equity-freedom-55a1d675b5d8](https://artplusmarketing.com/equality-equity-freedom-55a1d675b5d8)
Before the pervasive use of digital devices in the classroom, activities that promote and track equity was done through “Equity Sticks” where the students are given 5 sticks and every time they share, the stick is put into a container. Each student should place all his/her sticks in the container at the end of the class to ensure everybody has participated. Today’s presentation will be on an app called “Equity Maps” that is a digital version of the “Equity Sticks” at the very basic but one that also records the entire discussion and provides data for easier group analysis based on gender, percentage of participation, teacher’s interruption, chaos during discussion and equity factors.

The data collected from the app will be invaluable for the teacher for a number of reasons. Teachers can better identify the weakness of particular students and addressed it during consultation session. It helps with the gathering of information for questions such as:

i. Is everyone sharing air-time?
ii. Is someone with many ideas a little too quiet?
iii. Is someone too talkative?
iv. Is the teacher doing most of the talking?

Setting up Equity Maps

In the context of this paper, the Equity Maps app was set up on the IOS platform on iPad Apps from the website of Dave Nelson (2016) as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Equity maps.

To set up the class arrangement, go to “Create New Map”. There are a few layouts to choose from such as a rectangular table, a round table or even a classroom setting of up to 20
participants. After choosing the layout add the participants and arrange them according to how they are seated. Every time each participant speaks, just tap on their icon. There are icons for chaos, pair share, small group, silence, media and also teacher talk. At the end of the session, select “finish meeting” and the entire session will be saved in “Feedback Frames”. The teacher can playback the recording of the session and improve on the weaknesses identified in each session. In the images below, the first Frame shows Teacher Talk in the session was 14 times. The next Frame shows Teacher Talk as 1 time. In a traditional classroom, teachers might not realize the frequency of their “Talk”. One of the ways recommended for teachers was to ask a question and silently count to 5 before attempting to answer the question. This shows the inability of teachers to allow time for students to answer the questions as it is a compulsion teachers are unaware of. Therefore the “Equity Maps” app is not only helpful for a teacher to identify the weakness of her students but also to identify her own shortcomings as well.

Findings

Figures 4 and 5 shows the screenshots of group analytics, that is the results of using Equity Maps with the class during their first attempt. The findings illustrate how two groups interacted during discussions in the class. The first group had 4 members while the second in Figure 5 had 6 participants in the discussion. It can be seen that this app is able to provide detailed results of analysis on the classroom discussion. generally, the first group spoke more times than the second group. The figures also indicate how much time was spent by each participant in the discussion. For example, the student, Mini spoke the most number of times followed by Aida, Cher-maine and Laura respectively. Teacher talk in this first group also appeared to be more as she spoke 14 times in comparison to the other group discussion where she spoke only once.

Figure 4. Screenshot of results using equity maps in classroom discussion, first attempt. From Equity Maps iPad Apps, by Kang Yee Sun, 2019.
There are implications of these findings for pedagogical purposes because the teacher would be able to know how each student performed in the discussion and plan future activities or groupings accordingly. The App would be suitable for use in a small classroom setting of not more than 25 students. Initial use of the App might be difficult for teachers who are unfamiliar with the names of their students as the speed and pace of verbal discussions might be disorientating for the teacher to take note off. The flow of the classroom conversation has to be anticipated for the proper tracking to be done by the facilitator. On average, the App is able to cover a typical classroom lesson of 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. Overall, the App manages to provide a holistic overview of the students’ participation rate and what can/should be done by the facilitator to further enhance the classroom contribution rate of passive students.

Conclusion

Based on the use of the App, “Equity Maps”, we can conclude that the App can help the classroom facilitator to manage and oversee equal classroom participation in verbal discussions and reinforce the philosophy of equality and equity in the classroom setting. The basic data analytics concept of the App tallies the participation rate of each student while the other data markers provide a score card for the facilitator to keep track of the number of times each student

Figure 5. Screenshot of results using equity maps in classroom discussion, first attempt. From Equity Maps iPad Apps, by Kang Yee Sun, 2019.
takes part in the class. With the use of such an App, 21st century classroom teaching is now more progressive and dynamic and this signifies the unavoidable paradigm of the useful integration of Apps and their role in the spectrum of educational technology. The use of “Equity Maps” points to the growing role of smaller, practical and easy to use mass produced Apps and their target niche applications in the classroom setting. Without a doubt, the “classroom of the 21st century” will be the “playground” of new technological applications and this signifies the growing importance of Apps in the field of education.

References


3 Good Practices Vs Best Practices In Teaching English From Grades 3 To 6: An Approach In The Portuguese Setting

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Abstract

Recognizing the importance of English as a foreign language, the Portuguese educational policies have been aiming at the improvement of the students’ linguistic skills. The Decree-Law no. 176/2014, of the 12th of December, established English as a mandatory subject for grades 3 and 4. At the same time, special attention was given to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; the new curricular framework “Metas Curriculares” for English as a foreign language from grades 3 to 12 was built up; and a new teacher recruitment group was created for teaching English to young learners. In 2018, the “Essential Learnings” were published as a reference document for the national curriculum framework. Foreign languages have a constant reference in multiple documents, an example being the Students’ Profile Out of Compulsory Schooling. This paper is aimed at analysing good practices vs best practices in teaching English as a foreign language and specifically addressing examples of the former. It is also our purpose to lead schools and teachers into critical analysis of their performance, self-review, changes and further actions needed, stressing the relevance of the teachers’ collaborative practices, organization of learning resources, the classroom learning environment and thereby the impact of the actions on learner’s outcomes and experiences according to their age and abilities.

Keywords: foreign language learning, language curriculum development, language teaching and learning, language education and policy, good practices, best practices.

English As A Foreign Language: Teaching And Learning Background

The Recommendation No R (82) 18 of the Council of Europe states that it is only through a better knowledge of European modern languages that it will be possible to facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans of different mother tongues in order to promote European mobility, mutual understanding and co-operation, and overcome prejudice and discrimination (1982: 1). This key idea has been reiterated over time (Council of Europe, 1997, 2015), which makes it the driving force behind the debate on European educational policies regarding modern languages. The European Commission also signals its commitment to promoting language learning so that citizens’ language skills improve. To this end, it encourages governments to communicate, in addition to their mother tongue, in two more languages. This is designated as the "Barcelona goal" (European Council, 2002: 19), which focuses on improving employment prospects and facilitating the movement of people within the European Union.
Europe has been the scene of the growth of industry, commerce, finance, science, medicine, entertainment and tourism, the rapid development of information and communication technologies as well as the reduction of barriers to the movement of goods and people. These changes have created new opportunities and have given a central role to the teaching and learning of foreign languages, whose role is to overcome obstacles in the economic, political and socio-cultural spheres. Commonly recognized as a way to foster knowledge of different cultures and communities, the need to communicate and the acceptance of difference, foreign language learning is also a fundamental requirement for the integration of the individual into a dynamic, competitive society.

In Portugal, language teaching is framed in European directives from the Council of Europe and the European Commission. The relevance of learning a foreign language is evident in the legal diplomas since the 1960s. According to Ethnologue: Languages of the World, English is currently the third most spoken language on a global scale. Recognizing the growing importance of learning English (as a foreign language), the Portuguese educational policies have been giving the English subject a growing importance.

In 2016, the AEC (curriculum enrichment activities) were established and with the Decree-Law no. 176/2014, of the 12th of December, English became part of the curriculum in grades 3 and 4. It also set a new teacher’s recruitment group (120), whereby most teachers had to get additional training in order to be able to apply to teaching young learners and to be more prepared to work with them. Then, the English Metas Curriculares (national curriculum framework) were published by the Order no. 9442/2015, of the 19th of August.

In 2018, the Essential Learnings were published as a reference paper for the national curriculum framework. Foreign languages have a constant reference in multiple documents, namely the Students’ Profile Out of Compulsory Schooling (Order no. 6478/2017, of 26th of July), specifically the proficient use of different languages and symbols and the mastery of nuclear capabilities of comprehension and expression in oral and written modalities (p.21).

In May 2017, DGEEC (a branch of the Portuguese Ministry of Education) published a research concerning the school year 2014-2015 stating that English was the second subject in the country scoring the lowest in grades 5 and 6.

As we can see, our educational policies mirror the relevance that the English subject has at school, but the outcomes haven’t been as desired. It is therefore crucial a special attention to what could be considered a good practice inside and outside the classroom.

**Good vs Best Practices in Language Teaching**

According to Nichols the imperatives for the education in the 21st century are: (i) increased capacity and efficiency; (ii) improved effectiveness; (iii) easy accessibility; (iv) a competitive mindset; (v) a resource-based emphasis and (vi) the personal touch (2001, 13-14).
The researcher John Hattie, author of Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning, researched for more than 15 years the influences on K-12 student’s outcomes and concluded that they were linked to highly efficient practices in the classroom, namely (i) the focus of the teacher in explaining learning objectives and criteria on how students can achieve success, always giving examples; (ii) the fuel he gave to debate; (iii) the feedback the teacher gave his students and that the students’ gave him, so that the former can adjust the process, materials and strategies; (iv) the assessment.

A good practice is assumed as a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it (FAO, 2014).

The term best practices can be defined as a method or proven technique as the best in comparison to other alternatives, because it produces greater results or because it has become a pattern, i.e., techniques identified as being the best to accomplish a certain task. Many dictionaries define it in a variety of ways, but always aimed at being the best or most efficient solution to a problem in a given context.

In education best practices, according to Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan in Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School, is the existing practice which has produced the most efficient outcomes. So a best practice should have one of the following key-characteristics: (i) being repeatedly a successful experience ;(ii) having produced good outcomes and so set as a model and (iii) being shareable so as more people can adopt and verify its efficiency.

The criteria for the identification of best practices may be: (i) its efficiency and successfulness, i.e., having proven its strategic relevance as a means to obtain a specific objective, being successfully adopted and having a positive impact on individuals; (ii) that the approaches back up a set of decisions and actions; (iii) that it is replicable and adaptable to similar objectives in different situations and (iv) that it is flexible.

Therefore a best practice should (i) be meticulously planned (who’s involved, what is being done, why it is being done and how is it being done); (ii) state its objective/target (its outcome/purpose); (iii) be a partnership; (iv) focus on its implementation (the focal and starting point, timeline, its contribution to the academic success); (v) contemplate monitoring and validating (means are set to follow the process and corroborate its relevance); (vi) show evidence of its impact on the improvement normally being innovative and successful; (vii) identify its constraints; (viii) be sustainable and replicable.

Best practices are hard to find for they will have to follow the above pattern or something similar and there have to be documented conclusions of the effectiveness of the practices/strategies. This is the road ahead for schools and teachers to strive and achieve best practices. Nonetheless, a lot of good practices emerge and that have to do with planning, implementation and assessment.
**Good Practices: Planning**

Good practices in planning may integrate (i) the clear definition of objectives, goals and strategies for the development of the teaching and learning process of the English language in the school’s planning documents; (ii) the elaboration of short and long term planning, its analysis and reformulation so as to focus on the learning process and sequenced development of the curriculum framework, as well as the construction of a cross curricular planning for interdisciplinary curricular articulation at all levels of education; (iii) the elaboration of the assessment criteria which include all the referential domains as well as an instrument to apply them (guidelines, for instance); (iv) an effective collaborative planned work for and among teachers from grades 3 to 6, which leads to the knowledge of how English is being taught in the different years and to create resources such as correction criteria for tests and worksheets; (v) peer-to-peer pedagogical supervision planning with positive effects on cooperation, joint planning, sharing of materials and educational methodologies; (vi) the identification of success and/or nonachievement factors which necessarily lead to a set of actions/activities and strategies thus promoting the continuity and/or improvement of the students’ outcomes throughout the school year and the following year; (vii) the importance given to transnational projects aimed at communicating, collaborating and sharing as learning communities that contribute to the increased use of the English language and the key competences of students and/or to stimulate workshops and clubs that promote the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the use of innovative strategies and the deepening of the intercultural domain; (viii) the aim at the planning of specific training courses in didactics for young learners or teaching young learners, so as to foster adequate methodologies for students in that age range.

**Good Practices: Development**

Good practices in the classroom may include (i) the use of English as the main communicational language and the native language strictly when necessary; (ii) the development of differentiated practices and the use of a variety of activities adapted to the students’ different learning needs and pace; (iii) the attention to the use of English in oral interaction situations among students, namely through pair and group work/activities as well as projects and activities developed collaboratively by different grades; (iv) the effective collaborative work among teachers from grades 3 to 6 aimed at a sequenced educational and learning experience; (v) the development of students’ self-assessment and reflection on the lessons’ activities, their personal performance and the subject itself; (vi) the classroom management, i.e., adapting the layout of the furniture to the class size number, valuing and using the natural light, the use of technological and other resources, displaying students’ projects as a strategy of motivation and in order to avoid inadequate behaviour; (vii) the intentional selection of resources to use in the classroom so as to bring a change from teacher-centred to student-centred teaching and learning; (viii) the development of intercultural aspects, whenever possible, and not just in festive seasons or in the celebration of national holidays; the debate and reflection on the usefulness of giving students extra work to do at home and necessarily explaining its aims; (ix) the effective use of the lesson time, ending it with a summary or assessment of the contents/practices within its time limit; (x) the incorporation of fun activities, i.e., songs, music and games which help children to relax and enjoy the learning process as well as the retention of the language skills, as well as variety for very young learners and young learners have very short attention spans, so the more diverse the activities the more
motivated, attentive, participative and engaged the students will be; (xi) the focus on the national curriculum framework using different materials, allowing creativity to be at the core of the activities so as to get students to feel involved and taking active part in their learning process; (xii) the classroom environment, because we are working with children, its look and ambience, the classroom layout and, at the same time, a disciplined learning style; (xiii) the use of simple and clear English language in order to reinforce the students’ need to use language skills, vital for their education. Students should be able to track their progress. They also need positive reinforcement to help them to grow and validate their hard work in order to continue motivated which also contributes to a shared and productive environment.

**Good Practices: Assessment**

Last but not least, let’s focus on the practices considered good in what assessment is concerned: (i) the involvement of the students in their assessment, evaluation and educational process through the use of registers/instruments which allow them to monitor their linguistic acquisition and learning progress as well as to assess the subject itself and the practices; (ii) the reflection upon the information derived from students’ evaluation data for critical decision making on classroom practices and the differentiation of strategies; (iii) the establishment of assessment routines by the teachers concerning their practices and also the training courses so as to redefine the methodologies in the teaching and learning process; (iv) the sharing with the students of the instruments with the necessary information on their assessment in compliance with the referential domains of the curriculum framework; (v) the operationalization by teachers and the dissemination to the various stakeholders of the evaluation criteria; (vi) the preparation of a descriptive summary on the assessment record sheet, which provides accurate information to students and parents about the evolution of learning.

Much more could be said, but these are taken into account by the English teachers when doing a good job. More than good practices we need to go further and venture out with best practices.

**References**


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Abstract

The increasing number of Malaysians below the age of 35 who have been declared bankrupt is a growing national concern. Following that, the government has taken a significant step in introducing financial literacy skills into the local education system starting with the primary school curriculum. In response to that, the paper looks at how literary works can also be utilized as materials to educate the young about financial literacy. Using Jacqueline Wilson’s contemporary realistic children’s novel, The Illustrated Mum (1999), the discussion centers on how Dolphin, the 10-year-old protagonist manages the instances of financial mismanagement displayed by her mother, Marigold. The textual analysis is illuminated through Albert Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy forwarded in his book, Self-efficacy: The exercise of control (1997). The study explores how Dolphin gains self-efficacy through four sources of efficacy which are enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, as well as improved physiological and affective states. Resulting from that, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist is able to overcome the detrimental effects of her mother’s careless spending in the novel. It is hoped that the findings of this research contribute to the use of Wilson’s works to educate the young on important life lessons such as financial literacy.

Keywords: self-efficacy, financial literacy, Jacqueline Wilson, The Illustrated Mum, Albert Bandura

Introduction

Financial literacy among the nation’s youths has been a topic keenly discussed and debated over the recent years. The concern arises out of the Malaysian Human Development report revealing the low level of savings within Malaysian households with “53% of Malaysian households [having] no financial assets while 88% of households reported zero savings” (Nadason, 2018, par. 3). Further, the country’s Counselling and Debt Management Agency (AKPK) states that the number of consumers being declared bankrupt and seeking assistance has reached a shocking figure of 294,000 individuals, out of which 70% were “between the ages of 35 and 45” (Nadason, 2018, par. 4). According to Dr Marimuthu Nadason (2018) president of the Federation
of Malaysians Consumers Associations (FOMCA), “poor financial knowledge, wrong attitudes and poor financial habits leading to irresponsible financial behavior” (par. 1) are among the major factors contributing to financial mismanagement and bankruptcy among these young working adults. This is corroborated by findings from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) showing that “Malaysia ranked 20th out of 31 countries tested on financial knowledge, attitudes and behavior“ (“Kids with”, 2018, par. 3). Evidently, the lack of financial literacy among students (Augustin, 2016) leads to poor understanding of financial and resources management once they graduate and enter the marketplace (Vijaindren, 2015).

Owing to that, there has been urgent calls within the country pushing for “initiatives to add financial literacy into the school curriculum” (Ahmad, 2017, par. 13). In line with the focus of the Malaysian National Financial Blueprint 2011-2020, “a comprehensive approach towards consumer protection and education is essential” (Raj, 2018, par. 6). Moreover, the Asian Institute of Finance (AIF) has observed “a positive correlation between financial knowledge and responsible financial behaviours. That is those with higher financial knowledge saved and invested more than those with low financial knowledge” (Nadason, 2018, par. 7). This has inspired the introduction of financial literacy programmes aimed at educating the young. One such example is the effort from Prudence Foundation, “the community investment arm of Prudential Corporation Asia” (“Kids with”, 2018, par. 5) which joined forces with Junior Achievement (JA) Asia Pacific and Generasi Gemilang Foundation to create and run financial literacy modules under the “JA Cha-Ching Curriculum programme” (Rajaendram, 2018, par. 3) for primary school students. Speaking of the programme, chairman of Prudence Foundation, Donald Kanak (as cited in Rajaendram, 2018), believes that “[p]roviding children with a solid foundation and a good understanding of basic money management early on will significantly contribute to their ability to lead sustainable lifestyle, and contribute towards their country’s long-term development” (par. 4). In addition to that, FOMCA also conducts “various financial education initiatives including […] financial education programmes at pre-school, primary and secondary schools, institutions of higher learning” (Nadason, 2018, par. 9)

Despite that, CEO of FOMCA, Paul Selva Raj (2018) points out how progress in financial literacy in Malaysia has been slow and inadequate. Efforts are fragmented. There is a lack of vision and strategic direction to develop and implement a national financial education strategy. There is also a lack of government leadership providing strategic direction to achieve the objective of financial education for all, especially those in need (par. 10).

In view of that, Raj (2018) espouses for a strategy focusing “on children and young people” (par. 14) which is built around a collective impact, a strong emphasis on evidence and evaluation, and a clear plan of what will happen. Collective impact is where large-scale social change comes from cross-sector coordination, not the isolated intervention of individual agencies or organisations (par. 12).
Responding to this, the paper proposes a collective effort involving school teachers, parents and students through the use of literary works to initiate discussions about financial literacy and management with school children.

Following the success of the assimilation of the literature component into the secondary school syllabus, the government has moved to formalize “literature’s inclusion in primary schools” (Kaur, 2010, par. 5). As children’s literature begins to gain relevance within the local community, the selection of suitable reading materials for the young is necessary if they are to encourage the students’ “reading ability and personal growth” (Su, 2010, p. 5). Responding to the lack of reading interest among the emerging generation, Wigoutoff (1981) stresses that “young people need worthwhile literature now as much as ever, perhaps even more than ever” (par. 2). According to Savvidou (2004), the students’ engagement with significant themes found within the texts allows for a more personal interpretation of the texts studied which further fosters “greater sensitivity and self-awareness and greater understanding of the world around us” (Carter & Long, 1991, as cited in Su, 2010, p. 8). Likewise, Wopperer (2011) affirms the benefits of literature as a means for children to “cope with problems they face. It can also be written to introduce […] situations to its readers or to portray characters with whom readers can relate to better understand themselves” (p. 26). Hence

[i]t is important to be aware of the great variety and diversity of literature available for children […] and to incorporate resources written from a variety of perspectives into their collections and curricular for all to enjoy and learn from (Wopperer, 2011, p. 34).

The paper thus proposes Jacqueline Wilson’s contemporary realistic children’s novel *The Illustrated Mum* (1999) to introduce the concept of financial literacy and management to young readers. Scholars believe that the reading of contemporary realistic literary works within the classroom offers a non-threatening avenue to address important real-life issues (Stevens & Bean, 2007; Hitt, 2008; Prater et al, 2006; Wopperer, 2011; Guerra, 2012). Exposing the children to this genre of literary works can therefore prepare them “for the nasty adult world” (Hitt, 2008, par. 19). The following sections briefly introduce the author and the selected novel followed by the research methodology and findings of the study.

**Jacqueline Wilson and *The Illustrated Mum* (1999)**

A former Children’s Laureate (2005-2007) whose works have been translated into over 30 languages, Wilson is also the most borrowed author in the British public libraries (Sutton, 2008). According to The Telegraph, “[i]n the 10 years to June 2009, Wilson’s books were lent 16 million times by British public libraries” (“Jacqueline Wilson named”, 2010, par. 2). Acknowledged as “a literary superstar” (Waddilove, 2012, p. 75), the author’s appearances draw a large crowd of children with queues surpassing those for “Bill Clinton and Paul McCartney” (Macaskill, 2001, par. 1) even beating “David Beckham effortlessly” (Kellaway, 2003, par. 2). It is therefore not surprising that one of Wilson’s highest achievements was being conferred the title “Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, the female equivalent of a knight” (“Dame Jacqueline”, 2008, par. 1). She stands as the “first children’s author to be so honoured” (Waddilove, 2012, p. 76) for her “services to literacy in schools” (Farrah, 2002, par. 13). Other than that, Wilson
was made the first Coram Fellow of the Foundling Museum in London (Crichton-Miller, 2007) for having “significantly enhanced children’s lives” (Jardine, 2007, par. 4). It is said that adult visitors to the Coram Fields “must be accompanied by children” (M@, n.d., par. 2). Wilson was also given “a ChildLine award in recognition of the way her work gives ‘unique insight into challenging subjects’” (Dakin, 2012, par. 8). According to Waddilove (2012), “[t]he accolade of a year-long exhibition at Seven Stories which explores in depth her work and life affirms her importance in 21st century British children’s literature” (p. 77). Through her awards and titles, Wilson’s contribution to the field of children’s literature is widely recognized.

Among her notable works, The Illustrated Mum (1999) has won the “1999 Children’s Book of the Year at the British Book Awards” (Craig, 2009, par. 31) and the 2000 Guardian Children’s Fiction Prize after competing against numerous children’s books which “reflect an understanding that conventional family relationships have been replaced in children’s lives by broader and more complex structures” (Eccleshare, 2000, par. 14). In 2003, The Illustrated Mum (1999) was adapted for a Channel 4 television show (Flockhart, 2003; Rampton, 2003) which won the International Emmys award for “best children and young people’s programme” (“UK sweep” 2004, par. 1) and “two Baftas” (Pauli, 2005, par. 4). Told from the first person narration of 10-year-old, Dolphin who lives with her mother Marigold and her elder sister, Star, The Illustrated Mum (1999) is a book that Wilson claims to be closest to her heart because it “portrays an adolescent in a remarkably real and wrenching situation” (“The Illustrated Mum”, 2005, par. 1). The mother character, Marigold, who is covered in tattoos and suffers from manic depression (Wilson, 1999, p. 252) subjects her children to negligence due to her financial mismanagement and “all the credit card stuff she pulls” (Wilson, 1999, p. 226). According to Wilson (as cited in Bankston, 2011), creating The Illustrated Mum (1999) was

quite difficult, writing about a much-loved mother who lets her children down and suffers from mental illness and behaves very irresponsibly. I knew it was going to be a book without many laughs because there’s just no way you could have a sense of humour about such a searing and worrying subject (p. 101).

The paper thus charts how Dolphin, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist in the novel, learns to manoeuvre through her mother’s lack of financial prudence. It aims to highlight the significance of self-efficacy which empowers Dolphin to minimize the detrimental effects of Marigold’s financial mismanagement and overcome the negligence encountered. It is hoped that the study contributes to forming a sense financial literacy within young readers and build their agency to govern their finances efficiently.

**Methodology**

The analysis of the selected text is explicated through Albert Bandura’s psychological theory of self-efficacy forwarded in his work *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (1997). The concept has been widely recognized as fundamental factor in determining a person’s sense of agency (Pajares, 1997; Gariglietti, McDermott, Gingerich & Hastings, 1997; Bandura, 1997).

beliefs of personal efficacy touch virtually every aspect of people’s lives – whether they think productively, self-debilitatingly, pessimistically or optimistically; how well they motivate themselves and persevere in the face of adversities; their vulnerability to stress and depression and the life choices they make (par. 23).

Following that, “understanding critical issues related to our children’s sense of self is crucial to understanding the manner in which they deal with all of life’s tasks and challenges” (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 4). For that reason, Bandura (1986) asserts that

[e]ducational practices should be gauged not only by the skills and knowledge they impart for present use but also by what they do to children’s beliefs about their capabilities, which affects how they approach the future. Students who develop a strong sense of self-efficacy are well equipped to educate themselves when they have to rely on their own initiative (p. 417).

Further, Pajares & Schunk (2002) are of the view that children’s encounter with personal agency are

mediated by adults who can empower them with self-assurance or diminish their fledgling self-beliefs. Because young children are not proficient at making accurate self-appraisals, they rely on the judgments of others to create their own judgments of confidence and of self-worth (p. 22).

Similarly, Lehman (2007) reasons that reading and thinking about literary characters who exhibit self-efficacy allow children to model after their empowering behaviours. Hence, relating these fictional events to personal experiences helps readers to imagine “solutions to problems and give them a sense of vicarious accomplishment through these resolutions. Children then can apply or adapt these models to their own lives” (Lehman, 2007, p. 111). By highlighting how Dolphin develops and enhances her self-efficacy to manage and overcome her mother’s financial management through the four sources of efficacy information forwarded by Bandura, the paper hopes to contribute to envisioning children who are “self-assured and fully-functioning individuals capable of pursuing their hopes and their ambitions” (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 26) and equipped with “the self-beliefs necessary to maintain the excellence throughout their adult lives” (Pajares & Schunk, 2002, p. 27).

According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is defined as the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (p. 3). This sense of self-efficacy can be established through four principal sources of information comprising enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Enactive mastery experience is identified as “experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort” (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). Compared to other sources, Bandura (1997) recognizes this as “the most influential source of efficacy information because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed” (ibid). The
second source of efficacy information is vicarious experience which involves “[e]fficacy appraisals […] mediated through modeled attainments” (p. 86). Research has shown that “[w]hen adequacy must be gauged largely in relation to the performance of others, social comparison operates as a primary factor in the self-appraisal of capabilities” (Festinger, 1954; Goethals & Darley, 1977; Suls & Miller, 1977, as cited in Bandura, 1997, p. 87). Vicarious experience is thus able to “alter efficacy beliefs through transmission of competencies and comparison with the attainment of others” (Bandura, 1997, p. 79). Not only that, a person’s self-efficacy is also enhanced when “significant others express faith in one’s capabilities” (Bandura, 1997, p. 101) during difficult phases. Bandura (1997) observes that “[p]eople who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks are likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbour self-doubts and dwell on personal deficiencies when difficulties arrive” (ibid). Verbal persuasion therefore promotes self-affirming beliefs which lead to “development of skills” (ibid). Bandura (1997) also maintains that people determine their capabilities based on “somatic information conveyed by physiological and emotional states” (p. 106). These bodily functions and states help people to “judge their capableness, strength, and vulnerability to dysfunction” (Bandura, 1997, p. 79). Physiological and affective states therefore enhance efficacy beliefs when participants strive to improve their “physical status, reduce stress levels and negative emotional proclivities, and correct misinterpretations of bodily states” (Bandura, 1991a; Cioffi, 1991a, as cited in Bandura, 1997, p. 106). Using this explication on the sources of efficacy information, the paper traces how Dolphin gradually grows in self-efficacy, thus empowering her to cope with and overcome her mother’s financial mismanagement.

**Discussion**

Throughout Wilson’s *The Illustrated Mum* (1999), Marigold is portrayed as a manic depressive and alcoholic mother whose irresponsibility and lack of financial self-control subjects her children to living conditions void of basic necessities. Star and Dolphin are also forced to endure frequent starvation. Pipher (1994) asserts that “[a]dults who are struggling with their own problems such as depression, drug or alcohol addiction or crippling poverty often have no energy to parent” (p. 65). The following discussion thus looks at how Dolphin, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist of the text, learns self-efficacy through the four sources of efficacy information which are enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states. As her sense of agency is enhanced, Dolphin gradually becomes empowered to manage and overcome the negligence encountered.

In the opening pages of the novel, Marigold is shown to be a recipient of the state’s monthly welfare, alluding to her state of unemployment. However, the mother character displays carelessness in her spending, often using the money given to fulfill her personal desires than supplying for the family’s needs. This is revealed when she refuses to pay for the family’s electric bill but renews their postal forwarding services in hopes of receiving letters from Micky. Micky is Marigold’s first boyfriend who left her before knowing that she was pregnant with their daughter, Star. Since then, Marigold has been trying to relocate Micky, even attending the concert of his favourite band, Emerald City. Dolphin observes that “[i]t was the one thing she never forgot” (Wilson, 1999, pp. 15-6). Marigold also spends money on credit, which is shown when she persuades Steve, the owner of a tattooing parlour, to deduct the payment for her new tattoo from...
her wages (p. 17). The mother character’s financial mismanagement puts her daughters in dangerous situations, especially when her debtors pursue them. Dolphin narrates that her mother “owed lots of money to people. Some of the collectors were frightening” (Wilson, 1999, p. 99). Further, the family lives without basic amenities such as a television and video recorder (p. 21) or even a telephone since “[i]t’s been cut off because we didn’t pay the bill” (p. 45). Often, their belongings are reclaimed (p. 107) as well. Both Star and Dolphin also lack proper school uniforms (p. 32) as Dolphin’s clothes are modified from second hand materials: “I wore one of Marigold’s dresses she’d cut small for me” (Wilson, 1999, p. 32); “a black and white checked skirt that Marigold made me from a 50p remnant” (Wilson, 1999, p. 120). Not only that, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist wears an inappropriate pair of second-hand dancing shoes to school because Marigold is unable to buy new school shoes for her (p. 63). This corresponds to Zuravin’s (as cited in Dubowitz et al, 1993) statement that “the severe poverty that has been associated with neglect, together with housing and sanitation problems reflect poor management of financial and material resources” (p. 15).

Despite that, both Star and Dolphin learn to make use of their limited resources. The pre-adolescent girl protagonist observes how her elder sister usually manages their grocery shopping as “[s]he was much better at it than Marigold” (Wilson, 1999, p. 199). This becomes a vicarious experience for the Dolphin. On Marigold’s 33rd birthday, Star and Dolphin each designs a birthday card for their mother (pp. 1-3). They also buy inexpensive but practical presents for her:

Star found a remixed version of Emerald City’s greatest hits for only £2 at the Saturday morning market. I bought her a sparkly hair clasp, green to match her eyes. We even bought a special sheet of green tissue paper and a green satin ribbon to wrap up the presents (Wilson, 1999, p. 3).

Through this incident, Dolphin learns enactive mastery experience to manage their limited resources. Further, Star’s assurance that Dolphin’s choice of a hair clasp for Marigold is “a great present” (Wilson, 1999, p. 3, italics original) furnishes the pre-adolescent girl protagonist with verbal persuasion which enhances her self-efficacy to be resourceful despite their financial lack. When Marigold complains about her missing birthday cake, Star buys their mother a sponge cake “because it was cheaper” (Wilson, 1999, p. 11), thus modelling financial prudence to Dolphin. Through these enactive mastery experiences and vicarious experiences from observing how Star assists and pacifies Marigold, Dolphin’s sense of agency to endure the family’s financial challenge is enhanced.

In addition to that, Marigold’s financial mismanagement also subjects her daughters to frequent starvation. This is evident from the pre-adolescent girl protagonist’s small body frame which shows the malnourishment that she is subjected to: “I was quite a skinny girl and small for ten but it said 6-8 years old on the label [of my tight knickers]” (Wilson, 1999, p. 51). On the evening of Marigold’s trip to the pub to celebrate her birthday, she takes the household purse with her, leaving her daughters with no money or food supplies for their breakfast the following morning. This becomes another example of how the mother character’s financial mismanagement victimizes her daughters. Fortunately, Star uses the money that she finds in the park to buy Mars bars for both of them (p. 33). This curbs Dolphin’s hunger which raises her physiological and affective states (p. 36).
When Marigold eventually returns from an entire night out, she fills her kitchen with baking supplies and utensils, spending the entire afternoon baking cookies and cakes. Her wasteful attitude is evident when she discards the different batches of cookie dough which are considered imperfect: “The first lot went lumpy so I chucked them out. And the second batch was a teeny bit burnt. They’ve got to be perfect” (Wilson, 1999, pp. 43-4). During this episode, Dolphin exhibits enactive mastery experience by eating her mother’s cookies even when they turn out unattractive: “But they still taste delicious,” I said, biting mine quickly and burning my tongue” (Wilson, 1999, p. 46). She also manages to stop Marigold from baking more unnecessary cookies (ibid). These examples heighten the pre-adolescent girl protagonist’s self-efficacy to manage her mother’s excessiveness. Despite that, she is powerless to prevent Marigold from embarking on a cake-baking frenzy (p. 46). Owing to her reckless spending, Marigold also neglects buying proper food for the family (p. 47). Star recounts how their mother splurges on ice cream the previous summer, resulting in them surviving on “stale bread and carrots all the rest of that week” (Wilson, 1999, p. 48). Clearly, Marigold’s lack of financial prudence constitutes a form of abuse and negligence upon her daughters.

As the novel progresses, Marigold’s financial mismanagement worsens when she reveals the possession of a new credit card (pp. 63-4). Recalling her mother’s past involvement with credit card misuse, Dolphin attempts to divert her from using the new card:

But I knew Marigold had no money in the bank to pay a credit card bill. If it was her credit card. She’d sort of borrowed them from people once or twice before. Star said she could end up in prison. Then what would happen to us? […] I tried desperately to think of something we could do that wouldn’t cost any money. ‘Let’s go for a walk along Beech Brook’ (Wilson, 1999, p. 64, italics original).

Moreover, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist suggests that they feed the ducks with the leftover cakes from Marigold’s baking, thereby preventing her mother from spending more money (p. 65). These examples show Dolphin’s increasing capability to stop her mother from financial mismanagement, contributing to the enactive mastery experiences which enhance her self-efficacy to handle the situation.

When Marigold eventually finds Micky, she introduces him to their daughter, Star, who is now 13 years old. The story takes a turn for the worse when Star abandons Marigold and Dolphin to live with her biological father in Brighton. Consequently, Marigold uses her credit card to purchase a train ticket to Brighton. in search for Micky and Star (p. 142). When Dolphin and her mother arrives in Brighton, Marigold spends all her money on astrology charts to calculate her compatibility with Micky, leaving them with no additional cash for taxi fares, food or drinks throughout the trip (p. 143). In order to satiate her hunger, Dolphin resorts to eating leftover food from a fish and chip booth at the pier (p. 144) and “drinking from the cold water tap in a ladies loo” (Wilson, 1999, p. 146). These evidences further highlight how Marigold’s financial mismanagement victimizes her daughter.

The most critical consequence of Marigold’s financial mismanagement on Dolphin occurs on the day the mother character is sent to the hospital. This happens after Marigold’s manic
depression peaks and she covers herself in gloss paint. Left without any money and a diminishing supply of food, Dolphin is unable to provide for herself in the absence of both her mother and her elder sister. In desperation, she seeks financial assistance from her classmate, Oliver: “‘[i]f you could maybe lend me a little bit of cash, because I don’t think we’ve got much food in, then I’ll be fine’” (Wilson, 1999, p. 234). Instead of fulfilling her request, however, Oliver uses his money to locate Dolphin’s biological father by going through the Directory Enquiries (pp. 230-1) and purchasing train tickets for them to meet him (p. 235). This example shows a stark contrast between him and Marigold in their financial management. The novel ends with Dolphin being placed in a foster home while her mother is being treated at the psychiatric ward for an indefinite period of time. As Michael, Dolphin’s biological father, processes the legal papers to adopt her, the pre-adolescent girl protagonist lives with her foster mother, Aunty Jane, who ensures that she is well-fed and cared for (p. 275). Dolphin no longer has to worry about and suffer the detrimental effects of her mother’s financial mismanagement.

Conclusion

Although Dolphin is subjected to Marigold’s financial mismanagement throughout the novel, the discussion shows how the pre-adolescent girl protagonist manages to minimize its detrimental effects through enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and improved physiological and affective states. These sources of efficacy information raise her self-efficacy and agency to overcome the ramification of the negligence experienced. Wopperer (2011) stresses that “all characters in children’s and young adults books […] need to be portrayed independently solving their own problems” (p. 29). This is because “[b]ooks which empower girls to recognize and claim their subject positions empower the entire culture” (Trites, 1997, p. 137). Moreover, Raj (2018) maintains that “[t]he promotion of financial literacy should be a core concern for political and educational action in every country” (par. 4). For Ahmad (2017),

“[b]eing more financially literate means understanding that money is a resource that anybody can obtain and lose. It also means having the tools to deal with their financial situation in the best way. This can help empower people of financially underprivileged backgrounds while making those in positions of financial privilege become more aware of their status (Ahmad, 2017, par. 15).

As Nadason (2018) states, “consumers who effectively manage their consumption and their finances responsibly [enhance] both personal and community well-being” (par. 12). As such, Ahmad (2017) believes that “financial literacy would be taken more seriously as a subject of classroom study in the decades to come.” (par. 18). In response to that, the paper forwards the use of literary works to educate the young about financial literacy. Strengthening Guerra’s (2012) claim that “[l]iterature is powerful in its capacity to introduce new ideas and contribute to belief formation” (p. 386), the findings of this research aim to instigate the use of Wilson’s works to educate the young on important life lessons such as financial management.
References


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5 Using Digital Storytelling To Improve English Speaking Fluency Of EFL Students in Thailand

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Abstract

Since English is taught as a foreign language in Thailand, many efforts have been continuously made to find the appropriate techniques to develop English language learners’ ability. Most of Thai high-school learners have learned a great number of vocabulary, but they do not have opportunities to communicate in English. Although English teaching time at high schools has been increased, their English speaking still remain unsatisfactory (Person, 2018). Digital storytelling projects that are a stimulating and enlightening venture for EFL classroom can not only strengthen languages skills, but also provide opportunities for learners to develop autonomous learning, collaboration and problem solving skills (Thang et. al., 2014). Therefore, in this digital age, this study aims to investigate the effects of using Digital Storytelling Projects (DSPs) on EFL learners’ speaking fluency. All the 18 high-school students at Therdthaiwittayakhom School in Roi-Et in Thailand were trained to practice DSP individually and collaboratively in this project. Quantitative and qualitative data are collected from pre-test/posttest of English speaking fluency, semi-structured interviews and written reflections during the lessons. The findings indicate that learners’ speaking fluency is improved and they have more confidence in communicating in English. Moreover, the participants also have positive attitudes towards learning English, especially in speaking activities.

Keywords: digital story-telling, English speaking fluency, high school students

Introduction

English is an international language and that is one of the reasons why the Thailand government has maintained English as a foreign language which have to teach at school. Teaching language for communication has been greatly emphasized in the classroom since communication is one of the twenty-first century skills. Specifically, the ability to speak a language has been deemed critical as speaking is the most common form of human communication. Hence, successful language learners are the ones who can communicate effectively in the target language. There are several speaking activities in class such as discussion, debate and role play. Although English teaching time at high schools has been increased, the students’ English speaking ability still remain unsatisfactory (Person, 2018). Students who study in high schools in the countryside can be considered as studying in a non-English context because they have limited opportunities to use the target language outside the classroom. As such, they are unable to transfer their knowledge from
language-learning situations to using language situations. Therefore, they may need more opportunities to put their language learning skills to use in real life. To this end, technology may provide learners with a safe, less threatening, less anxiety and highly motivating environment to develop their spoken language competence (Gong, 2002).

In recent years, computer and technologies are rapidly increasing, learning is taking place in digital environments (Yang and Wu, 2012). Much research have been done with digital storytelling which is one technique for learning languages. According to Jessica and Yunus (2018), developing speaking skill through digital storytelling is able to promote pronunciation, accuracy, and confidence as well as motivation in English with tertiary level students. Moreover, there was a positive effect on learners’ oral performance (Abdelmageed, and El-Naggar, 2018). However, using digital storytelling in high schools of Thailand have not received consideration. Therefore this study will use Digital Storytelling to enhance the learners’ speaking skills.

Literature Review

English problem at high schools in Thailand

The speaking skill is considered to be the most important in a country where English is a foreign language. It is the ability that demands the process of communicative competence, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary improving. As Widdowson (1994), also believed that speaking is a production skill and it is the capability of someone to communicate orally with others. Wongsuwana (2006) accepted that speaking skills can be trained and it does not depend on talent. However it still is a problem of many Thai students at high school. According to Wiriyachitra (2003), learning English as a foreign language in Thailand is not very successful because most students lack the opportunities to learn and practise English in real English environments. The worry and anxiety as well as lack of confidence of students during a speaking session in the class are the problems in teaching and learning English (Ratanapinyowong, Poopon, & Honsa, 2007). Furthermore, Thai students always use the Thai language to communicate, and career paths in many fields do not use other languages for work.

Speaking Activities in the Classroom

The English activities in the classroom provide opportunities for students to practise their speaking skill. There are various speaking activities in class for instance, debate, discussion, role play, speech activity, etc. As Harmer (1984) reports since there were active activities in the classroom for motivating the students, they can increase the self-confidence of being of a part in the classroom including answering questions, sharing ideas, and also presentations. Therefore if the students do not get enough chances and activities to practise speaking in the language classroom, they may give up soon in learning. Activities and tasks must be designed to expose the students to the target language and foster students’ motivation to learn the language in class. As Long & Richards (1987) stated, in learner-centered classrooms, where students do the talking activities seem there build more speaking than teacher-centered classes. One task used as an English teaching speaking skill activity is storytelling. According to Jessica and Yunus (2018) agreed that digital storytelling projects are student-centered and encourages students to practise more often and develop autonomy by recording until they are satisfied with the final product. As
Smeada, Dakich & Sharda (2014) supported, digital storytelling promotes active engagement, foster collaboration, and enhance learning skill including organization as well as reflection. Furthermore, learners may work collaboratively to refine narratives, giving opportunities to revise and edit (Alameen, 2011).

**Speaking Fluency**

It seems the meaning of fluency is easily understood, however there are various definitions of fluency. Hartmann and Stork (1976) pointed out ‘fluent’ means a speaker is able to use the correct structures of a language at normal speed, which means speaking naturally meanwhile concentrating on the content delivery rather than the form or structure of a language. Moreover Fillmore (1979) defined four abilities of speaking fluently: a) the ability to talk at length with few pauses; b) be able to produce the sentences coherently, reasoned and semantically; c) have appropriate expressions in a wide range of contexts; d) be creative and imaginative in language use. However, According to Nation (2007), fluency development is a meaning-focused field. Fluency ability will show if the EFL learners are familiar with the content.

Neither is defining the term fluency easy, nor the measure of fluency. Many researchers attempted to identify the longitudinal fluency development (Lennon, 1990), to classify the fluent and non-fluent language learners (Riggenbach, 1991; Ejzenberg, 2000). They analyzed the words per minute and the average pause between different syllables in speaking. So, Wood (2001) summarized speech rate is an indicator of measuring fluency as speech rate shows the overall fluency of speaking.

**Digital Storytelling**

As Jianing (2007) state, storytelling is a basic form of teaching and story learning plays an important role in learners’ language improvement. All kinds of interesting storytelling techniques are used in different situations which are appropriate for learners’ level. Using storytelling is a good activity to encourage students to study English. Much research showed that storytelling activities are chances to practise oral and written language comprehension, critical thinking, increased greater speaking fluency and accuracy. Although using storytelling in the classroom is still satisfactory, there is not enough chance for expression. Nowadays, technology is popular. Hence, it is a good way to apply storytelling activity with combination of technology.

According to Davis and Weinshenker (2012) gives the term of digital storytelling that came from a basic movement that uses multi-media digital tools to help general people tell their own stories. Moreover, digital storytelling is similar to the ancient art of oral storytelling with mixed the creators’ own story voice and personal tales through blending images, music, narrative and voice together into their strong creations (Porter, 2004). In the present time, digital storytelling has become a stimulating and enlightening tool for EFL classroom teachers and students (Brown, 2005). In agreement with Ohler (2007), new advanced media was used in storytelling activity. As Ellis (2005) recommended that technology has worked on the collaborative relationship between students and the way they interact with each other which ultimately influence the learning chances in classroom. Nowadays, development in technology has brought an interesting activity into the classroom in the form of digital storytelling.
Students are motivated, engaged, and interesting in digital storytelling (Daniel, 2018). Jitpaisarnwattana (2018) have shown that any technologies can promote learner autonomy and self-directness. It also expressed that the use of multimedia in teaching helps students keep new information as well as aids in the understanding of difficult material. In addition, Abdelmageed, and El-Naggar, (2018) believe that digital storytelling which integrates oral speaking with technology in the classroom helps to improve speaking fluency and has a positive effect on learners’ oral performance. Therefore, incorporating activities with technology in the classroom is a suitable procedure which is selected in this research.

**Research Questions**

The research questions are:
1. Does learning English through digital storytelling improve students’ speaking fluency?
2. Does digital storytelling project promote a positive attitude in learning English?

**Delimitations**

The study was delimited to:
- One intact class of eighteen Grade 12 students in high school, doing a English Speaking and Listening course at Therdthaiwittayakom School which is located in the countryside and far from city.
- A specific duration for conducting the experiment i.e. during the last four weeks of the second semester of 2018.
- Two study units adapted from “Building the Ideal Digital Storytelling Project” by Daniel (2018).
- Fluency is the main subskill. There are also pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehensibility.

**Methodology**

**Research design**

This study employed a one-group pre-test and post-test design. The treatment group was pretested on speaking test, received the treatment, and finally was post tested. Differences in mean scores between the pre-administration and post-administration were calculated.

**Participants**

A group of 18 students who are in grade 12 of English for listening and speaking class at Therdthaiwittayakhom School in Roi-Et in Thailand. The reason that the researcher has chosen this group, firstly, they are in English for listening and speaking class. Secondly, they lack of opportunities to speak out in English language because the school is in countryside area, no one speaks English. When teacher taught English in class, it is very challenging to promote them to speak out. Last reason is all this student will graduate from secondary school after this year. Although they know the meaning of the English word, but they had a lot of long time of pause and space time as well as anxiety about language form. All these reasons should be solved so that they will be more willing to speak out.
**Instrumentation**

1. Speaking test (Pre-test and Post-test)

   It was developed according to the criteria suggested by the IELTS. Hence, the tasks and materials were adapted from the IELTS speaking module. Furthermore, the speaking test consisted of three tasks: warm-up questions, individual talk, and discussion. The time allotted for the test was 5 minutes per learner, including giving clear instructions. The total score was 20 on the speaking rubric. The test was reviewed by three EFL experts to ensure its face validity. The test consists 3 parts (See appendix A): introduction part, the experience story part (narrative personal), and discussion between pair work on one picture (tell story in the picture).

2. Scoring

   The researchers developed an analytic rubric to score the participants’ answers to the speaking test. A total of 20 marks was divided among four main components (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehensibility). Each component had four levels. Only fluency have 2 credit scores. The rubric was reviewed by a jury of EFL specialists, whose comments were considered in its final version (See Appendix B). Also, focusing on fluency aspect is more than others.

3. Interview

   The semi-structured interview comprised seven questions and was divided into two sections: section one had three questions asking about how a learner created his or her digital story whether it was instant speaking or reading from a script, how many times he or she recorded himself or herself per digital story, and how much time he or she spent making each digital story respectively. The second section had four open-ended questions asking about the positive and negative characteristics of digital storytelling from the learners’ perspectives. Learners were asked to comment on the relation between digital storytelling and their speaking skill, and the time frame for creating each of the two digital stories. The interview was conducted with the participants in the target language after the completion of the treatment; however, when the learners needed help, the interviewer would repeat or explain the questions.

4. Written Reflection

   By the end of the treatment, learners were asked to write reflective paragraphs about their digital storytelling experience. These written reflections were checked by Grammarly program on google form.

**Treatment**

After the participants did the speaking pretest, researchers took them to computer room then they received their usernames and passwords on www.wenvideo.com. The researchers chose WeVideo for a model of create Digital Storytelling because it is a user-friendly website, has a free library of pictures and music tracks, and can be accessed easily from any electronic device with internet connection. The instructor provided a guiding manual for using the platform.

The intervention lasted for four weeks, each week the learners and the instructor meeting once a week for two hours. First week is about introduction and the teacher demonstrated how to create a digital story as a model for students. The second week, they created their story ideas about personal narrative by individual work. The third week, they created their story ideas about folktales by working in groups of 4-5. Then, they completed their story maps, and worked on their scripts.
They were to complete the digital stage at home with their own smartphones or computers. The researcher allowed them to use smartphones because everyone has had smartphones more than computers. It does matter what they create by any digital way. After finishing their digital stories, learners were asked to upload them to YouTube and share them with their colleagues and other audience. In the following week, learners were divided into pairs. The teacher gave them a peer-review checklist to complete. This type of peer feedback was really constructive for learners to raise their awareness about, for example, pronunciation and fluency. They were encouraged to record and hear their speeches as many times as they needed for the sake of improving the quality of their final products. The instructor used the speaking test analytic rubric (See Appendix B) to assess the participants’ digital stories. In the other week, learners was asked for interview and written reflection.

Findings

The scores of the pre-post administrations of the speaking proficiency test were analyzed. The mean scores of the pre-post test were transformed into mean ranks to employ Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test, the non-parametric equivalent of the paired t-test because the sample size was small and the data were not normally distributed. Table 1 presents the results of the analysis. The Z value is 2.524 with significance level of P = 0.01 (< 0.05). To measure the significance of the difference between the participants’ performances on the two administrations of the speaking test, the effect size for Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test was calculated according to the formula \( r = \frac{Z}{\sqrt{N}} \) where N equals the total number of cases. The effect size was 0.831, designating a large effect. It can be suggested, then, that the project had a statistically significant positive effect on the participants’ speaking skills.

The mean scores of each speaking subskill on the speaking pre-post test were analyzed. As shown in table 1, students have improved their speaking subskills significantly.

Table 1
Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
<th>Z Value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Speaking</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12.35</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.524</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.45</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluency</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>5.016</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.375</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.157</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.437</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.875</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensibility</td>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.625</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.375</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for the first section of the interview, the learners unanimously agreed that they read from their scripts while recording their speeches. Also, they averagely recorded themselves 5.6 times. In addition, 4.64 hours was the average time to complete each digital story.
Another type of data was qualitative, collected through the second section of the interview and students’ written reflections. Content analysis was employed to analyze these qualitative data. The data was “the Digital Storytelling Project” comprised “positive attitude” and “negative attitude” to reveal learners’ viewpoints toward using digital storytelling to improve their speaking fluency. As presented in Table 2, the participants’ attitudes toward the treatment was mainly positive. They suggested that it helped them improve their speaking fluency skills. According to the learners, creating digital stories was interesting and helped them become more engaged in learning. They were able to improve their fluent and flow in naturally language because they dispose a lot of long pause and less language form. Moreover, they believed that their digital storytelling experience enhanced and boosted their vocabulary. As for vocabulary, they mentioned that the used dictionary to vary the diction of their digital stories. As for pronunciation, they looked up the pronunciation of new words or words they were not sure how to pronounce before recording themselves. For example, one participant stated, “I have to check the grammar and the pronunciation many times which improves my language.” Furthermore, they stated that digital storytelling enhanced their self-confidence by giving them the opportunity to organize their creational ideas. Having the power of choice to import their pictures and organize them the way they wanted, they had more self-confidence to produce final quality products. In addition, since learners were encouraged to write scripts, they felt less anxious about speaking in the target language. Moreover, they have opportunity to choose their interested story to retell with digital.

However, the learners had to record themselves many times to correct any pronunciation errors and produce a more fluent speech. They prefered to use the smartphone more than a computer program because it was convenient and many applications for creating videos at home or anywhere they wanted.

Hence, the learners viewed digital storytelling as a new way of learning that helped them improve their speaking fluency by highlighting the positive effect of the program or application on their vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. In addition, suggestion more technology-related guidance and practice before starting a digital storytelling project.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Learners’ Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Storytelling</td>
<td>- Improve pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
<td>- Increase vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
<td>- Make ideas organized and coherent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing a script</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Boost confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improve grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Believe it is engaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Enhance technology user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- less anxious and threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Improve speaking fluency, not much space time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Share idea in group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell story with fun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the findings of previous studies, Abdelmageed, and El-Naggar, (2018) found that digital storytelling integrating speaking practice with technology helped to improve speaking fluency and contributed to a positive effect on learners’ oral performance. The findings of this present study on digital storytelling indicates that this technique is able to improve speaking fluency skill in high schools in rural areas in Thailand.

The findings of this Digital Storytelling project shows that it enhanced students’ confidence in speaking. It seems that technology provides the learners with a safe space to practice their speaking in a less threatening environment and hence, lower anxiety levels. This concurs with Gong(2002) who found that technology can provide learners with a safe, less threatening, and highly motivating environment to develop their spoken language competence. Moreover, this method is interesting for language learners. The findings also support the findings of previous studies that, developing speaking skill through digital storytelling is able to promote pronunciation, accuracy, and confidence as well as motivation to learn English among tertiary level learners (Jessica and Yunus, 2018).

In addition, this project also indicated the benefits of a learner-centered approach because the learners have chances to use a digital means to tell the story in their life. This view is similar to Long & Richards (1987) who opines that a learner-centered classroom, where students do the talking activities seem there build more speaking than teacher-centered classes. Besides, they also improved their speaking skill and critical thinking skill during the group work as Ellis (2005), technology has worked on the collaborative relationship between students and the way they interact with each other.

In addition, they preferred to write scripts and read from them. Reading from scripts, accordingly, should not be considered as an obstacle to enhancing speaking fluency. On the other hand, learners should be allowed to have their scripts while recording their stories as it helps learners develop confidence and competence in speaking.

Recommendations

The findings of the study suggest that digital storytelling has a positive effect on learners’ speaking fluency. It may be the very tool to provide learners with opportunities to practise their speaking skills inside and outside the classroom. Meanwhile, the learners are reported to have a positive attitude towards the digital storytelling experience. They also pointed that it has more advantages than disadvantages. Learners’ behaviors combined writing scripts, recording and rerecording themselves, importing pictures, and selecting background music. Because the learners showed preference for reading from the script, the teachers should allow them to do so.
Despite the limitations and delimitations of the current research, its findings can be applied in English language teaching classes, in speaking and listening courses in high schools, and English for specific purposes courses. Moreover, EFL teachers may implement digital storytelling to enhance their learners’ speaking skills, to overcome the issue of learners’ not having enough opportunities to practise the target language outside the classroom.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

To further examine the use of digital storytelling in greater depth, the following studies seem pertinent: digital storytelling and EFL learners’ critical thinking skills; digital storytelling and EFL learners’ motivation and engagement; digital storytelling and EFL learners’ intercultural awareness; and digital storytelling and EFL learners’ project-based learning skills.

**References**


Riggenbach (Eds.), *Perspectives on fluency* (pp. 287-314). Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.


Appendix A: Pre-test and Post-test of Speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Activity</th>
<th>Question Guideline</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>conversation</strong></td>
<td>In this part you</td>
<td>Good morning/afternoon/evening. Can I have your</td>
<td>(2 – 3 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>have a conversation</td>
<td>mark sheets, please?</td>
<td>[to both candidates]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the examiner</td>
<td>[examiner takes the mark sheets, which will have been</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about yourself for</td>
<td>given to students before they enter the room]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>two minutes.</td>
<td>I’m ______ and this is ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Example</strong></td>
<td>He/she is just going to listen to us.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. What is your</td>
<td><strong>[to Candidate A]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>name?</td>
<td>Now, what’s your name? ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. What is your</td>
<td>Thank you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>surname?</td>
<td><strong>[to Candidate B]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. How do you</td>
<td>And, what’s your name? ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>spell it?</td>
<td>Thank you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Do you like</td>
<td><strong>[to Candidate A and then again to Candidate B]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>studying English?</td>
<td>What’s your surname?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Where do you</td>
<td>How do you spell it? / How do you write your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>live/come from?</td>
<td>family/second name? ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Do you work or</td>
<td>Thank you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are you a student</td>
<td><strong>[to Candidate A]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in (place name)?</td>
<td>What’s your surname?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you do/</td>
<td>How do you spell it? / How do you write your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>study?</td>
<td>family/second name? ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Do you have a</td>
<td>Thank you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>job? / What job do</td>
<td><strong>[to Candidate B]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you do?</td>
<td>And, what’s your name? ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Do you study</td>
<td>Thank you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English at school?</td>
<td><strong>[to Candidate A and then again to Candidate B]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. What subjects</td>
<td>What’s your surname?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>do you study?</td>
<td>How do you spell it? / How do you write your</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you like it?</td>
<td>family/second name? ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thank you.</td>
<td>(2 – 3 minutes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>experience</strong></td>
<td>In the next part,</td>
<td><strong>[to both candidates]</strong></td>
<td>[to both candidates]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>you are going to</td>
<td>In the next part, you are going to talk on the scary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>talk on the scary</td>
<td>experience or situation in your past of your life.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>experience or</td>
<td>[give candidates about two minutes to talk one by one]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>situation in your</td>
<td><strong>[to both candidates]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>past of your life.</td>
<td>In this part, you are going to talk each other about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Example</strong> Long</td>
<td>what happened in the photo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>time ago when I</td>
<td>[give candidates about two minutes to talk to each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>was 6 year olds.</td>
<td>other]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I was bitten by</td>
<td><strong>[to both candidates]</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the big dog. I</td>
<td>In this part, you are going to talk each other about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>went to the temple</td>
<td>what happened in the photo.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with my grandmother. I walked along with path beside</td>
<td>[give candidates about two minutes to talk to each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the wall of temple</td>
<td>other]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>while a big dog ran into attack my right thigh and bit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B: The Analytic Speaking Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks fluently with few pauses, rare repetitions, or self-correction; effortless and smooth speech; no hesitation to find words or grammar.</td>
<td>No conspicuous or consistent mispronunciations; pronunciation enhances understanding; Pronounces /b, p, θ, δ, f, v/ correctly.</td>
<td>Uses a wide range of vocabulary flexibly and precisely; uses idiomatic language and collocations naturally and accurately.</td>
<td>Response readily comprehensible; employs appropriate cohesive devices; develops the topic fully and appropriately; no interpretation required from the listener.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks fluently with only occasional pausing, repetition or self-correction; speech is mostly smooth; hesitation caused mainly by rephrasing and trying to find the right words.</td>
<td>Has occasional pronunciation lapses that do not interfere with understanding; no phonemic errors; Pronounces /b, p, f, v/ correctly, but has problems with /θ, δ/.</td>
<td>Adequate use of vocabulary; less use of idiomatic language and collocations; occasional inaccuracies; makes a few word choice errors.</td>
<td>Response mostly comprehensible; uses a range of connectives and discourse markers often appropriately; minimal interpretation required from the listener.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks slowly with frequent pauses; uses repetition or self-correction to keep going; some sentences may be left incomplete.</td>
<td>Occasional mispronunciations make understanding difficult; Pronounces /f, v/ correctly, but has problems with /b, p, θ, δ/.</td>
<td>Limited use of vocabulary; makes occasional errors in word choice; uses simple words only to convey basic meaning.</td>
<td>Response partially comprehensible; may overuse certain connectives and discourse markers; interpretation sometimes required from the listener.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speaks with long pauses and incomplete thoughts; gives only simple short responses or memorized expressions; may not be able to continue; perceiving continuity in utterances is difficult for the listener.</td>
<td>Frequent pronunciation errors lead to misunderstanding; Pronounces /b, p, θ, δ, f, v/ incorrectly.</td>
<td>Inaccurate use of vocabulary; frequent word choice errors impede comprehension; only produces isolated words or memorized utterances.</td>
<td>Response barely comprehensible; repetitious use of simple connectives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6 The Relationship Between L2 Motivational Self System And Language Proficiency Of Cambodian EFL Students

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**Abstract**

The study aimed to investigate the relationship between the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) and language proficiency. 224 Cambodian students, age range from 8 to 21, with different levels of English were randomly chosen from two private English schools in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. A 30-item questionnaire was used to measure the level of components of L2MSS, while the language proficiency test was used to measure the students’ level of English. Data were analyzed for mean, standard deviation, correlation and multiple regression. The results showed that the students possessed a high level of the Ideal L2 Self (IS) but that IS showed a weak correlation with language proficiency. Moreover, only IS was able to positively predict the proficiency level.

*Keywords: Cambodian ideal L2 self, language proficiency, private English schools, the L2 Motivational Self System*

**Introduction**

Studying English can be difficult especially for learners in the expanding circle countries, where students have limited opportunities to practice English outside class. In Cambodia, English has been a lingua franca throughout the country since the presence of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993 (Clayton, 2002). This political situation paved ways for a variety of international aid agencies to come to Cambodia and accelerate the process of “globalization” in the country. This meant that more companies and countries, as well as individual professionals, needed to collaborate internationally on a wider scale. For these reasons, English has become the language that is most frequently used across national boundaries and is considered a global language (i.e., Crystal, 1997; Gladdol, 1997). Also, it has come to be one of the job requirements in various work places across the country. This has resulted in the growth of teaching and learning of English in public and private schools and universities. The study of the language
has become popular. In state schools, it takes 12 years for the completion of general education with six years (grades 1 to 6) for primary education and another six years (grades 7 to 12) for secondary education. The study of the English language or foreign language education is provided for at the secondary stage (Igawa, 2010). Cambodian parents who are more aware of the importance of English education send their children to private English schools before they start grade 7. Also, since the students focus only on general education in state schools, English is more valued in private English schools. Run by the private sector, private English schools provide only English education, before or after regular state school hours, for children aged 3 and older. English class lasts 3 hours per day and is held five days per week. It takes three to six months for students to complete each level i.e. beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate and advanced. They can choose between either the morning or afternoon session.

It has been claimed that motivation is a key element of the learning process, which includes foreign languages, and is often regarded as a solution for all unfavorable outcomes and behaviors in education. But what is the real impact of English on the students’ learning in Cambodia? Huntington (1993) states that the processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from local identities. If this is what is happening in Cambodia, what are the consequences? More specifically, how is this change relevant to areas where English is not an official language, but it continues to be more and more necessary due to increased need in workplaces? It should follow that students are highly motivated to learn English in order to get well-paid jobs, or socializing. Could it be that they want to identify themselves as part of the community in which English is used? In addition, are students with high motivation always proficient in English?

As Dörnyei (1998) said, even good teaching methods and appropriate curricula do not ensure success in learning without the presence of motivation. A lot of studies have been carried out to find out the effects of different types of motivation on language learning achievement (Gardner et. al 1987; Spolsky 1989; Gardner et. al 2004; Dörnyei & Ushida 2011). In 2005, Dörnyei reconceptualized the latest motivation theory called L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). In other words, students’ motivation is better understood as self-identification processes, and mainly how students relate their language learning to their imagined personal future, whether they are in their home country or overseas (Dörnyei & Ushida, 2009). This theory conceptualized the L2 motivational theory based on psychological theories of self, and is made up of three components: Ideal Self (IS), Ought-to Self (OS) and L2 Learning Experience (LE). First of all, IS represents what characteristics an individual would like to have and the person he or she would like to become. An individual’s image of their future self will involve instrumental qualities such as employment and lifestyle, and integrative qualities such as wishing to be a high-level, well educated, and globally aware person. Next, OS represents what qualities an individual believes they should possess, which could include social obligations, responsibilities, or morals. It would appear that there is a factor of outside pressure that motivates one to learn an L2. Whether it is to please parents, receive a reward, or fulfill some pragmatic goal, the student is motivated to satisfy some external pressure. Lastly, LE relates to the learning environment and experience that an individual is engaged in (Dornyei, 2009). This theory suggests that a combination of the
individual’s vision of himself or herself as an L2 speaker, the social pressures derived from outside sources, and a positive environment will lead to motivation to learn an L2.

Boo et al. (2015) found that the L2 motivation research conducted from 2005 to 2014 were mostly made up of university students in 53 countries in East Asia, North America and Europe. They called for more studies to be conducted in other parts of the world and in different educational contexts. Located in Southeast Asia, Cambodia offers a rather unique context in which students at all levels have their own choice to attend English schools. It was, therefore, high time to investigate the English proficiency and L2 motivation of Cambodian learners.

The purposes of the study were to explore the motivation levels of Cambodian students, the relationship between the components of L2MSS and language proficiency as well as the degree to which the components of L2MSS can predict the students language proficiency. The study was designed to address the following questions:

1. What are the English language learning motivation levels of Cambodian students based on L2MSS?
2. Is there a relationship between students’ language proficiency and L2MSS? Which component is the most associated with language proficiency?
3. To what extent can the components of L2MSS predict students’ language proficiency?

Participants

According to Education Statistics and Indicators 2015-2016 provided by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2016), it shows that the total number of all types of private schools in the whole kingdom is 829. However, the exact number of private English schools and information from official sources is not available. From the researcher’s experience, of being a former student at a private English school, there are approximately fifty schools. However, only two, Universal English School (UES) and Singapore International School (SIS), allowed the researcher to conduct the research while the others rejected or cannot be reached.

Two hundred and forty-six students, with different levels of English took part in the main study. Their ages ranged from 8 to 21. However, after the data screening, 22 participants were removed due to invalid questionnaire responses and incomplete proficiency test; therefore, the remaining participants were 224, 106 males and 118 females. They had studied English for at least 1 year.
Research Instruments

Language proficiency test (see Appendix A)

The Quick Placement Test (QPT) version 2 was adopted to measure participants’ English proficiency level. Designed by Oxford University Press and Cambridge ESOL to be applicable to foreign language learners of all levels and ages, the test is used for placement testing and examination screening. It offers two versions: computer-based (CB) version and paper and pen (P&P) version. The latter was selected for this study because of technical limitations. The test consisted of 60 multiple-choice items with 4 alternatives. It was divided into 2 parts. Part 1 (items 1-20) tested vocabulary knowledge, items 21-40, tested vocabulary and grammar knowledge through 3 cloze tests while items 41-60, tested grammar knowledge in a form of gap-filling. In addition, with higher level of difficulty, in part 2, items 41-50, tested vocabulary and grammar knowledge in cloze test format while items 51-60, tested grammar knowledge in a form of gap-filling. One point was awarded for one correct answer.

Questionnaire (see Appendix B)

The five-point Likert scales questionnaire (1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) was used. The questionnaire consisted of three parts with 30 items. It aimed at determining levels of motivation of the three components of L2MSS. The items were adopted and adapted from Dörnyei et al.’s (2006); Taguchi, Magid & Papi (2009); and some were newly designed. Items 1, 5, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17, 19, 22, 27, 29 measured IS while items 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 20, 21, 24, 26, 30 were for OS and items 3, 6, 8, 11, 15, 18, 23, 25, 28 asked about LE. The second part contained demographic questions such as age, time spent on learning English school and attitude toward learning English. The last part contained an open-ended question to explore their overall views on learning English. The questionnaire was translated from English into Khmer to ensure total understanding of the items. The Khmer version was approved by two Cambodian teachers of English. It was piloted for reliability with 50 students in one private English school in Phnom Penh. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .829.

Data Collection and Analysis

With the cooperation with the teacher, the proficiency test and questionnaire were allowed to distribute together in a regular class session. The verbal consent was conducted and ensured that their answers were used only for research purposes and their names would be anonymous. All the instructions and verbal consent request were in Khmer to make sure all the participants understood the whole research purposes and procedures. Both proficiency test and questionnaire were completed within 2 hours.

Data obtained from the questionnaire and the proficiency test were entered into the Statistical Package for Statistical Sciences (SPSS 17.0). Descriptive statistics including the
frequency, mean score, and standard deviations (S.D) of each self were performed. Pearson correlations were then calculated to identify the possible relations between the different components of L2MSS and the language proficiency. P value from Pearson correlation was calculated to determine the significance of “r” at 0.05 level and to examine the reliability of the data. Data were also calculated through multiple regression in SPSS to see the prediction of components of L2MSS on the language proficiency.

Results

Tables 1-4 present descriptive statistics of English language learning motivation levels of Cambodian private school students. As shown in Table 2, the overall results indicated that the respondents had strong IS (x̄=3.95, SD= 0.499). A closer look at each item showed that the two highest mean scores were item 13, “I think that English is an important school subject”, and item 17, “I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English” (x̄ = 4.27, 4.26, respectively). This revealed that students were able to view their own image as English speakers and this was also influenced by the importance of this language in their country. The lowest mean score, although still in the moderate scale, was item 1, “I imagine myself having a discussion in English” (x̄ = 3.68). This showed that students seemed to have limited opportunity to discuss in English to improve their knowledge.

Table 1
*The descriptive statistics of IS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>(x̄)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. I think that English is an important school subject.</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>0.794</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English.</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>2.156</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English.</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I imagine myself speaking English fluently.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.940</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The things I want to do in the future require me to speak English.</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.906</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. I imagine myself speaking English with international friends  
29. I imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English.  
1. I imagine myself having a discussion in English.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. I imagine myself speaking English with international friends</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English.</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.982</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I imagine myself having a discussion in English.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**  
3.95 0.499 High

*Note: 1-2.3= Low, 2.4-3.6= Moderate, 3.7-5= High*

**Table 2**  
*The descriptive statistics of OS*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>( \bar{x} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person.</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>0.709</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.885</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>1.295</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my family and teacher.</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.120</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.060</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. It will have a negative impact on my life if I don’t learn English.</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>1.010</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I consider learning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.919</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. If I fail to learn English, I’ll be letting other people down.</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.177</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>1.357</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**  
3.68 0.619 High
As shown in Table 2, the overall mean score of OS was at a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.68$, SD= 0.619). Among 10 items, the three highest mean scores were item 12, “My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person” item 24, “Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English,” and item 4, “I have to study English because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.” ($\bar{x} = 4.42$, 3.81, and 3.76, respectively). This revealed that parents influenced their children very much in their study of English. Beside parents, students were also motivated to study to avoid possible undesirable outcomes. For example, item 21 “It will have a negative impact on my life if I don’t learn English.” Moreover, they also tried to meet external expectations, as in item 14, “I consider leaning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.” ($\bar{x} = 3.62$, 3.61, respectively).

Table 3
The descriptive statistics of LE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(X)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. I consider that my teacher motivates me to learn English.</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I find learning English really interesting.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I would like to have more alternative activities in my English classes. (e.g. group speaking activities, oral presentations, etc.)</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.993</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would like to have more English lessons at school.</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.011</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I find the topics covered in my English course book interesting.</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.876</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I like the atmosphere of my English class.</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.981</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I love how I am taught in class.</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I volunteer answers in my English classes.</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I think time passes faster while studying English.</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>1.095</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.481</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, LE was also important in motivating students to learn English by resulting in a high mean ($\bar{x} = 3.77$, SD= 0.481). A variety of learning experiences which influenced students’ motivation were mentioned e.g. item 23, “I consider that my teacher motivates me to learn English”, item 15, “I find learning English really interesting”, ($\bar{x} = 4.13$, 4.00 respectively).
It reveals that teachers, and how students were taught, influenced the students’ motivation to study English.

Table 4  
*The overall Mean score and average mean score for IS, OS and LE*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Mean score for IS</th>
<th>Average Mean score for LE</th>
<th>Average Mean score for OS</th>
<th>Overall Mean score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(x̄)</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.499</td>
<td>0.481</td>
<td>0.619</td>
<td>0.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scale</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, motivation was very important for Cambodian students to learn English at private English schools as can be seen by the overall mean score of all the components of the L2MSS (x̄ =3.80, SD=0.425). Moreover, the level of IS was the highest (x̄ =3.95, SD=0.499). It indicated that most of the Cambodian students were willing to view their image of themselves in a future that resulted from learning English. LE also showed the second highest importance in motivating students to learn English. Moreover, it also functioned in supporting the growth of IS. Last but not least, OS was also very important for students to learn English. If we looked at the mean of the three selves together, they were more or less the same. Therefore, L2MSS did have much effect on students’ learning.

To find the relationship between students’ language proficiency and L2MSS and the component which is the most associated one, a two-tailed Pearson Correlation was applied. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5  
*Pearson correlation between L2MSS and language proficiency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>IS</th>
<th>OS</th>
<th>LE</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.364**</td>
<td>.523**</td>
<td>.088*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>.364**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.475**</td>
<td>-.197**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>.523**</td>
<td>.475**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-.131*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>.773**</td>
<td>.807**</td>
<td>.805**</td>
<td>-.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
<td>.088*</td>
<td>-.197**</td>
<td>-.131*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**  
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The above results show a very weak correlation between IS and students’ proficiency (.088). In addition, there was a negative relationship between OS and LE with language proficiency
(-131, -197, respectively). This means that the higher OS and LE the students had, the lower the score they obtained in the proficiency test. Correlation analysis also shows the relationship between some of the components of L2MSS, especially between IS and LE; its correlation was the strongest of all of them but still in moderate relationship (.523). In addition, the correlation between OS and LE was also moderate (.475).

To find the extent to which the components of the L2MSS could predict the students’ language proficiency, multiple regressions were performed. To fulfill the function, three variables, IS, OS and LE, were computed onto all the 224 subjects’ English proficiency. The results obtained are presented in Table 6.

Table 6  
*Regression analysis for English language proficiency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>18.919</td>
<td>2.188</td>
<td>8.646</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>1.727</td>
<td>.575</td>
<td>3.003</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS</td>
<td>-1.337</td>
<td>.438</td>
<td>-3.055</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LE</td>
<td>-1.032</td>
<td>.616</td>
<td>-1.675</td>
<td>.095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R = 0.77  Adj. R Square = 0.65  F = 6.127  Sig. = .000

Table 6 shows that the model accounted for 65% of the variance (F = 6.127, p = .000, Adj. R Square = 0.65). The analysis showed that the model, as well as levels of significance, was statistically significant. Among the three components, IS was the most powerful predictor of the students’ English language proficiency (β = 1.727, t = 3.003, p = .003), and OS (β = -1.337, t = -3.055, p = .003), and LE (β = -1.032, t = -1.675, p = .095) were negative predictors. In other words, the participants who had high OS and LE tended to be less motivated in acquiring English language proficiency. Those who had IS tended to be more motivated to learn and had better outcomes.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Three main conclusions of the study can be drawn. Firstly, the level of the three components of L2MSS toward English learning at private English schools as a whole, and at each component in the system, was at a high level. The ranking from the highest to the lowest mean score was IS, LE and OS, respectively. It showed that the students were able to create self images
as that of ones who could use English well with the possibility of working in a foreign country, or in a company where English was used, because to them, working in such a workplace looked more professional. The is in congruence with Papi and Lamb (2010, 2012) who maintained that IS is more vital in learning a second language, especially English in Cambodia, as direct contact or communication with English native speakers is very rare; therefore, it may be difficult for learners to have positive attitudes toward, or to identify themselves with L2 native speakers and their communities. To a certain extent, such limited contacts with the target language allow the learners to value the L2 they are learning and also want to become like the English speakers who are rare in the country (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005).

Secondly, IS showed a weak correlation with the language proficiency while the other two selves, OS and LE, were correlated with the language proficiency score but negatively. This is confirmed that students with higher IS were most proficient in English. It seems that learners who have the capacity to visualize themselves as future English speakers tend to have better achievement scores in order to achieve the Ideal L2 selves they aspire to be (Kim & Kim, 2014). This might be because they perceived that learning English was crucial to enlarge their knowledge and understand something happened both locally and internationally. The same thing happened in Saudi Arabia where the L2 Ideal Self highly affected both the motivational level to learn English language and students’ formal L2 achievement (Khan, 2015).

Also, students created their vision of what they wanted to do in the future by looking at their surroundings. For example, Khmer was spoken by very few people in Europe and where the national economy was highly dependent on foreign investments and multi-national enterprises, so learners had to be aware of the fact that their career prospects were dependent on L2 competence. Students then created their image as the ones who could speak English and then motivated themselves to learn English.

However, students’ Ideal L2 Self might be destroyed or removed if the environment cannot provide any appropriate conditions for them to learn. There might be insufficient practice in school, such as unimportant lessons taught, a lack of quality teaching materials, untrained teachers, bad classroom temperature, lack of opportunity for students to practice. All these might affect students’ learning experience and make IS become very weak or even insignificant. This correlation suggests that students who did not enjoy their English classes, because of their class, teacher, group or curriculum, tended to have worse proficiency scores than students who found classes enjoyable. Moreover, as other studies have suggested (Young,1991; Papi, 2010), learning experience can be related to L2 anxiety. Thus, a negative language experience can increase L2 anxiety, and this might be reflected in their correlation with proficiency scores as well.

Moreover, when looking at Cambodian culture, we can understand why there was a negative correlation between OS and language proficiency. Many students in Cambodia have probably been pressured by their family to study hard so that they can obtain high status and a high-paid job. In this way, Cambodian students often feel a great obligation to their parents to study, even though they may not be intrinsically motivated to do so themselves. Sometimes their
parents also chose a major and a career for them as well as letting them follow in their footsteps. It is believed that if their children are successful, that it will be a sign of their own success and that it will raise the position of their family as well. Similar things have also happened in China where the family especially parents were the people who decided almost everything for their children (Taguchi, Magid and Papi, 2009).

In addition, since English language teaching in Cambodian state schools was introduced late and it might have lacked the capacity to equip students with the ability to use English, parents decided to enroll their children into private schools to achieve their goals. In exchange, they expected that their children would bring them honor and prestige by acquiring high English proficiency. So for the students, like it or not, they had to study. Therefore, because of the pressure, and little resemblance to the students’ own desires or wishes, this might have caused the students could not to do well in acquiring the language. This situation has parallel connections to what was found by Papi (2010): that OS made them feel more anxious in L2 learning. To be specific, those students who were concerned about what others thought of them were afraid of disappointing others and this accentuated their anxiety, which was a negative factor for their motivated behavior and consequent language achievement. And Ought-to L2 Self was also found to be of no significance in Tort Calvo’s (2015) study.

Thirdly, the multiple regression analysis presented that the impact from IS on language proficiency scores was stronger than the impact from OS and LE on the same variable, confirming the general theory in L2 motivation literature that the more positive the vision, the more motivated the students were to achieve it (e.g., Lamb al., 2012). This finding is not surprising in the light of studies on the psychology of education, which have shown that IS which showed the intrinsic interest and a strong self-concept was a powerful predictor of how much effort students were willing to make to learn effectively (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, IS was still weakly linked to the proficiency scores, so it showed as not being a very meaningful predictor of language proficiency. This means that although it was statistically correlated with the criterion, it did not have enough explanatory power for predicting the students’ language proficiency acquisition. These results were inconsistent with the findings of Islam et al. (2013), who found that IS was the most correlated component to predict the learning effort and increase the effectiveness of language acquisition.

These findings on Motivational Self System could help teachers focus on the aspects that have proved to be more significant for students in their language learning. Given that the Ideal L2 Self proved to be significant while the Ought-to self was not, teachers can provide the necessary tools to enhance and make their students’ ideal selves look more real. They can show them the actual advantages of using English, the kind of world they could live in or what people do internationally, which can raise their self-image and motivate their learning. Similarly, they can work on the L2 Learning experience by making classrooms positive places where anxiety is low. They can also teach using materials which are appealing to their students and which promote their ideal selves, since this will contribute to a better proficiency for the learners.
References


Appendix A

Language Proficiency Test

Part 1

Questions 1-5

Where can you see these notices?

For questions 1 to 5, circle one letter A, B or C on your Answer Sheet

1. YOU CAN LOOK, BUT DON’T TOUCH THE PICTURE
   A. in an office     B. in a cinema     C. in a museum

2. PLEASE GIVE THE RIGHT MONEY TO THE DRIVER
   A. in a bank       B. on a bus       C. in a cinema

3. NO PARKING PLEASE
   A. in a street     B. on a book      C. on a table

4. CROSS BRIDGE FOR TRAINS TO EDINBURGH
   A. in a bank       B. in a garage    C. in a station

5. KEEP IN A COLD PLACE
   A. on clothes     B. on furniture   C. on food

Questions 6-10

In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text below.

For questions 6 to 10, circle one letter A, B, or C on your Answer Sheet

6. A. at       B. up       C. on

7. A. very     B. too      C. much

8. A. is       B. be       C. are

9. A. that     B. of       C. than

10. A. use     B. used     C. using
Questions 11-15

In this section you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text

For questions 11 to 15, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

11. A. at B. up C. on
12. A. very B. too C. much
13. A. is B. be C. are
14. A. that B. of C. than
15. A. use B. used C. using

Questions 16-20

16. A. made B. pointed C. was D. proved
17. A. lied B. told C. cheated D. asked
18. A. find B. know C. think D. expect
19. A. Next B. Secondly C. Finally D. Once
20. A. as B. but C. because D. if

Questions 21-30

In this section, you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.

For questions 21 to 40, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

21. The children won´t go to sleep.......we leave a light on outside their bedroom
   A. except B. otherwise C. unless D. but

22. I´ll give you my spare keys in case you........home before me.
   A. won’t get B. got C. will get D. get

23. My holiday in Paris gave me a great........to improve my French accent.
   A. occasion B. chance C. hope D. possibly

24. The singer ended the concert........her most popular song.
   A. by B. with C. in D. as
25. Because it had not rained for several months, there was a...........of water.
   A. shortage       B. drop       C. scare       D. waste

26. I´ve always............you as my best friend.
   A. regarded      B. thought    C. meant       D. supposed

27. She came to live her............a month ago.
   A. quite         B. beyond    C. already    D. almost

28. Don´t make such a...........! The dentist is only going to look at your teeth.
   A. fuss          B. trouble   C. worry      D. reaction

29. He spent a long time looking for a tie which............with his new shirt.
   A. fixed         B. made      C. went       D. wore

30. Fortunately, ..........from a bump on the head, she suffered no serious injuries from her fall.
   A. other         B. except    C. besides    D. apart

Questions 31-40
31. She had changed so much that ........anyone recognized her.
   A. almost       B. hardly    C. not        D. nearly

32. ..........teaching English, she also writes children´s books.
   A. Moreover   B. As well as  C. In addition D. Apart

33. It was clear that the young couple were...........of taking charge of the restaurant.
   A. responsible B. reliable   C. capable    D. able

34. The book...........of ten chapters, each one covering a different topic.
   A. comprises B. includes   C. consists    D. contains

35. Mary was disappointed with her new shirt as the color............very quickly.
   A. bleached   B. died      C. vanished   D. faded

36. National leaders from all over the world are expected to attend the......meeting.
   A. peak        B. summit    C. top        D. apex
37. Jane remained calm when she won the lottery and......about her business as if nothing had happened.
   A. came  B. brought  C. went  D. moved

38. I suggest we........outside the stadium tomorrow at 8.30.
   A. meeting  B. meet  C. met  D. will meet

39. My remarks were.........as a joke, but she was offended by them.
   A. pretended  B. thought  C. meant  D. supposed

40. You ought to take up swimming for the.........of your health.
   A. concern  B. relief  C. sake  D. cause

**Part 2**

Questions 41-45

In this section, you must choose the word which best fits each space in the text.

For questions 41 to 45, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

41. A. despite  B. although  C. otherwise  D. average
42. A. average  B. medium  C. general  D. common
43. A. vast  B. large  C. wide  D. mass
44. A. lasted  B. endured  C. kept  D. remained
45. A. mostly  B. chiefly  C. greatly  D. widely

Questions 46- 50

In this section, you must choose the word which best fits each space in the texts.

For questions 46 to 50, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

46. A. introduce  B. present  C. move  D. show
47. A. near  B. late  C. recent  D. close
48. A. take place  B. occur  C. work  D. function
49. A. playing  B. reserving  C. warning  D. booking
50. A. funds  B. costs  C. fees  D. rates

Questions 51-60
In this section, you must choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.
For questions 51 to 60, circle one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet

51. If you’re not too tired we could have a……of tennis after lunch.
   A. match  B. play  C. game  D. party
52. Don’t you get tired……watching TV every night?
   A. with  B. by  C. of  D. at
53. Go on, finish the dessert. It needs……up because it won’t stay fresh until tomorrow.
   A. eat  B. eating  C. to eat  D. eaten
54. We’re not used to……invited to very formal occasions.
   A. be  B. have  C. being  D. having
55. I’d rather we……meet this evening, because I’m very tired.
   A. wouldn’t  B. shouldn’t  C. hadn’t  D. didn’t
56. She obviously didn’t want to discuss the matter so I didn’t……the point.
   A. maintain  B. chase  C. follow  D. pursue
57. Anyone……after the start of the play is not allowed in until the interval.
   A. arrives  B. has arrived  C. arriving  D. arrive
58. This new magazine is ………with interesting stories and useful information.
   A. full  B. packed  C. thick  D. compiled
59. The restaurant was far too noisy to be……to relaxed conversation.
   A. conductive  B. suitable  C. practical  D. fruitful
60. In this branch of medicine, it is vital to ………open to new ideas.
   A. stand  B. continue  C. hold  D. remain
Appendix B

Questionnaire (English Version)

We would like to ask you to help us by participating in this survey to better understand the motivation of learners of English in Cambodia. This questionnaire is not a test so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your opinion. The results of this survey will be used only for research purposes so please give your answers sincerely to ensure the success of this project. Thank you very much for your help!

PART 1: MOTIVATION

In this part, we would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by simply circling a number from 1 to 5. Please do not leave out any items.

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1. I imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English.  
2. I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.  
3. I would like to have more alternative activities in my English classes. (e.g. group speaking activities, oral presentations).  
4. I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.  
5. I imagine myself living abroad and using English effectively for communicating with the locals.  
6. I would like to have more English lessons at school.  
7. I imagine a situation where I am speaking English with foreigners.  
8. I think time passes faster while studying English.  
9. I imagine myself speaking English with international friends  
10. Learning English is essential because people surrounding me expect me to do so.  
11. I find the topics covered in my English course book interesting.  
12. My parents believe that I must study English to be an educated person.  
13. I think that English is an important school subject.
I consider learning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.

I find learning English really interesting.

Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using English.

I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English.

I volunteer answers in my English classes.

The things I want to do in the future require me to speak English.

Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my family and teacher.

It will have a negative impact on my life if I don’t learn English.

I imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker of English.

I consider that my teacher motivates me to learn English.

Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.

I love how I am taught in class.

If I fail to learn English, I’ll be letting other people down.

I imagine myself speaking English fluently.

I like the atmosphere of my English class.

I imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English.

Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.

PART 2: STUDENT PROFILE

Please put “√” in the circle and write your answer in the space provided.

1. Gender:
   √ male   __ female

2. Age: .................

3. School name:
   √ Universal English School (UES)   __ Singapore International School (SIS)

4. Level in English school: ........................................
5. Grade in state school: .................................................

6. The year I started learning English: .........................

7. Name in Facebook: .................................

8. To me, learning English is .........................
   - O boring
   - O interesting
   - O exciting
   - O useful
   - O useless
   - O other (please specify) .............

9. Activities I do outside class:
   - O watch TV in English
   - O play games in English
   - O talk to tourists
   - O Chat online with friends in English
   - O Other (please specify) ..........

10. Materials I use to help to learn English:
    - O dictionary
    - O book
    - O computer software
    - O audio-tape
    - O internet
    - O other (please specify) .........

**PART 3: OPEN-ENDED QUESTION**

Why do you choose to study English?

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7 Creating Opportunities for Language Use Through Outreach Activities: Teachers’ Perspectives

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Abstract

The interplay between language and actions is no longer an uncommon sight in the English language classroom. This is particularly true for the teaching of Language Arts and Literature. Strategically used and effectively applied, these elements can persuade students to desire the love for the English language. One way of inspiring young learners to develop the love for language is by integrating language and play. The ELTC Outreach activities employ a play-based and task-based approach which encapsulate the learning of language skills in a fun manner. This programme was designed with a two-fold approach. Firstly, to assist low proficiency students from the rural areas to enhance their aural and oral skills in English by creating spaces and opportunities for them to use the language. Secondly to assist teachers employ student-centered methods and techniques to facilitate the learning of English. This small-scale study focuses on teachers’ notion of the programme by exploring their perceptions of the outreach activities in creating opportunities for language use among students and to identify if these perceptions were realised into classroom practices. On a methodological level, data was collected from teachers’ written feedback and interview and triangulated with video recordings that captured students’ engagement. Results revealed that there was a change in the students’ behaviour and attitude towards the learning of English when a play-based and task-based methodology was employed.

*Keywords:* Outreach, student-centred approach, play-based, task-based, English language learning, teacher role

Introduction

A study conducted by Burns, A. (2017) says speaking in a second language is a demanding process for learners but there is necessity for the need of in the English language as proposed by
Gupta, A. (2015). One of the reasons that Outreach programme was developed was to address the need for Malaysian students from low-performing schools to speak in English. The lack of ability to speak in English among Malaysian ESL students is an issue that requires urgent attention. Sukainah, (2014). This is perhaps due to the fact that Malaysian students lack the motivation and interest to learn English as stated by Thang et.al (2012). Teacher-centredness is another contributing factor. Aman (2006) and Noor (2014) denote that Malaysian classrooms are predominantly teacher centred with teacher doing most of the talking. Minimal opportunities have been provided for students to use English. Hence, the activities designed are mainly on oracy skills to provide opportunities for students to interact in English. This need was further attributed to The Standard-Based Curriculum (KSSM) Framework for Secondary Schools which emphasizes the core strands such as effective communication to articulate thoughts and ideas, inquiry based learning and collaborative learning.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) henceforth acknowledges this need to provide more support for English language teachers through English language Outreach programmes to enable them conduct student-centred activities at their respective schools.

According to Harrison & Waller (2017), outreach activities are often concerned with change of attitude and in this context students’ attitude towards English. The outreach programme introduced by the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) aims to fulfil this need and to evoke a change of students’ attitude towards learning and using English. It serves as an initiative under the Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) 2013-2025 aimed at supporting Malaysian mainstream schools to enhance students’ learning of the English language as well as to provide pedagogical support to ESL teachers in the teaching of English. The programme is aligned to the MEB that focuses on students’ aspirations and student outcomes. The programme adheres to Shift 2 of the MEB where every child is proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and the English language. As of 2019, 3000 students from the government mainstream schools have had the privilege of experiencing the ELTC outreach programme. This is in tandem with MEB’s aspirations to achieve access and equity in education by providing more support to teachers and students.

The outreach activities seek to enhance and enrich students’ English language learning experience and expose them to areas of the language which may not have been delivered as part of the regular curriculum (Hargreaves, 2010). The ELTC outreach activities bridges this gap by providing students with real life scenarios which are embedded in learning environments that demonstrate the importance of English, inspire, intrigue and motivate students to use English. The target population for the outreach programme are students from the preschool, primary and secondary schools. The programme emphasises on thematic play-based and task-based activities to capture students’ interest and engagement and simultaneously to expose teachers to student-centred pedagogical approaches.

Teachers take the role of facilitators throughout the programme and are guided to do so by the ELTC team of trainers. The teachers are given a module and the templates for material production/development via email a week before the programme. Teachers are also given a
briefing prior to the session. The concept of follow up -follow through is employed whereby teachers are empowered to conduct the same programme or similar activities at their respective schools for students who did not get the opportunity to experience ELTC’s Outreach Programme.

There has been a paucity of studies that look at the effectiveness of outreach activities that are designed to encourage the use of English. This study sheds light on teachers’ perspective of outreach activities to promote the use of English among students. This paper aims to explore the perception of teachers towards outreach activities and if these perceptions translate into classroom practices.

**Literature Review**

**Teachers’ role**

The teachers’ role in the outreach programme is vital as these teachers would be the agent of delivery in the follow-up and follow-through outreach activities in their respective schools. F. Aslam and Adefila (2017), state that teachers’ crucial role in coordinating and facilitating outreach activities can be pivotal for a school’s growth in the English language. The attitude and enthusiasm of a teacher often influences the teaching of English. They would be conducting these activities for the larger pool of students at the school with the help of their colleagues or collaborate with other teachers from the same district. Hence, their conceptualization and perception of the programme in particular the activities would determine the success of the programme.

The outreach programme supports the role of teacher’s in the English language (EL) classroom. The facilitation from the teachers are equally important to denote partnership in the teaching and learning of English. Teachers who attended the programme were exposed to a variety of approaches, strategies and techniques in the teaching of English. Teachers were inducted to the programme structure and were required to facilitate along with the ELTC trainers. Teachers conduct the activities and take notes. Teachers were divided into groups of three to facilitate and observe the sessions. They would need to replicate or cascade the programme for the students in their respective schools.

**Teaching Approaches**

The teaching approach that was advocated throughout the outreach programme was underpinned by a student-centred approach, specifically by focusing on a play-based and task-based approach. Gibbs, T (2005) describes student–centred activities as those that emphasise active learning rather than passive learning, deep learning and understanding, increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student, involvement and participation of student as necessary for learning and the learner experiences confluence in his or her education (affective and cognitive domains flow together). Teachers were made aware of these fundamentals
to teaching through creating a student-centred environment, given that teaching in Malaysia is largely driven by a teacher-centred approach. Therefore, creating a paradigm shift from teacher-centred teaching towards student-centred teaching is one of the core objectives of this outreach programme.

Teachers were made aware of how task-based activities offer students an opportunity to engage with the task using the target language. Activities were demonstrated through a fun and engaging manner using a play-based approach for teachers to observe and replicate in their classroom practices. Play-based and fun learning activates the desire to learn. Many education theorists (Dulay & Burt, 1977; Krashen, 1982) have proposed that students retain what they learn when learning is associated with strong positive emotion. Therefore, the onus is on the teachers to create a positive environment to facilitate language learning through inductive teaching approaches. This inductive method encourages active participation as each student is given an opportunity to speak.

Inductive teaching approaches are generally less popular in Malaysia as teaching is often conducted through deductive methods (citation needed). Therefore, inductive teaching requires more planning, preparation and importantly, structured scaffolding. The activities in the outreach programme allowed opportunities for teachers to be exposed to scaffolding strategies to “enable a child or novice to solve a problem, carry out a task, or achieve a goal which would be beyond his unassisted efforts” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976, p. 90). The outreach activities designed for the students employed scaffolding strategies where teachers make crucial decisions on “the amount of scaffolding support given” and which “depend(s) very much on her or his evaluation of what is needed by the student” (Walsh, 2007, p.36).

The teacher takes on the role of a facilitator and a resource person in this approach. This also encourages reflexivity in the teaching process of the teacher which is implicitly intended throughout the activities. The primary focus of the activities was to optimize language use by the students which was done through thoughtful facilitation and allowed teachers to be cognisant of inductive teaching approaches. This was imperative to raise their awareness on inductive teaching methodologies and challenge any preconceptions or stereotypes they may have about English language teaching. When teachers have the opportunity to interact with their peers and work in a team environment that provides direction from peers, they are likely to be more welcoming and accommodating to new instructional approaches and strategies through knowledge transfer. According to Ralph, M. (2019) intentionally fostering collaboration increases teachers’ level of academic engagement. The outreach programme promotes opportunities for learning by forging new alliances and building a teacher network where teachers are able to tap into one another’s experiences and expertise.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that grounds the programme is Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978). Social constructivism has been selected as the underpinning principle for the design of the programme and in the development of the modules as the focus was on experiential learning. Within the educational scope, the concept of scaffolding has gained popularity over the past decades. One of its attractions is that the concept hints at what is considered good teaching namely “the active and sensitive involvement of a teacher in students’ learning” (Mercer & Littleton, 2007, p. 18). Therefore, the activities are student centred and are scaffolded based on the learners’ ability.

Socio constructivism expands the tenets of constructivist theory emphasizing that in social settings both individuals and groups construct knowledge collaboratively with one another, creating a culture of shared meanings. Contextualised in this study, the teachers involved in the outreach programme learn from observing the activities being conducted and learn from one another in a collaborative environment.

Socio constructivism acknowledges the uniqueness and complexity of the learner and encourages, utilizes and rewards it as an integral part of the learning process. It emphasizes the importance of the learner being actively involved in the learning process where Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the fundamental element for every learner which aids language learning, thought processing and reasoning which are actively constructed through collaboration with more expert others in cultural and social contexts. In this context, the teacher being the ‘expert’. Central to the approach is a conception of learning as a spiral in which participants progressively increase their understanding as they build on and modify earlier understandings. As a teacher, the outreach activities which they assist the ELTC trainers to facilitate is a form of ZPD. The teacher has two major roles which is the first is to select and introduce the overall topic of inquiry, provide access to the necessary resources, and negotiate with the learners the challenges they will take on while the second is to monitor the progress of individuals and groups and to provide guidance and assistance as appropriate, working in their zones of proximal development. Teachers employing this approach would have their classes engaged in a shared inquiry. The topic under investigation becomes of interest to the students generated through play based and task-based techniques.

In this model, learning is conceptualized as a continuing spiral and thus, the activities are designed beginning from basic vocabulary towards phrases, sentences and eventually paragraphs where teachers are made aware of it through their facilitation and debrief sessions. In each cycle, the teacher who is also the ‘learner’ approaches a new problem armed with some relevant experience or prior knowledge and gains new information from feedback from his or her own actions and from other resources. However, for this information to lead to enhanced understanding, the teacher needs to engage in active knowledge building, either through further thoughtfully planned actions such as tasks, or through dialogue with other people – or, ideally, through a combination of both these modes.
Methodology And Data Collection

The primary aim of the study was to explore the teachers’ conceptions of the programme, their perceived responses, and if these perceptions were realised into classroom practices.

Participants

The participants of the study comprised twenty ESL teachers from the state of Kedah teaching in low-performing schools and these teachers were selected from the district of Kulim, Bandar Baru. The participants of the study were selected through purposive sampling to ensure access to teachers who have participated in the outreach programme.

Instrument

A survey was conducted with the teachers at the beginning of the study to elicit preliminary perceptions of the outreach activities. The questionnaire comprised 10 close-ended questions. The preliminary findings were further investigated through a semi-structured interview to gain in depth understanding and an insight into their teaching experiences of the teachers involved in the outreach programme. The data from the semi-structured were recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically. Video recordings of classroom practices were observed. The observations were conducted in ten Form One English language classes looking at the teachers conducting the outreach activities.

Data Analysis

Data were coded and analyzed inductively by looking at recurring themes and patterns from the interviews and observations while the data from the questionnaire was tabulated and presented as pie charts.

Findings

The analysis of the data was based on the teachers’ responses from the survey, interview and their classroom practices. The perceptions of the teachers involved in this study was further validated through their follow up- follow through activities in school which were video recorded. The responses were divided into three broad themes which were the content relevance, effectiveness of activities and self-confidence of students in English.

Content Relevance

Based on the survey, 19 out of the 20 (95%) of English language teachers stated that the content of the activities presented in Outreach Programme are relevant as it is aligned to the
English language curriculum, employs relevant teaching strategies and improves classroom practices. The responses recorded from the semi-structured interview concurs with the survey as the respondents found the content of the activities to be relevant and aligned to the English language curriculum. For example, one of the teachers stated that *The activities were student-centred and was well conducted. The content of the activities are aligned to the English language curriculum for Form 1. It helped me improve my classroom practices.* Another teacher mentioned that the content had the features of the KSSM, aligned to the CEFR and consist of the 21st Century teaching elements. The recordings from the observations further demonstrated its relevance. Mainly it consists of student-centred activities. A snippet of the videos from the teachers exemplify the content being relevant to the curriculum and teaching strategies employed were play based and task-based approach.

![Figure 1. Responses by teachers on content relevance](image)

19 out of 20 (95%) teachers stated that the content of the Outreach Programme would improve their classroom practices and enhance their teaching skills. The data from the interviews concurs with the findings from the survey and further explanations were provided.

![Figure 2. Responses by teachers on how content improves classroom practices](image)
The teachers also denoted that the teaching strategies employed are relevant as it encompasses the learning standards and outcomes stipulated in the curriculum specifications for the secondary English language syllabus. The analysis of the interviews show that teachers gain new teaching methods. For instance, four of the twenty teachers mentioned that they had learnt new teaching methods which could be incorporated into their grammar and reading classes. These teachers gained new ideas to make their lessons more interactive. Similarly, the data from the recordings of the activities indicate the teachers employing the strategies introduced to them.

In terms of the effectiveness of the activities, the findings from the survey denote that 19 out of 20 (95 percent) of teachers found the activities effective in terms of being fun and feasible, developing language fluency and self-confidence. In the semi–structured interviews, the teachers stated that the activities were effective in extending opportunities for language use as each student were given opportunity to state something in English during each task and in particular the performance. The teachers also stated that they found their students’ confident to speak English had developed through the activities and wish to do the same in their classroom. The video recordings concur with the findings above as it observed students were speaking In English during the activities.

**Figure 3. Relevant Teaching Strategies**

**Effectiveness of Activities**

In terms of the effectiveness of the activities, the findings from the survey denote that 19 out of 20 (95 percent) of teachers found the activities effective in terms of being fun and feasible, developing language fluency and self-confidence. In the semi–structured interviews, the teachers stated that the activities were effective in extending opportunities for language use as each student were given opportunity to state something in English during each task and in particular the performance. The teachers also stated that they found their students’ confident to speak English had developed through the activities and wish to do the same in their classroom. The video recordings concur with the findings above as it observed students were speaking In English during the activities.
The survey also extracted positive feedback from the teachers on the activities conducted during the Outreach Programme. 18 out of 20 (90 percent) teachers agreed that the activities were student-centred and structure of the activities helps in scaffolding the teaching of English. The semi structured interview provides evidences of the teachers stating the structure of the activity made it easy to understand the processes in scaffolding the teaching and learning of English.

**Figure 5.** Responses of teachers on the Structure of Activities that Scaffold ELT
Developing Self-Confidence in English

The findings from the survey indicate 19 out of 20 (95%) teachers stating that the activities helped students to develop spoken confidence in English through their active participation in the Outreach activities. The responses analyzed from the semi-structured interview denotes the same findings. The teachers from the interview stated their students were able to share their thoughts, plan a sketch and perform in English which was rare in their classrooms. Three of the teachers found that the students were able to speak in English without fear because the activities helped them to. This gave them ideas to encourage their students to speak. One of the teachers also mentioned about not underestimating their students ability to talk in English. The videos also capture students speaking in English during the activity which demonstrates that the activities were well received by the students as they participated actively in all the activities.

Discussion

The findings from this small scale study demonstrates the ability of motivating teachers to adopt their teaching through planned and structured student-centred activities. The content of the activities should be relevant and meaningful to students if teachers want engagement and active participation. The delivery of the content does impact the learner and interactive techniques can encourage active participation of all students. The affective domain of students needs to be addressed if we want to encourage the learning of English. The activities reflected real life and learners’ focus on meaning. Playing a game, solving a problem or sharing information or experiences, were considered as relevant and authentic tasks. In carrying out the activities, the aim was to create a need to learn and use language. The tasks generated their own language and created an opportunity for language acquisition. Hence, students should be given the opportunity to use English in as they use their own languages in everyday life.
Teachers need to infuse play based and task based activities to garner the attention of the students in the teaching of English language. Play based and fun learning which were used in the outreach activities activated the students’ desire to learn. Many education theorists (Dulay & Burt, 1977; Krashen, 1982) have proposed that students retain what they learn when the learning is associated with strong positive emotion. It was evident through the data that the students were enjoying the activities due to the fun element embedded into the activities which indirectly affected their positive emotions to learn English. According to Willis, (2016) the highest-level executive thinking, making connections, and "aha" moments of insight and creative innovation are more likely to occur in an atmosphere where students of all ages retain that kindergarten enthusiasm of embracing each day with the joy of learning. Play-based activities increased their curiosity and the subsequent memory of retaining the information which made learning possible. These activities are vital in language learning as opportunity to use the language is created.

On the pedagogical front, the data revealed that the teachers who became the facilitators became the ‘face’ of English to their students. The knowledge, skills and expertise gained through the outreach programme developed their ability to teach English which gained the interest of students.

**Conclusion**

The ELTC Outreach Programme is an English language initiative by the Ministry of Education Malaysia that has proven to be well accepted by the target audience. Both students and teachers have gained experience and knowledge from the programme. The students also had the opportunity to immerse themselves in an English rich environment for a day which complements the HIP initiative whilst teachers developed facilitation skills.

**References**


English Language Teaching Centre (2018) *English Language Outreach Module for Lower Secondary Students* Negeri Sembilan: ELTC.


8 On Untrained English Teachers’ Professional Identities In Rural China

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Abstract

To better cater for individual development and national burgeoning embracement of the international world, the Ministry of Education of China (2001) introduced a new English language educational policy, which mandated that English learning be lowered from junior middle school to Grade 3 across the whole nation in 2002. However, teacher shortage topped the issues in the implementation of the new policy. In response to this, re-assigned, or untrained English teachers were co-opted to implement the policy. In the academic field, however, little was addressed with regards to their professional identities. Drawing on Darvin and Norton’s (2015) conception of investment, this paper explores how reassigned primary English teachers’ identity in rural China is discursively constructed. In-depth individual interviews with 8 participants were conducted. It was found that they were best represented with four Chinese phrases: wan jin you, pa erduo, ni pusu and beitai. Due to the significant roles of reassigned English teachers in language education in rural China and regional differences in China, future research is expected to explore reassigned English teachers in other contexts.

Introduction

Researchers diverge greatly on the definition of teacher identity (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). For example, it is conceptualized as “both unitary and multiple, both continuous and discontinuous, and both individual and social” by adopting dialogical approach in psychology (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Those who support the postmodern notion of identity take the position that teacher identity is multiple-layered, varying, and subject to change (Pillen, Brok, & Beijaard, 2013; Tao & Gao, 2018). In spite of these differences, interest in teacher identity has grown dramatically in the last two decades (M. Gu & Benson, 2014). However, in the context of China, much attention has been paid to university EFL teachers’ identities. Little research has addressed primary school English teachers’ identities, especially reassigned English teachers, or untrained English teachers.

Existing research on reassigned English teachers are is primarily on the training they have received (Li, 2012; Lin, 2003; Liu, 2009; Xie, 2007; You, 2016). Focus has been on their
“acquisition of assets such as knowledge, competences, and beliefs on the basis of professional development” (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Until recently, however, only a limited number of studies have surveyed their identities. Xiong & Xiong (2017) found that reassigned English teachers are more likely to encounter identity friction owing to their inadequate language proficiency and irrelevant educational and teaching background. Similarly, Zhao et al. (2018) identified rural teachers as “rootless transients, hometown educators, and rural knowledge workers” from macro (society), meso (school) and micro (individual) level (Douglas Fir Group, 2016).

In these studies, participants were mainly on the County or above level. However, 80% Primary school are in the rural areas (Robinson & Yi, 2008). In general, there has been limited information about reassigned English teacher identity in townships and village setting.

To this end, drawing on Darvin & Norton’s (2015) conceptualization of investment (see below), this paper reports on narratives of a group of primary school teachers with foci on their professional identities in Fenghuang Town, Gaozhi County, Guizhou Province, focusing particularly on the contextual impact on their professional identities formation. Specifically, I aimed to answer the following three research questions:

1. What perceived professional identities do reassigned English teachers have?
2. What personal or professional experiences contribute to the formation of their professional identities formation?
3. What motivates them to teach in the disadvantaged areas?

The study begins by describing the sociocultural landscape of English language teaching. And then it continues with a description of the methodology used to conduct the study. What is followed are the findings that emerged from the investigation.

**English Language Teaching in Rural China and Investment**

*Bianzhi,* or establishment is a system to fix “the number of organs and personnel in all state-financed units and organizations” (Kjeld Erik, 2002). For those who want to serve in the establishment, they need to take a selection test, a system which was established since the Sui Dynasty to recruit civilians to serve the government. While the competition is fierce, it still attracts thousands of people each year. For example, in 2018, 920,000 people sat the National Public Servants Exam to compete for 14,500 positions (China Daily, 2018a). However, it is important to note that their enthusiasm was not completely to serve the country and people. Instead, being part of the establishment system is to secure the safety of their family and individual development (Fei & Wu, 2012). In the educational system, the establishment is the symbol of teacher identity, which guarantees teachers’ salary, performance pay, allowance, social securities, and welfare and so on and so forth (Han, Pang & Xie, 2010).

Due to regional differences, Liu & Zhu (2009) found that teacher establishment is exceeded in the urban areas while in the rural regions it was insufficient. Teachers without establishment
are called community-funded and managed teachers (minban jiaoshi) and temporary or substitute teachers (daike jiaoshi). They are the major teaching force, typically in the rural China (Robinson & Yi, 2008).

Special-post teachers (tegang jiaoshi) are different from community-funded and managed teachers and temporary or substitute teachers. They enter the teaching community through a selection test. They have establishment on condition that they serve three years in the assigned teaching post and school. During their contract term, they are not allowed to teach in another school without permission. In the fourth year, they can choose to stay to get establishment or transfer to another school through a selection or selection test.

Reassigned English teachers are much more complex. Originally, they were teachers reassigned as English teachers from other teaching posts to English in response to the introduction of the English education policy in 2001. However, it is estimated that at least 100,000 by Hu (2005) and 300,000 by Wen and Gao (2007) primary English teachers are in need for the implementation of the new policy nationwide. In response to the shortage of English teachers, teachers were suggested to be transferred from other subjects to teach English after some training (Ministry of Education, 2001). They are defined as untrained English teachers in the paper due to the lack of formal English education program; yet they need to be trained to fulfill “all the roles and responsibilities associated with being a teacher” (Goodson & Cole, 1994). In the literature, they are also referred as reassigned, or Zhuangang (literally transferring post) English teachers (Xiong & Xiong, 2017; You, 2016). Thus, untrained, reassigned and Zhuangang English teachers are interchangeably used in this paper below.

Although loyalty to socialism and the Party-state are still emphasized, such themes as self-centeredness and materialism are prevalent in society (Chan, 2017). According to Gao and Xu (2014) and Ouyang (2000), language teachers in rural hinterland China are more likely to move away from their original positions as their English language competence improves.

Teacher shortage and unqualified teaching force, coupled with teacher retention and teacher commitment to teaching, are critical issues in rural China. It is for this reason that this paper wants to seek an understanding of who are teaching and why they are teaching in rural areas.

**Investment**

In her study on immigrant women living in Canada, Peirce Norton (1995) found the existing theories in SLA could not account for the relationship between language learners and the social world they lived in. She framed the concept of investment to address the gap by drawing on the poststructuralist view of identity. Identity is conceptualized as “multiple, changing and a site of struggle” (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Norton & Early, 2011; Norton & Gao, 2008; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Norton & Williams, 2012; Peirce Norton, 1995).

According to Darvin & Norton (2015), investment occurs at the intersection of identity, ideology and capital, which are inextricably interrelated. In each community of practice (Wenger,
“a normative set of ideas” predetermine “systematic patterns of control” to distinguish insiders from outsider (Darvin & Norton, 2015). When outsiders traverse across communities, they move with their own “capitals”. Their “capitals” may be changing or changed by the new community (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Their conversion is closely associated with “perceived benefits” (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Investment also indexes imagined future (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Methodology

Context and Participants

Fenghuang Town (a pseudonymous town in this study for the protection of privacy of focal participants) is located in the north of Gaozhi County. From Fenghuang Town to Gaozhi County, it takes about one hour by car. There are four villages in Fenghuang Town: Primary Central Village, Longmen Village, Big Village and Small Village. Each village has one primary school: Central Primary School, Big Village School, Small Village School, and Longmen Village School.

To locate the participants in a social-cultural context, the background of the 8 participants in this study were briefly introduced here. 4 (Zhao, Qian, Sun and Li) were reassigned English teachers, which meant that they had never received any formal English language or language teaching programs before they were transferred to teach English. And the other 4 (Zhou, Wu, Zheng, Wang) were assigned English teachers. They studied English or English education at tertiary level. Zhao, Qian and Sun were teaching English at Central Primary School. Zheng and Wang were from Big Village School. Li, Zhou and Wu were English teachers at Small Village School. Each of them had to teach other subjects besides English. Nearly all participants (except Zheng and Li) started their career as special-post teachers. Zheng (the oldest and the only male among participants) began as a substitute or temporary teacher in 1986 and Li (the youngest) as an establishment teacher. Four participants (Zhao, Qian, Sun, Zhou) are married with their children and homes in Gaozhi County. They travel to Gaozhi each week if they are available. Li, Wu and Wang are unmarried but they are from other counties. They acquired their teaching profession in Gaozhi through recruitment. Zheng has spent all his life in Fenhuang. He is 56 and will retire in 4 years.

Data Collection And Analysis

In this study, I used an in-depth semi-structured interview to capture the participants’ accounts of professional and personal experience because stories are a way to express identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Gilman, 2018). It allowed the participants to reflect on and articulate their experiences as an English teachers in the rural China. These interviews were conducted in local dialect and were audio recorded with the consent of the participants for subsequent transcription.
To keep the original flavour, I transcribed verbatim. When there were no written form of certain dialects, Chinese phonetic alphabets (hanyu pinyin) and further explanation in Putonghua (standardized Chinese) were employed. Place and people names were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. After the transcription, the transcripts were discussed with a local language informant to confirm understanding where elements of local dialect wereas used during the interview.

The data was analyzed in the following manners: First, I listened to each audio and went through each transcript twice to have a global understanding of what each participant had experienced. Then I listened and read the transcripts attentively to identify whether further clarification was needed. After that, I started to synthesize data in each transcript into a biographical narrative to have a general sense of the participants and I checked each biographical narrative with reference to Darvin & Norton’ (2015) concept of investment with an attempt to answer research questions. Finally, I compared and contrasted the answers to the research questions across different participants to identify recurring themes.

Findings And Discussion

It is important to note that investment and identity was originally to account for the relationship between language learners and their learning surroundings (Peirce Norton, 1995). Thus the conceptualization of investment (Peirce Norton, 1995; Darvin & Norton, 2015) has been adapted to serve the aims of this study. Before I proceed, I would like to make two further clarifications. are to make. First, the goal of this paper is to explicate the relationship between language teachers and their teaching environment. Second, scholars have emphasized language learning in target language settings, which differ from China politically, socially, and economically (M. Gu, 2008). The context participants are situated in is economically-backward area

wan jing you (万金油)

The Chinese phrase, wan jin you (万金油， it signifies a man’s versatility under different conditions), can characterize their personal and professional experience. As revealed in the analysis, all participants found themselves occupied with extra workload from school and government. AtOn the school level, as can be seen from Table 1, they taught other subjects besides English. Additionally, they needed to undertake administrative work.

Extract 1

I was responsible for canteen and drinking water. One year, I had to teach mathematics, English. Besides, I had to work as head teacher and be responsible for teaching and research. (Zheng, reassigned English teacher)

Another extract from him further illustrated his extraoridinary work.
In 1999, I went to the local middle school to teach English. Greater challenges were ahead. Jia Yi invested 200,000 RMB to build the school. It was nothing there. We did everything. After morning classes and lunch, we dug the mud and leveled out the playground. Teachers needed to carry. (Zheng)

In addition, Qian (assigned English teacher) voiced the same concerns:

We taught everything. Where there were not enough teachers, there would be us…I taught Chinese and Mathematics…However, I needed to teach other subjects besides English. I also taught mathematics…I needed to tutor students who lagged behind. (Qian)

The local government also contributed extra workload in recent years due to the targeted poverty alleviation campaign (jingzhun fuping, an initiate launched in 2013 by the central government to lift all rural poor and impoverished counties out of poverty, to eliminate absolute poverty and to build a moderately prosperous society in 2020). Teachers were allocated target families to visit on a regular basis, which somehow affected their normal teaching:

Especially in those years, the local government dispatched many tasks to school…many tasks. Especially after the targeted poverty alleviation campaign, teachers were asked to visit poor families... Gaozhi Education of Bureau selected some teachers to Zhaiwang (a village). Then there was no teaching. Even worse, examination papers were not prepared…There were more trainings than last year and the year before last because we needed to take part in targeted poverty alleviation campaign …(Zhao)

In short, these extracts show that participants were buried with non-teaching work. Thisese extracurricular work took up too much time of their regular teaching. However, they accepted thisese work because they had “other considerations”(Gao & Xu, 2014). Their obedience to higher authorities may be due to the fact that they would obtain a multitude of “symbolic and material resources”, which will in turn increase the value of their “cultural capital” (Darvin & Norton, 2015).

Pa erduo (耙耳朵)

Pa erduo (a dialect in Sichuan Province to index husbands’ fear for their wives) was another salient feature to describe them. Analysis of their narratives also revealed that they were vulnerable. As shown in the above analysis, in addition to teaching, substantive work from school and local government expended their time and energy. Unfortunately, no one receded in the face of mounting work. They avoide conflict at the expense of “harmony, tolerance and patience”(Ouyang, 2004). Excerpts from the life history interviews provide examples of how the teachers were helpless and hopeless in contact with students, parents, school and government. Wu’s (reassigned English teacher) statement described a typical rural teacher’s work:
Extract 5
I felt that rural teachers had a hard life. Teaching facilities and students’ family education affected teaching. Besides, we were busy preparing materials. It felt as if we worked 24 hours for school. (Wu)

Additionally, inspection to ensure the complemention of targets set by higher authorities (Zhou, Lian, Ortolano, & Ye, 2013) is another part of participants’ routine. Besides teaching, Zhao (assigned English teacher) also found herself immersed in preparing time-consuming and meaningless materials assigned by higher authorities:

Extract 6
Even though there were not many classes in our school, we had to prepare relevant materials for scrutiny from higher-level administrations. They checked this and that. Preparing materials was a fussy thing. There were countless materials. Some materials were useless. But we had to do it because it was arranged by higher authorities. But what we did most was to play at the inspection. That was how it worked. (Zhao)

More often than not, when friction arises within the wall, insiders are more inclined to minimize the conflicts. They have been indoctrinated with the mindset that collective interests outweighs others (Chan, 2017). It can be argued that their pursuit of harmony within working unit is to maintain social networking (guanxi) (Ouyang, 2004). In spite of their dissatisfaction with parents’ attitude and resentment of workload from school, local government and higher authorities, they still thought that it was worth it.

ni pusa (泥菩萨)

Ni pusa (clayed Bodhisattva indicating outwardly strong but inwardly weak) was another typical phrase to describe their situations. Pusa (Bodhisattva) is well worshipped and respected in China. However, clayed Bodhisattva (ni pusa) is not. He cannot even protect himself because he is made of clays. Participants in the paper resemble clayed Bodhisattva in the following two ways. First they have a decent job with solid, permanent and secured payment. Second, they are fragile when faced with external forces, as demonstrated above. In the interviews, they expressed their love for their profession, their family and their individual growth. However, their mobilisation somehow is manipulated. When Zhao tried to leave her current school and reunite with her family, she found:

Extract 7
I had only one chance. We were allowed to take the examination after serving for three years... another chance was last year when I worked in the Central Primary School. But it did allow teachers from Central to take the test. So I did not get the chance... Last year, according to the recruitment procedure, I was qualified to take the test. So I registered and passed the qualification inspection. But two days before the test, bureau of education called
and told me that I couldn’t take the test...If asked why, to be honest, it was for my family. Now I had two children. The elder went to Grade one and the younger was about to be one year old. If I stayed close to them, it was easier to take care of them. On the other hand, in the County, there were more resources, such as opportunity to learn. (Zhao)

As can be seen in the above extract, Zhao wanted to transfer to Gaozhi County through selection test to care for her children and to pursue individual development. But the chance to mobilize was blocked for some unexplained reason.

Family and personal career development seem to be the top two motives for leaving rural schools. Qian (assigned English teacher) expressed her regret for missing the growth of her kid. “I even did not know when my baby could walk and when my baby could talk. I had no idea”. However, theirri chance to “jump the dragon’s gate (tiao long men) and move up the social ladder” is slim (Gao & Xu, 2014).

beitai (备胎)

Reassigned English teachers appeared seemed ambivalent towards their career. Beitai (literally spare wheel which can only be used only when there is a flat) could portray their attitudes towards being an English teacher. As previously discussed, reassigned (Zhuangang) English teachers are introduced as a response to teacher shortage in implementation of the new English language policy in 2001. In thise paper, they displayed different career paths from assigned English teachers. They became English teachers because of the scant teaching force. In a way, they were forced to teach English. In addition, unlike assigned English teachers, they were defective in terms of knowledge about language and language learning, knowledge of language teaching skills and pedagogical issues and knowledge of language research engagement (Richards, 2008). As such, 4 participants (Zhou, Wu, Zheng and Wang) in the paper were metaphorically referred as spare tire (beitai) in two aspects. Flat tires by no means fit normal tires in size. On the other hand, people do not use a spare tire unless there is a flat tire.

For Wu, the idea of being an English teacher had never occurred to her:

Extract 8
I had not expected to teach English because I was recruited as an art teacher. (Wu)

In real teaching, they (reassigned English teachers) found it challenging to teach English. It was echoed by Zhou. She thought that teaching English was tough because she did not major in English.

Extract 9
It was difficult to teach English because I was not majoring in English at university. I knew some basic words and daily language. But I knew little about instruction language (Zhou).
Conclusion

Rural reassigned English teachers are conceptualized as wan jin you, pa erduo and ni pusa, and beitai. Wan jin you indicates their heavy workload from school and local government, which is detrimental to their teaching and learning. Pa erduo manifests their tolerance and harmonious stance towards external pressures. Ni pusa shows their awkward positioning in the society. Beitai is a sign of their bumpy career.

Their willingness to be transferred from their familiar teaching to English teaching, to undertake administrative work from school and local government, their obedience to higher authorities, their dim dream to take care of family and their commitment to teaching in rural area was understood with reference to Darvin and Norton’s (2015) construct of investment. It was because they believed what they obtained would compromise what they had lost. Their benefits is the establishment (bianzhi) that attract people to work in rural China. According to Gee (2000), through identity analysis, we can understand school and society. It can be argued that the wall still finds its roots and its deviations in Chinese psyche.

Reassigned teachers are prevalent in rural China. However, in an era of neoliberalism, counting on teachers’ ethical virtues alone cannot solve teacher shortage in impoverished areas (Chan, 2017). In 2010, there were 4.7 million rural teachers, but in 2013, the number decreased to 3.3 million (China Daily, 2018b). Thus, it is necessary to find out who are teaching and why they are teaching in rural areas of China. The key arguments to be developed are as follows: Reassigned English teachers who are willing to work in tough conditions compromise on something valuable.

As the main teaching force in rural areas, they are highly linked with education quality. Therefore, it is imperative for teacher educators, educational administrators and relevant government offices to draw attention to reassigned English teachers. Teacher education programs should not only cover “skills and knowledge of language teaching but also what it means to be a language teacher” (Gilman, 2018). Equally important is for educational administrators and relevant offices to increase establishment to recruit and retain teachers for the neediest children.

However, it must be pointed out that participants in this study are a special group of teachers in rural China. Findings from this study may not be applicable to other contexts in China. Measures to address teacher shortage, teacher retention, and teacher quality and teacher development poses great challenges in rural education. To this end, further research is expected to investigate reassigned English teachers to create an optimal condition for their professional and personal growth.

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Using Bilingual Fairy Tales With Investigative Learning Approach To Improve Grade Six Students’ Reading Comprehension

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were to study the use of bilingual fairy tales with investigative learning approach to improve primary school students’ reading comprehension and explore students’ satisfaction towards the use of bilingual fairy tales with investigative learning approach. The subjects were 21 Grade Six students at Ban Nong Khan School selected by purposive sampling. The study was conducted throughout the second semester of the 2018 academic year. The research instruments included instructional instruments and data collection instruments. The instructional instruments consisted of lesson plans and bilingual fairy tales. The data collection instruments were the English reading comprehension test, including 20 multiple choices items, the questionnaire of satisfaction, and the open-ended questions. The results of this research showed that the use of bilingual fairy tales with investigative learning approach significantly improved students’ reading comprehension. The students’ satisfaction towards the use of bilingual fairy tales with investigative learning approach was at “strongly agree” level. The use of bilingual fairy tales with investigative learning approach was found to improve Grade Six students’ reading comprehension. It is recommended that this approach be implemented with other groups of students to improve their reading comprehension and to compare this approach with other approaches in further research to find the best approach for learners.

*Keywords*: bilingual fairy tales, investigative learning approach, reading comprehension

Introduction

In the latest English curriculum under the Nation Education Act of 2002, currently in use, Thai students are required to study English from grades 1 to 12 (Ministry of Education, 2002). The curriculum focuses on four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing in order that learners can be competent in both daily communication and education. With the importance of the four
language skills, reading is one of the four main skills to acquire knowledge for academic success, and for professional development. Reading is a thought process that requires drawing from knowledge that the reader has already acquired.

Conversely, Thai students are not successful in reading, and their reading ability is unsatisfactory (Pumirat, 1992). Thai students have problems with vocabulary and sentence structure when reading texts. They have inadequate knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure. These problems affect reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is an effort to understand, evaluate, and also recognize the author’s ideas of reading text (Whother, 2005). It is very important to be gathered by the students because in reading comprehension, the students are expected to get the main ideas and the detail information from the text. Many students could not comprehend what they have read because they lack the ability to understand the texts. They only read the text without thinking and paying attention to every single sentence that they read. Besides, a lot of the students do not have much time to read because when teachers give a text and get the students to answer the questions of the text, they only focus on how to answer these questions quickly. They ignore the important part of being able to answer the question and they finally fail.

According to Ban Nong Khan School, reading comprehension problem was found in the primary school student. The reading comprehension was at low level. The Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) results were 24.72% in 2016 and 26.94% in 2017 (Ban Nong Khan School, 2018). With regard to the preliminary observation and class teacher interview (September 3, 2018), the students’ reading comprehension problems were caused by several factors. First, most students did not know the meaning of many words found in the text. Second, students were not able to comprehend the content of texts. It was difficult for them to determine the important information such as topic, stated and unstated details, and references. In an interview with the class teacher, he spoke about his students’ reading comprehension ability. They could not identify the main character, plot, and setting to the teachers. Third, students did not know the way to read. They were not taught reading strategies to comprehend the text effectively. Fourth, the teacher still used a conventional teaching method. He briefly explained the text and asked students to answer questions related to the text. Some students indicated that they were not interested and felt bored with such teaching of reading methods. The teacher came to class and taught only vocabulary and grammar in course books. The course books were white and black in color, with plenty of writing, and boring topics. It was not attractive and appropriate for students. For checking reading comprehension ability, teacher distributed reading worksheet in multiple choices form to students and informed only scores to students. This kind of teaching cannot help students learn to face problems and solve them in their real lives (The Office of the National Education Committee, 2002). Finally, the students felt no motivation to learn. It was not effective enough to promote language acquisition. The students often neglected reading in English and were not satisfied with their achievements because most reading classes were teacher-centered and the teacher paid too
much attention to language forms. From the situation mentioned, the researcher realizes that the traditional teaching method and material cause students’ reading comprehension problem.

The use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach which combines with active learning, problem-solving, and cooperative learning is chosen to be an effective approach which have a significant impact on the students’ reading comprehension. According to this approach, students involves in activities which engage their learning. Learning activities and materials are moving away from passive listening and traditional course books and worksheets to interesting material and problem-solving project. Students are presented with a problem in classroom, they have to brainstorm among their peers to identify the problem statement and generate learning issues for their own learning. Then, they share knowledge that they have learned and discuss it over for possible solutions of the problem. Finally, students gain more knowledge and improvement, and more comfortable in learning to read for comprehension. As Harmer (2001) states that teaching reading is taught from elementary school to university by using many kinds of approach applied by teacher. Teacher should use an approach that involves the students in the process of reading activity. The students will experience the learning and learn how to comprehend the text. Moreover, they will be able to acquire knowledge themselves from their reading ability.

In this research, the researcher is interested to apply the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach to improve primary students’ reading comprehension of Ban Nong Khan School in academic year 2018.

**Literature Review**

**Reading Comprehension**

Reading is an important part of the learning process. Seyler (2000) stated that reading is the understanding of ideas, information or feeling which the words convey when put together in the specific form chosen by writer. Reader has to be able to comprehend the text in order to understand, evaluate and criticize. To teach students to read is to teach the way to comprehend and react to what they read or to read for meaning (Tierney and Readence, 2000).

Comprehension is recognized as the heart of reading. Lenz (2005) identified that reading comprehension is the process of constructing meanings from the text. The process involves the readers’ ability to make a relationship between their background knowledge and their purpose of reading with the meanings of the text. When readers read something, they comprehend the writer’s intended message by predicting, evaluating, selecting significant details, and organizing.
Moreover, Klinger (2007) stated that reading comprehension involves much more than readers’ responses to text. Reading comprehension is a multicomponent. It involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text. Along similar lines, Pang et al (2003) defines comprehension as a process of deriving meaning from connected text. Readers should interpret written symbol that represent language and they use their background knowledge to comprehend information. According to good readers, they do not look at all of every sentence but they can understand what they read. Good readers can unite their purpose with the author.

**Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Teaching reading comprehension is essential because reading is the most important activity in any language class. Reading comprehension abilities between the first and the second language readers are different. Teaching is guiding and facilitating learning, enabling the learner to learn, and setting condition for learning. Teaching reading comprehension strategies should be a concern of teachers in every content subject area (Wise, 2009). To teach reading effectively, teacher should pay attention to the objectives in teaching reading as well as classroom procedures.

Concerning the issues of the practical teaching of reading comprehension, teachers should be aware of aims each phase to encourage students to develop their reading abilities and achieve proficiency in reading. In order to help students, understand the reading texts, the reading instruction should be based on three stage of comprehension (Crafton, 1982) as follows:

1) Pre-reading stage
   Students are encouraged to anticipate what they are going to meet in the text before they start reading. The teacher introduces the topic that the students will read in order to activate students’ background knowledge in this stage. The use of prompts such as visuals and photos are recommended.

2) During-reading stage
   The teacher observes students’ comprehension by encouraging them to self-questions in this stage. Students are involved in activities that enable them to understand the writer’s purpose and to clarify the text content.

3) Post-reading stage
   In this stage, the teacher may provide follow-up activities such as discussing the content, answering the comprehension questions, and retelling the text. Students can expand, share, and exchange information.
To conclude, students are activated what they are going to meet by using the title text and picture before they start reading. In the during-reading stage, students are guided to judge significant from insignificant information for answering to their own questions. Finally, they reflect their learning in post-reading stage.

**Bilingual Fairy Tales**

1. **Bilingual book**

The bilingual books discussed in this study refer to the books that have two full versions of the texts. Two languages are placed on one page or facing pages. The books are often with a graphic to separate the two. Sometimes a different ink color or typeface is used to call attention to the difference in languages. Some issues have been raised about the placement of two languages, and the implication for privileging one language over another. For example, which language comes first on the page? If the orientation (left-right, top-bottom) of the two written languages is different, which orientation will the book use? These books are meant to be read in both languages, page by page, either by one reader who is able to read both languages, or by two readers, each fluent in one of the languages (Sneddon, 2009).

In conclusion, bilingual books can be useful for classrooms with students. As for Laycock (1998) stated that well-chosen children’s literature should be aware of content, prior background, picture, language, and format. The books are able to provide additional support for culturally diverse children if used in carefully structured ways. They can be used to support native languages and cultures, to cultivate cultural understanding, and to improve linguistic and metalinguistic skills.

2. **Fairy tales**

The term “fairy-tale” conjures up many different images among individuals, depending on a person’s gender, culture, and cohort. Images typically conjured include witches, frogs, princesses, princes, talking animals, forests, magic, fairy godmothers, love’s-first-kiss, and most of all, a love that is happily-ever-after (von Franz, 1996). Fairy tales comprise stories that offer the whole imaginary world, created by language that children can enter and enjoy, learning language as they read. Good stories provide a study of universal values and needs and capture students’ interest and challenges them to explore new roads of meaning (Cameron, 2001).

Teachers’ concern should be to increase students’ motivation toward reading in a foreign language lesson by making reading interesting. The texts which a teacher offers students to read should be: interesting for students, be at the right level of difficulty and authentic (Cameron, 2001). Students typically prefer stories about animals, legends, folk tales and fairy tales (Verhoeven & Snow, 2008). In fact, fairy tales are essential stories for childhood. These stories are more than just
“happily-ever-after”, they portray real moral lessons through characters and virtues. Hanlon (1999) stated that fairy tales are enjoyable and, simultaneously, meaningful.

Fairy tales have universal values and plots which add familiarity to students. Fairy tales provide entertainment and further topics for discussion. They are fun and short, rich in terms of language yet less grammatically complex and syntactically speaking than many other forms of literature. There are many advantages of fairy tales to children. The first is children development. Children’s imaginations are enhanced through listening to fairy tales.

Teachers can engage children to discuss how the fantasy land or amazing worlds from these stories can be different or the same from our real world. Through such interaction with children, they will help children to express their ideas easily. The second is positive problem-solving skills. Children learn from the characters in the stories and this helps them connect the situation with their own lives. The next is building resilience in children. In this aspect, fairy tales can help them develop emotional resiliency by helping them connect the stories to real life issues where most of the time the hero triumphs. It shows them that they all go through life challenges and that they must always be prepared and believe that they can succeed in life. The last is fairy tales teach the basic of a story. Fairy tales are great tools for teaching kids about story development, conflict resolution, the development of characters, heroes and villains and simply broadening their imagination. Furthermore, they help them differentiate fiction to nonfiction stories (Walker, 2010).

In summary, fairy tales are appropriate for being teaching materials. Easy plots and beautiful pictures are contained in fairy tales. However, teachers should be concerned with selecting the types of fairy tales appropriate for their classrooms. In this study, the tales about animal, adventures, and love are chosen because 12 year old students are interested in these story types.

Investigative Learning Approach

Learning is a social process in which children grow into the intellectual life of those who are around them (Bruner, 1986). Hadow (1931) emphasized that the curriculum is in terms of activity and experience rather than knowledge. Students should not learn following their teacher method but they should acquire knowledge by their learning styles and interests. As Bruner (1971) said people can be helped to discover things for themselves.

The investigative learning approach proposed by Sellwood (1991) is one of methods that has a collaborative process with the teacher helping the pupils to acquire such knowledge, skills and concepts. Moreover, the students are encouraged to talk to one another, discuss and share ideas and work as a team. This approach concerns a child centered and places importance upon the
learner having a greater responsibility for their own learning. Active learning, problem-solving principles and cooperative learning are provided. Students learn and work together in a group to solve the problems that occurs in learning. It means that if they find problem, they can ask and share the problem with their friends in the group.

For this study, the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach was chosen as an approach to improve students’ reading comprehension. The conceptual framework of this study had three steps. Firstly, 21 Grade Six students were measured their literal level of reading comprehension before the instruction. Then, six lesson plans based on three topics of bilingual fairy tales are employed to the class. Each lesson plan comprises three stage of reading comprehension: pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading. The pre-reading stage is class presentation. Discussion technique and STAD are used in this step. The teacher explained the objectives of the study and brainstorm about the title for motivating students. The students tried to find out what they were going to read. Students activated their prior knowledge that related to the text. Then, these students are divided into four groups. Each group consisted of five to six students. Students talked, shared, discussed, and worked together to accomplish the goal of the task. They found the answers to the questions given by the teacher. In this stage, the discussion, STAD, and problem solving were applied. The last stage is post-reading. Students reflect their own knowledge in group and then discuss to the class. Moreover, the students do the exercises independently for checking their understanding. Group scores are the total of each member scores. For teacher’s role, teacher is facilitator in all stages. Teacher appreciated students’ performance and presented the prize to the winner group. Discussion, STAD, and problem-solving are used in this stage. Finally, English reading comprehension posttest are distributed to students. The improvement of literal reading comprehension was examined after the course.

Methodology

This study employed the one group pretest-posttest design. It was conducted in two main phases: the preparation of the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach and the main study. The subjects of the study were 21 Grade Six students. Six lesson plans based on the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach were employed in six weeks. Before the treatment, English reading comprehension pretest was administered to students. After the experiment, students were asked to do English reading comprehension posttest. The mean scores from English reading comprehension pretest and posttest were compared in order to study whether the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach significantly improved Grade Six students’ reading comprehension. Moreover, the students’ satisfactions towards the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach were explored through questionnaire and open-ended questions.
Findings

The findings were divided into two parts in accordance with the research questions. The students’ mean scores before and after the experiment were examined to answer the first research question. The mean scores in the posttest ($\bar{x} = 14.93$) were higher than pretest ($\bar{x} = 7.50$). All students obtained higher scores. The statistically significant difference was at .05 level (sig = .00<.05). It can be assumed that students’ reading comprehension were enhanced by using bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach. For research question 2, the results from the questionnaires and open-ended questions were analyzed. The mean scores of three aspects in the questionnaires: learning environment, teaching material, and learning activities agreeing. Moreover, the details investigated from open-ended questions showed that showed a strong agreement among the students. These students were motivated to learn by the appropriate atmosphere and instructor. Various tasks were provided to develop their reading comprehension. Working in groups increased student-student interaction when performing tasks with their friends. It indicated that students were satisfied toward the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach that comprised with active learning, problem solving, and cooperative learning.

Conclusion

This research aimed at improving the Grade Six students’ reading comprehension towards the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach, and investigating their satisfaction toward the use of bilingual fairy tales with investigative learning after the experiment. The research began in February and ended in April 2018. The findings of the study indicated that the students’ reading comprehension were improved. Moreover, students were very satisfied towards the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach.

Recommendations

The findings from this study generated some recommendations for further study. Firstly, it is recommended that future research should be conducted with other groups who are either at the same educational levels, or in different educational levels or fields of study but employ the same methodology. The results would help to gain better understanding of the effect of the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach. Secondly, it is recommended that other kinds of qualitative instruments such as classroom observation, interview, and teacher diary, should be included in future studies. These instruments are needed to allow a more in-depth study. Next, the further study should change the active learning technique or cooperative learning technique and compare to see whether the comparable techniques affect the students’ improvement in reading comprehension. Finally, researchers should continue to explore other dependent
variables. For example, researchers might explore whether the use of bilingual fairy tales with the investigative learning approach improves the use of other language skills.

References


10 The Impact of Discussions on Task Performance: Past and Present

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to compare the impact of discussions on task performance of two groups of Malaysian students with a lapse of 13 years. The students were namely, from a Computer Science degree programme and a Psychology degree programme. The participants in this study were completing product-centred English courses which focused on communication at the workplace; academic writing and reading for academic purposes during the course of study. Two case study groups were formed in the year 2004 and 2017 to enable the participants to perform memorandum-writing tasks. Their sessions of collaborative writing were observed closely. Interviews, diary entries and observations were research instruments used to obtain data for this study. In addition, the participants were encouraged to constantly reflect on the outcomes from their collaborative sessions critically. Consequently, benefits and challenges affecting task performance were derived from the student discussions. In addition, comparisons of findings from the two case study groups were made. It could be concluded that student collaboration among mixed proficiency students should be monitored closely so that collaborators regardless of their proficiency could mutually benefit from the sessions. Additionally, the use of WhatsApp (a smartphone technology) and smartphones can be promoted in their use as tools to refine the use of discussions. Therefore, technology can become an asset instead of a liability in the teaching and learning environment.

Keywords: discussions, benefits, challenges, task performance, WhatsApp, smartphones

Introduction

Employers place much importance on employees possessing the ability to perform successfully in groups with their colleagues (Stephens & Roberts, 2017). According to Hansen (1995), collaborative writing at the workplace is regarded as part of the power and politics which exist in organisations. Therefore, it is crucial for students to be equipped with effective collaborative skills to prepare them for the workplace.
There are many benefits gained from collaboration with others. They are promoting commitment towards work (Stepney, Callwood, Ning & Downing, 2011), producing grammatically correct and high quality writing (Storch, 2005; Krishnan, Cusimano, Wang & Yim, 2018); allowing communicative practices (Makarova, 2018), creating awareness of using language appropriately (Subrata Kumar Bhowmik, Hilman & Roy, 2018) and increasing motivation (Makarova, 2018).

However, there are challenges which individuals face during collaboration, too. Firstly, they face stiff competition and existence of power struggle with team members (Stepney, Callwood, Ning & Downing, 2011) and group members may be unsure of how to collaborate and communication problems due to differences pertaining to proficiency and background (Subrata Kumar Bhowmik, Hilman & Roy, 2018).

Therefore, the use of collaboration should be refined to enhance its use for learners. Successful collaboration does not occur spontaneously. Peer learning may not even be promoted through supportive instructions provided by instructors during collaboration (Fischer, 2014; Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998). This can be explained by interactions which may not take place naturally when learners are grouped together.

Kellogg, Booth, & Oliver (2014) suggest that interactions should be embedded into the learning situation failing which they may not exist for the students’ benefit. They need to feel a strong bond by establishing common interests and grounds so that they develop a sense of belonging towards their group members before they communicate at ease with one another. This principle is supported by Bates (2015) and Firmin et al. (2014) who are of the opinion that students may become confused by information overload when structure is lacking in discussions. Consequently, they are unable to learn successfully.

It is crucial to increase understanding of the use of discussions among students in order to increase its effectiveness. Political, economic, technological and social changes have direct influences on students, too, which may in turn, affect their classroom interactions. One of the studies which show the impact of technology on collaboration is a study conducted by Sungkur, Sebastien & Singh (2019). The results highlighted that Social Media could improve collaborative work through which collaborators were able to have effective group decision-making, provide opinions clearly and promote intake of international students by reducing geographical distance.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to obtain insights on the impact of discussions among students with comparisons made in a lapse of 13 years to gauge on its effectiveness in learning. The research questions (RQ) for this study are:

1. What are benefits of discussions observed in Group 1 compared to Group 2?
2. What are challenges faced during discussions observed in Group 1 compared to Group 2?
Theoretical Background

Dialogue and interactions have been found to be crucial in the learning process (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Their importance has promoted the use of team effort in the classroom.

Vygotsky’s Socio-Cultural Theory is the theoretical basis for the use of collaborative work in the classroom. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in the use of student collaboration is it is regarded as a way for students to create, obtain and communicate meaning (Moll, 1989). It can be stated that mediators play a very important role in promoting effective learning.

Mediation can be categorised into teacher-mediation and peer-mediation. The former is given much prominence through studies focussing on scaffolding and mediation while the latter is a new concept (Shamir, 2005). Therefore, peer-mediation is the focus of this present study in order to increase understanding of its use in the classroom environment.

Scaffolding is an important construct related to ZPD and learning is considered a socially-constructed situation. According to Donato (1994), collective scaffolding is made possible by individual novices. However, they become collective experts in providing assistance to low ability peers in the course of collaboration. This results in internalisation which is a “historical” process (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 50) and determined by learners’ past experiences.

Methodology

Participants

Eight participants selected for this study were first year degree students from different faculties in a private higher institution of learning in Malaysia. They majored in Computer Science and Psychology respectively. The participants were divided into two case study groups, namely group 1 and 2.

Group 1
There were four participants in Group 1. All of them were First Year Computer Science students in the year 2004 which was the year the study was conducted. Group 1 consisted of one female and three male students. The pseudonyms used in this study to identify the participants were Tim, Brendan, Ned and Mia.

The participants in Group 1 had mixed proficiency in English. Tim and Mia scored B while Brendan and Ned obtained C for their English course which was completed in the previous semester.
**Group 2**

There were four female students in Group 2. They were First Year Psychology students in the year 2017 which was the year the study was conducted. The researcher also used pseudonyms to identify the participants in this study. It was a bid to maintain confidentiality of the participants. The participants comprised Lois, Ora, Nicky and Julie.

The participants in Group 2 had mixed proficiency in English, too. Lois scored an A while Julie obtained a B+ and both Ora and Nicky possessed C for the English course they had completed in the previous semester of their studies. All of the participants formed a group to perform their writing task.

**Writing Tasks**

The groups were given memorandum-writing tasks to perform in this case study. The length of the memorandum should be about 150 to 200 words. The task given to Group 1 needed the participants to produce a memorandum from a manager to the employees reminding them to be punctual for work and meetings. However, the task given to Group 2 required the participants to produce a memorandum from a manager to the staff in a department regarding maintaining cleanliness of company washrooms.

All of the participants had learnt how to write memoranda in their English classes with much emphasis placed on the use of appropriate format, tone and language suitable for workplace documents. The participants self-formed their groups to perform their respective collaborative writing tasks. The researcher decided to allow them to choose their group members because they specially requested to work with their close friends. The group leader appointed for Group 1 was Ned while the leader appointed for Group 2 was Lois. Both groups needed 2 sessions of collaborative writing to perform their tasks. Each of the session had a duration of one hour and thirty minutes.

**Data Collection**

The researcher who was also the course instructor video-taped all of the collaborative writing sessions. After each session, the participants were interviewed individually. Additionally, they described their experiences during their collaboration through individual diary entries.

All of the collaborative writing sessions were observed by the researcher who was physically present during the collaborative sessions. Consequently, observation notes were produced to record down significant episodes which occurred during the sessions. The different research methods used in this study provided triangulation of data.
Findings

All of the participants were encouraged to reflect on their experiences critically. In addition, the researcher attempted to comprehend significant situations during the sessions from her own perspective. Therefore, input from both participants and instructor made it possible to answer both research questions formed for this study. The findings from this study are divided into two categories which are namely, benefits gained by collaborators and challenges faced during discussions. These findings are also discussed according to the research questions.

**RQ1: What are benefits of discussions observed in Group 1 compared to Group 2?**
The advantages gained by participants from Groups 1 and 2 were having an organised approach towards work, sharing of knowledge, possessing quality ideas resulting from filtering of ideas and completing task successfully. However, avoiding serious mistakes was solely observed in Group 2. A summary of the benefits faced by the respective groups is listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Advantages of discussions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organised Approach Towards Work</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Sharing</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Ideas Resulting from Filtering of Ideas</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Serious Mistakes</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Completion</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i. Organised Approach Towards Work

Both of the groups approached the writing tasks in a systematic manner. It could be attributed to their responsible group leaders, Ned and Lois who facilitated the sessions successfully. Firstly, they led their groups in discussing the format of the memorandum and then moved on to the content of their task. Group 1 edited and checked their work simultaneously as they wrote their memorandum. However, Group 2’s leader, Lois, checked their work after they had completed their writing task.

It was discovered from the diary entries and interviews that the participants were satisfied with their collaboration. Tim and Brendan from Group 1 described the sessions as “systematic” and “we know what to do”. Lois in Group 2 stated that she was “glad to help them”. Her group members expressed their positive responses towards her contribution by describing the sessions as “Good Lois in charge” and “©Got system”.
ii. Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing was evident during the collaborative writing sessions. The findings were similar with findings obtained from a study conducted by Nami, Marandi and Sotoudehnama (2018) which investigated the use of discussions among Iranian teachers’ asynchronous exchanges in discussion lists. They discovered that their participants, too, used the interactions to construct knowledge besides socialising and giving instructions to peers.

Tim and Mia from Group 1 were willing to guide their group members on using a suitable tone for their memorandum. They reminded them to soften their language by using the expression, “I am unhappy with the lack of punctuality among staff” when describing the manager’s frustrations with his employees.

Lois from Group 2 who had high proficiency in English was willing to share her knowledge of the format of a memorandum, appropriate content for the task and language skills. Her group members, in hand, were receptive to her input.

The obvious knowledge sharing which occurred during collaboration was observed when the group learned how to use the correct format for their memorandum. Lois guided them in providing suitable information regarding the sender, recipient and their company. In addition, they learned to provide a signature at the end of their writing when there were no initials provided by the sender.

In addition, Lois shared her ideas in describing the bad conditions of the washrooms in the company. Lois, interestingly, reminded her group not to be too uncouth when describing the conditions in the washrooms and the importance of being professional at work. After that, she guided them on how to provide preventive measures to overcome the existing problems.

Lois also shared her language skills with her group members. She highlighted to them that the word, “pristine”, was a suitable word to be used to describe the desired condition of the washrooms in the company than the word, “clean”. Furthermore, she corrected the grammar used especially pertaining to tenses as they wrote their memorandum together. Similar with Group 1, Lois filtered the phrases suggested by her group members so that only appropriate phrases with the correct tone suitable for a workplace document were used in their writing.

Participants from both groups were happy to share their information and also gain knowledge from others. They described their collaborative sessions as “… nice to learn while discussing”, “… glad to give my advice”, “My friend know a lot so i learn” and “… teaching and learning from my friends” in their interviews and diary entries.

iii. Quality Ideas Resulting from Filtering of Ideas

Both Groups 1 and 2 experienced the benefit of obtaining good ideas from their collaborative writing sessions. The writing task could be challenging when performed individually
due to the writer’s lack of knowledge. Therefore, the participants discovered that their friends could assist them in selecting suitable content for the business-related task.

However, the sources of information used by the groups were different. Group 1 produced ideas from their own knowledge and conducting prior research before their discussions. Group 2, on the other hand, used their current knowledge and also researched with their smartphones as they were performing the writing task. Furthermore, Group 2 formed a WhatsApp group to continue their discussions online after their face-to-face interactions. Consequently, they had time to check on the accuracy of their information. The positive comments obtained from participants during the interviews and diary entries on the sessions were “Good! So many ideas to write”, “My friends give points. Can write …”, “Wah! All got points. Use handphone easy only”.

The findings obtained from Group 2 were similar with the results from a study conducted by Muhammad Anshari, Mohammad Nabil Almunawar, Masitah Shahrill, Danang Kuncoro Wicaksono and Miftachul Huda (2017) which investigated Brunei students’ use of smartphones in supporting their learning. It was found that 77% of the respondents accessed the Internet via their smartphones while 20% used their personal computers and the remaining 3% used both methods to obtain information from the Internet. In addition, 52% of them were reported to use and update Whatsapp, Telegram and Instagram on a regular basis.

iv. Avoid Serious Mistakes

Only Group 2 benefited from avoidance from mistakes during their collaboration. It was observed that Lois, the group leader, directly intervened in preventing her friends from making language errors in their writing. On the other hand, Group 1 did not actively detect mistakes in the course of discussions.

Lois guided her group in using the correct format for their memorandum. She highlighted to them the need to provide names and positions of the sender and recipient and details on their departments as they started their task. Furthermore, she reminded them that the date, reference number and initials of the sender should be provided. Her group members followed her advice closely.

In addition, Lois emphasised the importance of using the appropriate tone in their writing. She reminded her group members of the knowledge she had gained from their previous writing lesson of the need to be courteous because the recipient could only judge the writer’s professional image based on the written document. Lois changed her approach in advising her friends against using the inappropriate tone by personally providing confrontational phrases such as “Please behave yourself” and “We’ve warned you a few times” when discussing the content of the memorandum. Later, she led her group in improving those phrases so that they could be used effectively. Consequently, they formed the phrase, “I hope there will be an overall improvement in this matter” to replace the phrases mentioned earlier.
Lois also corrected her group’s wrong use of grammar in their writing. Nicky suggested using the verb, “remind” in the phrase “Please be reminded …” and Lois quickly corrected him. In addition, Ora formed a grammatically incorrect sentence, “Next time, I scold you” and Lois again corrected her by saying that it should be “In future, I’ll be sending out warning letters if staff members continue to leave the tap running.” Lois edited and checked her group’s work after they had completed the task, too. Her group members praised her during the interviews and through their diary entries by commenting, “Lois good in English. She check work.”, “Leader correct us. I know my English weak”, “Nice to check work. If not, make mistake” and “Lecturer scold afterwards got wrong grammar 😊. Leader check for us”.

There were similar findings obtained from a study conducted by LaScotte (2017) in which it was found that peers often corrected each other during collaboration. It was discovered that scaffolding occurred when the two learners negotiated meaning with each other. The strategies adopted by participants in the study were using recasts and their first language to clarify explanations.

v. Task Completion

Both Groups 1 and 2 admitted feeling positive towards their discussions because they were able to perform their tasks successfully. Some of the participants lacked confidence in writing a good memorandum independently because it was challenging to write it since it is a business document. After attending their English lessons teaching them how to write memoranda, they realised that the tone and language to be used should be business-like and professional. Therefore, writing a good memorandum might be difficult for those who were not proficient in English.

The groups were able to use the correct format, produce suitable information and construct appropriate sentences for workplace documents. Participants with higher proficiency especially provided assistance to their less capable peers in the course of collaboration. The participants were satisfied with the sessions and expressed positive responses through their interviews and diary entries. They described the sessions as, “… good leader make us write well.”, “Happy with group, can finish work fast 😊.” and “Good leader so we can finish work together”.

RQ2: What are challenges faced during discussions observed in Group 1 compared to Group 2?

The problems encountered by participants from Groups 1 and 2 were having a lack of participation, being dependent on participants with higher proficiency and lacking ownership except for being distracted by their mobile phones. Only participants in Group 2 encountered the problem of handling their handsets responsibly. A summary of the challenges faced by the respective groups is listed in Table 2.
Table 2  
Problems faced during discussions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Participation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on Participants with Higher Proficiency</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Ownership</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distractions from Mobile Phones</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

i. Lack of Participation

The majority of the participants from both groups were observed to be passive during the discussions. The most active participants were those with a good command of English. Tim and Maria from Group 1 were observed to be very active during their discussions. Lois, as the leader of Group 2, was exceptionally responsible in facilitating the sessions and contributing the most ideas for the task. Group members who lacked proficiency in English, in contrary, were relaxed and quiet most of the time.

Therefore, some of the participants were unhappy with the discussions. Their negative feelings and opinions were revealed through their interviews and diary entries. They stated, “Have to talk all the time! The rest only quiet …”, “I don’t know why so many of them won’t talk. Wasting time waiting for each other.”, “No fun I only talk. If more talk then can share ideas, jokes, … 😊” and “Dunno y my frens didn’t talk.”

ii. Dependence on Participants with Higher Proficiency

The researcher observed that there was too much dependence on group members with high proficiency in English during the discussions in both Groups 1 and 2. There was no equal contribution of input among the group members.

The findings from this study concurred with findings from another study conducted by Bhowmik, Hilman and Roy (in press). Their investigation revealed problems which occurred when learners of different proficiency worked together. They discovered that diverse proficiency and background could have an adverse impact on communication.

In this study, Tim and Maria in Group 1 were frequently producing suitable ideas for their group. Their passive group members only responded when they were asked questions directly. Lois in Group 2 who had the highest proficiency in English was contributing much input during the discussions because her group members with lower proficiency than her did not contribute much to the task. They opted to use their mobile phones constantly on matters which were unrelated to the task. However, Lois was a very determined leader who wanted to ensure that the discussions were carried out smoothly. Therefore, she instructed her friends who were using their
mobile phones for personal matters to research on their task and then present the information to the group.

Opinions provided by some participants in Groups 1 and 2 through the interviews and diary entries reflected their frustrations with their inactive friends. Their comments ranged from “Friends reliant on me. They try to contribute. But English language phrase, sentences, mostly that, I helped out.”, “The task wasn’t challenging but my friends didn’t add more ideas which could be useful” and “I felt I’m the teacher all the time”, “Discussion time not to relax 🙄” and “maybe friends dunno about topic”. The findings from this study concurred with findings obtained by Subrata Kumar Bhowmik, Hilman & Roy (2018) who discovered the existence of communication problems between students with differing proficiency and background during collaboration.

iii. A Lack of Ownership

The researcher observed a lack of ownership towards the writing task among some of the participants in both Groups 1 and 2. Only a few participants were consistently active while the rest of them were not paying attention to the discussions.

Firstly, Ned in Group 1 was not in favour of having their work checked stringently during the writing process. He expressed his impatience with group members who voiced their doubts over the content because it resulted in them spending a long time in completing their writing task. Ned was not concerned about the quality of his group’s work but merely focussed in just completing the task quickly.

In addition, Ora and Nicky in Group 2 were unsure of which type of workplace document they were writing for their task. It was due to their pre-occupation with their mobile phones and, therefore, did not pay much attention to the task. They even refused to read the instructions written by their instructor on the whiteboard. They would rather check with Lois on the type of business document they had to produce as a group! Furthermore, two of the group members arrived 30 minutes’ late for their second collaborative writing session without informing their group whether they would be attending the session. Consequently, Lois decided to start the discussion with a group member who was punctual without the presence of the late group members.

Therefore, some participants were unhappy with the lack of commitment from their friends. Their frustrations were evident through the interviews and diary entries. They were of the opinion that “… we feel correctness is important (so group members should work together to check)”, “… some can ignore other details and simply write!”, “Aiyoh, must come early for discussion 🙄” and “… more opinions if friends know more about topic”.

iv. Distractions from Mobile Phones

It was observed that only Group 2 faced distractions from their mobile phones during their discussions. Participants in Group 1, on the other hand, were able to use their mobile phones effectively during the collaborative sessions. The difference between the groups could be due to
the type of mobile phones used. Group 2 used smartphones which had Internet connection and consequently provided access to a variety of information. However, Group 1 could not browse for information using their mobile phones for they were not equipped with Internet connection.

Some of the group members in Group 2 were too busy browsing the Internet on matters unrelated to their task and did not concentrate on their groupwork. They did not read the instructions given by their instructor and did not participate actively during the discussions. Only a few of their group members were contributing ideas regularly in all of the sessions. In addition, they constantly ignored their friends who advised them to focus on their work.

The actions of some of the group members who were distracted from their groupwork frustrated their friends. Their dissatisfactions were observed through their interviews and diary entries. The comments provided were “Some not active, only play with handphones”, “My friend and I only write, they r busy with phone!”, “… improve by not use handphone, then can discuss well?” and “Maybe lecturer can take away handphone 😊 so everyone can discuss.”

The findings from this study concurred with findings obtained from a study conducted by Muhammad Anshari, Mohammad Nabil Almunawar, Masitah Shahrill, Danang Kuncoro Wicaksono and Miftachul Huda (2017). They discovered that students could get distracted by their smartphones in the course of using it as a tool to help them obtain information for their assignments. Furthermore, they recommended that guidance should be provided to boost the use of smartphones in a teaching and learning environment.

\ Conclusion

The findings in this study were obtained from making comparisons between Groups 1 and 2 pertaining to benefits and challenges faced by participants with mixed proficiency during their discussions. The advantages are having an organised approach towards work, sharing of knowledge, possessing quality ideas resulting from filtering of ideas, avoiding serious mistakes and completing task successfully. However, the difficulties encountered by participants in this study are having a lack of participation, being dependent on participants with higher proficiency, lacking ownership and being distracted by their mobile phones.

Therefore, it is crucial for instructors to be aware of positive and negative situations which may be created through discussions among mixed proficiency students. The knowledge will guide them in refining the use of student collaboration. Instructors, too, can provide guidance to students on the use of mobile phones in helping them to become effective collaborators. Furthermore, when students experience positive experiences during collaborative work with others in the classroom, they can usually function well in teams at the workplace. This ability will enable them to become assets to their future employers.
References


Abstract

The term paper is a common process writing approach introduced at tertiary level. However, many undergraduates struggle to understand the process involved in writing a term paper. To add to this, most undergraduates have never been exposed to this kind of writing as the English language class they attended during their first year is mainly focusing on writing simple essays. This problem has called for an intervention by the instructor. Since scaffolding is found to be one of the effective approaches to teach writing at tertiary level, this paper highlights the use of this technique to help students refine their writing skills and be better writers. One particular type of scaffolding technique that fits the nature of term paper writing is outline. Therefore, this paper looks into how structured outlines assist undergraduates in writing argumentative term paper. The features of an effective argumentative term paper writing were identified from previous literature and used as a basis of forming the outline. It is concluded that the use of a structured outline to write the term paper can help students to produce quality work. This study highlights the potential of the process approach writing in helping undergraduates to write their thesis in their final year.

Keywords: structured outline, scaffolding, tertiary students, argumentative term paper, process writing
Introduction and Background

Writing practices at tertiary level are mostly procedural in nature. Tertiary students however have been found to have a hard time cognitively attending to the requirements of process writing (Nunan, 1989) and they end up getting lost in the process. This is because process writing is very complex and demanding. It is a process of which one needs to transform his or her thoughts into written communication. Not only that, the communicated content needs to be understood by the readers and this adds more burden to the process thus making the process more complex. It is indeed a difficult process since it requires necessary skills (Scott & Vitale, 2003) and writing itself deals with multiple stages. Lower proficient students especially are found to be greatly at a disadvantage by this (Yau, 2007). Process writing needs scaffolding for it to be successful as it consists of specific strategies that are useful to guide students in the process and help them perform well in all writing stages (Laksmi, 2006). This applies to all types of process writing including term papers. Term paper in the context of this study is a considerably lengthy academic essay prepared by a group of students discussing an issue. They are required to get various facts and information from credible sources on their chosen topic. They need to identify, analyse, interpret, discuss, draw inferences and make conclusions based on the given facts.

It is found however, that not many studies related to scaffolding techniques in process writing are looking at the pre planning organization of ideas, which is the outline. They focus more on the stages of writing that students must observe and look at more on the overall note of process writing (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Tompkins, 1994). Besides that, the fact that in process writing, students have to focus on the flow and structure of ideas, analysis and synthesis of ideas and many other aspects (Laksmi, 2006). This requires a lot of mental processes (Nawal, 2018). This is the reason why process writing is demanding. Therefore, to visualize their thoughts and to turn such thoughts into an effective writing plan, they need a structured outline. Although it is found that, some students do outline their thoughts before writing, it is not quite well-structured and do not meet the standard of quality that academic writing required. On the other hand, some outlines are vague and unfocused. They do not help to ease the students’ writing instead make them even more confused. A structured outline is believed to be able to contribute to a good process writing product (Garner, 2009) including term paper writing. Galbraith (2004 as cited in Dingfelder, 2006), proposes that outlines can facilitate some writers to see how different ideas hang together or when a theory has no supporting evidence. Therefore, this study seeks to (1) investigate the features of an argumentative term paper writing and (2) design a structured outline for argumentative term paper writing.

Literature Review

Good planning is essential in enhancing students’ quality of work. Preparing a written outline during prewriting and composing would ease attentional overload and consequently
enhance students’ writing performance. Tompkins (1994) states that effective writing process features five stages which are prewriting (Stage 1), drafting (Stage 2), revising (Stage 3), editing (Stage 4) and publishing (Stage 5). Outlining is one of the first steps that students need to consider when planning their writing and it is a part of prewriting stage. Therefore, it is safe to say that outline is a pre-writing tool. Walvoord et al. (1995) defines outline as “a written vertical list of ideas or information in the sequence that the writer intends for the final piece of writing.” (p. 400). They also highlight that outlining is not mere listing of ideas, it also helps students to organize their texts, generate ideas and texts, apply a hierarchical structure to the ideas, revise them and coordinate their writing process. Apart from that, Hayes and Nash (1996) also give a comprehensive view of an outline in their research in which they say that having an outline provides writers with a material planning environment that would allow them to think and act in flexible ways with relatively few costs of actions. This shows that having an outline gives the writers the opportunity to be flexible and creative with their ideas.

According to Graham and Sandmel (2011), process writing is one of the most favoured approaches used to teach writing. This type of writing requires a lot of scaffolding for it to be successful and effective due to its demanding nature. As stated by Van Lier (2004, p. 92), scaffolding helps students to “[know] how and where to look, … [provide] opportunities for interaction and collaboration with peers, … [structure] tasks so that they have clear procedures and goals, while at the same time … [allow] learners to employ creativity in a context of growing autonomy.” This shows how an effective outline can function as a scaffolding tool. Van Lier (2004) also mentions that providing a structured task helps students to be clear on what to achieve, making the task simpler. This is because a good piece of writing is often a result of “good, disciplined thinking” (Garner, 2009, p. 27).

Without an outline, the students’ thought processes involved when writing may be disorganized as their cognitive abilities are overwhelmed by the task at hand. With the help of a structured outline, cognitive overload when writing will be reduced and their thoughts and flow of ideas would be clearer. Cognitive load is defined as the “total amount of mental energy imposed on working memory at an instance in time” (Cooper, 1998, p. 10). When the working memory is greatly consumed by the writing task, the mental capacity for cognitive activities will become poor (Nawal, 2018). This will lead to cognitive overload. During writing stage, there are a lot of cognitive activities taking place such as brainstorming, organizing ideas, structuring sentences and delivering information. This could become even worse if the students are writing in their second language where there could be some interferences from their native language. There is a tendency for these kinds of students to directly translate their sentences from their first language. This mental translation certainly adds more to students’ cognitive load (Sasaki, 2002; 2004; Nawal, 2018). When the cognitive load is high, it would impede the writing process and fluency which later may result in poor quality of writing. This is because humans have limited working capacity. According to Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006) as cited in Artino (2008, p. 427), “when processing information (i.e. organizing, contrasting, and comparing), rather than just storing it, humans are probably only able to manage two or three items of information simultaneously”. 
Moving on to the features of argumentative writing, Hyland (1990, p. 69) suggested a three-stage structure for argumentative writing which are Thesis, Argument and Conclusion. In thesis, he proposes the writers to introduce “the proposition to be argued”. The argument should then “discuss [the] grounds for thesis” while conclusion “synthesizes discussion and affirms the validity of the thesis”. Hyland’s (1990) framework also recommends 10 comprehensive writing moves in coming out with an argumentative writing as shown in Table 1. These 10 moves are clearly defined which makes them comprehensive (Kanestion, Sarjit Singh & Shamsuddin, 2017).

Table 1
Writing moves in argumentative writing (Hyland, 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Moves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis</td>
<td>• Gambit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Attention Grabber – controversial statement of dramatic illusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presents background material for topic contextualization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Furnishes a specific statement of position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Positive gloss – brief support of the proposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduces and /or identifies a list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>• Marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Signals the introduction of a claim and relates it to the text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Restatement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Rephrasing or repetition of proposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Claim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- States reason for acceptance of the proposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- States the grounds which underpin the claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>• Marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Signals conclusion boundary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consolidation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Presents the significance of the argument stage to the proposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Affirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Restates proposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Close</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Widens context or perspective of proposition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Study

This study is qualitative in nature. Based on previous literature, features of an effective argumentative term paper writing were identified using thematic analysis. The recurring themes identified were then compared to the course information of a writing course Advanced Academic English Skills (ULAB 2122) at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The course was chosen to be the subject of the study as it requires students to write a term paper as one of the assessment components. Based on Hyland’s framework, the researchers adapted some features to suit the ULAB 2122 course requirement. Hyland’s framework was selected because as pointed out by Imtiaz and Mahmood (2014), the framework has nearly all the elements needed in writing argumentative essay.

Findings and Discussion

Writing is a challenging cognitive activity as it is a non-linear and cyclic process. Since outlining “corresponds directly to the cognitive components of the composing process” (De Smet et al., 2011, p. 6), the use of outline seems to yield good writing results. This is because the outline acts as an intervention tool that can help decrease the students’ cognitive load when writing. Kirschner (2002) suggests that cognitive load in writing happens when the students have to focus on too many aspects which among them are brainstorming the ideas, arranging them and composing the text. Hence, constructing an outline would help students to have a clear focus and goal of their writing which later will ease the process of producing the written text. This is because they do not have to focus on so many aspects at the same time anymore.

In this study, the outline acts as a tool that supports the students in organizing and developing their ideas in a more structured way. Outline helps by guiding the students on the way ideas can be effectively developed as well as making sure that students are able to quickly see how the flow of arguments are related to one another. It saves time and prevent confusion as it is concise, to the point and less wordy. Outline however, should not be too rigid since it reacts differently towards different contexts. It should be adapted following the requirements of the specific contexts (Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998). As in this study, the outline is adapted from Hyland and at the same time following the requirement of ULAB2122 course.

The list below are the features adapted from Hyland’s (1990) framework that the researchers think should be included in an outline when writing argumentative term paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[INTRODUCTION]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To introduce the issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To elaborate on the context of the issue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To introduce and prove your argument(s)
To anticipate your reader’s objection(s)

To remind readers of your argument and supporting evidence

The researchers then proceeded to add additional guidelines in the form of questions and brief descriptions in each feature. These additional guidelines are aimed to provide the students with a clear idea on what kind of points that could be included in an outline while also allowing them to have the authority to decide the points that they want to write. This could help to scaffold the students’ writing process. Essentially, it should not provide the answers but guide the students to find them instead. The proposed structured outline for writing argumentative term paper is as follows:

**Title:**

---

**Introduction**

**Purpose:** To introduce the issue

Ø Get the reader’s attention *(a ‘hook’: startling statistic, interesting fact, definition, famous quote, rhetorical question)*

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Ø Introduce the issue *(What is the issue?)*

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Ø Describe the current situation that relates to the issue

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

*Citation (statistics/statements)*

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Ø State the thesis *(introduce your STANCE and ALL of your arguments)*

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

**Background**

**Purpose:** To elaborate on the context of the issue

Ø Include recent data/statistics/research findings that discuss the issue

i) ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
Ø What do the above data/statistics/research findings suggest?

Argument 1
Purpose: To introduce and prove your first argument.
Ø State your first argument
..........................................................................................................................
Ø Explain your first argument
..........................................................................................................................
Ø State evidence to support your argument (put citation: statistics/statement)
..........................................................................................................................
Ø Explain evidence (how the evidence prove or support your argument)
..........................................................................................................................

Argument 2
Purpose: To introduce and prove your second argument.
Ø State your second argument
..........................................................................................................................
Ø Explain your second argument
..........................................................................................................................
Ø State evidence to support your argument (put citation: statistics/statement)
..........................................................................................................................
Ø Explain evidence (how the evidence prove or support your argument)
..........................................................................................................................

Argument 3
Purpose: To introduce and prove your third argument.
Ø State your third argument
..........................................................................................................................
Ø Explain your third argument
..........................................................................................................................
Ø State evidence to support your argument (put citation: statistics/statement)
Counterargument and Refutation
Purpose: To anticipate your reader’s objections

Ø State one argument that is against your argument
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
Ø Include evidence that supports the counterargument (put citation: statistics/statement)
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
Ø Refute the counter argument above (show the counter argument’s weakness)
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
Ø Include evidence that supports the refutation (put citation: statistics/statement)
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................

Conclusion: Sum Up & “So What” Paragraph
Purpose: Remind readers of your argument and supporting evidence

Ø Restate your paper’s overall claim (summary of thesis)
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
Ø Tell your readers why it is important to think about your claim
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................
Ø End with a question or powerful statement that could make your readers think.
.................................................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................................

Conclusion

This study concludes that the use of structured outline helps to scaffold students’ writing at tertiary level especially in writing argumentative term paper. This scaffolding technique suits well with the demands of process writing which is very complex. With the help of this intervention,
undergraduates are believed to be able to produce better thesis in their final year as the skills and processes involved in term paper writing are similar with thesis writing at bachelor’s degree level.

References


Improving Communicative Speaking Skill Of Nursing Students In English For Specific Purposes (ESP) Using Catur Jantra And String In Classroom Discussions

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Abstract

The communicative speaking skill is considered the most essential skill for a wide range professions, including nursing. Nurses’ effective communication when handling patients or conveying messages to patients’ family, co-workers and management is recognized as the cornerstone of high-quality nursing care. Improving communication can reduce medical error and poor performance in caring for patients. Yet nursing students’ ability in speaking is still lacking due to some factors; one of them is the use of media that stimulates their interest in speaking. This study aimed to investigate whether the use of Catur Jantra And String technique in discussions can improve the nursing students’ speaking ability and uncover their responses toward the use of these media. The sample of this study comprised 37 fourth semester students at STIKES Bina Usada Bali. Purposive sampling technique was employed. Two data collection methods were used i.e. observation and interview. The findings of this study revealed that the application of Catur Jantra And String technique had a positive impact on developing the students’ speaking skills, encourage students’ active in the class, sharpen memory and fun learning. It could be seen from the results the of posttest was higher than pretest. Furthermore, the results of the interview showed that the students had positive responses toward its implementation. In conclusion, teaching communicative speaking skill in ESP using the Catur Jantra And String in discussions can improve students’ speaking skill.

Keywords: speaking, ESP, Catur Jantra, string for discussion

Background And Problem Statement

Communicative speaking skill is considered the most essential skill for everyday situations and for a wide range of professions especially in the health sector. Considering Bali as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, many tourists plan their travelling and business in
Bali. Tourists who come to Bali may experience injury in mishaps or accidents during their vacation or business in Bali and may need to go to the clinic or hospital for treatment. Therefore, effective communication of the health workers is needed in order to provide good service to them. as such, they will be more effective if English for specific purposes (ESP) courses can be used in supporting their profession.

Nowadays, ESP become more popular than general English. It is considered as a widespread demand in the working arena, especially in the health sector. Being competent in medical terms can help the health worker especially nurses communicate more easily with the patients or patients’ relatives. In fact, effective communication ability of nurses in handling the patients or conveying information to the patients’ family, their co workers and management is recognized as the cornerstone of high-quality nursing care. Improving communication can reduce medical error and poor performance in caring for patients.

The importance of ESP is supported by Richards & Rodger (2001, p.107) who defines ESP as a movement that seeks to serve the language needs of learners who need English in order to carry out specific roles (e.g. student, engineer, nurse) and who need to acquire content and real-world skills through the medium of it rather than master the language for its own sake.

STIKES Bina Usada Bali is a health institution in Bali that sends the nursing students to do practical nursing either in the local clinic and hospital or international ones. Therefore, ESP is an important part of the programme highlighted by the campus to prepare its students to become ready-to-work personnel. However, the problem now faced by the campus is that students have not been able to use ESP optimally because of their different backgrounds, the lack of speaking skills and motivation of the students themselves to learn ESP. There are several factors that influence the students’ poor speaking ability and one of them is the teaching and learning resource or media that stimulates their interest in speaking.

Kubanyiova (2006, p.1) argues that the success of ESP learning “does not depend on students’ cognitive ability alone, but it is also influenced by learning motivation”. The learning motivation of ESP is influenced by some factors, including the way of the lecturer packing the material given to the students and the method used by the lecturer. According to Sasmedi (2008) in order to improve the teaching of English for the ESP students, the lecturer must know some strategies such as: 1) The lecturer should know the techniques that are most appropriate for their students. 2) It is expected that the lecturer uses modules most appropriate for their students. 3) The lecturers also should be more creative in selecting the teaching & learning resources and activities, in order to attract the students’ attention in order to increase the learners’ motivation to learn. In order to create a meaningful learning environment, the lecturer should be more innovative. This paper shares the use of the Catur Jantra And String as a teaching technique during discussions in order to improve students’ speaking skill and desire in learning ESP. This innovation is an adaptation of the chess game.
Research Objective

The objective of this study was to determine the influence of the Catur Jantra And String technique during class discussions and the students’ responses towards the implementation of this discussion technique.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated:
1. How was the students’ speaking ability after implementing the Catur Jantra And String in discussions?
2. How was the students’ response towards the implementation of the Catur Jantra And String in discussions?

Literature Review

In this era of globalization, being able to speak English is essential for people to communicate with the global community (Samad and Fitriani, 2016). There are some media used for improving someone’s speaking ability including:

Catur Jantra

Catur Jantra is a game adapted from Mr. Riasa, the leader of APBIPA Bali during the training of BIPA teacher level 1 in 2018. This game was inspired by his childhood game, chess which can improve analytical abilities because it requires higher order thinking skills. The language was proposed as an innate part of humans by both Pinker (32) and Chomsky (Cook and Mark: 2007). Language acquisition is not that different from learning how to play chess by displaying creativity and provoking of the stimulus in our model. From the movement of the chess, up, down, left and right in a straight line, the students can apply the rules to words or sentences they produced.

The use of catur jantra as a teaching and learning resource for beginners in ESP has some benefits including the fact that it exercises the brain, brings people together and develops creativity. The rules of playing catur jantra are as follows:

1. The class was divided into groups consisting of six students each
2. In each group, the students had to further form teams consisting of three people;
3. Lecturer distributed colorful bottle caps, stickers and catur jantra boards;
4. Each student in every group had to write three different words on each bottle cap (there were eighteen words on six bottle caps);
5. The students had the opportunity to say a sentence in order to move the bottle cap at a point they desired until there were three bottle caps from the same group in a straight line position both vertically, diagnosed and horizontally.
The application of *catur jantra* in this study could improve students’ speaking ability because this game needed teamwork, therefore they had to participate well to reach a good score by putting three bottle caps from the same group in a straight line position both vertically, diagnosed and horizontally. Each student had a turn to say one sentence based on one word/vocabulary they got. If there were not three bottles caps in a straight line position both vertically, diagnosed and horizontally, they should take bottle caps again and make sentences using different words. After all the words in the bottle caps have been taken, but the winner had not been defined, they took the bottle caps again and made sentences but there should not be repetition of any sentence. Therefore this game forced the students to speak up in the classroom.

**String for Discussion**

Playing games is fun and can be helpful in learning a new language. String for discussion is one of the games adopted from the IECTA workshop “Jackie Chan Approach in English Language Teaching in 2013. The procedure for using the string as a discussion media is:

1. Students worked in groups
2. They were asked to discuss a topic
3. Tell the students in each group to tie knots along the string.
4. The students then must tell a story along the string with of the knots they made. Each sentence they produced would give them the chance to move their finger along the knots they had made.
5. When one member finished their story, another member in that group continued the story or tell a new story related to the topic.

The string for discussion could be given after applying *catur jantra* because during their turns, the students could speak longer utterances which might consist of five until ten sentences. Therefore, the students who did not have any chance to speak up in the big class because they were shy or not confident, would have more opportunities to speak up in their small groups in this game.

**Research Method**

This study employed a pre-experimental approach with one group pretest and posttest design. The effectiveness of the *Catur Jantra* And String for discussions was studied by comparing the students’ score before and after being taught using this technique. This study was classified as pre experimental design because it did not have a control variable. In this study, the researcher involved one class of students and used pretest and posttest to see the result of the test because the researcher wanted to focus on conducting research on one class. The procedure of pre-experimental design using one group pretest and posttest design including three steps as follows:

i. Administering a pretest before applying the *Catur Jantra* And String technique during class discussions to measure the dependent variable.

ii. Applying treatment in improving the speaking skill by applying *Catur Jantra* And String during class discussions

iii. Administering a posttest after the treatment.
iv. Comparing the scores of pretest and posttest.

Sample

This study took place in STIKES Bina Usada Bali which is located in the North Kuta District of Badung in Bali. The sample for this study was the fourth-semester students. Students from this class were chosen because their previous performance report showed that this class scored the lowest scores, and the students were less motivated in learning English due to their impression that English was hard. In this study there were 37 nursing students. The students were of both gender (male/female).

Data Collection Methods

This study used a participant observation method. This method was employed in order to listen and observe the speaking ability of the students. This kind of participant observation is required because it provided data needed such as vocabulary related to medical instruments, health staff, symptoms and common illnesses (Arikunto, 2010, p. 237). During the observation, recording and note taking were also applied. Data of this study was also collected by administering the pretest and posttest. Then the assessment for ESP was primarily concerned with facilitating students to perform communicative speaking, providing feedbacks, highlighting those skills needing further attention, and encouraging learning.

The pretest was given in order to measure students’ ability prior to the application of Catur Jantra And String technique. The respondents were asked to give vocabulary related to nursing English and make sentences orally. The pretest consisted of 20 pictures. Time allocation of the test was 30 minutes. The posttest was conducted after Catur Jantra And String was implemented in order to measure students’ achievement in speaking. The respondents were asked to speak up in the classroom by producing one simple sentence using Catur Jantra in order to move the bottle cap. Teamwork was needed to be the winner in this Catur Jantra game. After that, the students during the posttest also made more sentences until the last stop they made on the string by using string as a discussion media.

Besides observation, interviews were conducted with the students by asking them some questions associated with the implementation of Catur Jantra And String during discussions to determine the extent of the effectiveness of the technique and the student's response or interest in learning English through this teaching and learning media.
Analysing Data

In the statistic calculation of the students’ speaking ability, the researcher analyzed data according to the following categories:

1) grammar: Students were scored for their accuracy and appropriateness in using grammar. Brown (2000, p.36) mentions that grammar is a system of rules governing the conventional arrangement and relationship of words in the sentence. In this study the grammar was checked on how they produced sentences using the past tense related to English for nursing purposes.

2) vocabulary: Vocabulary are words expressing the content of ideas to avoid confusion in communication. It plays a useful role to define any objects, actions, ideas as well. Mastering vocabulary would define someone’s capability in understanding language. Students were scored for their ability in using vocabulary or English equivalents in their utterances or sentences. Vocabulary assessed in this study referred to the students’ ability in mastering words related to nursing English such as medical instruments, health staff, symptoms and common illnesses.

3) pronunciation: According to Nation and Newton (2009, p.76), pronunciation involves good articulation, and it has features of sound such as aspiration, voicing, voice setting, intonation, and stress. Pronunciation plays a great role in speaking, and it gives a hint toward what is being said. The focus of assessment is on the accuracy of the students in pronouncing words with good intonation and stress;

4) fluency: In this study, the students were scored for their ability to deliver their ideas fluently. It means knowing about how he/she expresses ideas without using fillers (“um” and “ah”) while talking to the other occurs and how many sentence they produced when they took turns to make sentences related to the vocabulary. Pauses are allowed at meaningful transition points.

5) comprehension: The focus of assessment was on students’ competence to comprehend other persons talking in simple descriptive or transactional texts. (Thornbury, 2005, p. 127). Due to students’ comprehension, they would not repeat of the sentences produced by others, and in using the string for discussion, they must speak more sentences.

The rubric for assessing then speaking skill was adopted from Authentic Assessment for English Language Learner by J. Michael O'Malley and Lorraine Valdez Pierce(1996) which had been modified by the researcher is as shown in Table 1.
Table 1
Assessment rubrics for speaking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 100-90  | Excellent-very good   | a. Uses a variety of vocabulary and expressions  
|         |                       | b. Uses a variety of structures with only occasional grammatical errors  
|         |                       | c. Speaks smoothly, with little hesitation that does not interfere with communication  
|         |                       | d. Stays on task and communicates effectively; almost always responds appropriately and always tries to develop the interaction  
|         |                       | e. Pronunciation and intonation are almost always very clear/accurate  |
| 80-70   | Good-average          | a. Uses a variety of vocabulary and expressions, but makes some errors in word choice  
|         |                       | b. Uses a variety of grammar structures, but makes some errors  
|         |                       | c. Speaks with some hesitation, but it does not usually interfere with communication  
|         |                       | d. Stays on task most of the time and communicates effectively; generally responds appropriately and keeps trying to develop the interaction  
|         |                       | e. Pronunciation and intonation are usually clear/accurate with a few problem areas  |
| 60-40   | Fair to poor          | a. Uses limited vocabulary and expressions  
|         |                       | b. Uses a variety of structures with frequent errors, or uses basic structures with only occasional errors  
|         |                       | c. Speaks with some hesitation, which often interferes with communication  
|         |                       | d. Tries to communicate, but sometimes does not respond appropriately or clearly  
|         |                       | e. Pronunciation and intonation errors sometimes make it difficult to understand the student  |
| 30-10   | Very poor             | a. Uses only basic vocabulary and expressions  
|         |                       | b. Uses basic structures, makes frequent errors  
|         |                       | c. Hesitates too often when speaking, which often interferes with communication  
|         |                       | d. Purpose isn’t clear; needs a lot of help communicating; usually does not respond appropriately or clearly  
|         |                       | e. Frequent problems with pronunciation and intonation  |
Findings And Discussion

i. Students speaking ability before and after applying Catur Jantra and String for Discussions

During the pretest, from 20 pictures related to nursing English (including medical instruments, health staff, symptoms and common illnesses and also activities carried out) which had been provided to the students, the findings showed that most of the students could answer at least 10 pictures correctly but only few of them could reach until more than 15 pictures. Since this semester was their first time learning English for nursing purposes, some errors were produced by the students on the pretest section, such as:

1. When the students saw the picture of a man with thermometer and temperature, the students just said “a man got hot”, which should actually be “a man got fever”.
2. Some students were still unfamiliar with the medical instruments. They said “bloodpressure tool” instead of “sphygmomanometer”, and “spait” to indicate “syringe”.

Besides, the students were not confident to speak up and make sentences. They were worried to make errors. This condition made them not interested in learning English for nursing purposes because they felt it was too hard for them.

After implementing Catur Jantra, the students felt brave to communicate with others because they did not feel like they were studying but only playing chess in the classroom. The goal for them was just to be the winner in the game. This condition made them more relaxed. During the implementation of Catur Jantra, some students could produce one sentence for each word on their bottle caps but others could also produce more than two sentences, such as:

1. I meet the doctor and nurses yesterday. This sentence indicated past action but there was grammar error produced by the students. The word “meet” should be changed by “met”

2. My mother took me to the hospital and in the hospital a nurse checked my temperature. It showed 38.8°C so the doctor diagnosed that I got fever. This sentence was produced by the students with very good criteria because she could produce a long sentence, from the word “fever” that she took from the bottle cap.

After implementing Catur Jantra, the students were introduced to the string as a discussion media. In this section, the students were asked to produce more sentences. Each sentence they could produce means that they could move their finger along the string until more sentences until the string ties they made. It could be found that there was an improvement in the students’ speaking skill by using Catur Jantra And String as a discussion media.

Table 2 illustrates the results of pretest and posttest and the differences between them.
Table 2
Data of Pretest and Posttest Results and also the Differences of both Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Initial Name</th>
<th>Students’ Score</th>
<th>Differences between Pretest and Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MK</td>
<td>60 70</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DW</td>
<td>70 80</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>OB</td>
<td>65 73</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>50 63</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>50 67</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>AP</td>
<td>55 69</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>RA</td>
<td>60 72</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>63 75</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>IA</td>
<td>65 80</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>JP</td>
<td>73 83</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>DA</td>
<td>63 72</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>AG</td>
<td>70 81</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>CY</td>
<td>76 85</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>CP</td>
<td>64 74</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>TS</td>
<td>79 87</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>80 90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>KV</td>
<td>73 83</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>WT</td>
<td>60 72</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>IA</td>
<td>62 71</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>GW</td>
<td>58 65</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>55 63</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>60 70</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>ME</td>
<td>72 81</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>HA</td>
<td>64 75</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>SM</td>
<td>62 76</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>68 79</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>79 85</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>KR</td>
<td>67 71</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>RN</td>
<td>80 90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>DT</td>
<td>73 81</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>75 84</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>AW</td>
<td>70 82</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>65 72</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>62 72</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>KE</td>
<td>60 75</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>EP</td>
<td>70 79</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>GA</td>
<td>63 71</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The student “RN” obtained the highest score since this student was active and could produce more sentences although some errors were still found in the sentences. The student said, “My mother took me to the hospital and in the hospital a nurse checked my temperature. It showed 38.8°C so the doctor diagnosed that I got fever.”

Student “PA” obtained the lowest score because she could not produce any accurate sentences. It could be seen that the errors made included grammar, lexical choice and incomplete sentence, such as: “I go hospital and inject yesterday” when it should be “I went to hospital and got the injection yesterday”. But after implementing Catur Jantra And String For Discussion technique, she could make more sentences “I went to hospital yesterday because I wanted to check my pregnancy. Then the obstetrician gave me an injection on my left arm.”

Students SS showed significant progress. At first he was not interested in learning English because he felt English was boring. After the implementation of Catur Jantra And String technique for discussion, he changed his mind and became interested in learning English and could also produce more sentences.

ii. Students’ response towards the implementation of the technique
The interview was conducted in order to obtain the students’ response towards the implementation of Catur Jantra And String technique for discussion. The in-depth interview conducted by the researcher consisted of five questions. Based on the interview about the activity during the application of the technique, the memory of ESP vocabulary, speaking fluency, and fun learning activities received the students’ positive responses. Catur Jantra And String for discussion technique had a positive impact on developing students' speaking skills, could encourage students’ active participation, sharpen memory and create fun learning environment. Furthermore, the researcher also found that the application of Catur Jantra And String for discussion technique helped the students practice speaking more actively. The students felt less confident in their speaking ability previously but after the treatment, they became confident and more relaxed than before. This condition is also supported by the score they had gotten, making them proud of themselves that they could make a change.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the Catur Jantra And String for discussion technique can be a solution to create more meaningful learning for the students. This technique was appropriate to be used in order to increase the desire of the students in learning ESP. This technique had a positive impact on developing students' speaking skills, could encourage students’ active participation, sharpen memory and inject fun into learning.

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers would like to propose some suggestions. For lectures, this technique is appropriate to be applied in order to improve students speaking skills in ESP contexts.
References


13  Things Student Teachers Write In Their Reflective Journals

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Abstract

While the practice of writing reflective journals is widely regarded as being a valuable practice, indeed this is an essential element in the training process (Farrell, 2015; Moon, 2006). In this paper I investigated pre-service student teachers’ perceptions of reflection while on their practicum in Malaysian primary schools which they attended as part of their Bachelor of Teaching TESL programme. Student teachers’ reflective journals were collected and analysed using a mixed methods approach. The quantitative analysis of student teachers’ reflective journals revealed there are seven topics student teachers wrote in their reflections: i) focus on planning and delivering ESL lessons, ii) classroom management, iii) focus on learning, iv) school environment, v) support, vi) teacher’s general attributes, and vii) teacher’s use of language in the classroom. These topics implied that student teachers’ reflections focused more on the ‘self’ and ‘teaching’ than their ‘learners’ and ‘learning’. Reflection on teaching should involve examining a wide range of data which encourages new understanding and discoveries. Limiting the scope would impede this process. My suggestion is teacher educators need to reformulate the best way for student teachers to write reflections that are deep and promote reflection beyond the classroom while learning to write reflections on the course.

_Keywords: reflective journals, student teachers’ reflection, content analysis of journals_

Introduction

The popularity of ‘reflection’ in areas such as education (e.g. Zeichner & Liston, 1987; Hatton & Smith, 1994; Loughran, 1996; Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997) shows that ‘reflection’ is an important element and a valuable tool in training professionals. It is also a platform that integrates practical experiences and academic study. In Malaysia, ‘reflection’ has become an increasingly dominant feature in teacher education especially during teaching practice. Although, the practice of reflecting on teaching is not something new, it has been stressed even more now since the Ministry of Education in Malaysia decided that teachers should attain the ability to ‘think critically’ and ‘reflect on practice’ as part of being a competent professional teacher. This would
require a training approach that examines and highlights the potential of teachers which presumably could be achieved through ‘reflection’.

This has urged me to conduct a research on ‘reflection’. I investigated pre-service student teachers’ perceptions of reflection on a teacher education programme in Malaysia. The study found that student teachers perceived reflection in many ways. However, for this paper, I will be focusing only on one part from the many research findings that is the things student teachers write in their reflections. A close textual analysis of student teachers’ reflective journals reveals there are seven topics student teachers write in their reflections.

**Student Teachers and their Reflective Journals**

The participants for this research were 10 Year 4 Bachelor of Teaching – Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESL) student teachers undergoing their practicum or teaching practice in primary schools. During the practicum, student teachers are required to write reflections. There are three practicum phases in the programme. I collected student teachers’ reflections during the third phase of the practicum since it is the longest practicum of 12 weeks and the student teachers would be writing many reflections. A total of 265 reflective journals were collected.

There were two types of reflections: i) ‘daily reflections’ - reflections which student teachers wrote after every lesson they taught on one or more issues they experienced during the lesson and were written in their teaching practice record book, and ii) ‘weekly reflections’ - reflections student teachers wrote once a week focusing on one or two significant issues that they would like to discuss and explore further. These reflections were analysed together with the teaching practice portfolio.

In analysing the reflective journals, I was guided by Coffey’s (2013) and Atkinson’s & Coffey (2004) approach to textual analysis who asserted that it is important for the researcher to pay attention to the knowledge the documents contain about a setting, and to examine their role and place in that setting, the cultural values attached to them, and their distinctive types and forms in relation to the setting. Thus, this makes student teachers’ reflective journals important source of data. As documents, they ‘provide a mechanism and vehicle for understanding and making sense of social and organisation practices’ (Coffey, 2013, p. 2).

The student teachers’ reflective journals were analysed in two ways by adopting Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) ‘open coding’ method. Firstly, I performed a line-by-line analysis of the reflections to identify the issues student teachers discussed in the reflections. I coded and grouped the issues into categories. These categories were then called ‘topics’. Secondly, I administered a quantitative analysis of the topics in order to determine the frequency of the topics student teachers wrote most and least in their reflective journals. I did this by counting the ‘instances’ found in each sentence of the reflection. The term ‘instance’ was used to indicate an occurrence of an issue in
the student teachers’ written reflections. A simple calculation method converted the fraction of the instances obtained for each topic into percentage.

The analysis revealed seven topics which student teachers discussed in their reflections based on their experiences during teaching practice. These topics are: i) focus on planning and delivering ESL lessons, ii) classroom management, iii) focus on learning, iv) school environment, v) support, vi) teacher’s general attributes, and vii) teacher’s use of language in the classroom. Table 1 shows the topics arranged in descending order according to the percentage score.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No. of Student Teachers (10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons</td>
<td>57.82</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Classroom Management</td>
<td>18.50</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Focus on Learning</td>
<td>15.07</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. School Environment</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Support</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teacher's General Attributes</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teacher's Use of Language in the Classroom</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

As can be seen in Table 1 the topic with the greatest percentage is ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ (57.82%) and followed by ‘Classroom Management’ (18.50%) and ‘Focus on Learning’ (15.07%). These three topics account for more than 90% of the coded instances in the reflections. The remaining 8.61% of the total percentage scores are for other topics like ‘School Environment’ (3.62%), ‘Support’ (2.29%), ‘Teachers’ General Attributes’ (1.90%), and ‘Teacher’s Use of Language in the Classroom’ (0.80%), which has the least percentage.

‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ - Topic 1, is clearly the predominant topic which I found in the student teachers’ written reflections and which all ten student teachers wrote in their reflections. The focus of the extracts in this topic is on the teacher and his/her role in planning and delivering the various ESL teaching activities in the lessons. For example, Fatin wrote about aspects of language teaching pedagogy such as discussing on the teaching materials that she used in her class e.g. ‘poem entitled At the Playground’ (48Fatin) and meeting lesson objectives: ‘Pupils were able to name the playground items and able to show the action respectively’ (48Fatin).
In another example, Jega mentioned different types of activities and materials that he used in his class and how they affected his pupils’ behaviour and reaction to the lessons. One of his comments was: ‘Using a magic box during the set induction really wakes up the class’ (11Jega). While in other cases, choosing teaching materials which the teacher thought could attract the pupils’ attention, may not even attract them: ‘Some pupils seem to be bored with the 3D map and slides…so they felt a little reluctant to pay attention’ (38Jega). I felt that these instances were appropriate to be categorised under the topic ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ since I judged the focus of the issue for the writer was more on selecting teaching materials and how this affected the lesson.

Under this topic ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’, student teachers also wrote about their attempts of connecting theory of teaching to their practice. For example, Wee Mee wrote that her worksheets were ‘too easy and not challenging’ and knows that a good worksheet ‘must allow pupils to apply knowledge learned in new or different situation’ (16WeeMee). However, I did not see many instances like this in student teachers’ reflective journals. I would expect the student teachers to write more about this process of making sense between theory and practice since one of the purposes of writing reflections during teaching practice is for student teachers to establish relevant connections of these elements through ‘reflection’. Clearly, this was not the case although the literature (e.g. Dewey, 1933; Loughran, 2002; Gore & Zeichner, 1991) repeatedly claim that ‘reflection’ is the place for student teachers to bridge the gap between their technical and practical knowledge.

In addition to this, teaching of moral values, is another area student teachers wrote in their reflections which I also classified under Topic 1. For example, a comment such as ‘I can recall the moral values pupils have learned and remind them to practise the values taught in daily life’ (7WeeMee). Student teachers are expected to integrate the teaching of moral values explicitly into the lesson plans as well as in the teaching since this is an element that makes the overall lesson ‘holistic’ (based on the National Education Philosophy). This comment shows that Wee Mee had made an effort to insert moral values in the lesson.

Topic 2 ‘Classroom Management’, all ten student teachers wrote in their reflections with 17.83%. I have put this topic separate from ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ as it is focusing on managing skills rather than on imparting language skills. I could see that the topic of classroom management places the focus of the reflections to a large extent on the teacher, and his/her ability to manage the class and maintained discipline and motivation to learn. To that extent, the relatively high frequency of this topic in the written reflections further underlines the ‘teaching-centred’ nature of the student teachers’ reflections.

Under this broad heading, student teachers wrote about managing pupils’ discipline which they found challenging and difficult to manage especially for student teachers who are in training. In one example, Hendon described her pupils as being ‘noisy’ (19Hendon) because some of them were playing with their friends during group discussion activity and this had disrupted the timing of the lesson. This was a typical problem that student teachers faced in their classrooms and was
evident throughout their reflections. However, a statement such as Devi’s comment ‘I personally feel that it is vital for a teacher to gain the pupils’ attention at the very beginning of the lesson to ensure smooth teaching and learning process’ (2Devi) demonstrates a learning point, realising the importance of good classroom management would have on the lesson.

The third topic of reflection in the journals is ‘Focus on Learning’. This topic focuses on the learning process of the learners and their thinking, rather than teacher activities. There is a major difference between the frequency score for this topic (15.07%) as compared to the first topic ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ (57.82%). For example, this entry shows how Wee Mee was reflecting on dealing with her pupils’ needs as young learners: ‘I realised that I need to be more caring while teaching young children. Young pupils in lower primary need more attention than upper primary pupils’ (42WeeMee).

Although nine out of ten student teachers included entries in their journals on learners and their learning, there was a small percentage that discusses on pupils’ language learning process and making errors while learning English. Interestingly, there were only two entries in the journals which referred to this area. This is surprising because one would expect for teachers of English to focus their discussions on learners’ use of language too. The extract below is an example of one of the instances that talks about language error:

19Hendon
During set induction, pupils managed to spell the word ‘sympathy’ correctly. It is good to have this activity because I found out that there were few of them who could not managed to spell the word correctly. So, I was glad I could correct it.

Other concerns related to pupils’ language learning such as pupils’ language learning abilities and pupils’ language learning difficulties were also discussed in student teachers’ written reflections. For example, Fatin wrote that she could see her pupils unable to complete the task given because they were ‘quite weak’ in their language (37Fatin). Because of this, sometimes Fatin finds it difficult to ‘determine suitable activities to match with her pupils’ proficiency level’ (33Fatin). In another extract, Ai Ling expressed her concern: ‘this issue became worse when pupils’ first language got in the way and pupils barely understood English’ (11AiLing). These are examples of instances which I categorised under the topic ‘Focus on Learning’.

As can be observed in Table 1, the percentages fell considerably in the remaining four topics: ‘School Environment’, ‘Support’, ‘Teacher’s General Attributes’, and ‘Teacher’s Use of Language in the Classroom’. Topic 4 ‘School Environment’ contains student teachers’ reflections about their experiences in the school of their practicum, their impressions of the school’s atmosphere, the school’s general rules and regulations, as well as the staffroom environment. Seven student teachers wrote about this topic particularly in the early stages of the teaching practice. In the reflections, they wrote about their first impressions and described the school atmosphere as ‘hectic’ and ‘busy’ (2WeeMee). They also mentioned about being introduced to the ‘school rules and regulations’ (2Jega) and that they should follow these as long as they are there.
Apparently, it is necessary to make clear of this at the beginning of the practicum to maintain discipline so that student teachers are clear of their responsibilities and roles at the school.

Another issue that student teachers talked about was staffroom atmosphere. It is very interesting that one student teacher described the place as ‘friendly’ indicating that their presence was welcome by other teachers and perhaps because of this Suguna ‘liked’ the teachers in that school very much (1Suguna). This also shows the encouragement and support student teachers received from experienced teachers which are important in developing their confidence. However, there were not many student teachers who chose to comment on this topic in their reflections. In fact, the statistics also show that there were relatively few comments on student teachers’ written reflections about the wider school environment and context on which they were working.

Topic 5 is ‘Support’ which five out of ten student teachers wrote in their reflections. ‘Support’ refers to the assistance student teachers receive from their mentor or supervising lecturer on their teaching or their development as a teacher. Often during the practicum, student teachers would receive support in the form of ‘Feedback and Suggestions’ from their teacher mentor or teaching practice supervisor regarding their teaching. Evidently, five student teachers mentioned that they received help from their mentor or supervising lecturer in their reflections. For instance, in his first entry, Gan wrote about his mentor giving him some ‘tips’ (7Gan) on how to teach low proficiency pupils. Another example is found in Hendon’s ninth entry which describes how she received her mentor’s comments, suggesting for her to speak ‘louder’ (9Hendon) so that the class could hear her better. Although it was not stated in the reflections how helpful the feedback and suggestions were, to me the interaction between the student teacher and the ‘knowledgeable other’ seems to point student teachers in the direction that would help them cope in their teaching. Besides this, when student teachers made references to the comments made by the mentor or supervisor, this shows that student teachers were considering their suggestions which is an indication of reflection on-action as well as ‘decision making’ in order to improve their teaching.

Student teachers also wrote about ‘Teacher’s General Attributes’ in their reflections which is Topic 6. ‘Teacher’s General Attributes’ refers to the quality or characteristics of the teacher such as their appearance and demeanour. For instance, Fatin believes that she ‘is the one who holds the responsibility in motivating and guiding the pupils’ (21Fatin). Although it appears that Fatin knows what her responsibilities are as a teacher, it is also normal for student teachers to have mixed feelings and behaviour especially when they are dealing with situations which they were not yet familiar. Student teachers seem to believe that as teachers they should keep up to the teacher appearance such as being ‘healthy’ and ‘smart’. When a teacher is not healthy, it may affect the productivity of the lesson: ‘because I had sore throat and was unable to communicate with my pupils and give proper instructions’ (9Suguna).

In addition, Jega wrote about his headmaster who ‘sternly advised’ him about not keeping his long beard as ‘it may influence the pupils’ and told him not to wear black colour necktie as it ‘represents boredom and sadness’ (2Jega). This is a very interesting point of view about teacher appearance demonstrated by the headmaster that he is particularly concerned about teacher image...
and how he insisted that the student teacher should look presentable, as he saw it. Student teachers also mentioned that they have ‘other roles apart from teaching’ and that they are a ‘role model’ for others. These indicate how student teachers perceive themselves as teachers and how they begin to shape their ‘teacher identity’ during the teaching practice.

The topic with the least reference is ‘Teacher’s Use of Language in the Classroom’ – Topic 7. Only one student teacher referred to this topic. For example, Jega mainly expressed his concerns about his own language proficiency when he talked about language development in his written reflections. He wrote that he was ‘making many grammatical errors in speech’ and he ‘struggled to follow the correct grammar, pronunciation and stress’ (1Jega). He stated that he was ‘nervous and not well prepared’ and that ‘it has been a long time’ since he ‘used English in daily conversations’ (1Jega) which show the factors that made him feel less proficient in the English language. In another statement, Jega wrote: ‘I must improve my grammar as I am going to teach English and I must ensure that my English is up to the mark’ (6Jega). Jega seems determined to improve his language ability and realised the importance of being able to speak correct English in order to provide a good model to his pupils. This is an interesting remark by Jega which others do not seem to talk about in their reflections. However, this does not necessarily mean that the other nine student teachers were not aware of this issue. It may simply mean that they simply do not want to admit it. Instead, they focused on the pedagogical issues as they had been directed to write. Thus, this topic only includes the teacher’s concerns about their proficiency in the English language. I classified other teacher’s language issues relating to language teaching pedagogy such as ‘teacher talk’ or ‘teacher talking time’ in the classroom under ‘Focus on Planning and Delivering ESL Lessons’ and ‘Classroom Management’ as this relates to issues of instructions in teaching.

Discussion and Conclusion

From student teachers’ reflective journals, most of them focused their reflection on the ‘technical’ aspects of teaching. ‘Technical’ here refers to the means or procedures for delivering the lessons, that is the pedagogical aspects of teaching such as language teaching strategies or lesson planning, and these form the contents of my student teachers’ written reflections. Consequently, reflecting only on the ‘technical’ aspect of teaching made the area of discussion in student teachers’ written reflections somewhat narrow and confined to things that were related to teaching pedagogy. There was little or no discussion in their reflections of the other dimensions of their professional lives, noted in the literature, such as ‘subject knowledge’, ‘curriculum knowledge’ and ‘educational values’ (McGregor, 2011; Roberts, 1998; Shulman, 1987; Higgins & Leat, 2001). The reason could simply be that during teaching practice student teachers were only expected to show that they were able to deliver a lesson as effectively as possible using the teaching skills they had learned from their lectures during the practicum. Furthermore, the demands of the course such as assessment seems to influence the student teachers to reflect on pedagogic skills more than others.

It was also not evident in the journals that student teachers were reflecting on things related to the social aspect of learning, such as how pupils’ interaction with their peers could
influence learning behaviour or how pupils with different racial backgrounds interact in group work activities. Student teachers’ reflections that are predominantly ‘teaching-centred’ limits the subject matter and focus of student teachers’ reflections. They tend to diminish or ignore other important aspects such as the ‘learning’ process. As a result, the discussions in student teachers’ reflections become somewhat one-dimensional and covered only a small area from the wider perspectives of teaching and learning.

If teacher training programmes in Malaysia aim to develop student teachers who are able to think critically and holistically, then student teachers should be given the opportunity to reflect ‘beyond teaching’. This means teacher educators should encourage student teachers to explore other dimensions of teaching and learning such as their learners, culture and society because education is also made up of these elements. This is particularly relevant for student teachers to be aware and understand the diversity that exists in Malaysia, being a multi-racial and multi-cultural country, in order to plan and provide effective education for all. Furthermore, allowing student teachers to reflect ‘beyond practice’ and through the process of reflection and critical reflection ‘develop new ideas that can empower them to become transformative intellectuals within societies’ (Farrell, 2015, p. 96). This is something most teacher education programmes aspire to achieve.

References


14 Role Of Task Types, Interlocutors And Communication Contexts In Willingness To Communicate In English Among Malaysian Students

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Abstract

Enhancing English communicative proficiency among Malaysian students is currently a national priority. This paper presents self-reported willingness to communicate in English among Form Two students in a selected national secondary school in Cheras, Malaysia. Using McCroskey and Baer (1985) willingness to communicate construct as the basis, a questionnaire adapted from Xie (2016) was used to identify students’ willingness to communicate in English in terms of task types, interlocutors and communication contexts. One hundred, fourteen year old students participated in the study. Twelve interviewees were selected for a group interview to glean factors affecting their willingness to communicate in English. Findings revealed that there were no significant differences in self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in terms of gender but there were significant differences in terms of race. Of the Chinese, Indian and Malay respondents, the Indian respondents scored the highest self-reported levels of willingness to communicate. The respondents were also more willing to communicate in English when faced with situations of lower cognitive demand, where the interlocutors were friends that they knew and were more likely to communicate in English in a group context.

*Keywords: communicative proficiency, enhancing speaking, willingness to communicate in english*

Introduction

According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (2013, p.114) only 28 percent of Malaysian students were able to reach the minimum credit benchmark for Cambridge 1119 in the
English language SPM paper. This means that less than one third of all Malaysian students who sat for the SPM examination was able to achieve a credit in English, which shows that the current proficiency level of English among Malaysian students is low, signaling appropriate attention to reverse the deteriorating level.

One way is to investigate the construct of students’ willingness to communicate, known as the state of readiness to answer or discuss at a particular time with specific person or persons using the English language. This construct allows the use of English to facilitate language development by providing opportunities to practice related skills (McIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p.547; Ellis, 2008). By highlighting the levels and factors affecting willingness to communicate in English by Malaysian students, a better understanding of how to improve their English proficiency could be achieved.

Literature Review

Willingness to communicate

![Figure 1. The heuristic model of influences on willingness to communicate (McIntyre, Clement, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998, p.547)](image)

According to MacIntyre et al., (1998), the factors affecting willingness to communicate are generally separated into two components. The first component relates to conditional influences and the second component involves the idea of enduring influences. Conditional influences are usually transient and dependent on specific circumstances. Enduring influences however, are factors that are stagnant in a person’s biological, mental and emotional makeup applicable to any situation. Layer I in Figure 1 represents immediate situational and transient influences (conditional
influences) as it progresses from communication behaviour to social and individual contexts, the influences become more stable and enduring in terms of communicative competence (enduring influences). MacIntyre et al., 1998 stated that influences such as personality, second language competence and attitude indirectly influence willingness to communicate, while motivation, self-confidence and anxiety have a direct influence on willingness to communicate.

In terms of indirect influences, Oz (2014) found positive correlation between personality and willingness to communicate in English among pre-service respondents enrolled in an EFL teacher education program in Turkey. Specifically, the study found respondents who had the three personality traits; extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were more likely to be willing to communicate in English. This validates personality as an indirect influence on willingness to communicate among learners, as suggested by MacIntyre et al. (1998). Kim (2004) looked at influences affecting willingness to communicate in English of 191 Korean university students. The findings showed willingness to communicate in English among Korean students was heavily and directly affected by motivation received through self-confidence. Kim’s (2004) study concluded that lack of motivation had resulted in low levels of willingness to communicate which led to less successful outcomes in English learning for the Korean students.

**Willingness to Communicate and Demographics**

In another study Maftoon and Sareem (2013), investigated the relationship between gender of 30 Iranian learners and their willingness to communicate. The study showed that females were more willing to communicate than the males. The study suggested that the reason for this is that females at the adolescent age tend to engage more with other people in conversation than the adolescent boys (Smith, 1997). This results in a higher willingness to communicate by females. However, the study also mentioned that the level of willingness to communicate in males increases as they grow older and they tend to take a more assertive role in society, resulting in a bigger need for communication (Donovan & McIntyre, 2004). According to these two studies, females may have higher levels of willingness to communicate compared to males but that may vary with age and cultural settings.

Kho-Yar, Rafik-Galea & Kho’s (2018) study on willingness to communicate among ESL undergraduates of different races from one university in Malaysia found Malay respondents had higher scores compared to the other races in terms of motivation and desire to learn and communicate. The study states the reason Malay respondents struggled more in their undergraduate program was because when they were in secondary school, they were unwilling to speak English. Therefore, they are now more willing to communicate and learn English so that they can catch up with the others. It is important to note that results may differ with the sample population of the same race but of different age groups. A study by Youssef (2016) focused on the willingness to communicate among 230 Malaysian trainee teachers of different ethnic groups.
Willingness to Communicate; Task Type, Interlocutors and Communication Context

Xie’s (2016) study in a rural area in Fujian Province, South China showed that task type, specifically of high and low cognitive demand had an effect on willingness to communicate among the respondents. The respondents were more likely to choose tasks that were of low cognitive demand. In terms of interlocutors, Riasati (2012) reported four out of seven respondents stressed familiarity with an interlocutor as an important factor with regards to their willingness and unwillingness to speak. The interviewees expressed that they were more willing to speak to people that they were familiar with rather than to people they did not know. It also mentioned that motivation was higher in the interviewees when they were familiar with the interlocutor. Yang (2015), looked at the communication context to identify variables affecting willingness to communicate. Overall, respondents reported preferring small groups. The reason given was they were more comfortable to communicate in small groups than in settings such as public speaking as small groups allowed them to correct their mistakes.

Research Questions

Data were collected from questionnaires and group interviews. Descriptive and inferential analyses are presented using the SPSS as well as analysis of group interviews to answer the following research questions.

1. Are there any significant differences between self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in English in terms of gender and learner’s racial background among Form 2 Malaysian students from a selected national secondary school in Kuala Lumpur?
2. What are the overall self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in English among respondents?
3. What are the self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in English in terms of task type, interlocutors and communication context?
4. What are the task type, interlocutors and communication context which most promotes willingness among respondents to communicate in English?
5. What are the factors affecting respondents’ willingness to communicate in English?
Methodology

Research Setting
The study took place in a selected national school in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Study Participants
One hundred students from the top five Form 2 classes participated in this study by completing a willingness to communicate questionnaire. Twelve students were selected for a group interview.

Instrumentation
Willingness to Communicate in English Questionnaire
A questionnaire dealing with self-reported levels of willingness to communicate was used in this study. The questionnaire, adapted from Xie (2016), contained items relating to respondent demographics and questions that measure their self-reported levels of willingness to communicate.

Group Interview
A group interview was conducted to glean further understanding of the factors that affect willingness to communicate among twelve Form 2 students. Specifically, the interview guide comprised questions on the respondents' personality, motivation, attitudes towards the English speaking international community, self-perceived competence of their English, response to interlocutors involved in communication, experience in learning and using English, language anxiety and response to differing cognitive task demands.

Data Collection Procedure
After obtaining permission from the school authority and parents’ consent for selected respondents to participate in the interview with confirmation of confidentiality of all information collected from respondents, the questionnaire was administered with the researcher present to clarify any questions from the respondents.

Data Analysis
Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to analyze the data collected. The mean and frequency, significant differences according to the t-test and ANOVA of data were tabulated and inductive reasoning was used for analysis of interview data.

Validity and Reliability
The questionnaire and group interview guide used in this study were adapted from Xie, 2016; Cao and Philip, 2006; Weaver, 2005; McCroskey and Richmond, 1990; Cao, 2009. Cao and Philip (2006) reported that the questionnaire when measured by Cronbach alpha was .917. In terms of validity, both instruments have shown strong content validity. McCroskey (1992) reported that the
willingness to communicate questionnaire and group interview guide are tenable and have satisfactory content validity.

Results and Discussion

Gender

Table 1
*Distribution of Mean, Standard Deviation, t and p Values of Gender on Levels of Willingness to Communicate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male (N=53)</td>
<td>2.4630</td>
<td>0.52101</td>
<td>0.833</td>
<td>0.407*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female (N=47)</td>
<td>2.3781</td>
<td>0.49407</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is not significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

An independent sample *t*-test was performed to compare the levels of willingness to communicate between male and female respondents. Table 1 show that there was no significant difference in the scores for males (M = 2.4630, SD = 0.52101) and females (M = 2.3781, SD= 0.49407; t(98) = 0.833, p = 0.43). The data analysis for self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in terms of gender shows there is no significant difference in the self-reported scores of willingness to communicate between males and females. Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) found there were no differences in the levels of willingness to communicate between male and female respondents in their study.

Table 2
*One-Way ANOVA Analysis of Variance of Individual Learner Racial Background and Levels of Willingness to Communicate*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.533</td>
<td>2.266</td>
<td>11.655</td>
<td>0.0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>18.862</td>
<td>0.194</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>23.395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Shared subscripts represent statistically significant differences at P < 0.05

Table 2 presents one-way between groups ANOVA of individual learner’s racial background for the levels of self-reported willingness to communicate as measured by the Willingness to Communicate Scale. Respondents were divided into three groups according to their racial background (Group 1: Chinese; Group 2: Malay; Group 3: Indian; Group 4: Others). There was a significant difference at p <0.05 level in willingness to communicate scores for the four groups: F(3,96) = 11.655, p = 0.000).
Table 3
Tukey HSD Comparison for Learner Racial Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(I) Race</th>
<th>(J) Race</th>
<th>Mean Diff (I-J)</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>0.44182*</td>
<td>0.16276</td>
<td>0.0544</td>
<td>-1.6118</td>
<td>0.892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.99568*</td>
<td>0.25885</td>
<td>-1.6118</td>
<td>-2.1481</td>
<td>-0.7269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>-0.44182*</td>
<td>0.16276</td>
<td>-0.8292</td>
<td>-2.1481</td>
<td>-0.0544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1.43750*</td>
<td>0.29854</td>
<td>-2.1481</td>
<td>-3.0135</td>
<td>-0.5669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>0.99568*</td>
<td>0.25885</td>
<td>0.0544</td>
<td>0.3796</td>
<td>1.6118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.43750*</td>
<td>0.29853</td>
<td>0.7269</td>
<td>2.1481</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

The statistical significance in the actual difference in mean scores between groups was highly significant. As shown in Table 3, Tukey HSD test indicated that mean scores for Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 are significantly different. Figure 2 shows a one-way ANOVA of individual learner’s racial background and self-reported levels of Willingness to Communicate.

Figure 2. One-way ANOVA of individual learner racial background and self-reported levels of Willingness to Communicate.

In terms of willingness to communicate, the Indian respondents scored the highest levels (M = 3.3654, SD = 0.51673), followed by Chinese respondents (M = 2.8077, SD = 0.48141) and
the Malay respondents scored the lowest (M = 2.4120, SD = 0.45948). A study by Youssef (2016) also found that Indian respondents had the highest willingness to communicate among the three races. This is further supported by an ethnographic study by Azman (1999) which showed that Indians were the best in communicating in English.

**Overall Self-Reported Levels of Willingness to Communicate in English among Form 2 Malaysian Students from a Selected National Secondary School in Kuala Lumpur**

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Overall Self-Reported Levels of Willingness to Communicate in English (N=100)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Communicate</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>2.4231</td>
<td>0.50775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows the mean score for the 100 respondents was 2.4231 (SD=0.50775). With the mean score being 2.4231 (SD=0.50775), it suggests that the majority of respondents chose options between the threshold of "Sometimes Willing" and "Most of the Time Willing" with a higher inclination to "Sometimes Willing". The overall range of the mean scores for the willingness to communicate in English in Table 5 are from 1.85 to 3.52 and the range of the standard deviation is from 0.734 to 1.059. Results for 5 items (12, 17, 18) which had the highest scores showed respondents were “always willing” and items (16 and 25) which had the lowest scores showed respondents were “never willing”, and the remaining 21 items had mean scores ranging from 2.91 to 2.03. This means that 81 percent of the options chosen fell in the range of "Sometimes Willing". In other words, the self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in English among Form 2 Malaysian students in this study is at an average level than high or low.

Table 5

*Description of Self-Reported Levels of Willingness to Communicate: Mean and Item (N=100)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Say “thank you” in English when your friend helps you in class</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Say “thank you” in English when an acquaintance helps you in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Say sorry to your friend in English when you are wrong during class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Read out from a passage in English from the textbook.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Say sorry to a class acquaintance in English when you are wrong during class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Answer a question in English when you are called upon by the teacher.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Introduce yourself in English without looking at notes in front of the class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.059</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Participate in group discussions with friends and in English when in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personally ask the teacher a question in English in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ask the teacher a question in English in front of your classmates.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Greet a friend in English when you meet them in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>0.913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Participate in pair discussions with a friend in English when in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Participate in group discussions with a mix of friends and random acquaintances in English when in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Verbally help a friend answer a question in English in front of the class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.23</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Volunteer an answer in English when the teacher asks a question in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personally talk to your teacher in English before or after class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>0.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Talk about situations and events in foreign countries with your friends and/or classmates.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>0.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Participate in group discussions with random acquaintances in English when in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Greet an acquaintance in English when you meet them in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>0.861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Introduce yourself in English while looking at notes in front of the class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Give a speech in English with notes in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Participate in pair discussions with a random acquaintance in English when in class.</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>0.818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Levels of Willingness to Communicate in terms of Task Type, Interlocutor and Communication Context

Task Type

Respondents in this study reported high levels of willingness to communicate for item 17 which required respondents to say thank you in English to a friend when they receive help (M = 3.52, SD = 0.689). Item 18 which required respondents to say thank you in English to an acquaintance when they receive help (M = 3.40, SD = 0.765) and item 12 which required respondents to say sorry to a friend in English when they were wrong during class time (M = 3.17, SD = 0.779). These three items require low cognitive demand. This indicates that the respondents have higher willingness to communicate in English when the communication task has a low cognitive demand.

For items with mean score of 2.00 (Items where respondents are “Never Willing” to communicate in English), respondents reported lower levels of willingness to communicate for item 25 which required respondents to give a speech in English without notes (M = 1.96, SD = 0.920) and item 16 which required respondents to sing an English song (M = 1.85, SD = 1.058). Item 25, “Give a speech in English without notes in class” is of high cognitive demand and item 16 is of low cognitive demand. The reason item 16 has a low mean score may be due to the fact that the item is a public type of task. Singing in public, regardless of language, is something that requires confidence and that may have affected the mean score of this item. Thus, respondents are more likely to communicate in situations with lower cognitive demand than higher cognitive demand. Ely (1986) reported similar results where respondents reported higher willingness to communicate when tasks were of less cognitive demand and therefore safer.

Interlocutors

The three items with highest mean scores are item 11 which required respondents to participate in group discussions with friends in English in class (M = 2.47, SD = 0.846), item 4 which required respondents to personally ask the teacher a question in English during class time (M = 2.44, SD = 0.967) and item 7 which required respondents to participate in paired discussions
with a friend in English during class time (M = 2.33, SD = 0.943). The last two items with the lowest mean score are item 9 which required respondents to participate in group discussions with random acquaintances in English when in class (M = 2.19, SD = 0.734) and item 8 which required respondents to participate in paired discussions with a random acquaintance in English in class (M = 2.09, SD = 0.818). Both items have acquaintances as an interlocutor and also have the lowest overall mean score.

This suggests that the respondents may prefer friends as interlocutors when it comes to speaking in English but will be also comfortable having a teacher as an interlocutor. Respondents also reported a lower level of willingness to communicate in English when it came to a dyad of friends and acquaintances but are least likely to communicate in English when the interlocutor involved is an acquaintance. A study by Riasati (2012) found that learners are willing to communicate when they are familiar with the interlocutor.

Communication Context

According to the results, the items with the three highest mean scores were item 20 which required respondents to introduce themselves in English without looking at notes and in front of the class (M = 2.52, SD = 1.059), item 11 which required them to participate in group discussions with friends in English in class (M = 2.47, SD = 0.846) and item 4 which required them to personally ask the teacher a question in English during class (M = 2.44, SD = 0.967). These three items belong to communication in public, small groups and also one-to-one communication.

However, this may not necessarily suggest that the respondents are actually more willing to communicate in English when it comes to public speaking. The reason being the last three items in Table 5 with the lowest mean scores are item 15 which required them to verbally help a class acquaintance answer a question in English in front of the class (M = 2.07, SD = 0.807), item 6 which required them to present their opinions in English in class (M = 2.03, SD = 0.846) and item 25 which required them to give a speech in English without notes (M = 1.96, SD = 0.920).

The respondents reported higher willingness to communicate in English in the group context compared to a one-to-one intimate context. In a one-to-one intimate context, the respondents reported a preference for speaking to their teacher in a public context. After which they reported a preference of friends and lastly a preference for speaking to their teacher in an intimate one-to-one context. The respondents are least likely to be willing to communicate in English in a public speaking context. Yang (2015) found learners reported to prefer being in small groups. The reason given was that they felt more comfortable in a small group than in settings such as public speaking.
Factors Affecting Willingness to Communicate

Unfortunately, data collected from interviews with the selected fifteen respondents were not suitable for analysis. The majority of the selected interviewees had trouble articulating their thoughts when interviewed. Even if they did answer the questions, many of them gave nonsensical answers for the sake of answering. The interviewees also had the tendency to play, “follow the leader”, where the interviewees in the group gave similar answers to the first answer given. This inability to respond spontaneously in an interview situation is indicative of their low language proficiency and lack of confidence. The following is an example of answers given by the respondents in Group 3 for question number 6 (Do you enjoy using English? Why or why not?).

Table 6
Interview Transcript: Responses to Question 6 from Group 3 (Low English Proficiency Group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>A little bit. I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>A little bit because I talk with my friends, I use mandarin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>A little bit. I don’t know.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 6, the interviewees were not able to articulate why they enjoy English. All three students had the same answer: “A little bit”. The students are unable to articulate their reasoning (with the exception of Student K). However, Student K was unable to articulate coherently. Overall, the respondents gave the same answers and were unable to express their personal views.

Conclusion

There are no significant differences between scores of male and female respondents in terms of self-reported levels of willingness to communicate but there are significant differences in the scores of respondents in terms of race where the Indian respondents scored highest self-reported levels for willingness to communicate, followed by the Chinese and Malay respondents.

In terms of overall self-reported levels of willingness to communicate in English among the selected fourteen year old Malaysian students, the respondents generally reported a low to average level of willingness. The respondents are more likely to communicate in situations which are of lower cognitive demand and avoid tasks needing high cognitive demand.

In terms of interlocutors, the respondents reported that they are more willing to communicate in English with their friends as an interlocutor. They also reported equal willingness to communicate in English with a teacher as an interlocutor in a public context (in front of other
people such as friends and classmates). The respondents reported being least willing to communicate in English when the interlocutor is an acquaintance.

In terms of the communication context, respondents reported higher willingness to communicate in English in the group context compared to a one-to-one intimate context and least likely to be willing to communicate in English in a public speaking context.

Finally, students interviewed in this study have extremely low English proficiency and problems articulating their thoughts.

References


15 Teaching English Sounds Via Minimal Pairs: The Case Of Yemeni EFL Learners

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Abstract

Many foreign language learners encounter difficulties in pronouncing English language sounds, which potentially leads to misunderstanding in oral communication. The pronunciation teaching strategy of minimal pairs has long been considered as an effective technique that may address this issue. This study, therefore, investigates the extent to which minimal pairs can improve the pronunciation of English consonants among Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Five English phonemes were selected (i.e., /p/, /v/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /ŋ/), which are commonly found to be problematic among most Yemeni EFL learners. A pretest-posttest quasi-experimental research design was adopted in the study involving ten male undergraduate students in an experimental group. Drills on minimal pairs were applied throughout a period of five weeks’ intervention. The results showed significant improvement in the pronunciation of problematic English sounds, with the percentage of pronunciation difficulties being decreased from the pre-test to post-test results. It was concluded that the teaching strategy of minimal pairs is an effective way that could solve to some extent the pronunciation problems among Yemeni EFL learners. The findings have some pedagogical contributions in pronunciation teaching and learning, particularly dealing with English sounds in foreign language settings.

*Keywords: Pronunciation teaching and learning, minimal pairs, English language teaching, Yemeni learners of English*

Introduction

Speaking skills are the primary ability in the process of learning English as a foreign language (EFL) or a second language (ESL). In fact, oral communicative competence is highly critical in the teaching and practice of a target language (Li, 2016). In this aspect, pronunciation is essential for the success of a speaker. Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin (2010) state that successful communication involves correct pronunciation, especially in the EFL context. EFL learners, therefore, need to put more efforts in pronunciation in order to communicate appropriately and fluently.
Nevertheless, many EFL learners encounter certain difficulties in pronouncing English language sounds. Ehrlich and Avery (2013) consider learners’ first language as one of the sources of these difficulties. That is, learners fail to produce certain sounds that are absent in their mother tongue. The current study focuses on some pronunciation issues among Yemeni EFL learners, particularly with regard to consonant sounds that are unavailable in their first language, i.e., the Arabic language. According to Altamimi (2015), most Arab learners of English have some difficulties in five consonants, i.e., /p/, /v/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /ŋ/, which are the target sounds selected in the present study. In most cases, Arab learners usually replace these sounds with the closest sounds that exist in Arabic: /p/ is replaced with /b/, /v/ with /f/, /ʒ/ with /dʒ/, /tʃ/ with /ʃ/, /ŋ/ with /n/ or /k/ (Altamimi, 2015). The minimal pair strategy has been suggested as one of the effective pronunciation teaching strategies in EFL classrooms (e.g., Wright, 2010). The current study, therefore, aims to explore the degree to which minimal pairs would improve Yemeni EFL learners’ production of five problematic consonants in English. The next section will highlight some previous studies on minimal pairs.

Previous Studies

Wright (2010) defines minimal pairs as a technique to differentiate between words and phrases by using only one sound, such as “pig” versus “big”. Several empirical studies have examined the effectiveness of using minimal pairs as a teaching technique in addressing pronunciation difficulties among English language learners. Gierut (1989), for example, found that minimal pairs are effective in improving children’s pronunciation. Similarly, Barlow and Gierut (2002) discovered that minimal pairs are a powerful remedy for children facing phonological delays. According to Hayes-Harb (2007), minimal pairs may increase children’s awareness and sensitivity in finding contrasting phonemes and, therefore, improve their pronunciation.

A quasi-experimental approach on minimal pairs has been employed in many previous studies. Tajima, Rothwell and Munhall (2002), for instance, examined the English consonants /r/ and /l/ among Japanese learners; the findings revealed that most participants improved their pronunciation of /r/ and /l/ in the post-test, lending evidence that the minimal pair strategy was able to enhance the pronunciation among Japanese speakers of English. In Vietnam, Tuan (2010) examined whether the use of minimal pairs was effective in enhancing the pronunciation of Vietnamese learners of English; the study concluded that the participants, including teachers, obtained remarkable benefits from the minimal pair strategy.

Minimal pairs are also a powerful teaching strategy for speakers who suffer from speech problems such as speech apraxia, as reported by Wambaugh, Doyle, Kalinyak and West (1996). Na’ama (2011) added that using minimal pairs would improve not only learners’ pronunciation but also their word recognition. Given the findings shown in the literature, the current study aimed to investigate whether minimal pairs could be employed to enhance the pronunciation of English sounds for Yemeni EFL learners. The following section will provide the methodology employed in this study.

Methodology

The current study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and a post-test. It involved one experimental group in which they were exposed to an intervention in a classroom. A convenient sampling technique was used to select the experimental group who made up of ten male Yemeni EFL learners. At the time of the experiment, the participants were all undergraduate students who were studying
English in an intensive course at the Language Centre of Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). They were students in different specialisations. Their age ranged between 20 to 25 years old. All of them were Arab native speakers and classified into one experimental group. They had no experience of staying in any native English-speaking country before. All of them had prior exposure to EFL in primary and secondary schools back in Yemen.

Table 1 shows the procedures conducted in the current study. Firstly, a pre-test was conducted in which the participants’ pronunciations of minimal pairs were recorded with an audio recorder. Thirteen minimal pairs were used in the test, as shown in Table 2. Each pair consisted of sounds in word-initial, word-medial and word-final positions, except for /ʒ/-/dʒ/ and /ŋ/-/n/ (word-medial and word-final positions only).

Table 1
Research procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weeks</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Pre-test and Intervention (1 session)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Intervention (2 sessions)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Intervention (2 sessions)</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Intervention (1 session)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Minimal pairs in the pre-test and post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sounds</th>
<th>Word-initial</th>
<th>Word-medial</th>
<th>Word-final</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/p/-/b/</td>
<td>pace-base</td>
<td>rapid-rabid</td>
<td>cap-cab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/v/-/f/</td>
<td>veil-fail</td>
<td>rival-rifle</td>
<td>five-fife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʒ/-/dʒ/</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>vision-vegan</td>
<td>massage-message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ŋ/-/n/</td>
<td>chair-share</td>
<td>watcher-washer</td>
<td>match-mash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>hanger-henna</td>
<td>bang-ban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the pre-test, the intervention was conducted through minimal pair activities. The second author was directly involved in the intervention in the classroom. The target consonants used in the pre-test were integrated into drill exercises for the participants to practise. For each intervention, exercises and minimal pair drills were used. Each intervention lasted for 30 minutes. The intervention period consisted of six sessions, which was distributed into four weeks.

In the first session of Week 1, a pre-test was conducted. In the second session of the same week, general lessons were presented on how five consonants sounds were articulated by using some phonetic
pictures and graphs that indicated clearly the place of articulation for each sound. In Week 2 (first session) minimal pair drills and activities of the /p/ sound were practised. In the second session of Week 2, the exercises and activities of the /v/ sound were given. In Week 3 (first session), the training of the /ʒ/ sound was practised. Next, in the second session of Week 3, the minimal pair activities focusing on the /tʃ/ sound were conducted. In Week 4, the minimal pair exercises of the /ŋ/ sound were practised in the first session only. Finally, in Week 5, a post-test was conducted using the same minimal pairs employed in the pre-test (see Table 2).

Using auditory evaluation, the second author evaluated the participants’ pronunciations by analysing and classifying them into two categories: correct pronunciation (the target consonants were present) and incorrect pronunciation (the target consonants were absent). The results are presented in percentages in terms of the presence/absence of the target consonants using bar charts.

Findings and Discussions

The results of the pre-test is illustrated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1 Pre-Test](image)

Figure 1 *The results of the pre-test (1=10%, etc.)*

It can be observed that the participants had great difficulties in the English pronunciation of most consonants. Firstly, the /p/ sound seems to be the most difficult sound to pronounce with 90% of the participants being unable to articulate it properly (see the “absent” row in Figure 1). On the contrary, the /tʃ/ sound was the least difficult sound as only 10% of the learners are unable to pronounce it correctly. The /ʒ/ and /ŋ/ sounds share the same percentage, i.e., 70%, on the difficulty faced by the participants. Lastly, more than half of the participants (60%) encounter difficulties in producing the /v/ sound accurately.
With regard to the post-test results (see Figure 2), there was a remarkable improvement in the participants’ English pronunciation on all target sounds. It can be seen that the participants were more confident to pronounce the English consonant /tʃ/ (100% correct; see the “present” row in Figure 2). Moreover, the participants’ abilities to pronounce both /v/ and /ŋ/ increased to 80% after the intervention, while 70% of the participants were able to articulate both /p/ and /ʒ/ accurately. In short, it can be summed up that the minimal pair strategy succeeded to some extent to improve the English pronunciation among the participants in this study.

The positive progress shown in this study accords well with the previous empirical studies on minimal pairs (e.g., Attamimi, 2015; Barlow & Gierut, 2002; Hayes-Harb, 2007; Tajima et al., 2002; Tuan, 2010; Wambaugh et al., 1996). All the reviewed studies support the outcome of this study in which the effectiveness of using minimal pairs in improving pronunciation is evident among Yemeni EFL learners. Although the reviewed studies used different target consonants, it still provides strong evidence that the employment of the minimal pair strategy as a teaching method is reliable and effective.

Conclusion

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of minimal pairs as a teaching method to address the English pronunciation difficulties among Yemeni EFL learners. It was generally found that minimal pairs are an effective teaching strategy in improving the pronunciation of English consonants /p/, /v/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /ŋ/. However, the study has several limitations. First, for cultural reasons, it was limited to male participants only. Future researchers should extend this research by including female participants and also adding a larger number of participants to further establish the effectiveness of minimal pairs. Second, the study was limited to only one experimental group. Future studies should include a control group to compare minimal pairs with other teaching strategies. Third, the study was limited to only five consonants. It is recommended that future researchers should include more target sounds in English, which also includes vowels and
diphthongs. Fourth, the statistical treatment was absent in the current study. Thus, future research needs to employ appropriate statistical analyses in order to confirm the effectiveness of minimal pairs in a more scientific way.

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16 Getting Students to Do Systematic, Effective Independent Vocabulary Study

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Abstract

L2 learners typically say that mastering enough vocabulary is one of their most daunting challenges. Vocabulary learning also relates to the issue of memory in LL. Anyone who has struggled to learn an L2 understands the difficulty. One may intensively study and review key vocabulary but the result is often an inability to recall it fast enough for use in a real-time situation or for nuanced expression. Are there ways in which teachers can help their students to study, learn, review, revise, and practice vocabulary more effectively and independently? This article describes and explains a set of word-learning tasks centered on the Word Study Template (WST). The WST is a form that learners fill in and collect for word study and review. This technique will promote active learning. Finally, problems that beginning-level EFL learners face using the WST are also addressed. Some of the possible solutions involve getting them to use online resources and apps for smart-phones.

Keywords: vocabulary teaching, vocabulary learning, Word Study Template (WST)

Introduction

If you ask most L2 learners which part of language learning is the most challenging, many answer, "Vocabulary". Students want to learn the vocabulary that they need to get a better score on high-stakes tests like TOEFL, IELTS, or TOEIC. They also want to be more capable of expressing their ideas when they communicate in real interactions such as conversations, e-mail, SNS posts, video chat and so on. What's more, the issue of vocabulary learning relates to the one of memory. Anyone who has struggled to learn a foreign language knows the difficulties. One can study and review key vocabulary intensively, only to find that it is impossible to recall it fast enough in any real-time communication. Are there ways in which classroom teachers can help
their students to study, learn, review, revise, and practice vocabulary more effectively? Presented here is one set of techniques that has been devised to enable and support the active, independent learning of more vocabulary.

For students to become independent L2 learners, they have to do persistent routines involving word study. Success in that area might help to increase their motivation, too, since a perception of a lack of progress, combined with a sense of not knowing how to study the L2, can lead to low motivation and disengagement. However, it is not a simple issue. First, it is very hard to get students at this stage (18-22 years old) in their education and life to change their learning and study habits. Students' routines are highly schematized, culturally circumscribed, and function for smooth progress through a degree program—using Japanese. They are not very useful for making their EFL learning more effective. Second, even if students are guided to change their EFL study habits, many will lose patience before they can master new techniques, apply them over the long-term, and reap the benefits.

**Conceptual overview of the Word Study Template**

We tried various ways to get students to organize and expand their vocabulary studies for EFL courses. The results were unsatisfactory. Most prior efforts failed because the students' collections of words were inflexible—they could not be expanded and reorganized. Another issue was that the template for creating word entries was too small and didn't cover enough aspects of LL for an L2. Taking what was learned from trial-and-error, we asked ourselves what would we ourselves would want. Below (Figure 1) is a graphic organizer that shows what we considered to be the key elements of L2 word study. These were mapped out in schematized form with an emphasis on the cognitive and linguistic aspects. These specified aspects then went into constructing a word study template (WST).

Next, we drew up the WST. This was tested out with our own Japanese studies and in various EFL classes. We could see very quickly how separate cards worked better than a bound notebook. The card collection could be consolidated into one pack and expanded and re-organized alphabetically. After some adjustments, we devised a template that can be done uniformly. A blank copy is attached as an appendix. Below are the word template card with explanations (Figure 2) and an example card for the verb "to negotiate" (Figure 3).
Figure 1. Elements comprising the Word Study Template
Figure 2. The WST with the sections explained

Figure 3 The verb *negotiate* displayed on the template
Teaching the WST

Initial teaching

The following is an example task sequence for introducing the WST. The teacher can show how to do the word cards in the first class with a verb as an example. Then the students try to do a card during class for one more verb. They should be assigned the same verb so that they can compare and contrast their efforts with those of their classmates. In the next class, demonstrate the word card for a noun. Students do one more noun card. In the third class, show how to do cards for an adjective and for its adverb form. Then students do two cards for another adjective-adverb pair. Once students are familiar with the WST, it can be continued as homework and independent study. Students can choose vocabulary from the textbook, the current lesson, the next lesson, their university life (e.g., other courses), etc. As their vocabulary collection grows, they can review the cards regularly as an aid to memory.

One potential problem is that not all students are ready for independent learning. Their EFL courses may be compulsory courses, so they aren't necessarily there because they want to be. They are used to doing homework only if the teacher requires and checks it. Without the teacher's micro-management, many students will ignore it. Anticipating this, teachers can assign specific quotas with the WST. For example, by the end of the third class, all students should have at least six cards (copies of the three that were demonstrated, three of the ones they did in class). For the fourth class, they could be asked to complete two cards on their own. Then for the next class, the quota could be doubled. Then the quotas can be increased until independent word study matches the university's guidelines for time spent on homework outside of class (e.g., 1 hour).

Specific quotas make it possible for quick checks on minimum compliance. A teacher can look at a pack of cards and immediately see if a student has done the minimum number up to that point of the course. Once the packs get beyond 30 cards or so, the teacher should show students how to organize them alphabetically and bind them. We recommend a locking metal ring through a hole in the upper left corner or a large binder clip to clamp the pack.

Teaching for Active Learning to increase compliance

Another way to increase compliance is the use of a basic active learning technique: make the students responsible for some of the teaching. For example, choose several students to teach to the entire class one of the words that they have been working on. They can copy their word cards onto enlarged templates on the blackboard. This is also the time when the teacher can make improvements and suggestions in terms of how the cards can be used. The blackboard space in our classrooms allows for the simultaneous presentation of four words. Over the first month of a course, all students will have taught at least one word to the rest of the class. This makes it clear that this is a required task to be taken seriously. It also helps the teacher to give further direct guidance and
correction on how to do the cards. All the students can then add to their own collections by copying the ones on the board.

**Using WST cards for Evaluation**

*Course participation*

The cards can be used to help evaluate the students in terms of their participation in the course. This kind of evaluation is not an assessment of their vocabulary level or size. For example, you could ask them to submit their pack of cards at the end of the semester and assign them a grade based on their efforts. Since we typically teach large numbers of students, collecting so many cards for a grade proved too time-consuming and logistically overwhelming. Instead, we now check a certain number of students each class and make it a part of the classroom participation grade. If students are behind the quota, have not compiled their pack into alphabetical order, or are not prepared to teach a new word, they will get lower class participation marks for that class.

*Learner-centered content for testing*

Perhaps the best use of the cards though is to note down a handful of words that students themselves have selected each week when they teach them. These can then be recycled on mid-term and finals tests. All students will have had the chance to study the words that appear on such a test. But the tests tend to reward the serious students who are actively engaged in the task, week after week, both during class and while doing homework. So now we use the vocabulary template as a learner-centered ‘filter’ to help choose what words go onto the tests for a course, in addition to such criteria as students’ vocabulary levels, vocabulary size counts, or specific needs (e.g., EAP, EST, taking the TOEFL, taking the TOEIC, etc.).

*Learner and Learning Issues with Suggested Solutions*

In addition to resistance to doing homework, there were other issues with the students that needed to be addressed. Many did not have or know how to use dictionaries—J-E and E-E being mostly outside their experiences. Nor did many understand the separate sections of the word study template well enough to fulfill the demands of the task. This was even after these were explained in Japanese, for example, the concepts of parts of speech and their inflections, common lexical derivations, English-language definitions, collocations, etc. Many were unable to organize a set of word cards in alphabetical order. Solutions to the learning issues that arose with the students were best addressed using online software and smart-phone apps.

*Dictionary use in the smart-phone era*

The printed form is now nearing extinction. Only a few of our students have ever used them. Nor had they used the dedicated hand-held electronic devices that were popular a decade
ago. Most students said that they had various English-Japanese (E-J) dictionaries installed on their smart-phones and used these apps occasionally. But they were not familiar with J-E or E-E ones. For example, they had never used a J-E dictionary to do a reverse translation to find core meanings or key synonyms of an English word.

One solution is to have all students to install the SAME dictionary app on their smart-phones. To get a high use rate, the app has to be available for free and have versions for both Apple iPhone and Android. One useful app for word study for Japanese EFL students with limited proficiency is the Weblio E-J / J-E dictionary. In addition, a multilingual solution is the smartphone app of Google Translate (GT). Once installed, it can be used as an E-J / J-E dictionary (and many other languages). In addition to smart-phone apps, it is useful to have all students use the same small number of web-based programs running in web browsers. These require teachers to provide guidance and demonstrations of how use the interface. We made frequent use of web-based programs in class to show students the wide array of resources that are currently available. But we also realized that the extent to which students used them effectively outside of class is uneven.

**Definitions**

One major issue was that the students had a difficult time getting suitable English definitions. They would often copy definitions that they could not understand. In class, we could help students find definitions using the dictionaries that we as teachers have (printed, e-dict devices, software, etc.). We could also rewrite dictionary definitions into simpler English and highlight core meanings and uses. Sometimes, synonyms are enough to explain a term. But an unknown synonym or difficult paraphrase cannot explain an unknown word to an EFL beginner. This is why the WST has also been designed to allow for L1 translations of the core meanings. Some dictionaries are better than others at identifying the core meanings and conveying those in simple language. Below we discuss some that we have found to be the best.

**Using Google Translate as a dictionary**

Many students had already tried out Google Translate (GT). Their interest was in it as translator to help with academic reading and with composition. The problem is GT still doesn't work well as a machine translator across unrelated languages like English and Japanese. However, it can be used as an electronic dictionary that gives simple definitions accessible to beginning and lower intermediate EFL learners. Figure 4 is a screenshot that shows the result of translating the verb "to negotiate" at GT.
GT presents a Japanese translation, including Romanization. It also gives an alternative translation. It explains three basic definitions (many dictionaries list four). It also has one collocation (negotiate + with). One useful feature is the sound files. Note, however, the phonetic transcription is not IPA but instead a system found in American dictionaries. GT can be used in a limited way as a translator to help students with the information that they get there. For example, learners can take the English examples of the word in use and translate them into Japanese. They can also translate them back into English. If GT succeeds in reverse translation, it is usually a sign that the Japanese translation is sound. Since GT is available as a smart-phone app (and also a program extension, including browser plug-in), it is one that is easy to recommend or even require students to use.

Weblio

In addition to GT, the students were able to use a similar Japan-based translation service called Weblio. But Weblio isn't just a machine translator with one built-in dictionary. It also has an interface that makes access to multiple dictionaries, like E-J, J-E, and J-J ones. And Weblio offers a free E-J / J-E dictionary phone app. This helps assure most students actually getting and using it on their phones. Another useful Weblio feature is for registered users. They can create a vocabulary notebook that lists in alphabetical order all the words that they have studied at Weblio. This allows them to maintain an online version of the study card collections that they are making for the course. This feature also helped to train students who didn't know how to use alphabetical order to organize their cards. Weblio is really meant for people who can read Japanese and who are studying English and other foreign languages. However, if you have students who are studying Japanese, they can make good use of it as well.
Cambridge Dictionary

It can be difficult to get beginners to delve into English-only resources. A good transition can be found at the Cambridge Dictionary (CD) site. Our students were first shown the CD E-J dictionary. And then its Essential E-E dictionaries (designed for CEFR A-1 level beginners). Let us look at what a search of "negotiate" at the CD E-J dictionary yields (Figure 5 below). The key meaning of the term in a simple English definition, a translation of the definition into Japanese, and an easy-to-understand example sentence (if the meaning of "contract" is understood). One nice feature is that the sound files are provided in both UK and US accents, and that IPA is used for transcription of canonical pronunciations.

![negotiate](image)

*Figure 5. Cambridge Dictionary results for negotiate*

The CD E-E Essential dictionaries give very similar information to the E-J one. A snapshot of the search results for "negotiate" have been combined into one graphic (Figure 6 below). The CD Essential dictionaries usefully provide the most important meaning of a word. And the example sentence is also simple but shows how the word is used in a meaningful sentence. CD also has a learner's E-E dictionary for the intermediate level. It is comparable to the learner's or simple English dictionaries at Webster, Oxford, and Wiktionary.

Getting easy-to-understand example sentences

As students began filling in and collecting their word cards, other problem areas emerged. One that really stood out was students having difficulties in getting example sentences. Examples are important for at least two reasons. First, if students can write their own examples using the words that they are studying, it reinforces deeper learning. So, if possible, they should be
encouraged to make their own attempts to write example sentences. Second, when they can't, they need a source that provides easy-to-read examples. This also helps them to learn the words better.

Students would often use various dictionaries (such as phone apps) to find example sentences and phrases illustrating a given vocabulary item. The problem was that about the only thing they understood of the examples was that they contained the target item. Examples from literary and older journalistic sources are in difficult language, often don't reflect the nuances of modern use, and are typically not appropriate for beginners. On the other hand, some examples provided to EFL learners don't have enough of a context to illustrate the meaning of the target word.

**Tangorin and Tatoeba.org**

The Tangorin website has been useful as a source for understandable and pedagogically useful examples. It is set up for people learning Japanese (JSL or JFL). However, search for an English word at the top page, and it can be made to work as an E-J dictionary, too. It will give a list of Japanese translations. These translations are listed with their own English backward translations and examples. Click on the tab for Examples, and it yields a long list of short example sentences in both English and Japanese. This has helped overcome the problem of students copying literary and scholarly examples that they can't understand. The Examples page can also help teachers with finding short but illustrative sentences for making vocabulary exercises and tests.

![Figure 6. Negotiate results from Cambridge Dictionary Essential Dictionaries](image)

Tangorin itself draws on the resources of another site, Tatoeba.org, for its examples. ("Tatoeba" means "for example" in Japanese.) This site started as an English-Japanese study tool, but it has been developed into use for most major world languages. For example, type "negotiate" into the search box and chose "From English" and "To Japanese" as the options. This generates a multi-page list of English sentences using negotiate, along with Japanese translations. In Figure 7
below are two example sentences from that list. It is interesting to note that the two Japanese translations use verbs that are quite different from the dictionary translation of "to negotiate" (kooshoo suru). Japanese can use three different terms for three nuances of the English word "negotiate" (formally discuss, reach a mutual agreement, and decide on a price). This is a very good case in point as to why example sentences can be more important than definitions in helping learners acquire an understanding of words with multiple meanings and uses.

Tatoeba.org can be used to generate lists of translated example sentences across many other languages. Teachers also can use it to get readable sentences for vocabulary exercises and tests. It also has a growing collection of audio files to help with pronunciation and listening. Another useful feature is the localization of the interface. EFL beginners can be introduced to the site, and then they can choose their own language in order to browse the site.

**Collocations**

Many people think that the term "collocation" refers to words occurring next to each other frequently enough for there to be a pattern. That sort of understanding can be misleading since words can significantly co-occur without necessarily being located to each other in a text. Clear guidance on collocations is often lacking in dictionaries. Many online sources scan a corpus or word database (an e-dict) for collocations and then point out ones that are extremely frequent but trivial for vocabulary learning (an + apple, to + verb, etc.). So it might be better to at least try and show students how to infer a lot of semantically significant collocations on their own. For example, if they see 10 examples that collocate eat + food, eat + meal, etc., they should be able to deduce some patterns on their own.

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**Figure 7.** Two example sentences for *negotiate* from Tatoeba.org
Conclusion

We had hoped that it would be simple to get limited proficiency EFL learners to study and practice vocabulary using the WST. However, this hope proved naive when contrasted with the actual results from our students’ initial efforts. Despite having studied English from late elementary school until university, most students had never really used dictionaries much. In the case of J-E and E-E ones, many had never used them at all. Students did not really know the essential word study concepts of alphabetical order, parts of speech, derivations, English-only definitions, synonyms, or collocations. They would often extract definitions and example sentences from dictionaries that were beyond their comprehension, turning those aspects into largely empty copying exercises. While challenging, most of the issues have been addressed, if not completely solved. Active learning tasks in the classroom (e.g., students teaching words) have helped to increase participation and engagement. Getting students to use phone apps, online dictionaries, and other word study resources has also been important. The results are successful enough that we will continue with the WST. Our sincere hope is that others can benefit from this account and its explanations.

References


Suggested Websites for Word Study

Blank WST for Copying

Blank word study template for copying