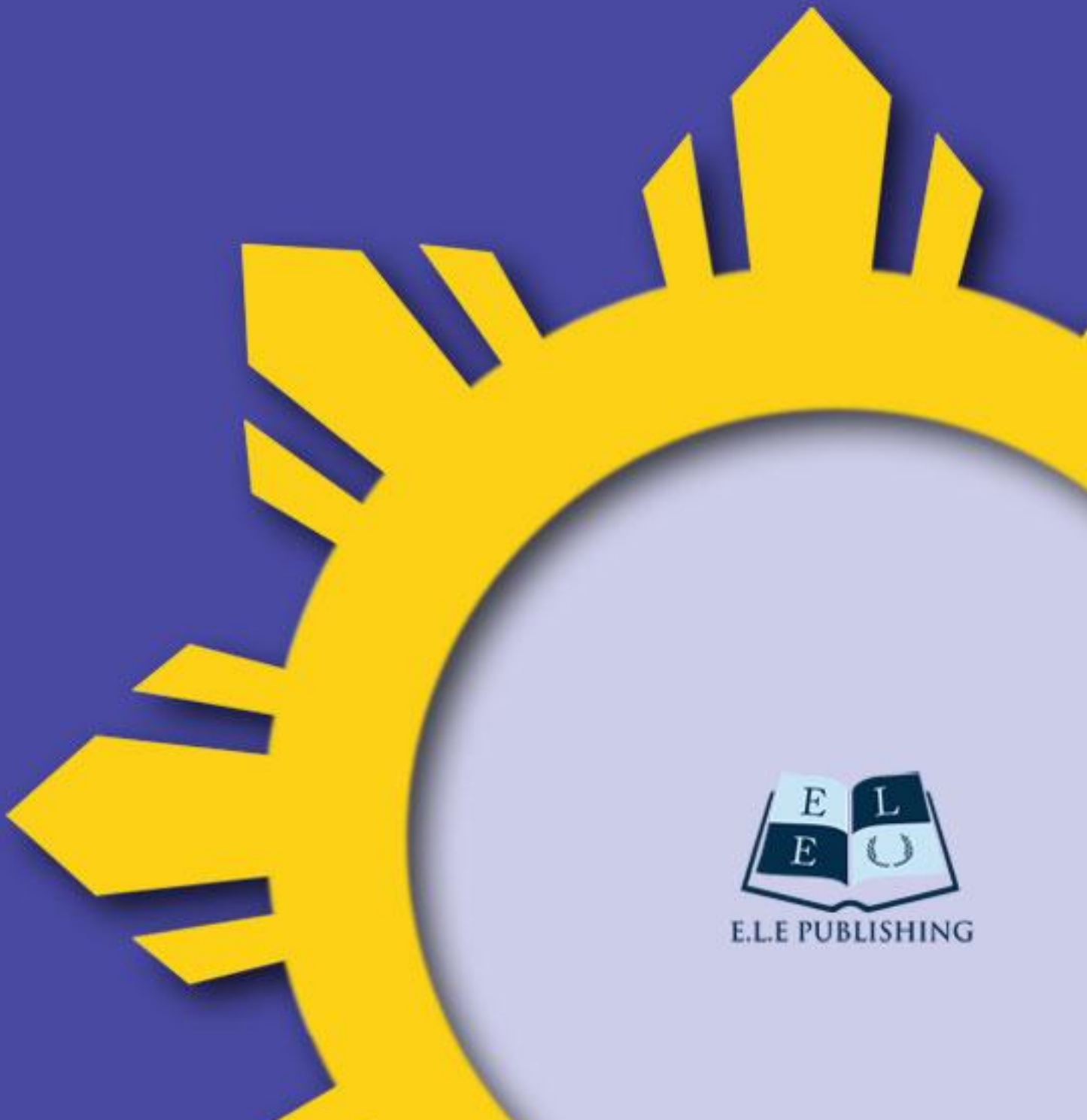
THE PHILIPPINE ESL JOURNAL

Volume 15 July 2015



E.L.E PUBLISHING

Published by the English Language Education Publishing

Asian EFL Journal
A Division of TESOL Asia Group
Part of SITE Ltd Australia

http://www.philippine-esl-journal.com

Chief Editor: Leah Espada Gustilo, Ph.D.
Managing Editor: Dr. John Adamson

The Philippine ESL journal is indexed in the Asian Education Index, Social Science Research Network,
Summons Serial Solution Index by Proquest, Google Scholar, Open J-Gate, NewJour, Ulrich's web, EBSCO, and Index Copernicus.

The Philippine ESL journal (ISSN 1718-2298) is published two times a year by ELE Publishing.

This journal is part of the Asian EFL journal services. Access to on-line table of contents and articles is available to all researchers at www.philippine-esljournal.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

 ISSN 1718-2298

Foreword

Leah Espada Gustilo

Chief Editor

De La Salle University, Manila

Volume 15 includes four research-based articles involving ESL learners from ESL zone (Philippines), EFL learners in an EFL Zone (Taiwan), and EFL learners from Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, and Colombia inside an English-speaking country which is New Zealand. It has put together empirical studies that can increase our understanding of some of the core competencies involved in language learning. Mohammad Shamsuzzaman, John Everatt, and Brigid McNeill of *University of Canterbury, New Zealand,* investigated the effects of vocabulary and grammar on English L2 writing by learners from Chinese and Non-Chinese backgrounds. Yi-chen Chen of *Yuan Ze University, Taiwan*, shed some light on Taiwanese EFL learners' metaphoric competence in their English essay compositions. Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales and Patrishia Lliane Torres of *De La Salle University, Philippines,* did a strategy instruction intervention research aiming at improving the reading comprehension of Filipino ESL learners using Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). Likewise, Glyn Gabano-Magbanua of *Al Musanna College of Technology, Oman*, evaluated the performance of four Filipino ESL students with dyslexia in phonological tests after they were given phonological and strategy training which aimed at addressing their phonological deficits. Lastly, Volume 15 also features the study of Jose Robert Reyes of *De La Salle Santiago Zobel School, Philippines*, which shed light on the perceptions and apprehensions of Filipino language teachers in pursuing and conducting action research.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to the aforementioned authors who chose to publish their works in the Philippine ESL Journal and to the reviewers who shared their time and expertise in reviewing the papers: Dr. Irish Siozon, Ms. Flora Debora Floris , and Dr. Maria Cequena. My gratefulness also goes to the growing readership of the Philippine ESL Journal who cites our articles in their work, to Ms. Roselle Pangilinan who proofread and edited the articles, and to the assistance of Dr. John Adamson, Dr. Paul Robertson, and Engineer Paul Silmaro in publishing Philippine ESL Journal.

 ISSN 1718-2298

Effects of Vocabulary and Grammar on English L2 Writing by Learners from Chinese and Non-Chinese Backgrounds

Mohammad Shamsuzzaman, John Everatt, and Brigid McNeill
University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Abstract

This article reports the findings of a study examining the L2 writing performance in English by learners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Participants (n=30) hailed from such countries as China, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, and Colombia. Their age ranged from 16 to 40 years. Their level of formal education varied from high school Diplomas to Master's. During the study, the participants were honing their English language skills at an English Language College in Christchurch to undertake higher studies at a university in New Zealand. Their proficiency in English was apparently similar given the results of a placement test. Participants completed background questionnaires, grammaticality judgement tests, vocabulary tests, and writing tasks. Incidentally, 20 participants of this study were of Chinese origin, so they were conveniently classified as Chinese and non-Chinese. Findings indicated that for the non-Chinese participants, both vocabulary and grammar test scores correlated with the scores of the writing test. However, for the Chinese learners, scores in the vocabulary test did not correlate with those of grammar and writing. The differences in performance between these two groups suggest that L2 writers of this study were influenced by their native cultures and/or languages to learn writing in English in specific ways. The findings of this study propose that effective strategies to teaching L2 in English across various cultural and linguistic contexts are contingent upon an understanding of learners' cultural and linguistic orientation and development.

Keywords: L2 writing, vocabulary, grammar, learners' background

Introduction

Writing in an L2 is unlike writing in a native language in that L2 writers are generally more constrained than their native counterparts by the linguistic and written codes of the language. The mutual relationship among various components of writing and how these components are influenced by the learners' culture and specific writing styles and strategies is an under-researched area in the field of L2 writing. The purpose of the current study is to understand the constituent components that underlie performance of L2 writing in English of pre-university learners. This is so that when such learners embark on higher studies, instructors can address their issues with writing in an informed fashion. The focus of the current work is on the components of grammar and vocabulary and on how to determine their possible relationships with writing in English. Instruction in grammar has not been unanimously recognized by ESL writing scholars and instructors as integral to teaching writing (Krashen, 1984). On the other hand, vocabulary has received less attention in L2 pedagogy compared to the other aspects of language (Folse, 2004). Nonetheless, writing is more than words strung together grammatically. Canagarajah (2002) contends that human agency cannot transcend cultural biases; hence, learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds undoubtedly permeate their texts. As such, a second objective of this study is to investigate whether the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of learners influence the styles and strategies of writing. In the present study, the focus is on L2 writers in English of Chinese and non-Chinese origins. Chinese learners were selected with specific consideration because of their unique educational and cultural experiences compared to other English L2 learners, who are steeped in more Western orthodox traditions (Gu, 2005). Therefore, a comparison between Chinese and non-Chinese learners can potentially yield critical information to facilitate the teaching and learning of English L2 writing across contexts.

Literature Review

A natural writer is an oxymoron in that writing is essentially a struggle for everyone (Breidenbach, 2006). However, it is easier to become a writer in one's native language (Bradatan, 2013). It is as if at least one language is innately available to human beings under normal cognitive and social circumstances. When one transcribes or translates one's thoughts in that language, he is familiar with the lexical, syntactic, and mechanical options and restrictions without having to struggle through the process of writing in an informed and advantageous fashion. However manufactured, inhuman, and artificial writing is (Ong, 1983), one's "interior language" (Hoffman, 1991, p. 108) undoubtedly eases the process of writing. When one decides or needs to learn to write in an L2, the scenario reverses, for he descends to a zero-point of existence (Bradatan, 2013) by changing language. L2 writers, therefore, are ontologically different from their L1 counterparts, though some writing scholars (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Raimes, 1985; Silva & Leki, 2004; Zamel, 1983) contend that writing processes in people's first and second languages are fundamentally realized in the same way.

While writing scholars are polarized as to whether or not the processes of writing in L1 or L2 are identical or different, the pedagogical approaches to teaching writing in L1 and L2 have been fundamentally different. Historically, in teaching L1 writing, style and structure are emphasized (Silva, 1992), while in teaching second language writing, language-specific errors are emphasized (Zamel, 1985). For L2 writers, then, writing is not composing, which is a sustained activity of discovering meaning (Norstrand, 1979). L2 writers instead engage in a process of demonstrating mastery in mechanics when they equate good writing with error-free writing (Leki, 1991). Apparently, the most effective way to help students produce error-free writing is to teach them grammar. Consequently, the focus of teaching writing to L2 writers shifts from the strategy of writing to the mechanics of writing. This in turn makes students compulsive grammarians (Bradatan, 2013), and teachers the

privileged intruders (Draper, 1969) to hunt errors. For less proficient L2 writers, writing is not a cognitive or a problem-solving process but is instead a process of generating formulaic texts.

In these formulaic texts, less proficient L2 writers make more errors compared to their L1 counterparts (Silva, 1992)—which is understandable in that L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing (Gustilo, 2015; Silva, 1993). A lack of appreciation of these critical differences between the L1 and L2 writing is reflected in various errors in the texts of L2 writers. Because the world judges writers by their mastery of conventions (Conners & Lunsford, 1988), ESL teachers view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers (Zamel, 1985) to help students eliminate those errors. But ESL errors are apparently intractable. Despite interventions by the teachers, errors are pervasive in the texts of L2 writers, who are not essentially intellectually deficient or impervious to instruction but are perhaps lacking of informed guidance regarding the frequency and weight of these errors. What accounts for this is that the field of composition demonstrates multiple personality disorder when it comes to dealing with errors (Conners & Lunsford, 1988). While errors are far from random (Zamel, 1983), the management of errors is "idiosyncratic and arbitrary" (Sommers, 1982, p. 149) because of a lack of consensus among writing experts and instructors. This polarization among the experts may not be surprising in that the field of L2 writing has to serve too many contradictory purposes, situations, and conceptual issues to have a single, comprehensive theory (Cumming, 2013).

While the field of L1 composition shows signs of evolvement by shifting from product to process to post-post-process, ESL composition has historically emphasized texts (Blanton, 1995). Despite the fact that L1 composition is one of the feeder disciplines of L2 writing (Silva & Leki, 2004), L2 writing has never been as radical as L1 writing. Conservatively, L2 writing privileges mechanics over messages, considers communication to be liable or subordinate to conventions, and prefers accuracy over fluency. In a situation such as this, error occupies a peculiar

position in the landscape of L2 pedagogy. Error is an elusive entity, for error marking is value-driven, and teachers have always marked different phenomena as errors, called them different names, and given them different weights (Conners & Lunsford, 1988). When such a fluid phenomenon like error consumes so much energy from L2 writing instructors, the latter can hardly afford to experiment with and implement new pedagogical approaches. L2 writing instructors are too conditioned by the power and pervasiveness of errors to think that errors are not enemies but clear evidence of language learning (Raimes, 1991).

A condition such as this is not conducive to learning a second language, let alone learning to write in that language. L2 learning is typically a slow long process (Harris & Silva, 1993), and a lifetime of development goes into becoming a mature, effective writer (Bazerman, 2013). Learning to write presupposes making errors to navigate that lifelong process because errors are, at least initially, integral to writing. Errors however defy a straightforward classification since they are not only mechanical but also rhetorical (Conners & Lunsford, 1988). Mechanical errors can be readily identified and fixed, but error-free writing is not essentially an example of good writing. Even few errors will not spoil a fine piece of writing (Breidenbach, 2006), but a piece of writing that demonstrates rhetorical (i.e., audience, purpose, tone) as well as organizational (i.e., logic, structure, cohesion, clarity) shortcomings might distort and even destroy the messages encoded in writing. When L2 writers learn to emphasize mechanics more than rhetoric and organization, they are merely language learners. They are not even writers in process (Hairston, 1984).

Mechanics are not thoughts but are tools to translating or transcribing thoughts. On the other hand, writing is thinking (Murray, 1981). Ideally, the main objective of writing instruction revolves around honing learners' critical thinking potential. A writer embarks on a journey of discovering meaning—from a skein of conflicting ideas and information to thinking. Since teaching is a form of intervention for some writing scholars (Emig, 1967; Reid, 1994; Zamel, 1982), it is their responsibility to intervene at each step and stage of the thinking process so that

the meaning that the learners intend to discover through writing can be realized (Murray, 1982). When a piece of writing is based on a strong narrative arc and when it reflects clarity, brevity, and cohesion, mechanics will automatically fall on the right slot. The development of writing skill does not necessarily precede the development of mechanical skills. They develop simultaneously through a process of osmosis. However, for second language writers, the development of writing skill precedes the development of mechanical skills. However, skills in mechanics or grammar and skills in writing are not the same things (Arapoff, 1967).

There is no apparent reason to assume that special approaches to writing instruction such as control composition or error correction have validity for the development of L2 writing when they do not have validity for mother-tongue speakers of a language (Cumming, 1989). Certainly, L2 writers have unique needs (Kietlinska, 2006). Their shortcomings in thinking, however, are apparently reflected in their lack of mechanical skills. Consequently, grammar appears to be the most promising intervention tool in helping L2 writers learn to write. Since composing is essentially a creative skill and not a demonstration of mechanical skills, grammar study has little or nothing to do with the composing process (Greenberg, 1985; Perl, 1979; Zamel, 1976). Grammar, in fact, goes against the grain of composing in that composing aims at taking advantage of the extraordinary generative power of language (Raimes, 1985). Since grammar is mechanical, it constricts the generation of language by inhibiting "the internal flow of composing" (Perl, 1979, p.18).

Nonetheless, some L2 writing experts such as Paul Kei Matsuda, Dana Ferris, and Ilona Leki advocate for teaching grammar to help students learn to write. Besides Leki, both Matsuda and Ferris have discouraged disembodied grammar teaching. Matsuda (2012a) contends that grammar should be taught with metalinguistic input. Matsuda, as such, urges that grammar be contextualized with adequate examples and explanations so that it is not divorced from the discursive potential of language. Ferris (2003) recommends a carefully planned mini lesson on grammar and thus discourages comprehensive and indiscriminate grammar

teaching. Leki (1992), however, is non-directive as she advocates for teaching grammar, for she claims that ESL students come from a grammar-dependent learning environment. Teaching through grammar, therefore, is aligned with their learning style, which also capitalizes on their previous knowledge-base of English. Leki's stipulation about grammar has not found much favor with writing theorists in that they are convinced that teaching grammar and punctuation usages for their own sake, independent of the writing process as a whole, is useless (Mills, 1953).

L2 writers come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds. Their proficiency in second language varies, and so does their learning style. Because the ESL/EFL students are not one or two groups (Raimes, 1991), teaching them writing that is independent of grammar or through grammar is constrictive to serve their extraordinary L2 writing needs. Canagarajah (2006a) argues that not every instance of nonstandard usage by a L2 writer is an unwitting error; sometimes, it is an active choice motivated by important cultural and ideological considerations. He, as such, discourages blind conformism to the dominant grammatical conventions. Canagarajah (2006b) claims that texts are representatives that display identities, values, and interests of writers. This considered, interventions on the writing of L2 writers should be text-specific (Sommers, 1982), since every text by a second language writer is individualistic. It embodies and exposes the unique traits of an individual learner. Unless L2 instructors are informed about their learners' backgrounds, they apparently do not qualify for text-specific interventions. What L2 writers bring from "prior schooling, families, and orientations to literacy in their lives" (Bazerman, 2013, p.422) is fraught with information for L2 writing instructors to tailor their styles and strategies of interventions.

While instructors intervene on different aspects of composition, vocabulary is the most neglected aspect of composition studies (Shaughnessy, 1977). Writing scholars claim unanimously that writing is thinking, so writers write not with words but with thoughts symbolized in words. Bizzell (1982) however claims that thought and language merge when the native tongue is learned, so one learns to think only

by learning a language. She further claims that one cannot have an idea if one does not have a word for it. What this implies is that words are the matrix of thoughts. Thoughts are both contingent upon and emanate from words. This symbiotic relationship between words and thoughts is often downplayed, especially for L2 writers, because of the assumption that the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary does not necessarily have to precede writing (Raimes, 1985). But compared to their native counterparts, L2 writers are often deemed poor in that they use shorter and less specific words, and they manifest less lexical variety and sophistication (Silva, 1997). Surprisingly, L2 writing instructors hardly teach vocabulary. Folse (2004) claims that since vocabulary weighs so critically in the texts of L2 writers, L2 instructors must teach vocabulary. This assertion with regard to vocabulary teaching merits consideration and application.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand how pre-university learners' cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence their development as second language learners and predict their performances in writing in English. Approach to writing in a second language underpins the theoretical framework of this study. To facilitate the teaching and learning of writing in English, this study endeavors to find answers to the following questions:

1. Do components of an L2 (i.e., English) such as grammar and vocabulary correlate with the performance in writing in that language?
2. Do L2 writers in English learn to write alike or differently across languages and cultures?
3. Do writers perceive writing alike or differently across languages?

Method

Participants

This study recruited 30 participants, who came from a range of countries (i.e., China, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, and Columbia) to New Zealand to study English at an English Language College. Most of the participants intended to pursue

undergraduate studies in New Zealand, though a few intended to pursue graduate or post-graduate studies. Despite the participants' variation in age (i.e., from 16-40, see Table 1 for demographic information about the two groups of students tested), the results of the college English placement test suggested that their English proficiency was overall about the same level. Participation in the study was voluntary, with the researcher meeting groups of 6 to 7 participants four times each to collect the data, and these four meetings corresponded to the administering of each of the four measures discussed in the instruments section of the methods. Groups were comprised of students from varying backgrounds based on their availability and willingness to attend a session. No attempt was made to exclude students from participating in order to ensure that the sample represented those students within the college as closely as possible. Due to the nature of the English second language students attending courses in New Zealand, there were approximately twice as many Chinese background students as those from other country backgrounds.

Table 1. Background information about the two groups of students within the study

	Chinese background students N = 20	Non-Chinese background students N = 10
Gender (Male / Female)	9 / 11	3 / 7
Average age (with range in brackets)	22.75 (16 to 31)	25.60 (18 to 40)
Average years studying English (standard deviation)	8.60 (3.10)	10.00 (4.14)
Average months learning English in NZ (standard deviation)	2.40 (2.04)	4.50 (3.81)
Self-rated English L2 writing	3.45 (0.61)	3.10 (0.74)

Instruments

Background Questionnaire

Every participant filled out a background questionnaire which asked for such biographical information as the learners' age, country of origin, first language, number of years spent in learning English, the age of first exposure to English, last academic qualification earned, the purposes of learning English, and difficulties encountered in learning English. The background questionnaire was completed in the first 30-minute session with the participants, during which 'Information Sheet' and 'Consent Form' were also discussed and completed. Information from the questionnaire provided background details about the L2 writers on which to contrast the performance in the rest of the study measures.

Grammaticality Judgment Test

This task comprised 30 items covering 15 areas of English grammar: article, tense-verb, singular vs plural, interrogative, word order, third person singular, parallel structure, apostrophe, continuous, redundant, incomplete/fragment, sequence of tense, verb tense, double negative, wrong pronoun, and perfect modal. Each item was a three-sentence paragraph in which a single grammatical error was embedded. Each grammar area appeared twice in the test, with the exception of errors of apostrophe and perfect modal, which appeared only once, and problems with interrogative appeared four times in order to represent the multidimensional aspects of this area in English. The test was developed based on the work of Johnson and Newport (1989), though the current measure was qualitatively and quantitatively different from that used by Johnson and Newport, which comprised more items and errors contained within one-liners. The rationale for providing a short paragraph was to minimize the chance of fortuitous error identification and to provide a more realistic written context to the detection of errors. The participants were asked to underline errors found in each short paragraph. They were informed that there was an error in each passage, but not the type of error. The participants had half an hour to complete the test.

Vocabulary Task

The participants were given a vocabulary size test based on that developed by Nation and Beglar (2007). The original version of the test comprised 10 vocabulary items from each of 14 sections, from the first to the fourteenth 1,000 word families in the English language, and was designed to provide a "reliable, accurate, and comprehensive measure" (Nation & Beglar, 2007, p.9) of a non-native speaker's vocabulary size. Nation and Beglar (2007) claimed that initial studies using the test indicate that non-native undergraduate students studying at an English speaking university have a vocabulary size of 5,000-6,000 word families. Given the proficiency level of the participants of this study, who were about to undertake studies in New Zealand, vocabulary items were selected from the first six 1,000 word families. Half

of the 10 items from each of these six word families were selected, making a total of 30 vocabulary words. For each item in the test, a sentence context was provided in which a single word was italicized. For each italicized word, the participants were asked to underline the approximate synonym from four options underneath the sentence. The participants had 30 minutes to complete the test.

Writing Task

On the final meeting, the participants were given a writing task. They were asked to write an expository essay on a topic selected by the researchers. Of the various modes of discourses, expository prose is the prose that students typically need to use in their academic work (Arapoff, 1967); hence, this was selected for the essay task. Students were given half an hour to write the essay, and were told to use their normal style of composing and writing essays. There were no instructions about the amount to be written, though students were informed about the 30-minute time limit. Once the essay was completed, these were collected and considered in two ways. The first tool evaluated each student's written output using the rubric used by the Educational Testing Services (ETS) on a 0-6 scale (Educational Testing Services, n.d.). The writing task was evaluated by two independent raters, both of whom had been ESL writing instructors for several years. When the scores of the two independent raters were within one score, the average was used to determine the final score of an individual essay. If the markers differed by two or more marks, a third rater was enlisted and the average between the two closest was used.

A second tool to analysing the essays of the participants was the Systematic Analysis of Language Transcripts (SALT) software (Klee, 1985). This software was designed for clinicians and speech therapist to analyze the oral production of language, but language teachers and researchers use this software to analyze lexical and grammatical issues and other indices of language to appreciate language development for pedagogical reasons. For the writing task, SALT was used to determine the number of grammatical errors made in the writing task by each participant. These errors were related to those in the Grammaticality Judgment Test.

In addition, the SALT analyses provided a measure of the number of simple and complex/compound sentences produced by the participants, as well as the number of different words and morphemes. The transcripts were coded for the following features:

1. Article error: The number of article errors in each text essay was calculated. For example, one student wrote, "Therefore, in my opinion, studying abroad is simple way to learn English."
2. Singular or plural error: The number of errors with singular or plural number was calculated in each essay. For example, one student wrote, "Every students have a different reasons about why they want to study in other country."
3. Preposition error: Learners both omitted necessary prepositions and used unnecessary prepositions in their writing. Number of errors with preposition was calculated for each essay. For example, one student wrote, "I have three reasons for answer why students study aboard."
4. Fragments or incomplete sentences: The number of fragments in each essay was calculated. For example, one student wrote, "After 1 year in China."
5. Number of simple sentences from each essay was calculated. A simple sentence has one subject and one finite verb. For example, one student wrote, "I enjoyed my school life."
6. The number of complex and compound sentences was calculated from each essay. A complex sentence generally has two dependent clauses, and a compound sentence generally has two independent clauses connected by coordinating conjunctions such as and, or, and but. An example of a complex sentence from a student essay is: "When I started writing, I didn't see the question." And an example of a compound sentence from a student essay is: "The Internet caused a revolution and also this phenomenon has lead to an inter-connected world."
7. The average number of words in a sentence in each essay was calculated by dividing the total number of words by the total number of sentences.

Results

Table 2 presents the results obtained from these students on the different measures in the tasks, separated across Chinese background and non-Chinese background students. Tables 3 and 4 present the first order correlations and partial correlations. The partial correlations were included to control the possible impact of the differences on years of exposure to English between the two groups of learners: Table 3 for Chinese background participants and Table 4 for the non-Chinese students.

Table 2. Means, with standard deviations in round brackets, and minimum-maximum scores in square brackets, for the measures in the study

Variables	Chinese background students	Non-Chinese background students
Essay marker score	3.10 (0.85) [2-5]	2.60 (0.84) [2-4]
Vocabulary test score	24.20 (2.57) [20-29]	22.70 (2.41) [19-26]
Grammatical judgement test scores	16.70 (6.50) [3-25]	15.00 (5.44) [5-22]
Number of words in essay	177.70 (66.17) [77-334]	192.30 (49.44) [112-269]
Average number of words per sentence	15.97 (3.74) [9.63-23.14]	15.08 (3.21) [10.35-19.73]
Number of simple sentences	4.55 (2.87) [1-12]	5.70 (4.92) [1-17]

Number of complex sentences	6.45 (3.02) [1-14]	6.90 (2.33) [4-11]

Table 3. First-order correlations (upper right-hand side of table) and partial correlations (controlling for years of English exposure) between the writing measures, grammatical judgment, and vocabulary scores for Chinese background students

	Number different words	Number of words per sentence	Number of simple sentences	Number of complex sentences	Essay marker score	Grammatical judgment score	Vocabulary score
Number of different words		.04	***.67***	***.91***	***.60***	.15	.26
Average words per sentence	.01		***-.58***	-.08	.27	-.15	-.15
Number of simple sentences	***.69***	***-.61***		***.70***	.28	**.36**	.16
Number of complex sentences	***.88***	-.11	***.68***		***.45***	.14	.21
Essay marker score	***.63***	.27	.25	*.44*		.15	**-.32**
Grammatical judgment score	.13	-.15	**.36**	.12	.14		.05
Vocabulary score	.12	-.18	.09	.08	**-.39**	.03	

Note: bold = correlation of 0.3 or greater; italics = correlation significant at .05 level

Table 4. First-order correlations (upper right-hand side of table) and partial correlations (controlling for years of English exposure) between the writing measures, grammatical judgment, and vocabulary scores for Non-Chinese background students

	Number of different words	Number of words per sentence	Number of simple sentences	Number of complex sentences	Essay marker score	Grammatical judgment score	Vocabulary score
Number of different words		.11	.13	.23	**.52**	.08	**-.33**
Average words per sentence	.08		***-.73***	.10	.01	**.34**	.08
Number of simple sentences	.15	***-.73***		**-.40**	-.09	**-.42**	-.12
Number of complex sentences	.25	.12	**-.41**		**.43**	***.84***	.07
Essay marker score	**.52**	-.01	-.08	**.44**		**.39**	**.54**
Grammatical judgment score	.07	**.33**	**-.41**	***.86***	**.38**		**.31**
Vocabulary score	**-.36**	.06	-.11	.08	**.53**	**.30**	

Note: bold = correlation of 0.3 or greater; italics = correlation significant at .05 level

In addition, Figures 1 and 2 show the types of grammatical errors made in the essay writing or detected in the grammaticality judgment test across the Chinese and non-Chinese learners.

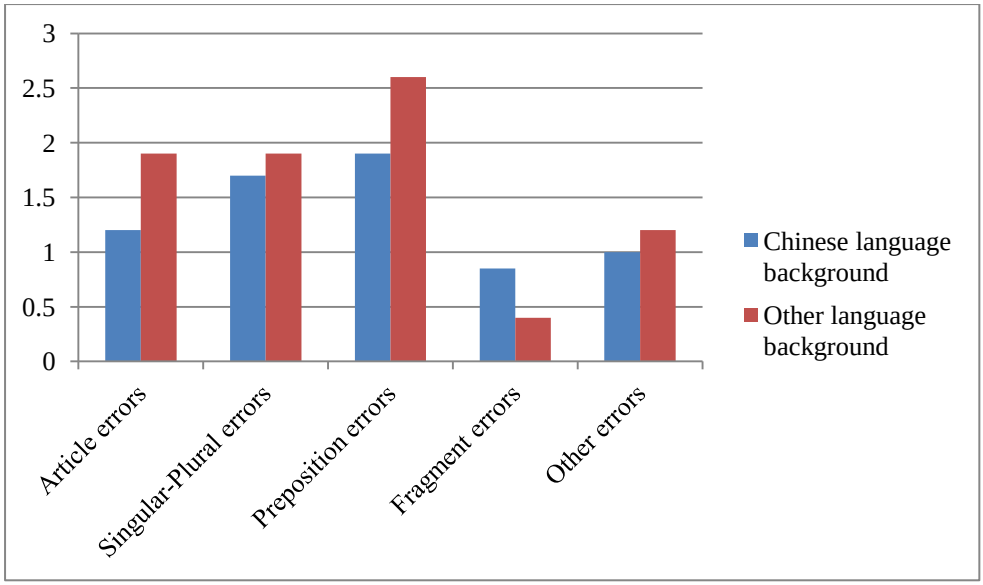


Figure 1. Frequencies of errors based on the SALT analyses of essays of Chinese and non-Chinese learners

Figure 1 shows the data from the SALT analyses and indicates that non-Chinese background students made more article errors, slightly more singular vs plural errors, and more preposition errors. In contrast, the Chinese background participants made more fragment or incomplete sentence errors. Other types of errors were about the same across the two groups.

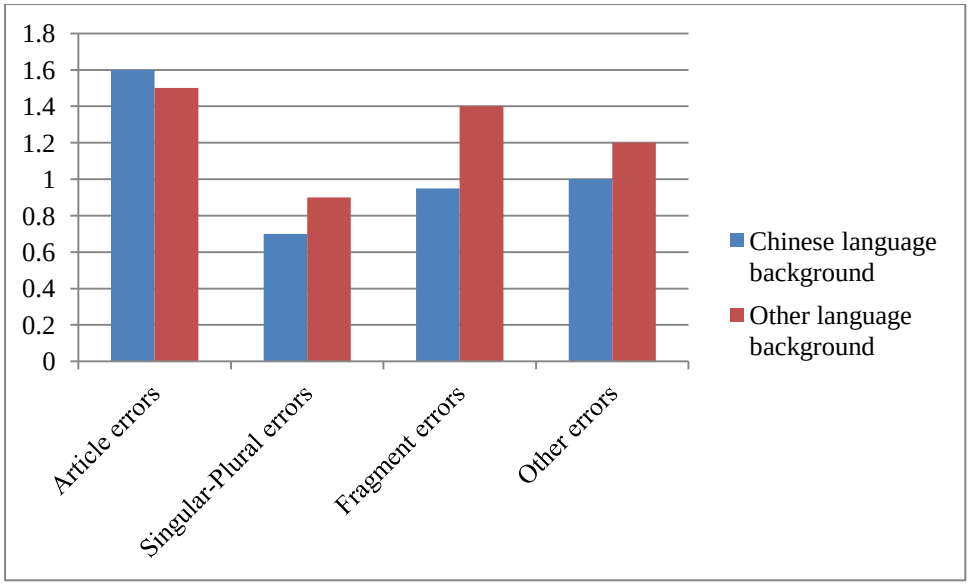


Figure 2. The frequencies of errors in the Grammaticality Judgment Test across Chinese and non-Chinese learners

Figure 2 demonstrates that in the Grammaticality Judgement Test, non-Chinese learners made more errors in all the four areas that were the focus of the present work. (Note that the Grammaticality Judgment Test did not include an item on preposition.)

Discussion

A critical finding of this survey was that while for the non-Chinese learners, grammar, vocabulary, and writing scores correlated, with the Chinese learners, vocabulary score did not correlate with writing and grammar scores. Although they appeared to have a good vocabulary, their superior vocabulary knowledge was not reflected in their writing task. A logical deduction is that the Chinese learners memorize words in a disembodied manner. This conclusion was not surprising given the Chinese tradition of learning. Repetition and memorization, which are usually part of rote learning, have been very much a part and parcel of meaningful learning in China (On, 1996). Their cultural inclination to memorization has been reinforced by the contemporary imperative of learning English in China in that vocabulary has often been regarded in China as the most important aspect of EFL

learning and teaching (Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). Pennycook (1996) also indicates the propensity of Chinese EFL learners to attempt to excel in English by memorizing. Different approaches to vocabulary learning— specially semantic and thematic as well as different dimensions of vocabulary learning such as polysemy, connotation, spelling, pronunciation, part of speech, frequency, usage, collocation (Folse, 2004)— were perhaps not exploited or were differently exploited by Chinese learners to learn vocabulary.

Apparently, the Chinese approach to vocabulary learning by memorizing was not altogether inconsistent with the standard approach to vocabulary learning. Gu (2005) claims that one of the first problems a foreign language learner encounters is how to commit a massive amount of foreign words to memory, and the easiest strategy to address this problem is by repeating words from a list. Nation (1993) advocates a "vocabulary flood," which would entail memorizing many vocabulary items from lists. Folse (2004) advises instructors not to hesitate to use a vocabulary list, and so do Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidamus (1996). With the Chinese writers, though, this accompanies a potential pitfall. The SALT analyses of the texts of the participants demonstrate that the Chinese learners tend to make significantly more errors in incomplete/fragment items in the grammar index. They intend to consider unprocessed or unstructured chunks of words as equivalent to complete and correct sentences. This corroborates the finding of Gu (2005) that for Chinese learners, strategies good for vocabulary retention are not necessarily good for the development of overall language proficiency.

All 20 participants of Chinese origin were the native speakers of Mandarin Chinese. Matsuda (2012b) claims that Mandarin Chinese does not have English-specific features such as articles, prepositions, and plural noun inflections. He claims as such that it may take many years for Mandarin Chinese speakers to fully acquire these English-specific features. The SALT analyses of the texts of the participants as well as the grammar test of the survey demonstrate that the Chinese participants are not different from the other participants as far as those English-specific aspects were

concerned. In fact, in all these areas, the Chinese participants were found to be slightly better than their non-Chinese counterparts. This finding can lead to the following two conclusions: The Chinese participants may have already spent many years to master these three English-specific features as Matsuda (2012b) claims, or these English-specific features were as easy or difficult as other features of the English language so as not to help or hinder their ability to learn a foreign language. The existence of similarities between the L1 and the target language perhaps do not determine how learners approach and learn a target language.

Given the mean score of the writing test, the Chinese participants (i.e., 3.10/6) were better than their non-Chinese counterparts (i.e., 2.60/6). They were also better than their non-Chinese counterparts in grammar and vocabulary tests. However, the SALT analyses of the texts demonstrate that the Chinese are more conservative, perhaps even more careful, writers than their non-Chinese counterparts. Their texts were quantitatively less weighty than their non-Chinese counterparts. For example, the mean length of a Chinese participant's test was 177.70 words, whereas the mean length of a non-Chinese participant's texts was 192.30. They did not use more different words than their non-Chinese counterparts either. Even at the sentence level, the Chinese participants looked more conservative and careful than their non-Chinese counterparts in that they opted for more simple sentences and less complex/compound sentences than their non-Chinese counterparts. Like basic ESL writers, Chinese participants were averse to risk-taking while they wrote, but that was not negatively correlated with their writing score, especially in this context. The research design of this survey did not allow to tease out the coordination from the subordination. Silva (1997) is nonetheless partially relevant in this context that ESL texts exhibit less subordination. But this might not be a permanent characteristic of ESL writers given their diverse cultural backgrounds, and it might be a strategy to avoid errors.

Given the frequency of writing activity besides academic assignment, Chinese participants did not generally write as much as their non-Chinese counterparts.

Nonetheless, the scores of the writing task suggest that they are better writers than their non-Chinese counterparts. It is indeed difficult to determine from the data the amount of writing they did before as well as the quality of engagement they had with writing activity besides academic assignment. It might yet be a logical conclusion in this context that the Chinese may have perceived and practiced writing in a different way. They may have flouted some of the common theories of writing in the Western world, especially the one that writing emerges from writing (Sommers, 1993). They claimed not to have written frequently, and they did not produce quantitatively bigger texts. Nonetheless, they produced qualitatively better texts as demonstrated by their scores in the writing task in this survey. This considered, Chinese are apparently not typical L2 writers.

This study also reveals another conflicting aspect of vocabulary learning of Chinese students. Given the results of the tests of this study, vocabulary is apparently their strength compared to grammar and writing. However, out of the 20 Chinese participants, 14 claimed that vocabulary is the most difficult aspect of writing. The non-Chinese participants, who were not as good as the Chinese in vocabulary given the test scores, claimed that grammar was the most difficult component for them to deal with while they wrote. Even though Chinese learners were more inclined to and proficient in vocabulary, they were more vulnerable to the difficulties of vocabulary. Gu (2005) claims that the real problem Chinese learners face is not the inadequate stock of vocabulary but their inability to use the words they know both receptively and productively. The findings as well as the confession of the Chinese participants of this study did not contradict the conclusion proposed by Gu (2005).

This study renewed the differences of writing performances between L1 and L2 as far as the perceptions of writers were concerned. None of the participants from both Chinese and non-Chinese groups claimed that they were 'excellent' writers in English, but 30% of the participants claimed that they were excellent writers in their L1s. Likewise, none of the participants of this survey claimed that they were 'poor'

writers in their L1s, but 43.3% participants claimed that they were poor writers in English. This apparently challenges the view that writing in the second language is not completely different from writing in the first language (Matsuda, 2013). However moderate the differences between L1 and L2 are, the differences have yet to be as significant as Silva (1992) claims. Although Zamel (1982) claims that ESL writers who are ready to compose and express their ideas use strategies similar to those used by native speakers of English, it was apparently not corroborated by the confessions of the writers of this study. The confession of the participants regarding their writing skills aligned with the observation of Zhang (2013). He argues that ideas are apparently not transferable from one language to another given essentially different structures of languages. Zhang (2013) observes that essays which are clear and cogent in Chinese become "elusive, lacking cohesion and coherence" (p. 447) once rendered into English. ESL composing processes then, seems generally more laborious than those in the L1 (Silva, 1992).

The findings of this survey also indicate some common language learning tendencies across languages. The SALT analyses demonstrated that none of the participants made any mistake in two of the indexes of grammar items: double negative and perfect modal (i.e., could have, should have, must have, etc.) Two explanations may account for it. While double negative is a problem or feature of oral communication, it does not appear to be a difficult challenge for the second language learners to recognize and avoid it while they write. Perfect modal, on the other hand, is a relatively difficult grammatical construct. Its application is contingent upon being very competent and creative in the target language to construct sophisticated and complex structures. But ESL texts generally tend to be shorter, less developed, and less sophisticated compared to their native counterparts (Silva, 1992). Their texts may not have required, or they may have deliberately opted out a relatively difficult grammatical construct such as 'perfect modal.' Zhang (2013) claims that EFL learners in many contexts are able to acquire systemic declarative linguistic knowledge, but the proceduralization (i.e., the application of declarative

knowledge) is challenging. This may explain why the participants of this survey did not fail to identify errors with 'perfect modal' but did not use it in their writing.

However, the results of the grammaticality judgement test reveal that both the Chinese and the non-Chinese learners were not immune to these errors. They fail to recognize errors in these two areas, but the differences between these two groups were not statistically significant. While the SALT discovered errors in production, the grammaticality judgement test discovered errors in recognition. The existence or the non-existence of a production error might not predict the existence or the non-existence of a recognition error and vice versa. There hardly exists any relationship between grammar study and writing ability (Greenberg, 1985); historically, however, text is privileged in ESL composition (Blanton, 1995), when instructors try to ferret out every grammatical error. But the findings of the SALT and grammaticality judgement test suggest that ESL errors were more insidious and widespread than popularly perceived. As such, an effective error elimination approach for ESL combines instruction in errors manifested in production as well as recognition.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that grammar and vocabulary are correlated with essay writing output but that these relationships vary across learners. While non-Chinese background learners showed evidence that vocabulary and grammar are positively correlated with writing, the Chinese background learners did not; indeed, in the latter case, vocabulary was negatively correlated with grammar and writing. In contrast, both the SALT analyses and the results of grammar test demonstrated commonalities across the two groups in terms of the type of grammatical errors produced and recognized, with the possible exception of the number of fragments produced by the Chinese background students. The Chinese background learners may have perceived and strategized writing differently than their non-Chinese counterparts potentially because of influences from their native language, education, and/or culture. The answer to the first research question is, therefore, non-directive. Development in L2 writing in English was indicated, and not indicated, by such

components of language as grammar and vocabulary. Likewise, the answers to second and third research questions were not conclusive. This study indicates some similarities and differences across cultures and languages when it comes to learners' ways of learning and perceiving writing in English. As an intellectual formation, the field of L2 writing essentially embodies "diversity and multiplicity" (Kubota, 2013, p. 430), and this study has demonstrated that essential diversity and multicity among L2 writers across languages and cultures.

References

Arapoff, N. (1967). Writing: A thinking process. *TESOL Quarterly, 1(2),* 33-39.

Bazerman, C. (2013). Understanding the lifelong journey of writing development. *Infancia y Aprendizaje 36(4),* 421-441. doi: 10.1174/021037013808200320

Bizzell, P. (1982). Cognition, convention, and certainty: What we need to know about writing. Pre/Text: *A Journal of Rhetorical Theory, 3(3),* 213-243.

Blanton, L. L. (1995). Elephants and paradigms: Conversations about teaching L2 writing. *College ESL 5(1),* 1-21.

Bradatan, C. (2013, August 4). Born again in a second language. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/04/born-again-in-a-second-language/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

Breidenbach, K. (2006). Practical guidelines for writers and teachers. In A. Horning & A. Becker (Eds.), *Revision: History, theory, and practice* (pp. 197-219). West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press and The WAC Clearinghouse.

Canagarajah, S. (2002). Multilingual writers and the academic community: Towards a critical relationship. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1(1), 29-44. doi: 10.1016/S1475-1585(02)00007-3

Canagarajah, A. S. (2006a). The place of world Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition and Communication*, 57(4), 586-619.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2006b). Toward a writing pedagogy of shuttling between languages: Learning from multilingual writers. *College English, 68(6),* 589-604.

Conners, R. J., & Lunsford, A. A. (1988). Frequency of formal errors in current college writing, or Ma and Pa Kettle do research. *College Composition and Communication 39(4),* 395-409.

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1996). English teaching and learning in China. *Language Teaching, 29(2),* 61-80. doi: 10.1017/S0261444800008351

Cumming, A. (1989). Writing expertise and second-language proficiency. *Language Learning 39(1)*, 81-141.

Cumming, A. (2013). Writing. In P. Robinson (Ed.), *The Routledge encyclopaedia of second language acquisition* (pp. 703-707). London: Routledge.

Draper, A. G. (1969). Teach the process of writing. *The English Journal, 58(2),* 245-248.

Emig, J. (1967). On teaching composition: Some hypotheses as definitions. *Research in the Teaching of English 1(2),* 127-135.

Educational Testing Service (n.d). Scoring guide for argument essay. Retrieved on the 8th of October from https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare/analytical_writing/argument/scoring_guide

Ferris, D. (2003). *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students.* Mahwah, N.J: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Folse, K. (2004). *Vocabulary myth: Applying second language research to classroom teaching.* MI, U.S.A.: The University of Michigan Press.

Greenberg, K. L. (1985). Error analysis and the teaching of developmental writing. *Research & Teaching in Developmental Education, 2(1)*, 34-39.

Gu, P. Y. (2005).*Vocabulary learning strategies in the Chinese EFL context*. London: Marshall Cavendish Academic.

Gustilo, L. (2015). Explaining L2 writing performance through a chain of predictors: A SEM approach. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 21(2), 115-130.

Hairston, M. (1984). Working with advanced writers. *College Composition and Communication, 35(2),* 196-208.

Harris, M., & Silva, T. (1993). Tutoring ESL students: Issues and options. *College Composition and Communication, 44(4),* 525-537.

Hoffman, E. (1991*). Lost in translation: A life in a new language*. London: Minerva.

Hulstijn, J. H., Hollander, M., & Greidamus, T. (1996). Incidental vocabulary learning by advanced foreign language students: The influence of marginal glosses, dictionary use, and reoccurrence of unknown words. *The Modern Language Journal, 80(3),* 327-339. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.1996.tb01614.x

Johnson, J. S. & Newport, E. L. (1989). Critical period effects in second language learning: The influence of maturational state on the acquisition of English as a second language. *Cognitive Psychology, 21*, 60-69.

Jones, S., & Tetroe, J. (1987). Composing in a second language. In A. Matsuhashi (Ed.), *Writing in real time: Modelling production process* (pp. 34-57). Norwood, New Jersey: ABLEX Publishing Corporation.

Kietlinska, K. (2006). Revision and ESL students. In A. Horning & A. Becker (Eds.), *Revision: History, theory, and practice* (pp. 63-87). West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press and The WAC Clearinghouse.

Klee, T. (1986). SALT: Systematic analysis of language transcripts. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 2(3),* 319-325.

Krashen, S. (1984). *Writing: Research, theory, and application*. New York: Pergamon Institute of English.

Kubota, R. (2013). Dislimiting second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing. 22(4),* 430-431. doi: 10.1016/j.jslw.2013.08.003

Leki, I. (1991). The preferences of ESL students for error correction in college level writing. *Foreign Language Annals, 24(3),* 203-218.

Leki, I. (1992). *Understanding ESL writers: A guide for teachers*. Portsmouth, NH. Boynton/Cook.

Matsuda, P. K. (2012a). Let's face it: Language issues and the Writing Program Administrator. *WPA: Writing Program Administration, 1(36),* 141-163.

Matsuda, P. K. (2012b). Teaching composition in the multilingual world: Second language writing in composition studies. In K. Ritter & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Exploring composition studies: Sites, issues and perspectives*, (pp 36-51). Logan, UT: Utah State UP.

Mills, B. (1953). Writing as process. *College English, 15(1*), 19-26.

Murray, D. M. (1981). Making meaning clear: The logic of revision. *Journal of Basic Writing, 3(3),* 33-40.

Murray, D. M. (1982). Teaching the other self: The writer's first reader. *College Composition and Communication, 33(2)*, 140-147.

Nation, P. (1993). Measuring readiness for simplified material: A test of the first 1000 words in English. In M. Tickoo (Ed.), *Simplification: Theory and application* (pp. 193-202). Singapore: RELC.

Nation, P., & Beglar, D. (2007). A vocabulary size test. *The Language Teacher, 31(7)*, 9-13.

Norstrand, A. D. V. (1979). Writing and the generation of knowledge. *Social Education 43*, 178-180.

On, L. W. (1996). The cultural context for Chinese learners: Conceptions of learning in Confucian tradition. In D. Watkins & J. B. Biggs (Eds.). *The Chinese learners: Cultural, psychological, and contextual influences* (pp.25-41). Hong Kong: CERC.

Ong, W. J. (1983). Writing is a humanizing technology. *ADE Bulletin 74*, 13-16.

Pennycook, A. (1996). Borrowing others' words: Text, ownership, memory, and plagiarism. *TESOL Quarterly, 30(2*), 201-230.

Perl, S. (1979). Unskilled writers as composers. *New York University Education Quarterly 2(1)*, 12-17.

Raimes, A. (1985). What unskilled ESL students do as they write: A classroom study of composing. *TESOL Quarterly, 19(2),* 229-258.

Raimes, A. (1991). Errors: Windows into the mind. *College ESL 1(2)*, 55-64.

Reid, J. (1994). Responding to ESL students' texts: The myths of appropriation. *TESOL Quarterly, 28(2),* 273-292. doi: 10.2307/3587434

Shaughnessy, M. P. (1977). *Errors and expectations: A guide for the teacher of basic writing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Silva, T. (1992). L1 vs L2 writing: ESL graduate students' perceptions. *TESL Canada Journal, 10(1),* 27-48.

Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research and its implications. *TESOL Quarterly, 27(4)*, 657-677.

Silva, T. (1997). On the ethical treatment of ESL writers. *TESOL Quarterly, 31(2),* 359-363.

Silva, T., & Leki, I. (2004). Family matters: The influence of applied linguistics and composition studies on second language writing studies: Past, present, and future. *The Modern Language Journal, 88(1)*, 1-13. doi: 10.1111/j.0026-7902.2004.00215.x

Sommers, N. (1993). I stand here writing. *College English, 55(4)*, 420-428.

Sommers, N. (1982). Responding to student writing. *College Composition and Communication 33(2),* 148-156.

Zamel, V. (1976). Teaching composition in the ESL classroom: What we can learn from research in the teaching of English. *TESOL Quarterly, 10(1),* 67-76.

Zamel, V. (1982). Writing: The process of discovering meaning. *TESOL Quarterly, 16(2*), 195-195.

Zamel, V. (1983). The composing processes of advanced ESL students: Six case studies. *TESOL Quarterly, 17(2),* 165-187.

Zamel, V. (1985). Responding to student writing. *TESOL Quarterly, 19(1),* 79-101.

Zhang, L. J. (2013). Second language writing as and for second language learning. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 22(4), 446-447.

About the Authors

Mohammad Shamsuzzaman has been pursuing a PhD in Education at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He earned his MA in English Studies both from Bangladesh and the USA. He has taught English at tertiary level in Bangladesh for around seven years. His research interests include L2 writing, composition, and acquisition in the second language as well as neurolinguistics.

John Everatt is a Professor of Education at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He received a PhD from the University of Nottingham in the UK. He has taught education and psychology at universities in New Zealand and the UK. His research focuses on literacy, second language acquisition, and developmental learning difficulties.

Brigid McNeil is a Senior Lecturer of Education at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. She received a PhD from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. Her research interests include dyslexia, phonological awareness, and literacy development in monolingual and multilingual children.

Appendix A

Background Questionnaire for ESL Participants

1. Age:

2. Sex:

3. Country of Origin:

4. Grade Level /Class You Are in at the Moment in Your Country:

5. Name of the Native Language/Languages:

6. Years of Academic Exposure to English:

7. Grade Level/Class You Were First Introduced to English:

8. Months/Years of Learning English in Foreign Institutions:

Please tick on the appropriate option/options below:

1. What is the economic group you belong to in your country?

- Rich
- Middle class
- Poor
- Others: Please specify---

2. What describes best your location of living in your country?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

3. What describes your parent's/parents' occupation:

- Job
- Business
- Agriculture
- Others: Please specify –

4. Are your parents educated?

- Yes
- No
- No comment

5. What is the means of instruction for higher studies (i.e., university studies) in your country?

- English
- Native Language
- Both
- Others: Please specify –

6. Do you practice English in any of the area below with the members of your family?

- Speaking Yes ☐ No ☐
- Reading Yes ☐ No ☐
- Writing Yes ☐ No ☐
- Listening Yes ☐ No ☐

7. What is most important area for you to improve to learn English?

- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

- Listening

8. What is the area that appears most difficult for you to learn English?

- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Listening

9. What necessitates you to learn English?

- Job
- Higher studies
- Intellectual development
- Peer pressure
- Parental persuasion
- Others: Please specify-

10. Besides academic training, what are the activities that you personally engage in to improve your English?

- Watching movies/documentaries in English
- Reading texts in English
- Speaking in English with friends and family members
- Listening to English music
- None
- Others: Please specify-

11. If you at all engage in any of the above mentioned activities to improve your English, how often does it happen?

- Regularly
- Irregularly
- Seldom

12. Besides your academic assignments, do you have the habit of writing in English?

- Sometimes
- Always
- Hardly

- Never

13. While writing, what is the area you find most difficult to deal with?

- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Punctuations
- Critical thinking
- Content
- All

15. Are you comfortable in writing in your mother tongue?

- Yes
- No
- Fairly
- Don't know

15. How would you rate yourself as a writer in English?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

16. I would much appreciate if you would share your experiences as an English language learner that is not cover by this questionnaire:

Appendix B

Grammaticality Judgement Test

Name:

Instruction: **Each item of the grammaticality judgement test has ONE error. Please underline that error.**

Example: I am going to an Indian restaurant for lunch. Will you go with me? It's not too far away. It serve the best food, I believe.

1. He played the cricket with few of his friends yesterday. He enjoyed the game, too. But he left the field a bit early. He forgot that he had to prepare for an exam the next day.
2. Sean always reaches his office in time. He is truly punctual and responsible. Yesterday, however, he is late by an hour to reach his office. That surprised everyone.
3. I prefer cricket to soccer. Although cricket is more time-consuming than soccer, it is more exciting than soccer. Sometimes, I go to the stadium with three of my cousin to watch cricket.
4. Who does believe it? He did not turn in his assignment once again today. He was sick. Strange that he was only sick before the due date of assignment.
5. I went to the mall for some groceries. As I was coming home from the mall, I saw my friend Delta. He there went for groceries, too. We exchanged pleasantries.
6. I take care of my teeth as well as possible. I see a dentist at least once a year. Yet, two of my tooths are developing cavities. I can't believe it.
7. Ronny know that his cousin is coming to visit him today. He is very excited. He plans to go to the movie with his cousin in the evening. He anticipates wonderful times ahead with his cousin.
8. John is an attentive student. But he also loves to play, to swim, and catching fish. He is knowledgeable. He is physically fit as well.

9. My neighbor sometimes complain about the loud music from my house in few mornings during a week. But I don't listen to music loudly. She should know that I only play the piano.
10. Perhaps no game requires the captain to be so responsible as cricket. He has to perform; he must motivate other players to perform. A captain responsibility is immense in cricket
11. Writing in English is very difficult for me at the moment. I don't know many English words. Grammar is not easy to learn, too. But my teacher is teach me the skills to improve my writing.
12. When I saw Susan, she was reading book in the cafeteria. I went close to her. She saw me. She said Hi to me, but she kept reading again.
13. Does she already knows that she is a good student? She can think critically. She writes persuasively. She reads deeply as well.
14. I find New Zealand really scenic. The weather of this country is soothing as well. In my opinion, I think this is one of the best countries to live.
15. Eric visits his country last month after staying five months in New Zealand. He felt homesick in New Zealand. He learned English here. He missed his parents, friends, and the food of his country
16. She is writing a letter to her friend. She will send it by post. She knows that it will take some time to reach. Why should it takes so long to reach by post?
17. I could not find my car as I stepped out of the mall. I was edgy. I saw a police around. So I him asked a question about the car.
18. I am scared of writing in English. Because English is not my first language. I am trying to improve my writing skills in English to continue my studies in New Zealand.
19. I thought that he scores a century in that match. But he got out on 99. He played really well. That was unfortunate.
20. Bret invited his friend, Andre, for a dinner at his place. It was Bret's birthday. Andre was too late. Why did not Andre knew that he had to come in time?
21. It is one of the best articles I have ever read on Sachin Tendulkar. It's detailed, and it is easy to follow. You must have to read it.

22. The day was rainy and windy. I stayed home and watch cricket on T.V. The day was enjoyable altogether, though it was not productive anyway.
23. Yesterday, I attended a lecture on Yoga. The speaker was inspiring and informed. I listened to him attentively, sincerely, and serious. Yuga looked helpful for our physical and mental health.
24. I had a class at room no. 21 at 9:30 am. I reached there on time. But nobody was not present. Perhaps, I went to the wrong room.
25. He must have go there before. The place looked confusing to me. I felt lost. But he helped me roam around.
26. The man drove fast to the station to catch the train. He was late. The train already left. It disappointed her.
27. They played well, and they almost won the match. Their supporters were cheer for them. But they lost too many wickets in the end. It was a very tight match, though.
28. Russell looked upset in the cafeteria. I went close to him. He left. Saying nothing.
29. My friend was cooking for both of us. I was trying to help him. But I severely burnt one of my fingers. My friend said, "Don't come to the kitchen never."
30. Rebecca came to New Zealand as a tourist from the U.K. She liked New Zealand. She could not decide instantly himself whether she would live in New Zealand, or go back to the U.K.

Appendix C

Name:

Writing Task

Instruction: Write for 30 minutes on the topic below.

Many students choose to attend schools outside their home countries. Why do some students study abroad?

Metaphoric Competence of EFL Learners in EAP Writing

Yi-chen Chen
Yuan Ze University, Taiwan

Abstract

This study aims to investigate EFL learners' metaphoric competence within the framework of communicative competence by examining their written essays. Four types of genres—description, narration, explanation, and exposition—were integrated to target EFL learners' use of figurative language in writing for academic purposes. An analysis of 80 essays written by 16 university students at the intermediate to high-intermediate proficiency levels was conducted. Findings show that figurative language uses and the different text types are interwoven in the participants' essays. The participants are capable of producing not only idiomatic usages but also open-class metaphors based on conceptual metaphors. Overarching metaphors followed by clusters of relevant figurative expressions were adopted in participants' attempts to maintain topical coherence. Finally, illocutionary functions were identified in the figurative expressions used in all four genres, and they matched the general writing goals of each text type. The results provide a comprehensive analysis of EFL learners' metaphoric competence and suggest that a more detailed set of descriptors involving figurative language uses be developed to add to the categorization of language proficiency.

Keywords: Metaphoric competence, communicative competence, genres, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), English Writing for Academic Purpose (EAP writing)

Introduction

Metaphoric competence, as its name suggests, refers to the ability that a language learner needs in terms of understanding and producing figurative language, including metaphor, metonymy, and idiom (Danesi, 1993). Particularly for L2 learners, metaphoric competence refers to the capability of interpreting and understanding meanings of metaphors figuratively (Littlemore, 1998, 2001), and interacting with and responding to metaphors pragmatically (Low, 1988). In other words, metaphoric competence consists of both receptive and productive skills of language use, suggesting that applications of metaphoric competence should not be limited to literary work but to all kinds of communicative events.

Researchers have found that metaphoric competence is a complexly interwoven knowledge as exemplified in Bachman's (1990) communicative competence model (Littlemore & Low, 2006). The ability to use metaphors appropriately can contribute to language learners' development of communicative competence. One might also expect this ability to contribute to language proficiency improvement (Littlemore, 2012; Aleshtar & Dowlatabadi, 2014). In short, metaphoric competence should be highlighted in the field of English language teaching and should be considered a complementary component of and beneficial supplement to communicative competence. For L2 language learners who aim to gain higher language proficiency or to improve communicative competence, acquiring metaphoric competence is an unavoidable step.

The Importance of Metaphoric Competence for Communicative Competence

Metaphoric competence is believed to permeate all aspects of communicative competence and should thus be seen as playing an important role in all the component parts of the communicative competence model. Littlemore and Low (2006) suggest that metaphoric competence is as equally important as communicative competence. In Bachman's (1990) model, communicative competence is schematized to consist of four components: grammatical, textual,

illocutionary, and sociolinguistic competence. If we analyze how metaphoric language and metaphoric thinking are interwoven with all the four component areas included in the communicative competence model, we can prove the important role that metaphoric competence plays in the communicative competence framework.

Regarding *grammatical competence*, which refers to a person's knowledge of and ability to use the grammatical system of the target language, metaphoric competence provides cognitive organization to the rules of grammar. Examples of grammar as metaphor include syntactic features, such as polysemous preposition use. For instance, through conceptualizing spatial organization and orientation, abstract meanings of prepositions in English phrasal verbs, like *up* and *down* (Boers, 1996; Lindstromberg, 1997) can be clearly captured. In terms of the grammar of phonology, recent research relates the phonological reduction of idiomatic expressions in oral presentations to their metaphoric natures, which increase the predictability of using such idioms (Sanford, 2008). As for vocabulary, words like *nod* in the sentence, "The tall ships nodded as they passed by," cannot be understood directly and requires metaphoric competence to form a mapping relationship between literal meanings (i.e., the movement of the head) and figurative meanings (i.e., the swaying of the ship). In sum, knowledge of metaphoric concepts can be helpful in interpreting grammar rules in syntax, phonology, and vocabulary; metaphoric competence is thus believed to factor into grammatical competence.

In terms of *textual competence*, which refers to the ability to understand and produce well-organized and cohesive text, figurative language can function as a discourse marker that demonstrates the cohesion of texts. For instance, Drew and Holt (1998) found that metaphors used at the edges of discourse units signal the suspension of time during a discussion, such as an expression in the conversation, "Uh . . . yeah, takes a bit of digesting." In addition, figurative language is sometimes used to maintain the cohesion of the text. Koester (2000) found that figurative language, particularly metaphors, was consistently used to signal problem–solution–evaluation patterns in a spoken text. In other words, by employing figurative

language, writers and speakers can lead readers and listeners through written or spoken texts easily.

Illocutionary competence refers to the ability to interpret meanings "beyond words," and in this sense figurative language performs a wide variety of illocutionary functions—ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative (Littlemore & Low, 2006). Figurative language is often used to convey vivid images and compact meanings of abstract and loose concepts (Ortony, 1975), similar to the *ideational function*, which uses language to exchange information and feelings about the information, as well as the *heuristic function*, which uses language to discover and explain new things and novel concepts. For example, in the expression, "The pen is mightier than the sword," vivid language use is considered a powerful force that can control or even alter others' perceptions of the world. The *manipulative function* of illocutionary competence uses language in an instrumental way to achieve a means to an end, while the *imaginative function* encompasses the ability to create and extend context settings for humorous or aesthetic purposes. In this sense, figurative language is considered a useful tool for expanding and elaborating speakers' creativity and innovation (Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Seitz, 1997).

Finally, *sociolinguistic competence* refers to a language user's sensitivity to language varieties, such as dialect and register, and these varieties reflect social and cultural references. Knowledge of shared cultural references is deemed necessary if one is to understand or produce the target language appropriately and accurately (Lantolf, 1999). Figurative language, which is formed based on people's knowledge and experience of the world, is thus considered crucial in developing sociolinguistic competence.

Metaphoric Competence in an EFL Context

Previous research investigating L2 learners' metaphoric competence has been limited. Most research has focused on L2 learners' awareness (Boers, 2000a, 2000b) and comprehension (Littlemore, 2011), namely, L2 learners' receptive ability of

metaphoric competence. The productive ability of metaphoric competence is an area that has received little attention due to conflicting presumptions of the definition of production. Figurative expressions sometimes involve cultures and conventions; though not as fixed and arbitrary, these types of expressions are deemed highly collocational. L2 learners' creativity in producing figurative expressions usually encounters the problem of acceptability in the L1 community (Davis, 2006). In addition, some research (Boers, 2001) has emphasized L2 learners' productions of figurative expressions as the ability to reduplicate those expressions which are taught; thus, evaluating L2 learners' metaphoric competence is similar to measuring their memory. However, in evaluating metaphoric competence, the essence of communicative competence can be compromised, and whether L2 learners are able to use figurative language for communicative purposes in authentic communicative events thus becomes doubtful.

To create a situation that allows L2 learners to demonstrate their metaphoric competence in both receptive and productive ways, in both an active manner and for communicative purposes, one suggestion for investigating L2 learners' writing was recently made (Kathpalia & Carmel, 2011; Littlemore, Krennmayr, Turner, & Turner, 2014). Furthermore, considering the unique situation of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, in which EFL learners have few or no opportunities to use English in oral communication, to explore EFL learners' metaphoric competence through writing seems appropriate. Through writing, EFL learners not only demonstrate their language proficiency and grammatical knowledge, namely, *organizational competence* in Bachman's communicative competence model, but also display their capability of controlling language to fit communicational purposes, namely, *pragmatic competence*. At the same time, EFL learners' ability to use metaphors properly in context (i.e., metaphoric competence) can be noted as well.

Kathpalia and Carmel (2011) conducted a study on metaphoric competence in Singapore, analyzing the written texts of 113 English language learners. They found that, in terms of grammatical competence, the learners produced grammatical

miscollocations that were related to their choice of lexis, nouns, verbs, determiners, and prepositions. For instance, the expression, "Prove my worth of being an NTU ambassador," should be corrected as, "Prove me worthy of [. . .]." Regarding textual competence, it was found that the learners used metaphors to link text within as well as beyond paragraphs in their writing; however, the expressions were often textually inconsistent or stylistically inappropriate. At the micro-level of writing, the students tended to use metaphors that were based on different metaphoric themes in adjacent sentences, they did not establish logical relations, and they failed to sustain one thematic theme throughout the whole essay to create a holistic image of the topic.

Regarding illocutionary competence, Kathpalia and Carmel (2011) found that L2 learners were able to use metaphors for ideational and manipulative functions in their written texts; however, these students had a harder time using figurative expressions for heuristic and imaginative functions. In terms of sociolinguistic competence, the learners' uses of metaphors reflected the influence of culture over language. For instance, one learner wrote, "I would together with my friends, hand make for them cards that have a Vanda Miss Joaquim flower on the exterior." A Vanda Miss Joaquim flower is Singapore's national flower, which symbolizes vibrancy, hardiness, and resilience; however, for readers from other cultures, such a flower may not represent the same meaning. In addition, both translating a metaphor directly from one's L1 into the target language and using the wrong register can lead to awkward constructions.

The results of Kathpalia and Carmel's (2011) study on L2 learners' metaphoric competence proved that although the students' attempts at using different types of metaphors were not always successful, such intentions were still commendable. At the same time, the results also indicated that the difficulties faced by L2 learners were not only due to a lack of awareness regarding the cultural connotations of metaphors but also to the conventions related to their use. In order to improve language learners' understanding and use of metaphoric expressions, the authors

suggested that language teachers need to pay particular attention to linguistic, cultural, and rhetoric aspects in their classrooms.

However, the findings of Kathpalia and Carmel's (2011) study should be carefully considered before being generalized to all English learners. First, the study was conducted in Singapore, a country in which English is one of the four official languages and is normally regarded as the main language. Therefore, the context of English language teaching in Singapore should be deemed as an English as a Second Language (ESL) environment. Considering the essential differences between ESL and EFL contexts, such as limited exposure and diverse learning goals, the results of the study may not apply directly to EFL contexts.

Second, the writing tasks that were collected in the study were written for one assigned topic only. It is possible that the participating students would have performed differently if given a variety of topics or even different writing genres. Low (1997) mentioned that various functions, such as summarizing, evaluating, and disengaging, could be expressed through different metaphors and could correspond to common purposes of writing genres, such as summarizing narrations and descriptions and evaluating arguments and expositions. Since writing is considered a performance of communicative competence, writing tasks using different genre types should be taken into consideration. That is to say, in investigating EFL learners' metaphoric competence, a more comprehensive collection of learners' writing tasks should be undertaken.

Third, the authors claimed that ESL learners' metaphoric competence in writing was based on errors that the learners made in their writing tasks. Such a focus may reveal learners' interim-stage interlanguage development, yet it may also hinder researchers from looking for language learners' active production of figurative language and improvised practices of metaphoric competence. Finally, the authors reported the results based on their observation of the participating ESL learners' writing tasks. Though Bachman's communicative competence model was adopted as

the framework for data analysis, the results of the study were more likely to be descriptions of errors rather than systematic analyses. To obtain organized and methodical results, a coding scheme that itemizes the types of practices of metaphoric competence should be developed.

Rationale and Research Questions

The present study aims to investigate Taiwanese EFL learners' metaphoric competence by analyzing their writing. Based on a review of literature on communicative and metaphoric competence, and the insights revealed by Kathpalia and Carmel's (2011) study, the present study developed a coding scheme to analyze learners' writing in a systematic manner. A noteworthy modification is that sociolinguistic competence (i.e., the competence that refers to the mastery of the sociocultural code of language use) was excluded from the framework of the present study due to the perplexity of defining such competence. The original construct for sociolinguistic competence is defined as the ability to interpret figurative language (Bachman, 1990) rather than to produce it; since the present study focuses on the production of figurative language, such ability was not suitable for examination. Thus, the present study focused on investigating the uses of metaphoric competence cross-examined solely with the remaining three communicative competences (i.e., grammatical, textual, and illocutionary).

Furthermore, different from Kathpalia and Carmel's (2011) study, the present study analyzed EFL learners' written essays in different genres or text types. Genres should be regarded as an indispensible factor when investigating writings, considering the fact that rhetorical strategies, as being suggested to be indiscriminately used by both L1 and L2 writing communities (Bernardo, 2010), may affect performance of metaphoric competence. Six text types are commonly identified according to their primary social and academic purposes (Derewianka, 1990; Fortune & Tedick, 2003): (1) Narratives: telling a story, usually to entertain; (2) Recounting: telling what happened; (3) Information reports: providing factual information; (4) Instruction: telling the listeners or readers what to do; (5)

Explanation: explaining why or how something happens; and (6) Exposition: presenting or arguing a viewpoint. Considering the fact that the participants were university students, four text types for academic purposes were taken into investigation: *description*, *narration*, *explanation*, and *exposition*.

Two research questions were addressed in this study: (1) Do EFL learners use figurative language in academic writing? If so, in what ways do EFL learners display their metaphoric competence in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing, cross-examined with the grammatical, textual, and illocutionary competences, respectively? (2) Do EFL learners display their metaphoric competence differently in various types of genres? If so, in what ways do the uses of figurative language and the amount of figurative expressions produced vary across different types of genres?

Methodology

Participants

Sixteen adult EFL learners participated in the study. They were native Taiwanese studying at a university in northern Taiwan. None of them majored in English, but they all were enrolled in an English Honors Program, which was designed for students aiming at advancing four English skills aside from the subject studies of their majors. The students in the program had at least an intermediate level of English proficiency. As Boers (2004) has suggested, to exploit how learners "actively generate figurative language" (p. 222), intermediate-level learners are the most responsive target group compared with beginning-level learners, who may face difficulties due to their lack of lexical knowledge, and advanced-level learners, who tend to avoid making use of uncertain expressions and thus are hesitant to take the risks required to produce figurative expressions. Since the current study planned to investigate both receptive and productive knowledge, learners at the intermediate level were the most suitable participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected in a one-semester class titled "Intermediate English Writing." The objectives of the course, as stated in the course syllabus, were to train students to express themselves fluently in written English to people around the world, to identify their own writing problems and adjust their writing accordingly, to develop the habit of constantly evaluating and correcting their own writing, and to appreciate the joy of writing and the process of reflection and production.

The course was organized according to the text types: description, narration, exposition, and explanation. Each text type was followed by essay writing practice, except for exposition, which was practiced separately for two structures: compare-and-contrast, and cause-and-effect. Thus, five essays were required from each participant. The required length of each essay was 200 to 250 words. The students typed their essays using a computer and uploaded their essays to the course website. These essays were collected as the data for analysis in the study. In total, 80 essays were collected from the 16 participants.

Data Analysis

Coding scheme

To conduct a systematic and organized analysis, a coding scheme was developed by the two trained raters and the researcher. A bottom-up approach was used: first, two raters screened the collected essays to identify figurative expressions; second, the raters categorized the figurative expressions by definitions. Based on the definition of metaphor and figurative languages given by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), three types of the figurative expressions were differentiated: *simile*, *metaphor/metonymy*, and *personified verbs*. Similes refer to direct comparisons between two objects or concepts using key words such as *like* or *resemble*, while metaphors/metonymies refer to comparison without such direct hints. Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson (2003) postulate that the most obvious metaphors are defined when the physical objects act as human actions. Thus, verbs following inanimate

subjects or abstract concepts were regarded as personified verbs. Example sentences [1] to [3] illustrate the three types.

Except for the three types, the raters found that the participants frequently adopted some usages, or clichés, in their writings; such way of using fixed usages was proven in previous research (Chen, 2010). Idiomatic figurative expressions, such as [4], and expressions which were used so frequently that they became conventional, such as [5], were categorized as *fixed usages*.

[1] **Simile**: . . . city [is] *like* a magnet that attracts lots of elites to compete and cooperate with each other. (compare and contrast-5)

[2] **Metaphor/metonymy**: The two kids were well-dressed and behaved willfully as if they *were* little prince and princess. (narration-3)

[3] **Personified verb**: Learning foreign languages can *help* children have different thought. (cause and effect-13)

[4] **Fixed usage**: In the end, to let my foolish brother hand in the poster tomorrow, mom and I *burned the midnight oil* to finish the poster. (narration-5)

[5] **Fixed usage:** As a result, love, honesty, and optimistic attitude are *playing a key role* for a good person. (description-1)

After identifying the figurative expressions in the data, the next step was to explore how metaphoric competence was demonstrated in the framework of communicative competence. The three competences used in this study were defined and analyzed separately, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Types of practices of metaphoric competence examined in the present study

	Grammatical Competence	Textual Competence	Illocutionary Competence

Operational Definition	The ability to produce figurative expressions	The ability to maintain sentential and textual coherence through figurative expressions	The ability to suit figurative expressions for illocutionary functions
Types of Practices	Density of figurative expression	Consistency and cohesion	Control of language function
Items Examined	• Word token number • T-unit	• Overarching metaphors • Metaphoric clusters	• Ideational function • Manipulative function • Heuristic function • Imaginative function

Grammatical competence. In the present study, the practice of metaphoric competence with regard to grammatical competence was defined as the ability to produce figurative expressions. However, the present study emphasized the ability of active production in that the intention to communicate should be the key element of communicative competence. Thus, instead of looking for collocational mismatches, the present study focused on examining the density of figurative expressions in the essays that the participants produced. Previous studies (Cameron, 2003; Low, 2008) calculate metaphor density in spoken data by dividing the number of metaphor uses by the number of word tokens; however, since figurative expressions can be either one word or a phrase in length, to determine the density by the ratio of the total number of word tokens might not be an accurate method. With the intention of focusing more on meanings rather than on forms, the total number of T-units, the minimal terminable unit in writing (Hunt, 1965), was counted; the *density of figurative expression* used in each text type was calculated by dividing the total number of figurative expressions by the total number of T-units. The higher the density, the more frequently figurative expressions were used in a text type.

Textual competence. Practices of metaphoric competence versus textual competence were defined as the consistency of metaphor use and textual coherence resulting from figurative language use. Similar to Kathpalia and Carmel's (2011)

study, metaphoric themes of figurative expressions in each essay were identified to determine the levels of consistency. In the present study, each essay was first screened to determine whether *overarching metaphor*s, conceptual metaphors that are used throughout a whole essay and thus show coherent metaphoric use at the macro-level of writing, could be found. If the figurative expressions consistently followed the same metaphoric theme throughout an essay, the essay was considered metaphorically coherent. *Metaphor clusters*, which contain expressions that represent "a whole set drawing together a variety of related metaphors that shared the same semantic theme or domain" (Kathpalia & Carmel, 2011, p. 283), were also searched. Metaphor clusters were examined between sentences at a micro-level, showing a cohesive effect in the written texts.

Illocutionary competence. Writers use metaphors for various purposes, for example, to attempt to communicate with their readers successfully. Therefore, each metaphor may carry one or more functions in writing. It was assumed that the functions could be roughly categorized with the following purposes of various text types: expository essays included an ideational function; argumentative essays included a manipulative function; descriptive essays included a heuristic function; and narrative essays included an imaginative function. The occurrences of the functions that the figurative expressions used were counted, and the frequency of each function in each text type was calculated. The higher the frequency, the more frequently the figurative expressions were used for a specific function.

Coding team

Two Taiwanese raters formed a team to develop, evaluate, test, and use the coding scheme to analyze the data. Both raters were native Chinese speakers who grew up and were educated in Taiwan through graduation from their respective universities. Their education backgrounds equipped them with linguistic theories and advanced English proficiency. Moreover, they were both experienced English

teachers at the university level who were familiar with teaching and grading EFL learners' writing. Both raters were trained by the researcher to become familiarized with the concepts of metaphoric competence, communicative competence, conceptual metaphors, and figurative language. The raters then worked together with the researcher to discuss and develop the coding scheme before formally coding the data. The researcher did not participate in the coding process; only when the raters had disagreements about their judgments did the researcher step in to join the discussions in order to reach a consensus among them.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 below reports the occurrences and frequency of figurative expressions found and coded in the five writing tasks. Among the five essay types, narration had the most figurative expressions (119), whereas cause-and-effect argumentation had the fewest (70). Generally speaking, text types that required reasoning skills and logical arguments, including explanation and exposition, had fewer figurative expressions compared with those that encompassed depictions and illustrations, such as description and narration. One noticeable finding was that the amount of the four types of figurative expressions showed a consistent tendency: metaphoric and metonymic expressions were the most frequently found in all five writing tasks, following by personified verbs, similes, and, finally, fixed usages. Such a finding suggests that the EFL learners may not only have been capable of but also preferred using figurative expressions based on abstract mapping processes, compared with similes (i.e., direct comparison) and fixed memorized idiomatic expressions.

Table 2

Occurrences and frequency of figurative expressions in the five writing tasks

	Description	Narration	Explanation	Compare-Contrast Exposition	Cause-Effect Exposition
Personified Verbs	27 (24%)	15 (12%)	34 (44%)	21 (24%)	28 (40%)
Metaphors	70 (61%)	89 (75%)	42 (55%)	61 (69%)	39 (56%)
Similes	13 (11%)	8 (7%)	0 (0%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)
Fixed Usages	4 (4%)	7 (6%)	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	2 (3%)
Total (100%)	114	119	77	88	70

Grammatical Competence: Productivity Does Not Guarantee Metaphor Density

In terms of grammatical competence, Table 3 below reports the total number of word tokens and T-units in each writing task, as well as the density of figurative expressions in the writing tasks. The compare-contrast exposition text type had the highest total number of words (5,692), yet the narration text type consisted of the highest total number of T-units (370). In terms of the participants' productivity in writing, the compare-contrast exposition text type had the highest number of word tokens per T-unit (16.26), meaning that the length of the sentence in that text type was longer compared with the other text types. However, when examining the metaphor density of each text type, description had the highest density (39%), meaning that figurative expressions were used with greater density in the description text type compared with those in the other text types.

Table 3

Density of figurative expressions used in the five writing tasks

	Description	Narration	Explanation	Compare-Contrast Exposition	Cause-Effect Exposition
Total Word Token Count	4343	5652	5554	5692	4912
Total T-unit Count	296	370	343	350	308
Productivity	14.67	15.28	16.19	16.26	15.95
Metaphor Density	39%	32%	22%	25%	23%

Note. Productivity refers to the number of word tokens per T-unit (Lennon, 1995). Metaphor density refers to the number of linguistic metaphors per T-unit.

The results show that the participants' productivity in the writing tasks did not guarantee the number of uses of figurative expressions. Though the participants managed to express their meanings with more word tokens, or in longer sentences, they did not necessarily express themselves with more figurative expressions. The fact that this group of EFL learners was more productive in writing explanation and exposition text types compared with narration and description might be attributed to two factors: learners' language proficiency and types of genres.

Textual Competence: Topical Coherence and Discourse Management

In terms of textual competence, the number of occurrences of overarching metaphors was calculated. Table 4 below reports the results of textual competence for each text type. At least one essay with an overarching metaphor and its metaphoric clusters was found in all text types except the explanation text type. The results suggest that even though the participants managed to include figurative expressions while writing, they were not yet capable of maintaining metaphor coherence in their texts.

Table 4

Occurrences of overarching metaphors and metaphor clusters in the writing tasks

	Description	Narration	Explanation	Compare-Contrast Exposition	Cause-Effect Exposition
Overarching Metaphor	2	1	0	1	1

The results of the analysis in terms of textual competence suggest that the participants' choices of figurative expressions were mainly determined by the topics of the essays. Certain overarching metaphors were chosen to illustrate the abstract concept involved in the assigned writing topic in order to embody an idea or a principle in the field. For instance, example [6] adopted the conceptual metaphor MEMORY IS TREASURE to show how the writer appreciated the memory of visiting Danshuei.

[6] Revisiting Danshuei, I found some *treasures* that I could not find in a metropolitan city . . . The memory of this trip was so *valuable* that I would never forget . . .(description-5)

Moreover, choices of overarching metaphors also revealed the true opinion of the writer; as such, a truth was considered not ready to be expressed directly. For example, the comparison between artificial crystal and authentic gem in example [7] implies the writer's preference to one over the other (i.e., small towns as authentic gems over big cities as artificial crystals). The participants might not have chosen to express a personal viewpoint directly at the beginning of the essay because the purpose of explanation is to explain a topic rather than to sell a viewpoint to readers.

[7] Big city is like *a sophisticated and artificial crystal* while small town is like *a pure and authentic gem* . . . Only does it depends on what kinds of lives one would like

to enjoy, *a sophisticated and artificial crystal* or *a pure and authentic gem*. (compare and contrast-5)

In sum, the participants' choices of overarching metaphors and the clusters of figurative expressions that followed were found to be influenced by the topic's level of abstractness, as well as by the participants' sophisticated control of matching various goals with different text types.

These results are similar to the previous findings on spoken discourse for academic purposes. Cameron (2003) investigated the production of metaphors in the course of a primary school lesson and found that metaphors were used mainly to explain unfamiliar and difficult topics and for discourse management in the openings and closings of lessons. Corts and Pollio (1999), on the other hand, reported clusters of figurative language and gestures in a study on three college lectures. They found that the clusters of figurative expressions were topically coherent (i.e., the figurative expressions connected to the main topics of the lecture rather than to diversions); moreover, those figurative expressions were used particularly for topics that the students found to be more complex, unfamiliar, or abstract, such as aging or alcoholism. These findings suggest that in spoken or in written language, figurative expressions were used to maintain topical coherence and to manage discourse. The participants in the present study demonstrated such ability through their essays.

Illocutionary Competence: Multiple Functions of Figurative Expressions

Regarding illocutionary competence, the occurrences and frequency of illocutionary functions of figurative expressions in the five writing tasks are shown in Table 5 below. Figurative expressions used in the description text type were most frequently used for the ideational function (31%), while those used in the other three text types were most frequently found under the manipulative function. Figurative expressions for the manipulative function were particularly frequent in the

explanation and exposition text types. Such findings are consistent with the general writing goal for these two text types in that explanations and expositions are meant to persuade and convince readers and thus manipulate readers' opinions. Similarly, the general writing goal for the description text type was to describe and use imagination, and thus figurative expressions for ideational and imaginative functions were the two most frequently found functions in the description text type. Narration, the text type that aims to tell stories with detail, uses figurative expressions in a more balanced manner; thus, the frequencies of the four functions were fairly close. The findings suggest that the types of genres, or the text types, indeed influenced the uses of figurative expressions. In other words, the participants were able to use figurative expressions for different functions in order to fit the goals of the writing tasks.

Table 5

Occurrences and frequency of illocutionary functions of figurative expressions in the five writing tasks

	Description	Narration	Explanation	Compare-Contrast Exposition	Cause-Effect Exposition
Ideational	35 (31%)	31 (26%)	13 (17%)	7 (8%)	9 (12%)
Manipulative	28 (24%)	34 (28%)	31 (41%)	47 (53%)	41 (56%)
Heuristic	21 (18%)	27 (23%)	21 (28%)	14 (16%)	7 (10%)
Imaginative	31 (27%)	27 (23%)	11 (14%)	21 (23%)	16 (22%)
Total (100%)	115	119	76	89	73

Metaphors with ideational functions were identified when the participants conveyed information or described events. In [8], the writer tried to convey his evaluation of big cities as artificial crystals and small towns as authentic gems, implying his

personal preference for rural over urban areas:

[8] Big city is like *a sophisticated and artificial crystal* while small town is like *a pure and authentic gem*. (description-5)

Manipulative functions were used when the participants tried to persuade readers and show their opinions (see [9]). The participants tended to employ figurative language with manipulative functions to strengthen their arguments.

[9] Nevertheless, parking space so hard to find that the drivers *waste much time on it*. (compare and contrast-16)

Heuristic functions were carried out when the participants tended to explain complicated ideas. The participant composing [10] adopts a similar metaphoric analogy with Littlemore's (2006), comparing human brains to containers and illustrating feelings of sudden anger.

[10] The *flow* was then *rushing into my head* and making me dizzy and my hands trembling. (narration-14)

Furthermore, the participants showed their imagination and tried to emphasize their points of view by recruiting imaginative functions; thus, their readers might need to use their imagination to interpret their expressions. In [11], the writer led his readers to "an imagined dark place" to elaborate his angry moment:

[11] Thanks to this angry moment, *I was introduced to the dark side of me*. (narration-14)

Sometimes a figurative token carried more than one illocutionary function. In [12], the writer tried to convey the idea that different attitudes would bring about different outcomes, and thus used the ideational function. On the other hand, the

writer used *two roads* to refer to the outcomes, which represented a metaphor with an imaginary function. Thus, it was counted as two functions. By the same token, the total number of illocutionary competences was greater than that of the textual competences.

[12] Therefore, these two types of attitudes *lead two different roads* into two different consequences. [imaginary and ideational] (description-1)

Such complexity of functions of figurative expressions suggests that the participants in the present study were capable of using figurative language to reach various goals. Considering the participants' proficiency levels, which were intermediate to high-intermediate, their performances corresponded to the previous research on metaphor use at different levels of second language writing. Early research (Boers, 2004) has suggested that learners with intermediate proficiency were the most responsive group in terms of metaphor uses, compared with learners who had beginning and advanced proficiency levels. Recent research (Littlemore, Krennmayr, Turner, & Turner, 2014) on EFL learners taking the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) examination also found that EFL learners at different proficiency levels performed differently regarding metaphor use in writing. Learners at the intermediate level (or level B1 of the CEFR) used significantly more metaphors compared with beginning learners, and they began to use personification metaphors. Learners at the high-intermediate level (or level B2 of the CEFR), though they did not outnumber the amount of metaphor uses, produced more open-class metaphors (i.e., metaphors that are created based on conceptual metaphors and that can be novel and creative) than closed-class metaphors (i.e., metaphors that are fixed conventionally or idiomatically) (Müller, 2008). Moreover, learners at the high-intermediate level also used metaphors to perform a much wider variety of functions, such as to provide reasons for or against their viewpoints or to evaluate their positions. That study also found that the higher the learners' proficiency, the more that sophisticated functions and more open-class metaphors were used. Such a finding matches the results of the present study.

Different from the above-mentioned research that was conducted with a single writing topic, the present study focused on various text types and hence on various topics. The similar tendency of EFL learners using figurative language in writing at different proficiency levels indicates that EFL learners are capable of producing figurative language in written discourse, or, more specifically, English writing for academic purposes, and manipulating figurative expressions to fit certain text types or suit certain purposes of writing. This capability was evident in the participants' communicative attempts and communicative competence found in their essays.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate EFL learners' metaphoric competence within the framework of communicative competence by examining their written essays. In addition, the present study integrated various types of genres, or text types, in order to target EFL learners' use of figurative language in an academic environment. The analysis of 80 essays written by 16 EFL learners at the intermediate to high-intermediate proficiency levels provided answers to the research questions proposed. In terms of the first research question regarding EFL learners' performance on metaphoric competence in EAP writing, the participants of the present study showed capability in using figurative language in writing for academic purposes. In terms of the second research question regarding the text types, the participants in the present study demonstrated their capability of matching their uses of figurative expressions to various types of genres. The figurative language uses and the text types turned out to be interwoven in the participants' uses of figurative language in EAP writing.

The participants in the present study displayed metaphoric competence in the grammatical, textual, and illocutionary aspects of communicative competence across different types of texts. At the grammatical aspect, the productivity of writing for each text type did not match its metaphor density, indicating that the length of

writing did not guarantee the amount of figurative expressions used; the participants wrote longer essays for the exposition and explanation text types without a heavy reliance on figurative expressions, while the participants wrote fewer words in the description and narration text types with more frequent figurative language uses. This finding suggests that EFL learners required figurative language to express more abstract sensations, such as emotions, compared with reason and arguments.

In the textual aspect, the participants' choices of figurative expressions were mainly determined by the topics for the writing tasks; topics that involved abstract and complicated ideas resulted in more figurative expressions being used. This finding shows that the EFL learners were capable of maintaining topical coherence and managing discourse using overarching metaphors followed by clusters of relevant figurative expressions. In addition, the adoption of overarching metaphors is suggestive of EFL learners' awareness of conceptual metaphors as an underlying principle of production.

In the illocutionary aspect, the higher amount of metaphors for the ideational function in the description text type and the higher amount of metaphors for the manipulative function in the exposition and explanation text types demonstrated that the participants were able to control and to manipulate their uses of figurative language according to the goals of the various text types. The balancing of uses in the narration text type also revealed the characteristic of the text type, which was to describe events with descriptive details in order to make readers feel alive under the same circumstances; such a particular writing goal for the narration text type required all four illocutionary functions of figurative expressions. Moreover, the findings of metaphoric competence in the illocutionary aspect add to the literature on how EFL learners' proficiency influences their metaphor uses in writing.

The findings of the present study provide a comprehensive analysis of EFL learners' metaphoric competence within the framework of communicative

competence; thus, it offers insight into EFL learners' metaphoric competence within the framework of communicative language teaching. Moreover, the results of the study echo the belief that lexical frequency patterns may shed light on the underlying conceptual model utilized by a speaker for a particular audience (Ahrens, 2011). These linguistic realizations can display the developmental stages in the interim period of language proficiency, as Littlemore and colleagues (2014) suggested in their empirical research. Conventional categorizations of language proficiency usually lie in language performance for general purposes; however, the results of the present study, along with previous research (Littlemore et al., 2014), suggest that a more detailed set of descriptors that involve metaphor uses needs to be invented. Finally, the present study implies the significance of teachers in EFL contexts in terms of helping learners to advance their language uses. As previous research (Kathpalia & Carmel, 2011) has suggested, metaphoric competence is essential if language learners are to acquire more than minimal communicative competence in the L2 and to communicate successfully in a global context. To prepare EFL learners for the globalized world, the development of metaphoric competence is an inevitable step in language learning.

Some limitations still exist in the present study and leave issues for future studies. First and most lamentable, sociolinguistic competence was left out of the present study for practical concerns, such as difficulties in identifying sociocultural elements in L2. To provide a more thorough investigation of metaphoric competence as part of communicative competence, future studies may include sociolinguistic competence in the analyses. Another suggestion is to assemble a coding team with native speakers of both languages, in this case, Chinese and English native speakers. The reason for having both L1 and L2 native speakers on the team is that they can provide not only language knowledge but also unique cultural insight. The previous review of literature has shown that metaphoric competence is a competence that involves a great amount of cultural components. Figurative language is essentially culture-bound and should be interpreted based on the cultural conventions of the language users. For instance, to judge the students' metaphoric competence in terms

of sociolinguistic competence, raters should be able to identify the conceptual metaphors of the figurative expressions so that they can determine whether the expressions are culturally appropriate and acceptable.

Second, the coding scheme could be developed further. Steen and his colleagues (2010) proposed the Metaphor Identification Procedure VU University Amsterdam (MIPVU), which is based on the previous version developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). Littlemore and colleagues (2014) modified the MIPVU in order to deal with phrasal verbs and multiword items and to take a change in word class into account. For the present study, due to the consideration of focusing on meanings rather than on forms and to prevent it from becoming an error analysis rather than a comprehensive examination, T-units were chosen as the minimal unit for analysis. However, since the above-mentioned studies used word tokens as the minimal units, in order to make the results of the present study comparable, a consistent coding scheme may be developed.

Finally, the present study, due to time and scale constraints, limited the scale of data collection to only 16 EFL learners and 80 written essays. For future studies, more samples may be collected in order to generate more comprehensive and generalizable results of this topic to assist learners in the EFL context.

References

Ahrens, K. (2011). Examining conceptual metaphor models through lexical frequency patterns: A case study of U.S. presidential speeches. In S. Handl, & H. Schmid (Eds.), *Windows to the mind: Metaphor, metonymy and conceptual blending* (pp.167-184). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.

Aleshtar, M. T., & Dowlatabadi, H. (2014). Metaphoric competence and language proficiency in the same boat. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98,* 1895-1904.

Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bernardo, A. S. (2010). Hybrid rhetoric in professional writing: The case of American and Filipino parents' letters of excuse from school. *Philippine ESL Journal, 5*, 134-159.

Boers, F. (1996). *Spatial prepositions and metaphor: A cognitive semantic journey along the up- down and the front-back dimensions*. Tübingen, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Boers, F. (2000a). Enhancing metaphoric awareness in specialised reading. *English for Specific Purposes, 19*(2), 137–147.

Boers, F. (2000b). Metaphor awareness and vocabulary retention. *Applied Linguistics, 21*(4), 553-571.

Boers, F. (2001). Remembering figurative idioms by hypothesising about their origins. *Prospect*, *16*, 35-43.

Boers, F. (2004). Expanding learners' vocabulary through metaphor awareness: What expansion, what learners, what vocabulary? In M. Achard, & S. Niemeier, (Eds.), *Cognitive linguistics, second language acquisition, and foreign language teaching* (pp. 211-232). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Cameron, L. (2003) *Metaphor in educational discourse*. London: Continuum.

Chen, Y. (2010). Teaching idioms in an EFL context: The past, the present, and a promising teaching method**.** *Proceeding of the 27th International Conference on English Teaching and Learning in R.O.C.* (ROC-TEFL 2010) (pp.182-193). Kaohsiung, Taiwan: National Kaohsiung Normal University.

Corts, D., & Pollio, H. (1999). Spontaneous production of figurative language and gesture in college lectures. *Metaphor and Symbol, 14*(1), 8-100.

Danesi, M. (1993). Metaphorical competence in second language acquisition and second language teaching: The neglected dimension. In J. E. Alatis, (Ed.).

Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics (pp. 489-500). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Derewianka, B. (1990). *Exploring how text works*. Sydney: Primary English Teaching Association.

Drew, P., & Holt. E. (1998). Figures in speech: The role of figurative expressions in topic transition in conversation. *Language in Society, 27*, 495-523.

Fortune, T., & Tedick, D. (2003). *The six prototypical written texts types (genres) of schooling*. Retrieved September 27, 2014, from http://www.carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/curriculum/textanalysis/Prototypical_Written_Text_Types.pdf

Hunt, K. (1965). Grammatical structures written at three grade levels. (NCTE Research report No. 3). Champaign, IL, USA: National Council of Teachers of English.

Kathpalia, S. S., & Carmel, H. L. H. (2011). Metaphorical competence in ESL student writing. *RELC Journal, 42*(3), 273-290. Retrieved December 21, 2012, from http://rel.sagepub.com/content/42/3/273

Koester, A. (2000). The role of idioms in negotiating workplace encounters. In H. Trappes-Lomax (Ed.), *Changes in applied linguistics* (pp. 169-183). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). Afterword. In G. Lakoff & M. Johnson (Ed.), *Metaphors we live by* (pp. 243-276). Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lakoff, G., & Turner, M. (1989). *More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Lantolf, J.P. (1999). Second culture acquisition: Cognitive considerations. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching and learning* (pp. 28-49). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lennon, P. (1995). Assessing short-term change in advanced oral proficiency: Problems of reliability and validity in four cases. *ITL Review of Applied Linguistics*, *109-110*, 75-109.

Lindstromberg, S. (1997). *English prepositions explained*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Littlemore, J. (1998). *Individual differences in second language learning: Towards an identification of the strategy preferences and language learning strengths of L2 students with holistic and/or imager cognitive styles* (Doctoral dissertation), Thames Valley University, England.

Littlemore, J. (2001). Metaphor as a source of misunderstanding for overseas students in academic lectures. *Teaching in Higher Education, 6*(3), 333-51.

Littlemore, J. (2011). Difficulties in metaphor comprehension faced by international students whose first language is not English. *Applied Linguistics, 32*(4), 408-429.

Littlemore, J. (2012). The role of metaphor and metonymy in EFL proficiency. *The Language Teacher, 36*(4), 15-17.

Littlemore, J., & Low, G. (2006). Metaphoric competence, second language learning, and communicative language ability. *Applied Linguistics, 27*(2), 268-294.

Littlemore, J., Krennmayr, T., Turner, S., & Turner, J. (2014). An investigation into metaphor use at different levels of second language writing. *Applied Linguistics, 35*(2), 117-144.

Low, G. (1988). On teaching metaphor. *Applied Linguistics*, *9*(2), 125-147.

Low, G. (1997). A celebration of squid sandwiches: Figurative language and the management of (non-core) academic text. Unpublished project report, University of York. Retrieved December 24, 2012, from http://www.york.ac.uk/media/educationalstudies/documents/research/Celebration.pdf

Low, G. (2008). Metaphor and positioning in academic book reviews. In M. S. Zanotto, L. Cameron, M. C. Cavalcanti (Eds.), *Confronting metaphor in use* (pp.79-100). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Müller, C. (2008). *Metaphors dead and alive, sleeping and waking: A dynamic view*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ortony, A. (1975). Why metaphors are necessary and not just nice. *Educational Theory, 25*, 45-53. Retrieved October 26, 2009, from http://www.cs.northwestern.edu/~ortony/Andrew%20Ortony_files/Why%20metaphors%20necessary.pdf

Pragglejaz Group. (2007). MIP: A method for identifying metaphorically used words in discourse. *Metaphor and Symbol, 22*, 1-39.

Sanford, D. (2008). Metaphor and phonological reduction in English idiomatic expressions. *Cognitive Linguistics, 19*(4), 585-603.

Seitz, J. A. (1997). The development of metaphoric understanding: Implications for a theory of creativity. *Creativity Research Journal*, *10*(4), 347-353. Retrieved April 6, 2011, from http://pdfserve.informaworld.com/570249__790767489.pdf

Steen, G. J., Dorst, A. G., Herrmann, J. B., Kaal, A. A., Krennmayr, T., & Pasma, T. (2010). *A method for linguistic metaphor identification: From MIP to MIPVU*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

About the Author

Yi-chen Chen is a full-time assistant professor of the Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics at Yuan Ze University, Taiwan. Her major research interests cover areas from TESOL, cognitive semantics, second language acquisition, to metaphor and metonymy. She has published papers about teaching and learning metaphor in EFL contexts in journals such as *Language Awareness*, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, etc.

Looking at CIRC through Quantitative Lenses: Can it Improve the Reading Comprehension of Filipino ESL Learners?

Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales and Patrisha Lliane Torres

De La Salle University

Abstract

Several pressing issues in reading instruction have prompted educators world-wide to conduct researches on how to best improve reading comprehension skills. Although there is a wealth of reading comprehension researches done with EFL learners and native English speakers, there seems to be limited published studies conducted in the Philippine ESL context, particularly one that focuses on the sub-skills of reading comprehension. The researchers attempted to address the aforementioned by assessing the effectiveness of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) in improving the reading comprehension of 127 Grade 8 Filipino ESL learners particularly in recalling details, summarizing, identifying the main idea, making inferences, and determining fact vs. opinion within three sessions in a span of two weeks. Adopting a quantitative quasi-experimental research design, the researchers discovered that, despite the insignificance of the posttest scores between the lecture and CIRC groups, there were notable internal improvements for both groups in particular sub-skills. This short-term study provides an important direction to ESL teachers in, but not limited to, the Philippine classroom. Other pedagogical implications are further discussed in this study.

Keywords: Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition *(CIRC);* ESL; quantitative; reading comprehension; sub-skills

Introduction

Reading is considered fundamental to language learning. Many assert that it is the most important skill to master (Anderson, et al., 1983). In light of this, educators world-wide have been prompted to research on best practices to teach reading, which includes reading comprehension.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension, as defined by Snow and Sweet (2003), is the process of extracting and constructing meaning simultaneously. According to Roldan (1993), it is when one comprehends a text when he or she understands the printed symbols in terms that have meaning for the individual. It was once regarded as the result of decoding and oral language; now, it is viewed as a much more complex process that involves inferential and evaluative thinking and not just the literal reproduction of the author's words (Fielding & Pearson, 1994). Based on Roldan's (1993) study, the three levels of comprehension can be summarized as follows: (1) *reading the lines*, where the reader derives meaning from the sequence of words and their relation to other words and sentences; (2) *reading between the lines*, where the reader must identify the main idea, interpret clues, and make inferences, and (3) *reading beyond the lines*, where critical and creative techniques are involved while the reader recognizes implications, draws conclusions, distinguishes fact from opinion, analyzes, and synthesizes the author's thoughts.

Day and Park's (2005) taxonomy included six types of comprehension, namely: literal comprehension, reorganization, inference, prediction, evaluation, and personal response. For the purposes of this study, the researchers focused on (1) *literal comprehension*, which involves basic recall of ideas that are explicitly stated in the text; (2) *reorganization*, which requires the learners to analyze, synthesize, summarize, and organize information found in the text, (3) *inferential comprehension*, which pertains to the use of one's experience and intuition in order to relate and

connect their learning to what they have read, and (4) *evaluation*, where external and internal judgment by comparison is the key to comprehension – to determine whether the reader has full understanding of the text (Lestyarini, n.d.). For the purposes of this study, the researchers would like to give particular emphasis to the following sub-skills: (a) recalling details, (b) summarizing, (c) identifying the main idea, (d) making inferences, and (e) determining fact versus opinion.

Cooperative Learning

One of the most prominent and established strategies in English Language Teaching (ELT) is Cooperative Learning (CL), a classroom activity that is based on Wittrock's *Theory of Cognitive Elaboration*, Vygotsky's *Zone of Proximal Development Theory*, and Deutsch's *Theory of Goal Structures* (Kluge, 1999). Olsen and Kagan (1992) described CL as a "group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others" (p. 8). In other words, CL is an instructional method where students in small groups work together to maximize the learning of one another to achieve mutual goals (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 1998).

Like any other approach, CL does not come in a single flavor— it comes in many methods and structures. Kluge (1999) categorized these into five models: (1) *The Structural Approach* (Kagan, 1985); (2) *Group Investigation* (Sharan & Sharan, 1992); (3) *Student Team Investigation* (Aronson, Blaney, Sikes, Stephan, & Snapp, 1978; Slavin, Cooperative learning theory, research and practice, 1995); (4) *Curriculum Packages* (Slavin, Leavey, & Madden, 1986), and (5) *Learning Together* (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). In spite of the fact that these models have differences in terms of the degree of individualistic learning and intra-group cooperation and competition, they have certain elements in common such as individual accountability, positive interdependence, group processing, and face-to-face interaction among students in a supportive learning environment (Kluge, 1999;

Ghaith & Bouzeineddine, 2003) (See Figure 1). Because of this, several researchers support CL with regard to its effectiveness and superiority to other forms of instruction in improving learner outcomes, and in some, reading comprehension (Bossert, 1988; Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1984; Slavin, 1995; Jalilifar, 2010; Bolukbas, Keskin, & Polat, 2011; Zarei & Keshavarz, 2011; Marzban & Alinejad, 2014; Pan & Wu, 2013).

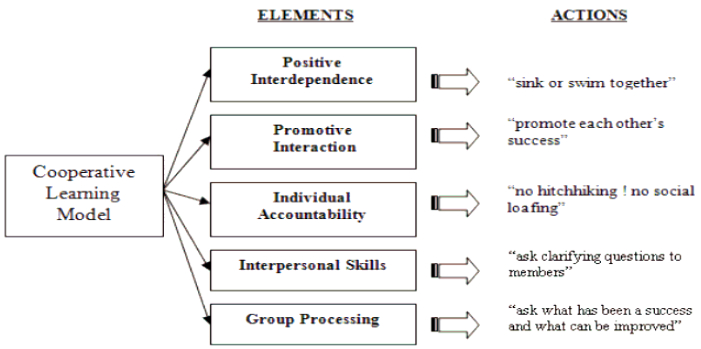


Figure 1. Johnson, Johnson & Smith (1998)'s *Five Elements of Cooperative Learning* (Neo, et al., 2012)

Numerous strategies and techniques under cooperative learning have been utilized and found effective in ELT. A few of these strategies include *Student Teams-Achievement Divisions* (STAD), which recognizes the division of the students into mixed groups where they are supposed to cooperate with each other to help make individual learning a success; *Team-Games-Tournament* (TGT), where groups compete with other groups in the class to earn additional points and credit for their respective teams; *Team Assisted Individualization* (TAI), a combination of cooperative learning and individualized instruction where students are allowed to choose and work depending on their own pacing; *Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition* (CIRC), where students are grouped with four members each and they work their way through different group assignments, and *Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies* (PALS), a well-known program where pairs tutor each other (Nneji, 2011; Wyk, 2013; Institute of Education Sciences, 2012).

Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC)

Numerous strategies and techniques under CL have been utilized and found effective in ELT. One of them is *Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition* (CIRC), where students are grouped with four members each and they work their way through different group assignments. The researchers selected CIRC as the focus of this study because of the importance of classroom instruction in the development of reading comprehension, as stressed by Snow and Sweet (2003). Research on reading comprehension is clearly supportive of teaching adolescents strategies to interpret and comprehend the text and not as an end in themselves (RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). CIRC clearly advocates this affirmation. Moreover, one of the reasons why the researchers chose the aforementioned strategy is due to its positive implications in enhancing reading comprehension, which is discussed in the latter part of this study.

CIRC is a CL strategy developed by Stevens, Madden, Slavin and Farnish (1987) in the late 1980's to address the problems in reading and writing instruction. Basically, it was an attempt to utilize CL as a vehicle to introduce state-of-the-art curricular practices from basic research into the practical teaching of writing and reading (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987). It is a technique where learners worked in heterogeneous groups in all activities. It has three main elements namely "story-related activities, direct instruction in reading comprehension, and integrated language arts/writing" (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012, p. 1). In addition, CIRC has a structure that does not only present opportunities for the direct teaching of reading and writing because students themselves also try to teach and help each other in the improvement of their own reading and writing skills in the form of reciprocal teaching (Durukan, 2011). The major components of this technique can be summarized into the following based on Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish (1987):

(1) *Cycle of instruction.* All activities under the CIRC program are confined to a certain cycle. It begins with the presentation of the lesson or introduction of the story

to the different reading groups. This will be followed by a teacher-mediated or teacher guided instruction where students are expected to participate in the discussion and answer queries. The teacher's job, on the other hand, is to check on the students' understanding, provide feedback, and focus on the parts of the lesson that the students failed to understand and reteach it. Upon successful transfer of new knowledge or skills that should be exhibited by the students, each student should go to his or her team and engage in team practice and assessment by working on the selection-based tasks and allowing his or her work to be checked and evaluated by a peer in the team. The individual exam scores of the members of the group will then serve as the basis for team recognition.

(2) *Reading groups.* Students are grouped depending on their present reading level, which will be determined by the teacher through a researcher-made pretest.

(3) *Teams.* Each team must be composed of two students from the high performing level and another two from the low performing level.

(4) *Basal-related activities.* In this process, the teacher will start introducing the most basic ideas or skills and further advance to the more complex ones after a matter of time. These may include spelling and read-aloud for younger learners and recalling details, identifying the main idea of the passage, and then making predictions for older learners. The reading groups will then be given follow-up activities to work on in order to enhance understanding.

(5) *Partner checking.* After a student completes his or her task, his or her partner would be asked to assess if the student was able to complete and achieve the criteria or goals that were set by the teacher that day.

(6) *Tests.* After class, students will be evaluated based on a reading comprehension exam. For example, they will be asked to identify the main idea, make predictions, etc. Students will not be allowed to help each other in the exam.

(7) *Direct Instruction in Reading Comprehension Skills.* The students will receive direct instruction on specific reading comprehension skills like recalling details, making

inferences, and determining between fact and opinion. They will be taught strategies on how to deal with the selection.

(8) *Integrated Language Arts and Writing.* Students work together to edit and revise each other's writing. They discuss and give each other feedback on how to improve their writing.

From the components of CIRC, one can see the drawbacks and benefits of the strategy. Drawbacks of the strategy include the length of preparation as well as its limitations to small and average size classes. However, despite the aforementioned disadvantages, the benefits of the strategy seem to outweigh the drawbacks. The benefits of CIRC include those of CL such as the development of general communication abilities, empathy, and peer personal relationship skills (Walmley & Muniz, 2003; Bower & Richards, 2006).

Effectiveness in Reading Comprehension of Elementary Level Learners (Grades 1-7)

In addition, several researches have shown positive effects of the CIRC approach on reading comprehension, the focus of the study, though most of them focus more on the elementary level. (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987; Stevens, Slavin, & Farnish, 1991; Stevens & Durkin, 1992; Zarei & Keshavarz, 2011; Durukan, 2011; Gupta & Ahuja, 2014). According to the Institute of Education Sciences (2012), CIRC is effective in the literacy development of students in the upper elementary level. In a study by Gupta and Ahuja (2014), 70 Indian ESL learners in the seventh grade who are exposed to the CIRC technique for eight weeks have significantly higher reading comprehension scores than those in the control group, who were instructed using the conventional method of teaching. Furthermore, the studies of Bramlett (1994), Durukan (2011), and Zarei and Keshavarz (2011) are all common in terms of the significant improvement in the reading comprehension and writing scores of upper elementary EFL learners, specifically students in the third to seventh grade, who were taught using the CIRC technique.

Effectiveness in Reading Comprehension of Secondary Level Learners (Grades 8-12)

Stevens, Madden, Slavin, and Farnish (1987) stated that CIRC is a comprehensive program for teaching writing and reading not only in the upper elementary, but also in the middle grades. Pedersen and Digby (1995) further expounded on the effectiveness of the CIRC technique in the secondary level English classes – particularly for learners who have poorer reading skills. However, it seems that there are limited or no published researches at all that focus on the secondary level, particularly Grades 8-12. Although not much has been said about the effect of CIRC in the secondary level, the researchers believe that this technique can also be used to improve the reading comprehension of secondary level learners since they are expected to be more cognitively mature and developed compared to upper elementary learners.

Research Gap

There are limited or no published studies on CL-based CIRC in the Philippine context. Also, most of the studies about CL and CIRC in the review of related literature focus on EFL rather than ESL. Furthermore, there are limited studies that focus on main idea identification, summarization, inferring, detail noting, and fact and opinion discrimination as a whole. Some of the studies, such as that of Stevens et. al. (1991), focus on the effect of CIRC on the individual reading comprehension sub-skill of main idea identification; while others tested the effectiveness of CIRC on general reading comprehension through a standardized assessment, but none focused on more than one skill. This could possibly be due to time constraint as well as the convenience of focusing on only one sub-skill. However, the researchers decided to focus on five because they believe that the aforementioned skills are all crucial in reading comprehension. More importantly, the researchers hope to include five sub-skills since the intervention is intended for

secondary learners who are assumed to have been introduced to all the five sub-skills before finishing elementary.

Due to the limited availability of published literature on CIRC in the Philippine secondary school setting, the researchers hope to contribute to the existing body of literature by attempting to conduct a study that aims to improve the reading comprehension skills of Filipino Grade 8 ESL learners particularly in (a) recalling details, (b) summarizing, (c) identifying the main idea, (d) making inferences, and (e) determining fact versus opinion through the CL-CIRC technique.

In other words, the researchers aim to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and post test reading comprehension scores of the control and experimental groups in literal comprehension, particularly in *recalling details* and *summarizing*?

2. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and post test reading comprehension scores of the control and experimental groups in inferential comprehension, particularly in *identifying the main idea* and *making inferences?*

3. Is there a significant difference between the pretest and post test reading comprehension scores of the control and experimental groups in evaluative comprehension, particularly in *determining fact vs. opinion*?

Methodology

Research Participants

127 Grade 8 students of a private school in Manila, chosen through purposive sampling, constitute the respondents of this study. To be more specific, 67 of them are male (52.75%), while 60 of them are female (47.25%) — their ages ranging between 12-15 years old. The respondents have their English classes for 50 minutes a day, which focus on language and African-Asian literature. Moreover, they are all Filipinos and have resided in the Philippines for at least 5 years.

Research Design

For the study, a quantitative quasi-experimental research design was adopted. More specifically, the *nonequivalent control group design with pretest and posttest*, described as "one of the most commonly used quasi-experimental designs in educational research" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 283) was used for this study. This design is most commonly used in educational research because the learners are naturally organized in groups according to their common and shared characteristics, which is a step to ensuring that the respondents are homogenous in nature (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). It can be illustrated as follows where NR represents the non-randomization of respondents, a feature of the design, O_1 represents the pretest, X, the intervention, and O_2 represents the posttest (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007):

Experimental Group: NR O_1 X O_2

Control Group: NR O_1 O_2

Research Instruments

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the researchers utilized *researcher-made multiple choice reading comprehension pretests and posttests*, which are used to assess the learners' reading comprehension skills, more specifically, (a) recalling details, (b) summarizing, (c) identifying the main idea, (d) making inferences, and (e) determining fact versus opinion. Two tests were administered to the students—one test is for *The Leopard,* while the other one is for *The Pheasant's Bell.* Basically, the pretest and posttest for each selection only differs in the time the tests were administered. The items were not changed to preserve the reliability and the validity of the tests. Each set of pretests and posttests comprise of 15 items each. The pretests and posttests were administered at the beginning and the end of each module, respectively (see Figure 2). The pretests for each selection have three functions. First, it aims to ensure that there are no significant differences between the control and experimental group that may affect the validity of the study. Second, the pretest scores also function as the basis for the clustering of the learners in the experimental group by comprehension level, the process of which will be further discussed in the latter parts. Third, the pretests serve as a reference to see if there are improvements after the intervention. The posttests, on the other hand, are used to assess the achievement of the learners after the lesson.

Based on the pilot testing, both tests for each selection had average difficulty and very good discrimination power. Moreover, the tests were also found to possess Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients of 0.739 (acceptable) and 0.764 (acceptable) for *The Leopard* and *The Pheasant's Bell*, respectively (George & Mallery, 2003). In terms of validity, three professional teachers deemed the tests valid.

Research Procedure

The flowchart below shows the schematic presentation of the flow of the research process:

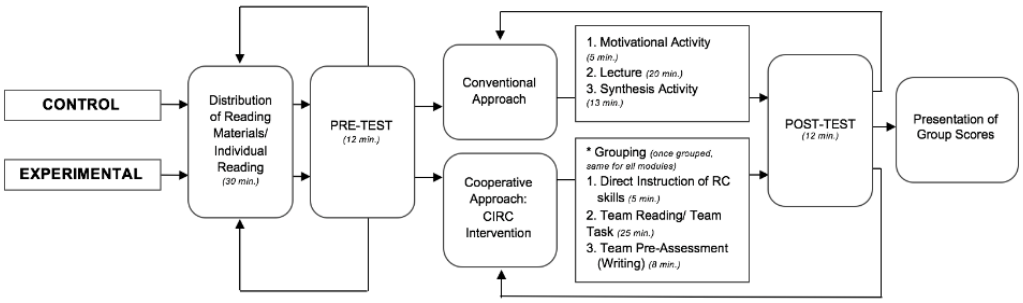


Figure 2. Solution Strategy Flowchart

1. The researcher utilized the revised 15-item reading comprehension pretest and posttest.
2. On the first formal meeting, the researchers instructed the students of both the control and experimental group to read the first selection–*The Leopard*. The researchers provided and distributed the reading materials for the module. Thirty minutes were given for the distribution of reading materials and individual silent reading. After 30 minutes, the researchers collected the reading materials.
3. The researchers administered the 15-item *researcher-made reading comprehension pretest* for *The Leopard* focused on the five aforementioned sub-skills. The researchers allotted only 12 minutes for the pretest due to time constraints.
4. The researchers repeated the aforementioned steps, but this time for the selection *The Pheasant's Bell.*
5. The researchers computed the pretest scores of the students. Based on these pretest scores, the researchers determined the composition of the control and experimental groups. The researchers ranked the four sections from highest to lowest based on the average scores in the pretest. The section, which got the highest average score, was paired with the section, which got the lowest

score. This became the experimental group. The section, which got the second highest score, was paired with the section, which got the second to the lowest score. This became the control group.

6. The researchers made use of the results of the pretest in determining the homogeneity of the reading comprehension level of the learners. A change of research design would have been done if the learners of both groups were not homogenous. Since the learners both the control and experimental group are homogenous (see *Results*), the researchers proceeded with the study.
7. For the students under the experimental group, the same pretest scores were used to cluster them into teams. Each team comprised of two learners that are "low performing" and two that are "high performing". A learner is classified as "low performing" if his or her score is below the median, in other words, the lower half; otherwise, the learner is classified as "high performing". In the case where the number of students is odd, the remaining students are distributed to other teams. It should be noted that the scores of absent students in the pretests and all other instruments were not considered in the interpretation and analysis.

   For the experimental group, which used the CIRC method, the researchers assigned the learners to their respective teams. Approximately nine to ten teams with four members each (two "high performing, two "low performing") were formed for each of the two classes under the experimental group. No such teams were assigned for the control group.
8. On their next meeting with the control and experimental groups, the researchers proceeded with the implementation of two different approaches on their classes. During the implementation, the researchers also made observation notes. The classes in the control group were conducted by utilizing the conventional approach, where the teacher facilitated interactive discussions regarding *The Pheasant's Bell*. Apart from that, the lecture was accompanied by a motivational activity before the lecture and a synthesis activity after.

The classes of the experimental group, on the other hand, were conducted using the CL approach—particularly the CIRC technique. The researchers directly taught the specific reading comprehension sub-skills for five minutes (See Figure 2). Then, the researchers distributed the reading selection for *The Pheasant's Bell* as well as the worksheets. There are two kinds of worksheets per module. One is the individual worksheet, while the other is the group worksheet. The researchers gave four unique individual worksheets and one group worksheet per team. Both of these worksheets cover the five sub-skills as well as composition, as mandated by the CIRC strategy. The answers for the group worksheet are based on the answers of the individual worksheets. The researchers allotted twenty-five minutes for team reading and the team tasks indicated the group worksheet. As for the composition component, eight minutes was allotted for a team pre-assessment that focused on writing composition. The assessment took the form of a short essay that is integrated in the individual and group worksheets. It synthesizes what the group has understood about the *The Pheasant's Bell*. The essays were assessed by the researchers using a rubric they formulated; however, the results of the essay were not included since it is not the primary focus of the researchers. Before the posttest, the teacher encouraged the students to review as a team because the scores will be added up to form team scores.

9. After the respective treatments in the control and experimental group, the researchers administered a 15-item *researcher-made reading comprehension posttest* for *The Pheasant's Bell* that ran for 12 minutes, just like the pretest.
10. On their next meeting with the students, the researchers showed the initial team scores based on the posttest administered.
11. The researchers repeated steps 6-7 in the next meeting; however, this time, *The Leopard* was used (See Appendix 2a). The researchers distributed the next set of reading materials, and so on (See Figure 2).
12. For the last meeting, the teacher presented the team scores to the experimental group.

Analytical Procedure/Method of Analysis

Several tools were used to address the research questions of the study. The researchers analyzed the collected data utilizing Microsoft Excel 2011 for Macintosh as well as SPSS Version 22.

In order to address the research questions and report the difference between the pretest and posttest reading comprehension scores, descriptive statistics, particularly identifying the mean scores and standard deviation (SD), was first employed. The aforementioned are summarized through a table and bar chart. As for the mean, the pretest and posttest reading comprehension scores for the two selections were combined or averaged first before they represent the mean pretest or posttest scores of the control and experimental group. Moreover, *Levene's test for equality of variances* was utilized to ensure the more or less equal distribution of the scores after which an *independent samples t-test* was conducted to determine whether significant group differences existed. *Levene's test* and the *t-test* were conducted for a total of four times: (1) between the pretest scores of the control and experimental groups, (2) between the pretest and posttest scores of the control group, (3) between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group, and (4) between the posttest scores of the control and experimental groups.

Results

Control group (pretest) vs. experimental group (pretest)

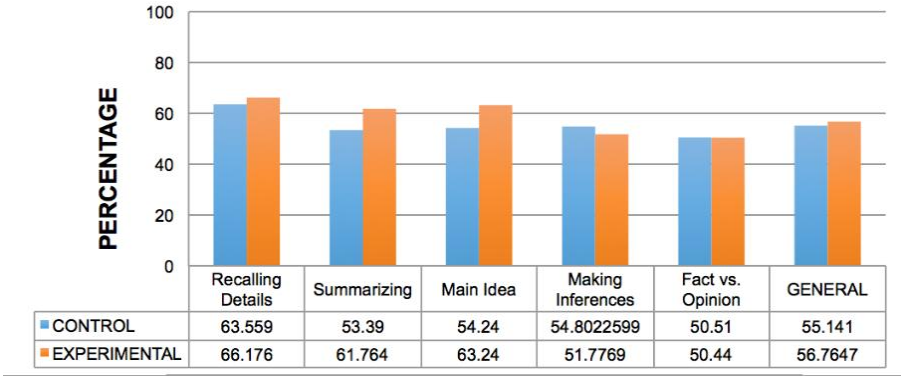


Figure 3A. The mean scores of the pretest of the control and experimental groups.

Table 1

Levene's Test and t-test results of the pretest of the control and experimental groups.

Reading Comprehension Subskills	Levene's Test	Control and Experimental Group Pretest Means t-test					
	F	Sig.	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.
Recalling Details	1.764	0.187	-0.774	125	0.44	-2.6171	3.3798
Summarizing	1.004	0.318	-1.224	125	0.223	-8.375	6.843
Main Idea	0.171	0.68	-1.739	125	0.085	-8.998	5.176
Making Inferences	0.164	0.686	0.731	125	0.466	3.025299	4.12778
Fact vs. Opinion	2.807	0.096	0.017	125	0.987	0.067	4.014
OVERALL	**0.587**	**0.445**	**-0.539**	**125**	**0.591**	**-1.623463**	**3.01218**

* Signficant at the p=0.05 level

Figure 3A shows the mean scores of the pretest of the control and experimental groups. Comparatively, it indicates that the experimental group has higher means compared to the control group in all sub-skills except m*aking inferences* and *determining fact vs. opinion,* despite the means being approximately in the 50th percentile.

Table 1 shows how the significant differences were computed. Based on Levene's test, there is no significant difference for all sub-skills in terms of variance (p=0.445). In addition, based on the t-test, there is also no significant difference in the pretest means for all the sub-skills; t(125)=-0.539, p=0.591. Since the mean pretest scores are both approximately in the 50th percentile and the differences in the pretest

scores between the control and experimental group are not significant, the two groups are, thus, homogenous in terms of their reading comprehension across the five sub-skills. Furthermore, results indicate that the skills of the two groups would most likely not have significant bearing on other results of this study.

Control group (pretest) vs. control group (posttest)

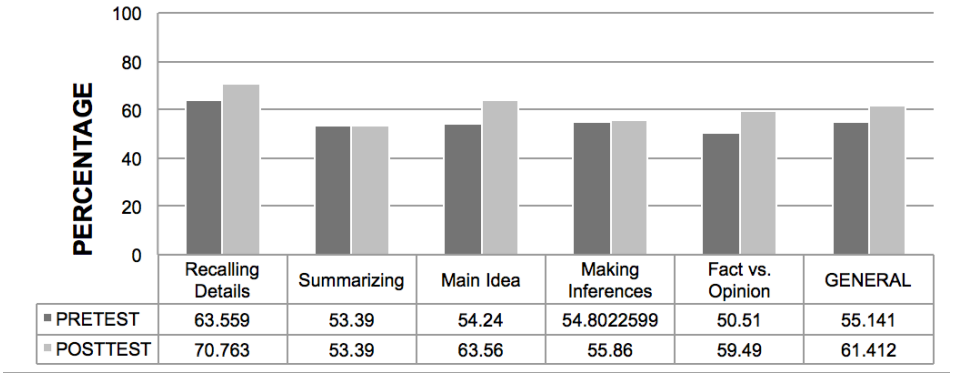


Figure 3B. Mean scores of the pretest and posttest of the control group.

Table 2

Levene's Test and t-test results of the pretest and posttest of the control group.

Reading Comprehension Subskills	Levene's Test		Control Group Pretest and Posttest Means t-test				
	F	Sig.	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.
Recalling Details	0.774	0.381	-2.052	116	0.042*	-7.2034	3.5098
Summarizing	0.136	0.713	0	116	1	0	6.915
Main Idea	0.34	0.561	-1.775	116	0.078	-9.322	5.251
Making Inferences	0.172	0.679	-0.249	116	0.804	-1.05932	4.24977
Fact vs. Opinion	0.219	0.641	-2.254	116	0.026*	-8.983	3.986
OVERALL	**0.527**	**0.469**	**-2.05**	**116**	**0.043***	**-6.271**	**3.0596**

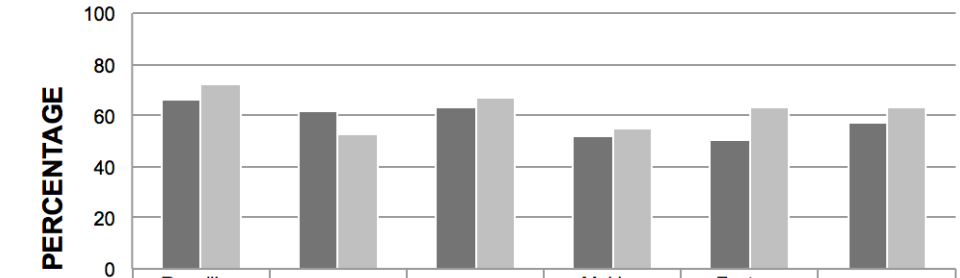
* Signficant at the p=0.05 level

Figure 3B summarizes the mean scores of the pretests and posttests for the control group. Comparatively, it indicates that the sub-skill *recalling details* has the highest mean for both the pretest and the posttest. It also shows that the lowest

mean for the pretest is *determining fact vs. opinion* and the lowest for the posttest is *summarizing*. Moreover, results from the aforementioned figure show that the posttest mean of the control group across all sub-skills are apparently higher than the pretest mean.

Table 2 indicates that the pretest and posttest scores have insignificant difference with regard to variance (p=0.469) across the five sub-skills, making the data eligible for t-test. According to t-test results, a statistically significant difference is observed between the pretest and posttest means of the control group; t(116)=-2.05, p=0.043. Specifically, out of the five sub-skills, a significant improvement in recalling details and determining fact vs. opinion is evident. Since there is a significant positive difference in the means and t-test results, it can be said that the students of the control group have generally improved in their reading comprehension skills, especially in *recalling details* and *determining fact vs. opinion*, even without the intervention. Moreover, the results suggest the positive effect of the traditional lecture and discussion method of teaching literature on reading comprehension.

Experimental group (pretest) vs. experimental group (posttest)



	Recalling Details	Summarizing	Main Idea	Making Inferences	Fact vs. Opinion	GENERAL
PRETEST	66.176	61.764	63.24	51.7769	50.44	56.7647
POSTTEST	72.426	52.94	66.54	54.9632	62.94	63.0882353

Figure 3C. Mean scores of the pretest and posttest of the experimental group.

Table 3

Levene's Test and t-test results of the pretest and posttest of the experimental group.

Reading Comprehension Subskills	Levene's Test	Experimental Group Pretest and Posttest Means t-test					
	F	Sig.	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.
Recalling Details	0.033	0.857	-1.827	134	0.07	-6.25	3.4209
Summarizing	2.761	0.099	1.366	134	0.174	8.824	6.458
Main Idea	1.151	0.285	-0.697	134	0.487	-3.309	4.746
Making Inferences	3.129	0.079	-0.846	134	0.399	-3.18627	-10.633995
Fact vs. Opinion	0.047	0.828	-2.948	134	0.004*	-12.5	4.24
OVERALL	**0.334**	**0.564**	**-2.03**	**134**	**0.044***	**-6.32352**	**3.11572**

* Signficant at the p=0.05 level

Figure 3C summarizes the mean scores of the pretest and posttest of the experimental group. Graphically, it shows that the mean scores in the posttest are all higher than the pretest except for the sub-skill *summarizing,* which is apparently lower. The mean of most of the sub-skills are at or above 60%. It also highlights *recalling details* as the sub-skill with the highest mean in both the pretest and posttest. Moreover, it shows that the lowest mean for the pretest is *determining fact vs. opinion* while the lowest for the posttest is *summarizing*

Table 3 shows the computations of the results of the pretest and posttest for the experimental group using Levene's test and t-test. According to Levene's test, there is no statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest means of the experimental group in terms of variance across the different sub-skills (p=0.564); thus, making the data eligible for t-test treatment. Based on the t-test, there is a generally significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group; t(134)=-2.03, p=0.044. Specifically, there is very strong evidence that the students' scores in the evaluative level, particularly *determining fact vs. opinion* (p=0.004) improved significantly.

Since the mean of most of the sub-skills in the experimental group posttest are at or above 60% and the difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the same group is significant, it can be said that learners who were exposed under CIRC

are most likely to improve on their reading comprehension, particularly in the evaluative skill *determining fact vs. opinion*.

Control group (posttest) vs. experimental group (posttest)

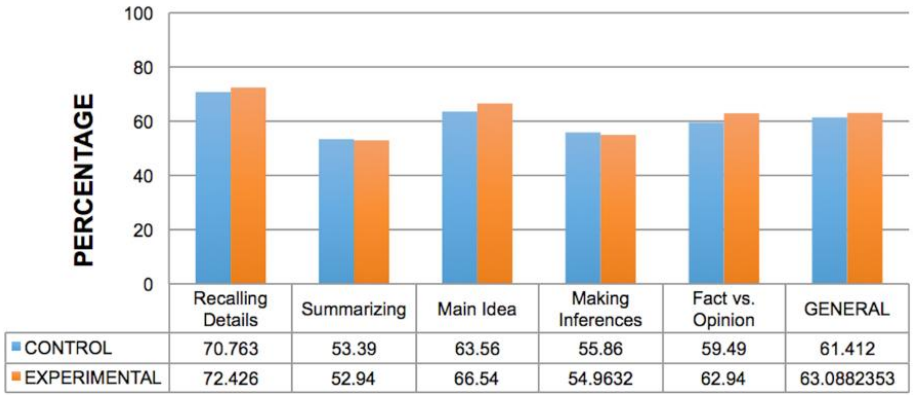


Figure 3D. The mean scores of the posttest of the control and experimental groups.

Table 4

Levene's Test and t-test results of the posttest of the control and experimental groups.

Reading Comprehension Subskills	Levene's Test	Control and Experimental Group Posttest Means t-test					
	F	Sig.	t	df	sig (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	SE Diff.
Recalling Details	0.263	0.609	-0.466	125	0.642	-1.6638	3.5713
Summarizing	0.033	0.856	0.069	125	0.945	0.449	6.537
Main Idea	0.86	0.356	-0.621	125	0.536	-2.985	4.805
Making Inferences	0.529	0.468	0.233	125	0.816	0.89834	3.8930886
Fact vs. Opinion	1.717	0.192	-0.812	125	0.418	-3.45	4.249
OVERALL	**0.396**	**0.53**	**-0.524**	**125**	**0.601**	**-1.675806**	**3.19991543**

* Signficant at the p=0.05 level

The last figure for this section, Figure 3D, compares the posttest means for the control and experimental groups in the five comprehension sub-skills. It shows that the sub-skill *recalling details* has the highest mean for both the control and experimental groups, while the lowest mean for both is *summarizing*. The aforementioned figure also indicates that the experimental group has higher means

compared to the control group in all sub-skills except *summarizing* and m*aking inferences*. Nevertheless, this does not show the significance of the results. Levene's test and t-test were utilized to measure the degree of significance.

Table 4 summarizes the results of the aforementioned tests in the posttests of the control and experimental groups. Based on Levene's test, the difference in variance between the two groups is not significant (p=0.53), which makes the data collected eligible for t-test. Despite the slightly higher posttest means of the experimental group in almost all the sub-skills, the t-test results show that there is no significant difference in the posttest reading comprehension scores between the control and experimental groups across sub-skills t(125)=-0.524, p=0.601. Since there is no significant difference, one can assume that the CIRC intervention is not more superior to the lecture/discussion method in improving the reading comprehension scores of the students, and vice versa. The results suggest that using either CIRC or the traditional lecture/discussion method are both equally good strategies in improving the reading comprehension skills, particularly the five mentioned in the paper.

Discussion

The research questions, which looked into whether there was a significant difference between the pretests and posttests of the control and experimental groups across the five reading comprehension sub-skills, were answered by the results of the researcher-made reading comprehension pretests and posttests. Broadly, it was discovered that both the lecture method and CIRC significantly improved reading comprehension. This is supported by Estacio (2013), who discovered that there is no single approach or strategy that affects reading comprehension. This is contrary to the researchers' expectations that the lecture method would not have a significant improvement on the reading comprehension scores on the control group. Nevertheless, the researchers' expectations were fulfilled after looking into the results of the CIRC experimental group, which also showed improvement generally, as well. Similar results in the use of CIRC in the upper elementary level were observed in several studies, although they are not focused on the five sub-skills on

comprehension but in reading comprehension as a whole (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012; Gupta & Ahuja, 2014; Durukan, 2011; Zarei & Keshavarz, 2011; Bramlett, 1994). In light of this, the researchers would like to discuss highlights of the study with regard to specific sub-skills.

Although there was no significant difference in the posttest scores between the CIRC experimental group and the lecture control group, based on the results, it was evident that there were notable internal improvements in the control and experimental groups for the specific sub-skills under the literal level of comprehension. For the control group, a distinct improvement can be observed in the *recalling details* sub-skill most probably because of its low level of difficulty. Reed and Vaughn (2012) affirm the aforementioned claim by pointing out that learners retell information more frequently in the literal level as opposed to the inferential level. Harris, Mandias, Terwogt, and Tjintjelaar (1980) strengthened this claim through their study, which revealed that eighth and tenth grade students tend to have easier comprehension of a narrative when the facts are explicitly stated. The similar trend in the researchers' study and other studies should come as no surprise because after all, the sub-skill *recalling details* falls under Bloom's Taxonomy's first level of cognition – the most fundamental one.

On the other hand, for the experimental group, a significant increase in the *determining fact vs. opinion* evaluative sub-skill is evident. One possible explanation for this finding would be the in-depth processing of the learners through the interactive exchange of ideas during the CIRC peer-led discussions. Several studies show that students can have better reading comprehension in the evaluative level if the activities done deviate from the conventional lecture. One of the noteworthy studies include Hogan, Bridges, Justice, and Cain's (2011), which mentioned that educators can promote higher order thinking skills by having activities that go beyond simple decoding, such as interpersonal discussions. Pan and Wu (2013) further support this claim by stating that group discussions provide avenues for (1) explanation, (2) logical inference, (3) debates to elaborate student understanding of reading materials, and (4) making ideas concrete and are, thus, crucial for reading

comprehension beyond the text. Galton, Hargreaves, and Pell (2002)'s study provided concrete evidence of this when it revealed that learners taught in collaborative small discussion groups for English were significantly better in the subject in contrast to those exposed to whole class instruction.

More importantly, Clark (2009) contributed to proof of a possible connection between the group dynamics in peer-led discussion groups and evaluative reading comprehension. An analytical 9-week study done with peer-led discussed groups, like the one CIRC mandated in the study, revealed that a majority of the groups' discourse involved the evaluation strategy (26.96%) and questioning strategy (27.69%). Some of the discourse were focused on the interpreting strategy (15.3%), and the rest were focused on prior knowledge, context, etc. These findings were instrumental in supporting the results of this research because it aided in establishing a possible relationship between interactive nature of group activities and the improvement in evaluative reading comprehension – higher frequencies of evaluative strategies during peer-led group discourse may result to higher evaluative reading comprehension. The potential positive relationship could explain why the CIRC experimental group improved the most in evaluative reading comprehension as opposed to the literal and inferential comprehension when exposed to CIRC-based peer-led group discussions. Thus, in this light, it could be said that the significant improvement in evaluative comprehension, particularly *determining fact vs. opinion,* could most likely be attributed to the interactional features of peer-led group discussions in the CIRC intervention.

The same may be said about the sub-skill *summarizing*. Aside from the very insignificant improvement of the learners in *summarizing*, results of the researchers' study showed that it is the sub-skill with the lowest scores in both the posttests of the control and experimental group. For the experimental group, there is a possible reason that would explain the low scores in *summarizing* as well as the insignificant improvement in the sub-skill. If Clark's (2009) study is representative for all peer-led group discussions, learners in peer-led group discussions tend to not focus on summarizing when discussing. According to Clark's (2009) study, it is one of the

least used strategies in peer-led discourse. This may explain why there was a slight deterioration, in the apparently low scores for the sub-skill *summarizing* compared to the other sub-skills. Another possible explanation for the lack of improvement in *summarizing* for both the control and experimental group would be the complexity of the skill and its acquisition. Brown and Day (1983) affirm this claim by saying that *summarizing* is a difficult skill to master for all levels. This applies even for university students and adults (Boch & Piolat, 2005; Rose, 2001; Karbalaei & Rajyashree, 2010). If this is true, it would explain why the respondents of this study, all Grade 8 students, had a hard time summarizing. Anderson and Hidi (1988) further support this explanation by stating that younger learners may have more difficulty identifying which information to include in their summaries and may focus on unusual ideas rather than essential ones in contrast to older learners. From the aforementioned literature, it can be inferred that the summarization sub-skill cannot be learned in one sitting, especially for younger learners. It is a complex process that requires a more mature and critical level of thinking as well as more time to acquire and master.

As for the inferential level of comprehension, it was gathered from the results that there were no significant differences between the posttest scores of the control and experimental groups in both *identifying the main idea* and *making inferences*. There were also no notable internal improvements in the aforementioned sub-skills from the pretest to the posttest for the control and experimental groups, respectively. One possible explanation would be the learners' questionable inferential skills even before the intervention because according to Kispal (2008), the ability to make inferences predetermines reading skills. This could be true, because after all, inferential skills are more complex than literal comprehension skills. A study by Padilla (2005), which showed that young Filipino learners around the same age range found it easier to restate and combine facts than interpret the content in their own words, supports this claim. Another possible explanation as to why there is no significant improvement would be the duration of the intervention. A similar study done by Green and Roth (2013) explored the inferential reading comprehension skill but had limitations in time, which they claimed have affected their study. Likewise,

the insignificant improvement in inferential comprehension for both groups in this study is indicative of the length of time that is required for the students to use strategies such as *identifying the main idea* and *making inferences* effectively. The researchers agree with Green and Roth (2013) when they mentioned that while the goal of strategy instruction is for the students to manifest automaticity in comprehension skills, the process of acquiring and then exhibiting the skill automatically takes time. From the aforementioned, it can be said that the possibly questionable prior inferential skills of the learners as well as the duration of the CIRC intervention could be a factor of the insignificant improvement in *identifying the main idea* and *making inferences* for both the control and experimental groups.

Conclusion

Summary

In light of the problems identified such as the problem in reading comprehension in the literal, inferential, and evaluative level, the researchers implemented the CIRC technique in a span of two weeks totaling three sessions to the learners with the hope that their reading comprehension skills, particularly (a) recalling details, (b) summarizing, (c) identifying the main idea, (d) making inferences, and (e) determining fact versus opinion, would improve significantly.

Adopting the quantitative quasi-experimental research design, the researchers discovered that, although there were no significant differences between the posttest reading comprehension scores of the control and experimental group, there were notable internal improvements for both groups in particular sub-skills. The control group, which was exposed to the lecture method, improved substantially in the literal *recalling details* sub-skill while the experimental group, which was exposed to the CIRC technique, has shown more significant improvement in the evaluative *determining fact vs. opinion* sub-skill compared to the control group. The researchers identified no significant internal improvement in the *summarizing, identifying the main idea,* and *making inferences* sub-skill for both groups.

Recommendations and Implications to the ESL classroom

Although the researchers initially identified problem such as the lack of time for implementation, the researchers see the potential of the CIRC technique in other ESL classrooms in the Philippines. This positive indication was achieved despite testing the method for only two class meetings for two weeks.

With regard to the preparation of materials for CIRC, the researchers highly encourage the collaboration among teachers so that they could share resources with one another and lessen the burden of preparing worksheets and activities. ESL educators who wish to utilize the CIRC method may modify the worksheets in this study or use it as a guide depending on the context. Furthermore, they could refer to and modify CIRC worksheets and activities available through the efforts of teaching professionals available through the Internet.

To address the problem of approach suitability, the researchers recommend that CIRC method be a complement to the lecture method since both methods have their strengths. The lecture method would provide a substantial foundation for literal comprehension while the CIRC method could provide the processing, analysis, and sharing of opinions and ideas under the evaluative level. The researchers also suggest that a synthesis activity be done after each CIRC activity to improve the retention and reading comprehension of the students.

With regard to the study, more significant and reliable results would have been seen if not for the time concerns. Since the pretests and posttest, like the ones used in the study, were not really necessary components of CIRC, these could be dispensed with; thus, more time can be allotted for the team reading and team task. Another aspect that can help address the time concern issue would be for the teacher to constantly remind the learners about the duration of each activity so that the learners would be aware of their time allotment, which could make them manage their tasks more efficiently during group work.

Future researchers who hope to expand, if not replicate, the research could opt to increase the number of participants and intervention sessions. Since time limitations made this research short term, they may also consider doing a longitudinal study in different settings with a wider variety of learners.

References

Anderson, M. J., Hawes, K., Heerman, C., Johns, K., Seeber, S., Seltzer, K., . . . Silliman, B. (1983). Reading attitudes of college students: Progress toward adequate assessment. *Reading Improvement, 20*, 120-124.

Anderson, V., & Hidi, S. (1988). Teaching students to summarize. *Educational Leadership*, 26-28.

Aronson, E., Blaney, N., Sikes, J., Stephan, C., & Snapp, M. (1978). *The Jigsaw Classroom.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Boch, F., & Piolat, A. (2005). Note Taking and Learning: A Summary of Research. *The WAC Journal, 16*.

Bolukbas, F., Keskin, F., & Polat, M. (2011). The effectiveness of cooperative learning on the reading comprehension skills in Turkish as a Foreign Language. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 10*(4), 330-336.

Bossert, S. (1988). Cooperative activities in the classroom. *Review of Research in Education, 15*, 225-250.

Bower, M., & Richards, D. (2006). Collaborative learning: Some possibilities and limitations for students and teachers. *Proceedings of the 23rd Annual Ascilite Conference: Who's learning? Whose technology?* (pp. 79-89). Sydney: The University of Sydney.

Bramlett, R. (1994). Implementing cooperative learning: A field study evaluating issues for school-based consultants. *Journal of School Psychology, 32*(1), 67-84.

Brown, A., & Day, J. (1983). Macro-rules for summarizing texts: The development of expertise. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 22*, 1-14.

Clark, K. (2009). The nature and influence of comprehension strategy use during peer-led literature discussions: An analysis of intermediate grade students' practice. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 48*, 95-119.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education.* New York: Routledge.

Day, R., & Park, J. (2005). Developing reading comprehension questions. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 17*(1), 60-73.

Durukan, E. (2011). Effects of Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) Technique on Reading-Writing Skills. *Educational Research and Reviews Vol. 6*.

Estacio, M. (2013). Bilingual Readers' Metacognitive Strategies as Predictors of Reading Comprehension. *Philippine ESL Journal, 10*, 179-199.

Fielding, L., & Pearson, D. (1994). Synthesis of Research/ Reading Comprehension: What Works. *Teaching for Understanding*, 62-68.

Galton, M., Hargreaves, L., & Pell, T. (2002). Group work and whole-class teaching with 11-to 14-year-olds compared. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(1), 119-140.

George, D., & Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference. 11.0 update* (4th Edition ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Ghaith, G., & Bouzeineddine, A. (2003). Relationship between reading attitudes, achievement, and learners' perception of their Jigsaw II cooperative learning experience. *Reading Psychology, 24*, 105-121.

Green, L., & Roth, K. (2013). Increasing Inferential Reading Comprehension Skills: A Single Case Treatment Study. *Canadian Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology , 27*(3), 228-239.

Gupta, M., & Ahuja, J. (2014). Cooperative Integrated Reading Composition (CIRC): Impact on Reading Comprehension Achievement in English Among Seventh Graders. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts, and Literature, 2*(5), 37-46.

Harris, P., Mandias, F., Terwogt, M., & Tjintjelaar, J. (1980). The influence of context on story recall and feelings of comprehension. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 159–172.

Hogan, T., Bridges, M., Justice, L., & Cain, K. (2011). Increasing Higher Level Language Skills to Improve Reading Comprehension. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 44*(3), 1-20.

Institute of Education Sciences. (2012). *Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition.*

Institute of Education Sciences. (2012). *Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies.*

Jalilifar, A. (2010). The effect of cooperative learning techniques on college students' reading comprehension. *System, 38*, 96-108.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R., & Holubec, E. (1994). *The New circles of learning: Cooperation in the classroom.* Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R., & Maruyama, G. (1984). Interdependence and interpersonal attraction among heterogeneous individuals. A theoretical formulation and meta-analysis of the research. *Review of Educational Research, 53*, 5-54.

Johnson, D., Johnson, R., & Smith, K. (1998). Cooperative learning returns to college: What evidences is there that it works? *Change, 30*, 26-35.

Kagan, S. (1985). The structural approach to cooperative learning. *Educational Leadership, 47*(4), 12-15.

Karbalaei, A., & Rajyashree, K. (2010). The Impact of Summarization Strategy Training on University ESL Learners' Reading Comprehension. *The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*(30), 41-54.

Kispal, A. (2008). Effective Teaching of Inference Skills for Reading. *National Foundation for Educational Research*.

Kluge, D. (1999). A Brief Introduction to Cooperative Learning. In D. Kluge, S. McGuire, D. Johnson, & R. Johnson, *Cooperative Learning: JALT Applied Materials* (pp. 16-22). Tokyo: Japan Association for Language Teaching.

Lestyarini, B. (n.d.). *The Barrett Taxonomy of Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of Reading Comprehension.* Retrieved from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta: http://staff.uny.ac.id

Marzban, A., & Alinejad, F. (2014). The Effect of Cooperative Learning on Reading Comprehension of Iranian EFL Learners. *Social and Behavioral Sciences, 116*, 3744-3748.

Neo, T., Neo, M., Kwok, W., Tan, Y., Lai, C., & Zarina, C. (2012). MICE 2.0: Designing multimedia content to foster active learning in a Malaysian classroom. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology, 28*(5), 857-880.

Nneji, L. (2011). Impact of Framing and Team Assisted Individualized Instructional Strategies Students' Achievement in Basic Science in the North Central Zone of Nigeria. *Knowledge Review, 23*(4).

Olsen, R., & Kagan, S. (1992). About Cooperative Learning. In C. Kessler, *Cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book* (pp. 1-30). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

Padilla, P. (2005). Metacomprehension and Reading Comprehension of Filipino Dyslexic Children. *CELEA Journal, 28*(6), 6-13.

Pan, C., & Wu, H. (2013). The Cooperative Learning Effects on English Reading Comprehension and Learning Motivation of EFL Freshmen. *English Language Teaching, 6*(5), 13-28.

Pedersen, J., & Digby, A. (1995). *Secondary Schools and Cooperative Learning: Theories, Models, and Strategies.* New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc.

RAND Reading Study Group. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension.* Sta. Monica: Science and Technology Policy Institute, RAND Education.

Reed, D., & Vaughn, S. (2012). Retell as an Indicator of Reading Comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 16*(3), 187-217.

Roldan, A. (1993). *Improve Your Reading and Comprehension Skills.* Makati: Society of Saint Paul.

Rose, M. (2001). In defence of summarization. *College of the Bahamas Research Journal, 10*, 29-35.

Sharan, Y., & Sharan, S. (1992). *Expanding cooperative learning through group investigation.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Slavin, R. (1995). *Cooperative learning theory, research and practice* (2nd Edition ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Slavin, R., Leavey, M., & Madden, N. (1986). *Team Accelerated Instruction: Mathematics.* Watertown: Charlesbridge.

Snow, C., & Sweet, A. (2003). Reading for Comprehension. In A. Sweet, & C. Snow, *Rethinking Reading Comprehension* (pp. 1-11). New York: The Guildford Press.

Stevens, R., & Durkin, S. (1992). *Using Student Team Reading and Student Team Writing in Middle Schools: Two Evaluations.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, Centre for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvantaged Students.

Stevens, R., Madden, N., Slavin, R., & Farnish, A. (1987). Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition: Two Field Experiments. *Reading Research Quarterly, 22*(4), 433-454.

Stevens, R., Slavin, R., & Farnish, A. (1991). The effects of cooperative learning and direct instruction in reading comprehension strategies on main idea identification. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 83*(1), 8-16.

Walmley, A., & Muniz, J. (2003). Cooperative Learning. *Mathematics Teacher, 96*(2), 112- 116.

Wyk, M. (2013). The Effect of Student Teams Achievement Divisions as a Teaching Strategy on Grade 10 Learners' Economics Knowledge. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 4*(2).

Zarei, A., & Keshavarz, J. (2011). On the effects of two models of cooperative learning on EFL reading comprehension and vocabulary learning. *Modern Journal of Language Teaching Methods, 1*(2), 39.

About the Authors

Wilkinson Daniel Wong Gonzales is a fourth year undergraduate student of De La Salle University,Manila, Philippines. He is currently taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education-Major in English (BSE-ENG) and is interested in TESOL, language teaching, and linguistics. He has recently published an article on language teaching and has several forthcoming publications focused on pedagogy and linguistics. He has recently presented in an international conference in Seoul and is

planning to present his other forthcoming papers locally and world-wide. (wdwgonzales@gmail.com)

Patrisha Lliane Torres is an undergraduate student currently taking up Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in English (BSE-ENG) in De La Salle University, Manila. Her interests include journalism, educational leadership, language teaching, and linguistics.

Developing Word Recognition Skills of Dyslexic Students through Phonological and Strategy Training

Glyn B. Gabano-Magbanua, PhD
Al Musanna College of Technology
Oman

Abstract

This paper evaluates the responses of four dyslexic students chosen through purposive sampling to a phonological and strategy training aimed at addressing the phonological deficits of children with dyslexia. After the administration of the intervention program which was composed of phonologically-based lessons delivered through Direct Instruction and upon which a set of flexible and effective word identification strategies are scaffolded in an integrated developmental sequence, all of the four participants were administered the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation and were all determined to have become phonologically aware. It is recommended that elementary teachers be trained in identification and remediation of reading disabled students. Moreover, researches analogous to the study are recommended.

Keywords: dyslexia, phonological awareness, direct instruction, reading difficulties

Introduction

All over the world, children with reading difficulties are vulnerable to a host of emotional bullying from people around them who label them as either "dumb" or "lazy". In countries where there are defined programs for special education these children constitute an estimated 80% of the students with learning disabilities and they constitute the majority of students who are referred to for academic concerns (Lerner, 1993). This concern over children who have reading problems is especially important as reading forms an integral part in the academic success of a student.

These children with reading disability are referred to as dyslexics. This developmental condition occurs when an individual has a significant difficulty with speed and accuracy of word decoding and is usually accompanied with spelling difficulties. Dyslexia is stable, which means that children who have the condition are not likely to outgrow it. There is, however, a strong evidence that children with reading problems show a continuing persistent deficit in their reading rather than just developing later than average children (Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996). More research show that dyslexia is a lifelong condition and dyslexic students are likely to have reading difficulties throughout adolescence and adulthood (Siegel, 2006).

Research Questions

The main focus of this research is to determine whether a phonological strategy program can address the word recognition problem of dyslexic students. Capitalizing on previous research on phonological strategy, the study aims to develop the participants' phonological awareness, a crucial component to becoming literate, through lessons that are spread across the development of skills in letter-sound correspondence, blending phonemes in words, segmenting sounds, and deleting and substituting sounds. Specifically, the research aims at providing answers to the following questions:

1. How do dyslexic students exhibit phonological deficits?

2. How do dyslexic students respond to a phonological strategy training to develop their word recognition skills?

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on two theories, the Neurobiological Theory of Dyslexia and the Phonological Theory of Dyslexia. The former argues that as the problem is located physically in the brain, the dyslexic brain is wired differently compared to a non-dyslexic brain. On the other hand, the Phonological Theory of Dyslexia suggests that phonological awareness is a very important precursor of reading. Moreover, it supports the hypothesis that early phonological deficits could cause later reading disability.

The Neurobiological Theory of Dyslexia

Brain researches on dyslexia show complementing results when analyzed based on material component and structure. Research on the brain's material component reveal that the brain is made up of two types of material: the gray matter and the white matter. The gray matter's primary function is to process information. White matter, on the other hand, is primarily responsible for information transfer around the brain. Booth and Burman (2001) found that people with dyslexia have lesser gray matter in the left parieto-temporal area than non-dyslexic individuals. Having less gray matter in this region of the brain could lead to problems of processing the sound structure of the language (phonological awareness). Meanwhile, many people with dyslexia were also shown to have less white matter in the same area as compared to average readers. This deficiency in turn, is correlated to a decreased ability to read (Deutsch et al., 2005).

Structurally speaking, the brain is divided into two hemispheres, the right and the left hemispheres. It is the left hemisphere of the brain which is responsible for speech, language processing and reading. Within each hemisphere are four lobes: the frontal lobe, the parietal lobe, the occipital lobe, and the temporal lobe.

Research shows that in reading, nondyslexic individuals use all of the areas of the brain to read. For dyslexic individuals however, there is an over reliance on the frontal lobe, where the Broca's area is located hence, the areas of the brain necessary for word identification and access to whole words namely, the parieto-temporal and the occipito-temporal areas, are not utilized.

The Phonological Theory of Dyslexia

Individuals with dyslexia have been characterized as having a dysfunction in the "phonological component of their natural capacity for language" (Liberman, Shankweiler, & Liberman, 1989); to this basic dysfunction has been attributed the myriad phonological processing difficulties disabled readers exhibit on speech-based and working memory tasks, as well as their signature deficits in acquiring alphabetic and phonologically-based reading skills (Brady, 1997; Lovett 2000). It has been suggested by investigators that the phonological representations of disabled readers are faulty or impoverished in nature (Snowling, Van Wagtendonk, & Stafford, 1988), and that these representational deficiencies underlie the core phonological deficit in reading disability. If their sound-based representations are not precise and well-specified, beginning readers are clearly at a disadvantage when acquiring and retaining spelling-to-sound relationships.

Review of Literature

Dyslexia

The most common learning disability is dyslexia. A person with dyslexia has difficulty with language skills, especially reading. It is made up of two different parts: *dys* meaning not or difficult, and *lexia* meaning words, reading, or language. So quite literally, dyslexia means difficulty with words (Catts & Kahmi, 2005).

Despite the many confusions and misunderstanding, the term dyslexia is commonly used by medical personnel, researchers, and clinicians. One of the most

common misunderstandings about this condition is that dyslexia is a problem of letter or word reversals (b/d, was/saw) or of letters, words or sentences "dancing around" on the page (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidelberg, 2001). In fact, writing and reading letters and words backwards are common in the early stages of learning to read and write among average and dyslexic children alike, and the presence of reversals alone may or may not indicate an underlying reading problem.

Hudson, High and Al Otaiba (2007) identified two obvious difficulties encountered by children with dyslexia when asked to read at their grade level. First, they will not be able to read as many of the words they stumble, guess at, or attempt to "sound out". Second, they will often show decoding difficulties, meaning that their attempts to identify words they do not know will produce many errors. They will not be very accurate in using the letter-sound relationships in combination with context to identify unknown words.

These problems in word recognition are due to an underlying deficit in the sound component of language that makes it very difficult for readers to connect letters and sounds in order to decode. People with dyslexia often have trouble comprehending what they read because of the great difficulty they experience in accessing the printed words (Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 2005). Similarly, Torgesen and Mathes (2007) list specific signs and symptoms observable to children who have reading difficulty. These symptoms include problems with reading and spelling, directionality and substitution. These are usually used as basis by teachers in identifying children with reading difficulties.

People with dyslexia do not make random reading errors. They make very specific types of errors. Their spelling reflects the same types of errors. They can read a word on one page, but won't recognize it on the next page; knows phonics, but can't – or won't – sound out an unknown word; slow, labored, inaccurate reading of

single words in isolation (when there is no story line or pictures to provide clues). When they misread, they often say a word that has the same first and last letters, and the same shape, such as form-from or trail – trial; they may insert or leave out letters, such as could – cold or star – stair; they may say a word that has the same letters, but in a different sequence, such as who-how, lost-lots, saw-was, or girl-grill. When reading aloud, they read in a slow, choppy pattern, and often ignore punctuation, become visibly tired after reading for only a short time, and reading comprehension may be low due to spending so much energy trying to figure out the words. However, listening comprehension is usually significantly higher than reading comprehension (Shaywitz, 2003; Lee, 2007).

Directionality confusion also shows up when reading and when writing. b-d confusion is a classic warning sign. One points to the left, the other points to the right, and they are left-right confused. This also happens in the cases of b-p, n-u, or m-w confusion. One points up, the other points down. Likewise, substitution is also a tell-tale sign of reading difficulty. A child may substitute similar-looking words, even if it changes the meaning of the sentence, such as sunrise for surprise, house for horse, while for white, wanting for walking. When reading a story or a sentence, he/she substitutes a word that means the same thing but doesn't look at all similar, such as trip for journey, fast for speed, or cry for weep. He/she misreads, omits, or even adds small function words, such as an, a from, the, to, were, are and of and may or change suffixes, saying need for needed, talks for talking, or late for lately (Torgesen & Mathes, 2002).

Their spelling is however, far worse than their reading. They sometimes flunk inventive spelling. They have extreme difficulty with vowel sounds, and often leave them out. They continually misspell high frequency sight words such as they, what, where, does and because – despite extensive practice and more common than not, they misspell even when copying something from the board or from a book. Lastly,

their written work shows signs of spelling uncertainty – numerous erasures and cross outs (Reid, 2005).

Dyslexic students are perceived as being at risk of failure not only academically but also socially and emotionally. The difficulties in learning experienced by dyslexic pupils may also lead to social and behavioral difficulties in class, and/or at home. The frustration of prolonged failure on a range of curriculum subjects, resulting in feelings of insecurity and lack of confidence can have profound effects upon social status, friendship patterns in class and acceptance and adjustment in the playground. Aggressive and anti-social behavior may result from these tensions. Stress and insecurity can lead to an accentuation of information processing difficulties. When dealing with problems, the dyslexic pupil may adopt strategies of avoidance and self-blaming (Palti, 1998).

What causes dyslexia is not clear. But studies have found differences in brain activity and development in dyslexic people compared to the general population.

Phonological Deficits in Dyslexia

Current theories of early reading development propose that children set up direct mappings between printed words and representation of spoken words in the child's language systems (Ehri, 1992). It follows from this that the status of a child's underlying phonological representations determines the ease with which they learn to read. Since, 1980, there have been many studies that point to language difficulties in the dyslexic child, specifically at the level of phonology (Snowling & Hulme, 1993; Lovett, 2000; Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999). Dyslexic children typically perform poorly on a wide range of measures of phonological awareness, verbal short-term memory, rapid naming, speech perception, and verbal representation, tasks which essentially tap children's representation of, access, to and recall of phonological information (Snowling, 2000; Torgesen, Alexander, Rashotte, 2001; Shaywitz, 2003).

Snowling (2000) makes it clear that it is a deficit in phonology that results in the reading and related difficulties that dyslexics experience. So how do phonological deficits that are evident in dyslexic children manifest themselves in reading failure?

Children's phonological awareness interacts with their emerging letter knowledge acquisition in order to promote reading development. Brian Byrne (1998) has described this process in terms of the acquisition of the alphabetic principle, that is, the child's realization that particular speech sounds are systematically associated with printed letters. Byrne (1998) has specified three conditions that need to be met for children to acquire the alphabetic principle. First, they need to know the letters of the alphabet. Second, they require a minimum level of phonological segmentation skill that enables them to split words into sounds. Finally, they need to connect or link their emerging speech sound sensitivity with their experience of print referred to as phonological linkage. Among dyslexic children, these three precursors of the alphabetic principle are slow to develop, with the result that the child has problems in mapping alphabetic symbols to speech sounds. This inability to abstract letter-sound correspondences from experience with printed words results in a failure to develop phonic reading strategies; so, not surprisingly, the dyslexic child soon falls further behind his or her peers in reading (Hudson, High, Al Otaiba, 2007).

The National Reading Panel of the Florida Department of Education presented a sequential order of developmentally appropriate phonological awareness skills used by researchers to assess children's phonological awareness through instruction and practice. These skills include, specifically: phoneme isolation, phoneme identity, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation and phoneme deletion (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000).

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness may be defined as one's ability to recognize that words are composed of individual phonemes (Lerner, 2003). This includes an awareness of and sensitivity to the fact that words ca be broken down into phoneme-sized units. Acquiring phonological awareness, then, involved developing an understanding that words can be divided into segments of sounds smaller than a syllable (Torgesen, Mathes, 2000). An important element of phonological awareness is one's ability to manipulate phonemes. Activities that demonstrate children's early phonological awareness include rhyming tasks, blending tasks and the ability to match a sound to a particular word (e.g. the sound /b/ is matched with "boy" rather than "toy"). Phonological awareness is a necessary prerequisite of successful reading, as it enables an understanding of how words in a language are represented in print.

Adams (1990) divides phonological awareness tasks that successfully predict reading skills into four main types. First, are syllable and phoneme segmentation tasks in which the child taps, counts out, or identifies the constituent syllables and/or phonemes within words, for example, for the word "cat," the child taps three times to indicate the three constituent phonemes within the word. Second are phoneme manipulation tasks which require the child to delete, add, substitute, or transpose phonemes within words. Third comes sound blending task in which the child is asked to put together individual phonemes of a word. Finally, there are rhyming tasks that include knowledge of nursery rhymes and the identification of the "odd word out" in a sequence of three or four words.

While some phonological skills are available at a rudimentary level to children as young as 2 and 3 years of age, they are not necessarily stable abilities at that age. However, as demonstrated in a study of children from two to five years (Lonigan, Burgess, Anthony & Baker, 1998), phonological sensitivity becomes increasingly stable during the preschool period. In addition, a number of long-term

longitudinal studies have shown that phonological processing abilities are remarkable stable during the elementary school years (Muter & Snowling, 1998; Wagner, Torgesen & Rashotte, 1994). In other words, the level of phonemic skill at an early age is significantly predictive of later phonemic ability. As Wagner and his associates conclude, phonological processing abilities should be viewed as stable and coherent individual difference variables akin to other cognitive abilities, as opposed to more transitory indices of reading-related knowledge that might vary from year to year. This observed stability is essential for any variable that might be used to assess and identify children who have significant and persistent reading problems.

Phonological Awareness and Reading Growth

There are three major kinds of evidence that directly demonstrate the important role that phonological awareness plays in helping children during the early stages of learning to read: that phonological awareness in kindergarten is a very strong predictor of children's progress in learning to read, that deficient phonological awareness is one of the most reliable diagnostic signs of serious reading disabilities, and that instruction designed to stimulate phonological awareness demonstrated positive effects on reading growth.

Many studies have examined the extent to which differences in phonological awareness among children in kindergarten and beginning first grade can predict who will become good and poor readers after reading instruction begins. For example, a study conducted by Stanovich, Cunninghamn and Cramer (1984) showed that several short phonological awareness tasks administered during late kindergarten stage predicted first-grade word reading skill as well as or better than the six sub-sections of a standard readiness test or a standardized intelligence test. Similarly, Wagner, Torgesen and Rashotte (1994) followed the reading growth of 200 children from kindergarten through the end of the fifth grade and found out that phonological awareness is a strong predictor of reading growth not only in English, but also in Swedish, Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Russian.

The second kind of evidence on the importance of phonological awareness in reading development comes from research that has carefully studied the abilities of older children with reading disabilities. When these children are compared to normal readers on many different verbal and non-verbal skills, they are consistently more impaired in phonological awareness than in any other single ability (Fletcher et al., 1994). Even when dyslexic children are compared to younger children who have the same general reading ability, children with reading disabilities perform more poorly on tasks that measure phonological awareness (Stanovich & Seiger, 1994).

The final type of evidence about the role of phonological awareness in reading is probably the most important. This evidence indicates that specific training in phonological awareness either before reading instruction begins, or during reading instruction, consistently accelerates reading growth for children who receive it. This research has also shown that methods that integrate instruction, consistently accelerates reading growth for children who receive it. This research has also shown that methods that integrate instruction in letter-sound correspondences in a way that directly links newly acquired phonemic awareness to reading and spelling produce stronger effects on reading than those that do not. While most instructional programs in phonemic awareness begin with oral language activities, most also conclude by leading children to apply their newly developed ability to think about the phonemic segments in words to simple reading and spelling activities (Torgesen, 1999).

Methodology

Research Design

This research utilized the qualitative paradigm. Specifically, it is a multiple-case design, exploring four bounded cases of dyslexic students over a period of four months, and an in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007), investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life

context (Yin, 2003) and gathering data from multiple sources that include observation, interviews and documents (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2007).

Following Stake's (1995) case study model, the participants were identified through purposive sampling. The data collection then drew on multiple sources of information that included interviews conducted during and after sessions, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts. The data underwent within-case analysis where a detailed description of the four cases was provided, followed by a cross-case analysis, establishing thematic analysis across the four cases as well as assertions or interpretation of the meaning of the case as a whole. The final phase of the study was then crafted, interpreting the issue and generating what Lincoln and Guba (1985) termed as "lessons learned".

Research Participants

The process of identification of participants had to meet certain conditions. First, the student had to be enrolled in the primary level of a public elementary school. The setting of this condition was based on previous research conducted among dyslexic children who underwent intervention programs. Second, the student had to meet three of the symptoms listed in Burton's Dyslexia Symptoms Checklist. Moreover, they had to manifest the most severe symptoms in the class.

There were four dyslexic students who met the conditions set by the researcher. The advisers, after a meeting with the principal, recommended two students each from grades 2 and 3. All of the participants were girls.

Assessment procedures revealed that all of the four participants exhibited directionality issues, produced words that are phonologically out of sequence, exhibited errors in speech production, had difficulty processing information presented auditorily, had difficulty reading fluently or had difficulty with reading comprehension, had difficulty with spelling and written expression and reversed

letters. All of the symptoms observed in the students are evidences of a dyslexic condition.

Data Sources

The document sources for this study included identification checklist, evaluation checklist and observation form as well as assessment forms detailing the performance and progress of the participants.

For this study, the Dyslexia Symptoms Checklist by Susan Barton proved important in identifying the participants. The advisers were asked to accomplish the checklist to determine which of the students were eligible for the program.

An observation form was used to record the performance of the student every session. It had two parts: the checklist of the learning tasks assigned to the student and the behavioral observations which the student exhibited during each session with the researcher. These parts of the observation form were necessary to determine whether the student's performance in her lessons was influenced by her behavior or vice versa.

Another source of data for this study were the various assessment tools used to measure the participants' improvement or non-improvement during the study. For screening purposes, the researcher used Rosner Test of Auditory Analysis and a series of reading assessment on phonological awareness. To measure the performance of the students and to evaluate whether or not the intervention program was effective, a quiz was administered every after each phase of the intervention program. The quizzes were adopted from Sue Dickson's Raceway Book and Murray and Smith's Test of Phoneme Identities. Then, as a final measure of the students' performance, the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation (1995) was used. This is a brief test of children's ability to isolate and pronounce the individual phonemes in words.

The first task was phoneme identification. The task required the participants to identify what same sound was present in the words that the researcher uttered. Instructions were provided and were translated in the mother tongue to facilitate understanding of the task. Moreover, a practice was administered to facilitate familiarity of the task. The table below shows the items used for the phoneme identification task.

Results and Discussion

Phonological Deficits Among Dyslexic Students

To answer the first research question, *How do dyslexic students exhibit phonological deficits?* a series of phonological assessment was administered to the participants. The assessment measured five specific phonological skills that included phoneme identification, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation, initial phoneme isolation and final phoneme isolation.

Table 1. Phoneme identification task

Items	Answers			
	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D
1. fix, fall, fun	fall	no answer	no answer	fun
2. me, milk, mom	milk	H	no answer	no answer
3. ship, shop, share	share	D	no answer	share
4. dig, dog, do	dog	H	no answer	do
5. fit, mat, lot	lot	P	no answer	no answer
6. lip, flap, cap	lip	Wala	no answer	no answer
7. chair, cheese, chalk	no answer	Wala	no answer	no answer

8. see, bee, me	no answer	S	no answer	no answer
9. like, slick, sick	no answer	H	no answer	no answer
10. fish, crash, dish	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer

On this first task, the participants' deficit was manifested through echoing of words, providing letter names instead of letter sounds and silence. For example, instead of identifying what sound was common in a set of words (/f/ in fix, fall, fun or /sh/ in ship, shop, share), two of the participants picked one of the word in a set as an answer (fall instead of /f/ or share instead of /sh/). Another participant, despite a previous practice provided letter names saying f, m, d instead of /f/, /m/ and /d/. The fourth participant, however, did not say anything.

The next task was phoneme blending. This required the participants to combine (blend) separate sounds into a comprehensible word. The items for this task composed of phonemes with increasing level of difficulty, starting with a two phoneme word - /m/ /e/ - progressing to a three phoneme word - /h/ /a/ /t/ - and ending with a six phoneme word - /s/ /t/ /r/ /a/ /n/ /d/. The table shows the items used for the phoneme blending task.

Table 2. Phoneme blending task

Items	Answers			
	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D
1. /m/ /e/	yin	Mad	no answer	e
2. /b/ /e/ /d/	no answer	Et	no answer	d
3. /h/ /a/ /t/	/t/	At	no answer	t
4. /m/ /u/ /s/ /st/ /t/	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer

5. /sh/ /o/ /p/	no answer	Apple	no answer	no answer
6. /p/ /l/ /a/ /n/ /t/	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
7. /s/ /t/ /o/ /p/	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
8. /f/ /l/ /o/ /w/ /e/ /r/	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
9. /l/ /u/ /n/ /c/ /h/	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
10. /s/ /t/ /r/ /a/ /n/ /d/	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer

Participants responded differently to the phoneme blending task. Their answers were characterized by invented words like /yin/ or /mad/ instead of /me/ or /apple/ instead of /shop/, incomplete rime chunk like /at/ for /hat/ or /st/ for /must/, nonsense response like /et/ or silence or the deliberate decision not to say anything.

The third task given to the participants was phoneme segmentation. In this task the researcher had to say a word which the participants needed to segment by identifying all of the sound components in the word. The task consisted of seven words shown on the table below.

Table 3. Phoneme segmentation

Items	Answer			
	Participant A	Participant B	Participant C	Participant D

1. in	in	Et	no answer	no answer
2. at	it	Amp	no answer	no answer
3. name	names	no answer	no answer	no answer
4. ship	shit	no answer	no answer	no answer
5. sock	shock	no answer	no answer	no answer
6. sink	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer
7. sand	no answer	no answer	no answer	no answer

Like the first two tasks, a deficit was also observed when the third assessment task was administered to the participants. Their responses varied from echoing, nonsense responses and silence. For example, when asked to segment /in/, one participant answered /in/ or said /shock/ when asked to segment /sock/. Nonsense responses include /et/ instead of /i/ /n/ and /amp/ instead of /a/ /t/ or /shit/ instead of /s/ /h/ /i/ /p/.

The last two assessment tasks given to the participants required isolation of sounds from a word. Initial phoneme isolation requires a student to identify the first sound that he/she hears in a word. The opposite is done in final isolation, where the last sound in a word is identified. This particular skill is important in reading as it is one of the precursors of the alphabetic principle which enables a reading student to map out sounds into words. The words used for this particular task is shown in the table that follows:

Table 4. Phoneme Isolation

Initial Phoneme Isolation		Final Phoneme Isolation	
Items	Answer	Items	Answer

	A	B	C	D		A	B	C	D
1. big	b	/b/	bi	bi	1. pick	picnic	ick	k	pick
2. land	land	l	la	li	2. ran	round	n	n	ran
3. farm	farm	f	f	fi	3. fill	fill	l	no answer	fill
4. apple	apple	a	/a/	a	4. bug	bug	/g/	d	bag
5. desk	desk	d	d	d	5. same	same	m	d	same
6. ship	no answer	h	/h/	no answer	6. tooth	no answer	f	m	no answer
7. man	no answer	m	mi	no answer	7. fish	no answer	h	ha	no answer
8. help	no answer	no answer	ha	no answer	8. hop	no answer	/p/	no answer	no answer
9. then	no answer	no answer	d	no answer	9. case	no answer	s	s	no answer
10. truck	no answer	no answer	ra	no answer	10. jar	no answer	r	r	no answer

At this point in the assessment, the participants' deficits have become quite predictable. Their responses were characterized by echoing, providing letter names instead of sounds and wrong onset. For example, when given the word land, the participants simply echoed the word as with other words in the list like desk, apple, fill, and bug. They also gave letter name answers like l, f, g, h, m or p instead of sounding the letters out (/l/, /f/, /g/, /h/, /m/ or /p/).

Generally, all of the participants had phonological deficits manifested in different ways that include echoing, using letter names instead of sounds, nonsense responses and wrong onset and rime chunks. Moreover, silence or the deliberate decision not to provide an answer was likewise seen as a manifestation of phonological deficit.

The occurrences of phonological deficits among the participants conform to results of previous studies. The inaccuracies in the participants' responses to phonological tasks is one of the two obvious difficulties encountered by dyslexic students recorded by Hudson, High and Al Othaiba (2007). In their research they found out that dyslexic students often show decoding difficulties, meaning that they will produce many errors when they attempt to identify words. This may also be because dyslexics naturally have great difficulty accessing printed words because of an underlying deficit in the sound-component of the language that makes it very difficult for dyslexic readers to connect letters and sounds (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2003).

What is noticeable in all of the assessment administered to the participants is their deliberate decision to stay silent in many of the tasks. This silence can be attributed to two reasons, the inability to recognize words or a behavioral problem associated with dyslexia. The participants could have decided not to produce answers because recognizing the words have become very difficult (Torgesen & Mathes, 2002) or laborious, especially as the words appeared in isolation, without pictures to provide clues (Shaywitz, 2003; Lee, 2007). Another possible explanation could be the fact that some behavioral problems co-exist with dyslexia (Palti, 1998). Because their difficulty, and oftentimes, inability to read have subjected them to bullying and being called "dumb" or "stupid", dyslexic students often develop a very low self-esteem and lack self-confidence.

The Intervention Program

To address their problems in reading an intervention program was administered to the participants. A framework of phonologically based lessons was used as a foundation upon which a set of flexible and effective word identification strategies were scaffolded in an integrated developmental sequence. A continuum of intervention (at least 25 hours) provided remediation of the basic phonological awareness and letter-sound learning deficits of disabled readers.

The lessons were categorized into four: letter-sound correspondence to address the dyslexic students' deficit in phoneme identification; blending phonemes in words to help develop the students' phoneme blending skill; segmenting sound by sound to enable students to split words into sounds; and deletion and substitution of sounds to help students manipulate the sounds of the language.

To monitor students' success, quizzes were given every after a batch of lessons. Thus, the students were required to take quizzes in phoneme identification, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation and phoneme substitution. The first three quizzes were adapted from the Raceway Book (Dickson, 2004), the last one modified from The Test of Phoneme Identities, developed by Murray, Smith and Murray (2000). Then, as a final measure of the students' progress, the program also included, as a concluding activity, the administration of the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation.

The whole program was validated by three reading specialists.

The figure below shows the program track. Utilizing an inverted triangle design, it shows the order of skills to be taught and how a new skill builds upon a previously learned skill thus promoting automaticity of learning.

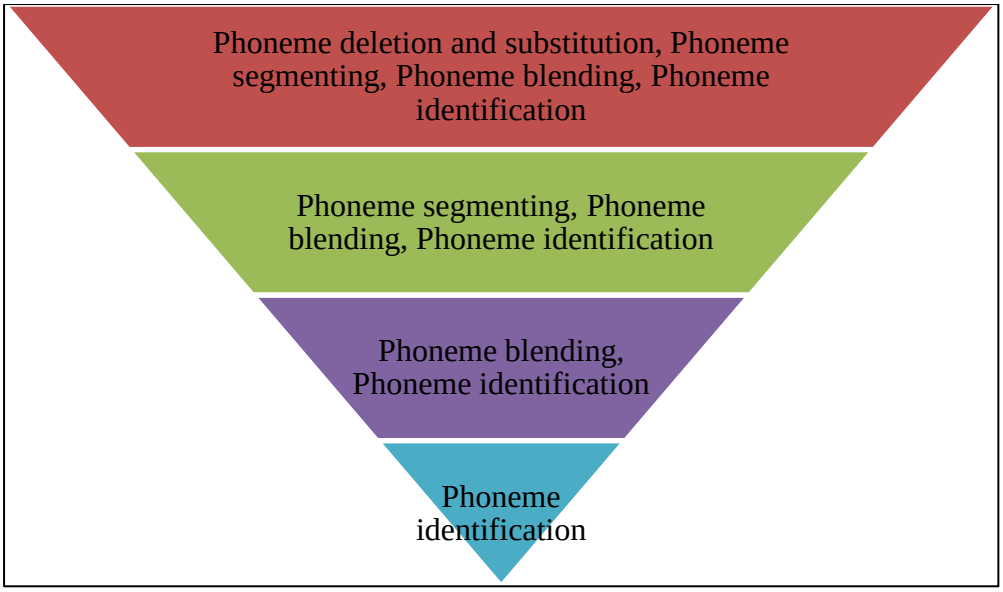


Figure 1. The program track

Each lesson in the program followed a specific order. All of the lessons presented to the participants of the program had the following components:

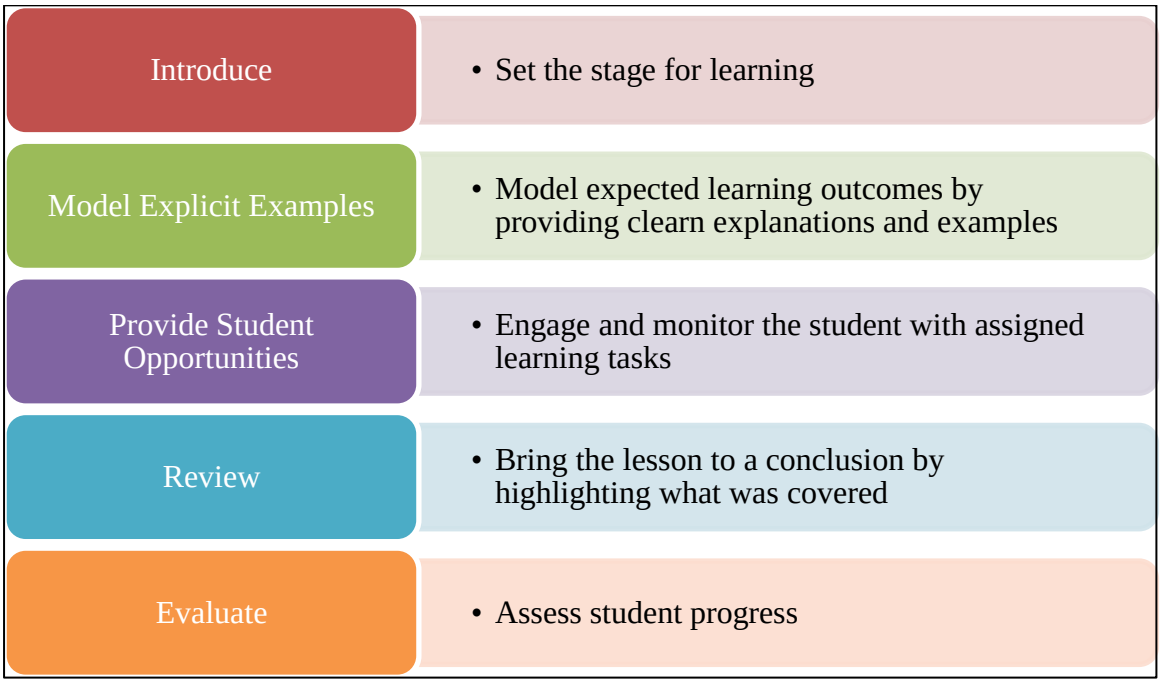


Figure 2. Instructional features

The program followed the schedule presented in the table below.

Table 5. The intervention plan

Component	Lesson	Duration
Initial Assessment		2 hours
Phoneme Identification	• Letter-Sound Correspondence (/t/, /b/, /m/, /s/	1.5 hours
	• Letter-Sound Correspondence (/r/, /l/, /i/, /p/, /g/	1.5 hours
	• Letter-Sound Correspondence (/c/, /f/, /o/, /h/, /j/	1.5 hours
	• Letter-Sound Correspondence (/u/, /k/, /d/, /n/, /w/	1.5 hours
	• Letter-Sound Correspondence (/q/, /v/, /e/, /x/, /y/, /z/	1.5 hours
	Quiz	1 hour
Phoneme Blending	• Blending phonemes in words (Part 1)	1.5 hours
	• Blending phonemes in words (Part 2)	1.5 hours
	Quiz	1 hour
Phoneme Segmenting	• Segmenting Sound by Sound (Part 1)	1.5 hours
	• Segmenting Sound by Sound (Part 2)	1.5 hours
	Quiz	1 hour
Phoneme Deletion and Substitution	• Deletion and Substitution of Initial Sound	1.5 hours
	• Deletion and Substitution of Final Sound	1.5 hours
	• Deletion and Substitution of Medial Sound	1.5 hours
	Quiz	1 hour
Final Assessment		1 hour

TOTAL 25 hours

Response to the Intervention Program

To answer the second research question, how dyslexic students respond to an intervention program to develop their word recognition skills, the students were provided with a developmentally appropriate and phonological-based lessons carried out through an organized sequence of activities, an instructional feature of direct instruction. Progress was measured through periodic quizzes while their general performance was determined through the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, results of which are displayed in the table below.

Table 6. Result of assessment

Participant	Score	Interpretation
Student A	18	Phonologically Aware
Student B	20	Phonologically Aware
Student C	18	Phonologically Aware
Student D	17	Phonologically Aware

The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation is a standardized assessment tool which tests children's ability to isolate and pronounce individual phonemes in words. Phoneme segmentation is a task that has been widely used in research on phoneme awareness and is highly correlated with other measures of phoneme awareness (Yopp, 1988). The test is usually used to monitor the growth of phoneme awareness among children who are learning to read.

The test consists of 22 items. It is administered individually and requires about five to ten minutes per child. The student's score is the number of items

correctly segmented into individual phonemes. Students who segment all or nearly all of the items correctly (17-22 items correct) may be considered phonologically aware. Students who correctly segment some items (7-16 items correct) are displaying emerging phonological awareness. Students who are able to segment only a few items or none at all (0-6 items correct) lack appropriate levels of phonological awareness.

The table shows what the students have become at the end of the intervention program. That all four of them became phonologically aware at the end of the program shows that the phonemic and strategy training delivered positive results to dyslexic students.

Discussion

A student's inability to identify phonemes, blend individual phonemes into words, segment words into individual phonemes and isolate, delete or substitute phonemes in words constitute an overall lack of phonemic awareness, a pre-reading requisite that beginning readers need to develop as words are made up of sounds and if students do not possess the needed awareness to manipulate sounds and blend them into words or look for words that sound the same, the will have a hard time learning to read.

This was clearly manifested by the performance of the participants of the study. Clearly, all of them were unaware of letter-sound correspondence, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation and phoneme isolation. The participants lacked what Byrne (1998) termed as alphabetic principle or the child's realization that particular speech sounds are systematically associated with printed letters and what Lerner (2003) described as phonemic awareness, a person's ability to recognize that words are composed of individual phonemes. These pre-reading requisites are slow to develop in dyslexic individuals so it is not surprising if they fall behind their non-dyslexic classmates both in reading and academic tasks. Consequently, because

children must master phonological principles in order to become good readers, those children who do not acquire phonological awareness are those who most often become poor readers (Torgesen, 2006).

In subscribing to the phonological theory of dyslexia as a possible reason behind a student's reading disability, one must also subscribe to the idea that a phonological intervention program can help address dyslexia or the problems associated with it. For one, phonological awareness training has been shown to consistently accelerate reading growth for children (Torgesen, 2006) given that phonologically based decoding and early reading skills are teachable aspects of reading for most children (Scanlon & Vellutino, 1997). Moreover, research has shown that with focused and systematic intervention, measurable progress in phonological reading skills can be achieved throughout the elementary school year even with the most severely disabled readers.

The results of the study then conform to previously conducted researches on similar programs emphasizing achievement of measurable progress. In this study, with the administration of the intervention program, the participants who before the intervention performed worse than kindergarten students had become phonologically aware at the end of the study.

Conclusion

Our efforts to understand the role of phonological awareness have far exceeded the efforts to relate research findings to classroom practice regarding phonological awareness. We have learned enough about students who are poor readers and who may be dyslexics in the classroom but so far have not done enough to provide these students the right intervention program so they too may learn to read like their non-dyslexic peers.

Recent researches in phonological awareness and strategies in teaching have made a valuable contribution to our understanding of how to teach reading to children with dyslexia, or in the Philippine setting, children with learning disabilities. It is not, however, a cure for reading disabilities, as these conditions are lifelong conditions and are never curable butt a significant step in preventing and correcting reading difficulties. If only intervention programs like the one used in this study in implemented in our public elementary schools, more children in our classrooms would undoubtedly learn to read.

Implications for Practice and Future Research

Whether we are in a position to suggest that specific learning difficulties merely indicate a naturally occurring variance in human capabilities or not, merely declaring it is inadequate. Current research predominantly focuses on difficulties relating to individual experiences of reading. Essentially the cause of the condition is sought in the structure of the individual's mind and his/her difficulties with learning. The quest to fully explain reading difficulties has resulted in an ever-widening range of symptoms being incorporated into definitions alongside the inclusion of difficulties associated with related syndromes. Come to think of it, it may be appropriate to lessen the focus of 'what is reading difficulty' that has driven so much research and as instead, 'where is the child's reading difficulty?' We may find that the conditions that give rise to reading difficulties are in fact located in the deeper structures of the education system or society as a whole and that the current approaches that are taken to alleviate reading-related difficulties are most of the time just superficial in their scope and impact than we would care to admit. Therefore, it is just fitting that with the government's thrust for reforms, the efforts should not only be focused on curbing corruption but also on prioritizing the actual needs and extending the programs to those who have been taken for granted, in this particular context, children with reading disabilities.

Dyslexic researches in the Philippine context are sparse and dyslexic students enrolled in the elementary schools are left to fend for themselves and to figure out both what is wrong with them and how they could best cope with their classmates, leaving them at a clear disadvantage. Therefore, more rigorous research in this area should be given priority. The lesser the attention given to this field of endeavor, the bleaker the future of the dyslexics in the Philippine public school classrooms. Therefore, the Department of Education should hasten the conduct of researches similar to this. Establishing the connection between learning behavior and learning outcomes of dyslexic students is a good start.

REFERENCES

Adams, M.J. (1990). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Booth, J.R., & Burman, D.D. (2002). Development and disorders of neurocognitive systems for oral language and reading. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 24*. 205-215.

Brady, S. (1997). *Ability to encode phonological representations: An underlying difficulty for poor readers.* Mahwah, NJ:Erlbaum.

Byrne, D. (1998). *Complexity theory and the social sciences.* London: Routledge.

Catts, H.W. & Kamhi, A.G. (2005). *Language and reading disabilities (2nd ed)*. Boston: Pearson.

Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Deutsch, G.K., Dougherty, R.F., Bammer, R., Siok, W.T., Gabrielli, J.D., & Wandell, B. (2005). Children's reading performance is correlated with white matter structure measured by diffusion tensor imaging. *Cortex, 41(13).* 354-63.

Ehri, L. (2002). Phases of acquisition in learning to read words and implications for teaching. *British Journal of Educational Psychology Monograph Series II*, 7-28.

Francis, D.J., Shaywitz, S.E., Steubing, K.K., Shaywitz, B.A., & Fletcher, J.M. (1996). Developmental lag versus deficit models of reading disability: A longitudinal, individual growth curves analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88*, 3-17.

Hudson, R.F., High, L., & Al Otaiba, S. (2007). Dyslexia and the brain: What does current research tell us? *The Reading Teacher*, 506-515.

Lee, D.D. (2007). *Culture, literacy & learning: Taking bloom in the midst of the whirlwind*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Lerner, G. (1993). Collectivities in action: establishing the relevance of conjoined participation in conversation. *Text, 13(2).* 213-245.

Liberman, I., Shankweiler, D., & Liberman, A.M. (1989). *The alphabetic principle and learning to read*. Ann Arbor: MI: University of Michigan Press.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication.

Lonigan, C.J., Burgess, S.R., Anthony, J.L. & Barker, T.A. (1998). Development of phonological sensitivity in 2 to 5 year-old children. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 90(2).* 294-311.

Lovett, M. (2000). Remediating the core deficits of developmental reading disability: A double deficit perspective. *Journal of learning disabilities*, 334-358.

Muter, V., Hulme, C., Snowling, M., & Taylor, S. (1998). Segmentation, not rhyming, predicts early progress in learning to read. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 65 (3)*. 370-396.

Palti, G. (1998). A study of the socio-emotional aspects of educationally resilient dyslexic pupils. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation*. University of Bristol.

Reid, G. (2005). *Learning styles and inclusion.* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Shaywitz, S. (2003). *Overcoming dyslexia: a new and complete science-based program for reading problems at any level*. New York: Alfred and Knopf.

Shaywitz, S. & Shaywitz, B. (2005). Dyslexia (Specific reading disability). *Biological Psychiatry*, 1301-1307.

Shankweiler, D., Crain, S., Katz, L.,Fowler, A.E., Liberman, A.M., Brady, R., … Shaywitz, B.A. (1994). Cognitive profiles of reading-disabled children: Comparison of language skills in phonology, morphology, and syntax. *Psychological Science, 6(3)* 149-156.

Snowling, M.J. (2000). *Dyslexia (2nd ed)*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Snowling, M. & Hulme, C. (1989). A longitudinal case study of developmental phonological dyslexia. *Cognitive Neuropsychology*, 379-401.

Snowling, M.J., van Wagtendonk, B., & Stafford, C. (1988). Object-naming deficits in developmental dyslexia. *Journal of Research in Reading, 11*. 67-85.

Stake, R. (1995). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Stanovich, K.E., Cunningham, A.E., & Cramer, B.B. (1984). Assessing phonological awareness in kindergarten children: Issues of task comparability. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology. 38.* 175-190.

Stanovich, K.E., & Seigel, L.S. (1994). Phenotypic performance profile of children with reading disabilities: A regression-based test of phonological-core-variable-difference model. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 86(1)*, 24-53.

Torgesen, J.K. (2006). Preventing reading difficulties in very large numbers of students: The Reading First Initiative. (I.D. Association Interviewer).

Torgesen, J.K., & Mathes, P. (2000). *A basic guide to understanding, assessing, and teaching phonological awareness*. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.s

Torgesen, J.K., & Mathes, P.G. (2002). *Assessment and instruction in phonological awareness.* Florida: Florida Department of Education.

Torgesen, J.K., Rashotte, C.A., & Alexander, A. (2001). *Principles of fluency instruction in reading: Relationships with established empirical outcomes*. Parkton, MD: York Press.

Torgesen, J.K., Wagner, R.K., & Rashotte, C.A. (1999). *Test of word reading efficiency*. Texas: Pro-Ed.

Wagner, R.K., Torgesen, J.K., Rashotte, C.A. (1994). Development of reading-related phonological processing abilities: New evidence of bidirectional causality from a latent longitudinal study. *Developmental Psychology, 30(1).* 73-87.

Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods (2nd ed).* Thousand Oaks: Sage.

About the Author

Glyn B. Gabano-Magbanua finished her Doctor of Philosophy in Education major in Applied Linguistics in 2013. She worked as a college instructor and a Graduate School lecturer at a state university in the Philippines for 12 years. She also

served as the Deputy Program Director for USAID-USM's Job Enabling English Proficiency Program. She is currently employed as a Lecturer at the Al Musanna College of Technology under the Ministry of Manpower, Oman. Concurrently she serves as the Research Coordinator at the English Language Center. Her research interests include Sociolinguistics, Special Education and Psycholinguistics.

Appendix A

Susan Barton's Dyslexia Symptoms Checklist

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Please assess if your student exhibits any of the following symptoms. Please check all that apply. If a student has 3 or more of the following items please refer the student to a dyslexia specialist.

In Elementary School

- ☐ dysgraphia (slow, non-automatic handwriting that is difficult to read)
- ☐ letter or number reversals continuing past the end of first grade
- ☐ extreme difficulty learning cursive
- ☐ slow, choppy, inaccurate reading:
  - guesses based of shape or context
  - skips or misreads prepositions (at, to, of)
  - ignores suffixes
  - can't sound out unknown words
- ☐ terrible spelling
- ☐ often can't remember sight words (they, were, does) or homonyms (their, they're and there)

- difficulty telling time with a clock with hands
- trouble with math
  - memorizing multiplication tables
  - memorizing sequence of steps
  - directionality
- when speaking, difficulty finding the correct word
  - lots of "whatyamacallits" and "thingies"
  - common sayings come out slightly twisted
- dreads going to school
  - complains of stomach aches or headaches
  - may have nightmares about school

Appendix B

Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation

Name: _____ Score: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Today we're going to play a word game. I'm going to say a word and I want you to break the word apart. You are going to tell me each sound of the word in order. For example, if I say old, you should say /o/ /l/ /d/. Let's try a few together.

Practice items: (assist in segmenting if necessary)

ride (3) go (2) man (3)

Test items: Circle those items that the student correctly segments; incorrect responses are recorded on the blank line following the item.

1. dog _____
2. keep _____
3. fine _____
12. lay _____
13. race _____
14. zoo _____

4. no _____
5. she _____
6. wave _____
7. grew _____
8. that _____
9. red _____
10. me _____
11. sat _____
15. three _____
16. job _____
17. in _____
18. ice _____
19. at _____
20. top _____
21. by _____
22. do _____

Answer Key

Practice Items: ride (3) go (2) man (3)

1. **dog** (3)_____
2. **keep** (3)_____
3. **fine** (3)_____
4. **no** (2)_____
5. **she** (2)_____
6. **wave** (3)_____
7. **grew** (3)_____
8. **that** (3)_____
9. **red** (3)_____
10. **me** (2)_____
11. **sat** (3)_____
12. **lay** (2)_____
13. **race** (3)_____
14. **zoo** (2)_____
15. **three** (3)_____
16. **job** (3)_____
17. **in** (2)_____
18. **ice** (2)_____
19. **at** (2)_____
20. **top** (3)_____
21. **by** (2)_____
22. **do** (2)_____

An Investigative Analysis of the Perception and Apprehension of Language Teachers on Research and Research Pursuits

Jose Robert Reyes
De La Salle Santiago Zobel School

Abstract

The present study made use of relevant, timely, and contemporary research papers, journals, and articles to shed light on reasons and explanations about the perceptions and apprehensions of language teachers in pursuing and conducting research. Based on the gathered materials, several reasons surfaced for the seeming apprehensions of language teachers in relation to conducting research. Some of the reasons include finding no direct connection and use for research in the classroom, lack of basic skills in creating instruments and analyzing data and results from research, and insufficient teacher training to conduct research. There is therefore a need to make teachers see their actual practice of teaching as a place for research that can improve language classroom teaching situations. Part of such thrust is to train a teacher who is a practitioner-scholar and is knowledgeable in research, particularly action research, creating lessons, strategies, and interventions that are driven by research (van Lier, 1994; McClintock, 2004).

Keywords: scholar-practitioner, teacher-practitioner, language teacher training and development

Introduction

Views on Teaching and Its Subsequent Effects on Teachers as Researchers

Historically, teaching and research have been viewed as discrete fields which, however, are part and parcel of a teacher or an academician's teaching career. The value of one over the other has been a source of great contention and even greater competition. For instance, more than two decades ago, in Florida, job tenure was controversially awarded to a faculty member who scarcely contributed to academic publications yet exuded exemplary teaching and outstanding civic service (Nobis, 2003). In this case, there seems to be a view that teaching and researching are distinct yet complementary of each other especially in understanding and realizing teacher effectiveness and performance.

Moreover, this paradoxical perspective on teaching and research being discrete yet rudimentary aspects of teaching appears to have emanated from two dichotomies in teaching. Pennington (as cited in Jourdenais, 2004) suggests a long-standing continuum where teaching can be viewed either as magic or science. At first glance, these two superficial yet opposing perspectives on teaching do not have any repercussions on research vis-à-vis teaching; however, as practice has otherwise shown, these two perspectives are essentially at the heart of teachers' ambivalence toward research or researching for improving pedagogy and andragogy.

Effects of Teaching as Magic versus Teaching as a Science on Teacher Development and Research

For some, teaching is viewed as "something mysterious … dependent on personal and individual factors that cannot be fully known or described" (Pennington as cited in Jourdenais, 2004, p. 647) and thus may not require or be conducive to formal training. For others, teaching is a science that is "something that can be clearly delineated, defined, and presented – a body of knowledge to be

learned, courses to be taken" (Pennington as cited in Jourdenais, 2004, p. 647). These perspectives then redound to attitude, perceptions, and readiness of teachers in doing and participating in research.

For teachers or educators who view teaching as magic, teaching then becomes a kind of profession that requires teacher-apprentices to master personal, inherent, and relative teacher qualities as they build their so-called teaching craft (Wallace, 1991). As such, teaching will require simple observation and imitation until a teacher-apprentice finds the unique teacher in himself or herself. In other words, teaching is a profession with a set of experiences that a person grows into with seemingly little need to understand the philosophical, systematic, and epistemic foundations of teaching (Wallace, 1991). From these definitions and descriptions of teaching as magic, teachers may then be resistant to having research to improve their teaching and instruction as applying research is seen to run counter to the experiential and organic view of teaching.

On the other hand, for teachers and educators who view teaching as a science, particularly, as an applied science, teachers are viewed as vessels that develop their practice through their investments and pursuits in research (Jourdenais, 2004). This perspective, however, has been largely scrutinized as it somewhat undervalues the uniqueness of teaching and teachers as human beings. As Freeman and Johnson (1998) note, "Teachers are not empty vessels to be filled with theoretical and pedagogical skills; they are individuals who enter teacher education programs with prior experiences, personal values, and beliefs that inform their knowledge about teaching and shape what they do in their classrooms" (p. 401).

The Teaching and Practice Divide and Its Effects on the Research Pursuits of Teachers

Reflectively, the previous discussions seem to suggest then that teaching, teachers, and research will have to form a synergy that ultimately sees the teacher as an interactive, social persona who needs to see the classroom as a field where research can be effective, owing to the unlimited range of experiences that come from teaching and its practice **(**Hedgcock, 2002; Jourdenais, 2004; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Contrarily, the current state of research and researchers has created a divide, distinguishing researchers and teachers with researchers doing theory and teachers executing the actual practice of teaching. As Johnson (1997) states**, "**those who construct theory are … generally held in higher esteem than and hold positions of power over those who construct practice" (p. 779). Hedgcock (2002) says that such beliefs lead to a "particularly damaging dichotomy" (p. 308) set up between theory and practice, which leads many novice teachers to see theory as something "authoritarian and prescriptive" (Clark, 1994, p. 9). In fact, Clark (1994) has argued that the "distinction between theory and practice … is generally dysfunctional for teachers" (p. 9). This dichotomy is indeed dysfunctional for teachers who are actively teaching in the classroom since teachers now see teaching as a hierarchical system where they become recipients and implementors of curriculums that were conceived of, studied, recommended, and worked upon by researchers and theorists who may or may not be in the current practice of teaching. Markee (1997) further articulates this dichotomy which prevents teachers from being active researchers:

1. Research is written by researchers for researchers, and thus it may not be readily accessible to teachers.
2. Topics researched in research studies may not be readily applicable to language classrooms.
3. The hierarchical relationship between researchers and teachers may lead to teachers' voices being less heard.

4. Research that teachers do may not be "rigorous" enough for publication in the prevailing research journals.
5. Teachers may not want to and/or have time to publish or conduct research (pp. 88-89).

These assumptions on teaching and research have created a rather impressive confusion on what teachers should be, should teach, and should become in relation to being active researchers and contributors to research. In this case, this paper aims to understand and realize further this seeming confusion of language teachers, or even teachers in general, and their corresponding roles as researchers while considering the dominant factors that affect apparent teacher apprehension and confusion as they undergo and carry on research in their professional career as teachers.

Research Objectives

With the points of discussions and considerations mentioned previously, the research aims to address the following objectives:

1. To understand some of the factors that affect teachers' perceptions or even apprehension on research or academic writing in general
2. To realize the effects of teacher development or the lack of it on teachers' perceptions or even apprehension toward research
3. To discuss pertinent issues on researching, teacher development, and research in general that affect research pursuits and interests of teachers
4. To create a model that will provide teachers with the aptitude, confidence, and impetus to engage in research

Methodology

Research Design

Since the paper aims to realize an ample sample and data that will realize the objectives of the research on teachers in relation to research, the study primarily seeks to explore a group of related and connected studies that will show "concepts, properties, dimensions, and variations" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 420), that will yield factors which can explain the perceptions and apprehensions of teachers on executing and conducting research. Thus, the research or analysis is ultimately hinged on grounded theory which essentially seeks to "determine how actors under investigation actively respond" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 419) to issues and problematic situations. In this regard, the actors should be actual teachers who have issues and problematic perceptions and views on committing to research. However, employing a full-scale inquiry on teachers and their assumed apprehension on research may prove to be futile as there are different types of teachers and teaching situations across the globe. Consequently, the paper then seeks to narrow down its inquiry to researchers, scholars, and teacher-scholars who have done extensive research and are therefore deemed knowledgeable and credible in the field of research and teacher development. In addition, "as in other qualitative approaches, the data for a grounded theory can come from various sources … that might shed light on the area of questions under study" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 419). In this regard, anecdotal illustrations and testaments will be used to further exemplify data from the investigations. Finally, when sufficient data have been collected, coded, and interpreted, discussions will follow that will seek to understand the findings and eventually create a subsequent model that will address issues that have been identified.

Literature Eligibility Criteria

The paper sought to gather relevant, timely, and contemporary research papers, journals, and articles that will shed light on the research objectives at hand. However, as mentioned previously, the researcher will have to concede to trusting that primary and highly recognized scholars, researchers, and theorists in the field of language teaching and language research may represent or speak for language teachers and practitioners who may or may not have apprehensions on research. In addition, since the research primarily aims to know the foundational aspects of research and subsequent research pursuits of language teachers, included in the list of journals and articles that will be used range from post-World War, which embodies the first wave of classroom research, to the contemporary, technologically advanced milieu, which has been dramatically changed and altered by research innovations (Mitchell, 2009). Still, the earlier sources and references will only be used for discussions that necessitate historical perspectives and support. Most of the sources, journals, and articles will include those that can explain or may have particular bearing on teachers teaching in our current context and situation. Moreover, chosen references and sources will have to be circumscribed under language teaching and language research to yield results that are contextualized and representative of a known research field, and ISI-ranking scheme in order to ensure credence and utmost reliability.

Coding and Data Analysis

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), "Every concept brought into the study or discovered in the research process is at first considered provisional. It earns its way into the theory by repeatedly being present in each interview, document, observation, in one form or another, or by being significantly absent (it should be there but isn't, thus we ask why)" (p. 420). However, as Corbin and Strauss (1990) are also quick to point out that if a particular concept or idea is neither repeatedly

present nor strikingly absent, such concept or idea cannot be incorporated in the theory or the model that will be made later on. In this case, the paper sought to thoroughly analyze and identify repeated or strikingly absent concepts. These concepts in return will have to eventually result in identifying and assigning pertinent subcategories, categories, and core categories (Barrot, 2013) that will illustrate teacher perceptions on research. This procedure will be followed up with a corresponding synthesis and comparative analysis using well-known and accepted research theories which will in turn provide the basis for the proposed model in the end.

Results and Discussion

After a comprehensive reading and analysis of the sources, references, journals, and articles that were considered, an optimal number of references and sources were selected. These sources had direct and indirect discussions on language teacher training, language teacher development, and language teacher research, which can be used in conceptualizing categories that may shed light on teacher perceptions and apprehension on research.

Table 1

Distribution of Connected and Relevant References and Sources for Language Teachers and Research

Type/Classification of Reference/Source	No. of Connected and Relevant Reference/Source
Studies in SLA	8
Language teaching and research	10
TESOL Quarterly	5
Modern Language Journal	2
Cambridge University and Oxford University Presses	3
Applied Linguistics	1

As shown in Table 1, only 29 of the 100 sources, culled from well-known and widely anthologized researches in the field of language teaching, were read and deemed useful and relevant to understanding and discussing categories and concepts that redound to research practice among teachers. Of the 29 articles, 5 were taken from TESOL Quarterly, 1 from Applied Linguistics, 2 from Modern Language Journal, 8 from Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 3 from Cambridge University and Oxford University Presses, and 10 from Language Teaching and Research. From these remaining sources, categories were then identified that could explain teacher perceptions and apprehensions on research undertakings. Interestingly enough, the key concepts and terms that surfaced from the analysis have suggestive implications on teacher training and teacher development vis-à-vis teacher perceptions and apprehension. These implications to a greater extent highlight issues that teachers face as they choose to engage and disengage in research as they continue through their professional careers as teachers.

Part I. Issues in Research Pursuits of Language Teachers

Table 2

Identified Key Issues in Language Teacher Research Pursuit

Subcategories	*Individual Categories*	*Core category*
1. Teacher Professional Development	In-service training During Service Training	
2. Teacher Appraisal	Teacher appraisal from accomplished research	
3. Research Mechanics	Research Practice and Instruments	
4. Action and Classroom Research		
5. Language Teaching		

6. Teachers as Scholar-Practitioners

Table 2 presents the identified key issues that directly and indirectly influence language teacher pursuit in research. From the identified categories, several key points in SLA teaching and research, research mechanics and pursuits, and teacher training and professional development were given particular attention as they appear to explain language teacher apprehension and reluctance in committing to research.

A. Use of Research in Language Teaching

In 1998, Freeman wrote that applied linguistics research and research in SLA were "ancillary" to language teaching and "should not be the primary subject of language teacher education" (p. 29). Great opposition, of course, has come from such remarks with many educators, scholars, teachers, and professors claiming that research often includes classroom interactions (Gass, Mackey, & Pica, 1998; Swain, 2000), effects of various types of error correction (Lyster, 2001; Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000) and grammatical presentation (Gibbons, 2003; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; van Lier, 2000) information gleaned on developmental processes and orders (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Pienemann, 1999), the processes involved in scaffolding learning (Gibbons, 2003; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995; van Lier, 2000), as well as research strategy use (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Gardner, 2001) and investment (Pierce, 1995) **(**in Jourdenais, 2004**).**

As can be seen, the actual use of applied linguistics research is extensive and far-reaching. The apparent problem or issue however is how teachers will be able to reflect the findings from the researches in their own classroom situations and environments (Jourdenais, 2004), which may or may not be altogether come to fruition. For example, Freeman and Johnson (1998) posit that current research and discoveries in the field of SLA seem to have no direct use to actual classroom

teaching and instruction. However, as far as actually understanding the mechanisms and science behind language acquisition is concerned, researches in second language acquisition have helped teachers to identify "the internal and external factors that account for why learners acquire an L2 in the way they do" (Ellis, 1994, p. 4)**.** This idea, of course, contradicts the belief of many teachers on teaching and even language teaching as magic, thereby seeing research as a threatening pursuit that may invalidate seemingly accepted and established practices in teaching. Thus, teachers have sometimes seen research and results from research as esoteric knowledge that is immaterial to actual teaching practice (Bashir, 2011). In addition, in most, if not all, in-service training manuals made and created for language teachers, which sometimes seem to be the last teacher development tool, research and contributing to research are seldom and sometimes not even mentioned (Bashir, 2011). All these points seem to suggest that there is a real divide between theory and practice, as theory from and through research has not provided much of the foundational education and training of teachers.

B. Problematic Intricacies of Classroom and Language Research

Development of Classroom Research

According to Mitchell (2009), in the first wave of classroom language research, much of classroom research was focused on understanding and knowing behaviors exemplified by good teachers in the hope that novice teachers will follow suit. In this regard, the focus of particular research was more on the teachers and less on the students. Simply, research was invested more on teacher evaluation and his or her effectiveness in teaching classroom concepts. During the second wave, the focus shifted to analyzing and researching audio-lingual methods and speech or language laboratories. This focus was still problematic as it discounted or ignored the actual subjects or the learners themselves. Thus, the third wave which focused on "classroom research came from theoretical developments that conceived conversational instruction as the performance of speech acts carrying illocutionary force" (Austen, 1962; Searle, 1969; in Mitchell, p. 677).

The changing and developing waves and trends in language classroom research were thus highly diachronic in the sense that research eventually veered toward realizing the functionality of language in general and language use in the classroom. This development then presents another problem for teachers and researchers especially since teachers and researchers or teacher-researchers have to shift focus from evaluating the effectiveness of the teacher to observing and analyzing language not only as the subject and medium of instruction but also as a discourse phenomenon that required suitable and appropriate standards, procedures, and instruments.

Language Discourse Analysis: Problems on Practice and Instruments

Perhaps there is nothing more discouraging for a researcher and thus a teacher-researcher than being simply told that the foremost problems or concerns of one's research pursuit are the instruments and mode and methods of analysis. This is so since instrumentation and methodology provide the foundation for the reliability and validity of a research undertaking (Crookes, 1990). For example, teacher-researchers may not be aware of the need to understand and apply appropriate unit of measures considering that most language teachers have not had the opportunity to undergo classes in discourse analysis where spoken and written utterances are, for example, unique or different. As Crookes (1990) notes, "researchers have been confronted with the fact that most grammars are based on a unit that is not defined for speech, but is based on the written mode of language" (p. 184). If, to a certain extent, researchers are confounded by this particular intricacy of discourse analysis, what more for a language teacher who may or may not be a performing language teacher.

Moreover, there is a need for teachers to know the stages of a discourse analysis system which contributes and determines to the validity, reliability, and

success of a research undertaking or pursuit. There are two crucial points, according to Crookes (1990), that determine reliability and validity. These are segmentation, or the way particular utterances in a transcript are broken down and analyzed, and the classification of broken down utterances into units. In a way, if teacher-researchers do get past the problem of transcription, they have segmentation and clarification to deal with, of which they may have little or no knowledge at all.

Standards are quite steep then for teacher-researchers, and these standards make research daunting, difficult, and insurmountable. For many foreign second language teachers, teacher-researchers do not usually know particular key concepts in research such as the observer's paradox, inter-rater agreement, and instrument validity, to name a few. Teachers have also failed to understand the actual use and application of "statistics, objectivity, hypotheses, large samples, and variables" (Bashir, 2011, p. 123) in their teaching practice vis-à-vis professional development. Basically, if a foreign language teacher does find the courage and encouragement to pursue research, he or she might or will face problems not only in the execution of research and in the simple rationalizing of research in relation to methods and instruments but also in the actual use of research in their professional growth and language teaching career.

Part 2: Transforming the Language Teacher into a Scholar-Practitioner

In the recent years, particular fields such as medicine, business, law, and psychology have adopted the scholar-practitioner model where employees have been given the opportunity and right to pursue further education and post-graduate studies to become reflective learners who can contribute to the improvement of workplace conditions (Coghlan, 2013). Similarly, in language research and language teaching, realizing practice and its importance in creating practitioners who are not only language teachers but are active stakeholders in the language learning and acquisition process is at the helm of providing a better research field that is relevant and necessary. As van Lier (1994) reasons, "practice must be seen as an opportunity

to do research, and as a source of theory" (p. 7). This idea then espouses the union of theory and practice, with actual language teachers who are in the actual practice of language teaching, being at the forefront of language research. Mitchell (2009) raises several points in order to realize the scholar-practitioner in language research and teaching.

A. University-Based Researchers with Group of Local/Community Researchers

Mitchell (2009) discusses that there are "experienced and confident practitioners" (p. 694) who actually do get published and cited in leading journals and publications. The problem appears not in trusting that teacher-researchers can make the grade but in being able to bring experienced university-based researchers down to the level of local schools and classrooms: private and public, modern and outdated, endowed and impoverished. However, in most non-English speaking countries, the problem of bridging this divide between university-based researchers and local community researchers or teacher-researchers is crippled by the mentality that those in the university are enlightened while those in the basic education practice are noble, with both groups thinking that they are unappreciated. Moreover, teacher-practitioners are also lacking in "both the knowledge and practical skills which must underpin good quality research" (Bashir, 2011, p. 124). In this case, the burden of bridging the divide does not fall on the basic education practitioners, who do not usually have the financial means, but on the experienced and confident university-based researchers who will have to go out of their way to reach out to the so-called masses of teachers and make these teachers scholars themselves.

B. The Suitability of Action Research to Teacher-Practitioner

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), one research model that has had considerable success is the action research model as it has allowed teachers, specifically language teachers, to immediately and essentially see the use of research as it is used to address current and contemporary curricular and instructional issues. Burns (2005) owes this relative success to a complex set of research experiences that

allow teachers to immediately see the need and relevance of action research which in turn provides for a reasonable set of research goals:

1. Exploring: feeling one's way into research topics;
2. Identifying : fact-finding to begin refining the topic;
3. Planning: developing an action plan for gathering data;
4. Collecting data: using initial data-gathering techniques related to the action;
5. Analyzing/reflecting: analyzing data to stimulate early reflection;
6. Hypothesizing/speculating: predicting based on analysis/reflection;
7. Intervening: changing and modifying teaching approaches;
8. Observing: noticing and reflecting on the outcomes of the changes;
9. Reporting: verbalizing and theorizing the processes and outcomes;
10. Writing: documenting accounts of the research; and
11. Presenting: giving reports/presentations of the research (Burns, 2005, p. 59).

Indeed, the experiences or processes delineated suggest the purposeful nature of action research. Processes like these may appeal to the teachers especially, since as practitioners who are in the frontline of teaching, the outcomes and results may help better classroom teaching and instruction. Still, these goals are not or may not even be fully realized in the context of basic education particularly in many developing countries given the limited time to execute lengthy processes. Ideal as these processes are, issues of practicality do surface given constraints in time and finances.

Moreover, time and finances are not the only concern. Burns (2005) writes that the current form and purposes of action research have been misconstrued by many as another instrument or criteria in the advancement of professional development; in other words, writing or making an action research is perceived as another requirement in a long list of requirements. As a result, feelings of ambivalence and disassociation emanate from having or requiring teachers to engage in a lengthy action research. Allwright (2003, 2005) suggests a type of exploratory research where teachers write a less stringent form of research whose goal is not to not necessarily

address research questions but to engage in a type of problem-solving or "puzzle-solving" endeavor that could actually ease the duties and functions, and better language teaching and instruction. Allwright lists down the principles of the exploratory research that he proposes:

> Principle 1: Put "quality of life" first.
> Principle 2: Work primarily to understand classroom life.
> Principle 3: Involve everybody.
> Principle 4: Work to bring people together.
> Principle 5: Make the work a continuous enterprise.
> Suggestion 1: Minimize the extra effort of all sorts for all concerned.
> Suggestion 2: Integrate the "work for understanding" into the existing working life of the classroom (Allwright, 2005, p. 360).

Now, these principles may appeal to the teachers since they work toward bettering the living and teaching conditions of the teachers. However, one missing aspect in this model that Allwright (2005) proposes remains to be the rise of a teacher toward some kind of progress as he or she grows in years and tenure. Thus, the better recourse is to have or conduct these exploratory researches in the presence and care of a university-based researcher or professor who will credit the exploratory researches as part and parcel of post-graduate academic units. For instance, in De La Salle Santiago Zobel High School, which is a competitive basic education school in the Philippines, math teachers have been enrolled in the post-graduate program of its mother university, De La Salle University Manila, with university professors themselves going to the high school. This setup satisfies all those involved as it validates the teachers' works, submissions, and courses taken by respected university professors who provide the "academic" atmosphere of a university while accommodating the concerns and issues faced by math teachers themselves. Furthermore, teachers are engaged in "a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in schools, or looking

for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement" (Bashir, 2011, p. 122).

C. A Modified-Scholar Practitioner Model

At this point, it goes without saying that the problem on the perceptions and apprehensions of teachers in engaging in research concerns manifold factors that are "attitudinal, conceptual, and procedural in nature" (Bashir, 2011, p. 124). A modified scholar-practitioner model may then solve problems that can lead teachers to realize better professional development, work compensation, and overall self-realization.

Figure 1. Modified Scholar-Practitioner Model for Teachers/Language Teachers

Figure 1, which is the proposed scholar-practitioner model of the present study, seeks to realize the teachers as cornerstones in their practice who are

competent because of research, who have been trained in research, and who earn well enough as they do more research. The model presents several avenues that can ultimately improve micro skills in writing, reading, speaking and listening. In her paper on giving feedback on student writing, Alamis (2010) used research to see what types of feedback would suit students' needs in improving writing. The author pointed out that different students require different types of feedback; thus, there is a need to always read literature from already accepted and researched models and types of feedback, to conduct action research, and to apply results of research in actual practice, thereby making the teacher an active participant in the learning model.

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to McClintock (2004), to develop scholarly skills, one must learn theories and how to integrate them with research so that a scholar-practitioner is able to understand and apply what he or she has learned to certain situations at hand. As can be deduced, a good scholar-practitioner has to be well-grounded on theory. Although the unique individualism of a language teacher, or a teacher in general for that matter, cannot be discounted, a teacher should immerse herself or himself in sound research in order to assure professional development in actual teaching in the classroom and as a contributing entity in the academe. There appears to be a need to ground teacher development on a strong research foundation where university-based professors actively recognize their role in reaching out and imparting what they know and understand about the workings of research and the impetus that drives research pursuit. In any case, teacher perceptions and apprehension may therefore be all in the mind. It may also seem not unfounded to say that theory and practice may be in the unwillingness and uneasiness of scholarly sectors in language teaching and teaching in general, which impedes the growth of teachers as scholar-practitioners or practitioner-scholars.

REFERENCES

Alamis, M. P. (2010). Evaluating students' reactions and responses to teachers' written feedback. *Philippine ESL Journal, 4,* 40-57.

Allwright, D. (2003). Exploratory practice: rethinking practitioner research in language teaching. *Language Teaching Research, 7(2),* 113-131.

Allwright, D. (2005). Developing principles for practitioner research: The case of exploratory practice. *The Modern Language Journal, 89*(3), 353-366.

Austen, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Barrot, J. S. (2013). A macro perspective on key issues in English as Second Language (ESL) pedagogy in the postmethod era: Confronting challenges through sociocognitive-transformative approach. *The Asia-Pacific Educational Research, 23*(3), 435-449.

Bashir, I. (2011). Professionalize Sudanese teachers' conception of work through action research. *English Language Teaching, 4*(2), 121-124.

Burns, A. (2005). Action research: An evolving paradigm? *Language Teaching, 38*(2), 57-74.

Clark, M. (1994). The dysfunctions of the theory/practice discourse. *TESOL Quarterly, 28,* 9-26.

Coghlan, D. (2013). Developing the scholar-practitioner. *De La Salle University Notes and Briefings, 1 (1)*, 1-6.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1990). *Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons and Evaluative Criteria* (pp. 418-427). California, US: University of California Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Crookes, G. (1990). The utterance, and other basic units for second language discourse analysis. *Applied Linguistics, 11*(2), 183-199.

Edge, J., & Mann, S. (2013). *Innovations in pre-service education and training for English language teachers.* London, UK: British Council.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freeman, D., & Johnson, K. (1998). Reconceptualizing the knowledge-base of language teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly, 32,* 397-417.

Gass, S. M. (2003). Input and interaction. In C. J. Doughty & M. H. Long (Eds.), *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 224-225). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Gass, S. M., Mackey, A., & Pica T. (1998). The Role of Input and Interaction in Second Language Acquisition: Introduction to the Special Issue. *The Modern Language Journal, 82* (3), 299-305.

Gibbons, P. (2003). Mediating language learning: Teacher interaction with ESL students in a content-based classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 37*, 274-272.

Hedgcock, J. (2002). Toward a socioliterate approach to second language teacher education. *Modern Language Journal, 86*(3), 299-317.

Johnson, K. (1997). The author responds . . . *TESOL Quarterly, 31,* 779-780.

Jourdenais, R. (2004). Finding membership in the discourse community of language educators. Paper presented at AAAL. Portland, OR.

Jourdenais, R. (2004). Language teacher education. In M. Long & C. Doughty (Eds.), *The Handbook of Language Teaching*. NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Kasper, G., & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 18,* 149-169.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (Eds.). (1988). *The action research planner*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Lantolf, J. P., & Pavlenko, A. (1995). Sociocultural theory and second language acquisition. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 15,* 108-124.

Lyster, R. (2001). Negotiation of form, recasts, and explicit correction in relation to error types and learner repair in immersion classrooms. Language Learning, 51 (Suppl. 1): 265-301.

Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second language research: Methodology and design.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Mackey, A., Gass, S., & McDonough, K. (2000). How do learners perceive interactional feedback? *Studies in Language Acquisition*, *22 (4),* 471-499.

Markee, N. (1997). Second language acquisition research: A resource for changing teachers' professional cultures. *Modern Language Journal, 81,* 80-93.

McClintock, C. (2004). Scholar practitioner model. In A. Distefano, K. E. Rudestam, & R. J. Silverman (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Distributed Learning* (pp. 393-397). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Mitchell, E. (2009). *Teaching for effective learning: The complete book of PEEL teaching procedures* (4th ed.). Australia: Peel Publications.

Nobis, M., Arrey-Wastavino, A., & De Leon, A.P. (2003). *Teaching versus research: toward the reconciliation of an academic dilemma.* Quinnipac University, & University of Minnesota. 1-16.

O'Malley, J. M., & Chamot, A. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Pienemann, M. (1999). *Language processing and second language development: Processability theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 471-484). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Tarone, E., & Allwright, D. (2005). Second language teacher learning and student second language learning: Shaping the knowledge base. In D. Tedick (Ed.), *Second Language Teacher Education: International Perspectives* (pp. 5-24). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

van Lier, L. (2000). Some features of a theory of practice. *TESOL Journal, 4,* 6-10.

Wallace, M. (1991). *Training foreign language teachers: A reflective approach.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yates, R., & Muchisky, D. (2003). On reconceptualizing teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly, 37,* 135-147.

About the Author

Jose Robert S. Reyes is a full-time senior high school teacher at De La Salle Santiago Zobel School. He is a graduate of Master of Arts in Teaching English Language (MATEL) at De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines. He is also an online tutor for Smarthinking.com, an online solutions company that provides feedback on improving student writing mostly for community colleges in the United States. He also conducts trainings and seminars on academic writing, research writing, and understanding plagiarism and its consequences.