TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OF ONTARIO

Research Symposium Special Edition

Foreword by: Hedy McGarrell and Robert Courchêne, co-editors

40038620

We are pleased to present the proceedings of the seventh annual Research Symposium, part of the 34th annual TESL Ontario Conference held in Toronto in November, 2006. The Research Symposium focused on three themes:

- Writing - Focus on Teacher Feedback
- Evaluation – Focus on Oral Skills
- Language and Settlement

The papers included in the proceedings are arranged according to these themes.

The symposia cover important issues for ESL practitioners and researchers. As in previous years, the themes were selected in consultation with the TESL Ontario membership and in conjunction with the Ontario Regional LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (Ontario). They reflect current instructional issues that confront classroom teachers with learners at all levels of subsequent language (L2) development.

Subsequent language (L2) teachers and researchers continually strive to improve the quality of the teaching and learning that take place in classrooms in different settings, involving a range of learners. Meeting the needs of these learners, creating optimal conditions for success and often advocating on their behalf frequently consumes the greatest portion of our energies, leaving little time for reading professional journals, attending professional development activities and doing research. In organizing the Research Symposium around pertinent themes and publishing the proceedings, TESL Ontario provides its members with an opportunity to keep abreast of recent research and learn about its application to day-to-day teaching. We are confident that readers will enjoy the written versions of the presentations related to the symposium themes and that they will provide a source of inspiration for teachers, researchers and other L2 professionals.

On behalf of TESL Ontario, we gratefully acknowledge the continued support of Citizenship and

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Immigration Canada (Ontario Access to Settlement and Information Services) and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (Ontario). Their commitment to this initiative has been an important source of encouragement in our efforts to organize the symposia and disseminate the proceedings. We hope that we can continue to count on their support in the years to come.

We would especially like to thank all the researchers who participated in the Research Symposium and took the time to submit written contributions for this publication to the members of the Reading Committee. Without their contribution, there would be neither symposia nor proceedings to read. Finally, we would like to thank members of the Reading Committee, the Symposium Moderators, the Conference Chair, Cheryl Richman, the Editor of *Contact*, Clayton Graves, Renate Tilson and the TESL Ontario office staff for supporting us in organizing the symposium and in preparing the publication of this Special Research Symposium Issue. Without them and their capable assistance, our task would have been far more difficult and considerably less pleasant. ❖

Hedy McGarrell
Robert Courchêne
Co-editors

Acknowledgements

TESL Ontario would like to acknowledge the support it received from the following organizations and individuals to arrange for and publish the proceedings of the Seventh Annual Research Symposium.

- Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- TESL Ontario Conference Committee
- The Presenters and Participants in the Research Symposium
- The Symposium Moderators
- Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario

Contact Editor: Clayton Graves

Reading Committee:

- Dr. Amelia Hope, University of Ottawa
- Dr. E. Marcia Johnson, Waikato University, NZ
- Dr. Parto Pajoohesh, University of Toronto

Introduction

On the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the Research Symposium, we are pleased to present this special refereed issue of *Contact*. Each paper included in this issue focuses on one of the three themes of the Research Symposium at the TESL Conference in 2006.

- Writing - Focus on Teacher Feedback
- Evaluation – Focus on Oral Skills
- Language and Settlement

The researchers whose work is included in these proceedings examined specific aspects of these themes to provide fellow researchers and language teachers with insights into new developments and current thinking on these aspects.

Theme 1: Writing - Focus on Teacher Feedback

Three papers focussing on the type and effectiveness of teacher feedback on L2 student writing in different contexts addressed the Writing theme. All three presentations have been included in this special issue of *Contact.* Ilona Leki reviews recent research findings on responding to L2 language writing in both writing and disciplinary classes. While confirming that all students request feedback on their writing, she points out that the type of feedback provided elicits different responses from students depending on the type of course and the nature of the task. Based on her own experiences teaching and researching writing and those of other researchers and practitioners, Leki concludes her paper with some tentative conclusions for responding to both macro and micro level features of student's written texts.

In the second paper, Usman Erdösy reports on a study he conducted at a Canadian university focussing on the type of feedback students received from the professor in a content-based course. His data include classroom observations, interviews, verbal protocols, and annotations on students' assignments. He considers feedback as a critical link between assessment and teaching. In addition, feedback provides a channel of communication between instructor and student. In analyzing the feedback the students received, Erdösy found that the content-area professor preferred context-based feedback tied in with class discussions. This contrasted with the detailed written feedback on the students' writing typically offered by TESL composition teachers. While agreeing that this type of feedback is valuable for students, responses to

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

student writing need to be situated in the larger context of discourse generated in a university course. To support his arguments, Erdösy analyses and presents the findings of how the students in the study reacted to the professor's feedback on their papers.

In the third paper on the Writing theme, Jill Cummings describes her study in which she examined ESL teachers' knowledge and practices related to content/subject matter in EAP writing instruction. She also traced the development of these teachers' knowledge based on their own perspectives. Her study describes three ESL teachers' perspectives on what they consider to be effective and appropriate content/subject matter for writing instruction in a pre-university, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. The study draws on the perspective of sociocultural theory that views teacher knowledge about EAP writing as an ongoing and dynamic development within the various communities of practice. Cummings' study on how the three EAP teachers provided feedback on their students' texts led her to conclude that it is within communities of practice that teachers learn how to teach. She argues that these communities support teacher participation, collaboration, and dialogue in day-to-day planning, curriculum development, and even research and, consequently, provide an effective starting point for future TESL education programs and professional development initiatives.

Theme 2: Evaluation – Focus on Oral Skills

Three presenters focussing on aspects of oral skills contributed to the Research Symposium. The work of two of these presenters has been included in this Special Issue. In the first paper, Kathryn Brillinger describes how the assessment of oral skills can affect teaching and learning in the classroom and questions whether existing forms of ESL teacher education programs adequately prepare teachers for evaluating oral assessment skills. Using speech samples as stimuli, she shows how it is possible to bring teachers to a greater understanding of the different elements that constitute oral skills and how they interplay in different contexts. The paper concludes with the presentation of a List of Oral Skills (a work in progress) Brillinger developed as a result of her research and practice.

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

In the second paper, David Wood examines the role formulaic sequences (FSs) – multiword lexical units which have particular meanings and are mentally stored and retrieved as single units – play in the development of spoken language frequency, more specifically, fluency. To examine the effect FSs have on L2 fluency, Wood conducted a study in which he recorded the speech samples of eleven L2 learners over a period of six months. His findings indicated that the fluency of these learners increased over the six-month study and that FSs may be linked to these gains. He concludes his paper with a number of pedagogical suggestions for improving L2 students' mastery of FSs.

Theme 3: Language and Settlement

The third theme of the Research Symposium focussed on the relationship between language and settlement in different Canadian contexts. The work of two of the three symposium presenters is included in this Special Issue; they focus on youth and adult immigrants respectively. In the first paper, Lee Gunderson reports on a subset of a longitudinal study involving 25,000 immigrant students in a west coast city. He examines the achievement of a number of groups of students in English, Science, Math and Social Studies as they progress from grades 8 to 12. The results, verified by an independent researcher, indicated that 60 per cent of the immigrant students disappeared from the cohort between grades 8 to 12 with nearly all students from one group (Spanish) dropping out. Gunderson concludes his paper with a plea for authorities to put in place policies that will offer these students better support mechanisms. Failing to do so, he points out, could possibly lead to a stratification of society along ethnic lines.

In their paper, Sutama Ghosh and Raymond Garrison report on the settlement patterns of Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto. After presenting their theoretical framework linking language, settlement and identity and describing the Bengali and Bangladeshi communities in Toronto, they describe their research study. The results clearly demonstrate not only that there are differences in the settlement patterns and language needs of these two groups but that within each group there exist important differences. They claim that ESL teachers often have little knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of their students. Lack of such background

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

knowledge or resorting to broad over-generalizations may lead to cultural stereotypes and the treatment of all individuals from a given area in the same manner. Ghosh and Garrison argue that ESL teachers need to be aware that immigrants bring their sociocultural and political identities to their new home. These distinct identities influence individual groups' settlement patterns and may result in different ESL needs. They suggest that intra-immigrant group differences exist in terms of ESL requirements, and that immigrants' distinct cultural identities shape their ESL needs. The paper concludes with practical suggestions for ESL teachers for meeting the diverse needs of immigrant communities. ❖

Hedy McGarrell

Robert Courchêne

Co-editors

Contact us

Contact welcomes articles of general interest to association members, including announcements, reports, articles, calls for papers and news items.

Contributors should include their full name, title and affiliation. Text should be e-mailed to: teslontario@telus.net or mailed on CD to:

Editor
TESL Association of Ontario,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 405,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1L2

Deadlines are January 30, April 30 and June 30. TESL Ontario's phone numbers are: (416) 593-4243, Fax (416) 593-0164.

Website: www.teslontario.org.

Inquiries regarding membership or change of address should be addressed to the TESL Ontario Membership Coordinator at teslmembership@telus.net.

Inquiries regarding advertising rates and reservation of advertising space should be addressed to the Office Coordinator at teslontario@telus.net.

The statements made and opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of TESL Ontario.

Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by TESL Ontario nor guarantee accuracy of information therein. ■

THEME ONE: TEACHER FEEDBACK

Research on Feedback to L2 Writing

By Ilona Leki

Abstract

Writing teachers use a number of techniques to guide students toward increased second language (L2) writing proficiency, such as making particular kinds of assignments, creating extensive guidelines, brainstorming ideas as a class, providing models, and direct teaching. Yet, the most powerful means of instruction is arguably the responses that teachers, including disciplinary teachers, make to actual student drafts. This paper reviews research literature on teacher response to L2 writing and student response to teacher response in an attempt to broadly sketch some tentative conclusions about "best practices" for responding both to micro and macro level features of L2 student texts.

In the summer of 2006 I taught a graduate course on Second Language (L2) writing at the University of Toronto. Most of the students in the course were practicing teachers, and for their final papers over half of them elected to write about giving feedback. This is clearly a topic that teachers turn to readily because we sense, I think, how important it is to a writer's growth to have someone read and respond to what they have written.

"…L2 students generally crave intervention in their work."

Information on how to perform literacy tasks comes in a number of forms: detailed descriptions of what the task requires, models of previously completed tasks (including readings in the disciplines), and feedback on an attempted task completion. Arguably, however, regardless of the care with which task directions are created and followed and regardless of the quality of available models to which L2 students might be referred, it is the response to the attempted completion of the task - the grade, the commentary, the praise, or criticism - that will send the strongest message about whether or not the attempt has matched expectations. As such, it is likely to have the greatest impact on the writer's developing sense of where to go with the next writing attempt. If responders say they are interested in ideas but give a great deal of feedback that is not focused on ideas, they train their student writers to focus on and value what gets addressed, no matter what the teachers say they are doing or want to do. This seems to be true both for writing teachers and teachers of courses in the disciplines. In any case the research evidence, for example, Dong (1998),

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

makes it clear that L2 students generally crave intervention in their work.

This paper reviews recent findings on responding to L2 writing that strike me as the most insightful from research, both on writing classes and in disciplinary classes. But that review might usefully be prefaced by brief consideration of why feedback to writing continues to be a topic that we return to as we look for that perfect constellation of responses that will produce better writing and better writers.

- First, we language, writing and disciplinary teachers—all of us who respond to student writing—have probably never really experienced good models of feedback to our own writing. Consequently, we do not have those examples to draw on in responding to our students, which leaves many of us insecure about our responding practices.
- Furthermore, knowing exactly what will improve a text is not an easy skill for teachers to develop. After all, some editors are better than others. Not all of us are talented in seeing just what a text needs.
- Plus, readers read differently. I certainly see this at the professional level in my work as a journal editor. Reviewers disagree; my co-editor and I disagree; or we both agree with each other and disagree with the reviewers. Similarly, two readers of student papers may also not agree on what would improve the text.
- Next, responding behaviours, like anything else, do not exist in a vacuum. To give reasonable feedback, it is important to keep in mind what the writing task was, what the goal of the writing course is, what has just been taught in the course, and what the student's last paper looked like. In addition, possibilities for feedback are constrained by institutional, historical, and situational factors that may be beyond the control of both writer and responder. As Goldstein (2005) notes, teachers may have too

"…knowing exactly what will improve a text is not an easy skill for teachers to develop."

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

many students, as is often the case in EFL contexts; certain contexts may not value writing, or may not value L2 students; there may be curricular impingements on the writing class, requiring "new" words rather than revisions; students may have to face entrance or exit exams that force writing teachers to orient their work with them in a particular way. All of these factors not only complicate response to L2 texts but also help to explain why it is so difficult to find best practices, put them into play in a given institution, and expect best results.

- Individual students also respond differently to the feedback they get. Students are not homogeneous in their ability or willingness to act, even on feedback they request. Left to their own devices, for example, students report (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990) that they make a mental note of feedback on sentence level issues such as grammatical errors but, unless required to, do nothing more with that feedback. Furthermore, we have the painful example of Fiona Hyland's (1998) research participant, Samorn, a graduate student who went to Australia from Thailand to improve her written English for her major, business. In Thailand, she had often been complimented on her excellent English grammar, was proud of her abilities, and wanted to perfect her already strong skills by eliciting response to grammatical forms from her writing teacher. The writing teacher complied, as requested, and although the teacher also gave praise and encouragement, the fact that she was detecting errors and pointing them out became singularly demoralizing for Samorn, who increasingly lost confidence in her L2 writing and ultimately changed her area of study from business to tourism because it would not require much writing in English. This example underlines that it is not always possible to be sure how writers will respond to particular feedback. (See also the example cited in L1 by Fuller & Lee, 2002. In the instance they cite, although by all appearances the student is reacting well to the feedback she

"Students are not homogeneous in their ability or willingness to act..."

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

is receiving, in fact the feedback she receives makes her increasingly anxious about plagiarizing, a situation of which the teacher/responder is unaware.)

Responding in Writing Classes

Despite all the complications, research findings have been nearly unanimous in noting that L2 students desire and appreciate feedback on their written work, especially from their teachers, and that they do pay some kind of attention to it. For example, in Ferris' 1997 research on students' uptake of teacher feedback at the ideational or rhetorical level, students used 3/4 of the teacher's feedback comments in their revisions. And yet, it is sobering to realize that only 1/2 of that uptake led to a better draft and 1/3 of the drafts actually became worse (F. Hyland & K. Hyland, 2006).

"Knowing how a teacher responds to students' writing is a first step toward providing better feedback."

Nevertheless, this 1997 research by Ferris, while only examining the feedback practices of one teacher, does allow us to see some of the effects on one group of students of using hedges, questions, directives, marginal comments, and end comments. Those interested in analyzing their own responding behaviours might consider an action research project using Ferris' categories. (See Ferris' suggestions in Ferris, 2003). There, in fact, is research evidence showing that teachers think they do one thing but actually do something else. Knowing how a teacher responds to students' writing is a first step toward providing better feedback. Ferris suggests first numbering every comment made on a student's paper and then following her categories to analyze the feedback given. (see Table 1.)

These categories can be used to sort the analyses into a grid for ease of analysis, something like Table 2, again based on Ferris' (2003) scheme.

The point in filling out the grids is not to evaluate the responses but simply to discover what an individual teacher actually does. This allows the individual to compare reality with what the teacher thinks he/she does or, more to the point, he/she would like to be doing. A further step in this self-study, as a form

(Continued on page 12)

Table 1: Analytic Model and Codes for Teacher Commentary

A. Comment length (number of words)	
1	Short (1-5 words)
2	Average (6-15 words)
3	Long (16-25 words)
4	Very Long (26+ words)
B. Comment types	
1 = Question asking for information	EXAMPLE: *Did you work out this problem with your roommates?*
2 = Question giving direction	EXAMPLE: *Can you provide a thesis statement here-- What did you learn from this?*
3 = Statement giving direction	EXAMPLE: *This paragraph might be better earlier in the essay.*
4 = Imperative giving direction	EXAMPLE: *Mention what Zinsser says about parental pressure.*
5 = Question giving information	EXAMPLE: *Most states do allow a waiting period before an adoption is final--Do you feel that all such laws are wrong?*
6 = Statement Giving Information	EXAMPLE: *Most states do allow a waiting period before an adoption is final--Do you feel that all such laws are wrong?*
7 = Positive Comment/Statement or Exclamation	EXAMPLE: *A very nice start to your essay! You've done an impressive job of finding facts and quotes to support your arguments.*
8 = Grammar/Mechanics Comment/ Question, Statement, or Imperative	EXAMPLES: **Past or present tense?* **Your verb tenses are confusing me in this paragraph.* **Don't forget to spell-check!*
C. Hedges	
0 = No hedge	
1 = Hedge included	*Lexical hedges: "Maybe," "Please," "might," etc. *Syntactic hedges: e.g., "<u>Can you</u> add an example here?" *"Positive Softeners": "<u>You've raised some good points</u>, but..."
D. Text-specific comment	
0 = Generic comment (could have been written on any paper)	EXAMPLE: *Nice Intro*
1 = Text-Specific Comment	EXAMPLE: *Why is the American system better for children, in your opinion?*

"There, in fact, is research evidence showing that teachers think they do one thing but actually do something else..."

(Continued from page 10)

of self-analysis or action research, might be to continue the research by analyzing which feedback suggestions are taken up by students in a subsequent revision and which simply died there in the margins. Is there a pattern?

Along those lines, in addition to analyzing the kinds of feedback writing teachers give, other research has looked at which kinds of feedback result in student uptake. Ferris and Roberts (2001) provide some evidence that, in terms of responding to sentence-level error, simply noting the place of the error was as effective in their study as either using symbols to indicate the type of error made or directly correcting the errors. Research on oral feedback in student/

(Continued on page 13)

"The point in filling out the grids is not to evaluate the responses but simply to discover what an individual teacher actually does."

Table 2: Analysis Charts

Comment #	Length	Type	Hedge	Text-Specific
1	2	5	0	1
2				

Total comments	
Short	
Average	
Long	
Ask for Information	
Request/Question	
Request/Statement or imperative	
Give information (any form)	
Positive	
Grammar	
# of Hedges	
# of Text-based	

(Continued from page 12)

teacher conferences by Goldstein and Conrad (1990) and by Strauss and Xiang (2006) and in writing centres by Williams (2004) all indicate that students incorporate more teacher/tutor suggestions more satisfactorily when the students engage in the interaction over their texts. That is, when they actively participate in the oral conference and both negotiate their understandings of what is being suggested and articulate their own positions on these suggestions, accepting or objecting to them. This would make sense: engaging in the interaction is bound to help clarify the responders' suggestions and cause the writer to process them more deeply than simply listening to advice on what to do.

However, the news is not necessarily as straightforward or good as we might hope. Williams (2004) looked not only at which of the responders' suggestions were included in subsequent revisions but then also had the original drafts and the revised drafts evaluated. What she found was that there was no noticeable improvement in the revised versions, which were not rated significantly higher than the original drafts had been.

Research by Conrad and Goldstein (1999) may shed a little light on this. It seems that the most difficult feedback for students is questions asking how or why, that is, questions or feedback comments asking for explanations or analyses. Most likely what is so difficult for the students is that they do not know how to revise in response to such feedback. This may mean that they do not quite know what analysis or explanation means, something which can be addressed in the writing class or with individual students through scaffolding or modelling. Or students' lack of uptake of this feedback may mean they do not have enough information about the topic to provide the analysis or explanation, something that should be addressed in the writing class through selection of appropriate writing assignments. I would argue that asking students to express yes/no, pro/con opinions on complex topics like homelessness or gun control or racism or any other social issue of the day after reading two articles on the topic is simply not an appropriate writing assignment, leaving the students at a loss for information when asked through teacher feedback to explore the topic more fully.

Conrad and Goldstein (1999) also note that analyses and explanations are time-consuming, more so than responding to such teacher requests as an

(Continued on page 14)

"…lack of uptake of this feedback may mean they do not have enough information about the topic to provide the analysis or explanation…"

(Continued from page 13)

additional example or a clearer thesis statement. The students in their study were able to provide these. But because the revisions called for by 'analysis' or 'explanation' requests are time-consuming, Conrad and Goldstein suggest that students may respond quickly with requests for revision but may be more reluctant to respond to the time-consuming requests for reasons unrelated to writing ability, such as lack of time, lack of motivation, and/or lack of interest.

In terms of students' own sense of what kind of feedback is most helpful, an article focused on L1 students provides interesting information. Straub (1997) polled 142 L1 students on their opinions of 40 different text annotations written in response to the same text, a text on legalizing marijuana, by a group of well-known L1 writing specialists. The annotations addressed everything from punctuation to organization to affect to argument and included both explicit and implicit praise and criticism. The following responses received the highest ratings from the students polled:

> Your paper might be clearer if you state, point by point, your opponent's view, as clearly and objectively as you can. Then you can deal with each of his arguments and show the weaknesses in this position.
>
> In your next draft try to focus on developing more convincing arguments against legalized drugs. For instance, what can you do to show how drugs like marijuana and cocaine would be more dangerous if they were legal and therefore more available?

The lowest ranked response was:

> These arguments are not convincing.

"…students may respond quickly with requests for revision but may be more reluctant to respond to the time-consuming requests…"

L2 students are of course much more heterogeneous in every way than first year U.S. college writers; nevertheless, I would imagine that results of a similar study of such students would produce similar results. What students wanted was specific directive feedback that answered the writer's question: "I

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

understand what you think I should do but now how do I do that? Give me some ideas." Consequently, the most helpful feedback gives the student not just a comment, question, or suggestion but includes fairly specific advice or suggestions on how to go about responding to the feedback, pointing the writer toward the way to proceed.

Finally, in terms of feedback by writing teachers, there seems to be a growing recognition of the affective side of feedback such that good feedback is seen not only as text specific and explicit but also writer specific, personalized, a communication between two people. Feedback to L2 student writing helps to configure the human relationship between the student and teacher. As Ken and Fiona Hyland (2006) point out "...learners are historically and sociologically situated active agents who respond to what they see as valuable and useful and to *people* they regard as engaging and credible" (p. 220) [emphasis added]. They suggest that feedback can perform the important function of maintaining social bonds between teacher and student.

Responding in the Disciplines

Turning to responding to L2 student writing outside of ESL or writing classes, in courses across the disciplines, there is less information. However, my own interest in what happened to my L2 students after they left my writing classes has prompted me to conduct several interview-and document-based studies with both undergraduate and graduate L2 students on this issue. (See Leki, 2006; 2007) I was interested in the issue partly because I wanted to determine more precisely what I should address in my classes, including what kinds of things I could tell my students to anticipate experiencing across the curriculum.

I learned first of all that many papers assigned in disciplinary courses are due at the end of the term and so are never returned to students at all. If there is any feedback on those papers, the students never see it.

Second, even in cases where professors do write feedback on students' papers and return them to students, there are rarely built-in opportunities for revisions. Although both undergraduates and graduates may see where they might

(Continued on page 16)

"...good feedback is seen not only as text specific and explicit but also writer specific, personalized, a communication between two people..."

(Continued from page 15)

improve what they wrote, they never actually revise and never get a response about how successful that revision turned out to be. I found only two consistent exceptions to this pattern. The first was among graduate students who were writing dissertations, theses, or preparing professional publications or presentations. In those cases, students were more likely to be involved with their professors in cycles of feedback that led to revision. Even there, however, one graduate student I interviewed noted that when he asked a professor on his PhD exam committee for feedback on his writing, the professor replied that he would give him feedback—at the dissertation defense! Other L2 students expressed frustration generally at not getting from faculty as full a response to their written work as they hoped.

> Interviewer/Respondent:
>
> I : Did they return the work to you with written comments?
>
> R: Some but that is not a common practice; I expected more and would like more.
>
> R: ... professor didn't provide many comments ... She just write overall evaluation. She said, "Wonderful paper." The result of the paper is good, but I don't know what is good or what is bad.

"Although both undergraduates and graduates may see where they might improve what they wrote, they never actually revise..."

The other circumstance in the data I collected where students received feedback that led to revision was when a professor announced generally to the whole class that he or she would be willing to look at first drafts or outlines of a writing assignment before it was due. For the series of projects I did related to these topics, I also interviewed about 50 professors and nearly all the professors who made these kinds of offers said the same thing—that the students who took them up on the offer were nearly always L2 students, indicating again that these students craved feedback on their writing.

My research includes several instances in which my research participants expressed another kind of frustration. This scenario typically occurred with the first writing assignment in a new course. Without a good sense of how much effort would be required to do well or how their work would be evaluated, students who put a great deal of time and energy into a piece of writing and then received mini-

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

mal response found the experience irritating and disappointing. For Jan, one of my undergraduate research participants, the first essay in his religions course required the students to reflect in two to three pages on a time when they learned something. Jan complained about how long it had taken him to come up with an idea for this essay and to find ways to stretch that idea out to the required two pages, always his main goal in his humanities classes. When we talked about this assignment Jan complained:

> Jan: The only comment I got was "Thanks." ... That was big comment.

He resented, as do many students, not receiving detailed feedback on work he had struggled with.

When feedback was not quite so minimalist, which tended to occur more in students' majors than in general education courses, one of the goals of written response by professors across the disciplines seemed to be to initiate these students into disciplinary language and concepts. An example I have of this is writing submitted by Yuko, one of my undergraduate research participants. Here are parts of the write-up of an interview she submitted in her social work class with her professor's feedback written in the right hand column. Yuko had interviewed a social worker she calls M. (See Table 3.)

The professor's changes might elicit at least the following observations:

1) Some of his changes were essentially arbitrary: which/that; Ms M..., writer/author

2) Some of the changes represented his ideas and not Yuko's: entire last section.

3) The professor made some of Yuko's points more generalized and less specific to her interview because of the use that would later be made of this text in the Social Work curriculum beyond his particular class in a graduation portfolio SW students were required to create in their last term at the university. So some of the feedback was shaped by broad contextual constraints.

"…students who put a great deal of time and energy into a piece of writing and then received minimal response found the experience irritating and disappointing."

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

4) Yuko knew that she would not and did not need to accept his changes.

Yuko was perfectly aware that her professor had changed the meaning of some of her sentences, but she felt he tried to make her phrasings more academic and was generally pleased at this kind of initiation into social work jargon and thinking.

Several of the L2 students I worked with responded to invitations to turn in first drafts and get feedback on them before revising and re-submitting for evaluation and they were generally assiduous in taking on the professors' comments and corrections. For example, here is the beginning and the end of a final paper by Yang, a nursing student who had a fairly difficult time with English and whose nurs-

(Continued on page 19)

"…one of the goals of written response by professors across the disciplines seemed to be to initiate these students into disciplinary language and concepts."

Table 3

Original	**Alterations underlined**
the writer asked M…	the writer asked <u>Ms</u> M…
She emphasized the importance of knowledge about those insurance policies such as eligibility and benefits.	She emphasized the importance of <u>not only knowing</u> about insurance policies <u>in general but having a clear understanding of</u> eligibility <u>requirements</u> and benefits <u>that are available</u>.
M… expressed a strong feeling toward the money issues which are behind these policies.	M… expressed a strong feeling toward the <u>monetary</u> issues <u>that</u> are <u>often</u> behind these policies.
She said, "Social welfare policy is not a pleasant issue for people to deal with."	She said, "Social welfare policy is not a pleasant issue for people." [i.e., changed quoted interview material!]
The writer	The <u>author</u> ["writer," which was not changed earlier in the text refers to Yuko! Her professor required this paper to be written in the third person.]
The writer concluded there are ways of utilizing social welfare policy in her future practice. As a first step, the writer will begin by obtaining knowledge about social welfare policies associate with her field practicum setting (i.e. health care).	The writer concluded <u>we are always using policies. The issue is knowing about policies, analyzing these policies and often trying to change policies. Being active in the policy-making process assists social workers in meeting their mission</u>.

(Continued from page 18)

ing professor had looked over and annotated only the first two pages of an earlier draft:

From page one:

> Group B streptococcus (GBS) is the leading cause of neonatal infections in the United States. The approach of screening and chemoprophylaxia of GBS has been inconsistent since its emergence in 1970s.

From page six, which the professor did not see:

> The improve the sensity of rapid-detection kits should be a priority of resaech, which would make it possible to detect parturients' status of GBS in labor or at administration.

Yang carefully incorporated every suggestion her professor made on the draft of the first pages and the difference between the first and last pages seems clear.

Finally in an interview study of L2 graduate-student writing, I collected, analyzed and categorized the written responses from professor feedback on a total of 311 pages, representing 18 different courses in 16 disciplines. There were over 1200 comments which I grouped into 9 categories (Table 4):

Table 4: Numbers of written comments by categories

Language/writing	299
Checks, underlines, etc.	287
Substantive response	275
Evaluative comment	113
Grades	102
Professional enculturation	63
Task management	47
Name use	14
Illegible comment	3
Total	1203

As this shows, comments on language and/or writing headed the frequency list, followed by more ambiguous checks, question marks, underlinings, and other such graphics. It was not always possible (for me, at least) to tell what they were intended to communicate so although these markings were second in frequency, what to make of them was not so clear to me although it may have been to the students.

The third largest category of comments, close behind the first two in

(Continued on page 20)

"…she felt he tried to make her phrasings more academic and was generally pleased at this kind of initiation into social work jargon and thinking."

(Continued from page 19)

number of appearances, was substantive comments referring to the content of the student's text, including calculations and tables. This category subsumed a large variety of subcategories.

Presumably correcting the student's interpretation and elaborating content gave the student a clear indication of where and how the professor expected the student to alter or expand his/her understanding of the course material and was appreciated by the students looking for guidance from their professors, an appreciation that was reflected in the students' interview comments.

Post-feedback action: The role of attention

As noted earlier, almost no students were called upon to revise their work. Nevertheless, the L2 graduate students generally reported reading the feedback comments with close attention. In fact, every one of the 21 L2 graduate students I interviewed for the study expressed the wish that they could get detailed feedback on what they had written in their disciplines, but they rarely did. Typical answers to interview questions emphasized the importance of feedback in guiding content, writing, and language.

> R: Yes, I want to know what the professor expects. ... Without comments, I don't know what I did wrong or what I did right ... what is expected from the project, what is suitable.

> R: ... I read it very carefully, like every word ... I'm thankful for every help ... teachers in Germany don't do that carefully and teachers do it here, and I really appreciate that.

Nearly all the students were extremely attentive to the feedback they got but, as noted, not all the students were lucky enough to get careful feedback. In fact, two students remarked that in their experience feedback was so rare that when course work came back to them with any kind of commentary whatsoever, they each read it particularly carefully because they assumed that, if the professor bothered to make comments, the comments must be especially important ones.

(Continued on page 21)

"It was not always possible (for me, at least) to tell what they were intended to communicate..."

(Continued from page 20)

Not that all the students accepted the feedback uncritically. Three students noted that although they tried to read feedback they received, the professors' handwriting was nearly unintelligible to them. Another student, perhaps reacting to the aggressive tone and sheer abundance of her professor's comments, said she did not read them. And one submitted the comments to critical scrutiny, noting:

> R: ... at the beginning I think my professor's feedback absolutely accurate. Then I will [change] according [to] them and re-correct them. But after a while I have been ... here, sometimes I will thinking about if, is his feedback right?

Expectations for language feedback

In terms of language feedback, and as displayed in Table 4, language/writing feedback was the largest category of feedback these students received. Overwhelmingly greater numbers of these L2 graduate students felt more confident in the content of their writing than in the expression of their ideas. Yet, sev-

(Continued on page 22)

"...almost no students were called upon to revise their work..."

Table 5: Substantive comment types

Type of comment	Number of instances	per cent of total number of instances (= 275)	Number of professors
Correcting student's interpretation	48	17	8
Elaborating content	47	17	8
Requesting clarification	39	14	7
Requesting elaboration	33	12	10
Correcting/rejecting calculation	16	6	3
Requesting information	5	2	3

(Continued from page 21)

eral students noted that they never expected any help with language. As some students said, they did not see language improvement as part of their major professors' job description:

> R: They are not in charge of my writing improve.
>
> R: I'm sure probably they don't have time to correct our English. ... if they have time [it would help], but that's not their work.
>
> R: My professor is not my grammar teacher so I cannot expect him to correct my English.

"Nearly all the students were extremely attentive to the feedback they got..."

The picture we get of these students then is that they are highly motivated to produce better written work, very responsive to any feedback they get, and craving more. What these students hoped for from the feedback was a clear sense of expectations and of standards, information about where specifically they were performing adequately and how, specifically, they were falling short. The novice's question, "How did I do?" or "How am I doing?," requesting evaluation appears to be widespread and even urgent. The need to feel sure that they are learning or somehow intellectually taking on the correct information or concepts or values, phrased in the correct, discipline-appropriate language, may help to account for the insecurity suggested by these students' intensely expressed desire for even more feedback than they were getting.

Prior's (1995) description of the situation of one of his L1 research participants is suggestive in this regard. His participant Liz received high evaluations in her graduate geography class yet seemed unconvinced of her mastery of the material, noting that in her seminar paper she used disciplinary terms whose meaning she did not fully grasp. She suspected that her professor, who of course did know the complete meaning of the term, might have been reading into her use of the term his own grasp of it. Prior plausibly suggests that disciplinary faculty essentially must respond to their students' writing by filling in the knowledge gaps in just the way Liz suggested in order partly to enculturate but

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 22)

also partly to keep the conversation going between two people with highly asymmetrical knowledge bases. In my study of graduate students, it was perhaps in part this vague awareness that the professor was reading more into their work than they themselves could at this stage of their development that gave the participants a sense of insecurity about what they wrote and prompted such insistence on more feedback.

The conclusions I come to based on my research on feedback practices across the curriculum is that L2 professionals potentially have an important role to play by devising means of sensitizing disciplinary faculty to:

- L2 students' desire for more feedback;
- L2 students' silence about that need, thus making it the faculty's responsibility, given their positions of greater power, to initiate negotiations with their students on how much and what kind of intervention is most efficiently delivered for the professor and useful for the student.

In addition, disciplinary faculty can be encouraged to help in the following areas:

- returning work submitted;
- writing legibly or using electronic response to course work;
- agreeing to respond to L2 students more, especially by modelling appropriate disciplinary discourse;
- maintaining and periodically reiterating an open invitation to students to consult about returned work;
- encouraging students to share their post-feedback papers and discuss the responses with peers, perhaps thereby clarifying feedback;
- occasionally (or often) offering the opportunity for revision, even of only a paragraph or two, which would provide a narrowed and focused field of attention and decrease the burden entailed for both student and professor.

(Continued on page 24)

"…several students noted that they never expected any help with language. "

(Continued from page 23)

As for L2 writing classes, I believe our understanding of what makes for good writing assignments and good feedback has improved a great deal over the years. But our writing classes cannot really hope to prepare students for the many varied writing contexts they will encounter as L2 students in English medium settings. Writing is not a generalized skill that can be learned once and for all in a writing class and then is simply there to call upon at will in other contexts. People do not simply write. They write something to someone for some reason and in some particular genre. It is difficult to reproduce in writing classrooms non-writing-class conditions, and yet long-term improvement in writing proficiency is probably most likely to occur in response to non-writing-class contexts that require writing in specified genres to particular audiences for authentic reasons.

"Writing is not a generalized skill that can be learned once and for all in a writing class..."

In long-term research on L1 writers, Carroll (2002) found that students who never did particularly well in first year writing courses often became entirely competent, sometimes even accomplished, writers in their majors by their senior years. And yet these same good writers still could not write well in the kinds of genres and for the kinds of purposes typical of their first year writing classes. In other words our writing courses can help set students on the right track, in terms both of some important writing skills and of affect or emotions and feelings about their writing in English. But in the end they are not learning to write in English so that they can perform well in writing classes. They have to move through new discourse landscapes and adapt to them on their own. Nevertheless, we can do at least two things to help our students negotiate those landscapes. First, we can discuss with them what they may find across the curriculum and how they might maximize the amount and usefulness of feedback from disciplinary faculty. Paralleling the efforts we can make with disciplinary faculty, we might suggest a few strategies to L2 students to maximize the amount and usefulness of feedback from disciplinary faculty:

- take advantage of any invitation to turn in first drafts or ask about the possibility of doing so;
- discuss their interest in receiving feedback, even if only on a limited amount of text;

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

- ask for just one or two major points to work on to improve a text;
- revise text in response to feedback and show the revision to the professor;
- show written work to peers.

Second, we can continue to improve our own feedback practices, first by investigating what we really do through research on these practices and reflecting on whether or not this is what we want to be doing, and second by turning to published work on L2 writing feedback. Recent books by Dana Ferris and Lynn Goldstein provide many tips on giving good feedback in writing classes and are excellent starting points for further practical exploration of these issues. ❖

"…we can continue to improve our own feedback practices…"

References

References

Carroll, L. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Cohen, A., & Cavalcanti, M. (1990). Feedback on written compositions: Teacher and student verbal reports. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second language writing: Insights for the classroom* (pp. 155-177). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Dong, Y. (1998). Non-native graduate students' thesis/dissertation writing in science: Self-reports by students and their advisors from two U.S. institutions. *English for Specific Purposes, 17*, 369-390.

Ferris, D. (2003). *Response to student writing*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ferris, D. (1997). The influence of teacher commentary on student revision. *TESOL Quarterly, 31*, 315-339.

Ferris, D. & Roberts, B. (2001). Error feedback in L2 writing classes: How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*, 161-184.

Fuller, G. & Lee, A. (2002). Assembling a generic subject. In R. Coe, Lingard, L., & Teslenko, T. (Ed.), *The rhetoric and ideology of genre: Strategies for stability and change.* (pp. 207-224). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Goldstein, L. (2005). *Teacher written commentary in second language writing classrooms*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Goldstein, L. & Conrad, S. (1990). Student input and negotiation of meaning in ESL writing conferences. *TESOL Quarterly, 24*, 443-460.

Hyland, F. (1998). The impact of teacher-written feedback on individual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 7*, 255-286.

Hyland, K. & Hyland, F. (2006). Contexts and issues in feedback on L2 writing: An introduction. In K. Hyland, & Hyland, F. (Ed.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues* (pp. 1-19). New York: Cambridge University Press.

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from page 26)

Leki, I. (2007). *Undergraduates in a second language: Challenges and complexities of academic literacy development*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Leki, I. (2006). "You cannot ignore": Graduate L2 students' experience of and responses to written feedback practices within their disciplines. In K. Hyland & F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues* (pp. 266-285). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Prior, P. (1995). Redefining the task: An ethnographic examination of writing and response in graduate seminars. In D. Belcher, and Braine, G. (Eds.) (Ed.), *Academic writing in a second language: Essays on research and pedagogy* (pp. 47-82). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Straub, R. (1997). Students' reactions to teacher comments: An exploratory study. *Research in the Teaching of English, 31*, 91-119.

Strauss, S., & Xiang, X. (2006). The writing conference as a locus of emergent agency. *Written Communication, 23*, 355-396.

Williams, J. (2004). Tutoring and revision: Second language writers in the writing center. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 173-201.

References

THEME ONE: TEACHER FEEDBACK

Responding to Student Writing in a Content-area Undergraduate Course: Implications for ESL Pedagogy

By Usman Erdösy

Abstract

From the perspective of writing instructors, content-area faculty's feedback on students' assignments often appears to be limited and even cryptic. However, the present paper argues that if feedback is contextualized in the discourse taking place in an undergraduate course, it will acquire much added signification and carry useful information for students and writing instructors alike. This argument, which carries implications for both research and instruction, is supported with data from a case study of assessment and feedback in an undergraduate history course taught at a Canadian university. ■

Abstract

Feedback links teaching to assessment, offering a channel of communication between professors and their students, and between content-area faculty and the writing instructors to whom students with 'writing problems' are routinely referred. However, from the perspective of writing instructors, the feedback practices of content-area faculty often appear opaque at best (e.g., Lillis, 2001). The argument presented here is that content-area faculty's feedback can yield valuable information for students, and important lessons for researchers and writing instructors alike, but only if it is situated in the overall discourse generated in a university course. To support this argument, this paper will review the current state of research, then report on a case study of assessment and feedback in an undergraduate course entitled *20th-century China*, offered at a Canadian university.

Content-area faculty's perspectives on writing and feedback

Although attempts to bring together the perspectives of content-area and composition faculty are rare, Fishman and McCarthy (2001), provide a wel-

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

come example of collaboration. Fishman's perspective is of interest here, as he identified his goals for his introductory philosophy course as imparting a syllabus without 'compromising on standards' and 'certifying' students' competence in 'Standard American English at the college level.' While situating his teaching practice in the ideals of Dewey, Gramsci, and to a lesser extent Freire, Fishman viewed writing primarily as a vehicle for demonstrating the achievement of course goals. He expected a finished assignment for assessment rather than multiple drafts, and referred students to a writing centre if they lacked the ability to write logically, clearly, and purposefully. Systemic factors may, of course, have contributed to his views. Large and increasing class sizes combined with an overriding concern with research do not encourage the structuring of assignments through cycles of drafting and response. However, Jeffery and Selting (1999) argue that a failure to recognize writing as a 'complex, multidimensional learning activity' may also be underlying content-area faculty's tendency to approach students' work as 'assignment judges', rather than as mentors and guides. These arguments are elaborated in a study of content-area faculty's feedback, which found that the majority of annotations, including those which at first sight involved mentoring, were judgmental. In addition, verbal protocol data revealed that while writings did evoke complex reactions from content-area faculty, few of these reactions became verbalized in either marginal or end comments. Finally, what little feedback was provided was frequently incomprehensible without the more detailed commentary Jeffery and Selting obtained through verbal protocols.

Overall, the form, the function, and the intent of content-area faculty's feedback are well understood. However, taxonomies developed for classifying content-area faculty's feedback (e.g., Ferris, Pezone, Tade & Tinti, 1997; Sperling, 1994) neglect to observe the 'process' that produces that feedback. In addition, by focusing on the form and function of feedback, these taxonomies have ignored the substantive issues that the comments target. To a degree these omissions are natural. Writing instructors have only the end product of feedback to inform their student conferences, and they lack the resources to gather information on the context in which feedback occurs. TESL/Composition faculty may have more time and resources at their disposal, but lack the discipline-specific

(Continued on page 30)

"...what little feedback was provided was frequently incomprehensible..."

(Continued from page 29)

knowledge required to fully engage with the substance of content-area assignments. However, as Jeffery and Selting's (1999) data indicate, content-area faculty's feedback concerns mostly substantive rather than linguistic or organizational issues.[1] Therefore, understanding such feedback requires situating it within the process of assessment, and situating assessment, in turn, within the broader, substantive, discourse generated in university courses.[2]

Research questions

The study addressed the following principal research question: *How did a university professor at a Canadian university assess two essays and two in-class tests in an undergraduate course on modern Chinese history, attended by both NNES and NES students?* Once unpacked, this question covered the following ground:

1. What assessment procedures did the professor employ?
2. What assessment criteria did he apply?
3. How, if at all, did he take into account the ethnic and linguistic identities of students?
4. How did he communicate his criteria to (and negotiate his criteria with) the class?
5. How did his criteria evolve over time?

"How did a university professor at a Canadian university assess two essays and two in-class tests in an undergraduate course…"

(Continued on page 31)

1. This may seem surprising in view of studies showing content-area professors having a keen interest in grammatical correctness. However, such findings, while they may accurately characterize some content-area faculty's reactions, likely stem from a research design (exemplified by Santos, 1988) that asks content-area faculty to respond to writing on personal topics, generating trivial content that subject-specialist readers cannot engage with, and to assign ratings that have no tangible consequences.

2. This was stressed in recent studies of 'indigenous assessment', defined by Douglas (2000, 68; compare Jacoby & McNamara, 1999) as '… subject specialists … assessing the communicative performance of apprentices in academic or vocational fields'.

(Continued from page 30)

Answers to the first and fourth questions will be reported in the following, with reference to the assessment of the in-class tests in *20th-century China*.

Participants

The principal participant in the study was Henry Lawrence[3], a professor at a major Canadian university with over 20 years' experience teaching Asian history and politics, experience which included teaching *20th-century China* throughout his tenure. In addition to Lawrence, 12 students were recruited; seven of them were male and five, female; seven were non-native speakers of English (NNES) and five, native speakers (NES). These students allowed their assignments to be photocopied once Lawrence graded and returned them and, at the conclusion of the course, granted interviews concerning their impressions of the way they had been taught and assessed.

"…all course documents were collected, including the course outline…"

Data collection

The scope of data collection was dictated by the need, identified above, to study 'indigenous assessment' in its broadest possible context. This meant capturing as much of the discourse constructed in the session of *20th-century China* under observation as was practically possible. To this end, the researcher's observations included all class meetings (23 out of a total of 26) led by the professor himself as well as scrums around the lectern that took place at the end of each class. In addition, all course documents were collected, including the course outline, departmental handouts concerning writing, the three prescribed textbooks (Bianco, 1971; MacFarquhar, 1997; Saich, 2001), assignment specifications for the essays and in-class tests, and the annotated assignments of the 12 participating students. Finally, in order to capture the reading/assessment processes that Lawrence employed, he was interviewed after he had returned three of the four assignments—at which time he was also asked to re-

(Continued on page 32)

3. Not the individual's real name.

(Continued from page 31)

read a sample of assignments and furnish think-aloud verbal protocols.

Conversely, to minimize the impact of his interventions on that discourse, the researcher attended the classes as a non-participant observer and prompted Lawrence to report on, but not to rationalize, his assessment procedures and criteria in the interviews and protocols. No student interviews were conducted until after they had received their final grades. The data discussed here include 72 short-answer responses to in-class tests, all annotated and graded; one interview with the professor and with eight of the participating students; one session of retrospective verbal protocols with the professor; notes taken at 22 class meetings; and the documentary evidence enumerated above.

Data analysis

During data collection, procedures for class management, assessment, and feedback were recorded in field notes taken during class meetings and during after-class scrums. These data were subsequently combined with interview data to generate a thick description of the presentation and negotiation of course content and assignment specifications. Additionally, the substantive content of the class discussions was recorded and subsequently distilled in a list of macro-propositions. This outline of the discourse constructed in *20th-century China* at the time of the study provided the backdrop of content against which Lawrence's feedback and assessment practices needed to be examined.

"…students allowed their assignments to be photocopied once Lawrence graded and returned them…"

Next, to determine Lawrence's assessment procedures, direct references to scoring procedures, performance expectations, and scoring criteria were extracted from the interview transcripts.

In addition, recurring operations in the verbal protocols were categorized based on:

1. type of engagement with the text (e.g. reading silently, rephrasing, querying meaning—see Appendices A and B for examples)

(Continued on page 33)

(Continued from page 32)

2. attitude toward the text (positive as in 'overt approval,' or negative, as in 'querying [the truth value of] a proposition')

3. syntactic boundaries observed in segmenting the text.

Subsequently the frequency, the manner, and the positioning of Lawrence's annotations on texts were analyzed, and compared to the verbal protocols to see how well Lawrence's reactions were reflected in written feedback. Finally, the sources of annotations and verbal comments (as well as of the statements in students' texts that were being annotated) were identified in the list of propositions generated from the field notes. These data were combined to provide a thick description of how Lawrence responded to and assessed students' written work.

"…data were subsequently combined with interview data to generate a thick description of the presentation…"

Assessment procedures in *20th-century China*

Interview evidence shows that Lawrence preferred to read test answers only once and assigned scores to them immediately afterwards. He preferred a reading generally uninterrupted by the need to write a commentary, because he could devote his undivided attention to processing, and at the same time judging, text. Although at times during his teaching practice he followed up his initial reading and scoring with a second reading that was devoted to writing detailed comments, he did not take a second pass through his corpora of texts during the session of the course analyzed in the present study.

Based on protocol evidence, the manner of Lawrence's reading fits the Construction-Integration model postulated by Kintsch (1988, 1998). In other words, Lawrence first parsed a segment of input as a series of propositions. Then, to interpret the parsed propositions, he activated an associative network of syntactic and semantic information stored in his memory. Having established a stable meaning by eliminating all implausible associations and confirming all plausible ones in his associative network based on the parsed input or having

(Continued on page 34)

(Continued from page 33)

concluded that he was unable to do so—he moved to a new text segment and began the process anew (compare Kintsch, 1988, Figure 1). In addition, he integrated meaning from the parsed propositions by constructing situational models that allowed him to 'understand' input without having to memorize it verbatim.

However, what is particularly important here is that 'reading' turned into 'assessment' through the superimposition of an additional layer of operations on the initial parsing and integration of texts. Based on recurring patterns in the protocols, these operations could include overt approval (or disapproval) of an integrated text segment (judging meaning, not form); verbatim repetition (signalling tacit approval); reformulation (approval of meaning, not form); and, querying meaning (by judging either form or content, or both).

Lawrence's verbal protocols (see Appendix A) illustrate this process concerning a response to the question:

"…he did not take a second pass through his corpora of texts during the session…"

> *There is general agreement among students of Mao-era China that during its first eight years in power, the Chinese Communist Party had substantial achievements to its credit. What are those achievements and what explains this unique period of unqualified successes?*

Lawrence's reactions range from overt approval to overt disapproval, with rephrasing, reformulating, and clarifying being the dominant operations. As the protocol shows, overall, Lawrence's reading was slow, his commentary extensive relative to the volume of text, and his overall assessment, provided at the end, unfavourable. By contrast, when reading clearly argued and factually accurate responses, which required little or no clarification or rephrasing, Lawrence was able to process long chunks of text, with commentary restricted to brief expressions of approval.

(Continued on page 35)

(Continued from page 34)

Feedback in *20th-century China*

Lawrence's feedback on test answers needs to be examined against the backdrop of his assessment procedures. Beginning with form, his annotations were sparse, brief, and judgmental. Each answer received, on average, 6 marginal comments, 95 per cent of which referred to content. In addition, 84 per cent of the annotations consisted of symbols with underlining, check marks, and bracketing signifying positive reactions and question marks signaling disapproval. Verbalizations, representing 16 per cent of all annotations, were brief; e.g., '*nice point*,' '*relevance?'* There were no end comments, but the grade given to every answer was prominently displayed. The visual impact of these practices may be easily appreciated by looking at Appendix B, and may be contrasted with examples of more pedagogically oriented feedback reproduced, for example, in Prior's (1998) and Sperling's (1994) studies.

Turning to function, Lawrence operated on the assumption that students wanted, above all, a grade and a justification for the grade (a point also raised by McCarthy (Fishman & McCarthy, 2001)). He assumed that the intensity of students' demands for feedback was inversely proportional to the grade they received, an assumption that was verified by all but one of the participant students in their interviews. Combined with the predominance of symbols over verbalizations in the form of feedback, the purpose of feedback thus emerges as the 'certification' of propositional content, highlighting ideas carrying both positive and negative impact.

"...what is particularly important here is that 'reading' turned into 'assessment'..."

In examining the annotated text in Appendix A in detail, it is the target of the comments, rather than their form or function, that is of primary interest. The picture that emerges from such scrutiny is of sparse, but strategically placed feedback, highlighting the principal ideas in the test answers, as well as major errors of commission. Lawrence queried the opening statement in the protocols (see Appendix A) and placed a question mark against it on the script (see Appendix B). He approved of the second statement in the protocols and signalled this on the script (although the bracketing overlaps with the question mark, creating some confusion). He glossed over the third statement which was merely a

(Continued on page 36)

continuation of the previous idea, but approved of the fourth statement in the protocols and again signalled this on the script. Finally, he glossed over the last two statements which merely continued the idea expressed in the previous statement.

What is important is that, sparse as the annotation appears, it highlights all the 'certified' ideas and most of the major errors of commission in the response illustrated in Appendix A. In addition, the annotations take on added signification because they can be referenced against the discourse that was generated in *20th-century China*. The discourse included substantive discussion of historical issues, the presentation and discussion of alternative interpretations to those offered in the textbooks, the articulation of general performance expectations, the articulation of key ideas relevant to questions on the test, and the specification of relevant readings in textbooks. With reference to Question 6, most of that discussion took place in class 11, during which Lawrence also showed a documentary; the prescribed course text was Teiwes (1997). As a result, if students were present and attentive in class, and read the prescribed text, both highly recommended activities in any university course, they could certainly draw conclusions from what at first sight appeared to be cryptic feedback.

"Lawrence operated on the assumption that students wanted, above all, a grade and a justification for the grade..."

It should be added that Lawrence repeatedly invited students in class to come to him if they needed additional feedback on their assignments. Two of the students participating in the study did precisely that and were rewarded with what they thought were very useful pointers to doing better in their subsequent assignments. As a result, even if Lawrence did not invite multiple drafts, students could at least transfer their experiences from a prior assignment to a subsequent one.

Problems do remain, however. Like the feedback in Jeffery and Selting's (1999) study, some of Lawrence's annotations were ambiguous. On text I.6.6, for example, a single question mark actually indicated dissatisfaction with both an idea and the way that idea was articulated, without a clue for the writer on how to interpret this. In several other instances the annotations (particularly check marks and question marks) were placed carelessly, making it difficult to identify the segments of text to which they referred. Granted that the protocols, or a visit to Lawrence's office, would have removed these ambiguities, many students, particularly those who were satisfied with their grades, never bothered to follow up.

(Continued from page 36)

Additionally, while the principal 'certified' ideas as well as principal errors of commission were highlighted, errors of omission were generally ignored. For example, none of Lawrence's concluding comments on I.6.6 actually found its way onto paper, yet these comments succinctly sum up everything that the student could and should have done:

> "*I was looking here for land reform, restoration of stability, reestablishment of government, the control of inflation … I was also looking for explanation, since the question says: "What are the achievements? What explains them?" … this is the period of strong leadership unity. Also, the carry over of kind of enthusiasm, of a kind of triumphant, revolutionary zeal.*"

Given Lawrence's workload, it would have been unreasonable to expect detailed end comments on all 240 test answers. However, selective use of detailed feedback, particularly for weaker students, could have been highly beneficial in making explicit links between classroom discourse and performance expectations.

"…Lawrence repeatedly invited students in class to come to him if they needed additional feedback on their assignments."

This point receives backing from an examination of the performance of the participating students in the course. Some of them evidently had little difficulty in grasping Lawrence's actions and expectations. The group included students of history, for example, who grasped that they had to weigh different arguments concerning historical controversies, but also that having done that they were free to come to their own conclusions. Many others, particularly those from other academic disciplines, were able to get up to speed as the course progressed, partly by seeking elaboration and/or clarification from Lawrence. Two such students, one NES student of computer science and one high-proficiency NNES student of economics, moved up one full grade level from their initial performance to their final grade. However, three low-proficiency NNES students with science backgrounds were unable to improve their performance: they received grades of C-/C on both their first and last assignments, as well as in the course overall.

(Continued on page 38)

(Continued from page 37)

A lack of motivation may have been a factor in these students' lack of progress. However, it may be argued that just as lack of language proficiency prevents learners from transferring discipline-specific knowledge from the L1 to the L2 during test performance (compare Clapham, 1996), so it will prevent university students from abstracting performance expectations from substantive, discipline-specific discussions and transferring these abstracted expectations from one course to the next. Such relatively low-proficiency students (not to mention their writing instructors!) would have benefited the most from more detailed written feedback, and yet were the least likely to feel empowered to seek it.

"Given Lawrence's workload, it would have been unreasonable to expect detailed end comments on all 240 test answers. "

Conclusions

The close correspondence between Lawrence's verbal protocols and marginal annotations suggests that his feedback represents a partial externalization of his reading. Further, the aspects of his reading that become externalized illuminate the criteria used to assess the tests. For example, 95 per cent of Lawrence's marginal annotations concern specific propositions and, in a similar vein, (see Erdösy, 2005) 64 per cent of the variance in the scores he awarded is explained by the propositional content of students' answers. In addition, while Lawrence was not overtly concerned with accuracy, he was concerned with clarity, because it affected the fluency of his readings. As a result, while surface errors are seldom marked, occasional question marks denote statements that he deemed to be ambiguous.

The second key point is that the annotations, while appearing cryptic, are anchored not only in Lawrence's scoring criteria and reading process, but also in the discourse that was generated by the session of *20th-century China* that was observed in the course of this study. To the 'uninitiated' they are meaningless, but to participants in the discourse they receive signification from detailed discussions of substantive issues both in the classroom and in the assigned course readings. Further, while the annotations are sparse they are also strategic, covering, as the discussion of Appendix A above suggests, all the key

(Continued on page 39)

(Continued from page 38)

propositions in students' answers. At the same time, the utility of the feedback could be enhanced by positioning annotations more carefully and by commenting, at least in the case of the weakest answers, on 'errors of omission' in addition to errors of commission (such as factual inaccuracies or logical inconsistencies). As the protocol for Appendix A shows, summative commentary at the end of a reading is part of the verbalizations in the protocols but is seldom externalized as feedback.

Implications

The first set of implications from my case study concerns research methods. Clearly, concepts and methods developed to analyze feedback in L2 writing/composition classes (e.g., by Ferris, et al., 1997 Sperling, 1994), which focus on the commentary, must be supplemented with a focus on the object of that commentary in students' writing. Further, it is impossible to study feedback in a content-based course without studying the negotiation of course content not only through assignments, but also through class discussions. It is to this broader discourse that annotations on students' texts are referenced. Seen in this light, apparently cryptic annotations lose the mystery that Lillis (2001) attributes to a deliberate obfuscation of academic practices in order to limit access to privileged knowledge.

"Lawrence's feedback practices may need fine tuning, but they are characterized by focus on meaning and economy of effort… "

There are equally important consequences for pedagogy. Lawrence's feedback practices may need fine tuning, but they are characterized by focus on meaning and economy of effort, the first an admirable and the second an enviable characteristic. However, economy of effort is permitted only by the presence of a rich discourse to which Lawrence could reference his feedback. This, among other reasons, suggests that EAP instruction would benefit from a strong thematic orientation. At the same time, given that a strong thematic orientation presumes considerable discipline-specific knowledge, the very premise of writing classes needs to be questioned. It may be time to abandon attempts to bring 'content' to 'writing classes' and bring, instead, 'writing' to content-area classes. How this can be done in a high-school context, and using a functional rather than

(Continued on page 40)

(Continued from page 39)

a formal approach to language, has been recently explored by Schleppegrell and de Oliveira (2006).

Finally, bringing writing to content should also demonstrate that the assigning of students with 'writing problems' to a writing lab is a questionable practice. With the benefit of access to the broader discourse taking place in content-area classes, not to mention the benefit of prior training in Asian history, I was able to decode seemingly cryptic feedback. However, writing instructors do not normally have, or even seek, access to the content-area classroom, and may not be able to comprehend the discourse if they did so. It would be very difficult, therefore, for them to make adequate use of content-area professors' content-oriented feedback. Conversely, content-area faculty must likewise accept the fact that writing is not merely a tool for transmitting knowledge, whose treatment can be delegated to a specialist (except, as argued above, in cases where students' language proficiency is too low to enable them to make use of other competencies). Instead, as Jeffery and Selting (1999) argue, writing is 'a complex, multidimensional learning activity,' and cannot exist separate from content any more than content can exist in isolation from it. ❖

"…writing is a complex, multidimensional learning activity and cannot exist separate from content…"

References

Bianco, L. (1971). *Origins of the Chinese revolution, 1915-1949*. Translated from the French by Muriel Bell. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Clapham, C. (1996). *The development of IELTS: A study of the effect of background knowledge on reading comprehension.* (Studies in Language Testing 4). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Douglas, D. (2000). *Assessing languages for specific purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Erdösy, M. U. (2005). *Responding to non-native and native writers of English: a history professor's indigenous criteria for grading and feedback in an undergraduate sinology course*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Toronto).

Ferris, D. R., Pezone, S., Tade, C. R., & Tinti, S. (1997). Teacher commentary on student writing: Descriptions & implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 6(2), 155-182.

Fishman, S. M. & McCarthy, L. (2001). An ESL writer and her discipline-based professor: Making progress even when goals don't match. *Written Communication*, 18 (2), 180-228.

Jacoby, S. & McNamara, T. F. (1999). Locating competence. *English for Specific Purposes*, 19(3), 213-241.

Jeffery, F. & Selting, B. (1999). Reading the invisible ink: Assessing the responses of non-composition faculty. *Assessing Writing*, 6(2), 179-197.

Kintsch, W. (1988). The role of knowledge in discourse comprehension: A construction-integration model. *Psychological Review*, 95(2), 163-182.

Kintsch, W. (1998). *Comprehension: A paradigm for cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lillis, T. M. (2001). *Student writing. Access, regulation, desire*. London: Routledge.

MacFarquhar, R. (1997). *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Prior, P. A. (1998). *Writing/disciplinarity: A sociohistoric account of literate activity in the academy.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

(Continued on page 42)

References

(Continued from page 41)

Saich, T. (2001). *Governance and politics of China*. New York: Palgrave.

Santos, T. (1988). Professors' reactions to the writing of nonnative-speaking students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 22(1), 69-90.

Schleppegrell, M. & de Oliveira, L. C. (2006). An integrated language and content approach for history teachers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5(2), 254-268.

Sperling, M. (1994). Constructing the perspective of teacher-as-reader: A framework for studying response to student writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 28(2), 175-207.

Teiwes, F. C. (1997). The establishment and consolidation of the new regime, 1949-1957. In MacFarquhar, R. (Ed.), *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng* (pp. 5-86). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

References

Appendix A

Text I.6.6	Lawrence's comments (L.1.70 ff.)
CCP used industrialization for the first 4 years...	Uh, I remember thinking, and making a question mark. I mean aside from the language "*CCP used industrialization for the first 4 years*" whatever that means, [unsuccessful clarification] even if the point is that the CCP emphasized industrialization [rephrasing] that is simply wrong. [disapproval] The industrialization drive begins 4 years after, at the end of that period. **(Source: Teiwes, 1997, *passim*)**
... and then they used capitalists to control industries in order to gain more money.	It is true [approval] that they tried to use, you know, to maintain the loyalty of the managers and the owners, briefly.[reformulation] **(Source: Teiwes, 1997, *passim*)**
Later on CCP think nationalism is a good idea to ask people to offer everything they had to government.	Uh, and here, "*nationalism is a good idea to ask people to offer everything to the government*." Uh, what went through my mind was she saw the film where all these people were handing over money to the government at time of the Korean war, and at least remembered that. [clarification approval] **Source: *The Mao Years* (film shown in Class 11)**
That is why CCP's economic recovery very fast, by gathering money from capitalists	(reading silently)
On the following years, CCP reform all the farms and took all the lands away from land lords.	But then "*the following years, CCP reform all the farms and took all the lands away from the landlords*," well, she has got the time wrong because that should have been in the first period. [First] they took the land from the landlord; it's in the following years that they took the land back from the peasants. So she, basically, you know, got this, but messed up the chronology [disapproval] **(Source: Teiwes, 1997, *passim*)**
CCP assigned the lands to peasants and asked them to work and produced more food.	(reading)
That is why CCP can control people and gained a lot of money to recover their economic	(reading)
[grade assigned: 13]	I mean I was looking here for land reform, restoration of stability, reestablishment of government, the control of inflation and, you know, very specific things. I was also looking for, for explanation, since the question says: "What are the achievements? What explains them?" and he wasn't very straightforward on this. it's, you know, as opposed to the subsequent period this is the period of strong leadership unity. Also, the carry over of kind of enthusiasm, of a kind of triumphant, revolutionary zeal. So, this one has no explanation … he got the facts, I mean, land reform is there, industrialization was there, it's just messed up the timing.

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix B : Protocol example Text I.6.6. with feedback & grade

Part B:

Question #1.

CCP used industrialization for first 4 years, and then they used capitalists to control industries 2 in order to gain more money. Later on CCP think nationalism is a good idea to ask people to offer everything they had to govrament. That is why CCP's economic recovery very fast. by gathering money from capitalists. On the following years, CCP reform all the farms and took all the lands away from land lords. CCP assigned the lands to peasants and asked them to work and produced more food. That is why CCP can control people and gained a lot of money to recovery their economic.

13

THEME ONE: TEACHER FEEDBACK

EAP Writing Instruction: ESL Teacher Perspectives on Content Issues and Teacher Knowledge

By Jill Cummings

Abstract

Freeman and Johnson (1998) called for a reconceptualization of the knowledge base of language teacher education according to teachers' perspectives and actual teaching practices. The following article contributes to this new teacher knowledge base by reporting on a qualitative study which examined three experienced ESL teachers' views on what is effective content for EAP writing instruction and the sources of their teacher knowledge. Variations in the sources of the teachers' knowledge are discussed within a sociocultural theory framework, situating teacher knowledge as an ongoing and dynamic development within various communities of practice in which instructors interact. The contrasts in the sources of the teachers' knowledge and the ensuing implications for ESL teacher education are discussed. Teacher knowledge is shown to be a lifelong and organic, social process developed in the contexts and processes of teaching itself. ■

Abstract

> *One of the most persistent and controversial issues in L2 writing is the debate over the focus of instruction: discipline-specific or general purpose instruction.*
>
> *Ferris, 2001, p. 300*

This article describes an ethnographic study of three experienced English as a Subsequent Language (ESL) teachers' approaches to and views on planning content for writing instruction in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context. Interviews with these teachers and observations of their teaching provide the basis for analysis and discussion of what they consider to be useful subject matter for EAP writing instruction. How they developed that teacher knowledge is also explored. The principal questions discussed are:

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued from page 45)

- What knowledge do practicing ESL teachers draw on in planning content and tasks for EAP writing instruction; and,
- What are the sources of that teacher knowledge?

These overarching questions are discussed in relation to the findings for the following specific questions investigated in my research:

- What were the three teachers' approaches to planning content for EAP writing instruction?
- (a) What were the contrasts in the teachers' knowledge for content selection for their instruction of EAP writing? and (b) What were the sources of this knowledge for each teacher, and how could this teacher knowledge be traced to her background and participation in various communities of practice?

"What knowledge do practicing ESL teachers draw on in planning content and tasks for EAP writing instruction?"

The purpose of this article is twofold:

(i) to contrast ESL teachers' practices and knowledge for planning content for EAP writing instruction; and,

(ii) to discuss the sources of that teacher knowledge. These goals aim to inform ESL teacher education and professional development (PD) initiatives as is discussed in the concluding section.

Background

Two areas provide the background for this study:

(1) research related to content and tasks for writing instruction; and,

(Continued on page 47)

(Continued from page 46)

(2) literature pertaining to the second language teacher knowledge base and language teacher education.

Content for EAP Writing Instruction

A primary goal of ESL teachers of academic preparation programs is to effectively bridge non-native English speakers' (NNES) transition from academic preparation ESL classes to discipline-specific university or college studies. A question that remains central to this task is: "How much specificity of content is desirable and possible?" (Ferris, 2001, p.300). The three experienced EAP teachers who participated in this project repeatedly raised questions about what is useful, interesting and effective content for writing instruction. One of the teachers, Leeanne[1], summed up their dilemma over content in this way:

> *I don't know how effective really we are…it [the content] is quite general. Honestly, some [students] are going into Waste Management Engineering; some are going into Business… I try, to a certain extent, to allow them to tailor the theme of what they are writing down. So there is a lot of scope there. (Leeanne.Int.1.1.21, Cumming, 2001)*

"…some [students] are going into Waste Management Engineering; some are going into Business…"

Similar teacher questions around what is effective content for EAP writing tasks will be familiar to most ESL teachers in these transition contexts. They have discussed these issues with colleagues during course planning sessions, debating whether students will be best served by writing about knowledge and ideas specific to their intended disciplines or whether they should focus on writ-

(Continued on page 48)

1. Pseudonyms have been used to protect participants' identity.

(Continued from page 47)

ing skill development within the context of more general, all-purpose type academic topics and materials.

Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) pointed out that in this debate over content for EAP writing two views consistently arise:

> (i) a generalist approach (Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1997) that recommends teaching general academic writing skills, strategies, and language, predicting that students will be able to transfer these to their discipline-specific studies and writing once they go on to university; and,
>
> (ii) a more discipline-specific focus in which students experience, analyze and imitate the genre requirements of the academic disciplines that they will enter (Leki & Carson, 1997; Leki, 2001; Reid, 2001; Russell, 1997). The latter is thought to result in increased motivation as students experience writing for content-specific, authentic tasks.

"Most research has focused on student reactions to EAP writing instruction…"

This study examines the previously unreported voice of teachers in the debate over content specificity. Most research has focused on student reactions to EAP writing instruction (Leki & Carson, 1997; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1995). I report on teachers' approaches to this question through the words and experiences of three teachers teaching in the same pre-university EAP program. I also examine the sources of the teacher knowledge which informed their writing instruction practices to contribute to insights into teacher knowledge and how teachers come to the practices that they use. This will be useful information for teacher education and professional development endeavors for ESL teachers.

Teacher Knowledge and Language Teacher Education

The second language (SL) teacher knowledge base has previously been defined according to various classifications of teacher knowledge (Richards, 1998; Roberts, 1998). Richards (1998) outlined six domains of teacher knowledge to serve as the base for SL teacher education courses:

(Continued on page 49)

(Continued from page 48)

(1) theories of teaching;

(2) teaching skills;

(3) communication skills and language proficiency;

(4) subject matter knowledge;

(5) pedagogical reasoning skills and decision making; and,

(6) contextual knowledge.

As useful as these classifications may be for course planning, the categorizations may reinforce a tendency to understand teacher knowledge as static, prescribed bodies of knowledge to be transferred or conveyed to teachers during their initial teacher education. In contrast, an alternate and dynamic view of teacher knowledge *in situ* is illustrated in the study presented in the following. Teacher knowledge is shown to be a process of ongoing participation developed through one's practice in collaboration with other educators and learners. This practice was proposed by Freeman and Johnson (1998) when they recommended reconceptualizing the knowledge base of language teacher education to bridge theory and practice. According to this reconceptualization, teacher knowledge is recognized as a lifelong and organic, social process developed in the contexts and processes of teaching itself. In this study, teacher knowledge is shown to be co-constructed in dynamic communities of practice of teacher practitioners who interact in their learning organizations when doing course planning and teaching. Their teacher knowledge was developed through participation and collaboration in the teaching/learning process. As such, teacher knowledge is recognized as both content and process —subject matter and practice.

"…the core of the new knowledge base must focus on the activity of teaching itself."

Freeman and Johnson (1998) recommended examination of the practice of teaching itself (rather than relying solely on traditional domains of teacher knowledge): "We argue that the core of the new knowledge base must focus on the activity of teaching itself; it should focus on the teacher who does it, the contexts in which it is done, and the pedagogy by which it is done." (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 397). Accordingly, the description of teaching practices of ex-

(Continued on page 50)

(Continued from page 49)

perienced teachers of EAP writing afforded by the study reported here offers a view of the teacher knowledge developed and drawn on in such a context.

Freeman and Johnson (1998) noted that research on language teacher knowledge has been noticeably missing from professional discourse: "… language teacher education…has been much done but relatively little studied… But as an activity it is arguably the foundation of what is done in language teaching." They recommended a shift away from traditional approaches to language teacher education in which scientific conceptions of teaching have applied the empirical findings of research to language teaching. They recommended instead a focus on what teachers actually know, how this knowledge has shaped what they do, and what the natural course of their professional development has been over time. This teacher/teaching-focused framework and related research into teacher knowledge such as Johnston and Goettsch (2000) and Woods (1996) provide the background for the study reported here.

"…research on language teacher knowledge has been noticeably missing from professional discourse…"

Woods (1996) and Johnston and Goettsch (2000) provide examples of such teacher-oriented research. Woods (1996) investigated the thinking and planning of eight university level ESL teachers. He observed that beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge (BAK) as integrated aspects of teacher knowledge pervaded the teachers' planning and decision-making processes. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) extended this concept of BAK in examining teacher knowledge related to grammar-teaching by four teachers of advanced ESL. Following this line of research, the study reported in this article provides an initial in-depth teacher perspective from which to examine teacher practices and knowledge related to content and tasks for academic ESL writing instruction.

The significance of practice-oriented studies for teacher education was also highlighted by Leki, Cumming, and Silva (2005) in their recent review of research related to SL composition teaching:

> *Various studies have started to document the knowledge that teachers have about L2 writing, identifying key differences in their individual orientations to teaching and writing. (Cumming, 2003; Li, 1996; Shi & Cumming, 1995)*

(Continued on page 51)

(Continued from page 50)

Such information specifically about L2 writing is integral to guide teacher education as well as the long-term professional development of educators.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks: Sociocultural Theory and Communities of Practice

Following Freeman and Johnson's (1998) call for a reconceptualization of teacher knowledge as complex and contextually situated, this study is framed within sociocultural theory (SCT). This allows focus on the teachers' knowledge as the tools or resources which develop through their participation in multiple communities of practice. Such a perspective is seen in contrast to previous work in SL teacher education (Richards, 1998; Roberts, 1998) as discussed in the previous section. By contrast, in the study presented here, teachers' practices and teacher knowledge are captured in their sociocultural contexts of living, learning, teaching and doing. Teacher knowledge for EAP writing instruction is traced to instructors' interactions in various communities of practice.

The concept of *communities of practice,* also discussed in related studies as "lifestyle sectors" (Giddons, 1991); "discourse communities" (Lemke, 1995); "activity systems" (Engestrom, 1999; Daniels, 1996), arises from the SCT perspective that learning is "situated in the context(s) of our lived experience of participation in the world… [and] is a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing…" (Wenger, 1998, p. 3). I have illustrated this concept by examining how each teacher's knowledge for EAP writing instruction developed within and through interaction in various communities of practice during her career. This record of how these teachers said they had worked out their approaches to EAP writing instruction shows how their knowledge had been individually shaped within the contexts of their daily life, study and work via ongoing interactions amidst social, professional, and educational communities.

(Continued on page 52)

"Fundamental to these views is an understanding of sociocultural theory…"

(Continued from page 51)

Fundamental to these views is an understanding of sociocultural theory and its focus on social interaction as the foundation of learning. SCT recognizes learning as a social process which proceeds from the interpsychological to the intrapsychological realms of thinking – that is, from the social to the individual,.

Sociocultural views of learning are based on the Vygotskian school of thinking and mind (Vygotsky, 1986), which sees learning as an interactive process which is co-constructed as a distributed process amongst various players and communities. In contrast, mainstream views of learning have portrayed abilities for learning as innate within the individual to be primed with content or knowledge through teacher education courses. SCT views learning as a process which happens through interaction between learners, in this case teachers, in dialogue with others or through dialogue with "the self" via writing and reflection. Interaction, collaboration and dialogue within communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) are therefore integral to the study of EAP teacher practices and knowledge.

"…writing is one of the main skills that students will need to study…"

The Study

The Context

The study took place in the most advanced level of a pre-university EAP course offered as part of an English Language Studies (ELS) program for ESL learners at a major university in Canada. The integrated skills course emphasized writing development as a primary objective of the course. As one of the teachers explained "…because, of course, writing is one of the main skills that students will need to study at university here." (Faith. Focus Group.23). Listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks were integrated in each class session, four hours a day, four days a week with an additional speaking focus course offered on the fifth day. The course outline and program documents identified the focus of this EAP program as "[This course is] aimed at the development of strategies for academic writing, reading, talking, and listening. Materials and activities are based on university and college studies."

(Continued on page 53)

(Continued from page 52)

This EAP course was designed for advanced pre-university ESL students whose TOEFL had not reached the required 600 score. Their scores averaged 550 at the beginning of the course. Most students were trying to gain entrance to undergraduate programs at the university where the EAP course was held and the study took place. However, two or three students in each of the three classes were headed towards graduate studies and had had previous university education and/or work experience in their home country and language. The average class size of the three classes was between 15-22 international students. Students' main countries of origin were China, Korea, and Japan, with several students from Eastern Europe and Central and South America. This was a high stakes EAP course: a final grade of B meant students had met the university's English language proficiency requirements and would be allowed to enter the undergraduate or graduate program that they had applied for at the university.

Assessment and evaluation were based on class assignments, in-class quizzes, oral presentations, a writing portfolio, and a final exit test valued at 50 per cent of the course grade. This final exit test required a summary and response-type writing task based on a general academic type reading text. For the purpose of maintaining standards and fairness, the exit test was graded by a panel of the teachers who evaluated the exit tests "blind", i.e., without the name of the student writer.

"…a final grade of B meant students had met the university's English language proficiency requirements…"

The ESL Teacher Participants

Three of the most experienced teachers of the advanced level of this EAP course – in this study referred to as Faith, Maria, and Leeanne - volunteered to participate. Their experience in teaching English ranged from four to 35 years and the major portion of their recent experience was in teaching EAP. Their individual backgrounds are outlined in Table 1 .

Data Collection

I collected the data for this study by observing and interviewing each of

(Continued on page 55)

"…the major portion of their recent experience was in teaching EAP."

Table 1: Backgrounds of the teacher participants

Teacher Pseudonym	Education & Professional Qualifications	Teaching Experience	Professional Development Activities
Faith	• Master's degree in French Literature • TESL Certificate • Provincial TESL Certification • Speaks and writes French as her L2; had also studied Italian; English is her L1.	• 4 years at the time of this study: EAP teacher of advanced, pre-university courses in the ELS program featured in this study • 7 years as French language teacher for local school board • 10 years as tutor of French and English	• TESL conferences annually; and several TESOL conferences. • "In-house" PD sessions for the EAP/ELS teachers every 28 days in the program.
Maria	• Master's degree in English and Linguistics (English Philology) from an eastern European university – a five-year program which included teacher education and language pedagogy as well as English language study. • Diploma/Certificate in teaching ESL/EFL from a major university in England, Department of Education • Provincial TESL Certification • Speaks, writes and teaches English; studied in a Slavic language, her L1, as a child.	• 35 years of language teaching includes: • Over 7 years EAP teacher of advanced, pre-university courses in the program featured in this study • Over 5 years of teaching advanced ESL (TOEFL preparation courses) for adult education program of the local school board • Taught EFL teachers how to teach English in a European country • Taught English to high school students in European country	• Same as above
Leeanne	• Undergraduate degree • TESL Certificate • Provincial TESL Certification • Speaks and writes Spanish as her L2; English is her L1.	• 10 years: EAP teacher of advanced, pre-university courses in the ELS program featured in this study	• Same as above

(Continued from page 53)

the three EAP teacher participants, Faith, Maria, and Leeanne, during one semester of their 2003-04 teaching year. The teachers participated in multiple data collection activities, including:

- 35-40 hours of each class during which I observed each teacher's instruction;
- each teacher's explanation of her objectives and daily lesson plans;
- a semi-structured interview in which each teacher explained the principles which guided her instruction of writing;
- a metaphor completion activity (Each teacher completed and discussed the prompt *Teaching EAP writing is like____* with a metaphor(s) or simile(s) which she believed summed up her approach to EAP writing instruction.);
- two retrospective interviews about representative classroom writing activities audio-taped during the observations (Based on transcriptions of the activities, each teacher discussed with me why and how she had used the specific instructional techniques for writing; as well as where and how her teacher knowledge for these writing tasks and techniques had originated.);
- a concluding two-hour focus group discussion.

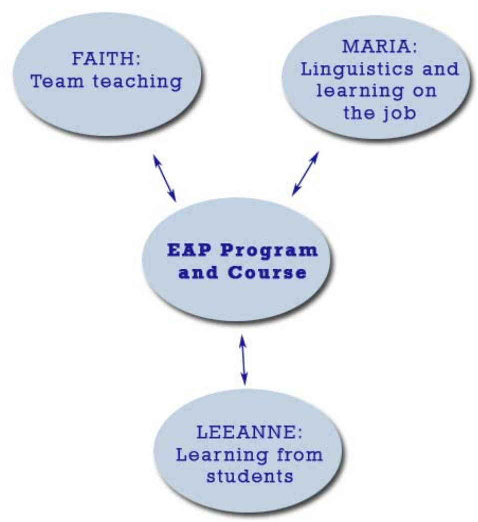
"I read and reread the transcripts of the teacher interviews..."

Data Analysis

I read and reread the transcripts of the teacher interviews, metaphor activities, observation reports, and the focus group discussion, noting recurring themes for each teacher in order to identify the sources of the teacher knowledge which informed their practices. These sources of knowledge were then grouped according to common threads or communities of practice for writing

(Continued on page 56)

Figure 1



instruction. I recorded similar themes and quotes together in grids, discerning the main communities of practice that had shaped each teacher's writing instruction. For example, Faith explained her use of a jigsaw activity in a lesson on "Fast Food Consumption in North America" during the first retrospective interview. When I asked her about where and how she had learned these instructional techniques, Faith told me about her team teaching with a more experienced partner teacher during her first year in the EAP program. As a result of this experience, Faith had learned the pre-writing activities for a process approach to composing that had become the trademarks of her writing instruction.

"…each teacher's knowledge for EAP writing instruction had developed within specific communities of practice…"

I found that each teacher's knowledge for EAP writing instruction had developed within specific communities of practice:

(i) their work within the EAP program and course itself;

(ii) their learning to teach and educational background;

(iii) their collaboration with each other and teacher colleagues, their professional network;

(iv) their interaction with the university and programs and courses their students entered;

(v) the students and the classroom; and

(vi) their personal lives and experiences.

I coded transcripts of the teacher interviews, metaphor completion activities, and focus group to identify these communities of practice. In order

(Continued from page 56)

to establish reliability, another coder and I reached over 95 per cent agreement in coding these sources of the teachers' knowledge. For the purpose of trustworthiness, I verified these findings with the teachers during the focus group discussion.

Findings

The findings of the study reported here focus on the following points:

(i) the commonalities and collaboration evident in the teachers' approaches to planning content for writing instruction; and,

(ii) the variations in their teaching and communities of practice related to their knowledge for writing instruction.

Commonalities and Collaboration

Faith, Maria, and Leeanne were a highly collaborative teaching group which resulted in their similar approaches to planning content. Having developed this EAP course together, they shared common course goals and views about topics and materials. Their use of current event type material, similar types of academic writing tasks, infrequent use of ESL course textbooks, and their attention to test/exam requirements were common to their individual approaches.

Each teacher said that her understanding of the course had developed mainly through conversations and meetings with her colleagues. The actual EAP course and the teachers' collaboration in developing the course had thus served as their central community of practice for their teacher knowledge as illustrated in Figure 2.

Faith, Maria, and Leeanne each described this EAP course as a general or all-purpose academic writing course (rather than discipline–specific). It was a place where a broad range of students could develop academic writing skills and strategies which they could later adapt to their particu-

(Continued on page 58)

"Each teacher said that her understanding of the course had developed mainly through conversations and meetings with her colleagues."

(Continued from page 57)

lar disciplines in university studies. Faith explained this:

> *I always tell them at the beginning, the academic preparation program is not going to focus on one area of academia. It's… a strategy-based program…um…but also being successful in academic life is being able to talk about what's going on in the world…I want them to feel comfortable in the academic setting. (Faith. Int. 2.141)*

"Foremost in selecting material for each teacher was whether topics would interest her students."

These teachers viewed effective content as authentic, timely and relevant, and based on a range of topics that would engage most students. To achieve this, the teachers gave the students a needs assessment questionnaire early in the course. Students indicated five or six topics that most interested them and topics which they would not want to discuss during the course. Each teacher also mentioned her willingness to change content during the course should student interest wane. This was, in fact, evident during my observations of the classes. Foremost in selecting material for each teacher was whether topics would interest her students. Each teacher frequently used current articles from major newspapers and related audio-or video-taped radio and TV programs – for example, from the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, *Maclean's* magazine, and CBC and CTV radio and television shows such as *Quirks and Quarks* and *Marketplace*. Faith explained these practices for content selection as related to the criteria of authenticity:

> *Well, all of the materials, resources have to be authentic, not written just for people who are learning English as their second language. That's the key, the bottom line. Using different kinds of newspapers. I use a lot of newspapers and magazines and some journals. (Faith. Metaphor. 46)*

(Continued on page 59)

(Continued from page 58)

Maria elaborated on this use of current events and content, noting how language items were targeted after selecting a news topic of interest to the students:

> *Whenever I see something interesting and useful, I cut it out… I try to find something interesting. Like here [pointing to a graph discussing current Canadian health care expenses, in a major Canadian newspaper]. They can also learn a lot about Canadian health care, right…? Not too difficult, and useful from a linguistic point of view as well [referring to her lesson on describing charts/graphs]. (Maria. Int. 2. 88)*

These teachers spent considerable time selecting and preparing current event topics and materials even though a large collection of materials was available in the teacher resource area.

Although an ESL composition and grammar course textbook had been assigned to the students, the teachers used it infrequently, and when they did, mainly for additional models of particular styles of writing (e.g. a description) and/or specific grammar exercises related to an item that had been problematic for the class. Faith, Maria, and Leeanne expressed their general dissatisfaction with ESL textbooks, explaining that textbook materials generally lacked authentic sample writings. Leeanne explained:

> *Styles of writing (genres) usually do not appear as separate compositions in real texts as they do in ESL textbooks – for example, stand alone comparison/contrast essays… We usually do not find a comparison/contrast by itself, but within or as part of a piece of text in a persuasive piece of writing. (Leeanne. Int. 1. 27)*

(Continued on page 60)

"…You can use the textbook, but if you are not comfortable, do where your heart is."

(Continued from page 59)

Maria attributed her personal dissatisfaction with textbooks to a lack of interesting material:

> *In my first year of teaching in this particular program, I tried to stick to the prescribed textbook, which was then based on business-related topics… I found it so boring… I'm not good at these things. I can't teach them. And it was murder for me because I felt it…but [names the program administrator] is great because she says: "You can use the textbook, but if you are not comfortable, do where your heart is." So as you said, I find my own texts usually. (Maria. Int. 3. 48)*

"…I think my duty is to open their eyes a little bit and to make them start thinking a bit more seriously. "

Writing objectives and tasks were also similar in each class. Teachers had students write 10-12 compositions based on the different themes/topics introduced via background newspaper and radio/tv texts. Students also practised other academic preparation tasks such as note-taking, timed writing, paraphrasing, quoting and referencing, analyzing and describing graphs and charts, and the final assignment – a mini-research paper of five or six pages on a topic of each student's choice. Teachers planned a summary-and-response writing task at the conclusion of each topic or theme, generally twice a week. Faith, Maria, and Leeanne explained that these summary-and-response writings were related to the course goal of preparing students to think and write critically in an academic environment. Teacher Maria particularly stressed this objective, explaining as her metaphor the role of being a catalyst for writing and thinking:

> *…I think my duty is to open their eyes a little bit and to make them start thinking a bit more seriously. So although I can't choose topics from particular fields because it's too difficult for them professionally, and not everybody's interested in the same thing, but if the topics come from things that surround them, from events that happen, from problems that people talk*

(Continued on page 61)

(Continued from page 60)

about, I think that makes them think. Some controversial topics…(Maria.Int.1. 217-219)

This shared emphasis of summary-and-response writing was shaped by teaching to the midterm and final exit texts in which students wrote a summary and response based on a text from a current academic journal. Leeanne noted that this required outcome influenced the writing tasks that teachers developed. She frequently explained to students: "Why are we doing this type of writing? Yes, because it's something that will be on your final test. "

In effect, then, the teachers' joint activity in developing the course had shaped not only the course and content, but had become the central community of practice in which they had developed their teacher knowledge for EAP writing instruction as is illustrated in Figure 1 on page 56. In contrast, the teachers infrequently referred to formal teaching theories and their teacher education in talking about writing instruction. In fact, Faith, Maria and Leeanne each remarked on how little they referred to direct knowledge from their teacher courses and the actual lack of information about academic writing that they had experienced in their TESL training. They each explained that they had developed their teaching practice as a work-in-progress through collaboration with colleagues while "on the job."

"…teachers infrequently referred to formal teaching theories and their teacher education in talking about writing instruction."

Variations in Communities of Practice and Teacher Knowledge

The main community of practice explained by each teacher (and illustrated in Figure 2) was important to her writing instruction knowledge. Faith emphasized composing processes as the main strategies that she aimed for students to learn. She had developed practices for composing process development through team teaching. Faith explained: "Content has to be secondary to the strategies we teach." (Faith 3.23). Faith's classes were full of group activities which began with small group pre-discussion activities in which students deconstructed background texts (print or audio-visual) for the purposes of comprehension, vocabulary development, synthesis and analysis, and discussion of

(Continued on page 62)

(Continued from page 61)

ideas. All of this collaborative activity served as background in a process approach to writing. Faith explained:

> *The writing generally wouldn't happen at the beginning. Basically you need to activate the schema, and to activate the schema you need to do some speaking, some reading, discussion, and then a grammar point that may be incorporated into the writing and then it's all put together in writing. (Faith.Int. 3.164)*

Faith noted that she had developed these practices while working with her mentor teacher during her TESL Certificate program and in her team teaching with a senior EAP teacher during her first year of teaching in this course:

"…I really benefit from the extensive experience of my colleagues. "

> *For the practicum I volunteered for about 6 months or so, and then I had a practicum and I was given many opportunities to work with the person I had my practicum with and she was doing the academic preparation. I learned a lot from that. (Faith. Int. 1. 108)*

And through her team teaching experience when she started to teach EAP:

> *I learned a tremendous amount from her [the team teacher] because she's got much more experience than I. I came in with no experience, having been away from the teaching scene…She [the team teacher] taught me a lot of theory. She taught me more than anybody… She was teaching the same level. At the time, she was doing her courses for her Doctorate. So she and I would do the same lesson in both of our classes, which means she would do one aspect, and I would do the other, and col-*

(Continued on page 63)

(Continued from page 62)

laborate to plan a lesson….It was just the one year. I'd say I learned more from her than anybody else… (Faith. Int. 3. 115-134)

Faith, like Maria and Leeanne, depicted her teacher knowledge for EAP writing as founded in continual observing, learning, borrowing and sharing with teacher colleagues:

You know I really benefit from the extensive experience of my colleagues. For ideas…I ask questions of them, you know: " Do you think this will work? What do you think I should do? Can you suggest a different activity?" Then, of course, I would give my material to somebody so we do exchange materials and ideas… Because there are only three of us who teach in this level, we do it [talk about classes] frequently, mostly informally. But we also have a formal meeting once a month. (Faith. Int. 1. 117- 126).

Thus, the main communities of practice in learning to teach EAP writing for Faith were her team teaching and work in the EAP course as is illustrated in Figure 1.

In contrast to Faith and Leeanne, Maria felt that her formal educational background had been most influential for her teaching of EAP writing. When teaching writing, Maria emphasized vocabulary and structures more than Faith and Leeanne. This she related to her background in linguistics:

It's [grammar and vocabulary instruction] very much against some trends in ESL which exclude direct grammar teaching. I think that that's extremely important. And especially for writing. If you don't understand how things work, it's almost impossible to write. So I think that having some theoretical knowl-

(Continued on page 64)

"If you don't understand how things work, it's almost impossible to write."

(Continued from page 63)

> *edge of the language helps [me] a lot [referring to her background in linguistics and her degree in philology]. (Maria. Int.3.58)*

However, Maria, too, explained that she had learned how to teacher EAP writing mainly "on the job":

> *I hate to tell you that, but in those days [the 1980s] we didn't learn how to teach writing. We wouldn't talk about that. I mean we would do some things, but it wasn't that caliber of writing at all, and I think basically you developed while you taught. There was a certain need… when I was teaching the TOEFL course with [names local school board], I suddenly realized that those people needed to write because part of that was writing an essay. And I started my own program. They allowed me to have an afternoon program, and I sort of read and looked around and that's how I taught myself, in a way; and you talk to other teachers and you get feedback from students. And that part I sort of developed while I was already a mature teacher. (Maria. Int. 3.52)*

"…most of what I do in class derives from what I identify as being their weakness."

Maria's communities of practice for writing instruction are therefore represented as "Maria: Linguistics and learning on the job" in Figure 1.

Leeanne is represented as "Leeanne: Learning from students" in Figure 2 according to her own self-explained source of knowledge about EAP writing: "I think a lot of the most useful information comes from…hearing from the students themselves what their difficulties are." (Leeanne. Int.1:35). Leeanne attributed her instructional practices more to observing how students learn to write than to formal TESL course work. Leeanne explained her student-based writing instruction style in this way:

(Continued on page 65)

(Continued from page 64)

> *I think it really would have come from just observing how the students write. This particular group, and also, previous groups… I can't honestly say that it would come very much from the TESL training except for the fact that I learned that there is this group of words called "reporting verbs", and that they might be important. But I guess most of what I do in class derives from what I identify as being their weakness, so of course here I saw that there was a non-use of …a variety of verbs. … Probably the students have taught me what I needed, and that's why I've gone more and more, I think, to letting them talk to me in class, which I used to regard as necessary, but kind of a waste of time. (Leeanne.Int.1.40)*

Leeanne thus attributed her instructional practices and knowledge to her collaboration with the learners in the learning-to-write process.

In keeping with this, Leeanne reserved parts of class for students to read their writing aloud, to discuss their difficulties, and to get feedback from their peers. Leeanne explained how these feedback sessions had become more important for her than providing written teacher feedback on their writing:

> *…I could write down every piece of information that they need to know and you know some of them won't read it. Some won't understand my handwriting but will be too shy to ask me. Some will look at it but will feel that the written response is more of a criticism, it hurts their feelings, so when it comes from a friend in a class…rather than me just saying "You have this weakness, you've got to do this about it"; me allowing them to say "I think I've done this wrong..", or, "I felt this made me angry or was frustrating." Just that kind of dialogue works a lot better for some*

(Continued on page 66)

"…I could write down every piece of information that they need to know and you know some of them won't read it. "

(Continued from page 65)

> *of them and they love it. So even while now I still think "Is this the best use of that 30 minutes?", they keep telling me that they really like a chance to tell me what's happening in their writing. So it becomes more and more a combination of what I know they need to do and their own identifying with me what they need and want to achieve. (Leeanne. Int. 1.41)*

Leeanne's interactions with the students in this way had shaped her teacher knowledge for writing instruction.

"...opportunities for collaboration, dialogue, and reflection need to be provided in ESL teacher certification programs..."

Discussion

Faith, Maria and Leeanne's collaborative experiences in learning to teach provide important insights about the social process of teacher knowledge. These experienced teachers had developed their knowledge for EAP writing instruction through their ongoing participation in collaborative communities of practice. These were distinguished by dialogue and exchange amongst colleagues and learners. Such opportunities for collaboration, dialogue, and reflection need to be provided in ESL teacher certification programs, ongoing professional development, and daily teaching in programs. Richards (1998) has elaborated means for incorporating such opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection into teacher education courses. These include autobiographies, reactions sheets and analysis of case studies, journals, language learning experiences, and discussion of audio and video recordings of one's own teaching. Such reflection and dialogue in teaching and teacher education will foster the process-oriented approach recommended by Freeman and Johnson (1998) and Johnston and Goettsch (2001).

As well, just as Faith, Maria, and Leeanne relied on each other in learning how to teach writing, there is a need to promote collaborative communities of practice to sustain lifelong teacher development. According to these teachers' experiences, the collegial nature of their program and their personal in-

(Continued on page 67)

(Continued from page 66)

volvement in developing the course had enhanced this participation. Keeping teachers involved in the course development process means that as they are given opportunities to talk about practice; they direct their own professional development according to the contexts and needs of the learning organizations in which they teach.

The example of Faith, who had benefited from her team teaching during her first year in the EAP program, stands out as one exemplary, collaborative way of enhancing teacher knowledge. Faith's experiences as a partner-in-teaching are shown as a worthwhile way of initiating teachers into teaching new courses. Team teaching could also be useful in helping experienced teachers try out and develop new ways of teaching techniques, styles and interventions.

I noted that Faith, Leeanne and Maria explained that they were able to develop their practice and their teacher knowledge by being involved in the *ongoing* exchange of ideas and materials. Their example illustrates the benefits of involving teachers in the process of course and curriculum planning and development on an ongoing basis. Their experiences indicate that learning to teach is a work-in-progress, and that opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and reflection around practice need to be provided continually. Each teacher remarked on how much teaching writing had changed during her career. Leeanne, for example, noted that she had taken her TESL Certificate Program (10 years earlier) when "… there was less focus on response writing [than is currently required in this EAP course]."(Leeanne.Int.1.183). Teacher knowledge and practice change with time and changes in students, programs, and teaching approaches. Opportunities for the types of ongoing learning that these teachers discussed need to be part of each teacher's professional development.

"…The experiences of Faith, Maria, and Leeanne point to ongoing and collaborative interaction as primary sources of learning to teach EAP …"

Concluding Remarks

In the introduction, I indicated that the questions of what knowledge practicing ESL teachers actually draw on in planning content and tasks for EAP writing instruction and the sources of this teacher knowledge were central to my study. The experiences of Faith, Maria, and Leeanne point to ongoing and col-

(Continued on page 68)

(Continued from page 67)

laborative interaction as primary sources of learning to teach EAP writing in this study. Their interactions in communities of practice illustrate that their teacher knowledge was based in processes of informed exchange amongst themselves, in dialogue with other practitioners and in interactions with students. Maria, in discussing the opportunity to participate in this study, underscored the benefits of such an interactive, dialogic approach to teacher knowledge:

> *You know, I find it quite helpful to talk to people about teaching. Because we have very little opportunity to do that. We are all busy and I think it's very useful to exchange ideas because I think by talking about it you make yourself aware of things…And you learn a lot, you know. (Focus Group. Maria. 534-6)*

"…a purposeful, community of practice approach to teacher knowledge and education may be facilitated by promoting teacher collaboration in curriculum…"

These teacher examples thus show that a purposeful, community of practice approach to teacher knowledge and education may be facilitated by promoting teacher collaboration in curriculum and course planning and delivery, team teaching and mentoring, future teacher participation in research, and related collaborative teaching/learning activities. These activities, if developed collaboratively and dialogically, should bridge theory and practice in teacher knowledge as advocated by Freeman and Johnson (1998). ❖

References

Block, D. (2003). *The social turn in second language acquisition.* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Cumming, A. (2001). Goals for academic writing. OISE/UT: Unpublished report.

Cumming, A. (2001). Experienced ESL/EFL writing instructors' conceptualizations of their teaching: curriculum options and implications. In B. Kroll (Ed.). *Exploring the dynamics of second-language writing* (pp. 71-92). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Cumming, A. (Ed.) (2006). *Goals for academic writing ESL students and their instructors.* Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Cummings, J., Erdosy, U., Cumming, A. (2006). A study of contrasts: ESL and university instructors' goals for writing improvement. In A. Cumming (Ed.). *Goals for academic writing ESL students and their instructors* (pp. 50-69). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Engeström, Y. (1999). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen & R. Punamäki (Eds.). *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 19-38). New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferris, D. (2001). Teaching writing for academic purposes. In J. Flowerdew & M. Peacock (Eds.). *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes* (pp. 298-314). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ferris, D. (2003). Responding to writing. In B. Kroll (Ed.). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing* (pp. 119-140).Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Flowerdew, J. & Peacock, M. (2001). *Research perspectives on English for academic purposes.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

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

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age.* Cambridge: Polity.

Johnston, B. and Goettsch, K. (2000). In search of the knowledge base of language teaching: Explanations by experienced teachers. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 56,* 437-468.

Leki, I., Cumming, A., & Silva, T. (2005). *A synthesis of research on L2 writing in English.* Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

(Continued on page 70)

References

(Continued from page 69)

References

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leki, I. (Ed.) (2001). *Academic writing programs.* Alexandria, VA: TESOL, Inc.

Leki, I. & Carson, J. (1997). "Completely different worlds": EAP and the writing experiences of ESL students in university courses. *TESOL Quarterly, 31,* 39-69.

Lemke, J. (1995). *Textual politics: Discourse and social dynamics.* London: Taylor and Francis.

Reid, J. (2001). Advanced EAP writing and curriculum design: What do we need to know? In T. Silva & P.K. Matsuda (Eds.). *On second language writing.* (pp. 143-160). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Richards, J. (1998). *Beyond training.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, J. (1998). *Language teacher education.* London, UK: Arnold.

Russell, D.R. (1997). Rethinking genre in school and society: an activity theory analysis. *Written Communication, 14,* 504-554.

Spack, R. (1997). The acquisition of academic literacy in a second language. A longitudinal case study. *Written Communication, 14,* 3-62.

Vygotsky, L. (1986). *Thought and language.* Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The MIT Press.

Wenger, E. (1998).*Communities of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Zamel, V. (1995). Strangers in academia: The experiences of faculty and ESL students across the curriculum. *College and Communication, 46,* 506-521.

THEME TWO: ORAL SKILLS

Assessing Oral Skills: Using Factors that Influence Speaking Proficiency in the Classroom

By Kathryn Brillinger

Abstract

Assessment affects teaching and learning, and this includes the assessment of oral proficiency. An English as a Subsequent Language teacher may encounter problems in teaching and evaluating oral skills due to insufficient knowledge about the practice of oral assessment or the research of oral assessment. Problems may also be due to a mismatch between what students find important in terms of developing and assessing oral skills and what teachers feel they should focus on.

This paper is intended to share a tool that I've found useful in enriching the teaching and assessment of oral skills. Over the past 21 years as I have taught ESL, I have encountered students in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs, in ESL programs and in private tutoring situations. I have also read many textbooks and articles related to teaching oral skills. As time passed, I started and have continued to develop a list of factors that adult ESL learners often need to work on (Appendix A). The list has become a long, but not exhaustive, collection of factors that influence speaking proficiency. The proposed use of the list is to guide teaching and learning, and to direct assessment.

The list is structured to start at the very broad (top down) factors that influence successful oral communication exchanges and end with narrow or discrete (bottom up) factors. The structure is not intended to suggest that either end is more important or needs to come first. In practice, I have found the mispronunciation of a single consonant sound can, on occasion, be as problematic as failing to take into account the global (English for International Business Communication) or local context in which a conversation occurs. In addition, pronunciation relates to many of the issues that might be addressed under global compe-

(Continued on page 72)

"I started and have continued to develop a list of factors that adult ESL learners often need to work on…"

(Continued from page 71)

tence such as the increasing use of English as an international language and the resulting stabilization of "non-standard" varieties of English such as Konglish (Korean-style English) and Singlish (Singaporean- style English) and Indian English.

The list of factors is not meant to be complete; rather it is an evolving tool that is constantly lengthened, shortened and modified to meet my own teaching/ assessing needs. It is also not meant to replace other existing tools such as the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) (Johansson et al, 2000). The value of the list is that it has encouraged me and my students, and can, perhaps, encourage other teachers and students to consider factors that are not typically considered in teaching and testing oral skills—factors such as "global competence" (the ability to take into consideration the diverse political, historical, and cultural backgrounds of the conversation partner) and "discourse management" (the need to understand and follow the conversation rules of a particular cultural group) and the impact of areas such as volume and intonation on successful communication.

"A lack of understanding and comfort will lead to a teacher's not teaching or assessing oral skills …"

Research into teacher knowledge (Segall, 2004; Shulman, 1986; Smith, 2005; Tigchelaar & Korthagen, 2004) indicates that teachers must possess Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) and the intention to bring such knowledge into the classroom. If teachers have had limited training in oral skills teaching and assessment, they enter teaching with a lack of SMK. A lack of SMK leads to a lack of PCK, as a teacher can only develop methods and approaches to teaching if he/she understands, and is comfortable with, the subject matter. A lack of understanding and comfort will lead to a teacher's not teaching or assessing oral skills or limiting him/herself to a few familiar areas.

It is not clear that current TESL training adequately prepares teachers for working with oral skills. Borg's (2003) review of the research into second language teacher cognition revealed that only the areas of grammar and literacy (reading and writing) teaching have been addressed with any thoroughness, and he argues that much remains unexplored even in these areas. I have not been able to locate sources discussing what ESL teachers learn and think about

(Continued on page 73)

(Continued from page 72)

evaluating oral skills as the area has not been researched. For example, in terms of pronunciation, Breitkreutz, Derwing, and Rossiter (2001) surveyed 67 ESL programs in Canada and found that the respondents felt that "teachers lack sufficient training and training opportunities" (p. 58) to prepare for teaching pronunciation. I agree with Farrell (2003) who suggests that large scale studies "of how English language teachers are socialized and developed into the profession need to be conducted … to see if there are mismatches between the teacher preparation programs and the realities of teaching" (p. 109). Therefore, I suggest that a list, such as the one provided in Appendix A, can help ESL teachers to develop their thinking in the area of oral skills, as well as assist teacher trainers in determining ESL students' needs.

A number of the categories listed in Appendix A may not be completely familiar to ESL teachers. Although increasing research has been carried out in recent years into the importance of areas such as global competence, prosody, pragmatics, and volume for successful communication, little of this research seems to have found its way into ESL classrooms. A sampling of these areas is provided below.

In defining the concept of global competence, Hunter, White, & Godbey (2006) state that "one must establish a firm understanding of the concept of globalization and world history…It is here that the recognition of the interconnectedness of society, politics, history, economics, the environment, and related topics becomes important" (p. 279). Andrade (2006) points out that "in a world that increasingly reflects the effects of globalization, the need for intercultural education and understanding is critical" (p. 133). Specific Canadian competence is needed as so-called "language problems may actually be culturally based ways of seeing the world" (p. 143).

Pragmatic competence is the appropriate use of language in conducting speech acts and it always involves language in an interactive context (CARLA, 2006). For a speaker to perform a speech act such as apologizing or thanking there has to be someone else who is being apologized to or who is being thanked, with the other person's response not necessarily being predictable (CARLA, 2006). Teaching and assessing such language functions as compliment-

(Continued on page 74)

"For a speaker to perform a speech act such as apologizing or thanking there has to be someone else who is being apologized to or who is being thanked..."

(Continued from page 73)

ing, denying, volunteering, and critiquing from the "Speech Acts" section of Appendix A allows students the opportunity to develop their pragmatic competence.

In terms of the importance of considering gesture in oral communication, Kelly, Kravitz & Hopkins (2004) confirmed that not only does gesture impact on the brain's processing of speech (p. 258) but that the processing of gesture precedes the processing of semantic content by several hundred milliseconds (p. 257). This may be especially critical for fluent oral speech. Alibali, Kita & Young (2000) found that "gesture facilitates access to items in the mental lexicon" (p. 593). In addition, Frick-Horbury found that "the use of hand gestures as a cue for recall can compensate for lexical deficiencies" (2002, p. 144). Gesture may also help in oral skill building. In a study that observed that children can express thoughts in gesture earlier than they can express these same thoughts in speech, Goldin-Meadow & Singer (2003) conclude that "gesture may be part of the mechanism that brings about cognitive change." (p. 519). Focusing on gesture in subsequent language (L2) oral skills teaching is well-supported as "the planning of utterances involves the interplay of imaginistic thinking and linguistic thinking. The outcome of imaginistic thinking manifests itself as gesture and the outcome of linguistic thinking manifests itself as co-expressive speech." (Kita & Ozyurek 2003, p. 17)

"…there is sometimes a mismatch between what students think they need in order to improve their oral skills and what teachers think students need"

I use the list in Appendix A to remind myself of the many areas involved in oral skills use and also to negotiate teaching and learning goals, both with groups and with individuals. It provides all concerned with a shared starting point. This is an important step, as there is sometimes a mismatch between what students think they need in order to improve their oral skills and what teachers think students need. For example, in 2001, when Derwing and Rossiter asked ESL students what concerned them about their pronunciation, the majority of the respondents mentioned segmental elements such as vowels and consonants, while the researchers (ESL teachers themselves) had evidence and experience which led them to suggest that prosodic features such as syllable stress and intonation led to more breakdowns in oral communication (Derwing & Rossiter, 2001). However, it is quite possible that the respondents were not aware of these

(Continued on page 75)

(Continued from page 74)

technical areas as such areas are not generally included in oral skills teaching and assessment.

During negotiations around learning objectives, the teacher and the student can both learn about the possibilities for teaching and assessment and together create a plan for the teaching session. A solid, co-designed assessment tool can guide both the learner and teacher. Such an assessment tool or instrument can be negotiated during a series of "skills conferences." This is in agreement with the findings from Strauss & Xiang (2006) whose research examined ESL writing conferences. The researchers found "gradual and progressive advancement of students' understandings of the tasks at hand within the situated interactions with their instructor" (p. 389). Such advancement was demonstrated by students' "more agentive attitudes towards the tasks in general and their own writing in particular" (p. 389). I have found that determining the oral skills focus with the class leads to this same sense of empowerment and commitment.

Using this list, teachers and students can work together to evaluate oral skills, negotiate teaching for their needs and plan how to reassess oral skills at different points during teaching and learning. This approach should lead very quickly to the development of a teacher's SMK, PCK and the intention to teach. This approach is supported by Farrell (2006), who suggests that "teacher education programs move away from stressing the various methods of teaching language and move towards promoting the development of skills in anticipatory reflection" (p. 218). He recommends analyzing new teacher case studies that follow a "story structure framework" … and better still, mutual constructions of the "story" by the researcher and the researched should be encouraged" (p. 219). The co-use of the type of list illustrated in Appendix A leads naturally to reflection on oral-skill needs and the co-construction of the oral-skill lessons makes each class an opportunity for in-service teacher development in the area of oral-skill assessment.

When I use the list in class, I follow certain steps. In the first class, I give a presentation on oral skills which highlights many of the areas listed. I use demonstrations, video clips and YouTube broadcasts (**www.youtube.com**) to show examples. I start at the top of the list and move down, defining and discussing

(Continued on page 76)

"A solid, co-designed assessment tool can guide both the learner and teacher. "

(Continued from page 75)

each area. I engage the students in a conversation about the importance of oral skills and then they work in pairs or small groups to work through the list again, highlighting skills that they would most like to focus on. For a 14-week course (three hours per week), I ask them to choose their top ten preferred focus skills. Each group writes its choices up on the white board and we go through the choices, noting overlapping preferences, and negotiating what to do with the odd ones out.

Popular choices from the list in Appendix A at the high intermediate/ advanced level include:

(a) coping with cultural diversity,

(b) appreciating Canadian ways of seeing the world,

(c) identifying local recreational possibilities,

(d) passing the IELTS test,

(e) managing discourse,

(f) conducting speech acts,

(g) using collocations,

(h) applying presentation skills, and,

(i) developing all areas of pronunciation - suprasegmental and segmental.

“I engage the students in a conversation about the importance of oral skills and then they work in pairs or small groups to work through the list…”

These choices can generally be manipulated to suit the outcomes of a particular course. For example, if a course outcome was to build the students’ oral abilities in using idiomatic expressions, then a teacher could go through the choices above and integrate idiomatic expressions into course activities.

The choices made during these negotiations influence the overall orientation of the class and the development of speaking activities. For example, students will be assigned to gather examples and prepare presentations using the

(Continued on page 77)

(Continued from page 76)

topics chosen as a base. A presentation on topics such as "Making New Acquaintances in the Canadian Workplace" or "Supporting Your Position in a Conversation at Work" would require consideration of all of the chosen areas.

To facilitate assessment, the chosen items are pasted into a smaller ten-section rubric (See Appendix B). The class or teacher need to clarify further the meaning of each section of the scoring. For example the table below shows descriptors developed for volume of the speaker's voice.

I use the same rubric multiple times throughout the term. I use it for a first presentation with no mark value (pre-instruction/early assessment), a second and third presentation with low-mark values (formative assessment), and a final-mark, intensive presentation (official/outcome assessment). Assessment needs to be performed before, during, and after any teaching occurs. Quay (2006) describes three types of assessment that teachers should include:

(Continued on page 78)

"The class or teacher need to clarify further the meaning of each section of the scoring. "

Table 1: Sample Rubrics

Volume	
Exemplary	Could be heard easily and clearly throughout room for entire presentation. Peaks in volume matched key points/ excitement.
Accomplished	Could be heard throughout room for entire presentation.
Acceptable	Voice projection lacking occasionally, but could be heard.
Developing	Occasionally too quiet to be heard.
Lacking	Could only be heard with difficulty throughout presentation.

(Continued from page 77)

1. early assessment, which is informal information about a student gathered through observation early in the semester which provides knowledge about the student that the teacher can use to help with course planning;
2. instructional assessment, which is a cyclical process where teaching occurs, the teaching/learning is assessed based on student work, responses, etc. and the teaching is revised; and
3. official assessment, which involves giving an exam and providing a grade. When planning each type of assessment, Quay asks teachers to keep one essential question in mind, 'What do we want this learner to be able to do five years from now?' In deciding what to assess, teachers need to work back from the desired outcome. In oral skills, the outcome desired is often context-appropriate use of speech in spontaneous speech acts.

"…without 'exams' learning English became an amorphous phenomenon for the informants…"

Gao (2005), in a study of 14 Chinese students, found that the students involved changed their learning strategies depending on the type of assessment required and that "without 'exams' learning English became an amorphous phenomenon for the informants" (p. 62). Therefore, first it needs to be recognized that oral skills assessment is as necessary as the assessment of grammar and writing skills. Second, if our goal is to have students develop useful long-term language learning strategies, we must carefully choose the type of oral assessment to guide students' choice of appropriate learning strategies. For example, the use of the list in Appendix A has led me to develop more comprehensive assessment, which, in turn, has helped me to guide students' learning of oral skills.

The list can also be used in many different ways. One example is that it can serve as a guide for a face-to-face interview with an internationally-educated professional. In this scenario, the categories can be used as prompts for questions. The assessor and professional can determine jointly whether the interviewee is lacking, developing, or competent in each area. The list can be used in a similar way in the classroom, with peers using the list as an interview tool. Al-

(Continued on page 79)

(Continued from page 78)

ternately, the list can be used for practice in a writing class with students assigned to choose an area on which to tell personal narratives or to write comparison/contrast essays on how a certain speech act is generally accomplished in one culture versus another. The students can then either "publish" their work or change their written work into an oral presentation.

It is my hope that this list can also encourage ESL teachers to become better versed in current research on teaching pronunciation and oral skills. Without being participants in discussions, teachers will not be able to provide input into or respond to researchers' suggestions of what students need. A related unfortunate example of the disconnect between researchers' recommendations and practitioner/student experience occurred in the late eighties when teaching grammar directly was forbidden in some institutions. In terms of oral skills, scholars are currently questioning the appropriateness of a full-spectrum (segmental to prosody) pronunciation curriculum for students who intend to use English primarily as a means of international communication (EIC) between non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2004; Seidlhofer, 2004). This, in itself, is interesting and may be appropriate. However, at a presentation at last year's TESL Ontario conference it was suggested that these findings be applied to current ESL programs. Given that the research that led to the suggestions was not based on the experiences of newcomers to Canada, careful consideration of such suggestions before applying them to oral skills teaching and assessment is essential.

This paper has explored the use of a list of oral skills characteristics in helping both teachers and students to develop an understanding of the complexities involved and how oral skills can be assessed. By considering the large variety of skills that have an impact on successful oral communication and by co-creating oral skills lessons and assessments with L2 students, ESL and LINC teachers can grow in their subject matter knowledge, pedagogical competence and intention to teach in this very important area. ❖

"…students can then either 'publish' their work or change their written work into an oral presentation. "

Appendix A part 1

List of Oral Skills

Name:

Area	**Sub-Areas**	**Lacking** (Not able to converse/manage in this area)	**Developing** (Can converse/ manage with difficulty)	**Competent** (Can converse/ manage with ease)	**Comments/Questions/ Concerns**
Global Competence	Globalization				
	World History				
	Cultural Diversity				
	Other:				

Canadian Competence	Canadian Society/ Ways of Seeing the World/Gender Identities				
	Canadian History				
	Canadian Politics				
	Canadian Economics				
	Canadian Geography/ Demographics				
	Canadian Educational Systems				
	Computer/Internet Literacy				
	Multiculturalism/ The Charter of Rights and Freedoms				
	Other:				

Appendix A part 2

Appendix A part 3

Local Competence for __________ (town or city)	Places to Work				
	Places to Study				
	Resources for Emergencies				
	Recreational Possibilities				
	Social Support for Loneliness/ Homesickness				
	Local History				
	Local Demograph-ics/ Geography				
	Other:				

Oral Test-Taking Competence	Name Tests that you must pass				

Discourse Management Competence (Conversational Exchanges)	Starting Conversations				
	Encouraging a Speech Partner to Go On				

Appendix A part 4

Appendix A part 5

Discourse Management Competence (Conversational Exchanges cont'd.)	Ending Conversations				
	Buying Time				
	Giving an Appropriate Amount of Information to a Prompt				
	Getting the Floor				
	Ability to Hold the Floor				
	Ability to Follow a Conversation with Multiple Partners				
	Comfort in Casual Conversations				
	Comfort in Academic Conversations				
	Comfort in Professional Workplace Conversations				
	Other				

Speech Acts (Conversational Exchanges)	Requesting				
	Refusing				
	Suggesting				
	Complimenting				
	Apologizing				
	Greeting and Saying Goodbye				
	Complaining				
	Expressing Gratitude				
	Criticizing				
	Guaranteeing				
	Promising				

Appendix A part 6

Appendix A part 7

Speech Acts Conversational Exchanges cont'd.	Volunteering				
	Critiquing				
	Demanding				
	Recognizing Insults				
	Convincing				
	Persuading				
	Explaining				
	Denying				
	Expressing Regret				
	Asking Questions				
	Disagreeing				
	Stating a Belief				

Speech Acts (Conversational Exchanges cont'd.)	Insisting				
	Warning				
	Threatening				
	Begging				
	Inviting				
	Congratulating				
	Accepting				
	Sympathizing/ Condoling				
	Giving a Detailed De-scription				
	Giving Detailed Direc-tions/Instructions				
	Giving a Formal Pres-entation				
	Other				

Appendix A part 8

Appendix A part 9

Grammar	Accuracy				
	Fluency				
	Other				

Vocabulary	Variety				
	Appropriateness				
	Use of Collocations/ Chunking of Language				
	Other				

Presentation Skills	Overall Expressiveness/Liveliness				
	Gesture (batonic, iconic, deictic)				
	Posture (walking, sitting, standing)				
	Facial Expression (including mouth, eyebrows and eye gaze)				
	Oculesics (Use of the Eyes)				
	Proxemics				
	Haptics (touching handshake)				
	Head Nodding/Shaking				
	Head Tilting				
	Silence				

Appendix A part 10

Appendix A part 11

Presentation Skills (cont's)	Elaboration				
	Emotional Regulation				
	Listener Validation				
	Volume				
	Tone				
	Rate of Speech				
	Use of Fillers (positive and negative)				
	Clothing and Jewellery				

Appendix A part 12

Pronuncia-tion	Chunking (Phrasing)				
	Intonation (Grammatical)				
	Intonation (Affective)				
	Rhythm				
	Focus Stress (at the sentence level)				
	Word Stress (on the content words)				
	Syllable Stress				
	Reduction to Schwa				
	Linking				
	Consonant Issues				
	Vowel Issues				
	Other				

Appendix A part 13

Conversat-ional Possibilities	At School				
	At Home				
	At Work				
	Other				

Comments and Examples:

Oral Skills Presentation Feedback

Name ________________________________

Topic: Making New Acquaintances at Work in Canada

x10 for each section	Focus Area	N/A	Ineffective Coverage or Examples 2	Limited Coverage 3	Effective Coverage 4	Exemplary Coverage 5
Audience Awareness Issues	Coping with cultural diversity					
	Canadian ways of seeing the world					
	Local issues					
	Connections to the IELTS test/other possible testing					
	Discourse management					
	Speech acts					
	Some needed collocations					

Appendix B

Appendix B part 2

Focus Area		Frequently-Unclear/ Ineffective 1	Occasion-ally Un-clear/ Ineffective 2	Clear/ Effective With Atten-tion/ Effort 3	Mostly Ef-fective/ Clear 4	Always Clear and Effective 5
Pronuncia-tion Issues	Phrasing					
	Intonation					
	Sentence Stress					
	Content Word Stress					
	Syllable Stress					
	Reduction to Schwa					
	Linking					
	Consonants					
	Vowels					
Paralin-guistic Issues	Proxemics					
	Gestures					
	Facial Expres-sions					
	Use of Eyes					
	Liveliness					
	Volume					
	Pace					
Presenta-tion/ Delivery	Quality of visuals /Board					
	Professionalism					
	Engaging the audience in dis-					
	Time Manage-					
Score _____/170 = _____ (25 per cent of Course)		Comments:				

References

Goldin-Meadow, S. & Singer, M. (2003). From children's hands to adults' ears: gesture's role in the learning process. *Developmental Psychology*, 39, 3, 509-520.

Hunter, B., White, G., & Godbey, G. (2006). What does it mean to become globally competent? *Association for Studies in International Education*, 10, 267-285.

Alibali, M., Kita, S. & Young, A. (2000). Gesture and the process of speech production: we think, therefore we gesture. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, Vol. 15 (6), 593-613.

Andrade, M. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5, 131-154.

Borg, S. (2003). Teacher cognition in language teaching: a review of the research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, 81-109.

Breitkreutz, J. Derwing, T., & Rossiter, M. (2001). Pronunciation teaching practices in Canada. *TESL Canada Journal*, Vol. 19(1), 51-61.

CARLA, (2006). Descriptions of Speech Acts. Retrieved January 16, 2007, from Centre for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition website: http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/descriptions.html

Derwing, T. & Rossiter, M. (2001). ESL learners' perceptions of their pronunciation needs and strategies. *System*, Vol. 30, 155-166.

Farrell, T. (2003). Learning to teach English language during the first year: personal challenges and influences. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 19, 25-111.

Farrell, T. (2006). The first year of language teaching: imposing order. *System*, 34, 211-221.

Frick-Horbury, D. (2002). The effects of hand gestures on verbal recall as a function of high and low verbal skill levels. *The Journal of General Psychology*, Vol. 129 (2), 137-147.

Gao, X. (2005). Understanding changes in Chinese students' uses of learning strategies in China and Britain: a socio-cultural re-interpretation. *System*, 34, 55-67.

Jenkins, J. (2004). Research in teaching pronunciation and intonation. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 109-125.

(Continued on page 96)

(Continued from page 95)

References

Johansson, L., Angst, K., Beer, B., Martin, S., Rebick, W., and Sibilleau, N. (2000). *Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: ESL for Literacy Learners.* Ottawa: Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks.

Kelly, S., Kravitz, C. & Hopkins, M. (2004). Neural correlates of bimodal speech and gesture comprehension. *Brain and Language*, 89, 253-260.

Kita, S. & Ozyurek, A. (2003). What does cross-linguistic variation in semantic coordination of speech and gesture reveal? Evidence for an interface representation of spatial thinking and speaking. *Journal of Memory and Language*, Vol. 48, 16-32.

Quay, S. (2006). What college professors can learn from K-12 educators. *The Teaching Professor,* 20, 1.

Segall, A. (2004). Revisiting pedagogical content knowledge: the pedagogy of content/ the content of pedagogy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 489-504.

Seidlhofer, B. (2004). Research perspectives on teaching English as a lingua franca. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 209-239.

Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 4-14.

Strauss, S. & Xiang, X. (2006). The writing conference as a locus of emergent agency. *Written Communication*, 23, 355-396.

Smith, K. (2005). Teacher educators' expertise: what do novice teachers and teacher educators say? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 177-192.

Tigchelaar, A & Korthagen, F. (2004). Deepening the exchange of student teaching experiences: implications for the pedagogy of teacher education of recent insights into teacher behavior. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20, 665-679.

THEME TWO: ORAL SKILLS

Measuring the Link between Formulaic Sequences and Speech Fluency: Implications for the Language Classroom

By David Wood

Abstract

Speech fluency is usually defined in quantitative terms, as a function of temporal variables of speech such as speed of production, amount of pausing, and length of fluent runs between pauses. In addition, some evidence exists that formulaic sequences, multi-word units of speech stored in memory and retrieved as if they were single words, play a key role in the production of fluent speech. This paper is a report on an examination of the relationship between use of formulaic sequences and second language speech fluency. Eleven learners of English as a second language produced six speech samples over six months. The samples were analyzed for development of key temporal variables of speech to determine fluency gain, and formulaic sequences were identified. Quantitative measures of the relationship between formulaic sequence use and fluency development were applied. Results indicate that fluency increased significantly on temporal measures and that use of formulaic sequences may be linked to the gains in fluency. This has important implications for classroom teaching and some suggestions for guiding principles and activities are presented.

Abstract

Subsequent language (L2) speech fluency remains ill-understood in language education, despite the fact that it is key to effective communication and the ability to cope with life in an L2 environment. Many L2 learners have limited fluency after studying language for long periods of time, and L2 educators have a tendency to overlook fluency and concentrate on language accuracy or entertain a notion that language input or oral language practice activity will help learners to speak their L2 more fluently. This is likely because fluency is elusive and difficult, and its nature and development have not been highlighted in subsequent language acquisition (SLA) research or in teaching methodology. In particular, little research to date has explored the development of fluency in L2 learners over time. This paper presents an investigation of speech fluency development in English as an L2 (ESL), focusing on changes in measurable aspects of L2 speech over time and indicating the importance of the use of formulaic sequences or fixed word combinations in facilitating fluency. The results have strong implications for the teaching of speech fluency, and

(Continued on page 98)

(Continued from page 97)

some principles and suggestions for activities are offered in the second part of this paper.

Most quantitative research on speech fluency has focused on temporal variables of speech, including speech rate, amount, frequency and location of pauses, and length of runs of fluent speech between pauses (Raupach, 1980; Möhle, 1984; Lennon, 1990a, 1990b; Riggenbach, 1991; Freed, 1995; Towell, Hawkins & Bazergui, 1996; Hansen, Gardner & Pollard, 1998). Some other research indicates the importance of control of a store of formulaic sequences - multi-word strings or frames which are retrieved from long-term memory as if they were single words - as a possible key to speech fluency (Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992; Towell et al, 1996; Chambers, 1998; Wood, 2002; Wray, 2002). These include, among other categories, two-word collocations such as *good time*, or *first step*, phrasal verbs such as *run into*, or *come across*, idioms, routine expressions with social pragmatic functions such as *have a good day* or *how are you*, whole clauses, discourse markers such as *on the other hand* or *in summary*, and frames with fillable lexical slots such as a (*year/day/week*…) ago or a (*one/two/three*…) step process.

"In fluent speech production, formulaic sequences are likely automatized, meaning they are retrieved as wholes from long-term memory…"

In fluent speech production, formulaic sequences are likely automatized, meaning they are retrieved as wholes from long-term memory, not assembled word-by-word using conscious effort or control. There is some evidence that formulaic sequences make up a major part of everyday spontaneous speech, and this might help explain how spontaneous speech occurs under the heavy processing and time constraints of real-life discourse (Weinert, 1995; Miller and Weinert, 1998; Skehan 1998; Wray and Perkins, 2000; Wray, 2002; Schmitt, 2004).

The study reported here investigates the relationship between fluency development and formula automatization by linking developments over time in the temporal aspects of learner speech with learners' use of automatized formulas. Speech samples from ESL learners were collected over a 24-week period and were analyzed to determine fluency growth as measured by changes in key temporal variables. Fluency development was examined in relation to increased use of formulaic language, as measured by a formula/run ratio which determines the mean number of formulas per run for each speech sample, as well as a calculation of the percentage of spoken syllables which occurred in formulaic sequences.

(Continued on page 99)

(Continued from page 98)

Temporal Variables

Speech Rate

Many studies have focused on the speed or rate of speech as a feature of fluency. Measured as syllables uttered per minute or second, speech rates tend to increase over time along with certain other measures of learner fluency or to correlate with judges' perceptions of fluency (Towell, 1987; Riggenbach, 1991; Freed, 1995; Towell et al 1996). This accords with popular notions of fluency being somehow a function of smoothness or flow of speech, but speech rate in and of itself can only provide limited insight into how fluency can be achieved or what mental processes it entails.

Pause Phenomena

One of the more informative elements of fluency studied so far in empirical research involves pause phenomena.

Pause Times and Frequencies: Some research has successfully focused on comparisons of the pause times and frequencies in first (L1) as opposed to L2 speech. For example, Möhle (1984), looking at the length and number of silent and filled pauses in a study of French and German L2, found differences between the L1 and L2 performance of the subjects in the number of pauses. Lennon (1984) had twelve German students of English retell a story and compared their performance to a native speaker model, finding that there was a higher ratio of pause time to speech time in the performance of the L2 speakers. Longitudinal research has confirmed the importance of pause times and frequencies in fluency. For example, Lennon (1990a) studied the pause time of four German English students in his longitudinal research, finding that total pause time as a percentage of total speech dropped by an average of 25 per cent for three of four subjects. Freed (1995), comparing French L2 learners who spent a term abroad with those who stayed in the United States, found that the fluent learners had generally shorter and fewer silent pauses.

Pause Location: Dechert (1980), in a study analyzing the speech performance of a German student of English who retold a story in English before and after a stay in the United States, noted that the second speech sample showed that pauses tended to be located at breaks termed "episodic units," or

(Continued on page 100)

"Longitudinal research has confirmed the importance of pause times and frequencies in fluency."

(Continued from page 99)

before and after segments of a story which have specific narrative functions such as establishing setting, location, reaction, attempts, and so on. Lennon (1984), in a comparison of L2 learners' retelling of a story after listening to a native speaker (NS) model, found that in the NS narration, 100 per cent of the pauses occurred at clause breaks. The L2 narrators, however, paused frequently within clauses. A similar finding was reported by Deschamps (1980), in a comparison of students' performance in their L1, French, and in English, their L2. It was found that the L2 speech showed more pauses within sentences, and even within verbal phrases.

It may be that there is a pattern of pausing in speech which is a natural consequence of the mental processing needed. Chafe (1980) states that L1 speech occurs in "spurts" of two seconds, containing an average of five words between pauses. Pawley and Syder (1983) state that the norm in NS production is to pause or slow down after four to ten consecutive words, and only extremely rarely in mid-clause. In conversational speech in English, over 50 per cent of fluent units are complete and grammatical clauses. It is uncommon to pause more than .5 seconds in mid-clause, generally for emphasis or to breathe. Pauses of less than two seconds are the norm for pauses at clause boundaries. The L2 performances in empirical studies indicate pause patterns which deviate from these NS norms, instead being characterized by pauses occurring more frequently and within clauses and sentences.

"In conversational speech in English, over 50 per cent of fluent units are complete and grammatical clauses."

Length of Fluent Runs

An important variable of speech associated with fluency is the size and quality of the runs of speech which occur between pauses. One of the earliest studies of temporal variables in L2 speech is that of Raupach (1980), in which French and German students told a story in their L1s and L2s. The L2 speech exhibited shorter runs between pauses. Möhle (1984) found that both the French and the German speakers in her study produced shorter runs between pauses in L2 speech than in L1 speech. Towell's (1985) study of a British learner of French over a four-year period found that the mean length of runs increased a remarkable 95 per cent over the first three years. Lennon (1990b) noted in his study of the L2 fluency development of German students of English that their mean length of runs between pauses increased over 23 weeks by 20 to 26 per cent. Freed (1995), in her large study of fluency development in American students of French, found the raw data to indicate a trend in the direction of longer runs.

It seems that mean length of runs between pauses is a significant indicator of fluency in a L2. This is probably because of the need to balance skills, at-

(Continued on page 101)

(Continued from page 100)

tention, and planning during speech, and the fact that advanced, fluent speakers and NSs have a greater repertoire of automatized formulaic sequences to use to buy time in order to formulate the next sequence or phrase.

Formulaic Language

The consensus in definitions seems to be that formulaic language sequences are multi-word units of language which are stored in long-term memory as if they were single lexical units (Pawley & Syder, 1983; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Wray & Perkins, 2000). Hickey (1993) puts it most succinctly by noting that definitions of formulaic language units are often expressed in terms of processes, referring to multi-word or multi-form strings produced and recalled as a chunk like a single lexical item rather than being generated from individual items and rules.

A key question for the present study was how to recognize a formulaic language sequence in productions. In speech production, formulaic sequences may be uttered with phonological coherence (Coulmas, 1979; Wray, 2002), with no internal pausing and a continuous intonation contour. Phonological reduction in the form of phonological fusion, reduction of syllables, deletion of schwa, may also be present. These are common features of the utterance of the most high frequency phrases in English, but much less so in low frequency or more novelly constructed utterances, according to Bybee (2002). Phonological reduction can be taken as evidence that "much of the production of fluent speech proceeds by selecting prefabricated sequences of words (Bybee, 2002, p. 217)."

Researchers have identified other conditions necessary for word combinations in speech to be considered formulaic (Coulmas, 1979; Peters, 1983; Wray, 2002). Two conditions, that the unit must be at least two morphemes long and cohere phonologically, are seen as necessary for formulaicity. As well, formulas may outstrip other output in terms of length and complexity, and be invariant in form and be used for specific situational purposes. Wray (2002) adds structure or form of the sequences as an additional criterion, and she notes that such strings often begin with conjunctions, articles, pronouns, prepositions, or discourse markers (p. 31). Of most relevance to the identification of formulaic sequences in spoken language is Wray's statement that "it may simply be that identification cannot be based on a single criterion, but rather needs to draw on a suite of features (p. 43)."

"...it may simply be that identification [of formulaic language sequences] cannot be based on a single criterion, but rather needs to draw on a suite of features..."

(Continued on page 102)

(Continued from page 101)

A vital aspect of formulaic sequences, according to Wray and Perkins (2000), is that they are not composed semantically, but are holistic items. Another key element of formulaic sequences is their syntactic irregularity, which is manifest in two qualities: a restriction on manipulation, for example, one cannot pluralize *beat around the bush* or passivize *face the music* or say you *slept a wink* or *feeding you up*; the fact that, in formulaic language normal restrictions are flouted, such as the sequences which contain an intransitive verb + direct object, for example *go the whole hog* or other gross violations of syntactic laws like *by and large*.

Another important question in the present study was how formulaic sequences are categorized. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) provide a complex and broad classification of lexical phrases, a pragmatically specialized subset of formulaic sequences. This classification scheme was used to help in the location of formulaic sequences in the speech samples in the present study. They outline two large categories of the phrases: strings of specific lexical items - generally unitary *lexical strings*, canonical in the grammar or not; *generalized frames* - category symbols and specific lexical items. Four criteria help in classifying the phrases: length and grammatical status; canonical or non-canonical shape; variability or fixedness; form or existence as a continuous, unbroken string of words or discontinuous, allowing lexical insertions. (pp.37, 38).

"…it has become increasingly apparent that language production based on rule-governed formulation of utterances from lexis through syntax, morphology and phonology is improbable and unfeasible…"

Mental Processing, Formulaic Language, and Fluency

Since the early 1980's, it has become increasingly apparent that language production based on rule-governed formulation of utterances from lexis through syntax, morphology and phonology is improbable and unfeasible in real time, given the limitations of human memory and attention.

It was hypothesized in the present study that fluency is enhanced by the control of formulaic sequences in spontaneous speech. Many of the most familiar concepts and speech acts can be expressed formulaically and, if a speaker can pull these formulas readily from memory, that is, if they are proceduralized or automatized, fluency is enhanced. This reduces the amount of planning, processing, and encoding needed within clauses. It gives the speaker time to pay attention to the multitude of other tasks necessary while speaking, such as generating specific lexical items, planning the next unit of discourse, syntactic processing of novel pieces, and so on. Pawley and Syder assert that memorized chunks form a high proportion of the speech of everyday conversation (Pawley and Syder, 1983, p. 205). Peters (1983, p. 85) sees formulas as being primarily a shortcut in

(Continued on page 103)

(Continued from page 102)

communication, noting that certain expressions or variations on them are so useful it is convenient to be able to retrieve them in as prefabricated a form as possible.

An Empirical Investigation of the Link between Formulaic Sequences and L2 Fluency

The focus of investigation in the present study is on whether using formulaic sequences might have facilitated the speech fluency of the participants. The research was framed by four main hypotheses. The hypotheses were focused mainly on quantitative aspects of speech fluency development previously established in empirical research:

Over time, with continued learning and experience:

1. L2 speech will exhibit a faster rate of production.
2. L2 speech will exhibit a greater amount of production time spent speaking as opposed to pausing.
3. L2 speech will exhibit longer runs between pauses.
4. Formulaic sequences will appear more frequently in the longer runs between pauses and more syllables will be uttered as part of formulaic sequences.

"The intensive ESL program provided 24 hours of language instruction per week…"

Methodology

The present study was undertaken using a longitudinal design, with repeated measures. Speech samples were collected on tape from participants at regular intervals six times over the course of a six-month period and analyzed for changes in temporal variables and learners' use of formulaic sequences.

Sample

The participants were eleven students enrolled full-time in an intensive ESL program at a large Canadian university, all at approximately intermediate level of oral proficiency as measured by an interview-based placement test which elicited mainly narrative talk. The intensive ESL program provided 24 hours of language instruction per week, of which six were specifically focused

(Continued on page 104)

(Continued from page 103)

on spoken language. The participants in this study also lived in homestay situations with Canadian families. This provided a naturalistic acquisition environment with rich and sustained opportunities for English input and communication outside of the university ESL classrooms.

All had been enrolled for at least one twelve-week term prior to the study and remained in the program for the summer and fall terms as well, meaning that they continued to receive the same rate of instruction over the six months. They were from three L1 groups: Spanish; Chinese (Mandarin); Japanese. The Spanish L1 group consisted of two females and two males, as did the Japanese L1 group, while the Chinese L1 group consisted of one female and two males.

Procedures

Eight- to ten-minute silent films were used as prompts. Films with spoken dialogue or voiceover could have presented problems related to listening ability and other language skills. Silent films allowed the learners to control what to attend to and what to say on tape, rather than trying to repeat spoken language heard in the films.

"They were advised not to write a script of their retellings, and not to stop, pause, or rewind the tapes."

The prompts for the retells were three silent animated short films from the National Film Board of Canada: *Neighbours* (Norman McLaren, 1952: runs 8:10), to elicit samples one and four; *Strings* (Wendy Tilby, 1991; runs 10:18), to elicit samples two and five, and *The Cat Came Back* (Cordell Barker, 1988: runs: 7:37), to elicit samples three and six. All three include roughly the same number of characters, have equally complex settings, and the same number of plot movements. Having three films, each used twice over 24 weeks, allowed a three-month time interval between viewings of the same film and minimized the chance of participants remembering the previous viewing and not paying full attention when viewing and retelling the second time. Roughly eight narrative turns are present in each of the three films used in this study.

The participants were shown each film in its entirety without pause only one time for each sample collection. The content of the films was not introduced and no language help was provided, nor were participants allowed to take notes; they simply watched. After viewing, they were immediately instructed to retell the story of the film spontaneously in the university language laboratory. They were advised not to write a script of their retellings, and not to stop, pause, or rewind the tapes.

(Continued on page 105)

(Continued from page 104)

Data Analysis

The data recorded on tape in the language laboratory were transcribed from a Sony hand-held tape recorder using Microsoft Word. The transcripts included all non-lexical items such as pause filling syllables *um* and *ah*, and orthographic representations of incomprehensible segments or words. To locate pauses in the speech samples, the tapes were then recorded into SpeechStation2 speech analysis software, and a spectrogram produced for each. This visual representation of the speech was used to identify pauses and their duration. In determining the lower cut-off point for pauses, .3 seconds was used. Anything less than .3 seconds is easily confused in a spectrogram with other speech phenomena such as the stop phase of a plosive sound, and anything longer can omit significant pause phenomena. Given that NSs seldom hesitate longer than .5 seconds in mid-clause or two seconds at a clause juncture, .3 seems a reasonable cut-off. As well, the tradition in fluency research has been to use .25 to .3 seconds as a lower end cut-off (Towell et al., 1996, p.91). Pauses were marked in the transcripts by duration in seconds, inserted into the text in parentheses.

Native speaker judgment was used to determine what constituted a formulaic sequence. The judges were the researcher and two graduate students in applied linguistics who had read the most salient literature on criteria for identifying formulaic sequences. In benchmark sessions, the criteria taken from the background literature were used as justification for selecting particular items as formulaic sequences in the transcripts, and features of the recorded speech such as speed and volume changes were also used as guides. Perhaps the most compelling reason for using NS judgment was the fact that this was a corpus of spoken language and the act of *listening* to speech and noting intonation and pause patterns cannot be done by computer software.

The judges listened to the recordings and studied the transcripts, using five general criteria in deciding whether a sequence was a formula. It is important to stress that no particular criterion or combination of criteria were deemed as essential for a word combination to be marked as formulaic, and judgements were made based on one, several, or all of these.

1. Phonological coherence and reduction. Formulaic sequences may be uttered with phonological coherence (Coulmas, 1979; Wray, 2002), without internal pauses and a more or less continuous intonation contour. Phonological reduction may also occur, involving phonological fusion, reduction of syllables,

(Continued on page 106)

"It is important to stress that no particular criterion or combination of criteria were deemed as essential for a word combination to be marked as formulaic..."

(Continued from page 105)

deletion of schwa, all of which are common in production of most high frequency phrases in English, but much rarer in lower frequency or novel utterances, according to Bybee (2002). Phonological reduction can be seen as a sign that 'much of the production of fluent speech proceeds by selecting prefabricated sequences of words' (Bybee, 2002, p. 217).

2. The taxonomy used by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992). The taxonomy includes syntactic strings such as 'NP+Aux+VP'(…), collocations such as *curry favor*, and lexical phrases such as *how do you do*? that have pragmatic functions (…) (p. 36). While these categories may not cover all possible formulaic sequences, they provide a guide or possible framework to help in determining possible formulaicity in combination with other criteria.
3. Greater length/complexity than other output. The use of sequences such as *I would like*… or *I don't understand*, while never using *would* or negatives using *do* in other contexts, would tend to indicate formulaicity. Judges were able to see and hear the entire output of participants, which helped in the application of this criterion.
4. Semantic irregularity, as in idioms and metaphors. Wray and Perkins (2000, p. 5) state that formulaic sequences are often composed holistically, like idioms and metaphors, and not semantically. Examples of this were clear from the background literature for the judges, and many formulaic sequences obviously match this criterion.
5. Syntactic irregularity. This criterion was readily applied to some sequences, but it was necessary to check syntactically irregular sequences against other criteria on this list.

"The criteria were used in a holistic manner and no one criterion was used as necessary for the judgement of formulaicity…"

The criteria were used in a holistic manner and no one criterion was used as necessary for the judgement of formulaicity, nor were all criteria required to be applicable to all cases. Idiosyncratic and non-canonical formulaic sequences were accepted. After the judges had individually marked the transcripts for formulaic sequences, marked items were accepted as formulaic if two or all three of the judges were in agreement.

Three temporal variables (as discussed above), a formula/run ratio, and

(Continued on page 107)

(Continued from page 106)

the proportion of formulaic syllables were calculated for each speech sample in this corpus:

- Speech Rate (SR): Syllables uttered per minute, or the actual number of syllables uttered, divided by the total speech time in seconds. This is a gross measure of speed of speech production.
- Non-phonation/time Ratio (NTR): The percentage of total speech time spent pausing. This is determined by totaling the pause times for each speech sample and calculating it as a percent of the total speech time. It indicates the amount of hesitation relative to actual speaking time, a combined measure of pause frequency and duration.
- Mean Length of Runs (MLR): The length of runs of speech produced between pauses, measured as the mean number of syllables uttered between pauses.
- Formula/Run Ratio (FRR): The ratio between the length of runs and the number of formulaic sequences in a sample. It is calculated as the number of runs in a speech sample, divided by the number of formulaic sequences. This indicates how many formulaic sequences were used relative to the number of runs in a sample.
- Percentage of Formulaic Syllables (PFS): The percentage of uttered syllables which occurred in formulaic sequences as compared to other stretches of discourse. It is calculated as the percentage of total syllables in a sample which are in formulaic sequences.

"...higher FRR and PFS would indicate increased use of formulaic sequences in connection with increased length of runs..."

The pattern of change over time to indicate increased fluency is increased SR, reduced NTR and increased MLR. Most importantly, in conjunction with this pattern of change, a higher FRR and PFS would indicate increased use of formulaic sequences in connection with increased length of runs, a possible indication that formulas may play a role in expanding the amount of speech produced between hesitations.

The means for all measures were analyzed for change over the six samples. It is important to bear in mind that the small sample in the present study, along with the high degree of variance among the samples from different partici-

(Continued on page 108)

(Continued from page 107)

pants, makes it rather problematic to base interpretations and generalizations on statistical determinations of significance. Table 1 shows that the trend in the measures for the whole group from sample one to sample six is clearly indicative of fluency gain and increased use of formulaic sequences over the six months of the study.

Results

Table 1: Measures for Whole Group

	Sample 1	Sample 6	Per cent change
Speech Rate	90.3	112.5	24.6
Non-phonation/ time Ratio	46.2	36.7	-20.6
Mean Length of Runs	3.6	4.3	19.4
Formula/run Ratio	.27	.41	51.9
Percentage of Formulaic Syllables	22	29.1	32.3

"The small sample in the present study, along with the high degree of variance among the samples from different participants, makes it rather problematic to base interpretations and generalizations on statistical determinations of significance."

The increase in SR is 24.6 per cent, the decrease in NTR is 20.6 per cent, and the increase in MLR is 19.4 per cent. The increase in FRR from sample one to sample six is 51.9 per cent, and this increase, combined with the increase in MLR, indicates that as MLR increased, use of formulas did also. As well, the increase in PFS from sample one to sample six is 32.3 per cent, indicating that a greater overall proportion of speech was formulaic. Together with the temporal measures and FRR, this would mean that formulaic sequences likely played a key role in the fluency gains.

Discussion

In sum, all the hypotheses which frame the research have been confirmed to varying extents. The overall trend fits the hypothesized pattern of increased speech rates, decreased amount of hesitation, increased length of runs,

(Continued on page 109)

(Continued from page 108)

increased use of formulas per run, and increased proportion of syllables occurring in formulaic sequences. Speech rate increased as the proportion of speech time spent pausing declined, and, of key importance here, the mean length of runs increased as the ratio of formulaic sequences to runs also increased. The overall picture which emerges from the data on FRR is that increased formula use went hand in hand with improvement on other temporal variables, including MLR. This can be taken as an indication that the formula use may have facilitated the improvements in other measures. The small sample used in this study makes it difficult to generalize broadly from the results. As well, it is important to bear in mind that these data are based on speech samples involving narrative retell and, as such, are limited indicators of the real communicative ability of the participants. These are performance samples and thus far from perfect mirrors of underlying ability, although an important step has been taken here in that there is some quantitative evidence that use of formulaic sequences does contribute to fluency.

Formulaic Sequences and Language Teaching

Various researchers have addressed the issue of how to incorporate formulaic sequences into classroom pedagogy. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) devote half of a book to classroom applications of knowledge of formulaic language, and Lewis (1997) and Willis (1990) advocate syllabuses and methodologies based on lexis, with a strong focus on collocations and other types of formulaic sequences. Still, there is work to be done to integrate current knowledge about formulaic language with state-of-the-art language teaching methodology. A starting point might be to attend to formulaic language when dealing with input and interaction in the classroom, although, as described below, many types of focusing and practice activities may be of use as well.

"These are performance samples and thus far from perfect mirrors of underlying ability, "

If formulaic sequences are a key element of natural language production, it would seem that a large amount of exposure to natural, native-like discourse, be it written or oral, would be a useful part of a pedagogy designed to promote their acquisition. Years of classroom research and SLA research have shown the importance of input and interaction for the development of L2 competence and ability (Krashen, 1981; Chaudron, 1988). The evidence that formulaic sequences are of great importance in accomplishing pragmatic goals and with the production of fluent language implies that exposure to authentic native-like input may be of use in acquisition of formulaic language. Since it appears that formulaic sequences are retained in long term memory as single units, they should be observed in use in real-time, spontaneous communication, and prac-

(Continued on page 110)

(Continued from page 109)

ticed extensively. The link between formulaic sequence use and pragmatic competence is further support for the notion that extensive exposure to spontaneous input is important. It is only in spontaneous communication that the immediate and flexible selection of formulaic sequences becomes apparent. Repeated exposure to such input over time would encourage learners to achieve a certain level of comfort with natural expression in English.

In dealing with the spoken language, interaction would seem to be helpful in facilitating acquisition of formulaic sequences. Tasks can be structured in such a way that a great deal of negotiation is required. In these interactions, learners are able to help each other negotiate their way through some complex or unfamiliar linguistic and pragmatic ground, and formulaic sequences play a key role in enabling the participants to accomplish communicative goals together. As well, they can aid each other in finding the appropriate sequences to fit with particular needs. The classroom research which shows a benefit of information gap student-to-student interaction for fine tuning of output (Pica, 1994) may have relevance for the acquisition and appropriate use of formulaic sequences, but it is important to bear in mind that formulaic sequences carry sociocultural and personal weight, and thus are best acquired in learning situations in which learners are motivated and personally invested.

"…small group and student pair-to pair interaction can facilitate ease and flexibility in using formulas in spontaneous speech. "

Bygate (1988) encourages small group interactive tasks to facilitate use and flexibility with formulaic sequences on the part of learners. Bygate notes that sub-clausal units or fragments make up a great deal of spontaneous conversational interaction in English. Through an analysis of learner language production in small group communication, Bygate found that the learners actually worked together and tacitly encouraged each other to use formulas to move the conversations ahead efficiently. He found a great deal of production and monitoring of language at the level of sub-clausal fragments, and that one can control oneself in conversation through their use. He found that student-to-student interaction helps by encouraging flexibility in choosing efficient syntactic units and activates mechanisms for communication to occur. He also concludes that use of formulas and sub-clausal units helps to smooth the progression of discourse as a response to the demands required in the actual spontaneous production of speech. It seems probable, then, that small group and pair student-to-student interaction can facilitate ease and flexibility in using formulas in spontaneous speech.

(Continued on page 111)

(Continued from page 110)

Sample Fluency Activities

Classroom activity with a fluency focus must provide learners with large amounts of naturalistic input and opportunities to produce and monitor their own speech, with attention to formulaic sequences. The following sample activities involve repetition, context sensitivity, attention to naturalistic input, monitoring, and attention to formulaic sequences. They represent a step in the direction of a fully developed pedagogy of fluency.

Shadowing and Tracking

Shadowing and tracking are two imitation activities which have long been used as a weapon in the battle to fight the fossilization of L2 pronunciation (Ricard, 1986), but which have significant potential for furthering L2 fluency as well.

The procedure involves collecting spontaneous speech from a native speaker on tape and transcribing it. Learners then follow the transcript and shadow it, speaking along with the voice on the tape, practicing repeatedly until they feel they have control over the talk. Tracking can follow, in which the learners repeat the talk without reference to the transcript, a few syllables after the model, while listening. Then, they record their best effort after the native speaker sample, on the same tape. The instructor listens to the tape and responds, giving feedback on the elements of the talk which remain problematic. Learners then can make more attempts at shadowing and recording, using the instructor's feedback as a guide.

Before dealing with the transcript, learners need to listen to it and have aspects of the fluency features drawn to their awareness. The location and duration of pauses, breathing pauses, repair phenomena, are several such features which a class could look at as a whole, before doing the individual tape work. Formulaic sequences in the model could be highlighted as well, with learners adding them to their repertoire through repetition and monitoring.

"…learners need to listen to it and have aspects of the fluency features drawn to their awareness."

4/3/2

Nation (1989) describes the positive benefits of the 4/3/2 technique, which requires students to prepare a talk and deliver it to a peer, first with a four-minute deadline, then a three-minute limit, and finally a two-minute limit.

(Continued on page 112)

(Continued from page 111)

Students should change partners for each delivery of the talk. Nation analyzed the fluency variables of students, comparing their third delivery to their first:

> (…) there was an increase in the rate of speaking from the first to the third delivery…the number of false starts, hesitations… and repeated words…decreased in each case study from the first to the third delivery of each talk. (Nation, 1989: 379)

Mingle jigsaw

Similar in process to the 4/3/2 technique discussed by Nation (1989) is the mingle jigsaw (Wood, 1998). The procedure involves repeated information delivery by learners to peers, while listening to the varied information the peers have to convey. Divide sentences or small clips of written information equally among class members. Each group should carefully prepare to explain the assigned information as simply and clearly as possible. All class members should rise from their seats and mingle, carrying no notes or writing materials. Each student should explain his or her assigned information to another student, and listen to his or hers. After each such session, students may return to their seats when ready and jot down a few notes, returning to the whole group mingle to continue sharing information. Mixing and returning to one's seat continues until everyone has all the required information. The mingle jigsaw technique could be used with as many pieces of information as there are members of the class, and does not necessarily need to be reading-based. Opinions and personal experiences could also be shared in this way.

"All class members should rise from their seats and mingle, carrying no notes or writing materials."

Class Photo/Family Tree

This basic repetition of information or types of speech is also a focus in the activities described by Gatbonton and Segalowitz (1988, 2005), "Class Photo," and "Family Tree."

In "Class Photo," learners are to arrange themselves for a photographic group portrait. They follow teacher modeling of instructions of where to pose, then take turns instructing their classmates about poses. The student instructions require that they repeat specific phrases used by the teacher. They then engage in follow-up activity requiring more use of these phrases to, for example, suggest how individuals in pictures could be combined to create a good group photograph.

(Continued on page 113)

(Continued from page 112)

In "Family Tree," the class forms two groups to pretend to be members of a family and describe their kinship relationships with each other. Individuals from each group then pair up and interview each other, then rejoin their original "families" to pool information and create an accurate description of the "family tree" of the other group. (Gatbonton and Segalowitz, 1988, 2005).

Marketplace/Messengers

Nation (1989) describes several activities which go slightly beyond the 4/3/2 procedure discussed above. In marketplace, the learners are buyers and sellers. Each seller develops a sales pitch for his or her products and the buyers visit the sellers listening to the sales talks and deciding what to buy with their budgets. Each seller has to repeat his or her sales talk to the buyers who are shopping for their products. In messengers, the learners are divided into describers, messengers, and makers. The describers have something to describe, which cannot be seen by the messengers or the makers. A messenger listens to a describer and then goes to a maker and tells the maker what to make or do. Because of the complexity of the task, the messenger must return to the describer several times for the same information. One describer can work with two or three messengers (Nation, 1989: 383).

"The describers have something to describe, which cannot be seen by the messengers or the makers..."

Chat Circles

Chat circles involve dividing a class into two large groups. The groups are to stand in two concentric circles, the inner circle facing out, the outer circle facing in. Each of the resulting face-to-face pairs should take turns talking spontaneously for two or three minutes on a simple, everyday topic assigned by the instructor. When the time is up and both have spoken, the outer or inner circles step one partner to the right or left. Now facing new partners, again a topic is assigned and learners talk spontaneously for the same amount of time as in the previous round. This continues until every outer circle member has spoken with every inner circle member, always on a different topic. The assigning of topics by the instructor should move from the immediate and personal or familiar, to the more abstract and opinion-oriented as the rotation of pairs progresses.

(Continued on page 114)

(Continued from page 113)

Conclusion

In the study reported here, evidence points to the possibility of a facilitating role for formulaic sequences in the development of fluency in English L2. As the participants exhibited increased fluency over time as measured by temporal variables, the ratio of formulaic sequences to runs in their speech increased, as did the percentage of syllables uttered in formulaic sequences. If it is the case that formulaic syllables are an important part of the foundation of speech fluency, then it follows that language education needs to search for ways to build on this knowledge.

Fluency may be fostered by classroom activity which includes attention to formulaic sequences in naturalistic and fluent input, and repetition in purposeful contexts. As seen in the above overview of fluency activities, there already exists an assortment of activities which more or less incorporate these elements in materials and course designs. Clearly, more work needs to be done on building fluency-based oral skills courses, integrating existing knowledge about fluency and formulaic sequences into all elements of a language teaching program. As well, there is a need for materials and program development which can foster and increase student skill in using formulaic sequences within the current state-of-the-art context of communicative, task and process-based language teaching. Research is needed on the efficacy of some of the pedagogical techniques used to promote oral fluency; it is important to ask questions about whether or not the elements of repetition, practice, attention to input, tuned output, interaction, and attention to lexical phrases can lead to transfer of abilities and skills outside of the classroom context. ❖

"…more work needs to be done on building fluency-based oral skills courses…"

References

Barker, C. (Director) (1988). *The cat came back* [Film]. Montreal: National Film Board of Canada.

Bybee, J. (2002). Phonological evidence for exemplar storage of multiword sequences. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 24 215-221.

Bygate, M. (1988). Units of oral expression and language learning in small group interaction. *Applied Linguistics, 9,* (1), 59-82.

Chafe, W. L. (1980). Some reasons for hesitating. In H. W. Dechert & M. Raupach (Eds), *Temporal variables in speech* (pp. 169-180). The Hague: Mouton.

Chambers, F. (1998). What do we mean by fluency? *System*, 25, (4), 535-544.

Chaudron, C. (1988). *Second language classrooms: Research on teaching and learning.* Toronto: Cambridge University Press.

Coulmas, F. (1979). On the sociolinguistic relevance of routine formulae. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 3, 239-266.

Dechert, H. W. (1980). Pauses and intonation as indicators of verbal planning in second-language speech productions: Two examples from a case study. In H. W. Dechert & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Temporal variables in speech* (pp. 271-285). The Hague: Mouton.

Deschamps, A. (1980). The syntactical distribution of pauses in English spoken as a second language by French students. In H. W. Dechert & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Temporal variables in speech* (pp. 255-262). The Hague: Mouton.

Freed, B. F. (1995). What makes us think that students who study abroad become fluent? In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (pp. 123-148). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Gatbonton, E., & Segalowitz, N. (1988). Creative automatization: Principles for promoting fluency within a communicative framework." *TESOL Quarterly*, 22, (3), 473-492.

Gatbonton, E., & Segalowitz, N. (2005). Rethinking communicative language teaching: A focus on access to fluency. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 61* (3), 325-353.

Hansen, L., Gardner, J., & Pollard, J. (1998). The measurement of fluency in a second language: Evidence from the acquisition and attrition of Japanese. In B. Visgatis (Ed.), *On JALT '97: Trends and Transitions - Proceedings of the JALT 1997 Conference on Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 37-45). Tokyo: Japan Association of Language Teachers.

(Continued on page 116)

References

References

(Continued from page 115)

Hickey, T. (1993). Identifying formulas in first language acquisition. *Journal of Child Language*, 20, 27-41.

Krashen, S. D. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Lennon, P. (1984). Retelling a story in English. In H. W. Dechert, D. Möhle, & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Second language productions* (pp. 50-68). Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Lennon, P. (1990a). The advanced learner at large in the L2 community: Developments in spoken performance. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 28, 309-321.

Lennon, P. (1990b). Investigating fluency in EFL: A quantitative approach. *Language Learning,* 40 (3), 387-417.

Lewis, M. (1997). Pedagogical implications of the lexical approach. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second language vocabulary acquisition* (pp. 255-270). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McLaren, N. (Director) (1952). *Neighbours* [Film]. Montreal: National Film Board of Canada.

Miller, J., & Weinert, R. (1998). *Spontaneous spoken language: Syntax and discourse*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Möhle, D. (1984). A comparison of the second language speech production of different native speakers. In H. W. Dechert, D. Möhle, & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Second language productions* (pp. 26-49). Tubingen: Gunter Narr Verlag.

Nation, Paul. (1989). Improving speaking fluency. *System*, 17, (3), 377-384.

Nattinger, J. R., & DeCarrico, J. S. (1992). *Lexical phrases and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pawley, A., & Syder, F. H. (1983). Two puzzles for linguistic theory: Nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. In J. C. Richards & R. W. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 191-226). New York; Longman, pp. 191-226.

Peters, A. M. (1983). *Units of language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pica, T. (1994). Questions from the language classroom: Research perspectives. *TESOL Quarterly,* 28, (2), 49-80.

Raupach, M. (1980). Temporal variables in first and second language speech

(Continued on page 117)

(Continued from page 116)

production. In H. W. Dechert & M. Raupach (Eds.), *Temporal variables in speech* (pp. 263-270). The Hague: Mouton.

Ricard, E. (1986). Beyond fossilization: A course on strategies and techniques in pronunciation for advanced adult learners. *TESL Canada Journal Special Edition,* 1*,* 243-253.

Riggenbach, H. (1991). Toward an understanding of fluency: A microanalysis of nonnative speaker conversations. *Discourse Processes,* 14, 423-441.

Schmitt, N. (2004). Formulaic sequences in action: An introduction. In N. Schmitt (Ed.), *Formulaic sequences: Acquisition, processing and use* (pp. 1-22). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

SpeechStation2 [Computer software]. (1997). Somerville, Massachusetts: Sensimetrics Corporation.

Tilby, W. (Director), & Verrall, D. (Producer). (1991)*. Strings* [Film]. Montreal: National Film Board of Canada.

Towell, R. (1987). Variability and progress in the language development of advanced learners of a foreign language. In R. Ellis (Ed.), *Second language acquisition in context* (pp. 113-127). Toronto: Prentice-Hall, pp. 113-127.

Towell, R., Hawkins, R., & Bazergui, N. (1996). The development of fluency in advanced learners of French. *Applied Linguistics*, 17 (1), 84-119.

Weinert, R. (1995). The role of formulaic language in second language acquisition: A review. *Applied Linguistics*, 16 (2), 180-205.

Willis, D. (1990). *The lexical syllabus: A new approach to language teaching*. London: Harper Collins.

Wood, D. (1998). *Making the grade: An interactive course in English for academic purposes*. Toronto: Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon.

Wood, D. (2002). Formulaic language in acquisition and production: Implications for teaching. *TESL Canada Journal*, 20 (1), 1-15.

Wray, A, & Perkins, M. R. (2000). The functions of formulaic language: An integrated model. *Language and Communication*, 20, 1-28.

Wray, A. (2002). *Formulaic language and the lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

References

Where Have all the Immigrants Gone?

By Lee Gunderson

Abstract

Approximately 4,000 school-age immigrants enter the Vancouver, B.C. school system each year where they are enrolled in English-only mainstream classrooms to learn both English and academic content in English. A random sample of 5,000 was selected and their achievement in English, Science, Math, Social Studies, and ESL was measured from grade 8 to 12. Grades were recorded following a conversion metric and were plotted across grade levels and linguistic groups. Results showed that approximately 60% of the immigrant students disappeared from these academic classes between grades 8 and 12. Achievement decreased from grade 8 to 12 as ESL support disappeared. Some groups showed significantly higher disappearance rates and decreases in achievement than other groups. Spanish speaking immigrants were more likely to disappear from secondary school than other linguistic groups. These and other findings are discussed and policy implications are suggested.

Abstract

The notion of the importance and centrality of research informing instruction is one that many, if not all, researchers and teachers appear to subscribe to. Research is viewed as objective, well planned, and meticulously conducted; the reliability of research is assumed and is pivotal in the design of pedagogical programs. However, Gunderson (2007) notes, "As social institutions containing micro-societies comprised of students, teachers, administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, librarians, custodians, secretaries, parent volunteers, occasionally police officers, and others, schools are not the best places to conduct scientific research" (pp. 358-359). He concludes, "The normal state of affairs in a school is one of great flux and change. It is likely impossible to conduct scientific research in a typical school because there are too many confounding variables to control" (p. 359). One of the premises in conducting long-term research is that there is an underlying stability in school populations that will allow a researcher to measure reliably achievement over time. This author assumed, for instance, that study mortality would be a feature of long-term research involving immigrant students, but that it would not be a variable of great concern.

(Continued on page 119)

(Continued from page 118)

The Longitudinal Study

A longitudinal study was designed to explore immigrant students' achievement in a large western Canadian metropolitan school district. Data were collected for approximately 25,000 immigrant students to explore the relationships among such variables as immigration status, oral English ability, English reading, English composition, first language composition, school background in home country, and gender (Gunderson, 2000; 2004; 2007).

The purpose of the long-term study included an exploration of Cummins' notions of "basic interpersonal communicative skill" (BICS), the language of ordinary conversation or "the manifestation of language proficiency in everyday communicative contexts" (Cummins, 1984, p. 137), and "cognitive academic language proficiency" (CALP), the language of instruction and academic texts, which has come to be known as academic language proficiency (Cummins 1979; 1980; 1981a; 1981b). Cummins (1981a) found that students with literacy backgrounds in their first languages learned CALP faster than younger students who had little or no literacy background. Collier (1987) confirmed these findings in her study of 1,548 "advantaged" limited English proficient (LEP) students from upper or upper middle class families. LEP students arriving between the ages of 8 and 11 were the quickest to acquire CALP, seven year-old students were slightly behind their rate, while students who arrived at ages 5-6 required two to three more years of schooling to reach the level attained by the 8-to-11 year-olds. Those who had arrived at ages 12-15 were the lowest achievers in all areas except math.

"…students with literacy backgrounds in their first languages learned CALP faster than younger students who had little or no literacy background."

The design of the large-scale study involved an exploration of BICS and CALP that involved data on approximately 100 variables such as the age at which an immigrant had first produced single word utterances in L1 and if, and how long, she had studied English before immigrating to Canada. The author did not take into account a potential problem signalled by Collier in 1987. She noted, "after only those students who entered at the beginning level of ESL and who were at grade level in L1 literacy and math skills had been selected and those students who had not remained, 1,548 LEP students remained in the data file with longitudinal records (4-6 years) of school performance" (p. 623). Her original population of immigrant

(Continued on page 120)

(Continued from page 119)

students was approximately 14,000. Therefore, only about 11 per cent of her total population remained in her study.

The Long-Term Achievement Study

The purpose of the long-term study was to explore the relationships existing among a number of variables and immigrant students' success in secondary schools in Canada. It was hypothesized that there would be predictive relationships among immigrants' family backgrounds, developmental milestones, literacy and schooling backgrounds and their entry-level English abilities (if there were any). Background data were collected for about 25,000 school-age immigrant students. A wide range of language measures were included to measures differences between BICS and CALP.

"Scores on first language compositions were the best predictors of academic achievement in secondary academic classes ."

Random samples of 5,000 immigrants and 5,000 native-born students were selected and their academic grades in English, Science, Math, and Social Studies were collected. As originally planned, the study explored the relationships among many background variables and grades in these courses (Gunderson, 2007). There were a number of interesting long-term findings that confirmed the existence of common underlying proficiencies. Scores on first language compositions were the best predictors of academic achievement in secondary academic classes. However, there were a number of unpredicted and startling results. The purpose here is to describe and discuss them and to propose an approach for understanding the underlying results occurring in large data sets.

Findings of the Study of 5,000 Immigrant Students

Grades were provided by the school district for individuals in the two random samples of 5,000. Grades were converted to numbers and ranged from 0 (F) to 4 (A). These grades are shown in Table 1 and are broken down by grade (eight to twelve) and academic subject. A perusal of the grades provided the first research surprise.

The first surprise was that the immigrant students' grades were not significantly lower than the native-born students' grades. This was not this author's

(Continued on page 121)

Table 1: Means (and Standard Deviations) of Native-born Canadian and Immigrant Students' Grades for Examinable Courses in Grades eight to 12.

Subject	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Native-born students					
English	2.2 (1.1)	2.2 (1.1)	2.2 (1.1)	2.0 (1.1)	2.2 (1.1)
Social Studies	2.2 (1.2)	2.2 (1.1)	2.1 (1.1)	1.9 (1.1)	2.1 (1.2)
Science	2.2 (1.2)	2.2 (1.2)	2.2 (1.1)	1.9 (1.2)	2.1 (1.3)
Math	2.1 (1.2)	2.1 (1.2)	2.0 (1.2)	1.8 (1.2)	2.1 (1.2)
All immigrant students					
English	2.3 (1.1)	2.3 (1.1)	2.2 (1.0)	2.1 (1.0)	2.0 (1.0)
Social Studies	2.4 (1.1)	2.5 (1.2)	2.3 (1.2)	2.0 (1.0)	2.0 (1.2)
Science	2.5 (1.2)	2.4 (1.2)	2.5 (1.1)	2.3 (1.2)	2.4 (1.2)
Math	2.7 (1.2)	2.5 (1.2)	2.4 (1.3)	2.6 (1.2)	2.6 (1.3)

Grades are valued on a four-point scale with A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, and F = 0.

"Given such internal diversity, any conclusions drawn about 'South Asians are not only simplified and over-generalized, but also incomplete."

(Continued from page 120)

expectation. After all, they had to deal with both learning academic content and English. Indeed, their overall performance was, on the surface, as good as the native-born Canadian students' performance. The second surprise was native-born students' grades appeared relatively stable across the grades and subjects; immigrant students' grades were not. In English and Social Studies their grades went down, especially after they left ESL support classes in about grade 10. It was also somewhat surprising that their grades for math and science were higher than the native-born students'.

It seemed like an anomalous finding that, on the average, immigrant students as a group would achieve higher grades in any subject than native-born Canadian students. The most revealing and surprising findings occurred when

(Continued on page 122)

Table 2: Means (and Standard Deviations) of Mandarin-speaking, Cantonese-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking Students' Grades for Examinable Courses in Grades eight to 12.

Subject	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Mandarin-speaking students					
English	2.8 (.8)	2.7 (.7)	2.5 (.8)	2.0 (.8)	2.1 (.8)
Social Studies	2.9 (.8)	2.8 (1.0)	2.5 (.9)	2.4 (1.0)	2.3 (.8)
Science	2.9 (1.1)	2.8 (1.0)	2.7 (1.0)	2.6 (1.0)	2.7 (.7)
Math	3.3 (1.0)	2.9 (1.0)	3.0 (1.0)	3.1 (1.1)	3.0 (1.2)
Cantonese-speaking students					
English	2.3 (1.0)	2.3 (1.0)	2.2 (1.0)	2.0 (1.0)	1.7 (1.1)
Social Studies	2.4 (1.1)	2.6 (1.0)	2.4 (1.1)	2.0 (1.0)	1.7 (1.7)
Science	2.6 (1.2)	2.5 (1.1)	2.6 (1.1)	2.3 (1.2)	2.3 (1.3)
Math	2.9 (1.0)	2.7 (1.2)	2.5 (1.2)	2.6 (1.2)	2.4 (1.4)
Vietnamese-speaking students					
English	1.7 (1.4)	1.8 (1.1)	1.9 (1.0)	2.2 (1.3)	--
Social Studies	1.5 (1.3)	2.3 (1.1)	1.9 (1.2)	1.6 (1.1)	--
Science	1.5 (1.5)	2.2 (1.1)	2.2 (1.2)	2.2 (1.2)	2.5 (1.8)
Math	1.2 (1.5)	1.6 (1.5)	1.9 (.9)	2.3 (1.1)	2.7 (1.2)

Grades are valued on a four-point scale with A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, and F = 0.

Table 2

(Continued from page 121)

mean scores were disaggregated. Table 2 shows the grades of Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese-speaking students broken down by subjects across the grades.

Mandarin speakers scored higher than native English speakers across the board and Cantonese speakers also scored comparably, although lower than Mandarin speakers. Cantonese speakers' grades decreased significantly in English and Social Studies, actually falling below a "C" average. The drop in these

(Continued on page 123)

Table 3: Means (and Standard Deviations) of Indian, Filipino, and Spanish-speaking Students' Grades for Examinable Courses in Grades eight to 12.

Subject	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
Indian students					
English	2.8 (1.2)	2.8 (1.3)	2.1 (1.3)	1.7 (1.2)	2.0 (1.2)
Social Studies	2.6 (.5)	2.4 (1.2)	1.9 (1.3)	1.8 (1.4)	2.0 (1.3)
Science	2.3 (1.0)	2.4 (.4)	1.9 (1.3)	2.2 (1.0)	1.5 (.8)
Math	2.3 (.9)	2.4 (.8)	1.4 (1.1)	1.6 (1.0)	1.0 (.8)
Filipino students					
English	2.3 (1.0)	2.3 (1.2)	2.0 (1.4)	1.8 (1.1)	1.5 (.7)
Social Studies	2.5 (1.1)	2.2 (1.1)	2.1 (1.4)	2.3 (1.2)	1.0 (00)
Science	2.2 (1.2)	2.1 (1.3)	2.5 (1.2)	2.0 (1.4)	1.0 (00)
Math	2.4 (1.0)	2.4 (1.0)	2.0 (1.3)	2.0 (1.4)	1.0 (00)
Spanish-speaking students					
English	1.2 (.7)	1.5 (.8)	1.1 (1.0)	1.4 (.8)	1.0 (00)
Social Studies	1.2 (.8)	.9 (.8)	1.4 (1.0)	.9 (1.4)	--
Science	1.1 (1.0)	1.4 (1.1)	1.6 (1.2)	1.4 (1.2)	--
Math	1.4 (1.2)	1.4 (1.3)	1.6 (1.2)	1.3 (1.2)	--

Grades are valued on a 4-point scale with A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0, D = 1.0, and F = 0.

Table 3

(Continued from page 122)

scores appeared to happen at approximately the same time as many were leaving ESL support classes. There is also a surprising and dramatic increase of grade-point average in grade 12 Math and Science grades for Vietnamese immigrants. This is a finding that is less positive than it appears from the data presented in the table (see below). The disaggregated data are also dramatic and

(Continued on page 124)

(Continued from page 123)

surprising in the cases of Indian, Filipino, and Spanish-speaking immigrants as shown in Table 3.

Grades for these last three groups drop dramatically from grade eight to grade 12. Another surprise was to discover that no Spanish-speaking students in the random sample had taken grade 12 Social Studies, Math, or Science. The one feature of the disaggregated data not shown in the tables above is the sample sizes in each of the cells. The final and most upsetting of the unexpected findings was that many students disappeared from their academic classes by grade 12.

Discussion

"…immigrant numbers had decreased significantly by the time students were ready to begin Grade 8. "

A random sample of 5,000 immigrant students was selected to explore secondary school achievement. They were selected so that they were old enough on entry into Canada to have completed their secondary-school studies at the time of the study. The research goal of the longitudinal study was to explore issues such as the relationship among BICS and CALP, first language literacy background, developmental variables, and English proficiency and secondary school academic achievement.

Findings of the study of 5,000 students revealed support for interdependence as predicted by Cummins (Cummins, 2000). There were fairly substantial correlations between L1 composition and grade-point averages in secondary school. However, sample size had become a serious and confounding variable. The number of immigrant students in the random sample of 5,000 decreased rapidly as they moved from one grade to the next.

The first study mortality problem was that immigrant numbers had decreased significantly by the time students were ready to begin Grade eight. This finding describes students' mobility in a rather dramatic fashion. Students in the sample who enrolled in English classes decreased from 1433 in eighth grade to 651 (45.40 per cent) in 12th grade, Math 1576 to 498 (31.60 per cent), Science 1482 to 375 (25.30 per cent), and Social Studies, 1407 to 326 (23.20 per cent). The decrease was not uniform across groups. Overall, there were 60 per cent fewer

(Continued on page 125)

(Continued from page 124)

students in grade 12 taking examinable courses than there were in grade eight. The decrease was not equally distributed across ethno-linguistic groups, however. There were 260 Vietnamese students, for instance, in the random sample, but by grade 12 only four were left in the sample. Out of the 180 Spanish-speaking students, only one was left in the random sample, a student who only took English 12.

It is important to remember that this study did not measure dropout rate, but rather it measured disappearance rate from academic courses, the courses that are required for entrance into university. Some students may have dropped out or moved to other school districts, or registered in other courses.

Pirbhai-Illich (2005), convinced that these statistics could not be correct, conducted a meticulous follow-up study and discovered the rate of immigrant students who did not complete a high school diploma or equivalent was about 40 per cent. This statistic was computed by following up on those who left school prematurely, but returned or finished a GED in adult school. Even so, this is an extremely high dropout rate. Immigrant students would appear to have less success in receiving the basic certification to allow them to enter the work force at levels higher than as unskilled laborers. Toohey & Derwing (2006) completed another follow-up study. They selected four secondary schools in the same western metropolitan city to ascertain graduation completion rates. They found the following graduation completion rates: Japanese (81.25 per cent); Chinese (70.29 per cent); Korean (68.09 per cent); Russian (65.00 per cent); Tagalog (42.95 per cent); Vietnamese (40.45 per cent); Spanish (36.07 per cent), and; Indo-Punjabi (34.69 per cent). The disappearance rates vary from 18.75 per cent for Japanese students to 65.31 per cent for Indo-Punjabi students. Other studies in Canada have also reported high ESL dropout rates, e.g., as high as 73 per cent (Watt & Roessingh, 2001). Attendance at university also shows disheartening results when data are disaggregated.

"…the rate of immigrant students who did not complete a high school diploma or equivalent was about 40 per cent…"

A recent survey revealed that 177 Spanish-speaking students in the entire province of British Columbia graduated from high school and were eligible for admission to university. The sobering finding is that only 14 actually went to university (Pair, 2002). In comparison 47 per cent of those who are successful

(Continued on page 126)

(Continued from page 125)

graduates who have "Chinese" as their primary language spoken at home attend university. This is a significant disparity in that university is seen by most as a key to higher paying jobs and success in society. This disparity is not due to differences in innate intelligence or aptitude. It is due, unfortunately to socio-economic status and educational opportunity.

The results of the present study are sobering. Overall arithmetic means, those numbers most often reported in newspapers to the public, mask underlying significant differences. Indeed, overall mean scores were surprisingly high for immigrant students in the present study. So high, in fact, that they can lead to the conclusion that immigrant students as a group are not at risk. This general result was due to the scores of the largest group of students who were Mandarin speakers who were also from the most financially well-off families. This finding suggests that mean scores representing broad groups such as ESL students can be misleading and should be disaggregated to reveal underlying relationships.

"The results of the present study are sobering."

One general finding that was surprising was that students disappeared from academic courses, those required to go on to university, at about a 60% average. This is a discouraging finding. However, disaggregating the data revealed differences among groups that clearly demonstrate that educational opportunity is not equally distributed across groups in the school population. A disturbing finding was that ethno-linguistic groups were associated with differences in socio-economic status. As a result, terms such as Spanish and Vietnamese not only signified inclusion in particular linguistic groups, they were also related coincidentally to socio-economic status; unfortunately, socio-economic status is a strong predictor of academic success. Educators and policy makers must address these issues. If not, Canadian society will become increasingly stratified by socio-economic and educational status. ❖

References

Collier, V. P. (1987). Age and Rate of Acquisition of Second Language for Academic Purposes. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*, 617-641.

Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency, Linguistic Interdependence, the Optimum Age Question and Some Other Matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism, 19*, 197-205.

Cummins, J. (1980). The Entry and Exit Fallacy in Bilingual Education. *NABE Journal, 4*, 25-59.

Cummins, J. (1981a). Age on Arrival and Immigrant Second Language Learning in Canada: A Reassessment. *Applied Linguistics, 2*, 132-149.

Cummins, J. (1981b). *The Role of Primary Language Development in Promoting Educational Success for Language Minority Students*. Los Angeles, CA: California State University.

Cummins, J. (1984). *Bilingualism and Special Education: Issues in Assessment and Pedagogy*. Clevedon, UK: Multicultural Matters.

Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy*. Toronto, Canada: Multilingual Matters.

Gunderson, L. (2004). The language, literacy, achievement, and social consequences of English-only programs for immigrant students. In the *53rd Yearbook of the National Reading Conference*. Milwaukee, WI: National Reading Conference.

Gunderson, L. (2000). Voices of the teenage diasporas. *Journal of adolescent and adult literacy, 43*, 692-706.

Gunderson, L. (2007). *English-only instruction and immigrant students in secondary school: A critical Examination*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Pair. (2002). *Transitions for 1999/2000 graduates from BC secondary schools to BC universities in fall 2000*. Retrieved December 12, 2006, from http://www.pair.ubc.ca/student/demographics.htm

Pirbhai-Illich, F. (2005). *The educational pathways and outcomes of ethnic and linguistic minority students.* Unpublished Ph.D., University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.

(Continued on page 128)

References

(Continued from page 127)

Toohey, K., & Derwing, T. M. (2006). *Hidden Losses: How demographics can encourage incorrect assumptions about ESL high school students' success*. Retrieved December 14, 2006, from http://www.riim.metropolis.net/Virtual%20Library/2006/WP06-11.pdf

Watt, D., & Roessingh, H. (2001). The dynamics of drop-outs: Plus ça change. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 58*, 203-222.

References

THEME THREE: LANGUAGE AND SETTLEMENT

Are the ESL Needs of All Immigrants the Same? A Case Study of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto

By Sutama Ghosh and Raymond M. Garrison

Abstract

As Canada moves rapidly towards becoming a multiethnic country, teachers in general, and teachers of English as Second Language (ESL) in particular, will increasingly find students of diverse linguistic and religious backgrounds in their classes. A number of recent studies in the United States have shown, however, that ESL teachers are not always equipped to handle such diversity (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). There is a possible lack of knowledge among ESL teachers about their students' cultural backgrounds and their associated needs in ESL classrooms. This may have ensued from the fact that there is limited dialogue between researchers working on the settlement experiences of specific immigrant groups in Canadian cities and people associated with imparting ESL training, including teachers, curriculum designers, administrators and researchers. In this paper, we wish to establish that connection. The purpose of this paper is to suggest that differences exist in terms of the ESL requirements of students from two South Asian subgroups in Toronto — the Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis — and that these differences are rooted in their distinct cultural identities. ■

New immigrants from "non-traditional" sources constitute a major proportion of students in English as Second Language (ESL) classes in Canadian metropolitan areas. As Canada moves rapidly towards becoming a multiethnic country teachers in general, and teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) in particular, will increasingly find students of diverse linguistic and religious backgrounds in their classes. A number of recent studies in the United States have shown, however, that ESL teachers are not always equipped to handle such diversity (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Having little knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of their students, teachers often construct cultural stereotypes -- for instance, Kumaravadivelu (2003) reported that Asian students, including Chinese, Indian, Korean, and Vietnamese, are often thought to be obedient, passive, and lacking in critical thinking skills (Kumaravadivelu 2003: 709-713). Needless to say, while constructing and projecting such images, some ESL instructors may fail to address adequately differences among Asian students with respect to their needs in the classroom. It may be argued that students thought to be from Asia (including South

(Continued on page 130)

"…teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) in particular will increasingly find students of diverse linguistic and religious backgrounds in their classes."

(Continued from page 129)

Asia and Southeast Asia) are most highly affected by erroneously homogenized perspectives, since Asia is comprised of so many diverse subgroups, not only on the national scale, but on the sub-national / regional scales as well. That is why in this paper it is valuable to examine two South Asian subgroups that are widely thought of as being "the same" in the Canadian context – Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis. It is precisely the differences between these subgroups with respect to history, religion and housing needs that fundamentally and profoundly affect their ESL requirements.

This possible lack of knowledge among ESL teachers about their students' cultural backgrounds, and their associated needs in the classrooms, may have ensued from the fact that there is limited dialogue between researchers working on the settlement experiences of specific immigrant groups in Canadian cities and people associated with imparting ESL training, including teachers, curriculum designers, administrators and researchers. In this paper, we wish to establish that connection.

"It is imperative to clarify at the outset that we are by no means ESL experts..."

It is imperative to clarify at the outset that we are by no means ESL experts, rather we belong to the other side: we are interested in learning about differences in immigrant settlement experiences in the Canadian urban milieu and note their possible policy implications in various fields, ESL being one of them. Also, even though the empirical material used in this paper may provide important insights for TESL, the research project upon which this paper is based did not focus directly on ESL. The empirical research was conducted by the first author for her doctoral dissertation, titled "We are Not all the Same: Migration, Settlement Patterns and Housing Trajectories of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto" (Ghosh, 2006).

The dissertation research demonstrated that, although people may arrive in Canada from the same general part of the world (e.g., South Asia) and have phenotypical resemblances (e.g., skin colour), important differences exist among them with respect to their migration (i.e., why and how they came to Canada) and residential experiences (i.e., where they live within the city, and how they came to be there). Differences between immigrant subgroups with respect to their residential needs are often historically and culturally motivated, further cementing a well-established notion that when starting an immigrant life most migrant households do not leave their existing socio-cultural and political identities behind (e.g., Portes, 2001). These "pre-migration identities" strongly influence their settlement in the new country (e.g., Ghosh, 2007 forthcoming; Hyndman and Walton-Roberts, 2000; Kelly, 2003;). We argue that these broader findings may shed some light on specific

(Continued on page 131)

(Continued from page 130)

issues related to ESL instruction.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest that differences exist in terms of the ESL requirements of students from two South Asian subgroups in Toronto, the Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis, and that these differences are rooted in their distinct cultural identities. We will show that students from each subgroup may vary widely with respect to their need to function in English in various situational contexts throughout their day-to-day lives (e.g., in their communities, at work, etc.), and that culture, religion and gender may be inextricably linked in some cases. Their cultural imperatives are expressed spatially by their housing and neighbourhood preferences. Different modes of teaching may be more conducive to the learning processes of some. The ultimate goal is to increase the cultural sensitivity of everyone involved in designing, coordinating, administering and implementing ESL instruction.

An outline of a theoretical framework linking language, settlement and identity in residential spaces situates our work. The over-generalisation of "South Asian" experiences will be reviewed, elaborating on the problems associated with using such a broad immigrant group as an analytical category. The research design and methods used for the empirical portion of this research are presented. The migration characteristics of each subgroup are discussed, and their differential housing needs are highlighted. This is followed by a discussion of how specific cultural identities, associated with language, religiosity and dietary habits, and preferred neighbourhood social composition, have differentially impacted on the settlement experiences of each subgroup, and suggest particular ESL needs. After a brief reflection and summary of the paper's main arguments, implications of this research for ESL design and instruction are suggested.

"…differences exist in terms of the ESL requirements of students from two South Asian subgroups in Toronto, the Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis…"

Theoretical Framework Linking Language, Settlement and Identity in Residential Spaces

Cosgrove and Jackson (1987:99) argue that culture is the "medium through which people transform the mundane phenomena of the material world into a world of significant symbols to which they give meaning and attach value". It is the level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987:2). Although there is an ambiguity with respect to the specific phenomena that are included or excluded from the term culture (Mitchell, 2000:13-16), it is imperative that

(Continued on page 132)

(Continued from page 131)

we explore which symbols are considered to be a part of the culture of the immigrant subgroups, and how these symbols are variously expressed and retained through their lived experiences, both spatially and through time.

It is now well established that identity(ies) is a multiple and fluid phenomenon, often formed by internal processes of "belonging", and by external processes of "ascribing" (Jenkins, 1996). While similarities emphasize collective identity(ies), differences establish individual identity(ies). Using Barth (1969), Jenkins (1996) argues that although the processes of identity formation are internal and external, they work in unison -- when we differentiate "us" from "them" we also define "them" in the process. As a result of these bilateral processes, boundaries of identity(ies) are negotiated, constructed and revised through our lived experiences. Since language is a fundamental symbol of identity, one of the goals of culturally-sensitive ESL instruction can be to mitigate the negative consequences of stereotypical ascription. By knowing their students, instructors can narrow the "us-them" gap and create a functional sense of belonging within the classroom setting.

"By knowing their students, instructors can narrow the "us-them" gap and create a functional sense of belonging within the classroom setting…"

Cultural identity is a phenomenon that ensues from sharing common symbols and practices, born out of one's *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2002). For Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1990, 1998, 2002), habitus is a way of being, a tendency, propensity or inclination to behave in a certain way in society as a collective, a conscious and unconscious way of doing things. It is not what people are born with, but rather it is what they acquire through social/cultural conditioning. Habitus is also a product of history, usually long lasting, but can slowly change over time, through new experiences, education, and training. Most importantly, though habitus is generally local in nature, it can be transported. Instructors need to be mindful of any aspects of a student's cultural habitus that may facilitate or impede learning of English, as well as the relatively gradual nature of habitus transformation.

In order to examine the experiences of different immigrant subgroups, it is important for scholars to recognize that what immigrants do 'here and now' is not only influenced by various factors in the country of migration, but also what they did 'there and then'. We further suggest that cultural identity, born out of one's habitus, is variously expressed and retained, and possibly reformed in private spaces (i.e., inside the residence) and public places (e.g., through built-forms and settlement patterns) (Lefebvre, 1961:9). As a result of their habitus, some immigrant groups may express their cultural identity by constructing public buildings where they congre-

(Continued on page 133)

(Continued from page 132)

gate (e.g., temples and clubs). In addition to these built-forms, others live in close proximity to people who speak the same language and practice the same religion, and in some instances develop ethnic enclaves. Also, because of their adherence to specific religious rules (i.e., way of life), some immigrant groups are discriminated against in the housing market, with the result that they are forced to live within certain neighbourhoods. The balance of a student's habitus of interaction in various public vs. private spaces may greatly affect her/his need to function in English on a day-to-day basis, thereby potentially slowing down their learning process in ESL classes. Curriculum designers should understand these spaces of interaction for various subgroups and design homework assignments and recommended study modes that encourage English to be spoken more often (e.g., group rather than individual assignments/exercises).

The Over-generalization of "South Asian" Experiences

When studying the settlement experiences of various immigrant and refugee groups in Canadian cities, many researchers rely on the Canadian census data. This overreliance on the census, and more importantly, uncritical acceptance of census categories, has created unrealistic understandings of the experiences of specific immigrant groups and their needs. "South Asians" are one such immigrant group in Canada that suffers from the problem of over-generalization. Researchers studying South Asians have often made extreme generalizations about their socio-economic conditions in Canada and their 'integration' into the host society (Balakrishnan and Hou, 1999; Kazemipur and Halli 2000). By using "South Asia" as an analytical category, a homogeneous identity is projected on a group of people, often based on the illusion of a common culture, thereby erasing the numerous and significant internal differences that exist among subgroups.

According to the 2001 census, there are about 500,000 immigrants from the Indian subcontinent in Canada. They are one of Canada's largest and fastest growing immigrant groups. Table 1 illustrates the internal diversity of the group in terms of their places of birth, mother tongue, religion, and time of arrival in Canada.

"…because of their adherence to specific religious rules…some immigrants are discriminated against in the housing market "

(Continued on page 134)

(Continued from page 133)

Table 1: The Internal Diversity of 'South Asians' in Canada

<table>
<tr><td>Places of Birth</td><td colspan="2">India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal , Bhutan</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mother Tongue</td><td colspan="2">Punjabi, Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Urdu, Bengali</td></tr>
<tr><td>Religion</td><td colspan="2">Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Christian, Parsi, Jewish</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Time of Arrival</td><td>Early 1900s:</td><td>Single Punjabi Sikh men</td></tr>
<tr><td>Late 1960s and early 1970s:</td><td>Punjabi women (Family Reunification), Indian Bengalis (students and workers via European countries), Ugandan Gujaratis</td></tr>
<tr><td>Late 1970s and early 1980s:</td><td>Bangladeshi refugees</td></tr>
<tr><td>Mid-to- late 1980s:</td><td>Refugees from Sri Lanka (Tamil), India (Punjabi Sikhs)</td></tr>
<tr><td>1990 onwards:</td><td>Skilled workers from various parts of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ethnic Diversity</td><td colspan="2">India—most heterogeneous
Bangladesh—most homogenous</td></tr>
<tr><td>Official Language</td><td colspan="2">India--English, Hindi
Bangladesh--Bengali</td></tr>
</table>

"***South Asians are extremely diverse...***"

South Asians are extremely diverse — they are from six different nation states, speak many different languages, and adhere to diverse religions. Moreover, although the Punjabi Sikhs from undivided British-India arrived in Canada at the turn of the last century, immigration from other parts of the subcontinent gained momentum only in the past two decades (Johnston 1984; Sampat-Mehta 1984; Walton-Roberts 1998, 2003; Walton-Roberts and Pratt 2005). During this time, Indians and Pakistanis came primarily as economic migrants, with more education and possibly better chances of integration, but many Sri Lankan Tamils (Ferdinands, 2002) and Bangladeshis (Ahmed, 1986) arrived as refugees. A few recent studies have noted some social and economic differences among South Asian subgroups from specific

(Continued on page 135)

(Continued from page 134)

nation states (Buchingnani, 1987; Fernandez 2001; Ferdinands 2002; Israel 1987; Israel and Wagle 1993). For instance, among Sri Lankans, the Sinhalese arrived as highly educated professionals, whereas the Tamils generally possessed fewer educational and financial resources (Ferdinands, 2002). Given such internal diversity, any conclusions drawn about 'South Asians' are not only simplified and over-generalized, but also incomplete.

This relatively recent increase in the diversity of immigrants from South Asia perhaps warrants a revisiting of the design of ESL instructional materials and pedagogical approaches in order to address adequately not only issues of cultural diversity but also the great differences in educational levels among recent immigrants. The imperative to be culturally sensitive, particularly in large metropolitan areas such as Toronto, is increasing. With respect to the two subgroups examined in this paper, among all South Asian nation states, Bangladesh is ethnically the most homogenous (98 per cent of the population is Bengali), and India the most heterogeneous (Phadnis and Ganguly, 2001; Srestha, 2002:241). Despite regional variations in dialects, Bangla is the mother tongue for most Bangladeshis; it is used for all official purposes and English is an 'associated language', and Islam (Sunni sect) is the predominant religion (83 per cent) (World Bank, 2005). In all of India, English is used for all national, political and commercial communication. Clearly, these two groups will have different ESL needs.

"In all of India, English is used for all national, political and commercial communication."

Research Design and Methods

This paper is based on a further analysis of interviews collected during Ghosh's doctoral study (2006). For the doctoral study, the migration and settlement experiences of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto were analyzed at the group and household levels. At the household level, the migration and housing trajectories of sixty respondents were examined by administering a semi-structured questionnaire in a face-to-face format. The Bengali respondents were selected on the basis of their place of birth (India/Bangladesh) and length of stay in Toronto (at least three years in order for them to build a housing trajectory). Bengali husbands and wives were interviewed together at their residence. With respect to their housing and neighbourhood, the respondents were asked to indicate factors they had considered in their search process, areas they had searched,

(Continued on page 136)

Table 2: General Characteristics of Bengalis from India and Bangladesh.
Source: Compiled from Ahmed 1986; Ahmed 1993; Fernandez 2001.

Characteristics	**Subgroups**	
	Indian Bengalis	**Bangladeshis**
Place of Birth	Primarily India (State of West Bengal)	Primarily Bangladesh
Language	Bengali (Bangla)	
Religion	Hindu	Muslim
Spatial Identity	Regional	National

(Continued from page 135)

"…during the interviews, most Indian Bengalis spoke in English, while most Bangladeshis preferred to communicate in Bengali."

and their satisfaction with each residence they had occupied. It is important to note that during the interviews most Indian Bengalis spoke in English, while most Bangladeshis preferred to communicate in Bengali. In responding to some of the questions pertaining to the importance of language, some respondents mentioned that they were taking (or have taken) ESL classes in Canada, but no explicit questions about their ESL experiences were asked. As noted in the introduction, the importance of language with respect to the migration and settlement experiences of the respondents emerged as a finding from the research.

Migration Characteristics of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto

Although Bengalis originally shared the same state within a pre-partition India, there are many similarities and differences between what are now two subgroups, created over time through specific historical and geographical processes (Ghosh, 2006). Some general characteristics are summarized in Table 2.

Although the Bengalis were born in different countries (i.e., India and Bangladesh), they speak the same language -- Bangla or Bengali [1]. They also ad-

(Continued on page 137)

1. Although the dialects are somewhat different—Indian Bengalis speak Bangla with more Sanskrit words while Bangladeshis use numerous Arabic words.

(Continued from page 136)

here primarily to two different religions and embody different territorial identities: Indian Bengalis are predominantly Hindus with a regional identity, and Bangladeshis are mainly Muslims with a national identity.

The Bengalis are a relatively new immigrant group in Canada. More than half of Canada's Bengali immigrants have settled in Toronto. Although some Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis who migrated to Canada in the late 1960s settled in Montréal, Bengalis arriving in Canada since the 1980s have increasingly chosen Toronto as their destination. Presently, more than 15,000 Bengalis live in the Toronto area (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Of the 60 respondents who participated in this study, Indian Bengalis were almost exclusively from an urban background. Most of them were born in Kolkata (83 per cent) and the few who were born in smaller towns migrated to Kolkata for higher education. In contrast, the majority of Bangladeshis were born in villages (73 per cent), although many had migrated to urban areas as well.

Not much difference was observed between the two Bengali subgroups with respect to their time of arrival (Table 3).

Most Indian Bengali and Bangladeshi sample households arrived in Canada in the late 1990s, and in terms of immigrant class most came as independent

(Continued on page 138)

"The Bengalis are a relatively new immigrant group in Canada."

Table 3: Key Arrival Characteristics of Sample Respondents

Characteristics	Subgroups	
	Indian Bengalis (n=30)	Bangladeshis (n=30)
Arrived in Canada in the late 1990s	97%	73%
Came as independent immigrants	87%	70%
Home Country was last country of permanent residence	70%	70%
Had lived in another country prior to coming to Canada	57%	50%

(Continued from page 137)

immigrants. About one-quarter of the Bangladeshis arrived as refugees, however. Most respondents from both groups indicated India or Bangladesh was their country of last permanent residence, although more than half of the respondents had lived in another country for at least six months prior to coming to Canada. When they came to Canada, Indian Bengali and Bangladeshi respondents were young and educated. Many had professional degrees and held well paid jobs in the home country and/or where they had previously migrated. In other words, they were 'designer immigrants' (Simmons, 1998).

Through conversations with the households it was revealed that, unlike Indian Bengalis, most Bangladeshis had siblings, relatives, friends and/or ex-colleagues living in Canada, whereas few Indian Bengalis had such connections. On the other hand, many Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis had social connections in the United States and England (despite this, the knowledge and use of English was not the same for both groups, as will be discussed later). More Bangladeshis than Indian Bengalis had social connections in multiple countries. This difference had important implications for their reasons for and processes of migration, and consequently their settlement experiences.

"…there is no 'common immigrant experience' with respect to housing."

Differential Housing Needs of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto

It is well established in the literature that despite some similarities, there is no 'common immigrant experience' with respect to housing. Research on specific groups and inter-group comparisons have demonstrated that immigrants do not have similar housing needs and/or aspirations, they do not face equal barriers in the housing market, nor use the same strategies to overcome them (Darden, 2004; Ferdinands, 2002; Murdie, 2002, 2003; Murdie and Teixeira, 2003; Oliveira, 2004; Owusu, 1999; Ray 1994, 1998; Skaburskis 1996). Many of these studies have noted that, when controlling for structural factors, the housing experiences of immigrant groups differ as a result of their distinct internal characteristics, including time of arrival, country of birth, immigration status, income, household size, and family structure. 'Culture', in particular, is generally understood as influencing

(Continued on page 139)

(Continued from page 138)

housing demand (Darden, 2004; Lapointe and Murdie, 1996; Murdie, 2002, 2003; Owusu, 1999).

Since most Bengalis arrived in Toronto in the mid- to late-1990s, it was expected that they would find it difficult to access affordable, suitable and adequate housing, but that individual households would have both similar and differential housing experiences depending on their internal characteristics (e.g., length of stay in Toronto, household structure, economic circumstances, and culture).

At the household level, similarities and differences were noticed within Indian Bengali and Bangladeshi households in terms of their housing preferences. All households wanted housing that was affordable and accessible (near amenities such as public transportation and schools). For most Indian Bengali households, 'close to amenities' also included living near mainstream grocery stores and day-care facilities, whereas for most Bangladeshis this meant living near a mosque and a Bengali grocery store. Also, since Bangladeshi families were larger than Indian Bengali families, they normally required large dwellings with more bedrooms.

Over time, the Bengali subgroups have been differentiated by their economic class in Canada, but cultural identities have also played a crucial role in defining their specific settlement patterns and housing needs. In order to understand this role, the respondents were asked a series of closed and open-ended questions focusing specifically on language, religion and dietary habits, and preferred neighbourhood social composition.

Specific Cultural Identities and their Impact on Settlement Experiences

Language

To understand their affinity with 'Bangla', the respondents were asked to indicate to what extent it was important for them to be able to speak Bangla in the privacy of their homes and outside in public places. Almost all Indian Bengalis and most Bangladeshis (except Sylhetis) claimed that they 'always' spoke Bangla at home. The Sylheti households pointed out that they only spoke Sylheti at home, and

(Continued on page 140)

"For most Indian Bengali households, 'close to amenities' also included living near mainstream grocery stores and day-care facilities, whereas for most Bangladeshis this meant living near a mosque and a Bengali grocery store. "

(Continued from page 139)

were not conversant in Bangla per se.

In contrast to their preference for speaking in Bangla at home, almost all Indian Bengalis indicated that speaking Bangla in public places was not at all important. Several Indian Bengali respondents were surprised that this question was asked since the need to converse in Bangla outside the house in India was of very little importance in their everyday lives. Conversely, most Bangladeshis stated that they spoke Bangla outside their homes with colleagues, friends, and neighbours. Many Bangladeshi men mentioned that "it [speaking in Bangla] is necessary for [the] wife" in order to "function independently" (Mr. S. A.: 2003) and "feel at home" (Mr. J.H.: 2003) in Toronto. Several Bangladeshi women also indicated similar needs:

> *Yes it is very important for me that there are some Bengalis in our building. It would be very difficult for me otherwise…by Allah's grace, this is not a problem in this* para *[in the Markham Road and Ellesmere Avenue area in the Scarborough suburb of east Toronto]. (Mrs. K. K.: 2003)*

"Almost all Indian Bengalis and most Bangladeshis (except Sylhetis) claimed that they 'always' spoke Bangla at home."

To explore the extent to which linguistic identity affects housing choices, the respondents were asked to consider the relative importance of having a Bengali neighbour, someone whom they could speak to in their own language. In responding to a hypothetical situation where there is an adequate, suitable and affordable residence in a non-Bengali neighbourhood, all Indian Bengalis indicated that they would "readily take such a place", whereas almost 60 per cent of the Bangladeshis stated that they would not take the place, further reinforcing the effect of linguistic affinity on housing preferences.

Linguistic affinity also has implications for ESL instruction. Most Indian Bengalis were accustomed to communicating in English outside their homes in both Canada and in India (it was part of their habitus in the public sphere). Consequently, their need for ESL instruction would be much less than for most Bangladeshi respondents, who rarely communicated in English outside their homes in Bangladesh as well as in Canada. As the quotation above indicates, there is a gender difference in the use of English among the Bangladeshis – ESL instruction may need to be specifically oriented toward the needs of Bangladeshi women. Instructors may also need to

(Continued on page 141)

(Continued from page 140)

encourage Bangladeshi students to communicate in English more (through homework design and role-play exercises) since the linguistic imperative to do so is much less than for Indian Bengalis.

Religiosity and Dietary Habits

To understand their religiosity, respondents were asked to indicate the importance of practicing religion in their everyday life, their frequency of visits to a place of worship (temple/mosque), and the importance of praying at a place of worship. To assess the extent to which religion affected their housing preferences, the respondents were asked to state the relative importance of living near a place of worship, and living in an area where the majority of the population adhered to their religion.

By religion, all Indian Bengali sample households were Hindu, and all Bangladeshis were Muslim. Most Indian Bengali households declared that they go to a temple occasionally - 'less than once a month' - especially "during a *puja*" (i.e., at festival times). Most households also stated that "religion was a private affair" and therefore it was not necessary to practice it at a public place such as a temple. As a result, almost all Indian Bengalis (96 per cent) indicated that it was "not at all important" for them to live near a temple. When asked to state what they would do in a hypothetical scenario where they found a place of their choice except that it was far from a temple, only two Indian Bengali households indicated that they would choose living near a temple over a suitable and affordable residence. In terms of dietary habits, most Indian Bengalis indicated that they rarely shopped in a Bengali grocery store - usually only once a month. As a result, for most Indian Bengalis it was 'not at all important' to live near a Bengali grocery store.

"...there is a gender difference in the use of English among the Bangladeshis..."

When asked what they would do in a situation where they found a residence of their choice located in a neighbourhood where the majority of the population was Muslim, Indian Bengalis provided mixed responses. Close to one-half indicated that it was 'not at all likely' that they would take the residence, about a third pointed out that if they "really liked the house" this issue would not matter "so much", particularly because "this is Canada". A quarter said they would not know what to do in such as situation.[2] Differences of opinion were also observed within some couples in

(Continued on page 142)

2. Since this is a sensitive issue it is possible that these respondents did not want to disclose their personal opinions.

(Continued from page 141)

this regard. Mr. P.R. (2003) grew up in the Beckbagan area of Kolkata, where there is a large Muslim population. Whereas he expressed few reservations about living in an all-Muslim neighbourhood, Mrs. S. R. (2003) (his wife), who grew up in a mixed neighbourhood, declared "no matter how good the house was I will never let him take the house…you never know when riots can happen, Canada or no Canada".

In contrast to Indian Bengali households, Bangladeshi households indicated that it was 'very' or 'somewhat important' for them to practice Islam because it was an integral part of "who [they] are". Most Bangladeshis said that according to the Holy Qur'an, men in particular were required to pray in a mosque at least once a week, especially on a Friday. For women, the rules were more relaxed and it was only necessary to pray at the mosque during auspicious days, such as the *Eid*. Many Bangladeshi households pointed out, however, that in recent years these "rules" have changed. Particularly after 9/11, clerics at mosques in Toronto and in Bangladesh have encouraged women to pray at the mosques. As a result, almost all Bangladeshis, regardless of gender differences, indicated that it was 'important' to live near a mosque.

"…almost all Bangladeshis, regardless of gender differences, indicated that it was 'important' to live near a mosque."

> *In Bangladesh and Toronto it is a recent phenomenon that women are encouraged to go to the mosque to read* namaz *[prayer] every week…when we were growing up [in Bangladesh], we never went to a mosque, other than during* Eid*…but things are different now….in Toronto I try to follow the rules and, although every day I read* namaz *all five times at home, I can only go to the mosque on a Friday….for us [meaning women] and children it is important to have a mosque nearby…by going to the mosque the children learn to read namaz with correct pronunciations and perform the rituals correctly…at the Baitur mosque [located in Victoria Park in the Scarborough suburb of east Toronto] women have a separate space where they can pray," (Mrs. S. B.: 2003).*

In a hypothetical situation where they had an option of taking a residence that was suitable and affordable in all respects except that it was far from a mosque, eighty percent of the Bangladeshis said that in doing so they would not be able to attend prayers regularly, and as a result they would make numerous *gunnah* [sins].

(Continued on page 143)

(Continued from page 142)

Many Bangladeshis said that even though they would want the house they would prefer to live near a mosque. One respondent said that this was "a big problem earlier in the Victoria Park area", but the Bengalis have "solved it". Recently, in addition to Baitur (an existing mosque), a rental apartment on Teesdale Place was converted into a mosque, catering especially to the needs of the Bangladeshi women and children living in the area (Mrs. R. B.: 2003).

Most Bangladeshis also noted that living near a halal meat shop was a 'very' or 'somewhat important' factor, as they shopped in a Bengali grocery store regularly (at least once a week). When Bangladeshis were requested to indicate what they would do if they found a residence of their choice in a non-Muslim area, more than half of the Bangladeshi households said that it was 'somewhat likely' that they would take the place. The other half, however, said that they would 'not likely' take it. Unlike Indian Bengalis, few differences were witnessed within couples on this issue.

These issues of religiosity (i.e., the need to pray collectively) and dietary habits (i.e., the need to shop at a Bengali food store on a regular basis) may constrain the spatial extent that Bangladeshis are able to travel to meet their daily needs, due in some part to time constraints. Having ESL classes locally available would greatly increase the convenience for them, and encourage them to attend classes regularly.

"…Most Bangaldeshis also noted that living near a halal meat shop was a 'very' or 'somewhat important factor' "

Preferred Neighbourhood Social Composition

In addition to language and religion, the sample households were asked about their preferences with respect to the social composition of their neighbourhood. Before they emigrated from India, only a third of the Indian Bengalis lived in the same neighbourhood as their relatives, more than two-thirds had neighbours who were Hindu, and many (living in or outside of West Bengal) had 'other Indians' as their neighbours, belonging to a variety of linguistic and religious groups. None of the Indian Bengalis had lived previously in an all-Muslim neighbourhood. Indian Bengalis who step-migrated to Canada from another country (including the Middle East)[3] had lived in 'mixed' neighbourhoods with other Indians, South Asians, and Caucasians.

(Continued on page 144)

3. Even though these were Muslim countries, Indian Bengalis lived in 'international townships'.

(Continued from page 143)

To some extent the former living patterns of Indian Bengalis are reflected in their present housing situation in Toronto. Only a third of the Indian Bengalis had a relative in the Toronto area, and most lived about an hour away. When asked how important it was to live near relatives, most Indian Bengalis indicated that it was 'not at all important'. When asked whether they would prefer to take a place that was far away from their place of work but close to their relatives, about three-quarters of the Indian Bengalis said they would choose to live near their work place. Most Indian Bengali women said they would prefer not to live near their relatives. As Mrs. S.R. (2003) noted:

> *I came away from India to avoid them…why should I want them to be near me and breathe on me…no I don't want to live close to them…the relationship is better when you see each other on occasions…if they need me I can be there within half an hour but living beside them will definitely not be my choice.*

"Most Indian Bengali women said that they would prefer not to live near their relatives."

Even though Indian Bengalis have expressed their cultural identities in Toronto through various built forms such as temples and clubs, they have not prioritised living near these cultural symbols. Instead, they congregate in these places occasionally while residing in multicultural neighbourhoods.

About 60 per cent of the Indian Bengalis indicated that their closest friends in Toronto were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds including 'other Indians', 'Chinese', 'Canadians of British origin' and 'Italians'. Close to 40 per cent, however, said that 'other Indians' were their closest friends in Toronto. Slightly more than half of the Indian Bengalis indicated that it was 'very' or 'somewhat important' for them to live near "close friends". In reality, however, most were living between half an hour and an hour away from close friends. When asked if they would choose to live near a place of work or near a close friend, less than half of the Indian Bengali households indicated that they would choose to live near a close friend. Only five Indian Bengali households had another Indian Bengali Hindu as their next-door neighbour, although about half had an Indian living on the same street or in the same apartment building. When asked to indicate whether it was important for them to live near another Indian Bengali, over 80 per cent of the households indicated that it was 'not at all important'.

(Continued on page 145)

(Continued from page 144)

When asked to identify three ethno-religious groups with whom they would prefer to share a neighbourhood in Toronto, most Indian Bengali households indicated that they would prefer to live with "people of educated middle class backgrounds… *bhadralok* [decent] families". Ideally the neighbourhood would have "a nice mixture of many races" (Mr. S. K.: 2003).

In contrast to Indian Bengalis, many more Bangladeshis lived near their relatives (40 per cent) or close friends (53 per cent) before immigrating to Canada. Several Bangladeshis indicated that back home, their 'close friends' were usually from their own district or village. Such living patterns were pronounced among the Bangladeshi sample households in general and Sylhetis in particular. Most Bangladeshi step-migrants indicated that they lived with other Bangladeshis in the step-country. Only two households indicated that they had lived in 'mixed' neighbourhoods in the step-country.

As in the case of Indian Bengalis, the living patterns of Bangladeshis in Toronto are similar to their pre-migration ways of life. Seventy percent of the Bangladeshi households had a relative in Toronto — including parents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. In most cases their relatives lived in the same apartment building, or within a block or two. Most Bangladeshis indicated that it was 'very' or 'somewhat important' for them to live near their relatives. When asked whether they would prefer to take a place that was far away from their place of work but close to their relatives, most Bangladeshis said they would choose a residence closer to their relatives than their place of work (71 per cent).

"…the living patterns of Bangladeshis in Toronto are similar to their pre-migration ways of life."

About two-thirds of the Bangladeshi households indicated that their closest friends in Toronto were Bangladeshis. This was similar to Indian Bengalis who indicated that about half of their close friends were 'other Indians'. A fifth of the Bangladeshis said these friends were from their own village or district. Almost all households indicated that it was important for them to live near their close friends. When asked if they would choose to live near a place of work or near close friends, almost all Bangladeshis indicated that they would choose to live near their close friends. Two-thirds of the Bangladeshis had close friends within a block or two of their current residence and all Bangladeshi households had at least one Bangladeshi neighbour.

When asked to identify three ethno-religious groups with whom they would

(Continued on page 146)

(Continued from page 145)

prefer to share a neighbourhood in Toronto, almost all Bangladeshis said that they would prefer to live exclusively among Bangladeshis. As Mr. R.B. (2003) noted: "Bangladeshis first and Bangladeshis last". Although some households indicated that they would prefer to live among South Asians and/or Asians in general, most indicated that they would avoid 'all-white' neighbourhoods. Although not asked explicitly, many Bangladeshis indicated that though they were 'comfortable' living with Indian Bengalis, it would not be their "first choice" (Mr. J. H.: 2003).

The stronger neighbourhood preferences and community ties among Bangladeshis suggest that the ideal ESL class should be locally-based and relatively homogeneous in composition (these two suggestions are inter-related), and incorporate a group-study curriculum design. In contrast, Indian Bengalis would likely function better in an instructional environment comprised of students from different backgrounds.

"...almost all Bangladeshis said that they would prefer to live exclusively among Bangladeshis."

Reflection and Summary

Throughout this paper, we have argued that Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis have distinct cultural preferences with respect to where and how they live, and how they communicate day-to-day in Toronto, because of their respective habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), brought with them to Canada and maintained through transnational ties and local interactions. This research shows that, for both subgroups, their mother tongue (Bangla) and religion are important, but are integrated into their daily lives in very different ways.

Unlike Bangladesh, which is increasingly becoming Islamic, India is a secular country, with people of different linguistic and religious backgrounds. Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal, is one of the four major metropolitan cities of India and is highly cosmopolitan in nature. Moreover, although Bangla is the state language of West Bengal, it is not the only official language. As a result, Indian Bengalis are habituated to function in a language other than their mother tongue outside their homes. For Bangladeshis the situation is different. In Bangladesh, Bangla is the official language — an historical, cultural and political symbol — a language for which many had fought and died during their War of Independence in 1971. In Toronto, Bangladeshis are not only somewhat limited by their relative (in)ability to function in

(Continued on page 147)

(Continued from page 146)

English, but also 'choose' to express and retain this important aspect of their identity in both public places and private spaces. As a result, Bangla acts as a hindrance to their dispersal in Toronto, but at the same time preserves the distinctiveness of their culture.

With respect to religion, Indian Bengalis pray regularly, like Bangladeshis, but religion is a private affair. Moreover, it is not required by the rules of Hinduism that prayers be offered only in a temple. Therefore, although religion is an important aspect of their cultural identity and Indian Bengalis are socialised to live near a temple, it is not a practical necessity. As Muslims, however, it is important for Bangladeshis to pray in a mosque every Friday. The rules of their religion do not allow Bangladeshis to live far away from a mosque, or a halal meat shop. Therefore, like the Jewish community, Bangladeshis are accustomed to living near a mosque for practical reasons.

The Indian Bengalis interviewed were not accustomed to living in a Muslim area. There is a "geography of fear" associated with Muslim places in most Indian cities and it has been argued that "communal riots [are no longer] confined within particular spaces and times" (Brass, 1991:12). As a result, the "anticipation of riots" is a common phenomenon among Hindus in India (Brass, 1991), which has arguably transcended geographical boundaries to Toronto. Most Indian Bengalis preferred to live in a "mixed" neighbourhood, and few wanted to live in a 'desi' area and/or in a neighbourhood of Toronto where there was a "formidable presence of Muslims" (Mr. K. S.: 2003).

"...for both subgroups, their mother tongue (Bangla) and religion are important, but are integrated into their daily lives in different ways."

Very few Muslim Bangladeshis had lived in a Hindu area or an area of "mixed" religions in their home country. As a result, living in a mixed area and/or with other Indian Bengalis was not their "first preference" in Toronto. Moreover, the localized kinship ties among Bangladeshis were very strong — even in their home countries, many Bangladeshis lived near their relatives. Unlike most Indian Bengalis, almost all Bangladeshis prefer to live in Bangladeshi neighbourhoods. When searching for a place to live, Bangladeshis place more importance on whether they will be able to speak Bangla in public places, and access a place of worship (i.e., a mosque) and ethno-specific stores on a regular basis.

Bangladeshis have altered the 'face' of Toronto through "smell, feel, colour, and other sensory dimensions" (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003: 5). By embodying

(Continued on page 148)

(Continued from page 147)

certain places, they have transformed their everyday experiences into "symbolic cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1998). Bangladeshis have also developed socio-psychological attachments with these places, and created a 'Bangladeshi space' amidst a multicultural Toronto. They explicitly express their reluctance to move to a new location. This is not to say that the residential location of Bangladeshis in Toronto is completely a matter of cultural choice. The development of the Bangladeshi neighbourhoods reflects overt and covert 'racialisation' processes as well. For instance, the Bangladeshis interviewed have stated that they have been denied access to apartment buildings on the eastern side of Victoria Park Avenue by members of other minority groups, in a sense being confined within an imagined boundary.

The goal of this research was not to make universal claims for all immigrant subgroups or for all Bangladeshis and Indian Bengalis for that matter. The conclusions drawn, however, are applicable to most members of both subgroups in Toronto. In the case of Bangladeshis, interviews were conducted within their major population clusters. The conclusions drawn here may or may not apply to all Bangladeshis located outside of the main clusters, for example, but they do typify the experiences and desires of those located within the clusters. This research demonstrates that not only must one look at the specific needs of meaningful subgroups (as defined by their cultural norms and desires), but that these needs are geographically grounded – location matters. The reputational sampling method used, supported by key informant interviews, supports the wide applicability of the conclusions drawn from this research.

"…the localized kinship ties among Bangladeshis were very strong."

In the next section, we will consider some of the potential implications of research such as this for ESL instruction, including some particular recommendations pertaining to the Bangladeshi and India Bengali subgroups.

Some Implications of this research for ESL Instruction

ESL instructors must understand that language is much more than just a mode of communication. As this research has shown, it is often the heart of a culture. Not only must instructors be sensitive to the instructional needs of different immigrant subgroups, they must operationalize this sensitivity in a number of practical ways, including class size, composition, location, exemplary materials, and homework assignments. An adaptive pedagogy is paramount.

(Continued on page 149)

(Continued from page 148)

The goal of many immigrants is not to become unilingual English speakers, but to acquire a functional use of an additional language. Like all Bengalis, many groups have a strong culturally-driven desire to retain their mother tongue. Language adoption should not necessitate cultural change in our multicultural society. Emphasis should not be on giving up a language, just adding another.

This research has highlighted the unique needs of Bangladeshi migrants in particular. Bangladeshis are far less comfortable functioning in a multicultural setting than India Bengalis, and likely have had much less exposure to English-speaking people. Comfort is an essential element to a teaching environment - students need an environment that is inviting. Environment is composed of both location and class composition. For example, in recognition of the gendered social norms within Bangladeshi households, it may be beneficial to teach Bangladeshi women separately from men, in a location within their neighbourhood clusters, preferably by a Muslim instructor. Care should be taken to ensure that examples and symbols used in classes are not offensive to Muslim students. It is essential to realize that language and religion are tied together within culture. It may be beneficial to have Muslim students study English translations of the Qur'an as part of their homework assignments.

"Comfort is an essential element to a teaching environment — students need an environment that is inviting."

Localized convenience is a very important factor in the Bangladeshi lifestyle. Small localized classes could be held at specific times of the day. Evenings may not always be best — perhaps classes during the day might be better while the children are in school. Take a small poll within specific neighbourhoods — ask the residents when the best time for classes might be. Classes might be held at a local school. Alternatively, perhaps group transportation may be arranged from Bangladeshi communities to instruction locations via a community bus. Because of their dispersed settlement pattern, Indian Bengalis are accustomed to travelling away from their neighbourhoods to places of worship and socialization, or to purchase Indian food items. It is not essential that they attend ESL classes in specific areas of the city. Locating classes near main transportation arteries may be beneficial. Because most Indian Bengali immigrants have lived in cosmopolitan environments, they would likely feel relatively more comfortable receiving ESL instruction in classes composed of diverse ethnic groups. The social norms are less gendered for most Indian Bengalis – men and women could receive instruction together.

It may be difficult to encourage all Bengalis to speak in English in their pri-

(Continued on page 150)

(Continued from page 149)

vate spaces (e.g., homes). Class and homework assignments for Bangladeshi women in particular should involve some group work or study, since group communication pervades most daily activities (i.e., the women do not perform most of their daily activities in isolation). Due to their geographic dispersal, Indian Bengalis may benefit more from individualized homework assignments that would engage the couple (if they are both taking ESL classes), rather than group study.

ESL instruction should be coordinated with other services to a greater degree to meet the needs of each immigrant subgroup holistically. ESL providers should be aware of local external daycare services, or informal day care networks (e.g., within the Bangladeshi community), and could provide this information to their students. Since Bangladeshis value their familial and kinship ties to a great extent, perhaps mentoring programs could be established whereby Bangladeshis who have previously successfully completed ESL classes would tutor new Bangladeshi students in their neighbourhood. Upon successful completion of their ESL classes, students may be asked if they would be willing to mentor a new incoming student in their neighbourhood, and a list of mentors may be kept on file. Indian Bengalis may also be encouraged to engage in mentoring, but since the Indian Bengali community is so dispersed, the coordination of the tutor-student matching is an additional challenge.

"…ESL instruction should be coordinated with other services to a greater degree to meet the needs of each immigrant subgroup holistically."

We acknowledge that some of these suggestions cannot be implemented overnight. Some involving instructional modifications (e.g., course content) may be easier to implement than broader logistical issues (e.g., class time and location). The ability to implement some of these changes may depend on localized conditions as well (e.g., staff availability, funding, classroom space). Nevertheless they may be used as guidelines to work towards. The underlying imperative is to know the students: one size does not fit all. Teachers might take the time to design and distribute a short questionnaire to their students on registration, asking them about the demands on their lives, their needs and preferences. This is the first step toward curriculum design modification. Members of other immigrant groups and subgroups may share similar needs. Social scientists and ESL practitioners must continue to communicate and work together to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse society.

It is essential to get the students and community members involved in the process of ESL learning. Practitioners must draw upon the internal strength of

(Continued on page 151)

(Continued from page 150)

the vibrant communities within Toronto to design and implement ESL classes tailored to local needs and cultures. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are the starting points.

Acknowledgements:

We wish to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments. ❖

"The underlying imperative is to know the students: one size does not fit all."

References

References

Ahmed, A. (1986). *Class and Ethnic Consciousness among the Bangladeshis in Toronto: Historical Base and Current Patterns*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. York University: Toronto.

Ahmed, S. (1993). *Discrimination in Employment and Adaptation of Immigrants: Dimensions of Bangladeshi Experience.* Unpublished Master's Thesis. York University: Toronto.

Balakrishnan, T. R. & Hou, F. (1999). Residential Patterns in Cities. In S. S. Halli & L. Driedger (Eds.), *Immigrant Canada: Demographic, Economic, and Social Challenges*, (pp.116-147). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Differences*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). The Choice of the Necessary. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). Forms of Capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook Of Theory and Research for the Sociology Of Education*. (pp. 241-257). New York: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2002). Habitus. In J. Hiller & E. Rooksby (Eds.), *Habitus: A Sense of Place*. (pp-27-33). Aldershot: Ashgate.

Brass, P. (1991). *Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and Composition*. New Delhi: Sage.

Buchingnani, N. (1987). Research on South Asians in Canada: Retrospect and Prospect. In M. Israel (Ed.), *The South Asian Diaspora in Canada: Six Essays*. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario.

Cosgrove, D. & Jackson, P. (1987). New Directions in Cultural Geography, *Area, 19,* 95-101.

Darden, J. (2004). *The Significance of White Supremacy in the Canadian Metropolis of Toronto, New York: E. Mellen Press.*

Ferdinands, S. (2002). *Sinhalese Immigrants in Toronto and their Trajectories into Home Ownership*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. York University: Toronto.

Fernandez, P. (2001). Asian Indian Immigration to Canada. In K. Berry & M. Henderson (Eds.), *Geographical Identities of Ethnic America: Race, Space, and Place*. Reno: University of Nevada Press.

(Continued on page 153)

(Continued from page 152)

Ghosh, S. (2006). *We are Not all the Same: Migration, Settlement Patterns and Housing Trajectories of Indian Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Toronto*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. York University: Toronto.

Ghosh, S. (2007). Transnational Ties and Intra-immigrant group Settlement Experiences: A Case Study of Indian Bengali and Bangladeshis in Toronto, *Geojournal, (forthcoming).*

Hyndman, J. & Walton-Roberts, M. (2000). Interrogating Borders: A Transnational Approach to Refugee Research in Vancouver, *Canadian Geographer*, 44, 244-258.

Israel, M. (1987). *The South Asian Diaspora in Canada: Six Essays*, Toronto: Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario.

Israel, M.& Wagle, N. K. (1993). *Ethnicity, Identity and Migration: The South Asian Context*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, R. (2002). *Pierre Bourdieu.* London: Routledge.

Johnston, H. (1984). *The East Indians in Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association.

Kazemipur, A. & Halli, S. S. (2000). *The New Poverty in Canada: Ethnic Groups and Ghetto Neighbourhood.* Toronto: Thompson Educational.

Kelly, P. (2003). Canadian-Asian Transnationalism, *The Canadian Geographer*, 47, 209-218.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003). Problematizing Cultural Stereotypes in TESOL, *TESOL Quarterly, 37(4)*. pp. 709-19.

Lapointe Consulting & R. A. Murdie. (1996). *Housing and Immigration - Immigrants and the Canadian Housing Market: Living Arrangements, Housing Characteristics, and Preferences*, Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Lefebvre, H. (1961). The Social Text. In S. Elden, E. Lebas & E. Kofman (Eds.) *Henri Lefebvre Key Writings – 2003*. Continuum: New York.

Low, S. & Lawrence-Zuniga, D. (2003), *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture.* New York: Blackwell.

Mitchell, D. (2000). *Cultural Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Murdie, R. A. (2002). The Housing Careers of Polish and Somali Newcomers in Toronto's Rental Market, *Housing Studies*, *17 (3)*, 423-443.

Murdie, R. A. (2003). Housing Affordability and Toronto's Rental Market: Perspectives from the Housing Careers of Jamaican, Polish and Somali Newcomers, *Housing, Theory and Society*, *20 (4),* 183-96.

(Continued on page 154)

References

(Continued from page 153)

References

Murdie, R. A. & Teixeira, C. (2003). Towards a Comfortable Neighbourhood and Appropriate Housing: Immigrant Experiences in Toronto. In P. Anisef & M. Lanphier (Eds.), *The World in a City*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Oliveira, L. (2004). *Housing Trajectories into Homeownership: A Case Study of Punjabi Sikh Immigrants in the Toronto CMA*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. York University, Toronto.

Owusu, T. (1999). Residential Patterns and Housing Choices of Ghanaian Immigrants in Toronto, Canada, *Housing Studies*, *14 (1)* 40-52.

Phadnis, U.& Ganguly, R. (2001). *Ethnicity and Nation Building in South Asia*. New Delhi: Thousand Oaks.

Portes, A. (2001). Introduction: the Debates and Significance of Immigrant Transnationalism, *Global Networks*, 1, 181-193.

Ray, B. K. (1994). Immigrant Settlement and Housing in Metropolitan Toronto, *Canadian Geographer*, 38, 262-265.

Ray, B. K. (1998). *A Comparative Study of Immigrant Housing, Neighbourhoods and Social Networks in Toronto and Montréal*. Ottawa: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Sampat-Mehta, R. (1984). First Fifty Years of South Asian Immigration: A Historical Perspective, in R. Kanungo (Ed.), *South Asians in the Canadian Mosaic.* Montréal: Kala Bharati.

Simmons, A. (1998). Racism and Immigration Policy. In V. Satzewich (Ed.), *Racism and Social Inequality in Canada.* Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.

Skaburskis, A. (1996). Race and Tenure in Toronto, *Urban Studies*, *33 (2)*, 223-52.

Srestha, N. (2002). *Nepal and Bangladesh: A Global Studies Handbook*, California: ABCLIO.

Statistics Canada. (2001). *Immigration and Citizenship: 2001 Census of Canada*, Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada.

Walton-Roberts, M. (1998). Three Readings of the Turban: Sikh Identity in Greater Vancouver, *Urban Geography*, *19 (4),* 311-331.

Walton-Roberts, M. (2003). Transnational Geographies: Indian Immigration to Canada, *Canadian Geographer*, 47, 235-250.

Walton-Roberts, M. & Pratt, G. (2005). Mobile Modernities: A South Asian Family Negotiates Immigration, Gender and Class in Canada, *Gender, Place and Culture*, 12 (2), 173-195.

World Bank (2005). *World Bank Fact Book, 2005*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Contributors to this issue

Kathryn Brillinger teaches TESL/ESL at Conestoga College. She has presented extensively on the teaching of pronunciation and oral skills and served as an Assistant Chief Rater for the Test of Spoken English (TSE) for 11 years. Kathryn has an MEd in TESL from Brock University.

Jill Cummings has taught and coordinated ESL and ESL teacher education programs. Her recent work has included research related to ESL teacher knowledge, EAP writing instruction, literacy instruction and assessment practices for LINC and ESL learners, and ESL teacher and student goals for writing development. Jill is currently completing her PhD thesis in Second Language Education at OISE/University of Toronto.

Usman Erdősy has a special interest in teaching and assessing second-language writing. Prior to 2004 he taught academic writing and English for Academic Purposes programs at the University of Toronto and York University; since 2004 he has been the Testing Manager for the Canadian Academic English Language Assessment at Carleton University. His current preoccupation is with developing new methods to test academic English language proficiency.

Contributors

Raymond M. Garrison teaches qualitative research methodology at the Institute for Social Research, York University. He has a keen interest in the policy implications of social research and has published several academic articles related to policy issues and qualitative research methodology.

Sutama Ghosh teaches Urban Studies in the Department of Social Sciences at York University. Being a first generation immigrant herself, she is most interested in exploring the experiences of ethnic minorities in global cities.

Lee Gunderson is a professor and former head of the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia where he teaches both undergraduate and graduate courses in second language reading, language acquisition, literacy acquisition, and teacher education. He has served as a pre-school teacher, a primary-level elementary teacher, a reading specialist, a principal and vice-principal in a bilingual school, and a teacher of the learning disabled. He received the David Russell Award for Research, the Killam Teaching Prize at the University of British Columbia and has been awarded

(Continued on page 156)

(Continued from page 155)

the Kingston Prize for contributions to the National Reading Conference. He has served as Chair of the Publications Committee of the International Reading Association and is founding Chair of the Pippin Teacher's Professional Library. He is a Past President of the National Reading Conference.

Ilona Leki is a professor of English and director of ESL at the University of Tennessee, author of books and articles on second language writing in English, and co-editor of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*. Her research interests include academic literacy development and the literacy experiences of English learners.

David Wood is an assistant professor of Applied Linguistics at Carleton University, where he coordinates the CTESL program. He has taught at the University of Victoria and in Japan at Naruto University of Education. He authored the English for Academic Purposes textbook, *Making the Grade*. His research interests are formulaic sequences, spoken language, and teacher education.

Editors

Editors

Robert Courchêne, Acting Director of the Second Language Institute, is a teacher/teacher trainer at the University of Ottawa. His research interests include testing, curriculum design and multicultural and antiracism education. With Hedy McGarrell he organizes the annual Research Symposium and edits the proceedings.

Hedy McGarrell is an associate professor in Applied Linguistics at Brock University. Her research is on ESL writing, technology in language learning/teaching and ESL teacher knowledge. She is the editor of the *Americas* volume in the *TESOL* series on *Language Teacher Research* and the co-author of *Writing for Results: Academic and Professional Writing Tasks*.