CONTACT

Special Research Symposium Issue

L2 Students' Willingness to Communicate
Pronunciation in the ESL Classroom
Adult learners: Are we meeting their needs?

TESL Ontario

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TESL ONTARIO

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EDITORS' NOTE

FOREWORD

This issue offers the refereed proceedings of the twelfth Annual Research Symposium, part of the 38th Annual TESL Ontario Conference held in Toronto in October 2011. The three themes that provided the focus of the Research Symposium were as follows:

- **"L2 students' Willingness to Communicate"**

- **"Pronunciation in the ESL Classroom"**

- **"Adult Learners: Are we Meeting their Needs?"**

As in previous years, the three themes covered topical issues that affect the classrooms and practice of ESL professionals in varied ways. Teachers who encounter problems and challenges related to these themes on a daily basis in their classrooms look for background information and practical ideas that will help them meet their learners' needs and the needs of their own professional development. In organizing the Research Symposium around topical themes and in publishing the proceedings, TESL Ontario offers ESL professionals relevant information on recent research and new initiatives; this information informs both classroom practice and the development of the profession.

Following past practice, the different themes were selected in consultation with the TESL Ontario membership and in conjunction with the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC), the Ministry of Culture and Immigration, and Citizenship Canada. Presenters were invited to submit a written version of their oral presentation after the Research Symposium. Readers reviewed the manuscripts; those papers included here offer readers a focus on pedagogical challenges that classroom teachers, administrators, and other ESL professionals deal with on an ongoing basis in trying to provide learners with optimal learning conditions. We are confident that readers will find the selected papers interesting and relevant to their teaching and professional development. We hope that they will feel inspired by the ideas presented, launch their own inquiries into an aspect of their teaching context, and then report their insights at future TESL Ontario conferences.

On behalf of TESL Ontario, we express our thanks to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (Canada) and the Ministry of Culture and Immigration (Ontario) for supporting the Research Symposium and the publication of this special refereed issue of Contact. Their commitment to this important event for ESL professionals has been a source of encouragement and strength for TESL Ontario and its members for over a decade. We look forward to continued cooperation and support from the different ministries involved in language, immigration, settlement, and training issues. We also wish to thank all the presenters who participated in the different topics of the Symposium

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for their dedication to their work and for sharing their expertise and insights. Without them, we could not have organized the Symposium and compiled these proceedings.

Finally, we thank the many individuals who contributed in one way or another to the success of the Research Symposium. We particularly wish to thank the editor of the Contact newsletter, Brett Reynolds, and TESL Ontario administrative and office staff for supporting us in organizing and preparing the Research Symposium and for the opportunity to assemble this refereed Research Symposium issue of Contact. Without their continuing support, our work would have been considerably more difficult and less pleasant.

Hedy McGarrell
Robert Courchêne

Co-editors

INTRODUCTION

The Research Symposium and the ensuing refereed proceedings of contributions to the symposium have become an integral part of the annual TESL Ontario conference. The symposium at the 2011 TESL Ontario conference brought together researchers and language professionals who addressed one of the three topics. While some of the contributions included in this volume present data from individual researchers' recent studies, others summarized areas of activity that have become topical in ESL learning and teaching. All of the contributors link theoretical insights with practical issues in pedagogy and consider the implications to classroom practice. We are pleased to be able to include contributions in all three themes addressed at the 2011 Research Symposium in these proceedings. The contributions are grouped according to theme and, within each theme, presented to progress from more general or background-oriented papers to more narrowly focused or data-specific studies.

Theme 1: Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Three written contributions were selected for inclusion on the theme of "Willingness to Communicate". In the first paper, "Examining Willingness to Communicate on Multiple Timescales" Peter MacIntyre offers the metaphor of ocean currents and waves to discuss background to and current insights into WTC and affective variables that influence second language communication. MacIntyre draws on what he refers to as the idiodynamic method to describe the affective states involved in WTC and the various influences on them. The framework presented serves both a research and a teaching perspective to access and coordinate the diverse factors, including anxiety and motivation, that impact on second language learning and speaking.

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The second contribution on the theme of willingness to communicate entitled "Willingness to Communicate and L2 Fluency: Complexity and Variety in a Corpus of Japanese and Chinese ESL Learner Speech" is from David Wood. In his innovative exploration of the relationship between aspects of second language speech fluency and WTC, Wood points out that research into speech fluency has focused primarily on a cognitivist paradigm. WTC in second language learning, on the other hand, has relied on more subjective assessments of contextual and learner factors. Affective factors in WTC and various measures of speech fluency are likely interconnected, but no research has been identified that explores this connection. To address this gap in the literature, Wood presents longitudinal data on speech fluency measures from five Japanese learners, and then relates them to affective factors involved in WTC. The findings, while preliminary and tentative, suggest a complex relationship between speech fluency and WTC. Wood's contribution suggests a promising methodology for future research to pursue; it also highlights an important connection that needs to be considered in second language teachers' classroom practice.

In the third and final contribution on willingness to communicate, Stephanie Arnott and Callie Mady in their paper "Volunteer Exchange Experiences and Willingness to Communicate (WTC): An English Language Learner (ELL) Perspective" report on English language learners' perspectives, based on questionnaire and interview data, and on their participation in a volunteer youth program organized by a national volunteer organization. The study sought to assess participants' post-exchange impression of how these exchanges affected their motivation and confidence in their language skills. Interview and questionnaire data suggest that the exchange experience, especially the influence of the community and group leaders, positively affected their WTC.

Theme 2: Pronunciation in the ESL Classroom

Three contributions are included on the topic of pronunciation in the ESL classroom, each one with a different starting point. Sara Kennedy's "When Non-Native Speakers Misunderstand Each Other: Identifying Important Aspects of Pronunciation" presents the learners' perspective in a study designed to identify the aspects in non-native English speakers' pronunciation that lead to misunderstandings in conversations with other non-native English speakers. Interactions among non-native speakers of English are frequent in international settings where English is used as a lingua franca as well as in English-language programs in English-language settings. Twenty pairs of non-native English-speaking university students completed three speaking tasks. They were then given opportunities to indicate what and why they did not understand during these tasks. Findings suggest that when pronunciation was the cause of a misunderstanding, the pronunciation of specific sounds and overall understanding of particular non-native accents were typically the source of the problem. Kennedy concludes with a brief discussion of how these findings might be considered in the teaching of L2 speech.

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The second contribution to the theme of pronunciation teaching in the ESL classroom, Ron Thomson's "Demystifying Pronunciation Research to Inform Practice" approaches the topic from the teachers' and material designers' perspective. He argues that the apparent recent neglect of pronunciation teaching in ESL classroom is due to a lack of clear information on how to teach pronunciation in a manner that brings about the desired results. Thomson provides background information on how humans learn speech sounds in a second language, and then proceeds to list six myths that tend to influence ESL teachers and materials designers, myths that he dispels through reference to insights based on data-driven research. In conclusion, Thomson points toward a research-based approach to pronunciation teaching as a means of improving classroom instruction and relevant learner achievements.

The third contribution on this topic explores the broader question of "The Ethics of Pronunciation Teaching." Donna Brinton and Helen Butner examine the question in light of a recent complaint a faculty member lodged with the relevant university Ethics Committee against an ESL instructor at the same university, but in a different department. The instructor had offered an elective English as a second language pronunciation course at the university level. The complaint alleged that the term "accent" was discriminatory; Brinton and Butner explore the varied questions related to ethics as well as to the ownership of English that the complaint raises. They synthesize the responses to this case from members of an international pronunciation listserv defending the practice of offering English language pronunciation support courses to non-native speakers of English.

Theme 3: Adult Learners: Are we Meeting their Needs?

Last but not least, the third theme included during the 2011 Research Symposium focused on the question of whether current practices in teaching ESL meet the needs of the learners in "Adult Learners: Are we Meeting their Needs?" Two of the contributions are included in these proceedings. The first one presents Kim McDonough and Teresa Hernández González's "What Language Production Opportunities do ESL Conversation Groups Provide?" The researchers investigated conversation group interactions between preservice teachers and ESL participants to determine whether their interactions share characteristics with informal conversation or classroom discourse. The focus of their analysis was on the quantity and type of language production opportunities available during the interactions. The study involved twelve conversation group sessions facilitated by six preservice ESL teachers over a one-month period. Quantitative analysis of the whole-group interaction focused on the language production opportunities created by the preservice ESL teachers as reflected through the amount of talk and questioning styles in four interactional contexts. The findings suggest that although the preservice teachers produced more talk than the ESL participants, interactional contexts oriented toward

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content elicited the greatest amount of ESL participant talk. The researchers conclude with a discussion of the organization of conversation groups and the training provided to preservice teachers who facilitate conversation group interaction.

Ellen Cray's contribution entitled "'Complete Sentence!' What Teachers Need to Know about Spoken Language" focuses on the nature of informal spoken language and its underrepresentation in grammar teaching materials and, more generally, in English language teaching. Cray illustrates how two freely available corpus resources offer ESL teachers and their students access to tools that facilitate exploration of how specific lexical items (words, phrases, utterances) are used in informal spoken and formal written English. Cray argues that, despite the complexities of spoken language, learners need to be exposed to these varieties in classroom learning and teaching.

We have enjoyed preparing this Special Research Symposium Issue for readers of Contact. To grow, members of the TESL profession need to continue to investigate research and teaching practice; this continual striving for more sophisticated research questions and teaching techniques allows them to meet the challenges encountered in their classrooms. We hope that the stimulating contributions contained in this issue of the referred proceedings of the 2011 Research Symposium will inspire teachers to experiment with a new methodology or new techniques in their classrooms.

Hedy McGarrell
Robert Courchêne

Symposium Issue Co-editors

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CURRENTS AND WAVES:

Examining willingness to communicate on multiple timescales

Peter MacIntyre, Cape Breton University

Abstract

The metaphor of ocean currents and waves is used to discuss some of the ways in which psychological and social processes affect second language learning and communication, in particular the willingness to communicate in a second language. Currents represent the long-term, but less visible, influences of stable factors such as personality traits and culture. Waves represent the more easily visible, short-term and unstable processes that energize or restrain second language communication at a particular moment in time. Drawing upon dynamic systems theory, this paper describes a new research approach called the idiodynamic method that can be used to study and better understand waves of communication. It is hoped that, in the future, idiodynamic methods can be adapted to classroom instruction, so that teachers can better understand the communication patterns of the individual students in their classrooms.

As a resident of the east coast of Cape Breton Island, I live a stone's throw away from the Atlantic coast. In such an awe-inspiring part of the world, one's thinking cannot help but be influenced by the presence of the Atlantic Ocean. The power and beauty of the Atlantic provide two key concepts, waves and currents, that I hope will be useful metaphors for understanding individual differences among language learners. On the one hand, waves roll along, rising and falling seemingly at random, cresting and crashing on the shore, only to retreat and be replaced by the next wave. On the other hand, currents exist beneath the surface of the water; the warm waters of the Gulf Stream, always moving dependably up the Atlantic seaboard from the eastern coast of Florida, help to moderate the climate for Cape Breton Island. This paper will examine currents and waves that teachers might observe among their students. The discussion will centre on the willingness to communicate (WTC) that students display on the surface, as well as the underlying influences that reflect the currents of communication in the classroom. While ocean currents and waves work together to produce the resulting action of the water, the metaphorical waves and currents in the classroom also work together to produce communication patterns.

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To identify currents, one must look for long lasting, deep-running, broad pathways of movement. A focus on consistency, stable patterns, and long lasting trends is needed. Currents can be identified in students' WTC and students' communication behaviour within the classroom. In contrast, waves reflect surface variability, changing from one moment to the next, they are more easily identified. Waves are here and then they are gone; they are always somewhat unpredictable. Whereas currents run deep, waves are the temporary states that come and go within language classrooms.

Both currents and waves have their influence on students' communication behaviour. With respect to currents, teachers can identify the talkative students, the shy students, the dominant ones, and the jokesters, and teachers can identify students who keep quiet unless the class is talking about sports or another specific topic of interest. Educators often describe their students in terms of the underlying currents of their personalities, especially when they write letters of reference for students. However, temporary influences can also be identified; waves can be experienced by teachers and students within a specific classroom, for example during the course of a lesson. Teachers may find that early on in the lesson, students are willing to communicate but seem to lose their willingness as time progresses. Alternatively, students sometimes gain momentum as the class moves along and the conversation really gets going. If a teacher were to ask a student to stand up and talk about his or her favourite hobby, the student might be willing to do so at one moment but be unwilling just a few moments later. These sorts of currents and waves are important to understand in the language classroom.

Tides and Time

Two key ways in which the language classroom changes over time are the changing day-to-day tasks or activities and the people involved, including teachers and peers. One factor that affects a student's WTC is the difficulty of a language task, relative to the student's competence (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998). For example, a complex or difficult task will tend to reduce a student's WTC. It may or may not be that the student is able to communicate because being willing and able are two different things. A second critical factor influencing WTC is the classroom audience (Kang, 2005). Teachers and peers can have a major impact on WTC, which may or may not be for the better (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Conrod, 2001; MacIntyre, Burns & Jessome, 2011). A teacher's approach might be found to be intimidating or encouraging, but every teacher will have good days and bad days; teachers experience their own currents and waves. Similarly, some friends of a student can be facilitating and other friends can inhibit a student from communicating, with the influence being highly context-dependent (MacIntyre et al., 2011). Although it might be tempting to classify elements of the context, such as task difficulty, teachers, or peers, as either currents or waves (see also Larsen-Freeman, 2007), it is very important to be able to point out that water is water. Sometimes water moves in currents, other times it moves in waves. It is the movement that determines the pattern of the water's action, not the nature of water itself. Similarly, a teacher, peer or parent can be understood to move

(act) both in reliable currents and less predictable waves.

One of the more interesting discussions about conceptualizing motivation factors in second language (L2) acquisition came from Dörnyei (2009) who observed

> I have now come to believe that many of the controversies and disagreements in L2 motivation research go back to an insufficient temporal awareness that different or even contradictory theories do not exclude one another, but may simply be related to different phases of the motivated behaviour process. (p. 18)

This observation is equally true for WTC. Educators must be aware of the timeframe in which they are thinking about students' WTC. It may be that different phases of communication move differently; that is, sometimes communication flows as a current and other times fluctuates as a wave. MacIntyre & Legatto (2010) point out that affective disturbances that occur before communication begins tend to lead to refusal to respond or polite avoidance of the topic, but similar affective disturbances during communication produce active coping efforts.

It is important to distinguish psychological processes that occur before, during and after behaviour. These processes may differ substantially from one another (Dörnyei, 2005) and the processes that are relevant before and ones that are relevant after behaviour may be very different. Much of our research on WTC has focused either on the longer lasting currents (e.g., MacIntyre & Charos, 1996) or on the rapidly changing waves (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2010). Research is showing that the manner in which affective variables, including WTC, influence language learning will change as the timeframe under study changes.

The particular moment in time where the student decides to take action, when the wave breaks, can reveal the interaction of many psychological processes (MacIntyre & Clément, 2011). Dörnyei and Otto (1998) used the metaphor of "Crossing the Rubicon" to discuss the point of no return. Crossing the Rubicon refers to an edict that generals in the Roman Empire never bring their army back across the Rubicon river and into Rome itself—to do so would trigger a civil war. Although language learners are not in such dire straits, it can be intimidating and even frightening to initiate L2 communication. To continue with the aquatic metaphor, jumping into a conversation can be like jumping into the ocean. When a decision is made that initiates communicating in the second language, one cannot undo that decision. For some language learners the realization of a point-of-no-return presents a major influence on their communicative choices (MacIntyre, 2007). For example, when communication opportunities are highly specific and localized in time, such as offering a specific answer to a teacher's specific question, there may be a wave of WTC that allows even a hesitant student to speak up. However, an open conversation, with no particular direction, can trigger a wave of reluctance based on uncertainty about the pragmatics of that conversation. For the learner, it is a bit like jumping into the ocean water without

knowing where the strong currents are or whether a "rip tide" might drag you far away from the safety of shore.

To be more concrete with the example, MacIntyre (2007) identified specific leaps that learners may take into the waters of second language conversation. One is "do I raise my hand to answer a question?" This decision is common among students in a language class. Students typically understand that they must talk in order to learn (MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Donovan, 2003) and that teachers wish to have students raise their hand to answer a question—most learners will accept these as currents running through their language classroom experience. But given the audience members that are in the room, their teacher and their friends, students might worry about a number of issues, such as

- What will other students think, will they tease me for getting it right or laugh at me for getting it wrong (a wave of social comparisons)?

- Will I be embarrassed in front of the teacher (a wave of personal pessimism)?

- I think I know the answer to the question; maybe I should try (a wave of self-confidence)?

- Does someone else know the answer to the question (a wave of isolation)?

All of those influences and more will converge and have an impact on whether a student will choose to put their hand up to answer the question or avoid volunteering a response.

A second leap a learner might take is to offer assistance to a second language speaker in a public context, for example someone who stops to ask for directions. The current of simple politeness dictates that one should help another person if possible, especially to help a tourist or a person new to the area. Plus it is an opportunity for second language usage and contact, along running goal of language learning. However, in the back of a student's mind there might be the question about where the conversation is going to go (a wave of anxiety), whether the student's response might be misunderstood (a wave of concern for the tourist), or whether somebody with better second language skill might be able to help instead (a wave of social comparison). What if the helper makes a mistake or uses poorly chosen vocabulary (a wavering self-confidence)? All of those thoughts and more converge at a particular moment in time as the person makes the decision whether to speak up and offer assistance, or not.

When examining these decisions that a specific learner might have to make, it can be noted that there is a convergence of opposing processes, a collision of motivation and language anxiety. Motivation is propelling individuals toward action and learning but anxiety is holding them back. This is relevant in many ways because interpersonal communication can be an opportunity for intergroup contact. Communicating with people from another cultural group is also an occasion for the development of relationships between representatives of different language groups. There are pedagogical or educational processes of language learning in play, including the student's experience with authentic communication.

Pyramid Model

To look at WTC in a systematic way, MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, and Noels (1998) proposed what has been nicknamed the pyramid model of WTC (see Figure 1). It is a layered heuristic model that captures social psychological influences that converge at the moment of decision. The pyramid shape helps to capture the notion of time along a proximal distal continuum, in other words, influences that occur in the distant past versus influences that are occurring in a specific situation at a particular point in time. At the top of the pyramid model is a decision point, the point where all of the previous influences combine to shape the learner's behaviour. In other words, the learner has arrived at a point in time where he or she must decide either to act, or not to speak up at all.
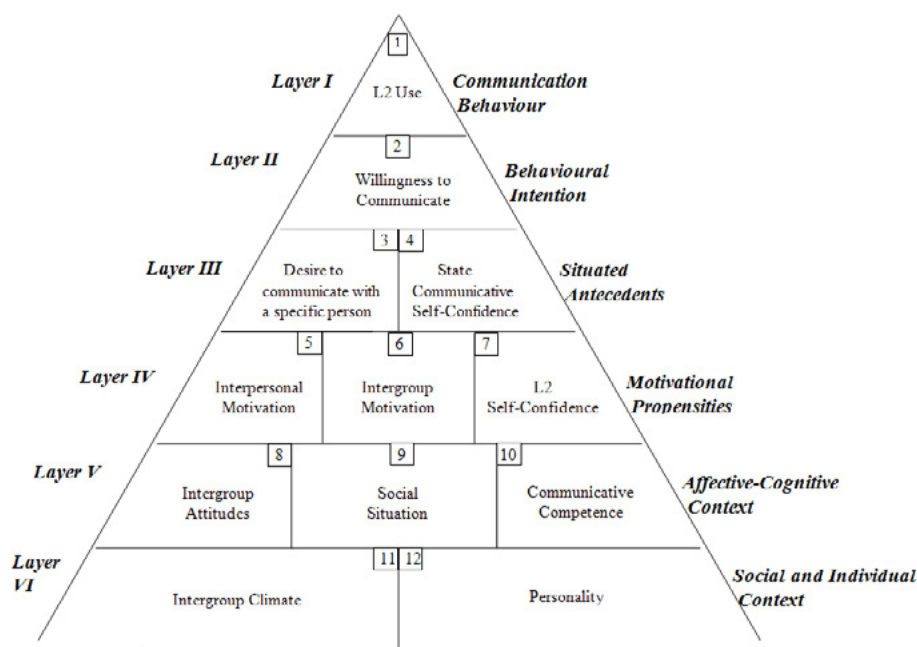
Figure 1. The pyramid model of WTC, originally published in *the Modern Language Journal* (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

The WTC concept was originally defined as a "trait-like" or stable predisposition (identified in this paper as a current). Therefore, a person will carry with them from one situation to the next a predisposition towards communication. One individual may be shy and introverted—they may lack confidence—and this will make them generally unwilling to communicate. On the other hand, another individual may be extraverted, outgoing, and confident, and all of those variables will contribute to a high level of WTC. This is how the original concept was defined. Without rejecting the notion of long-term patterns, MacIntyre, et al. (1998) re-oriented the WTC concept to focus on a state, or a wave of willingness. WTC is defined as a state of readiness to enter into a conversation with a specific person at a specific time (MacIntyre et al., 1998); as such it is a volitional act, that is, an act of free will.

Theme 1: Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

MacIntyre (2007) discusses volition and how useful a concept it can be in understanding communication behaviour among students. Volition itself has a long history in both psychology and philosophy. In philosophy the concept of volition, or the ability of a person to freely choose his or her actions, is tied to the idea of free will. However, in psychology the concept was all but abandoned because defining something like free will is very difficult to do. It is however useful to think about how volition implies a state of readiness to act, of the choice to act or not to act. In fact, having the choice or ability to act or not to act implies that individuals have within themselves opposing forces, one to approach communication and one to avoid it. This ambivalence is evident in numerous ways (MacIntyre, et al., 2011).

At the moment of decision, where the factors converge on creating a willingness or unwillingness to communicate, there is a long list of psychological, linguistic, pedagogical, situational, socio-political and other factors that might be salient. The relevance of these different influences will vary over time. Certain relevant factors might be consistent from one occasion to another, for example, having very small L2 vocabulary. But even small changes in context can produce large effects by altering the key factors that influence WTC at a particular moment in time (see Clément, Baker & MacIntyre, 2003). For example, although low levels of perceived competence likely will change little from one L2 speaking context to another, high levels of perceived competence can drop quickly when a single other person, perhaps a stern teacher or sarcastic peer, enters the room. To list all of the potentially relevant influences would not be possible because WTC is part of a dynamic system in which complete prediction is unattainable (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2010; Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007; see also de Bot Lowie & Verspoor, 2007). It is possible, however, to group influential factors into broad categories of driving and restraining forces.

Renowned social psychologist Lewin (1951) addressed the manner in which a multitude of forces influence specific human behaviour at specific times. As with the pyramid model of WTC, Lewin's field theory also differentiates general versus momentary influences on behaviour. Lewin's key point for this discussion is that momentary influences will have a greater impact on action than general influences; generally, people are more affected by proximal factors than distal ones. Using the metaphor guiding this paper, waves will have more of an impact on the person's action in the communicative water than will the currents.

Indeed, it is easy to imagine a wave of unwillingness to communicate counteracting a longer-term current of WTC, leading the individual to avoid speaking that day. Lewin offered a second key point that is particularly germane to the issue of WTC. He noted that within every person are both driving forces and restraining forces, forces that are moving us toward action or motivation and those that are holding us back. This can be seen in the tension between motivation (approach) and anxiety (avoid). Lewin stated clearly that it is easier to modify a person's action in a specific situation by reducing the restraining forces than by increasing the driving forces. If teachers are looking at a student who seems unwilling to communicate and that teacher has a choice between increasing the student's

motivation versus decreasing the student's anxiety, Lewin's analysis would recommend decreasing the anxiety as the first step. A teacher would be wise to identify whatever factors are holding the student back; hesitation might be the result of a powerful under-current or simply a transient wave. Reducing restraining forces, if possible, is a first step to encouraging action. Research from a dynamic perspective is needed to better understand how to reduce the power of the restraining forces (MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre, Burns & Jessome, 2011).

These research findings can be used to better understand the combinations of multiple driving and restraining forces that occur within a student at a particular time (see also Verspoor, Lowie & van Dijk, 2008). To impact the student's communication patterns, it is best to focus on the moment-to-moment, state-level processes, the waves of communication. Such a focus tends to increase the complexity of our explanatory models because it makes us consider more influences than the trait level models have done in the past (e.g., MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; McCroskey & Richmond, 1991). However, to understand second language communication and WTC requires looking at the momentary restraining forces that come into play when a speaker is choosing whether or not to initiate communication.

Language teachers can take up the enduring influences in a number of powerful ways. Where conflict among language groups exists within a classroom, teachers might point to examples of cooperation between those groups, either in historical contexts or individuals from opposing groups who forged successful relationships across language and cultural lines. Learner personality, including trait shyness or anxiety, might be dealt with by a teacher's focus on actively dealing with the affective dimensions of language learning (MacIntyre & Gregersen, in press). Students feeling a wave of anxiety about speaking might be informed of the natural physiological processes in the parasympathetic nervous system that activate to calm the body down. Students with enduring motives of affiliation can be encouraged to form new L2 friendships, and those with control motives can be shown how effective communication requires speaking the language of the persons one is trying to influence. Teachers' daily lessons help to develop actual competence but pessimistic students might instead focus on what is left to learn, rather than the successes to date. Although there are too many possibilities to mention, suffice it to say that teachers who explicitly consider the affective side of learning can help to shape the quality of those affective reactions among their students. The pyramid model is one guide pointing to potentially relevant factors that influence WTC, any one of which might become a wave within the classroom.

A New Approach

To help both researchers and teachers understand the dynamics of WTC a new research and pedagogical method is being developed called the idiodynamic method (MacIntyre & Legatto, 2010). Idiodynamic refers to the dynamic changes that occur within an individual (see Rosenzweig & Fisher, 1997). The method itself focuses on a four-step process in order to understand communication. The first step is to record a sample of second language communication; it might be a classroom presentation, an oral exam,

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or an interaction with a teacher or a classmate. The second language communication is recorded and immediately played back for the student. Using a stimulated recall protocol (Gass & Mackey, 2000) students rate their changing affective state. The focus may be on any specific affective state on which the study is focussed. For example, one may look at changes over a brief period of time in anxiety, WTC, perceived competence, motivation, or other variables. Special software records and graphs the reaction over a few minutes and the student can be interviewed with a focus on the changing levels of anxiety, motivation, and so forth. When the graph is reviewed, the respondent describes what he or she was thinking and feeling as the communication unfolded. The research describes the factors that participants understand as the influences on their communication, (i.e., what they see as their own the driving and restraining forces). Further, expert observers can also rate the video using techniques from conversation analysis (see Wong & Zhang Waring, 2010). In addition to understanding the dynamics of the affective reaction, the actual speech sample can be transcribed and examined for patterns as well. The students' linguistic output can be linked with changes in their affective state to help better understand what those driving and restraining forces might be for a particular person or to identify patters across a group of participants.
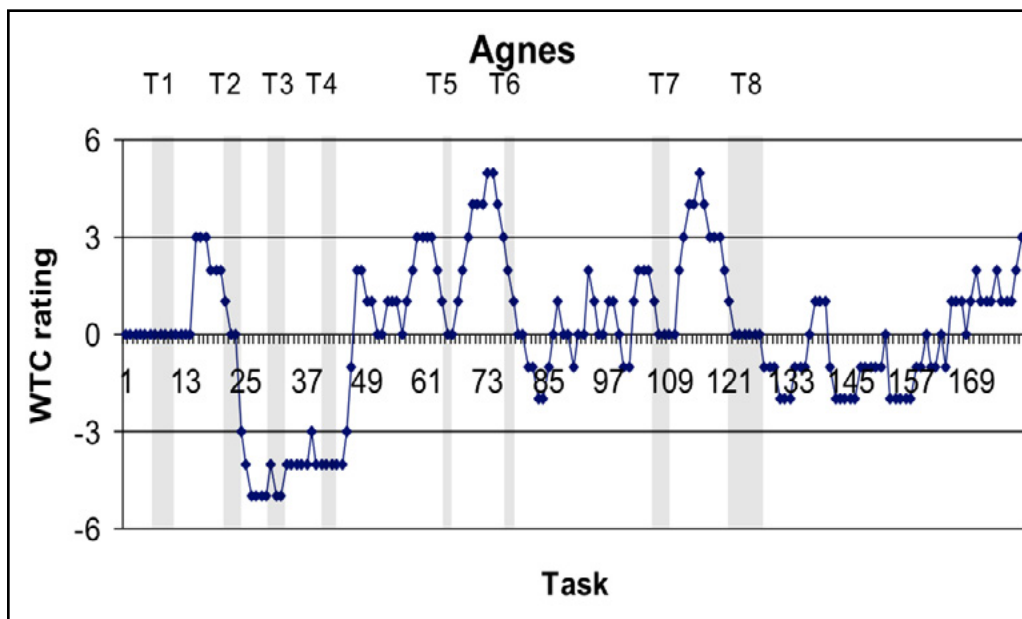
Figure 2. Dynamic changes in WTC during a 3-minute oral interview from MacIntyre & Legatto (2010), originally published in *Applied Linguistics*.

An example of dynamic changes in WTC is provided in Figure 2 (from MacIntyre & Legatto, 2010). In this particular study, participants were asked to perform eight tasks in an oral interview situation. Figure 2 shows that tasks two and three produced a very low level of WTC, tasks five and seven showed relatively high WTC, and task eight was initially low but then WTC levels recovered to be high toward the end. All of this change occurred over

roughly a three-minute period. Other patterns are possible as well, including consistently high WTC throughout the tasks, very little affective reaction, and stumbling over words that causes high WTC to crash like a wave on the beach.

This idiodynamic method tends to produce a variety of data streams that can be interesting for both research and teaching purposes. The self-ratings can be studied in and of themselves. In addition, the learner's anxiety, WTC, competence and so can be rated from an external observer's point of view. A third type of data stream is the linguistic quality of the student's speech. The interview data also provides the respondent's unique understanding of the communication process from the inside as they went through the tasks; only a participant can report their own state of mind. The text of the verbal output indicates word choice, which can be subject to conversation analysis, and additionally or alternatively can be looked at for markers of grammar or syntax. The video can be separated into audio and video channels such that one may use only the audio, only the video or the combination to understand how the verbal and nonverbal streams of behaviour interact. In addition, these data streams can be linked to ongoing affective changes in physiological activity, for example, changes in heart rate as a student progresses through a conversation (Blackie, 2011). Finally, there can be an interesting contrast between what the student is doing in conversation, what is observable, and what the student is reportedly feeling, because there may be interesting differences between what people are thinking, what they are saying, and what is obvious to an outside observer. For example, participants might be maintaining harmony in a conversation at the same time they are feeling that communication is not going well, or possibly even that they have been offended or insulted (Burns, 2011). Within a classroom where there is a mix of cultures, there can be a variety of underlying currents reflecting different value placed on maintaining harmony or expressing individuality, interdependence versus independence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

If a second speaker is added, as in a conversation dyad, there are additional data streams that come into play (MacIntyre & Clément, 2011). Not only can individuals rate themselves, but they can also rate their partner. Person 1 rates person 2 and vice versa, and these ratings can be compared with each participant's self-ratings. This procedure produces four sets of ratings. Then the multiple points of convergence and divergence over those various sets of ratings can be studied. An additional variation of the method might be to have both participants come together and negotiate a common rating for the conversation. The process of negotiating the aggregate specific rating would shed new light on the conversation and its constituent elements. It is quite possible that shared understanding of a conversation as a whole may differ from each of the individuals' unique understandings of what happened in communication. It is another form of data that might be interesting and reveal some of the currents and some of the waves that occur for individuals as they communicate. Teachers might find this especially useful in cross-cultural contexts (see Wen & Clément, 2003). In our lab, we plan to conduct the research necessary to develop the pedagogical uses for the idiodynamic ratings. If successful, the hope is to find ways to make the software available to teachers in the not-too-distant future. This is a potentially

powerful tool that both teachers and researchers can use in the future to understand the driving and restraining forces that occur in second language communication.

Conclusion

This paper employs the metaphor of ocean currents and waves to discuss visible and invisible, short term and long term, processes that energize or restrain second language communication. Much of the research on topics like WTC, anxiety, and perceived competence has been done from a trait perspective (Dörnyei, 2005) looking for long term currents that affect the learners. A newer approach uses a dynamic systems perspective to look for short term fluctuations over a short period of time, such as waves of emotion that wash over the learners. From the dynamic perspective, the goal of research is not the prediction of future affective states. Rather, the goal is a rich description of the various states and the influences upon them, to achieve a better understanding of how the psychology of communication affects the learning process. Although idiodynamic method has been used primarily with a research focus, it is possible to envision future uses in the classroom. This method is one way to understand the many currents that flow through learning and speaking a second language, as well as the waves of anxiety, motivation and WTC that affect learners as they speak using their new, still-developing language.

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Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE AND L2 FLUENCY:

Complexity and Variety in a Corpus of Japanese and Chinese ESL Learner Speech

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Abstract

Research on second language speech fluency has tended to focus on temporal variables such as speed and pause phenomena, within a largely cognitivist paradigm. Research on contextual and learner factors in second language acquisition, such as willingness to communicate (WTC), has tended to focus more on learner perspectives and subjective evaluations. To date, no body of research exists that attempts to bridge this divide. Therefore, any determinations are based on what is known separately about the two phenomena, fluency and WTC, perhaps assuming that greater WTC equates to greater fluency. The study reported here addresses this particular notion by examining fluency gains of EFL learners in a study abroad intensive ESL program over a six-month period, and probing the results in light of perceived WTC of the individual participants. The findings, while interpretive and preliminary, hint at a complex and varied relationship between WTC and fluency.

Second language (L2) speech fluency has typically been identified as a set of observable temporal features of speech, but it has rarely been analyzed in relation to learner factors in performance such as willingness to communicate (WTC). This is likely a reflection of the broader split in applied linguistics research acquisition between, on the one hand, linguistic and cognitive explanations of L2 performance, and, on the other hand, examinations of the contextual factors influencing performance, including learner-internal and social forces. Second language acquisition (SLA) research has tended to draw a division between the language user and the context in which the language is used. When examining L2 speech, it would seem that attempts to bridge this divide could lead to helpful insights. Speech is an interactive process, and its performance is integral to identity, acculturation,

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the development of cultural fluency, and the emergence of voice in the target language. Discussions of L2 spoken language performance should take into account how the act of communicating in L2 is influenced by a range of factors beyond the linguistic ones.

At first consideration, one might assume that high WTC should facilitate fluency, and that a desire and confidence to speak with others in the L2 would correlate with higher levels of speech fluency or a faster increase in the development of fluency. It would seem that the more L2 communication students experience, the more they will improve in many aspects of speech proficiency, including fluency. While this notion might seem fundamentally logical, very few researchers have examined whether there is a link between WTC and L2 fluency. A clearer, evidence-based perspective on the link between WTC and fluency can have significant implications for classroom teaching and assessment. Among other benefits, it might help in determining whether WTC can facilitate fluency by itself, or whether the relationship between WTC and fluency development is more complex. Insight into the link between WTC and fluency can help answer questions such as "Can I assume that the more talkative students will become more fluent with practice?", or "Can I assume that having students engage in speech is sufficient to improve their fluency?"

The present study is an exploratory step in the direction of bridging the gap, presenting an examination of data on L2 fluency development in an ESL context, in light of knowledge about WTC. Monologic speech samples from three Japanese and two Chinese L2 learners of English over a six-month period are examined for evidence of fluency gain and the possible effects of WTC on fluency. Specifically, each participant's speech samples are analyzed for markers of fluency development over the six months and interpreted in light of his/her WTC profile. The analysis reveals a potentially complex relationship between fluency and WTC. Suggestions for future research are presented at the end of the paper.

L2 Speech Fluency

L2 speech fluency is not well understood, in spite of the fact that it is vital to effective communication and the means of coping with life in an L2 environment. Many L2 learners have limited fluency after studying a language for significant periods of time, and L2 education has tended to overlook fluency and concentrate on accuracy, language input, or oral language practice activity to help learners with L2 fluency. No doubt, this situation exists because fluency is an elusive and difficult construct, and its nature and development have not been highlighted in second language acquisition (SLA) research, teaching methodology, or commercial materials.

Virtually all of the research on fluency has been quantitative and situated within a cognitivist paradigm. 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 (Freed, 1995; Hansen, Gardner & Pollard, 1998, Hawkins & Bazergui, 1996; Lennon, 1990a, 1990b; Möhle, 1984; Raupach, 1980; Riggenbach, 1991; Towell). Some other research indicates the importance of control

of a store of formulaic sequences—multi-word strings or frames that are retrieved from long-term memory as if they were single words—as a possible key to speech fluency (Chambers, 1998; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Towell et al., 1996; Wood, 2002, Wray, 2002). Formulaic sequences 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. Formulaic sequences appear to make up a major part of everyday spontaneous speech, which might help explain how spontaneous speech occurs under the heavy processing and time constraints of real-life discourse (Miller and Weinert, 1998; Skehan 1998; Weinert, 1995; Wray and Perkins, 2000, Wray, 2002).

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 (Freed, 1995; Riggenbach, 1991; Towell, 1987; 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-language (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 study participants in the number of pauses. Lennon (1984) had twelve German students of English retell a story from listening to a model, 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, showing that as learners become more proficient and fluent, the pause patterns in their speech change. 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% for three of four participants. 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.

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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 before and after segments of a story that 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% 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. 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 native speaker 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% of fluent units are complete and grammatical clauses. According to Pawley and Syder (1983), it is uncommon to pause more than 0.5 seconds in mid-clause, generally for emphasis or to breathe, and pauses of less than two seconds are the norm for pauses at clause boundaries. The L2 performances in empirical studies indicate pause patterns that deviate from these native speaker norms, instead being characterized by pauses occurring more frequently and within clauses and sentences.

Length of Fluent Runs

An important variable of speech associated with fluency is the size and quality of the runs of speech that 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 from picture prompts in their L1 and L2. 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 compared to L1 speech. Towell's (1987) study of a British learner of French over a four-year period showed that the mean length of runs increased a remarkable 95% over the first three years. Lennon (1990b) noted that, in his study of the L2 fluency development of German students of English, their mean length of runs between pauses increased over 23 weeks by 20 to 26%. Lennon's students were studying English in England and the increase in length of runs in their speech may be attributable to the richness of L2 exposure they experienced. Freed (1995), in her large study of fluency development in American students of French, considered the data to indicate a trend in the direction of longer runs.

Mean length of runs between pauses appears to be a significant indicator of fluency in a speaker`s L2. This is probably because of the need to balance skills, attention, and planning during speech, and the fact that advanced, fluent speakers and native speakers

have a greater repertoire of automatized formulaic sequences to use to buy time in order to formulate the next sequence or phrase. In fact, an increasingly skilful blend of automatized chunks of formulaic strings and frameworks of speech, together with newly assembled strings of words, is thought by some researchers to be what enables speakers to produce the longer runs between pauses which distinguish fluency.

As Chafe (1980) notes, fluent speech occurs in spurts, punctuated by pauses at meaning and syntactic junctures. The ability to perform in this way necessitates a facility in handling plans, which often could compete for attention and "jam the system." When this jamming happens, the result is disfluent speech, characterized by pauses at mid-clause or mid-phrase, slow speed, and brief, incomplete or simplified language runs between pauses. Rehbein (1987, p. 104) notes that "one may propose that fluency in a second language requires the capability of handling routinized complex speaking plans." Routinized speaking plans are those plans that have become more or less automatized, that is, stored in long-term memory in such a way as to be easily pulled from a repertoire and encoded into speech. Simultaneous to the encoding and production of the automatized strings, the speaker must generate new words and constructions to encode the new or novel elements of the message.

L1 Influences on L2 Fluency

A key cultural and linguistic issue that might have an effect on the development of fluency in English as a second language is the discourse and temporal features of L1 speech. In spoken Mandarin, features of syntax, lexical chunking, and prosody can help create a distinctive set of temporal features if transferred into English. For example, according to Ho (1993), Mandarin tends to be spoken without sentence boundaries, and in fragments juxtaposed without distinct boundary markers, in sequences which Ho terms "utterance clusters." Ho describes Chinese spoken discourse as "long series of simply constructed and loosely connected short utterance segments with the major constituents often suppressed or not suppliable" (p. 84). The prosody of spoken Mandarin also reflects the syllable-timed nature of the language, with word stress generally absent but mostly monosyllabic words uttered rapidly and tonically (p. 85). If transferred to English speech, these features of spoken Chinese can produce a discourse pattern showing a high degree of hedges, false starts, reformulations, frequent short pauses, and rapid syllable-timed clusters of fragmentary utterances. For a detailed look at characteristics of the English L2 speech of Mandarin speakers see Derwing, Thomson, and Munro (2006).

Japanese has its own set of distinctive discourse features that could influence how Japanese learners of English perform in their L2. According to Maynard (1989), phrasal units in Japanese are often accompanied by pause-warning decreased speed, resulting in variations in articulation speed over a given stretch of discourse (p. 24). As well, clauses in Japanese are often uttered broken into smaller units bounded by short pauses, resulting in a high frequency of pausing overall. There is also a high frequency of use of hesitations, fillers, and sentence-final particles, often drawled, for a range of purposes including politeness, and building of utterances from fragments called bunsetsu, typically containing one content

word and function words, bracketed by pauses (Maynard, 1989, pp. 24-32). The result of this is that spontaneous speech in Japanese may be more fragmented and show more speed variation and more frequent pausing than English. If transferred to English, this type of speech style could appear disfluent.

Willingness to Communicate

WTC is, like fluency, an elusive construct whose nature and influence are difficult to pin down. Best defined as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels 1998, p. 547), WTC appears to be a key factor in the dynamics of L2 speech communication. In classrooms, in language programs, and in the world at large, WTC is vital in creating conditions for engagement in communication and input generation. It has even been claimed that WTC should be at the top of any list of goals of language instruction (MacIntyre et. al., 1998).

Early research in WTC was focused on L1 communication (McCrosky and Richmond, 1987). WTC was seen at first as a trait rather than a state, a stable predisposition toward communication. Over time, it was adapted and expanded to include both trait and state elements, especially as it was examined in the complex and shifting context of L2 learning. The most robust and often-applied model is that of MacIntyre et al. (1998), integrating personality, communicative competence, social situation, intergroup climate, attitudes and motivation, interpersonal motivation, L2 self-confidence, and desire to communicate with a specific person. WTC is thus conceived as an interweaving of internal and external variables. Self-confidence is the most influential factor (e.g., Clement, Baker & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre & Charos, 1996; Yashima, 2002). A combination of perceived competence and low anxiety, self-confidence is the factor most strongly correlated with initiation of communication by L2 speakers.

Research on WTC in Chinese and Japanese contexts has tended to focus on culture-specific classroom environments and their effects on WTC. Peng and Woodrow (2010), in a large-scale study in Chinese EFL classrooms, applied a model that integrates WTC with communication confidence, motivation, beliefs, and classroom environment. Classroom environment was found to be a predictor of WTC, as were communication confidence, beliefs, and motivation. The data revealed that although many Chinese students may be motivated to study English, this does not mean that they are actually willing to communicate in the L2, since confidence and beliefs also have a strong influence on WTC. This, along with culturally conditioned notions of what constitutes appropriate classroom behaviour as well as cultural norms encouraging conformity and modesty as opposed to public shows of L2 proficiency, help to explain the reticence of Chinese students in communicative classrooms and the general difficulties in implementing communicative or task-based language curricula in China.

Wen and Clement (2003) document a large number of culture-specific factors potentially influencing L2 WTC among Chinese students of English. They point out the strong

influence of Confucian values on Chinese society and particularly in language classrooms. They argue that cultural values strongly influence an individual's perception and way of learning, which in turn has significant implications for L2 communication inside and outside the L2 classroom.

As for WTC in a Japanese context, Yashima (2002) examined relations among L2 learning and L2 communication variables in a Japanese EFL context. The study measured a variable Yashima refers to as international posture, which goes beyond integrative motivation to embrace the notion of English as a lingua franca used to communicate with the world outside of Japan, or to "strangers" as Gudykunst (1991) terms them. This inclination includes interest in international news and affairs, willingness to go abroad to stay, readiness to communicate with non-Japanese interlocutors, and a sense of openness and non-ethnocentricity, toward other cultures. Yashima found that this variable was a strong predictor of motivation, which in turn affected proficiency in English, and that international posture had a direct effect on WTC. Hashimoto (2002), in a study of 56 Japanese L1 learners of English in a study abroad context, found that those who reported higher WTC also reported more frequent L2 use in class.

Most of the studies that have investigated WTC as a variable have used or adapted a scale first elaborated by McCroskey and Richmond (1987) and tested for reliability and validity by McCroskey (1992). The scale is based on a questionnaire containing a set of twenty real-life situations that the subject rates according to the percentage of time he or she would choose to communicate. The situations include talking with an acquaintance while standing in line, talking with a waiter in a restaurant, presenting a talk to a group of friends, talking in a large meeting of strangers, and so on.

Method

The present study was undertaken using a longitudinal, repeated measures design. 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. The participants were five students enrolled full-time in an intensive ESL program at Carleton University, in Ottawa, all at approximately intermediate level of oral proficiency as measured by an interview-based placement test which elicited mainly narrative talk. The participant group included two female Japanese students, one male Japanese student, and one male and one female Mandarin student. The participants in this study lived in homestay situations with Canadian families. Their WTC profiles are presented below.

The intensive ESL program provided 24 hours of language instruction per week, of which six were specifically focused on spoken language skills in general, with no specific fluency training component. The researcher was part of the teaching team for two of the participants at the time of the data collection and had already taught the other three in the previous semester.

Three short 8 to 10 minute silent films were used as prompts, shown in staggered sequence: film one was used as the prompt for the first and fourth month samples, film two was used for months two and five, and film three was used for months three and six. These films had been pilot tested with intermediate-level students in the intensive program previously and had yielded useful data. Silent films were chosen because 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 as opposed to trying to repeat spoken language heard in the films.

The participants were shown each film in its entirety without pause once only 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 recordings.

Fluency Measures

The data recorded on tape in the language laboratory were transcribed from a Sony hand-held tape recorder using Microsoft Word. To locate pauses in the speech samples, the tapes were then recorded into SpeechStation2 speech analysis software, and a spectrogram was 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, 0.3 seconds was chosen. Anything less than 0.3 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 (Towell et al., 1996). Pauses were marked in the transcripts by duration in seconds, inserted into the text between parentheses.

Three temporal variables 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 totalling the pause times for each speech sample and calculating it as a percentage 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.

Willingness to Communicate Measures

Since the data were originally generated as part of a study focusing on fluency and not WTC per se (Wood, 2010), no specific instruments such as the WTC scale of McCroskey and

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Richmond (1992) were administered. Rather, WTC was interpreted from the backgrounds and attitudes of the participants toward the communication task of narrative retelling, including aspects of their speech samples. The participants in the present study were categorized according to certain observable characteristics that have been identified in the literature as linked to WTC. All of the participants had been in integrated skills and/or speaking classes taught by the researcher, who therefore had an overall sense of their confidence, openness, and participation in classroom talk. WTC has been defined as "readiness to enter into discourse" (MacIntyre et. al., 1998, p. 547), and self-confidence has been identified as an influential factor in WTC (MacIntyre et. al., 1998). As well, international posture or openness to other cultures (Yashima, 2002) and participation in ESL class communication (Hashimoto, 2002) have been linked to WTC. Thus, participants were rated as high or low WTC based on researcher recollections of four categories of behaviour:

- Readiness to communicate: Those who showed behaviours of initiating and sustaining L2 communication with classmates, friends, and teachers were rated as having high readiness to communicate in the L2.

- Self confidence: Those who showed low degrees of nervousness and anxiety in L2 communication and who hesitated little in classroom and outside communication were rated as having high self-confidence in L2 communication.

- Openness to other cultures: Those who showed willingness and initiative in working and socializing with members of other ethnic and linguistic groups were rated as having high openness to others.

- Ready participation in classroom communication: Those who energetically engaged in classroom L2 communication of all kinds—for example, discussions, information gap activities—were rated as having high readiness for participation in classroom communication.

Participants who exhibited behaviours linked to three or all of these categories were determined to have higher WTC than those who did not display these characteristics.

In sum, five participants each produced a speech sample based on viewing the film prompts once a month for six months, six samples each, or thirty samples for the group as a whole. For each sample, speech rate (SR), non-phonation/time ratio (NTR), and mean length of runs (MLR) were calculated. These results were interpreted in light of the WTC profile of each participant.

Results and Discussion

Individual results are presented here for each participant. The pattern of temporal variables that suggests increased fluency would be increased SR and MLR, and decreased NTR. The total change for each variable over the 6 months is shown in the box to the right of each chart. Discussions of the path of fluency gain and the possible influence of WTC are presented for each participant.

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Yuka was one of the participants rated as low WTC. Regarding her readiness to communicate and self-confidence, she agreed to participate in the study, but stayed quiet during orientation sessions and was usually one of the last participants to leave the viewing room to go to the laboratory to record her retell, indicators of low readiness to communicate and low self-confidence. While she lived in a homestay situation, she was seldom seen to associate with non-Japanese fellow intensive program students, a sign of low openness to communication. She seldom took initiative to speak in classes. Her fluency scores are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Temporal Variable Scores for Yuka

Measure	Month						% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SR	61.5	56.6	72.0	77.8	53.9	65.0	5.7%
NTR	54.4	58.7	51.0	51.1	53.0	57.3	-5.3%
MLR	2.8	2.5	3.0	3.7	1.8	3.0	7.1%

Note. % change is between time 1 and time 6. SR = speech rate; NTR = non-phonation/time ratio; MLR = mean length of runs.

Yuka's profile on all variables is complex in that she does not show a steady increase in fluency measures over the six samples. Clearly, she performed poorest on sample five on two of the three variables, and her NTR scores show increased rates of pausing over time. While her data are not a model of the pattern of variables that shows steady development of fluency, she did demonstrate improvement in some aspects.

Yuka has the briefest retells of any of the participants in the study. She digressed from straightforward narrative retell at times to comment on other issues; for example in sample four she makes lengthy reference to events at the university and in the news. Sample four is brief and she focuses on the actual retell for less than half of the speech time. In several samples, she remarks numerous times that she does not understand.

Yuka was ranked as a low WTC participant and her fluency development profile is weak as might be expected. Yuka was among the lowest performers at the beginning of the research project and, as she struggled with the task of each retelling, she may have been even less willing to communicate over time as the task did not appear to become easier for her with repeated experiences at retelling.

Natsuko was rated as a high WTC participant. She took initiative to ask questions and clarify points during the research orientation sessions, and she appeared in all ways to be a motivated student who took every opportunity to practice speaking skills, demonstrating readiness to communicate and self-confidence. In evidence of her openness to others and

participation in classroom communication, she had friends among her non-Japanese co-students in the intensive program, particularly Latin American students, and was a frequent and confident participant in classroom communication. Natsuko's fluency measures are presented in table 2.

Table 2

Temporal Variable Scores for Natsuko

Measure	Month						% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SR	89.0	73.3	86.9	94.4	88.5	113.9	28.0%
NTR	42.3	39.3	43.0	39.7	42.0	39.1	-7.6%
MLR	3.7	3.1	4.0	3.6	3.6	4.1	10.8%

Like Yuka, Natsuko also shows a complex pattern of development, with jagged lines on her temporal variable charts. Her SR increases steadily, and her mean length of runs also increases, although not strongly. Her NTR scores are up and down from sample to sample, to show a slight decrease overall, and her MLR increase is modest and erratic.

It is important to note that Natsuko's speech samples were usually the longest and most detailed of the group, as would be expected in light of her high WTC ranking, and she began the research project at a relatively high level of fluency as measured by the temporal variables. She showed great willingness to communicate in the retells by speaking at length and in detail, but by exploring details of the narratives and making an effort to address some of the complexities of the retell task directly, it is possible that she overextended her language and fluency ability. This would mean that she did not avoid difficult parts of the narrative or events that might have been difficult for her to express comfortably, leaving her to struggle, reformulate, repair, and so on, resulting in clusters of dysfluencies in places. She may have lacked the appropriate language to express what she wanted to express, or she may have become cognitively overloaded by the task of recalling what she had seen and could not use language that she might otherwise have retrieved with more ease.

Natsuko's enthusiasm for detailed retelling, combined with her relative lack of progress in developing fluency, may tell something about willingness to communicate. If it is true that her high WTC, leading to a desire to do a complete job of retelling, made her overstep the boundaries of her fluency abilities, this could be a case of how a sense of WTC in speech tasks can actually be a disadvantage.

Isamu was rated as a high WTC participant. His readiness to communicate and self-confidence were demonstrated in his forthright and confident interactions with the researcher and teachers, asking questions and participating in "hallway" chat readily despite his limited speaking skills. In terms of openness to others and participation in classroom communication, while not a particularly talkative character, he was friendly

with non-Japanese fellow intensive program students, playing sports with several Chinese and Latin American friends. Isamu's fluency measures are presented in table 3.

Table 3

Temporal Variable Scores for Isamu

Measure	Month						% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SR	58.4	59.0	59.5	74.4	96.2	105.9	81.3%
NTR	49.0	49.9	39.4	43.5	37.0	30.0	-38.8%
MLR	2.7	2.6	2.5	3.7	3.8	4.2	55.6%

Isamu shows development in all variables to fit the profile of increased fluency. His SR and NTR show good development, especially in the last three samples. However, his MLR scores level off for those same last three samples.

Like Yuka, Isamu shows a tendency to talk about issues related to the topic or themes of the film prompts in addition to direct retelling of the narratives. For example, in sample four he reflects on events in the news, and in sample five he comments at length on the unusual floor plans of the apartments depicted in the film and how they are unlike Japanese apartment layouts. Unlike Yuka, however, he manages to progress on all temporal aspects of fluent speech over all six samples. His speech samples are all relatively brief, and he is generally cautious to retell only the main narrative moves without detail.

Isamu may be an example of an L2 speaker who has limited language ability but WTC such that he uses strategies to do his best in the retelling. For example, he avoids conceptually or linguistically challenging content and injects his own opinions and observations into the task. While he was clearly among the least fluent participants at the start of the research project, he showed steady improvement as time passed. Unlike Yuka, he was able to perform the task without being overwhelmed each time, and unlike Natsuko, he chose what to express most efficiently. It may be that his WTC helped him overcome his language limitations.

Lin was ranked as a mid-range WTC participant, who appeared not to participate in L2 communication easily except under certain circumstances. When it came to readiness to communicate and self-confidence, Lin stayed rather quiet in his interactions with the researcher and teachers, very seldom asking questions or taking initiative in communication.

His openness to others and participation in classroom communication was judged based on his Lin participating in classroom communication usually only when called on and his socialization mostly with fellow Chinese L1 students.

However, Lin was clearly a motivated student who seldom missed a class and who spent considerable time and energy preparing for speaking assignments in ESL courses. He was a keen participant in an assignment that required him to maintain a spoken dialogue journal

with his teacher. In all, he appears to fit the profile for Chinese students as outlined by Wen and Clement (2003), which is motivated but reticent. His fluency measures are shown in table 4.

Table 4

Temporal Variable Scores for Lin

Measure	Month						% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SR	127.8	141.1	153.6	149.4	118.0	144.8	13.3%
NTR	27.1	31.3	24.6	28.0	30.3	28.2	4.1%
MLR	3.8	4.4	5.0	6.0	4.4	4.7	23.7%

Lin shows development in some variables but not in others. His SR scores increased modestly over the six samples. In NTR, however, there is almost no development: the trend line is flat. For MLR, Lin shows steady growth for the first four samples but drops for the last two to manage an overall increase of 23.7%. Overall, it appears that Lin may have increased fluency in some temporal variables in the early part of the study but lost momentum for some reason thereafter.

Although Lin began the study at a relatively high rate of fluency as measured by temporal variables, he shows a loss of momentum in development in the last half of the study. Like Natsuko, Lin produced consistently long and detailed retellings of the films. He may have pushed his conceptualizing and formulating abilities beyond his comfort level and tried to express ideas that were challenging for him. If this was the case, he showed WTC but compromised his speech fluency in the process as measured by the temporal variables in this study.

Meiling was rated as high WTC. Readiness to communicate and self-confidence were visible in her eagerness to communicate with teachers, the researcher and others. She appeared enthusiastic to share ideas and ask questions. Regarding her openness to others and participation in classroom communication, Meiling was highly social in her interactions with all classmates and a dependable and vocal attendee in classes. Her fluency scores are displayed in table 5.

Table 5

Temporal Variable Scores for Meiling

Measure	Month						% change
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
SR	132.2	116.6	116.5	80.7	116.6	140.0	5.8%
NTR	38.2	31.7	30.1	23.1	31.3	27.9	-27.0%
MLR	4.5	4.8	5.1	5.3	5.2	5.1	13.3%

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Meiling shows a complex pattern of change in the variables over the six samples. Meiling's SR scores drop after sample three, but her NTR declined steadily over the six months, with a surprising drop in sample four. Her MLR increased sharply over the first four samples and declined thereafter.

In terms of content, Meiling's retells of the stories differ from those of other participants markedly in several instances. In sample one, she spends the last third of the speech focusing on the theme of the story as she sees it and comparing it to a Chinese proverb. In sample two, she again discusses a theme, and discusses her upcoming trip home to China. In sample three, she spends time at the end thanking the researcher for assistance in classes. In sample four, she spends time at the end saying what she would do if she were in a situation like that of the protagonists in the film. In sample five, she again spends time at the end identifying the theme of the film.

These apparent digressions from the task of retell may tell something about Meiling's WTC and her cultural fluency or culturally conditioned expectations of the task, although it is impossible to identify whether social and cultural issues influenced her performance in any particular way without hearing her own perspective on it. It seems that she was sufficiently invested in the task to relate it to her own beliefs and ideas, but her overall sense of the speaking task in this study seems to be that she should comment on the moral themes of the films and agree with them. This may reflect a cultural or social value she has learned as part of her educational background. However, this also shows a high level of WTC and a sense of voice, especially as she chats comfortably about her travel plans and her own cultural values as related to the film themes. Unfortunately, none of this helps her to show consistent gains in fluency over the six months as measured by the temporal variables.

Conclusion

This primarily fluency-focused study provides a tantalizing set of data that hints at some surprising dynamics between fluency and WTC. While it might be assumed that WTC is a strong motivator of speech and a boon to language acquisition through, among other factors, increased output and increased input generation, it appears that it may have deleterious effects on actual speech performance in real time. The connection between WTC and fluency may, therefore, not be a linear or stable one, but rather, a complex and possibly shifting relationship.

One participant, Yuka, appeared to show little WTC and she produced uneven and brief film retells throughout the study. She was at a relatively low level of fluency at the outset, and she showed little improvement on any measure over the six months. She digressed from the film narratives, complained of not understanding, and kept her speech at a minimal level of complexity. Her performance on the retell task translated into a weak development in the temporal variables of fluency over time.

Three of the participants in the study show apparently high levels of WTC, with enthusiastic and lengthy speech samples. However, both Natsuko and Lin appear to have compromised

their fluency gains by, in a sense, "trying too hard". They remained focused and produced complex retells of the film narratives but fell short of improving their fluency, possibly because they overstretched their language capabilities. Rather than keeping control of the narratives and communicating at a comfortable level, they seem to have gone into detail and to have been unable to sustain the increases in speed and changes in pause profiles that characterize fluency gain. Meiling, on the other hand, while showing WTC, chose to scatter her energies more, digressing from the narrative retells and discussing film themes and personal topics instead. This did not help her fluency profile to show improvement, however.

One participant, Isamu, showed both WTC and an increase in fluency over the six months. He carefully retold the parts of the narratives that he was capable of, avoiding troublesome parts of the stories and digressing into expressing personal views and recounting events outside of the task at hand. As a set of strategies, this paid off, as his fluency profile shows overall improvement.

Revisiting the questions posed at the beginning of this paper, the data suggest that the link between WTC and fluency may be less direct and linear than it appears at first glance. In response to L2 teachers wondering whether they can assume that the more talkative students will become more fluent with practice or that having students engage in speech is sufficient to improve their fluency, the data presented indicate that the answer might be "perhaps." Talkative students or those exhibiting WTC may indeed become more fluent with practice, but WTC may also hinder fluency by causing students to push their communication abilities too far. Therefore, while teachers should encourage students to communicate as much as possible, they should also be mindful of the need to keep a focus on clarity and control of spoken language.

Clearly, this is a tentative and exploratory set of findings with regard to WTC. While the fluency measures in the study are operationally defined based on established research protocols, the WTC measures here are tentative in the absence of an instrument. Future research in this area needs to be much more precise in determining what constitutes WTC in monologic tasks, and to match WTC measurements more exactly with fluency gains or changes. Use of WTC measurement instruments before, during, and after the production of speech samples would help to correlate WTC more effectively with changes in fluency. As well, a more fine-grained research methodology involving assessing WTC and fluency during a specific speech event rather than over time would yield results which could potentially inform task-based pedagogy.

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VOLUNTEER EXCHANGE EXPERIENCES AND WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE (WTC):

An English language learner (ELL) perspective

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Abstract

This paper reports on English language learners' (ELL) perspectives as obtained through questionnaires and interviews pertaining to their participation in a volunteer youth program organized by the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada. Findings showed the ELLs to be willing to communicate prior to their week in the target language, yet also indicated gains in motivation and confidence in reading post-experience. The interviews supported the questionnaire findings while adding explanatory information highlighting the impact of the situation in their willingness to communicate, in particular, the influence of the community and group leaders.

Researchers and practitioners alike continue to seek means by which to improve students' second language learning. Providing opportunities for interaction with native speakers of a target language is one strategy used with the view to enhance second language acquisition. In Canada, the federal government supports exchanges as one method to provide authentic interaction between English and French learners. For more than 70 years, with the financial support of the federal government, the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC) has coordinated bilingual interprovincial exchanges that provide opportunities for English and French learners to use their acquired language skills with native speakers in the target community. Both French and English language learners have taken advantage of SEVEC's exchange offerings; in fact, 33 percent of SEVEC exchange participants are English language learners from Quebec (SEVEC, 2005, 2006, 2007).

The attraction to exchanges as a means of providing language-learning support is supported by research. In fact, studies showed that national and international bilingual

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exchanges lasting as little as five days are enough to influence student attitudes towards another cultural group (Allameh, 2006; Rose & Bylander, 2007). More precisely, studies have demonstrated that homestay experiences in particular can enhance the study abroad experience (Schmidt-Rinchart & Knight, 2004).

Although the majority of Canadian studies focusing on bilingual exchanges have tended to examine the experience of Anglophone students in French communities, MacFarlane (1997, 2001) also explored Grade 6 Francophones' experiences during a bilingual exchange. Through questionnaires and focus group interviews, she found that this group of English language learners chose to participate in an exchange with the main goal of improving their English skills. However, following the exchange, the English language learners' expressed a gain in confidence, not only in their English skills but also in general.

While the above research focuses on post-exchange benefits, other studies have suggested that non-linguistic factors are also influential pre-exchange. Clément (1978), for example, recognized that Francophone learners' motivation to learn English went beyond a desire to learn the language to a willingness to participate in the culture of the other group. More recently, MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, & Noels (1998 p. 545) identified "willingness to communicate" (WTC) as a crucial component in order for authentic interaction to occur. To provide some context, WTC attempts to explain why people show a great deal of variability in their propensity to communicate, including why some learners speak in spite of limited communicative competence, whereas others are quite reluctant to talk even with high competence (MacIntyre et al., 1998, p. 558). In particular, the model distinguished ten factors that influenced WTC; some factors are trait-like (e.g., age, gender) while others are situation-dependent (e.g., frequency of contact). As it pertains to the study described below, and to the exchange situation in particular, the model identified learners' motivation and self-confidence in using their second language in authentic interaction as one of the influential factors determining one's WTC. More precisely, this study considered learners' integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985), their willingness to participate with the target language population, as a potential factor in their WTC in the exchange experience. Correspondingly, MacIntyre et al. (1998) posited that explicit attention to these foundational factors encourages learners to use the second language with the target language community when the opportunity presents itself. As such, this construct has been examined in exchange contexts where English was being learned as a foreign language (e.g., Kang, 2005; Yashima, 2002).

With the common goal to increase the odds for communication to occur in the target language, SEVEC proposed a change to its programming with a view to enhancing authentic communication opportunities during target language contact. The Volunteer Youth Exchange (VYE) program housed groups of 14-16 year old Anglophone and Francophone participants while they engaged in community volunteer activities for two weeks- with one week in the target language. SEVEC's VYE program not only provided contact with the target language community, but also the additional need for communication by completing

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a community service project. The expectation was that this new situation would encourage participants to seek out additional opportunities to use their second language.

This paper adds to the existing literature on WTC in exchange contexts used to improve English proficiency (e.g., Kang, 2005; Yashima, 2002) and summarizes findings from a larger study (Mady & Arnott, 2010) that examined the experiences of VYE participants broadly, and more specifically the influence of such experiences on language skills and WTC.

Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a questionnaire and interview protocol to investigate the experiences and perspectives of Anglophone and Francophone VYE participants. Initially, we were looking to achieve as close to an equal distribution of Anglophone and Francophone participants as possible in order to equalize the L1 and L2 community experiences. However, due to circumstances beyond our control, we did not achieve such a distribution. Nonetheless, while we isolated as many of the ELL-related findings as possible for this paper, we feel there are significant findings that transcend the second languages of the participants, and have important implications for second language exchange programs for ELLs.

Context

The Volunteer Youth Exchange Program lasted two weeks at each location. During those two weeks, the participants volunteered at two community festivals, one per week. Each festival had a cultural and linguistic focus as it pertained to the community, one Anglophone, the other Francophone. For the ELLs, French was the language of communication at one festival (L1 context), while English was used at the other (L2 context).

Questionnaire

Adolescents (N = 49) from five different provinces (i.e., Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Quebec) completed the questionnaire component of this study. The majority by gender (n = 39) were female, and the linguistic majority was Anglophone (n = 33). The questionnaire was developed exclusively for the purpose of this study and used pre- and post-VYE experience. The Anglophones completed the questionnaire in English, Francophones in French. The pre-questionnaire requested demographic information such as gender, age, past language-learning experience, time spent in second language environments and knowledge of other languages. This was followed by a second section of 34 statements to which the participants responded using a Likert scale both pre- and post-volunteer experience. Although the questionnaire was not originally designed to probe specifically for WTC factors, the statements used readily lent themselves to WTC analysis, and many were similar to those used and validated across other investigations of WTC and adolescent L2 learning (e.g., Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément &

Conrod, 2001; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Donovan, 2002; MacIntyre, Burns & Jessome, 2011; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004).

Interview

The Ontario VYE participants (n = 15) were selected as the case study group to observe and interview, with Anglophones outnumbering Francophones, and women outnumbering men in this sub-sample. For this paper, we focus on the experiences and perspectives of two participants (identified with the pseudonyms Fiona and Emily) who self-identified as ELLs because French was their native tongue and home language. Each ELL participant was interviewed at the English (L2) festival, and Emily volunteered to be interviewed at both festivals (English and French). They answered questions from a semi-structured interview protocol that elicited their perceptions related to student leadership, community participation, and second language acquisition. A content analysis of the transcriptions was then conducted, looking specifically at the three aforementioned themes.

<div align="center">

Findings

</div>

Although this study examined the perspectives and experiences of both Anglophones and Francophones, we extract survey (n = 49) and interview (n = 2) data that is most applicable to ELL experiences whenever possible for the purposes of this publication.

Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire consisted of 34 five-point Likert-scale items with the following response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, and Neither Agree nor Disagree. The Likert-type questionnaire items were coded, scoring the most positive response "strongly agree" as a 1 and the most negative response, "strongly disagree" as a 5. Responses of "Agree" and "disagree" were scored as 2 and 4 respectively, and "Neither agree or disagree" was scored with the value of 3. After using Cronbach's alpha to ensure internal consistency, the items were grouped into the following traits: motivation, community engagement, leadership, language acquisition in general (and specifically in listening, speaking, reading, writing), and confidence in speaking and in writing.

As indicated in Table 1, the participants (N = 49) were in agreement with most trait statements at both pre- and post-program. In turn, the small standard deviations showed that most participants tended to be in agreement. However, a wider range of responses were offered for the language acquisition categories of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, Table 1 presents the paired samples t-test results conducted to explore whether there were significant changes from pre- to post-program. Only two variables differed pre- and post-program participation. Motivation and confidence in reading were more positive post-program.

Theme 1: Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Scale Scores measured in the Questionnaire and Results of Paired t-tests Measuring the Difference between Pre- and Post-Scores

	Time 1 (Pre)		Time 2 (Post)		Paired t-test Scores (Pre & Post)
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*T*
motivation	1.50	0.43	1.35	0.40	2.81*
community engagement	1.76	0.59	1.80	0.61	-0.36
leadership	1.59	0.44	1.55	0.57	0.56
language acquisition score	2.58	0.95	2.54	0.97	0.47
listening score	2.66	1.16	2.62	1.16	0.36
speaking score	2.50	0.87	2.45	0.95	0.44
reading score	2.29	1.15	2.19	1.17	0.49
writing score	2.54	1.36	2.36	1.27	1.03
confidence in speaking score	2.93	1.10	2.64	1.27	1.66
confidence in reading score	2.51	1.16	2.05	1.22	3.15*

Note. **The lower the score the higher the agreement with the questionnaire statement. Table 1 was previously used in Mady & Arnott (2010). We would like to thank the Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics for allowing us to include it in this publication.**

The questionnaire used in this study allowed for the formation of subgroups based on various demographic characteristics (province, country of birth, language etc.). To investigate whether changes in student responses differed among the subgroups, repeated-measures ANOVAs were conducted. Scale scores at Time 1 and Time 2 were used as repeated-measures and demographic features were used as grouping variables. Demographic variables were considered one at a time. Given the nature of this journal and the dominant position of English in Canada and globally as a lingua franca, it was important to compare language groups. In particular, these tests were conducted to investigate the effect of the program on the Anglophone and Francophone groups. Table 2 shows the results of repeated-measures ANOVAs conducted for each scale with dominant language identification (Anglophone, Francophone or bilingual) as a grouping variable. The results suggest that Time by Language interaction was not significant for any of the scales. This means that the changes (if any) between Time 1 and Time 2 are similar for Anglophone, Francophone and Bilingual students. These results suggest that students changed their perception of bilingualism and were more motivated at the end of the program, regardless of their language.

Theme 1: Willingness to Communicate (WTC)

Table 2

Results of Repeated-Measures ANOVAs with Language as a grouping variable

	Time			Time × Language		
	Wilk's Λ	F	η^2	Wilk's Λ	F	η^2
motivation	0.788	10.496**	0.212	0.878	2.705	0.122
perception of bilingualism	0.877	5.458*	0.123	0.886	2.512	0.114
community engagement	0.984	0.616	0.016	0.980	0.407	0.020
Leadership	0.999	0.058	0.001	0.982	0.353	0.018
language acquisition	0.994	0.230	0.006	0.973	0.550	0.027
listening score	0.999	0.029	0.001	0.974	0.525	0.026
speaking score	0.989	0.417	0.011	0.938	1.279	0.062
reading score	0.981	0.721	0.019	0.919	1.679	0.081
writing score	0.998	0.059	0.002	0.973	0.536	0.027
confidence in speaking score	0.992	0.289	0.008	0.991	0.171	0.009
confidence in reading score	0.971	1.114	0.029	0.971	0.558	0.029

Qualitative Findings: ELL Interviews

Both ELL participants reported that the VYE experience had provided them with opportunities to speak English (L2) outside of school and to speak French (L1) beyond the home environment. During their interviews, the ELL participants connected their perceived L2 improvement and increased confidence to opportunities they had to interact with speakers of English at the English festival:

> My English has improved since almost all of the people I'm working with in the festival are English. We're speaking English all of the time, especially with the other volunteers here. So it helps my English proficiency. (Fiona)

> Working at the festival has made me a little more social, …to go up to people and just talk to them in English. (Emily)

When interviewed at the French site, the ELLs highlighted how their responsibilities during the English festival (e.g., welcoming patrons; helping local kids make thematic crafts; responding to patron inquiries at the information tent) provided them with more community interaction and language practice compared to their behind-the-scenes responsibilities during the French festival (e.g., sweeping the stage; directing cars to the parking lot; cutting out paper supplies for the play; serving food to volunteers). The fact that English was the dominant language being used amongst the students also had a positive impact on the ELL participants' opportunities to practice their English. Overall, not only were they practicing their English in a rich target language environment other than school, but they also highlighted the importance of doing so with a variety of native (e.g., English

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festival community; fellow VYE participants) and non-native (e.g., Francophone group leader) speakers.

The ELL interview findings also showed that opportunities for language practice were not limited to English (L2); rather, the ELLs described how explicit efforts were made by the group leaders in particular to speak French as much as possible, both at the English festival and the French festival. The ELLs reported that these efforts made them eager to practice their French (L1) outside of the home environment, which was not always possible for them:

> The group leaders speak French and English. I usually choose to speak French, because, well, that's really the language that I like to speak. I'm more willing to speak French. This program has impacted me since there are many more people who speak French. (Emily)

Discussion and Conclusion

The positive findings on the Likert scale pre-program indicate groups of participants who entered the program willing to communicate. Such positive responses may be due to a prior in-class focus on building WTC and may be indicative of a ceiling effect. On the other hand, the significant increase in motivation and confidence in reading (See Table 1) for all groups post-program is consistent with previous research Serow's (1991) showing language acquisition gains through service learning.

The reported openness to the target language and culture reported in the questionnaire could also be explained through interview data that point to the benefits of VYE for developing L2 learners' "integrative motivation" (Gardner, 1985), which represents an important variable that can influence one's WTC in the L2 (MacIntyre et al. 1998). The ELL learners in particular highlighted how interacting with the community at the English festival and developing communicative relationships with them while fulfilling their responsibilities was key to improving their perceived L2 competence and overall WTC in English. The fact that the ELLs sought opportunities to speak English with native speakers shows that they are perceived as resources that can help them improve the ELL participants' L2 skills, consequently increasing their incentive to communicate (Kang, 2005).

The interview data revealed important situational factors influencing participant's overall WTC. For example, the ELLs identified the group leaders as important sources of L1 input, and their peers and English community members as supportive L2 interlocutors. MacIntyre et al. (1998) proposed that the desire to interact with specific people is one of the most immediate determinants of WTC in either the L2 or L1. However, the fact that their group leaders and peers were not strangers to the ELLs, and were not interacting to critique or analyze their language use could also account for their increased willingness to communicate in English in particular (MacDonald, Clément & MacIntyre, 2003). The types of volunteer roles provided at the English site also succeeded in eliciting the feelings

of "responsibility" and "excitement" that Kang (2005) insisted are indicative of a high level of situational WTC. Perhaps, as Yashima (2002) proposed, the jobs that supported purposeful language interaction with community members at the English festival could be singled out as having had the same influence as homestay hosts who actively support exchange students' attempted L2 interactions.

These findings support the notion that choosing to communicate is an "act of volition" (MacIntyre, 2007) with motivating and restraining processes converging to affect L2 communication. The VYE participants' increased motivation and confidence in reading show the potential for an established WTC to continue to build with an authentic opportunity for purposeful language use. Such growth could, in turn, lead participants to seek additional opportunities, which would further improve their language acquisition. In this case, the extent to which the ELL participants' WTC transformed into communication during their exchange experience was affected as much by their integrative motivation as it was by situational factors, including (a) the degree to which the volunteer exchange experiences required communication, particularly with members of the L2 community and (b) the presence of native and non-native speakers who could help them practice their English and reduce anxiety about taking risks with their L2. All in all, if exchanges like VYE are meant to provide a complementary addition to ESL programs across Canada and foster L2 WTC, then these factors related to exchange program development need to be taken into account.

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WHEN NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS MISUNDERSTAND EACH OTHER:

Identifying Important Aspects of Pronunciation

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Abstract

A major teaching objective for many English as a second language (ESL) teachers is that their learners' pronunciation can be understood by native speakers. However, ESL learners do not speak English only to native speakers. Besides their classmates, many ESL learners frequently interact in English with other non-native speakers. It is therefore important to identify which aspects of pronunciation can cause misunderstanding between non-native speakers so that ESL teachers can then be better informed when deciding on particular focuses for pronunciation. In this study, 20 pairs of non-native university students from different first language backgrounds completed three speaking tasks and later talked about what and why they did not understand during their paired tasks. When pronunciation was the cause of a misunderstanding, the most typical problem was (a) the pronunciation of specific sounds, both vowels and consonants, and (b) overall understanding of particular non-native accents. I will discuss how these findings could be interpreted when planning to teach L2 speech.

The English language is no longer the sole property of its native speakers. There are over 400 million second language (L2) speakers of English worldwide (Crystal, 2003), and the most common use of English is as a lingua franca, spoken predominantly between L2 speakers. Jenkins (2000, pp.16-17) notes that when L2 speakers use a language most typically to communicate with other L2 speakers, at least two crucial issues arise. First, it is more difficult to justify an expectation that speakers should adhere to a native speaker standard of pronunciation. Second, the preservation of mutual intelligibility between speakers becomes crucial, since the pronunciation of various speakers may include quite different features due to the influence of their respective first languages (L1s). These two issues exemplify the tension between what Levis (2005) terms the nativeness principle and the intelligibility principle. The main tenet of the nativeness principle is that non-native like pronunciation in a second language is undesirable and can be eliminated. On the other hand, the intelligibility principle holds that

> communication can be remarkably successful when foreign accents are noticeable or even strong, that there is no clear correlation between accent and understanding, and that certain types of pronunciation errors may have a disproportionate role in impairing [understanding]. (p. 370)

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The view that an L2 speaker's pronunciation is appropriate and sufficient if the speaker can effectively communicate a message means that successful learning and use of L2 pronunciation is that which results in listeners' comprehension. Even if an L2 speaker's pronunciation is non-native like and accented, if the speaker's pronunciation allows him or her to be understood by others, the speaker has successfully learned L2 pronunciation.

What, then, is known about the aspects of pronunciation which most affect understanding, or intelligibility, between L2 speakers of English? Intelligibility is defined here as the degree to which a given utterance is understood by a listener (Derwing & Munro, 2005, p. 385), or, as Smith and Nelson phrase it, a listener's recognition of a speaker's utterance (2006, p. 429). Little research has targeted this question. The purpose of this study is therefore to evaluate how intelligibility between L2 speakers of English is affected by particular L2 phonological variations in L2 speech. This study is framed in the context of Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core (2000), a set of "phonological features which…regularly cause unintelligibility" between L2 speakers (p. 123). The overall goal of this study is to extend the work of Jenkins (2000, 2002) in highlighting aspects of pronunciation which may be important when L2 speakers of English are trying to understand each other.

In the first part of this paper, previous research on the components of the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) will be described. The second section sets forth the methodology of the current case study. Next, the findings from analyses of the L2 speakers' interactions will be presented, and finally, some areas for further investigation in research and pedagogy will be suggested.

Communication between L2 speakers

Jenkins (2000, p. 2) states that people who teach, learn, or use English as a lingua franca (i.e. to communicate with both native and non-native speakers) need to know how particular aspects of pronunciation affect mutual intelligibility between L2 speakers. For example, some aspects of speech, such as the use of a "clear" /l/ (e.g., _lamp_) as opposed to a "dark" /l/ (e.g., _full_), may not affect intelligibility between L2 speakers in any discernible way. Knowing an LFC, a set of pronunciation features which affect mutual L2 intelligibility, would allow users, teachers, and learners of English as a lingua franca to focus their attention on those aspects of speech which are most necessary for intelligibility. Work on the development of this core was initiated by Jenkins (2000).

Jenkins' LFC

Jenkins (2000) recorded and analyzed interactions between L2 speakers over several years in her English as a second language classes and in social interactions. She targeted what she called "problematic discourse" (p. 132), focusing on problems caused by speakers' pronunciation. Jenkins identified three main categories: individual sounds (segments), nuclear stress, and articulatory setting (see Appendix for detailed outline of the LFC). She found that when most types of consonants were substituted by another consonant or deleted, there was a loss of intelligibility. The exceptions to this were /θ/ and /ð/ (interdental

fricatives), which Jenkins found could be replaced, with little to no loss of intelligibility, by other consonants. In consonant clusters, syllabification of clusters (e.g., /səpik/ "suhpeak" for /spik/ -"speak") did not lead to lower intelligibility, but deletion of consonants in word-initial clusters (e.g., /pik/ for /spik/ did contribute to lower intelligibility. For vowels, Jenkins did not find any loss of intelligibility as long as L2 English speakers were consistent in their production of given vowels and maintained a contrast between tense and lax vowels (e.g., /hit/ "heat" and /hɪt/ "hit").

Suprasegmental aspects of speech are "those phenomena that extend over more than one sound segment" (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996, p. 35), such as rhythm or lexical stress. In terms of suprasegmentals, Jenkins identified nuclear stress and word groups (also known as thought groups) as important aspects of the LFC (pp. 153- 156). Nuclear stress highlights the part of an utterance which is key for the listener, that part which gives new or important information. Word groups are "a discrete stretch of speech which forms a semantically and grammatically coherent stretch of discourse" (Celce-Murcia et al., 1996, p. 175). Jenkins noted that, when L2 speakers were unintelligible because of their intonation, inappropriate placement of nuclear stress was almost always the source of the problem. As appropriate placement of nuclear stress also requires speakers to pause their speech at appropriate boundary points, Jenkins included word groups in the LFC. Unlike many other pronunciation researchers (e.g., Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler, 1992; Magen, 1998), Jenkins recommended that teachers not spend a great deal of time and effort teaching most suprasegmental aspects of English because they may be either unimportant for intelligibility, unteachable, or both. These aspects include the reduction of function words such as "is" or "to", lexical stress, and stress-timed rhythm. In stress-timed rhythm, stressed syllables are produced at roughly equal intervals of time. For example, if speakers said the following two sentences—WRITE a STORy and I'm WRITing lots of STORies— the time interval between the two stressed syllables WRIT and STOR would be about the same, even though the second sentence contains more unstressed syllables between the two stressed syllables.

A more speculative category is articulatory setting – the posture of a speaker's lips, cheek and jaw and the tension and shape of the tongue while speaking. Jenkins did not identify particular aspects of articulatory setting which were important for intelligibility, but stated that if an L2 speaker used the articulatory setting from his or her L1, this could potentially lead to pronunciation which was unintelligible to listeners.

The above-mentioned categories of segments, nuclear stress, and articulatory setting were the focus of Jenkins' LFC. Jenkins believed these categories were "essential in terms of intelligible pronunciation" between L2 English speakers (2000, p. 123), and should be the main focus for teachers who wish their L2 English students to be more intelligible to other L2 English speakers.

Although the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) was a ground-breaking development in research on English as a lingua franca, Jenkins never meant the proposed categories to be the conclusive

and unchanging core for pronunciation of English as a lingua franca (p. 166). To explore other possible components of the LFC, a wider range of participants and environments for language learning and use should therefore be investigated. Teachers who want to use the LFC to target particular aspects of pronunciation could then be more confident that the elements included in the LFC had been substantiated in numerous environments with numerous L2 speakers of English.

Other Research on the Lingua Franca Core

Several researchers have explored unintelligibility between L2 speakers of English, with reference to the LFC. Pitzl (2005) investigated unintelligibility between L2 English speakers in European business contexts. In the two business meetings described, there were three L1 German and two L1 Korean speakers, and one L1 German and one L1 Dutch speaker, respectively. Analyzing the recordings and field notes of the meetings, Pitzl found that some pronunciation features in the LFC seemed to cause intelligibility problems in the conversations she analyzed (e.g., unstressed words or syllables which should have received nuclear stress) while other features which were not mentioned in the LFC were also causes of unintelligibility (e.g., unreleased final consonants, such as [ðæt˺]).

Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) analysed recordings of casual conversation in English between twenty English teachers visiting Singapore from different countries in Southeast Asia. They found that whenever pronunciation was implicated in a communication breakdown, the production of individual sounds was always the source of the unintelligibility, whether a sound was substituted, deleted, or added. For example, the substitution of /n/ for a word-final /l/, the deletion of /r/ from the consonant cluster /θri/ "three", and the addition of /t/ before a word-final /s/ (/ʌts/ for /ʌs/ "us") all contributed to listeners having difficulty understanding speakers. All of the sounds involved had been included by Jenkins in her LFC. In other research, Pickering (2009) analysed recorded interactions between 26 L2 English speakers doing a paired "spot the difference" task, focusing particularly on instances of unintelligibility which were related to intonation. Like Jenkins (2000), Pickering found that misplaced nuclear stress seemed to be behind some of the intelligibility problems noted in the interactions (Pickering, 2009, p. 244).

Apart from the four studies described above, no other published research has been identified in which L2 English unintelligibility is empirically investigated with reference to the LFC. The aim of the current study, therefore, is to explore which aspects of pronunciation are involved in unintelligibility between L2 speakers of English in the North American context, and to investigate how these aspects of pronunciation compare to Jenkins' LFC.

Identifying and Explaining Unintelligibility in L2-L2 Communication

Excepting Jenkins (2000), nearly all research on unintelligibility in L2 English has identified and explained unintelligibility through external observations and interpretations of L2 speakers' behaviour. Researchers' analysis has predominantly taken an "etic" perspective, that of an outside observer describing a behaviour in an ostensibly neutral

manner (Pike, 1967). To date, no "emic" accounts, from the perspective of the L2 speakers themselves, have been elicited about unintelligibility. Emic perspectives from participants allow researchers to be more confident first in identifying and second in explaining the occurrence of unintelligibility in L2-L2 interactions. Therefore, in the current study, the use of stimulated recall (described below in the "Methodology" section) plays a key role in the identification and analysis of unintelligibility between L2 speakers. Through a stimulated recall protocol, the current study elicited participants' experience of unintelligible speech and participants' insights about the reasons for the unintelligibility. The participants' experience, a fundamental element of intelligibility, is thus a crucial source of data in identifying important aspects of pronunciation.

Research Questions

The particular research questions under investigation are:

1. Which aspects of pronunciation contribute to unintelligibility between L2 speakers of English in communicative interactions?

2. How do these identified aspects compare to aspects of Jenkins' LFC?

Methodology

Participants

Forty adult non-native speakers of English who were full-time undergraduate or graduate students in degree programs at an English-medium university in Quebec participated in the study; eighteen of the participants were female and twenty-two were male. Their ages ranged from 21 to 64 years, with a mean age of 28.6. Speakers' first language backgrounds included Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish, Farsi, Bengali, Russian, French, and Tamil. These participants were not recruited from particular courses or programs, but from the university community at large. Because different degree programs had different requirements for admission, some participants had been admitted to their degree programs without submitting English proficiency test scores and additionally were not required to take English as a second language courses. Therefore, participants did not initially share a common measure of proficiency; prior to completing the study tasks, participants self-rated their English ability in listening, speaking, reading, and writing on a nine-point Likert scale. Participants' mean rating for speaking was 6.5 (SD = 0.96) and for listening it was 6.9 (SD = 1.42). In this study, moderate differences between participants in English proficiency were advantageous; this is because the LFC should include all aspects of pronunciation which contribute to unintelligibility between L2 English speakers, regardless of their proficiency.

Procedure

Prior to engaging in interactive tasks, each participant was paired with a partner who spoke a different first language and was previously unknown to the participant. Intelligibility problems between L2 speakers occur more frequently when the speakers are of different

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language backgrounds (Jenkins, 2000). The participants read and completed the consent form and a questionnaire targeting their biographical information, language learning history, abilities in English and other languages, and their typical contact with English.

Participants then engaged in Phase 1 of the data collection. They completed four interactive tasks, each preceded by written and spoken instructions. The first, a warm-up task, was designed to allow participants to become more comfortable and familiar with each other. The participants had three minutes to discover three things they had in common (e.g., a dislike of spicy food). Participants then engaged in three interactive speaking tasks, each lasting no more than seven minutes. The first two tasks were two-way closed information gap tasks, where both participants were required to transmit information that was unknown to their partner to achieve a specific, shared goal (Ellis, 2003). The first task completed was a picture story completion task: each participant had half of the panels from a six-panel picture story (three different panels for each participant). Participants could not see each other's panels and had to share descriptions of their panels to come to a common understanding of the story. The second task was a map task: each participant had a map containing some information common to both participants. However, one version of the map contained a route drawn on it, while the other version had no route but pictured some additional landmarks not contained in the first version. The participants had to describe their versions to each other to accurately add the information initially missing in their original versions. The third task was a shared-information problem-solving task. Participants discussed the problem (introduced in a prompt) of overcrowding in classes at the university. They were asked to try to agree on and justify three possible solutions. All tasks were completed in a quiet room and were recorded onto a laptop computer using a digital video camera, and two lapel-mounted wireless microphones. The author can be contacted by readers interested in viewing sample tasks.

Phase 2 of the data collection began within fifteen minutes of completing Phase 1. This phase elicited participants' recall and perceptions of the interaction during the tasks. Participants went to separate rooms to do a stimulated recall task. Stimulated recall methodology aims to elicit information about participants' thoughts at the time of an activity or task. After completing the task, participants were presented with some material to stimulate their recall, and were asked to report on their thoughts during the previous task (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. xi). Each participant worked individually with a research assistant who had been present during the interactive tasks. Before replaying the digital files of the interactive tasks on a computer, the research assistant explained the main focus of the stimulated recall, which was participants' memories of instances when at least one of the participants, whether as a speaker or as a listener, was faced with potential or actual unintelligibility. The participant was encouraged to use the computer mouse to stop the recording at any point when, during the task, he or she had noted (a) speech that was unintelligible, or (b) an attempt to prevent or repair unintelligible speech, whether from the participant or from his or her partner. The participant was encouraged to describe his or her thoughts *at that moment in the original communication task*. Participants were told that the assistant

might also stop the recording at points when speech seemed to be unintelligible for at least one participant and ask them to describe their thoughts at that past moment. To become familiar with the demands of the stimulated recall task, the participant first viewed the warm-up task to stimulate his or her recall. If the participant had not stopped the recording at least halfway through the warm-up task, the research assistant stopped the recording to ask the participant to describe his or her thoughts at that point in the warm-up task.

The stimulated recall task then continued, with the digital files of each task being shown to the participant in the order the tasks were completed (picture story, map task, discussion). The entire stimulated recall task was audio-recorded using a digital computer application. The research assistants also took notes on participants' comments and the times they were referring to in the original tasks to generate an additional record of the stimulated recall session if technical problems caused loss or corruption of the audio recording.

Data Analysis

The data to be analyzed consisted of the recordings of the interactive tasks and the recordings and notes of the stimulated recall task. The two research assistants who engaged in the stimulated recall tasks reviewed recordings and notes for the stimulated recalls they themselves had participated in. The research assistants had previously completed graduate-level courses with focuses on research methodology and phonology and had received individualized training on the data analysis task. The research assistants located participants' reports of potential or actual unintelligibility in the stimulated recall (e.g., "He said the *vallet*, right? I think the...the right pronunciation should be *wallet*, *wallet* [...] I cannot understand this...*vallet*"); the research assistants then used those reports to locate the relevant periods during the original interactive tasks. The researchers closely analyzed both the stimulated recall reports and the periods during the original tasks with the purpose of identifying particular words, phrases, or sentences which contributed to difficulties in understanding. If a particular word or phrase could be identified as the source of the problem, the researchers phonetically transcribed that word or phrase (e.g., "He uh lost his uh /vælɪt/). The aspect(s) of pronunciation which contributed to difficulties in understanding was then isolated, drawing on the participants' stimulated recall reports and interactive task recordings and the research assistants' experience as ESL teachers. Frequency counts were tallied for the occurrence of specific aspects of pronunciation which contributed to difficulties in understanding. The research assistants' identification of these aspects was reviewed by the primary investigator (the author), a researcher with specialized training in second language phonology and several years of research and teaching experience in second language pronunciation and intelligibility. Drawing on the stimulated recall reports which had focused on difficulties in understanding, the author reviewed the task recordings to identify specific aspects of pronunciation which were involved in the understanding difficulties. The author's frequency counts were compared to those of the research assistants. There was 85% agreement in the frequency counts. Given the author's extensive experience with identification of aspects of second language

pronunciation which were linked to unintelligibility, the author's analysis was adopted for the final results.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

In total, 161 comments made in the stimulated recalls (from 28 participants) were related to either the participants' or to their partners' unintelligibility. Of those comments, 54 comments related to participants' pronunciation or accent. Table 1 shows, for the 54 comments, the aspects of pronunciation which were involved in unintelligibility. Sample words are transcribed using International Phonetic Association (IPA) format, with the first word showing speakers' actual pronunciation and the second word showing standard pronunciation.

Table 1

Pronunciation Aspects Contributing to Unintelligibility

Aspect of pronunciation	Times involved in unintelligibility
Segments	
Vowel quality (e.g., /kurs/ for /kɔrs/)	11
Single consonant deletion, addition, or substitution (e.g., /pur/ for /pul/)	6
Consonant clusters (e.g., /pad/ for /pand/)	3
Multiple aspects (e.g., /kago/ for /kaʒuəl/)	7
Suprasegmentals	
Word stress (e.g., /ˈbɪ low/ for /bɪ ˈlow/)	2
Accent	25
Total	54

Note. **Accent was a catchall category for statements like "his accent makes it sometimes difficult to understand."**

When research assistants identified episodes during which listeners had difficulties understanding speech due to segmental aspects of pronunciation, the particular trouble spot was typically a one-syllable word. In the following excerpts, participants are identified only by the first letter of their given name.

(1) Vowel quality (picture story)

B: *First one, he need buy a milk. A milk.*

C-Y: *A milk?*

B: *A milk, yes. And Second one, they need buy, uh, buy a /pil/* (meaning *pill*)

C-Y: */pɪl/?* ("pill")

B: */pil/*

C-Y: *…Like?*

B: *Anything, just-*

C-Y: *O.K., he just want to buy something.*

(2) Consonant substitution (map task)

M: *What other picture you have?*

J: *I have a, a /wɔr/, I have the /wɔr/* (meaning *wall*)

M: *O.K., a war?*

When listeners had difficulty understanding *multisyllabic* words because of segmental aspects, in almost every instance the pronunciation of more than one segment was involved.

(3) Multiple aspects (warm up task)

J: *So what is your favourite dress, you know?*

M: *Dress, you mean. Drink?*

J: *Dress, dress.*

M: *Dress, yeah. /kago/ /kago/* (meaning *casual*).

J: *Ahhh.*

Very few instances were observed when suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation were involved in listeners' reported difficulties in understanding. Involvement of suprasegmentals was limited to two non-standard placements of lexical stress. Apart from segmental production, the most frequently identified source of difficulty was "accent". In these instances, listeners and research assistants could describe the trouble spots only in terms of a speaker having a (non-native) accent and could not further isolate what in particular contributed to the difficulty.

Importance of Stimulated Recall

Data from the stimulated recall task showed how valuable the task could be for identifying trouble spots during participants' interaction. In some cases, participants did not show that they had trouble understanding their partners. The excerpt below is of two participants speaking in the warm-up task.

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(4) Apparent understanding (warm-up task)

M: *Something else? Yeah, something else sports do you like?*

J: *How about /dɛnɪs/?*

M: */dɛnɪs/?*

J: *Yeah.*

M: *Oh, no.*

J: *You don't love that?*

M: *Actually, no, I...actually, I like swimming.*

This excerpt seems to show that M has understood J's suggestion of tennis as a preferred sport, but in fact prefers another sport. However, in the stimulated recall task, M described this episode to a research assistant (RA):

(5) Stimulated recall - M

M: *He started talking about dennist?*

RA: *Oh, you don't know what he said?*

M: *Oh, just not very clear about it.*

RA: *What did the word sound like?*

M: *Dennis...dennis. I hear him say that...but I don't know.*

M's behaviour during excerpt (4) did not explicitly signal his difficulty in understanding J. Only during the stimulated recall task was his struggle to understand J apparent. This episode demonstrates two points: first, the value of using the stimulated recall task to identify instances of unintelligibility, and second, the possible dangers in assuming that a listener has understood a speaker if the listener has not signalled a lack of understanding.

Discussion

The research questions for the current study were:

1. Which aspects of pronunciation contribute to unintelligibility between L2 speakers of English in communicative interactions?

2. How do these identified aspects compare to aspects of Jenkins' LFC?

Based on recordings of the interactive tasks and notes and recordings of the stimulated recall tasks, results showed the pronunciation of segments (sounds) was frequently a source of unintelligibility during the interactive tasks. This included the pronunciation of single vowels and consonants as well as the pronunciation of multiple sounds in a word.

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Suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation (aspects continuing over more than one segment) were rarely implicated in unintelligibility, with lexical stress being the only aspect involved. Participants frequently cited accent, also described as "pronunciation" as a contributor to unintelligibility. The particular aspects of accent which were important could not be pinpointed.

The results for the current study are somewhat reflective of the pronunciation features in Jenkins' LFC. In the current study, the pronunciation of individual sounds frequently contributed to unintelligibility. However, the pronunciation of vowels, not simply of consonants, was involved in unintelligibility and the breakdown of communication. As in Jenkins' LFC, suprasegmental aspects did not frequently play a role in unintelligible speech. The suprasegmental aspect implicated in the current study was lexical stress, whereas Jenkins' LFC highlighted the use of nuclear (sentence) stress. Another difference in the current study was the frequency with which accent was cited as a contributor to unintelligibility. The frequency of this explanation may have been due to the unfamiliarity of many participants with their partners or with their partners' L1 background. Bradlow and Bent (2008) and Baese, Bradlow and Wright (2007) found that when English listeners have never before heard an L2 English speaker or have rarely heard speakers of that L1 background, those listeners may require some time to adapt to features of the speaker's speech. In the current study, some participants may have been unfamiliar with multiple aspects of their partners' speech and may have had difficulty identifying specific words or particular aspects of pronunciation which were problematic for the participants' understanding; the participants may therefore have generally explained all difficulties in understanding as due to accent.

The results of the current study show that the pronunciation features which can contribute to unintelligibility between L2 English speakers are not limited to those features described in the LFC. Future research with different participants in different contexts using language for different purposes is necessary to identify more clearly which and how particular pronunciation features can be important for understanding between L2 English speakers.

Implications for Teaching and Learning Pronunciation

Besides having implications for future research, these findings also have significance for the teaching and learning of pronunciation. One basic implication is that sometimes, as shown in (4), learners may not explicitly show that they do not understand a speaker. Therefore, teachers and other learners may not realize when particular aspects of pronunciation contribute to a lack of understanding. Interactive speaking and listening tasks which do not *require* particular information to be understood (e.g. many discussion tasks or casual conversation) likely fail to reveal when a learner's pronunciation is problematic for a listener. Teachers and learners can address this possibility in at least two ways. One way is to include two-way information-gap tasks regularly to enhance learners' understanding of the information transmitted by their partners to complete the task successfully. Instances

when the information has not been understood will be more obvious and will affect the success of the task. Many two-way information gap tasks (e.g., describe the picture differences, paired dictation) can be used. A second way is for the teacher to engage in awareness-raising activities regularly to facilitate opportunities for learners to become aware of aspects of their own or their classmates' pronunciation features that contribute to difficulty in understanding. These activities can be as simple as asking learners after a speaking/listening activity to describe instances when their own or their partners' pronunciation was not understood. As learners become more aware of aspects of their pronunciation that can contribute to unintelligibility, they can take steps to improve those particular aspects. Celce-Murcia et al. refer to this as learners' self-monitoring strategies (1996, p. 348).

Another implication of these results is that an approach to pronunciation teaching that focuses primarily on suprasegmental aspects such as rhythm, stress, and intonation may not address aspects of pronunciation (e.g., individual sounds), which can be problematic for some learners. These sounds may be problematic not because they are pronounced in a non-native like way, but because the way in which they are pronounced can lead to a lack of understanding on the part of listeners. A challenging but more targeted approach to pronunciation teaching would be to identify, for each learner, a limited set of pronunciation features that can be problematic for listeners' understanding; then, instruction can target those particular features with the goal of increasing learners' intelligibility. With diverse groups of learners, this approach does not allow for one-size-fits-all instruction; however, learners can be trained to act as models and tutors for the pronunciation aspects that are not problematic for them.

A final implication of the results is that learners who are unfamiliar with different L1 and L2 English accents may struggle to understand speakers with those accents. Therefore, accent familiarization activities would help learners to become more skilled at understanding L1- or L2-accented speech. Accent familiarization could imply simply including speakers of different accents in regular listening activities, or actively identifying and discussing particular characteristics of specific L1 and L2 accents.[1]

Conclusion

The move from English used for and by native speakers to English used as a lingua franca by diverse speakers continues to gain speed. Teachers and learners of English who do not see the need to equate successful pronunciation with native like pronunciation can choose to aim for pronunciation that is intelligible not only to native speakers, but to any speaker of English. The aim of the current study was to highlight aspects of pronunciation that may be important when L2 speakers of English are trying to understand each other. The findings were somewhat reflective of elements in the LFC (Jenkins, 2000), but also demonstrated other aspects of pronunciation that were significant for L2 English speakers' understanding. The nature of pronunciation that is intelligible to all users of English as a lingua franca continues to be explored and discussed. It is already clear, however,

that researchers, teachers, and learners all have a role to play in enhancing intelligibility between speakers of English as a lingua franca.

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Endnotes

[1] Sample accent familiarization activities are described in Walker's (2010) Teaching the Pronunciation of English as a Lingua Franca. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix – Jenkins' Lingua Franca Core

Phonological error involves an error in producing any of the following (not in order of priority)

1. The consonantal inventory with the following provisos:

    • Rhotic [ɻ] (Standard North American) rather than other varieties of /r/ (i.e, "r-less varieties")

    • Intervocalic /t/ rather than /ɾ/ (e.g., no flapping for middle consonant in "butter")

    • Most substitutions of /θ/, /eth/ and [ɫ] (dark l) permissible

    • Close approximations to core consonant sounds generally permissible

    • Certain approximations not permissible (i.e. where there is risk they will be heard as a different consonant sound from that intended)

2. Phonetic requirements:

    • Aspiration following the tense consonants /p/, /t/, and /k/ (e.g. [kʰæt] not [kæt])

    • Tense/lax differential effect on preceding vowel length (e.g., /siːd/ "seed" vs. /sit/ "seat")

3. Consonant clusters

    • Word-initial clusters not simplified (no elision of any consonant)

    • Word-medial and word-final clusters simplified only according to L1 rules of elision (e.g. /fɪfθs/ "fifths" becomes /fɪfs/)

4. Vowel sounds

    • Maintenance of vowel length contrasts (i.e., shorter before voiceless consonants, longer before voiced consonants)

    • L2 regional qualities permissible if consistent, but maintain production of /ɜː/ (e.g., /bɜːd/ "bird" in Standard British English)

5. Nuclear stress production and placement and division of speech stream into word groups

6. Articulatory setting

    • Posture of the lips, cheek and jaw, tension and shape of the tongue while speaking

    • the aspects of articulatory stress which are relevant for English as a lingua franca have not yet been determined

Adapted from Jenkins (2000).

DEMYSTIFYING PRONUNCIATION RESEARCH TO INFORM PRACTICE

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Abstract

Appealing to empirical research, this article critiques some common misconceptions regarding how second language (L2) pronunciation develops and how it is best taught to adult learners. It begins by articulating why pronunciation instruction is important, but often overlooked. Next, it critiques five myths concerning pronunciation and foreign accent. These myths relate to the effect of age; the role of production and perception; what it means to learn an L2 sound category; the extent to which learning generalizes to new contexts; and the place of pronunciation instruction in communicative language teaching. The article is organized thematically. After research on each topic is summarized, implications for teaching are discussed. The paper's focus is on the learning of segmentals (vowels and consonants), which have received relatively little attention in recent years.

Pronunciation is a recognized as a frequently neglected component in English as a second language (ESL) classrooms (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, & Griner, 2010). In some cases, this may be because it is in disagreement with a teacher's beliefs about language learning and teaching. For example, while accurate pronunciation was a hallmark of the Aural-Oral approach of the 1940s and 1950s, and Audiolingualism, which followed in the 1960s and 1970s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001), it lost its lustre with the popularization of Communicative Language Teaching in the 1980s (Isaacs, 2009). In this article, I will argue that the recent neglect of pronunciation teaching does not stem from a sudden awareness that it is unimportant, but rather, it results from a lack of knowledge about how best to teach it. Then, with reference to research investigating how second language (L2) pronunciation develops, I will critique five myths that influence pronunciation teachers and materials designers alike, and point toward a research-based approach as the way forward to more effective pronunciation instruction.

Background

English language teaching has now entered into what Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe as the post-methods era. They argue that a dearth of new approaches and methods since the 1980s is the result of teachers recognizing that there is no magic solution to the challenge

of learning an L2. In a survey of nearly 500 English Language Teachers (ELTs) around the world, Liu (2004) found that the overwhelming majority of respondents reported using an eclectic approach to teaching. He argued that this fact supports Richards and Rodgers (2001) contention that teachers have consciously left behind a once strict adherence to specific methods. I would argue, however, that this seeming end of methods is not, in fact, because teachers recognize methods have failed. Rather, many teachers may simply not have the knowledge of or training in particular pre-packaged methods. For example Lightbown and Spada's (2006) popular introductory text for teachers mentions methods from a historical perspective, but does not suggest that a particular method should be learned and used over any other. It is also no surprise that eclectic approaches are popular in an era where English is treated as a lucrative commodity, and simply being a native speaker is often the only qualification expected and sought by language program managers and employers. In this context, coherent methods with their prescribed techniques cannot be deployed, because doing so requires training. While teacher training was the norm during the heyday of the methods era, time constraints, coupled with frequently poor salaries, at least in private language programs, conspire against a systematic and regulated approach to language teacher training in many jurisdictions. These current realities do not mean a methodical approach to language teaching is unimportant.

The thirst for knowledge regarding how best to teach pronunciation is self-evident in the popularity of workshops on the topic at ELT conferences. It is also evident in several surveys of ELTs in Canada, Britain and Australia (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2002; Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2011; Macdonald, 2002). Admittedly, while these surveys have found that some ELTs consider pronunciation less important than other skills, some teachers report not teaching pronunciation because they are unsure of how best to do so, believing they lack the relevant training or expertise and access to relevant materials. In regard to the latter, Foote, et al. (2011) point out that materials for teaching pronunciation, both as part of broader courseware and as stand-alone courses, have rapidly increased in recent years. An increase in language-teaching materials is no doubt also due to the commercialization of English, and the concomitant demand for materials by teachers who may sometimes lack specialized training in pronunciation instruction.

Although a rapid increase in pronunciation teaching materials is a positive development, it entails some negative consequences. It introduces the potential for teachers to over-rely on and defer to published materials, rather than developing their own knowledge. For example, the best materials may not be used to their full advantage if a teacher does not understand why particular exercises are included. This was my own experience early on in my ELT career, when I used what turned out to be a very good student text rather ineffectively. Since I did not understand the pedagogical rationale for particular exercises, I would sometimes race through them, or even skip them entirely, believing they were pointless. Several years later, I came to understand that there was strong empirical evidence to support each activity's inclusion, and that the text's author was a well-respected applied linguist and teacher.

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Another possible consequence of relying on textbooks is that without at least some background knowledge, ELTs are reduced to relying on intuition to determine if a particular textbook and its exercises are useful. Thus, it is not uncommon to find some teachers unknowingly using pronunciation resources that include factually incorrect information. In some cases, intuition serves teachers well. For example, Judy Thompson's (2011) self-published pronunciation text entitled *English is Stupid* indicates that the difference between voiced and voiceless sounds in English (e.g., /b/ vs. /p/ and /d/ vs. /t/) is that for voiced sounds, speakers draw air in, while for their voiceless counterparts, speakers puff air out. Despite the claim being patently false, because it is in print, some teachers might give it more credibility than it deserves. Fortunately, most ELTs' intuition and training would prevent them from passing this information on to students, who themselves would quickly discover that it is quite difficult to produce sounds while breathing in. Speech sounds made while inhaling are exceptionally rare, and in English such sounds are limited to speaking while heavily exerting oneself, or in some cases, when sobbing uncontrollably. Another example of a technique most teachers would intuitively question is one promoted at an "accent reduction" workshop described by Derwing (2008). In that workshop, L2 English learners were encouraged to place a marshmallow between their lips while reciting "Peter piper picked a peck of pickled peppers", ostensibly in an attempt to help them develop the ability to pronounce English /p/. It is unclear whether participants even had difficulty producing /p/ to begin with. Given the fact that the language learners came from different linguistic backgrounds, many likely were familiar with a counterpart to /p/ in their own language that could reasonably be expected to transfer to English. Even if a given group of learners needed help producing /p/, there is no evidence that placing a marshmallow between one's lips will have any impact on pronunciation. Needless to say, most ELTs intuition will tell them that such an approach to pronunciation instruction borders on the absurd.

Such misguided pronunciation teaching techniques suggest that being without a coherent approach or method can limit ELTs' ability to help learners. Any method's key feature should be that it is evidence-based, something argued for by Derwing and Munro (2005) in an overview of current pronunciation research. Part of the reason why earlier language learning methods were ultimately discarded is that many were based on theory rather than on empirical evidence. The study of language learning and teaching has evolved, as has pronunciation research, giving ample evidence to inform improved practice.

Some Research-based Perspectives on Pronunciation

The rest of this article will critique some common pronunciation learning and teaching myths that have largely been the result of a reliance on intuition and theory over empirical evidence. Teachers with a basic understanding of the English sound system and the processes underlying learners' acquisition of intelligible pronunciation are more likely able to navigate pronunciation-teaching materials. Specifically, they will be better able to introduce effective techniques to their students, while avoiding those techniques that are

inconsistent with current research-based understanding of how L2 pronunciation develops. After each myth is discussed, implications for teaching will be suggested. Presenting research in this fashion aims to help improve teachers' self-confidence in their ability, which, as the surveys described earlier indicate, is one reason pronunciation instruction is neglected in some English language classrooms.

Myth 1: Adult Learners can't Improve their Pronunciation

Historically, this myth seems to result from the Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) (Lenneberg, 1967). The CPH maintains that there is a brief biological period during childhood after which acquiring a language is impossible. This is an example of a theory that, although never supported through data, has had a major and lasting impact on practice, including approaches to teaching L2 pronunciation to adults. Applied to second language acquisition, the CPH claims that adult learners cannot acquire a native-like pronunciation of English, because changes in the brain during childhood make it impossible to access the cognitive mechanisms used for language learning (Scovel, 2000). Teachers who subscribe to this belief might, therefore, not teach pronunciation at all, believing that attaining native-like pronunciation is simply too difficult, or worse, impossible in L2.

In fact, while native-like pronunciation by adult learners may be rare, there is clear evidence that adult learners *can* significantly improve their pronunciation (e.g. Bongaerts, van Summeren, Planken, & Schils, 1997). Furthermore, improvement is almost certainly not constrained by changes in the brain at a particular biological age. In a study that seems to put the CPH debate to rest, Flege, Munro, and McKay (1995) found that on average, the age at which Italian immigrants arrived in Canada served as a strong predictor of strength of foreign accent. However, the relationship between their age of arrival (as young as 3 years old, and as old as 25) and degree of accent was perfectly linear. That is, rather than finding that anyone who arrived before a particular age (e.g., between 3 – 12 years of age) achieved a native-like accent, while those who arrived after that age did not, Flege et al. found that as age of arrival increased, perceived degree of foreign accent increased in tandem. These researchers argue that this contradicts the CPH as it has been applied to L2 learning, which would predict a finding that the extent of foreign accent should abruptly increase at a specific biological age, after which learning would be impossible. Interestingly, Flege et al. (1995) also found that within any particular age group, there was significant variation in the strength of foreign accent. In a follow-up study, Flege, Bohn, and Jang (1997) provided evidence that most within-age group variation in degree of accentedness was quite predictable. Those immigrants who continued to use their first language the most were the ones who had the strongest accents in English, whether they arrived in Canada when they were three or 23 years old. From such evidence, it is now widely held within the L2 speech research community that it is not biological age that most influences pronunciation, but instead, relative experience with the L2 vis-à-vis experience with the learners' first languages (L1s; see Moyer, 2009). Consequently, the more experience speakers have with their L1, the more L2 experience they will need to improve their L2 pronunciation.

In summary, contrary to the first myth's claim, adult learners can improve their pronunciation in relation to the amount of experience they have with the L2. Unfortunately, in naturalistic learning environments and in more traditional language classrooms, a massive amount of experience of the sort known to most affect learning is not often available (e.g., Munro, Derwing, & Thomson, 2003; Munro & Derwing, 2008; Thomson, 2007; Thomson, 2011). Specifically, all forms of experience are not equal; the quality of experience also matters (Moyer, 2009; Thomson, Nearey & Derwing, 2009). In classrooms where there is a focus on providing higher quality input, improvement in pronunciation will likely be more rapid than without such explicit intervention. Higher quality input might include the teacher spending time raising learners' awareness of pronunciation features in an explicit way, rather than simply exposing them to input without directing their attention to auditory or articulatory features of pronunciation (e.g., Saito & Lyster, 2011). Ultimately, non-native accents rarely if ever entirely disappear, but learners can quickly become more intelligible and comprehensible with effective training.

Implications for teaching. The fact that adult learners can improve their pronunciation means pronunciation instruction is worth providing. At the same time, evidence suggests that attaining native-like pronunciation is an unrealistic goal, despite being sought after by many learners (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). Therefore, teachers and learners should be satisfied with improvements that result in more intelligible and comprehensible speech, rather than speech that sounds like a native speaker. This reality also means teachers should warn students who are tempted to pay large sums of money for accent reduction programs, particularly when there is no evidence such programs work. From Flege et al. (1995), it is quite clear that there are no known magic pills when it comes to pronunciation learning. It requires both hard work and motivation.

Teachers should make the most of limited class time by focusing on those aspects of pronunciation that are known to improve with the least amount of input. For example, suprasegmental features (e.g., word stress, intonation, rhythm, etc.) improve more rapidly than segmentals (i.e., vowels and consonants), and have a more noticeable impact on comprehensibility (e.g., Derwing, Munro & Wiebe, 1998). This means that it is probably more important to focus on suprasegmentals during class time while being satisfied with simply raising awareness about more complex phenomena, such as segmentals.

Myth 2: Pronunciation Problems are due to Weak Speech Articulators

The original source of this myth is uncertain, but many of its strongest proponents are Speech Language Pathologists, who often treat accent as though it were comparable to a speech disorder (Thomson, 2012a). Speech disorders often stem from weaknesses in speech-related muscles. Such muscle weakness can be developmental or be caused by traumatic brain injury or stroke, for example. When it comes to teaching pronunciation using strengthening exercises, it is important to ask whether the learner's articulators work in their first language. If they do, it is unlikely that stretching exercises will be necessary for improvement in L2 pronunciation.

Theme 2: Pronunciation in the ESL Classroom

This second myth also sometimes stems from a belief, which I have encountered in several conference presentations, that ethnicity affects jaw shape, and that these differences in physiology mean special exercise is necessary to improve pronunciation. As with the rest of this myth, there is no research that supports it, and simple anecdotal evidence immediately shows it to be false: children of immigrants and internationally adopted infants from many different ethnic communities who grow up in Canada have no difficulty acquiring the local pronunciation without articulation exercises.

Some presenters have also claimed that the tongue muscles used in producing L1 sounds are not the same as those used for producing L2 sounds, and therefore language specific muscles need to be developed. Any introductory course in phonetics is sufficient to falsify such claims. Vowels are not produced with language specific muscles, nor are most consonants. Thus, while it is certainly worth targeting problem sounds, a blanket application of this technique to all L2 sounds is largely inappropriate.

Another example that demonstrates the inaccuracy of this myth comes from the experience of L1 English speakers who are learning L2 Spanish and experiencing difficulty producing the trilled Spanish /r/. If the difficulty were with a speech muscle, one should expect that those who cannot produce the trill would gradually improve in its production, moving from an English /r/, to one that is more and more Spanish-like as the relevant muscle became stronger. In fact, this is not the experience of the hundreds of undergraduate phonetics students I have taught. Many English speakers produce the trill from the outset, while others never do. Those who acquire the Spanish /r/ later do so instantaneously, rather than gradually. In other words, they figure it out, by discovering where their tongue needs to be positioned, and by learning how to control airflow around and over the tongue. This experience is somewhat analogous to learning to ride a bike. There might be one or two false starts, but most go from not being able to ride a bike, to quite suddenly having figured it out. Like learning to ride a bike, producing new L2 sounds has more to do with muscle control than muscle strength.

There is overwhelming empirical evidence that rather than being caused by weak muscles, it is the perceptual similarity between L2 sounds and sounds in the learners' first language that predicts ease of acquisition (e.g., Flege, 1995; Thomson, Derwing, & Nearey, 2009). There is also evidence that perceptual training can lead to improvement in production (Thomson, 2011), even without teacher-instructed articulation practice. Thus, perceptual training (sometimes called aural training) is an essential, though insufficient, foundation for learning to accurately pronounce new sounds in new words.

In critiquing the myth that weak speech articulators are to blame for accent, I am not at all suggesting that it is not worth practicing the articulation of sounds. Although articulation difficulty is rarely if ever associated with weaknesses in speech muscles, there is quite obviously a need to rehearse new sounds in production. Automatization of L2 speech articulation can only come through practice.

Implications for teaching. The focus of pronunciation instruction should include at least as much attention to the development of perception as to production to enable learners to monitor their own speech. If learners cannot accurately perceive L2 sounds, it will be impossible for them to automatize correct pronunciation, unless a teacher or other interlocutor is always present to give them immediate corrective feedback on their pronunciation. In most pronunciation textbooks, attention is given to perceptual training, but it is rarely enough, for reasons that will be revealed when discussing later myths.

Myth 3: Vowels and Consonants are Stable Categories one can Talk about

Implicit in many pronunciation materials and activities is the assumption that if learners can perceive and produce a pronunciation feature accurately in one context, they have learned the category as a whole. In fact, even in other perceptual domains, this is not how categories are learned. For example, learning that a dining chair belongs to the category "chair" does not mean an English learner will automatically know that an armchair or swivel chair, is also a chair, or that (for most) a stool is not a chair. Categories must be learned through experience with multiple examples, in multiple contexts.

The same is true for learning phonological categories. All instances of the same English sound are not perceived the same way, even by native speakers (Flege's SLM, 1995). Rather, sound categories are highly variable clusters of sounds with shared properties that can only be recognized after massive amounts of exposure. In most cases, members of sound categories are quite clear for native speakers, without needing to give them a second thought (e.g., /l/ vs. /r/). This makes it surprising that nonnative speakers sometimes have so much difficulty learning what seem like such obvious English distinctions. There are also some instances where English categories are inherently ambiguous, even for native speakers. For example, English speakers do not all agree on whether particular instances of /ɪ/ vs. /ɛ/, intended as one or the other by a given speaker, are perceived as the intended vowel (Thomson et al., 2009).

In Thomson et al. (2009), it was also found that several productions of the same English vowel category (e.g., /æ/ as in *bat*), spoken by different speakers, although identified accurately by native speaker listeners, were heard as different vowels by Chinese learners of English. For example, the Mandarin speaking listeners in the study identified some of the native speaker English productions as belonging to the new English /æ/ category that they were trying to learn, while other productions were perceived as being the same as a Mandarin vowel /a/, which when used in Canadian English sounds more like /ɑ/, as in *hot*. What was particularly interesting was that the learners' perception of the English productions not only changed across phonetic contexts, but also within the same phonetic context, when produced by a different speaker. This suggests that for L2 learners, some native speakers may provide more salient examples of a category than other native speakers. The nature of such interactions will depend on a learner's first language, and his or her individual category boundaries.

Given these observations, it is important to provide learners with highly variable input that includes exposure not only to numerous native speaker voices, but also to the same category presented in many different phonetic contexts (e.g., the same English vowel after a variety of consonants). The benefits of this approach, referred to as High Variability Phonetic Training (or HVPT), were first established by a group of researchers over 20 years ago (Logan, Lively, & Pisoni, 1991). The efficacy of HVPT has subsequently been confirmed in many other studies, but has rarely found its way into pedagogical materials (Thomson, 2011; Thomson, 2012b).

Implications for teaching. Since phonemic categories are highly variable, learners need many examples of each category. The textbook by Dale and Poms (2004), *English Pronunciation Made Simple*, provides more variation than most texts. For example, it has students listen to sets of words such as *police, thief, machine* and *vision,* and then asks students to identify which word does not contain the target vowel. This type of activity provides phonetic variation within the same category (e.g., /i/), although it does not include multiple voices. Despite the fact that this material does not provide variation in terms of speakers, the activity is far superior to minimal pairs activities, which typically provide only one example of each category (e.g., *bit* vs. *beat*), produced by a single voice (see Thomson, 2011, for an overview).

Another resource that provides HVPT is www.englishaccentcoach.com. This website contains a game-like interface for learning English vowels and consonants, where learners can select to train at the level of syllables or words. Multiple voices are used, with increasing levels of complexity. For example, Levels 1 and 2 provide target sounds in phonetically controlled contexts, and learners must identify the sound they hear. At the highest levels, learners must identify target sounds in the stressed syllable of multisyllabic words, again with variation in both voices and phonetic contexts. As noted earlier, HVPT has been shown to help improve perception, and more recently, such improved perception has been found to transfer to production (Lambacher, Martens, Kakehi, Marasinghe, & Molholt, 2005; Thomson, 2011). While HVPT has shown promise, more research is needed to determine possible limits on its effectiveness.

Myth 4: Learning a Sound in one Word will Transfer to other Words

This myth is a natural companion to Myth 3. If categories of sounds in English are not stable but vary across speakers and words, it cannot be assumed that when an L2 English learner acquires a vowel or consonant in one word that that knowledge will automatically transfer to other words. Rather, learners will need to learn how the target sound is perceived and produced in each word individually, in order to approximate the variability found in the speech of native speakers as they acquire each vocabulary item. For example, Thomson and Isaacs (2009), and Thomson and Campagna (2010), found that learners' production of ten Canadian English vowels varied depending on how familiar the learners were with the word in which it occurred. For the English vowel /e/, found in the words *say, bake* and *gate,* the forty participants' pronunciation was most intelligible

in the word *say*, second most intelligible in *bake*, and least intelligible in *gate*. This order of intelligibility reflected participants' degree of self-reported familiarity with each word. The same pattern held for other vowels, which in most cases were the most intelligible when spoken in the most familiar words. Interestingly, this effect of familiarity on the pronunciation of a word's constituent sounds seems to be minimally influenced by a learner's first language. In these studies, no statistically significant differences in vowel intelligibility were found when comparing 20 Mandarin speakers with 20 Slavic language speakers (Russian and Ukrainian). Furthermore, since learners in these studies did not receive focused pronunciation instruction, it again seems as though experience is the main predictor of degree of non-native accent, even at the level of experience with individual sounds in individual words.

Implications for teaching. Although in the absence of focused pronunciation instruction, improvement seems to be predicted by learners' experience with particular words, it is reasonable to expect that intervention can speed up the transfer of sounds from one word to another. Intervention might occur by drawing learners' attention to the same vowel or consonant category found across multiple words, regardless of their frequency, or even in isolation from words. Some teachers suggest using keywords or colour words as reference points for particular vowels or consonants (Finger, 1985; Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). For example, the vowel in words like *reach, feed* and *team* can be taught in relation to the colour word *green,* which contains the same vowel. Finger (1985) provides suggestions for colour terms that can be used for each Canadian English vowel category.

Using minimal pairs activities can also help, but only if there are multiple pairs containing the same two vowels (e.g., *sit vs. seat, fit vs. feat,* and so on). It might be helpful to extend sound identification activities to include examples not only of pairs of sounds, but a variety of sounds, where one is the target to be identified. For example, learners might be asked to identify which words belong to the /i/ category, with reference to a keyword or colour word (e.g., work through a list of words, only some of which contain /i/, and ask learners to indicate when they hear a word that belongs to the "green" category).

Myth 5: It's Best to Teach Pronunciation in Communicative Contexts

This myth is in large part simply a by-product of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In the earliest forms of CLT, attention to linguistic form was viewed as largely unnecessary given the belief that simply communicating in the language will result in learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). More recent versions of CLT recognize that some focus on form within the context of a CLT approach is necessary, including focusing on pronunciation (Saito & Lyster, 2011). This form-focused instruction typically takes the form of the instructor intervening when the need arises, rather than explicitly targeting a particular form. For pronunciation, this ad hoc approach to teaching phonological form may not be as effective, if not used in conjunction with more explicit instruction.

Research suggests that attentional constraints can limit learning of particular linguistic features, and provides strong evidence that attention is directed toward meaning first, at the expense of attention to form (Schmidt, 2001). With regard to phonological learning, there is also clear evidence that less competition for attention from other linguistic features (e.g., meaning, vocabulary, etc.) promotes learning at the level of sound categories (e.g., Guion & Pederson, 2007). Even competition from other sounds in the same word may distract learners' attention away from target sounds. For example, Munro and Derwing (2008) report that beginning English learners of Chinese origin have difficulty perceiving and producing English vowels that are nearly identical to Mandarin vowel categories. In a later study, a comparable group of learners showed little difficulty perceiving and producing those same vowels (Thomson, 2011). The only difference between the two studies is in the method used to elicit production data. The first study required that speakers produce the vowels in a word containing a consonant + vowel + consonant sequence, while the later study had speakers produce the vowels in consonant + vowel sequence. Thomson (2011) hypothesizes that the difference in performance stems from the fact that Mandarin lacks a final consonant in most syllables. Study participants were likely trying to learn both the vowel and a final consonant simultaneously, which made it more difficult to produce the vowel.

There is some evidence that providing learners with both written and auditory models of a given word simultaneously helps to facilitate accurate pronunciation. Thomson and Isaacs (2009) found that learners' pronunciation was best when they produced words after hearing the words modelled and seeing their written form at the same time. When learners only read the words, without hearing an auditory model, or only heard the words without seeing the words' written forms, their pronunciation was worse. The authors concluded that seeing the written word allowed learners to activate meaning, after which attention to its form provided by the auditory model was easier. Without an auditory model, although learners could also activate meaning, they would have to rely on a possibly faulty mental model of pronunciation that they had formed previously.

Another issue with teaching pronunciation using an ad hoc approach is that it accommodates very little feedback for learners. Teachers are reluctant to constantly interrupt the flow of communication after every error in pronunciation. Thus, most errors must be ignored. This does not do much to promote learning, because feedback is essential in orienting learners' attention toward misidentified or mispronounced sounds (McCandliss, Fiez, Protopas, Conway, & McClelland, 2002).

Implications for teaching. Although it may now be increasingly common to introduce explicit, form-based instruction within the context of a CLT approach, with respect to pronunciation, research suggests that it is better to provide some explicit instruction in isolation from meaning-based activities. Ad hoc form-focused instruction as issues emerge during communicative activities is an important bridge between explicit pronunciation instruction and spontaneous communication, but on its own it is likely inadequate. Thus,

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a teacher might begin with phonetic training activities of the sort described in the previous two sections, before moving on to larger contexts of use in words, sentences and finally in spontaneous conversation.

Considering the use of multiple modalities of learning (i.e., visual and auditory), if reading is to be used to guide pronunciation learning, then the teacher must be careful to provide a very clear auditory model at the same time. If the teacher does not provide a model along with the written form, students may reinforce their own mispronunciations of the words being taught. It is may also be useful to spend some time focusing on pronunciation activities in the absence of any reference to orthography, which will force learners to consciously attend to phonetic form.

Conclusion

There are undoubtedly many other myths that inform pronunciation teaching practice. Those presented here are a few that I believe are particularly influential. In keeping with the overall theme of this article, teachers should consider one final myth.

Myth 6: Experts Never Create Myths

This myth needs no research-based motivation. There are instances in which experts, both self-proclaimed and even some in the scientific community, get it wrong. As new evidence emerges, some of the beliefs promoted in this article might ultimately be viewed as an oversimplification. Progress in understanding how best to teach pronunciation is incremental in nature and arriving at the "right" or "best" method is unlikely in any one person's lifetime. This is, in fact, the story of science. However, if teachers take a research-based approach to pronunciation instruction, benefits to students will be far greater than if they simply rely on intuition. Teachers should consider the origin of expertise. Teaching experience on its own does not make one an expert. Caution should be exercised when following the advice of self-proclaimed experts who are unfamiliar with research in this area, and who self-publish materials rather than follow the peer-review process.

Implications for teaching. Many teachers do not have the luxury of time or resources to keep up-to-date on the latest research findings in pronunciation learning and teaching. However, occasionally seeking out review articles (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2005) or book chapters (e.g., Derwing, 2008), or attending research-oriented presentations at teacher conferences can provide some basis for assessing pronunciation materials, and for selecting material that is most likely to reflect the state of the art. Perhaps more importantly, teachers should reflect on what they do in class, and regularly assess its impact. Teachers should test what they have read, what they see prescribed by textbooks and always be mindful that many teachers are experts too, and may have valuable advice.

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THE ETHICS OF PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

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Abstract

Is pronunciation teaching ethical? This issue is examined in light of claims regarding the global ownership of English and discussions on the need for a lingua franca core in the teaching of pronunciation. The specific catalyst occasioning this research involved a complaint lodged against a TESOL faculty member, whose elective English as a second language pronunciation course at the university level was being called into question. The complaint, filed with the university Human Rights and Conflict Resolution office by a faculty member from another discipline, alleged that the term "accent" was discriminatory. Although not explicitly stated, the underlying position of the complainant appeared to be that offering English as a second language pronunciation support courses constituted an unethical practice. The article synthesizes the responses to this case from members of an international pronunciation listserv defending the practice of offering English language pronunciation support courses to non-native speakers of English.

Pronunciation is the primary medium through which we bring our use of language to the attention of other people.

Stevick (1978, p. 146)

In English language teaching (ELT), pronunciation instruction is a well-established and respected practice, as evidenced by the wealth of graduate-level practical phonetics courses and teacher resource texts aimed at providing teachers-in-training and practitioners with guidance in how to effectively teach this skill area. As a result, ELT professionals tend to take for granted the notion that non-native English speakers (NNESs) place a high value on speaking English both fluently and intelligibly and that they value instruction in this skill area. This article critically examines the above foundational assumption and reports on a small-scale study asking members of an international pronunciation listserv to respond to the allegation that pronunciation instruction is unethical.

Background

The initial impetus for this study was an email, sent to one of the authors of this article (Brinton) by the article's other author (Butner). The email described a situation in which Butner's English as a Second language (ESL) pronunciation course was under investigation by her university's Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Office[1] following a complaint by a member of another faculty at her university. In the complaint, it was alleged that offering an English pronunciation course to NNESs constituted a form of discrimination. Specifically, the email appeal from Butner requested assistance in preparing the defense of her pronunciation course (H. Butner, personal communication, March 25, 2011):

> . . . I have been teaching a course in pronunciation support for the ESL department of our university using your book, *Teaching Pronunciation* [Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010], as a guide. This week, I was asked to appear before our university's Human Rights and Conflict Resolution office to defend this course and its promotion as there was a complaint from another professor, who specializes in multiculturalism, racism, and identity issues. The complaint is that promoting a course in pronunciation awareness or modification is unethical. I am asking for your advice on how to respond to this complaint.

> Pronunciation is an integral part of language. I see pronunciation support as a tool for students. I am not asking them to change their identity. I am helping them be aware of different patterns of stress, rhythm, and intonation as well as show that pronunciation can be seen, felt, and heard. Students set their own goals and the class is an elective, so only those interested in pronunciation issues register. I would really appreciate your advice or any articles that I could use to support my position.

Responding to Butner's initial request for assistance, Brinton sent the following email, empathizing with Butner's situation and offering her personal take on the situation. She also indicated that she would consult a group of pronunciation specialists to see if she could gather more thoughts on the issue (Brinton, personal communication, March 25, 2011):

> Thanks for your question. On first glance, I'd say your basic "defense" is entirely reasonable. In pronunciation teaching today, we often talk about "accent addition" rather than "accent modification." I believe we reference Olle Kjellin's work in the second edition of *Teaching Pronunciation* and this reference may be useful to you in formulating your response. You can also look at the sections of the text where we discuss English as a lingua franca and intelligibility on the whole as you may find useful information there.

> English is the most widely used lingua franca in the world. Speakers from all language groups who use ELF [English as a lingua franca] need to be able to communicate with a high degree of intelligibility. This is also true for those

NNSs who are using English in an English-medium environment. We have lots of evidence that intelligibility is a major factor in employment and in rising up the corporate "ladder" once hired into a corporate (or academic, or other) environment.

Especially given that your course is an elective, you are on firm ground with your university administration in defending your course on the grounds that only those students who feel a need to work on their English pronunciation enroll in this course.

Clearly this is a case of political correctness gone awry, and I sincerely hope that your university administration is able to see it as such. I have put your question out to a listserv of pronunciation specialists that I am a part of and will forward to you any responses that I might receive on the listserv. Please do let me know the outcome of this issue. I wish you the best of luck!

The setting

The case in question occurred at the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV), a community-focused university situated in Abbotsford, British Columbia with a population of about 14,000 students. Situated in the third most ethnically and culturally diverse community in Canada (Abbotsford School District, 2000), the university is committed to accessibility, teaching excellence, and lifelong learning.[2] UFV enrolls approximately 700 international students each semester from over 70 different countries. As well, UFV draws immigrant students from local ethnic communities and from all over the lower mainland, where according to the Vancouver School Board (2012) over 60% of all students speak another language at home. Regarding the demographics of the immediate area, 32.8% of Abbotsford residents indicate that English is not their first language (Immigration Partnerships and Initiatives Branch, 2006).

To support its NNES population, UFV has a dedicated ESL program offering courses specifically designed to respond to its diverse second language population. As described on the university's website: "The English Second Language program (ESL) at UFV is an academic preparation program that combines in-depth training in core language skills at six levels with a choice of electives to suit the individual needs of students."[3] The pronunciation course at issue forms part of the elective suite of courses[4] and thus only students interested in improving their pronunciation skills register for this course. Both international students and local immigrant students take advantage of this course offering.

The complaint

In the complaint filed with the university Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Office, the primary allegation was that the term "accent" was discriminatory. The complainant indicated that posters promoting the course and using the term "accent modification" could be deemed offensive, and also protested when the terms "L1" (first language), "L2" (second

language), "native speaker," and "non-native speaker" were used during the subsequent discussion. No suitable alternative descriptors were offered when Butner and the ESL department head asked for input during the face-to-face meeting in order to help resolve the concerns. Although not explicitly stated, the underlying position of the complainant appeared to be that offering ESL pronunciation support courses in accent improvement constituted an unethical practice. In particular, the complainant repeatedly questioned the pedagogical model being used and indicated that any pronunciation support focused on segmentals was particularly troublesome as this aspect of pronunciation was most closely connected with identity. The discussion ended with all parties agreeing to be sensitive to wording on promotional materials. No further complaints were raised after this meeting.

The listserv discussion

The listserv referred to above in Brinton's email is comprised of approximately 150 internationally-renowned pronunciation specialists. As a closed forum listserv, it allows membership by invitation only. Due to its invitational nature, the authors have been asked by the listserv moderator not to identify the listserv by name; instead, they refer to it with the pseudonym Etcetera. Informal in nature (its originator has characterized it as an online "Kaffeeklatch" for pronunciation specialists), members use Etcetera as a venue to discuss a wide range of issues of general interest in phonetics, phonology, and second language pronunciation instruction (e.g., differences in dialects in the English-speaking world, research into prosodic phenomena, the best techniques for teaching certain features of English pronunciation).

Following up on her promise to share Butner's quandary with members of Etcetera and to solicit ideas, Brinton posted the following message on the listserv, appending Butner's original email (Brinton, personal communication, March 25, 2011): "Hi all - Great to see many of you at TESOL. Here's a question I just received from a user of *Teaching Pronunciation*. Any thoughts I could pass along to her would be much appreciated!" The resulting discussion strand generated a considerable number of responses from Etcetera members. In total, 20 members responded (several of whom responded multiple times). All respondents took issue with the allegation that pronunciation teaching constituted an unethical practice, with many providing copious arguments in favour of pronunciation instruction for second language learners (the compiled discussion totals 6,186 words)[5] along with a wealth of research citations that could assist Butner in the defense of her course.

Conceptual Underpinnings

Before reporting the results of the Etcetera listserv discussion, several key concepts in pronunciation teaching should be foregrounded:

Accent

In lay terms, a native speaker (NS) tends to ascribe the term accent to a non-native speaker (NNS) whose pronunciation is discernibly different from the "native" variety. However, linguists tend to define accent more broadly. According to Derwing and Munro (2010), accent refers to the degree to which an individual's pronunciation differs from a given local variety. Thus for example, judging from a California standpoint, a speaker from another part of the English-speaking world such as New Zealand or a speaker from Alabama might both be considered to have an accent; similarly, a Greek immigrant living in California or a tourist from Japan just visiting the state might also be perceived to have an accent when speaking English. And even with the state of California, there are discernible differences in dialect that may result in the listener perceiving the speaker as having an accent.

Intelligibility and Comprehensibility

Attempts to define and measure intelligibility are central to the enterprise of pronunciation instruction. In what are probably the most universally cited definitions, intelligibility has been defined by Abercrombie (1991) as "comfortably intelligible" speech "which can be understood with little or no conscious effort on the part of the listener" (p. 93) and by Gimson (1989, p. 316) as "minimum general intelligibility" in which the message can be communicated efficiently to a native-speaking listener familiar with both the context and the given speaker's pronunciation. Derwing and Munro (2010), on the other hand, define intelligibility as "how much a listener actually understands" (p. 366). In an attempt to measure intelligibility, Morley (1994) presents a six-level intelligibility/communicability index for rating intelligibility and evaluating its impact on communication. Finally, closely related to intelligibility is the construct of comprehensibility, which entails the effort required for the listener to understand (Derwing & Munro, 2010). According to these researchers and Levis (2005), both intelligibility and comprehensibility are more appropriate goals for pronunciation instruction than the reduction or elimination of a NNESs' accent.

More recently, questions have surfaced regarding who bears the primary responsibility for intelligibility (i.e., the speaker or the listener). Lindemann (2011), for example, notes that listeners' attitudes toward NNESs (along with their beliefs about the speaker's language background) not only influence how they interact with NNESs but also how to judge their intelligibility. Ultimately, she claims, the listener bears some responsibility in the equation of NNES intelligibility.

The Ownership of English

In 1982, Strevens (as cited in Nayar, 1994) posed the then provocative question "Whose language is it?" (p. 6). Recent literature on this issue focuses on the spread of English as an international language (EIL) in the inner, outer and expanding circles (see Figure 1) and

the resulting proliferation of "international Englishes" (see, for example, Crystal, 2003; Kirkpatrick, 2007; McKay, 2002; Walker, 2010). Inner circle countries are those where English is spoken as an L1; outer circle countries are those where English serves as a very widely-used L2 in education, commerce, intra-national communication, and politics (often due to prior colonial influences); and expanding circle countries are those where English plays a role as an important lingua franca or language of wider communication (e.g., in education, business, government).
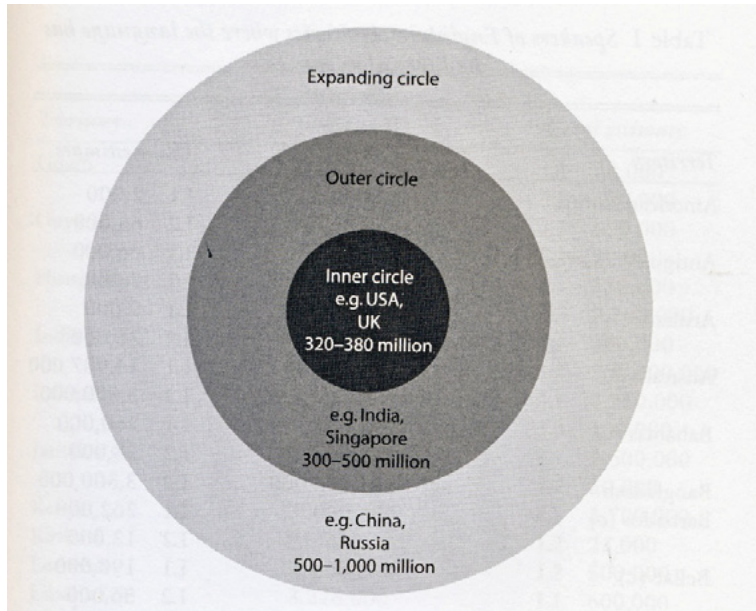

Figure 1. **The three 'circles' of English. Adapted from Crystal (2003), p. 61.**

The above authors, in discussing the conglomeration of "Englishes" that make up the English world, argue that today's language learners need to be aware of these multiple varieties if English language classrooms are to be credible. They also emphasize that in the context of EIL, the issue of retaining one's local or personal variation of English pronunciation has definite political overtones. As noted by Levis (2005):

> Decisions about adjusting accent are not value free because accents are intimately tied to speaker identity and group membership. Increasing evidence also shows that the context of instruction directly affects how pronunciation should be addressed. Users of English who interact professionally in inner-circle contexts may need to adjust to an inner-circle model, but English users in the outer or expanding circle may find that inner-circle models are inappropriate or unnecessary. (p. 376)

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Which Variety of English Should we Teach?

Closely related to the above issue is the question of which standard or variety of English should serve as the target in the classroom, e.g., General American (GA) English, British Received Pronunciation (RP), or a local variant of international English (e.g., Kenyan, Indian, or Singapore English). Brinton & Goodwin (2006) analyzed previous discussion strands from Etcetera to ascertain listserv participants' thoughts on this issue. They summarize the pronunciation specialists' thoughts as follows:

- Today, RP and GA remain the two major NS target models.

- In the past, these norms reflected the reality that NNSs used English predominantly to communicate with NSs.

- With the global spread of EIL, the traditional NNS/NS interlocutor model is increasingly being replaced by a NNS/NNS model, thereby diminishing the importance of NNSs being taught a native variant of English but increasing the overall importance and role of intelligibility in NNS/NNS conversational exchanges.

- Although the primacy of the NS/NNS interlocutor model may no longer be a valid one, many learners *do* still aspire to NS models.

- Given the global spread of Englishes, learners should be exposed to a variety of English regional accents (including international Englishes).

- They should be encouraged to determine their own target accent.

As Crawford (2005) states: "Increasingly teachers (and their students) must question *what* is situationally and socially acceptable and *who* decides this in the ever-expanding range of contexts in which English is being used as a global lingua franca" (p. 81).

Lingua Franca Core:

A final key issue is Jenner's (1989) notion of the "common" or lingua franca core (LFC) as a potential model for EIL speakers whose primary contact and use for English is as a lingua franca, that is, with other NNSs. Building on Jenner's concept of the LFC, Jenkins (1996, 2000) has carried out groundbreaking research identifying the pronunciation features of English that are most critical in ensuring the mutual intelligibility of ELF speakers (Walker, 2010; see also Kennedy, this volume). Jenner and other proponents of the LFC concern themselves with questions such as

- what pronunciation standards are appropriate given the global spread of English as a lingua franca;

- whether there is a trend away from Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) toward English as a lingua franca (ELF) as a model for pronunciation instruction;

- which pronunciation features are most critical to intelligibility for ELF speakers.

- While Jenkins' construct of the LFC is generally embraced in pronunciation teaching, most pronunciation specialists believe that a definitive description of how much deviation from the NS norm is acceptable under common core standards is still lacking.

Responses from the Etcetera Listserv Participants

The following points reflect the responses from Etcetera listserv participants (i.e., pronunciation specialists) regarding the "ethics" issue:

- Students are choosing to take this elective course due to a perceived need.

- ESL, English as a foreign language (EFL), and ELF speakers *all* need a high degree of intelligibility.

- Providing pronunciation instruction helps students become multicultural.

- This is *not* an issue of compromising individuals' cultural identity.

- The goal of pronunciation is accent *addition*, not accent eradication (see Kjellin, 1999).

- Many learners have strong instrumental motivation to modify their accent.

- It is unethical *not* to help those struggling with pronunciation issues.

Table 1 provides selected verbatim quotes from a representative sampling of the online responses, allowing further insight into the pronunciation specialists' thoughts on the topic.

Table 1

Selected verbatim responses from "Ectcetera" pronunciation listserv members

Respondent	Response
MJ	[This issue] has absolutely nothing to do with washing away someone's cultural identity, and everything to do with empowering immigrants to have a fighting chance in this tough economic climate. . . Speaking clearly and being understood without a struggle from the listener is a major concern of every immigrant student that I come in contact with.
GG	Pronunciation teachers sometimes get caught in the crossfire, mainly because pronunciation is so much more potentially salient as a social marker. I would argue back, if pronunciation ought to be cut, shouldn't also grammar courses, or any other language courses that might promote "correctness" or regularity of use, because such a course would be promoting the elevation of one language variety over others?
FJ	Surely the most successful learners (especially in areas like pronunciation and listening) are those who possess integrative motivation to associate themselves with the L2 community. It's simplistic to suggest that this necessarily entails renouncing their L1 culture or allegiances.

CG	I argue that rather than being improper or unethical to teach and correct pronunciation, it is a means of empowerment.
DT	I think it is unethical not to help people who struggle with intelligibility. People learn a second language because they want to communicate with others in that language -- if their pronunciation is interfering with that goal, it is wrong not to help them. We know now what some of the principle factors are those that will make an L2 speaker more intelligible, so it is our responsibility to use that knowledge to help our students. Students have their whole first language intact for their identity.
KV	Learners' views cannot be ignored; they must be taken into consideration when designing language courses.

Note. **All listserv participants are identified by a two-letter code to preserve anonymity.**

Research Base

An essential part of Butner's initial appeal was her request for resources from the literature on pronunciation teaching that might help bolster the defense of her elective pronunciation course. Etcetera members were quick to provide references, as summarized in Table 2 below (note that this is not an exhaustive list of studies on the topic but rather a listing of those provided by "Etcetera" members):

Table 2

Research studies supporting the efficacy of English pronunciation instruction

Source	Findings
Barrera Pardo (2004)	Synthesis of 25 empirical studies exploring the effect of pronunciation instruction. Empirical results of the studies confirm the positive effects of instruction. The author notes that the type of instruction, learner's needs and attitudes, and access to input are all determining factors in learner success in this skill area.
Cenoz and Lecumberri (1999)	Study of 86 first-year English students at a university in Spain investigating the beliefs on the acquisition of the phonetic component; all respondents considered pronunciation to be a very important skill.
Couper (2000)	Literature survey summarizing existing research findings. Rather than being improper or unethical to teach and correct pronunciation, it is a means of empowerment. Consensus in the research literature is that learners view pronunciation as being important and that teachers should teach it.
Couper (2003)	Results of action research involving pre- and post-course testing of learners' pronunciation along with a post course survey of students' reactions to the syllabus. The results show gains in pronunciation skills along with confirmation of learners' attitudes about the value of pronunciation teaching.

Derwing & Munro (2010)	Summary of research on the effectiveness of pronunciation teaching with reference to L2 phonological acquisition and the social implications of speaking with an accent. The authors stress the interrelatedness of intelligibility, comprehensibility, and accentedness, noting that the former two are the most suitable goals for the pronunciation classroom and can help increase its effectiveness, even in long-term L2 speakers.
Derwing (2003)	Survey of 100 students from 19 different language backgrounds. Ninety seven percent of the respondents believed it was important to pronounce English well. Fifty five percent felt that pronunciation played a part in their communication difficulties.
Fraser (2000)	Study across a wide range of contexts in Australia; all groups of learners either needed or wished to acquire a good level of pronunciation and regarded the acquisition of pronunciation as a very important element in the English language learning process; however, their teachers and/or programs/ courses failed to meet their needs and desires in this area.
Kanellou (2001)	Study of EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes to pronunciation in Greece; 80% of respondents believed that pronunciation should be allocated a very important place in the language classroom.
Peacock (1999)	Study of 202 EFL students in the English Department at the City University of Hong Kong; 52% of the respondents noted the importance of speaking a foreign language with an excellent accent.
Sobkowiak (2002)	Large-scale study involving 645 informants; 75% said they wished they had more pronunciation practice in their teaching institutions (university or teacher training college).
Waniek-Klimczak (2002)	Questionnaire survey of 120 first-year English philology students at the University of Lodz, Poland; virtually all respondents believed pronunciation to be an important aspect of language and aimed to achieve native pronunciation in English.
Waniek-Klimczak (2011)	Survey of 150 university students majoring in English. Seventy four percent of the respondents aspire to a native-like accent but recognize that this goal will be very difficult to achieve. They stress the need for fluency, the ability to be easily understood, and the desire not to have a "strong Polish accent."
Willing (1988)	Investigation of the cognitive style preferences of different ethnic groups. Findings revealed that, while pronunciation instruction is valued by all, there are differences in the value placed on such instruction according to ethnic background.

To summarize the findings of the research studies cited in Table 2, there is ample evidence that ESL/EFL students recognize the value of pronunciation instruction and rank it highly on the overall scale of importance in language learning (Cenoz & Lecumberri, 1999 Couper,

2000, 2003; Derwing, 2003; Fraser, 2000; Kanellou, 2001; Peacock, 1999;). Though students may aim for the acquisition of a native-like pronunciation in English (Waniek-Klimczak, 2002), they tend to recognize that this goal is both difficult to achieve and perhaps not entirely realistic (Waniek-Klimczak, 2011).

Some students note that pronunciation did not receive adequate emphasis in their previous ESL/EFL courses and attribute this inadequate instruction to their ongoing communication difficulties (Sobkowiak, 2002). Responses to pronunciation instruction may vary by linguistic group (Willing, 1988). Intelligibility and comprehensibility (rather than the reduction or elimination of accent) are the most suitable goals for the pronunciation classroom. These goals can help increase the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction, even in long-term L2 speakers (Derwing & Munro, 2010). Pronunciation instruction is a means of L2 learner empowerment (Couper, 2000).

Rationale for Pronunciation Instruction

To return to Stevick's (1978) quote at the outset of this article, pronunciation is indeed the "primary medium through which we bring our use of language to the attention of other people" (p. 146). NNESs are not only aware of the importance of effective English pronunciation in their daily lives, but they also tend to be hyper aware of the role that it plays in academic and professional advancement. They desire pronunciation support for a wide variety of reasons. They may, for example

- believe that their interlocutors exhibit negative attitudes toward the way they speak, which in turn makes them feel less confident;

- "sense" negative attitudes but are not clear of the source of (or reason for) such attitudes;

- simply not feel confident when speaking English in professional situations;

- have experienced gaps in their learning opportunities and want to change this (i.e., believe that they need more pronunciation support than they have already received);

- be pursuing pronunciation support courses purely for the pleasure of learning, or simply to help them identify what differentiates their spoken English from that of their native-speaker counterparts.

Extrapolating from the listserv participants' responses and the research studies that they cite, we can formulate the following rationale for offering ESL/EFL pronunciation courses. First, learners recognize the need for a high degree of spoken intelligibility in their second language. They further recognize the need for courses that provide them with support in the area of accent improvement. Pronunciation instruction in a second language does not eradicate an individuals' cultural identity but instead provides a source of empowerment for speakers of a second language. Providing these learners with effective pronunciation instruction is therefore not only a highly ethical practice but also a responsibility for all institutions serving ESL students.

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Conclusions

It is a virtually uncontested fact that most NNESs, especially those living and working in an English-medium environment, have encountered challenges in their daily lives related to their English pronunciation. Jenkins (2000) documents that pronunciation issues are responsible for approximately 70% of all intelligibility issues. Many NNESs, though aware of these challenges, may not be able to articulate specifically what makes their English sound non-native or what may have contributed to their lack of intelligibility in the case of communication breakdowns. To assist in addressing these issues, many seek private pronunciation tutoring or classes in accent improvement.

Ultimately, pronunciation classes such as Butner's provide a great service to second language learners and are a potential source of empowerment rather than a source of discrimination, as alleged in the complaint directed to the UFV Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Office. As Walker (2010) notes, the goal of pronunciation instruction globally is to assist NNESs to achieve a level of intelligibility that enables them to function effectively in work, community, and academic settings (i.e., such that they must not struggle to be understood). ELT professionals have a responsibility to respond to these concerns and to provide opportunities for NNESs to achieve their desired level of intelligibility. Kjellin's (1999) notion of "accent addition" rather than "accent eradication" (i.e., the claim that when learning a new language learners acquire an additional L2 accent rather than lose their L1 accent) is as timely today as it was when originally proposed—perhaps all the more so given the ethics question that spurred this study.

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Endnotes

[1] This office is responsible for ensuring that the university's Harassment Prevention and Institutional Ethics Policies are enforced and that members of the university community comply with British Columbia's Human Rights Code. Additional information on the services offered by this office is available at http://www.ufv.ca/hrcro.htm.

[2] To learn more about the university's mission, visit http://www.ufv.ca/About_UFV.htm

[3] For more information on UFV's ESL program, visit http://www.ufv.ca/esl/program.htm

[4] For elective course descriptions, visit http://www.ufv.ca/esl/course/elective.htm

[5] Responses ranged from 3 words in length ("I am speechless.") to 669 words in length.

WHOLE-GROUP INTERACTION DURING CONVERSATION GROUPS:

What language production opportunities do preservice ESL teachers create?

Kim McDonough and Teresa Hernández González, Concordia University

Abstract

This study investigates the whole-group interaction that occurred between preservice teachers and ESL participants during conversation groups that were organized as part of an English for academic purposes (EAP) program. Twelve conversation group sessions were facilitated by six preservice ESL teachers over a one-month period. Quantitative analysis of the whole-group interaction focused on the language production opportunities created by the preservice ESL teachers as reflected through the amount of talk and questioning styles in four interactional contexts: communication, content, management and explicit language. Additional insight into the preservice teachers' conceptualization of the conversation groups was gained through a qualitative analysis of their lesson plans and instructions for small-group activities. The findings indicate that although the preservice teachers produced more talk than the ESL participants, interactional contexts oriented toward content elicited the greatest amount of ESL participant talk. Implications are discussed in terms of the organization of conversation groups and the training provided to preservice teachers who facilitate conversation group interaction.

Theoretical perspectives differ in terms of the extent to which language production is believed to facilitate the linguistic development of second language (L2) speakers (for a summary see Muranoi, 2007). Among theories that acknowledge that language production serves important functions in L2 acquisition, two main orientations are apparent. The first orientation is associated with cognitive psychology, such as skill acquisition theory (Dekeyser, 2001, 2007), in which language production is considered a form of practice. In this model, learners first acquire declarative knowledge about form-meaning connections, and then develop procedural knowledge and eventually automatization, through

meaningful practice activities that target a variety of skills and modes. Without practice, learners are not able to develop procedures for accessing their declarative knowledge during spontaneous L2 use. The second orientation is associated with interactionist and social-cultural approaches, which hold that language production in socially-situated, interactional contexts is a source of learning. In these approaches, language production is inseparable from the social act of communication, and learning occurs as a result of the conversational adjustments that occur when interlocutors are engaged in the communication of meaning (Gass, 2003; Gass & Mackey, 2007; Long, 1996) or from the other- and self-mediation that occurs during the joint construction of knowledge (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain, 2006).

From a pedagogical perspective, the importance of language production for L2 learning is reflected through numerous approaches to instruction, such as communicative language teaching and task-based language teaching, which emphasize use of the target language in meaningful contexts in the form of "conversations" (Thornbury & Slade, 2006) or "instructional conversations" (Ellis, 2003). The perceived value of conversation for L2 learning is also apparent in extracurricular programs which are designed to provide L2 speakers with opportunities to interact with target language users in non-classroom settings. Some programs, such as community partnerships (d'Arlach, Sanchez, & Feuer, 2009) and tandem learning (Cziko, 2004), bring together groups of L2 speakers who are learning each other's languages. For example, d'Arlach et al. (2009) described a program in which university students studying Spanish as a foreign language regularly met Spanish-speaking members of their local community to enable both groups to communicate using their L2. Other programs have created opportunities for L2 speakers to volunteer in community organizations where there is a need to interact with the public using the target language (Hillyard, Reppen, & Vásquez, 2007). Similar partnerships have been arranged by programs within universities or between universities and schools to bring together L2 learners and more proficient speakers for tutoring, academic literacy, or assistance with service encounters (Ariza, 2003; Vann & Fairbairn, 2003; Williams, 2009; Young & Holmes, 1997). Finally, conversation groups, ranging in formality from drop-in language clubs that meet in coffee shops to organized meetings with a designated facilitator, also provide L2 speakers with language production opportunities outside the formal classroom (McDonough & Hernández González, in press; Ziegler, Ammons, Lake, Hamrick, & Rebuschat, in press).

Despite the prevalence of such extra-curricular programs, few empirical studies have analyzed the interaction that occurs among L2 participants or between L2 participants and community members. Instead, previous empirical studies have focused on L2 speakers' perceptions about the value of the experience (e.g., Williams, 2009, Young & Holmes, 1997) or have described how the activities facilitated the professional development of the participating preservice teachers (e.g., Johnson, 1996; Zainuddin & Moore, 2004). In light of theoretical and pedagogical claims about the role of language production in L2 learning, we believe it is important to identify the language production opportunities created during these extra-curricular programs. In particular, we investigate the nature of conversation

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group interaction to determine whether it shares characteristics with informal conversation or classroom discourse, particularly in terms of the amount and type of language production opportunities it provides.

Informal conversation consists of genuine communication in which interlocutors decide when and how to make contributions, check that meaning has been communicated successfully (such as through efforts to clarify and confirm), and nominate and change topics (Nunan, 1987). Previous comparative studies of informal conversation and classroom discourse have found that informal conversation is characterized by efforts to exchange unknown information and to clarify or confirm message content, which leads to a predominance of referential and clarification questions (Long & Sato, 1983; Pica & Long, 1986). In contrast, classroom discourse is often characterized by teachers' frequent use of display questions to elicit and evaluate learner knowledge and comprehension questions to verify that students have understood key content (e.g., Muscumeci, 1996; Nassaji & Wells, 2000). Empirical studies carried out in other educational settings have reported that interaction during face-to-face writing conferences shares similarities with classroom discourse, particularly the prevalence of tutor talk (Ewert, 2009; Patthey-Chavez & Ferris, 1997; Williams, 2004).

Differences in the interaction associated with instructional talk and informal conversation raise interesting questions about conversation groups. One possibility is that conversation groups may be similar to the interaction found in other educational settings, in which teacher talk during whole-group interaction is prevalent, and display and comprehension questions are the primary methods of eliciting learner talk. An alternative possibility, however, is that conversation groups share similarities with informal conversation due to the overarching goal of providing L2 speakers with opportunities to engage in meaningful, genuine communication. In this scenario, learner talk may be more prevalent, with the preservice teachers eliciting talk through referential questions. The current study aims to clarify these possibilities by identifying the types of language production opportunities that preservice ESL teachers create during conversation groups, focusing primarily on the interactional contexts and questioning styles that occur in whole-group interaction.

Method

Conversation Group Program

The conversation groups were organized in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program to provide optional, extra-curricular oral communication opportunities to any ESL speaker enrolled in a degree program at the university. Although the program offered two oral communication courses that could be taken for course credits, ESL students had expressed interest in less formal and expensive options for developing their oral communication skills. This was particularly true for students who were paying international tuition or whose programs did not allow the oral conversation course credits to count toward their degree requirements. The ESL participants paid a small administrative fee

($25) to participate in the conversation groups. Five conversation groups were organized, with one group held per weekday. All five groups met for ninety minutes (from 11:30 to 1:00) over a ten-week period. The EAP program hired university students from the MA Applied Linguistics and BEd TESL programs to monitor the conversation groups.

The EAP and TESL programs collaborated to incorporate the preservice teachers into the conversation group program, recognizing the experience as the practical training component of their first TESL methods course. The methods course covers general topics in ESL pedagogy, such as lesson planning, giving feedback, targeting language skills, giving instructions, and monitoring student learning. It was taught by a team of two instructors who collaborated throughout the semester. One instructor was responsible for delivering course content through lectures and assessing the preservice teacher's understanding of that content. The other instructor, who was the second researcher, helped the preservice teachers prepare for the conversation groups and facilitated peer and self-evaluation of the conversation group sessions. The TESL methods course instructors worked with the EAP program director to place teams of two preservice teachers with a monitor, whose conversation sessions the preservice teachers observed at the beginning of the semester. Each team of preservice teachers was responsible for facilitating 45-minute segments in four of the ten 90-minute conversation groups. For the four sessions when the preservice teachers facilitated the groups, the monitor began each session, led the first 45-minutes, and remained in the room after the preservice teachers took over. When one team member was facilitating, the other preservice teacher was video-taping, which was required as part of the assessment of the TESL methods course. The partnership between the TESL and EAP programs required that (a) the video-camera remain focused on the preservice teachers at all times, (b) only the ESL participants in the immediate proximity of the preservice teachers would be video-recorded, and (c) no additional audio-recording or data collection from the ESL participants be obtained.

Participants

The participants in the study were six preservice teachers who facilitated the conversation group sessions and the ESL participants who attended those sessions. The preservice teachers (3 men, 3 women) were enrolled in the TESL methods course described previously. Five teachers were in their late teens or early twenties, while the other teacher was in his early thirties. In terms of their self-reported language background, four teachers were French-English bilinguals, one was an English monolingual, and one was an English-French-Italian trilingual. All but one of the teachers reported having studied at least one second language previously, which included French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Polish. Two teachers reported prior experience teaching English or French through summer camps, individual tutoring, or volunteer activities, while four teachers reported no prior L2 teaching or tutoring experience. None of the preservice teachers reported any experience teaching ESL at the tertiary level or for adults.

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Due to the partnership agreement between the EAP and TESL programs, the researchers did not have access to individual ESL participant's personal information, and could not administer research tasks, such as biographical information questionnaires, during the conversation groups. However, general information about ESL participants was obtained through an interview with the EAP program director and the personal information that they shared during the conversation group sessions. The ESL participants were students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate degree programs at the same university as the preservice teachers. Some of the ESL participants were concurrently taking courses in the EAP program, but others had fulfilled all language requirements and were taking courses only in their degree programs. While some of the ESL participants were international students from a variety of countries (e.g., China, Korea, Japan, and Saudi Arabia), others were permanent residents of Canada or native Quebecers.

Data Coding

At the end of the semester, the video-recordings of the 12 conversation groups were transcribed by paid research assistants. The whole-group interaction between the preservice teachers and the ESL participants was analyzed quantitatively in terms interactional contexts and question types. The whole-class interaction was coded for the four interactional contexts identified in previous classroom research (Oliver & Mackey, 2003): explicit language, management, content, and communication.

Explicit language. The first context, explicit language, is interaction in which the preservice teachers provided or elicited knowledge about language form, which could include vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation, and the ESL speakers asked or answered questions about language form. In (1), the teacher is introducing the topic of "habits" and stopped to clarify vocabulary.

(1) T: *if I'm talking about habits in the past—a habit you know? You guys know*

what habits are?

S: *yeah*

T: *yeah? Give me an example of a habit*

S: *soccer*

T: *yeah playing soccer*

Management. Management refers to interaction in which the preservice teachers talked about the organization of activities, such as starting and ending the conversation groups, giving and clarifying instructions, allocating turns. In (2) the teacher is giving instructions.

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(2) T: *so we just spent a few minutes reviewing winter clothing, right?*

What we're going to do today is I'm going to have you guys go through a system

of buying and selling winter clothing

S: *oh really?*

T: *right yeah exactly*

Content. Content refers to interaction in which the preservice teachers provided or elicited information about the topic, theme, or language use context that was the focus of the conversation group session. They often checked whether the ESL speakers understood key terms and concepts and then asked them to discuss a topic or theme. In (3) the teacher is eliciting opinions about the ethics of keeping money found in a lost wallet.

(3) T: *so even if you know you're going to go to jail for stealing*

S1: *you didn't steal it, you found it*

T: *oh is that a difference? What do you think about this?*

S2: *I think he should take the money*

Communication. Communication is interaction in which the preservice teachers engaged the ESL participants in an exchange of information that did not directly support the topic or activities that were the main focus of the conversation group session. Communication segments occurred when the teachers created opportunities for follow-up questions, the ESL participants nominated topics, or the teachers shared personal information or gave an opinion to illustrate a concept. These contexts included the exchange of information about topics that arose during the session, such as shared interests and personal information. In (4), the teacher has concluded the main activity of the session, which involved a search for words with affixes in newspaper articles, and is chatting with the ESL participants about books and movies.

(4) T: *Have you read Harry Potter?*

S: *yeah*

T: *in Chinese or English?*

S: *in English*

T: *oh that's hard. There's a lot of silly words in Harry Potter*

The whole-group interaction was also coded in terms of the types of questions asked by the preservice teachers. Four question types previously reported in comparative studies of informal conversation and classroom discourse (e.g., Brock, 1986; Long & Sato, 1983; Pica & Long, 1986) were coded: referential, comprehension, display, and clarification.

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Questions that elicited information unknown to the facilitators were coded as referential. They occurred as yes/no questions (e.g., *do you guys agree? did you find this activity helpful?*), *wh*-questions (e.g., *what do you think are good qualities for a doctor? why do you think it's a disadvantage?*) and declarative sentences with rising intonation (e.g., *same two again? she's your only friend?*).

Comprehension questions are a subset of referential questions that served to establish whether the ESL speakers had understood something previously mentioned by the facilitators, such as a word, concept, or instructions. They occurred as yes/no questions (e.g., *do we all understand what an adjective is? do we all understand that?*) and declarative utterances with rising intonation (e.g., *everyone knows what it means? everybody understands?).*

Display questions are those that elicited information already known to the facilitators in the form of *wh*-questions (e.g., *what is an adjective? what's another word for sadness? what's the noun form?*) or declarative utterances with rising intonation (e.g., *the adjective is? another synonym for that?*).

Clarification questions verified information previously supplied by an ESL speaker in form of single word utterances (e.g., *sorry? what? Russia?),* declarative utterances with rising intonation (e.g., *you said you wanted to be a lawyer? I'm sorry?*), yes/no questions (e.g., *is that what you said?*), and *wh*-questions (e.g., *what exactly do you mean by looks friendly?*).

Finally, the pair and small group activities that were implemented by the preservice teachers could not be analyzed quantitatively in terms of the quantity of talk or question types. Instead, we carried out a qualitative analysis of the teachers' lesson plans, instructions for pair and small group activities, and whole-group comments after the pair/small group activities to gain further insight into conversation group interaction. We identified four types of pair/small group activities that were implemented in the conversation group sessions: service encounters, careers, personal interest topics, and language practice.

Service encounters occurred in two conversation groups in which the preservice teachers asked the ESL participants to assume defined roles and simulate interaction between shoppers and salesclerks or between customers and wait staff. Career-oriented pair/small group activities occurred in two conversation groups in which the preservice teachers asked the ESL participants to carry out a debate of the personal attributes needed to succeed in different careers and a decision-making task to select the most qualified applicant for a specific position. Pair/small group activities involving topics of general interest were implemented in five conversation groups, in which the preservice teachers nominated topics such as music, celebrities, vacations, daily routines, and hobbies for the ESL participants to discuss. Finally, language-focused pair/small group activities were implemented in three conversation group sessions, during which the preservice teachers asked the ESL participants to locate words with prefixes and suffixes in newspaper articles or to construct

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sentences or paragraphs involving specific language forms (e.g., adjectives and past tense).

After establishing the coding categories, we independently coded one conversation group and met to clarify definitions and identify examples of each interactional context and question type. An example of the coding of interactional contexts across turns is provided in (5), in which the preservice teacher is facilitating a report of the narratives that the ESL participants had written during a pair activity. The first turn (a), in which S1 begins to read his narrative, was coded as content. In response to background chatting (turn b), the preservice teacher asks the participants to pay attention in turn c, which was coded as management. S1 continues reading his narrative in turn d, which was coded as content. The teacher's feedback move and the student's responses in turns e, f, and g were coded as explicit language. The teacher's comments about the student's narrative and the confession that he didn't remember the next team's name was coded as communication (turns h & i), after which he requested that the next group to read their narrative (turn j), which was coded as management.

(5) Interactional contexts across turns

a)   S1:   *when I woke up yesterday, I got a letter which was written by my friend--*

b)   SS: (background chatting)

c)   T: *Shh! Guys, listen, ok?*

d)   S1:   *--who usually, uh wrote letters In that letter, he told me that his favourite soccer team won the game. My favourite team lost the game. I couldn't understand how it happened. After that, I tore the letter and throw it to the garbage.*

e)   T: *threw it <u>into</u> the garbage!*

f)   SS: (laughs)

g)   S1:   <u>*into*</u> *the garbage*

h)   T: *It's good. I feel bad—I feel sorry for your friend! Okay, team J, right?*
      Because I don't remember your name.

i)   SS: (laughs)

j)   T: *Uh please read your uh your—whatever you have in front of the class*

Because the preservice teachers often took long turns with more than one interactional context, we decided to take contexts, rather than turns, as the unit of analysis. In (6), the example begins with the preservice teacher wrapping up a practice activity by reviewing the language form the ESL participants had been using (adjectives). This explicit language context continues through the first three lines of turn e, after which the context shifts to

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management (*okay so now...*) when the teacher starts to describe the next activity and give instructions.

(6)   Multiple interactional contexts within a turn

a)   T: *so uh what would you say we were practicing the most? What words?*

b)   S6:   *adjectives*

c)   T: *adjectives!*

d)   SS: (laughs)

e)   *Okay good did you forget the word? Okay so that was adjectives so that was— those were all different forms of adjectives, so you can have uh ones that uh mostly focus on senses...Okay so now we're going to go on to another activity. And this is going to be an activity where we describe a celebrity, ok? So we're going to go into groups of two, so if that's you two right there, and then you and then you two. Uh and we're going to describe celebrities. So here's the paper and it has some celebrities and uh on the back, there are four spaces per celebrity. And you're going to write the four adjectives that first come to your mind when you're describing these celebrities, ok? Is that good for everybody? Alright, so you're going to be in pairs, and you can just discuss and come up with mutual consensus* (hands out papers)

After establishing contexts as the unit of analysis and discussing context boundaries, we then independently coded six transcripts and met to compare our analysis. If one researcher missed an interactional context or question that had been coded by the other researcher, then it was considered a coding omission (rather than a disagreement) and was subsequently included in the dataset (5% of the interactional contexts and 2% of the questions were missed by one researcher). Simple percentage agreement between the researchers was 97% for interactional contexts and 98% for questions. Disagreements were resolved through discussion, and the final decision was included in the dataset. Having established agreement as to the coding categories, the first researcher then coded the remaining six conversation groups.

Results

Whole-group Interaction: Talk, Contexts, and Questions

The conversation groups ranged in length from 27 to 50 minutes (rounded to minutes), with a median length of 46 minutes. In terms of the distribution of time, the preservice ESL teachers spent a median of 26 minutes engaged in whole-group interaction (range = 21 to 45 minutes) and asked the ESL participants to carry out pair/small group interaction for a median of 15 minutes (range = 3 to 25 minutes). In other words, the preservice teachers spent approximately two-thirds of each conversation group leading whole-group

interaction. The number of ESL participants ranged from three to 11, with a median of eight participants per conversation group. In terms of the types of language production opportunities provided through the conversation groups, we first considered the amount of talk in turns and words produced by the preservice teachers and ESL participants. When the quantity of talk was considered in terms of turns, there was close to equal distribution of turns taken by the preservice teachers (51%) and the ESL participants (49%). However, when considered in terms of words, the preservice teachers produced 70% of the words that occurred in whole-group interaction (31,850/45,279), while the ESL participants produced only 30% (13,429/45,279) of the total words. This indicates that the preservice teachers took much longer turns than the ESL participants.

Next, we identified how frequently the four interactional contexts (explicit language, management, content, and communication) occurred in whole-group interaction. A total of 463 contexts were identified in the data set. The number of interactional contexts ranged from 10 to 76 with a median of 35.5 contexts per conversation group. The variation was due to differences in the preservice teachers' styles, as some teachers frequently switched between contexts, such as alternating between commenting on content and managing the ESL participants' turns, while other teachers spent more time in a particular context. Management contexts occurred most frequently (45%) followed by explicit language (26%) and content (23%), with few communication contexts occurring in the data (9%).
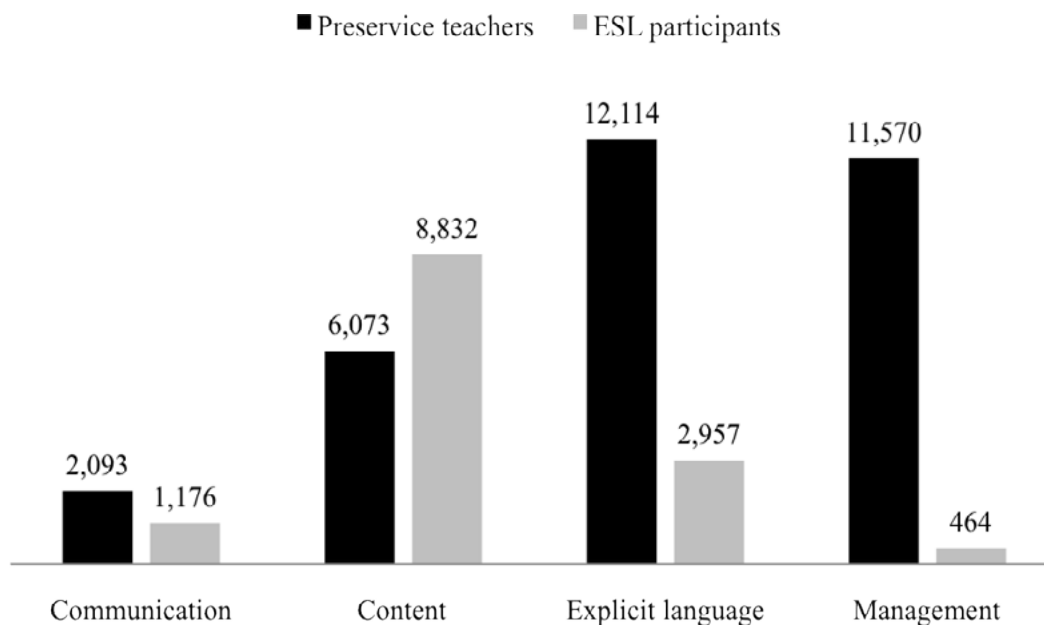

Figure 1. **Number of facilitator and ESL participant words by interactional context.**

We next considered whether the preservice teachers' tendency to produce more language than the ESL participants was consistent across the four interactional contexts. As shown in Figure 1, the preservice teachers produced more words during communication, explicit

language, and management contexts. The gap between the amount of talk generated by the preservice teachers and the ESL participants was greatest during management (96% and 4%, respectively) and explicit language (80% and 20%, respectively) but was less disproportionate during communication contexts (64% and 36%, respectively). However, during content interaction, the ESL participants generated more talk (59%) than the preservice teachers (41%).

Our next analysis considered whether the quantity of language produced by the ESL participants' across the interactional contexts was related to the preservice teachers' questioning styles. Because they showed similar patterns, management and explicit language (e.g., preservice teachers dominated) were combined as were the communication and content (e.g., more equitable distribution of talk). As illustrated in Figure 2, the preservice teachers used comprehension and display questions during management and explicit language contexts, but these question types rarely occurred in content and communication contexts. In contrast, preservice teachers used referential and clarification questions more frequently in content and communication contexts.
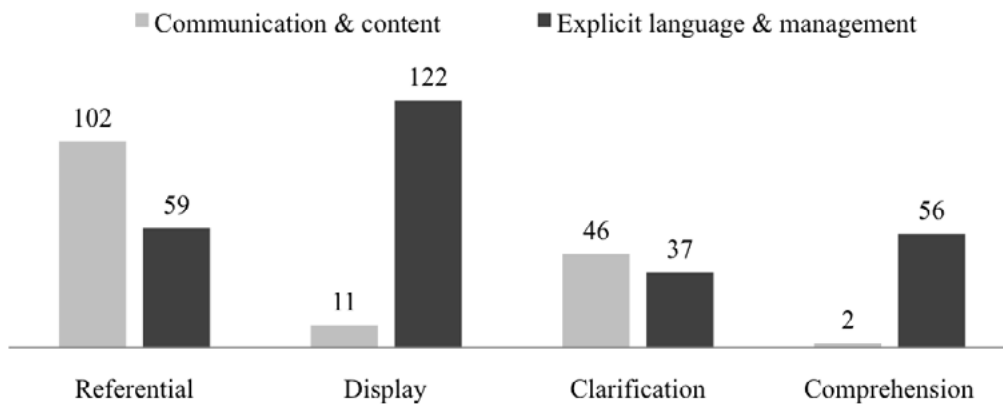

Figure 2. **Number of preservice teachers' question types by interactional context.**

To summarize the quantitative analysis of the whole-group interaction, the preservice teachers produced more language than the ESL participants overall, with this tendency most prevalent during management and explicit language contexts. They elicited more talk from the ESL participants when the whole-group interaction was oriented toward communication and content, during which they asked more referential and clarification questions.

Conceptualizing Conversation Group Interaction

By combining the quantitative findings for interactional contexts and questioning styles with a qualitative analysis of the teachers' lesson plans, instructions for pair/small group activities, and whole-group reports after pair/small group activities, three conceptualizations of conversation groups emerged in the data: language practice, role-plays, and discussions. The conceptualization of conversation groups as language practice was apparent in seven of the 12 sessions. This orientation was evident in the lesson plans when the preservice

teachers stated objectives in terms of learning or practicing specific language forms. For example, one preservice teacher stated that the objective for the conversation group was for the ESL participants to learn "the various prefixes and suffixes that one can add to words to create antonyms." In this approach to conversation group interaction, the preservice teachers began by introducing a language form as the focus of the session and eliciting the ESL participants' existing knowledge. The target language forms included adjectives, past tense, prefixes/suffixes, concrete/abstract nouns, and idioms. The preservice teachers then led whole-group practice activities in which individual ESL participants generated words, phrases, or sentences with the target form. The nature of the whole-group practice is illustrated in (7), in which the teacher asks the ESL participants to provide the past tense forms of various verbs.

(7) Conversation groups as language practice: Whole group practice

T: *if I'm asking you what you did yesterday and the verb is study what would you say you did yesterday?*

S1: *uh I did uh I didn't uh*

T: *we're using the word study…you're conjugating the verb study not doing*

S1: uh *okay…just study?*

T: *yeah in past tense yesterday…you're telling me what you did yesterday and the word is study*

S1: *I studied*

T: *perfect okay let's see how we do this…arrive*

S2: *arrived*

T: *kick*

S3: *kicked*

T: *watch*

S4: *watched*

Following the whole-group practice, the preservice teachers gave instructions for pair/small group activities that involved the manipulation of language form, such as writing sentences using verbs that had been provided, guessing games using the target form, stating whether they liked or disliked nouns that had been provided, jumbled sentence activities, and searching for the target form in newspaper articles. After the ESL participants completed these activities, the preservice teachers led a whole-group report of the language forms that the ESL participants had talked about. In the conversation groups as language

practice sessions, management and explicit language contexts were more frequent than communication or content contexts, and the preservice teachers tended to ask display and comprehension questions.

The conceptualization of conversation groups as role plays was evident in three of the twelve sessions. The preservice teachers stated the objectives of these conversation groups in terms of the types of language use contexts to be practiced. For example, one preservice teacher wrote in her lesson plan that the objective was for the students to "use appropriate utterances to ask and answer basic questions related to purchasing winter clothing." In these sessions, the preservice teachers began by introducing a language use context and eliciting or providing the words and sentences typically used in that setting. The language use settings that the preservice teachers selected were ordering in restaurants, buying clothing, and being interviewed for a job. Functional expressions and useful vocabulary for these encounters were written on the board. The teachers then modeled a role play with the team member who was video-recording or with a volunteer ESL participant. After modeling the role play, the teacher distributed role play activities to the ESL participants to carry out in pairs or small groups. After the ESL participants carried out the role plays, the preservice teachers led a whole-group report. As illustrated in (8), the whole-group report involved the teacher asking individual ESL participants about their role play conversations.

(8) Conversation groups as role plays: Whole-group report

T: *what did you buy today?*

S1:   *I bought a down vest and--*

T: *--a down vest yes*

S1:   *a down vest yes and a parka*

T: *a parka yes very good*

S1:   *and a sweater*

T: *yes*

S1:   *and leather gloves*

T: *and leather gloves and where did you buy these things?*

S1:   *from Xue's store*

T: *very good, thank you very much, next S2 what did you buy today?*

In the conversation groups as role plays, the most frequent interactional context was content, and the teachers' questioning style included a relatively equal number of display and referential questions.

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Finally, the conceptualization of conversation groups as discussions was evident in two of the 12 sessions. This orientation was evident in the lesson plans when the preservice teachers stated objectives in terms of the task or decision that the ESL participants were to accomplish. For example, one preservice teacher stated that the objective for the conversation group was for the ESL participants to "choose a particular candidate with a set of descriptions and qualities in the context of a work place and provide arguments backing up their choices." In this approach to conversation group interaction, the preservice teachers introduced the content focus of the session and explained the topic for discussion. The topics that the teachers selected were ethical dilemmas in which the ESL participants presented their opinions and discussed how they would respond in various scenarios such as finding a wallet, and occupational qualifications in which they discussed which applicant they would hire for a particular position. After the ESL participants were asked to share opinions, give reasons for their opinions, and respond to the opinions of others in small groups, the teachers then led a whole-group report. During the report phase, the teachers asked the ESL participants to share their opinions and provide reasons for their opinions, as illustrated in (9).

(9) Conversation groups as role plays: Whole-group report

T: *Did anyone choose Gabrielle?*

S4:   *yeah we chose Gabrielle*

S3:   *me too*

T: *why?*

S4:   *because she's very young so she has a lot of energy for work at night and during the day. And for her kids, it's her problem and she need to care about this problem...she choose to have two kids so now she need to manage this*

S3:   *she worked customer service it's uh evidence of high social skills*

S4:   *and she's organized and she has uh good management skills*

T: *uh-oh it looks like Shelly has a problem with her* (laughs)

S1:   *yes I can't hire this girl, because just she's only 25 and she already has two young children, so it means they're going to be sick, they're going to break their legs, uh they going to have problems at school, so it becomes teenagers, so it will have some other problems....*

These conversation groups had more interactional contexts involving content and the teachers' questioning style consisted almost exclusively of referential and clarification questions. Rather than begin the sessions with a preselected language focus, the teachers provided language forms when they perceived the ESL participants as needing assistance. For example, in (10) and (11) the teacher provided lexical items when the ESL participants

were searching for an appropriate word, after which the conversation between the ESL participants resumed.

(10) Providing lexical items: Multi-tasking

S1:   *I think it's very interesting to somebody who can do…multi…capacity?*

T: *multi-tasking?*

S1:   *multi-tasking it's doing many activities and interests*

S5:   *yeah but many other activities and interests is a negative thing*

 (11) Providing lexical items: to fire

S2:   *so if the man is all alone and he has to do his work and he is not doing his work he will be…uh…I will uh…*

T: *fire? To fire somebody?*

S2:   *yes okay I will fire him so he doesn't really have a choice to be lazy*

S4:   *but it's not negative to be lazy*

Another characteristic of the whole-group interaction was the teachers' reformulation of the ESL participants' utterance. In (12) the ESL participant was providing an opinion about whether governments have the right to torture prisoners if the information obtained saves lives. After S6 finished stating his opinion, the teacher reformulated what he had said and sought clarification.

(12) Reformulating ESL speaker's contributions

S6:   *but actually, to come back to the argument, is that really we have the power or we have the rights to torture person in order to say, we keep uh the society uh safe or we keep the security…we ask that uh you love the country or you love the government but it's not justifying saying we can have the rights to take a life of another person*

T: *okay so you think it's okay to torture in this case because you're going to keep the city safe…so we have the right to torture a person in order to keep others safe?*

S6:   *no actually I argue that we don't have the right to torture others*

T: *you don't have the right?*

S6:   *yeah*

In sum, the conversation groups organized as discussion sessions generated language production opportunities in which the ESL participants' ideas and opinions were the main focus and language forms were provided as they arose during conversation.

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Discussion

The present study analyzed the type of language production opportunities that preservice teachers created through whole-group interactions during conversation groups. The quantitative findings revealed a prevalence of teacher talk, which is similar to the teacher-fronted discourse previously reported in L2 classroom and writing conference research (Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007; Ewert, 2009; Salhberg & Boci, 2010; Williams, 2004). The findings also indicated the preservice teachers' whole-group interaction involved management and explicit language contexts most frequently, with the number of content and communication contexts fewer than has been reported previously (Oliver & Mackey, 2003). These findings are consistent with a view of a teacher as a knowledge holder and discourse manager that has been described in L2 classroom discourse (Nassaji, 2000). However, when the preservice teachers implemented whole-group interaction oriented toward content, the ESL participants produced more language than in other contexts, which parallels the findings of classroom-based studies which reported differences in student participation based on interactional context and content focus (Huang, 2011; Oliver & Mackey, 2003).

In terms of the different theoretical perspectives about the role of language production in L2 learning highlighted in the introduction, the majority of the conversation group sessions illustrated a view of language production as practice. Ten conversation group sessions reflected this orientation, which was apparent through the teachers' use of display and comprehension questions to establish or review declarative knowledge, and their provision of pair/small group activities that involved language practice. In this conceptualization of conversation groups, form appears to receive greater priority than meaning, as the whole-group and small-group interaction served as vehicles for practicing form. In this model, the teacher functioned to provide and sanction knowledge, check for accuracy, and allocate turns. In contrast, two conversation groups reflected the view of language production as socially-situated learning. These groups were organized around decision-making tasks that required discussion and debate of ideas and reasons, and were characterized by whole-group interaction in which the teacher asked referential and clarification questions, provided lexical items, and reformulated the ESL participants' ideas.

The findings suggest that it may be beneficial for preservice teachers to develop greater awareness of language production as socially-situated learning. Concrete suggestions about questioning styles (such as those found in Abd-Kadir & Hardman, 2007; Nassaji & Wells, 2000) may help preservice teachers become aware of the types of questions that are associated with non-instructional contexts, as opposed to the display and comprehension questions typically found in L2 classroom discourse. Raising their awareness of more diverse roles, such as organizer, prompter, or observer, may also help them create whole-group interaction in which they do not feel responsible for managing the discourse or serving as the primary knowledge holder (Téllez & Waxman, 2006). By adopting more diverse roles, the preservice teachers may be able to create community-driven conversation

groups in which all participants feel able to contribute to the exchanges by nominating and changing topics or serving as a knowledge-holder (Smit, 2010).

The ability to conduct interactive classroom discussion has been recognized as an important skill for teachers of various subjects, including math, science, and English (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Rosaen, Lundeberg, Terpstrac, Niu, & Jing, 2010). Huang (2005) reported that successful discussions in university business classes require teachers who have a large repertoire of question styles, including those targeting higher levels of thinking in Bloom's taxonomy of questions (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation), tolerance of silence to allow thinking time, active listening techniques, strategies for encouraging dialogue among students, and techniques for helping students clarify their thoughts. Teachers who engage in successful discussions reflect the conceptualization of language production as socially-situated learning, and awareness of these characteristics may help preservice teachers expand beyond a conceptualization of conversation as a vehicle for language practice.

By structuring conversation groups as content-based discussions, preservice teachers can also help serve the oral academic needs of university students. Previous studies have indicated that ESL students in higher education contexts report difficulty participating in whole-class discussions in their academic courses (Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004; Ferris, 1998; Kim, 2006; Leki, 2001;Tardy, 2004). In discussing her findings, Kim (2006) suggested that EAP programs simulate the academic oral communication tasks that are frequently used in university content courses. In particular, ESL speakers may benefit from consciousness-raising activities that make explicit the value typically attached to active oral participation in university classrooms. Conversation groups that build proficiency in oral academic English and the discourse of specific disciplines may be particularly useful for ESL students who are studying in higher education programs. In particular, knowledge of university lectures discourse can be helpful for university students (Dafouz Milne & Núñez Perucha, 2010); incorporating mini-lectures followed by small-group and whole-group discussion into conversation groups may be helpful for academically-oriented ESL students.

We are currently examining the impact of peer and instructor feedback on the development of preservice teachers' whole-group interaction. We have integrated the findings of the current study into peer and instructor feedback rubrics designed to raise the preservice teachers' awareness of the interactional contexts they create during the conversation groups and how the amount of talk produced by ESL participants is impacted by their interactional contexts and questioning styles. By comparing the interaction that occurred in conversation group sessions before and after the preservice teachers receive feedback and analyzing their reflective essays, we hope to identify which types of feedback were useful for promoting their professional development. Our future studies may also analyze the conversation group interaction that occurred during the session led by the monitors, who were hired by the EAP program, in order to explore how more experienced ESL

instructors facilitate conversation groups. Additional avenues for future research include studies that elicit the perceptions of the ESL participants in order to gain more insight into what types of conversation group activities they believe are most helpful, and case studies that focus on the professional development of the preservice teachers across consecutive practical training experiences. Although it is not possible in our context, using audio-recording equipment to supplement the video-recording would provide insight into the ESL participants' language use during small-group interaction, which would provide a more complete view of the language production opportunities provided to ESL participants during conversation groups.

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"COMPLETE SENTENCE!"

What teachers need to know about spoken language

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Abstract

The development of large-scale corpora of spoken and written language has allowed applied linguists to describe language in use. One of the consequences of this research has been the discovery that informal spoken language has a number of syntactic and lexical features that make it distinct from more formal varieties of spoken and written language. These discoveries have not found a place in ESL/EFL classrooms where the tendency for teachers to value a variety of language viewed as correct and standard over communicatively effective spoken language often dominates. The author argues that while the place of spoken language in some second language (L2) teaching contexts remains subject to discussion, it is time for teachers to recognize the importance of conversational language.

The title of this paper is a quotation from a teacher in a community ESL class teaching a lesson on the semi-modal *be going to*. When a student, reading from an exercise, asked another "What are you doing after class?" the second student answered, "eat lunch." The teacher then said, "complete sentence!" a directive that prompted the student to produce, with some hesitation, the expected response: *After class I'm going to eat lunch*. The student understood the teacher's utterance (i.e., *complete sentence*) to mean that he was to produce a complete and grammatical sentence including the correct form of *be going to*. It should be noted that although the teacher's directive is not a complete sentence, it was understood by the learner. This exchange between teacher and student is in fact very efficient communication. Members of the class, at least the learner in question, have likely learned from past experience that when practicing a grammar rule, complete sentences are expected and a short prompt from the teacher serves to remind learners of the expectation.

Anyone who has spent time teaching or learning English as an additional language knows why the teacher wanted a full sentence, meaning a sentence with no syntactic, morphological, or lexical non-standard features, and one that included at least a subject

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and verb. First, the teacher may have been trained to expect that to learn the language, learners need practice producing complete sentences. Secondly, and importantly for the purposes of this paper, it is likely that the teacher viewed *eat lunch* as "not good English" because the structure was not a complete sentence and, therefore, did not follow the rules of formal pedagogical grammar. Carter and McCarthy (1995) have noted that teachers often believe that "many of the grammatical features observable in everyday, unplanned conversation are simply wrong and are corruptions of and lapses from standards enshrined in the scholarly grammars" (p. 142).

If a teacher values grammatical accuracy over communicative efficiency and views spoken language as less than acceptable, the teacher is unlikely to encourage students to learn and use that variety of the language, despite the fact that this variety of the language is most commonly used by proficient speakers. It is likely also the one most needed by learners who study the language in order to communicate in second language environments. The teacher's two-word utterance demonstrates a number of important characteristics of informal spoken language: that it is efficient, that it is embedded in a context in which interlocutors share knowledge of what is being talked about, and that there are conventions and norms of communication to observe.

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest that teachers both value and understand the variety of the language in question. They recognize that informal spoken language has conventions and rules that make it distinct from other spoken and written registers of the language. The paper will not focus on whether or how teachers of English as a second language should teach conversational language in their classrooms.

Second language teachers are faced with numerous challenges, one of which centres on what sort of language they should teach and expect learners to acquire. This is not a simple issue as teachers work to find ways to encourage learners to become fluent, appropriate, and accurate in their additional language while making judgments about what it is those acquiring the language need to learn. These judgments may be coloured by a teacher's beliefs about what constitutes correct language, either in terms of appropriacy or accuracy. As Carter and McCarthy (2006), Milroy and Milroy (1999), Hughes (1996), and others have noted, teachers may want to hold learners to a standard of language production that is inconsistent with what first and proficient speakers of the language know and say. This inconsistency often occurs because teachers give credence to the model of language encoded in pedagogical grammars and grammar textbooks. The model referred to has dominated second language teaching and learning for a long time. The texts generated within the framework of this model describe a variety of English often characterized as "correct" or "standard."

Several reasons are related to this situation. As Johnson and Goettsch (2000) report, teachers often assess the rules of grammar as authoritative, valuing their knowledge of the

rules for pedagogical grammar more than their own intuitions about language and possibly associating learners' knowledge of rules as indicative of how well they know the language. This view may be coupled with the perception, noted above, that English spoken in everyday situations by proficient speakers has been labelled as "incomplete" and has "even been said to be 'wrong'" (Milroy & Milroy, 1999, p. 61). Pedagogical grammars and grammar textbooks reinforce this view. They contain samples of decontextualized language created to exemplify the conventional rules of grammar rather than descriptions of what Carter and McCarthy (1995) have termed "the interesting features of the grammar of informal, interactive talk" (p. 141). These perceptions of the model of language that should be taught and used in the language classroom mean that informal, unplanned, conversational language is not given much attention.

The tendency on the part of grammarians to ignore informal spoken language as a model for grammatical description in favour of a more formal variety is referred to as the "written language bias" by Linell (2005) and other grammarians. Several reasons suggest why grammarians have not concerned themselves with describing spoken language, including the perception that while it is the duty of grammarians to describe rather than prescribe usage, written language has been viewed as the most correct language, thus most appropriately described in grammar (Linell, 1995; Milroy & Milroy, 1999). Written language is also more amenable to description because it is typically more polished and without what Leech (2000) has labelled the "elusive nature of spoken language" (p. 677).

Teaching the Structures of English

As Johnson and Goettsch (2000) note, while teachers may have different approaches to teaching grammar, they adhere to the idea that learning and applying the rules of formal grammar are essential parts of learning the language. As Chalker (1994) notes, "grammar is rules" (p. 31) – by which she means that pedagogical and descriptive grammars are a compendia of rules that describe formation and usage conventions in the language. There is an assumption that these rules, which supposedly capture, albeit in simplified form, what proficient speakers know of the language, are useful to learners, useful in the sense that they serve to help learners learn and produce the grammatical forms of the language.

The assumption that grammars contain rules for "good" language is problematic. The usage rules for the present perfect tense, a verb tense that has long troubled grammarians, teachers and learners, illustrate some of the difficulties. According to grammar texts, the present perfect is used to communicate a past event that continues to the present or that was completed at some unspecified time**.** For example, the first part of the rule in Azar's *Understanding and using English grammar* (1989) states that "the present perfect expresses the idea that something happened (or never happened) *before now, at an unspecified time in the past. The exact time it happened is not important"* (p. 29).

The value of this rule to someone learning English as an additional language is questionable. While it is easy enough to understand what it means for an event to have occurred in the

past, it is more difficult to determine what constitutes an expression of exact time. For example in a sentence such as *I have worked her since 2010,* the preposition phrase *since 2010* seems to provide an indication of exact time, apparently violating the rule.

A common way of teaching the structures of English has been through various drills consisting of sentences created to exemplify the particular structure being taught. The following two examples from Azar (1989) are typical:

4. Bill (be) _____ here since the 22nd.

8. I (know) _____ Greg Adams for ten years. (p. 30)

These are not samples of language in use but decontextualized sentences the author created to exemplify a specific rule. According to Azar, both examples require the present prefect, although both tend to confuse students who do not understand that *since the 22nd* and *for ten years* are not indications of exact time but of duration.

Exercises of this type have long been criticised as being based on a model of language that is no longer current, portraying language as a series of decontextualized, grammatical sentences, far removed from the language of everyday communication. While the rules for the present perfect, when practiced with these mechanical exercises, may seem useful, they mask the complexity of the structure in question. Proficient speakers of English use the present perfect as opposed to the past based on judgments about their understanding of both time and aspect. Simple rules and mechanical exercises cannot capture that complexity.

Conventions of descriptive grammar, perpetuated in pedagogical grammars and in grammar textbooks, communicate the idea that the model of "good English" is composed of complete and rule-based sentences. While the reasons for the elevated status of this variety of English are many and complex, one reason is that until recently few descriptions of spoken English existed. Informal spoken language is ephemeral and therefore difficult to capture and analyse. In addition, there are features of spoken language, some of which will be discussed in the following sections, that, when judged against the rules of conventional grammar, may seem to be ill formed and substandard. As Linell (2005) pointed out, for many grammarians and teachers "talk is not real language" (p. 11).

Spoken not Written Language

How can talk not be real language when it is the language that, with few exceptions, speakers of any language typically acquire naturally and use continually? While many native speakers of a language never learn to read or write, skills that most often must be taught, the vast majority of human beings acquire the complex system of their first and proficient language(s). Yet all too often grammarians, teachers, researchers, and methodologists give credence to a simplified version of the language rendered in descriptive and pedagogical grammars and ignore the value and centrality of spoken language.

Reasons for this apparent failure to focus on conventions of spoken language include the reality that the rules of spoken language are, for the most part, not known. In fact another issue is that there is no single entity that embodies "spoken language." Human beings speak in a range of situations, including conversations, interviews, and lectures. It seems unlikely that one set of descriptions can encompass all these communicative situations. At the same time, there are characteristics of informal spoken language that distinguish it from other registers of spoken and written language.

Characteristics of informal spoken language are well known (Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Cheshire, 1999; Hughes, 1996; Linell, 2005). Spoken language is not necessarily structured as a series of complete sentences but often consists of small units marked by, for example, pauses, and differences in pitch. As Cheshire (1999) noted, "spoken spontaneous language is produced as chunks of information rather than as the sentence structures so beloved by philosophers and theoretical linguists" (p. 137). Carter and McCarthy (2006) note that conversational language occurs in real time and is typically unplanned, face-to-face and marked by factors that relate to immediate context, including pragmatic considerations (p. 164). These factors influence how speakers structure their utterances. For example speakers do not have to make explicit what can be assumed from the situation, or from shared knowledge or experience.

Informal spoken language often includes elements that grammarians struggle to describe and categorize, including utterances such as *yeah* or *right*. Because informal spoken language is most often unplanned, speakers repair, repeat and restate, checking to see that listeners understand and whether they agree or disagree. In other words, when informal spoken language is used, listeners need to be present to understand what is going on.

For example, in the following conversation, the two people in the exchange presumably know each other and share an understanding of the situation:

A: *Where's the meeting?*

B: *The usual place.*

A's question is understood in the context of a specific planned event in a particular setting. If B had no idea that there was a meeting, the question would be confusing. It would likely elicit a response along the lines of *What? There's a meeting? Now?* If the question is understood, the answer can be as brief as [*The*] *usual place,* although it is clear that B's response is not a complete sentence. In fact, the response is nothing more than a noun phrase (NP; determiner + adjective + noun); it is, however, effective and efficient language in use.

Language Corpora

Thanks to the creation of large-scale language corpora, collections of authentic spoken and written language which are machine-readable and can be analysed with easily available

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software (McEnery & Wilson, 2001), much more is now known about language in use than has previously been the case. Analyses of corpus data have yielded considerable information about the syntax, lexicon, and discourse of English. Leech (2000) maintains that the creation of corpora has caused a revolution in the understanding of language in use: "For the first time… (it is possible to) study broadly and in depth the grammatical characteristics of spoken discourse" (p. 677). Anyone using a corpus can, for example, find out what words collocate with others; how frequent words or combinations of words are; and in what register, spoken or written, they most commonly occur. It is this type of analysis that has provided important and at times surprising information about spoken English.

Figure 1. A screen capture from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA; Davies, 2008-).

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Figure 1 shows a screen capture from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA; Davies, 2008-) http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/, a large corpus available to anyone with an e-mail address who is interested in features of North American English.

The page lists examples of the phrase *complete sentence* in different registers and genres (i.e., spoken, fiction, magazine, newspaper and academic). For any example of the string *complete sentence,* it is possible to identify when, where, and by whom it was spoken or written. It is also possible to access longer sections of the discourse in which the phrase occurred. Users can restrict a search to spoken or written language. Using this corpus, and other corpora available on the site (http://view.byu.edu), a user can investigate features of language by formulating questions about any structure or lexical item of interest.[1]

The corpora provide access to large samples of authentic language from which it is possible to determine what proficient users say and write, not what grammar books mandate they should. Until the development of these electronic corpora, little was known about the language produced by proficient speakers. Below is a screen capture from the *COCA* Based on the search term *she goes,* which yields the following examples of spoken language data:

SPOK	Fox_Susteren	it , and I know I put it there .	She goes ,	**I** think he 's getting into the box or wherever they
SPOK	ABC_Primetime	I feel so bad for him . BAR-PATRON-1FEMAL#	She goes ,	**I** 'm only 22 . I guess marry for money the
SPOK	Ind_Oprah	, Oprah 's eating a plate of food , and	she goes ,	**I** 'm telling you , this really works . This no
SPOK	NBC_Today	Friday … GIFFORD : Right . KOTB : … and	she goes ,	**It** was a beautiful show . I loved the show so
SPOK	NBC_Today	it ? And she says the man 's name ,	she goes ,	**Jimmy** , he left you everything . ' KOTB : What

Figure 2. **A KWIC concordance of she goes from the COCA.**

One of the examples cited in Figure 2 above is *And she goes, 'I'm telling you, this really works'.* In this utterance, *go* is used as a reporting verb for direct speech. Grammar books would advise using the verb *say* to result in *and she said, 'I'm telling you, this really works.'* Further analysis of *go* as a reporting verb reveals that while the example reflects a common usage in spoken language, it is rare in academic, newspaper and magazine texts. The example also reflect a usage that is often labelled as non-standard or incorrect, but if there were a wider understanding of the features of spoken language, this usage of *go* may be viewed differently. While it is difficult to know why a speaker would choose *go* as a reporting verb, its frequency marks it as a viable alternative to the more conventional *say,* the preferred verb in grammar book rules for reported speech.

There is another interesting usage in the utterance above, one that seems to occur with the informal use of *go* as a verb of reported speech. The clause *I'm telling you* is used to focus on the important information in the utterance. In a written version, such usage would be deemed a comma splice, yet it is perfectly natural in spoken language and serves to focus

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on the topic of the second clause. As Biber and Reppen (2002) note, this lack of congruence between grammar books and data in the corpora is common (pp. 206-7).

Linguists and grammarians such as Biber and Reppen (2002) and Carter and McCarthy (2006) have analysed corpus data to determine a number of important features of spoken language. While it is not the intent here to detail their findings, a brief consideration of some of the structures of spoken language serve to illustrate features that distinguish it not only from other registers but illustrate the "differences between assumptions about language structure in the abstract (as presented in grammar books) and what is found in real-world use" (Hughes, 2010, p. 402).

The Status of the Sentence

Although grammarians have long based their descriptions of language on carefully composed, complete and grammatical sentences, the sentence, defined as minimally containing a subject NP and a verb phrase, is not the basic unit of everyday spoken language. Biber and Reppen (2002) argue that the sentence (capital letter at the beginning, punctuation at the end) is an orthographic unit, a feature of written language that is not useful when describing features of spoken language (p. 13). Carter and McCarthy (2006) concur:

> The sentence is a unit of grammar, and must be grammatically complete (i.e. it must have at least one main clause). The utterance is a unit of communication. It must be communicatively and pragmatically complete, but it does not need to be grammatically complete. Communicative means that the utterance communicates a meaningful message, and pragmatic means that it is fully interpretable in its context. (p. 486)

A number of features of oral language mitigate against utterances being articulated as complete sentences. Informal spoken language is expected to be sensitive to context and to interlocutors, in Carter and McCarthy's terms, to be communicative and pragmatic. If speakers used only complete sentences when speaking, they would likely bore their listeners and waste their time. For example, had B in the language sample above had said, "The meeting this afternoon will be held in Room 200 as our meetings usually are," the speaker would have supplied information already known and therefore not needed. On the other hand, the teacher's very succinct but non-sentential utterance *complete sentence* is quickly understood and acted upon.

Non-clausal Units, Lexical Bundles, and Headers and Tails

Analysis of corpus data has shown that spoken language has features that occur rarely in written language. *The usual place* illustrates one of these features: non-clausal units, short units common in spoken language, which serve a range of functions including questions (*that all?),* directives (*complete sentence!)* and comments (*just perfect).* Viewing these

units as complete spoken utterances rather than ungrammatical sentences opens the way to recognizing the features of spoken language as legitimate and integral to the language.

Another feature of spoken language, variously labelled "fixed expressions" or "lexical bundles," has emerged as particularly interesting and important. Both terms refer to re-usable chunks of language that become what Biber and Reppen (2002) term "prefabricated", strings of words that take on an integrated meaning and can be retrieved by speakers with little or no processing (p. 443). Through analysis of corpus data, grammarians have located lexical bundles specific to or most commonly used in spoken language. These include utterances such as *do you want me to, did you see that, I would like to,* and *I would like you to*. An awareness of lexical bundles encourages a new view of spoken language as a variety of the language that can be characterized as composed of utterances, many of which are non-clausal and composed of pre-packaged strings of words. This is a very different view than one that sees language as individual words assembled into complete clauses.

Another feature of spoken language, one that rarely occurs in written form, is what Carter and McCarthy (2006) have termed headers and tails. A header is a focus structure, an example being <u>*That leather coat,*</u> *it looks really good on you* (p. 782). Such NPs help to provide orientation for the listener, who can then more easily identify the main topic. They often lead the listener from given or known information to new information. Headers of this kind do not normally occur in written English, and though they may look strange when transcribed and written on the page, they are normal, frequent, and pass without comment when spoken. In the sentence *They're incredibly nice, our neighbours,* the NP *our neighbours* is a tail that serves to clarify or emphasize the pronoun subject of the clause. These structures are, according to Carter and McCarthy (2006), "listener-sensitive" elements that clarify "what may not have been understood by the listener" (p. 784).

Headers and tails are frequent in spoken language. They provide ways for speakers to make their utterances readily comprehensible. Although the production of non-clausal units, lexical bundles and structures such as headers and tails, are what mark first and proficient speakers of English competent and successful communicators, these structures are rarely addressed in pedagogical grammars or grammar textbooks and often judged to be neither acceptable nor grammatical.

The intent here is not to advocate for ways that spoken English can or should be taught in the second language classroom but rather to argue that professionals involved in English second language teaching and learning, including teachers, curriculum developers and teacher educators, should acknowledge the value and importance of spoken English. At the same time, they should value language that is communicative and efficient over that which conforms to the normative rules of pedagogical grammar. It is the language of everyday communication. As such, it does not adhere to many of the rules and conventions laid out in pedagogical grammars and grammar textbooks, as the language described in those texts is not language in use but language created to exemplify grammar rules. Such recognition does not necessarily require that spoken language serve as the model for language in the

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classroom or be taught. For example, the issue of headers would raise the question of why they are common and appropriate in spoken but not in written language. The conditions that determine the choice of a header are complex and to a large degree still unknown.

Carter and McCarthy (2006) argued two types of language rules exist. The first type is deterministic, the rules that describe what is invariant in grammar. For example English auxiliary verbs (the modals, *be* and *have*) precede a lexical verb. Thus standard language requires *she could have finished the lesson much earlier* but not *she finished could have the lesson earlier much*. Deterministic rules are relatively easy to codify because they do not change. Probabilistic rules, on the other hand, describe what is possible but not required. For example in English the relative pronoun can be deleted in cases such as *the house* (*which*) *they wanted was too expensive*. Corpus studies helped clarify that in conversation speakers are more likely to omit *which*. Both versions are accepted as standard English. Many of the features of spoken language can be accounted for by these probabilistic rules, but probabilistic rules are optionally applied and therefore difficult to teach and learn. In the above response *the usual place,* the speaker made a series of very rapid decisions about the context (was that a question in passing that needs to be answered in the few seconds before the questioner moves on?), the interlocutor(s) (have they been going to the same meetings in the same place for years?) and the required level of politeness (is that a friend or a superior?) All those factors are evaluated and an appropriate, comprehensible answer is presented: *the usual place*. Current knowledge makes it difficult to imagine how this complexity could be captured in a rule.

Hughes (2010) argued that thinking about teaching spoken language in terms of teaching rules has to change. Instead, teachers and methodologists should adopt Carter and McCarthy's (1995) general tenet that "the best course of action would seem to be to expose learners to natural spoken data whenever possible and to help them become observers of he grammar of talk in its natural contexts and in different genres" (p. 142). Timmons (2005) concurs, arguing that teachers can provide samples of spoken language and help learners develop strategies of analysis (p. 117). Corpora are available to learners; teachers need only recognize that such data have a place in the language classroom.

Although spoken language is complex, more complex than imagined, and although that complexity raises issues about the place it has in the classroom, this does not obviate the need for language teachers, or teachers of any language, to recognize the importance of that variety of the language. Accepting that spoken language is very different from the language often used as the norm and goal in many language classrooms is an important first step, one that must be taken before professionals in second language studies can begin to consider what to do with this knowledge and how it relates to the value and characteristics of everyday spoken language.

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Endnotes

[1] Access to the COCA and other corpora on the site is free and the software is relatively easy to use. Another easily accessible corpus is Google, a search engine that offers a large set of texts that are searchable.

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TESL Ontario 2012
Program Flow

	Thursday, November 8	Friday, November 9	Saturday, November 10
7:00			
20			
40	REGISTRATION OPEN	REGISTRATION OPEN	REGISTRATION OPEN
8:00			
20	Refreshment Break	Refreshment Break	Refreshment Break
40			
9:00			
20	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions
40			
10:00	Plenary: Randi Reppen & Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions
20			
40			
11:00	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions
20			
40			
12:00	Annual General Meeting	Plenary: Diane Larsen-Freeman & Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions
20			
40			
1:00	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions
20			
40			
2:00	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions
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40			
3:00	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	
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4:00	Concurrent Sessions	Concurrent Sessions	
20			
40			
5:00		Free Time	
20	Welcome Reception		
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6:00			
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7:00		Gala Dinner and Entertainment	
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8:00			
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9:00			
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10:00			

EXHIBITS OPEN — POSTERS OPEN (Thursday)

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM - Challenges and Approaches for Low Level Literacy Learners (Thursday)

EXHIBITS OPEN — POSTERS OPEN (Friday)

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM — PANEL — RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM (Friday)

EXHIBITS OPEN — POSTERS OPEN (Saturday)

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