

Esther Usó-Juan, Alicia Martínez-Flor (Editors)

Current Trends in the Development
and Teaching of the four Language Skills

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Teaching of the Four Language Skills



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Current Trends in the Development and Teaching of the Four Language Skills

edited by

Esther Usó-Juan

Alicia Martínez-Flor

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*We would like to dedicate this book to our families.
The many hours that we devoted were hours that
obviously came from their time.*

Preface

Thinking of a second language (L2) class that you have taught or observed recently can make you realize that most tasks or activities involve more than just one language skill. Certainly, there are moments in which learners are involved in a single language skill, such as when they are watching a film or writing a report, for instance. However, the most likely scene is that of a class in which skills are rarely employed in isolation. In fact, the four language skills are the heart of L2 classes and, whenever possible, they should be integrated as happens in actual language use, if our aim is to develop learners' communicative competence. Consequently, practitioners must have a rich understanding of where the particular field of each language skill is heading in order to make the most appropriate choices in their teaching practices. The goal of *Current trends in the development and teaching of the four language skills* is to provide L2 language teachers with that understanding by reviewing exemplary research and presenting innovative activities. This volume will definitely be an invaluable resource for practitioners who want to create a more engaging classroom.

The volume has twenty-one chapters that are grouped in five main sections. Section I includes a single chapter which provides theoretical issues of language learning while also presenting a communicative competence framework developed by the editors in order to highlight the key role the four skills play in language learning and teaching. The next four sections each represent a language skill. The language skills have been presented in separate sections for the sake of organization and not because we think that an L2 class should be based on separate components mainly concerned with the four skills. Therefore, Section II is devoted to listening, Section III to speaking, Section IV to reading and Section V to writing. In order to provide an extensive treatment of each of the four skills, each section starts out with a theoretical chapter which briefly illustrates advances in the understanding of how each skill is likely to be learned and taught, followed by four didactically oriented chapters written by leading international specialists. These pedagogical chapters deal specifically with four key topics: 1) areas of research that influence the teaching of a particular skill; 2) an overview of strategies or techniques necessary for developing a particular skill; 3) an approach to the academic orientation of a particular skill, and 4) unique aspects of teaching each skill.

Moreover, in order to maximize the usefulness of the volume, all chapters incorporate two common sections: *pre-reading questions* at the beginning of the chapter in order to stimulate readers' interest in its content, and a section entitled *suggested activities* at the end of the chapter in order to allow readers put the ideas and concepts presented into practice.

Section I

Section I comprises a single chapter written by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, the editors of this book, in which we briefly overview past and current approaches to language learning grouped under three central theoretical positions: the environmentalist, the innatist and the interactionist views of language learning. Drawing on the interactionist view of language learning, which shows the importance of using language for communication purposes, we review relevant models of communicative competence that have influenced classroom instruction. Finally, on the basis of some limitations attributed to those models, we present our framework of communicative competence, where we highlight the integration of the four skills to build discourse competence for communicative purposes. This chapter, in turn, serves as the foundation for the four introductory chapters to the four skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Section II

Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan's introductory chapter briefly outlines advances in the understanding of listening over the past decades. In describing these advances, the authors present the theoretical foundations for a communicative approach to the teaching of listening, and then explain the key role this skill plays in the communicative competence framework outlined by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor in Section I.

The chapter by Rost then provides an overview of a set of research areas that have a direct impact on L2 listening instruction, namely: accessibility of input, top-down processing, bottom-up processing, and listener status. For each of these four areas, the author makes a central claim about what the research suggests for developments in pedagogy, and provides additional research questions that the reader can explore in order to develop more beneficial listening instruction.

Mendelsohn's chapter argues that simply providing opportunities for learners to listen to English does not constitute *teaching* listening comprehension. Thus, the author stresses that the role of the teacher is to teach learners *how to listen*, and the way to do this is by adopting a *strategy-based approach*, which is illustrated in detail in the chapter.

Lynch's chapter also places emphasis on the teachers' role in the process of teaching the listening skill. The author first discusses how theory-based top-down and bottom-up approaches to language processing have influenced professional practices in the teaching of L2 listening skills in the last two decades. The author then contends that it is essential that teachers guide learners in ways of exploiting both top and bottom clues in order for them to become effective listeners to natural speech. Finally, he shows how this "marriage," or synthesis, of top and bottom might be encouraged.

This section closes with the chapter by White, in which the author points out that the ways in which the listening skill is currently taught often do not encompass all aspects of the listening skill, or fail to take account recent developments in how teaching and learning processes and sociopolitical attitudes towards the teaching of English have been conceptualized. The author discusses some of these developments, and suggests ways in which the methodology for teaching listening could be modified to make it a more effective, motivating and participative experience for students.

Section III

The introductory chapter by Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, and Alcón starts off this section with a historical description of trends in learning and teaching speaking over the past decades. In outlining how speaking is currently viewed, they present the theoretical background for teaching speaking from a communicative perspective. To conclude, the authors describe the crucial role this skill plays in the communicative competence framework presented in Section I by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor.

The next chapter, by Bygate, offers a brief initial survey of four areas of pedagogically relevant research in the study of spoken discourse, namely, in the psycholinguistics of oral language processing and development, in the sociolinguistics of talk, and in the pedagogical use of tasks. It then explores the implications of this research by focusing specifically on *constructive* repetition as an important pedagogical principle for the

teaching of speaking, and suggests that systematic exploitation of this principle would be a valuable contribution to oral L2 pedagogy.

Dalton-Puffer's chapter considers the potential that content-and-language integrated classrooms offer as naturalistic environments for the acquisition and use of the speaking skill. It focuses on the classroom questions as a major strategic device for shaping verbal interaction as a whole and student output in particular, and shows how the development of speaking strategies may take place in typical content-classroom interaction.

The chapter by Hughes suggests that turn-taking skills are an aspect of teaching speaking which can offer substantial benefits for the learner. The chapter explains why turn-taking can be difficult even for the advanced learner, and how turn-taking awareness and practice may improve matters. After showing examples of successful and less successful turn-taking, the author points out that the more structured the context (for example, interviews or academic seminars), the more predictable the patterns of turn behavior are for the learner. It concludes by presenting practical ways in which learners can be helped to improve their interactive skills.

Finally, Burns' chapter considers the planning and development of speaking activities from a discourse and text-based syllabus approach. The author looks at the kinds of spoken texts in English that lend themselves to analysis from a situational and functional point of view, which should include both pragmatically oriented and socially oriented purposes for speaking. The chapter also presents how teachers can plan programs using a text-based syllabus approach and illustrates how activities using this approach can gradually be introduced to learners.

Section IV

Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's introductory chapter outlines how the understanding of reading has progressed over the past decades. In presenting how reading is viewed nowadays, the author highlights the theoretical foundations for teaching reading from a communicative perspective. Finally, they address the key role this skill plays in the communicative competence framework presented by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor in Section I.

Then, the chapter by Grabe notes a set of instructional implications which derive from reading research and comments on the research that supports them. These implications, as instructional goals, include the following: ensure word recognition fluency; create a vocabulary-rich

environment; activate background knowledge; ensure language knowledge and general comprehension skills; teach text structures and discourse organization; promote the strategic reader; build reading fluency; promote extensive reading and develop intrinsic motivation. After examining all these issues, the author concludes with a set of curricular recommendations.

Ediger's chapter narrows the scope of reading research by specifically examining what research says about how having an authentic purpose can influence the way(s) in which one reads. Building upon this, the author looks at how task-based (purposeful) reading can be used in L2 reading instruction, and also points out the key role reading strategies play in this process. Finally, the author suggests various classroom implications and ideas for developing effective, strategic L2 readers.

Field's chapter identifies the processes involved in fluent academic and workplace reading, urges students and teachers to examine their own reading practices and beliefs, and then maps out a *path* to attain fluency in L2 reading. The author concludes by identifying the critical elements in a program for developing fluent L2 reading and lays out the steps for establishing a structured path to fluency.

The section closes with Williams' chapter which examines two traditions in literacy research, the *narrow* and the *broad*. The former tradition focuses upon the individual's ability to read and write, whereas the latter tradition focuses on the deployment of literacy practices within society. Finally, pedagogical implications from these two traditions are proposed.

Section V

The introductory chapter to this section presented by Usó-Juan, Martínez-Flor, and Palmer-Silveira traces the changing patterns of writing over the past decades. In outlining how writing is currently viewed, they offer the theoretical groundings for teaching this skill from a communicative perspective and then they describe the essential role it plays in the communicative competence framework presented in Section I by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor.

The next chapter, by Johns, reviews past writing research into texts, participants, and contexts. The author then turns to future possibilities for research: corpus linguistics, discourse communities and their genres, and situated texts and their domains (or activity systems). The author suggests

that future research must be multi-methodological and take into consideration all the factors that influence a text in a specified context.

Kroll's chapter presents practical issues of assignment design, as well as suggestions on how to link tasks to course goals and student needs. In addition, the author discusses how both a teacher's philosophy of how students learn and a program's approach to curriculum design influence the design of writing assignments.

Tribble moves the discussion to academic writing. In this chapter the author argues that standardized forms of written communication required by the editors of learned journals have been developed to serve the needs of communities of scholars. As such, the author maintains they are no longer the exclusive property of native English speakers but rather the common property of a broad academic institution. At the end, the chapter presents a pedagogic model of written communication.

Cumming's chapter closes the section. Drawing on theories of motivation, self-regulated learning, and composing processes, the author first outlines why teachers should be aware of their students' individual goals for writing improvement, and then presents a framework for describing writing goals in second and foreign language contexts. Finally, suggestions to help students identify, analyze, and monitor their personal goals for writing improvement in an L2 are presented.

To conclude, we hope that this collection of articles provokes some thought among those somehow involved in language teaching and helps them to improve the way languages are learned and taught. Should this be the case, then we will consider ourselves rewarded for the effort and work we have put into this volume.

Esther Usó-Juan
Alicia Martínez-Flor

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**Section I Theoretical perspectives on
language learning and teaching**

Approaches to language learning and teaching: Towards acquiring communicative competence through the four skills

Esther Usó-Juan and Alicia Martínez-Flor

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. How much has the view of learning a language changed over the past five decades?
2. How much has language instruction changed over the past five decades?
3. How could you make language instruction communicative?
4. Identify the different components of communicative competence that the second language (L2) teacher should focus on in the confines of his/her classroom. Would you establish any relationship among them? Why or why not?

1. Introduction

Progress in our understanding of how L2 languages are learned, and subsequently taught, has expanded impressively over the past five decades. Research findings from a variety of disciplines, mainly those of linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics, have better established the complex nature of language learning: it has become clear that linguistic, psychological and sociocultural factors interact and play a part in this process. Moreover, these findings have also shown that communication is crucial in the process of learning a language (Mitchell and Myles 1998) and that the degree of success achieved in this process depends to a great extent on how meaning is negotiated in particular acts of communication. This view of language learning explains the emergence of communicative approaches to language teaching over the last few decades, whose main goal is to develop learners' communicative competence. However, the implementation of a communicative approach is not a simple task. In fact, it presents a challenge to the teaching profession (Anderson 1993),

since it requires a full understanding of what is involved in the L2 learning process.

In an attempt to help language teachers build up that understanding, the purpose of this chapter is threefold. First, we provide a historical review of past and current approaches to language learning grouped under three central theoretical positions: the environmentalist, the innatist and the interactionist views of language learning. These three approaches will help to gain an insight into how the view of learning a language has changed over the past five decades and how this view has affected language teaching. Second, as a result of the interactionist view of language learning that highlights the importance of using language for communication purposes, we review influential models of communicative competence that have shaped classroom instruction from a communicative point of view. Finally, on the basis of some limitations attributed to the reviewed models of communicative competence, we propose our framework of communicative competence. In this proposal, on the one hand, we have incorporated the intercultural component as an essential part needed to develop learners' full ability to communicate in the L2 and, on the other hand, we have highlighted the integration of the four skills to build discourse competence for communicative purposes.

2. Approaches to language learning and teaching

Historical trends in linguistics and psychology have had a profound influence on the conception of language learning, which in turn has served as the source of practices and principles in language teaching (Richards and Rodgers 1986). Accordingly, we will accomplish the task of describing trends in language teaching by first examining theoretical views of language learning from a linguistic and psychological point of view and, then, by showing how they motivated particular teaching practices. Therefore, the environmentalist, the innatist and the interactionist views of language learning serve as the background to language teaching theory.

2.1. The environmentalist approach to language learning

Up to the end of the 1960s, the field of language learning was dominated by environmentalist ideas. The theory underlying these ideas was rooted in two parallel schools of thought in linguistics and psychology. In linguistics,

the structural school of linguistics (Bloomfield 1933) was strongly influential in the 1940s and 1950s. The approach arose from the attempts to analyze Indian languages, many of which had no written system and therefore the only data available was the oral form of the language. Based on the evidence that many languages did not have a written form and that people learnt to speak before they learnt to read or write, structural linguists assumed that language was primarily an oral phenomenon. Furthermore, written language was a secondary representation of speech. To the structuralists, language was viewed as consisting of different elements related to each other in a linear way by means of a series of structures or rules, these elements being phonemes, morphemes, words, and sentence types. The target of language learning was to master all the elements of the system and to learn the rules by which these elements were combined, from phoneme to morpheme to word to phrase to sentence. This specific theory of the nature of language learning, which was attracting language teachers' attention at that time, was the general learning theory then dominant in mainstream psychology, behaviorism.

In psychology, the behaviorist school (Skinner 1957) dominated thinking in the field during the same time period, that is, in the 1940s and 1950s. This approach stemmed from early learning theorists who attempted to describe the learning process in terms of conditioning. To the behaviorists, behavior happened in associative stimulus-response chains, and all learning was seen as associative learning or habit-formation which became stronger with reinforcement. Therefore, the occurrence of behavior was dependent upon three crucial elements in learning: a *stimulus*, which elicited the behavior; a *response*, which was triggered by the stimulus; and *reinforcement*, which marked the response as being appropriate or inappropriate and encouraged repetition or suppression of the response. Behaviorist theory placed emphasis on the role of the environment and denied the existence of internal mental processes, which were regarded as "inaccessible to proper scientific investigation" (Williams and Burden 1997: 8).

The main proponent of this approach to the study of (learning) behavior was generally considered to be Skinner (1957, 1987), who constructed a system of principles to account for human behavior from the observation of animal responses to stimuli in laboratory experiments. In his view, language learning, like any other kind of learning, was simply seen as a stimulus-response-reinforcement chain which led to the establishment of the appropriate habits of the language being learnt through automatic conditioning processes. Children received linguistic input from language users in their environment and positive reinforcement for their (grammatically)

correct repetitions. As a result, and encouraged by the environment, they continued to practice until habits were formed. *Imitation* and *practice*, according to Skinner (1957), were strong contributing factors in the language learning process.

Structural linguistics, in conjunction with behaviorist psychology led to the environmentalist approach to language learning. The American structuralist Bloomfield (1933) made the marriage between these two schools of thought clear in his book *Language*, which provides an excellent description of how language is acquired from a behaviorist point of view. The implications of this theoretical approach for language teaching were, thus, twofold (Mitchell and Myles 1998). First, it was believed that learning took place by imitating and practicing the same structures time after time. Second, teachers should make it explicitly clear what was to be taught and focus mainly on the structures that were presumably more difficult.

This environmentalist account of language learning offered a reasonable explanation of how children learn some basic, routine aspects of language. Moreover, it showed the important role played by adults and educators in setting appropriate learning conditions (Alcón 2002). However, by focusing only on the input received by the child, it was unable to provide a complete explanation of how children learn the more complex grammatical structures of the language. This type of work was the focus of study in subsequent years.

2.2. The innatist approach to language learning

By the 1960s, the fields of linguistics and psychology witnessed major changes. Linguistics saw a paradigm shift from structural linguistics, which was based on the mere description of surface forms of utterances, to generative linguistics, which was concerned with both surface forms of utterances as well as the abstract structures underlying sentences, thus emphasizing the creative nature of human language. This paradigm shift was initiated by the publication of Chomsky's revolutionary book *Syntactic Structures* (1957), in which he explained Transformational-Generative Grammar. This linguistics theory contends that language has a *deep structure*, which consists of the essential meanings, and a *surface structure*, which is made up of the particular way in which ideas are stated. Thus, there is one type of rules, *phrase structure rules*, which generate deep structures, and a second type, called *transformational rules*, which are responsible for converting *deep structure* into *surface structure*. Chomsky (1957) was inter-

ested not only in describing language, but also in explaining language behavior by studying the rules by which speakers and writers transformed their meanings (deep structure) into the particular sentences they say or write (surface structure) and the rules by which listeners and readers answered to these sentences by discovering their meanings. Following Saussure's (1915) dichotomy of *langue* (the language system) and *parole* (actual speech), Chomsky made the theoretical distinction between *competence* and *performance* and it was this competence or *langue* that generative theory was trying to explain.

Two years later Chomsky (1959) reviewed *Skinner's Verbal Behaviour* (1957) and made a critique of behaviorism by arguing consistently that a theory that only considers the observable responses in linguistic interaction could not hope to account for language behavior. He proved that statement to be true with two kinds of evidence. First, children can create and understand new sentences that they have never learnt before. He contended that this creativity implies that children have internalized an underlying system of rules (what he calls language *competence*) rather than strings of words. Second, all children successfully learn their native language at an early age in life despite the complexity and abstractness of linguistic rules. Furthermore, they accomplish this complex task of language learning without being systematically corrected on language points. Chomsky claimed that children were innately predisposed to acquire the language of the community into which they were born because they were born with some kind of Language Acquisition Device (LAD) to tackle the language learning task. In later work, Chomsky and his followers (Chomsky 1981; Cook 1988; White 1989) replaced the term LAD by the idea of *universal grammar*. This was a theory of innate principles and rules of inferences that enable the child to learn any grammar, or what Cook (1997: 262) defined as "the black box responsible for language acquisition."

Around the same period of time, the field of psychology also underwent a major change as a result of the emergence of the hybrid field of psycholinguistics, which in its initial years of existence, aimed to test Chomsky's innatist theory of language acquisition. In direct contrast to the antimentalistic and mechanic view of human learning advocated by the behaviorist approach, this new approach was mentalistic and dynamic (Ellis 1994; Mitchell and Miles 1998). The learner was seen as possessing an innate ability to process language and as actively participating in the learning process, using various mental strategies in order to sort out the language system to be learnt. Psycholinguistics studies (Klima and Bellugi 1966; Slobin 1970; Brown 1973) showed conclusively that children were *active*

rather than *passive* participants in the language learning process, since they inferred rules to test how language worked. This insight enabled researchers to explain why sentences such as *I dranked the juice* or *I have two foots* are produced in early childhood. In the first construction children are inferring that the past tense is made by adding *-ed*, whereas in the second construction they infer that the plural is formed by adding *-s*. In addition, this research also found that children's language development was incremental and could be characterized as going through similar stages. Longitudinal studies and cross-sectional studies (Brown 1973; de Villiers and de Villiers 1973) also found that there was a consistent order of acquisition in a number of grammatical morphemes. All these findings, therefore, seemed to support Chomsky's assumptions that children are born with a predisposition to language acquisition. The implications of this theoretical approach for language teaching were, thus, twofold. First, it was believed that language learning was a rule-governed internal behavior (not the automatic formation of new habits). Second, teachers should develop learners' mental construction of the language system.

This innatist account of language learning, which focused on the child's output, was essential in that it provided a description of what was learnt. However, a focus on the product of acquisition could not establish the operation of the process of learning. Additionally, such a view failed to account for the functions of language. Therefore, it was still necessary to focus on the actual course language development took and to grant environmental and linguistic input an essential role in the language learning process (Ellis 1994). The consideration of these aspects took place in the following years.

2.3. The interactionist approach to language learning

By the 1970s additional developments could be seen in the fields of linguistics and psychology. In the linguistics field, researchers began to turn their attention to discourse or language beyond the sentence (Schiffrin 1994). The development of discourse analysis supposed a shift within the field of linguistics away from the study of isolated sentences and toward understanding how sentences were connected. This new orientation advocated the study of both structure and function in order to understand what language was. The functional analysis of language was mainly represented by Halliday's systemic grammar (1970, 1973, 1974, 1975), which attempted to explain how the function of language determines the form of language.

Halliday (1975) postulated a total of seven communicative functions characterizing the child's early communicative development, all of which were related to aspects of social life. These functions were: *instrumental*, which involves the use of language to get things; *regulatory*, which involves the use of language to regulate people's behavior; *interactional*, which involves the use of language to interact with other people; *personal*, which involves the use of language to express one's feelings; *heuristic*, which involves the use of language to explore the outside world; *imaginative*, which involves the use of language to create an environment, and *representational*, which involves the use of language to communicate information. He theorized that children learned to talk because it served a function for them. Halliday's (1975) theory underscored the crucial importance of context of situation in the description of language systems and language was viewed as *meaning potential*. Therefore, the decontextualized analysis of formal structures followed by structural and generative linguistics was losing ground in favor of a contextualized perspective followed by systemic-functional linguistics.

It was also around the 1970s when psycholinguists' attempts to test the psychological implication of Chomsky's (1957) theory were largely absorbed into mainstream cognitive psychology. In direct contrast to the behaviorist approach and in line with the work carried out in psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology was interested in the mental processes that were involved in the (language) learning act. However, the way these mental processes were studied varied considerably (Harley 2001). On the one hand, there was the *information processing approach* (Atkinson and Shiffrin 1968; Schank and Abelson 1977), which was mainly concerned with the way human beings take in information, process it and act upon it. To do so, information theorists distinguished several components in the cognitive system and explored the ways in which these components acted upon the information. Thus, constructs such as attention, perception and memory became the focus of work for information processing theorists. On the other hand, there was the *constructivist approach*, which was mainly concerned with the way human beings make their own personal understanding from the experiences that surround them. This constructivist approach grew mainly out of the work of Piaget (1966, 1972, 1974), who discovered that learning developed through a series of stages, each stage having a set of cognitive characteristics that determined how learning could take place. He was more concerned with the process of learning (the *how*) than with the product of learning (the *what*) and saw cognitive development as a process within which there is an interaction between genetics and experience.

Therefore, cognitive psychology enabled psychologists to better understand the mental processes involved in learning by analyzing constructs such as attention, perception and memory (Pearson and Stephens 1994).

In addition to the above-stated major changes that took place in linguistics and psychology, the 1970s saw the emergence of new disciplines which brought new approaches to the study of discourse or language in use. Here, mention should be made of the contribution of sociolinguistics as a discipline, and in particular the influential work of Hymes (1971, 1972), who was among the first theorists to react against Chomsky's (1965) view of language. He felt that Chomsky's theoretical distinction between competence and performance did not include any references to aspects of language use in social practice and related issues concerning the appropriacy of an utterance to a particular situation. Therefore, he introduced the term *communicative competence*, which included not only Chomsky's (1965) grammatical competence but also the rules of language use in social context and the sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy.

In such a theoretical framework, the field of language learning was dominated by interactionist ideas which emphasized the role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the child's innate predisposition to language development. The interactionists' position maintained that both internal and external factors played a key role in the process of learning a language. In direct contrast to innatists, interactionists argued that a crucial element in such a process was the language which was modified (modified input) to suit the capabilities of the learners (Lightbown and Spada 1993). As indicated by van Els et al. (1984: 26), this approach represented a shift in the discussion "away from innate versus learned linguistics ability, and toward the children's cognitive capacity to discover structure in the language around them." The implications of this theoretical approach for language teaching were, thus, twofold. First, it was believed that learning was dynamic, social and communicative in nature. Second, the goal of teachers should focus on developing learners' communicative competence and emphasize learners' cognitive capacity in the language learning process.

This interactionist approach to language learning accounted for the functions of language use in social context and emphasized the quality of interaction as well as learners' cognitive capacity in such a process. All these aspects have been regarded as essential in developing learners' communicative competence in the L2 learning process, and this is the focus of our next section.

3. A communicative approach to L2 teaching

Our discussion up to this point has focused on those learning theories that constitute the general background of theories for language teaching. This general knowledge, we believe, is crucial to gain a full understanding of the models of communicative competence that have been proposed to make the process of L2 teaching more effective. In this section, therefore, we review these models and we also discuss some of their limitations.

The first model of communicative competence, regarded as the pioneering work on which the theoretical bases of communicative approaches to L2 language teaching have been founded is that of Canale and Swain (1980), and further expanded by Canale (1983). This model presented an integrative theoretical framework consisting of four main competencies: grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competence. *Grammatical competence*, the first component of the model, refers to the knowledge of the language code. It includes knowledge of vocabulary, rules of pronunciation and spelling, word formation and sentence structure. *Sociolinguistic competence* refers to the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of use in a particular context. *Strategic competence* involves the knowledge of how to use verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to handle breakdowns in communication. *Discourse competence*, the last component of the model, is concerned with the knowledge of achieving coherence and cohesion in a spoken or written text. According to the authors, learners' knowledge of these four components was essential to prepare them to face their communicative needs in the L2. However, they did not provide a description of the relationship among these components, a fact that was regarded in the model of communicative competence proposed by Savignon (1983). Her model, which included the same four competencies already mentioned above, adopted the shape of an inverted pyramid to show how an increase in only one component produces an increase in the overall level of communicative competence, since all components are interrelated to each other. This assumption is supported by the fact that a measure of both sociolinguistic and strategic competencies, without any knowledge of grammatical competence, can contribute to increase someone's communicative competence (i.e., without the use of language, a person can communicate through gestures or facial expressions).

These two models of communicative competence, which were developed during the 1980s, were serious endeavors to define the communicative competence construct. But in spite of these attempts, they received criticism on the basis that they did not take into consideration the pragmatic

component. Although it may be argued that both models included pragmatic competence as an area within sociolinguistic competence, it was not until the late 1980s that pragmatic competence was explicitly considered to be a component of communicative competence. Additionally, we believe that no attention was paid to the key role of the four skills in these communicative frameworks.

The task of considering the above-mentioned aspects was carried out by Bachman (1987), who developed a model of communicative language ability in which three components were included: language competence, strategic competence and psychomotor skills.¹ *Language competence* is, in turn, divided into two components, organizational and pragmatic competence. On the one hand, organizational competence consists of grammatical competence and textual competence, which are comparable to Canale's (1983) and Savignon's (1983) concepts of grammatical and discourse competencies respectively. On the other hand, pragmatic competence is further divided into two subcomponents, namely illocutionary competence, which refers to the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, which deals with the knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context. This last competence, thus, is similar to the one proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Savignon (1983), although for these authors sociolinguistic competence was considered to be one of the four main components, while Bachman includes it within pragmatic competence. Additionally, Bachman (1987, 1990) also considered two more components of communicative language ability, namely strategic and psychomotor skills (Bachman 1987) or psychophysiological mechanisms (Bachman 1990). The former allows language users to employ the elements included within language competence depending on the context in which communication takes place in order to negotiate meaning. The latter involves the receptive or productive mode in which competence is performed through a particular type of channel: oral or visual in the case of receptive language use, and aural or visual in the case of productive language use.

This theoretical framework developed by Bachman (1987, 1990), made a distinction with regard to pragmatic competence and took into account the psychophysiological mechanisms which are essential for performing utterances. However, the author did not try to establish any relationship among these constituents, as Savignon (1983) had already done. Thus, a few years later, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) presented a detailed model of communicative competence in which the authors not only incor-

porated pragmatic competence under the name of actional competence and the receptive and productive skills within discourse competence, but also highlighted the connection existing among these components – together with the linguistic, sociocultural and strategic competencies – that go to make up such a model.

In analyzing these components, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) start with the core, that is to say, *discourse competence*, which concerns the selection and sequencing of sentences to achieve a unified text, whether it be spoken or written. *Linguistic competence* entails the basic elements of communication, such as sentence patterns, morphological inflections, phonological and orthographic systems, as well as lexical resources (i.e., formulaic constructions, collocations or phrases related to conversational structure). *Sociocultural competence* refers to the speaker's knowledge of how to express appropriate messages within the social and cultural context of communication in which they are produced. In this sense this constituent is related to Canale and Swain's (1980), Savignon's (1983) and Bachman's (1990) sociolinguistic competence. In fact, in Savignon's revised model (2001), sociolinguistic competence is also termed sociocultural competence in a similar way to that of Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995). *Actional competence* involves the understanding of the speakers' communicative intent by performing and interpreting speech act sets. Finally, these four components are influenced by the last one, *strategic competence*, which is concerned with the knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them. This model thus provides a clear picture of the interrelationship among all the components. However, with regard to the function they assign to strategic competence, our view is that this competence should be placed at the same level as the rest of the competencies, since its aim is to build discourse competence while allowing communicative ability to develop parallel to the other components.

Up to this point we have reviewed the models of communicative competence applicable to language teaching that were developed during the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, Alcón (2000) also proposes a model of communicative competence, which is a hybrid of the models proposed by Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995). Here, comparable to Bachman's (1990) model, communicative competence consists of three main subcompetencies that are interrelated to each other, namely discourse competence, psychomotor skills and competencies, and strategic competence. *Discourse competence* is the core of communicative competence in line with the model put forward by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) and is, in turn, broken down into the three constituents of

linguistic, textual, and pragmatic components. Linguistic competence refers not only to grammatical knowledge but to all aspects of the linguistic system including those lexical resources such as formulaic speech. The textual and pragmatic constituents are necessary for the construction and interpretation of discourse and, in this sense, pragmatic competence is similar to Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell's (1995) actional competence. As far as the *psychomotor skills and competencies* are concerned, Alcón (2000) suggests that discourse competence influences the abilities of listening, speaking, reading and writing, which are interrelated to one another in order to use the language for communicative purposes. Finally, *strategic competence* includes both communication and learning strategies, thus widening the conceptualization of strategic competence proposed in the model by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), which only considered the knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them.

Three aspects of Alcón's (2000) model are of particular interest: 1) discourse competence is the core of the model; 2) an explicit function is given to the four psychomotor skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), and 3) strategic competence is an important component in its own right that incorporates both communication and learning strategies. However, although it may be assumed that Alcón (2000) includes sociolinguistic (Canale and Swain 1980; Savignon 1983) or sociocultural (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995) competencies under pragmatic competence by following Bachman (1987, 1990), it is our view that these competencies should be considered separately, as in Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell's (1995) model, given the increasing recognition nowadays associated to cultural aspects.

According to Cortazzi and Jin (1999), culture can be regarded as a wide framework of values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that are used to subjectively interpret other people's actions and patterns of thinking. Given the subjective nature of this concept, it is essential for foreign language learners to become aware of different cultural aspects if they are to make an appropriate interpretation of the target language. For this reason, in order to foster L2 learners' knowledge of the skills required to be successful in intercultural communication, the development of *intercultural communicative competence* should be included within a communicative approach for L2 teaching. This competence has been defined by Meyer (1991: 137) as "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures." In fact, Byram (1997) proposed a model of intercultural commu-

nicative competence, given the need to integrate the teaching of intercultural communicative skills as part of classroom instruction.

After examining all the above models, we found that all of them present some shortcomings. First, some models (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990) do not show the relationship existing among their different components. Second, some models (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983) do not consider pragmatic competence on its own but rather include it under the sociolinguistic competence. Third, with the exception of Bachman (1987, 1990) and Alcón (2000), no explicit function is given to the four skills. Fourth, most of the models reviewed (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995) include strategic competence as a component having a different degree of importance to the rest of the components. Finally, little attention is devoted to the intercultural component necessary to develop learners' full communicative competence in the target language (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990; Alcón 2000). Consequently, in the next section we aim to present a framework of communicative competence that tackles all these limitations.

4. A proposed framework of communicative competence integrating the four skills

The framework of communicative competence we propose was designed on the basis of all the models of communicative competence described in Section 3. Additionally, we found the work by Scarcella and Oxford (1992) and Celce-Murcia and Olhstain (2000) to be particularly valuable, given the emphasis they place on the four skills in the overall communicative process. Figure 1 shows the schematic representation of our proposed framework of communicative competence integrating the four skills. The proposed framework contains five components which appear inside rectangular boxes of the same size, namely, discourse, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic. Discourse competence, which appears inside an oval with a broken line, is placed in the core of our construct leaving room within the same rectangular box for the four skills, which are situated in the four corners. This competence, therefore, is located in a position where the rest of the components (i.e., linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic) serve to build discourse competence which, in turn, also shapes each of the other competencies. Support for this view of discourse competence as

the central competence can be found in Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 16) where they claim that “it is in discourse and through discourse that all of the other competencies are realized.” Additionally, and in line with Savignon (1983, 2001), we believe that all components cannot be developed in isolation. Rather, an increase in one component interacts with the other components to produce an increase in the whole construct of communicative competence. This is the reason why we have placed all the components within a circle that corresponds to the overall communicative competence.

This construct, therefore, aims at 1) showing the relationship among all the components; 2) incorporating both the pragmatic and the intercultural competencies on their own; and 3) highlighting the function of the four skills to build discourse competence. A detailed explanation of these five components is given below.

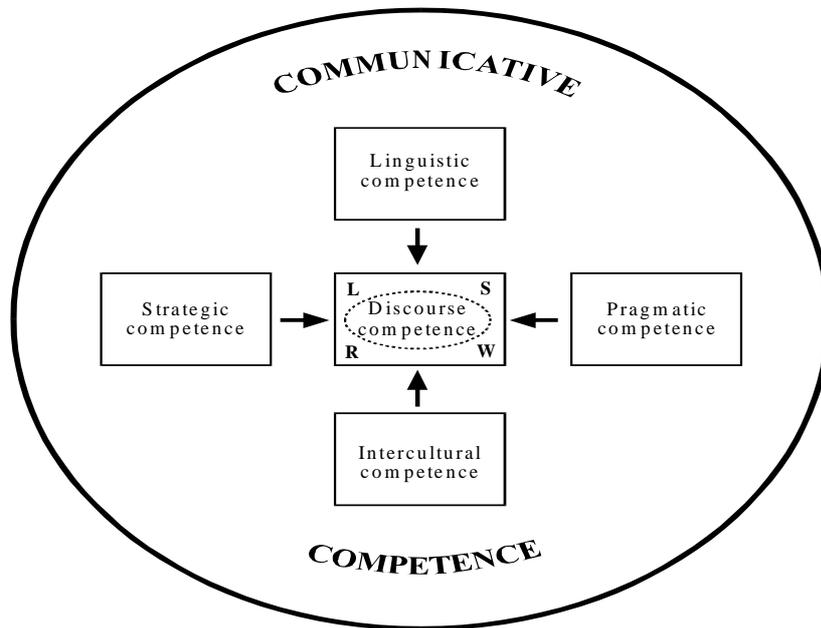


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the proposed framework of communicative competence integrating the four skills (the capital letters stand for the four skills: L = Listening; S = Speaking; R= Reading; W = Writing)

Discourse competence refers to the selection and sequencing of utterances or sentences to achieve a cohesive and coherent spoken or written text given a particular purpose and situational context. Following this definition, the integration of the four skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing) is explicitly accomplished within the core of our proposed framework, since the fact of being able to interpret and produce a spoken or written piece of discourse is the means to achieve successful communication. Our view of discourse competence has also been justified by following Byram's (1997: 48, italics ours) definition of discourse as "the ability to use, discover and negotiate strategies for the *production* and *interpretation* of monologue or dialogue texts which follow the conventions of the culture of an interlocutor or are negotiated as intercultural texts for particular purposes."

Linguistic competence not only refers to the grammatical competence mentioned by Canale and Swain (1980), Savignon (1983) and Bachman (1987, 1990) but also includes all the elements in the linguistic system, in line with Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) and Alcón (2000). This linguistic competence would therefore involve the phonology, grammar and vocabulary aspects illustrated in Celce-Murcia and Olshtain's (2000) work.

Pragmatic competence is closely related to Bachman's (1987, 1990), since it involves both illocutionary and sociolinguistic types of knowledge. The former deals with the knowledge needed to perform language functions and speech act sets. It must be noted that this conceptualization is, therefore, similar to the actional competence proposed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995). The latter regards knowledge of sociopragmatic factors such as participant and situational variables as well as politeness issues. It should also be noted that these are part of the components included in the sociocultural competence developed by Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995).

Intercultural competence involves both cultural and non-verbal communicative factors, which are the two remaining components of the Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell's (1995) sociocultural competence. The former is concerned with sociocultural knowledge of the target language community, knowledge of dialects and cross-cultural awareness, whereas the latter refers to non-verbal signals such as body language, use of space, touching or silence. It is obvious that this competence reflects knowledge of cultural aspects and, therefore, it could have been named cultural competence. However, the term intercultural has been employed instead in order

to create the effect of symbolizing that learning an L2 interrelates knowledge of your own culture and the target culture.

The last component, *strategic competence*, has also been contemplated in all the previous models of communicative competence, since the knowledge of communication strategies and how to use them serves to avoid breakdowns in communication. These sorts of strategies are therefore a way of overcoming limitations in language competence (Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). However, apart from communication strategies, and in line with Alcón (2000), we also believe that strategic competence should include learning strategies, which according to Cohen and Dörnyei (2002: 178) refer to “the conscious and semiconscious thoughts and behaviours used by learners with the explicit goal of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language.” For this reason, considering learning strategies in a communicative approach would also be especially important to increase learners’ ability in the four skills (Scarcella and Oxford 1992).

5. Conclusion

Since it has been acknowledged that particular teaching approaches derive from language learning theory, this chapter has presented a synthesis of past and current research on the nature of language learning. This synthesis has provided an understanding of both the language teaching approaches that immediately preceded the communicative approach to language teaching as well as the direct influences on the development of the communicative approach. In doing so, it has shown that our understanding of how languages are learnt and subsequently taught has advanced significantly during the last two decades. It has also examined the construct of communicative competence by paying attention to some of the most influential models of communicative competence. Taking these models as the basis of our work, we have modestly proposed a pedagogical framework of communicative competence with the aim of continuing research on them by highlighting both the importance of the intercultural component as well as the key role of the four skills in developing discourse competence for communicative purposes.

This chapter, in turn, serves as the theoretical foundation for the introductory chapters to the four skills, namely *listening* in Section II, *speaking* in Section III, *reading* in Section IV, and *writing* in Section V. In these chapters we aim to show: 1) how advances in our understanding of the four skills run parallel to trends in language learning and teaching, and 2) how

learners' overall communicative ability can be acquired through the four skills by showing the role they play in our proposed communicative competence framework.

Suggested Activity

A Cultural Awareness Project

The goal of this project is to develop learners' overall communicative competence in the target language by focusing specifically on the four skills, as well as to make them aware of cultural differences or similarities in different language communities. The project should be conducted in small groups so that learners can work collaboratively. It consists of four different stages: 1) a *preparation stage*, in which learners are provided with some cultural topics to deal with; 2) a *collection stage*, in which learners are asked to collect materials for these topics; 3) an *implementation stage*, in which learners work in the classroom with all the materials they have brought along; and 4) a *reflection stage*, in which the teacher guides feedback and encourages cross-cultural class discussion. Each stage is described in detail in what follows:

1. Preparation stage

As a preliminary step, teachers should provide learners with a brief introduction about the nature of intercultural competence in order to make them aware of the importance of paying attention to different cultural frameworks. This explanation could be carried out by following Byram (1997). Once the concept of intercultural competence has been introduced in class, the teacher explains to the learners that they are going to explore the English target culture in the language classroom. They are then presented with a list of cultural topics which may offer entry points to the English culture in order to focus on learners' intercultural competence. The topics could be: Family, Education, the World of Work, Regional Identity, Power and Politics or Law and Order. The selection of topics follows the ideas suggested in other projects dealing with how best to explore another culture (Duffy and Mayes 2001; Morgan 2001). In order to help learners with the topic

orientation, the *five-word technique* (Cain 1990) can be used. This technique consists in asking students to note down the first five words they think of in relation to each topic presented by the teacher. In fact, making learners provide such words may be a useful technique to activate their background knowledge on the cultural topics to be covered. Once learners have selected the topic they are going to focus on, the next stage of the project is explained to them.

2. Collection stage

In this stage, it would be tempting for the teacher to make the collection of materials him/herself about a particular cultural topic and bring them to the classroom along with prepared activities for the learners. However, we agree with Morgan (2001) that doing this would block one of the major aims of the project, which consists in raising learners' cultural awareness through having to question themselves what is culturally important and representative of the target language.

Taking this assumption into account, learners are given the task to collect materials in the English target culture in relation to the particular topic they have agreed to work with. Here, they are recommended to look for a variety of sources, including photocopied information from different printed materials; photo-documentaries, video or DVD scenes; recorded material, like conversations with Erasmus learners or English native speakers; excerpts from the Internet or the hard copy of conversations after having contacted English-speaking partners through e-mail exchanges or CMC telecollaborative tasks. During the process of collecting such material, learners are required to meet the teacher at appointed office hours so that the teacher can provide any help they might need. Once learners have collected all the material they are asked to hand it in to the teacher in order to prepare the next stage of the project.

3. Implementation stage

This stage involves several class sessions devoted to developing learners' communicative competence through the four skills while working on the cultural topics it was agreed they would deal with in the first stage. Here, learners are presented with structured activities on the four skills in order to increase their cultural awareness, intercultural imagination and context

sensitivity on that particular topic (Meier 2003). A detailed explanation of these activities would be provided in the four introductory chapters of each section dealing with each skill, that is, Section II (listening skill), Section III (speaking skill), Section IV (reading skill) and Section V (writing skill).

4. Reflection stage

After learners have worked on all the activities prepared by the teacher in each of the four skills, a cross-cultural class discussion follows in order to elicit learners' opinions about the topics being dealt with. This discussion will allow them to take a critical and evaluative position in relation to the cultural awareness activities already carried out.

In short, by engaging learners in a project such as the one described above, they become active participants in their own process of language learning. They are provided with opportunities to develop their overall communicative competence in the target language by increasing their ability to communicate in each of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Additionally, they become aware of the importance of understanding how cultural issues influence our perception of the world (Cor-tazzi and Jin 1999). This development of learners' intercultural competence, thus, turns out to be an essential part of foreign language teaching.

Notes

1. The same components appeared in Bachman (1990) although the psychomotor skills were termed *psychophysiological mechanisms*.

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Section II Listening

Towards acquiring communicative competence through listening

Alicia Martínez-Flor and Esther Usó-Juan

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. How much has the view of listening changed over the past decades?
2. How much has listening instruction changed over the past decades?
3. How could you make listening instruction communicative?
4. How do you think the different components of the communicative competence framework influence listening comprehension?

1. Introduction

Listening to a second language (L2) has been regarded as the most widely used language skill in normal daily life (Morley 2001; Rost 2001). It involves a complex process that allows us to understand and interpret spoken messages in real time by making use of a variety of sources such as phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic (Lynch 1998). Given the complexity that underlies this process of listening comprehension, it has been considered the most difficult skill to learn out of the four skills. In fact, research carried out over the last few decades on how this skill is learned has provided insights into why listening was traditionally regarded as a passive skill with no place in L2 teaching, and how it has been increasingly considered an important skill in its own right (Mendelsohn 1998; Morley 2001; Vandergrift 2004). As a result of this progress, the primacy of listening is nowadays obvious and, as such, it plays a key role in developing learners' L2 communicative ability.

Building on these assumptions, the purpose of the present chapter aims first to review the changing patterns that have taken place in the learning of listening over the past decades. It will then describe how these changes have provided the basis for a communicative approach to the teaching of listening. Finally, it will show how this skill can be integrated in a communicative competence framework that will allow

learners to increase their overall communicative competence in the L2.

2. Approaches to learning and teaching listening

Advances in language learning over the past decades have led to significant changes in how listening is viewed. Therefore, in order to further our understanding of trends in learning and teaching listening, the role of this skill within the environmentalist, the innatist and the interactionist language learning approaches (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume) is presented.

2.1. Listening within an environmentalist approach

Up to the end of the 1960s, the status of listening comprehension in language learning and teaching was one of neglect and, like the reading skill (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's chapter on reading in this volume), listening was viewed as a passive process with no role in language learning. This assumption stemmed from the environmentalist approach to language learning, which considered that learning a language was a mechanical process based on a stimulus-response pattern (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). In such an approach, listeners' *stimulus* consisted in hearing L2 spoken words and the *response* involved identifying and organizing those words into sentences. Thus, listeners' main role was simply based on the recognition and discrimination of sounds rather than the understanding of what they were listening to (Brown 1990). In fact, apart from learning how to discriminate sounds and pronunciation aspects such as intonation patterns, sentence stress and rhythm, little importance was granted to listening under this view since it "was simply taken for granted" (Morley 2001: 71). Consequently, it was assumed that just by repeating, imitating and memorizing what listeners heard, listening comprehension took place.

These environmentalist considerations about learning to listen resulted in the Audiolingual teaching methodology. This instructional approach emphasized the practice of listening by engaging learners in a series of exercises that focused on pronunciation drills, memorization of prefabricated patterns and imitation of dialogues (Morley 1999, 2001). The emphasis was, therefore, placed on the purely linguistic level, in which learners were taught to listen to single words and short phrases spoken in isolation.

The purpose of training learners through these structured oral-aural drills was that it helped them to improve their hearing habits (Rost 2001; Flowerdew and Miller 2005). However, the higher level cognitive aspects involved in listening were not taken into account under this teaching methodology (Morley 2001). This task was the focus of study in the subsequent years, in which attention was paid to the importance of learners' mental processes during the act of listening comprehension.

2.2. Listening within an innatist approach

By the late 1960s, the status of listening changed from being considered just a merely mechanical process of habit formation to a more dynamic and mentalistic process. The main influence of such a shift came from Chomsky's (1957, 1965) innatist views, which stated that children possess an innate ability that allows them to face the complex task of language learning (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). Within such a view (and together with the discipline of psycholinguistics which attempted to test Chomsky's innatist theory) special emphasis was given to the mental and cognitive processes involved in the comprehension act. Comprehension was, therefore, a necessary step for language learning and listening was viewed as the primary channel by which access could be gained to L2 input, while in turn serving as the trigger for acquisition (Peterson 2001; Rost 2001). As a result of this primacy of listening, listeners' role also changed from merely recognizing sounds to actively participating in the comprehension process through the use of mental strategies that were necessary for them to understand what they were listening to. Consequently, it was assumed that for listening comprehension to take place, the primary condition was to understand language rather than simply repeat, imitate and memorize it (Rost 1990).

The mentalistic aspects underlying this innatist view to learning to listen were adopted by a series of educators who developed teaching methodologies based on what Rost (2002) has called *initial listening* or *listening first* (i.e., listening should be the first aspect to be tackled in the language classroom). These instructional approaches highlighted the explicit role of listening as a critical element for language learning and claimed that reception should precede production (Peterson 2001). The main proponent of such methodologies was Asher (1969), who proposed the pedagogical system Total Physical Response. This approach was based on the belief that once learners had been exposed to an extended period of listening (i.e., consist-

ing of the instructor's verbal commands) and had been able to understand this spoken language through non-verbal actions, they could be ready for oral practice. Other scholars in the early 1970s also developed a series of classroom teaching methodologies considering that learning a language was most effectively if the focus on production was introduced after listening to and understanding it (Postovsky 1974; Nord 1975; Winitz and Reeds 1975). These teaching practices consisted in exposing learners to large amounts of input together with semantic decoding practice and simple selection tasks (Rost 1990). Similarly, some years later Krashen and Terrell (1983) developed the Natural Approach, which set a natural order of language acquisition by making learners listen to the language first and then involving them in a production phase next.

As can be derived from this innatist view, by the late 1960s and early 1970s listening was seen as the promoter of language learning. However, relevant aspects such as the interactive nature of listening, the role that contextual factors play while listening, as well as the fact that we listen for meaning and have a purpose when listening, were not taken into account. The consideration of how these factors affect listening comprehension was to gradually become more important in the following years.

2.3. Listening within an interactionist approach

By the late 1970s, the role of listening assumed greater importance due to significant shifts in a variety of research fields that shaped the interactionist approach to language learning (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). These changes were characterized by adopting an interactive, social and contextualized perspective to the language learning process. Under such an approach, it was claimed that listening should focus on a whole piece of discourse rather than listening to single words or short phrases spoken in isolation. Thus, listeners' role changed from merely paying attention to the formal structures being heard toward listening for content and meaning (Rost 2001). In fact, qualities that had been previously neglected during the listening comprehension process, such as meaningful intent and communicative function, were now paramount aspects of the listening act. This new conception of listening was termed *purposeful listening*, since, as claimed by Brown (1990: 147), "in normal life we have reasons for listening, and interests and purposes which our listening serves."

The significant advances being made within the discipline of cognitive psychology played an important role in gaining a better understanding of

the particular processes involved in the listening comprehension act. This discipline, in line with psycholinguistics, paid attention to the mental processes involved in the listening event. However, a more dynamic and interactive process of meaning creation during the listening event was now emphasized under two main views of comprehension (Peterson 2001). On the one hand, the *information processing* view of listening claimed that comprehension of a given message only occurred when it was internally reproduced in the listeners' mind. Such a view included two comprehension models: 1) the Perception, Parsing and Utilization model (Anderson 1985), and 2) the Identify, Search, File and Use model (Brown 1995), which followed a sequential order of input, perception, recognition, and understanding stages (Lynch 1998). On the other hand, the *constructivist* view of listening emphasized the fact that listeners did not merely receive and process meaning, but rather constructed such meaning according to their own purposes for listening as well as their own prior knowledge. As can be seen, therefore, both the information processing and constructivist views of listening highlighted the complex nature of the listening act as well as listeners' active participation in it (Peterson 2001). Additionally, the influence of listeners' prior background knowledge in the listening comprehension act was also considered. This aspect was indeed the key feature of the schema theory developed during the 1980s.

The schema theory proposed by Rumelhart (1980), which was of paramount importance in reading comprehension (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's chapter on reading in this volume), was also extended to the listening skill. This theory involves the collection of prior knowledge (i.e., *schemata*) and experience that is stored in listeners' memory and assists the process of comprehension. Schemata can be of two types: *content schemata* and *formal schemata* (Lynch and Mendelsohn 2002; Lynch this volume). The former includes topic familiarity, cultural knowledge and previous experience with a particular field. Thus, if listeners are familiar with the given topic they are listening to, their content schemata can be activated and, consequently, comprehension becomes much easier. The latter, formal schemata, involves knowledge about discourse forms, rhetorical conventions as well as the structural organization of different text types, such as an academic lecture. Again, if listeners are familiar with the particular type of text or genre they are going to listen to, comprehension will take place far more easily. The importance of having knowledge of both types of schemata is, therefore, essential since it can to a great extent facilitate listeners' comprehension process.

Apart from the influence of all these psycholinguistic aspects and processes involved in facilitating listening, by the 1980s and 1990s social and cultural aspects were also claimed to play an important role in the listening comprehension act. As far as the relevance of social factors, the notion of *context* acquired special emphasis under the discipline of sociolinguistics since, as pointed out by Carrier (1999: 65), “real-life listening does not occur in a vacuum but rather in a rich social context.” Thus, Carrier (1999) examined how the social context of listening influenced comprehension and, more specifically, the author paid special attention to the effects that status relationship between interlocutors had on listening. After reviewing the influence of the social variable of status on language behavior from the theories of linguistics, human communication and sociolinguistics, the author concluded the potential of this social factor to help or hinder listening comprehension. In fact, it was pointed out that listeners engaged in face-to-face interaction must pay attention to this variable in order to determine which type of verbal behavior should be appropriate when delivering a response.

As part of the social context in which listening occurs, listeners should also be aware of the fact that speakers not only convey meaning through the use of verbal behavior but also by means of non-verbal elements (i.e., body postures, body movements, facial expressions, facial gestures, eye contact or the use of space by the communicators) as well as non-verbal paralinguistic elements such as the way the voice is used (Morley 2001). Consequently, an understanding of all these aspects would provide important clues for interpreting what is being listened to and, in turn, facilitate the whole process of listening comprehension. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that body language and gestures differ considerably between cultures, so their meaning has to be interpreted within the particular cultural context where it is being heard. Cultural aspects, therefore, also need to be considered as relevant factors that help listeners’ understanding in another language (Lynch 1998). In fact, research conducted in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989) has demonstrated how the formulation of different speech acts and politeness issues, such as the directness-indirectness continuum, differ considerably across cultures. This fact means that listeners’ knowledge of the speakers’ cultural norms would have a great influence on their listening comprehension in that language and culture (Rost 2001).

As a result of all previous assumptions underlying an interactionist view of learning to listen, the trend in language teaching has been to adopt a Task-Based or Interactive approach to listening (Morley 2001; Flowerdew

and Miller 2005). In both types of teaching methodologies the learning goal focuses on processing spoken discourse for functional purposes and learners become active listeners who are expected to use language selectively to perform tasks which focus on meaning rather than on form. In the Task-Based approach, learners are engaged in a *listening and using* model in which they are first asked to listen to authentic language samples and then to carry out a particular task using the information received (i.e., follow the directions given, complete a diagram, fill in a table, take notes, and so on). In such an approach, the process listeners have to employ in order to solve the task is more important than understanding the whole spoken piece of discourse presented to them. In the Interactive approach to listening, learners follow a *decoding, critical-thinking, speaking* model in which they have to first decode the information they hear, react to it by processing it critically, and finally produce an appropriate response. Here, listeners have to interact with speakers and respond to what they hear in order to establish communication.

As can be implied from this interactionist view, since the 1980s listening has been considered as a primary vehicle for language learning, achieving a status of significant and central importance in both language learning and language teaching fields (Morley 2001; Rost 2001). It has been acknowledged that listening is a complex, social and interactive process in which “the listener is actively engaged in constructing meaning from a variety of contexts and input sources” (Vandergrift 1999, cited in Carrier 2003: 384). Given all these aspects, listening can be viewed as a communicative event in which listeners need to be taught a variety of communicative competencies that would allow them to behave appropriately in a given situation. The importance of integrating listening within a communicative competence framework is, therefore, the focus of the next section.

3. Teaching listening within a communicative competence framework

In the 1970s, and under the influential work of Hymes (1971, 1972), significant changes in L2 language teaching took place. In contrast to Chomsky’s (1965) view of language as a mere formal system governed by a series of rules, Hymes (1971, 1972) argued the need to pay attention to language use in social practice. Thus, he introduced the term *communicative competence*, which incorporated not only internal aspects of the language, such as its grammar, but also the rules of language use in social context as well as the sociolinguistic norms of appropriacy. Considering these aspects,

the construct of communicative competence has been operationalized into different models which have evolved over the last two decades in an attempt to increase the effectiveness of the L2 teaching process (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995; Alcón 2000; Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume).

In this communicative competence construct, and given the primacy of listening for language learning, it can be assumed that focusing on this skill within such an approach will contribute to the development of L2 communicative ability. Therefore, the aim of this section is to show where the listening skill is placed within the framework of communicative competence proposed by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). More specifically, it is described how the different components influence the development of this particular skill in order to increase learners' communicative competence in the L2. Figure 1 shows the diagram representing this framework with listening positioned in its core.

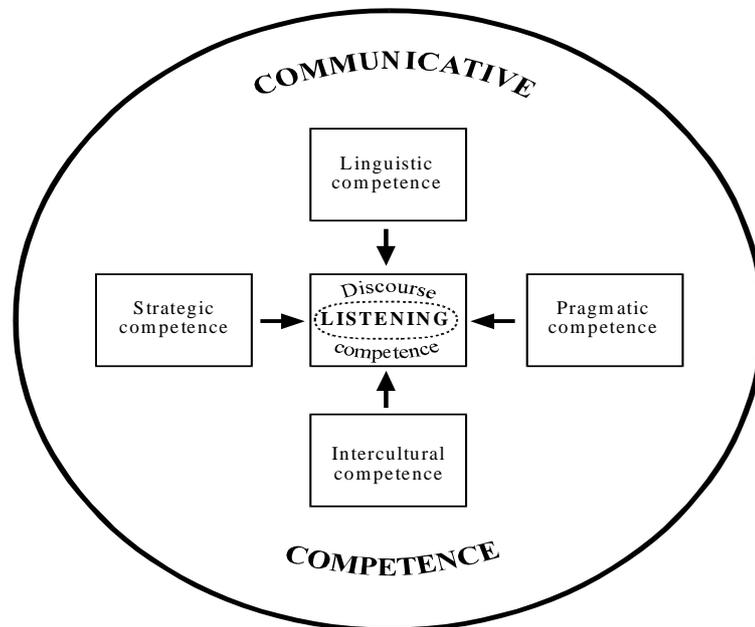


Figure 1. Integrating listening within the communicative competence framework

3.1. Discourse competence

As illustrated in Figure 1, the core of the proposed framework of communicative competence is the listening skill since it is the manifestation of interpreting spoken discourse and a way of manifesting the rest of the components. Discourse competence implies an understanding of how language operates at a level above the sentence. It involves knowledge of discourse features such as markers, coherence and cohesion as well as formal schemata in relation to the particular purpose and situational context of the spoken text. Thus, if listeners have to recognize and interpret what is heard in longer or interactive discourse, they need first to understand which discourse features have been used and why, and then relate them to the communicative goal and particular context of that piece of discourse.

In such a process, listeners play an active role in which activation from the rest of the components included in the proposed framework (i.e., linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic) is necessary to achieve overall communicative competence. Put another way, having command of all these components implies that listeners will be able to know how the different parts of a given spoken text relate to each other at the discourse level, what they mean and, in short, keep communication running smoothly in a meaningful way (Scarcella and Oxford 1992).

3.2. Linguistic competence

Linguistic competence includes all the elements of the linguistic system such as aspects concerning grammar, phonology and vocabulary (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). Knowledge of these features set at the bottom level of the listening process is necessary for listeners to decode a given spoken text. On the one hand, listeners' grammatical knowledge enables them to apply the rules of morphology and syntax to recognize the inflections on words as well as understand whether the sentences being heard are cohesively and coherently well formed. On the other hand, mastery of the phonological system is also fundamental in the listening comprehension process, since listeners need to know not only how words are segmented into various sounds, but must also understand aspects such as rhythm, stress, intonation, feature detection or metrical segmentation (see Rost this volume). In fact, Lynch and Mendelsohn (2002: 194) point out that one of the unique features of listening includes "the presence of a rich prosody (stress, intonation, rhythm, loudness and more), which is absent from the

written language.” Additionally, knowledge of the lexicon or vocabulary is an essential part of listeners’ linguistic competence, since it is the means to recognize the words that are heard within a whole piece of spoken discourse (see Rost, this volume, for the importance of lexical knowledge and lexical access).

As can be implied from the description of this component, mastery of the language system is inherently related to discourse competence since listeners’ deficiencies in any of these linguistic-related aspects (i.e., grammar, phonology or vocabulary) may cause them problems when trying to understand the meaning of a spoken text at the discourse level.

3.3. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence involves an understanding of the function or illocutionary force of a spoken utterance in a given situation, as well as the sociopragmatic factors necessary to recognize not just what that utterance says, in linguistic terms, but also what it is meant by it. Thus, in order to interpret the speaker’s actual intended meaning when producing a particular utterance, listeners need to be aware of the situational and participant variables as well as politeness issues implied in such utterance. Regarding knowledge of the contextual setting, it has been claimed that if listeners recognize the specific communication situation where a given spoken event takes place (i.e., a formal lecture, an introduction between strangers or a casual talk among friends), they can be ready to listen for what is expected in such a situation (Scarcella and Oxford 1992).

Similarly, participant and politeness issues such as status, social distance and the degree of imposition involved in the delivery of the spoken message also play an important role for listeners’ interpretation of such message. In particular, the fact that the use of language changes considerably depending on the status relationship among the interlocutors has been considered to exert a strong effect on listening comprehension (Carrier 1999).

The importance of this component and its interrelationship with discourse competence is also evident if the purpose is to make listeners achieve a full understanding of a given spoken text at the discourse level. In fact, if listeners do not have a full mastery of the language system but are aware of the pragmatic factors presented above, the understanding and subsequent interpretation of the communicative intention of the spoken text will still take place.

3.4. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence implies having knowledge of both cultural and non-verbal communicative factors in order to appropriately interpret a given spoken text. The presence of cultural references is something inherent in any piece of discourse. Thus, listeners' background knowledge of those cultural aspects will help them construct its meaning as well as acknowledge differences between their own culture and that of the target language so that possible misunderstandings can be avoided. To this respect, Lynch (this volume) pays attention to the importance of intercultural differences by examining some examples from English for Academic Purposes classes in which such differences "can lead to situations where communication is limited or obstructed." Similarly, both Rost and White (this volume) also point out the importance of tackling cultural issues as essential aspects that influence listeners' interpretation of what they are hearing. In fact, White (this volume) argues the need to expose learners to materials that can show them a range of cultures that they need in order to be able to develop their intercultural competence.

Additionally, the knowledge of non-verbal means of communication, such as body language, facial expressions or eye contact, also plays an important role in the appropriate interpretation of a given spoken text. Listeners' awareness of those elements will provide them with important clues that enable them to improve their communicative ability when listening.

In a similar way to the two previous components, namely linguistic and pragmatic, the intercultural component is also intrinsically related to the core of the framework (i.e., discourse competence), since knowledge from both cultural and non-verbal means of communication would allow listeners to increase their overall communicative competence.

3.5. Strategic competence

The last component, strategic competence, has been added to the above-mentioned components since it has been regarded as one of the most important competencies for developing the listening skill (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). This competence involves the mastery of both communication and learning strategies that will allow listeners to successfully construct meaning from oral input. Thus, knowledge of different learning strategies, which have been classified as cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective (O'Malley and Chamot 1990), and the ability to use them effectively has

been considered of particular importance in L2 listening. In fact, the relevance of this strategic competence can be reflected in the following four chapters by Rost, Mendelsohn, Lynch and White, who advocate the positive role of teaching strategies as a means to achieve successful listening comprehension.

Rost (this volume) claims that an important area of research in listening has been devoted to strategy instruction. Mendelsohn (this volume) also provides a detailed account of the benefits of implementing a strategy-based approach in the L2 learning syllabus, whereas Lynch (this volume) illustrates an example of a strategic approach to the training of lecture listening skills, thus also highlighting the importance of using strategies in a particular type of listening (i.e., academic listening). Finally, White (this volume) also points out the importance of teaching listening skills and strategies so that learners become used to employing them. Consequently, it has been claimed that making learners strategically competent in their ability to comprehend oral input will foster their overall communicative competence in the L2 (Carrier 2003).

4. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated how listening, the all-to-often neglected skill, has gained a status of significant and central importance in language learning and teaching over the last decades. In fact, it is considered nowadays a primary vehicle for L2 language learning which involves an interactive process of meaning creation. In such a process, listeners' active participation has been highlighted, and the influence of linguistic, psychological and cultural factors has also been described. The complexity involved in how these factors affect the listening comprehension act has made the teaching of this particular skill an arduous task. However, the advances that have taken place in communicative approaches to L2 language teaching since the 1980s have opened new avenues to overcome this issue. To this respect, it has been shown how the teaching of listening can be carried out as part of an overall communicative construct. By adopting this perspective, learners' communicative competence can be developed through the listening skill.

Suggested Activities

The activities presented in this section are included within the *implementation stage* of the Cultural Awareness Project described by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). The goal of these activities is to foster learners' communicative competence through the listening skill, as well as to raise their awareness of cultural differences or similarities in different language communities.

Activity 1

Select a representative scene from a film, brought in by the learners, which shows a given cultural topic (see Williams 2001: 119 for the benefits of employing video to tackle behavioral and cultural values in the classroom). Prepare a series of questions divided into three phases (i.e., pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening) with the aim of activating, developing and reflecting on their cultural knowledge of such a topic while practicing their listening skill. Figure 2 shows the worksheet that would be given to the learners.

Visual listening

Pre-listening phase

- Do you think the topic of (...) is representative of the target culture and of your own culture? Why or why not?
- Which ideas come to your mind when thinking about such a topic?

While-listening phase

- Can you identify elements such as pauses, changes of intonation, tone of voice or periods of silence that involve cultural meaning?
 - Which is the setting of the scene? Does it involve particular implications for the development of the situation?
 - What is the participants' relationship in terms of social status and power? Does such a relationship affect their communicative interaction? Would such interaction be different in your own culture?
 - Which non-verbal means of communication can be identified (i.e., body movement, facial expression, eye contact, etc.)? Are they different in your own culture?
-

Figure 2. Video worksheet with a focus on cultural aspects

Post-listening phase

- Reflect on the scene you have just watched and in small groups discuss the cultural differences that would arise if the same situation were to take place in your own culture.
-

Figure 2. cont.

The pre-listening phase attempts to engage learners in cross-cultural comparisons and activate their background knowledge on the particular cultural topic the scene is going to cover. The while-listening phase involves a series of questions designed to make learners analyze the scene in terms of how linguistic, pragmatic and intercultural-related issues (i.e., non-verbal behavior) influence their understanding of the cultural topic. Finally, the post-listening phase makes learners reflect on and discuss the cultural differences that may arise if such a situation were to take place in their own culture.

Activity 2

Select representative audio extracts or video scenes with *cultural incidents* (Harmer 1998) or *intercultural misunderstandings* (Lynch and Mendelsohn 2002) that have been brought in by the learners (i.e., scenes in which someone from a particular culture feels odd in a situation interacting with someone from a different culture, or scenes that report an intercultural misunderstanding given the beliefs and attitudes in the different cultures). Prepare a series of activities aimed at raising learners' cross-cultural awareness by asking them, for example, to evaluate the behavior of the person involved in the situation by paying attention to non-verbal features, such as body movement, eye contact or tone of voice (if video scenes are employed), or to interpret and explain the misunderstanding (see Harmer 1998: 104 for an example of an audio extract that involves a cultural incident).

Activity 3

Classify all culture-specific listening materials brought in by all learners (i.e., audio extracts, recorded conversations, video scenes) according to the particular cultural topic covered (i.e., family, education, regional identity,

etc.) and use them as resources for a larger listening activity. Therefore, each learner could take the material on a given topic home and return it to class after a suitable period of time. To ensure that learners listen to the material, they should prepare a short written report describing the content it dealt with as well as giving their point of view about such a topic.

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Areas of research that influence L2 listening instruction

Michael Rost

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. In your experience, what aspects of listening give second language (L2) learners the most difficulties? What kinds of research might help you, as an instructor, understand how to address these difficulties?
2. When working with listening, what decisions do teachers have to make concerning the following: choice of input, top down processing (activating appropriate schemata), vocabulary access, bottom up processing (hearing sounds, recognizing words, parsing), dealing with misunderstandings and developing listening strategies? How might research in any of these areas influence a curriculum or classroom teaching decisions?
3. Skim over the “claims” that are stated at the beginning of each of the research sections. Which of these claims do you intuitively agree with? Which do you not agree with? What experiences have you had as a language learner or language teacher that lead you to accept or reject any of these claims?

1. Introduction: Influences on listening instruction

Listening instruction covers a wide range of teaching strategies. We can define listening instruction as a pedagogic plan that focuses on any of four goals: 1) improving learners’ comprehension of spoken language, 2) increasing the quality of learners’ intake from spoken input, 3) developing learners’ strategies for better understanding of spoken discourse, or 4) engendering a more active participation in face-to-face communication. As such, listening instruction can take place any time spoken language is used, not just during a specific phase of pedagogy involving recorded input and explicitly called “listening practice.”

There has been in the last several years an evolution in the teaching of listening. The progress is due in part to developments in general communicative language learning methodologies and to advances in technologies that allow for improved access to a wide range of spoken language from multimedia sources. But what has also spurred this evolution is a better understanding of research into the nature of oral communication and into the internal perceptual and comprehension processes of the listener.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of four key areas in which research has provided insights into the teaching of L2 listening.

- Area 1: Accessibility of input
- Area 2: Top down processing
- Area 3: Bottom up processing
- Area 4: Listener status

For each area, this chapter will suggest a general claim and provide a brief survey of research initiatives that support this claim. Each section will conclude with a set of research questions that have an impact on L2 listening instruction.

2. Accessibility of input

Claim: Access to relevant and appropriately challenging input is a critical factor in listening development.

2.1. Functions of input

It is axiomatic that listening is the primary vehicle by which a person acquires an L2. Listening opportunities “provide the linguistic environment” or “set the stage” for acquisition. What must be acquired in L2 acquisition is a range of new knowledge and a multi-faceted set of skills for using this knowledge:

1. a new perceptual mode for categorizing the phonological system of the L2 (Escudero and Boersma 2004)
2. an abstract system of novel grammatical rules (Braidı 1999)
3. a lexical system that is linked to the semantic system of the first language (L1) (Nation 2001)
4. a comparative pragmatic system (House 1996; Sercu 2000)

5. a set of language specific processing procedures (Brown and Hulme 1992; Adams and Gathercole 2000)
6. a set of complex cognitive skills that allow for “thinking in the L2” (Rico 2001; Juffs 2004)

All of these types of knowledge and opportunities for skill development are available to the learner through listening input, but acquisition is not automatically brought about by mere exposure to the input. The learner, in order to acquire the L2, must come to understand input in personally meaningful ways, engage in interactions and tasks based on that input, *and* simultaneously pay attention to the form of the input and interaction that will allow for permanent development of L2 knowledge and skills.

We know that significant development in an L2 requires a great *quantity* of listening – certainly on the order of hundreds of hours per year. What is less clear is how the *type* and *quality* of input affects learner engagement and eventual acquisition from the input. Factors that affect quality of input include relevance, difficulty, and authenticity.

2.2. Factors that affect quality of input

2.2.1. *Relevance*

The first factor is relevance. Relevance refers to the personal significance of the input. As Beebe (1988) aptly describes, unless individual learners find “the right stuff” – listening and reading input – to fuel their intrinsic motivation for acquisition, it is unlikely that they will become sufficiently engaged to trigger the mental processes needed for sustained development. Because of its subjective nature, relevance can only be measured in terms of sustained effort to understand. The more relevant the listening opportunities, the more motivated the learner is likely to be to continue seeking comprehensible input.

2.2.2. *Difficulty*

The second factor is difficulty. Difficulty refers to the intrinsic “cognitive load” of a listening or reading text, its linguistic and informational complexity. Text difficulty is a reflection of the cognitive processes required for an adequate understanding of a text and is known to include several vari-

ables involving length, speed, familiarity, information density, and text organization (see Figure 1).

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Hypothetic impact on the listener (the text is easier if...)</i>	<i>Relation to construct (...because)</i>
Word count	Total number of words in a text	the word count is lower	There is less text to process
Text speed	Average speed (words per minute) of the speaker	The speed is slower, contains more pauses	There is more time for word recognition and parsing
Individuals and objects	Total number of individuals and objects	it involves fewer rather than more individuals and objects	There are fewer cross referencing decisions to make
Text type	narrative, descriptive, instructive, argumentative	It has paratactic (time ordered) organization rather than abstract (unspecified) or hypotactic (embedded) organization	sequential ordering take less time and effort to process
Pause Unit length	Average number of words per sentence (or pause unit)	Average pause unit is shorter	There is less syntactic parsing needed
Object distinction	Clarity and distinctness of individuals or objects in the text	Individuals and objects in the text are clearly distinct from each other	There are clearer spatial and/or semantic boundaries between items being analyzed in short term memory
Inference type	Inferences required are very familiar to the listeners	It involves lower-order (more frequently used) inference calculations	It requires less cognitive effort

Figure 1. Text variables in difficulty (based on Rost 2002; Rupp, García, and Jamieson 2001; Brown 1995)

Information consistency	Information in text is consistent with information known by listener	It involves direct activation of useful schemata in memory	It involves shorter memory searches and less delay in re-comprehension of problematic text segments
Information density	Ratio of known to unknown information in the text	It involves higher ratio of known to unknown information	It involves less filing or storage of new information;

Figure 1. cont.

2.2.3. Authenticity

The third factor is authenticity. Authenticity refers to the degree to which a text is a legitimate sample of the way the language is actually used. This notion is important because we can only acquire a target language by drawing inferences and making generalizations from valid samples.

In language pedagogy, authenticity has been approached in different ways. It is sometimes believed that mere exposure to genuine texts (i.e., listening texts used by native speakers in an “authentic” context) are helpful for learning to listen. Long (1996), however, claims that *genuine texts* (except when used at very advanced levels) hamper learning by confronting the learner with large amounts of unfamiliar language (new vocabulary, complex syntax, novel collocations) without compensatory devices to facilitate comprehension. In short, they present too dense a linguistic package for learning purposes.

As an alternative to listening to genuine texts, it is often assumed that controlling difficulty through means of text simplification is an aid to both comprehension and eventual development of listening ability. However, this contention has also been called in question. Simplification does not always help comprehension, often because it serves to remove useful redundancy in texts, e.g., by deleting explicit intra- and inter-utterance markers of logical relationships among referents and propositions. Even when simplified texts do improve comprehension, they tend to be stilted, lacking complete cross references (which are needed for normal kinds of logical inference) and intertextuality (cultural references which are necessary for activation of appropriate schemata). In spite of the good intentions by teachers who use them, simplified texts may actually impede learning by

modeling unnatural *usage*: simplified texts remove from the input the very items which learners need to be exposed to in order to eventually acquire the L2.

Two alternatives have been proposed to deal with the genuine vs. simplified text conundrum. One alternative that has been proposed is the use of “elaboration” rather than simplification. Research has shown that elaborated texts are able to bring about almost as great an increase in comprehension as simplified ones, but they achieve this without damaging the richness of the original text (Long 1996). Comprehension is improved through adding redundancy (various types of natural repetition, amplification and paraphrase) and transparency (overt signaling to increase topic saliency, matching order of mention in the text to the chronological sequence of events, prevalent use of a here-and-now orientation). Another essential feature of elaborated texts is a slower rate of delivery (usually through increasing the length of natural pauses), and where discourse is interactional, by frequent use of clarification requests, comprehension checks and confirmation checks. Because acquisition requires uptake (i.e., long-term retention) of previously unknown linguistic targets (new vocabulary, syntax and collocations), elaboration better assures that learners will notice new items, while they are working to comprehend the text.

Another alternative of course is the use of focused processing tasks that provide scaffolding to allow learners to deal with selected aspects of an authentic text. Tasks can include pre-listening steps that provide advance organizers for content and selected vocabulary and concept support to “prime” listeners for “difficult content” that would normally be beyond their comprehension capacity (Long and Crookes 1992; Vogely 1995; Rost 2002).

2.3. Research questions

- What combination of listening input is best for learners – genuine texts, simplified texts, or elaborated texts? How is the benefit to be measured – through immediate comprehension, motivation to continue listening efforts, or long-term learning? (Lynch 2002; Mishan 2004)
- What kinds of adjustment in input selection or delivery are helpful for L2 listeners in various settings, such as academic lectures? (see for example Yule 1997; Lynch 2004)

- How does “listening in context” help learners develop appropriate content and cultural schemata that will help them adjust to authentic texts? (Miller 2003; Flowerdew and Miller 2005)
- How does extensive listening (with varying degrees of support from text simplification and written text supplementation) aid the development of listening skills? What kinds of practical tasks can boost the effectiveness of extensive listening? (Waring 2004)
- How can authentic listening materials from internet multimedia sources assist learners be used to help learners develop listening skills at beginning vs. intermediate vs. advanced levels? (Dumitrescu 2000; Ginther 2002)

3. Top down processing

Claim: Top down processing –activating background knowledge and expectations through lexical access– guides the listening process and provides connection with higher level reasoning.

Top-down processing in listening refers to the use of expectations in order to infer what the speaker may have said or intended to say. Expectations come from pre-packaged patterns of background knowledge that we have stored in memory from prior experiences. An entire pattern of knowledge, or schema, consisting of hundreds of interlinked nodes in memory, may be triggered by recognition of just a single word or image. When a network is activated, it allows us to fill in – by “default” – other parts of the pattern, with related words, images, and concepts. It has been estimated that by the time we reach adulthood, we have stored over a million schemata in memory, for everything from filling out a tax form to asking someone for a date (Churchland 1999). These schemata obviously help us process spoken communication quickly, even if they sometimes lead us to an erroneous conclusion about what a speaker said or meant. In order to remain operational as comprehension devices, new schemata are created every day and existing ones are updated constantly: every time we read, listen to, or observe something new we create a new schema by relating one fact to another through a logical or semiotic link (Altarriba and Forsythe 1993).

3.1. Activating schemata

Top down processing plays an important role in listening because it is the basis for interpreting and enriching (and possibly distorting) the speaker's meaning. In L2 listening, the role of schemata is especially important because in NS-NNS interactions and in the L2 listening generally, there are frequently significant mismatches between the speaker's and the listener's schemata that lead to misunderstandings.

Indeed, much research in cross-cultural pragmatics has shown how differences in or absence of schemata for culturally specific references and events leads to comprehension problems, as well as perceived social distance from the speaker (see for example, Miall 1989; Tyler 1995; House 2000; Duff 2001).

Understanding what a speaker says – and having an emotional appreciation of the speaker's content – depends to a large degree upon shared concepts and shared ways of reacting to the world, or at least the *imagination* of shared concepts. The advantage of shared concepts is that the speaker need not make explicit whatever he or she can assume the listener already knows. Although it is impossible that any two persons (even close family members, much less members of different L1 communities) would share identical concepts for a topic, it is indeed possible to alter one's habitual schemata to include other ways of experiencing the world. Alteration of schematic organization of memory, in order to include novel interpretations that are needed in learning an L2, is a conscious learning process. By altering schemata used for interpretation, the L2 listener can come to “share common activation spaces in memory” with the speaker (Churchland 1999). This process allows the speaker and listener to experience “mutual meanings,” even if they have different sources of background knowledge and experiences (Lustig and Koester 1998).

3.2. Lexical access

Top down processing is made possible both through non-linguistic means, particularly visual cues, and through linguistic means, primarily lexical access. The activation of background knowledge – the content schemata and cultural schemata – that is needed for comprehension of speech is linked to and launched by word recognition.

It is now hypothesized that, for most kinds of texts, lexical knowledge and lexical access are the primary predictor of proficient listening (Segalowitz et al. 1998; Laufer and Hulstijn 2001).

Corpus studies show that a recognition vocabulary of 3000 word families is necessary for comprehension of everyday conversations, if we assume that a listener needs to be familiar with – and able to recognize – about 90% of content words to understand a conversation satisfactorily (Nation and Waring 1997). There is evidence that occurrences of “out of vocabulary” words in a spoken text (i.e., words outside of one’s vocabulary knowledge, either nonsense words or not-yet-acquired words) create attentional problems that seriously interfere with comprehension and with the listener’s affective sense of adequately “following” the discourse (Rost and Ross 1991; Vandergrift 1999). Of course, there can be no clear definition of what a “recognition vocabulary” means because word knowledge involves a number of overlapping aspects and this knowledge continuously expands in our “mental lexicon”. Word knowledge includes, on a surface level, recognition of the word’s spoken form (including its allophonic variations in actual speech), its written form, and grammatical functions, and on a deeper level, its collocations, relative frequency in the language, constraints on use, denotations, connotations, association, concepts and referents. There is evidence that depth of knowledge of words influences speed of spoken word recognition, by way of priming effects. Where “neighborhood density” is greater, that is, when semantic connections in the mental lexicon are more complex, word recognition becomes easier. This means that the depth of individual word knowledge determines a given word’s degree of integration into the mental lexicon, and therefore the facility with which it is accessed in real time (Luce and Pisoni 1998).

It has been hypothesized that in live discourse a listener can hold only four unknown elements in short-term memory, and continue to listen actively (Davis 2001). When this capacity is reached during aural processing, attempts at integration of new items become problematic, and one of three comprehension strategies is required: (1) repair of the memory problem through pausing and clarification, (2) use of top-down inferencing to construct a plausible message that incorporates the unknown elements, or (3) postponement or abandonment of attempts to comprehend, or overriding the speaker’s intent (Rost 2002).

3.3. Research questions

- Examining misunderstandings is a valuable line of research for development of listening pedagogy. As House, Kasper, and Ross (2003: 2) note, “miscommunication is itself communication” – that is, it reveals our underlying knowledge and expectations. What role can an analysis of misunderstandings play in the teaching of listening? (Bazzanella and Damiano 1999)
- What understanding problems arise when L2 listeners know they do not have similar cultural schemata to those of a speaker? What understanding problems arise when L2 listeners assume that they share similar content and cultural knowledge with the speaker, but actually they do not? (Lantolf 1999)
- How, when, and why do language teachers use the concept of culture as an explanation for the inherent meaning of a text? When is cultural “otherness” produced and what are the consequences of this barrier for listening comprehension? (Scollon and Scollon 1995). To what extent does “intertextuality”, such as inclusion of references to pop culture, influence the perceived difficulty of different listening texts? (Duff 2001)
- To what extent can task type or question type help learners develop awareness of culture-specific schemata that are needed to understand listening texts more critically or more fully? (Buck 2001; Rupp, García, and Jamieson 2001)
- In multimedia-based learning, listeners have access to visual cues to trigger appropriate schemata for understanding. What happens to language processing when these visual cues are missing, or are delayed (e.g., through picture-off viewing, followed by picture-on viewing)? (Markham, Peter, and McCarthy 2001) How does the use of captions (either L1 or L2 captions) influence understanding? (Baltova 1999)
- Does concurrent lexical support while listening, either through captioning of videos (Baltova 1999) or overt signaling and paraphrasing of unfamiliar lexical items in face-to-face delivery (Pica 1994) assist comprehension or lexical acquisition?
- Do group reconstruction activities following listening (as in the “dictogloss” method) promote awareness of unfamiliar lexical items and help learners deepen and extend their vocabulary knowledge? (Swain 1998)

- Lexical difficulties are one of the most highly cited sources of listening comprehension problems, even by advanced learners. One descriptor of an advanced learner is “someone who uses appropriate top-down metacognitive strategies to avoid a preoccupation with interpreting every lexical gap” (Buck and Tatsuoka 1998). Is it effective to teach beginning and intermediate learners this strategy of “overriding” lexical difficulties while listening? (Goh 2002, 2000).
- Hulstijn (1992) suggests that vocabulary that is inferred during listening is retained more permanently than vocabulary that is glossed in advance. What implications does this have for teaching vocabulary in connection with listening?

4. Bottom up processing

Claim: Training in bottom up processing is an essential element in listening comprehension. Although influence of the L1 may prevent efficient bottom up processing (metrical segmentation and word recognition), specific training will promote better listening.

Bottom up processing refers to a two-pass listening process: the first is to identify the overall phonological shape of the metrical unit (or phrase or pause unit) that the speaker utters and the second is for segmental decoding or breaking the metrical unit into individual words. Because these processes are nearly simultaneous and mutually informing, we experience them as a single process of “decoding.”

Word recognition, segmenting the words out of the stream of speech, is the foundation of this decoding process. It is both a retrospective and prospective procedure. Word recognition is retrospective in that it requires identification of words and activation of lexical knowledge linked to words that have been recognized. Word recognition is prospective in that it allows the listener to locate the onset of the immediately following word and enables “proactive processing”, indicating syntactic and semantic constraints of the utterance it is part of (Field 2001).

4.1. Components of bottom up processing

In continuous speech, there is no auditory equivalence to the white spaces in reading continuous text, so the listener does not have reliable cues for

marking word boundaries. Given the lack of reliability, it is often word recognition that becomes the most salient area of difficulty for L2 listeners, particularly those who are highly literate in their L1. Because there are no visual indicators of word boundaries, word recognition is achieved only by phonological competence. There are two complementary phonological processes that assist the listener: feature detection and metrical segmentation.

4.1.1. Feature detection

Feature detection is the most fundamental bottom up listening process. Speech processing research has shown that we have a wide range of phonetic feature detectors (specialized synaptic networks) in our auditory cortex which enable us to decode speech into linguistic units. These networks respond to specific frequencies of sounds. If we do not use particular networks during development of our L1, they will become dysfunctional and atrophy as we enter adolescence. This means that as adults we eventually retain only the phonetic feature detectors that were stimulated by our native language and allow us to recognize the 30 or 40 phonemes that make up our native language.

This also means that once some detectors have been developed and others atrophied, we will experience perceptual difficulties in perception of any L2 sounds that are not similar to those in our L1. The speech can be difficult to segment into words and phonemes because different phonemic categories in the L2 can sound as if they are the same (single category assimilation) and occurrences within the same category can be heard as if they are different (multiple category assimilation). Accurate motor articulations of the L2 can also be difficult to reproduce for the same reasons.

4.1.2. Metrical segmentation

In addition to processing speech with phonetic feature detectors, we also utilize a more holistic type of word recognition process called “metrical segmentation.” Metrical segmentation refers to the use of stress and timing rules to segment incoming speech into words, which are then used for lexical processing and meaning construction.

According to the Optimality Theory (Kager 1999; Tesar and Smolensky 2000) all L1 listeners acquire a primary metrical segmentation-strategy to

process strings of speech efficiently into grammatical chunks, and subsequently into individual words as necessary. The strategy acquired is based on the phono-lexical system (how content words receive stress) and the phonotactic principles (how sound combinations and pausing intervals correlate) of their first heard language. Together, these strategies become automatic and allow L1 listeners to segment the words in the speech stream efficiently “in real time,” with a wide range of speakers of the same language. For most varieties of English, the preferred segmentation strategy utilizes two principles: (1) a strong syllable marks the onset of a new content word (90% of content words in English have stress on the first syllable; many of course are monosyllabic) and (2) each pause unit of speech (most speech is uttered in 2-to-3 second bursts, bounded by pauses) contains one prominent content item (which may be a single word or a phrase).

Although there will always be lingering effects of the L1 perceptual system and some need for compensation, any L2 learner, at any age, *can* improve L2 bottom up processing through auditory training. For an L2 learner who has an L1 that shares similar phonetic features and metrical segmentation strategies with the L2, the oral properties of one’s L1 and L2 are likely result in positive transfer, making bottom up speech processing in the L2 to some extent automatic, without any specific training (Auer, Couper-Kuhlen, and Muller 1999; Cutler 1997). For an L2 learner who has an L1 with few shared phonetic features and metrical segmentation strategies, intensive work at training a new phonological and phonotactic system is necessary (Chun 2002; Field 2002).

4.2. Research questions

- Due to the extreme efficiency of metrical processing in our L1 listening, which results from developmental sharpening, is everyone rendered “disabled second-language listeners later in life” (Cutler 2001). What kinds of perceptual difficulties do learners from different L1 backgrounds experience? To what extent can these difficulties be attributed to their L1 perceptual system?
- Do shadowing exercises (immediate oral repetition of heard texts after each pause unit), which are widely practiced in interpreter training, improve learners’ bottom-up processing? (Kurz 1992)
- What kind of “connected speech” perception exercises or pronunciation exercises might remediate lexical segmentation problems? (Bra-

- zil 1994; Cauldwell 2002; Field 2003; Flege, Munro, and Mackay 1995; Iverson et al. 2003; Wilson 2003)
- Zhao (1997) concluded that when given direct control of the speed of the input, students' listening comprehension improved. In what ways is the learners' comprehension improved by this kind of control? In what ways do learners develop listening strategies through this type of training?
 - N. Ellis (2003) contends that aural perception can be understood in terms of frequency effects – L2 users, unlike L1 users, recognize words in speech in correlation with amount of exposure they have had to the words. Less frequent words are “missed” more often. What parts of listening input are learners “missing” – not recognizing clearly and not processing further? (Ross 1997; Kim 1995; Tsui and Fullilove 1998)?
 - What can “mishearings” (such as hearing “going to kill a mouse” when the speaker said “going to Maury’s house”) tell us about bottom-up listening processes? What kinds of mishearings are common among L2 learners? (Bond 1999)
 - How does speech rate affect learners' understanding of a text and capacity for listening in longer stretches? Does listening comprehension improve for all L2 listeners when the speech rate is slowed down? If so, in what ways? (Griffiths 1992; Cauldwell 1996). What are the most effective or most natural ways to “slow down” speech, through additional pausing or through slower and more deliberate articulation? (Flowerdew 1994).
 - To what extent does “processing instruction” – a teaching approach based on inducing noticing of new grammatical features – contribute to bottom up processing? (van Patten 2004)
 - Does “enriched input” – flooding the input with specific grammatical features – assist learners in noticing new grammatical forms or collocations that they might otherwise miss hearing? (R. Ellis 2003)

5. Listener status

Claim: The listener's perceived status influences comprehension, participation, and value of input for language acquisition. Engagement by the L2 user – assumption of an “active listening” role – promotes acquisition of listening skills and strategies.

In all listening settings, including non-collaborative ones such as listening to an academic lecture or watching a film in a theater, the listener adopts a role along a continuum of participation rights and responsibilities (see Rost 1990: 1-8 for a discussion.) The assumption of a role affects not only overt participation behaviors, but also the way in which the listener comprehends the event and retains information.

This view of listening roles enables explicit development of attitudes, perspectives and responses that promote more symmetrical participation and more active involvement in the construction of meaning. The extent to which listeners choose to become involved in various discourse situations depends in large part on how they perceive their status in relation to the primary speaker and in relation to the content the speaker is conveying. One known aspect of affective involvement in any discourse setting is the raising or lowering of anxiety and self-confidence, and thus the motivation to participate actively. For non-interactive settings, this involvement may entail the use of higher order cognitive strategies, such as evaluating the speaker's position or taking notes of key points. For interactive settings, this motivation will also involve using higher risk social strategies, such as showing openness and revealing private aspects of self (Robbins 1996; Vogely 1998).

It is now known that higher affective involvement promotes enhanced understanding through better connection with the speaker and through construction of more tangible references for remembering the discourse, while lower affective involvement typically results in less connection, less understanding, and minimal efforts to evaluate and repair any misunderstandings that arise (Graumann and Kallmeyer 2002). For example, in separate studies Yang (1993) and Aniero (1990) found a clear negative correlation between learners' levels of anxiety (or "receiver apprehension"), their perceived distance from the speaker, and their listening comprehension performance. One well-known effect of perceived social distance is a reduction in the amount of negotiation for meaning — that is, the work that the listener will do to resolve communication difficulties (Carrier 1999; Pica 1994).

A related factor in social distance and listening performance is uncertainty. Uncertainty regarding one's role or a likely "map" for the way the discourse is unfolding leads to a decrease in the listener uptaking of turn opportunities, including backchanneling. Backchanneling signals — or "vocalizations of understanding" as Gardner (1998, 2003) calls them — are a primary influence on the speaker's perception of the listener's stance. When the listener does not provide backchanneling signals, or does not

provide them in the expected fashion (particularly in ritual encounters such as job interviews), the speaker often unconsciously assumes antagonism or indifference (Brennan and Williams 1995; Kerekes 2003).

As listener uncertainty increases, the asymmetry of the discourse increases also. As has been well documented, in many stereotypical NS-NNS encounters in which asymmetry develops, the NS quickly assumes a “superiority position,” and makes little effort to establish “common ground” with the NNS. This often leads to poor mutual affect, strained communication, and misunderstandings which are hard to trace to a single moment in the interaction (House, Kasper, and Ross 2003; Keysar et al. 2000).

5.1. Analyzing listener problems in discourse

Because asymmetry, anxiety and negative affect among L2 listeners are so pervasive, addressing the listener’s role in collaborative discourse has become a vital aspect of listening instruction. There are two important sources of research that contribute to this aspect of instruction.

The first source is analysis of the critical problems that L2 participants encounter in discourse: misunderstandings, asymmetrical control, and lack of establishment of common ground. Based on a discourse analysis of these problems (an analysis of organization, symmetry, turn-taking, intention, response, etc.) in real interaction, researchers provide insights into the kinds of problem-solving decisions and techniques that can be used to repair or avoid problems in discourse. Various typologies of listener strategies have been developed to encapsulate these insights (see Bremer et al. 1996; Rost 2002). (A general summary is provided in Figure 2).

<i>Characteristics of unsuccessful / asymmetrical / passive listening</i>	<i>Characteristics of successful / symmetrical / active listening</i>
- waiting for information to “register” (assuming that the speaker has the primary role in creating meaning)	- taking a lead in constructing meaning
- assuming the listener is responsible for any communication failures	- assuming the speaker is (partly) responsible for any communication failures
- not activating background knowledge or assumptions (assuming that speaker will provide all information necessary for comprehension)	- activating background knowledge and assumptions to fill in missing information

Figure 2. Strategies of unsuccessful vs. successful listeners in interactive settings

- | | |
|---|--|
| - not asking for clarification if confusion arises | - asking for clarification when confusion arises |
| - not responding to speaker voluntarily (not revealing any personal reaction) | - providing reactions and responses to the speaker voluntarily |
-

Figure 2. cont.

5.2. Strategy instruction

A second source of research has been formalized under the banner of “strategy instruction,” in which researchers attempt to isolate approaches, decisions, and tactics that are associated with “successful” (symmetrical, low-anxiety, positive affect) listening.

Early researchers of learning strategies began by listing the range of strategies that learners reported using in their attempts at learning a L2 (see Chamot 1995; O’Malley, Chamot, and Küpper 1989 for a discussion). The essential pedagogic implication behind this initial research was that assisting learners in planning and monitoring their attempts at learning would be a benefit, helping them maximize the results of their learning efforts. This type of strategy instruction taps into a basic theme of most motivation theories, namely that intrinsic, self-guided motivation leads to increased time on task and concomitant success, which in turn strengthens motivation. One aspect of this method of compilation research that is misleading, however, is the implication that all instances compiled are necessarily effective for all learners. When this research method was applied to listening, an exhaustive list of “listening strategies” was produced (see Figure 3).

<i>Listening strategies</i>		
- grouping	- getting the idea quickly	- paying attention
- associating	- using resources for receiving messages	- organizing
- elaborating	- reasoning deductively	- setting goals and objectives
- creating mental linkages	- analyzing expressions	- identifying the purpose of a language task
- using imagery		- self-monitoring
- semantic mapping		- self-evaluating
- using keywords		

Figure 3. Strategies used by listeners (based on Oxford 1990)

- representing sounds in memory	- analyzing contrastively across languages	- using progressive relaxation, deep breathing, and meditation
- structured reviewing	- translating	- using music
- using physical response or sensation	- transferring	- using laughter
- using mechanical techniques	- taking notes	- making positive statements
- repeating	- summarizing	- taking risks
- recognizing and using formulas and patterns	- highlighting	- rewarding yourself
	- using linguistic clues	- listening to your body
	- using other clues	- using a checklist
	- overviews and linking with known material	

Figure 3. cont.

Subsequent work on strategy development has focused more on defining a smaller subset of strategies that are consistently associated with successful listening and with more efficient progress in gaining listening skills (see Field 2003; Goh 2000, 2002; Harley 2000; Rost and Ross 1991; Thompson and Rubin 1996; Vandergrift 2002, 2003). Collectively, using introspection and retrospection methodologies, and coupled with measures of actual effects of strategy use on comprehension and retention, this work has identified specific tactics that listeners use to plan, monitor, and modify their listening efforts. The five strategies that are most commonly identified as “successful” are: 1) predicting speaker intentions and activating ideas, 2) monitoring one’s own comprehension, 3) asking for clarification (with increasingly focused informational requests), 4) making inferences from incomplete information, and 5) providing personal responses about content (Rost 2002).

By identifying “successful listening strategies” and structuring opportunities for students to practice these strategies, instructors can provide a “laboratory” for L2 learners to experiment with different approaches to use when listening.

5.3. Research questions

- In specific NS-NNS encounters, such as job interviews or other “gatekeeping” encounters, “pre-text” (the information that the NNS has prior to the event) is a key determiner in the symmetry and success of the encounter (Bardovi-Harlig 2002; Bou-Franch 2002). For

- other kinds of discourse, what kinds of prior knowledge are necessary for listeners to have to assure a satisfactory listening outcome?
- What is the role of content knowledge in affecting perceived status in a listening situation? How does content knowledge influence L2 learners' conversational participation? Does increased participation by the L2 learner lead to better listening outcomes? (Zuengler 1993; Zuengler and Bent 1991).
 - Does "raising awareness" of successful listening strategies affect learners' behavior when they are actually listening? Can specific listening strategies be "taught" or "encouraged," or do learners adopt strategies on their own through trial and error only? (Vandergrift 2002).
 - How does the methodology of introspection and retrospection (in the L1 or the L2) affect the results of research on strategy use and development? (Vandergrift 1999, 2003).
 - Rost (2002) has identified five "teachable" listening strategies: predicting, monitoring, inferencing, clarifying, responding. What kind of instructional tasks can be designed to promote these strategies and evaluate their effect on comprehension, satisfaction, motivation, and learning?

6. Conclusion

This article has provided an overview of four research areas that have a direct impact on L2 listening instruction: accessibility of input, top down processing, bottom up processing, and listener status. For each of these areas, a central claim was made about what the research suggests for language pedagogy. The claims concerned the role of accessibility of input, the ways that top down processing guides (and possibly distorts) interpretation, the ways that bottom up processing accelerates comprehension (or the ways that a lack of bottom up processing impedes it), and the ways that the perceived status of the listener influences the listening process and the kinds of strategies that can be used to create better conditions for better understanding.

The applicability of these general claims and of the specific insights that particular research offers must be tempered by individual teaching contexts. The goal of listening instruction is to help learners become better listeners, able to utilize their linguistic and non-linguistic resources to interact, to comprehend, to interpret, to respond more fully and more effectively. Help-

ing learners become better listeners involves complex teaching strategies that will include insights and applications from all of these research areas, and from other sources that inform instructional practices.

Suggested Activities

At the end of the survey of each research area – accessibility of input, top down processing, bottom up processing, and listener status – several research questions are suggested (sections 2.3, 3.3, 4.2, 5.3). For each research area, choose *one* of the questions for personal exploration:

Activity 1

Read one of the articles or studies cited. Look for specific applications of the article or study to your own teaching situation.

OR

Activity 2

Read one of the articles or studies cited. Plan and carry out a similar research study in your own teaching situation. Compare your results with the original study.

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Learning how to listen using learning strategies

David J. Mendelsohn

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. Are you satisfied with your teaching of listening comprehension? Please give reasons.
2. What/who determines the content and material you teach in your listening classes? Do you have input and are you satisfied with this situation?
3. Try to verbalize what the guiding principle or thread is that shapes the curriculum of the listening courses that you teach.
4. Where do you stand on the debate over the use of authentic versus inauthentic/contrived materials in your listening class?
5. In your listening classes do you actually teach your students *how to listen*?

1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on the practice of teaching listening comprehension rather than the theory. There is very little that is new in what is being proposed. Neither should this strategy-based instruction be seen as a “fad” or a “bandwagon.” In fact, it is my contention that what is being proposed is simply good pedagogy codified into a coherent approach that is either described as “strategy instruction” or as a “strategy-based approach” (Mendelsohn 1994).

Much of what is traditionally mis-named *teaching* listening should in fact be called *testing* listening. The distinction that is being made is that when you teach, by definition, you teach the learner of anything *how to do* something, whether it is planing a piece of wood, driving a car, developing a roll of film, or learning to listen. On the other hand, when you *test* a learner, you do not show them *how to do it* but rather, simply have them do it, and you evaluate how well they did it. Ironically, most traditional listen-

ing classes took the latter form of having the learners listen and answer questions, *without teaching them how to go about it*, i.e. testing their listening rather than teaching them to listen. This meant that a traditional listening course, if such a component of the second language (L2) course curriculum existed at all, took the form of a substantial amount of listening followed by questions, but with no attempt at training the learners how to go about getting at the meaning.

2. What should the learners be listening to?

The material that the learners should be listening to should be *spoken English*. While this sounds somewhat obvious, that is far from being the case. All too often, to this day, the listening that learners are exposed to in their listening classes is written English that has been recorded. Such material fails to demonstrate many of the features that characterize the spoken language and sets it off from the written language. Examples of these are: incomplete/imperfect sentences or sentence fragments; articulatory rules of fast speech such as assimilation and elision, vowel reduction and/or centralization, hesitation phenomena of different types, distortion of word boundaries; and built-in redundancy, repetition and restatement, thereby reducing the semantic intensity of each sentence or utterance. Moreover, being written language, it tends to contain sentences that are much more complex with much more subordination than is normally encountered in spoken language; and the language has a tendency to be stilted or even “dated”, as compared to spoken language. Moreover, being recorded written language, it is often somewhat formal as compared with real spoken language.

3. Materials

3.1. Authentic or non-authentic material?

The above discussion of the need for spoken language leads directly to the debate over whether the material being listened to should always be authentic. And there are those who would argue that it should – that the only way that a second/foreign language learner will learn to comprehend spoken English is by exposing them to authentic, spoken language.

A different stance could be taken on this matter. If one only listened to authentic material, it would be very difficult to reconcile this with the notion of teaching and providing practice in “how to” listen – it would push one into testing more than teaching. It is true that ultimately, students, having been taught strategies for listening, i.e. how to listen, should indeed be given a great deal of practice in listening to authentic spoken English. However, this, in my opinion, should be the *final phase* of the process. In order to be true my stated and firmly believed principle of teaching “how to,” it is the belief of the author that prior to listening to authentic, unscripted, unmodified language, learners have to be given training in how to go about this challenging task. This should take the form of “training exercises” (i.e., listening tasks with varying degrees of “scaffolding”), in which a particular dimension of the listening task is first taught, and then very deliberately practiced – and practiced more than is possible with authentic material.

An example will make the argument much clearer: If we take the question of teaching learners to determine the interpersonal relations that exist between interlocutors, then one of the strategies that is very helpful is to train them to listen to the appellatives – to the names by which they address each other – is it terms like “Baby Beaver” talking to “Big Bear,” suggesting a high degree of intimacy in the relationship, or is it terms like: “Ms. Jerrard” and “Professor Laugrin,” suggesting a relatively formal relationship? If we want to teach our students to listen for, and to process the meaning of such appellatives, then they need a lot of practice, and using strictly authentic materials will not yield sufficient practice. I, therefore, make no apology for advocating the construction of special activities and exercises to practice the interpretation of appellatives. This, ipso facto, calls for the *creation* of non-authentic or contrived materials in which there is a greater number of appellatives than one would find in authentic materials. This is an essential part of the process of teaching “how to” and therefore I make no apology for it.

3.2. Other criteria for materials selection

3.2.1. Needs analysis

There are other factors that should be borne in mind when selecting what the learners will be listening to. The material needs to be relevant to the needs of the learners in question. This can only be determined by carrying

out a careful “needs analysis” and then, as far as possible, ensuring that the material chosen is as relevant and useful to these particular students as possible. My experience has shown that generally speaking, teachers either do not carry out a needs analysis at all, or they pay lip-service to the idea but nothing more than that. Part of the problem lies with the way programs are often structured, and decisions as to what materials are to be taught are made by administrators or senior teachers ahead of knowing who the learners are going to be. An additional problem in many English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in particular, is that the needs and aspirations of the students in one class vary greatly, making it very difficult to accommodate everyone’s needs in the same course.

3.2.2. *Motivation*

There is also the problem of boring the students: In a course in which the needs of the learners are relatively homogeneous, an appropriate needs analysis has been carried out, and materials have been selected accordingly, care must be taken not to overdo the “needs specific” material. Some courses exist, for example one for computer programmers, in which such meticulous care was taken to use only material highly relevant to that group’s needs, that the course became boring to the students and they complained. To avoid boring the students, the highly relevant material needs to be peppered with other, different types of material in order to break the tedium and at the same time to expose the students to other types of language. Such an approach makes space for humorous, general interest, and other listening as well, which enhances motivation –something that should be consciously and deliberately worked at *all the time*.

3.2.3. *Level of difficulty*

A final factor that needs to be taken into account in materials selection is the level of difficulty of the material in relation to the proficiency level of the students. Sometimes, we become so involved with issues of authenticity and relevance of the material, that we lose sight of the dimension of level of language difficulty. While analyzing need is much more talked about at the present, diagnostic testing of proficiency level is at least as important, if not more so. Subjecting students to material that is too difficult can be a hu-

miliating and demotivating experience, and subjecting them to material that is too easy can be equally demotivating.

We are not very good at defining and measuring the level of difficulty of listening passages, but some very useful work has been done in this area, particularly by Rubin (1994) and Brown (1995), both of whom attempt to define what goes to make a listening text easier or more difficult. They identify such factors as the ease with which you can distinguish between the speakers, the number of speakers, and the chronology of the account.

4. Instruction

There is often a question as to whether the four skills should be taught separately, or whether the skills should be integrated. The approach being advocated in this chapter is that the skills should be integrated, and in this case, certainly the skills of listening and speaking. In fact, if we acknowledge that most of the listening we do is in a dialogic, interactional setting and not monologue, then it is essential that these skills be integrated. Not only should speaking and listening be integrated, but I will also be making the case for teaching interactive listening strategies, which, in fact, bridge the gap between these two skills.

In spite of advocating skills integration, there is one very important caveat: that claiming to be handling the skills in an integrated way, does not become a smokescreen for neglecting listening or any other skill. Unfortunately, this has often been the case in the past (the same definitely holds true for neglect of teaching pronunciation behind the smokescreen of skills integration), where teachers have not actually explicitly taught learners how to listen, claiming that they are “getting practice in listening” in the speaking class.

5. Learning strategies for listening?

5.1. Concept

Learning strategies are defined in a number of slightly different ways in the literature. However, since this is not a theoretical paper but rather a discussion of the actual teaching of listening strategies, Chamot’s definition (1987: 71) is being proposed as the working definition for this paper:

Learning strategies are techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic content area information.

Willing (1988: 7) in his definition identifies three features of learning strategies that are worth noting because they are directly relevant to listening comprehension: “processing, associating [and] categorizing.”

Most commonly in the literature, learning strategies are classified into three main types: metacognitive, cognitive, and social/affective strategies. Chamot (1995: 15) defines them as follows:

Metacognitive strategies are executive processes associated with the regulation and management of learning, and include strategies used to plan for a task, to monitor a task in progress, and to evaluate the success of a task after its completion. Cognitive strategies are used during the execution of a task to facilitate comprehension or production. Examples of cognitive strategies are elaboration or use of prior knowledge, grouping or classifying items to be learned, making inferences while listening or reading, and taking notes of information to remember. Both metacognitive and cognitive strategies are important in classroom learning tasks of all kinds, and they are also used by learners outside the classroom for interactive encounters in the target language. The third category in this classification system is social and affective strategies, which includes strategies such as questioning for clarification, cooperating with peers on a language learning task, and using affective controls such as positive self-talk to lower anxiety.

To this classification must be added what Lynch (1995) calls interactive listening strategies. As will be seen from his definition, they are clearly part of Chamot’s (1995) social/affective strategies, but Lynch (1995: 166) makes their definition more explicit, and emphasizes that this is the point of contact with the speaking skill:

“[Interactive listening strategies] refer to the ways in which a partner in a conversation may attempt to resolve a comprehension problem by seeking help from the speaker, i.e., to negotiate meaning.”

It is my belief that when teaching listening comprehension, all of these kinds of learning strategies need to be taught and practiced.

5.2. Principles that should underlie all listening comprehension courses

Before going into the issues of strategy instruction in any detail, it is essential to list the essential features of *any* listening comprehension course, including a strategy-based one. Space and the specific focus of this chapter prevent the inclusion of any detail here, but the following are the essential features: (some of the points have already been mentioned, and in those cases, this is noted)

- there should be an initial needs analysis (discussed above)
- linguistic proficiency features such as sound discrimination, understanding the role of stress and intonation, etc., must be taught
- training should be given in recognizing linguistic signals
- training should be given in recognizing extralinguistic and paralinguistic clues
- there should be a lot of listening practice
- the material should be spoken English (discussed above)
- the content should be appropriate (discussed above)
- attitude and motivation should be considered
- the level of difficulty should be carefully set (discussed above)
- the delivery (recording) should be natural
- the material should be video not audio
- the course should cover different kinds of listening
- there should be a recognition of the importance of prior knowledge
- prelistening should precede the listening
- students should know what they are listening for
- postlistening should follow the listening
- the course should teach, not test (discussed above)
- the course should include training in hypothesis formation, prediction and making inferences (drawn largely from Mendelsohn 1994).

5.3. Types of instruction

As has been implied several times above, the listening component of the course should be rooted in strategy instruction. This can take one of two forms: “strategy instruction” or “a strategy-based” approach.

Strategy instruction: This is the “weak” or less intense version of how to incorporate strategies into the teaching of listening. It takes the form of a very close examination of the materials/textbooks being used, and design-

ing activities that “inject” strategy instruction into the existing course/material. It is a kind of “retrofitting” strategies into an existing course. In effect, it is strengthening the “how to” component of the existing listening course through the teaching of strategies. This will make it less testing-like and more teaching-like. Mendelsohn (1998) examined nine listening textbooks published between 1995 and 1998. He found that most of them make reference to strategy instruction and its importance. However, a close examination of the materials themselves (as opposed to the preface or introduction) showed that despite saying all the “right” things about strategy instruction in the preface, it was seldom borne out in the materials and the activities.

A “*strategy-based*” approach: This term was coined by Mendelsohn (1994), and goes further than the above. What Mendelsohn proposes is a curriculum for a listening course built around and on teaching listening strategies. This does not mean that only strategies will be taught, but it does mean that strategy instruction will constitute the “spinal cord” or organizing principle on which the listening course is built. He (1994: 37) defines a “strategy-based” approach as follows:

A strategy-based approach, then, is a methodology that is rooted in strategy training ... It is an approach that sees the objective of the ESL course as being to train students how to listen, by making learners aware of the strategies that they use, and training them in the use of additional strategies that will assist them in tackling the listening task... Learners have to be weaned away from strategies that are unhelpful or even destructive, like grabbing for a dictionary ..., and these have to be replaced by such helpful strategies as guessing the meaning of a word from the context.

What this approach is calling for is a course or a curriculum, the bulk of which takes the form of teaching different strategies for listening comprehension. This notion will be explored below.

A “strategy-based” approach in no way alters the absolutely essential need to carry out a needs analysis and diagnostic testing to determine what needs to be taught and where the learners are at in terms of their proficiency level. Moreover, such a curriculum or approach does not change the guiding principle that the learners must do a lot of listening.

It must also be noted from the outset, that not everything taught will take the form of strategy instruction. For example, there is a certain level of “linguistic proficiency” (Canale and Swain 1980) that is required to serve as the foundation on which learning to listen should be built. This would include, for example, mastery of the essentials of the sound system and the

grammatical system. In addition, a comprehensive listening course should include units that teach learners to listen to different things in different ways, and this may not always be strategy-based teaching. Examples of very different types of listening are listening while interacting, i.e., during a conversation, listening to a lecture, and listening for one particular point or detail.

Although there are those who would disagree, it is my contention that the strategy instruction should be explicit and it should be made clear to the students what is being done and why (those who disagree would argue for unstated, implicit strategy instruction). As Willing (1988: 97) argues, what you are doing is simply focussing on the learning-process aspect of what is going on. And he continues, “the learner needs to be able to discover the strategies underlying particular classroom activities.” Moreover, the approach and the scaffolded “training activities” undertaken in a strategy-based listening class may be foreign to some of the students, and much of their potential resentment or opposition can be removed by explaining why you are doing what you are doing, and involving them.

5.4. Development of a strategy-based listening course

As stated above, the course would always begin with a needs analysis and some diagnostic testing. Having determined what the learners’ needs and their proficiency levels are, it would be desirable to begin with a unit teaching (or reviewing, depending on what the diagnostic testing yields) the essential features that make up the “linguistic proficiency” that needs to underlie all listening comprehension. This would be followed by the strategy-based instruction – the main part – of the course. Traditionally, listening courses have been organized around a list of grammatical structures – not real listening comprehension in my opinion – or around a list of situations in which the learners will need to understand spoken English. A “strategy-based” approach organizes the course around the teaching of different strategies that will assist the learners to comprehend. So the main units of the course will not be, for example, listening in different situations, but rather they will be “learning to” use some strategy, for example: learning to assess the mood of the speakers, or learning to form hypotheses, predict and make inferences. Each unit will actually teach the students how they can use the strategies, for example, to determine the interpersonal relations between interlocutors, and will provide “training exercises” that give the learners a lot of practice in using these newly-learned or newly-

activated-in-the-L2 strategies. This structured, somewhat contrived practice will be followed by listening activities in which the material being listened to is authentic and in which the students' listening will be greatly helped by using the strategies they have just been practicing.

"*SIMT Units*": For learners to be able to determine the content of the discourse they are listening to, they need to make use of different linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic signals that will help them. I, therefore, would include a set of units that would teach learners "how to" determine what Mendelsohn (1994) calls the "SIMT" (the Setting, the Interpersonal relationships, the Mood and the Topic).

Probably *the* most important linguistic signal to determine any or all the components of SIMT is the lexical signal – students need to be trained to listen for *any* word they might recognize and then to guess beyond it. For example, if they heard and recognized the word "funeral," then they would be able to guess that they are listening to something about someone who has died. Of course, as will be discussed below, their guess might be incorrect, but all that this requires is that they modify their guess – their hypothesis – as they are able to comprehend more as the discourse proceeds.

To determine the *setting*, the most useful signals are extralinguistic – visuals, background sounds, etc. To determine the *interpersonal relations*, the most useful signals are paralinguistic – voice quality, how close speakers stand to each other, the amount of touching, etc. To determine the *mood*, again, paralinguistic signals are the most useful – facial expressions, smiling, voice quality, etc. To determine the *topic*, all three kinds of signals are very useful, and often the topic can be determined by piecing together what has been gleaned about the setting, interpersonal relations, and mood. As was stated above, the other extremely useful strategy for determining topic is using the lexical signals. Even if a student can understand only one word, this single word will enable them to make a hypothesis based on their prior knowledge (also referred to as activating existing schema). For example, if the only word a student can understand is "concert", then they can already guess what they are listening to. If a little later they catch the word "fund-raising", then they will have an even better chance at guessing what the discourse is about although there always remains the possibility that they are incorrect and that their hypothesis still requires modification. But, what must be emphasized is that nothing has been lost even if they are wrong. And, what is more, more often than not, they will be right.

Forming a hypothesis: A "strategy-based" approach requires that the information derived from SIMT be used to form a hypothesis as early as possible. Forming a hypothesis, predicting and making inferences all require

courage on the part of the L2 learner. They require that the learner takes a “leap” and they may well be wrong. We do this all the time in our first language (L1), but ironically, learners in their L2, where they need these strategies even more, are more loath to use them. Much of what we do in a strategy-based programme involves practice in getting the students to take this leap.

At the root of this strategy-based approach, then, is the idea that the listener who does not understand everything will use whatever signals they can in order to form a hypothesis as to the meaning *as early on as possible*. Then, on the basis of further input/comprehensible signals, the hypothesis can be modified or confirmed. This hypothesis formation requires the use of one or both of two additional “guessing” strategies – predicting and making an inference. A very important point to be remembered and to be emphasized with students is that forming a wrong hypothesis does not matter, and that we do it all the time in our L1 and take it in our stride.

Predicting: Predicting here is defined as guessing the whole based on part. In other words, it involves having the courage to make a guess based on the partial comprehension that has taken place so far. An example of a predicting activity would be sentence completions like: “On the one hand she was very happy with the news, but on the other hand,...” Or, “The goalkeeper slipped as the player kicked the ball towards him, and ...” These have fairly predictable and a very limited number of logical completions. For advanced level students, activities should be developed to encourage predicting when the prediction is much more open-ended, and therefore requires even more courage. For example, students could be asked to complete utterances like:

SPEAKER A: How do you like my new furniture?

SPEAKER B: It’s certainly different.

Students would then be asked to predict what SPEAKER A is likely to say next. The class could also discuss what different people felt and why “I knew you wouldn’t approve” is a more likely next response than “Thank you.”

Making inferences: This is a different type of guessing. It relates to a higher level of competence than just understanding the words because it also involves understanding what is *not* said – listening between the lines. For example, a listener will hear: “The price of the concert tickets was exorbitant. The average age of the audience was high.” The competent lis-

tener will learn three, not two pieces of information: 1) that the tickets were very expensive, 2) that the average age of the audience was high, and 3) that only older, more established people could afford to go. Or, stated differently, the reason the average age of the audience was high was the high cost of the tickets. An L2 learner might well not pick up the third, unsaid fact. In other words, they will have failed to understand the inference that there is a cause and effect relationship between the price of the tickets and the age of the audience – that only older, more established people can generally afford those prices. There is very little I have found in textbooks that provides practice in making inferences, but Lougheed's *Listening Between The Lines* (1985) is a commendable exception. Practice in making inferences is, however, an essential part of a strategy-based approach.

6. An extended example of strategy instruction

In Chapter 7 of *Learning To Listen* (1994), Mendelsohn describes in great detail how we can teach strategies to determine the main meaning or the essence of the meaning of an utterance. This is an extremely important strategy for L2 learners as they often become overwhelmed when listening in the same way with the same concentration to every word, and miss the point of what is being said. What is needed is to make students realize that the essence of the meaning of an utterance resides in the stressed words which, more often than not, are the “content words,” while the “grammatical words” are mainly unstressed. For example, in the utterance, “The news of Mrs. Smythe is very worrying,” if a competent listener only hears/comprehends/processes “news,” “Mrs. Smythe,” and “worrying,” they will have understood the meaning.

In order for an L2 learner to use the appropriate strategies, there are a number of things they need to learn about the structure of information in English:

1. they need to pay more attention to the stressed words than to the unstressed words because they are the main “meaning carriers.”
2. they need to learn to identify the stressed words acoustically. Brown (1990) talks of them being louder, longer, having greater pitch prominence, and greater precision of articulation. Mendelsohn (1994) proposes practicing the acoustic identification of stress/unstress by using a fictitious language which shares the rules

of stress as English, so that the students will be forced to concentrate merely on this feature.

3. if they disregard the unstressed words, they will not “fall behind” and will be able to follow the stressed words (i.e., they are less likely to feel that the speaker is speaking too fast).

What has been described in the 3 points above, are examples of training and training exercises or activities which are necessary to get students to use this strategy in getting at the essence of the meaning of an utterance. Having had all this practice, there must be a lot of practice with real, authentic English.

7. Bringing it all together and concluding remarks

The downfall of certain methods and approaches in the past has been to teach/drill a certain form of the language in an artificial manner and setting and then not follow through with providing practice in using what had been learned in real language situations. This, for example, was the major weakness of the audiolingual approach: learners were given a great deal of controlled practice, but were not then expected to put it to use in real situations.

Care must be taken when following a strategy-based approach to teaching listening, that once the strategies in question have been taught, the learners are then required to do a lot of authentic listening, in which, it is hoped that they will apply the strategy-instruction that they have received.

In conclusion, a strategy-based approach to teaching listening comprehension is not, in fact new or revolutionary. However, it does ensure that in the listening course learners are actually taught “how to” listen, instead of merely being exposed to a lot of listening, as has been so common in the past.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Make a list of what you would consider to be key features of “fast speech.” Then, design activities to practice listening to and comprehending them.

Activity 2

In a group, plan two or three alternative instruments to analyze the needs of your particular students.

Activity 3

Use your existing textbook for teaching listening comprehension. Take one unit/chapter and decide what you would like to teach your students to be able to do when listening to such material. Then design some strategy-based activities that would help them to be able to achieve this goal.

Activity 4

Start from scratch and design one unit of a strategy-based listening comprehension course. For example, drawing on SIMT, design a unit that teaches students how to determine the interpersonal relations between speakers. Try to develop an entire unit, including when you ultimately provide a lot of authentic listening.

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Academic listening: Marrying top and bottom

Tony Lynch

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. Do you think that language teachers can do anything to *train* second language (L2) listening skills, or is it a question of practice?
2. In your experience, what causes learners the greatest problem when they are listening to spoken English?
3. Is guessing regarded positively or negatively in the educational culture or cultures which you are familiar with?
4. Do you think that proficiency in L2 listening basically depends on the size of a learner's vocabulary?

1. Introduction

Listeners rely on a wide range of informational and emotional cues in spoken language to achieve a reasonable interpretation of what is being said to them. When listening under favourable conditions, such as without competing sources of noise and in a language of which we are a competent speaker, we are largely unaware of what is helping us make sense. Under less favourable conditions – such as when trying to cope with a language of which we have a limited command – we are made only too aware of the difficulties we encounter. In my view, a large part of the teacher's role in improving L2 listening skills is to sensitize our students to the potentially useful signals, cues and other sources of help available to them in the spoken forms of the language. This applies particularly in the case of teaching a language for academic purposes, which will be the focus of this chapter.

There have been periods in L2 teaching when either a “top-down” approach or a “bottom-up approach” has been considered more useful or more realistic than the other. Currently, the prevailing view in the professional literature seems to be that teaching materials for L2 listening have over-emphasized schema-based strategies; a number of authors have argued the

benefits of more intensive work at the “bottom” (for example, Cauldwell 1996; Krashen 1996; Field 1998, 2003; Wilson 2003). In this chapter, I argue that listening skills teachers should not regard the approaches as mutually exclusive but as essentially complementary, and should create listening tasks in which language learners make conscious use of both top and bottom as they try to understand what a speaker is saying, and I will illustrate that approach with sample listening tasks from an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecture listening course for international students (Lynch 2004).

2. Levels

The levels at which spoken information is potentially available for interpretation include phonetic, phonological, prosodic, lexical, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic. At the bottom-most phonetic level, partners in a conversation in English need to monitor the sub-lexical signals of their interlocutor’s attitude to the current topic and what is being said about it, for example, *Hm*, *Hmhm* and *Uhuh*. They also need to assign the intended meaning to these briefest of comments, which have different socio-pragmatic associations; this is no easy matter for non-native listeners (Gardner 1998).

The conventional way of describing the use made of the internal and external resources available to listener is to group them into *bottom-up* and *top-down* processes. In its strictest sense, bottom-up processing would involve piecing together the elements in the speech signal in a linear fashion, in real time, as it is being spoken and heard. For some time, under the influence of Information Theory and its later computational variants, this was regarded as an adequate description of successful listening. Top-down processing is broadly the converse of bottom-up, emphasizing the listener’s use of their existing knowledge of topic and the relevant context in forming hypotheses as to the speaker’s meaning and, when appropriate, in modifying them to match new incoming information.

Clearly, a key issue for the teaching and testing of L2 listening skills is the relationship between top and bottom. Buck and Tatsuoka (1998) examined TOEFL candidates’ listening performances using the “rule-space” statistical procedure, which had been used previously to assess mastery of skill components in other academic subjects. The technique analyses the cognitive attributes representing the underlying knowledge and skills that the test items assess. Buck and Tatsuoka isolated 15 attributes accounting for virtually all the variance in candidates’ performance. Among the top-

level attributes were: the ability to recognize the task by deciding what constitutes task-relevant information, to use previous items to locate information, to identify relevant information without explicit markers, to make inferences and to incorporate background knowledge into text processing. The bottom-level skills included the ability to scan fast spoken text automatically and in real time, to process dense information, to understand and utilize heavy stress, and to recognize and use redundancy. The study concluded “second-language listening ability is not a point on one linear continuum, but a point in a multi-dimensional space” (Buck and Tatsuoka 1998: 146).

2.1. Top

In top-down processing we rely on what we already know to help make sense of what we hear. Schemata, the relevant packages of prior knowledge and experience that we have in memory and can call on in the process of comprehension, are of two types: *content schemata* and *formal schemata*. Content schemata are networks of knowledge on different topics, for example, “cooking,” comprising knowledge gained from a range of sources and also personal experience. When we hear someone talking about a topic that we are able to link to an existing content schema, then we find comprehension very much easier. Formal schemata are derived from our knowledge of the structure of discourse genres, e.g., an academic lecture, a sermon. An awareness of what sort of discourse is being listened to makes it easier to engage in top-down processing strategies, such as predicting and inferencing.

Context also provides a powerful support for on-line listening, as shown by the many studies investigating one-to-one interaction based on conflicting maps (summarized, for example, in Brown 1995; and Yule 1997). Such research has highlighted the degree to which, even in the first language (L1) and in a tightly constrained communicative domain, interlocutors have to negotiate meaning and create a “mutual cognitive environment” (Sperber and Wilson 1995: 61).

In counterpoint to the hermetic “world” of the paired map task, there has been growing interest over the last two decades in the ways in which listeners’ knowledge and experience of their own culture may help or hinder understanding in another language. Bremer et al. (1996), for example, recorded real-life or naturalistic encounters between L2 listeners and L1 gatekeepers, such as social security officers. By so doing they discovered com-

plexities rarely revealed in lab-type experiments: “both understandings and misunderstandings are founded in linguistic difficulties and imbalances, social and cultural differences and power relations which structure individual encounters in hierarchical ways” (Bremer et al. 1996: 10).

There is a sense in which “a true grasp of the meaning involves understanding the mental models of a culture” (Aitchison 1994: 95). Although what Aitchison had in mind was the differences between speakers of different languages, it is worth bearing in mind that the same holds true for members of different sub-cultures within what is regarded as the same language community. Many readers of this chapter will have difficulty making much sense of the following extract from a sports commentary I have just heard on the radio: “*it’s a bit odd to see no third man and two silly points, but then this is a rather unusual Test.*” Keen followers of cricket will have no such problem.

In EAP classes, in particular, intercultural differences can lead to situations where communication is limited or obstructed, yet where the real source of difficulty remains unclear. The episode shown below illustrates just such a case (Lynch 1997). It features an attempt at negotiation of meaning following a presentation by Kazu, a Japanese student of economics, on the global economic impact of changes in resource supply, such as the oil price hike of the early 1970s. One of the Chinese students in the class, Lian (a geographer), asked a question:

1. Lian: *I’m sorry I didn’t catch + what you mean by “the shock” + that’s the first question + and the other one is I am not clear + who organises the transfer between companies + so + there are two questions here*
2. Kazu: *um + + for the first question + “shock”?*
3. Lian: *yes I didn’t catch what “shock” means here*
4. Kazu: *“shock”?*
5. Lian: *“after the shock”*
6. Kazu: *it’s the oil shock + in 1973*
7. Lian: *I don’t + +*
8. Kazu: *sorry + I didn’t mention it?*
9. Teacher: *perhaps I can + just ask you to explain the word “shock” because there may be others in the room who don’t understand it + +*

you've explained "shock" by saying "it's a shock" + can you explain it in any other words?

10.Kazu: *in any other words ? + the oil shock?*

11.Teacher: *Lian doesn't know what the word "shock" means*

12.Nobu: *prices*

13.Kazu: *ah yes + the oil prices increased at one + very alarming rate + so as a result + companies have to change their structure + in the 1970s + + + ok*

Kazu's reaction suggests that he found it hard to imagine what difficulty there might be in what he had said. At speaking turn 4 he responded to Lian's clarification request by simply repeating the word "shock?." Lian tried to help by providing a fuller context, "after the shock." Kazu expanded his answer to "the oil shock in 1973." When Lian then indicated that she still had a problem understanding him, Kazu apologized and asked ambiguously "didn't mention it?." The negotiation had reached an impasse.

The teacher then intervened, at turn 11, in a way that showed she assumed that Lian's problem was one of vocabulary, pointing out that Kazu's "explanation" was circular, and asking him to paraphrase "the oil shock." A very marked high-rise on Kazu's turn 10, "in any other words?," suggests that he found it hard to credit that anyone should need to have "oil shock" explained. In the end it was another student, at turn 12, who finally resolved the impasse by reformulating "oil shock" elliptically as "prices." To judge from Kazu's reaction ("ah yes"), it seems to have been only then that he realized that the source of Lian's original problem was not the English lexical item "shock," or even the collocation of "oil" and "shock," but her unfamiliarity with the real-world significance of the price hike of 1973. So here we have an example of a listening problem stemming from the speaker's assumptions about the listeners' background knowledge. This brief episode – typical, in my experience, of miscommunication in EAP settings – shows how the multiplicity of the sources we normally use to achieve understanding can make it hard to identify which of the many levels is the source of a current problem – for the teacher, as well as the learners, as we have seen in this case.

2.2. Bottom

My earlier description of listening as “making sense of what we hear” assumes that we have correctly identified what has been said. Yet speech recognition can be far from straightforward, since all languages present difficulties in the form of acoustic blurring of lexical boundaries in connected speech. When trying to recognize L2 speech, learners use the characteristic patterning of their L1 as a mental template for identifying incoming words. Native speakers of English and Dutch, for example, tend to segment speech at the onset of strong syllables; French speakers do the same after what they perceive to be the final syllable of a rhythmic group (Cutler 1997). When listening to an L2 we initially transfer the same metrical expectations as we attempt to segment speech; only at relatively advanced L2 levels do we seem to be able to suppress these L1-based segmentation strategies and to adopt that of the other language (Dejean de la Bâtie and Bradley 1995).

English represents a particular difficulty for L2 listeners in this respect because it is one of the languages that allows polysyllabic lexis, which features words embedded within others. For example, in addition to its own 11 words, the sentence “*Milo went to a teaching conference last August in Caister, near Norwich*” contains (in my non-rhotic Southern English idiolect) the phonetic forms of at least another two dozen words: *my, mile, low, tour, teach, each, chin, chink, in, ink, con, for, an, store, or, Augustine, stink, (ink), case, to, encased, an, ear, Ian, rich*. Although this is a contrived example, the point remains that embedded forms of this sort are a common feature of spoken English; according to Cutler (1997), as many as 85% of the polysyllabic words in English contain embedded words, which represent potential phonetic distractions to the L2 listener struggling to recognize English speech.

There is increasing evidence that L2 listeners’ ability to cope at this bottom, or linguistic, end of processing may well be a key to success. Tsui and Fullilove (1998) sampled 150,000 item performances by Chinese learners of English to investigate whether skill in bottom-up processing makes some listeners more successful than others. They compared performances on questions where the correct answer matched the likely content schema with items where the answer conflicted with the schema. Candidates who got the correct answer for non-matching schema items tended to be more skilled listeners; presumably, the less skilled could rely on guessing for the matching items, but not for non-matching ones. Bottom-up processing seemed

therefore to be more important than top-down (non-linguistic) processing in discriminating between candidates' listening performance.

Similarly, Wu (1998) explored listeners' use of linguistic and non-linguistic processing of L2 speech by applying a retrospective commentary method to performance on a multiple choice listening test by 10 relatively advanced Chinese learners of English. His analysis of the learners' test performances and individual commentaries showed that 1) partial success in linguistic processing often forced the listeners to activate general knowledge, as compensation for linguistic failings, and 2) partial success in linguistic processing could also lead them to override what they had correctly abstracted from "bottom" processing, in favour of schema-based interpretation. He concluded that for L2 listeners, linguistic processing is basic, in two senses: 1) failure or partial success in it may result in learners allowing activated schematic knowledge to dominate their decision-making inappropriately, and 2) competence in linguistic processing constrains but does not rule out non-linguistic activation.

If it is true that bottom-up processing is more important than top-down at limited levels of L2 listening proficiency, one pedagogic implication might be that learners should be helped to rely less on contextual and topical guessing, by directing their attention to practice in rapid and accurate linguistic decoding. This point has been made by a number of writers about listening (for example, Brown 1995; Field 1998, 2003; Tauroza 1997; White 1998; and Wilson 2003). Their pedagogic suggestions may differ in detail, but what they have in common is a concern that we should establish a principled way of tackling processing problems at local and text level.

Brown (1986) was one of the first to call for what she called a *diagnostic* approach to teaching listening: "Until the teacher is provided with some sort of method of investigating the student's problems, the teacher is really not in a position of being able to help the student "do better" (Brown 1986: 286). Later Tauroza (1997) questioned the value of a pre-emptive approach to teaching listening, in which the teacher tries to spot potential problems in listening materials before using them in class. This is not a practical solution for many teachers, he argues, because it adds considerably to lesson preparation time. Instead, he developed a three-phase remedial technique that he called *troubleshooting*:

1. Identify the students' listening problems in a text
2. Find out how many students share those problems
3. Focus students' attention on the problem points and provide remedial practice

On similar lines, Field (1998, 2003) has argued for a skill-based approach to teaching listening that involves pre-listening, listening and then an extended post-listening session in which gaps in the learners' listening skills can be examined and remediated through short micro-listening dictation exercises. Wilson's (2003) proposal for *discovery listening* is in very much the same mould. In essence, Field's argument is: 1) the skills of listening are competencies that native speakers have acquired and L2 learners still need to acquire; 2) strategies are compensatory and, as learners' ability improves, can and should be discarded, except in emergencies; and 3) teachers should aim to help students enhance their bottom-level linguistic processing skills, as well as encouraging strategic listening – temporarily – but ought not to regard strategies as a *substitute* for skills. As we have seen, this position finds support in the research findings of Tsui and Fullilove (1998) and Wu (1998): what differentiates skilled and unskilled listeners is the ability to cope with linguistic processing, rather than the ability to use higher-level strategies.

3. Designing materials to bring top and bottom together

In this section I illustrate my own approach to the training of lecture listening skills, which represents an attempt to marry top and bottom in a way that will get EAP learners to apply listening strategies and skills and to reflect on that experience (Lynch 2004). The materials presented here form part of the second edition of *Study Listening*, and readers who are familiar with the original course (Lynch 1983) will notice substantial changes in the new version, reflecting some of the developments in listening research over the 20 years since publication of the first edition. For reasons of space, I will concentrate here on one element – the way guessing is presented and trained in the new version of the course.

The first edition featured little in the way of what could be called a strategic approach to listening. This is hardly surprising; in the early 1980s listening strategy research was in its infancy – if not still in gestation. The second edition introduces, practises and recycles six “Macrostrategies” – *Predicting, Monitoring, Responding, Clarifying, Inferencing* and *Evaluating* – which draw on the common ground of listening research summarized by Rost (2002: 155). My decision to call the fifth Macrostrategy *inferencing* rather than *guessing* was the result of editorial discussion, which throws some sociocultural light on the way effective listening is perceived in dif-

ferent cultures. In the manuscript for the second edition I had used the term *guessing*, but one of the reviewers who piloted the draft materials commented in her piloting notes that “Being asked to guess is unacceptable to students from some cultures. I would suggest the word *hypothesising* instead.” It is an interesting sidelight on this area of strategy teaching that there should be such strongly held views in some academic cultures – including my own – about the legitimacy or illegitimacy of guessing. My response to the reviewer’s suggestion was to change the name of the strategy to *inferencing*, but to add a gloss intended to encourage both teachers and learners to regard guessing as a positive component of effective listening, and not as something to be avoided or to be ashamed of. I also created a series of awareness-raising tasks about guessing (Lynch 2004: 60), as shown below.

Macrostrategy 5: Inferencing

Inferencing is really just a more academic word for *guessing*. For some reason, many people have a negative attitude to guessing. You hear them say “*Oh, I just guessed,*” as if it were a less satisfactory way of dealing with a problem. In fact, guessing is an essential part of listening, even in our first language. It helps us to cope with situations such as these:

- when the information the speaker gives is incomplete
- when we don’t know the expressions the speaker is using
- when we hear a familiar word, but used in an unfamiliar way
- when we can’t hear what the speaker is saying

An efficient listener – especially when listening to a foreign language – regularly uses guessing as a main strategy. We are going to practise it in three short tasks.

After this lead-in, the students work on three awareness-raising tasks, all of which involve listening to short texts read aloud by the teacher from the *Teaching Notes* section at the back of the book.

Task 1, *Guessing from incomplete information*, is designed to get the students monitor their thought processes as they construct a plausible interpretation of a story for which they do not have all the necessary background information. Here is the text the teacher reads aloud (from Lynch 2004: 192):

When I first went into the System, I had to queue for ages. At first the woman did not understand what I had asked her for, but eventually she found the bottles I wanted. Then, just as I was about to pay, the red light went on. So it was a good thing I had my passport with me.

Most of my students have guessed that the location is the duty-free shop at an airport or ferry terminal (*queue, bottles, passport*). They also realize that it must be in a foreign country (as the *woman didn't understand* me). However, the problem that arises for most listeners is working out what the red light was for (for discussion of differing interpretations of this text, see Lynch 1996: 134-136).

In fact, the location for the mini-story was a branch of the Swedish state alcohol monopoly Systembolaget, popularly shortened to Systemet (“the System”). I spent two years in Sweden in the early 1970s and if – as I evidently did – you looked younger than the minimum age for buying alcohol, the System assistant could press a button on the floor with her foot, switching on a red light on the cash register, which meant that the customer had to prove their age. As a foreigner I had to use my passport as identification.

The point of this task is not (necessarily) for the students to reach the correct solution but to discuss and compare their individual mental searches for the sort of relevant bottom-level language cues and top-level background knowledge that will help them deal with similar ‘efforts after meaning’ in other listening situations.

Task 2, *Guessing at unfamiliar words*, encourages students to use their bottom-level knowledge of the English language system to work out the meaning of words I assume they will not have seen before (from Lynch 2004: 60 and 193):

Sometimes we can infer the meaning of new words if they are made up of parts that we already know. For example, you can work out what a “pencil box” must be, even if you have never seen the expression before.

This time the teacher is going to give you four words to work on. They are all in common use in a country where English is an official language. As you hear each one, write it down as it sounds and then try to guess what it means, from its parts.

1. *a hot-box*
2. *an undertrial*
3. *a fire-boy*
4. *to prepone*

The students then discuss in groups the possible meaning of the four items. Some of the plausible guesses at the meaning of *fire-boy* that I have heard in recent EAP classes have been: “hot-tempered youth”; “fireman in training”; and “young arsonist.” (for the actual meanings, see the Suggested Activities at the end of this chapter).

Task 3, *Familiar words, unfamiliar meanings*, simulates the situation where we hear and recognize a target language word but find it hard to interpret it because the speaker is using it in a sense we were unaware of. For example, I recently encountered a problem in understanding a Spanish text in which the words *alta* and *baja*, which I am familiar with as “high” and “low,” were in fact being used to refer to the opening and closing of a bank account.

In this third task, the students are asked to listen to their teacher reading out a conversation, based on one I overheard some years ago between two of my colleagues in Edinburgh. At each of five stopping points to write down what they believe the topic of the conversation is and what has led them to think so. The aim of the task is to reinforce the point that individual listeners will differ in their routes to understanding and in their use of available clues. Experience of using this particular text over a number of years tells me that some students will guess wrong at stopping point 1 and will not waver from that original guess, despite doubts over the later information; others will interpret it correctly at first but move away from that guess in the light of the ensuing conversation; others are unsure or confused until the final piece of the jigsaw; some remain puzzled throughout; and some guess right at the start and keep to that interpretation until the end. I invite readers of this chapter to try out the task with their own classes, to see how differently their students interpret what they hear – see the Suggested Activities at the end of this chapter.

After these preparatory exercises on the Macrostrategy of *guessing*, the students move on to the lecture for that unit, on preventive medicine. After listening and taking notes, they then work through a number of post-listening tasks focusing on the language used, and finally on the content of the lecture. Among the focus on language tasks is an activity in which I have adapted Tauroza’s *trouble-shooting* technique (Tauroza 1997) and the similar *discovery listening* (Wilson 2003). However, a key element of both techniques is that it is something the teacher does in response to a point that has caused difficulties for many or most of the students in their class. Clearly, this is not possible when writing materials for publication, since I would have to predict what may be difficult. My solution is to choose a point in the lecture where the speaker (Eric Glendinning) uses an expres-

sion which many of my past students have found hard to recognize. Figure 1 shows the relevant extract from the student's material.

Trouble-shooting

Chips, ships or sheeps?

Some students are puzzled by something Eric Glendinning said in the section on factors in the improvement of health status in Britain, when he was talking about the improvements in diet.

Perhaps you had the same problem? In your notes, have you included one of the expressions below, or something similar? These are all examples from students' notes in Edinburgh.

refrigerated chips
refrigerator chips
refuge-rated sheeps
refuge eighty ships
fridge or eighty chips

If you had difficulty with that expression, listen out for what Eric Glendinning actually said, when you hear and read Section 3 of the lecture.

Other problem points?

If there are parts of the talk that caused you particular difficulty during the first two hearings, discuss them now with your teacher. The class can then analyse the source of the problem when you reach that section of the talk.

Focus on language

This time we are going to work through the transcript in sections, using each one to focus on a different aspect of spoken language.

Section 2: Changes in health in Britain over the last century

This section contains examples of voice emphasis used to direct our attention to the lecturer's main points:

Figure 1. Extract from students' material in *Study Listening* (Lynch 2004: 68-71)

1. Eric Glendinning stressed certain words to contrast the two approaches to medicine. In the part of the section shown in bold print, **underline the words** you hear him stress more than others.
2. He used faster and quieter speech to show where information was less important - putting it 'in brackets', so to speak. That part has been shown in smaller italic font, with the words run together to represent faster speech, as on page 62.

Section 3: Factors in the success of preventive medicine in Britain

Before you hear this section, have another look at your notes. How many factors do you have under "the sanitary revolution"? As you listen again, **underline those factors** in the transcript.

This section also contains the expression that students in Edinburgh have found hard to understand (see "Trouble-shooting"). It is shown as a gap in the transcript. Try to **complete it**.

let's look at some of the factors in this story - immunisation against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough and polio in the first year of life - protects the child from these diseases - the provision of infant clinics - health visitors - together with improved nursing standards and midwifery standards - have helped reduce infant mortality - screening measures - *you're probably most familiar with mass radiography* - the screening for tuberculosis - screening measures help detect diseases in their early stages - before they've reached a dangerous stage - we can add to those preventive measures something which I will put under the term "**the sanitary revolution**" - if you think of the industrial revolution as being what created the wealth of this country - the sanitary revolution created the healthy society that we have today - the sanitary revolution - I suppose really dates from the Public Health Act of 1875 - which resulted in piped water supplies - although ironically one of the first attempts at improving the water supply in this country helped increase the incidence of cholera - the introduction of the flushing toilet in London increased the quantity of raw sewage entering the Thames - and the pumping stations for London's water supply were heavily contaminated as a result - not only piped water supplies were important - but provision of cheap soap - people began to wash more frequently - public bath-houses were built and wash-houses - people started to wear cotton underclothes instead of wool - and cotton is more easily washed - more likely to be washed more frequently - people

Figure 1. cont.

enjoyed a better diet – due to such diverse factors as _____ South American beef – New Zealand lamb – and so on – making available to all classes of society fresh fruit and cheap and fresh meat all the year round – birth control – the fact that children are now spaced out so that homes are no longer so crowded – uh as they were – no longer so overcrowded – so that the factors which lead – which allow tuberculosis to flourish have been controlled – in the workplace Factory Acts have made working conditions much better – so that we're no longer subjected to the same industrial diseases which were prevalent in Victorian times

Figure 1. cont.

The words missing in the gap are in fact, *refrigerated ships bringing in (South American beef etc.)*. At the level of EAP class with which I used this material, I usually find that some students have correctly identified what was said, but the majority have not. This focus on problematic micro-elements of spoken text stimulates real discussion among the class as to plausible ways of filling the gap – which is precisely what I want to encourage. It provides them with the opportunity to compare their routes to interpretation, to weigh up the likely meanings in context, and to hear of alternative hypotheses. In short it engages the students in verbalizing the processes and products of their listening.

4. Conclusion

As I have stressed, efficient listening involves the integration of whatever top and bottom information the listener is able to exploit – incoming auditory and visual information, as well as information drawn from internal memory and previous experience. The scale of the task, especially in real time, as is the case in live academic lectures, means that comprehension can only be achieved by parallel interactive processing. Recent approaches to teaching L2 listening have tended to emphasize the need to listening strategically, to compensate for problems in one area – the linguistic bottom end – by employing as much top-level schematic information as possible. But we now have increasing empirical evidence that what distinguishes skilled from unskilled listening behaviour can be either individuals' ability to deal with the lower-level formal components of incoming speech, or

their ability to apply higher-level knowledge sources (Tsui and Fullilove 1998).

Such research has stimulated the debate in the pedagogic literature over whether it is more effective to raise learners' level of listening through a focus on skill or on strategy (for example, Field 2000; and Ridgway 2000). My own approach to teaching lecture listening skills is to stress to my students that it is not a question of having to plump for one or the other, but to integrate *both*. The listening materials I have illustrated here have been designed to help EAP students maximize their chances of understanding the main points in what lecturers are telling them, by both listening out for the formal cues in what they hear and also constantly checking them against context and their knowledge and experience – in other words, by marrying top and bottom.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Read aloud my mini-story to your students and get them guessing what it was about:

When I first went into the System, I had to queue for ages. At first the woman did not understand what I had asked her for, but eventually she found the bottles I wanted. Then, just as I was about to pay, the red light went on. So it was a good thing I had my passport with me.

Most people guess the events take place in the duty-free shop at an airport or ferry terminal (*queue, bottles, passport*). They may also guess that it must be in a foreign country (as the *woman didn't understand* me). If that's what your students think, ask them to explain what the red light was for.

And what about the passport? If it had been a duty-free airport shop, then surely I would have had to show a boarding pass, rather than a passport.

You could also tell them that the word System has a capital S, not a small S, but that may not add very much to help them.

Activity 2

Below is the text of the conversation I overheard at work. Read out two speaking turns at a time – one from Gus and one from Sue - and then stop to give the students time to write down what they think the topic of conversation is and what clue they used in deciding on it. The conversation went like this:

Gus: What's like then?

Sue: Not bad. It's got a good short menu, which saves quite a bit of time

STOP 1

Gus: It doesn't have a mouse, does it?

Sue: No, not at that price

STOP 2

Gus: Anything else special?

Sue: Well, it's got a thing to stop you having to worry about widows and orphans

STOP 3

Gus: So you're happy with it, then?

Sue: So far, yes.

STOP 4

Gus: And did you get the 512 in the end?

Sue: No the 256

END

Some students may guess (correctly) at Stop 1 that Gus and Sue are talking about a new computer, but then they may have doubts at Stop 3. Most students start by guessing it's about a restaurant, and at Stop 2 think that an expensive restaurant wouldn't have mice. But they also have doubts by Stop 3. A few students may even write down five different topics at the five stopping points (you can compare your student's interpretations with those of native and non-native speakers, in Lynch 1996: 89-91).

Activity 3

This is based on Task 2 described in the chapter. The four words you give to the students are: *a hot-box*; *an undertrial*; *a fire-boy* and the verb *to prepone*.

Read them out for the students to write down. Don't tell them (yet) how to spell the words, because that way they practice the essential micro-skill of guessing at an English word's spelling from its sound. These words should be relatively easy to get right.

Ask the students to work on the words in small groups. When they have had time to work out their guesses, get them to put the words in order of confidence – i.e., how sure the students are that they are correct. Most confident = 1; least confident = 4.

The four words are all in common use in India. Answers:

- *a hot-box* is a metal container in which people take their lunch to work, to keep it warm
- *an undertrial* is a defendant in a court case
- *a fire-boy* is a (usually elderly) male servant who lights and looks after the coal fires in Himalayan hotels in the winter
- *to prepone* is to bring (a meeting) forward, i.e., the opposite of *to postpone*.

Getting your students to justify, or at least to explain, their interpretations can be both entertaining and enlightening. It also helps to reassure learners from some educational cultures that guessing is a “legitimate” part of effective listening and learning.

Activity 4

Find a text that you can use as a dictation. Get your students to write down what they hear after *one* listening (rather than the usual two).

One text I have found useful for this once-only dictation, at listening proficiency levels up to high-intermediate, is this one:

*Conversing with native speakers can cause a range of difficulties.
However, many of them have practical solutions.
One thing you have to get used to is uncertainty.*

*For instance, you may not be able to decipher every word.
 But then you can use the context to guess.
 Another problem is the cultural assumptions in what is said.
 You may catch the words but fail to grasp their meaning.
 In either case, you want to get your doubts cleared up.
 Requesting repetition and clarification is natural in our mother tongue.
 In the foreign language it is more demanding but beneficial.*

When the students have completed their dictation, analyse their errors. You will probably find that they represent a range of top-influenced and bottom-influenced misunderstandings or mis-guessings

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Teaching listening: Time for a change in methodology

Goodith White

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. How do you currently teach the listening skill? Jot down some notes about how you planned the most recent listening lessons which you taught. Did it go well or were there some aspects you were dissatisfied with?
2. What skills and strategies does a competent listener need? Write down a list of those listening skills and strategies which you would teach to your students.
3. How do students make progress in the listening skill? What kind of characteristics would you expect a “beginner listener” to display, in comparison with a more expert listener?
4. Do you always stick to the listening practice provided in your course book, or do you add to, adapt or extend the material provided, or create your own listening activities?

1. Introduction

I would suggest that of the four skills, listening is the one that has historically been the most neglected and misrepresented in second language (L2) classrooms, and hence, has been the skill which has been the least well taught. Nunan (2002: 238) calls it “the Cinderella skill in second language learning” and argues that proficiency in a L2 has tended to be viewed in terms of ability to speak and write the language in question, with listening (and reading) relegated to a secondary position. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course books, listening *is* practised as a skill, but all too often it seems to be viewed as a means of exposing students to new language or of practising language which has already been introduced. Listening gained a new importance in language classrooms in the 1980s, largely as a result of Krashen’s (1982) work on language acquisition through com-

prehensible input, and Asher's (1988) methodological innovations which were based on the idea that students would benefit from a "silent period" in which they would not be required to produce language, but just listen to it. However, it could be argued that these new developments tended to focus on listening as a means of learning language, rather than listening as a skill in its own right. In both first language (L1) and L2 learning for children, there has been a tendency to see listening as a means of developing sound and word recognition in preparation for reading and for literacy in general, and teachers' books contain comments such as "listening to language and the sounds of language helps to lay the foundation for learning to read in numerous ways" (Allen and Iggulden 2002: iv), or "reading is often presented through the text of stories. These are recorded on cassette in order to link pronunciation to the written form of the language" (English Language Curriculum Department, Sultanate of Oman, 2002: xi). In this scenario, the teaching of listening seems to become a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

2. The need for methodological change

There is no doubt that listening provides a rich source of language input and that it can be a useful vehicle for preparing students for reading and writing in the new language, but it is much more than that. It is a means by which social relationships are established and maintained in the L2, information about the world is gathered, the media are accessed and cognitive development is brought about in younger learners. The way in which we currently teach the listening skill does not appear to cover all these aspects of listening, often over-concentrating on "transactional" aspects of listening, where the primary purpose is to communicate information, at the expense of "interactional" ones, that is to say, those in which the primary purpose is social interaction (Brown and Yule 1983). Students are often asked to listen for information rather than for attitude, and encouraged to focus on *what* has been said rather than *why* it has been said. The methodology of teaching listening appears to have remained somewhat unaffected by a number of recent developments in how we conceptualise teaching and learning processes, and how we view the relationship between the classroom and the world beyond it. Some of these developments are outlined below.

2.1. Learner responsibility

The belief that learners should become active participants in their own learning, rather than passive receivers of what is taught. An important part of the teacher's role is to help students develop strategies which enable them to become more independent as learners, and to take some of the *responsibility for their own learning*. Mendelsohn's chapter in this volume, for example, suggests a strategy-based curriculum for teaching listening which explicitly trains students to use strategies which will assist them in understanding spoken language. In this approach, the students themselves are responsible for discovering and activating strategies which are effective for them in aiding comprehension.

2.2. Authenticity

A complexification of the notion of *authenticity*. The original definition of authenticity centred on *text* authenticity, i.e., that authentic texts were ones which had not been designed specifically for classroom use but were drawn from "real-life" contexts outside the classroom (Rixon 1986; Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Nunan 1989). Nearly thirty years later much of the debate about authenticity in teaching listening still centres around how far it is possible or desirable to expose language learners to authentic texts which have been produced in real-life conditions, with no concessions made for L2 listeners (Lam 2002). However, four other versions of authenticity have developed alongside this original definition. Breen (1985), Taylor (1994) and Lee (1995), among others, have suggested other aspects of the learning and teaching context which could also be authentic to a lesser or greater extent. They explore the concepts of *task* authenticity, *teacher* authenticity, *learner* authenticity and *classroom* authenticity. *Task* authenticity implies that the tasks which students are given to do in connection with the listening text are as near as possible to the kinds of tasks they would do with those texts in real life. Task authenticity also implies that there should be genuine communication between the student and the text, the student and others in the classroom and that the task should lead to learning (Breen 1985: 66). *Learner* authenticity concerns the notion that that the student should be motivated and interested to listen, that listening materials should engage "the learner's prior knowledge, interest and curiosity" (Breen 1985: 63). Lee (1995: 325) points out that "textually authentic materials are not inherently learner authentic", i.e., the mere fact that a teacher has used a

piece of listening which has not been specifically designed for language learning does not automatically mean that students will be motivated to listen to it. *Teacher* authenticity refers to the fact that teachers can make inauthentic materials more authentic, by being culturally aware, “friendly, understanding and sensitive to learners’ needs” (Thorp 1993). Conversely, teachers can damage text or task authenticity by being overly authoritarian, and thus interfering with the genuine response of the learner. *Classroom* authenticity refers to the fact that classrooms are part of real life too; they are social contexts in their own right: “We cannot just dismiss the classroom setting and all that takes place in it as being by definition artificial” (Taylor 1994: 6). Thus, texts and tasks which are produced within the classroom have authenticity. If authenticity in listening, rather than being solely seen in terms of text authenticity, is also considered from these other viewpoints, this could have a profound influence on the teaching of listening. For instance, it could suggest that if students make their own listening texts and tasks within the classroom context about topics that interest and motivate them, this will provide them with listening practice which is just as authentic as listening material which has been taken from a so-called “real-life” context with which the students are unfamiliar, or which concerns a topic which does not interest them.

2.3. Task-based learning

A move away from traditional presentation-practice-production (P-P-P) approaches to teaching towards *task-based* learning, which typically involves students in using and extending their available language resources to do a communicative task with a real outcome and then reflecting on the language they needed to perform it: “a goal-oriented communicative activity with a specific outcome, where the emphasis is on exchanging meanings, not producing specific language forms” (Willis 1996: 36). P-P-P is in any case ill-suited to the teaching of language skills; it was designed for teaching specific linguistic items such as structures and lexical sets, and it tended to concentrate on a successful *product* of language learning (i.e., the student correctly produces the linguistic item in a new context) rather than supporting the complex *processes* involved in performing a language skill.

2.4. Intercultural competence

A realisation that the learning of English can develop *intercultural competence*. Learners no longer expect to acquire solely American or British culture along with the English language, but to be exposed to a range of cultures, including their own, and in doing so, to gain insights into their own culture and an emerging global culture (see for instance, de Jong 1996). Most course materials, especially those for children, contain some references to the home culture(s) of the learners. The implication is that materials for teaching listening should not exclusively feature L1 speakers in L1 contexts.

2.5. Changes in the way English is used worldwide

Following on from the last point, the most common context for English use now and in the near future is not for communication between native speakers but as a *lingua franca between L2 speakers* of English, who outnumber native speakers by about three to one at current estimates (Graddol 1997). The implication for teaching listening is that students should not be asked to listen to L1 speakers exclusively, as this is not likely to be the most common listening situation for them outside the classroom.

3. The traditional model for teaching listening

I would argue that these developments in the pedagogy of teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and in socio-political attitudes towards the teaching of English need to be incorporated into what has become a rather outdated methodology for teaching the listening skill. At present, a typical lesson plan for teaching listening as a skill (as distinct from its use to introduce or practice language items, or as pre-reading preparation) tends to follow the pattern illustrated in Figure 1.

Lesson Plan

1. Selection of listening material

Either the teacher chooses the material which the students will listen to (a video or audio recording), or it is the next piece of listening in the course book. The students are not involved in choosing.

2. Pre-listening

The teacher perhaps does a warm-up to the topic of the listening text along the lines of 'What do you know about...?' 'What do you think they're going to say...?'

The teacher may pre-teach some difficult or key vocabulary items.

3. Gist questions

The teacher sets some gist questions for the students to answer after they have listened for the first time.

4. First listening**5. Checking answers to the gist questions**

The teacher often does this stage by getting the students to check their answers in pairs, then has a whole-class feedback.

6. Detailed questions

The teacher sets some tasks which require the students to listen for main information/details in the piece of listening.

7. Second listening

The teacher plays the audio or video tape again so that students can complete the tasks.

(Steps 6 and 7 can be repeated. The teacher will probably play the tape at least once for each task. Teacher and students check the answers after each task.)

8. Extension activity (optional)

The teacher uses the topic or some of the language from the listening text as input for an 'extension' or 'transfer' activity in which the students use other language skills. Perhaps the listening prompts a discussion, or a writing task, or leads on to some reading on the same topic.

Figure 1. Lesson plan for teaching the listening skill (traditional version)

4. Problems with the traditional model

The model given above may be a caricature in some ways, but elements of it continue to be present in many, if not most listening lessons. There are a number of problems with teaching listening in this way. If we refer back to the developments in methodology which were discussed earlier, it is obviously not a lesson plan which allows students to take much *responsibility for their own learning*. The plan is dominated by teacher decisions. The reader will notice that the teacher is the one who chooses the listening material, sets the tasks and controls the equipment, and there is little room for accommodating student preferences or for encouraging students to plan and monitor their own learning of the listening skill. The fact that the teacher still tends to choose the material becomes even harder to justify now that a wide range of spoken language is available to students outside the language classroom through satellite TV and the Internet. The teacher takes responsibility for replaying bits of the recording, so it is s/he who decides which parts of the listening text students are finding difficult and how often they need to hear the text. This could discourage students from developing listening strategies such as asking for clarification and monitoring their own comprehension (Lynch 1995; Rost 2002, this volume). In this model of teaching the listening skill, learners can become passive over-hearers rather than active participants in the listening process. They are often placed in the position of listening to disembodied voices on an audio or video tape which they cannot stop, interrogate or interact with. In real life, listeners play a very important (and active) role in keeping conversations going, by showing interest and sympathy, and by causing speakers to modify or repeat things which the listener has had difficulty in understanding. If we see listening practice as primarily provided by recordings and underestimate the listening possibilities provided by face to face interaction (which includes teacher talk) we ignore the link between speaking and listening and the fact that listeners play a vital and active part in reciprocal oral communication.

The model presented above does not score very well either as far as *authenticity* is concerned. The listening passage may be one which was produced for real life rather than pedagogical purposes, and thus have text authenticity, but if it is not on a topic which interests the students, or which develops from the social context of the classroom, then it may be deficient in learner and classroom authenticity. Tasks set by a teacher or textbook writer assume that there are certain features of what is being listened to which are important, and these features are the ones on which the task fo-

cuses (e.g., detailed questions which ask students to understand particular information in the listening text). The whole class are thus required to listen in the same way for the same information. However, we know that in real life, different people can listen to the same thing – for instance, a news broadcast – with different degrees of attention, and remember different things, depending on their individual interests, prior knowledge and reasons for listening. We expect students in the language classroom to all listen in the same way and to find the same information interesting and memorable. We also often expect them to understand and remember 100% of the listening text, which is far beyond the percentage typically achieved by L1 listeners (Bone 1988; Wodak 1996).

Moreover, the model presented above is to a large extent, a P-P-P one. The students are *presented* with a new piece of listening, they *practice* by listening to the text a number of times and doing tasks, and then the “extension” activity corresponds in many ways to the *production* stage of a P-P-P lesson. The emphasis is on getting correct answers to the comprehension questions and other tasks associated with the listening text, rather than on examining the processes which the students are engaged in as they attempt to build understanding. Most teachers, if they are honest, focus on the students getting the right answers. If students fail to do so after a first listening, the teacher will typically play the tape again in the hope that a second listening will solve the problem, and students will get the correct answer this time round. If the students fail to get the correct answers after a second listening, the teacher often supplies the right answers and moves on. The focus is on the product of listening (getting the right answers) rather than on the listening process, which would examine the far more interesting questions of what students are getting wrong and why they are doing so. Rost, in this volume, refers to the useful information which can be garnered about the listening process from an analysis of misunderstandings, particularly for what it could reveal about students’ underlying knowledge and expectations. Because the methodology for teaching listening still focuses on the products of listening, students often experience the listening class as a kind of “test”, which creates anxiety and tension. Mendelsohn, in this volume, refers to this tendency to test rather than teach the listening skill. Few students who are taught following this model say that they enjoy lessons which focus on the listening skill. A more task based approach would enable students and teachers to concentrate more on the listening process and possibly make the learning of the listening skill less threatening and more enjoyable, which in turn will help to improve listening performance (Aniero 1990).

In the quest to use authentic texts, and for students to be exposed to L1 speakers, listening practice may fail to adequately represent topics from the students' *own culture*, or an appropriate range of *L2 speakers*. Could allowing students to record each other, and English speakers around them, about topics which interest them, go some way towards solving these problems?

5. Some ways of improving the teaching of listening

It seems clear that the methodology of teaching listening needs to change in a number of ways, in order to provide students with some opportunity to play an active role in their learning of the listening skill, and to engage with listening materials which interest and motivate them. Many of the problems associated with the traditional model of teaching listening can be lessened if teachers can find ways of allowing students to:

- Choose what they listen to
- Make their own listening texts
- Control the equipment (being in charge of replaying difficult parts of the listening text, for example)
- Give the instructions
- Design their own listening tasks
- Reflect on their problems in listening

I would like to give examples of three listening activities which could all be done with different levels of student, including beginners or near beginners, which contain many of the above features.

6. Listening activities displaying features which would improve the methodology for teaching listening

6.1. Activity 1: Out of the room

One of the class volunteers to go out of the classroom for a few minutes. The rest of the class decide on a topic which the volunteer is going to talk about for 2-3 minutes when s/he comes back into the classroom. Each member of the class then notes down 6 words which they predict that the volunteer will say about the topic (it could be 4 words for lower level stu-

dents). The words have to be content words, i.e., nouns, lexical verbs, adjectives and adverbs. The teacher should make it clear that function words such as “*the*” and “*is*” are not allowed! While the students are writing down their words, the teacher can go outside to tell the volunteer what topic has been chosen, so that the volunteer gets a little time to think about what s/he is going to say. The volunteer then comes back into the room and starts talking about the topic which has been chosen. The other students listen intently to hear whether the words they have predicted are mentioned. The first student to “cross off” all their words, or the student who has had the largest number of their predicted words mentioned after the volunteer has spoken for 2-3 minutes is the winner. The winning student should then read out the words they have heard, and the rest of the class, including the speaker, should agree that they were actually said.

This appears to be a simple “game,” which uses no special resources except the students themselves. However, it contains most of the features which I have suggested above as ways of modifying the current methodology for teaching listening. The students and not the teacher have chosen the topic, and it is likely to be one which interests them, and has learner and classroom authenticity. Students often suggest something which they have been studying in English class, or a topic which is currently in the news. Lower level students can suggest topics which are within their linguistic resources, such as “my family”, “hobbies” or “my day,” and they could also be given more help and time (perhaps for homework) to prepare what they are going to say. The students have made their own listening “text” in the form of the volunteer’s talk to the class. Once they have become familiar with the activity, the students can control the “equipment” themselves, asking the volunteer to start speaking and to stop, or, if necessary, to repeat something, or to speak more slowly or more clearly. This could be said to be the equivalent of turning a tape or video recorder on or off, or turning up the volume, or replaying sections of the tape, with the difference that the “tape” is a living person. The students are no longer passive over-hearers; they can see the speaker face-to-face and by verbal and non-verbal reactions, influence what the speaker is saying. Although they are not permitted to specifically prompt the speaker verbally to say the words they have written down, they can be allowed to suggest that s/he should say more about certain aspects of the chosen topic, in the hope that s/he will say the words they have noted down. They can give instructions, such as choosing the volunteer and bringing him/her out of and into the classroom. They have designed their own individual listening task, since each student has chosen their own set of words to listen for. It sometimes happens that the winning

students have not heard the words they thought they had, and this can provide an opportunity to reflect on problems in listening, and what might have prompted the mishearing(s). The activity encourages “bottom-up” processing as students listen for particular words, but also asks students to activate “content” schemata when they are predicting which words the volunteer will say.

6.2. Activity 2: A tour around our town

This second activity was suggested by the audio CD players which visitors can hire at art galleries and museums and which give a personal guided tour of the building for tourists. These tours are often available in a number of different languages. Students could make a guided tour of the school or educational institution in which they are being taught, or of the town they live in, or a special place in that town, such as a zoo, or a historical site, or a famous shopping area. The first stage is for the teacher to accompany some of the students to take photos of places which have been decided on by the rest of the class. If that is not possible, the teacher could alternatively bring some postcards into the class. Pairs of students choose a photo or postcard to describe, and discuss what they think tourists would like to hear about the place which is depicted. Lower level students could make notes or even fully prepare a “script.” The class then decide on the order in which these places would be visited by a tourist on foot, although they can also incorporate using taxis or public transport if some of the places are rather far apart. The class then make an audio or video recording of their tour, with pairs taking it in turns to describe their point in the tour. The class then send the recording to either another class in the same educational institution, or a class in another institution, together with some listening tasks which they have designed; possible tasks include true/false questions, or deliberate errors, or a quiz which asks the recipients to listen for details. If they send an audio recording, they should also send the postcards or photos which accompany it. The receiving class do the tasks, and also comment on the quality of the recording and perhaps suggest how they would improve it. The receiving class could also make and send back their own recording of a tour to the other class.

Again, this activity incorporates a number of the features which I have suggested would improve the effectiveness of the current methodology for teaching listening. The students can choose the kind of tour and the places that are visited during the tour. They make the listening text. They control

the recording equipment, and often want to re-record parts which have not gone as well as they wished. They also listen to their recording several times in order to design their listening tasks, so that a lot of listening practice takes place. Feedback from students in the same class or from the receiving class often reveals problems in speaker intelligibility which may cause difficulties for comprehension. A number of different listening skills are practiced both by the designers of the recording and the recipients.

6.3. Activity 3: Serial story

The teacher could use any short text for this activity. It could be one the students have recently covered or are about to cover in their course book, or a story they are familiar with, a short description of an item which has been in the news, or an anecdote or joke. Figure 2 shows a text (a short joke) that I have used with an intermediate class.

Once upon a time a horse walked into a restaurant .

He asked the waiter for a lemonade.

The waiter was very surprised that a horse could talk, but he poured him a lemonade.

“That will be \$50 please,” he said to the horse.

The horse gave him the money and started to drink the lemonade.

The waiter watched him and finally got the courage to say, “We’ve never had a talking horse in here before.”

“With prices like yours, I’m not surprised” said the horse.

Figure 2. A sample text for a “serial story” activity

The teacher writes the text down as 6 to 7 short separate sentences and asks for a group of volunteers, as many as there are sentences. The volunteers get together in a quiet corner of the classroom or go outside, while the rest of the class do another activity. The volunteers rehearse and then record their sentences but in a jumbled order. This should take about 5-10 minutes, and the teacher can help with pronunciation or any other problems. The tape is then played to the rest of the class, who have to write down exactly what was said. One of the volunteers can control the replaying of the tape,

and the tape can be replayed as many times as the class need. When the class have written down the sentences, they decide on the correct order.

Again, this activity contains a number of the features which I mentioned earlier as ways in which the teaching of listening could be revitalized. Once students are familiar with this activity, they can choose their own text, and they can be encouraged to bring jokes or short stories into class which they would like to use for this activity. They make the listening text, and also design the listening task for the other students, by deciding on the jumbled order in which the recording should be made. They control the equipment. There is considerable reflection on problems in listening as the other students in the class perform what is essentially a dictation task; it may be for example that the students recording the tape have made pronunciation errors which in turn affect the listeners' comprehension. The activity practices a number of bottom-up listening skills as well as engaging students in some top-down processing in terms of activating a formal schemata for jokes (e.g., they normally end with a "punch line").

7. Arguments which support changes in methodology

I am aware that there are a number of objections which could be made to some of the proposals I have made for ways in which the teaching of listening could be modified, and which I have attempted to illustrate in the preceding three activities. Some teachers would argue, for example, that allowing students to make their own listening texts would mean that other students would then be exposed to language errors, and would be deprived of good L1 models. It has also been suggested that students will never expand their linguistic resources if the only listening input which they receive is from fellow students at the same level as themselves. However, there are also many arguments in favour of these modifications. If students make the listening texts themselves (and these need not necessarily be audio or video recordings of classmates – the students could invite an English speaker from the community or a teacher from their school to come into their classroom, or record English speakers outside class, for example) then they will be interested in and motivated by the topic of the text, and will be listening to familiar voices operating in known contexts. The texts will have both learner and classroom authenticity. Such texts actually provide an extremely powerful way of correcting errors, because the students who have made them realise in a very direct and immediate way that an error has caused problems of understanding. As with task-based learning in general,

rather than constraining students within the language they already know, in order to do the activities, students are pushed to expand their linguistic resources, with input from the teacher, other speakers, reference books, written texts of various kinds and so on. It might also be argued that the three activities place more emphasis on practicing the speaking skill rather than the listening skill. However, I have suggested earlier that the two skills are inextricably bound up with each other. Through such activities, the link between speaking and listening is reinforced for students as they realise that if they speak unclearly, or make language errors, or present information in a disorganised way, this can make the listener's job of trying to understand more difficult. The activities are also clearly communicative in that they use language for a non-linguistic purpose, focus on meaning rather than linguistic form, and involve students in genuine interaction with each other.

8. Progression in acquiring listening competence

It has been suggested that the methodology I am proposing, which makes great use of the students' immediate learning context and gives students a large degree of control over opportunities for listening and the design of tasks, is more useful in the early stages of learning to listen to the L2 and that later on, students need to be exposed to different kinds of listening. The Council of Europe (at http://www-user.uni-bremen.de/~jsuther/listening_self_assessment.html) has produced a useful "self assessment grid" which suggests how students could progress in acquiring L2 listening skills (see Figure 3).

<i>A1</i> <i>Basic user</i>	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family, and immediate, concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
<hr/>	
<i>A2</i> <i>Basic user</i>	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g., very basic personal and familiar information, shopping, local geography, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.

Figure 3. Progression in acquiring listening skills

<i>B1</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>user</i>	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc.. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
<i>B2</i> <i>Independent</i> <i>user</i>	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument, provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
<i>C1</i> <i>Proficient</i> <i>user</i>	I can understand extended speech, even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.
<i>C2</i> <i>Proficient</i> <i>user</i>	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.

Figure 3. cont.

This grid certainly shows students progressing from understanding familiar voices and familiar topics in face-to-face contexts where reciprocity is possible to an ability at more advanced stages to cope with longer, non-reciprocal listening with a range of L1 speakers and less familiar topics. However, I would argue that even at advanced levels, listening methodology needs to encompass authenticity in all its aspects and to avoid exclusive focus on the products of listening at the expense of listening processes.

While some teachers do enjoy a great degree of autonomy, and can choose or create their own listening material, the reality for a large number of teachers is that they need to do the listening practice provided in the course book, perhaps in order to meet the requirements of a national English curriculum, and/or the demands of various examination boards. I believe that they can still find ways of either modifying the material in the course book or of adding to it in various ways in order to increase authenticity, active student participation and reflection on listening processes. The

last part of this article focuses on ways in which teachers can adapt and expand an existing syllabus for teaching the listening skill.

9. Goals for teaching and learning listening

What kinds of listening skills and strategies do we need to help our students to develop? There are a number of ways in which listening skills and strategies can be described for teaching and learning purposes, and taxonomies can be derived from sources of evidence such as introspection, observation and the reflections of proficient L2 listeners about the stages they have gone through in learning to listen. The interested reader can refer to such taxonomies in Valette (1977: 20), Aitken (1978), Richards (1983), Weir (1993) and Buck et al. (1997). Buck (2001: 59) cautions against accepting such taxonomies as necessarily either complete or descriptive of what listeners do. He suggests that rather than seeing skills as things which are innate in proficient listeners, they should be thought of as ways in which listeners use language at a number of different levels, and that they refer to two main things: “the ability to extract ... basic linguistic information, and the ability to interpret that in terms of some broader context.” In other words, listeners construct an interpretation of a sentence from the speaker’s words, while at the same time trying to understand what the speaker intends to communicate. This description of listening as a two-fold process of “construction” and “utilisation” (Clark and Clark 1977) is common in the literature and influences taxonomic descriptions.

One problem with such taxonomies is that they may suggest that listening sub-skills and strategies can be taught separately, when in fact as with all complex skills, the sub-skills are combined and used in different ways depending on what is being listened to and why. Another problem with these taxonomies is that they may suggest either that there is a hierarchy of skills, with some skills being more “basic” or more “important” than others, or that the skills should be acquired or taught in linear fashion. Perhaps a more satisfactory way for teachers to work is with a framework which describes listening ability as a whole, in all its aspects, in terms of competencies which students need to achieve in order to become proficient listeners. These competencies are usefully described by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). They involve linguistic, discursual, pragmatic and sociolinguistic/intercultural knowledge and the ability to use that knowledge appropriately in specific listening contexts. Strategic competence in their model involves both communication strategies and learning strategies, that

is, listeners should be able to deal with breakdowns in communication caused by their lack of language competence and should also use listening input as a way of improving their knowledge of the L2. For the teacher and learner of listening, these competencies could be stated in more concrete terms in the following “listening goals” (which owe much to Buck 2001: 104):

Goals for teaching and learning listening skills and strategies

- understanding short utterances on a literal semantic level. Involves knowledge of phonology, stress, intonation, spoken vocabulary, spoken syntax.
 - understanding longer or interactive discourse. Involves knowledge of discourse features such as markers, cohesion, schemata.
 - understanding the function/illocutionary force of an utterance.
 - interpreting utterances in terms of the context/situation. Involves knowing how different socio-linguistic groups use language, so involves knowledge of dialects, cultural references, degrees of formality, power relations and so on.
 - resolving comprehension problems by seeking help from the speaker.
 - remembering input, monitoring and evaluating how well one is understanding.
-

Figure 4. Goals for teaching and learning listening

These listening “goals” can then be further broken down, as they are in Teacher’s Books, to items such as “recognising individual sounds” (where the focus is on linguistic competence), “using knowledge of a topic to guess what the speaker might be saying about it” (sociolinguistic/intercultural competence), “understanding gist meaning” (a number of competencies). For the interested reader, I drew up my own (subjective) list of goals for the purposes of teaching in White (1998: 8-9).

10. A proposed listening syllabus

In my experience of teaching the listening skill, I have found that the following areas can be added to, or extended within an existing course book, making it possible to implement the features which I proposed earlier, and

also providing practice in some aspect(s) of the listening goals which have been outlined above:

- Becoming a good listener
- Helping students to create their own listening texts and tasks
- Microskills (aspects of the grammatical knowledge mentioned in the figure above)
- Adapting published materials so that they contain more of the “features” mentioned in Section 5 above
- Telephoning
- Listening projects

I am going to give some teaching suggestions under each heading, which may in turn inspire teachers and their students to create their own activities. At the end of the chapter, I will describe one activity (a listening project) in more detail, and ask the reader to reflect on the aspects of listening competence which it practices, and the features of methodological change which it contains.

10.1. Becoming a good listener

It is worth spending time helping students to realise all the processes involved in listening. Language learners often make the mistake of thinking that all their difficulties in listening are due to their inadequate knowledge of the target language, but that is only half the story; native speakers can be bad listeners if they are bored or tired, for example. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, listening is not only transactional (listening for factual information) but also interactional (involving listening for the purposes of social interaction), which in turn involves empathizing with speakers and really trying to understand why they are saying something. Both L1 and L2 listeners may need to use listening strategies when their listening skills fail, such as inferring words which are unfamiliar or have been missed, asking for clarification and predicting.

Some of the activities you could use here are:

- Asking students to think about the different meanings which the word “listen” could have
- Telling a story but coughing at certain points so that students have to ask for clarification of the missing information or guess what it was

- Asking students to think of people they know who are good listeners, and getting them to compile a list of the qualities shown by a good listener
- Designing their own listening course
- Planning how they can do listening practice outside class

10.2. Helping students to create their own listening texts and tasks

Some suggested activities:

- Instead of “pen-pals,” students have “tape-pals” in another place to whom they send an audiotape, video or CD-Rom. The pal replies.
- Students develop a “listening corner” of recorded material (e.g., interviews, radio and TV programmes, descriptions of their homes, self-help tapes, quizzes, etc, all of which they have made themselves, plus commercial material, perhaps recordings from the Internet) with accompanying tasks, for self access use by their classmates. They create or choose the texts and tasks, not the teacher. The activities “A tour around my town” and “Serial story” suggested in sections 6.2. and 6.3. can be included in this resource area.

10.3. Microskills

Some suggested activities:

- Wall dictation
- Games where students have to find other students who have words showing the same stress pattern
- Retelling stories; another group of students have to listen for certain words
- Using recordings of soap operas to recognise the mood of particular characters from intonation, body language and facial expression
- The activity “Out of the room” suggested in section 6.1.

10.4. Adapting published materials

Some suggested activities:

- Students are given pictures of scenes, people and objects taken from magazines. They explain how they fit in with a piece of listening from the course book
- Students add to a piece of listening in the course book, or change it (e.g., monologue to dialogue)
- Students design their own listening tasks for the listening texts in the course book

10.5. Telephoning

These tasks exploit the listening opportunities available outside the classroom, and they also help students to do what is perhaps one of the most stressful listening activities for L2 speakers. Telephoning in a foreign language is difficult; you are often speaking to strangers, and you cannot see the person you are speaking to, or their expressions, gestures or surroundings, which would all provide clues to meaning.

Some suggested activities:

- The teacher pretends to have a short conversation with somebody on his/her mobile phone. Students have to decide what the other person was saying
- Students vote on a topic by ringing a phone “buddy” at home. The next day, the buddies report on the votes and produce a picture of how the whole class voted

10.6. Listening projects

These tasks bring together a number of listening skills and strategies, and are good examples of the methodological changes I have suggested earlier in this chapter. See the “Suggested Activity” at the end of this chapter for an example.

11. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made proposals for ways in which the methodology for teaching listening needs to change if it is to cover all aspects of the listening skill, and if it is to incorporate current beliefs about language and language learning, and to lead to true competence in listening within a wider framework of communicative competence in all four language skills. I have suggested that listening practice needs to be more task-based, that the notion of “authenticity” for listening materials needs to be interpreted more broadly, and that L2 listeners need to be encouraged to take more responsibility for developing their listening ability. I have given examples of some activities which seem to me to embody some of those principles, and have sketched out possible areas for a listening curriculum which allows teachers to develop their own activities based on the listening practice contained in their course book, while at the same time exploring opportunities for listening which may not be found in their course materials. The examples are intended to stimulate teachers (and students) into discovering their own listening activities, since I believe that fundamental and lasting changes of this kind in the methodology of teaching and learning listening can only really start at grass roots level, by co-operation between teacher and students in individual classrooms.

Suggested Activity

A listening project

Tell the students that they are going to find out something about the childhood of people of their grandparents' age.

Ask them to mention some topics which are important to children during their daily life. You might need to get the students started by suggesting a few topics. Here are some topics which my students have suggested:

*Games school entertainment music food clothes prices family
transport toys dos and don't about behaviour weather*

Ask students individually to note down what comes into their head when they remember these things from their childhood. They can then get into

pairs and compare what they wrote. Do they notice any similarities or differences?

Tell the class that they are going to interview a person who was a child during a different era. The class should choose three or four of the topics they discussed, and prepare some questions on those topics to ask the interviewee.

Either the whole class interviews an English speaking person of say, 55 or over, or groups find their own English speaking elderly person to interview. The interview(s) are recorded (with the interviewee's permission) and then played in class. Students compare their own childhood with that of the interviewee. They could comment on whether their own childhood was better or worse. The recordings can be added to the resources in the "listening corner," perhaps with accompanying photos, pictures and listening tasks designed by the class.

For teacher reflection after the class

1. What innovative methodological features did this task contain, in your opinion (as mentioned in Section 5)?
2. What level of student is the best one to use this activity with? (You might like to refer to Figure 3).
3. What skills and strategies did the activity practice? You may find it useful to refer to Figure 4, and to your own mental list of "listening goals."

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Section III Speaking

Towards acquiring communicative competence through speaking

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Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. How much has the view of speaking changed over the past decades?
2. How much has speaking instruction changed over the past decades?
3. How could you make speaking instruction communicative?
4. How do you think the different components of the communicative competence framework influence speaking?

1. Introduction

Speaking in a second language (L2) has been considered the most challenging of the four skills given the fact that it involves a complex process of constructing meaning (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). This process requires speakers to make decisions about why, how and when to communicate depending on the cultural and social context in which the speaking act occurs (Burns and Seidlhofer 2002). Additionally, it involves a dynamic interrelation between speakers and hearers that results in their simultaneous interaction of producing and processing spoken discourse under time constraints. Given all these defining aspects of the complex and intricate nature of spoken discourse, increasing research conducted over the last few decades has recognized speaking as an interactive, social and contextualized communicative event. Therefore, the key role of the speaking skill in developing learners' communicative competence has also become evident, since this skill requires learners to be in possession of knowledge about how to produce not only linguistically correct but also pragmatically appropriate utterances.

Drawing on these considerations, this chapter first outlines the advances that have been made in learning the skill of speaking over the last decades. It then considers how this knowledge becomes the basis for teaching speak-

ing from a communicative perspective. Finally, it presents the importance of integrating this skill within a communicative competence framework so that learners can acquire their L2 communicative competence through speaking.

2. Approaches to learning and teaching speaking

Since advances in language learning over the past decades have influenced how speaking has been learned and taught, a review of the role that this skill has played within the three approaches to language learning described by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume), namely those of environmentalist, innatist and interactionist, is presented.

2.1. Speaking within an environmentalist approach

Up to the end of the 1960s, the field of language learning was influenced by environmentalist ideas that paid attention to the learning process as being conditioned by the external environment rather than by human internal mental processes. Moreover, mastering a series of structures in a linear way was paramount (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). Within such an approach, the primacy of speaking was obvious since it was assumed that language was primarily an oral phenomenon. Thus, learning to speak a language, in a similar way to any other type of learning, followed a stimulus-response-reinforcement pattern which involved constant practice and the formation of good habits (Burns and Joyce 1997). In this pattern, speakers were first exposed to linguistic input as a type of external *stimulus* and their *response* consisted of imitating and repeating such input. If this was done correctly, they received a positive *reinforcement* by other language users within their same environment. The continuous practice of this speech-pattern until good habits were formed resulted in learning how to speak. Consequently, it was assumed that speaking a language involved just repeating, imitating and memorizing the input that speakers were exposed to.

These assumptions deriving from the environmentalist view of learning to speak gave rise to the Audiolingual teaching approach. This instructional method emphasized the importance of starting with the teaching of oral skills, rather than the written ones, by applying the fixed order of listening-speaking-reading-writing for each structure (Burns and Joyce 1997; Bygate

2001). Thus, learners were engaged in a series of activities, such as drills and substitution exercises, which focused on repeating grammatical structures and patterns through intense aural-oral practice. However, rather than fostering spoken interaction, this type of oral activities was simply a way of teaching pronunciation skills and grammatical accuracy (Bygate 2002). In fact, speaking was mainly associated with the development of good pronunciation since the mastery of individual sounds and the discrimination of minimal pairs was necessary in order to properly imitate and repeat the incoming oral input (Brown and Yule 1983; Woodwin 2001).

Consequently, although it can be assumed that this approach to learning and teaching speaking stressed the development of oral skills, speaking was merely considered as an effective medium for providing language input and facilitating memorization rather than as a discourse skill in its own right (Bygate 2001). In fact, significant aspects, such as the role that internal mental processes play when learning to produce new and more complex grammatical structures, were neglected under this view. The task of paying attention to those processes was the focus of study in the following years.

2.2. Speaking within an innatist approach

By the late 1960s, the previous view of learning to speak as a mechanical process consisting in the oral repetition of grammatical structures was challenged by Chomsky's (1957, 1965) theory of language development. His assumption that children are born with an innate potential for language acquisition was the basis for the innatist approach to language learning (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). Thus, as a result of this assumption and together with the discipline of psycholinguistics that aimed to test Chomsky's innatist theory, the mental and cognitive processes involved in generating language began to gain importance. Within such an approach, it was claimed that regardless of the environment where speakers were to produce language, they had the internal faculty, or competence in Chomsky's (1965) terms, to create and understand an infinite amount of discourse (Hughes 2002). This language ability was possibly due to the fact that speakers had internalized a system of rules which could be transformed into new structures by applying a series of cognitive strategies. Given this process, speakers' role changed from merely receiving input and repeating it, as was the view in the environmentalist approach, to actively thinking how to produce language. Consequently, it was assumed that speaking a

language was a decontextualized process which just involved the mental transformation of such an internalized system of rules.

These innatist assumptions about learning to speak did not result in any specific teaching methodology. However, the emphasis on practicing drills and repeating grammatical structures advocated by the audiolingual approach was replaced by “an interest in cognitive methods which would enable language learners to hypothesise about language structures and grammatical patterns” (Burns and Joyce 1997: 43). In this type of methods, learners took on a more important role in that they were provided with opportunities to use the language more creatively and innovatively after having been taught the necessary grammatical rules.

Although this approach recognized the relevance of speakers’ mental construction of the language system in order to be able to produce it, speaking was still considered to be an abstract process occurring in isolation. In fact, this innatist view of learning and teaching speaking did not take into account relevant aspects of language use in communication, such as the relationship between language and meaning (i.e., the functions of language) or the importance of the social context in which language is produced. The consideration of these aspects took place in subsequent years.

2.3. Speaking within an interactionist approach

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, important shifts in the field of language learning took place under the influence of interactionist ideas that emphasized the role of the linguistic environment in interaction with the innate capacity for language development (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). The changes under this approach were thus characterized by an increasing recognition of the need to examine the complex cognitive processes involved in producing oral language from a more dynamic and interactive perspective. Additionally, such a perspective should also pay attention to the functions that producing spoken language fulfills, as well as accounting for the social and contextual factors that intervene in such speech production act.

The analysis of the processes that intervene in the production of oral language was carried out by Levelt (1978, 1989). Drawing on the discipline of cognitive psychology, Levelt (1989) proposed a model of speech production whose basic assumption concerned the fact that messages were “planned.” Thus, in order to be able to produce oral language, speakers had to construct a plan on the basis of four major processes: 1) *conceptualiza-*

tion, which involves the selection of the message content on the basis of the situational context and the particular purpose to be achieved; 2) *formulation*, which implies accessing, sequencing and choosing words and phrases to express the intended message appropriately; 3) *articulation*, which concerns the motor control of the articulatory organs to execute the planned message; and 4) *monitoring*, which allows speakers to actively identify and correct mistakes if necessary. Considering what these planning processes involved, speaking was regarded as a complex activity that required speakers to possess a capacity to integrate different interpersonal and psychomotor aspects during the oral production event (Bygate 1998). In fact, speakers' *automation* of these key four processes was necessary because of the inherent difficulty involved in paying attention to all of them simultaneously while subject to the pressure of time restraints imposed during an ongoing conversation. Additionally, these planning processes also implied speakers' *choice* or *selection* of what they judged to be appropriate so that both meaning and form could be brought together in such a conversation.

The importance of the model developed by Levelt (1989) with the identification of the underlying processes involved in producing oral discourse was also consistent with both functional (Halliday 1973, 1975, 1985) and pragmatic (Searle, Kiefer, and Bierwisch, 1980; Leech 1983; Levinson 1983) views of language. In fact, these two fields of research paid attention to speakers' communicative intent as being central to the connection between the meanings they wanted to communicate and the form through which those meanings could be expressed. Moreover, as a result of the emergence of discourse analysis, which described language in use at a level above the sentence (McCarthy 1991), producing spoken language was no longer seen in terms of repeating single words or creating oral utterances in isolation, but rather as elaborating a piece of discourse (i.e., a text) that carried out a communicative function and was affected by the context in which it was produced.

The functional view of language thus accounted for the role that this communicative function played in determining the form of the language to be used (Halliday 1973, 1975, 1985). According to Halliday, it could be theorized that, like children who learned to talk because language served a function for them, speakers learned to use language in order to fulfill a number of functions given a particular cultural and social context. Therefore, speaking was seen as a contextualized process in which both the *context of culture* and the *context of situation* (Malinowski 1935) influenced the nature of the language to be used. In relation to the former type of context, the notion of *genre* was developed in order to describe the ways in

which spoken language was used to achieve social purposes within a culture (Burns, Joyce, and Gollin 1996). Thus, genre was defined as “a purposeful, socially-constructed, communicative event” (Nunan 1991: 43) which resulted in oral texts with different communicative functions (i.e., a political speech, a church sermon, a casual conversation, etc.). Regarding the latter type of context, the notion of *register* was elaborated considering the fact that, within the broader cultural context, speakers also varied their language depending on the social situation in which they were interacting. Consequently, their choice of a particular register was based on the interaction of three contextual variables: 1) the *field*, which concerns the topic of communication; 2) the *tenor*, which refers to the relationship of the participants; and 3) the *mode*, which involves the channel of communication.

In line with the functional view of language, and the importance of regarding speaking as a contextualized communicative event in which speakers’ choice of a particular linguistic form depended on their intended meanings, the pragmatic field of research was also concerned with how such meanings were created in context (Searle, Kiefer, and Bierwisch 1980; Leech 1983; Levinson 1983). More specifically, pragmatics was defined by Crystal (1985: 240) as:

The study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

As can be implied from this definition, apart from considering the active role that the users (i.e., speakers) of the language played in the act of communication, the choices they were able to make and the social context in which they participated, pragmatics also focused on the importance of *interaction*. In fact, this aspect played a very important role when dealing with pragmatics, since it was claimed that the process of communication did not only focus on the speakers’ intentions, but also on the effects those intentions had on the hearers. The interactive view of speaking thus became evident since the collaboration of both speakers and hearers in a given communicative situation was of paramount importance to achieve mutual understanding.

Additionally, and drawing on the work developed in speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), pragmatics examined how speakers were able to perform actions by producing speech acts (e.g., requesting, apologizing, complaining, refusing) and how these speech acts should be performed in

an appropriate fashion. In fact, rather than producing grammatically correct utterances, the focus of attention in pragmatics concerned speakers' appropriate use of such utterances within various situational contexts that affected their level of appropriacy. In this respect, the development of the politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987) was of great relevance, since it described the three sociopragmatic factors which qualified a linguistic form as being appropriate. These factors involved: 1) *social distance*, which refers to the degree of familiarity that exists between the speaker and hearer; 2) *power*, which refers to the relative status of a speaker with respect to the hearer; and 3) *degree of imposition*, which refers to the type of imposition the speaker is forcing on the hearer. Thus, it was assumed that when one of these factors increased, speakers were expected to be more polite so that they did not threaten hearers' *face* (i.e., a person's feeling of self-worth or self-image).

Given all the previous assumptions underlying an interactionist view of learning to speak, the focus of attention in language teaching dealt with the need to prepare learners to face the typical functions of oral language and to perform a range of speech acts appropriately, as well as to deal with commonly occurring real-life situations. More specifically, in relation to the functional view of language, the particular teaching method that was developed was the *genre approach*. This consisted in teaching learners "how texts within certain cultures have evolved particular discourse structures to fulfil particular social functions" (Burns and Joyce 1997: 48). The relevance of such an approach, based on teaching learners whole texts, was originally adopted in relation to writing (see Usó-Juan, Martínez-Flor, and Palmer this volume). However, its importance has also been increasingly highlighted in speaking (see Burns, Joyce, and Gollin 1996; Burns and Joyce 1997; Burns this volume). Regarding the pragmatic view of language, current research is being conducted on the role of instruction to develop learners' pragmatic language development, which in turn helps to increase their speaking skill (Rose and Kasper 2001; Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003; Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, and Fernández-Guerra 2003; Alcón and Martínez-Flor 2005). The compilation of articles collected in these volumes shows the range of pragmatic features that can be taught and the different practical activities that can be employed, as well as the effectiveness of different teaching methods that can be implemented in both second and foreign language classrooms.

As a result of the influence exerted by the discipline of cognitive psychology as well as the functional and pragmatic views of language, speaking was viewed as an interactive, social and contextualized communicative

event. Given these defining characteristics derived from the interactionist approach to speaking, it was claimed that such an approach served as the theoretical foundation for teaching this skill within a communicative competence framework. The importance therefore of integrating the speaking skill within this framework and the description of how the rest of the components influence it is addressed in the next section.

3. Teaching speaking within a communicative competence framework

Communicative approaches to L2 language teaching have undergone significant changes over the past two decades. A strong background influence is associated with the work developed by Hymes (1971, 1972), who was the first to argue that Chomsky's (1965) distinction between competence and performance did not pay attention to aspects of language in use and related issues of appropriacy of an utterance to a particular situation. Thus, he proposed the term *communicative competence* to account for those rules of language use in social context as well as the norms of appropriacy. Considering how a proper operationalization of this term into an instructional framework could contribute to make the process of L2 teaching more effective, different models of communicative competence have been developed since the 1980s by specifying which components should integrate a communicative competence construct (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995; Alcón 2000; Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume).

In such a construct, it can be assumed that the role of speaking is of paramount importance to facilitate the acquisition of communicative competence. Thus, the aim of this section is to show where the speaking skill fits into the bigger picture of the framework of communicative competence presented by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). More important, it is described how the different components influence the development of this particular skill in order to increase learners' communicative ability in the L2. Figure 1 shows the diagram representing this framework with speaking positioned at its core.

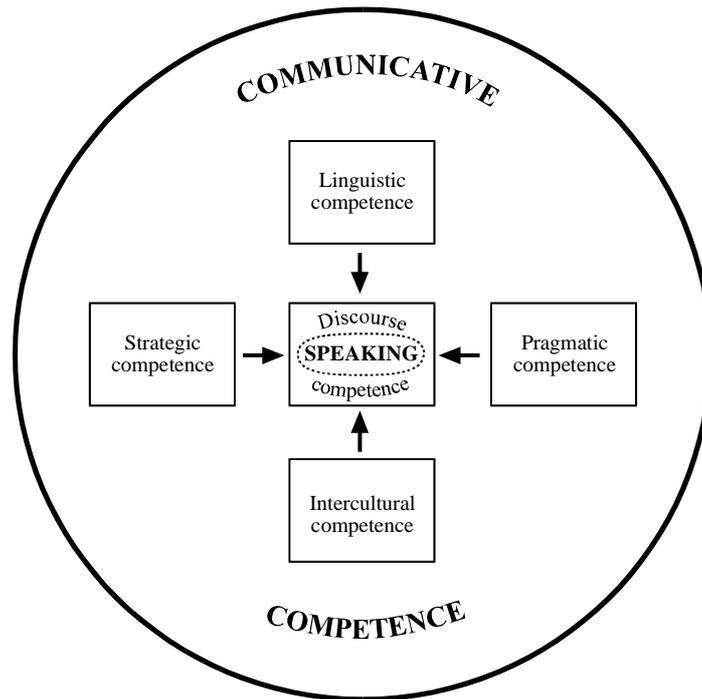


Figure 1. Integrating speaking within the communicative competence framework

3.1. Discourse competence

The proposed communicative competence framework has at its heart the speaking skill since it is the manifestation of producing spoken discourse and a way of manifesting the rest of the components. Discourse competence involves speakers' ability to use a variety of discourse features to achieve a unified spoken text given a particular purpose and the situational context where it is produced. Such discourse features refer to knowledge of discourse markers (e.g., well, oh, I see, okay), the management of various conversational rules (e.g., turn-taking mechanisms, how to open and close a conversation), cohesion and coherence, as well as formal schemata (e.g., knowledge of how different discourse types, or genres, are organized).

Making effective use of all these features during the process of producing a cohesive and coherent spoken text at the discourse level requires a

highly active role on the part of speakers. They have to be concerned with the form (i.e., how to produce linguistically correct utterances) and with the appropriacy (i.e., how to make pragmatically appropriate utterances given particular sociocultural norms). Additionally, they need to be strategically competent so that they can make adjustments during the ongoing process of speaking in cases where the intended purpose fails to be delivered properly (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000).

Consequently, an activation of speakers' knowledge from the other components proposed in the framework displayed in Figure 1 (that is, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic) is necessary to develop an overall communicative ability when producing a piece of spoken discourse. Each of these components is described in turn below.

3.2. Linguistic competence

Linguistic competence consists of those elements of the linguistic system, such as phonology, grammar and vocabulary, that allow speakers to produce linguistically acceptable utterances (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). Regarding phonological aspects, speakers need to possess knowledge of suprasegmental, or prosodic, features of the language such as rhythm, stress and intonation (see Hughes, this volume, for the importance of prosody in turn-taking). These aspects shape speakers' pronunciation, which refers to the ability to employ speech sounds for communication (Burns and Seidlhofer 2002) and, according to Woodwin (2001: 117), is "the language feature that most readily identifies speakers as non-native."

Apart from being able to pronounce the words so that they can be understood, speakers' linguistic competence also entails knowledge of the grammatical system. Thus, speakers need to know aspects of morphology and syntax that will allow them to form questions, produce basic utterances in the language and organize them in an acceptable word order (see Dalton-Puffer this volume for the importance of making different types of questions as a strategy to encourage speaking, and Hughes this volume for the relevance of syntax in turn-taking). Similarly, speakers' ability to choose the most relevant vocabulary or lexicon for a given situation will also contribute to the elaboration of their spoken text.

The mastery of these three linguistic aspects (i.e., pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary) is, therefore, essential for the successful production of a piece of spoken discourse since it allows speakers to build grammatically well-formed utterances in an accurate and unhesitating way (Scarcella and

Oxford 1992). However, it has been claimed that it is possible to communicate orally with very little linguistic knowledge if a good use of pragmatic and cultural factors is made (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). These factors refer to the next two components proposed in the framework, which are also interrelated to build discourse competence through speaking.

3.3. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence involves speakers' knowledge of the function or illocutionary force implied in the utterance they intend to produce as well as the contextual factors that affect the appropriacy of such an utterance. Thus, speakers need to master two types of pragmatic knowledge: one dealing with pragmalinguistics and the other focusing on sociopragmatic aspects (Leech 1983; Thomas 1983). On the one hand, pragmalinguistics addresses those linguistic resources that speakers can make use of to convey a particular communicative act. In other words, depending on the meaning speakers want to express, they can choose a particular form from among the wide range of linguistic realizations they may have available.

On the other hand, sociopragmatics deals with speakers' appropriate use of those linguistic forms according to the context where the particular utterance is produced, the specific roles the participants play within that contextual situation and the politeness variables of social distance, power and degree of imposition. These politeness factors and the way speakers may use them to *save face* play a paramount role in successful communication (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000).

Additionally, speakers also need to know how to vary their spoken utterances appropriately with respect to *register*, that is, when to use formal or informal styles (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). In fact, it has been claimed that speakers use more than one register on a regular basis (e.g., an intimate and casual register in familiar contexts, a formal register in situations involving strangers or higher-status participants, etc.) (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). Burns (this volume) pays attention to the importance of dealing with all these pragmatic aspects, the notion of register and also the importance of spoken genres when elaborating her text-based syllabus approach to the teaching of speaking.

3.4. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence refers to the knowledge of how to produce an appropriate spoken text within a particular sociocultural context. Thus, it involves knowledge of both cultural and non-verbal communication factors on the part of the speaker. Regarding the cultural factors, speakers need to be aware of the rules of behavior that exist in a particular community in order to avoid possible miscommunication. For instance, the length of pauses within a normal conversation may be very short in one culture, thus making the speakers quickly look for something to say, whereas in another culture pauses may be desired, and even considered polite, given the fact that they allow time for reflection and prevent speakers from overlapping with other participants in conversation (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000).

Knowledge of non-verbal means of communication (i.e., body language, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.) is also of paramount importance to communicate appropriately when producing a spoken text. Speakers need to pay careful attention to listeners' non-verbal movements, such as their body language or whether to maintain or avoid eye contact, in order to be able to repair their intervention if something goes wrong in the course of the exchange (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000).

3.5. Strategic competence

The last component included in the framework, which has been added to all the above-described competencies, refers to strategic competence. This competence implies speakers' knowledge of both learning and communication strategies. On the one hand, speakers need to possess learning strategies in order to successfully construct a given piece of spoken discourse. Bygate (this volume) points out the relevance of *repetition* as a strategy that may allow speakers to contribute to their oral development. Repetition is also highlighted by Dalton-Puffer (this volume), who, in addition, pays attention to the importance of *creating purpose* as a strategy for encouraging speaking.

On the other hand, speakers' knowledge and ability to use communication strategies is of the utmost importance in order to avoid possible breakdowns in communication. Thus, the use of compensatory strategies, such as circumlocution, paraphrasing, appealing for help or topic selection, assists speakers in making adjustments given an incomplete or failing interaction (Scarcella and Oxford 1992; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). In short,

speakers need to become competent in using strategies in order to overcome limitations due to a lack of competence in any of the other components integrating the proposed communicative competence framework.

4. Conclusion

As has been shown in this chapter, a review of the changing patterns of how speaking has been viewed over the last decades has provided us with a better understanding of why this skill has progressively come to be learned and taught as a discourse skill in its own right. Once considered as the *result* of repeating and memorizing words in isolation or just combining a series of formal linguistic rules in the abstract, speaking is nowadays recognized as an interactive, social and contextualized *process* that serves a number of functions. Given this complex communicative process in which speakers need to take account of a variety of linguistic, contextual, cultural and interactional aspects among others, the task of teaching the spoken language has been perceived as a very difficult one (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). Consequently, and in order to facilitate this task, it has been argued that it is of great importance to teach speaking within a communicative competence framework, since this skill has been regarded as the means which learners can use to develop their overall L2 communicative competence. Communication, in short, is the final target learners aim to achieve in the L2, and the skill of speaking plays a key role in their success in accomplishing this goal.

Suggested Activities

The activities included in this section are part of the Cultural Awareness Project, presented by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume), the main goal of which is to develop learners' communicative competence through the four skills as well as their awareness of cultural differences/similarities in different language communities. Thus, these suggested activities are part of the *implementation stage* of that Project and focus specifically on the speaking skill.

Activity 1

Arrange opportunities for all learners to get engaged in *tandem learning* (Woodin 2001), that is, collaborative learning between speakers of different languages. The possibility of making learners talk face-to-face with learners from other countries (such as the “Erasmus scheme,” which involves student exchanges among European countries) allows them to develop their intercultural communicative competence while practicing their speaking ability.

Thus, after getting to know their partners and having arranged the time and place for the tandem session will be held, learners are asked to choose a particular cultural topic they are interested in (i.e., family, education, etc.) and to talk about it with their tandem partners. They have to record all the conversations and bring them to class together with a written summary, which should be used to give an oral presentation of how the topic discussed with the tandem partners is viewed in their cultures. The aim of asking learners to make an oral presentation of this kind is to encourage them to conduct a deeper reflection on the topic being discussed while practicing their speaking skill.

This type of recorded tandem conversations are valuable material that can serve as the basis to prepare additional activities that make learners reflect on linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural-related issues (e.g., tone of voice, silence) and strategic features underlying these oral interactions.

Activity 2

Select representative passages or video scenes with cultural incidents or episodes that have been brought in by the learners (i.e., situations in which some type of conflict or misinterpretation develops due to the lack of an appropriate cultural framework for understanding the incident). Distribute those passages or video scenes to different groups of learners and ask them to divide them into different episodes in order to construct a *culture minidrama* (Omaggio 2001), that is, the representation of several episodes in which a cultural conflict or miscommunication occurs.

Then, each group of learners has to prepare a particular culture minidrama and represent it orally in front of the class. The rest of the learners have to try to explain what the source of miscommunication is (which in fact only becomes apparent in the last scene) through class discussion.

The purpose of this activity is to make learners experience problems in cross-cultural communication while developing their speaking skills.

Activity 3

Classify all culture-related materials brought in by all learners (i.e., written passages, audio extracts, video scenes) according to the particular cultural topic covered (e.g., family, law and order, power and politics, etc.) and use them as resources for further practicing the speaking skill. Arrange learners in groups of three or four members and ask them to select the materials that deal with a given cultural topic they are interested in. After reading or listening to the material they have chosen, they are asked to discuss the topic by giving their own personal point of view and to record their discussion. The transcripts from these oral discussions can then be used in the classroom as a starting point to deal with the cultural topic with the rest of the class, as well as to analyze the oral features employed by each particular group of learners (i.e., pauses, repetition, pronunciation, turn-taking mechanisms, etc.).

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Areas of research that influence L2 speaking instruction

Martin Bygate

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. In your experience how far does oral discourse exploit repetition?
2. Is repetition necessarily always “verbatim”?
3. Is oral repetition incompatible with creativity?
4. Do you feel that the language students use in groups is isolated from the attention of teacher and class, or that it builds on and feeds into the lesson?
5. How far do you think that oral tasks and teacher talk involve some element of repetition for successful task completion, and how far do you think this can contribute to learners’ development?

1. Introduction

This article considers how four areas of research into oral discourse can be used to inform the teaching of second language (L2) speaking. Rather than attempt to consider the broad range of aspects of speaking, this chapter concentrates on how the four areas can be used to inform one particular problem within oral language pedagogy – that of the place of discursive repetition. The areas of research that I will be drawing on are the following:

1. the features of oral discourse
2. the sociolinguistic dimensions of talk
3. the psycholinguistics of speech processing and language development
4. the impact of pedagogical tasks and their implementation on oral language development.

These areas of research are important if we are to attempt to teach oral language in ways which take account of the typical conditions and parameters

of oral discourse. The question the paper poses then is this: in the light of these four areas of research, is there a place for discursive repetition within a communicative approach to the teaching of oral skill? I will argue that research suggests that repetition is indeed a natural element of non-pedagogic oral discourse; that it is significant in the psycholinguistics of speech processing and language development; that it is an important element in the sociolinguistic dimensions of talk; and that its value is supported by research in the use of pedagogical tasks. From this basis, I will then suggest some practical implications of the argument, and conclude with a plea for the development of a researched oral L2 pedagogy in which repetition has an important role to play.

2. A problem in learning language through oral communication

It is uncontroversial to say that speaking in an L2 has a lot in common with reading and writing. However although the similarities are clear, speaking can also cause some difficulties that are a little distinct from those experienced when reading and writing. In this paper I want to argue that the nature of speech processing influences its effectiveness as a context for language learning, and that teaching and materials production need to take this into account, if classroom talk is to be not only motivating but also supportive of learning.

The main difficulty with speech is the problem of “impermanence.” In contrast, written language can be re-read several times, with the reader able to take time to scan the whole, identify the topic, purpose and general direction, and sort out the comprehension difficulties. By the same token, the writer can plan the whole, organize the topics and their structure, and has time to sort out difficulties of expression. In contrast, speech is transitory and impermanent, so talk has to be produced bit by bit, with new meanings added in the light of meanings communicated so far, with each utterance being expressed while the listener waits. In other words, whereas working with written texts seems to allow careful and thorough handling and clarification of message and expression, working aloud allows less time to make sure of the meaning and expression of each bit of talk, and no time at all to check over the whole interaction. The result is that whereas reading and writing are rather like navigating from a plan or a map (if necessary with the support of dictionary resources), speaking and listening involve navigating without a map, and relying only with the help of one’s interlocutors. Even more importantly, someone wishing to *learn* a language from com-

munication may often find written texts easier to learn from than oral communication: one can go back over written texts again and again, take notes from them, and use them as a basis for checking new material in grammar and dictionaries. In contrast, as soon as oral interaction is completed, most if not all of it is gone from the memory.

This is significant when we recall that learning a foreign language involves internalizing and mastering a new linguistic system. This alone is a complex and time-consuming task. In addition, though, to achieve mastery learners also need to learn how to *use* the new system to achieve their own purposes. This means bringing the language knowledge face to face with the individual's needs and purposes. This is not only the case with language learning. Bruner (1966) describes the need for learners of mathematics to organize their knowledge in their minds so that its arrangement corresponds to the ways it needs to be used. As Widdowson (1983) puts it, the target language needs to be schematized so that it is "ready for use." New language has to be organized by the learners so that it "interfaces" with their strategic needs and purposes.

Descriptions of language as a skill make this particularly explicit. Levelt (1989) for instance describes language processing fundamentally in terms of how it is used to meet pragmatic demands. Speakers' language processing is inevitably situated within their general background knowledge, their knowledge of the interlocutors and of the situation, and directed towards their immediate goals, in terms of the meanings they want to construct. Language then has to be selected to carry their intended meanings. This means speakers have to match available language to meaning, and where they are unable to do this, they have to adjust their meaning to the language they have available (see Faerch and Kasper 1983). That is, speech as a whole is goal driven, as is the ability to manage it, including any adjustments to messages or their formulation. All this implies that new language knowledge has to be "integrated" into learners' own purposes, organizing it and their abilities to use it so that it is accessible for their needs. This becomes a central focus for any teaching of language use: formal knowledge and the ability to use it needs to be incorporated into learners' needs, and the only way to do this is through a range of relevant activities.

Given this perspective, there is however a new problem: seeing speech as goal driven means that it is fundamentally situated within particular contexts, and managed and produced for particular purposes. The problem this creates is that it is not clear how these conditions can be managed so as to promote learning. For if speech is all locally focused, this seems to imply that every speaking activity needs to be unique and newly creative, and this

in turn means that speaking experiences are likely to be essentially “one-off.” If speaking experiences are “one-off,” the teacher is likely to have problems getting learners to build and improve on their efforts. As Ericsson and Hastie (1994) point out, when we are constantly concerned with getting a job done in ever changing surroundings, things we have difficulty doing do not recur sufficiently often to enable us to work at getting them right. Furthermore, we have also noted above that speech is in any case highly transitory when compared with writing. As a result, any attempt by learners or teachers to monitor performance with the aim of improving it is at best bound to be very limited.

Given all this, speaking activities can easily fail to provide the kinds of learning opportunities that students so badly need. I want to argue, however that without wanting to undermine the creative focus of recent approaches to oral L2 activities, certain types of repetition are, in fact, perfectly viable in speech – even in communicative speech, and are quite compatible with creativity. In addition, they can contribute significantly to language development.

3. Features of oral discourse

So far we have seen that language learning involves the integration of a complex skill into learners’ own purposes, and that in written language the absence of time pressure, the permanence of language, and the apparent uniqueness of different speech situations together make it seem far easier to process and learn from written than from spoken discourse. Repetition does however occur in spoken discourse. Indeed, the more we consider the matter, the more types of repetition there seem to be. This occurs in the two main dimensions of spoken discourse: the linguistic features at utterance level, and the discourse features.

At discourse level, whole stretches of talk are often repeated, for perfectly good functional reasons. Greetings and small talk are commonly re-used. Personal introductions are repeated again and again, to different people of course, but by definition, introductions do not often change. Stories, jokes, and experiences are typically told and re-told, usually to different audiences, but sometimes to the same audience: children love to hear the same story told again and again, dramatic events are recounted again and again, and family stories are re-run to people who already know them well. And sometimes we find we have to repeat the same account to different people in order to get a service which we are entitled to (I heard of one

overseas student in a British university who wanted to claim back a deposit she had paid as a student in a hall of residence, and because she was sent from one office to another, ended up having to repeat the same explanation and request in four different offices). Essentially the same oral reports and talks can be repeated to different audiences. And it is fairly common for people to rehearse with colleagues some of the arguments they plan to present in business or departmental meetings.

Similarly at utterance level, speech events often depend upon repeated words and phrases. Word games are one example (Cook 2000). Bruner (1983) noted that very young children from the ages of 8 to 20 months commonly experience again and again very similarly structured speech events, in which very similar lexical items, verb forms and turns of phrase recur again and again. This is partly because young children's schedules are typically structured around key daily events – meal times, getting dressed, going out, bath time, bed time, play time and story time. An important characteristic of these events is that each is structured every day in a very similar if not identical way. For example meals are organized around eating, drinking, and the relevant tools and ingredients (as I write this I realise that even my own daily adult breakfasts are pretty much the same every day). Similarly bath time and bedtime are each organized around the same props. Playtime tends to be structured through familiar games, or variants of them. All this means that the speech acts and the relevant vocabulary and verb structures will also be very similar, from day to day.

In other words, the recurrence of speech events brings with it the repetition of words and phrases. At infants and primary school, teachers and pupils continue to work with recurring speech events: the daily weather chart, the timetable, the daily story, daily instructions and briefings (see for instance Bernhardt 1992). Children's playground games – football, basketball, skipping, hopscotch, tag, little ponies: all depend on repeated rhymes, rules and refrains, and give rise to repeated commentaries day after day. Just as pervasively, study in many school subjects develops through repetition and recycling of familiar information, whether in woodwork, nature studies, history, mathematics, music, dance, sports, or reading and writing. The recurring content gives rise to recurring language. Repetition also occurs for functional reasons in order to maintain the fluency of communication. Cameron (2001: 33-4) notes that given the time pressures on speech production and comprehension, repetition can buy time for speaker and for listener, as well as helping speakers access or reformulate words and phrases. This is understandably a significant phenomenon in classrooms both in teacher talk (Duff 2000) and in learner talk (Bygate 1988).

Repetition is common in adult life. As adults we find ourselves repeating sequences of talk which, although they are not identical, are very similar to what we have said on previous occasions. This is often the case with service encounters. Going into a bank, a pharmacy, a post office, a hardware store, a pub or restaurant, or asking for train tickets, we often find ourselves checking through similar routines on different occasions. Sometimes this is made vivid in one's own culture on returning from a period away: the services available sometimes change, and the vocabulary along with it. Native speakers have to re-learn the wording, within the request forms. Negotiating what is available and what it is called is something we can find ourselves doing repeatedly in the different businesses. This kind of experience is not limited to service encounters: students attending tutorials and seminars also find recurring types of speech opportunity, with recurring opportunities for similar expressions.

The fact of recurrence is reflected in much of the analysis of spoken discourse. The concept of discourse structure itself implies that there are features that recur in different stories, such as introductions, background information and initial situation, some complicating problem, causes and effects, solutions or outcomes, and evaluations (or conclusions) (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Cameron 2001). The language for making choices or selections tends to typically involve comparisons, predictions, prioritisation, and justification. Descriptions often make use of copular, stative and habitual verbs, adjectives, place adverbs, and relationships between things or people.

Other aspects of discourse structures hint at repetition. For example, adjacency pairs (Labov 1972; Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974; Schiffrin 1994; Eggins and Slade 1997). These are pairs of utterances in which the first part of the pair expects a response from another speaker, as in exchanges such as the following: A: "Hi how are things?" B: "Fine, thanks – and you?"; A: "Nice to see you" B: "Same here"; A: "Have a nice day" B: "And you"; A: "See you next week" B: "OK, bye for now." Studies in pragmatics suggest that when speech acts are at all delicate (in terms of the social distance between the speakers, or the weight of the speech act) they are often structured through sequences of turns (Widdowson 1983; Kasper and Rose 1999). So that speech acts such as requests, offers, invitations, apologies and complaints are often performed over a series of strategic turns, with an initial preface for instance being used to reduce the risks involved in performing the speech act from "cold."

As we have seen above, there are connections between context and utterance. In certain contexts, special sequences of utterances tend to occur.

Telephone conversations for instance start and end through a relatively small number of options for opening and closing utterances (see for instance Cameron 2001). Furthermore, to close a telephone conversation, we typically perform “pre-closing” moves, indicating that we are preparing to finish the conversation, and giving the other person the opportunity to indicate whether they have anything further to add. Many other types of talk are structured in predictable ways, such as interviews with the doctor, the optician, job interviews, radio phone-ins, tutorials, and television interviews. Some of the language will of course vary from occasion to occasion, but significant elements will recur. Negotiation for meaning exchanges are further ways in which speakers typically re-use sequences of utterances in different contexts. Negotiation for meaning exchanges are sequences of utterances through which speakers check that they or others have correctly understood, or ask for clarification, or request help with wording. As Yule and Tarone (1991) have pointed out, they are closely related to communication strategies, which in turn can also involve routinized phrases.

So talk, then, involves a lot of repetition, both in content and in form. At both linguistic and discourse levels, this helps make oral communication manageable.

4. Sociolinguistic dimensions of talk

The account so far makes fairly clear that oral discourse uses repetition abundantly. It is worth noting at this point that this phenomenon is not simply a matter of formal regularity and patterning. A functional approach to language seeks to attribute motivations to the surface phenomena which it identifies. And when viewed from a sociolinguistic perspective, repetition can be seen as performing significant sociolinguistic functions.

In analysing the surface features of talk, Chafe (1985) notes numerous linguistic markers which are used to signal personal involvement in the discourse (notably various kinds of hedges, intensifiers, and slang expressions). This can be seen as a consistently present feature in talk. At sociolinguistic level, it has also been argued for some time that language can be used to mark group membership and interpersonal involvement or distance, whether at lexical level (Tarone 1988; Preston 1989; Giles, Coupland, and Coupland 1991), at lexico-grammatical and phonological levels (Rampton 1995), or at genre level (Swales 1990, who argues that genres enable people to participate in target discourse communities). Cutting (1999) showed how the grammar of reference used by a group of students to refer to their

worlds evolved as they gradually got to know each other and their physical and intellectual context better. Linguistic markers could be used to represent complex but familiar information in a way which was rapid for members of the group to process whether as speakers or listeners. Furthermore, the associated vocabulary came to be a vehicle for signalling and reinforcing a sense of group membership. What is particularly relevant for our purposes is that it was through repeated encounters over time with the same referents that the group settled on ways of signalling it through the grammar and lexis, which at the same time could be used to promote a sense of solidarity between speakers. Sharing a social context then implies socially significant repetition both of content and the means of representing it. This is a very normal dimension of language use.

The re-use and exploitation of familiar discourse structures is also likely to play an important role in facilitating the joint conduct of discursive acts between interactants. Marking a discourse routine at various points with discourse moves expected by one's interlocutor in a given context is likely to help predict where the talk is leading, to interpret what is being said, and to help the unfolding of the discourse. For instance, a study by Ranney (1992) showed how a group of non-native speakers of English had rather different expectations of how a medical consultation with a family doctor would unfold, and predicted that this could give rise to difficult and uncomfortable interactions on medical visits. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) found that students unfamiliar with North American one-on-one advisory sessions had difficulty selecting appropriate discourse moves within the tutorial. Knowing the "script" and its predictable elements helps all participants in managing new interactions. Indeed van Lier (1996) suggests that routine is a constituent of interaction in general and of classrooms in particular which has a key role in enabling innovation.

In other words, the structuring of discourse is built up of repetitions at all levels, which help both to reflect and to promote shared understanding and a degree of solidarity. Such repetition is not verbatim, but rather enables constructive adjustments and adaptations according to the speakers' local needs.

5. The psycholinguistics of speech processing and language development

Repetition then occurs a lot in talk, and for good reason. The question is how repetition relates to learning. This leads us to consider aspects of the

psycholinguistics of speech processing, and how this can lead to change in the learner's language store.

Perhaps partly because of the legacy of certain versions of behaviourism in language teaching, we tend to think of the term "repetition" as referring to "verbatim" repetition, that is, word-for-word repetition. However, as the various examples in the previous section suggest, we can repeat a lot, both in terms of content and form, without using verbatim repetition. Rather, we seem to use common structures of interaction, familiar content, common structures of topics, and common phrases and collocational patterns to build and to improvise. The analogy of musical improvisation, seems appropriate, for instance in jazz, or *cante*, or perhaps the classical cadenza. Improvisation often works with significant amounts of repetition, but any repetition that does occur is not verbatim repetition. These communicative types of improvisation can be related to the learning process.

Bruner's (1983) study, which we have already referred to, illustrates this through the types of repetition that children encounter as they learn to talk in their first language (L1). As in other contexts, people interacting with young children typically structure their talk around the phases of the activity they are involved in. One of Bruner's examples is a peek-a-boo game, played with a doll. Bruner proposes that this particular game has four phases: *Introduction of the doll*; *Hiding of the doll*; *Searching for the doll*; and *Re-uniting with the doll*. Talk is aimed at handling each of these phases in turn, so that the content remains similar each time the game is played. The fact that the content remains constant provides a way in for the child to learn the language. It is clear from Bruner's data that the child understands the game long before perceiving much if any of the language. Repeating the game helps the child to remember the game and to notice the language. Understanding the game then helps the child to understand and memorize bits of the language. In other words, the repetition of the game is seen as providing a first support for the child to become familiar with the language.

Things are not static however, even from the start: the adult doesn't necessarily stick tightly to a fixed textual script. In fact, the language used differs a bit on each occasion. Speakers might sometimes say, "Who's this? Who's this? It's Bobby, isn't it?" Other times they might say, "Hello, here's Bobby. Say hello to Bobby. It's Bobby isn't it?" On other occasions there could be yet other phrases, or different combinations of these. The stability of the content then enables the speakers to vary the wording, without compromising the child's involvement. That is, although there is repetition, it is not verbatim – it is varied.

The variation probably occurs partly in order to sustain both adult's and child's participation. As the participants become more conversant with the content and with the language, more and more variations can be brought in, introducing more and more language. In this sense, then, repetition can be thought of as "constructive." The recurring context provides a support for the introduction of new language, and for the increasing ability on the part of the child to manipulate basic language resources, and subsequently to add in further dramatic or descriptive refinements.

Levelt, in various models of L1 oral interaction (his 1989 version works well for our purposes), proposes that in order to communicate speakers and listeners have to process language simultaneously in three main phases. First, they need to work on the conceptualisation of messages, in which meanings are planned and tracked; second, they operate a formulation phase, in which words are selected, sequenced, and inflected, or recognized; and thirdly, they work at articulatory production or acoustic perception. The whole is linked of course into the broader socio-cognitive context and purposes of speaker and listener. Levelt's account links well with the picture emerging from the kind of analysis that we can derive from Bruner's study. If speakers and listeners have to work simultaneously with new meanings, new formulations and at managing a new articulatory/acoustic system, it makes sense to conclude that some recurrence and predictability at the conceptual level is likely to free up capacity to attend to the articulatory and formulation levels. That is, learners may then find constructive repetition useful to the extent that it can allow them to do the following:

1. *Conceptualisation*

- Become familiar with the content of the talk
- Organize the content of the talk for speech
- Explore additional content to add

2. *Formulation*

- Identify and recall relevant vocabulary and grammar for managing the content of the talk and the interpersonal functions (such as referential markers, aspect, tense and modality)
- Try out alternative vocabulary and grammatical resources
- Monitor the grammatical features required by the vocabulary and syntax
- Develop cohesion

3. Output

- Attend to speech production
- Attend to interlocutors' understanding

Note the pattern of learning that this suggests. Conceptualisation is the driving force, and working at this is seen as helping the rest of the production process. Further, if we think of the vocabulary as one of the main semantic resources, with grammatical material being both more detailed but also less crucial to our message, the picture this offers is of learning starting with the major resources and moving towards the more detailed features of language. That is, repeated encounters with stretches of talk enable the gradual integration of details into the whole. Clearly this picture accounts only weakly for how learners identify *new* language, but it does explain how both the noticing of new language and the integration into performance of language that the learner has already noticed can be facilitated by increasing familiarity with the content, that is, with the whole. It is worth reflecting for a moment on why this might be – why proceed from the whole to the details, and not the other way around?

The main reason why this may be an important mode of communicative development is associated with the fact that we typically conceptualize meanings ahead of our ability to express them, and with the way we manage linguistic redundancy. The fact that we conceptualize ahead of our ability to express meanings is reflected in Bruner's data. The child can understand the game before s/he identifies or understands the words. The possibility of a grasp of the concepts preceding control of the language is also reflected in our ability to understand language we would never be able to produce ourselves.

The term "linguistic redundancy" refers to the fact that language is made up both of linguistic features that are relatively meaningful and of features which are relatively redundant (i.e., unnecessary). The more meaningful features are especially the lexical items, along with the main canonical syntactic patterns (such as subject-verb-object word order). Grammatical function words, and especially inflections are more redundant. Various writers have pointed out that both in language production and comprehension learners are more likely to attend to the meaningful features, and to ignore the more redundant ones. Wong Fillmore (1979) showed how a child L2 learner indeed started by "getting the big things right," and only after that gradually picked up and incorporated more and more of the redundant details. Linguistic redundancy and our prior concern with meaning

is reflected in the common observation that in our L1 we find it much easier to recall information we were told than to recall the precise words in which the information was told to us.

6. Research into the impact of pedagogical tasks on oral language development

How then might our conceptual ability and our awareness of linguistic redundancy affect the way speakers approach their learning? If we assume that our attention capacity is limited, then it follows that learners will often not be able to attend to all aspects of the speech production process, and that therefore they will have to prioritize what they will attend to: some things may have to be ignored in the interests of efficiency. Given the relative importance of conceptualization, formulation and articulation, and the relative importance of meaningful and redundant forms, there is a clear likelihood that L2 learners will concentrate more on the content (conceptualization), and on the most meaningful forms of representation. Speakers will spend more effort sorting out what they want to say, and trying to find some ways of saying it under the time pressures of the activity, and will devote less effort to monitoring for accuracy, or to self-correcting when necessary. If this is generally true, then it will be particularly the case if learners have to attend to message content that is at all new and unfamiliar, or even if familiar, something that they do not normally talk about, or something they do not talk about in the classroom. In these circumstances we should expect that on the first occasion they will spend more effort than normal on the content of what they want to say, and on finding as quickly as possible words that will express the meanings. If learners then *repeat* a speech activity, or at least significant elements of the activity, this will lead them to have to allocate less attention to the content, and enable them to allocate more attention to how the content is expressed, than they did first time around. That is, on repetition their attention would be expected to shift from the content, to the form, with the result that grammatical details are gradually integrated into the whole.

A number of studies suggest that this can in fact happen in L2 learning. In a case study (Bygate 1996) I found that a student repeating a familiar story two days after a first attempt, without any intervening tuition, and without expecting to have to repeat the task, produced significantly more accurate and idiomatic English on the second occasion. In addition, second time around she produced significantly more self-correction than when she

first carried out the task. In a subsequent study (Bygate 2001) larger groups of students were more accurate and more fluent when repeating a familiar task 10 weeks later. More recently Bygate and Samuda (2005) found that a subset of the students in the 2001 study also produced significantly more elaborated versions of familiar stories than unfamiliar stories. That is, they introduced more information about the reasons and effects of the events, of the intentions and feelings of the participants, and of the speakers' own feelings about the characters and the story. In other words, the narrative was generally more elaborated on the second telling (although often actually using fewer words). Lynch and Maclean (2000, 2001) also found a general repetition effect. When different students repeatedly had to explain posters they had prepared to different interlocutors they all developed their language through the different repetitions, albeit in their own distinct ways. In other words, repetition of "unscripted" – ie. improvised – tasks seems to give rise to development in students' oral language. Samuda (2001) found that using a communication task at the start of a lesson provided a starting point for the learning of language for a target area (epistemic modality). Once the content material and the communication problem was familiar, the task could then be used both as an anchoring point for the introduction of new material, and the students could return to the task and continue working on it so that it then served as a point for the integration of the new language into use.

Now this view of repetition is different from the one traditionally associated with the teaching of speaking in an L2. Audio-lingual approaches, for example, insisted on detailed accuracy in handling oral language through stimulus-response drills. The nineteenth century direct method similarly emphasized lexico-grammatical accuracy during the teacher's oral face-to-face presentation of vocabulary and structures to the class. Accuracy was also highlighted through "scripted" talk, reading aloud and rote learning. For instance, oral skills practiced in grammar-translation were generally scripted, since they amounted to reading aloud exercises that had initially been done on paper. In the latter half of the twentieth century, situational dialogues tended to be learnt by heart, or memorized through substitution drill activities. Even some so-called humanistic methods seemed odd in respect of discursive repetition. The Silent Way focused narrowly on developing structural accuracy, one structure at a time; suggestopedia aimed to promote rote learning of lengthy written texts. Meanwhile other approaches seemed to go in the opposite direction and avoid all repetition or focus on accuracy. Community language learning emphasized the spontaneity of rendering individual learners' utterances into the target language

whatever they might be. Communicative approaches tended to emphasize the spontaneous and creative speech of learners seeking to avoid rather than exploit repetition.

In contrast with many approaches, this article argues then that meaningful constructive repetition is a useful element in oral language use and development. In particular it can provide learners with a recognisable and recurring thematic space to which they can return to work orally again and again without entailing the boredom of verbatim repetition. The question then is what implications are there for the classroom, and for further research?

7. Constructive repetition in the classroom: whole class talk, and talk on tasks

As we have said, the rationale for encouraging meaningful constructive repetition in the classroom is that it can help to give learners space to work on matching meanings to language, and to integrate attention to the more redundant features (especially grammatical and phonological) into their speech. One common response to the idea of constructive repetition is that it is not welcome by learners, that it does not encourage creativity, and is not appropriate for learning. This is actually very questionable. Learners do often welcome the opportunity to repeat activities, specifically in order to try to do them better. Cook (1997) in fact argues that repetition is intrinsic to a lot of language play and hence offers a prime context for learning. And in addition, personal experience also suggests that learners are indeed quite keen to redo activities that they have already done once. This is consistent with the point we noted above, namely that repetition offers particularly useful context for learning. Far from discouraging creativity, it is a powerful basis for creative invention, provided that learners are encouraged to explore for themselves alternative ways of expressing their ideas.

In what follows I would like to consider how constructive repetition can be encouraged in classrooms. There are two main contexts in which this seems of interest, in talk on tasks, and in whole-class talk. We will consider these in turn.

7.1. Task talk

We often tend to think of oral communication tasks as designed to encourage unscripted creative talk, around some information, whether verbal or non-verbal (i.e., pictorial, realia, diagrammatic, or some type of chart or tabulation). However as suggested here, our concern is not simply to stimulate talk, but to find ways of structuring it so that constructive repetition is encouraged. In fact, the structure of many familiar tasks already involves degrees of built-in repetition. These are grouped below into two sets, which I will here call “external repetition” and “internal repetition.” “External repetition” is repetition where the task requires students to repeat their talk to different students. “Internal repetition” is repetition which is encouraged by the demands of processing the input material and/or of preparing the intended task outcome.

7.1.1. External repetition

1. *Survey tasks*: I am calling “survey tasks” any tasks which require students to circulate around their class gathering information from colleagues in order to compile a group profile. The structure of tasks such as these in fact requires the students to ask many classmates the same set of questions. This is a simple example of in-built repetition. Although the wording is unlikely to change, as suggested in the preceding discussion, repeated enactment of the same questions is likely to lead to improved accuracy and fluency.
2. *Interview tasks*: Similar to survey tasks, interview tasks usually involve students in interviewing a limited number of people, seeking the same information from all of them. The interview might be an opinion interview, or a job interview, or an interview about people’s personal histories. In each case, the interviewer is interested in getting responses to a pre-arranged set of questions. The key element here is for the interview to be repeated, either through rehearsals, or by carrying it out with different people. The fact of repeating an interview is expected to lead learners to build on their increasing familiarity to alter the phrasing, or again to improve their accuracy and fluency.
3. *Card games*: Various oral activities are structured around sets of cards, with one student holding a card, while the others have to guess or ask questions about the card, or respond to what the student hold-

ing the card says. Each student takes it in turns to draw the card to set off a round of talk. Each round of talk is likely to be structured similarly, around the rules of the game. Hence each successive round is likely to lead to re-use of some strategies, changes or additions to them, with students borrowing strategies and formulations from each other. This is expected in turn to lead to improvements in the fluency and accuracy of students. That is, a “round” is at first strategically structured, and useful structures are then re-used, as students build on their experience of previous rounds.

4. *Poster carousel*: Working in pairs, students prepare a poster on a topic. Posters are posted on the walls around the room, with one student going off to visit and ask questions about the other posters, while the second student stays and hosts visitors from the other pairs. Each visitor will be expected to ask questions of the host, so that given that the posters define the content, each host will have repeated practice in talking about the same content, to different people, leading naturally to constructive repetition (see Lynch and Maclean 2000, 2001).
5. *Pyramid (or “snowball”) tasks*: Pyramid tasks are of course quite well known: students explore a topic initially in pairs, and then meet up with another pair to develop their account of the topic, the group of four then joining another group of four, to refine their ideas, leading to a plenary session. One of the purposes of this design is to encourage and support constructive repetition.

7.1.2. *Internal repetition*

6. *Picture stories*: Distributed picture stories (that is, activities where each member of a group can see a different picture from a story) typically first involve speakers in describing their pictures, so as to situate each picture in relation to the rest of the set. The task can orientate them towards repetition, since particularly if the story is difficult to sort out, students will be led to repeat the narrative in order to check it, and potentially to ensure everyone is able to re-tell it if asked. In addition, where a large number of pictures are involved, or where the set includes a series of very similar pictures, there is likely to be a fair degree of repetition of the descriptions. In the former case, this is because it is hard to hold large amounts of information in working memory – participants are going to need reminding who

holds which picture. In the latter case, repetitions are encouraged by the fact that sequencing depends on being able to identify the differences between the pictures, so that if several of the pictures are very similar the descriptions are likely to need repeating. The likelihood of repetition is increased if there is an expectation that *any* member of the group can be called upon by the teacher to report back to the class, leading to greater readiness to repeat, clarify and rehearse.

7. *Picture and map differences tasks*: Picture differences tasks typically involve managing three important types of information: location, identification, and description. Location itself requires both use of prepositions, and the identification of reference points (e.g., on the table, north of the forest), and some of these are likely to be repeated, with prepositional phrase constructions being widely used. Identification involves naming, or the use of strategies to negotiate reference: and the inclusion of a lot of referents which students are not easily able to name could lead to repeated use of negotiation/communication strategies. Descriptions will tend to take the form of various kinds of noun modifiers and constructive repetition may be motivated where subcategories of referents are needed (a major road, a minor road, a footbridge, a railway bridge). Making the task of identifying differences deliberately problematic is likely to lead to extended discussion of what is in the pictures and/or how to say it. For example the teacher might deliberately provide pictures for which students do not have all the vocabulary, leading them to have to negotiate understanding; or the pictures may contain a large number of distracting elements or ambiguous material (see Samuda and Rounds 1993 for an example of this).
8. *Prioritising tasks*: A number of tasks have been designed which give students a set of options to consider and prioritise in order of importance, preference, urgency, moral significance, and so on. Tasks like this are likely to encourage repeated use of expressions of opinion, and of justificatory comments, and depending on the design of the task can also give rise to repeated comparisons.
9. *Interpretation tasks*: Interpretation tasks require students to consider the significance of a set of objects in terms of some specified context. An example is a “Things in pockets” task, where the students are told the objects come from someone’s pocket, and are asked to consider who the likely owner is (see Samuda 2001). Constructive repetition can occur here if each student is pushed to speculate in

turn about the significance of each item, and to propose a likely owner of the whole set.

10. *Problem-solving tasks*: By problem-solving tasks I am referring to tasks which pose conceptual or logical puzzles and which are deliberately intended to engage learners in talking through the nature of the problem, identifying potential explanations, and evaluating them before arriving at a preferred solution. A well-known example is the famous problem of how a farmer can cross a river by boat, with a dog, a rabbit and a lettuce if he can only get two of them into the boat at a time (though note that this may need “taskifying” if the material is to be used to generate interactive discourse). Other more real world examples might involve students in explaining why particular roads in a given town carry more traffic than others; working out the best location on a map for a new factory, hospital or housing, given a number of important sometimes competing criteria; or providing an explanation for the different rates of growth of three potted plants, or for what it is that causes a hole in a punctured tyre to create bubbles when put under water. Tasks such as these push learners towards constructive repetition to the extent that they are led in to checking that they have described the situation correctly, and checking and reviewing the proposed solutions in order to identify the best one. Barnes (1976) provides examples from across the curriculum, and Prabhu (1987) suggests basing language syllabuses around problem-solving tasks.

As we said above, a characteristic of tasks with “internal repetition” is that this type of repetition depends on pressure on the individual students to manage the information content, and to be able to present and/or explain the outcome to the teacher and class at the end of the groupwork. In other words, repetition here is a likely product of pressure on them to manage the different phases of the task.

7.1.3. Internal and external repetition: three-phase “jigsaw” tasks

One final type of task combines internal and external repetition. This is the kind of task developed by Geddes and Sturtridge (1979, 1982). Geddes and Sturtridge named their tasks “jigsaw” tasks, a term which has since been used more loosely, sometimes referring to any kind of information-transfer task (see for instance Yule 1997: 32). Geddes and Sturtridge’s original idea

consisted of a type of task which was deliberately designed to have three phases. The first phase was based on four complementary reading or listening tasks, each one being entrusted to a different group within the class to be done in parallel. By the end of the first phase, each group would have a different part of the overall information needed to for the second phase. The second phase then involved the students in being regrouped to pool the information from the first phase. For this the new groups were made up of one student from each of the four original groups. The new groups then had to decide a solution on the basis of the pooled information, leading to a third phase, where each group had to present their solution in plenary mode to the whole class. Tasks designed in this way are a kind of “pyramid” task, that is, involve “external repetition” but each phase also pushes learners to clarify the information for themselves and for their colleagues, exploiting “internal repetition.”

All these examples are intended to illustrate the power of the design of tasks to lead to constructive repetition. The idea is not to push learners by simply telling them to repeat, but rather to consider how the internal design of activities, and the overall expectations on them towards achieving goals collectively and individually, can together push learners towards working and re-working meanings and their formulations.

7.2. Whole-class talk

By whole-class talk I mean talk between the teacher and class in plenary mode. Obviously this is a type of talk which the teacher has considerable influence over. Three main types of constructive repetition are possible in this mode.

7.2.1. Plenary topics

The first main type of context for constructive repetition is when the teacher explores common recurring topics and themes with the class as a whole. Teachers can structure this in various ways, such as through questions or headings of sub- topics given orally or on the board. Teacher and class then respond to each sub-topic jointly. In junior classes this can include the daily weather report; regular reviews of seasonal changes; regular accounts of pupils’ daily routines; sports results. With more senior classes, additional themes can include brief news reviews; contemporary social

issues; sports results. All of these are topics which offer opportunities for updating around a limited range of lexico-grammatical resources, organized in a fairly standard way.

7.2.2. Pre- and post-task talk

The second and possibly the most important type of context for constructive repetition is before or after specific classroom activities, exercises or tasks. Before students begin activities, whether individual, pair or group, it is clearly often useful if the teacher first rehearses with the class as a whole the information content to be covered, or the procedures to be followed. For instance, if students are to undertake a problem solving task in groups, in which they have to decide from a set of objects from someone's pocket who it is that they probably belonged to, it would be possible for the teacher to rehearse the vocabulary needed to refer to the various objects through a preparatory activity. For example, the objects could be involved in a memory activity, in which the class are shown an array for 1 minute, and working in pairs, are to write down the objects that they had been shown. This is effectively a communicative activity built around the vocabulary items which, unbeknown to the class, are going to be needed in the coming "things-in-pockets" task. A similar preparatory activity could be used prior to a picture story, or a prioritising task, a picture differences task, or indeed most other kinds of task. Sometimes teachers might want to avoid doing this so that students are left to work out how to do the task on their own. However preparation can be helpful. The intended effect is to provide meaningful rehearsal of the vocabulary items to be used in the following activity, to give students a common starting point, and to reduce their processing load so that they are better able to attend to the language during the task.

Another way of promoting constructive repetition through tasks is for the teacher to do an example task with the whole class prior to letting them work in pairs. For instance, prior to a picture differences task, the teacher can provide the whole class with one of the two pictures, and using an alternative version of the second picture themselves, perform the task in plenary mode. The point here is that the class would be able to rehearse roughly the procedures they might follow, and the kinds of utterances that they could use, to do the task effectively. If the pictures are versions of the ones they are about to use in pairs, this would also help them rehearse the vocabulary they would need. All of these pre-task activities would provide

valuable rehearsal and preparation work, without undermining the communicative nature of the activities themselves.

Opportunities for constructive repetition can also be found *after* a task. Too often it seems that once tasks are completed in pairs, the lesson moves on to other activities, with no opportunity for learners to put to further use the conceptual and linguistic work they had been doing in their pairs. That is, follow-up activities can be used to lead students from the task-based work into further constructive repetition.

For instance, following a picture story, students can be asked to retell the story in plenary mode, working alone or with their pairs or groups. Given the fact that picture stories are unscripted activities, alternative ideas and different wordings can be subsequently noted on the board, along with relevant grammatical details. Other types of pair or group tasks can similarly lead into follow-up activities. For instance tasks in which students work in pairs or groups to prioritise their preferences from different pictured options (such as a selection of AV equipment, preferred designs of an apartment, preferred locations for public amenities) can be followed by whole class reports of options, along with reasons. For the same reason it can be valuable to organize follow-up activities after groups have been working on tasks centred on complex personal decision-making (such as suggesting responses to letters in “agony aunt” columns, or job appointment decisions). Any such follow-up activities serve a double function: partly to put pressure on the students to attend to the work they do in groups, and partly to provide valuable opportunity to re-use their language with teacher and the whole class.

The main purpose then behind both the pre- and post-task phases is to ensure constructive repetition – that is, re-presentation of the ideas so as to encourage and/or allow for incorporation of new language. The whole-class format also allows the teacher to provide formal feedback – a valuable additional dimension, provided that it dovetails with the constructive repetition, and does not discourage it, or distract from it.

7.2.3. Classroom management

A third context for constructive repetition occurs around classroom management and procedures. This is talk which teachers typically use to explain or review classroom management rules or procedures to be followed for different activities. They are naturally repeated and rehearsed subsequently in collaboration with students, so that the class keeps them in mind.

To summarize, teacher-class talk can encourage and model constructive repetition around the use of regular themes for plenary talk, around the running of the class itself, and above all to prepare the students for tasks they are to do, and to build on what they have done individually, in pairs or in groups. Pre- and post-task briefing is often justified as a controlling procedure – that is, to ensure students do what they are intended to do. It is useful to think of this as playing a significant role in leading to progressive increases in elaboration, in accuracy and in fluency, and in enabling the plenary context to add to and complement the work done individually.

8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to show how in addressing a specific applied pedagogical issue in the teaching of spoken language, distinct areas of research can provide significant insights. Most important, I would argue, is the development of empirical research around our pedagogical interventions, such as the one discussed in this paper. While associated research areas can illuminate and inspire in the development of classroom pedagogy, what ultimately matters is how far the insights we derive from research impact on classroom practice. However, this in turn may perhaps ultimately depend on the potential of the underlying theoretical idea.

This has sought support from the research literature around the proposition that learning in general, and language learning in particular, involves both repetition and creativity. Much of the history of language teaching has harnessed talk to various types of highly structured repetition, whether narrowly verbatim repetition, or repeated structural transformations. More recently, this perspective has been rejected as too constraining, and instead talk is now most commonly seen as a privileged context for creative language use. However, I have suggested that there are also problems with using talk in this way. One is that talk is not usually purely creative – much repetition and recycling occurs within most kinds of talk. Hence organizing classroom talk as essentially creative or indeed as exclusively repetitive is to distort it. The second problem is that although creative language use is important, learning cannot take place entirely through creative language. Learners need to be able to work on sorting out what they want to say, and then work on matching what they want to say to their language resources. This involves them in spending time and some effort to work through their meanings, and to recover and use the language they are familiar with. To do this they need to incorporate what they know into their oral language use.

Further, learning is additionally promoted if they are led to incorporate language from each other and from their teachers. This cannot be done if oral L2 activities are treated exclusively as opportunities for one-off spontaneous talk. For these reasons, constructive repetition seems well worth exploring, and it seems to me that we have enough materials and understanding to be able to do this, and to develop and research further the resources for doing so.

Research and development in task design, of the kind being pioneered by Samuda (forthcoming), and Samuda, Johnson, and Ridgway (2000) (and alongside this the study of expertise in task design, see Johnson 2003) is clearly one important direction. A second direction is to consider the methodological options open to teachers in the ways they exploit tasks within the classroom (see notably Samuda 2001), and in the ways in which they can use the notion of constructive repetition within their own teacher talk. Perhaps as a result we might come to think in more detail about the different types of connection between communicative language use and language learning, and of how they can be exploited in the classroom. Communication alone is far from sufficient for learning. Rather, the question to consider is “what kinds of communication can best promote learning?” Constructive repetition may well be one important element.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Review the types of oral activities you are familiar with, either in course-books or in supplementary materials: consider each type in terms of the kinds of repetition that it could involve. What if anything could the teacher do either to the design or to the use of the activity so that meaningful repetition could be motivated?

Activity 2

Explore the attitudes of colleagues and students to the notion of repetition: how far do they accept or reject repetition in the context of oral discourse in general, and of language learning/teaching, and why?

Activity 3

You might consider recording a lesson conducted by a mother tongue teacher in another discipline area (e.g., history, literature, mathematics, woodwork, biology), and analyse it for examples of discursive repetition.

Activity 4

Think of ways in which an activity students do in one lesson could be re-used with some minor alterations in a later lesson, to provide them with meaningful (i.e., communicative) repetition. You might then study the impact of the repetition 1) on the students' talk, by recording and comparing their talk on the two occasions; 2) on the students' perceptions of the repetition, by giving them a questionnaire, or by interviewing them about the experience.

Notes

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Questions as strategies to encourage speaking in content-and-language-integrated classrooms

Christiane Dalton-Puffer

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. What are your most effective strategies or activities to get students to speak in class?
2. What in your opinion are the main limitations of the classroom as an environment where foreign language speaking can be learned?
3. In your perception, what are the goals of Content-based instruction (CBI)/Content-and-Language-Integrated Learning (CLIL)¹ teaching programmes?
4. Which characteristics of CBI/CLIL seem to enhance those goals?

1. Introduction

Speaking the target language in order to solve real-life tasks is a complex, sometimes daunting experience for the second language (L2) learner. Whether we are moving among native speakers in the target culture or among other non-natives in international lingua franca contexts, on leaving the classroom and entering the “real world” as L2 speakers we often feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation. We have to function on-line and attend to several demands simultaneously: we search for mental schemata into which we can fit the content that is being talked about so that we can make a relevant contribution. At the same time we have to try and “get hold of the ropes” of the discourse, the relationships between the other participants while trying to honour rules we sometimes only have a vague idea about so as not to jeopardize our aims (like getting a stamp in our passport on immigration). All this we have to accomplish using vocabulary, grammar and speech sounds we know only imperfectly or at least less automatically than we take for granted in our first language (L1). Actually mastering such a trying situation produces feelings of deep satisfaction as everyone who has ever functioned in a language other than their L1 can

confirm. By the same token, true mastery of a foreign language is often equalled with being able to speak it fluently and efficiently in different situations.

As L2 speakers, then, we need a good number of strategies for learning and for use. But if we happen to be language teachers who want to foster learning in their students only some of those strategies are open to our influence and can be transformed by us into *strategies for teaching*. In this contribution I want to focus on two of them: *repetition* and *creating purpose*. I will briefly discuss these two learning/teaching strategies and will then examine how they are made to work in an educational setting founded on the idea of language learning through meaningful use: CLIL.

It is a fact of life that the more often we have done something the better we are at it. Like for any other skill such as playing a musical instrument or cooking, therefore, speaking develops through an inextricable combination of learning and use. We have to speak again and again, improving automatization and developing routines on all levels from the articulation of individual sounds, via recognizing complex discourse structures to accomplishing whole interactions like buying our breakfast in the corner shop or negotiating a contract. Among all the language skills, speech with its transitoriness maybe makes this particularly necessary and Bygate's chapter (this volume) shows how *repetition* pervades speech on all levels: through redundancy on the level of discourse structures, through familiar routines on the level of social interaction, through practise and rehearsal on the level of psycholinguistics and learning. There has to be room for rehearsal, repetition and practice: a baby's babbling, a group of foreign language learners chanting in chorus or someone rehearsing how to buy stamps abroad or giving a public speech.

The second important point I want to focus on is that when we speak we normally do so for a *purpose*. We speak because we want to achieve something in a particular situation or context. Such achievements are not necessarily something grand like concluding a business deal, but may simply be passing on a piece of information or establishing contact with another human being. Another motivation for speaking which can best be observed with very young children is the sheer joy of being able to do it and relishing in the accomplishment. During my third elementary school year I often spent the last stretch of my walk home practicing tongue-tip "r" which my friend could do but I could not. I was simply thrilled to feel how it worked and the motor-skill I thus acquired served me well when I later started to learn Spanish. Some people preserve this kind of motivation into their adult life, transferring it to the sounds of a second or third language.

More often, however, this does not seem to be the case and a good deal of thinking in EFL teaching methodology has gone into working out how language learners can be provided with tasks that give them motivation and purpose to speak within their language classes or EFL curriculum (Bygate 1987; Cook 2000).

A learning arrangement which is considered very attractive, if not ideal, in this respect is to use the target language to teach so called content-subjects like science or history. In such classrooms the target language is not in the role of “subject” but it is the “medium of instruction” for some other subject, and the need to talk about whatever *is* the subject of the lesson provides learners with an authentic purpose for speaking. In recent years this teaching/learning arrangement has gained an increasingly visible profile in many parts of the world and its popularity grows chiefly from the belief that learners will develop communicative competence in the second or foreign language more comprehensively through large quantities of input (“the more the better”) and the use of the target language for naturalistic, meaningful interaction regarding their everyday classroom activities.

Looking at the language goals which CLIL programmes set for themselves, the gains in speaking competence are often the only ones which get explicitly formulated. For instance, the pan-European CLIL-COMPENDIUM² initiative mentions “develop oral communication skills” as the most concrete among the five language foci for CLIL programmes.³ The following extract from an interview with a CLIL teacher also illustrates the point:

*I just think that no matter what I do and how well or how badly I do it, that just through the quantity, two more hours per week where they are confronted with the foreign language, that this has an effect, namely—and the second important goal is that I hope(.) that this **fosters fluency and unobstructed uninhibited speaking***

[ich glaub ganz einfach egal was ich mache und wie gut ich es mache oder wie schlecht ich es mache, dass durch diese Quantität, 2 Stunden mehr in der Woche, wo sie damit konfrontiert sind mit der Fremdsprache, dass das etwas bringt und zwar und die zweite wichtige Zielsetzung ist, dass ich hoffe, ah dass diese äh Sprachflüssigkeit und das ungehinderte, ungehemmte Sprechen gefördert wird] (German original, English translation by CD).

The expectations, then, are that CLIL classrooms are effective in developing speaking skills and observers regularly state that learners speak the foreign language at visibly lower anxiety levels once they have

experienced a certain amount of CLIL. It is clear that CLIL classrooms are an environment where one can expect both learning strategies, repetition and purpose, to have a good habitat. However, rather little is known about what this foreign language speech produced at lower anxiety levels actually looks like (Duff 1996; Musumeci 1996; Hajer 2003).

In this chapter, then, I will explore speech in CLIL classrooms through looking at a central element of classroom talk, namely questions. I will briefly discuss the role of questions in classroom interaction and will then examine 1) how they shape and influence the talking students do as questioners and as respondents, and 2) how teachers might make strategic use of certain types of questions to enhance the complexity of student talk.

2. Questions in whole-class interaction

School lessons are very much a speaking event and the talk which happens in them commonly has one of two purposes. If the purpose is to organize work, set tasks, focus attention and conduct administrative affairs, this is the “regulative register,” which provides the frame in which content work can proceed. If the purpose is to pass on knowledge specific to the subject, the main topics are usually predefined by the curriculum and this is known as the “instructional register” (Christie 2000).

Questions occur in both registers and we will see later that there are interesting differences between them regarding the amount of active questioning students do. In this section however, I want to focus specifically on questions in the instructional part of lessons.

When classes of teachers and students are working on “content,” the typical three-step “teaching exchange” is a frequent occurrence and probably always will be (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Mehan 1979; Wells 1993). An example of this pattern is shown in (1) (see the Appendix for the transcription conventions):

- (1) *The teaching exchange*
- | | | |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| T | what does inherit mean | <i>Initiation</i> |
| S | erben //inherit// | <i>Response</i> |
| T | exactly, “erben” | <i>Feedback</i> |

Long stretches of classroom interaction are conducted through repeating this three-step pattern over and over again. One important function of the pattern is clearly that it gives the teacher the possibility to steer the talk in

the required direction in order to cover the necessary concepts and facts. The sequence of *Initiation – Response – Feedback* thus has room for student speech only in the Response-slot. In sum, the dominant pattern in CLIL classroom interaction associates active interactional work with the teacher and the passive, responding role with the student. It is the teacher, through his/her control of the Initiation-slot, who can strongly influence students' oral production while staying within the confines of the teacher's and students' roles in lock-step whole-class interaction.

Especially earlier analysts tended to be critical about how teachers use questions as a tool for expressing and maintaining their dominant role in classroom discourse (Long and Sato 1983; Stubbs 1983) and discussions of pedagogical reform have always included considering ways in which students can be made more active participants in educational encounters. Particularly the fact that teachers ask many questions to which they already know the answer has been a point of critique. Nevertheless, the three-step teaching exchange is still alive and well in most classrooms and has meanwhile seen something of a rehabilitation. Many educationalists now believe that asking known-answer questions is strange only if judged by some decontextualized standard of what is "normal language use," that is if one disregards the purpose or goal of a particular interaction (Mercer 1999). Known-answer questions have been shown to be "normal" in all pedagogical encounters, also in primary socialization, and teachers' questions have consequently been reinterpreted as a "fundamental discursive tool for engaging learners in instructional interactions, checking comprehension and building understanding of complex concepts" (McCormick and Donato 2000: 183).

These fundamental teaching tools come in different shapes and sizes and can be distinguished according to their purpose, form and content (Thompson 1997). If one looks at questions in terms of their purpose one may distinguish between those that are directed towards something that is truly new to the questioner (these are called "referential" or communicative questions) and those that prompt someone to display whether they also possess a certain knowledge item that the questioner has (these are "display" or known-answer questions). When using the latter a teacher is thus interested in gaining new information not on the subject matter itself but on the state of mind of the student. In this sense, display questions do aim at new information, but on a different level than "referential" questions. Additionally, display questions may also aim at putting a topic, or a knowledge item on the communal "floor" and thus make it available for collective

inspection or discussion. Examples from both types of questions are given in (2) and (3):

(2) *Display Questions*

- and why were they called colonies⁴
- yes, what does inherit mean
- what kind of city do you know about in the east of America
- what is it in German

(3) *Referential Questions*

- why didn't you do your homework
- did anybody of you try to dive already

Classification according to form involves a distinction between *yes/no* questions (closed questions), and *wh*-questions (open questions). *Yes/no* questions are generally easiest to understand and to answer. Truly open questions, on the other hand, leave the respondent more space for their response and also tend to put higher demands on their linguistic encoding skills. Incidentally, they are also more demanding of the questioner: because the answers are less predictable they may be more difficult to integrate into a coherently progressing teaching unit and may thus put a greater strain on the teacher's own linguistic resources. Examples from both types of questions are given in (4) and (5):

(4) *Closed Questions*

- did anybody of you try to dive already
- was that a four-star hotel
- are they really gods or are they monsters
- do you think do you really think that parents know what their kids are doing just by calling them

(5) *Open Questions*

- who fought against whom in the First World War
- how was it under water
- who are the rich men in an early society
- why the cold war was going so long?
- what would be the result of dropping a hundred percent of my products, martin

As one may read from the examples, also open questions are not always as open as they appear: they often imply that there is a simple, one-word response, which makes them quick and easy to answer and leaves the conversational control with the questioner.

A third way of looking at questions is to consider their content, distinguishing between different kinds of information that may be sought by the questioner. These may be facts, opinions, reasons or explanations (Richards and Lockhart 1994; Thompson 1997; Zuengler and Brinton 1997: 264). Examples (6) through (8) illustrate this type of questions:

- (6) *Questions for Facts (outside or personal)*
 - who fought against whom in the First World War
 - what thoughts did you have when you saw this scene

- (7) *Questions for Opinions*
 - do you think do you really think that parents know what their kids are doing just by calling them

- (8) *Questions for Reasons or Explanations*
 - why do you think this is correct
 - why did the spartans prefer sons

Whichever way we decide to look at them, questions are an indispensable part of CLIL lessons but what can we say about the foreign language speech they motivate? If we assume that some kinds of questions are more effective in evoking more or more complex student speech, then teachers might *strategically* employ those kinds of questions to foster their students' speaking skills. In addition to that we may also consider the role of students' own questions for rehearsing this important speech function in their classroom language. Let us now look at what happens in CLIL classrooms: What kinds of questions do students ask? What kinds of questions do teachers ask and what kinds of responses do the students make? How does questioning and responding to questions shape the speaking students do in the CLIL classrooms?

3. How questions shape speaking in CLIL classrooms

The findings presented here are based on recordings and transcripts of over 40 lessons from CLIL classrooms taught in Austrian secondary schools

(grade 6-13). They represent content subjects like history, geography, physics, biology accounting, and marketing. On the whole, teacher-led whole-class discussion is the predominant activity in the classrooms investigated but there are also student presentations and group-work activities. A subset of ten lessons, one with each participating teacher, was selected for coding and quantitative analysis. With a total of 657 information questions asked in these ten lessons (ca 520 minutes), the statistical average is well over one question (1.26) per minute.

Let us now consider how the different question types are distributed. The numbers are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of different question types (N=657)

Question type	% of Total
Referential Q.	53%
Display Q.	47%
Open Q.	63%
Closed Q.	37%
Facts	88%
Explanation, Reason, Opinion	12%

The table shows a slight overhang of referential over display questions and a more pronounced one of open questions over closed ones. This is somewhat contrary to what has been reported in earlier research into classroom questions and raises our expectations as to the kind of target language use may be prompted in CLIL lessons. As we shall see, the most significant percentages are perhaps the ones relating to the question objects: only a very small number of questions (12%) do not target facts.

3.1. Student questions

Even though they are not usually considered in studies on classroom questions, in this chapter student questions have an important place as part

of the speaking which learners do in their classrooms. Four out of ten of all student questions occur in the regulative register (a much higher share than with teachers' questions). These may be directed to both teacher and fellow students and frequently concern the whereabouts of learning materials, aspects of groupwork, or speaker nomination. In the classrooms investigated they had a strong tendency to be put in the L1 or an L1-L2 mix, even if the surrounding talk was all in English. An extract showing these aspects is (9):

(9) *Extract 1. Physics, grade 6.*

1	T	we have to collect the books
2	S	welche books //which books//

The same L1-tendency can be observed in the instructional register if a question concerns a language point rather than subject content per se. This "language point" addressed is nearly always some missing vocabulary item, questions concerning grammar or pronunciation are practically absent. The linguistic realization of such questions is highly formulaic in all contexts (how do you say x? what does x mean?) but even so the English versions are not really in evidence. This goes to show that students in these CLIL classrooms have a strong sense of differentiating between a subject-content core that is "in English" and a more procedural periphery which preferably happens in the language of the environment, the L1. In those classes where the L1 is less expansive, an explicit code of practice had been installed and "enforced" by the respective teacher.

Didactic or display questions are never used by students even though they also take on the role of expert in the classroom when they act as the spokesperson of a group or give a presentation. However, they always enact this role through monologue (the presentation) or through answering questions of others. The other kind of content-related questions students may use is to ask the teacher for more information on what he or she had said before. These "real" content questions are in English with very few exceptions. However, they do not occur with any regularity in the classrooms investigated but are basically concentrated into two lessons (both of them history lessons). In all the other lessons students asked content questions only very sporadically.

When content questions do occur, the ones with the lowest threshold seem to be those which ask for extra facts. Incidentally, while these are all “real” questions, they are mostly closed.

(10) *Student content questions*

- ahm could a metics woman marry a citizen(s)?
- i have a question: could the the wife ahm ah the woman say she w- she wants to be divorced?
- how how big was the ...radius? ...the radius how big was it?
- wasn't a war between soviet union and afghanistan?

Questions which seek reasoning or explanations from the teacher, let alone challenge what she or he has said, are very rare. Such questions are characteristically introduced by *if* or *why* (and if she was poor? but if the hu- ah husband dies?) and occur only if they can be found “embedded” in plenty of questions for facts. The extract in (11) illustrates this point as it is taken from a lesson where many student questions were asked.

(11) *History, grade 10.*

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | Sf | and why were they called .. colonies |
| 2 | T | iit's a question of terminology (.) you could call them independent settlements= |
| 3 | Sf | =but the language= |
| 4 | T | =we called them we called them colonies, the books call them colonies today |

Summarizing over student questions in general we can say that the students' aim seems to be chiefly to overcome lexical gaps, ensure that they can fulfil the tasks set by the teacher, occasionally to obtain specific information but very rarely to obtain explanations or arguments, or to check understanding (Musumeci 1996). Additionally, because of their tendency to use German for questions which are not about core-content, the learners formulate very few questions in English themselves and thus get little practice in taking an active speaking role in the target language.

3.2. Teacher questions and student responses

It is evident that the bulk of student speech in the L2 happens in response to teacher questions. This gives such questions an important influence on the development of student speaking and it is interesting to see how particular question types make a difference in this respect. The desired outcome is of course always for students to have as much opportunity as possible to make linguistically and cognitively complex contributions to classroom talk. Remember that this is one of the crucial arguments for doing CLIL in the first place.

Let us examine now, whether student responses actually do differ in terms of length and complexity depending on the type of questions they are responses to. Previous research into classroom questions has indicated that referential and open questions tend to generate longer and more complex responses than their respective counterparts, so that the relatively large share of referential and open questions in the CLIL classrooms raises positive expectations (see Table 1). However, the transcripts also show that by far the largest part of student responses are very short indeed and typically consist of one word (such as *yes/no*, nouns, and sometimes verbs) or at most one clause element (most frequently determiner + noun). Several examples are included in (12):

(12) *Short answers to closed referential and display questions*

a.

1. T yes, good (.) Aniza, was this from you
2. S **no**

b.

1. T ah did you know which kind of an aircraft that was
2. S **a fighter**

c.

1. T what are the egyptian gods
2. S (XXXXXX)
3. T are they really gods in stargate or are they cats or are they monsters are they ghosts michelle
4. Sf **aliens**
5. T aliens okay

- d.
1. T favelas belong to which town
 2. Sm **rio de janeiro**
 3. T yes

One can see that minimalist answers occur not only as a reaction to display questions, but are normal also as answers to “real” questions, see (12a) and (12b). It must be the context of didactic discourse which determines that numerous questions which are formally “open-ended” are treated as closed by the participants. When we take into account the surrounding talk it is easy to see the reason for this: the context of the answer is usually already provided either by the question itself or by the larger subject-specific conceptual frame the talk is set in and there is no need to provide a context through uttering “a complete sentence.” An example is given in (13). Even though the teacher puts a formally open question “what did you write,” the student’s answers can draw only on a limited set of options (even though the teacher actually claims that “there were quite a lot of where you could choose from”).

(13) *Marketing, grade 11.*

1. T mhm then show three different examples what structured questions could look like (more or less) depends on whatever you wrote martin **what did you write**
2. Sm **erm smilies erm boxes and erm scala**
3. T smilies for instance boxes for eight numbers a scale and so on so there were quite a lot of where you could choose from

It thus seems that the classification of teacher questions into referential-display and open-closed is only of limited relevance for how much student speech they stimulate. More interestingly, what all of the above-quoted examples have in common is that they ask for facts. It is quite possible, then, that “question object” is the category where one might look for ways to get more complex student output.

So, if questions for facts make students give answers of low linguistic and conceptual complexity, what *are* question formats which encourage more extended student responses? On the surface of it, questions for definitions or explanations of the form “*what is a X?*” seem to be a

promising choice, and they do occur with considerable frequency. Under the specific conditions of the CLIL classroom, however, such questions are nearly always interpreted as requests for translation as in (14). The same happens in (15), but an explanation is added by the teacher herself. Much more often, however, the translation is accepted *in lieu* of a definition or explanation.

(14) *History, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | T | what is a sniper? |
| 2 | Ss | scharfschütze |
| 3 | T | scharfschütze. so, very dangerous, the snipers. |

(15) *Business studies, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | what is a P-and-L account |
| 2 | S | gewinn und verlust (.) profit and loss |
| 3 | T | gewinn und verlust konto, ja (.) dieses konto zeigt mir als bi- als balance dann, als saldo den gewinn oder verlust |

(16) *Marketing, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | T | what is market growth we always think about market growth but did not yet explain it (xx) do you know what is market growth |
| 2 | Sf1 | erm how fast a market erm grows |
| 3 | T | yeah Kerstin erm that is how fast (.) use different words |
| 4 | Sf1 | erm it ex extend na (xx) (pause) extend |
| 5 | T | yeah, how fast consumers are buying it, how quickly more buyers are come coming and so on. |

It is only in (16) that the teacher actually avoids getting a translation. The student, however, finds it difficult to produce an explanation which is not circular (“market growth is how fast a market grows”) and following the teacher’s prompt to “use different words” comes up only with the verb *extend* whereupon two alternative verbalisations (or explanations) of the concept of market growth are provided by the teacher herself. One might of course say that insufficient L2 competence explains the student’s difficulty

in formulating a full response. However, this may not be as self-evident as it seems. Researchers have made similar observations in L1-English science classrooms (Lemke 1990) so that it is just as likely that classroom interaction per se does not encourage students to encode explicit utterances on a routine basis.

It is important to note that the teacher's use of the word *explain* seems to be instrumental in securing an actual attempt on part of the student at giving a coherent definition or explanation in English rather than a translation. Extract 8 is not an isolated example and it certainly seems as if the word *explain* functions as a code for "be explicit." Whether consciously or not, some teachers seem to regularly exploit this potential while others do not.

Aside from definitions and explanations, which are mostly circumvented by translations in CLIL classrooms, descriptions and giving reasons represent further question objects which can evoke more extended student answers. These types of questions are typically introduced by *how* and *why* as illustrated in (17) and (18), respectively.

(17) *Description. Marketing, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|----|--|
| 1 | T | mhm how do producers make parents buy the cellular phones (xxx) |
| 2 | Sf | erm they er give them the feeling er if your kid has a mobile then you can call them and you can be parent even if you are at work and don't have don't really have time for your children but you can call them |

(18) *Giving reasons. History, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | ah (..) in nineteen seventy-eight why was there a conflict between the Islamic fundamentalists and the left-wing government in Afghanistan
(28 turns during which T repeats the question another time; only when a specific student is nominated does the rationale materialize)) |
| 2 | T | okay (.) Monika. why was there a conflict (.) could you put your long statement into very short sentences |

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 3 | Sf1 | ahm the government wanted to make a land reform .. but thee Islam is against it because (the?) Islam says that |
| 4 | Ss | psch |
| 5 | Sf1 | only Alláh can decide who is rich and who is poor. and so em the government also made (.) other (.) reforms which the Islamic (.) population didn't want to have |

The above extracts show that asking for descriptions and rationales does indeed stimulate longer and more complex student turns than questions for facts. Sometimes students are also asked to give their opinion. Such teacher initiatives are usually flagged by signal words like *opinion* or *you think* or the use of subjunctives in display questions, see (19) and (20), and these too are followed by relatively long answers.

(19) *Opinion. Marketing, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | T | now in your opinion do you think do you really think that parents know what their kids are doing just by calling them |
| 2 | Sf1 | no they can do this because the children can also say im with a friend and in real they are |
| 3 | T | and in= |
| 4 | Sf1 | =in somewhere in reality they are somewhere else |

(20) *Opinion. Marketing, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | but what if you produce only poor dogs what then ... according to the matrix you should drop them off what would be the result of dropping a hundred percent of my products martin |
| 2 | S | yeah find new ways of sell developed products or erm |

Further questioning techniques which open up the floor to a wide range of responses are returning student questions to the group or asking very general questions like *anything else? does anyone know anything about...?* but these are used only sparingly by most teachers. The challenge of such unspecific questions is not always taken on by the students, but if it is, the

teacher has to bear the calculated risk that the talk may lead into unplanned directions putting unforeseeable demands on their own target language competence.

We have seen that contrary to questions for facts questions for other kinds of information do have the potential of stimulating the learners into using and thereby developing their speaking skills because they evoke more and more complex speech. However, all non-facts questions taken together (explanations, descriptions, reasons, opinions) account for only 12% of all questions in the classrooms I have investigated here. Of these few questions, even fewer actually receive the extended student responses which they have the capacity to elicit. The “responsibility” for this seems to lie with all the participants in more or less equal measure: students seem much more ready to engage in providing single facts in the “guess what’s in teacher’s head” – game than in more open question types, while teachers tend to find it hard to demand that extended responses be given and to wait until they materialize. What frequently happens in instances when a student answer is not forthcoming is that the teacher offers a series of progressively less complex questions until an answer is provided. By this time we are usually “down” to a question for facts.⁵ The extract in (21) gives an indication of such a progression: after asking the learner to explain his own thinking, the teacher immediately moves on to requiring a general description (how...?) and then a fact (what...). The extract in (22) illustrates further how more complex questions that could generate more complex answers are discursively treated in these classrooms: about half of the questions in the non-facts category take this course.

(21) *Physics, grade 6.*

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | T | why is there pressure |
| 2 | Sm1 | the molecules can ahm ahm walk in all directions |
| 3 | T | wu what do you mean like that but don’t think about molecules how can you picture water what did we say last lesson= |
| 4 | Sm1 | =(xxx) be in a container |
| 5 | T | could be in a container and |

(22) *History, grade 11.*

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | T | ah, but that comes close (pause) why do people have a lot of power in a society where there is (.) |
|---|---|---|

		no industry
2	S1	they were born into it
3	S2	they were upper class
4	S3	(rich?) men, they were-
	T	they were upper class (.) they were born into their (.) social (.) status (.) if your father was a nobleman, you are a nobleman, yes, but
5	Ss	ahm .. no (xxx)
6	T	they are rich (.) yes okay (.) why are they rich (.) what have they got
7	S	Money
8	S	they have mines
9	T	they have (.) mines
10	Ss	land
11	T	yeah, there were s- there were silver mi-

Based on the evidence from the CLIL lessons analysed in this chapter we can set up a tentative ranking for teacher questions in terms of the complexity of responses which they seem to elicit:

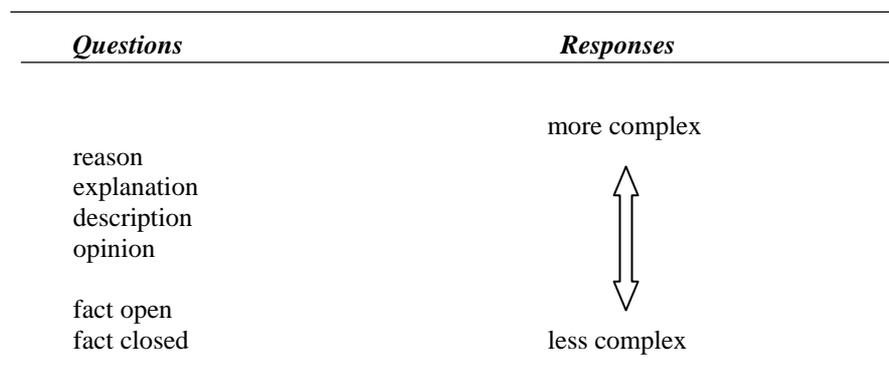


Figure 1. Ranking of questions according to likely complexity of responses

This ranking is still tentative and will need further empirical support. What can be said with some confidence is that as teachers we often cut short what we would profess (and, I surmise, honestly believe) to propagate, namely the linguistic expression of complex thinking processes.

4. Conclusions

I said at the outset that among the numerous strategies involved in learning L2 speech, *repetition* and *creating purpose* are open to positive action on the part of educators. On a global level CLIL classrooms provide both quite simply because of what they are: they provide a purpose beyond language learning in and of itself and they mean more L2 exposure and an additional practice ground on top of traditional foreign language classes. Consequently, CLIL or immersion classrooms have high expectations set on them as environments which successfully further learners' speaking skills in the foreign language.

In this chapter I have tried to be more specific and to examine how the very global speaking purpose offered by CLIL as such translates into the details of actual everyday classroom talk. Like all lessons, CLIL lessons follow well-established routines regarding who speaks when about what and how much, providing learners with a secure well-known frame. But I assumed that there are possibilities within the confines of ordinary classroom talk that may be more effective in realizing the global aims of repetition/rehearsal and speaking purpose. For this I specifically looked at classroom questions since they are a major structuring device in educational talk: they drive the discourse forward, introduce new topics, and generally direct the focus of the interactants.

It turned out that in the phases of lessons which belong to the instructional core, students cannot be said to be very active questioners overall. This means that questions are not really exploited by students to obtain further input from the teacher. Some language learning theories would argue, however, that this is instrumental for promoting language learning. At the same time it is noticeable that CLIL students are much more ready to openly address lexical gaps than students in EFL-lessons, something which has been observed by many teachers during interviews and informal encounters. However, there was a strong tendency for such questions to be in the L1, as there was for questions concerning classroom procedures (regulative register). This means the learners formulate very few questions in English themselves and thus get little practice in taking an active speaking role in the target language. This suggests that if CLIL aims at maximizing opportunity for and variety of communicative intentions in student questions, teachers should strive to establish discourse rules which give priority to the target language also in the regulative register.

In previous studies dealing with language and/or content learning it has been claimed that "real" questions are somehow better than "didactic"

questions at eliciting longer and more complex student responses (Brock 1986; Shomoossi 2004). The picture derived from the CLIL classrooms is more complex than this and should prevent us from adopting an over-simple understanding of classroom language being divided between “natural, authentic and open-ended” referential questions on the one hand, and “unnatural, artificial and closed” display questions on the other. For understanding speaking in CLIL classrooms it turned out that another perspective on teacher questions is more productive, namely considering a question’s object. Evidently, student responses differ in quantity and quality according to what kind of information they are supposed to provide. Questions for facts almost universally result in minimal responses, no matter whether they are display or referential. If, in contrast, teachers aim at students’ beliefs and opinions or require them to explain, define or give reasons, they are quite likely to get extended student responses. Therefore, if CLIL teachers want to enhance their students’ speaking skills while remaining within the confines of ordinary classroom talk, they can do so through giving students more opportunities for extended responses through asking non-facts questions. It is, however, important to have the patience sometimes to wait for these extended responses, presumably even longer than if the class is run in the L1. Such wait-times are, however, notoriously difficult for many teachers. A second obstacle may be that giving more space to student responses also means that teachers have to face the possibility that the talk may develop into unforeseen directions. While they may be quite relaxed about such a perspective on the level of content as such, many CLIL teachers may feel insecure about or even threatened by the idea of exploring new territory in a language which is not their first. This points to the importance of careful selection and training of teachers who are entrusted with CLIL classes.

In sum, I have argued that like any other context-embedded oral event, CLIL lessons have their limiting conditions, but that within these limits there is a space for developing learners’ speaking skills by asking some types of questions more frequently than others. What I also want to point out, however, is the fact that the very limitations of the CLIL context may have an enabling effect on speaking skills on a very global affective level. It may well be that the predetermined and stencil-like format of typical student responses in typical classroom talk offers L2 speakers a chance to “say something in the foreign language” under circumstances of reduced complexity. The typical one-word responses do not require active syntactic processing (they are often colloquially referred to as “not speaking in whole sentences”) and they have a repetitive, almost ritualistic character. That is

to say, the students' part in typical didactic discourse is syntactically simple and predictable. On top of that the entire situation is highly familiar to them in the sense that they are experts in their particular culture-bound version of what happens in class and their CLIL classes are normally part of that. Because the students are familiar with the overall discourse rules they can concentrate on the topic and on semantic processing. They can contribute to the talk in the L2 without overload on several levels simultaneously and this in turn helps to build to their linguistic self-confidence. Enhanced L2 confidence is a commonly observed outcome of CLIL programmes. In this sense, then, the limitations of the CLIL classroom may also be a chance.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Here are some extracts from CLIL lesson transcripts. Identify the questions and decide in each case how you would classify them according to three typologies of classroom questions introduced in this chapter:

1. display/referential (d/r)
2. open/closed (o/c)
3. fact/opinion/reason/explanation (fa/op/re/ex)

Consider also whether the question belongs to the instructional or regulative register, that is, whether it concerns:

4. curricular content or classroom procedure (inst/reg)

A grid for entering your categorization codes has been added alongside the transcripts. The first question has been done.

1.	2.	3.	4.
Display Referential	Open Closed	Fact Explanation Opinion Reason	Instructional Regulative

10 Sm5 yes, we had an article about world war two "they're still hunting us."

--	--	--	--

Tourism, grade 6

- 1 T okay. **anything ... special you would like to mention about German tourist?**
- 2 S (XXX)
- 3 T **anything you('ve?) found very interesting in the article**
- 4 Sm m-maybe Verena wants to (XX), .. she said something
- 5 T you would like to add something?
- 6 Sf yes, (XXX)

History, grade 11

- 1 T ... it began in the New Stoneage, yes. ah ... ya, i thinkahm ... i thinkah men .. i don't know, **what do you think**
- 2 Sf1 the women
- 3 Sf2 i don't know
- 4 T **is it natural .. that men always want to have power over women**
- 5 Sf3 no
- 6 T **what do you think**
- 7 Sf4 yes, of course

Physics, grade 6

- 1 T okay so weve nearly finished with pressure in liquids there is just one thing as usual grace
- 2 S ah **what material is this**
- 3 T ah its metal special metals but i don't exactly know which metal it is

How difficult was this task? Where did problems occur and what was the nature of these problems?

Activity 2: Questions in your classroom

This task is intended as action research for you to examine your own questioning practices as well as your students' responses. If you do not teach a content subject you may want to focus on a language lesson dedicated to discussing a reading text or target language culture, history, politics etc. Decide on which question types you want to look at. The "object of question" categories should be included.

Version A. Observation

Draw up an observation grid on the basis of the question types you decided to look at. Teach a colleague to distinguish them with the help of Activity 1. Ask this colleague to sit in on one of your lessons and to tick the right category every time a question of a certain type occurs. This way you will obtain a quantitative overview of your questioning behavior. Ask the colleague for any other observations s/he has made. You can offer your colleague to reciprocate the observation.

Version B. Recording a lesson

Record (part of) a lesson you teach and transcribe it. Despite your advantage as one of the participants, this will take you several hours. Go through the transcript, identify the questions, classify them, and examine the student responses you got. Do you discern any patterns in your questioning behavior? Do your results confirm the points made in the chapter? Do you see a potential for encouraging more student speaking? Where are the obstacles?

Appendix: Transcription conventions

T	teacher
S	student; Sm=male student, Sf=female student
((text))	transcriber's comments
word-	truncated speech
word=	latching utterances
(x)(xx)(xxx)	unclear word(s), utterances

(text)	uncertain transcription
//text//	translation of L1 utterances
(.)	brief pause, not exceeding 1.5 seconds
((pause))	a pause longer than 1.5 seconds
?	rising intonation

Notes

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1. In Europe the term Content-and-Language-Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained wide currency on a supra-national level and will be used in this article for referring to situations where a second or foreign language is used as a medium of instruction. In North America the term Content-based instruction (CBI) is mostly used for second-language (ESL) contexts, while “immersion education” tends to be employed when other languages are involved.
2. www.clilcompendium.com This is a project co-funded by the Council of Europe and the European Commission aiming at establishing a common reference frame for the further development of CLIL-type initiatives all over Europe.
3. The remaining language goals are: “improve overall target language competence,” “deepen awareness of both mother tongue and target language,” “develop plurilingual interests and attitudes” and “introduce a target language.”
4. All examples are taken from authentic CLIL classroom discourse.
5. The teacher’s strategy can be interpreted as a kind of scaffolding: the teacher is assisting the student to create a space for learning and to make an adequate contribution to the construction of a conceptual web. It is really a kind of co-construction of knowledge which the student on his or her own would be unable to accomplish (McCormick and Donato 2000; Marton and Tsui 2004).

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Turn-taking awareness: Benefits for teaching speaking skills in academic and other contexts

Rebecca Hughes

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. What is the commonest problem that learners experience in terms of spoken English?
2. Other than grammar and vocabulary, what linguistic skills does a second language (L2) user need in a conversation?
3. Imagine that you ask someone their opinion of your new haircut, or that you ask them out to dinner. There is a pause before they respond. How would you interpret this?
4. Do you think an L2 user can ever be “comfortable” in conversation with a group of native speakers?

1. Introduction

Turn-taking in spontaneous speech is at the same time the simplest and the most complex of mechanisms. At its most basic, a model of turn-taking is straightforward: an A-B-A-B speaker exchange in which one speaker takes over from another at an appropriate point. There may be many speakers – Cs, and Ds, and Es – but a very influential conceptualization of spoken discourse is that it is constructed of turns and that these are discrete entities which can be labelled as belonging to the person holding the floor. It's a model which will be familiar from many course-book dialogues and transcripts at the back of these books, or from speaking tasks where the learner constructs an invented dialogue to practice with a partner, or responds orally to recorded initiating prompts.

However, two aspects of turn-taking make it a more complicated than that model suggests. First, we need to consider how it is that a speaker knows or judges the appropriate point for the speaking move from one person to another. Second, we need to understand the extent to which the A-B-

A-B model reflects the realities of turn-taking. These two questions are at the basis of most of the research on turn-taking, an under-studied, but distinctive area of work on the spoken form.

While making the situation complex, these issues also make turn-taking an interesting and rewarding area to work on with language learners. Most significant for the learner is the following: however good the language ability, however wide the vocabulary and however extensive the discursive and pragmatic knowledge, if the speaker cannot judge the right moment to begin to speak, they will never be heard. The central benefit of working on turn-taking awareness, then, is that it should help the learner with that most often described problem often expressed as the difficulty of participating in a spontaneous conversation and more formal spoken interactions, such as academic seminars or business meetings, with native speakers in the target language.

2. How does turn-taking work?

Turn-taking behaviour and mechanisms have been studied in some detail for at least 30 years in the conversation analysis (CA) tradition. Early work tried to pin down the rules of turn-taking while later analyses moved towards quantitatively based research, looking for statistically meaningful patterns in how speakers appear to signal that it is time for another speaker to speak, or not (for example, the methodologically influential paper by Koiso et al. 1998, or Caspers 2003).

2.1. The idea of the Transition Relevance Point

Fundamental to most studies is the concept of a point, or, more accurately a phase, in the utterance of a speaker which signals to the listener that they may take over smoothly and without apparent interruption (“apparent” since, as we will see later, many speakers clip and overlap one another’s speech without it seeming to be an interrupting act). This is often shortened to the Transition Relevance Point (TRP) which good conversationalists must monitor a speaker’s utterance for and time the start of their contribution to the micro-second. Too soon and they will seem to interrupt, too late and there may be an embarrassing or apparently significant silence. Let that silence grow, and the original speaker will either lose interest, or will continue to speak themselves.

In keeping with linguistic fashions of the time, the early, and relatively simple, model of turn-taking mechanisms (famously captured in the seminal article by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) is based on the modelling of interactions between listeners and speakers in terms of rules. These rules are not agreed explicitly in any sense between speakers at the start of a conversation, they are, we might argue, part of the pragmatic linguistic competence which a proficient language user brings to any conversation. Research on turn-taking still revolves around the predictability of the TRP, the nature of the turn (specifically how to define the units of talk, such as the “Turn-Constructional Unit” or TCU) and an excellent review of the theoretical issues can be found in Selting (2000).

For the language classroom what is most relevant is to help the student understand the importance of turn-behaviour and the basic, common signals they might look out for and use. Some examples showing turn mechanisms working and not working is a good starting point. Further discussion of this, and a wider range of examples can be seen in Hughes (2005). These are all taken from the the National Institute of Education Corpus of Spoken Singaporean English (NIECSSE) (Deterding and Low 2001). This is an extremely valuable source of examples of semi-structured interviews between native and non-native speakers and, being both rigorously constructed and easily accessible (it is available freely on-line at <http://videoweb.nie.edu.sg/phonetic/niecsse/index.htm>) can be used equally well for the language classroom and for research. Significantly for work on the spoken form with an emphasis on the actual stream of speech, it also pairs the transcripts with the sound recordings. The reader may therefore wish to visit the site and hear these examples of turn-taking for themselves. The sample classroom tasks at the end of this chapter are based on some of these examples.

(1) (F28-a¹): TRP-signalling working smoothly

- 20 I Did you go during the summer? Or during the winter?
22 S I went there during winter.
23 I So it was very very cold was it?
25 S Erm n-- ... it was late winter, so ...

In (1), the turn changes are smooth and unproblematic. At line 22², the speaker does not break in after the word “summer” although a question has

been asked, and it is syntactically possible, and at line 23 the original speaker takes back the conversational baton without a pause. Equally, although at line 25 the speaker is hesitating about what to say she does not let a silence develop and uses the voiced filler transcribed as “Erm...” to show that she has understood the question and is soon willing to make an answer.

(2) (*F16-e*): *TRP-signalling working less smoothly*

- 00 I So if if you could go anywhere in the world where
would you like to travel to?
- 04 S Mmm ... we we have this er ... idea of going to all
those those beach resorts ...
- 12 er perhaps the next the next one would be ... this is
just er what we plan, er Tahiti.
- 18 I [Tahiti
- 18 S [The--the--yeah, the islands ...'cos yesterday ...

In (2), at line 18 both speakers speak together and the second speaker has to try to re-start her utterance at the same time as answering the first speaker's query (“Tahiti”) which leads her to have to both begin a turn (“The ...”) and answer the other speaker (“yeah”).

2.2. What signals do speakers send out when a transition relevance point is coming up?

The idea of a point or phase where the listener and speaker can change roles without causing problems for each other remains, perhaps inevitably given the topic, central to research on turn-behaviour. However, work has tended to move on from looking at the subject in terms of high level rules or patterns of speaker behaviour towards work on the signals the speaker sends out prior to a moment of possible turn-release. Findings in the literature have not always agreed with one another, and much discussion surrounds the specific nature of turn-behaviour signals, and the balance of importance of various aspects of speech.

Many studies have suggested that prosody plays a central role in turn-taking (Wells and Macfarlane 1998). That is to say, it is the acoustic information coming from the speaker in terms of pitch, intonation, loudness and

rhythm which, fundamentally, carries the cue to the other speaker of whether it is appropriate for them to take over. Other studies have suggested that syntax plays more of a role than prosody, but that it is supported by the prosody (Caspers 2003). This suggests that listeners must pay attention to the grammatical completion points in utterances, but also listen out for clues in the melody of the language as to whether a speaker is going to release the turn, or wants to continue. Some researchers have suggested that while "... syntax has a stronger contribution than any individual prosodic feature, ... the whole prosody contributes as strongly as, or even more strongly than, syntax" (Koiso et al. 1998: 295). Most significantly, perhaps, in terms of the L2 classroom some studies have acknowledged that prosody and syntax may have different levels of importance in different languages (Wells and Macfarlane 1998).

3. Why turn-taking is difficult for learners

As this brief summary of some research findings shows, turn-taking is a complex mechanism and therefore there may be several linguistic factors working simultaneously to produce difficulty for the language learner in engaging in natural and effective turn changes. There are also reasons to do with expectation and traditional approaches to language teaching in general.

3.1. Learners learn sentences

The first reason for difficulties with turn-taking is due to the way that learners tend to be presented with language. Despite the growth in the understanding of real speech data through work on discourse analysis and, more recently, spoken corpora the grip of literate views of language in the L2 classroom remains tight. Language is still largely presented as discrete sentences or clauses which follow one another in a logical, linear fashion and in which words are mainly visual elements separated from one another by white spaces. Cloze tasks, and other forms of gap-fill, whether single word or longer elements, are perhaps the ultimate form of this static, literate view of language. In such tasks the framing text is a given which persists on the page through time and the learner is encouraged to think in terms of one clear and correct choice which was in the mind of the task creator.

The reality of speaking is fundamentally different from this. The processing demands of spontaneous speech production, the dynamic interrelations between speaker and hearer, the need for co-operative checking of understanding and the pressure to repair utterances when interruptions or false starts have occurred all lead to the spoken form being a dynamic and unpredictable medium. It is less a series of discrete sentences available for inspection from which the listener can “read off” propositional content, and more a complex matrix of sound, meaning, speaker intention, and listener interpretation. Far from knowing what will be said, neither speaker nor hearer can accurately predict what will be produced in spontaneous speech. As language is produced both parties interpret the discourse and within this evolving communicative world speakers and hearers collaborate to bring about conversational coherence. In this process the need for turn-taking skills is at a premium.

As little is “given” in a spontaneous conversation the burden is on the participants to support one another’s attempts to convey meaning. Effective backchannel at potential TRPs and smooth transition to next speaker build trust and conversational confidence. This requires accurate listening, split-second timing, and the ability to both understand and produce the meaning bearing elements of language that are carried by the prosody. However, on the whole, learners learn language as if it is a set of sentences that can be written down, and then at a later stage try to match these up with appropriate intonation and pitch movements for particular conversational contexts. This puts a great burden on the learner to try to move from static “sentence” to dynamic conversational “turn.”

3.2. Turn-taking requires active prediction of grammatical completions

The second main reason for the learner finding it difficult to participate effectively in conversational turn-taking is that prediction of the TRP requires the listener to monitor what is being said and to process both the meaning of words being uttered and, simultaneously, the probable grammatical completion of the utterance. Grosjean and Hirt (1996) have suggested that first-language speakers are very accurate in their ability to predict probable number of words remaining and the precise time that an utterance will end at a given point in a speaker’s stream of speech. However, in the L2 context the anxiety to understand present meaning may prevent the listener from bringing these skills into play. Again, if language is presented as something that the recipient passively “reads” then the listener will tend

to focus on trying to understand, rather than engaging in actively predicting the point at which the current speaker will expect them to start speaking.

As the literature suggests that syntax plays an important role in predicting the TRP, learners need to be made aware that thinking about, and recognizing, possible grammatical endings of clauses and being on the look out for them in a conversation is a necessary part of conversational participation.

3.3. Turn-taking requires active listening strategies that take into account prosody

In addition to syntax, much of the literature on turn-taking suggests (and common sense tells us) that prosody plays a key part in helping a speaker signal whether they wish to hold the turn, or relinquish it. A speaker may, for instance, break off in the middle of a sentence and it will be clear from the intonation whether they are pausing to think of a word, or whether they have deliberately stopped. Additionally, utterances often have several possible completion points in them and in order to time their entry into the conversation the listener needs to be able to clarify which is the “real” ending.

(3) *(BfI-e)*³

- 11 S ... actually when he was there I actually went to
more lectures //
- 14 It's just ... they've erm started more courses // ... in
the last couple of weeks //
- 17 and they're all sort of at ten a.m.// ... which isn't a
good time for me.

In (3), there are four potential completion points signalled by the syntax (these are at “lectures,” “courses,” “weeks,” “a.m.” and finally the speaker hands over at “me”). Syntax and semantics work together particularly strongly at “lectures.” However, the listener does not break in until “me.” The speaker sends out several prosodic signals which overlay the grammar suggesting that she is happy to continue speaking.

Figure 1 shows the pitch lines for the clauses in (3), showing a general fall in the highest pitch-point for the opening of each clause from the first

“actually” to the point when the listener takes over. The first prosodic signal relates to pace and pausing. Although the first section – “actually” to “lectures” – follows a steep pitch fall which could signal completion the speaker joins the start of the next clause on to the final word with a quickening of pace, and a pause for thought in the next clause where there is no potential TRP: “I actually went to more lectures (*strong potential TRP, but quickened pace*) It’s just (*weak potential TRP*) [pause] (*speaker can afford to pause here and is unlikely to be interrupted, given the lack of TRP*) they’ve...”

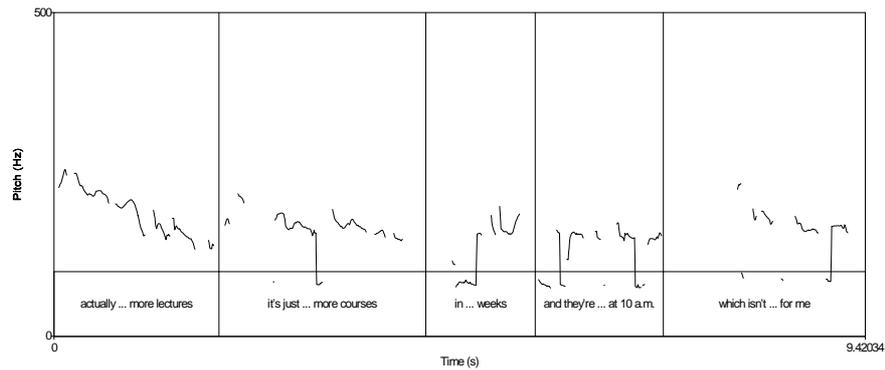


Figure 1. Pitch line of clauses in (3)

The second type of signal in this example relates to pitch range and to the pitch movement of the final syllable in the clause. The words “courses” and “weeks” and “a.m.” which could be points of completion by the speaker are either nearly flat, in the case of the first and last, or rising as in the case of “weeks.” This means that the speaker “holds the floor” until her final evaluative comment: “...which isn’t a good time for me.” In addition to these in-clause signals, the whole extract runs through a series of falling highest pitch points each below the high “Actually” (see Figure 1). Only in the final clause does the speaker’s pitch match the opening of this sequence on the word “which,” and the contrast of high to low, together with the summing up comment, suggests that the speaker is ready to pause.

It is extremely difficult for the learner to pick up on these kinds of nuances of prosody, unless they have been trained to hear them. In standard approaches to language teaching the main focus tends to be on the proposi-

tional content (the meaning conveyed by words as objects which can be written down) of the language being produced, and such prosodic signaling of discourse intention from speaker to speaker is seen as, at best, secondary.

3.4. Turn-taking is collaborative behaviour

A fourth area of difficulty in turn-taking for the learner is that it frequently depends on the collaborative construction of utterances. Collaborating in utterance construction, echoing another speaker, or showing understanding all require confidence, trust and timing. There are two main forms which the learner can be introduced to. The first kind of collaboration is simple backchannel. In this case the listener produces voiced fillers and discourse markers at suitable points in the speaker's utterances. By this means they show their level of understanding and can also signal to the speaker that it is appropriate for them to continue speaking.

(4) (F18-c)

- 39 S Er ... one of the card they used about ... two thousand five Aussie Dollars.
14 I [Wow.
17 [And another about one thousand Aussie Dollars.

In (4), the first speaker is explaining what happened when her husband lost his wallet. At line 44 the speakers speak over one another, but this is not a problematic overlap as the interviewer is showing surprise and sympathy at the amount of money taken from the credit card by means of backchannel in the word "Wow." Other simple backchanneling terms are words and phrases like "Right," "OK," "I see," and the non-lexical items "Mm," "Aha" or "Oh." These are produced with generally low pitch and intensity at the TRP. The low levels of loudness indicate that the listener is not attempting to take the floor, but rather supporting the speaker.

The second, more complex, form of collaboration is seen when two speakers co-operate to find a word, or to finish a particular utterance, or try to say the same thing in slightly different ways to show that they agree. In

these cases, the “interrupter” may take the floor, or not; but again these simultaneous turns are not problematic or aggressive in nature.

(5) (*Bm-2-e*)

- 22 ... the Neu Camp, had a look at that.
 25 I Really?
 26 S [That's --
 26 I [That's absolutely huge [isn't it?
 27 S [Yeah, it was really impressive, that was really
 good.
 29 I Yeah?
 29 S Yeah

In (5), the speakers speak over one another, but they are actually converging on an opinion of something: that the Neu Camp is “huge” (interviewer), “impressive” and “good” (student). They complete this affirmation of agreement with three ‘yeah’s in quick succession.

These kinds of collaborative efforts can only be staged after a great deal of practice and effort in an L2. Rather than being able to concentrate solely on their own language production, the effective speaker must constantly listen for TRPs and show their understanding and agreement by means of either backchannel or quickfire convergence statements. These have to be at the right pitch and intensity to be unchallenging to the speaker. In the case of complex collaborations it may actually be counter-productive to suggest that the learner should attempt these, for reasons discussed in the conclusion. They are, however, excellent examples to help the unconfident speaker realize why they may find following native-speaker conversation difficult.

3.5. Speaking in different contexts requires different kinds of interactions

Very often, the spoken form is taught as if one kind of skill and one type of language are required. Burns (this volume) shows persuasively the benefits of moving towards a more fine-grained matching of types of talk and characteristics of language. Equally, the learner should be aware that different turn-taking behaviour is appropriate in different contexts. Certain speech

genres provide their own norms of turn-taking which awareness of which can help the learner. For instance, in an academic seminar turns are very often allocated by the tutor and topics are pre-decided. Therefore the skill required is not so much to take the floor and get conversation going as to monitor the staged interactions and see when it becomes appropriate to interrupt. This kind of semi-structured interaction is also often a form of intellectual display rather than simple continuation of talk. A speaker may need to not only interrupt, but also bring the listeners back to a point made much earlier about which they have something to say. These interactions, therefore, will contain much more explicit meta-language to manage the talk than spontaneous, informal conversation. For instance, the seminar leader will explicitly allocate turns (“OK, [x] would you like to kick off?” “Thanks, that’s great, [y], did you want to say something?”). In addition, participants will lexicalize their taking of a turn (“Sorry to butt in, but...”, “Actually, Sorry, I have to interrupt here...”) and will manage topics so that they, artificially at times, suit their own needs to display knowledge (“Going back to what you said about [z], I’d like to add something...”).

It is difficult for learners to gauge the type of interactive behaviour required of them in an L2 context as this aspect is so rarely focused on. In spontaneous, one-to-one or very small group conversations turn-change is strongly dependent on careful and active listening for the TRP – it is something of a “free for all.” In an interview, the turns will alternate in a predictable fashion. In a formal academic lecture, the listener is not supposed to speak at all unless a lecturer requests this from the audience. In a semi-structured seminar there will be a mix of self-selection and other kinds of turn allocation. The less predictably structured the speaking context, the more difficult the task for the learner (and for the teacher!).

4. How can learners improve their turn-taking skills?

While the foregoing paragraphs suggest reasons why turn-taking is difficult for the language learner, there are several simple methods which can be used in the classroom to explore this rewarding area with the student.

4.1. Awareness raising comes before production

The complex set of factors which influence turn behaviour – semantics, syntax, prosody – mean that it is best to begin with awareness raising tasks, rather than attempt productive activities to begin with. It also needs to be

pointed out to the student, through listening to tapes of speakers or watching videos, just how complex the process is. Interestingly, in turn-taking tasks the learner rarely has to ask the teacher whether they have “got it right”, this will be clear from the interaction itself. These tasks, are, therefore, an excellent forum for fostering a more autonomous approach to learning. However, as mis-timing or interrupting can be a face-threatening situation for the learner, and one which it is difficult for interacting speakers not to be aware of, the teacher needs to promote a supportive group dynamic and take care that students are not made to “run before they can walk.”

Clear decisions need to be taken about what kind of turn-behaviour your student can aspire to at any given stage, taking into account their present level of proficiency, fluency and, perhaps most intangibly, but importantly, personality and levels of self-confidence. These decisions can be negotiated with the learner on the basis of what type of talk they feel most in need of learning about: semi-formal discussions in a meeting or seminar? Chatting about football? Using the telephone? And, ideally, some examples of natural conversation analysed to show the basics of turn-behaviour in action.

Whatever the level, the student needs to be enabled to feel confident that they can hear the appropriate point to speak, time their start of utterance and say something that will get them the floor. These three areas can be introduced separately (see next section).

4.2. Introduce the learner to some facts about turn-taking

Students need to be made aware that knowing when to speak is a matter of listening to both what someone says, and how they say it. Some basic facts about turn-taking can help the learner understand why it is not just their level of language proficiency which affects whether they can take part in spontaneous talk. If you can find a recording of an animated discussion from the radio or television, play this (without letting students see the picture, if a video) to the learners and ask them to listen for how many speakers are involved. Then play a short stretch of talk with several quick turns and ask them to guess how many times each speaker speaks in the example. This might only be 20 seconds of speaking and should not be very much longer. For upper-intermediate or advanced learners a transcript of the example can then be given and the learners check their answers. At lower levels you might go through the transcript slowly playing each turn and getting them to keep a tally of who is talking. Ask the students how each

speaker knows that they can speak and then move on to a discussion of how the structure of the sentence and the way the speaker says the sentence combine to give out messages to the listener.

4.3. Begin with structured tasks and small stretches of talk

Learners need to build up to being able to stage an extended set of turns, or longer contribution to a conversation. Simple tasks which are built around common topics or functions in course books – saying telephone numbers, dates, or names, spelling out addresses, checking information is correctly understood, and so on – can provide excellent opportunities for structuring the practice of turn-taking. In this way, natural turn-behaviour can also be built into a standard class, without “taking over” as a topic in its own right. What is required is for the teacher to be aware of the need for incorporating appropriate turn-taking into the speaking class, and for learners to be trained to expect part of a task to focus on this area. A simple approach is to give a series of numbers of varying length and to ask the class to check the final three numbers. This will require them to listen for the intonation pattern that shows the end of the number has been reached.

4.4. Use minimal responses to build confidence

If it is clear that the learners have grasped the basics of turn-taking, they can move on to listening to extended stretches of talk, and finding the moments when it might be appropriate to break in. These are usually also the places where speakers use “backchannel” (the short words, or noises, used in English to show understanding or request the speaker to go on). Therefore, a non-threatening task is for the learner to listen to a stretch of talk and simply try to say “mmm” as if to encourage the speaker to go on. As this appears to be a very simple task for advanced learners a system will be necessary to show them quickly the effects of getting the positioning wrong. The teacher may, for instance, tell a story or anecdote and ask a learner to tap the table with a pencil where they might make a sound (this is, for some reason, less threatening and much simpler for the learner than trying to say “mmm” to begin with). If the tap comes at a point when the speaker feels it is not appropriate, they should stop speaking completely. In this way, although the task is quite artificial a sense of the importance of

timing the backchannel utterance, however simple it may be, can be conveyed.

4.5. Stage the tasks so as to provide a cycle of production and self-reflection

Finally, the fact that accurate turn-behaviour is a difficult skill to acquire in an L2 needs to be reflected in the fact that learners will not, necessarily, learn to do even the simple tasks given above quickly or well. There can be a tension for the learner (and, indeed, the teacher) who has perhaps always focussed on improvement as a matter of more words, more structures, more functions, and, in the communicative classroom, using talk to collaborate on completing a task, but not focussing on the mechanisms of talk itself. Fundamentally, learners have to want to improve their interactive skills for them to spend time on revisiting and practicing very simple exchanges until they are prosodically acceptable.

Whatever aspect of turn-taking is being focused on it is, therefore, useful to train the learner to think in terms of self-correction and feedback and to stage the presentation of the parts of a lesson on turn-behaviour as shown in Figure 2.

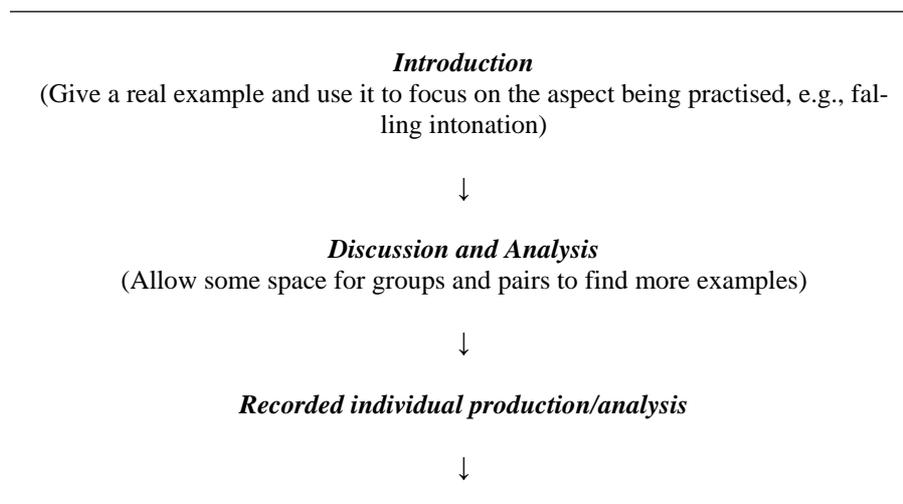


Figure 2. Cycle of introduction and reflection

(Ideally, in a language laboratory or computer multi-media setting create a task which allows the individual to try out the target element, or work on their own analysis)



Reflection and Needs-analysis

(Encourage the student to discuss their individual production, or their findings, with other students. Use this as a way of negotiating what the group is most interested in, finding difficult etc.)

Figure 2. cont.

5. Conclusion

Whether the non-native speaker can be conversationally “comfortable” with quick-fire, spontaneous, informal talk between native speaker is a significant question. The co-construction of discourse is, generally, a marker of social convergence and psychological closeness. It is hard to separate out the linguistic and the non-linguistic factors which come into play in turn-behaviour. The latter will include the speakers’ sense of social similarity, cultural reference, levels of shared understanding and so on. Conversational collaboration, and smoothly appropriate turn-taking, are both evidence of, and, more significantly, a catalyst for, social bonding.

We must, therefore, be realistic in our goals for the L2 learner in terms of what their goals are, interactively. In a world where we are often reminded that far more L2 speakers of English engage in discourse with one another than with native speakers, our goals may be quite modest. First, that learners become aware that turn-taking can significantly affect the impression they give to other people as to their level of interest and engagement in the discourse. Second, that learners gain a sense of the complexity of naturally occurring talk, and are not disheartened when they cannot participate freely. I hope that the examples in this chapter will show that it does not reflect on their language proficiency, rather on a range of factors, from individual personality to accurate listening skills. Third, that we help learners find and understand the points in utterances when they can appropriately break in on that complex conversational world when they are confident enough to do so. Fourth, that we give them a chance to attempt simple

backchannel and turn-taking tasks to give them the platform to build their personal interactive speaking style. These four goals, if met, will take the learner quite a long way on the road to improved speaking skills.

Suggested Activities

The aim of these activities is to introduce the idea of overlapping talk – basic definition of two people speaking at the same time. Either explained as input, or elicited via Activity 1. They are intended to relate to one another and could provide basis for 1.5 hr lesson or two 1 hr lessons depending on pace and level.

Pre-class preparation:

- Explore the data available in the NIECSSE corpus and find example 2 (f16-e), example 4 (f18-c) online and example 5 (BM2-e). Listen to the audio versions.
- Download and prepare handouts of the transcripts (Remember to acknowledge the owners of the corpus and reference the source with the relevant URL).

Materials:

- Tape/digital audio player.
- Selected sections from the audio files in the corpus (these activities are based on examples 5, 2 and 4 from this chapter, but others would be equally suitable and may fit the themes of the group's recent work better).
- Transcripts of the extracts.

Warm up activities:

Whole class sharing of information based on the central opening question of the interviews in the corpus: What did you do during the last vacation?

Activity 1: Whole class

Play example 5.

Instructions to students: Are there any examples of overlapping talk in this extract? Can you guess how many? Do the speakers seem to be interrupting one another?

Activity 2: Small group or pair task

Organize the students into small groups or pairs.

Play examples 2 (problematic overlap) and 4 (collaborative backchannel overlap).

Instructions to students: Do both extracts contain overlapping talk? Which extract contains speakers seeming to interrupt one another? What is the difference between the overlapping talk in the two extracts?

(Answers are aimed to elicit the fact that overlapping talk can be supportive or can be a problem. Supportive overlaps are often simple words to show that the listener has understood, and wants the other speaker to go on. Try to elicit some more examples: “really?,” “mmm,” “right,” “aha”).

Activity 3

Go back to the example of “wow!” in example 4. List the simple back-channel responses (“really?,” “mmm,” “right,” “aha”) on the board.

Instruction to students: Decide which of these could replace “wow!” Which is closest in meaning (answer: “really!”). Which could you use to respond to almost any statement to show you wanted the speaker to go on? (answer: “mmm”).

Activity 4

Group students in threes:

Stage 1:

Show some examples of simple, information seeking (yes/no) questions, with a follow up (wh-...) question:

Can you drive? What do you think of [nationality of country you are in!] drivers? (or Would you like to learn?)

Do you enjoy cooking? What's your favourite meal?

Have you booked a summer holiday? Why are you going there? (or Where would you like to go?)

(Check that students are clear about the difference between yes/no and wh-questions)

Instruction: which of these wh- questions will make people talk most/least?

Stage 2:

Instruction: Write an example of a simple question (yes/no) and a follow up question (wh-...). Show it to your group. Will someone answer with one or two words, or will the question make them speak more? Re-write the wh-questions until you are happy with them. The aim is to make the other speaker talk!

Stage 3:

Re-group students into different groups of 3. Explain that they are an interviewer, and interviewee and an observer. Each of them have different tasks.

- Interviewers: ask a simple yes/no question and a follow up wh-question. Encourage the interviewee to keep talking by saying back-channel words in the right places. You can just use "mmm."
- Interviewees: answer the questions and try to keep the conversation going as long as possible. Try to avoid long pauses or silences, but stop if you don't think the interviewer seems interested!
- Observers: Note each time you hear the interviewer try to use a back-channel expression. Do they sound interested? Are they using the words in the right places?

(Students take turns to be interviewers, interviewees and observers.)

Stage 4:

A possible round-up is to record a confident triad to analyse in the next class, or for the students who want to try out their questions again to interview the teacher and the rest of the class be the observers.

Notes

1. This represents the coding of the sound file and transcript in the NIECSSE corpus. It can be interpreted as female interview candidate number 28, interview extract a)
2. Numbers refer to seconds elapsed.
3. // = possible TRPs in terms of syntax

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Teaching speaking: A text-based syllabus approach

Anne Burns

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. What do you understand by the term “text-based syllabus”?
2. In what ways does spoken language differ from written language?
3. What kinds of speaking texts do you select for your learners?
4. In your classroom, on what basis do you plan activities for teaching speaking?

1. Introduction

In this chapter, I take as my starting point a number of assumptions. The first is that a focus on speaking English is now a major goal and aspiration for language learners and teachers all over the world. The second is that technological advances have enabled language professionals to develop new insights in the analysis of spoken language and, thus, to suggest new approaches to the teaching of speaking in English language programs. The third is that understanding something about the nature of spoken interaction in naturalistic settings can enhance the traditional linguistic databases that have been the mainstay of most commercially produced teaching materials and their use in language classrooms. Therefore, my focus will be on:

- Exploring some of the key features of natural language data
- Highlighting the relationships and contrasts between spoken and written language
- Offering a pedagogical approach for the teaching of speaking that is spoken-text-based

2. Conceptual and pedagogical orientations to the teaching of speaking

The innateness of speech in human development and its primacy as a mode of communication would suggest that the teaching of speaking has been a central force in language learning. Paradoxically, however, it has occupied what Bygate (2001: 14) refers to as a “peculiar position” in the history of language teaching. The reasons are manifold.

First, traditionally, there has been a lack of study of the linguistic structures and forms of speech in its own right. Second, there is the reliance in linguistic descriptions underpinning language teaching on the grammatical forms and features of written language. Speech is ephemeral, contextually and culturally mediated, less standardized than writing and subject to rapid variation and change. Therefore, it has been more challenging to codify linguistically. Third, technologically, it was difficult to collect large samples or corpora of speech until relatively recently, thus minimising the development of pedagogical resources for teaching speaking based on analysis of naturally occurring speech. A further reason is the conflation of the teaching of speaking with the use of spoken language in order to teach and learn – the speaking that is part of classroom interaction as opposed to teaching the discourse, structures, and phonological and prosodic systems of speaking.

Finally, as a result of some of these factors, and in the absence of clearer descriptions and guidelines for teaching speaking, approaches that have their basis in grammar-translation and structuralism have tended to remain influential in teaching speaking across the world. Thus, even today in an era of communicative language teaching, pedagogical activities tend to focus on getting learners to add to their spoken repertoires and competence through receiving language input, noticing and applying new vocabulary and structural patterns, enhancing fluency, and improving pronunciation.

Approaches such as audiolingualism, followed by communicative language teaching, which has included notional-functional, meaning-centred and task-based approaches, have progressively provided stronger perspectives on the teaching of speaking. One major orientation of pedagogy which has recently become influential, drawing on psycholinguistically oriented second language acquisition studies, has focused in particular on speech processing and production, skills-based approaches and the study of oral task-based performance (Nunan 1989; Bygate 1996; Skehan and Foster 1997). Another orientation takes its lead from developments in sociolinguistics, discourse and conversational analysis, functional linguistics, and most recently corpus linguistics (Goodwin 1981; Brown and Yule 1983;

Halliday 1989; McCarthy 1991; McCarthy and Carter 1994) and it is this perspective that has motivated the text-based syllabus approach that is the focus of this chapter (see Burns 2001 for an overview of how discourse analysis tools can be used for pedagogical purposes).

3. What is a text-based syllabus?

As the name suggests, this kind of syllabus takes the notion of *text* as the basis for developing tasks and activities for the classroom. Texts are units of discourse – or flows of language functioning in the numerous contexts that make up a culture (McCarthy, Mathiessen, and Slade 2002) – that according to Feez (1998: 4) can be defined as follows:

A text is any stretch of language which is held together cohesively through meaning

A text is identified, not by its size or form, but by the meaning it makes as a unified whole in relation to the particular context in which it is used. Thus, a sign, such as *Exit* or *Stop* is as much defined as a whole text as an entire political speech, or a novel such as George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*. The opening segment of the speech or one chapter of the book, however, could not be considered to be texts as they are only a part of the whole. The linguistic assumptions underlying a text-based syllabus are therefore different from those derived from structuralist or transformational-generative grammars which take the sentence as the basic unit of analysis (see Derewianka 2001).

Two central ideas in a text-based syllabus approach are: 1) how language is used in social contexts; and 2) how it is structured in relation to those contexts. Feez (1998: 3-4) sets out the main characteristics of a text-based syllabus, which are illustrated in Figure 1.

Syllabus type	A text-based syllabus can be thought of as a type of mixed syllabus. This is because all the elements of various other syllabus types [structural, situational, topic-based, notional-functional, process, task-based, procedural] can constitute a repertoire from which a text-based syllabus can be designed
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Figure 1. Characteristics of a text-based syllabus

View of language	Language occurs as whole texts which are embedded in the social contexts in which they are used
View of language learning	People learn language through working with whole texts
Syllabus elements	All the elements of a text-based syllabus are given unity and direction by being organized with reference to holistic models of content and methodology
Content	The content of a text-based syllabus is based on whole texts which are selected in relation to learner needs and the social contexts which learners wish to access
Methodology	The methodology which supports a text-based syllabus is based on a model of teaching and learning in which the learner gradually gains increasing control of text-types [ie. scaffolded learning]. Using this model, it is possible to develop sound principles for selecting and sequencing the content elements of the syllabus

Figure 1. cont.

4. The nature of speech and writing

One important implication of thinking about syllabus design in terms of texts that are used in daily social contexts is the realization that speech and writing (as well as listening and reading) are not discrete communicative skills. I will elaborate on this point later in the chapter.

In a text-based approach one key question for teachers is: what are the contrasts and overlaps between speech and writing? One of the contributions of discourse analysis to language teaching is that it has revealed systematic differences and patterns in these two modes that reflect their cultural and social functioning. As Halliday (1994: 92) states, “talking and writing, then, are different ways of saying. They are different modes for

expressing linguistic meanings.” Different ways of expressing meaning through speech and writing are illustrated through (1) and (2).

(1) *Text 1*

- A: geez... mate... what happened here?
B: I was stopped and...and that ... er, that bloody thing over there moved back [and...
A: [but you've smashed into... the bloke... behind...
B: well, I was jus...tryin' to get out of the way and backed into 'im...he'd... he came up behind me ... and...and...
I didn't know he was there...yeah...

(2) *Text 2*

I was following a crane that was passing No 5 Blast Furnace when the crane stopped to allow a ram truck to pass from the opposite direction. I stopped behind the crane. It became apparent that the crane would not have enough room to allow the ram truck to pass and would have to reverse so I checked that nothing was behind me in case I needed to reverse. It was clear.

When the ram truck was alongside the crane, the crane rolled back so I reversed back without then checking if anything was behind me. In doing so, I collided with a car which had stopped behind me since I had last looked behind.

(Source: Burns and Joyce 1993: 60)

While the social context in which (1) and (2) are produced is the same – an Australian industrial workplace – they serve different communicative purposes and therefore, there are noticeable linguistic differences between them. A first and obvious difference is the overall shape of the structure of the texts. In the written text the sentences are complete and the various events are laid out in a logical order so as to capture the sequence. In (1), the language is fragmented and the events as they occurred are subject to clarification by the two speakers as they go along, so that the order is not so logically organized. The notion of a sentence is problematic in (1), as several of the meaning units are brief and incomplete; it is more relevant to refer to “utterances.” These are characterized by exclamations (*geez*), repetitions (*and...and*), false starts (*he'd...he came*) and hesitations (*yeah*). The

sentences in the written text are longer and more complex than in the spoken text. The clauses making up the sentences tend to be in an embedded (*hypotactic*) relationship, whereas in the spoken text the speakers string complete clauses together using simple conjunctions such as *and* and *but* (*paratactic* relationship).

The contracted forms (*you've*, *he'd*, *didn't*) are absent from the second text, where they are fully spelled out. Also, the references to people and things in (1) rely on the immediate context and are implied or assumed to be understood (*what happened here*, *that bloody thing over there*). They are explicitly named as referents in the written text (*Number 5 Blast Furnace*, *the crane*, *the ram truck*), which must stand apart from the physical context and be understood in contexts distant in time and place from the actual events.

The spoken text is highly interactive and thus the participants make personal references to each other (*I*, *you*, *he*), features which are less prominent in the second text. There are also direct questions and responses, which do not feature in (2) because of its general rather than specific purpose and audience. Similarly, the spoken text is much more interpersonally focused, with speakers making direct references to their thoughts, emotions and judgements relating to the events. The tone of the written text is impersonal and factual with no evaluations concerning the rights or wrongs of the situation. Figure 2 summarizes the major differences.

<i>Text 1: Spoken</i>	<i>Text 2: Written</i>
The speakers recount the incident immediately after it happens	One of the speakers recounts the incident sometime after it happens
The speakers refer implicitly to things and people in the physical environment	The writer refers explicitly to things and people involved in the incident
There are relatively few nouns, and references to things are vague	There are more nouns, and things are named precisely
The relationships between speakers (expressed through the language) is informal	The relationships between writer and reader (expressed through the language) is formal

Figure 2. Comparison of features of Texts 1 and 2

The speakers' relationships are to the fore and they reflect each speaker's sense of relative status	The writer is focused on providing accurate information to a distant and perhaps unknown reader
Utterances are incomplete and are joined by simple conjunctions	Sentences are fully formed and joined by more complex conjunctions, including those of cause and effect

Figure 2. cont.

The contrasts illustrated through these texts are an aspect of register analysis, which is concerned with the relationships between situational contexts and the texts they give rise to (Painter 2001: 173). For language teaching purposes, the language variation that occurs across spoken and written communications can be usefully seen as a gradual cline or continuum from the most to least context-embedded, as suggested in Figure 3.

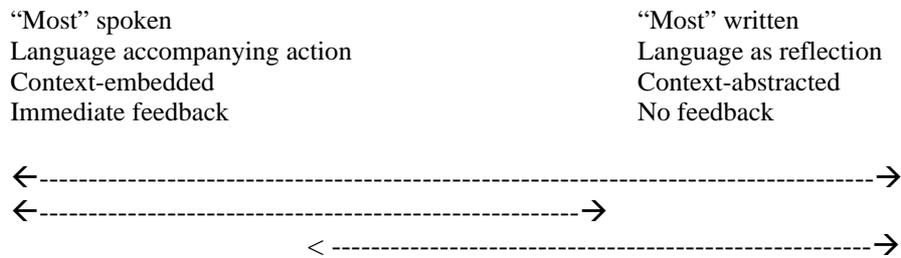


Figure 3. The continuum of spoken and written language (based on Hammond et al. 1992: 5; Eggins 1994: 54)

On the continuum, the first text would clearly be placed towards the most spoken end. It is not so easy to place the second, however. While it obviously fits towards the written end, other written texts on the same topic such as a workplace manual of standard machinery operating procedures, or an academic thesis on accidents in the workplace would contain more formal, technical or abstract language than Text 2. While this continuum is helpful in typifying broad differences, language variation is never so clear-cut and is always determined by the purposes for which texts are produced.

As Cornbleet and Carter (2001: 92) point out, writing and speaking are not simply at opposite ends of a spectrum, but overlap in a “fuzzy area” where “text boundaries blur.” The following (invented) examples given in (3) and (4), which could be contextually related to the same incident, lie somewhere along the cross-over lines in the diagram:

(3) *Text 3*

An industrial accident occurred this afternoon at the Number 5 Blast Furnace at the XYZ Steel Company. A spokesperson for the company said, “A lot of damage was done to a ram-truck, but thankfully no-one was seriously injured.” The company is still investigating the cause of the accident.

(4) *Text 4*

RU OK? BTW, CU2moro? :-)

Both these texts occupy the indeterminate middle ground of the continuum. (3) is typical of the kind of language used for reporting in the media, but it is not clear from the language features whether it is written or spoken. (4), on the other hand, is the kind of “written” text increasingly identified with text-messaging, where time and money motivate the use of characters for shortening (BTW = by the way) and interpersonal features are expressed through “emoticons” (:-) = frowning, sad).

The main features of spoken and written language that have been covered in the discussion so far are summarized in Figure 4.

<i>Spoken language</i>	<i>Written language</i>
<i>Context dependent</i>	<i>Context independent</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - generally used to communicate with people in the same time and/or place; - relies on shared knowledge between interactants and often makes reference to the shared context; - generally accompanies action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - used to communicate across time and distance; - must recreate for readers the context it is describing; - generally reflects action

Figure 4. Typical features of spoken and written language (adapted from Burns and Joyce 1997: 16)

<p><i>Dialogic in nature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - usually involves two or more speakers creating spoken texts together 	<p><i>Monologic in nature</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - usually written by one person removed from an audience
<p><i>Unrehearsed and spontaneous but not unpredictable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - speakers build spoken, unrehearsed texts spontaneously within social and linguistic parameters 	<p><i>Edited and redrafted</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - written language can be edited and redrafted any number of times
<p><i>Records the world as happenings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relies more on verbs to carry meaning 	<p><i>Records the world as things</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relies more on nouns and noun groups to carry meanings
<p><i>Grammatically intricate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tends to contain more grammatical words such as pronouns, conjunctions, etc.; - develops through intricate networks of clauses rather than complete sentences as it is jointly constructed and relies more on verbs 	<p><i>Lexically dense</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tends to contain more content or lexical words as meaning is carried by nouns and noun groups; - relies on the process of nominalization whereby activities which are not normally expressed as nouns are turned into nouns

Figure 4. cont.

5. Spoken genres

The idea that language varies according to purpose is at the base of the notion of genre. Genre refers to the prototypical ways that different kinds of texts demonstrate common structures and language features. Painter (2001: 167), following Martin and Rothery's definition (1980-81) of genre as a "staged, goal-oriented, social process", elaborates three key concepts of genre:

1. Any genre pertains to a particular culture and its social institutions (hence "social" process).
2. Social processes are purposeful (hence "goal-oriented").
3. It usually takes a number of steps to achieve one's purpose (hence a "staged" process).

Although genre analysis tended initially to focus on written text (probably because such texts were more accessible), it has become a tool for analysing spoken interaction. Spoken interactions have been broadly categorized (Brown and Yule 1983; Eggins 1994) as:

- Transactional (or pragmatic): used to exchange goods and services (e.g., service encounters)
- Interactional (or interpersonal): used to create and maintain social relationships (e.g., casual conversations)

Transactionally motivated talk can be easier to teach because it is generally more predictable and therefore identifying overall text structures (macro-analysis) is usually less problematic than in interactional talk. It can also be easier to examine the relationships between various stages of the text and the grammar (micro-analysis). A service encounter, for example, typically contains essential generic structural elements, as can be observed in Figure 5 (adapted from Ventola 1987).

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Generic structure</i>
Service encounter	(Offer of service) ^ Request for service ^ (Statement of price) ^ Transaction [i.e., giving/receiving goods/money] ^ Closing the encounter

[^ = followed by; () = optional stages]

Figure 5. The generic structure of a service encounter

The extract below, see (5), (adapted from Carter and McCarthy 1997: 91) illustrates this generic structure:

- (5) *Text 5:* <S01> *customer: male;* <S02> *customer: female (at a post-office in the UK)*

Request for service

1. <S01> Right, send that first class please.

Acknowledgement/stating price

2. <S02> That one wants to go first class, right we'll see if
3. it is , it's not it's not 41, it's a 60, I thought it would be, I'd be in

Handing over the goods

4. the...60 pence [6 secs] there we are
5. <S01> Lovely thank you

Giving and receiving change

6. <S02> Okay 70 80 whoops 90 100

Closing the encounter

7. <S01> Thanks very much
8. <S02> Thank you

Interpersonally motivated talk, on the other hand, such as typically occurs in casual conversation, can be more difficult to teach as it is highly context specific, interpersonally sensitive and therefore less predictable. For these reasons it is usually structurally more complex than transactional talk. One useful way, however, to begin to identify teachable genres in interpersonal talk is proposed by Slade (1997), who refers to two different kinds of segments in casual conversation – “chat” and “chunks.”

Chat segments are defined as “highly interactive sequences of spoken language characterized by a rapid transfer of turns from one speaker to the other” (Eggins and Slade 1997: 227). In chat sequences, conversation is spontaneous and informal, speakers exchange turns frequently, there is often high competition for turns and the overall structure is managed locally turn by turn. Chat is not easily amenable to analysis for language teaching purposes, although it can be useful for teachers and learners to be aware of the patterns of grammatical features of such “language-in-action” genres (Carter and McCarthy 1997), such as the high incidence of discourse markers (e.g. *right, OK, then*) that serve to organize the activity, and extensive use of ellipsis (because the people and things being referred to are present in the context).

Chunk segments are “those aspects of conversation that have a global or macro-structure where the structure beyond the exchange is more predictable” (Eggins and Slade 1997: 230). In these genres typically one participant takes the floor for an extended period and there is a recognisable chunk of interaction interwoven into the overall conversation. The chunk

also moves through more predictable stages than chat, as speakers use their turn to tell a story, to joke, to gossip or to give an opinion. Such genres are variations of narrative or “story-telling” episodes in casual conversation and are structurally characterized by Slade (1997: 49) as shown in Figure 6.

<i>Genre</i>	<i>Generic structure</i>
Narrative (facing and resolving a problematic experience)	(Abstract) ^ Orientation ^ Complication ^ Evaluation ^ Resolution ^ (Coda)
Anecdote (experiencing a remarkable event)	(Abstract) ^ (Orientation) ^ Remarkable Event ^ Reaction ^ (Coda)
Exemplum (highlighting a moral point)	(Abstract) ^ (Orientation) ^ Incident ^ Interpretation ^ (Coda)
Recount (experiencing a sequence of events)	(Abstract) ^ Orientation ^ Record of Events ^ (Coda)

Figure 6. The generic structures of story-telling genres in casual conversation

Text 6, see (6), illustrates a recount genre in which two Australian women, Charlotte and Naomi who live in a suburb of Sydney called Cronulla, are talking about annoying events that have occurred during the day.

(6) *Text 6*

Abstract

1. N: Mmm...well I haven't had a wonderful day either... I've been dropping
2. things and forgetting things all day

Orientation

3. however, I went to the library this morning to get a copy of *Salt*

Record of Events

4. and when I got there I realise I'd left my list behind and I didn't know the
5. name of the author, so the libararian looked it up on the computer and there
6. were literally hundreds of *Salts* [laughs] I couldn't identify it at all so I went
7. home and rang...um...Sutherland and they said yes we have one copy at
8. Cronulla [library
9. C: [back to Cronulla {laughs]
10. N: so back to Cronulla I went and then I went up to Miranda Fair and er... there
11. were several things I wanted to do up there and I had a plastic bag with a pair
12. of shoes in it to take to the repairer ... to have the heels and toes done...
13. C: right
14. N: and when I arrived there I opened my bag and I'd taken the wrong
[shoes

Coda

16. C: [Oh no... [laughs]
17. N: So all in all I've had a rather ... disjointed day
18. C: And it's not even Friday the thirteenth
19. N: No [laughs]

(Source: Burns, Joyce, and Gollin 1996: 103)

The analysis of the text at the macro-level of genre can begin to reveal how lexical and grammatical patterns are tied into the overall structure at the micro-level. Speakers tell stories to maintain social relationships, to entertain each other and to share and exchange daily experiences. Casual story-telling genres are therefore characterized not only by speakers' knowing how to begin and end a story appropriately but also by being able to identify the people involved, the time, place and setting, and the logical sequence of events. In addition, speakers are usually concerned not to bore their audiences so will strive to highlight something that is unusual, funny,

embarrassing, annoying and so on. Again, in the interests of keeping their listeners entertained, stories are typically adorned or embellished by the teller through the use of exaggeration, intensification or understatement. Speakers also sometimes switch tenses from the past to the “dramatic present” or provide direct quotations to make the events more immediate. They might also pepper the story with evaluative, emotive or colourful expressions that indicate their own attitudes as well as those they anticipate from their listeners. To create solidarity there is sometimes some kind of building on or harking back to a similar point that another speaker has made. All of these features are realised lexically and grammatically by particular selections from the language systems that speakers have at their disposal. Figure 7 shows the language features at the micro-level that Charlotte and Naomi select in the conversation above.

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Language Features</i>
<p><i>Abstract</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establishes the point/signals that the story is about to begin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comparative (<i>either</i>) to signal general relevance of story to both speakers - attitudinal lexis (not a <i>wonderful day</i> – point of story) - exemplification of events that are not <i>wonderful</i> (<i>dropping, forgetting</i>)
<p><i>Orientation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - orients the listener to events in terms of time, location, characters, things etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expressions of time/place - who, what, where, when: <i>I, the library, this morning, copy of Salt</i>
<p><i>Record of events</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - outlines events in sequence with ongoing evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - past tense action verbs (<i>went, got, looked up</i>) - past tense mental verbs (<i>realised, know, identify</i>) - use of nouns and pronouns for specific participants (<i>I, they, the librarian, the repairer</i>) - events sequenced in time (<i>when I arrived, then</i>)

Figure 7. Selections of language features at each stage of recount

<p><i>Coda</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comments on the overall story and brings it back to the present context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evaluation of story (understatement used to heighten the evaluation and add irony – <i>a rather...disjointed day</i>) - exclamations expressing speakers' attitude of solidarity (<i>oh, no</i>) - return to present (<i>it's not even Friday the thirteenth</i>)
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Figure 7. cont.

6. Implications for teaching speaking

The majority of materials available for language teaching fail to incorporate insights gained from genre and text analysis. The typical diet of spoken samples provided for language learners and teachers frequently misrepresents how English is actually used in daily life. Textbook dialogues based on written grammar norms and the writer's intuitions about "conversation" may be appropriate at beginner stages of learning because of their predictability and their focus on a limited number of grammatical features, but will not ultimately serve learners well in the linguistically dynamic world beyond the classroom. A text-based syllabus approach attempts to expose learners to activities that work towards ways of understanding and participating in authentic interactions. Below, I set out briefly a number of starting points for teachers wishing to plan a text-based syllabus approach.

6.1. The language event

Given my earlier statement above that the four macro-skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing are not discrete, one approach when teaching speaking is to consider how texts in daily contexts cohere. Real-life language events involve an integration of spoken and written language upon which units of work can be based. The focus points for these units can be drawn from situations identified and mapped jointly by teachers and learners or from course book segments or syllabus specifications which are the current focus of teaching and learning (see Figure 8 for an example of one language event).

Discuss a good travel agent with friends	Consult directory pages for telephone number	Make initial request for brochures by phone or in person	Read Brochures	Consult the travel agent on cheaper options	Fill in booking forms and make the payment	Describe plans to family, friends or neighbours
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Figure 8. A sequence of texts in a language event: Booking a flight (based on Burns Joyce, and Gollin 1996: 84; Feez 1998: 83)

Within this kind of syllabus planning sequence, a range of activities can be introduced. The first can consist of the teacher pre-teaching some key vocabulary related to travel, travel agents and booking flights, and providing different newspaper articles or advertisements for travel agents that learners can use as a basis for their choices. Depending on learner level, the teacher can then (re)teach alphabetic referencing skills and model how the various parts of a telephone directory are consulted. Learners can be asked to practice finding different agents' numbers and addresses themselves.

The teacher can then introduce the structure, vocabulary, and typical expressions used in a service enquiry for requesting brochures in preparation for a role-play activity, or even encourage learners to undertake out-of-classroom interaction tasks where material is brought back to the classroom. Brochures can be used to extend knowledge of the textual layout or format and to identify where different kinds of information, essential and non-essential to the ultimate purpose of the activity, are likely to be located. The consulting-the-travel-agent segment could involve asking learners to brainstorm relevant questions and to practice discourse strategies to challenge, extend or clarify unexpected responses. The learners can practice some of their reading and writing skills, such as using key vocabulary or locating specific information in the form filling activity, while they can revisit the service encounter genre by role playing the payment stage. Finally, to reintroduce an interpersonal spoken genre, they can practice explaining their plans to different people (e.g., family member, workmate, boss), where the status of their relationships and therefore the register choices they might make would vary.

6.2. Starting with topics

The language event is one example of how a teacher might plan for a text-based syllabus beginning with a topic. Another example of starting from topic is to use a cyclical model where the teacher: 1) identifies the broad topic (as far as possible with the learners and based on their needs); 2) identifies a real-life task within the scope of that topic; 3) records one or more spoken interactions related to the task (or if this is not possible, either identifies a suitable scripted text or records a semi-scripted text with a colleague); 4) identifies the genre, the stages and the grammatical patterns of the interactions; 5) selects classroom activities that extend the learners' knowledge of the topic and the text (see Burns, Joyce, and Gollin 1996: 75 for a fuller description of this cycle). On completion of the cycle the teacher and learners can evaluate to what extent parts of the cycle need to be repeated. An example of a topic-based syllabus plan is illustrated in (7):

(7) *Topic-based syllabus plan*

1. Broad Topic: Health
2. Specific objective: To make a medical appointment
3. Real world tasks:
 - Making a medical appointment by phone
 - Making a medical appointment face-to-face
 - Changing or confirming an appointment
4. Type of interaction: Transactional – to seek goods and services
5. Possible spoken interactions:
 - Recorded telephone interaction of appointment making
 - “Shadowed” record of a spoken interaction based on a real-life observation
 - Semi-scripted interaction role-played and recorded by two teachers or non-teacher expert English speakers
 - Course book dialogue modified to include illustrative features of spoken discourse inserted by the teacher
 - Dialogue drawn from sources in the literature that illustrate relevant authentic spoken language samples
6. Possible classroom tasks:
 - Discussing previous experiences of making appointments in own language and in English
 - Identifying and practicing new or key vocabulary
 - Practicing expressions for giving personal information

- Practicing expressions of time and date
- Identifying and practicing opening and closing discourse strategies
- Listening and responding to typical expressions for questioning
- Practicing discourse strategies for clarifying, summarizing, challenging and extending information

6.3. Starting with texts

An alternative starting point is a specific genre or text, depending on learner need or the requirements of a prescribed syllabus. Once the focal genre is identified the teacher can collect texts that exemplify this genre, drawn from different contexts and focusing on different topics. For example, if one wanted to teach interpersonally motivated story-telling genres focusing on recounts, (6) above, would provide one such illustration. The teacher can then develop a range of activities to extend learners' development in participating in these kinds of texts. In teaching such texts, teachers can scaffold learning through a series of activities with varying aims, that are designed to support learners towards gradual independent production (the examples provided below in the Suggested Activities section are based on the content of Text 6). The term scaffolding derives from the work of Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) and is based on sociocultural theories of apprenticeship into learning through language development (Vygotsky 1978). Scaffolding is a metaphor that captures the notion of the assistance required by the teacher "which will enable a learner to accomplish a task which they would not have been quite able to manage on their own" (Maybin, Mercer, and Steirer 1992, cited in Hammond 2002: 7).

6.3.1. *Preparation activities*

These activities aim to prepare learners for the type of spoken interaction they will be focusing on. They focus attention on the social context of the interaction and draw on their previous experiences of learning and using spoken texts.

6.3.2. Discourse activities

Here, learners are introduced to specific generic structural features and provided with practice in becoming speaker/listener participants. Activities aim to focus attention on how speakers begin, progress and end interactions, take up their roles as speakers and listeners, and use specific discourse strategies and markers to maintain the interaction.

6.3.3. Language activities

The focus here is primarily on form. Activities draw attention to the main language patterns and features associated with a particular genre. With the teacher's assistance, learners identify and practise relevant vocabulary and the grammatical structures foregrounded in the genre.

6.3.4. Interaction activities

These activities aim to move learners towards independent practice and participation in the interaction. They offer practice in producing whole, sustained interactions or parts of interactions. They also provide opportunities for teachers and learners to (self)evaluate and gain feedback on performance.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate how a text-based syllabus can frame the teaching of speaking. The focus I have taken is based on my belief that a discourse-based approach to the teaching of speaking is long overdue in the field of English Language Teaching, but that it will increasingly feed into new directions in language pedagogy. Teachers can use the insights from such analysis to identify the major genres needed by their learners, to clarify starting points and related activities in syllabus planning, as well as to analyse performance and diagnose learners' further spoken interactional needs. Understanding the typical features of spoken and written language and the grammatical patterns associated with them enables teachers to model different types of spoken genres explicitly for their learners. A text-based approach also provides a basis for coherent task design

based on an understanding of the kinds of spoken interactions that are important goals for learners. In materials design also a text-based approach leads us towards more authentic and naturalistic representations of spoken communication and away from misleadingly “can-do” constructed dialogues. This approach thus complements existing resources that might already be valued by teachers in the teaching of speaking and offers a way of extending learning repertoires that relates to the realities beyond the classroom.

Suggested Activities

These activities (adapted from de Silva Joyce and Burns 1999: 103-106) are based on Text 6, but can be amended according to the content of the text.

Pre-class preparation

Record the interaction with another teacher, write it up for presentation to the learners or model it with a teaching colleague.

Activity 1: Examples of preparation activities

- ask learners to describe a day when a series of unsatisfactory or annoying events took place
- ask the class to tell each other about their experience in pairs or tell your own (you could begin by getting learners to use their first language and then move towards telling the story in the second language)
- discuss why and when people tell such stories to each other
- discuss how people tell these stories in the learners’ own language(s)
- ask learners to listen to the recorded interaction.

Activity 2: Examples of discourse activities

- ask learners to listen to the way the speaker begins the story, focusing attention on the grammar (e.g., past tense, circumstances [adverbial expressions of place, time]: *all day, to the library, this morning*)

- ask learners to listen to the way the speakers end the story (e.g. past perfect tense, present tense: *I've had a rather...disjointed day*)
- ask learners to listen for the way the listener gives feedback (e.g., ellipsis, exclamations: *back to Cronulla, oh, no*)
- put a transcript of the recount on an OHT and let the learners follow as they listen, asking them to indicate features on which you want to focus attention (e.g., listener feedback: *right, oh no*)
- with the learners, discuss and mark the stages of the recount on the transcript
- ask the learners to work in pairs with role cards which have descriptions of the embarrassing or annoying circumstances they have identified – get the pairs to practise giving appropriate feedback
- jumble the sequence of events and ask the learners to reorder them as they listen to a recording
- give learners the “skeleton” of a spoken recount and ask them to complete the various parts of it in groups or as a whole class.

Activity 3: Examples of language activities

- put the words “annoying event” on the board and ask learners to brainstorm vocabulary
- work with learners to build synonyms for relevant words on the board or OHT
- work with learners to identify antonyms for relevant words on the board or OHT
- work with learners to describe reactions to events by building evaluative noun groups (e.g., *a frustrating day*)
- ask learners to listen to the recording and mark on the transcript all the circumstances used in the Record of Events stage (e.g., *this morning, so back to Cronulla, then, to Miranda Fair*)
- give the learners a transcript of the text and ask them to mark the conjunctions the speaker uses to keep the story going (e.g., *and when I got there...*)
- ask the learners to mark the major tense patterns (e.g., past tense) on the transcript
- develop grammar exercises that provide practice with language features of the text (e.g., contractions, *I haven't, I've, I couldn't*).

Activity 4: Examples of interaction activities

- ask the learners to tell a partner about an annoying event
- ask pairs of learners to prepare a spoken recount to role-play the event (you might get them to perform the role play and/or record their performance)
- play back the performances to the class (or alternatively get the pairs of learners to listen to the recordings) and (self)-evaluate aspects of discourse, vocabulary and grammar
- use the performance to diagnose with the learners areas for revision or further development.

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Section IV Reading

Towards acquiring communicative competence through reading

Esther Usó-Juan and Alicia Martínez-Flor

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. How much has the view of reading changed over the past decades?
2. How much has reading instruction changed over the past decades?
3. How could you make reading instruction communicative?
4. How do you think the different components of the communicative competence framework influence reading comprehension?

1. Introduction

The ability to read in a second language (L2) is considered to be an essential skill for academic students and it represents the primary way for independent language learning (Carrell and Grabe 2002). In addition, arguments for the importance of this skill abound in the amount of reading research conducted in the last few decades, which has greatly refined and enriched our knowledge about the enigmatic nature of reading comprehension. One strong outcome of this research is that it has helped us to better understand why the skill of reading was traditionally considered a passive skill with no place in L2 teaching, and how it has been increasingly recognized as an interactive, constructive and contextualized process with a key role in developing learners' communicative competence. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to trace these changing patterns of reading comprehension in order to position current teaching practices.

To accomplish this goal, this chapter will first briefly summarize advances in learning the skill of reading by describing its influences from a variety of disciplines – mainly linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics. By so doing, the theoretical foundations of current approaches to teaching reading from a communicative perspective will then be presented, and finally the important role this skill plays in ena-

bling L2 learners to acquire communicative competence will finally be addressed.

2. Approaches to learning and teaching reading

Since the history of language learning has had an enormous influence on how reading has been viewed over the past decades, I will accomplish the task of describing trends in learning and teaching reading by placing the ability to read within each of the three approaches to language learning described in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume), namely those of the environmentalist, the innatist and the interactionist approaches.

2.1. Reading within an environmentalist approach

Up to the end of the 1960s the field of language learning was dominated by environmentalist ideas that avoided speculation about the workings of the human mind and concentrated only on observable facts outside the person. Moreover, modeling and practicing the correct structures time after time were paramount (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). Under such an influence, reading was viewed primarily as a passive, perceptual process. Readers were decoders of symbols printed on a page and they translated these symbols into the corresponding word sounds before they could construct the author's intended meaning from them (Carrell, Devine, and Eskey 1988). Comprehension of printed material was merely comprehension of speech produced by the reader since the ability to comprehend was regarded as an abstract operation that was difficult to grasp. Environmentalist ideas shaped not just the theoretical conceptions of what reading was but also research (Venezky 2002). Yet early reading research focused chiefly on the nature of perception during reading and it became mainly restricted to the relation between stimuli as words and responses as word recognition.

Given this view of reading, most language programs tackled reading comprehension by focusing on the development of decoding skills, and their major instructional task was to teach readers to discriminate among the visual symbols they encountered on a printed page before they could translate them into word sounds (Pearson and Stephens 1994). Furthermore, error was prevented in order to achieve oral correctness. Consequently, the reading methods used to help learners to build fluent decoding relied mainly on the phonic method of teaching reading by *sounding-out*

routines or the *look-and-say* method of whole-word teaching (Bielby 1994). The rationale behind this teaching practice was that mastery in decoding skills had to precede the development of reading comprehension. This conception of the nature of reading, however, was to be challenged by many researchers in an attempt to identify comprehension skills.

2.2. Reading within an innatist approach

The early view of reading as a passive, perceptual process was first challenged by the 1960s by Chomsky (1957, 1965) with his theory of language and language development which undermined the behaviourists' models of language learning that prevailed throughout the 1950s. Chomsky's (1957, 1965) theory of language provided the basis for the innatist theory of language learning (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume), which claims that children are born with a predisposition to language acquisition. Thus, together with the advent of the discipline of psycholinguistics which attempted to test Chomsky's contentions of language and language development, cognitive processes began to gain more attention. By the mid-1960s reading practitioners were wondering how an innatist position would work in studying the acquisition of reading and a new generation of reading research began to test that idea. This research came mainly from the work carried out in psycholinguistics and in particular from the work of Goodman (1965, 1967) and Smith (1971).

Goodman (1965) conducted one of the first studies to explain the role of errors or *miscues* (Goodman 1965) made by readers when reading aloud and his experiment resulted in two important findings. First, learners were able to read a far greater number of words in context than without a context (i.e., word lists). Second, miscues were due to the reader's intention to make sense from the written text. Goodman's application of the *miscue* concept gave a new meaning to oral reading errors, as they became positive aspects in the understanding of the reading process. Later, in a seminal work, Goodman (1967) posited that reading was a *psycholinguistic guessing game* in which readers guess or predict the text's meaning on the basis of textual information and activation of background knowledge, then confirm or correct their guesses, and thereby reconstruct the message. In addition, he described the three sources of information (what he called *cue systems*) that readers make use of to reconstruct text meaning: 1) *grapho-phonetic cues* (or knowledge of the visual and phonemic features); 2) *syntactic cues* (or knowledge of syntactic constraints); and 3) *semantic cues* (or

knowledge of the meaning of words). Moreover, he added that semantic knowledge is refined by background knowledge. Goodman (1967) saw readers as having a natural motivation to make sense of the reading texts and established clear parallels between learning a language and learning to read. This approach to reading was reinforced by Smith (1971), who stated that reading was not something one was taught but rather something one learned to do by reading. Smith believed that the act of learning to read should be considered as any other *natural* comprehensible aspect of existence. The hypothesis advanced by Goodman and Smith that people learn to read by reading was later confirmed by Krashen (1988) in his research on the relationship between the amount of free voluntary reading and reading ability.

As a result of such a view of reading, learners were taught to become active readers (Reid 1993), that is, to derive meaning from the text by predicting and guessing its meaning by using both their knowledge of language and their background knowledge. Most important, errors were no longer considered negative aspects that should be prevented. Instead, they were viewed as a way to better understand the reading process (Pearson and Stephens 1994).

The research conducted by Goodman (1965, 1969) and Smith (1971) represented the first step of a transition toward an increasing interest in what goes on in the reader during the reading act. Reading comprehension research began to focus on the reader as a text processor and to move away from the text itself. However, this shift was gradual and, in fact, it was not until the late 1970s that comprehension started to be developed.

2.3. Reading within an interactionist approach

By the late 1970s researchers were attempting to identify comprehension skills. This significant change, though, grew out of the interactionist approach to language learning (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume) and, particularly, from the work carried out essentially in the disciplines of cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics.

In the cognitive psychology field, researchers started to conduct studies on basic processes in reading. They analyzed what happened during the reading act and they incorporated notions of how readers represented text in memory. A major development within this field was the emergence of story grammars. A story grammar is a structural account of narrative stories that readers develop, based on acquisition of knowledge about human interac-

tions and repeated exposure to stories. Story grammarians (Rumelhart 1975; Thorndyke 1977; Stein and Glenn 1979) started looking at the organization of narrative episodes and claimed that certain categories appear to be universal in well-formed stories, regardless of the language in which they were written. For instance, the story grammar categories for Stein and Glenn (1979) were: 1) *setting*, which consists of characters and surroundings; 2) *initiating event*, which marks a change in the story environment; 3) *internal response*, which represents the goal; 4) *attempt*, which is the effort to achieve the goal; 5) *consequence*, the attainment or non-attainment of the goal, and 6) *reaction*, which is the outcome of the consequence. This research direction represented an effort to formulate some correspondence between the structure of the story or text and the processing properties involved in the reading process and its effect on understanding (Rumelhart 1975). However, it did not get to the heart of comprehension because, by being so structural (that is, form was considered more important than content) they tended to ignore non-textual factors of the reading act (Pearson and Stephens 1994). The task of considering the non-textual factors involved in the reading process gave rise to the most influential theory of the 1980s: schema theory.

Schema theory (Rumelhart 1977, 1980; Anderson and Pearson 1984) arrived on the scene during the latter part of the 1970s and early 1980s to tackle the relationship between the background knowledge that readers bring to the text and text comprehension. A schema theory, in Rumelhart's words (1980: 34), "is a theory about how knowledge is represented and about how that representation facilitates the use of the knowledge in particular ways." One of its fundamental tenants is that any given text, whether it be spoken or written, does not carry any meaning in itself. Rather, it provides directions for readers so that they can construct meaning from their own cognitive structure, that is to say, from their own previously acquired knowledge (Anderson and Pearson 1984). On applying this theory to reading, researchers (Grabe 1988; Rosenblatt 1988; Swaffar 1988) found that reading was an *interactive* process, i.e., it was a dynamic interaction between the writer and the reader in which the reader creates meaning from the text by activating his stored knowledge and extending it with the new information supplied by the text (Grabe 1988). This direction in reading research concentrated on the text-reader interaction. Indeed, that appears to be the current direction, with the added dimension of the social context, which came from the work of sociolinguists.

Research conducted in the field of sociolinguistics contributed to reconceptualize the notion of context (Shuy 1986; Pearson and Stephens 1994).

Whereas prior to the advent of sociolinguistics *context* in reading meant the relationship between the graphic symbols that surrounded a word on a page, the work of sociolinguistics extended the meaning of context not only to the immediate context of the situation in which a text was encountered (i.e., the institutional context), but also to a larger social context with its values, beliefs and norms. Bloom and Green (1984: 395-396), for instance, proposed viewing reading as a social process focusing on author-reader interaction:

As a social process, reading is used to establish, structure, and maintain social relationships between and among peoples... a sociolinguistic perspective on reading requires exploring how reading is used to establish a social context while simultaneously exploring how the social context influences reading praxis and the communication of meaning.

This approach to reading was rooted in the belief that readers construct the meaning of the texts within a culture. More important, this approach further emphasized the context of the reading event since different cultural contexts may provide different readings of the text. Therefore, this sociolinguistics view of reading as a constructed process enhanced the interactionist views of reading emerging from psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology by incorporating the social dimension of reading.

This social view of reading was supported by the classic studies of Heath (1983) and Wells (1986). The study of Heath (1983) depicted the strong influence of family and cultural values on schooling, and the work of Wells (1986) helped the field to reinforce the conception that literacy in general and reading in particular is inherently social. All in all, perhaps the most important consequence from the sociolinguistics view of reading was that it highlighted the vital role that institutions and the sociocultural environment play in the reading act.

Contributions from the disciplines of cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics were extremely useful in helping both researchers and practitioners to view the process of reading as a dynamic, constructive and contextualized process through which individuals make meaning. The major pedagogical implications from such a view of reading were twofold. On the one hand, teachers should move away from what learners do not know about the text and place emphasis on what they do know about it. There was general acceptance of the idea that learners do not need to understand every single word in a passage, but rather they should be able to read dynamically and selectively in order to construct text meaning with confi-

dence. On the other hand, different text interpretations should be accepted and welcomed in the classroom. This approach to reading laid the foundation for current work in teaching reading as a communicative act, which is the focus of the next section.

3. Teaching reading within a communicative competence framework

Communicative approaches to L2 language teaching have evolved over the past two decades. A strong background influence is associated with the work of Hymes (1971), who was the first to argue that Chomsky's (1965) competence-performance dichotomy did not include any reference to aspects of language use in social practice. Hymes (1971) was the first to point out that what was needed was a characterization of not just how language is structured internally but also an explanation of language behavior for given communicative goals. Therefore, he proposed the notion of *communicative competence*, which included both grammatical competence as well as the rules of language use in social context and the norms of appropriacy. From the 1980s on, various models of communicative competence have given specifications of the different components which should integrate the communicative competence construct in order to make the process of L2 teaching more effective (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995; Alcón 2000; Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume).

In such a construct, the reading skill plays an essential role in facilitating the acquisition of communicative competence. Therefore, this section aims to show where the reading skill fits into the bigger picture of the proposed communicative competence framework presented by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). More important, it offers a description of how the different components influence the development of this particular skill in order to increase learners' overall communicative ability in the L2. Figure 1 shows the diagram representing the framework with reading in a core position.

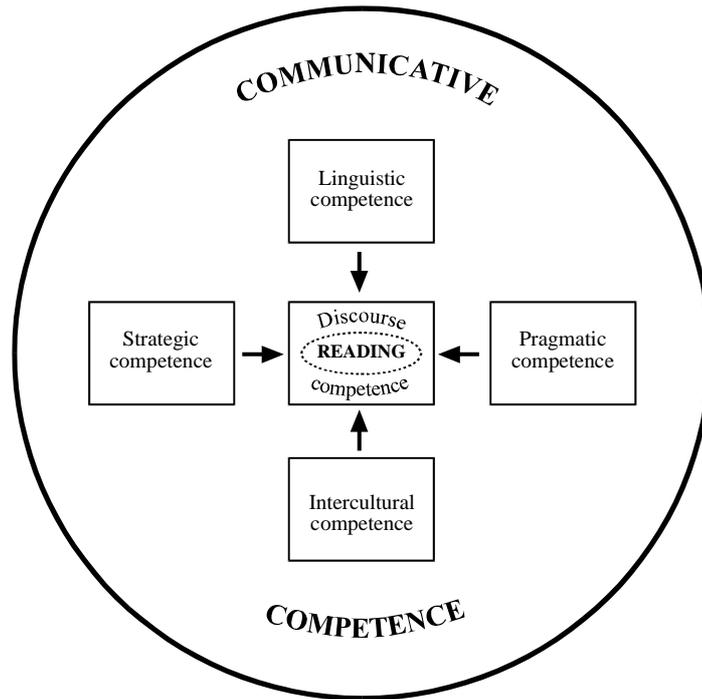


Figure 1. Integrating reading within the communicative competence framework

3.1. Discourse competence

As shown in Figure 1, the core of the proposed framework of communicative competence is the reading skill since it is the manifestation of interpreting written discourse and a way of manifesting the rest of the components. Discourse competence involves the knowledge of written discourse features such as markers, cohesion and coherence as well as formal schemata (i.e., knowledge of how different discourse types are organized) with reference to the particular communicative goal and context of the written text. In other words, if readers are to be able to interpret a written piece of discourse, they need to understand how discourse features are used and why, as well as to relate them to the purposes and contextual features of the particular text. Thus, during the process of interpreting a given text at the discourse level, the reader plays an active role in which knowledge activation of other components of the proposed model (namely, linguistic, pragmatic,

intercultural and strategic competencies) is necessary to develop overall communicative ability when reading a piece of text.

3.2. Linguistic competence

Linguistic competence consists of the elements of the linguistic system such as grammar rules and knowledge of vocabulary. Moreover, the ability to read also involves the mastery of the mechanics of the language, such as the alphabet and punctuation (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). All these features are set at the bottom level of the reading process and they are fundamental for the readers to be able to decode the written text. This competence is intrinsically related to discourse competence since deficiencies in linguistic competence may result, for instance, in a failure to identify the cohesive links and, therefore, cause problems in the interpretation of a written passage (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000).

Within this competence, knowledge and development of vocabulary has been considered a critical area in the reading process. Of course, as Anderson (1999) and Field (this volume) comment, knowing a lot of vocabulary does not necessarily result in comprehension of the text. However, there is ample evidence that an extensive knowledge of vocabulary does facilitate the overall reading process. In fact, both Grabe and Williams (this volume) report the strong relation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Additionally, the development of automatic recognition of words for achieving effective reading comprehension merits special attention. In this regard, Grabe (this volume) points out that word recognition automaticity is a key factor in explaining fluent reading comprehension. This is also the view held by Field (this volume) but, additionally, she points out that in order to develop the skill of automaticity, it is desirable to match the language of the text with the language level of the learners.

3.3. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence involves an understanding of the illocutionary force of an utterance by being aware of situational and participant variables within which the utterance takes place, as well as politeness issues. This competence has been regarded as essential to understanding spoken communication in which the social contextual factors are explicit (see Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan this volume). However, this information is

missing when interpreting the communicative intention of a given written text and, therefore, readers must rely on a set of graphic, syntactic and linguistic devices that may help them to interpret the writer's intended meaning. Kern (2000: 71-73), for example, characterizes the following features: 1) typographical issues such as the choice of capitalization, italic and bold font styles, underlining, the use of exclamation marks or punctuation, and layout of print, among many others; 2) syntactic issues such as cleft constructions to simulate spoken discourse; and 3) lexical issues such as the choice of verbs (i.e., command, ask) or adverbs (i.e., sharply, soothingly) which in a way parallel the tone of voice of oral speech. Additionally, Kern (2000) points out that the physical situation of a given text also provides information about the possible communicative intent of the text.

Knowledge of these clues to illocutionary force may facilitate readers' inferences about what is written in order to interpret the writer's intended meaning (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). However, the role of the pragmatic consequences of written form is just beginning to receive attention. Williams (this volume) reports the *critical* perspective undertaken by Kern (2000) in the teaching of L2 reading in which these aspects of pragmatics are an essential part in reading instruction.

3.4. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence refers to the knowledge of how to interpret written texts appropriately within their sociocultural context. Therefore, it involves knowledge of the cultural factors such as knowledge of the sociocultural background of the target language community, knowledge of dialects, and cross-cultural awareness (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995). Thus, readers' background knowledge on the cultural factors involved in a given written text will help them to construct its meaning and will prevent possible misinterpretations. Williams (this volume), in fact, pays attention to the *social perspective on reading* and contends that the teaching of L2 reading should not be detached from the social context within which the text has been created.

3.5. Strategic competence

Strategic competence has been added to all above-described competencies, since it has been regarded as crucial to the development of reading skills

(Anderson 1999). This competence refers to the possession of both communication and learning strategies (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). With reference to reading, the former refers to the ability to use reading strategies to make up for interpretation problems, whereas the latter refers to the ability to use reading strategies to enhance the communicative act between the writer and the reader. Thus, knowledge of different reading strategies, which have been categorized into metacognitive, cognitive, social and affective (see Ediger this volume), and the ability and disposition to use them effectively has received prime consideration in L2 reading. In fact, Grabe, Field and Ediger (this volume) regard strategic reading as an essential competence for successful comprehension. Grabe (this volume) highlights strategic reading development as an important research area within reading. Field (this volume) emphasizes the benefits of paying attention to reading strategies and metacognitive awareness in a reading program to develop fluency in reading and Ediger (this volume) gives a detailed explanation of key reading strategies, the use of which may result in improved comprehension.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has shown the significant progress made over the past decades in understanding what reading comprehension is and how we should go about teaching it. Once considered as a mere decoding process, reading is now seen as an interactive, constructive and contextualized process through which individuals make meaning (Usó-Juan 2006). Such a view of reading implies that linguistic, psychological and sociocultural factors play a key role in the reading process. Obviously, this view of reading has clear implications for the teaching of this skill (Kern 2000). Teachers and educators should teach the process of L2 reading as 1) a product based upon linguistic, psychological and sociocultural factors, including different purposes for reading; 2) as a meaning-construction process and, as such, accept different text interpretations; and 3) as a process in which the sociocultural environment and purposes for reading shift its pragmatic rules. In teaching in this way, they would facilitate learners' task of becoming aware that reading is a communicative event.

Suggested Activities

The activities included in this section are part of the Cultural Awareness Project described by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). The main goal of these activities is to help learners acquire communicative competence through the four skills as well as making them aware of cultural differences or similarities in different language communities. Therefore, these suggested activities focus specifically on the reading skill and are part of the *implementation stage*.

Activity 1

Select a representative passage on a particular cultural topic that has been brought in by the learners. Carry out critical reading with your learners by encouraging them to answer the questions presented in Figure 2, which are grouped into the three phases of pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading.

Critical reading

Pre-reading questions

- Do you think the topic of (...) is representative of the target culture and of your own culture? Why or why not?
- What content do you think the text entitled (...) is going to cover?

While-reading question

- How is content presented to deal with that particular topic?

Post-reading questions

- What other aspects should be incorporated within the passage to deal with this topic in a more comprehensive way?
 - How could the content of the text vary if it was written by another writer or read by another reader in a different context?
-

Figure 2. Cross-cultural questioning activity (based on Wallace 1992)

The pre-reading questions invite readers to make cross-cultural comparisons and to activate their background knowledge on the particular topic. The while-reading question encourages readers to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic resources selected by the writer to state his/her point of view (if any). Finally, the post-reading questions call readers to adopt a critical perspective by first suggesting information missing in the text about that particular topic and then reflecting on the context within which the text was written and is now being read.

Activity 2

Select representative passages with *cultural incidents* (Williams 2001) or *intercultural misunderstandings* (Meier 2003) that have been brought in by the learners (i.e., passages in which someone from a particular culture feels odd in a situation interacting with someone from a different culture, or passages that report an intercultural misunderstanding given the beliefs and attitudes in different cultures). Carry out a series of reading activities aimed at raising learners' cross-cultural awareness by asking the learners, for example, to evaluate the behavior of the person involved in the situation or to interpret and explain the misunderstanding. See (Williams 2001: 123) for an example of a cultural incident passage and activities.

Activity 3

Organize all culture-specific written materials brought in by the learners into different thematic portfolios and use them as resources for extensive reading. Therefore, each student could take a thematic portfolio home and return it to class after a suitable period of time. To ensure that learners read the portfolios, they should prepare a short oral report on the portfolio recently read. See Day and Bamford (1998: 149) for ideas on how to prepare a short oral report on written material.

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Areas of research that influence L2 reading instruction

William Grabe

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. Without previewing the text itself, name 5 effective reading instruction practices. What evidence can you suggest that might support your five practices?
2. Look at the nine implications for instruction near the beginning of the chapter. Note two that you would expect to be in “good ideas for reading instruction” and discuss why. Note two ideas that you think might be less expected as implications for reading instruction and discuss why.
3. To what extent is research directly useful for the practical instruction that is at the heart of an effective reading course? What other factors besides research play important roles in planning effective reading instruction?

1. Introduction

Reading is a complex cognitive activity, almost a miraculous one, in fact, since it involves the secondary uses of cognitive skills in relatively new ways, at least in terms of evolutionary development.¹ Reading is not an inherently natural process in the same way that speaking and listening are in a first language (L1). Unlike our first spoken language, which one might say “comes for free,” nothing is free with respect to reading. Learning to read requires considerable cognitive effort and a long learning process, whether one is learning to read in the L1 or in a second language (L2). If a person is not taught to read, in one way or another (e.g., by a teacher, a parent, a sibling), that person will not learn to read (Grabe and Stoller 2002).

As a consequence, the teaching of reading is also a complex matter. Obvious variables such as student proficiency, age, L1/L2 relations, motivation, cognitive processing factors, teacher factors, curriculum and materials resources, instructional setting, and institutional factors all impact the de-

gree of success of reading instruction. One could easily come to the conclusion that reading is too complex a process for one to make straightforward connections between research and instructional practices. However, we know that many learners become quite fluent L2 readers. There are, in fact, good reasons for optimism in exploring research on reading instruction and effective instructional practices.

One reason for optimism is that research on English L1 reading has made remarkable advances in the past 15 years, and it is possible to synthesize this research in ways that generate major implications for reading instruction. Second, research on reading instruction in L2 settings has provided additional insights that often converge with the L1 reading research literature. Third, the real distinctions between L1 reading and L2 reading (Grabe and Stoller 2002; Bernhardt 2003; Koda 2004) do not prevent researchers and practitioners from drawing major implications from L1 research findings in general, and especially from research on many academically-oriented instructional issues. At the same time, it is essential to recognize that instruction will need to vary in important ways for L2 learners depending on context, learner needs, and language proficiency levels.

This overview will focus specifically on learners with a need to develop academic reading abilities in school settings. The purpose of the overview is to link research findings to a set of key implications for instruction. These implications can also be addressed as applications for reading instruction, taking the next step to actual teaching practices that provide the basis for an effective reading curriculum. There is little space in this chapter for such a direct linkage to application. However the interested reader should see (Aebersold and Field 1997; Anderson 1999, 2002-2003; Grabe and Stoller 2001; Field this volume).

This review will not separate L1 research from L2 research with regard to possibilities for reading instruction; however, it will refer specifically to L2 research whenever recent L2 studies apply to instructional practices. For a number of the sub-sections that follow, the review will focus on instructional research in L1 settings because there is a reasonable expectation that the same instructional principles hold for L1 and L2 learners in these cases and there is relatively little controlled empirical research done with L2 learners. Before turning to implications for instruction, it is important to establish the rationale for these implications through a description of the reading ability itself.

2. The nature of reading

We all read for a variety of purposes, and as we read for different purposes, we often vary the cognitive processes and knowledge resources that we use. So, it is not straightforward to identify one purpose for reading as the single way to interpret what we mean by reading. At the same time, the many purposes for reading that can be commonly identified, share the same cognitive processes and knowledge resources, but in differing combinations and with differing emphases given to these processes and resources. For example, when we want information from a manual, we will search for the right place by some combination of scanning for key terms and skimming small segments for meaning to see if we are in the right area of the text. When we read a newspaper we read headlines and often skim news stories to see if we want to slow down and read more carefully. When we read a good novel at night, we generally don't skim (unless we get bored), but we usually don't read carefully to remember details either. When we are trying to learn new information, we read more slowly, thinking about how information fits with prior information in the text and with our own background knowledge that we have. All of these are purposes for reading. As we read for different purposes, we shift how we use our cognitive processes and knowledge resources.

It is possible to talk about a number of these purposes with general labels such as the following: Scanning, skimming, reading for general understanding, reading to learn, reading to integrate and reading to evaluate critically. All of these various purposes need to be related to underlying cognitive processes and resources so that we understand better how processes and resources define these purposes systematically. Thus, in line with Carver (1992), scanning is a reading process that requires recognition of a visual form (number, word, or phrase) that can be matched to forms in the text. It does not require semantic processing, and it can usually be carried out by fluent L1 readers at a rate of 600 WPM. Reading for understanding is a process requiring visual and semantic processing and the construction of a summary version of what the text means. It is usually carried out by fluent readers at about 250-300 WPM. Reading to learn is a process that requires, in addition to a summary version of what the text means, the formation of elaborated relations among the sets of information being processed. These relations reflect hierarchies of text information and they need to be combined with the reader's prior topical knowledge. For fluent readers, such a process seems to be carried out at about 200 WPM.

For this chapter, we will assume that L2 readers in academic settings most often need to develop “reading for understanding” and “reading to learn.” Under both reading purposes, it is possible to say that reading is “the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (Urquhart and Weir 1998: 22). At the same time, this definition does not indicate the many components of the required cognitive processing or the knowledge bases being integrated during the reading process. Thus, a definition of reading requires some recognition that a reader engages in phonological processing, morphological processing, syntactic processing, semantic processing, discourse processing, goal setting, text-summary building, interpretive elaborating from knowledge resources, monitoring and assessment of goal achievement, various adjustments to enhance comprehension, and repairs to comprehension processing as needed. Moreover, these processes are integrated in working memory under intense processing-time constraints. With this more elaborated definition of reading, it becomes more apparent that the tasks of understanding the nature and development of both L1 and L2 reading is complex. It is also apparent that developing fluent L2 readers is a challenging task requiring much time, resources, and effort.

3. Implications for reading instruction from reading research

Over the past 10 years, a set of implications for L2 reading instruction has emerged from overviews of the research literature (see Grabe 2000; Grabe and Stoller 2002). These implications provide a way to examine how research supports effective reading-instruction practices, and how teaching, materials development, and curriculum design could become more effective. Drawing on extensive and still accumulating research, the following implications for academic reading instruction and curriculum design are reasonably well supported. Although stated as instructional implications, they also represent component abilities of learners that need to be developed for effective reading comprehension.

1. Ensure word recognition fluency
2. Emphasize vocabulary learning and create a vocabulary-rich environment
3. Activate background knowledge in appropriate ways
4. Ensure effective language knowledge and general comprehension skills

5. Teach text structures and discourse organization
6. Promote the strategic reader rather than teach individual strategies
7. Build reading fluency and rate
8. Promote extensive reading
9. Develop intrinsic motivation for reading

A long list of instructional implications does not, in and of itself, represent a ready made curriculum for reading instruction, and such a claim is not being made here. In fact, any instructional setting and any group of curriculum developers must determine priorities based on student needs, institutional expectations, and resource constraints. The major discussion in this paper focuses on each implication in terms of empirical support for reading and possible instructional application. It does not say how such abilities or instructional practices should be combined most effectively in a single curricular approach (Anderson 1999, 2002-2003; Grabe and Stoller 2001). At the same time, many of these implications should be considered, in one form or another, in any effective reading curriculum. The choices of which factors finally to emphasize rest with local contexts and goals, and with the relevance and persuasiveness of supporting research.

3.1. Ensure word recognition fluency

Word recognition fluency has been widely recognized in L1 reading research as an important factor in explaining reading comprehension abilities, particularly at earlier stages of reading development (Stanovich 2000; Perfetti and Hart 2001). In general, word recognition fluency has not been a major focus of L2 research. However, in the early 1990s, research by Segalowitz (1991) demonstrated that word recognition automaticity was an important factor in distinguishing proficiency levels of very advanced L2 readers (in terms of overall reading fluency). There are a number of more recent studies that are also suggestive in this regard. For example, Segalowitz, Segalowitz, and Wood (1998) demonstrated that L2 university students who were more fluent readers overall had better word recognition automaticity skills. In addition, they showed that less fluent students improved their L2 word recognition automaticity through L2 instruction over the course of an academic year. Their results argue that increased word recognition automaticity results from incidental exposure to vocabulary through instruction and practice over extended periods of time. In a more recent training study, Fukkink, Hulstijn, and Simis (2003) report fluency

gains through word recognition training for eighth grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Holland. Students showed significant gains in word reading fluency with just two training sessions.

The second issue for word recognition fluency is whether or not fluency can be taught in normal instructional settings, and whether or not fluency instruction would also improve reading comprehension. It is generally assumed that repeated exposures to high frequency words through extended print exposure (e.g., extensive reading of level-appropriate texts) would contribute to automatic word recognition and comprehension gains. However, no causal connection between word recognition improvement and reading improvement in L2 settings has yet been demonstrated. In L1 reading research, such a connection was explored by Tan and Nicholson (1997). In their study, they trained below-average grade 3-5 students to develop word recognition automaticity through flash card practice. Results of the training showed that experimental students outperformed a control group not only in fluency but also in passage comprehension. In another study, Levy, Abello, and Lysynchuk (1997) carried out training studies with fourth grade students and demonstrated that both word recognition training and repeated readings of texts had a positive impact on comprehension of texts which included all the words used in the fluency training.

A final issue involves how best to teach word recognition fluency effectively as part of a reading curriculum (e.g., through timed word recognition practice, greater phonological awareness, morphological awareness training, extended reading practice, assisted reading activities). Instructional recommendations have been made along this line by Anderson (1999), Hulstijn (2001) and Nation (2001).

3.2. Emphasize vocabulary learning and create a vocabulary-rich environment

The relation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension has been powerfully demonstrated in both L1 and L2 contexts. Anyone who wants to be a fluent reader must have a large vocabulary. In L1 reading research, there have been many studies that demonstrate the strong relationship between vocabulary and reading. In an early large-scale study, Thorndike (1973) surveyed reading in 15 countries (with over 100,000 students) and reported median correlations across countries and age groups of between $r = .66$ and $r = .75$ for reading and vocabulary. In a set of unusual research studies, Carver (2003) has argued that the relationship be-

tween reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge is so strong that they can produce almost perfect correlations. When reliable vocabulary tests are converted to grade-level equivalent scores, and when reliable reading comprehension measures are also converted to grade-level equivalent scores, Carver predicts that the corrected correlations between the two measures will be almost perfect. The argument is extraordinary, but Carver presents extensive evidence from multiple sources of assessment data to support his position. For purposes of this review, it is safe to claim that there is a strong and reliable relationship between L1 vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension.

In L2 settings, Droop and Verhoeven (2003) demonstrate a powerful relation between vocabulary knowledge and later reading ability with 3rd and 4th grade language minority children in Holland. Pike (1979) reported corrected correlations between vocabulary and reading on a TOEFL administration on the order of .84 to .95. Laufer (1997) cited several assessment studies with strong correlations between reading and vocabulary knowledge (.50 to .75). Qian (2002) found strong correlations, from .68 to .82, between TOEFL reading sub-section scores and three vocabulary measures. Clearly, the powerful relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension also applies to the L2 reader. Of course, how to teach most effectively to build a large store of vocabulary knowledge over time is a question deserving its own chapter.

3.3. Activate background knowledge in appropriate ways

Almost all reading researchers agree that background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension. It is clear that readers comprehend texts better when texts are culturally familiar or when they relate to well developed disciplinary knowledge of a reader. More generally, background knowledge is essential for all manner of inferences and text model construction during comprehension. It is also important for disambiguating lexical meanings and syntactic ambiguities. The complications appear to arise with texts that present relatively new information or information from fields for which readers have no special expertise. In many cases, these are informational texts that require students to learn new information. The limited role of background knowledge for comprehending new topics was documented by Bernhardt (1991), and additional studies reviewed in Alderson (2000) present conflicting evidence on the role of background knowl-

edge on reading assessment. Nonetheless, background knowledge appears to provide strong support for comprehension in many contexts.

From an instructional perspective, the issue becomes whether or not there are specific benefits for promoting appropriate background knowledge for students encountering new information in instructional texts. Will the activation of background knowledge lead to better comprehension? Chen and Graves (1995) conducted one of the few L2 studies to pursue this issue directly. They demonstrated that the use of text previewing led to significantly better comprehension in comparison with both a control group and a group that activated general background knowledge. The finding can be interpreted straightforwardly as support for the activation of specific information that is relevant to the text as opposed to activating more general background knowledge.

3.4 Ensure effective language knowledge and general comprehension skills

Text comprehension requires both a) language knowledge and b) recognition of key ideas and their relationships (through various comprehension strategies). Language knowledge, for purposes of this review, primarily involves vocabulary knowledge (see above) and grammar knowledge. There is a range of research that argues for a strong relation between grammar knowledge and reading. Furthermore, research on syntactic processing, or word integration processes (integrating lexical and syntactic information into clause-level meaning units), also suggests significant relations between syntactic processing abilities and comprehension abilities (Fender 2001).

While relatively few research studies of reading development include grammar measures, a recent L2 study by Van Gelderen et al. (2002) examined the relations between linguistic knowledge, metacognitive knowledge (what we know about how we use language and how we read), and word processing speed, on the one hand, and reading comprehension on the other. They reported a very strong correlation between EFL L2 (Dutch students) grammar knowledge and reading abilities (correlation of .73) and an even stronger correlation between EFL L3 (Turkish students in Holland) grammar knowledge and reading (correlation of .78). As further support for this relationship, Alderson (1993) reported correlations between reading and grammar of .80. Pike (1979) reported corrected correlations among sub-sections of a TOEFL test of (.80 to .85). Enright et al. (2002) reported a very strong relationship between the structure and reading subsections of

the current TOEFL ($r=.91$) and a strong relationship between the structure section of the current TOEFL and the piloted reading section of the New TOEFL ($r=.83$).

The strong relationship between grammar and reading has not led to a call for extended grammar instruction as a direct support for L2 reading comprehension. Especially at advanced levels of instruction, grammar is better seen as an indirect support system that is developed through comprehension instruction and strategy training (e.g., establishing the main idea, summarizing information, recognizing discourse structure, monitoring comprehension). Some of the strategies that are important for comprehension involve grammatical knowledge while others focus on processing skills and background knowledge.

A number of individual comprehension strategies have been shown to have a significant impact on reading comprehension abilities. In L1 settings, the report of the National Reading Panel (2000) and the follow-up overview by Trabasso and Bouchard (2002) identified nine individual reading strategies as having a significant influence on reading comprehension:

- Prior knowledge activation
- Mental imagery
- Graphic organizers
- Text structure awareness
- Comprehension monitoring
- Question answering
- Question generating
- Mnemonic support practice
- Summarization

There is relatively little recent L2 research demonstrating the effectiveness of specific comprehension strategies or synthesizing prior research (; Tang 1992; Carrell et al. 1989; Chen and Graves 1995; Hulstijn 1997), and more research of this type should be encouraged. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to extrapolate from L1 research results and earlier supporting L2 research to argue that certain comprehension strategies and instructional practices are useful for developing student reading comprehension.

3.5. Teach text structures and discourse organization

In many instructional settings, when considering older students and more advanced L2 students, a strong emphasis is typically placed on expository prose processing for learning purposes. Students need to understand the more abstract patterns of text structuring in expository prose that support readers' efforts at comprehension. While advanced learning texts are typically denser and present more complex information than texts of a more general nature, they are, nevertheless, assumed to be understandable with relatively little ambiguity when assigned in school settings (this assumption is often mistaken, however.)

Texts have numerous signaling systems that help a reader to interpret the information being presented. Most importantly, texts incorporate discourse structures, sometimes understood as knowledge structures or basic rhetorical patterns in texts (Mohan 1986; Meyer and Poon 2001). Discourse structures have functional purposes (e.g., to compare two ideas, to highlight a cause and effect relationship), and these purposes are recognized by good readers and writers, if only implicitly in some cases. These functional purposes are supported by well recognized conventions and systems that lead a reader to preferred interpretations (Tang 1992). Moreover, these discourse mechanisms extend to the level of genre and larger frames of discourse structure that organize textual information for the reader.

A major issue concerning the influence of text structure on reading is the extent to which such knowledge can be directly taught to students so that it will lead to improved comprehension. There are three major lines of research (mostly L1) on the effect of text structure instruction. One line of research involves the impact of direct instruction which explicitly raises student awareness of specific text structuring. A recent study by Meyer and Poon (2001) demonstrated that structure strategy training significantly improved recall from texts for both younger adults and older adults. A second line of research develops student awareness of text structure through graphic organizers, semantic maps, outline grids, tree diagrams, and hierarchical summaries (Tang 1992; Trabasso and Bouchard 2002). This research demonstrates that students comprehend texts better when they are shown visually how text information is organized (along with the linguistic clues that signal this organization). A third line of instructional training follows from instruction in reading strategies. Because a number of reading strategy training approaches include attention to text structure, main idea identification, and text study skills, this line of instructional research is also a source of studies supporting text structure instruction. Thus, strategy training

which includes summarizing, semantic mapping, predicting, forming questions from headings and sub-headings, and using adjunct questions appears to improve awareness of text structure and text comprehension (Duke and Pearson 2002; Trabasso and Bouchard 2002).

In L1 settings, multiple studies have demonstrated the importance of text structure awareness on comprehension and learning from expository texts (Goldman and Rakestraw 2000). There is relatively little recent L2 research on this area of text structure and comprehension, and more research is needed in L2 contexts. It is very likely, however, that the L1 research on instructional practices with different types of text structure knowledge applies well to L2 students developing their reading comprehension abilities.

3.6. Promote the strategic reader rather than teach individual strategies

In L1 settings, reading comprehension instruction today is equated with strategic reading development. There is now considerable research to show that reading comprehension is strongly influenced by instruction that emphasizes the coordinated use of multiple strategies while students actively seek to comprehend texts (National Reading Panel 2000; Block and Pressley 2002; Trabasso and Bouchard 2002). Such instruction involves direct teaching of several strategies while students are reading and comprehending a text. The teacher and students engage in discussions about the text while also learning to use key strategies in effective combinations. Students learn to engage with texts strategically through a process of teacher modeling, teacher scaffolding and support, and gradual independent use of strategies to comprehend text better. There is general agreement among L1 researchers that instruction that focuses on students learning repertoires of strategies over an extended period of time is more effective than individual strategy instruction.

Many approaches involving multiple strategies tend to focus on 4-8 major strategies, though other approaches may incorporate up to 20-30 distinct strategies over a longer period of time. Grabe (2004) reviews these approaches to combined-strategies instruction that improve reading comprehension. Two L1 approaches deserve specific mention for their proven effectiveness and their potential application in L2 settings: Transactional Reading Instruction (TSI) and Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). Both provide curricular frameworks for strategic comprehension instruction, but also incorporate comprehension instruction activities that

go beyond strategy development (e.g., vocabulary development, fluency practice, extensive reading). Both have been validated through multiple studies and both represent approaches that fully engage students in all aspects of strategic reading instruction (Guthrie et al. 1999; Guthrie, Wigfield, and von Secker 2000; Guthrie 2003; Pressley 2002).

L2 reading research has not been developed as extensively in the direction of curricular frameworks for strategic engagement with texts. Janzen (2001) reports results of an L2 adaptation of Transactional Strategies Instruction and provides instructional descriptions. Klingler and Vaughn (2000) report on an approach they named Collaborative Strategies Instruction. Anderson (1999) and Cohen (1998) both discuss the effectiveness of direct teacher modeling of strategies for reading. Two L2 strategy-instruction approaches, Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA; Chamot and O'Malley 1994), and Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI; Cohen 1998) could be adapted more specifically to an extended academic reading curriculum. Most of the L2 efforts to develop strategic engagement with texts have yet to be researched carefully for their effectiveness in promoting reading comprehension skills.

Most contemporary discussions among L1 researchers center on the use of, and training in, multiple strategies to achieve comprehension (commonly including summarizing, clarifying, predicting, imaging, forming questions, using prior knowledge, monitoring, and evaluating). As the multi-strategy research suggests, most researchers now see the real value in teaching strategies as combined-strategies instruction rather than as independent processes or as processes taught independently of basic comprehension with instructional texts.

3.7. Build reading fluency and rate

The importance of reading fluency has taken on much greater importance in the past few years, particularly in L1 settings. Because reading fluency, as opposed to automatic word recognition, is not a commonly discussed factor in reading development, it is useful to provide a careful definition. Reading fluency involves both word recognition accuracy and automaticity; it requires a rapid speed of processing across extended text (i.e., reading efficiency); it makes appropriate use of prosodic and syntactic structures; it can be carried out for extended periods of time; and it takes a long time to develop (National Reading Panel 2000; Segalowitz 2000; Kuhn and Stahl 2003).

The National Reading Panel (2000) devoted a major section of its report to research on fluency development and fluency instruction. Its meta-analysis demonstrates that fluency can be taught and that it has a positive impact on reading comprehension abilities. Kuhn and Stahl (2003), reporting on a more inclusive meta-analysis, came to similar conclusions. In L1 settings, almost any kind of independent or assisted repeated reading program, done carefully and appropriately, will have a direct positive effect on reading fluency and an indirect positive effect on comprehension improvement. There are many ways to develop re-reading instruction for fluency purposes and they are well reviewed in Kuhn and Stahl (2003), National Reading Panel (2000) and Samuels (2002).

There is relatively little L2 reading research on reading fluency training, though this issue has recently emerged as a goal for instructional practices in L2 settings (Anderson 1999; Hulstijn 2001; Nation 2001). The best ongoing exploration of Fluency development is the work of Taguchi (1999, Taguchi and Gorsuch 2002). Both studies have shown that the practice of repeated reading of short graded readers leads to improvement in reading fluency. The more recent study, in particular, showed that students read significantly faster in the post-reading test than the pre-reading test while demonstrating the same levels of comprehension.

3.8. Promote extensive reading

The true experimental research on extensive reading is seemingly contradictory, but the preponderance of non-experimental research is overwhelmingly in favor of extensive reading as a support for both reading comprehension development and reading fluency (as well as incidental learning of a large recognition vocabulary and word recognition fluency). The L1 research reviewed by the National Reading Panel (2000) did not find a single experimental study (i.e., pre and post measures for an experimental and control group) that demonstrated significantly better reading comprehension abilities for an extensive reading group. However, Kuhn and Stahl (2003), among others, have pointed out that the restricted range of studies reviewed by the National Reading Panel ruled out much persuasive research.

In L1 settings, Kuhn and Stahl (2003), point out that there is good evidence for a strong relationship between reading comprehension abilities and extensive reading over a long period of time. This view is strongly supported by two specific research programs. Over a decade from 1990 to

2000, Stanovich (see Stanovich 2000) and his colleagues have demonstrated in multiple studies that the amount of overall exposure to print by readers has a direct relation to vocabulary knowledge and comprehension abilities. Strong arguments have also been made by Guthrie et al. (1999). In an important study, they demonstrated that, for students from grades 3 to 10 (grades 3, 5, 8, and 10), amount of reading significantly predicted text comprehension.

In L2 settings, Elley (2000) provides the strongest on-going evidence for the effect of extensive reading (and fluency training), although he reviews book flood approaches that also include a range of additional instructional practices, and not just the effect of extensive reading. Reporting on a series of large-scale curricular research studies, he has demonstrated that modified book floods – along with careful attention to training teachers to use the books effectively in class – lead consistently to significant results in comprehension development (reporting on major studies in Niue, Fiji, Singapore, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and Solomon Islands, 1977-1998). There are a number of additional brief reports and small-scale studies on the effectiveness of extensive reading, but there are no other major research studies that provide strong evidence for the influence of extensive reading on reading comprehension abilities (see Day and Bamford 1998).

3.9. Develop intrinsic motivation for reading

In L1 settings, the strongest evidence of the direct impact of positive motivation on reading comes from Guthrie and his colleagues. In two studies, they demonstrated the impact of reading engagement on both reading amount (reading extensively) and reading comprehension. First, Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) demonstrated that motivation and engagement with reading were significantly related to amount of reading. More highly motivated fourth and fifth grade students engaged in significantly more reading. In a further study, Guthrie et al. (1999) demonstrated that higher motivation among third and fifth grade students significantly increased their amount of reading and their text comprehension. In examining related questions of whether or not motivation (defined as reading engagement) could be taught directly through classroom instruction, Guthrie et al. (1998) demonstrated that Concept-Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) developed significantly higher levels of student motivation than control classes among third and fifth grade students.

In L2 settings, there is little research specifically on the relation between motivational variables and reading comprehension. Most L2 motivation research focuses more generally on language abilities. Dörnyei (2001) provides an excellent overview of motivational factors and their influences on L2 learning. In addition to covering L2 motivation research for the past decade, he devotes serious attention to motivation instruction and teacher motivation.

4. Conclusions

Teachers, teacher trainers, and materials writers often argue in favor of instructional practices that they have seen “work for them” informally. In many cases, this knowledge works well and supports students’ reading development. There is certainly a need to recognize practitioner knowledge, good teaching ideas, and positive instructional outcomes, and teachers cannot wait for “the definitive research study.” (It will never happen in any case.) At the same time, the informal notion of “doing what works,” by itself, can limit progress with, and dissemination of, effective reading instruction. Practitioner knowledge is typically not open to comparisons and competition from new ideas (except fashions and bandwagons), and it is easily abused when teaching practices become fossilized or politicized.

The reasons to look for reliable research evidence in support of instructional practices is to minimize some of the negative consequences of informal practitioner lore and be more effective in helping students develop as readers. Research studies do not guarantee such benefits, but they represent important ways to test instructional practices and search for more effective outcomes. The ideal for effective reading instruction, then, is a merging of practitioner knowledge and persuasive research support: Both are needed for effective instruction.

This chapter has sought to highlight research that supports a range of instructional practices. It does not examine *how* such instructional practices could best be coordinated in the coherent and effective curricular framework. Such an exploration would require its own chapter. Instead of embarking on a whole new chapter at this point, I will simply note that the most effective ways to develop reading abilities, and incorporate the many research implications discussed in this article, is through some form of well thought out content-based instruction. There are certainly many versions of content based instructional that have not proven to be very effective, so the label itself is not a panacea. However, the two strongest curricular ap-

proaches examined in L1 research – CORI and TSI – pare both content-based approaches. Carefully planned and developed content-based approaches offer a potent framework for effective reading instruction (Stoller 2004).

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Select a text from a reader that is appropriate for your students' level. Note briefly what pre-reading, during reading (if applicable), and post-reading activities are provided with the text. Determine the purposes for each of these activities. Develop three additional pre-reading activities for the text. One should focus on predicting information about the text; one should create a simple five or six item survey of information to get from classmates; and one should ask students to find some key idea in the text and explain it (e.g., an extended definition). (see Grabe and Stoller 2001; Anderson 2002-2003 for many options.)

Activity 2

Select a text that has been read by your students and that your students now understand well. Develop three fluency activities that will help your students practice reading quickly and fluently. (see Anderson 1999, 2002-2003 or Rasinski 2003 for several ideas.)

Activity 3

Select a set of extensive reading materials that could be used as part of a reading course. Explain how you would use the materials as part of your course. What specific activities would you use to develop their interest in extensive reading and enhance the skills that will help them become better readers? (see Day and Bamford 1998; Bamford and Day 2004).

Activity 4

Select a longer text that you might use with your students. Look carefully at the text and decide how the text can be explored for the patterns of larger discourse organization in the text. Are there in the text paragraphs or multi-paragraph units that present information in a cause and effect relationship, a time sequence, a descriptive classification of concepts, a comparison relationship, or a problem-solution relationship? Is there a paragraph that provides an extended definition of the term or a concept? As post-reading activities, create graphic organizers that reflect these patterns for organizing information and ask students to fill in the information from the text in the right places in the graphic organizer. (Note that there is no effort here to analyze some “top-level” structure of the text: All longer texts have multiple discourse structures in many combinations across the text. Note also that certain patterns can be used as easily with narrative as with expository texts.) (see Tang 1993; Reppen 1994/1995; Grabe 2003 for ideas.)

Notes

1. This comment highlights the obvious but not always recognized point that our eyes were not originally designed for rapid processing of graphic language symbols, our short term memory was not originally intended to store language based knowledge, and our cognitive processing was not originally designed to connect graphic symbols to phonological representations for language comprehension purposes.

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Developing strategic L2 readers... by reading for authentic purposes

Anne M. Ediger

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. What are some of the purposes for which you read in your daily life? Can you think of some and list them?
2. What do you do when you don't understand something that you are reading? Try explaining this to another person, or describing it briefly in writing.
3. Think about the last time you ran into a problem in your daily life. Did you throw your hands up in defeat as soon as things became difficult? Or did you sit down and begin to figure out some strategies for solving the problem and for accomplishing your goal? Have you ever worked with another person to "plot a strategy" for handling a problem or for accomplishing something important? What did you do? What was the result of your strategy session?

1. Introduction

Learning to read is a type of problem solving, and has often been described in this way (Pressley et al. 1992). Researchers of reading, in both first and second language (L1/L2), have known for many years now that good readers become "strategic" in their attempts to make sense of a text, and over the years, a great deal of research has focused on identifying which strategies they use, which ones are most effective, how skilled readers use them, and finally, whether such strategies are then teachable to developing readers. By now, we also know that a person's strategic competence, the ability to control and guide the direction of one's own process of learning or using a new language in order to communicate is a key part of one's overall communicative competence (although its role in reading and writing is not often addressed). This strategic competence is vital for enabling L2 learners to achieve their purpose for communicating, whether orally, or through producing or comprehending written text, as well as for finding and repair-

ing the communicative attempt if something goes wrong for some reason. In fact, the literature on reading strategies (as well as on strategies involved in many other areas of learning and thinking) has now grown to the point where researchers have moved beyond simply extolling the virtues of just any strategy use, and are now able to explain in considerably more detail which sorts of strategy use are more effective and which are less so.

However, before we launch into what is known about good reading strategy use, we need to understand where reading strategies fit into the bigger picture of reading and reading instruction in general. When we talk about reading and reading instruction, we do so with the basic assumption that reading fundamentally involves *comprehending* what we read – in other words, the finding, or creating, of *meaning*. The creation of this meaning, then (the ability to comprehend what we read) depends heavily on having automatic word-level skills, the appropriate background knowledge, and a range of comprehension strategies (Pressley 2000). This suggests that instruction designed to develop comprehension abilities should similarly focus on improving students' abilities in these same areas. Good readers need strong word-level skills because having them enables readers to decode a text efficiently, leaving their remaining mental processing capacity available for focusing on other aspects of comprehension. Skilled readers also contribute significantly to their comprehension of texts through the background knowledge that they bring to the reading task. Among other things, the knowledge helps them make inferences that fill in the gaps in the information that is provided explicitly in a text. This prior knowledge they bring also does something else: it works hand-in-hand with the third requirement for comprehension, namely, the skilful use of comprehension strategies – the focus of this chapter.

The term *strategies* is used to describe a variety of different notions in reading and reading instruction (both for L1 and L2), ranging from using it to describe broad *approaches* to learning or using the L2; to the specific, automatic reading *skills* readers use; and even to various *techniques* that teachers can use to help students develop aspects of reading they find difficult. There is also still some disagreement about whether *strategies* should be used to describe only those actions that readers deliberately choose to use (as opposed to *skills*, which are automatic, like recognizing letter-sound correspondences, etc.). Some researchers argue that strategies can become skills when automatized, and conversely, skills can become strategies when used intentionally (Paris, Wasik, and Turner 1991; Pressley and Woloshyn 1995). In spite of this variation in usage, there is still fairly broad use of the term *strategies* (whether for language *learning* or language *use*) to refer to

those (often conscious) procedures, actions, techniques, or behaviors that a learner selects and uses in order to enhance their comprehension or their learning from what they read. However, as I hope to show later in this chapter, if we move closer toward a focus on *real-world reading*, it may be helpful to view strategies more in the way that Pressley and Woloshyn (1995: 6) do, as “nothing more than a listing of the processes required to accomplish a particular task efficiently,” and begin to see that “learning to use strategies is not the mechanized sequencing of processes, but rather a *flexible, constructive execution of the processes*” [emphasis in the original] that we might need in order to carry out all sorts of important day-to-day, as well as academic, tasks.

2. Reading strategies

Over the last 30 years or so, already many different reading strategies have been identified. As can be seen in Figure 1 below, strategies can be categorized into metacognitive (including purpose-oriented, comprehension monitoring, and strategies that focus on learning from text), cognitive (including strategies for interacting with the author and the text, strategies involving different ways of reading, strategies for handling unknown words, and those making use of one’s prior knowledge in some way), as well as social and affective strategies, among others.

Key Reading Strategies

Metacognitive Strategies

Purpose-oriented strategies:	Comprehension-monitoring strategies:
- Planning what to do next, steps to take	- Assessing comprehension
- Reminding oneself about the purpose for reading	○ Evaluating one’s understanding
- Evaluating information in terms of whether it leads to one’s purpose	○ Identifying difficulties in understanding
- Deciding whether a text is relevant to one’s purpose	○ Summarizing what one has read
- Comparing information from one text with that of another	○ Restating for oneself what one has read
- Reflecting on how well objectives were met	○ Reviewing a text after reading is completed
- Evaluating the quality of a text	- Repair strategies
- Checking the time one has available	○ Re-reading
	○ Slowing down and reading again
	○ Trying to pronounce words

Figure 1. Key reading strategies (adapted from Grabe and Stoller 2002; Oxford 1990; Sarig 1993; Pressley 2000; Anderson 1991, 1999)

Strategies that focus on learning from reading:

- Reflecting on what has been learned from the text
 - Underlining or marking in text
 - Thinking how to use a text in the future
 - Making notes about what one has read
 - Paraphrasing what the author said in order to remember it
-

Cognitive Strategies

Strategies for interacting with author and text:

- Previewing a text
- Predicting the contents of the text
- Checking/confirming predictions
- Asking questions about the text
- Looking for answers to questions about the text
- Connecting one part of the text to another
- Critiquing the author
- Critiquing the text
- Evaluating and revising hypotheses that arose while reading
- Interpreting the text
- Making associations to ideas presented in a text based on prior knowledge
- Constructing mental images to represent the meanings expressed in text

Strategies involving different ways of reading:

- Reading slowly
- Reading quickly
 - o Skimming for a general idea
 - o Scanning for specific information
- Re-reading
- Ignoring certain texts or parts of a text
- Reading out loud (and listening to how it sounds)
- Reading selectively/deciding whether or not to read something
- Reading ahead

Strategies for handling unknown words:

- Using other information in the context to understand an unknown word
- Skipping/ignoring an unknown word
- Waiting to see if more information is provided later
- Analyzing the structure or parts of a word in order to understand it
- Asking someone the meaning of a word
- Looking up a word in a dictionary
- Pronouncing a word
- Thinking about other related words that one already knows
- Thinking about cognates in the L1
- Translating a word/phrase into the L1
- Checking the spelling of a word

Strategies involving prior knowledge:

- World knowledge:
 - o Thinking about what one already knows about a topic
 - o Making connections between a text and one's prior knowledge
 - o Revising one's prior knowledge that is inconsistent with ideas in the text, if convinced by information or arguments in the text
 - Knowledge of texts and text formats:
 - o Using discourse markers to identify relationships
 - o Connecting one part of a text to another
 - o Paying attention to text structure
-

Figure 1. cont.

-
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verifying whether one's guess about meaning fits the context and one's conceptual knowledge; then revising or seeking alternative explanations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyzing texts (e.g., stories, science reports) into the typical components and language of that genre (e.g., story grammar, steps/components of science experiments) |
|--|--|
-

Affective & Social Strategies

- Rewarding oneself
 - Talking with others about what one reads
 - Encouraging oneself
 - Selecting what one wants to read
-

Figure 1. cont.

After years of research on reading strategies, there is now a strong pattern of findings, both in L1 (Pressley and Afflerbach 1995; Pressley and Woloshyn 1995) and L2 (Barnett 1989; Carrell, Pharis, and Liberto 1989; Kern 1989; Oxford 1990) that the use of reading strategies results in improved comprehension and greater self-confidence. The self-regulated use of comprehension strategies is clearly evident in the reading of skilled readers, and now believed to be crucial for effective L2 reading. Carrell (1998: 4) describes it this way:

Strategic reading is a prime characteristic of expert readers because it is woven into the very fabric of 'reading for meaning,' and the development of this cognitive ability. Reading strategies – which are related to other cognitive strategies enhancing attention, memory, communication, and learning – allow readers to elaborate, organize, and evaluate information derived from text. Because strategies are controllable by readers, they are personal cognitive tools that can be used selectively and flexibly. And, reading strategy use reflects both metacognition and motivation, because readers need to have both the knowledge and the disposition to use strategies.

3. Reading in L2 classrooms

So, what does the effective use of reading strategies involve? And how can instruction in their use be integrated into L2 classrooms of today? A look at L2 reading classrooms today reveals a wide variety of methods for teaching reading, not all of which are effective. In some of the L2 classrooms that I have observed in various parts of the world, the reading instruction treats

reading material primarily for the purpose of teaching grammatical structures found in the text, where students labor over word-by-word translations and spend hours looking up in dictionaries and memorizing the meanings of the vocabulary and structures they encounter in these texts. In many L2 classrooms, the readings that students typically encounter are short texts, each on a completely different topic from the previous one, with each passage typically followed by a mandatory list of comprehension questions. Probably much of the reasoning for teaching reading through single texts on many different topics is based on the idea that students need to be exposed to many different subject areas so that they can learn the vocabulary of all of those areas.

Also in many L2 classrooms, often encouraged by the ways in which reading textbooks and materials are designed, students are taught to conduct all of their reading (at least, of prose texts) in a similar manner, regardless of the text being read or the purpose for reading. Students are almost invariably asked to find the main idea of each passage they read, and the entire passage is viewed as having equal importance to the reader, because the reader's main task is to answer all of the comprehension questions about what the writer has said. In fact, "it is not surprising, therefore, that students conclude that the very 'purpose of reading text is to answer the questions that follow it' and that answering these questions correctly signifies that they have understood what the text means" (Belanoff 1987, as cited in Zamel 1992: 464).

From my observations of such classes, I would argue that this type of instruction shows little awareness of how we often read in real life, namely, that: we often have wide-ranging purposes for reading; we often need to choose and/or synthesize information from multiple sources (think especially of how we use information when browsing the Internet); we pick and choose certain information from a text while disregarding other parts as irrelevant or not useful; we sometimes even read, re-read, and re-read material yet again until we get what we need from it; or sometimes we even decide *not* to read something at all, because we have determined that it is not interesting or relevant to our purpose. In other words, much of the reading that is done in the sorts of L2 classrooms described above is merely the "practicing" of reading in an artificial context, something that does not often reflect the reading we have to do in real life. Thus, I would argue that much of the reading instruction that presently takes place in L2 classrooms unfortunately does not prepare L2 learners for the sorts of reading that they will encounter in real-life contexts, where they must be able to make immediate *use* of what they read in the L2. Leki (1993: 13) also decries the

teaching of reading for no particular purpose, saying that in many ESL classrooms,

the reason for reading is to learn to read... the failure to provide real purposes for reading suggests that in isolated L2 reading classes (i.e., ones in which students are not reading to write), students are not reading but merely practicing reading. This "reading practice" is evident in reading selections and in pedagogical focuses in L2 reading classrooms.

In other L2 classrooms I have observed, teachers of reading do indeed try to teach specific strategies, for example, by having students read specific texts in different ways (e.g., skimming for the general idea, scanning for specific information), but here too, in these contexts L2 learners are asked to do these things without much instruction in *why* they might want to read differently at different times, or in determining *when* they might want to read in different ways, or even what more of those different ways might be. Leki (1993: 16) criticizes this, too, when she says,

If proficient readers skim some texts, they do so because the text, as they themselves judge it for their own internally motivated purposes, merits no more careful reading. The answer to the question of which texts should be skimmed, which scanned, which words looked up in the dictionary, or which texts abandoned altogether is determined by the reader's purpose in reading. If the purpose in reading is only to practice reading, there can be no internally motivated answers to these questions. With no purpose for reading, then skimming, scanning, or any of the other strategies we teach all become no more than artificial exercises. By taking over control of their reading through post-reading exercises and telling our students which texts to skim, which information to scan for, and how fast to read, we are preventing the very grappling with meaning that would allow students to develop their own strategies for rapid and accurate text processing.

Indeed, if we look at the big picture in which authentic reading occurs, we must acknowledge that reading "is a 'goal-directed, context-specific' behavior, which means that a literate person is able to use reading and writing in a transactional sense to achieve some purpose in the world at hand..." (Flower et al. 1990: 4).

If this is the case, then how might reading be taught to prepare L2 students to be able to handle the demands of real-life reading better? And how can reading strategies be taught effectively in such a context? How will a focus on strategies bring us to real-life reading processes? Answering these

questions is our goal in this chapter – to understand a little better how readers use strategies to make meaning from the texts they read for *real-life* purposes, and to spell out the implications of this knowledge for teaching students to read in another language. In addition, we will also consider how the development of strategy use in reading can be interwoven with the development of the vital word-level abilities and the world knowledge that Pressley (2000) says we need for optimal comprehension.

4. How do good readers use reading strategies?

Now that we are aware of our own goal for reading in this chapter, let's return to what is now known about how strategies can be used most effectively in reading. Although learning to use strategies has repeatedly been shown to facilitate comprehension in reading, using strategies effectively is not just a matter of learning to use a couple of “good ones,” and then using them wherever we can, without an understanding of why we're using them. In fact, it is probably safe to say that there are no strategies that are in themselves inherently good or bad (Anderson 1991). What one reader may find useful when reading a particular text may not be very effective for another reader in a different situation. Unfortunately, simply using certain strategies may not necessarily guarantee comprehension, and conversely, not using certain strategies may not necessarily result in the lack of comprehension, either.

The picture that is beginning to form of good strategy users from the reading research is that they are “strategic,” which means that they:

- Are primarily focused on the drive to obtain *meaning* from a text, not on “using strategies”.
- Are aware of their *purpose* for reading, whether it be for pleasure, for obtaining important information needed to perform a task (e.g., for performing a procedure, writing a paper, making a decision), or to learn something new (Pressley 2000; Grabe and Stoller 2002). Within that context, then, they tailor their strategies specifically to fit the particular task involved (Oxford 1994).
- Overview a text to decide if it is relevant to their purpose and to identify the portions that might be particularly relevant or helpful (Pressley 2000). They then read selectively, focusing on those parts of the text that are most relevant to their purpose (Ediger 2000).

- Use strategies in ordered hierarchies that are generated from an analysis of the steps in the process needed to accomplish their task (Pressley and Woloshyn 1995).
- Know and utilize *multiple* strategies, including cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and other types, integrating and orchestrating their use in relation to each other, and then evaluating their effectiveness in achieving the purpose (Block 1986; Oxford 1994); Well-tailored combinations of strategies are more effective than single strategies (O'Malley and Chamot 1990).
- Make use of, and integrate their prior knowledge, not only of the world, but also of the nature of texts, and of how they have used different strategies for different purposes in the past, to help them make sense of what they read (Block 1986; Pressley et al. 1992). Having prior world knowledge and knowledge of the topic of a text influences which strategies they need to use (Afflerbach 1990) and the effectiveness of the strategy use (Pressley and Woloshyn 1995; Nassaji 2003).
- Make particularly effective use of metacognitive strategies, the “higher-level thinking” (or “thinking about how one is thinking”), the monitoring system that readers use in order to direct and control their overall strategy use. They use metacognitive strategies for planning, selecting and using strategies, monitoring comprehension and effectiveness of strategy use, and learning (Carrell 1998; Anderson 2002).
- Make effective use of varying strategies for handling unknown vocabulary, with the quality of their strategy use more important than the quantity, and in relation to the various sources of knowledge they have available for inferring meaning (Nassaji 2003).
- Differ in their use of strategies, depending on their gender, language and cultural background, age, beliefs, motivations, or learning style (Oxford 1996).
- Know if their strategy use was effective or not by assessing whether they were able to accomplish their purpose (Ediger 2000).

5. The importance of reading for a purpose

One crucial element of this good reading strategy use that is often mentioned, but that has been given little detailed attention (especially in instruction), involves the purpose for which one reads. This may also be seen as involving the task one is trying to accomplish with what one reads, and fits closely with what is known as task-based learning. In task-based learning, a

task is “an activity in which: meaning is primary; there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of task performance is in terms of task outcome” (Skehan 1996, as cited in Ellis 2003: 4).

In “real-world” reading, there are many different authentic purposes for which readers read – and, presumably, precisely the same real-world purposes for which many L2 learners will eventually need to be able to read in their target language. These include the range of purposes for which we read in daily life, for example, to obtain the information that we need in order to accomplish some real-world task. For example, this might take place when we read a guidebook, a train schedule, or an Internet website in order to purchase a ticket as part of making the necessary arrangements to travel to a desired destination. It could also include reading for academic purposes (e.g., reading to obtain information from various sources so that one can write a research paper or make an oral presentation in class); reading for business purposes (e.g., reading information or data in order to write a report or make a business decision); or even reading for entertainment, passing the time, or pleasure (e.g., reading a novel or a poem; or a magazine while waiting for a friend).

These types of real-world reading are important to focus on because the strategies a reader uses in order to achieve them are different from those one needs or uses when reading to learn the grammar of a language, to “practice” reading, or when reading without any particular purpose at all. As Knutson (1988: n.p.) says, “whether we are reading for pleasure or information, the nature of the reading depends on what we want from the text, as well as situational factors such as time available or constraints relative to place of reading. No matter what our agenda, *why* and *where* we read inevitably determine *how* we read” [emphasis in the original]. If the purpose for which one reads is ignored, or if one always reads for the same purpose (such as to answer comprehension questions), then an important element influencing the choice and use of particular strategies is missing from that reading context. In a parallel fashion, it would follow that leaving out the purpose from L2 instruction distorts the learning context within which L2 readers need to learn about effective reading strategy use.

This is not to say that reading for a purpose is never addressed in the literature on L2 reading. In fact, many L2 reading researchers do indeed mention the importance of one’s purpose for reading (Eskey 1986; Oxford 1994; Carrell 1998; Grabe and Stoller 2002); however, few go the next step to spell out *how* to focus reading toward accomplishing the purpose that one has set. Also, in some lists of reading strategies, the setting of goals or

objectives is indeed mentioned, but it is described as just one of the strategies (Anderson 1999; Grabe and Stoller 2002; among others), but here too, a key point is often missed: in real-life reading, generally one *starts out* with a goal or purpose for which one is going to read, a reason for taking up a text in the first place, and then one uses various strategies to determine how to proceed with reading in order to get the information necessary for *accomplishing* that purpose.

One of the primary reasons why we read is because we want to do something and we need to obtain the information that is in a text in order to accomplish it. In fact, often when we read, we only learn the extent to which we have understood what we have read when we try to do something with that information, what Blanton (1993) calls “reading as performance” (see Blanton, 1993 for a list of classroom activities teachers can use in order to determine whether students have understood what they have read). When we have a purpose for reading from the outset, our ability to accomplish our task can give us important clues about whether we have understood what we read. Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986: 16) describe it this way:

We never know what we’ve read until we are forced to perform as readers – as though we know what we’ve read – and we face all those occasions (lectures, tests, papers) with that sense of anxiety, that doubt whether we can pull it off, which is evidence that comprehension is not something we possess but something we perform.

Reading for specific purposes requires students to *do* something with the information they have gleaned from reading. If we aren’t able to do what we set out to do (our original purpose for reading), then we invariably need to set in motion further strategies to remedy that lack of comprehension, or do what is necessary in order to “fill in the holes” in our understanding. If we didn’t have this “comprehension check,” we might not know to use some of those additional strategies. In real life, then, because we read in different ways for many different purposes, our purpose must be an important early consideration in determining which strategies to use and how to use them.

In my own study of one particular purpose for reading in an academic context, the writing of a research paper based upon the reading of a collection of articles on a chosen topic (Ediger 1999), two graduate student readers continually referred back to their ultimate task – the paper they had been assigned to write – to determine whether they were pursuing an ap-

propriate strategy and obtaining the information they needed for their goal. In this case, their understanding of their ultimate task – to write a synthesis paper on a topic related to their class – formed the basis for many of the decisions they made. For example, it was their *purpose* that led them to do all of the following:

- Skip from the beginning of an article they were reading to the last page, and then, to read only the last page of it, because they realized that that was where the information was that they needed.
- Compare the degree of detail in an article they were reading with the degree of detail that they thought they would need to use in the paper they were going to write.
- Take detailed notes, compare them with an article they were reading, then go back and read their notes, before going on to the next article.
- Reflect on and check the meaning of a particular term – by saying to themselves what they thought it meant, reflecting on it, and then looking at how the word was used in an article they had read earlier, and finally, when satisfied, moving on to reading something else.
- Reject an article completely, realizing it was not as relevant to their task as they had first thought.
- Re-read, at the end of the process, a particular paper that they had originally read at the beginning, because at that point, they realized that it contained the most important information, and thus, was crucial for accomplishing their task.

The students involved in this study reported that being forced to think aloud throughout the entire process turned out to be a useful strategy in itself, in that it helped bring to their awareness what they needed to do along the way in order to achieve their purpose.

Another remarkable effect of reading for a purpose is that the purpose increases a reader's interest and recall (Schraw and Dennison 1994) and provides a built-in motivation to read. When students read for a purpose, their internal desire to accomplish the goal often causes them to do things that they might otherwise be resistant to doing. For example, in one purpose-focused reading class I have worked with, if the students had been asked to read a particular book chapter over seven or eight times, they would have protested and been extremely reluctant to do it. However, at one point in the class when their complete understanding of a chapter was needed in order to be able to summarize its content as part of a presentation to their class, I observed them reading the chapter over and over – seven or

eight times – until they felt confident about their understanding of the material. In this case, repeated re-reading became a strategy that they used without being asked to because the end task compelled them to. They reported that it was an extremely helpful strategy, not only for finding the information they needed, but also for confirming their comprehension of it. Reading seven or eight times turned out to be a strategy that enabled them to accomplish their task (and, by the way, one frequently recommended in reading instruction) (Taguchi, Takayaso-Maass, and Gorsuch 2004).

Reading for real purposes also makes it easier for us to see that not all reading should be performed in the same way – it depends on what our purpose is. For instance, it calls into question the common practice of always teaching students to look for main ideas in everything they read. In one illustration of this, when investigating how one group of high school students read their science texts when asked to summarize what they had read, Johns and Paz (1997) concluded that since much of what they read had *no* main idea, looking for the main idea didn't make sense as a reading strategy. A more useful strategy in this case, and one that was used by the expert readers in their study, involved using what they knew about the discourse structure commonly found in scientific reports. Ultimately, looking for information in the science texts in a way that paralleled the different parts of the genre of science reports produced the best summaries of the science texts.

Leki (1993: 17) also makes a similar point about not always reading for main ideas when reading for a different real-world purpose:

What difference does it make if the student correctly or incorrectly identifies the same main idea as the teacher? In natural reading contexts, proficient and even less skilled readers reading for a real-world purpose not only skim, scan, or chunk for their own purposes, but they also choose to privilege either main ideas or details of a text, again depending on their purpose in reading. In a given text read by a specific reader in a real-world context, the main idea may or may not be significant. The reader may retain only a striking image or line of reasoning, or even, as is often the case with academic readers, only a citation or reference to another text. But if the purpose for reading a text is to practice reading, then students have no basis on which to privilege main ideas or details. By persistently imposing a check on comprehension of main ideas, we may in fact be training our students to read in ways characteristic of poor readers, bound to the text and lacking the purpose that would allow them to skip over information they themselves judge uninteresting or unnecessary.

When we read for a purpose, our purpose is often different from the original purpose of the writer of the text – and it is important for our students to understand this. What we have to read for instead is information that fits *our* purpose, not necessarily the purpose of the original writer. Sometimes, this means that we may need to read a large amount of material in a certain way (often quickly) to determine generally if it is relevant to our purpose, and then we may read more closely and carefully only that specific information or the portion of the text that we have determined is relevant to our own purpose. This may be quite different from the original writer’s main idea, and may even be quite contrary to it.

6. Fostering effective reading strategy instruction

By now, numerous studies on reading in both L1 (Baker and Brown 1984; Bereiter and Bird 1985; see also Pressley and Woloshyn 1995 for a very useful review) and L2 (Hosenfeld 1984; Hamp-Lyons 1985; Barnett 1988a, 1988b; Carrell, Pharis and Liberto 1989; Kern 1989; Carrell 1998) show that teaching learners to use reading strategies helps students improve their reading comprehension. Furthermore, the research suggests a number of qualities for such instruction to be maximally beneficial (Duffy 1993; Oxford 1994; Pressley and Woloshyn 1995; Janzen and Stoller 1998). In order for strategy instruction to be effective, it should:

- Focus on establishing a purpose for reading – Duffy (1993) found that until the teachers he was working with established a purpose for their students’ reading, their strategies didn’t make sense, and didn’t lead toward the ultimate ability to use strategies.
- Extend over time – learning to become strategic readers is a long-term developmental process, often taking even years (Pressley 2000).
- Be multi-componential, and thus, should focus on the teaching of multiple integrated strategies, oriented toward specific purposes.
- Be different for different learners, depending on their language background, ethnicity, goals of study, proficiency level, learning styles, and gender. There are no universal “good language learning or using strategies” as past research has led us to believe (Oxford and Leaver 1996; Chandler, Lizotte, and Rowe 1998).
- Involve either explicit explanation or modeling (e.g., by “thinking aloud”) of strategies by teachers for students. Then students gradually

assume more control for their own use of strategies from the teacher, eventually becoming able to use them independently.

- Focus on helping students understand when and where to use strategies, either by explaining it to them directly, or by having them abstract it while practicing the use of strategies. Such instruction needs to include important metacognitive information, such as why the strategy should be used, what it accomplishes, and specific situations in which the strategy is applicable.
- Teach students to monitor how they are doing in their strategy use, and to take corrective action when problems are identified; this focus on ultimately developing students into self-regulated strategy users will enable them to determine for themselves if their strategies are effective, or if they need to take other measures to ensure their understanding of a text.
- Include specific information about the benefits of the strategies being taught, and thus, to motivate students to use strategies regularly.
- Teach strategy use in context-integrated into the curriculum and into course content, rather than as a separate subject. Students benefit most when they can see when and where to use them through direct experience in realistic contexts.
- Teach students non-strategic knowledge along with the strategies – knowledge on which their strategy use often depends. In reading, one type of non-strategic knowledge involves background knowledge that readers need in order to make sense of what they are reading.

7. Using purposeful reading to develop strategic L2 readers

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw that the key elements fostering comprehension in reading include, in addition to the skillful use of comprehension strategies, strong word recognition skills and the ability to integrate background knowledge. Thus, effective instruction in strategy use also can be enhanced by incorporating these other two comprehension-facilitating components, namely, the ability to incorporate world knowledge with the strategy use, and a learning context that facilitates the development of strong word-level skills. The following are some practical ways in which strategies, world knowledge, and vocabulary skills can be integrated into L2 reading instruction:

7.1. Integrate purpose into the overall curriculum design

Design the overall course curriculum in a way that supports real-life reading for a purpose. Although there are many different ways to do this, some of the types of curriculum that particularly support purposeful reading include sustained content instruction, narrow reading, or task-based reading (see Pally 2000; Schmitt and Carter 2000; Murphy and Stoller 2001; Ellis 2003; among others, for explanations of these types of curricula). When taught in these types of curricula, readers must strategically determine which readings or which parts of a reading are useful for their purpose, as well as which strategies will enable them to make use of the information contained in the texts to achieve their purpose. Some ways to do this are:

- Collect a variety of materials in different genres around a single topic or theme (e.g., “developing a multi-cultural identity”).
- Explore or develop collections of news articles on a single subject (e.g., “the war in Iraq”).
- Select a longer novel, non-fiction book, or other extended text that will involve students in reading on a single subject for multiple class sessions over an extended period of time.
- Depending on the content, subject, and texts selected, consider including at least one text that is only marginally relevant, so that at some point students must evaluate whether reading it will help them achieve their purpose.

7.2. Begin each lesson with a purpose

Design instruction so that units or lessons begin with a real purpose for reading. Although few L2 reading textbooks available today provide such purposes (however, see Ediger and Pavlik 1999 and 2000 for some examples that do), designing a purpose is not difficult. Make this purpose fit the students’ own reasons for learning the L2 and the content of the curriculum. (Are they learning the L2 for academic reasons? Business? Travel?) Some real-life purposes can be seen below, along with examples of how they might be integrated with selected content texts (See Figure 2, below).

<i>Purpose – Read in order to:</i>	<i>Classroom applications or activities that involve reading for such purposes:</i>
Make a decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read business reports in order to make a business decision - Read a college catalogue in order to decide whether to apply for admission - Decide which candidate to vote for, on the basis of their campaign statements
Report (orally or in writing) what one has learned about a subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research how advertisements are designed so that they have the most effect on their audience; then present this information in an oral report - Read a non-fiction book on gorillas in Rwanda, in order to understand how a group of animals work together to aid each other's survival
Synthesize or put information into a different format	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write a research paper about a particular author's style, as seen in several of the author's books - Develop a travel brochure to highlight key features of a place people like to visit - Read and compare a novel and a non-fiction book on a related topic - Design an advertisement for an imaginary product, based upon the information learned from reading on this subject
Get a general idea about something	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read several news articles to understand what happened in an event - Look over a magazine to get an idea of what it is about, or who its intended audience is
Learn about a subject (in order to pass a test on it)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prepare for a test to obtain a driver's license - Read about the history of the Civil War in order to take a test about its causes and impact on the country - Research a company at which you will have an interview for a job
Obtain information crucial for performing a specific task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Follow a series of directions in order to build a bookshelf - Read a travel guide to learn where to find a particular historical site and to understand better what happened there

Figure 2. Some real-world reading purposes and related classroom activities

	- Obtain necessary information to order books or merchandise over the Internet
Make an argument or case for something	- Read business reports to make a recommendation about which division a company should sell off - Read several stories by a single author, in order to determine if a particular interpretation or claim about this author is justified - Read a non-fiction book on the bear population in some urban areas, in order to decide if hunting of bears should be permitted
Be entertained, or to pass the time	- Read a novel, and share what you liked about it - Read a magazine while waiting for a bus - Enjoy a poem, by reading it out loud
Other:	- (...)

Figure 2. cont.

7.3. Teach students to regulate their strategies for achieving specific purposes

Teach by integrating into instruction the self-regulated use of comprehension strategies explicitly within the context of a particular purpose, and in a supportive classroom, following these steps:

- Begin by brainstorming and discussing as a class or with partners about which strategies to use, how to use a particular strategy in a particular context, and what alternatives they have if a strategy doesn't work.
- Break down a task into a series of steps that can be used to accomplish it. In the process of accomplishing the task or purpose, the entire task can be visualized and the component steps listed so that an appropriate strategy can be selected to address each of those sub-steps. Students may refer back to these steps in the process over and over in their minds – as a way of keeping a constant focus on whether their strategies are helping them accomplish their purpose. For example (adapted from Pressley and Woloshyn 1995; Johns and Paz 1997):

Purpose: To summarize a passage

- Identify the genre of the text, and the typical text organization system for that genre.
 - Identify information that matches each typical element of that genre.
 - If applicable, identify main vs. supporting information; Relate main and supporting information.
 - Delete trivial, irrelevant, and redundant information.
 - Substitute superordinate terms for lists of items.
 - Integrate a series of events with superordinate action terms.
 - Select or create a topic sentence to generalize the other information.
-
- If necessary, explain strategies and provide a mental modeling of their use, i.e., show students how to apply a strategy by thinking aloud through your mental “decisions” and by putting into words your thoughts as you consider the purpose, the content, and different strategic courses of action.
 - Have students practice the strategies in the context of real reading; Monitor this practice, providing additional explanations and modeling as needed.
 - Teach students the language they need to share about and discuss their use of strategies (e.g., such vocabulary as: predict/prediction, etc.) and restate students’ strategic and interpretive responses, for example:
 - I tried the ___ strategy because ...
 - ___ doesn’t make sense because ...
 - How did that strategy help you? It helped me by ...
 - Because I want to (purpose), I need to (strategy)
-
- Share with the class what works and what doesn’t; Teach metacognitive monitoring of strategy use.
 - Teach strategy use in conjunction with other strategies; discuss how different ones relate to each other.
 - Help and encourage students to develop and test their own strategies individually, in the process of identifying which ones work well for them; Develop a classroom environment that builds on the understanding that different learners use strategies in different ways.

- Encourage students to ask themselves why the ideas related in a text make sense. “Why” questioning can have great effect on learning by connecting readers to prior knowledge that can make facts in a text more sensible, and hence, more comprehensible and memorable.
- Gradually reduce feedback and instruction as students become more and more independent (i.e., scaffold the instruction).
- Encourage transfer of strategies by discussing when and where the strategies being learned might be used.
- Call students’ attention to the times when they are using strategies; Praise them for their use of strategies; Encourage students to offer and try out their own strategies.
- Cue the use of new strategies when students encounter situations where they might be applied profitably, regardless of when these occasions arise during the school day.
- Continue cuing and prompting until students independently apply the strategies they have been taught.

7.4. Help students access their world knowledge

Facilitate your students’ ability to incorporate their world knowledge. L2 students often do not share the world knowledge of the author because their experience does not always overlap with that of the writer. Design pre-reading activities in ways that build background knowledge and help students focus that knowledge on achieving their assigned purpose for reading. In a sustained content curriculum, the learning environment and curriculum can help students build the world knowledge they need, while also supporting and situating the strategies they are developing. Sustained content and narrow reading allow students to build their knowledge of a subject gradually and incrementally through multiple texts on a single topic, or through reading multiple chapters that revolve around a single context. This “layering” effect gives students a chance to develop deeper background knowledge of the particular subject they are reading about.

7.5. Build students’ vocabulary recognition through multiple exposures

Facilitate your students’ ability to recognize vocabulary quickly by exposing them to key vocabulary over and over again through the content material they are reading. Do this by providing texts for reading that recycle

vocabulary and provide multiple exposures to the same vocabulary and concepts. Allow students to experience and re-experience vocabulary in both written and oral language contexts, providing many encounters with the same words. Keep a class vocabulary list; at the same time, encourage students to keep their own personal vocabulary notebooks. Involve students actively in developing meanings of words and exploring them in those contexts. A sustained content or narrow reading curriculum does this also by exposing students to key vocabulary repeatedly through the multiple and extended readings on the same topic. As students see certain vocabulary repeatedly in different texts, all on the same general topic, they increase their word recognition speed, as well as develop a working vocabulary for talking or writing about that topic.

8. Conclusion

Ultimately, having a guiding purpose or a specific task to accomplish when reading can aid significantly in the development of strategies for facilitating reading comprehension. In both real-world and classroom situations, purposeful reading can influence the reader's motivation, interest, and manner of reading, making it a crucial factor for consideration in reading instruction. If students are given real-world tasks and reasons for reading, they can provide an authentic context within which to learn the steps and methods of reading for a meaningful message. As in real-world reading, one's purpose in classroom activities needs to guide the method of reading and the choice of strategies to be used throughout.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Identify some of your own real-world purposes for reading: For a limited period of time (for example, for a day or two), carry around a small notebook with you wherever you go, and note down all of the different purposes for which you read (in any language) as you go about your daily life. What are some of these purposes? In many of these cases, what do you DO with the information that you have read? Does it influence HOW you read

in each case? Can you use any of this information when you teach your students about reading in English?

Activity 2

Along with some other members of a class or group, try doing a Think-aloud individually of the same paragraph (or other short passage) and audio-taping your words. Then transcribe your Think-aloud and bring it to share with other members of your group. Together, discuss the different strategies each of you came up with, and the relative effectiveness of each strategy. Try to explain in each case why you used that particular strategy where you did. Now evaluate your strategies: Do you think they were effective? Did you learn any new strategies from others in your group? Do you think your individual learning styles, gender, or other background influenced the strategies you chose?

Activity 3

Select one real-life purpose for reading (e.g., “to make a decision” or “to summarize a passage”) to fit a text that you have, and brainstorm a list of sub-steps you would follow in accomplishing your purpose, as well as a list of strategies that you think would help you accomplish that purpose. Then look at your two lists. Is there a particular order to your steps? What would happen if you changed the order? Is there any relationship between the steps you would follow in the process and the strategies you would use?

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Finding a path to fluent academic and workplace reading

Mary Lee Field

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. What reading skills do students need in order to function well in English-language environments?
2. Think for a moment about someone you consider to be a fluent reader in his/her first language (L1). Is it someone who seems to devour material of all kinds – novels, newspapers, academic texts, technical materials? Is it someone who remembers well what was read? Someone who sees main points and the relevant details that support those points? Someone who loves to read? Someone who spends a significant part of each day reading? How did that person become a fluent reader?
3. What types of students are most successful in English-language environments? Why?
4. What is fluent reading? Is it learned or developed? How long does it take to become a fluent reader? Can every student become a fluent reader?

1. Introduction: The gap

Many people who have studied how to speak English as a Second or Foreign language (ESL/EFL) have experienced shock and disappointment when they are placed among native speakers of English in an English-language environment. They cannot understand what the native speakers are saying. Overheard conversations are meaningless. Television announcers cannot be deciphered! All that work, all that study, and they cannot understand 50% (or more, or less) of the language around them!

The gap between a controlled, classroom environment and the noisy, busy, uncontrolled real world of communication is huge. The same kind of shock and disappointment can occur when EFL learners are suddenly

confronted with reading tasks in English environments. Texts written for native English speakers – not graded readers with glossaries or simplified newspapers with pictures, but college texts, business memos, formal and legal documents – provide new challenges. Japanese students who have never read more than 3-page assignments per week in their native language for a college class are suddenly asked to read one hundred pages in the next two days for a class in a western university. In addition, the teacher will give them a Supplemental Reading List of ten to thirty books that will enhance their understanding of the context of the course. Employees in a corporation will be given 100-page reports to read and critique overnight. How can they manage?

How can we possibly prepare students for study or work in an English environment? What skills do they need, and can we effectively teach them those skills? The gap between their formal schooling situations and their future academic or work situations is huge. Leaping across it demands special training provided by savvy teachers. It may be helpful to use the metaphor of the “long distance runner.” To become fluent readers, students need practice, stamina, training, skills, and endurance – things like extensive reading, automaticity, specialized vocabulary, metacognitive strategies, comprehension monitoring, and background building. Your ability to teach, motivate, and reward students engaged in the marathon of work that leads to fluent English reading will be strengthened both by a solid understanding of reading theory in L1 and in a second language (L2) and by a familiarity with the most effective methods for teaching fluency.

This chapter deals exclusively with ways to prepare students for the reading tasks they will face in English universities or in English language work situations. If you are teaching beginning ESL readers, or even intermediate students who will not strive for study or work in English environments, the material here may be interesting but somewhat removed from your daily activities and concerns.

The three previous chapters in this collection on reading, those by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, Grabe and Ediger, have provided a solid foundation for us to build on as we turn to the issue of reading fluency. Armed with their information on current research, instructional implications of that research, instructional effectiveness, and the importance of purposeful, strategic reading, we can now address the complex task of finding a path to fluency. I will first examine several definitions of reading fluency so that we share a common understanding of the phrase. Second, I will note some of the most troublesome barriers to achieving fluency; these are the hurdles that students and teachers must

consciously address as they go about building fluency. Next, I will lay out the areas involved in getting to fluency based on the relevant research on those issues. Building from that research, I go on to describe the critical elements to be included in a program designed to build fluency, including specific activities, assignments, and tasks.

2. Defining fluent reading

Anyone who is reading this book is almost certainly a fluent reader of his or her L1 and possibly of one or more second languages. Defining fluent reading is not an easy task, however, specifically because we all have some deep-set notions about the meaning of fluency. Think for a moment about someone you consider to be a fluent L1 reader. Is it someone who seems to devour material of all kinds? Is it someone who can remember, summarize, discuss and comment on what was read? Someone who loves to read? Then, think about someone you know who is a fluent reader in an L2. Is that person a fluent reader in L1 as well as L2? Would you describe that person's L2 reading in the same ways that you describe his or her L1 fluent reading? Does that person love to read? How many people can you name who "hate to read" in their native language but love to read in an L2? Is there a lesson for us there? As you can see, the issues here are complex and often inter-related.

Despite our individual notions and experiences of fluent reading in native and second languages, we need to establish a basic definition of fluent reading in order to agree on the best ways to teach students to become fluent readers. Grabe and Stoller (2002: 110) comment that the elements of fluent reading "reflect cognitive abilities to process visual and semantic information efficiently, combining automatic and attentional skills most appropriately for the reading task involved." Day and Bamford (1998: 16) identify the "components upon which fluent second language reading depends [as] a large sight vocabulary; a wide general vocabulary; and knowledge of the target language, the world, and text types." Fluent reading comprehension, not just decoding words but coming away from a text with a clear understanding and an appropriate interpretation of it, involves a number of processes. Consider the astonishing processes that occur in every two seconds while we are reading in L1: recognize and understand the meaning of eight to ten words; recognize a grammatical structure and form a meaning unit; connect new meaning to what was read before; assess the 'fit' of the information; infer, check comprehension,

revise if necessary; and evaluate information, making decisions about ambiguities when necessary (Grabe and Stoller 2002). That we achieve all those processes while reading in L1 is remarkable; reaching a level where we can complete those processes as rapidly (or nearly so) in L2 is doubly remarkable. No wonder a recent publication (Moats 1999) from the American Federation of Teachers was entitled “Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science.”

Reading fluency in both L1 and L2 is not a static or fixed process that once achieved remains constant. We are not all fluent readers, even in L1, all of the time with all texts. Comprehension and speed vary with different tasks. First of all, not all L1 readers are fluent readers, and certainly few of us are fluent readers when confronted with materials that are specialized, de-contextualized, in a technical area outside our experience or simply not consistent with our cultural background and schemata. A fluent reader of 20th century novels may flounder when confronted with an economics text. A computer geek who has never read much fiction may be lost when reading a stream-of-consciousness novel. An article about physics leaves me completely baffled. Moreover, even fluent readers vary their speed according to the text they are reading and their purpose(s) for reading that text. When we read to learn or remember, we tend to read a bit slower. When we read through a detective story to discover who the villain is, we read rapidly (Grabe and Stoller 2002).

Even more disruptive to fluent reading can be cultural issues, ideas or assumptions that we are not conscious of or that do not exist in our own experience. An ESL student aptly describes that difficulty: “I do not know how to explain something which does not exist in the English-speaking world in the English language. And I do not know how to understand something that never existed in my frame of reference” (Zamel and Spack 1998: 97). Decoding words and understanding the meanings of individual words does not necessarily constitute comprehension of a text. Thus, a passage in English with no new words may still be incomprehensible to an L2 reader. In all situations it is critical to remember that individuals have particular literacy backgrounds that “will significantly affect attitudes towards texts” (Ridgway 2003: 9).

Fluent reading is a complex process that involves cognitive processes, cultural background, world knowledge, and linguistic knowledge. As a working definition for the purposes of this essay and adapting a list compiled by Grabe and Stoller (2002), along with the descriptions cited above, I suggest the following: Fluent L2 reading is a rapid, efficient, interactive, flexible linguistic process that incorporates purposeful,

strategic, evaluating elements. In addition to providing comprehension of a wide variety of texts, fluent reading produces enhanced knowledge of the L2, reinforces knowledge of standard structures in the target language, and helps develop the habit of reading that in turn promotes fluent reading.

3. Barriers to achieving fluent L2 reading

Language learners follow a certain general progression in learning a language. They must learn and begin to produce a new sound system (sometimes quite different, sometimes not), memorize, recognize, and produce a new orthography, and learn new rules of syntax and morphology, among other tasks. Hard work, feats of memory, hours of study, practice, repetition, translation and analysis are necessary for any language learner, no matter how talented, gifted or bright the student may be. While target languages that share orthography, sounds, etc. with the learner's native language may seem somewhat easier to learn (Grabe and Stoller 2002), the acquisition processes are similar no matter what the target and the L1 may be.

The part of the language learning sequence that is under consideration in this essay – the teaching that moves students from upper intermediate or advanced to fluent or bilingual – has not received as much attention as teaching at the beginning and intermediate levels. When do students go from being earnest *studiers* of a language to fluent users of a language? What is the crossover point? Does it happen in class or in the student's everyday use of the language? How long does it take? What triggers the change?

A friend who teaches in an intensive language program phrased those questions to me recently – why do some students make it and some don't? Some make the leap, some never do. Two students with similar TOEFL scores begin graduate study in the same department of the same university. One fails; the other succeeds. Why? What barriers, hurdles, interferences or factors stopped one from being successful? What skills helped the other succeed? I argue here that a number of events, usually involving some kind of change in thinking or in approach, have to occur for a learner to find the path to fluency. Some changes are metacognitive – a better understanding of the nature of reading and the nature of language learning and strategy use. Some changes are strongly tied to culture, personality and identity. Some changes involve new behaviors, new goals, new motivation, new priorities. Without changes, many high-intermediate students reach a kind

of plateau in their language-learning journey and do not move on to fluency.

The learner who has achieved a high intermediate or even advanced level in L2 has already established a number of habits, learning methods, beliefs about language, and assumption about his or her ability. Having been a successful language learner up to this point, those habits and beliefs are deeply embedded. There has been no reason to question them, no reason to modify them. Unfortunately, some of those habits may also be barriers to attaining fluency – or to continue the metaphor, hurdles in the path of the long distance runner. In order to move learners from competent to fluent, teachers and students alike must look honestly at previous learning behaviors and evaluate each one in terms of whether or not it will help produce fluency. Figure 1 below illustrates some of the most common and troublesome beliefs and behaviors that may be barriers. A discussion of each general area follows the table.

<i>Previously useful language learning habits that may be barriers to gaining fluency</i>	<i>How these habits inhibit the development of fluency</i>
- Study intensely and to the point of exhaustion	- Learners can only take in so much new information at a time and retain it. Beyond that limit, the ‘hard work’ is potentially wasted. A reader may make gains from reading “at level” that will be more useful than burning midnight oil to memorize another 20 words.
- Tackle increasingly difficult materials, far above one’s current language level	- Very high-level materials force one to translate in order to understand; they often destroy confidence and erode motivation.
- Continue to translate all texts into L1 under the assumption that one can’t really understand them unless every word is translated	- Translation prevents one from functioning “in” the target language and developing automaticity.

Figure 1. Common barriers to developing fluent L2 reading

- Memorize long lists of words/definitions, especially technical or specialized words	- This activity takes precious time away from the process of understanding words in phrases and frequently used combinations.
- Study only authentic materials at the highest levels	- Authentic texts may sometimes work against developing fluency.
- Avoid long texts in favor of short, difficult ones	- Short texts prevent one from sustained reading and practicing automatic word and sentence pattern recognition.
- Read only to 'study' a text, never for pleasure or information	- Reduces and often eliminates any pleasure in reading, any desire to read for fun, any habit of reading or love of reading.
- Slow reading, using a pencil or a finger to keep track of lines, seeing one word at a time	- These behaviors are a sure indication of the learner's inability to process information, rely on understanding in the target language, and see larger chunks of language. The student is on a path that moves away from fluency.

Figure 1. cont.

3.1. Language use, cultural identity, and translation

Most beginning language learners are dependent on L1 as a base for their acquisition of L2. While the communicative method encourages learners to use the target language as soon as possible, it takes time for us to give up our dependence on some level of translation. Those who learn to communicate and to read without constant, simultaneous translation are well on the way to becoming fluent in the L2. However, when they are confronted with a reading text that has a high percentage of unknown words – high meaning more than 5 or 6% – or a text with complex grammar or syntax that is new to them, their natural tendency is to fall back on translation in order to understand the text. In an attempt to move students to higher levels of reading, teachers often assign more difficult texts. With each difficult text, the learner is thrown back to the need to translate in order to comprehend. The result is that reading is slow (far from fluent), tedious, unrewarding, and de-motivating. Fast, efficient, flexible, strategic reading will not result from the decoding, grammatical analysis,

and translation of difficult texts (Day and Bamford 1998; Waring and Takahashi 2000).

Being fluent in an L2 may also create identity issues for some learners. While an L1 German speaker may not feel much loss of identity when speaking English, a Japanese speaker may feel quite disoriented when asked to function in an English speaking environment. Certainly an English speaker, especially a woman, will feel oddly uncomfortable being constrained to use various levels of honorifics and deferential terms, as well as grammatical markers and vocabulary, that mark her as being female. On a subconscious level, learners may resist the steps toward full understanding in the L2 because it makes them feel odd and forces them to think about the content of the text in their second language, which isn't THEM. Being aware of that resistance, an example of metacognitive understanding, is the first step toward overcoming it.

3.2. Vocabulary acquisition and automaticity

There is considerable agreement about the need for a large general vocabulary and an appropriate specialized vocabulary in order to be a fluent reader in L2. There is a difference, however, between knowing definitions (or translations) of a long list of words and a rapid, automatic recognition and processing of many commonly used words. Automatic processing of text leads to fluent reading, but automatic processing only occurs when the language in the text matches the reader's own language level. Difficult texts, as noted above, throw the student back into translation rather than automatic processing.

Even those who have achieved a large specialized sight vocabulary in their areas of specialization can have trouble with texts written for native speakers that use a rich choice of English words. Zamel and Spack (1998: 97) show an example of a student describing problems with reading a psychology text. The student says:

It's not the actual scientific terms (such as 'repression,' 'schizophrenia,' 'psychosis,' or 'neurosis') that make the reading so hard, but it's descriptive and elaborating terms (e.g., 'to coax,' 'gnawing discomfort,' 'remnants,' 'fervent appeal'), instead. It is a very frustrating thing to read these kinds of texts, because one feels incredibly ignorant and stupid.

Feeling ignorant and stupid are not the affects that will motivate students to read often and more.

3.3. Sentence pattern processing and automaticity

Language knowledge is critical to fluent reading. Readers must be able to process sentences, words, chunks of language, ideas, and syntactic structures. But as long as the learner sees those elements only as they appear in translation to L1, the pattern recognition and automaticity will not develop (Lewis 2000). Proponents of extensive reading argue convincingly that learners only develop automaticity by reading extensively at their own level. Through hours of reading at their own level they become better and better at recognizing larger chunks of language, understanding sentence structure and syntax, and processing information (Day and Bamford 1998; Lewis 2000; Waring and Takahashi 2000).

3.4. Level, amount, and appropriateness of materials

Fluent readers are confident readers. Confidence is built over time, not bestowed suddenly. The materials that will build reading fluency and confidence must be selected with care. Interest, level (both vocabulary and grammar), cultural context, and length are considerations for the teacher who is selecting texts to help students develop fluency. The materials need to promote each learner's habit of reading, sustained silent reading, and the reading of longer and longer text. These materials must also lend themselves to increasing the learners' reading speed and to building their confidence. There can probably never be too many materials. Since gathering materials in a number of academic fields and career paths is too large a task for any one teacher, every student can be called up to download and print materials from the internet, peruse materials in the library, borrow, beg and buy any texts – from low level to high level – that deal specifically with their area. Indeed, the more the students are responsible for collecting the materials, the more likely they will be interested in the texts. The readings that are too easy will help reinforce rapid reading; the ones that are too difficult will be read much later in the program.

3.5. L1 environment vs L2 environment

Some argue that it is impossible to become fluent in an L2 unless one is living in an environment where that language is spoken. Certainly the amount of language input (Krashen 1988) available when everyone around speaks the L2 as a native language is a boost to listening and speaking fluency. On the other hand, people may live in an English-speaking environment and never learn to speak English – a point that infuriates many who understand little about language acquisition. The language environment does not insure language acquisition. In the case of L2 reading, the environment does not insure fluent reading. In fact, the influence of the environment may be even less important for reading than it is for speaking and listening. Anderson, in a study of students' use of reading strategies in L1 and L2 environments, concludes that the availability of English texts around the world and through the internet has diminished the differences between readers in the two settings (Anderson 2003). An English text in Spain is like an English text in Japan, a tool for improving reading skills regardless of the current language environment. More critical than the language environment is the nature, appropriateness, and interest of the text. Becoming fluent readers of English means having access to a large quantity of appropriate texts that will help the learner develop automaticity in word recognition and sentence pattern recognition. These texts will reinforce general vocabulary and give students the critically important confidence to continue reading.

Well, enough of barriers, hurdles, fears and difficulties. If fluent reading can be taught and nurtured, and I believe it can, we need to look at how to do just that. Recent studies conclude that L1 reading and L2 reading are quite different, and there are many reasons for those differences (Grabe and Stoller 2002). Even with obvious differences in vocabulary knowledge and language knowledge, the process of reading in L2 at the high-intermediate level and above is more like the process of reading in L1 than anything else. At some point, fluent reading in L2 becomes something like reading in L1. Vastly different orthographies, cultural attitudes towards reading, availability of appropriate materials, and other factors may keep learners from reaching fluency quickly. Yet, when fluent readers use the target language, learn in the target language, and function in the target language, they are performing in ways that have some similarity to the ways that native speakers develop fluent reading and higher register speaking skills.

4. How to build reading fluency

4.1. Begin at the beginning – with your own reading

At the risk of making my readers a bit uncomfortable, I want to begin with a crucial, self-reflective activity. Teachers must first consider their own reading ability, both in L1 and in the L2. I am confident that you are fluent readers of your native language. I am equally confident that most of you have never thought much about your own L1 reading processes and how you became a fluent reader. Teachers faced with the task of helping learners become fluent L2 readers need first to be quite conscious of their own reading history, beliefs, abilities, strategies, etc. The suggested activity 6 at the end of this chapter takes you through a series of steps to become more conscious of your own reading.

Having considered your own L1 reading, it is also wise to examine your L2 reading. For teachers who are native speakers of English, consider how you read in Spanish, Greek, German, Japanese or any language you have studied. Have you achieved reading fluency in that language? How did you accomplish that? If not, what are the barriers that have kept you from becoming fluent? Do you model for your students your own attempts to read more fluently in a second language? My students in Japan were thrilled, amused, and motivated by my bringing kindergarten-level Japanese texts for my own reading while they engaged in silent extensive reading. If I could sit and read L2 texts at a kindergarten level, they could certainly read easy stories in graded readers at their own (much higher) L2 levels.

For non-native teachers of English, consider the model that you present to your students. Do you read English in front of them? Do you carry an English newspaper with you to read in spare moments? Do you enjoy reading novels, essays, or other texts in English? What are your own beliefs about becoming a fluent reader in English? Have you reached the reading level in English that you would like to achieve?

You cannot become a fluent reader of English overnight. But you can model for your students your own steps toward becoming a fluent reader. In a mixed-level class, and most classes contain a range of abilities, students can model reading for each other. You should remind learners frequently and emphatically that becoming a fluent reader is a process that occurs over time. They did not become fluent readers of L1 in the first two years of elementary school. Even as older or mature learners of a second language, they cannot become fluent readers in a few months. However, as older

learners they can apply, with your guidance, conscious strategies, metacognitive awareness, focused study and savvy methods to that developmental process.

4.2. Find plenty of appropriate materials

You and your students need access to a wide range of reading materials in order to find enough appropriate texts. On one hand it is good to let learners pick the reading materials that interest them and keep them engaged; on the other hand, learners often pick materials too far above, or occasionally even somewhat below, their own reading levels. Full sets of graded readers from a number of different publishers, English newspapers at all levels and with various points of view, materials from the internet that are written for elementary and middle school English speaking children, magazines for young people, textbooks for young people – all these may provide useful reading materials for your learners. Beware, however, of an emphasis on authentic texts simply because they are authentic. As Day (2003) so wisely illustrated in “Authentic Materials: A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”, a text may seem useful because it is authentic; but if the level is too high, learners are thrown back on translation, decoding, and other strategies that slow down rather than promote fluent reading.

4.3 Provide continuous motivation

The amount of time and effort that an intermediate-to-advanced students need to devote to becoming a fluent readers of English is substantial. Only students with high motivation, self discipline, and clear goals will achieve the levels they envision. Motivating students to do this much work is not easy, especially if they have not traveled or lived in the L2 environment at all. Fear and threats seldom work, and none of us want to teach in such a manner anyway. The motivation that will transform their wishes into the actions they must take to become fluent readers have to be internal, positive, and sustained. Day and Bamford’s (1998) chapter on motivating students to do extensive reading provides excellent suggestions that apply to a fluent reading program as well. Motivation that arises from stress, worry, or fear is exhausting, short-lived, and usually external. No matter how high the motivation, learners must have a realistic understanding of the time and effort it will take them to become fluent readers. In addition, they

must be willing to adjust their learning methods, to accept that fluency is acquired gradually, and to know that fluent reading cannot be dependent only on translation.

4.4. Vocabulary

The most obvious gap between fluent and non-fluent EFL readers is the English vocabulary that they have available for use while reading. A native English-speaking elementary school child in the US has a vocabulary that is usually estimated at 5,000 words. The highest levels of graded readers contain about 3,600 to 5,000 head words; college freshman sociology texts may contain between 20,000 and 40,000 words (Grabe and Stoller 2002). Most L2 readers begin reading without the spoken vocabulary advantage that native users have, and their progress is relatively slow. In addition, L1 readers begin reading with a wealth of knowledge about how words are combined in their language. Lewis (2000: 55), arguing that collocations are a key to fluency, comments that “advanced students do not become more fluent by being given lots of opportunities to be fluent. They become more fluent when they acquire more chunks of language for instant retrieval.” What kind of curriculum can we design to help students acquire those chunks? Where is the path through this difficult patch in their language learning journey?

Students may be highly motivated to focus on vocabulary study. It is a familiar task for them, and many have probably been successful in memorizing lists of words. In order to build fluency, however, their vocabulary study tasks will be more complicated. Fluent readers need automatic recognition of many words and of many word combinations. They need to focus on acquisition of vocabulary in the long-term memory, giving them access to a broad, functional word base in various contexts. In addition, they need the specialized vocabulary that will occur repeatedly in their work situations or academic fields of study. No one method of vocabulary study is comprehensive enough to train learners in so many ways. Instead, several types of vocabulary study, pursued at different times and with different texts, may combine to produce the vocabulary skills that fluent readers need: bottom up strategy training; reading at their language level to improve sight recognition and develop automaticity; collocation study to help them recognize larger segments of texts; and, narrow reading exercises. All four should be a part of any fluent reading program, but not all at the same time.

4.4.1. Bottom-up strategy training

Most researchers agree that reading is an interactive process that involves both bottom-up and top-down activities. Recent emphasis on top-down processes (e.g., schema building, guessing words in context) is now being balanced with more attention to de-coding and word recognition exercises (Birch 2002). Exercises that push learners to recognize and process words quickly are good correctives for those who read very slowly and translate even the simplest words. Positive results with bottom up vocabulary study are reported by Ichiyama (2003). The exercises used in her study included rapid and repetitive exposure to vocabulary that appeared to help students not only to recognize but also to memorize and remember words (see also Grabe 1988; Segalowitz, Poulson, and Komoda 1991; Paran 1996). For beginning readers, the bottom-up strategies are critical, and some recent approaches have neglected them sadly. If high-intermediate-to-advanced readers are lacking some of these bottom-up skills, additional or new training may be necessary.

4.4.2. Reading at level to develop automaticity

Proponents of extensive reading are unequivocal in their agreement that automatic recognition of words is critical to fluent reading (Eskey 1988; Wallace 2001; Birch 2002; Grabe and Stoller 2002). Native speakers develop this skill by years of reading at levels appropriate to their current language ability. Elementary school readers do not read medical textbooks; however, beginning EFL students may be asked to read nearly that far above their current language levels. Waring and Takaki (2000: 7) insist that “learners need to be reading at or below their reading ability in order to develop fluency and confidence.” Moreover, they emphasize that “there is no ‘short cut’ to the automatic recognition of words.” My own work with a Chinese graduate student is a case in point. When she came to me, her reading speed at Level One of the Cambridge Graded Readers (about 400 head words) was less than 100 words per minute. Over two months, she completed a rigorous reading program that took her through about 80% of the Cambridge Graded Readers at all six levels, moving up a level only when she was reading comfortably at the previous one. After two months, she was reading nearly 200 words per minute, with 90% comprehension, at the top level (about 3,500 head words). One cannot assume an equal success from all students, but there is no question that she learned to

recognize words and understand English syntax with a much higher degree of automaticity during that time.

4.4.3. Collocation study

A third type of vocabulary study that will nurture fluent reading is explained by Lewis (2000) in *Teaching Collocation: Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*. Lewis and other authors lay out an extensive program for collocation study, one that focuses on noticing and recording the most useful language in a given text and helping students build vocabulary through collocation notebooks. Collocations help us understand different meanings and definitions of words in actual contexts where they appear. Collocations also teach us to recognize “multi-word units” or “ready-made chunks” of language (Lewis 2000). Nearly all researchers agree that L2 readers need a large vocabulary in order to read fluently, but that is something of a simplification. A large vocabulary is only the first element in the recognition of larger-than-a-word chunks of language. By focusing on chunks of language and phrases that include a number of words, collocation study gives learners the chance to recognize larger packages of text, process them faster, and read more fluently. Combined with bottom-up strategy training, reading at level to develop automaticity, and narrow reading described below, collocation study will add an important processing element to the learner’s program.

4.4.4. Narrow vs. wide reading

The final element in a comprehensive vocabulary study plan must address the specialty vocabulary necessary for study or work in an English-speaking environment. Most people already know the subject, career track, or specialization that they will pursue in another country. They need a program, concurrent with the three types of vocabulary study described above, that will help them recognize quickly the words and phrases in their academic or career area. Schmitt and Carter’s (2000) experiment with “narrow reading” provides an illustration of how the teacher can design, with the student’s input, some narrow reading exercises, gather materials for narrow reading on one topic, and re-enforce the learner’s familiarity with a specialized vocabulary. For example, asking students to read 1 or 2

newspaper articles specifically in their area (such as economics, computer science, business management, biology) will begin the process.

Building a narrow or specialized vocabulary must occur simultaneously with building a large general vocabulary in order to allow learners to read fluently in their special fields or areas. Reading widely, as promoted by Krashen (1988) for language input and Day and Bamford (1998) for extensive reading is a powerful tool for improving reading skills. When learners read widely, especially at levels that contain fewer than 6% unknown words, they will improve reading speed, word recognition, and make progress toward fluency. When they read narrowly, in their own area of specialization, they will add the vocabulary and the specialized collocations that will help them read a subject-specific text fluently.

4.5. Grammar knowledge

Grammar knowledge exists in a variety of forms. Native speakers acquire considerable tacit grammar knowledge even before they begin to learn to read. The ability to read and understand simple, compound and complex sentences without having to stop and analyze specific structures is a powerful type of tacit grammar knowledge, one based partly on the ability to process chunks of language as we discussed earlier. The ability to draw a line from a pronoun to its antecedent indicates a more formal and conscious grammar knowledge. Many students of EFL have studied formal grammar rules and memorized grammatical charts, verb tense forms, rules of morphology and syntax. They may be able to complete grammar exercises at a rather high level of structural understanding. In order to become fluent readers, however, they must be able to process sentences with an increasing speed, competence and automaticity. Continuing to work high level grammar exercises may teach students new elements of grammar, but it will not improve their ability to recognize and comprehend those structures automatically. Corpus linguistics research illustrates for us that there is a “finite number of regularly-occurring patterns in language” (Larsen-Freeman 2001). Learning to read fluently means recognizing word groups that occur in the same structural patterns and being able to process them quickly.

While acquiring grammar knowledge is an ongoing process in language learning, and learners must never abandon the goal of better understanding of the target language, they must apply that knowledge in way that will lead to fluency. They must read. In the beginning, they must read at a level

where the grammar and syntax of the text is far below their technical understanding of the target language, and they must read as quickly as they can without stopping to examine grammar or syntactical features. One problem with texts written for elementary level native speakers is that low-level vocabulary does not guarantee low-level grammar. Because of a native speaker's tacit understanding of grammar patterns, the grammatical structures may be too advanced for the EFL reader. Remember Day's (2003) warning about a "wolf in sheep's clothing."

A full-blown reading program to develop fluency, with hours and hours of reading at each level in the graded reader series, will help students move gradually from very simple structures to more complex one. When the learner can read at Level 1 without stopping and without problems understanding the sentences/syntax, the language and grammar of Level 2 will introduce a few new elements – but not too many. The learner will process all the Level 1 material automatically, and will pause briefly (then, eventually less and less) to review or examine the higher-level sentence/syntax grammar as it appears.

4.6. Metacognitive strategy training

A reading program to develop fluency will also include some attention to reading strategies and metacognitive awareness of the nature of fluent reading. This is not to say that all hurdles can be overcome with strategy training. However, studies have hypothesized and confirmed that reader awareness and a flexible use of strategies among high intermediate to advanced students is directly correlated with reading proficiency (Carrell 1989a; Zhang 2002). Some of the most useful strategies are fully discussed in articles by Carrell (1989b) and Oxford (1990, 2001). Any program to develop fluent reading should also address a number of metacognitive strategies, including comprehension monitoring, connecting synonyms, outlining, structural highlighting, asking pre-reading questions, semantic mapping and others that are well discussed in the literature for teaching at the intermediate to advanced levels (Hosenfeld 1977; Carrell 1989b; Anderson 2003).

If, however, students already are familiar with these techniques, it is important to move on to a higher level of metacognitive awareness, especially an understanding of text structure in various academic disciplines or career areas. On the path to fluency, the structure of texts and the cross cultural features of texts are critical elements (Wallace 2001).

Students in the sciences need to understand the organization of a scientific article. Those who will specialize in social sciences or literary fields need to know the conventional structures of social and literary criticism. Career people need to know the ways that reports, memos, proposal, and projects are organized and developed (Carrell 1984a, 1984b).

In fact, probably the most helpful materials teacher can provide for their students are samples of the texts they will deal with in the L2 setting – a college syllabus, a theoretical text, a business report, a proposal to be submitted to a boss. All of these will help learners become familiar with the cultural and structural patterns of texts in their L2. The more they read those texts, the more fluent they will become. Teachers who are thus faced with the difficult task of trying to meet the needs of students with different specialties will find substantial help in works by Connor (1996) and Swales (1990).

5. A program to develop reading fluency

It is now time to pull together the cautions and advice offered above and describe the elements in a program designed to develop reading fluency. Each of the following elements is critical:

5.1. Preliminaries: Before starting a program

1. Be as informed as possible about the different cultural expectations for reading in their native languages and reading in English.
2. Know the rhetorical structures of academic and business texts in the students' native language as well as in English.
3. Understand the nature of fluent reading – yours in L1, yours in L2, and the research that describes it.
4. Build support for the program you design, convince colleagues, students and administrators of its validity, and stick with it. Even if the design isn't perfect, a program based on the recommendations in this chapter will take students in the right direction, and maybe to their goal.

5.2. Critical elements in a fluent reading program

Time: learners must make daily, weekly, monthly time commitments and adhere to them throughout the program. Any program to produce fluent readers should be a minimum of four months, preferably six. There will be great advances in four months, but six months is more realistic for achieving results that will make the transition to study or work in the L2 environment.

Motivation: The motivation for a fluent reading program must be nurtured, modeled, and reinforced by the teacher, but the motivation must come from within the student. Motivation is energy transformed into constructive, methodologically sound, efficient and productive activities. It needs to be reinforced regularly by work with peers, rewards, and recognition of progress. Integrate motivational elements into the programs – team goals, a buddy system, posting of goals, posting of timed reading scores, posting of books or materials read, individual record keeping, reading logs, and anything that helps keep the learners' energy levels high.

Metacognitive awareness: Teachers must promote an increased understanding of the nature of reading, the processes of reading, the most effective strategies for reading, and the cultural and rhetorical patterns of texts in the L2.

Appropriate materials: Collect, beg, borrow, download, buy materials in the target language – graded readers, textbooks at all levels (elementary to college), technical texts at all levels, newspapers, magazines, internet articles and anything else that is relevant to the students' special fields and at a wide range of reading difficulty. By the end of the program both the teacher and each individual student will have a substantial collection of useful texts.

Four pronged vocabulary study: Whether simultaneous or serial, different types of vocabulary study will deepen and widen the learner's word recognition skills and automaticity. Identify, with the students' help, the kinds of specialized vocabulary they will need in order to function well in the English environment. After explaining the four types of vocabulary study that they need to pursue, have students prioritize their needs and decide on a sequence of study.

Willingness to change: Both teachers and students will need flexibility, open minds, and cultural awareness. Teachers must be willing to use new methods of teaching; learners must be willing to learn new ways of reading.

Confidence in the program: Flexibility, motivation, and the ultimate success of the program depend on both the teachers' and the students'

belief that it will work! Explain to the students the value, efficiency and power of the program. Work with students to help them develop their goals and set up individualized programs: have them set a time frame; have them select the types of vocabulary study and strategy training they want to work on. Explain that they must do extensive reading, along with one type of vocabulary study and one metacognitive strategy training. Beyond that they can select from collocation study, narrow reading, timed readings, re-reading exercises, paired reading exercises, guided reading exercises, and any other activities you specify. Other activities could include comprehension monitoring, question formulation, visualization techniques, rhetorical analysis, genre recognition, and schematic mapping.

Read: Model reading for the students. Talk to them about things you read recently. Most important, get students reading – in class, out of class, in groups, individually, on the internet, in the library, on the bus/train, waiting in line, early in the morning, late at night, in waiting rooms, waiting for a meeting, waiting for a class to begin, and instead of watching TV.

6. Conclusion

Teachers and students who embark on a program of developing fluent reading have a lengthy, thrilling, and difficult journey ahead of them. The rewards are enormous; the challenges are daunting. Armed with a good understanding of the nature of reading, both in L1 and L2, as well as solid information about the most effective, progressive, satisfying and efficient ways to develop fluent reading, the successful journey to becoming a fluent L2 reader will bestow power, confidence and an ability that can not be lost, destroyed or taken away. There will be no regrets, no losses, no turning back. Go there.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Understand your own reading: How important is reading in your life, both in L1 and in L2? How much do you read every day? Are you satisfied with your reading levels in L1 and in L2? Why or why not?

Activity 2

Compare your reading in L1 and L2. Make note of the following items: What kinds of texts do you read? How often do you read? How do you feel when you are reading?

Activity 3

Interview someone that you consider to be an excellent L2 reader. How did that person develop those reading skills? How often does he read L2? What kinds of texts does he read?

Activity 4

Read a graded English reader (or an L2 text if your native language is English) that is substantially below your own English-reading level. Were you processing chunks of texts automatically? Did you have to stop to examine grammar or vocabulary? Was the reading fun or interesting? What lessons can you draw from this experience for your students?

Activity 5

Develop a list of metacognitive reading strategies that you use in your own L1 and/or L2 reading. Share these with your students and see what strategies they use.

Activity 6

Below (see Figure 2) is a sample worksheet for students to complete as they design their own path to fluent reading. Adapt this worksheet to fit your own students and situation.

Individualized worksheet: My path to fluent reading

1. Personal Data

- Name: _____
 - Where you expect to study or work: _____
 - What subject will you study or career path you will follow: _____
 - Your current reading speed at level _____ of graded readers: _____
-

2. Personal Commitment

I am committed to spending _____ hours each day on this fluent reading program. I will spend _____% of that time reading at my level, _____% of that time focusing on vocabulary study, and _____% of that time improving my reading strategies. I understand that less time spent on these activities will jeopardize the goals I have stated below.

3. Definitions of goals

First stage: to be completed by _____

Speed:

I want to be able to read _____ words per minute with 90% comprehension at Level _____ of a graded reader.

General Vocabulary:

I want to be able to read (fill in the kind of texts): _____

Specialized Vocabulary:

I want to be able to read an article in my field of study or career path with 95% understanding at _____ wpm. (Native speakers would probably read the same article at about 250-300 wpm)

Metacognitive Strategies:

I want to improve my reading strategies by working on the following items: (select three) _____

Second stage: to be completed by _____

Speed:

I want to be able to read _____ words per minute with 90% comprehension at Level _____ of a graded reader.

(CONTINUE AS FOR FIRST STAGE ABOVE)

Figure 2. Steps for constructing an individualized fluent reading program

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Teaching reading: Individual and social perspectives

Eddie Williams

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. Is reading something that “individuals do” or something that “society does”?
2. What was the last thing you read (before this), and why? Does your answer have any relevance to the first question?
3. What do language learners need to know in order to understand texts in a second/foreign language (L2/FL)? What does “understand” mean in this context? Do readers understand texts in the way that writers intend?
4. Are FL learners aware of the ideological messages that FL texts may embody? If not, should they be, or is ideology not the business of language teaching?

1. Introduction

Academic work on reading in the English speaking world of today may be divided into two perspectives, the “narrow” and the “broad.” The narrow perspective focuses upon the abilities of individuals, and generates research work into initial reading, and reading as comprehension, in both first and additional languages.

Work on reading in the broad perspective, on the other hand, examines literacy practices generally in society, and has its origins in sociology and anthropology. This perspective is part of an intellectual movement which has been influential from the 1980s onwards, and which has turned the focus of attention away from the individual, characteristic of the previous psychological approaches, and towards the social. It accordingly concentrates upon the meanings and values of literate behaviour in social contexts, and to some extent may be regarded as the “communicative competence” perspective on reading and writing.

Much of the work on the child's acquisition of initial literacy (both reading and writing) has been concerned with what may be termed "alphabeticisation", that is, the process by which children come to master the orthographic system. In the English-speaking world a great deal of the pedagogy of initial reading has been politicised around the relative advantages of the so-called "phonic" methods as against the "real" books (alternatively "good" books) approaches. The general conclusion (Adams 1990), seems to be that both can, depending upon the context of acquisition, be effective, although research suggests that children of average and below average reading ability gain from systematic attention to "phonics". There is, however, very little research work on initial literacy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) of children who have already learned to read and write in their first language (L1). Children who are not taught literacy in their L1, but go "straight for English" from the first day of school – a phenomenon common in African countries that were British colonies – are known to have weak competence in reading English (Williams 1996, 1998).

Research work beyond initial literacy has generally dealt with reading and writing separately, and our account of the narrow perspective will reflect this, although more attention will be given to reading, where most research has been done (in fact, as early as 1908, Edward Huey in his seminal book on the subject claimed that "there is too much work in reading to review. Within this "narrow" perspective, work in reading has been preoccupied with characterising what knowledge and competencies readers need, and how these are deployed in comprehension (i.e., the construction of meaning). Reader proficiency in the language of the text is agreed to be crucial (Grabe this volume), and applied linguistics has devoted a great deal of attention to the relative importance of "reading ability" and "language proficiency" in L2/FL reading. In addition, work on the process, rather than the product, of reading has come up with reading strategies and skills "beyond language". This chapter will first review the narrow approaches to reading, then move on to the broad approaches, and we finally indicate some areas for future developments.

2. Reading: The narrow perspective

The narrow psycholinguistically-oriented research perspective into reading has been interested not only in establishing the components necessary for reading, but also with attempts to model the reading process by specifying the relations between components.

2.1. Component approaches

The proponents of simple two-component models of reading put forward what may be roughly characterised as a reading component, and language component. Prominent advocates of the two-component view of reading are Hoover and Tunmer (1993: 1) who say “this view holds that reading consists of only two components, one that allows language to be recognised through graphic representation, and another that allows language to be comprehended.” In short, their intuitively appealing claim is that in order to understand a written text, the two necessary components are the ability to read, and competence in the language of the text.

2.1.1. Language competence in reading

Vellutino and Scanlon (1982: 196) are particularly assertive in their claim that “reading is primarily a linguistic skill [...] it is the linguistic components of printed words that imbue them with meaning and substance.” A number of studies have looked at language in terms of syntax and lexis, and examined how they contribute separately to the construction of meaning in reading. Other studies have examined the effect of “language” holistically, more in accordance with our intuitions of how we read (it is rather implausible that in normal reading syntactic decoding operates in a lexical vacuum, or vice versa).

2.1.2. Syntax in reading

Studies of the effect of syntactic competence in the case of L1 readers are scarce, primarily because of the widespread assumption that “grammatical meanings are intuitive” (Fries 1963: 70) and therefore their effects did not need to be studied. In similar vein, Schlesinger (1968) concluded after a series of experiments that, for L1 readers, syntax did not significantly affect the reading process.

However, many psychologists working with young readers have come to the opposite conclusion. Vellutino and Scanlon (1982: 236) claim that competence in syntax facilitates the process of reading, as it provides on-the-spot feedback if a “reading” conflicts with the grammatical context, and thereby allows self-correction. They also report research which found that, in the case of sentences such as *John promised Mary to shovel the driveway*, poor readers tended to see *Mary* as doing the shovelling. Such misinterpretation is explained by the so-called “minimum distance principle”, where the noun phrase closest to a preceding infinitive verb is judged as the implicit subject, possibly by analogy with sentences such as *John told/wanted/asked Mary to shovel the driveway*. Ten years later Rayner and Pollatsek (1989) introduced the very similar “garden path” principle, according to which weak readers structure written sentences in the most “economic” manner, by trying to relate new items syntactically to preceding items. Thus in sentences such as: (1) *Because Tim always eats a whole chicken this doesn't seem much to him*, as opposed to (2) *Because Tim always eats a whole chicken is just a snack for him* it is predicted that the first sentence is easier to process than the second, since the “default” path is to attach “a whole chicken” to “eats” as the object of a transitive verb. Although Vellutino and Scanlon's (1982) review finds that syntactic proficiency and reading ability *correlate*, they also point out that syntactic competence does not necessarily *cause* reading ability, and suggest that syntactic weaknesses could be signs that readers have difficulties in other areas of language.

In L2 studies of syntax in reading, there is universal acceptance of the view that adequate competence in L2 syntax is necessary. Berman (1984) for example, after conducting a series of studies looking at Israeli students reading English concludes that “efficient FL readers must rely - in part, though not exclusively - on syntactic devices to get at text meaning”. However, Berman's note of reserve is in order. It may well be possible for successful reading to be achieved with less than perfect competence in syntax, through a combination of lexical knowledge and background knowledge. In other words, readers may “guess” at a structural meaning, as they “guess” at lexical meaning.

2.1.3. Vocabulary

Much research with L1 English primary schoolchildren provides support for the relationship between lexical development and reading ability. A number of studies cited by Vellutino and Scanlon (1982) find substantial correlations between measures of vocabulary and reading. In addition, research into L2 reading has highlighted the crucial importance of vocabulary (see Grabe; Field this volume), while surveys among L2 learners invariably reveal vocabulary to be an important concern for L2 readers.

In deciding which vocabulary to teach language learners, an important and justifiable criterion has been frequency. A finding repeated over several decades (Richards 1974; Nation and Waring 1997) is that the 2,000 most common words (including grammatical function words) account for approximately 80% of the total number of words in most prose texts. However, the other 20% of these texts, that is, one word in every five, roughly two words per line, is made up of the remaining words of the English language (several hundred thousand, according to McArthur 1992: 1091). Thus we have a “frequency paradox”, namely that, since the 2,000 most frequent words are common to most texts, the crucial contribution to the message uniqueness of texts is not the 2,000 most common words, but rather the words that constitute the remaining 20%, some of which may be extremely infrequent. Poor vocabulary knowledge, especially in the case of L2 readers, has implications for the advice that readers should guess the meanings of unknown words from context: in order to be able to do this, it has been estimated that readers need to know over 95% of the other words in a text (Hirsh and Nation 1992).

2.1.4. Background knowledge

In recent decades a great deal of attention in the applied linguistics view of reading has been devoted to “background knowledge”, particularly under the label “schema theory” (the terms “script” and “framework” are also used for what is essentially the same notion). Whatever labels may be used, the effects of prior knowledge have been frequently demonstrated in both L1 reading (Anderson et al. 1977), and L2 reading, where Steffensen and Joag Dev (1984) have demonstrated the importance of “general” or “cultural knowledge, while Alderson and Urquhart (1988) have done so for academic knowledge.

2.1.5. "Reading ability" in L2 reading

While there is general agreement that language proficiency is important for reading, there has been a great deal of debate about the relative contributions to L2 reading of, on the one hand, reading ability, as manifested in L1 reading, and on the other, general proficiency in the L2. Some have argued that L2 reading depends crucially on L1 reading, that "reading is only learned once" and that poor L2 reading is in part due to poor L1 reading skills or failure to transfer such skills. However, it is obvious that many people, especially minority groups whether indigenous or immigrant, *only* learn to read in their chronological L2 or learn to read in L2 *first*. The view that L2 reading depends on L1 reading therefore cannot be taken too literally.

The opposing view is that L2 reading is largely a function of proficiency in L2, and that a minimal level of proficiency in L2 is needed before L1 reading skills will transfer. We may note at this point, however, that the terms "first language" or "mother tongue" may be inappropriate in cases where learners have "bilingualism as an L1", or undergo a shift in language dominance (such that their chronologically L1 atrophies and they achieve greater fluency in their L2).

A number of studies have investigated the relative contributions of "reading ability" and "language proficiency" to reading: Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) administered reading tests in English and Spanish to 187 English L1 speakers at 3 levels of Spanish instruction, and concluded that both factors were important, although they found that language proficiency played a greater part than did ability in L1 reading. Carrell (1991) administered reading tests in English and Spanish to 45 native speakers of Spanish and 75 native speakers of English. She concluded that while both L1 reading ability and L2 proficiency level are significant in L2 reading ability, the relative importance of the two factors varied: for the Spanish group reading English texts, differences in reading ability in the L1 (Spanish) appeared to be more important than differences in proficiency in English. However, for the English group reading Spanish texts, the position was reversed, with proficiency levels in the L2 (Spanish) being more important than were differences in reading ability in their L1 (English). Thus the results of the Spanish group tend to support the transfer of skills hypothesis, while the results of the English group support the language proficiency hypothesis. The reason advanced for this is that the English group was below the "language threshold" required by the Spanish test, and not in a position to utilise their reading skills; the Spanish group, on the

other hand, were above the level required by the English texts, and accordingly the “language threshold” was not in evidence in their results.

The effect of differential language proficiency was also explored by Lee and Schallert (1997). They investigated 809 Korean middle-school students, and concluded that the contribution of L2 proficiency is greater than the contribution of L1 reading ability in predicting L2 reading ability. They also found that there was a much stronger relationship between L1 and L2 reading at higher levels of L2 proficiency. The importance of language proficiency in reading was confirmed by Verhoeven’s (1990) longitudinal study of Dutch and Turkish children. Verhoeven (1990: 90) found that in the first 2 grades, Turkish children were less efficient in reading Dutch than their monolingual Dutch peers, and concludes that at this level reading comprehension appears to be most strongly influenced by “children’s oral proficiency in the second language.” These findings support the conclusion that in L2 reading, L2 knowledge plays a more significant role at low levels of proficiency, while L1 reading is more influential at high levels of L2 proficiency.

Educational surveys confirm the experimental findings that using an L2 in reading tends to produce poor results. Elley (1994) reports on a survey of 32 countries which found that children whose home language differed from the school language performed less well on reading tests than those who were tested in their home language. In sub-Saharan Africa where ex-colonial languages (mainly English, French and Portuguese) dominate the education system, there is special cause for concern: in Zambia most primary school pupils are not able to read adequately in the official language of instruction, English (Williams 1996; Nkamba and Kanyika 1998), while in Zimbabwe, Machingaidze, Pfukani, and Shumba (1998: 71) claim that at year 6 over 60% of pupils did not reach “the desirable levels” of reading in English.

2.1.6. Reading for language learning

While adequate language proficiency is important for “successful” reading, much language pedagogy has focussed on reading as an important way of improving language proficiency, through intensive classroom reading, and also through extensive reading (i.e., independent reading of relatively long self-selected texts with minimal teacher intervention). “The best way to improve your knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live amongst its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it” maintains Nuttall

(1996: 128). The rationale for extensive reading comes from the input hypothesis (Krashen 1989) which claims that the crucial factor in L2 acquisition is that learners be exposed to adequate amounts of comprehensible input (see also Day and Bamford 1998). Although the theoretical argument is persuasive, research suggests that extensive reading has not always produced positive results.

There have been many studies of incidental vocabulary learning through extensive reading (see Coady 1997). While a number have produced positive results (Hafiz and Tudor 1990; Day, Omura and Hiramatsu 1991; Horst, Cobb, and Meara 1998), others have revealed little vocabulary learning (Pitts, White, and Krashen 1989), and the view that extensive reading will enhance learners' vocabulary is clearly affected by other factors.

As regards general language development, research results are again uneven. Some, (including Hafiz and Tudor 1989; Mason and Krashen 1997; Walker 1997) claim that extensive reading lead to an improvement in language proficiency. Less positive findings come from Lai (1993) who carried out an investigation into 18 schools in Hong Kong. Lai does, however, suggest that extensive reading benefits 1) those students who might otherwise have little exposure to English, and 2) high ability students with high motivation.

Other research findings on the effect of extensive reading on writing are generally positive: a number of studies claim it improves writing (Hafiz and Tudor 1990), but there is, surprisingly, no strong evidence that it improves spelling. The view that extensive reading promotes positive attitudes to reading is widespread (Elley 1991), although attitude assessment does not seem to have been carried out in a rigorous manner.

Although claims for the potential of extensive reading are intuitively appealing, meeting all the conditions necessary for the "success" of a programme is difficult. At the cultural level, for example, extensive reading presupposes a society which accepts reading for pleasure as a leisure activity, while at the linguistic level, the vocabulary demands of the text relative to the vocabulary knowledge of the reader is a crucial factor. The traditional answer to learners being frustrated by unknown vocabulary or syntax has been the production of simplified and simple reading texts (Davies 1984); however, "matching" of individual texts and readers in terms of language and interest can be problematic.

2.1.7. Reading skills

Work on reading skills can be considered an extension of the component approach to reading. The coherence of the field has been marred by inconsistent use of the terms “skill”, and “strategy”. It has been suggested that a skill be regarded as an acquired ability, which has been automatized, and operates subconsciously, whereas a strategy is a conscious procedure carried out in order to solve a perceived problem. Whether consciousness is present or not, however, is difficult to detect, and it is possible for readers to achieve the same goal through “a strategy” or “a skill”. Thus for beginner readers, phonological encoding may be a strategy whereby they deliberately “sound out” a word they do not recognise, in order to gain clues as to its identity. A fluent reader, on the other hand, who generally employs the skill of automatic word recognition, may still resort to the strategy of phonological encoding when faced with an unfamiliar word.

In the 1960s and 1970s a number of reading skills taxonomies were produced. Typical is Davis (1968) who listed: 1) identifying word meanings; 2) drawing inferences; 3) identifying writer’s technique and mood; 4) finding answers to questions. Thorndike (1971) has a shorter list, namely 1) memory for word meanings; 2) reasoning in reading. However, many items featured in such lists are not intrinsic to the reading process, but are rather part of the product. Other “reading skills” lists go further, to include reading *styles* such as scanning, skimming, intensive and extensive reading, which again are not intrinsic to the reading *process*.

One of the most thorough attempts to investigate reading subskills was made by Lunzer and his associates (Lunzer, Waive, and Dolan 1979). They administered English reading tests to 257 native-speaker English primary school pupils, and concluded that “one must reject the hypothesis that the several tasks used in the tests of reading comprehension call on distinct subskills which can be differentially assessed and taught” (Lunzer, Waive, and Dolan 1979: 59). Their results “would seem to be entirely consistent with a hypothesis of unitary aptitude of comprehension” (1979: 62). A similar conclusion was reached by Rost (1993), who administered a German reading comprehension test to 222 German elementary school pupils, and found that results could be accounted for by “one broad factor, general reading competence” (Rost 1993: 87). (However, a vocabulary dimension to reading skills is detectable even in these studies; Lunzer, Waive, and Dolan (1979) observe that “word meaning” scores in their tests do not appear to be entirely consistent with the “unitary” process view, while Rost suggests an alternative two-factor explanation of his results, one factor being “inferential reading comprehension” and the other

“vocabulary”. Such comments suggest that knowledge of vocabulary may be significant, but that it tends to be masked if readers are being tested in their L1, but which becomes very obvious in the case of L2 readers.)

The theoretical issue of whether reading is made up of a number of separate subskills or of a single skill or would seem to have implications for pedagogy, since in the former case the skills may be separately taught through *intensive* reading lessons, while in the latter case the most appropriate course of action would be to undertake individualised *extensive* reading. Many teachers, of course, try to use both approaches.

2.2. Process models of reading

These models attempt not only to specify relevant components, but also to specify the relationships between them. Reviews of reading often give separate treatment to three psycholinguistic process models, labelled “bottom-up”, “top-down” and “interactive”. Although the order of presentation implies an historical evolution, with each succeeding view replacing its predecessor, the prototypical representative of the “bottom-up” model (Gough 1972), appeared five years later than Goodman’s “psycholinguistic guessing game” approach to reading (Goodman 1967), generally regarded as the champion of the “top-down” view.

However, rather than embrace the unidirectionality suggested by the terms bottom-up and top-down, it might be more accurate to employ the terms data-driven and concept-driven, and see the debate in terms of differing foci of interest, the data-driven focus being on text as a point of departure, the concept-driven on the reader’s cognitive state and capacities. The interactive model, of course, views reading as a process whereby the reader is engaged in the continuous construction of meaning based on input from the text. The debate has a long history: in ancient Greece, Aristotle’s “intromission” theory maintained that letters sent out rays that entered the reader’s eyes, while the “extromission” theory, championed by Euclid, claimed that the reader reached out to the page by means of a “visual spirit”. It was left to the eleventh century Iraqi scholar al-Hasan ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen) to propose an interactive view (see Manguel 1996: 28-32).

2.2.1. Data-driven models

The bottom-up model of reading (Gough 1972) holds that the reader takes in data from the page in sequence, and that reading involves a letter-by-letter, and word-by-word analysis of the orthographic words, processed through various nodes. The crucial feature of this model, is that the processing moves in one direction, from “bottom” (the perception of letters on the page), to the “top” (cognitive processes to do with the construction of meaning), but that the higher level processing does not affect the lower level processing. In pedagogy, the model justified a phonics-based approach to initial reading which stressed letter-by-letter “sounding out”, and included decontextualised exercises where learners had to distinguish minimal pairs such as “park/bark”, “tap/top”.

However, experimental evidence and informal observation produce the same criticism of data-driven models, namely that they cannot account for context effects. For example, initial readers reading in their L1, make miscues (i.e., mistakes or deviations from what is actually written on the page) which would appear to be generated by their knowledge of language, and are only partially explicable by bottom-up processing e.g., an English native-speaker child aged 5 reading aloud *Rabbit went* for *Rabbit won't* or *He won't bother about...* instead of *He won't bother today...*

2.2.2. Concept-driven models

Goodman's psycholinguistic approach to reading can be seen as a reaction against phonics-based pedagogic *methods* in the teaching of initial reading, rather than against the bottom-up *model* proposed by Gough (1972). The proponents of concept-driven (or “top-down) models hold that text is sampled and that predictions which are meaningful to the reader are made on the basis of their prior knowledge, especially, although not exclusively, their language knowledge. Hence the “psycholinguistic guessing game” in the words of Goodman's well-known title (Goodman 1967).

Although Goodman's account lacks detail compared with that of Gough, the view of reading as a process of “guessing” based on the reader's state of knowledge clearly does account for context effects, of the type common when initial readers read aloud in their L1. The model exerted considerable influence in applied linguistics and the teaching of initial reading in the USA and the UK, particularly through the support of Smith (Smith 1978).

2.2.3. *Interactive models*

This interactive model was first elaborated by Rumelhart (1977), and it proposes that graphemic input (i.e., the marks on the page) passes to a visual information store, where “critical features” are extracted. The information extracted is then operated upon by what the reader knows about language, syntactic knowledge, semantic knowledge, lexical knowledge, orthographic knowledge as well as pragmatic information “about the current contextual situation”. The crucial point about this interactive model is that the knowledge sources operate in parallel: the information in the pattern synthesiser is scanned to yield the “most probable interpretation”, and the higher level processing of meaning may affect the lower level processing of the orthographic word (i.e., there is “top-down” as well as “bottom-up” processing).

The compensatory interactive model (Stanovich 1980) likewise represents reading as involving interaction between bottom-up and top-down processing. The compensatory element in Stanovich’s model claims a reader’s lack of ability at one level may be compensated for by proficiency at another. Thus a reader may compensate for weakness at word meaning level by drawing on appropriate background knowledge. There are clear advantages of such a view for L2 reading.

2.2.4. *Reinstating the bottom*

However, many have argued not only against purely “concept driven” top-down views, but also “interactive approaches” to the extent that they rely on “the top.” Mitchell (1982) claims word recognition is automatic in good readers, while Stanovich (1986) concludes that it is actually poor readers who make most use of context to help word recognition.

In similar vein, Just and Carpenter (1987) found that even skilled readers do not fixate only on one in every three or four words, as had previously been supposed, but on over 80% of content words, and around 65% of syntactic words. In their model, lexical access, syntactic analysis and semantic analysis work in parallel to yield comprehension. Readers interpret successive words as they meet them, integrating the new information both with what they have learned from the text, and also with what they already know about the topic. The strength of their approach is that it takes into account the generally automatic nature of skilled reading, in which many of the processes are sufficiently automatic to be carried out in paral-

lel. Rayner and Pollatsek (1989) also claim that rates of fixation are high; their experiments found that in “normal” reading there is a fixation every 1.1 words on average, and that fixation duration is 200-270 milliseconds.

It seems safe to conclude, then, that “guessing” is a strategy of unskilled readers – good readers do not need to guess, as they can recognise the printed words, although they may need to resort to guessing in cases of difficulty. Advice to “guess” has remained, nonetheless prominent in L2 reading (although here we might note that L2 readers are being urged to guess the *meaning* of unknown words, rather than, as is the case for L1 readers, the *identity* of known, but unrecognised, words).

2.3. Reading styles

The commonly identified “reading styles” are: scanning (rapid and partial search reach reading for specific information), skimming (rapid sample reading to obtain general gist), intensive reading (deliberate reading and re-reading to extract detailed information), extensive reading (relatively rapid and complete reading, as favoured for “extensive reading” programmes). These styles are clearly behavioural responses to text, mediated by the reader’s purpose and proficiency. Equally clearly, reading styles are not discrete categories, and although much has been made of them in EFL reading materials, there is little research into their validity, or indeed whether they are subject to consistent developmental sequence. Terminology is again inconsistent with “skills” being an alternative label to “styles”.

3. Reading: The broad perspective

Reading in the broad perspective, is, as previously mentioned, concerned not with the psycholinguistic process of reading, nor with how well the reader comprehends, but rather with literacy as social practice, in other words social patterns of activities involving reading (and writing), as well as the social values attaching to these activities. An important distinction in the broad approach is between the “autonomous literacy” model and the “ideological literacy” model (Street 1984). The autonomous model sees literacy as a value-neutral set of skills, detached from social context, the possession of which is assumed to bring certain cognitive and social results. Much of what has been described above as the “narrow” approach to liter-

acy is in the “autonomous” tradition. The “autonomous” nature of schooled literacy has long been an issue of concern, as shown in W.B. Hodgson’s essay of 1867 (see Graff 1995), where Hodgson questions the value of the ability to read with no consideration given to the value of what is read.

Much of the impetus for literacy studies in the broad perspective comes from the view that literacy in formal education is a restrictive attempt to “teach literacy” without reference to society. In contrast the “ideological” model of literacy, is concerned with literacy practices in relation to specific social contexts; the multiplicity of contexts generates a multiplicity of literacies, which are not simply neutral, but are associated with power and ideology. The ideological model, it is claimed, leads to a better understanding of how literacy is embedded in other human activity - in brief “literacy” does not exist outside of human action, and the strong may manipulate institutions concerned with literacy in ways that disadvantage the weak.

3.1. Consequences of literacy

Supporters of the ideological model of literacy have claimed that a number of invalid claims are made for “autonomous literacy”, two of the main ones being 1) that literacy, as an “autonomous agent”, leads to logical and scientific thinking 2) that literacy leads to social and economic development.

The first claim (made by the anthropologist Goody) is challenged by the research of Scribner and Cole (1981), who studied the Vai people in Liberia, where one group were literate in the Vai script, a second group had literacy in reading the Koran, and a third group was literate in English, the medium of education. The conclusions that Scribner and Cole drew from their test results are frequently cited to claim that it is not literacy (in this case “the ability to read”) itself, that produces cognitive changes, but schooling, since the schooled group, literate in English, were superior in reasoning power. Although this work is presented as a naturally occurring experiment, there are doubts as to whether the researchers had managed to isolate literacy as a variable; nonetheless it may well be that little cognitive advantage comes from simply being able to read and write, irrespective of what is read and written, by whom and for what purpose.

As far the relationship between literacy and economic development is concerned, there has long been a belief that investment in education would have a beneficial effect in developing countries, similar to that claimed for developed countries – Denison (1962), for example, claimed that between

1930 and 1960, 23% of annual growth in the US national income could be attributed to education. As to how literate the population of a country should be, Anderson (1966) estimated that an adult literacy rate of about 40% of was needed for economic development, although he adds that that level would not be sufficient if societies lacked other support systems. Indeed, the failure of the Experimental World Literacy programme, (organized by UNESCO in 11 countries from 1967 to 1972) to generate economic growth in those countries, proved that literacy alone cannot be a causal factor in development. In their evaluation of the programme, UNESCO concluded that, if development is to occur, then the literacy programme should be integrated with economic and social reforms (Lind and Johnson 1990: 71-75).

However, although literacy may not be a *sufficient* condition for economic development, there is ample evidence that it is a *necessary* one: Azariadis and Drazen (1990), who looked at the development history of 32 countries from 1940 to 1980, concluded that none of the countries where the level of education, including literacy, was inadequate, managed to achieve rapid growth. Moock and Addou (1994) suggest that an adequate level of education occurs when literacy and numeracy skills which have been learned in school, are retained, so that they can be rewarded in later life. The current consensus of opinion is that literacy is a necessary contributory factor in development, but that it is not an independent causal factor.

3.2. Social dimensions in literacy

In examining the social role of literacy, the new literacy studies have carried out detailed ethnographic work on reading and writing practices in specific communities, such as Heath's (1983) seminal work on literacy in three communities in the US, Barton and Hamilton's (1998) description of various literacy practices in Lancaster, and Martin-Jones and Jones's (2000) documenting of a variety of bilingual literacies. While there is a variety of locations for this research, the focus is consistently upon practice and value. For example, Street's (1984) research on literacy in Iranian villages, identifies three sets of literacy practices: traditional literacy associated with the primary Quranic school; schooled literacy from the modern state school; commercial literacy associated with selling fruit. He notes that, contrary to expectation, commercial literacy was mainly undertaken by those who had Quranic literacy, since they had the social status within

the village that people who only had schooled literacy, lacked. Work such as Street's attempts to relate literacy to notions of identity, of power and of solidarity, rather than attempting to identify components of literacy as in a psycholinguistic approach, or to discuss methods of improving literacy, as in an educational approach.

A second concern of the broad approach to literacy is critical reading, deriving from critical discourse analysis, which attempts not only to describe texts, but also to interpret and explain them. Critical readings of texts typically examine one or more of the following: 1) linguistic issues, such as choice of vocabulary, or the manipulation of grammar (e.g., the expression or suppression of agency in verb phrases); 2) rhetorical issues such as the overall text structure and organisation; 3) issues of text type and discourse convention (e.g., an advertisement for a beauty product, or a newspaper report on migration into the UK).

The approach may critique not only the language and sentiments expressed in texts, but also the ideological and/or the historical assumptions underpinning them as revealed through the writing, whether these assumptions were intended or not by the writer. This type of analysis is socially engaged in that it claims to reveal how readers may be unwittingly manipulated by powerful political or economic forces. Critical reading claims to "look beyond the classroom to the way in which reading [...] practices are carried out and perceived in the wider society" (Wallace 1996: 83). Critical reading, while probably not suited to low level EFL learners, is claimed to be both possible and desirable for learners with adequate English: in some respects the teaching of critical reading resembles the teaching of literature, for it involves close reading of, and reflection upon, the text. A range of texts and procedures for teaching critical reading in EFL classes is provided in Wallace (1992: 102-124).

Although the broad approach to literacy presents a strong moral argument, in a socialist tradition, the enthusiasm of its proponents occasionally leads to incomplete representations of the psycholinguistic tradition. Gee (1996), for example, one of the chief protagonists of critical literacy, claims that the psycholinguistic position is that there is a "right" interpretation for texts that "is (roughly) the same for all competent readers" (Gee 1996: 39). In fact this notion had been widely disputed by applied linguists (Urquhart 1987; Cohen et al. 1988). Likewise Gee's point that readers from different cultures interpret texts differently had long been accepted as a result of research into background knowledge (Steffenson and Joag Dev 1984). However, if one cannot read – in the psycholinguistic sense – one will not be able to make *any* kind of interpretation any written text. There is there-

fore an argument that the “autonomous literacy” model is valid, in the sense that if one cannot read, then clearly one cannot read anything. Equally, the “ideological literacy” model is valid in the sense that the converse proposition “If one can read, then one can read everything” is incorrect.

One of the chief merits of the new literacy studies is that they have focussed attention upon the social dimension. It has made the point that literacy practices are ideologically laden, and often manipulated by powerful institutions. To date, however, most work in the broad approach has not generated practical pedagogy, but has investigated the relationship between literacy practices and school literacy teaching. In the UK, Gregory and Williams (2000) document a range of home and school practices in a multicultural urban area of London, and found that children from backgrounds that are economically poor draw on home literacy practices, as well as those of the school, in learning to read, and that older siblings and grandparents as well as parents, can be important mediators of literacy. Snow et al. (1991) report on work in the US which also looked at home-school literacy in poor families, and came to the conclusion that there was a need for holistic family literacy programmes involving “bridge building” support for both caregivers and children.

3.3. Implications for teaching

A proposal for implementing a pedagogy drawn from social literacies has come from the New London Group (a group of educationists who first met in New London, US: see Cope and Kalantziz 2000). Having developed the basic concept of “Design”, which refers to conventions of meaning (linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial), the group proposes the following four sequential components of pedagogy:

- Situated Practice, which draws on the students’ experience of meaning-making in their lives
- Overt Instruction, through which students develop an explicit meta-language of Design
- Critical Framing, which interprets the social context and purpose of Designs of meaning
- Transformed Practice, in which students, as meaning makers, become “designers of social futures” (Cope and Kalantziz 2000: 9).

A very direct attempt to take account of L2/FL learning through this approach to literacy is provided by Kern (2000: 129-170), who takes the four components listed above and applies them to reading, giving many examples of activities within each component: for Kern, “situated practice” is largely student-centred activity, with group predictions and negotiations about the meaning of texts; overt instruction consists of work on lexical choices, syntactic relations and discourse structure of texts; critical framing involves the students distancing themselves from the text through critical questioning and summarising work; transformed practice is essentially a matter of writing, and Kern suggests translation and the transforming of a text into a dialogue as possible activities. Although these activities are reasonably well-known to EFL teachers, what the approach stresses is the *critical* perspective through comparing and discussing the interpretations of students and teachers, rather than extracting fixed meanings from text, and through encouraging students to be aware of the social context in which the text was produced, as well as the social context in which they as L2 readers are interpreting the text.

There are, however, relatively few practical examples of EFL work in this framework, possibly because, since its proponents eschew the psycholinguistic, the approach has no obvious theory of learning. Street (2003: 85) suggests that the emphasis from the ideological view of literacy should be “on appropriateness, a key concept in the ethnography of communication (Hymes 1977).” This implies that students should explore “the various uses and meanings of literacy in the social context of the school and its surrounding communities” (Street (2003: 85), and after briefly reviewing literacy projects in the US, South Africa, Nepal, Australia and the UK, Street (2003: 86) advocates a “combination of ethnographic-style research into everyday literacy practices and constructive curriculum development and pedagogy.”

4. The future?

Looking into the future, there is a great variety of literacy and reading issues which still remain to be researched. The psycholinguistics of reading is beginning to explore the field of memory, while the effects of ageing on reading have hardly been touched. Work into multimodal literacy, exploring arrangements of graphics and visuals in communication, will certainly make progress. Further interdisciplinary research is likely from investigating the links between numeracy and literacy. The communication revolu-

tion too has implications for individual and global practices in literacy, and there is also sure to be increasing research into electronic literacy.

Economic and cultural globalisation, facilitated by the communication revolution, and enabled by state deregulation, means there is likely to be an increasing movement of goods, services and people across the world: this has implications for reading and writing in both rich and poor countries. The role of literacy and reading the development of poor communities is attracting renewed attention, as are the literacy practices and needs of migrants in rich countries. Grassroots literacy of poor villagers, those neglected inhabitants of the global village, also deserves further research. The field of L1 and L2 literacy and reading is likely to generate innovation in both research and teaching for the foreseeable future.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Devise and administer a simple questionnaire (in L2) to find out:

- what problems school students have in reading L2 texts
- what L2 texts (if any) students think they will be reading after leaving school

Activity 2

Attempt to measure the L2 vocabulary of a class. This can be done by taking a sample from an L2 dictionary with a known number of words, then doing the necessary calculation e.g., if students know 10% of the words you sample, then they probably know 10% of the words in the whole dictionary. (The sample could be obtained by choosing words at intervals through the dictionary – for example, the top word on the every fifth page.)

Activity 3

Carry out a series of interviews with school students to find out what sort of things they like to read in their L1, and what sort of things, if any, they like to read in L2.

Activity 4

Ask school students to bring in any English text (or extract from a text, which may be a printed page or from an electronic source) that they have found interesting. Select some for discussion with the class and ask students to explain why they find it interesting.

Activity 5

Carry out a critical reading with your class of a text from an L2 newspaper but which deals with an issue from the learners' own country.

Activity 6

With a class of learners, compare an article from an L1 newspaper with an article on the same topic from an L2 newspaper.

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Section V Writing

Towards acquiring communicative competence through writing

Esther Usó-Juan, Alicia Martínez-Flor and Juan Carlos Palmer-Silveira

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. How much has the view of writing changed over the past decades?
2. How much has writing instruction changed over the past decades?
3. How could you make writing instruction communicative?
4. How do you think the different components of the communicative competence framework influence writing?

1. Introduction

The nature of second language writing (L2) has become clearer nowadays. Broadly speaking, we may say that research conducted in the areas of linguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive psychology and sociolinguistics has helped us to gain a better understanding of how the ability to write is likely to be learned. We are now aware that writing is not a decontextualized activity but rather it is embedded in the cultural and institutional context in which it is produced (Kern 2000; Hyland 2002). Additionally, it involves a dynamic interaction among the three basic elements that play a part in the writing act, namely the text, the writer and the reader, which requires writers' consideration of all them in order to write accordingly (Silva and Matsuda 2002). Needless to say, this view of writing has affected its teaching. In particular, it has stressed the key role that the social and contextual factors play in creating a piece of written discourse. The major aim of this chapter is therefore to explore developments in writing to better justify current teaching practices.

This chapter first summarizes advances in the understanding of writing over the last few decades by describing how trends in the language learning

field have influenced the view of writing. In so doing, it presents the theoretical foundations for teaching writing from a communicative perspective. Finally, the relevance of how writing can help learners develop their communicative competence is addressed.

2. Approaches to learning and teaching writing

The view of writing over the past decades has been greatly influenced by trends in language learning. We will therefore use the language learning approaches described in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume), namely those of the environmentalist, the innatist and the interactionist approaches, as the guiding reference points to trace such changing patterns of writing.

2.1. Writing within an environmentalist approach

Up to the end of the 1960s, writing was neglected in the language learning field. This status of neglect grew out of environmentalist ideas which dominated thinking about the way languages were learned. These ideas, which were rooted in structural linguistics and behaviorist psychology, identified language with speech and described the language learning process as a mechanical process based on a stimulus-response-reinforcement chain (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). In the light of this theory of language learning, writing was considered as secondary to speech since it was regarded as just its orthographic representation. It was believed that mastery of spoken language and its orthographic conventions had to precede the learning of written language because discrepancy between speech sounds and orthography could cause interferences with the proper learning of speech (Silva and Matsuda 2002). Accordingly, writing was seen as a language skill which served as *reinforcement of learning* grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, which in turn served to achieve oral correctness.

Given this simple view, it is not surprising that most language programs deal with the teaching of writing by focusing on the development of language skills, which were reflected in an emphasis on formal correctness of students' writing. Instruction typically involved imitation of what were thought to be appropriate sentences as well as their manipulation, that is to say, sentence combination or rework of problematic sentences. Furthermore, the task of writing was tightly controlled to prevent errors caused by first language interference (Kroll 2001). The main role of the teacher, there-

fore, was to instill notions of accuracy, which was expected to arise out of practice with structures. In such a context, a written text, as pointed out by Silva (1990: 13), was merely considered as “a collection of sentences patterns and vocabulary items – a linguistic artifact, a vehicle for language practice.” However, this early view of the role of writing in language pedagogy was to be challenged by many researchers who attempted to explore the very act of composing a written text.

2.2. Writing within an innatist approach

By the late 1960s attention began to shift away from attention to form toward the actual process of composition, that is, towards ways in which text could be developed. This significant change, however, was prompted by the development of Chomsky’s (1957, 1965) innatist theory, which claimed that children are innately predisposed to learn language (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume). Thus, with the collaboration of the disciplines of psycholinguistics (Slobin 1970; Brown 1973) and cognitive psychology (Shank and Abelson 1977), which showed that children are active rather than passive in the language learning process since they infer rules to test how language works, writers’ mental processes during the composing act began to gain importance.

Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer (1963) were the first researchers to question the effectiveness of grammar instruction to improve learners’ writing and they made a call for teachers to investigate how writing was actually produced. Consequently, research began to focus on the internal processes going on inside writers which were involved in the production of this skill. Emig’s (1971) work was the first case-study that responded to the shift in writing orientation away from product toward process. She analyzed learners’ cognitive processes while writing by means of the technique of the *think aloud* protocol and found out that the stages of writing are not lockstep or sequential but rather recursive and creative.

From this research, cognitive models of writing emerged. The most influential theory was set forth by Flower and Hayes (1981), who proposed a cognitive model of recursive writing consisting of three major elements: 1) the *planning stage*, in turn subdivided into smaller processes such as generating ideas, organizing these ideas and setting the goals for writing; 2) the *translating stage*, in which writers articulate and write down their thoughts generated in the first stage; and 3) the *reviewing stage*, in which writers evaluate and revise the text. The strength of this model was that it provided

teachers with a theory about how to teach the writing skill. Researchers then, began to recommend focusing on writing not as a product but as a process, thereby decreasing the focus on grammar and spelling. This approach highlighted personal writing, the writer's creativity, and fluency (Reid 2001). Thus, as Kern (2000: 181) points out, "writing was no longer seen simply as a way of recording thoughts, feelings, and ideas after the fact, but also as a key means of generating and exploring new thoughts and ideas." Greater emphasis was, therefore, placed on the formulation of learners' ideas in the writing process. In such a context, writing was viewed as a complex, recursive and creative process which was essentially learned, not taught.

As a result of such a view, learners were taught to become active writers, that is to say, to generate thoughts or ideas and move actively and dynamically throughout their composing processes, that is, from the generation of ideas through to the editing of the final text. Hence, the main role of the teacher, was first to foster learners' creativity, and then to guide them in the process of drafting, revising and editing their writings (Silva 1990; Kern 2000; Silva and Matsuda 2002). Further, within such an approach errors were considered natural and corrected in the final stages of the writing process. Contrary to the previous approach, in which the teacher modeled the text, in this process-approach to writing the teacher modeled learners' processes in the writing task (Kern 2000). The written text therefore, was no longer viewed as a vehicle for practicing the language but rather as a vehicle for generating thoughts and ideas.

This approach to writing represented the first step in a transition towards a focus on the writing processes and away from a focus on form. However, an essential aspect such as the influence of the sociocultural context on the composing processes, which helps construct writers' goals and communicative intentions was ignored. The consideration of this aspect was the focus of attention in the following years.

2.3. Writing within an interactionist approach

By the late 1970s beginning of the early 1980s, attention shifted toward the sociocultural context of the writing act under the influence of the interactionist approach to language learning (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume) and, particularly, with the development of discourse analysis which provided the theoretical foundations for understanding the act of writing. The emergence of this field of research cannot be identified to a

particular school of thought but rather to a variety of approaches that share the common assumption that the study of language in use extends beyond the sentence level.

In linguistics, discourse analysis can be associated with the school of linguistic analyses such as formal linguistics (text linguistics) or systemic linguistics (genre analyses). Both research lines extended the grammatical analyses by including the functional objectives (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000). On the one hand, within text linguistics, the research conducted by Winter (1977) and Hoey (1983) was influential since it represented an effort to organize the diversification of discourse in language teaching. These authors distinguished three main patterns of textual organization: 1) the *problem-solution pattern*, in which a problem is presented in a given situation followed by the response to the problem and the evaluation of the response as a solution to the problem; 2) the *hypothetical-real* pattern, which is characterized by, first, the presentation of a statement which is to be supported or rejected, and then the affirmation or denial of that statement, and 3) the *general-particular* pattern, in which a generalization is presented followed by an exemplification of that generalization. They pointed out that readers draw on their conventionalized knowledge of text patterns to infer the recognizable connectedness of text and, therefore, they emphasized the cognitive approach to writing. This approach maintains that what makes writing coherent is not in the text but in the readers' prior knowledge of the formal and linguistic structure of different types of texts or formal *schemata*.

On the other hand, within systemic linguistics, Halliday (1978) developed a systematic way of describing language in terms of its functions within social contexts. Basic to his theory was the notion of *register*, which is a functional language variation and is analyzed on the basis of three variables: *field*, or the social function; *tenor*, or the role of the participants; and *mode*, or what the language is doing. According to Halliday (1978) these three situational and contextual dimensions are central to language interpretation. Halliday's theory represented the theoretical foundation for current contextual approaches to writing. In these approaches, the writer is viewed as a social being, and texts are viewed as a social purpose and have come to be associated with the notion of *genre*. According to Swales (1990: 59) a genre is:

... a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the ra-

tionale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. Communicative purpose is both a privileged criterion and one which operates to keep the scope of a genre as here conceived narrowly focused on comparable rhetorical action.

Swales's (1990) definition of genre, which was closely tied to Halliday's (1978) functional approach to language, highlighted the fact that the communicative purpose of a text is the most important feature of the genre, rather than any formal feature. In fact, he maintained that it is this communicative purpose that influences the textual choices of the writer. Genres, thus, are not patterns of words but rather socially accepted ways of using the language for communicative purposes.

English for specific purposes (ESP) genre research had a significant influence on L2 writing. This line of research focused specifically on academic and professional genres and attempted to make the recurrent patterns of texts explicit in order to facilitate the task of learning to write for students. The most well-known research in ESP genre analysis was conducted by Swales (1990), who analysed the *moves* or functional sections in research articles introductions. Since Swales's (1990) seminal publication, a substantial body of research has been conducted on the structures of many academic and professional written genres, such as research papers, dissertations, reports and summaries, among many others (see Hyland 2002, for a summary of research conducted on the structures of many professional and academic genres). This research provided teachers of writing with useful analytical tools to teach discourse awareness to learners. Genre-approaches to writing therefore enhanced the interactive view of writing that was emerging from textual analyses by incorporating not only the context of situation of writing but also the context of culture.

The importance of the cultural dimension of texts was further highlighted by the research area of Contrastive Rhetoric (Connor 1996; Kaplan 1966), which analysed L2 writing by giving prominence to cross-cultural research. As described by Connor (1996: 5), three basic principles underlie this theory: "Language and writing are cultural phenomena"; 2) "Each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it"; and 3) "The linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with writing in the second language." Research in this area (Kaplan 1987; Ostler 1987; Anderson 1991) showed that the rhetorical patterns in which L2 English learners write vary significantly from culture to culture and, therefore, it provided the culture-bound nature of rhetoric.

With these contributions from text linguistics and contextual approaches to writing, it became obvious that writing itself was a dynamic, creative and contextualized process of communicating through texts. Furthermore, they helped to gain a better understanding of the fact that writing is not just an individual process but also a social one (Kern 2000; Hyland 2002). Consequently, writers were taught the crucial role of context and how language changes and, in turn, is changed by the context in which it happens. From an ESP genre approach, it has been recommended that three main phases should be followed in that instruction (Hyland 2002: 21): 1) *modeling*, in which the teacher provides an explicit explanation of the genre to be dealt with; 2) *negotiating*, in which the teacher guides the class composition by means of questions; and 3) *construction*, in which the students construct the genre by working through several drafts in consultation with the teacher. In such a practice, the written text was viewed as a conventional response to a particular type of task that fits a socially recognized genre (Silva 1990; Silva and Matsuda 2002). This approach to writing laid the foundation for current work in teaching this skill as a communicative act in which writers need to be taught a range of communicative competencies to allow them to write appropriately in a given context. Therefore, the importance of integrating writing within a communicative competence framework is addressed in the next section.

3. Teaching writing within a communicative competence framework

Over the past two decades communicative approaches to L2 language teaching have emerged. A key influence is associated to the work of Hymes (1971, 1972), who proposed the notion of *communicative competence* in reaction to Chomsky's notion of *language competence*. Hymes (1971, 1972) pointed out that what was needed was not just an understanding of how language is structured internally but also a better understanding of language behavior for a given communicative goal. Thus, the notion of communicative competence accounted for both grammatical competence as well as the rules of language use that were neglected in Chomsky's view of language. Since the 1980s the communicative competence construct has been operationalized into different models in an attempt to make the process of L2 teaching more effective (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Savignon 1983; Bachman 1987, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995; Alcón 2000; Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor this volume).

In this construct of communicative competence, the skill of writing plays a crucial role in facilitating the acquisition of communicative competence. It is the main purpose of this section, therefore, to show where the writing skill fits into the bigger picture of the proposed communicative competence framework presented by Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). More specifically, it is described how the different components influence the development of this particular skill in order to increase learners' overall communicative ability in the L2. Figure 1 shows the diagram representing this framework and it can be seen that writing is placed in a core position.



Figure 1. Integrating writing within the communicative competence framework

3.1. Discourse competence

The proposed communicative competence framework has at its heart the writing skill since it is the manifestation of producing written discourse as well as a way of manifesting the rest of the components (see Figure 1). Discourse competence enables writers to use discourse features to achieve a well-formed written text given a communicative goal and context in which it has to be written (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995). These discourse features involve cohesion (e.g., reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical chains), coherence (and its markers) as well as formal schemata or knowledge of the structure of written genres (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). Thus, if writers are to create a coherent written text, they need first to plan the discourse features to be used and then relate them to a given communicative purpose and context. Consequently, during the process of producing a coherent written text, writers are expected to play an active role, since they have to recruit their knowledge of how to produce linguistically and pragmatically accurate sentences given particular sociocultural norms together with their ability to use strategies to allow effective communication. In other words, they have to activate their knowledge of the other components of the proposed framework, namely, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic competencies, which are described in turn below.

3.2. Linguistic competence

Linguistic competence is an umbrella concept that comprises basic elements of written communication such as vocabulary or lexicon, grammar rules, and conventions in mechanics. Regarding lexical resources, writers need to know basic word meanings and how these meanings, for example, may differ depending on context (Kern 2000). In order to use words, writers also need to become familiar with knowledge of the grammatical system. Thus, writers need to pay attention to form in order to learn the grammar rules underlying the syntactic relations as well as the structure of clauses. Additionally, writers' knowledge of the mechanics is essential in writing since faulty punctuation or spelling mistakes may result in an illegible written text (Olshtain 2001). As acknowledged by Silva and Brice (2004) and Johns (this volume), research on L2 writers' texts continues to dominate in the literature on writing. However, there is a trend in studying these bottom-up features in a more contextualized setting. In fact, both

Johns and Tribble (this volume) advocate the contextualized teaching of these bottom-up features and discuss the benefits of using corpus linguistics to teach both grammar and vocabulary.

The mastery of linguistic competence is crucial to the efficacy of writing a text since it helps writers construct grammatically well-formed sentences accurately. Needless to say, this competence is intrinsically related to discourse competence since difficulties in linguistic-related aspects, namely, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics, may create problems when trying to produce a cohesive text.

3.3. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence involves an understanding of the illocutionary force of an utterance in accordance with the situational and participant variables within which the utterance takes place, as well as politeness issues such as degrees of formality. This competence, as pointed out by Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, and Alcón (this volume), plays a paramount role in spoken communication, in which features of the situational context are clues to the illocutionary force of the utterance (i.e., its intended meaning). However, writing, as happens with reading (see Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's chapter on reading in this volume), has limitations in this respect since these contextual clues are not explicit and, therefore, the writer has to rely on a set of devices to convey the intended meaning of a written text. Following Kern (2000: 70-71), these written clues to meaning include: text layout and graphic devices (such as punctuation and italics, among many other means), syntactic devices (cleft constructions), and linguistic devices (such as the choice of verbs or adverbs), as well as awareness of the physical location in which the text is to appear or appears. As exemplified by Kern (2000) readers' response to the word "coffee" will be different if it appears on a roadside sign or on a menu.

An important point to remember here is that a written text also provides important clues to meaning and that mastery of how these clues is essential for writers if their ultimate goal is to make readers achieve a full understanding of a given written text. In fact, Johns (this volume) emphasizes the importance of helping learners to understand how texts are voiced by paying attention to their rhetorical situation. Of course, the interrelationship of this component with the discourse component is obvious, since texts always carry with them an intended meaning.

3.4. Intercultural competence

Intercultural competence deals with the knowledge of how to produce written texts within a particular sociocultural context. In order to produce a competently written discourse within a particular culture, writers need to understand and adhere to the rules and norms of behavior that exist in a target language community, as well as to develop cross-cultural awareness, since each particular culture has different “do’s and don’t’s” (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995: 25). To this respect and within a genre approach to writing, Johns (this volume), for example, argues that it is, in fact, the specific situation in which the text appears that determines how it will be successfully written and interpreted. Similarly, Tribble (this volume) in a way, stresses the importance of cultural aspects by arguing the need to present learners with *English as a lingua franca* writing models in order to cope with the learner’s writings needs, i.e., with samples in which the English language is, in principle, neutral with regard to the different socio-cultural backgrounds of its users.

The intercultural component is also inextricably tied to discourse competence, since written texts are always produced within a culture, and they have, in fact, been regarded as cultural manifestations.

3.5. Strategic competence

In addition to all the above-described competencies, writers also need to have strategic competence, which refers to both learning and communicating strategies (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). On the one hand, writers need to possess a set of learning strategies to write effectively. Kroll (this volume) points out the relevance of encouraging learners to develop the strategy of revising their drafts based on their own opinion or suggestions from peers and/or teachers. In fact, this strategy has been regarded by Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) as fundamental if writers are to create a coherent text. Additionally, Cumming (this volume) exemplifies how learners use goals as a strategy to direct their learning to write process. On the other hand, writers also need to possess communication strategies to overcome limitations in the language area, such as paraphrasing, restructuring or literal translation from the first language (Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell 1995).

Similarly to what happens with the previous three components, namely linguistic, pragmatic and intercultural, strategic competence is also intrinsi-

cally bound to discourse competence. In fact, it has been acknowledged that in order for writers to create a coherent piece of discourse they have to employ a set of strategies, such as planning ahead to structure and organize ideas, providing connections, and revising the written text several times (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000).

4. Conclusion

This chapter has traced significant advances over the past decades in understanding the nature of writing. Once considered to be the handmaid to all other language skills (Leki 2002), and a way to practice grammar and reading exercises, writing is currently seen as a dynamic, creative and contextualized process of communicating meaning. As Kern (2000: 186) puts it: “Writing is at once an individual, creative process and a socially constrained normative process.” Such a view implies that linguistic, cognitive and sociocultural factors have to interact with one another for effective writing. Accordingly, this skill has been regarded as a complex phenomenon given learners’ need to take all the above issues into consideration in order to construct a communicative piece of discourse (Silva and Matsuda 2002). As such, the teaching of this ability has also been viewed as a particularly complex task (Kroll 2001). To facilitate this endeavor, the need to teach this ability within a communicative competence framework has also been pointed out, since writing is a discourse manifestation as well as a way of manifesting the linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic components. In so doing, teachers will facilitate learners’ awareness of all those factors inherent in the communicative act of writing and, consequently, will encourage them to communicate through writing.

Suggested Activities

The activities presented are included within the *implementation stage* of the Cultural Awareness Project explained in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (this volume). The main goal of these activities is to help learners acquire communicative competence through the writing skill, as well as to make them aware of cultural differences or similarities in different language communities.

Activity 1

Arrange opportunities for learners to get engaged in class-to-class *tandem e-mail learning* (Dodd 2001), that is, collaborative learning between learners of different languages and cultures. This possibility promotes cross-cultural dialogue while it is at the time a means of engaging learners in extended writing in a motivating way.

Thus, learners from the two classes, after having introduced themselves and arranged the time for the tandem sessions, are asked to decide on a content area they are interested in (education, rules, family traditions, etc.) and engage in a written dialogue on the topic chosen. They should be asked to bring into the class all e-mail exchanges in order to prepare a written summary of how the topic dealt with is represented in the partners' culture. Learners should be encouraged to plan the summary in the light of the responses from e-mail partners as well as to draft and revise the summary as many times as necessary before it is finished. Additionally, e-mail exchanges are a valuable material that can serve as a basis to prepare a series of writing activities to exploit features related the other competencies. (An excellent source of ideas for preparing writing activities based on intercultural exchanges via e-mail is developed by Kern 2000).

Activity 2

Select representative passages with *cultural incidents*, that is, passages in which someone from a particular culture feels odd in a situation interacting with someone from a different culture (Williams 2001) or with *intercultural misunderstandings*, that is, passages that report an intercultural misunderstanding given the beliefs and attitudes in different cultures (Meier 2003). Ideally, they should be narrative texts with different paragraphs each leading toward the cultural incident or intercultural misunderstanding. Cover all but the first introductory chapter in which the situation is presented and then ask learners to read this first paragraph and continue the story in the way they think is most likely, bearing in mind the particular cultural context in which the situation takes place. Encourage learners to plan, draft and revise their versions in order to promote their writing proficiency.

Activity 3

Sort all culture-specific materials brought in by learners into the different cultural topics covered in the project (i.e., Family, Education, the World of Work, Regional Identity, Power and Politics or Law and Order) and use them as resources for a larger writing activity. Thus, learners could take all materials dealing with a particular topic home and write a variety of essays, summaries or personal viewpoints on the topic chosen. In such a way, learners are first engaged in *preparatory work* (Kroll this volume) that allows them make notes, write summaries, plan actions to be taken or even reflect after being involved in authentic activities (i.e., watching a documentary, accessing the Internet, listening to audio extracts, reading newspapers and so on). All drafts should be discussed with the teacher and kept in a portfolio, since this has been regarded as a “fairer and more perceptive way to evaluate” learners (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000: 159).

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Areas of research that influence L2 writing instruction

Ann M. Johns

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. What areas of writing research have you already explored, formally or informally? What did you learn from this exploration?
2. What questions now arise about writing as you prepare your curricula, teach your classes, and assess your students?
3. How might you use these questions in a research project for a thesis or dissertation – or just to increase your knowledge?
4. After you have developed a research question, how will you discover how this question or topic is being discussed in the research and teaching literature? That is, how can you understand, and enter, a “conversation” in the literature about the teaching, learning, and assessing of writing?

1. Introduction

Pedagogies tend to lag behind theory and research – and perhaps they should – until consensus is reached or a major paradigm shift occurs. However, as time passes, second/foreign language (L2) writing teachers are influenced by current trends in sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, technical writing, and rhetoric, to name a few of the research areas that support our work.

For this paper, I have selected several issues that are destined to be an integral part of teacher education and academic literacy study in the coming years. These issues fall into two categories: one focusing on past research and the other upon directions for future research. There are features that all topics discussed here have in common: this research will enhance – but also *complicate* – our work. Busy literacy teachers, many of whom are part-time and underpaid, and busy students, many of whom are enrolled in several classes, work, and/or have families, do not want complications. Busy peo-

ple want answers, and the answers suggested by the topics discussed here are increasingly messy and complex.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to explore past writing-related research and look to the future, particularly as it relates to teaching. First, I will delve into the past, using three publications, rich in content, that classify and review recent studies. In this first discussion, arguments in three publications will be outlined (Polio 2003; Silva and Brice 2004; Matsuda and Silva 2005), using the categories suggested by Polio (2003): research into writers' texts; studies focusing on writers' processes, research into participants in the learning and teaching processes, and studies that are concerned with the contexts of writing, both inside and outside of the classroom.

This initial discussion will be followed by comments on some of the directions for future research that may influence L2 writing teaching: studies of corpus linguistics, discourse communities and their genres, situated texts and their domains, multi-modal environments, the writer in the text and critical pedagogy.

2. Recent research

2.1. Writers' texts

Though a glance through prominent L2 publications such as *Journal of Second Language Writing* or *TESOL Quarterly* might cause one to conclude that most of the recent research has dealt with writers' processes, Silva and Brice argue (2004: 72) that studies of texts, not writers' processes, continue to dominate the literature. These textual studies have a long tradition, beginning with the 1950s/1960s "Current-Traditional" era when text structure and accuracy were the focus of writing classes (see Silva 1990; Johns 1997: 6-8) and continuing into the current era when the study of genres is in vogue. Though research into local, bottom-up features of texts, such as concentrations of grammatical items, is still important, especially in languages for specific purposes contexts, a number of recent projects have dealt with text-related issues that are fully as central to teaching but more difficult to operationalize. Silva and Brice (2004) speak of work which attempts to measure writer genre awareness (within texts) as well as studies that measure the textual features related to individualism and collectivism. New research is also emerging that investigates "intertextuality," (Bakhtin

1981), that is, how the writer draws from other “texts” and personal and cultural experiences to construct her own.

In current research contexts, analyses of texts are often combined with other approaches to research, e.g., interviews. In his *Digging up texts and transcripts: Confessions of a discourse analyst*, Hyland (2005) provides a useful description of such text and interview integrations.

2.2. Writer processes

Due to the centrality of the Process Movement to the teaching of writing (see Silva 1990; and Johns 1997: 8-13), studies of writing processes are still important to research, as well. In process studies, researchers analyze the ways in which writers plan, draft, revise, and edit their texts. Initially, these studies encompassed the entire writing process, generally within a classroom context (Zamel 1983). However, more recently, researchers have been investigating student writer sub-processes such as revising, reviewing and annotating texts, backtracking, idea generation, and task representation. Processes of expert writers are also subject to study (Flowerdew 2005), and research approaches have become increasingly complex (Manchón, Murphy, and Roca de Larios 2005). Silva and Brice (2004) note that context has entered the studies of process, particularly in English as a Foreign language (EFL) environments.

Polio (2003: 44) points out that one of the important and controversial features of process research has been the methodology: capturing what the writer does through a variety of methods such as stimulated recall, interviews, text analysis, observation, and think-aloud protocols.

Since the process movement has revolutionized the teaching of writing, it continues to influence all types of research. For example, genre researchers often refer to the socially-constructed processes that writers undergo as they attempt to produce texts within a complex context (Dias et al. 1999).

2.3. Participants

Learners’ processes have been central – but also studied is the work of teachers, the other major participants in pedagogies. Polio (2003: 50) notes that most of the teacher-centered studies have been qualitative, focusing on issues such as their views and practices in writing, how their views change over time or as they encountered new student populations, and teacher re-

sponses to student texts. Students have also been studied beyond their writing processes, as researchers have delved into their educational experiences in writing classes or content courses, their attitudes toward writing, and the effects of their first languages upon their L2 texts. One recent development in studies of students involves the concepts of “voice” and “identity” as student and expert writers interact through text with their academic discourse communities (Silva and Brice 2004: 75), a topic discussed later in this chapter.

2.4. Contexts

The recent emphases upon the social nature of writing and genre (Swales 1990; Hyland 2003) has brought context or (“writing situation”) into the research limelight, an issue that is central throughout this chapter. Polio writes about studies that investigate the goals of programs and writing classes, the tasks characteristic of academic writing classes, and the ways in which features of text interact with the values of a discipline. As all teachers know, assessment is often the major context variable that influences the way in which writing is taught. Silva and Brice (2004: 73) report on studies in Europe and Asia, in particular, where teachers’ ratings of student work have been identified and analyzed.

However, research into the influences of context upon writing is still in its infancy. Much more could be accomplished in investigating how writers vary their genres for specific situations, the influences of technology upon texts, particularly how e-mail and the Internet have affected student prose (Silva and Brice 2004: 75-78), texts and writers’ first cultures, and situated writing in third and fourth languages, among other topics.

I cannot do justice to the reviews of the literature (Polio 2003; Silva and Brice 2004; Matsuda and Silva, 2005) from which I have drawn this brief overview. The reader will need to access the original texts for citations and depth of analysis. Instead, I am devoting the remainder of this chapter to speculation, to considering what might be the principal influences upon future research and teaching in L2 writing.

3. The future

3.1. Corpus linguistics

Despite the increasing number of studies in corpus linguistics coming out of Northern Arizona University, University of Michigan, and elsewhere in North America, research in this area has not permeated most of the textbooks and curricula on this continent, either at the teacher education level or at the English as a Second Language (ESL)/EFL student level. In contrast, corpus studies and related pedagogical tools (one only needs to consider the COBUILD series) have been integral to research and curricula in other parts of the world for several years.

Why is this? Why have educators in North America, which produces so many textbooks, been slow to embrace corpus studies? Simpson and Swales (2001: 2) provide us with an answer: on the one hand, in the United States, the influence of Noam Chomsky and his followers “has privileged language structure rather than language use....” Thus, most North American applied linguistics programs and classrooms emphasize grammar over other features of language. In these programs, there are discrete separations among syntax, semantics, and discourse; and language acquisition is generally discussed as a purely cognitive phenomenon. On the other hand, the authors (2001: 3) claim that in Europe and in other parts of the world,

...the prime link for linguistics has been between language and social life, and in consequence, there has been a greater interest in usage, in the co-occurrence of certain vocabulary with certain grammatical forms, and in an accounting for linguistic expressions that incorporate social, ideological and emotional factors as well as purely cognitive ones.

But the tide must turn eventually, even in North America, because corpus linguistics provides avenues for study that are rich, integrated, and contextual. We cannot continue to present separate linguistic topics in our classrooms because, as Graddol (2004: 1329-1331) points out, the human brain does not store this information in separate places:

No one has ever successfully produced a comprehensive and accurate grammar of any language... for as Edward Sapir pointed out in the early 20th century, “all grammars leak” [...] It seems that much of what we have expected of grammars can be better explained by focusing on words and the complex way they keep each other’s company... The human brain is able to store experience of how words pattern, what kinds of text they appear in,

what kinds of rhetorical structure will follow them. This is the new science of collocation and colligation that illuminates how texts work.

Corpus linguistics acknowledges and plays upon this leakage, revealing not only the incidence of an item but “how words pattern, what kinds of text they appear in, and what rhetorical structures follow them.” Researchers and students in a classroom can now correlate form and meaning and validate the patterns and variations in authentic discourses, something we have been working toward in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for many years.

Thus, corpus linguistics can radically change our classrooms. By selecting the corpora from targeted genres, teachers can assist students in completing their own research about how language operates: the ways in which form, meaning, discourse and pragmatic factors interact. As a result, the classroom can become more individualized and student-centered, a great service to teachers who know that all classrooms are, by nature, heterogeneous. As Tognini-Bonelli (2001: 41) notes, “What students can derive from corpus work is qualitatively different from descriptive statements found in traditional grammars... students can formulate their own hypotheses and rules inductively from the corpora they select.” By its very nature, then, corpus linguistics changes the classroom dynamic and establishes the learner as researcher, as Tim Johns (1991: 17), the father of data-driven learning points out: “The task of the learner is to discover the foreign language [...] and the task of the language teacher is to provide a context in which [the learner] can learn how to learn.”

It is possible that corpus linguistics will finally bury the notion of the “ideal speaker/hearer,” for there is none, and the fully absurd notion of “general English” or a general version of any language?

3.2. Discourse communities and their valued genres

Corpus linguistics is only one leg of the table, one step on the ladder leading to curriculum renovation and research, however. Though valuable for its inductive, empirical base and student-centered approaches, it remains a bottom up research strategy, an approach to patterned uses and immediate, textual contexts of words and phrases. Thus, though corpus studies will help students to analyze a text, it will not give them all the tools they need to read or write one. Note the contrast between reading a corpus and reading a text in Figure 1, below (adapted from Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 31):

<i>A text</i>	<i>A corpus</i>
Read whole: top-down	Read fragmented: bottom-up
Read horizontally	Read vertically
Read for content, argumentation, arrangement and other factors	Read for formal patterning of specific elements
Read as a unique event (though, perhaps, an instance of a genre)	Read for repeated “events,” i.e., patterns of co-selection
Read as author- and community-driven and voiced. (Social practice)	Read as sample(s) of social practice at the word and phrase level
Read as a coherent, purposeful communicative event	Not read as a coherent, communicative event

Figure 1. Reading a text; Reading a corpus

So in addition to understanding of language systems that corpus linguistics offers, our students must also have a top-down and context-driven view of text, so that they can better understand writer’s purposes, the context, the argument, and, not incidentally, the discourse community (also called the “community of practice” in the literature) that validates a genre and its ideologies. This brings us to that difficult concept, “discourse community,” that is so much a part of the EAP literature. Since 1990, many of us in EAP have been influenced by Swales’ (1990: 24-27) much-quoted definition, which is:

1. [A discourse community] has a broadly agreed upon set of common public goals.
2. It has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. It utilizes, and thus possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its goals.
4. It uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
5. In addition to owning genre, it has acquired some specific lexis.
6. It has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discorsal expertise.

When this definition appeared in *Genre analysis* in 1990, we understood that our job as researchers and teachers was to study the “owned genres” and lexis of identified communities in order to assist our students to attain a “threshold level” of acceptance among the community initiated.

After years of working with faculty across the disciplines, I do not doubt that the concept of community (or discipline) is salient among academics. However, as EAP teachers, we confront at least two problems with essentializing “discourse community” within a classroom:

1. The first is that we cannot fully define communities of any type, since they are evolving, fuzzy, and difficult to pin down. Gumperz (1997: 188), the great anthropologist, has this to say about community definition:

...with the ever increasing pace of change... and large scale population migrations, sociologists as well as anthropologists have all but given up attempts to find empirical ways of defining the bounds of community.

2. Even if we could essentialize a community at any one moment in time, we know that academic communities continue to change and even die – and in most cases, their major means of communication, e.g., journals, evolve as paradigms shift in the discipline and new journal editors take over (see Berkenkotter and Huckin 1995). Prior (1998) makes important contributions to this argument when he notes the instability of disciplinary communities and the highly dependent and contextualized process of community initiation.

How about the valued genres that discourse communities that “possess in the communicative furtherance of their goals”? (Swales 1990: 26) Again, we run into instability and evolution of texts augmented by the situated nature of literacies. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), borrowing from Bakhtin (1981), note the centripetal forces that contribute to the prototypicality of genres across situations but the centrifugal forces that require that a genre be revised for a specific rhetorical situation.

3.3. Situated texts and their domains (activity systems)

Therefore, though valued genres and discourse communities may, in fact, be highly salient to disciplinary faculty, it is the specific situation in which a genre appears that determines how it will be successfully written and interpreted. In a new volume on the rhetoric of everyday life, Nystrand and Duffy (2003: vii) discuss the importance of this situatedness:

...the leading edge of research on writing, reading, and literacy these days is defined by its intersection with sociocultural, historical, political, disciplinary, instrumental and everyday context – each *situated* and *domain-specific*.

In each situation, writers draw from community genre knowledge and domain and revise texts to serve their own purposes within a rhetorical site. To give a personal example: though I wrote many acceptance and rejection letters (each of which was somewhat different) in my years as co-editor of the journal, *English for Specific Purposes*, my more recent letters in the same genre written as guest editor of a special issue of *Across the Disciplines* are varied to meet the requirements of that journal and the particular context and audience with which I am working. What can I borrow from my accumulated genre knowledge? Certain forms of politeness and format – and not much else.

Each rhetorical situation is highly complex, of course, for it embodies the values and genres of the discourse community and their interactions, writer purposes, the physical attributes of the context, and other factors. How can we theorize a literacy site, then? Russell (1997), drawing from theories developed by Cole and Engeström (1993), posits that activity theory may provide explanatory adequacy. The key term in activity theory is “system.” There is an activity system (such as a laboratory) in which a variety of texts appear, are developed, and interact. Participants “use certain genres but not others at certain times but not others” so there is also a genre system within the context. And, of course, there is a group of people with different roles (also a system) who are involved in meaningful and productive activities in the site. Russell (1997: 520) uses the activity system of the classroom to show how participants interact through texts:

The teacher writes the assignments; the students write responses in classroom genres. The administrators write the grade for; the teacher fills it out. The parents or government officials write the checks; the administrators write the receipts and send out the transcripts.

It is through this microstructural circulation of texts and other tools in genres, these regularized shared expectations for tool use within and among systems of purposeful interaction that macrosocial structure is (re-)created. At the same time in the same fundamental way, the identities of individuals and groups and subgroups are (re-) created.

Russell (1997: 522) points out that an activity system is both temporarily stabilized and evolving, that the genres that appear at any moment in time

are only stabilized-for-now. Thus “genres predict – but do not determine – [the text] structure.”

We teachers are very familiar with the classroom. However, different systems operate in other literacy sites. Windsor (2000: 164), studying an engineering firm, discovered complex, overlapping systems and a hierarchical writing process during which the technicians’ work “disappeared into the work of the engineers.” She concludes that “being in a powerful position may allow one to use the knowledge someone else has generated, but being able to use that knowledge is one of the things that generates the powerful position.” In her research, the systems interact and the writing of technicians is buried as engineers produce the valued genres.

Mathieson (2004), studying engineering in an academic setting, found that the “texts” central to journal articles and grants are, not surprisingly, visual and numerical, thus influencing that particular activity system.

What can we say, then, to the teachers, and their students, who are looking for answers, who want researchers to inform them about what the experts in their disciplines know and how to read and write successfully in a number of contexts? How can we make the complex nature of writer purpose, activity system, and “stabilized for now” genres accessible to students? If we even understood the activity systems in which our students will be working, could we replicate them, and their genres, for the classroom? Freedman and Medway (1994: 11), *North American New Rhetoricians* (see Johns 2002, for a discussion of their theories and research.) claim that we cannot import students’ authentic literacy experiences into our EAP classrooms. However, Coe, another New Rhetorician, claims that an appropriate use of the term “genre” opens the door to student discovery. Coe (1994: 159) claims that “Genre epitomizes the significance of approaching reading and writing as social processes in which individuals participate without necessarily being entirely conscious of what the social processes are.” He continues by arguing that we need to raise students’ consciousness of the complex and social nature of texts within academic and professional settings.

For years, I have been working on this consciousness raising in my own first year university classroom (Johns 1997). Now, I am attempting to write a first year university textbook intended to be both appropriate to the research topics I have discussed here and accessible to busy teachers and students (Johns in process). Needless to say, it is not an easy job; but others have already entered this field (Trimmer 2001; Devitt, Reigg, and Bawarshi 2004) and it is important for our pedagogical work to reflect research and theory.

3.4. Multi-modal environments

So far, I have not mentioned the activity systems that are central to most of our students' lives, found on the Internet, Ipods, and in other technologies. Many of our (more privileged) students have grown up with technology; they use the Internet, the cell phone, the palm pilot and other tools frequently and for a variety of purposes. This dependence upon technology marks a truly significant departure from reliance upon print texts. In a recent discussion of the influences of computers upon writing, for example, Chartier (1995: 15) says:

...the substitution of the screen for codex is a far more radical transformation than that brought on by Gutenberg's invention of the printing press; it changes the methods of organization, structure, consultation, and even the appearance of the written word.

We see evidence for Chartier's argument every day. By producing texts in these environments (e.g., web-logs/blogs), students can bring their personal lives to the world. They can write expressively in short, fragmented, and ungrammatical texts and be read immediately by often appreciative audiences. They can make links, use gestures, and impart visual information with technical ease. However, these technologies do not encourage extended, thoughtful, critical and well-argued texts. And that's a problem for EAP writing classes. In their landmark publication, Cope and Kalantzis (2000: 7) speak of six "design elements" in our current students' meaning making processes:

Linguistic meaning (now, of course, complicated by the implications of corpus linguistics)
Audio meaning (noise is central to our students' lives)
Visual meaning (in various media, including the Internet)
Gestural meaning (including "gestures" in texts)
Spacial meaning (again, the Internet provides significant possibilities)
The Multimodal patterns of meaning that relate the first five modes to each other.

How do we bring these meanings into the EAP classroom? How can assist students in analyzing and critiquing their varied textual experiences? Here is a great opportunity to draw from what they know to lead them into information competence and visual literacy activities such as critiquing web-sites.

Also important to our teaching can be the technological tools, the many sources available to students on the Internet for their writing, in particular. I happen to be working with Houghton Mifflin on my textbook (Johns in process), so I am most familiar with their tool, WriteSpace, which undoubtedly resembles other literacy tools of this type. WriteSpace is embedded within the Blackboard Classroom management system, providing modules for process writing, interactive exercises, an on-line handbook, real time tutoring and feedback. My editors tell me that they will be able to tailor a WriteSpace component to interact with my textbook, to use the Internet for a variety of approaches to understanding the complexity of genre and context.

Thus the new technologies offer challenges to EAP as students use it for quick chat and research. They also give us possibilities for out-of-class literacy assistance. We need to make full use of their potential in our academic literacy classrooms as we draw from students' interests and knowledge.

3.5. The writer in the text: voice, persona, stance, and evaluation

Amidst this talk about context, genres, and technology, the writer still must still be considered in research. Silva and Brice (2004) find the concept of writer's voice to be an emerging issue in L2 language research. I-chat and BLOGS are voiced, expressive, personal, and often direct, and our students love this immediate and personal contact. On the other hand, one of the many reasons why students believe that academic discourses are distant and foreign is because they view them as unvoiced, as "objective" and "factual" rather than encouraging the kinds of expressive writing with which they may be comfortable.

What students do not see – and what we must show them – is how every text is voiced, though also constrained by an activity system, genre, and community. Fortunately, we have valuable new research and theory on this topic. For an overview, readers might examine, for example, the special issue of *Journal of Second Language Writing* devoted to voice (Vol. 10, 1, 2002). Here is Ivanič and Camps' (2002: 3) argument found in this issue:

All writing contains "voice"...which locates their users culturally and historically. Writers may, through the linguistic and other resources they choose to draw on in their writing, ventriloquate an environmentally aware voice, a progressive-educator voice, a sexist voice, a positivist voice, a self-

assured voice, a progressive-educator voice, a committed-to-plain English voice, or a combination of an infinite number of voices.

But as noted, voice in all contexts, including I-chat and e-mail, is constrained by the genre, the context, and the community: to use our writing voices effectively we need to consider the immediate rhetorical situation. Here, the work by Hunston and Thompson (2000) discussing writer's stance is useful. Using corpus linguistics to guide them, these authors argue that our voices in academic texts are found when we:

1. Express our opinions... that may reflect the value system of our community or the particular group within that community with whom we affiliate.
2. Construct and maintain relations between reader and writer (here, Hyland's [1998] working on hedging is useful)
3. Organize the discourse using metatextual features.

Hyland (2002), again using corpus studies, examines a more potentially face-threatening element of the author's voice: the use of directives to the reader (e.g., "Look at this.") within a variety of rhetorical contexts. So as academic writers, our students can maintain a voice, express their opinions, construct relationships with the reader through hedging and directives (and many other means), but they need help in how to accomplish their ends within the academic and professional genres with which they are unfamiliar.

3.6. Critical pedagogy: Ideology

By studying activity systems, genres, and writer and reader roles (or watching CNN), we have become acutely aware of the ideological thrust of every text and the ways in which multimodal factors interact to display these ideologies (see Silva and Brice 2004: 81 on nascent commentary in this area). Critical pedagogy, based loosely upon Freire (1973), encourages students to challenge, or at least question, the standard ideologies (see Benesch 2001) and to negotiate them within activity systems. Benesch tells us that when we talk with students about genres and technology, we must also evoke issues of textual and visual hegemony; we must assist students to understand and resist society's inequities, initially by encouraging them to question academic faculty and negotiate assignments in their classrooms, and later by questioning authority in general (see also Pennycook 2000).

Our ESL/EFL students are often fully aware of the inequities that surround them, and critical pedagogy assists them to develop effective critique and resistance. Particularly interesting to us as EAP teachers may be the growing work of L2 scholars who are voicing their resistance (see Canagarajah 1999; Sasaki 2003) while writing within the English language community.

4. Conclusion

What the six topics discussed in section 3 here have in common, of course, is the necessity for *not* separating one feature of academic literacy (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, or the text) from another within an activity system, for not removing genres from their linguistic and visual elements or from their contexts. The research here points to our responsibility for being more thoroughly rhetorical and analytical in our teaching, taking into consideration the immediate activity systems within which texts operate, the knowledge that texts are purposeful and that “speakers and writers have intentions or designs on readers and hearers” (Fahnestock and Secor, 2002: 177). Many years ago, Widdowson (1981) reminded teachers that we should not confuse “authenticity” of texts (and now, literacy sites) with “relevance.” Widdowson (1981: 5) said, quite wisely, that

...the language content of a course is selected not because it is representative of what the learner will have to deal with after the course is over but because it is likely to activate strategies for learning while the course is in progress.

His advice is fully as relevant today. Our EAP students need to develop strategies for researching texts and rhetorical contexts, for adapting their reading and writing processes and voices to a variety of purposes and the rhetorical situation. And we, of course, need to continue our research.

In conclusion, what can we say about recent trends in EAP writing research and influences upon future curricula? Several things:

1. Writing is integrated: We cannot separate linguistic elements such as vocabulary, grammar, or discourse from writer purposes or rhetorical contexts.
2. Genres are social; they are used purposefully by individuals to get something done – even if that something is only to attain a good grade in a classroom.

3. Genres are intertextual and interactive; they are integral to the activity systems in which they are situated.
4. Texts from genres vary: the situation and writer's purposes, in addition to the conventions of the genres, determine the resulting text.

Because the activity systems in which our students find themselves are highly complex, they need to develop their abilities to be researchers: to use corpus and other research methods to investigate genres and the activity systems in which they are found. They also need to use both investigation and critique to examine the visual and auditory influences upon their lives – and the technologies that influence thought and discourses. We must conclude, then, that our responsibilities as EAP teachers and researchers are both comprehensive and complex as we attempt to prepare students for the demands of the 21st Century.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

In a recent publication called *Genre and the invention of the writer*, Bawarshi (2003) shows literacy teachers how they can enhance student writing processes while assisting them researching those factors that determine the success of a text within any activity system. I will not discuss Bawarshi at length, for he needs to be read in the original; however, I demonstrate below how I have translated Bawarshi (2003), Widdowson (1981), and my own 30+ years of teaching and research into a first year composition curriculum. Here is what happens in my classroom as students prepare to write:

Step 1: Students begin with what the Australians suggest (Feez 2002 and Macken-Horarik 2002): several textual models from a genre which they analyze, asking these questions:

- Name: What is this genre called by those who value and use it? Who values these texts?
- Purpose(s): What purpose(s) does this genre serve? [And there may be several purposes.]

- Site(s): Where do texts from this genre appear? What systems operate in this context? [A little simple activity theory is presented here, using Russell's classroom example.]
- Conventions: How do people recognize this genre? What are the features that seem to be repeated across texts? For example, does it have a recognizable discourse structure such as Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion (IMRD)? Are there repeated uses of visual information? Fonts? Are certain types of language common? [This is a good place to work with a simple corpus activity.]
- Intertextuality: What do the texts you are studying draw from? What are the sources for these texts? [Here, students might interview a text writer for how s/he integrated visual, auditory, textual – and discussions in the hall – into the text.]
- Situational variation: How has this genre been revised for different contexts? What writer, context, or other factors caused these changes to occur? [Here, we talk about the characteristics of a specific context that may lead to situational variation.]
- Writer's voice: Who is the writer in this text? What does the language tell you about this writer? In what ways is the writer conforming to the genre and community, in your view? In what ways does the writer, as individual, shine through the text?

Step 2: Then, students discuss how they might read one of the texts studied for a number of academic or other purposes within a variety of contexts, e.g., for enjoyment, to summarize, to use as a source, to take notes. The students practice one, or several, approaches to exploiting the text for their purposes.

Step 3: Students then move to drafting a text from this genre for a known context, using an invention grid which becomes their guide throughout the writing process. Figure 2 below shows one example of such an invention grid:

<i>Genre features</i>	<i>What I know</i>	<i>What I don't know</i>	<i>How I'll find out</i>
Name			
Conventions: -visual appearance, -form/structure			
Language			
Writer's role (e.g., student), voice and stance			
Writer's purpose(s)			
Audience or community (values and assessment practices)			
Immediate context/situation			

Figure 2. Invention grid for writing

The topics in the last column are sometimes particularly puzzling. I talk with the students about how we conduct research into academic situations: using writing mentors in the disciplines, finding sample texts and discussing them with experts, using sources for intertextuality and other approaches. It soon becomes very clear to students that all elements of a text in a genre must be carefully thought through as writing and revising takes place. Since the most common type of academic writing for undergraduates in many countries is the in-class examination essay (Melzer 2002), we devote considerably more time in class using the grid to deconstruct different types of essay examination prompts and discussing how writers produce

effective texts under pressure (see Kroll this volume, for a more complete discussion of tasks and assignments). Then, our students' in-class process (peer editing, revising, rewriting, etc.) is based upon the discussions remarked upon here, placing special emphasis upon the complexities of the activity system.

Notes

1. Polio provides some useful charts throughout her chapter that outline these studies. Charts include the main focus, the research question, the technique (e.g., simulated recall) and the approach (e.g. qualitative/causal comparative).

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Techniques for shaping writing course curricula: Strategies in designing assignments

Barbara Kroll

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. If you were enrolled in a writing course in which you were required to prepare essays in a second or foreign language (L2/FL), what kinds of topics would you most like to be writing about? Why?
2. Think back to several writing courses you have ever taken, or to writing classes you have observed, or classes you have taught in which writing activities took place. Identify some of the components that were found in each and every one of these courses.
3. In assigning writing tasks to their students, what factor or factors most influence teachers to craft the assignments they require?
4. What are some of the ways teachers draw upon outside reading materials to shape writing assignments?

1. Introduction

Early on in the L2 or FL learning process, when learners have only a limited range of vocabulary and grammar skills, what teachers present as “writing” activities typically are provided as a way for students to practice and gain mastery over a variety of language skills. That is, the goal of these apparent writing activities is not to work towards proficiency in writing per se but rather to expand general linguistic fluency (Currie and Cray 2004). However, once learners have attained an intermediate or advanced level of proficiency in the L2, they are expected to be able to produce sustained prose (“writing”) that expresses or creates meaning in ways that resemble the ways that well-formed texts in the target language might. It is this latter meaning of “writing” which I shall be using in my discussion throughout this chapter. Such writing should not be construed to require necessarily long or complex texts but assuredly “complete” texts in which the goal for the writer is to encode his or her meaning and purpose for writing in a format that matches those goals.

In this chapter, I will suggest that underpinning every writing course is a particular teacher's philosophy about how best to help his or her students achieve course goals and make improvements in their overall writing proficiency. Each writing course moves through a series of events that I will suggest form its natural life cycle. Driving the cycle forward is the presentation of the writing assignment around which a variety of class activities take place. I will review some criteria for creating well-structured assignments, give several examples of different assignment types, discuss how each assignment fits into the life cycle of the course, and conclude with some reservations about how much can reasonably be achieved within the specific constraints of any given course.

2. Setting the stage

Imagine, if you will, an interested teacher-observer who was able to take a trip around the world and visit say a dozen or even a hundred different L2 writing classes in a wide range of settings. Let's suggest, just as examples, the following six possibilities, from among so many others that could be detailed. (And while I provide examples related to writing in English as a target language, one could provide similar examples for writing courses designed for non-native speakers of virtually any language.)

In one class in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing for future English teachers, 20 or so students sit in a fully computerized state-of-the-art classroom in a completely modern university. In another country, 30-40 students are having a writing lesson as part of an EFL multi-skills program in a poorly lit economically impoverished secondary school. Elsewhere, 100 students sit in a cavernous lecture hall sharing textbooks used in a state-sponsored lockstep program designed to teach English reading and writing EFL skills to students in a variety of post-secondary programs. Our next classroom of perhaps 12-15 students is found in an intensive English language program located in virtually any English-speaking country and catering to international visa students eager to achieve a level of English proficiency sufficient to qualify them to enter baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate programs in an English-medium university of the host country. Our final two classes are located on college and university campuses throughout North America. One class is an English as a Second Language (ESL) writing course that serves as an equivalent to the required freshman composition course restricted to native speakers of English; this is the single course most likely to be required of all post-secondary students in North America and serves as almost a rite of pas-

sage in their first year of college or university studies. Depending on the school, enrollment can range from 15-50 students and may include a combination of international visa students and long-term North American residents whose home language is other than English. The sixth class is an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing course designed to improve the writing skills of perhaps 12-15 international graduate (post-baccalaureate) students across the disciplines; it is seen as a “service” course to the students whose real interests lay in pursuing advanced knowledge in the specific fields of their academic interests.

What each of these six writing classrooms have in common (along with the countless classrooms where writing instruction takes place and whose specifics we have not detailed) is the individual components – a teacher, students, texts of reading (to represent some kind of input), and texts of writing as produced by these students (output). I state the obvious because we sometimes forget that there are only a limited number of actual variables across both space and time in describing what takes place in a writing course. In fact, Cumming (2003: 85) interviewed 48 writing instructors teaching in six different countries and was “surprised” to discover that “practices for ESL/EFL writing instruction may be more uniform internationally (and even within countries) than people might presume.” We do not need to travel anywhere beyond our own classrooms and schools to realize that we can indeed predict and describe quite a lot about what “teaching writing” really means. Despite the very real differences any teacher faces in his/her actual situation, common underlying forces drive all writing courses forward. In this chapter, I would like to focus on some issues related to course content, especially as embodied in course assignments, hoping that all teachers will be able to recognize how these elements factor into their own highly contextualized curriculum, course planning, and lesson designs.

3. Philosophies of teaching

Using a term I first wrote about a few years ago, I would like to make the claim that all writing classes revolve around a kind of natural “life cycle” (Kroll 2001a) that is common in all writing courses, regardless of the materials or methods of any particular teacher or institution and regardless of whether the writing is to be generated in an L1 or L2. I will return to this point later, but want to emphasize here that the focal point of the life cycle is the *writing assignment* students will be asked to prepare, and every course will have numerous repetitions of this life cycle.

I believe that the most important (but rather infrequently discussed) factor in selecting topics around which assignments for writing are constructed is the fact that all assignments reflect a particular philosophy about teaching writing from which any given teacher operates. This is true even when a teacher might, in fact, not be consciously able to articulate his/her philosophy. In fact, even in cases where teachers might claim they choose topics for their classes based on suggestions to be found in a course textbook or for “no particular reason” (maintaining their selections are random or haphazard), I believe they are developing or choosing assignments which seem appropriate on the basis of a felt inner sense of appropriacy, reflecting perhaps unconsciously how they view the goals of that course, the ways in which writers learn, and what they particularly value as good writing.

These claims are substantiated in the work of Ivanič (2004), who writes about a variety of teacher belief systems, including beliefs about writing and beliefs about learning to write that tend to work in tandem with particular choices a teacher might make in structuring classroom activities or assignments. For example, she finds that the “process approach” is favored by those who believe that “writing consists of composition processes in the writer’s mind,” while at the same time believing that “learning to write includes learning both the mental processes and the practical processes involved in composing a text.” This is in marked contrast to the “genre approach” favored by teachers who believe that “writing is a set of text-types, shaped by social context” and “learning to write involves learning the characteristics of different types of writing which serve specific purposes in specific contexts.” (Ivanič 2004: 225). No wonder class assignments look so different!

In a book about conflicting belief systems in the field of L2 writing itself, Casanave (2004: 64) states: “Perhaps the most consuming of all dilemmas for L2 writing teachers is how to best help their students improve their writing.” While not writing about assignment design in and of itself, Casanave details a variety of choices teachers have and can make that all derive from underlying belief systems about how to foster improvement. As we shall see, different philosophies invariably lead to different types of assignments. Regardless of the underlying philosophy of teaching that leads to the specific assignments presented to students, however, assignments must be carefully constructed to assure their success and their contribution towards promoting the goals of the course. In fact, as Neff-Lippman (2003: 206) warns, “...because each assignment offers students an ‘invitation’ to write, the inadequate ‘invitation’ may lead students astray.”

4. Close up on assignments¹

Although assignments can vary widely (as will be illustrated later in this section), it seems reasonable to claim that there are broad-based and generic guidelines for approaching the task of creating any and all assignments. Speaking to this issue, Clark (2003: 535) states that key components for teachers to think of in crafting assignments include attention to “purpose, structure, audience, and sources of information.” (An additional resource that provides an extensive and highly detailed repertoire of both specific writing assignments (oriented towards English L1 writers), and analyses of how to create assignments that serve a variety of course goals is Roen et al. 2002).

In the case of both L1 and L2 students studying in the United States, and based on a review of a large number of writing assignments that were given to students in a range of courses across the curriculum, Reid and Kroll (1995) developed a set of six guidelines for the preparation of successful writing assignments. The six components listed below (adapted and condensed from Reid and Kroll 1995: 19-22) outline all of the factors teachers should consider as they craft the wording of their assignments and prepare to ask their students to work on them.

1. A writing assignment should be presented with its *context* clearly delineated such that the student understands the reasons for the assignment.
2. The *content* of the topic area should be accessible to and appropriate for the writers while being broad enough to allow for multiple approaches.
3. The *language* of the “task” part of the assignment and the instructions it is embedded in should be unambiguous, comprehensible and transparent.
4. The *task* should be focused enough to allow for completion in the time or length constraints designated. Additionally, it should further students’ knowledge of classroom skills.
5. The *rhetorical specifications (cues)* should provide a clear direction of likely shape and format of the finished assignment, including appropriate references to an anticipated audience.
6. The *evaluation criteria* should be identified so that students will know in advance on what basis their output (i.e., written product) will be judged.

To supplement this list, Pfinstag and O’Hara (1998) point to the importance of writing tasks that are culturally accessible as well as providing for evaluation

standards that include attention to the writer's ability to fulfill the tasks set forth in the prompts. In a study that reports several examples of L2 writers misinterpreting a variety of examination prompts, Pfinstag and O'Hara (1998:7) conclude that it is the L2 writing teacher's charge to "teach [students] how to navigate writing prompts by themselves." Silva and Matsuda (2002: 255) point out that before a writer can even begin to address a task, he or she "has to assess the rhetorical situation and identify the primary purpose or aim of writing." All of these critical assignment components should be readily retrievable from a well-conceived and carefully crafted assignment regardless of the very real differences that can be found in the specific choices any teacher makes to select and shape assignments.

In the rest of this section, I would like to discuss three distinctly different types of writing assignments, each of which derives from rather different teacher belief systems about such variables as course goals, the nature of writing itself, and the challenge of helping students achieve greater writing proficiency. The focus of the first type of assignment is for students to create an essay that instantiates a particular rhetorical pattern or exemplifies a clearly discernable genre. The focus of the second type of assignment is that students begin with reading tasks that will be used to structure the writing task in some way. The third type of task lacks a focal point in the way of the first two types, but instead presents itself as a kind of self-actualizing task.

4.1. Patterns, models and genre approaches

One philosophy that seems to drive many writing teachers is the desire to ensure that students become familiar with standard organizational patterns common to English writing and the specific genres (including both their rhetorical and linguistic properties) most likely to be found in the academic environment where students are based. Additionally many teachers value essays that follow easily discernible patterns and/or believe that training students to recognize and produce those patterns is a reasonable goal for a writing course. One assignment type that speaks to this concern falls within the realm of the "rhetorical patterns" approach. Assignments along these lines may ask students to create or plug in content according to a specified manner of presentation, such as comparison and contrast or cause and effect. Some textbooks that are oriented towards this approach provide a short sample text exemplifying the pattern at hand. Often such texts are written by the textbook author, and do not actually represent an authentic piece of writing. This assignment type is illustrated in (1).

- (1) Read the passage [on page xx in the course textbook] that presents and analyzes three different ways that people can learn about the world from watching television. Notice how each way is presented with both general discussion and specific details that analyze how that factor contributes to the overall goal of learning about the world. Now you write an essay in which you provide three different reasons for why a student may choose to major in his/her chosen field. Use a similar classification pattern to the passage on television, making sure that your three categories are clearly separate. Provide adequate discussion and details.

In this example, students are presumably provided with a “model” essay about learning from television organized according to classification pattern that is easily discernible in the model (or source text). The writing task asks students to foreground the pattern of the model essay’s structure and to create an essay that adheres to this classification pattern but based on material they generate on a topic area provided to them. Imitation of this sort, teachers might argue, allows students to develop fluency in the production of complete texts that exhibit at least some native-speaker like discourse style.

Still, a typical objection made to this type of assignment derives from the fact that there is ample evidence that “real world” writing does not get produced in this fashion. “If not used judiciously, . . . models . . . can perpetuate the misleading impression that writing involves following simple rhetorical formulas” (Ferris and Hedgcock 2005: 142). Not only do real writing tasks *not* begin with a particular form which merely awaits content in order to become a completed text, but content itself usually does not get generated without the writer first having a purpose for writing. Nevertheless, I caution against abandoning the “rhetorical pattern” approach altogether (as do Ferris and Hedgcock 2005), for there is evidence that many academic writing tasks outside of English departments or ESL/EFL classes *do* ask students to prepare papers which follow a particular format (Horowitz 1986; Hale et al. 1996; Wambach 1998; Braine 2001; Zhu 2004) and the ability of L2 writers to prepare papers that meet reader expectations has a definite value within an academic environment. Further, a related study conducted in the FL environment (Way, Joiner, and Seaman 2000), with French as the target language, demonstrated that secondary school students performed better at writing when provided with a prose model stimulus than when asked to write a descriptive or narrative piece in the absence of any models. The authors conclude with a call for additional research on the prose models approach in FL classes with the belief that

it will help accomplish the goal “to produce [future] proficient FL writers capable of expressing themselves in authentic situations in an authentic manner” (Way, Joiner, and Seaman 2000: 181).

When working with students at higher levels of academic proficiency, it is more likely that assignments of this text-oriented sort will take on a more genre-based approach, and teachers will be motivated by wanting students to learn about the specific textual features and nature of academic writing that their students are likely to encounter when faced with writing tasks in specific disciplines. The focus is not on imitation as much as it is on fostering the ability to identify (and then re-create) the ways in which texts accomplish their rhetorical goals. Within this perspective, L2 writing teachers view their charge as one of helping their students acquire skills that will serve them *after* they exit from the writing course. As this topic is covered in some detail by Johns (this volume), I shall omit further discussion on writing assignments that may be motivated by a teacher’s philosophy that progress in writing skills is best accomplished in a genre-based course. (For more on genre approaches to L2 writing, in addition to John’s chapter, see Gee 1997; Swales and Feak 2000; and Hyland 2003).

4.2. Reading to write tasks

Several essentially different writing assignment formats can be grouped under the heading of “reading to write” tasks, a term that has spawned a large body of research, though mostly in the field of first language writing studies (Flower et al. 1990; Morrow 1997; McCormick 2003; but see also Belcher and Hirvela 2001, and Shi 2004 for L2-focused studies). In these types of assignments, students are asked to produce a text of their own subsequent to having read one or more published texts found in a course textbook, and/or available in such supplementary materials as newspapers or periodicals, and/or distributed by the teacher or even selected by the students through their own research endeavors. I separate this type of assignment from the “models/genre” approach because the primary function of the source text(s) here is not to serve as an example of a particular type of writing (as in the approach that focuses on textual properties) but rather to yield raw material derived from the *content* of the reading(s). The writing tasks assigned to students following content-focused readings can include the following (among other possibilities), listed more or less in a kind of hierarchical rank order of presumed difficulty:

- Write a summary of the text. (Not a particularly simple task, although often presented as such, cf. Sternglass 1989.)
- Write a response to the text. (e.g., Do you agree or disagree with the author?)
- Synthesize the information and/or opinions found in two or more texts.
- Resolve conflicting claims made in two or more readings.
- Draw on multiple published texts to analyze a key issue in a specific discipline.

Inasmuch as there is such a huge variety of ways that L2 students can be asked to write following engagement with source texts, I will not provide any examples of such assignments since space constraints prevent the publication of sample source texts used to generate these kinds of topics. Instead, I suggest the reader consult the numerous examples of these task types as presented and analyzed in such L2 teacher-training manuals as Jordan (1997), Coffin et al. (2003), Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), and Williams (2005). Suffice it to say that virtually all students in secondary and tertiary institutions have been asked to read texts in advance of being asked to prepare a writing assignment, and thus this is a familiar experience (at the very least in one's native language).

Quite probably, teachers who choose to structure writing assignments that follow reading assignments may be operating from a number of different motivations. A reasonable philosophical underpinning to this approach may derive from a teacher's belief about how most scholarship gets generated. For example, many published articles in academic circles report on research studies that have been carried out to answer questions in the field *after* a scholar has researched and failed to come up with what he/she considers adequate attention to the matter in his/her reading of prior scholarship. Another impetus for published scholarship is when a teacher or scholar reads a published piece or series of texts that he/she disagrees with. Still another piece of scholarship might result when a scholar sees the chance to generate original ideas by drawing on the work of several others. On a more mundane level, teachers might be drawn to the reading-to-write approach because they recognize that such a process underpins how most writing tasks are presented to students in disciplines outside the language course. As a way to help students in language classes prepare for writing tasks in non-language classes, practice is provided in how to use source texts in a variety of ways. Lastly, I have elsewhere suggested that some teachers use readings as the basis of writing assignments without any clear notion as to the value of this approach; rather they may be motivated by their own enjoyment of having something substantive to discuss

in class or a fear of what they will do to fill class time if they cannot use readings as a way to structure class discussions (Kroll 1993). They may not recognize that spending too much class time promoting discussions about ideas and information provided by source readings leaves little time for learning about *writing*. Hopefully, few teachers today are that ambivalent or disingenuous about the valid and genuine goals of a writing course.

4.3. “Student to world” tasks

The final examples of writing assignment types I wish to discuss derive from a philosophy that students will learn best if they can engage with the material in some way that allows them to develop a high level of investment in their writing. I refer to this approach as the “student to world” model. Rather than crafting assignments that are oriented towards having students focus their attention on the form and shape of the written product (as can be the case in the rhetorical or genre approach), or crafting assignments that respond to and draw from source material in ways that the student must bring the outside world inside (as in the reading-to-write approach), the “student to world” approach sets a topic in motion that attempts to draw on something the student can relate to from a personal perspective. I am not referring to personal writing *per se* (as in narrative and reflective tasks), but rather to writing that starts with the assumption that the student can write him or herself *into* the topic because of a personal hook. Fulton (1998: 3) points out that students who cannot find a way to personally connect to their assignments

tend to look ... at the assignment to provide “the answers.” Context-rich assignments [for example] can be especially seductive because they may appear to do just that. When students “follow the directions,” in such an assignment and still something eludes them, they think they must have “misunderstood the assignment.”

Although Fulton is highly influenced by her situation as a writing professor at the Maharishi University of Management (Fairfield, Iowa), a college founded by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a Vedic sage and founder of the Transcendental Meditation movement, her multiple suggestions on how to structure writing assignments seem applicable to the goals of many L2 writing teachers. Her philosophy is articulated most clearly when she asks (Fulton 1998: 3): “How can we structure writing assignments such that [they] can help students develop personal connections with the world around them?”

For an example of an assignment based on the approach of “student to world” and one that might be presented to perhaps lower intermediate L2 (target English) students, I offer (2).

- (2) University students can spend their spare time during the school term or during vacation periods in a variety of different ways.

Write a paper describing in detail the leisure time activity you MOST like to do and why it interests you. In your paper, include an explanation of how you became interested in the activity you write about. Consider that your audience might be a foreign e-pal (pen pal) who wants to know more about you. Your paper should be written in the first person (using “I”).

To provide some examples of what you might write about, you can discuss your love of soccer or another sport, your enjoyment of playing video games or engaging in any other hobby, or volunteering at a local hospital or any other organization.

This task offers the hook of asking students to draw on personal knowledge while at the same time requiring a purpose that brings the students outside themselves by requiring an orientation towards a hypothetical interested audience. Unlike in the previous types of tasks, no outside text need be read or referred to in order to complete this task.

As a final example, and a more complex version of (2), I present (3), targeting a high intermediate or advanced class of ESL/EFL students:

- (3) “Excellence” is a term that has both a general, relatively transparent semantic meaning and a more precisely conceived meaning when used in an explicit context that can narrow its specific features.

Prepare a report of approximately 4-5 pages in which you investigate, discuss and analyze the notion of “excellence” as applied to the qualities to be found in a person engaged in a specific career or profession that you select. Consider that your audience might be people considering a career or profession of the type you analyze, and that the purpose of your paper might be to create a document worth posting to a college or university career center’s website. Such a document could help readers decide if they are suited to pursuing a career where excellence is defined as possessing certain personal traits and attributes, as well as specific abilities, attitudes, skills and so forth as

set forth in your discussion. Your report must incorporate 1) information gleaned from one or more interviews conducted with people who are engaged in the profession or career you select and/or 2) information from published and creditable reference sources. Use appropriate in-text citation and bibliographical documentation style as required by the nature of your presentation.

To provide some examples, papers could be prepared, to name just three possibilities, on what it takes to be an excellent simultaneous translator, or an excellent biochemical researcher, or an excellent independently employed accountant.

To complete this task successfully, students must identify a career or profession that they are personally interested in or at least intrigued enough by to want to research. This assignment brings that personal perspective “from the student to the world” by providing a hypothetical situation for the potential publication of a research-based report. Although it is possible that students will read and cite outside sources in the final version of the report they produce (if they do not rely solely on interviews), I distinguish this from a “reading to write” task because it starts with different assumptions and requires the student to complete the writing in rather different ways than source-based assignments. Still, I believe that the more practice students have had with source-based assignments, the more likely they are to do well on this assignment, which I see as potentially more challenging.

5. A natural “life cycle”

Regardless of the nature of any specific assignment, the writing assignment itself is the center of the life cycle of the writing class, a cycle that gets repeated any number of times based, in large part, on the length (in real time) of a specific course. As summarized in Figure 1 below, the cycle includes six steps from the setting of an assignment to the point at which the student submits a complete text for evaluation. Embedded in the various steps writers must learn to draw on a variety of strategies towards a successful completion of the task at hand. For example, to begin “the writer has to assess the rhetorical situation and identify the primary purpose or aim of writing” (Silva and Matsuda 2002: 255). As each cycle nears the generation of a complete and well-worked on (revised) text, the teacher must determine whether or not additional learning possibilities will result from the students’ continuing to work

on any given assignment or decide instead to move on to the next instance of the “life cycle” to promote additional opportunities for improved writing proficiency. Sometimes, the life cycles overlap, with final drafts being prepared even as activities begin which lead the students into the work that will contribute to a new and different writing assignment.

<i>Six steps in assignment completion</i>	
<i>Step 1</i>	Teacher sets assignment
<i>Step 2</i>	Students engage in preparatory work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and/or • Conducting Interviews and/or • Writing Notes and/or • Reflections and/or • Other
<i>Step 3</i>	Students draft complete text
<i>Step 4</i>	Feedback is provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By self and/or • By peers and/or • By teacher
<i>Step 5</i>	Students revise text and/or return to <i>Steps 2-4</i>
<i>Step 6</i>	Students submit text for evaluation by teacher

Figure 1. The life cycle of the writing class

As each cycle begins, the teacher must have at the minimum a general plan for the targeted writing assignment in order to structure or allow for the creation of activities that will help students prepare to undertake the writing. (This would include the choice of specific reading materials selected to advance the goal(s) of the assignment.) In most cases, students should be provided a fully detailed assignment sheet at the outset. Occasionally it might prove advisable for the teacher to withhold such details until certain preparatory activities have taken place.

In either case, Step 2 codifies that a number of purpose-driven activities

should precede the students' drafting of a text. Some of these activities include asking students to engage in small group or whole class discussions designed to expand their vocabulary or linguistic skills, sharpen their insights on the topic, or generate material for use in their individual writing. Students can interview classmates, family members or people in the community in order to gather information, develop perspectives, or draw conclusions. For more complex topics, they can conduct text or web-based research. Often, they are asked to reflect in writing, and perhaps but not always are they commonly asked to engage in some kind of reading prior to writing, especially for source-based writing assignments.

In the absence of any activities, a writing assignment becomes indistinguishable from a writing test, in which the learner is being asked to generate a complete text as a means to demonstrate his/her mastery of whatever conventions the evaluator or score-giver has in mind. Although it might appear that the steps I have outlined appear to adhere to an approach to writing often subsumed under the label "process" writing, and more recently discussed in composition scholarship as less valid than so-called "post-process" approaches (see Matsuda 2003, for a helpful and accessible history), I am referring here to methodological concerns of pedagogical choices in how to move students from a blank page to a well-structured text. I echo the words of Atkinson (2003: 10-11), in a piece that otherwise discusses how an overly simplified process approach fails to take into account such considerations as those related to the contextualized and social nature of learning:

The usefulness and power of process writing has been revealed time and again; and if I were suddenly transported into and put in charge of an L2 writing classroom, pre-writing, drafting, feedback, and revision would almost certainly be important classroom activities. . . . I personally hold process writing in high regard. . . . it is, in fact, difficult for me to conceptualize the effective teaching of writing without it.

Following engagement in preparatory activities, Step 3 in the life cycle calls for students to prepare a working draft of their response to the assignment at hand. It is important that both teachers and students see these texts as drafts, subject to revision, and not as final products. Many students resist the idea that they need to invest additional work on a text once it has been "fully" written. However, teachers can train students to identify feedback options that will allow them to re-vision their work when necessary; they should insist on Step 4, a feedback loop.

Feedback in any of its many forms should be considered a critical part of

the “life cycle” of the writing class. The goal is for students to be able to utilize such feedback to shape their evolving texts in ways that will yield an improved product in advance of the evaluative judgment on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the text, a judgment that usually involves the recording of some sort of grade in nearly all teaching situations.

Feedback can be direct, and it can be initially elicited in the form of a self-administered set of queries to help a writer review the extent to which a given text fulfills the goals of the specific writing assignment. Direct feedback can also be provided by the teacher or other students either orally or in writing or in some combination. There is a large body of research focused on the various ways in which peers can be trained to work together to discuss each other's writing productively (see Ferris 2003: 69-91, for an extensive review of this research; and see Liu and Hansen 2002, for extensive classroom suggestions). But even when such peer interaction is superficially intended to provide direct feedback, it can often accomplish indirect feedback just as if not even more effectively. Although many students initially resist the idea that, as novices, they can contribute to improving the quality of texts other novices produce, peer work can contribute *indirectly* to writing improvement through providing students an opportunity to re-consider their own work through the eyes of others. For example, instead of asking a student to read and comment on perceived weaknesses in another student's paper (direct feedback), the student can be asked to read a classmate's paper in the search for an idea, a technique, or an example he or she would like to emulate in a revision of his/her own paper (indirect feedback).

Additional indirect feedback could take the form of activities undertaken in class that allow students to practice specific rhetorical or linguistic skills keyed to the nature of the writing assignment they have prepared in draft form. Such activities could allow them, for example, to return to their working drafts with a new sense of the use of certain transition markers, the nature of evidence, or the finer distinctions between the use of past tense and the present perfect. To put this in perspective, Hinkel (2003) analyzed sentence-level features in essays written by 877 non-native speakers (NNS) of English versus lexical features in essays written by 206 native speakers (NS) of English and determined there is “clear evidence that NNS students with a relatively high academic standing employ significantly higher median rates of simple syntactic and lexical features than newly admitted first-year NS students do” (Hinkel 2003: 297). Clearly, once a student has a complete text to work from, revision activities that would promote linguistic and stylistic improvement might be lessons better learned than de-contextualized exercise material ostensibly designed to practice generating more felicitous prose.

Additionally, teachers should recognize that they have developed some of their own sense of what makes texts successful for students in a particular course and at a particular level of proficiency due to repeated exposure to examples of student texts; many students have never seen the type of writing their classmates produce, and this is another indirect benefit of peer review that can prove a very instructive experience for students as they gain some insight into their own strengths and weaknesses in comparison to the skills of their classmates.

Depending on a variety of factors, Steps 2-4, the preparation, draft and feedback cycles, may be repeated as additional rounds of revision (Step 5) unfold. At the very least, some measure of feedback should factor into a new (or perhaps final) draft of the paper being readied for submission and evaluation. This recursive cycle allows learners to revise their work in ways that promote increasing self-reliance as writers and additional practice in techniques that promote mastery. Eventually, however, it is best to require the writers to submit their work for evaluation. (Even the most professional of writers do not always consider their work “finished,” but find themselves needing to let go of it because of deadlines or other “real world” considerations.)

In the last phase of the “life cycle,” Step 6, after the sharing and feedback stage(s) have passed, the students prepare a polished and edited draft which will be evaluated or marked according to the criteria outlined with the assignment. Even in the most enlightened of institutions, there is little likelihood that anyone other than a teacher will interpret and apply the grading standards to the student’s written text. The purpose of feedback provided to students at that point in the writing process should ideally be not only to offer a judgment on the totality of the written product but also to provide the writers advice or guidance that can contribute to continuing growth in their writing proficiency as they move on to create new texts.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has made the claim that writing assignments form the heart and soul of the writing course: they determine the type of activities students will engage in, they reveal the teacher’s sense of what is important in shaping course curricula, and they lead to documents (the finished products created in response to the assignments) that serve as evidence of students’ level of skill in writing. For readers interested in broader based and more research-focused discussions regarding considerations for teaching writing, I suggest several

relatively recent articles, presented as discursive bibliographies, which provide extensive reviews of scholarly work on teaching L2 writing in both foreign and second language contexts: O'Brien 2004; Paltridge 2004; Silva and Brice 2004.

Most teachers believe that students best learn to write by writing, a point repeatedly and solidly verified by virtually the entire field of L2 writing studies. That being the case, the design of the writing tasks that will allow students to engage in writing becomes perhaps the key component of curriculum design. It is in the engagement with and the completion of writing tasks that the student will be most directly immersed in the development of his or her writing skills.

Teachers are understandably gratified when they find that students leave their courses with a broader appreciation of writing as a process (rather than a gift from the gods) and an enhanced range of skills they can put to use in addressing writing assignments in future classes. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that it is not necessarily teachers' poor crafting or choice of assignments (or students' lack of effort) that can lead to less than adequate progress. It is important to bear in mind that courses can be compressed into a period of just a few weeks or can extend over several months; similarly the total number of hours a class meets both for each class meeting and also cumulatively can vary widely. Courses can include students of basically similar or widely dissimilar skill levels. Teachers can work in situations where their total student load allows them ample time to work with learners on an individual basis or situations where they are overwhelmed by their total workload. These external realities are set by a variety of institutional constraints and are not determined by research into the amount of time or the nature of the conditions under which optimal learning occurs. Regardless of how carefully crafted and sequenced writing assignments may be, sometimes the very progress in skill level that programs aim to achieve proves elusive because of factors that have little or nothing to do with what actually takes place within the walls of a writing classroom as its life cycle unfolds.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Interview a teacher about *one* specific writing assignment he/she has recently used with a single class. Then interview 2-4 students in that class who completed that same assignment. Your purpose is to prepare a brief report in which you compare and contrast the teacher and student views on the same assignment. Some of the areas that you might choose to question the teacher and students about are suggested below. Feel free to adapt these questions or expand upon them as the situation warrants:

Ask the teacher:

- Did you anticipate that the assignment would be easy or difficult for your students to complete? Were you correct in your judgment?
- Were you pleased or disappointed with the results when the students submitted their completed versions of their responses to the assignment? Why?
- Would you use the assignment again, revise and re-use it, or scrap it completely? What are your reasons?

Ask the students:

- When you first got the assignment, did you anticipate that it would be easy or difficult for you to complete? Were you correct in your judgment?
- Was your work on this assignment a valid learning experience for you personally? Why or why not?
- Do you think the teacher spent an appropriate amount of time preparing you to do well on the assignment?
- Would you or would you not encourage the teacher to use the assignment again with another class. Why?

Activity 2

In your own school setting, collect a minimum of six different writing assignments used to elicit writing from L2 students who are at two or more different levels of language proficiency. Aim to collect the actual set of assignment

instruction sheets that have been used in writing courses (or multi-skills language courses). You may collect these assignments from either the teachers who created them or the students who were in various writing classes. Analyze the assignments as presented to determine what specific features or aspects make them particularly well-suited to the level of student language learner they have been assigned to. Based on this analysis, discuss what you find to be distinguishing features of assignments presented to students of varying linguistic proficiency. If possible, create a grid or table or other visual to capture these factors and display as you provide an oral report on your findings.

Activity 3

Working together with a few other students, jointly prepare a 15-20 minute oral “training session” accompanied by Power Point slides on “Understanding the Nature of Effective Writing Assignments.” Your presentation should be especially applicable to a specific teaching situation believed relevant by members of the group, and the goal would be to create something to share with novice teachers in one or more programs you are familiar with. To help create this presentation, review the Power Point presentation on “Designing Effective Writing Assignments” as prepared by Dr. Beth Rapp Young, Director of the University Writing Center at the University of Central Florida in the United States and available on the web at:

http://www.uwc.ucf.edu/Faculty_Resources/Designing%20Effective%20Writing%20Assignments.htm

(NB: This activity can be done as a follow-up to Activity 2.)

Notes

- * I appreciate the funding provided by the Faculty Fellows Program, sponsored by the Dean of the College of Humanities, California State University, Northridge, which helped to support the preparation of this chapter.
- 1. In this section of the chapter, I am drawing on some ideas about assignment design that I presented in Kroll (2001b) though treated there with much less detail.

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Written in, written out: Who sets the standards for academic writing?

Christopher Tribble

Pre-reading questions before you read, discuss the following:

1. When you are teaching writing, do you provide examples and models to help your students work towards independent writing?
2. Is the mother tongue status of the writers of these examples and models important to you? Why?
3. When you use examples, where do you get them from?
4. What criteria do you use when you select examples and models?
5. How do you use these examples and models in your teaching?

1. Introduction

The five questions given in the pre-reading task, set out a fairly clear agenda for what this chapter will be focusing on. I am fairly confident that the vast majority of readers will answer the first question with a resounding “yes.” The tradition of using examples in writing instruction is long and honourable, and I, for one, would be at a loss if I was asked to develop a writing course for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students without recourse to examples. I need examples to help learners build an understanding of what appropriate texts should look like in a specific setting, and I need them to provide students with a basis for critical assessment of their own performances.

However, *which* examples we select is another question, and, in particular, whether or not those examples should be written by a native speaker of the target language is a major issue for many teachers I have met. In this chapter, I will summarise some of the arguments in favour of the use of example texts (in general) in writing instruction – while stressing the need for multiple exemplars, rather than single model texts within a genre approach. I will then consider some of the arguments around the role of native speaker norms, native speaker texts in foreign language teaching, and na-

tive speakers as gate keepers in international communication. Following this discussion I will demonstrate how a pedagogic account of a collection of expert texts can be developed in order to provide a basis for course development in advanced writing instruction.

2. Models and scaffolding in genre informed writing instruction

The importance of examples and models has long been emphasised in genre informed approaches to writing instruction. These have become particularly influential in the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) (Swales and Feak 1994, 2002 or any recent issues of English for Specific Purposes Journal or Journal of English for Academic Purposes).

A genre informed approach builds on the work of functional-systemic linguists such as Halliday (1994a), Martin (1989) and Swales (1990), and the work of practitioners such as those discussed in Cope and Kalantzis (1993). Hyland (2003: 18) usefully states the core position in genre informed writing pedagogy as being: "... the central belief that we don't just *write*, we write *something* to achieve some *purpose*. It is a way of getting something done." Hyland (2003: 21) then summarises an approach to writing pedagogy in genre informed practice with the diagram below:

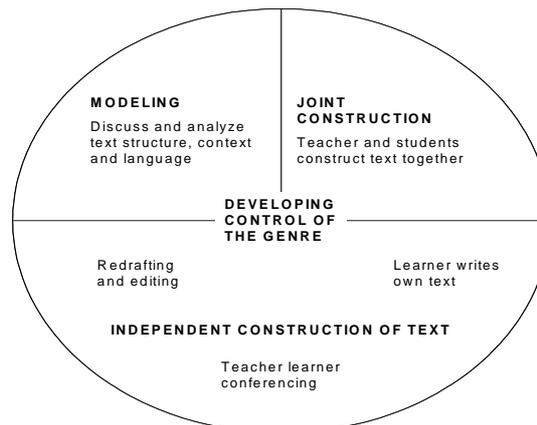


Figure 1. Hyland (2003: 21)

There are two important points to note in this approach. First, the teacher is primarily a facilitator and co-practitioner. Teachers *and* learners have the

shared objective of working towards control of a particular genre. This control is achieved through an initial analysis of *several* exemplars (i.e., examples of good practice within the writing practice of a particular genre). Once a *scaffold* has been derived from this analysis, teachers and students work together to prepare their own contributions to a genre. Learners then work towards autonomy in the construction of texts appropriate to the target genre. In general educational settings, the Australian functional-systemecists identified a number of core genres (e.g., *recount*: to reconstruct past experience by retelling events in original sequence, which compares with *procedure*: to show how processes or events are accomplished / how something is done – Martin 1989). In higher education, more institutionally situated genres have been identified, with one of the most significant being the published research article.

The second point is that in a genre informed approach to writing instruction, there is no automatic assumption of genre expertise on the part of the teacher. A teacher's expertise lies in his or her capacity to develop analyses and explications and share them through appropriate methodology – in the writing classroom, teachers, like their students, are discovering how the genre works. Teachers do not have a ready-made set of knowledge about how language works in the domain in question but must use their professional skills to build this knowledge as part of curriculum development. Critically, this means that teachers *have* to have access to appropriate exemplars if they are going to be able to develop a curriculum and deliver an appropriate teaching/learning programme for their students. Which leads us to the potential problem of which exemplars we choose, and by whom these texts should be written.

3. Linguistic politics and L2 writing

Drawing on Kachru (1985), Ammon (2000: 112) has argued:

in spite of the majority of non-native speakers or the non-inner-circle countries, many of whom use the language actively and regularly in institutional frameworks, the native speakers of the inner-circle countries retain the hold to the yardstick of linguistic correctness.

Such a position is in line with accounts which have expressed concern at the growing dominance of the English language in international scientific communication since the 1980s (Pennycook 1994, 2001), critical perspec-

tives implicit in the *linguiscism* of Skutnabb-Kangas (1988), and arguments around *linguistic imperialism* (Phillipson 1992) which have focused on the controlling and privileged role of native speaker gatekeepers.

While I accept that at the time these authors did their most influential work the world was largely constructed along the lines that they outlined, I would suggest that this situation no longer holds true in all cases – at least not in such direct and simple ways. For English language users and teachers in the twenty-first century, things have changed. Arguments against the ever-increasing dominance of a small number of global languages still matter – especially when the spread of large *spoken* languages like English, Spanish or Mandarin Chinese comes to be associated with the death of smaller languages (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson 1994). I would contend, however, that in professional and academic *writing*, both authorship and gate keeping authority have shifted and the production and evaluation of these texts it is no longer a native speaker monopoly. What was once a foreign language for many writers in academic and professional settings, is now accepted by many practitioners as a convenient *lingua franca*, a resource no longer within the control of a single mother tongue speech community. Tardy (2004) discusses the impact of this change in attitudes amongst pluri-lingual research students. My purpose in this chapter, is to argue that teachers also need to recognise this reality and that they will be better served by using the notion of expertise as the starting point for their identification of relevant exemplars, rather than the notion of the native-speaker.

In developing this argument I will focus on the example of a well respected research journal which is written and edited by scholars who are for the greater part *not* first language (L1) users of English but who do have expertise as *lingua franca* writers in specific domains. From my perspective, the fact that it is now relatively easy to have access to this kind of data is of revolutionary importance because the identification of appropriate text exemplars for use in EAP writing programmes is one of my central professional concerns – especially where a genre informed approach is being implemented. Without access to a *range* of relevant exemplars it is not possible to put in place such a teaching programme. Moreover, if teachers feel obliged to restrict themselves to the production of “native speakers” they can be accused of perpetuating asymmetries of power, or more seriously, fail to provide exemplars that are genuinely relevant to the their students’ *lingua franca* writing needs. However, if teachers can choose relevant exemplars on the basis of the writers’ expertise rather than on the basis of the accidental criterion of mother tongue status, Ammon's (2000) con-

cern about fairness and unfairness becomes irrelevant, and students get the educational programmes that they need. And we end up with what we all hope for, a win, win situation.

If I am correct, *native speaker* ceases to be a useful criterion for the selection of exemplar texts. The critical thing is the extent to which a text is likely to be acceptable in the eyes of peers in the discourse community in which an expert writer already acts, or which they wish to enter. If the text is published in a respected peer-reviewed journal, it's an expert text. The L1 status of the writer has become irrelevant.

4. The value of expertise as a criterion for text selection in writing instruction

As an example of how things have changed, I have chosen some recent articles published in an international research journal – *Acta Tropica*. This journal is published by Elsevier – one of the leading publishers of academic journals (and, what is more, a joint Anglo-Dutch company), is edited by Swedish scholars, and has an editorial board of 23, only 9 of whom are based in countries where English is an L1 (see Appendix A for a list). Eight full text articles were accessed via www.sciencenow.com¹ from *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004). Of the thirty-six authors involved in the production of the eight articles, twenty nine are from countries where English is neither the L1 nor an official language. Four come from the “inner-circle” countries of the USA or Australia, and three come from India – where English is an official language. This author information is summarised in the figure 2 below.

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Authors</i>	<i>Country</i>
6	Brazil	2	USA	3	India
4	Argentina	2	Australia		
3	Kenya				
3	Central African Republic				
3	Cameroon				
3	Venezuela				
1	Argentina				
1	France				
2	China				
2	Germany				
1	Switzerland				

Figure 2. Author information

I do not have information on the membership of the journal's peer review panel, and only have country information and family names for the editorial board and the article authors. However, given the information to hand, it seems reasonable to assume that in the case of the *Acta Tropica*, expertise is not the monopoly of those who have English as an L1. Again, although we have no information on whether the authors of these articles had any linguistic support when preparing for publication, the collection of texts, nevertheless, appears to offer a glimpse of a community of researchers, expert authorities and editors which is sufficiently coherent to represent a discourse community (Swales 1990) for whom English is a *Lingua franca*.

4.1. Lexico-grammatical expertise as a component of professional expertise

Viewing the *Acta Tropica* articles as a non-member, I am struck by the small extent to which my experience within the discourse communities I consider myself to belong to (applied linguistics, photography, evaluation), would help me evaluate these texts. For a start, the professional lexis which is required in order to realise the genre is largely beyond my ken despite English being my mother tongue. Even though I can identify their word-class and their role in the syntax of the clause complexes which make up the text, I don't know what many of the words mean. Secondly, the text structure of the genre contrasts with that required within my own disciplinary areas. Two examples might help exemplify these particular contrasts. The first is from the abstract of one of the *Acta Tropica* articles (see Figure 3), the second from an article in a recent edition of *English for Specific Purposes Journal* (see Figure 4).

The brief extracts below offer a clear demonstration of the need for professional / linguistic expertise in the two genres under discussion – and the contrast between the demands of the different disciplinary cultures. At the simplest possible level, we can see that there is a high density of very different specialist lexis in both examples. In *Acta Tropica* the 18 lexical items or combinations marked in the text do not appear in the set of 6,318 lexical items identified by Kilgarriff² as the most frequent words in the British National corpus (underlined and numbered in the text). The ESPJ article contains 13 also infrequent words, but their difficulty lies in the fact that many of them have an “ordinary” meaning, but are being used in this text in a specialist sense (e.g., corpus, resources, adopt, stance).

[1] Cystic [2] echinococcosis in Argentina: evolution of [3] metacestode and [4] clinical expression in various [5] Echinococcus [6] granulosus [7] strains

Eduardo A. Guarneraa, Alberto Parrab, Laura Kamenetzky, Gustavo Garcíac and Ariana Gutiérreza

Abstract

[8] Echinococcus [9] granulosus [10] hydatid [11] cysts were examined in 41 patients from Neuquén and Tucumán provinces in Argentina. [12] Sequencing of the [13] mitochondrial [14] cytochrome [15] c oxidase subunit 1 (CO1) revealed in 19 patients common sheep strain (G1), in 6 patients [16] Tasmania sheep strain (G2), in 1 patient [17] cattle strain (G5), and in 15 patients [18] camel strain (G6)...

(175 words in the original)

Figure 3. Acta Tropica

Hooking the reader: a [1] corpus study of [2] evaluative that in [3] abstracts

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Abstract

The [4] linguistic resources used by academic writers to [5] adopt a position and [6] engage with readers, variously described as [7] evaluation, [8] stance and [9] metadiscourse, have attracted increasing attention in the [10] literature over the last 10 years and now form an important element of many [11] ESP courses. A relatively overlooked [12] interpersonal feature, however, is what we shall call [13] evaluative that'.

(197 words in the original)

Figure 4. ESPJ

Focusing on the *Acta Tropica* example, we can also see how a writer in this disciplinary area also has to control at least two associated systems which are of central importance in the construction of scientific discourse: 1) the grammar of extended noun phrases (particularly noun-noun pre-modification and *of* phrase post-modification) and 2) the control of theme /

rheme structures to foreground discursively significant information and background the authors and experimenters (Halliday 1994a, 1994b; Biber et al. 2000).

An initial analysis of these features in the complete *Acta Tropica* abstract is given below. Underlined text indicates the sentence theme (the starting point of the message in Halliday's framework³). *Italicised* text indicates extended noun-phrases. Sentences have been numbered S1 etc. for ease of reference.

[S1] Echinococcus granulosus hydatid cysts were examined in 41 patients from Neuquén and Tucumán provinces in Argentina. [S2] Sequencing of the mitochondrial cytochrome c oxidase subunit 1 (CO1) revealed in 19 patients *common sheep strain* (G1), in 6 patients *Tasmania sheep strain* (G2), in 1 patient *cattle strain* (G5), and in 15 patients *camel strain* (G6). [S3] In Argentina the only known is the domestic cycle that affects dogs and herbivorous, including ovine, swine, cattle and goats. [S4] These strains produced a total of 58.6% of *primary liver infections*, 29.2% primary in lung, 2.4% primary in spleen and 9.8% were *multiorgan abdominal infections*.

[S5] The metacestode was classified using the evolutive stages proposed by WHO-IWGE (from CE1 to CE5). [S6] We estimated that CE1 cyst has a duration of about 22 years, CE2 of 14 years, CE3 of 10 years, CE4 of 19 years and CE5 was not determined. [S7] The active types CE1 and CE2 reached 75% of all cases from all strains.

[S8] In 36 patients with cysts from G1, G5 and G6 strain, there were only two asymptomatic cases.

[S9] The strains of the E. granulosus complex do not present important clinical differences; only G6 seems to have higher growth rate.

S1 usefully exemplifies both of the features under discussion. *Echinococcus granulosus hydatid cysts* is both a complex extended noun phrase – with *cyst* as the head, pre-modified by *echinococcus* (noun) *granulosus* (adj.) and *hydatid* (adj.). It is also the grammatical subject and theme of the agentless passive clause. This is important as the use of this kind of structure not only enables the writers economically to foreground the information that is most important to their argument, but also reduces their profile at this point in the argument (though note the thematisation of *we* in S6 where register conventions require authorial responsibility to be taken for

acts such as *estimation*). S2 is typical of structure and role of the other extended noun phrase mentioned. Here we have a non-human reference noun phrase acting as grammatical subject and containing the head word *sequencing* with a very long postmodifying “of” phrase. When considering this text, it is also important to notice that there is only one agentless passive clause (S6). Writers in the experimental sciences create effects of distance and objectivity through their choice of impersonal themes in active clauses, not by depending on passivisation.

Using corpus analysis programs such as WordSmith Tools 4 (Scott 2004), it is possible to extend this analysis. A *keyword* list shows the words in a text or text collection that are statistically prominent with reference to a larger text collection – in this case a set of academic texts in the British National Corpus.⁴ The top thirty keywords for the collection of *Acta Tropica* articles are given in Figure 5 below:

Key words

1. mosquitoes	11. laboratory	21. quinquifasciatus
2. infection	12. height	22. tekmar
3. liver	13. parasite	23. trypanosoma
4. cysts	14. falciparum	24. leishmaniasis
5. infected	15. larvae	25. dosages
6. spleen	16. mosquito	26. mean
7. trop	17. infections	27. amphotericin
8. mortality	18. brucei	28. instars
9. schistosomiasis	19. bacillus	29. oocyst
10. malaria	20. granulosis	30. vivax

Figure 5. Top thirty keywords words

The keyword list provides an immediate insight into the extensive professional knowledge that is involved in writing in this context, an insight which is reinforced when word pairs revealed through mutual information analysis (Oakes 1998) are reviewed. An edited top 30 of *Acta Tropica* word pairs with the highest mutual information linkages is given in Figure 6 (proper names and abbreviations have been removed), alongside a similarly edited top 30 for the Guardian UK news sections of a collection of Guardian Weekly texts⁵ (see Figure 7).

<i>Word 1</i>	<i>Word 2</i>	<i>Word 1</i>	<i>Word 2</i>
diplonychus	indicus	branch	wall
polymerase	chain	carried	out
chain	reaction	target	organisms
pentavalent	antimonials	lethal	doses
peripheral	branches	received	revised
improve	accuracy	oblique	view
diptera	culicidae	pupal	recruitment
egg	rafts	grass	thatched
polymerase	reaction	grass	thatch
triatoma	infestans	grass	hut
hemiptera	reduviidae	unused	wells
vectorial	capacity	aedes	aegypti
gametocyte	carriers	ulcerated	lesion
residual	activity	relative	humidity
tsetse	flies	did	differ

Figure 6. *Acta Tropica*

<i>Word 1</i>	<i>Word 2</i>	<i>Word 1</i>	<i>Word 2</i>
entente	cordiale	Lib	Dems
genetically	modified	Lib	Dem
hi	tech	Booker	prize
clip	joints	dioxide	atmosphere
Sinn	Fein	detective	inspector
unexplained	infant	poaching	nurses
inland	revenue	queen's	birthday
polo	players	Barclay	brothers
variant	CJD	charitable	status
bodily	harm	golden	eagle
customs	excise	loyalist	paramilitaries
vice	chancellors	farmed	salmon
carbon	dioxide	green	belt
ethnic	minorities	loyalist	paramilitary
cockle	pickers	binge	drinking

Figure 7. *Guardian* 2004

The contrast between these two lists is immediate. As was implicit in my earlier comments, a writer contributing to *Acta Tropica* has to have a highly

specific professional induction in order to function effectively in the *discourse* community which deploys this kind of lexis. Writers contributing to the Guardian have to learn how to marshal information and write fluently and persuasively, but the lexis they use is determined by broad and shifting cultural influences, and is readily accessible to any reader within a large UK and international *speech* community of broadsheet newspaper readers (see Swales 1990 for a discussion of speech and discourse communities).

4.2. Discourse expertise as a component of professional expertise

Lexico-grammatical expertise is only one of the components of professional expertise that writers need at this level. They also require what we will call *discourse expertise*. Discourse expertise is most easily understood as a writer's capacity to systematically pattern their texts in order to meet the requirements of the discourse communities they write within. In the case of *Acta Tropica*, there is a highly conventionalised move structure (Swales 1981; Dudley Evans 1994) for the research articles that are published in the journal. This appears to require 6 obligatory moves, one variable move, and one optional move. Their distribution is summarised in the Figure 8 below (papers are numbered – refer to Appendix B for the full listing):

<i>Move</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
title		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
authors		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
abstract		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
introduction		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
case_studies			x						
subjects_and_methods									x
materials_and_methods		x		x	x	x	x	x	
results		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
discussion		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
acknowledgements		x		x	x	x	x		x
references		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Figure 8. Move structure

In the eight instances in our sample (and a visual scan of the contents of other issues confirms this to be a consistent pattern over the last five years

at least), *title*, *authors*, *abstract*, and *introduction* are obligatory opening moves. These are followed by a further obligatory move describing data collection or experimental procedure, although this has optional labelling in the text: *case studies*, *subjects and methods*, or *materials and methods* (the most common form). Each paper concludes with two obligatory moves – *results and discussion*, an optional move – *acknowledgements*, and a final obligatory move – *references*. Within moves, there appears to be both flexibility and consistency. The use of personal pronouns provides one example. In many instructional materials focusing on writing in the sciences, students are advised to avoid the use of personal pronouns, yet we find the that authorial “we” is used across all of the moves apart from the obvious cases of *title*, *authors*, and *references*. This said, consistency is also present in the ways in which themes are introduced and maintained across texts. In order to demonstrate this, I coded one of the articles in the collection (Article #1 for sentence, paragraph and subheadings in addition to the move tags mentioned above. It was then possible to produce a concordance of 24 paragraph beginnings (see Figure 9):

-
1. <P><S>The effect of microhabitat temperature variation on the early development
 2. <P><S>The mean temperature observed in the temperature-unregulated laboratory (2
 3. <P><S>The ookinete intensities for mosquitoes in the screen house (10.11 ± 1.79
 4. <P><S>One of the characteristics of malaria parasite extrinsic cycle is its temp
 5. <P><S>In field conditions, the distribution patterns of in-door mosquito populat
 6. <P><S>**This study was conducted** in Mbita Point, Suba District, western Kenya in
 7. <P><S>The experiments were conducted under live micro-habitats described as: (1)
 8. <P><S>**Throughout the study period** extending from August 2001 to January 2002, ho
 9. <P><S>The Ethical Review Boards of the Kenya Medical Research Institute, Kenya a
 10. <P><S>Human volunteers were recruited from the outpatient department of the loca
 11. <P><S>A. gambiae s.s. mosquitoes (MBITA strain) originally colonized from specim
 12. <P><S>The mean macrogametocyte density ingested by the mosquitoes was estimated
-

Figure 9. Paragraph themes

-
13. <P><S>For enumeration of ookinetes, batches of live mosquitoes per experimental
 14. <P><S>The descriptive means of the temperature and humidity was computed amongst
 15. <P><S>The mean temperatures were higher in the unregulated laboratory (28 .C) t
 16. <P><S>For each replicate of the experiments, there was a single maximum and mini
 17. <P><S>Although the mean temperature in the iron roof house was comparable with t
 18. <P><S>In the unnatural environments, 87% (27/30) of human volunteers (=infection
 19. <P><S>For the experiments done in the natural unregulated real village houses, a
 20. <P><S>**This study has shown** that the natural fluctuations in indoor environmental
 21. <P><S>**Our study suggests** that using wild type parasites in a natural set up is l
 22. <P><S>**The results of our studies** also demonstrate the possibility that some wild
 23. <P><S>**In conclusion, our study** has shown that the development of ookinetes and o
 24. <P><S>We wish to thank people who assisted in the success of this work particula
-

Figure 9. cont.

The first comment which we can make on the basis of this data is that the features we commented on in section 4.1 (i.e., the importance of extended, impersonal noun phrases in theme / grammatical subject position) apply consistently across the paragraph beginnings in Article #1. A second comment relates to the use of *study* which occurs in 6 out of the 24 paragraph beginnings. The use of this term is consistent with the conventional need to maintain an impersonal discourse. It is also worth noting how widely the word is used across the 8 article collection; it occurs in 47 times in the collection, and is present in all the articles. Verbs occurring with *study* included: conduct / detect / determine / perform / provide / report / show / suggest.

On the basis of the evidence here, discourse expertise in this disciplinary area appears to have at least two major components. The first is a capacity to use an explicit move structure which conforms to the requirements of the journal to which the article has been submitted. The second is the capacity to use stylistic devices which will ensure the text's acceptability to a professional readership.

4.3. Expert exemplars vs. native speaker exemplars

This study of a small collection journal articles has had three main purposes. The first has been to problematise the notion of “native speaker” as a criterion for the selection of pedagogic examples in writing instruction. I am aware that I have taken an extreme example in order to make my point. I hope, however, that I have demonstrated how professionals in this disciplinary area have had to acquire a multi-componential expertise as they have established themselves as writers in their discipline. This expertise will include not only a grasp of the literature, research methods and practices of their discipline, but also a capacity to select appropriately from the complex and sometimes recondite lexico-grammar associated with academic literacy in their field, and an ability to exploit the argument structure of the discipline, along with its citational practices (Hyland 1999; Thompson and Tribble 2001) and other text conventions. None of these textual practices come naturally to native speakers of the language.

Secondly, we need to be aware that while these texts might be generically appropriate exemplars, at a local level language teachers might find that they contain wordings which they consider to have low probability when compared with a large set of instances – in other words “mistakes”. Examples of such instances can be found in the sentence themes given in Figure 10 – they are:

Instances of sentence themes

4. One of the characteristics <u>of malaria parasite extrinsic cycle</u> is its tem	<i>missing article</i>
7. The experiments were conducted <u>under live micro-habitats</u> described as: (1	<i>collocation: <u>in preferred</u></i>
13. For <u>enumeration of ookinetes</u> , batches of live mosquitoes per experimental	<i>missing article</i>
19. For the experiments <u>done</u> in the natural unregulated real village houses, a	<i>style - <u>conducted or carried out more likely</u></i>
21. Our study suggests that using wild type parasites in a natural <u>set up</u> is l	<i>style - in <u>natural conditions more likely</u></i>

Figure 10. Sentence themes

The critical point is that these local problems do not really matter. Editors and peer reviewers have accepted the articles for publication because they are good science, and meet the standards for clear expression and formal structure set by the journal. As we have seen, the texts are systematically remarkably harmonious. Local instances of infelicity, concord error, and the like remain that – local. Critically, they are not treated as reason for disallowing these texts as contributions to a specific genre. They might be less acceptable if the texts were being submitted to a literary publisher – but this is precisely the point. They are research articles – not elegant *belles-lettres* essays. Teachers wanting to present consistent models of how the language works at clause or phrase level will still need to refer to the grammars and lexicons which are either required in national education systems, or which they find most useful for their students in their own professional judgement.

My second concern has been to present some of the techniques and tools we can use as teachers of writing in establishing a programme to help apprentice writers work towards disciplinary expertise. I will discuss possible applications of this approach in the final section of this chapter.

5. Building a pedagogic account of written communication

We do not know how the writers in *Acta Tropica* have developed their expertise as writers – but we can be absolutely certain that they were not *born* with a capacity to write scientific research papers in English or any other language. Experts learn how to become experts by following educational and experiential pathways. The *introduction > methods & materials > results > discussion* structure of the typical research paper in the sciences, arose with the development of empirical scientific method and the professionalisation of the sciences, and has been codified in a tradition of writing science in English that had its beginnings in the work of Newton, and was developed by nineteenth century scientists such as Darwin, and has been standardised during the last fifty years (Halliday 1987, 1994b). The propagation of the research paper as a near universal means for reporting and communication in the experimental sciences has been the result of the systematic training of generations of science graduates.

Teachers of languages for specific purposes who want to help EFL students to develop as writers have long faced the dilemma of balancing disciplinary content with discourse expertise (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998; Swales 1988). Within a genre informed approach to writing instruction

such as that outlined in Section 1 in this chapter, the emphasis is placed squarely on helping learners to develop the capacity to write appropriately for specific genres through the study of the social, and literacy practices of expert members of the discourse communities to which a genre belongs, including the analysis of the texts which are required for these genres. In such an approach the notion of the native speaker has no place – what matters is a writer's expertise.

If, therefore, we are asked to help a group of post-graduate students to become better able to prepare research articles for publication, we have a clearly defined task. In the first instance, and through consultation with disciplinary area specialists, academic supervisors and our own students, we identify relevant instances of good practice (such as the *Acta Tropica* articles). We can then make use of the kinds of descriptive framework that have become common in genre studies (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993; Hyland 2000), along with the analytic tools that have been exemplified in this chapter, to analyse multiple examples and then specify the features that are characteristic of expert writing in the discipline (lexico-grammar, discourse, text convention). This resource then forms the basis of a curriculum for a writing instruction in which our students have to make use of their emerging disciplinary expertise.

Writing pedagogy then becomes a process which shifts from teacher-led to student-led analysis and description of expert performances, and thence to student production of texts based on their work as disciplinary apprentices, and their informed critiquing of these apprentice texts. At each stage in this process, with the teacher's support, students are forming hypotheses about the nature of the texts they are engaging with and the texts they are producing, and working towards the acquisition of the linguistic expertise that will be necessary if they are to establish full expertise within their profession.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1: Investigating a student compiled ESP corpus

At the beginning of an ESP/EAP course introduce learners to the concepts of discourse community and genre, and value of exemplars, demonstrating this either with examples from a disciplinary area that is familiar to you,

with examples from earlier courses, or with examples from published materials. Once students are clear on the concept ask them to collect at least three examples of texts that they consider to be instances of good writing from their specialist professional or academic areas. Ideally these will be available in both print and editable electronic format. If students provide you with PDF files, these can often be converted by using Adobe Acrobat Professional⁶ to save them as Word or Plain Text documents. If you have a document scanner and optical character recognition (OCR) software, a less expensive solution is to use the OCR software to convert the PDF document to an editable format.

Once you have your collection of examples, use a simple framework such as the one below (see Figure 11) to guide them through an analysis. All of this analysis can be done without the need for a computer, but if students do have access to electronic texts and a word processor or text analysis software, the analysis can be thicker and completed more rapidly. Working in groups also speeds up the analysis and also leads to more fruitful discussion. An ideal way to organise this is to have a number of small groups (3 or 4 students) working on contrasting texts from the same genre and disciplinary area.

Analytic framework #1

- What major organisational units can you identify in this text (use section headings and subheadings as an initial guide)? Is there any common ground between your exemplars? If yes, why? If there are contrasts, how do you account for these?
 - Make a list of between twenty and forty words in the text that you consider to be essential to its meaning. What other words seem to collocate with them? What grammatical function do these words typically take in a clause (subject, object etc.). How do you account for this?
 - Select a comparable passage from each text (abstract, discussion section, recommendations etc.). Review the theme, rheme structure of each main clause. What information is being foregrounded in the message? How do you account for this?
-

Figure 11. Analytic Framework 1

Once groups have completed their analysis they should report back to the class on their conclusions. These reports should be presented as advice to apprentice writers. If this framework is insufficiently detailed for your learners, an alternative is given in Figure 12 below (adapted from Tribble 2001b – this also gives a detailed example of this analytic framework in use).

Analytic framework #2 (alternative)

Contextual Analysis

- <i>Name</i>	What is the name of the genre of which this text is an exemplar?
- <i>Social context</i>	In what social setting is this kind of text typically produced? What constraints and obligations does this setting impose on writers and readers?
- <i>Communicative purpose</i>	What is the communicative purpose of this text?
- <i>Roles</i>	What sorts of roles do writers and readers in this genre have in their discourse community?
- <i>Cultural values</i>	What shared cultural values may be required of writers and readers in this genre?
- <i>Text context</i>	What knowledge of other texts do you expect writers and readers in this genre to have?
- <i>Formal text features</i>	What shared knowledge of formal text features (conventions) is required to write effectively into this genre?

Linguistic Analysis

- <i>Vocabulary grammar</i>	What aspects of the vocabulary and grammar of the text distinguish it from other kinds of texts?
-----------------------------	--

Figure 12. Analytic Framework 2

- <i>information, argument and style</i>	Can you identify any ways in which the style of the text or the way in which information or arguments are organised distinguish this text from other kinds of writing? Why do you feel the writer has chosen these strategies?
- <i>text structure</i>	How is the text organised as a series of units of meaning? What is the reason for this organisation?

Figure 12. cont.

Activity 2: Investigating a corpus of apprentice writing

Once a group of apprentice writers have established a provisional account of a genre they want to contribute to – or which is closely analogous to the texts they need to write – exactly the same approach can be used for critiquing their own written production. In this case, ask learners to provide examples of course work, preferably in an anonymised, electronic form.

In order to critique apprentice texts usefully, it may be necessary, however, to re-specify the analysis of the research articles that was carried out earlier. Published research articles clearly differ in many ways from graduate student writing. The researcher is engaged in knowledge transforming, rather than knowledge telling, (Bereiter and Scardemalia 1987, 1993), and is writing as a peer within a narrowly defined discourse community. This does not make research articles inappropriate exemplars for apprentices to work with, as the criteria for assessment for a postgraduate writing usually state that a distinction level dissertation is “worthy of publication.” What it does mean though, is that the purpose of the apprentice text will have an impact on text structure, writer authority, citation requirements and the like. The discussion of these issues is valuable for the apprentices as it helps them become aware of *which* aspects of the target they need most closely to approximate.

In class, cycle of work such as the following works:

- summary of the key features of the genre in question (based on earlier analysis)
- re-specification of the specification to take into account contrasts between the purposes of apprentice and expert writers

- critique of individual apprentice texts
- summary of lessons learned

Activity 3: Reformulation of apprentice texts

Reformulation, (Allwright, Woodley, and Allwright 1988) provides a way of extending the investigation of apprentice writing through the participation of expert informants from disciplinary areas. A typical reformulation cycle includes:

Stage 1

- EITHER: agree a task (class) > Plan / Prepare (group work) > Draft (individual) > Teacher collects all drafts and selects one that is *interestingly* problematic
- OR: collect from students a previously written assignment (or an extract from an assignment such as a discussion section) from their disciplinary course and select one *interestingly* problematic example

Stage 2

- work with an expert writer who will sympathetically reformulate the text so that it more closely conforms to disciplinary requirements

Stage 3

- Class discussion of contrasts between anonymous original and reformulation

Stage 4

- Students revise drafts for peer review and teacher evaluation

I have used this approach successfully in courses focusing on writing research papers, examination essays and business reports.

Appendix A: *Acta Tropica* Editorial Board

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C. Curtis	London	UK
A. Tomkins	London	UK
D. Warhurst	London	UK

Appendix B: Papers referred to

1. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 99–108 "The development of *Plasmodium falciparum* in experimentally infected *Anopheles gambiae* (Diptera: Culicidae) under ambient microhabitat temperature in western Kenya" **Authors:** Bernard A. Okecha, Louis C. Gouagnaa, Elizabeth Walczaka, Ephantus W. Kabiruc, John C. Beiere, Guiyun Yand, John I. Githure
2. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 127–132 "Successful treatment of cutaneous leishmaniasis with lipid formulations of amphotericin B in two immunocompromised

- patients" **Authors:** Valdir S. Amato, Ana Rabello, Alexandre Rotondo-Silva, Adriana Kono, Tania Patricia H. Maldonado, Isabel C. Alves, Lucile M. Floeter-Winter, Vicente Amato Neto, Maria Aparecida Shikanai-Yasuda
3. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 147–151 "Serological surveillance of brucellosis and Q fever in cattle in the Central African Republic" **Authors:** E. Nakounea, O. Debaere, F. Koumanda-Kotogne, B. Selekona, F. Samory, A. Talarmin
 4. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 119–125 "Mortality profiles of *Rhodnius prolixus* (Heteroptera: Reduviidae), vector of Chagas disease" **Authors:** Luis Fernando Chaves, Maria-Josefina Hernandez, Tomas A. Revilla, Diego J. Rodriguez, Jorge E. Rabinovich,
 5. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 109–118 "Laboratory and field evaluation of Teknar HP-D, a biolarvicidal formulation of *Bacillus thuringiensis* ssp. *israelensis*, against mosquito vectors" **Authors:** K. Gunasekaran, P.S. Boopathi Doss, K. Vaidyanathan
 6. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 139–146 "Infection rate of *Trypanosoma brucei* s.l., *T. vivax*, *T. congolense* "forest type", and *T. simiae* in small wild vertebrates in south Cameroon" **Authors:** F. Njiokoua, G. Simoa, S.W. Nkinin, C. Laveissiere, S. Herder
 7. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 153–159 "Cystic echinococcosis in Argentina: evolution of metacestode and clinical expression in various *Echinococcus granulosus* strains" **Authors:** Eduardo A. Guarnera, Alberto Parra, Laura Kamenetzky, Gustavo Garcia, Ariana Gutierrez,
 8. *Acta Tropica* 92 (2004) 133–138 (Ultrasound organometry: the importance of body height adjusted normal ranges in assessing liver and spleen parameters among Chinese subjects with *Schistosoma japonicum* infection) " **Authors:** Y.S. Lia, R. Kardorff, J. Richter, K.Y. Sun, H. Zhou, D.P. McManus, C. Hatz

Notes

1. A resource available to staff and students in higher education institutions with subscriptions to electronic journals.
2. <http://www.itri.brighton.ac.uk/~Adam.Kilgarri/bnc-readme.html> (accessed 20 January 2005).
3. See Bloor and Bloor 1995 for a highly accessible introduction to this kind of analysis.
4. See Scott 1997 or Tribble 2001b for a fuller account of this kind of corpus investigation.
5. Personal collection.
6. <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobatpro/main.html> (accessed 21 January 2005).
7. e.g., using relevant research articles as the basis for learning how to write Master's level dissertations.

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Teaching writing: Orienting activities to students' goals

Alister Cumming

Pre-reading questions – Before you read, discuss the following:

1. Do you know what goals your students have for improving their writing abilities? If so, what uses do you make of this information? If not, how could you gather and use such information for your teaching?
2. Do you have specific goals for teaching writing? If so, what are they? How closely do your goals for teaching fit with the goals your students individually have for improving their writing? Why might there be a discrepancy?
3. To what extent do you, as a teacher, help your students to monitor their individual improvement in writing and to make use of the full range of resources available to them? How do you do this?
4. When you respond to your students' writing, how do you direct your responses: (a) to your immediate, intuitive impressions of the writing? (b) to the student's present abilities to write? (c) to their individual goals for improvement? and/or (d) to elements of the curriculum they are studying?

1. Contexts of writing improvement

Writing is at once a profoundly complex ability, a highly conventionalized mode of communication, and a uniquely personal form of individual expression. Helping students to improve their writing requires an approach to teaching that attends to each of these elements judiciously. At the same time, teachers need to foster students' capacities to regulate their own writing performance autonomously, purposefully, and effectively. I suggest in this chapter that a focus on students' goals for improving their writing is a powerful way for writing instructors to organize and teach their courses –

not only to address the complexities, conventions, and personal dimensions of writing but also to capitalize on key elements of learning theory.

The consensus of recent research is that learning to write in a second or foreign language fundamentally involves students improving 1) features of the texts they write, 2) their processes of composing, and 3) their interactions appropriate to literate social contexts (for recent reviews of this research see Grabe and Kaplan 1996; Johns 1997; Cumming 1998, 2001a; Kroll 2003; Silva and Brice 2004; Leki, Cumming, and Silva in press) Students improve their written texts by increasing their fluency in text production, expertise with a range of rhetorical or genre functions, uses of specific vocabulary, complexity of syntax, and accuracy in grammatical forms. Students improve their composing processes by doing more sophisticated and effective planning, revising, and editing of their texts – attending conscientiously to their appropriate choices of words, discourse coherence, and rhetorical functions in relation to their ideas, purposes for writing, the audience(s) they address, and for learning the language. Learners expand their social roles, self-confidence, cultural identities, and positions of personal power as they write more effectively and extensively to interact with others in the classrooms, communities, and situations they encounter through literate activities.

But development in writing is highly variable, particularly in second or foreign languages. There is no single, common route of development. Rather, a range of different variables combine to determine the progress that individuals make in writing a second language (L2) (Valdes, Haro, and Echevarriarza 1992; Cumming and Riazi 2000; Hornberger 2003; Jarvis et al. 2003). These variables include, for instance, *sociolinguistic factors* such as the statuses of, structures of, and opportunities to use the first and the second languages in both oral and literate media; *personal factors* such as attitudes toward writing and the L2, motivations or perceived needs for written communications, and self-efficacy and investment in learning; and *educational factors* such as prior experiences with particular approaches to teaching and learning, the extent and quality of curricular resources available, and local program requirements or standards for writing. Great variability exists internationally as well as from person to person. So educators have to view writing development, as Smagorinsky (1997) put it, as a process of “personal growth in social context.”

For these reasons, it is difficult to make prescriptions about what or how to teach writing in a way that might apply universally across a range of programs of L2 education. Indeed, the social, personal, and educational factors related to writing in an L2 vary so greatly that they create expecta-

tions and conditions that are unique to the specific contexts in which writing and the L2 are taught and learned as well as the individuals involved. For example, contexts for L2 writing instruction vary by learners' ages, prior education, literacy in their dominant languages, societal situations, purposes, and curriculum conditions (Leki, Cumming, and Silva in press). Uses of the second languages may occur either widely or rarely in local contexts (i.e., second vs. foreign language learning vs. international communication). They may involve learners who have either a minority or majority status in society or who may be studying the language for general, academic, travel, or work purposes. In turn, writing curricula may emphasise composing processes, specific text types or discourse functions, topical themes, or personal expression; be taught as either independent from or integrated with other language skills; or be studied for general or very specific purposes (Cumming 2003). Widely-taught languages such as English, French, German, Japanese, or Spanish may have extensive curricular materials for writing available, whereas languages that are infrequently taught may lack such established resources (Reichelt 1999). For these and other reasons, even in situations where an official curriculum policy sets explicit standards for teaching L2 writing, teachers and students tend to interpret and act on such standards in unique and differing ways (Cumming 2001b; Mackay et al. 2001).

2. Goals and self-regulated learning

The diversity of contexts for learning to write in a second or foreign language certainly invites an approach to teaching that caters to the interests and purposes of individual students. But further reasons to adopt an individualized pedagogical approach come from theories of learning complex abilities such as writing. All major theories of writing development emphasise people's individual processes of progressively learning to regulate a complex set of their own knowledge and behaviours to produce texts appropriate to specific social contexts (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1987; Zimmerman and Bandura 1994; Hayes 1996; Smagorinsky 1997). Most case studies of the long-term development of writing in second languages likewise highlight students' processes of progressively self-regulating their writing performance in relation to the social contexts in which they study or work (Spack 1997; Parks and Maguire 1999; Cumming and Riazi 2000; Sasaki 2004).

Self-regulated learning is usually defined in respect to the goals that people have for achievement. As Pintrich (2000: 453) stated, “a general working definition of self-regulated learning is that it is an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features in the environment.” Theories and research about learning goals have been one of the most fruitful aspects of educational psychology in recent decades, producing many principles to help students regulate their own learning more effectively (Austin and Vancouver 1996; Locke and Latham 1990; Pintrich 2000; Midgely 2002). At a practical level, goals are the focal element guiding people’s motivation to do activities, to mediate the contexts they experience, and to learn. Goals are central to theories of learning in mainstream psychology (Ames 1992; Schunk and Zimmerman 1994; Austin and Vancouver 1996) as well as Vygotskian socio-cultural theories (Leont’ev 1972; Engeström 1999; Lantolf 2000).

Austin and Vancouver’s (1996) review of the enormous range of research on learners’ goals in various fields concluded that descriptions of these goals tend to emphasise their content, structure, and processes. In turn, Pintrich’s (2000) review concluded that goals have cognitive, motivational, behavioural, and contextual dimensions, each of which involves phases – of planning, monitoring, self-control, and then reflection – wherein people focus on goals to regulate their own learning. Engeström’s (1999) elaboration of Leont’ev’s (1972) activity theory takes a related but more socio-historical perspective to these issues, viewing goals for learning as the focal point of motivation and orientation in individual learners’ active reconstruction of knowledge from and with others through mediating tools, such as language and writing, in the local communities in which they participate.

With a few notable exceptions, surprisingly little has been made of these ideas in regards to teaching second or foreign languages. To some extent, the practical dimensions of goals for language teaching or learning have been overshadowed by or subsumed within concepts such as strategies, motivation, or tasks. For example, Skehan’s (1998) proposal for a cognitive, task-based approach assumes that language teaching has the goals of improving students’ accuracy, fluency, or complexity in the L2, and so learning tasks should be designed and sequenced to realise these common aims and tests devised to assess their achievement. Importantly, however, little research has been done to document or analyse students’ goals for language learning. So no general frameworks or taxonomies have been

established to describe them. The centrality of goals does feature in arguments for promoting autonomy among language learners as well as case studies of educators helping language students to direct their own language learning (Holec 1981; Dickinson 1987; Wenden 1991; Dam 2001). The value of students' goals for their learning also features in many recent publications that have adopted sociocultural orientations to language learning (reviewed in Lantolf 2000). Notably, consideration of learners' goals has emerged through analyses of activities in language classrooms where students write regularly in journals and reflect analytically on their own progress (Donato and McCormick 1994; Gillette 1994) or discuss and analyse their individual perceptions of success in writing (Basturkmen and Lewis 2002). But these researchers have assumed that the goals articulated by students in these contexts are idiosyncratic or confined to the specific socio-cultural contexts of the particular language classes in which the goals arose.

Only a few educators appear to have conscientiously set out to use goal theory as the principle for designing courses to teach L2 writing. The two case studies I am aware of – Cumming (1986) and Hoffman (1998) – documented course syllabi in which adult English as a Second Language (ESL) students defined personally relevant goals for their writing improvement then monitored and adjusted their achievement of these goals while they wrote assignments over the duration of the course. The studies published from these inquiries describe the types of goals that students selected as well as their relative success in achieving some of these goals and improving their writing abilities. The potential value of these exploratory case studies led me recently to conduct a project with the purpose of describing ESL students' goals for writing improvement systematically and comprehensively in the contexts of ESL as well as university courses. Detailed results of this research are described in Cumming, Busch, and Zhou (2002), Cumming et al. (2004a) and Cumming (in preparation); some of their key implications are described in the remainder of this chapter.

3. A framework for describing goals to improve ESL writing

Various aspects of goal theory described above informed the following framework, but we developed it primarily by analysing the descriptions for writing improvement expressed during indepth interviews with 45 adult students and 5 of their instructors at the beginning and end of a pre-university ESL academic preparation program. We asked the students what

goals they had for improving their writing generally and in respect to 20 aspects of writing as well as in reference to samples of their recent writing that they brought to the interviews. The students had come from diverse countries (many from China or Korea but 12 other countries as well) with the purpose of studying at a university in Canada the following year. They were relatively proficient in English (average institutional TOEFL scores of 552) so able to express their goals in English, though bilingual members of our research team (see Acknowledgement note below) conducted interviews in Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin with speakers of those languages, then they translated transcripts of the interviews into English for our analyses. We coded 1,409 statements in transcripts of the interviews as students' explicit descriptions of their goals for writing improvement in English. We analysed these goal statements to develop the following framework to describe these goals for writing improvement. Although situated in the one university context, this framework, or modifications of it, should extend to other, related situations for language teaching and learning. A purpose of the present chapter is to encourage teachers to do so.

3.1. Goals as propositions with a force

We realized, in coding students' statements about their learning, that to identify a goal clearly and reliably, the goal had to be interpretable as a proposition (e.g., "I want to write faster", "I am trying to improve my adjective clauses" – involving a subject-verb-object or complement clause). Most of the goals we observed were stated in this way – as explicit intentions – but we also observed that some goals were initially formulated as a dilemma or problem that a student might later develop a specific intention to resolve (e.g., "I have problems with my verb tenses so need to do something about that"). In turn, other goals appeared as outcomes, describing the results of actions that students had already taken and completed to their satisfaction (e.g., "I added more examples to my paragraphs to support my arguments"). We called these aspects the "force" of a goal, recognizing that goals for writing improvement may involve a *dilemma*, an *intention*, or an *outcome*. Learners may move through a cycle in which they first observe a dilemma, then formulate an intention to deal with it, and then later acknowledge that they have accomplished the goal as an outcome. This cycle corresponds to the phases of forethought, monitoring, control, and reflection about goals in Pintrich's (2000) concept of self-regulated learning.

3.2. Objects of goals

The content of a goal is usually expressed as one or more objects (on which the goal operates). In our interview data, the majority of goals that students expressed concerned their wanting to improve either their *language* (e.g., vocabulary or grammar), the *rhetoric or genre forms* of their writing (e.g., to write argumentative essays), or their *processes of composing* (e.g., planning, drafting, editing). To lesser extents, certain goals also related to the students' development of *ideas and knowledge* (e.g., "I try to find out more how people write in my professional field"), *affective states* (e.g., "I try to feel relaxed when I write"), *learning and transfer* (e.g., "The things we do in class I try to use in my writing"), or *identity and self-awareness* (e.g., "I want to feel comfortable writing in English like I do when writing in Spanish"). As activity theory would suggest, these objects of their goals related to the students' current situations, particularly the content of the ESL courses they were taking, situations they experienced personally at home or elsewhere, or future abilities they wished to develop.

3.3. Actions taken

To realize these goals the students described various actions they were taking. An orientation to actions is a third aspect of students' goals. More than a third of the goals we identified involved studying course materials or completing course assignments or activities, as might be expected from students taking an intensive English course. Likewise, the actions associated with many other goals involved seeking assistance with their writing from teachers or (less frequently) from others (such as relatives or neighbors), regulating their own composing processes while they wrote, using tools or resources such as dictionaries or spell-checkers, reading various materials, or altering their conditions to stimulate themselves to write better.

3.4. Contexts of actions

A fourth aspect of goals is that people relate them to actions in specific social contexts. As noted above, most of the goals we documented linked directly to the ESL courses the students were taking. Ames (1992) called these *performance goals* because they relate to achieving particular tasks or

social norms in a course. Such performance goals dominated most students' discussions of samples of their own writing (e.g., "I am trying to introduce the topic in this first sentence"). But certain of the students' goals went beyond their immediate educational contexts, for example, to relate to the students' expectations for writing in their future academic classes in university programs or their intended careers. As such, these appeared to be what Ames (1992) called *mastery goals* because they transcended the immediate situation of classroom activities and involved students in developing their abilities for general purposes or long-term aspirations (e.g., "I want to organize my paper in the way that is particular to my field of study as an architect"). To lesser extents, students' goals also related to contexts such as tests they wanted to take for admissions to universities, writing in jobs that some of them had previously held, or the expectations of family members (such as parents or spouses) or other people in their home environments (such as roommates or neighbors).

3.5. Origins of and responsibilities for goals

Related to social contexts, goals have certain origins and involve certain commitments. When we asked students about the origins of their goals, and who had responsibilities for them, the students tended to name either themselves or their teachers. Students most frequently said they themselves were responsible for defining and carrying out their goals for writing improvement. But they sometimes acknowledged that their teachers – or in a smaller number of cases, their classmates, family members, or colleagues at work – also shared some of these responsibilities or had oriented them to particular goals for their writing improvement. In contrast, when we conducted parallel interviews with their teachers, the teachers tended to depict themselves as having primary responsibilities for defining the goals for learning in their courses and the activities responsible for students realising these goals.

In one sense, this difference between the perspectives of students and of teachers may simply represent the division of labor in classroom settings. Teachers establish the general conditions for learning activities, and students are expected to do these activities, with greater or lesser success, according to their personal levels of ability, engagement, or effort. But in another sense, how could teachers realistically appreciate the many highly personalized goals of individual students in their courses, the diverse ways in which students were acting on them, the resources students were utiliz-

ing individually, and the assistance they were obtaining to fulfill their goals outside of classrooms? A full appreciation of such individual commitments is probably beyond the capacities of any one instructor teaching 15 or more students, even the exemplary instructors who participated in our research study. But this fact alone suggests the potential value of teachers adopting systematic approaches to fostering, understanding, and aiding the accomplishment of the individual goals of their students as well as their orientations and actions related to them.

4. Implications for teaching L2 writing

These considerations – about the goals that 45 ESL students expressed for their writing improvement prior to university studies, concepts from goal theory, and recognition of the cultural diversity associated with learning to write – suggest at least three implications for teaching writing in second or foreign languages. Teaching activities to put these implications into action conclude the present chapter.

4.1. Organize courses to foster students' goals and their achievement

Writing or composition courses can readily be organized to promote students' becoming more aware of, and better able to act on, their goals. Compared to other media of communication, the pace of writing encourages time for self-reflection, thinking, and analysis. Case studies by Cumming (1986), Donato and McCormick (1994), and Hoffman (1998) demonstrate how instructors can organize the overall syllabus and activities in their L2 courses to prompt students to identify problems in their own writing, set specific goals to resolve these, monitor their progressive achievement of these goals through successive writing tasks and self-assessments, acquire knowledge relevant to the goals (e.g., from reading model pieces of writing, corrections and other responses to their writing), interact with classmates productively about these goals, and link their goals to benchmarks for achievement in tests or course syllabi. In the process, students become better able to regulate their own learning as well as their writing performance.

Students inevitably have goals about their writing improvement, whether implicitly or explicitly. The value of instruction is to help students to specify or refine these goals and to provide a productive context for their achievement. While a curriculum or instructor may set general aims for all

students to achieve, the psychological reality of learning is that students create and utilize their own goals to guide their own writing performance and improvement. As the framework for describing goals above suggests, teachers can help students to define the force of their goals (as dilemmas, intentions, or outcomes), the appropriate objects for their goals (e.g., as language, rhetoric, composing processes, or other aspects of writing), the appropriate actions to take to take to achieve the goals as well as the contexts and resources for doing so, and responsibilities to assume or share with others for them. Goals do not just happen nor are they fulfilled easily. Goals for writing improvement may take a relatively long time to achieve because of the sheer complexity of writing. Students may go through a cycle of recognizing specific problems in their writing, setting a goal to resolve them, monitoring and controlling their behavior while writing several tasks to realize the goal, and recognizing when the goal has been accomplished.

4.2. Promote a range of goals and uses of resources

Goals have multiple realizations. In the context of writing, one goal may encompass various aspects of writing, including text features, rhetorical functions, composing processes, and cross-cultural identities together. For this reason it is important to encourage students to set and act on a range of goals for their writing improvement, as they personally see fit. Some goals may simply involve completing a writing task successfully. Such *performance goals* may be promoted by task-based language learning (Skehan 1998), where the purpose is to write in the L2 fluently, accurately, and with appropriate complexity. Indeed, performance goals may be typical of most writing tasks in schools, as Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) have argued, but suggesting that as a consequence students develop an approach to composing where they quickly write down their relevant knowledge about a particular topic.

In addition to performance goals, however, it is important to encourage students also to develop *mastery goals* (Ames 1992; Pintrich 2000) in which students aim to extend their knowledge and abilities beyond the one task performance. The intrinsic motivation to develop one's knowledge strategically while writing, to achieve broader goals or purposes, relates to the approach to writing that Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) called knowledge-transforming (rather than just knowledge-telling), characteristic of expert writers. Setting high-level goals for writing improvement inevitably

involves people in applying such reflective processes to their writing as planning, self-reflection, critical analysis, and editing. However, as Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) have rightly pointed out, performance and mastery goals often overlap or interrelate. So rather than expecting hard and fast distinctions, it may be prudent simply to encourage students to develop both forms of goals as their motivations and abilities may permit.

A further point is to encourage students to use a broad, expanding range of resources to fulfil their goals. Our research indicated that even highly experienced ESL teachers were often not aware of the many resources that their students drew upon outside of classes to fulfil their goals for writing improvement, such as help from friends or family members, reading various types of books or magazines, or technical assistance from dictionaries, computer software, or the Internet. Case studies of students who made notable progress in achieving their goals for writing improvement showed them to make increasing uses of these out-of-class resources as their ESL courses progressed (Yang, Baba, and Cumming 1994). Along with setting and monitoring goals, it is important to help students make use of the many resources that they can use to realize the goals, inside and outside of classes.

4.3. Respond to students' writing in respect to their personal goals

One persistent problem we observed in our research is that students and teachers can have difficulties communicating with each other about their goals for writing improvement. For example, teachers can write well-intended comments on students' papers, which the students ignore, do not understand, or fail to put into context. Likewise, individual students may follow their own agendas in their writing, based on personal interests or inclinations, rather than the expectations (or even written instructions) for writing tasks that teachers specify in classes. Moreover, teachers can neglect to be very precise about such expectations. Fretz (2003) established in case studies that many such misunderstandings arose because teachers and students did not have opportunities to explain their personal goals clearly to one another. Goldstein (2004) has described similar problems across a range of studies of teachers' responses to students' L2 writing. An obvious implication from this observation is, as suggested above, to feature students' personal goals for writing improvement in all aspects of a course syllabus. In responding to students' writing a worthwhile step is 1) to ask students to write out their particular goals for each writing assignment they

do, along with a self-assessment of whether and how they achieved them, then 2) for the teacher to write responses to the student directly in respect to these goals and self-assessment. Talking with students one-on-one in “conferences” about drafts of their writing can also foster mutual appreciation of individual goals among a student and teacher, but it may be that an orientation to goals in the broader context of a whole course is necessary to facilitate this purpose.

5. Conclusion

There is every reason to orient the teaching of writing to goals that students have for their writing improvement, encouraging students to identify, monitor, and act on these goals autonomously in appropriate tasks. The complexity and variability of writing invites an approach based on individual situations and aspirations. Moreover, students learn to improve their writing by regulating their command of their own written texts, composing processes, and social positions as writers. Teachers can organize their courses to promote students’ awareness of personal goals for writing improvement, to adopt and reflect on a range of relevant goals, and to respond to students’ writing in respect to these personal goals and their progressive achievement.

Suggested Activities

Activity 1

Near the beginning of a course, assign a task for writing relevant to your course curriculum. Respond to each student’s completed composition in detail by indicating some positive accomplishments and suggesting particular aspects of the student’s writing that could be improved. After students read your comments, ask them to select 1 to 3 goals for their individual writing improvement, specifically goals that they would like to accomplish over the next three writing assignments in the course. Ask students to write out their personal goals on a sheet of paper:

- Stating each goal as a full proposition (e.g., “I want to xxxx”) with a specific object.

- Describing each goal in regards to particular contexts of writing.
- Stipulating actions the student will take to accomplish each goal.
- Indicating the origin of the goal and who has responsibilities for achieving it.

Collect and photocopy these sheets. Keep one for your reference to inform your teaching. Ask students to attach a copy of the sheets to each of their next three writing assignments in the course, along with a description of 1) how they tried to achieve each goal, 2) a self-assessment of the extent to which they think they succeeded, and 3) problems they encountered in trying to achieve the goals.

When you respond to the subsequent compositions that the students write, direct your comments to the goals the student indicated s/he was trying to achieve. Provide other comments as you think appropriate. Use this cycle of goal setting, monitoring and evaluation for later portions of the course, having students set new goals for their writing improvement and then try to achieve them after they have accomplished the initial set of goals.

Activity 2

Supplement Activity 1 with peer-group discussions of each learner goal in respect to drafts of each composition. In the class before students submit the assignments to you, organize the students into groups of three. Have each student explain to the group the goal that s/he was trying to achieve while writing the composition then to read the draft composition aloud to the group. After each goal is explained and the relevant composition is read aloud, ask other students in the group to comment on the goal and the relative success of the student/author in achieving it in the composition. Encourage students to revise their compositions based on feedback from the group discussions, prior to their submitting the compositions for your marking.

Activity 3

Model to the class your personal goals for writing one of the course assignments. During one class period write a draft of one of the compositions that students in the course have to do, prior to their doing it. While you

write, talk aloud (i.e., say everything that you are thinking of). As you talk aloud make sure that students can hear you clearly and observe your processes of writing, thinking, and decision making. Near the beginning of the session, try to state some goals that you want personally to achieve in the composition. Write on a transparency with an overhead projector if you have one available, so that students can see what you write as you write it. Ask students to observe you while you do this, taking notes about anything you say or write that surprises them. After you finish writing, prompt students to discuss their observations about your writing and your goals. What did they learn from observing you? While you write and talk aloud try to indicate clearly your goals for the writing task, and then conclude the writing session by reviewing your completed text to assess whether you have accomplished the goals you set for yourself.

Activity 4

Does the course you teach, the textbook you use, or the composition exam that students write stipulate any particular curriculum goals, standards, or benchmarks for student achievement? If so, then have students analyze these for the goals for writing performance and achievement they contain. Make photo-copies of the official version of these standards or benchmarks for students. Then put students into groups to identify which of the stipulated standards or benchmarks relate most closely to the personal goals that the students in the group have for their individual L2 writing improvement. Encourage students to distinguish between performance goals (i.e., just doing the writing task) and mastery goals (i.e., developing a general writing, language, or other ability while writing the composition). Prompt them to identify any goals they may already have successfully accomplished. Ask the students to rank order the other goals by priority. Then ask each group to explain to the full class their selections and their reasons for making them. Use the information from these discussions to plan your teaching in the subsequent parts of the course.

Notes

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