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Speakers of Other Languages**

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Special Edition to Honor Dr. Marjorie Terdal

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In this Issue

This issue of *The ORTESOL Journal* honors Dr. Marjorie Terdal, who retired in 2001 after 15 years of service as professor in the Department of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University. Dr. Terdal's influence is reflected in the professional work of each of the contributors to this issue. These contributors represent a range of settings where TESOL education occurs, including university, teacher education, and English as a Foreign Language programs.

- John Armbrust shares highlights of an interview with Dr. Terdal that took place soon before her retirement in 2001. She reflected on her career in TESOL, telling how her early trepidation was transformed into excitement about teaching ESL, love of linguistics, and passion for classroom research. Her interview reveals values she imparted and modeled in and out of the classroom, including collaboration, focus on the learner, self-awareness, adaptability, attention to detail, and openness.
- In her article, Leslie Siebert reports the results of her study comparing the beliefs about language learning of learners and teachers in intensive English language programs in the U.S. Northwest. She examines significant differences, notes the influence of national origin and gender, and discusses classroom consequences. She explains how identifying and discussing their individual beliefs about language learning can benefit learners and teachers in language and teacher-training courses.
- In her article, Hilary Williams presents the results of her replication of an experiment to investigate vocabulary learning. She confirms that semantic sets—groups of words that have the same part of speech and closely related meanings—are the most time-consuming and frustrating to learn. She proposes principles of organization and teaching strategies to help textbook writers and teachers ease the vocabulary learning burden for language students.
- Caleb Prichard's teaching notes describe an 8-hour curriculum that leads language learners to become more active in conversation. He explains curriculum components, including (a) awareness training to help students recognize the characteristics and consequences of passivity in conversation and (b) activities to promote asking questions, elaborating and holding the floor, initiating topic moves, and taking turns.

- **In her teaching notes, Janet Cowal shows how insights from linguistic theories can inform language teaching. Using teaching of pronunciation to English language learners as an example, she explains how linguistic knowledge helps her choose priorities, analyze errors, develop teaching strategies, and augment textbooks. She concludes that knowledge of linguistic theory also boosts one's confidence as a language teacher and enhances one's understanding and appreciation of language and language learning.**

Interview with Marge Terdal: "A Good Little Story, Actually"

John Armbrust
Portland State University

This volume and each article in it are dedicated to Dr. Marjorie (Marge) Terdal. Throughout her 19 year tenure as professor of Applied Linguistics she served as an inspiration to colleagues and students alike. Her dedication to the field of TESOL is reflected in the large number of her students who teach around the world. In the local community Marge has been a strong supporter of the Oregon TESOL affiliate, ORTESOL.

Marge helped to found ORTESOL and served as President from 1980-1981. She presented at many of the conferences throughout her membership and served as the ORTESOL Journal editor from 1988 until 1994. At the national level Marge was a TESOL Journal contributing editor for several years and the TESOL Journal special issue co-editor for Volume 12, Number 3 coming out in the Autumn, 2003.

In her retirement Marge has been conducting international teacher training workshops, traveling to Cuba, Nepal and Greece in the Elderhostel program and devoting more time to her family. Those of us who have been inspired by Marge will miss her even as we feel a little envy. The faculty and students in the department of Applied Linguistics at Portland State University have been enriched by working with Marge. The contributors to this volume demonstrate the lasting impact that Marge continues to have on the field of professional language education.

John Armbrust is an instructor in the Intensive English Language Program at Portland State University.

Over a period of 15 years, a procession of students passed through the doorways of Marge Terdal's classroom and office at Portland State University (PSU). In the process, they had the good fortune to be instructed, counseled, and encouraged by one of the finest educators in the TESOL profession. When Marge retired from her position in the Department of Applied Linguistics in the spring of 2001, that opportunity largely came to an end. Before grading the last of her students' papers and projects, however, Marge agreed to spend some time talking about her career in ESL/Linguistics and to share some of her views on classroom research.

Marge's introduction to ESL was like that of many in the profession, a combination of timing and serendipity. As she explained, "It's really a good little story, actually."

Upon moving to Oregon in 1965, Marge worked as a stay-at-home mother for several years following the births of her children. After that, she returned to the world of academia, initially in part-time positions training teacher aides for the Albina Head Start program and then in remedial English classes. Eventually, she was asked to teach a class for Spanish speakers. Although she already had a master's degree in English Literature from Michigan State University, she acknowledged that the prospect of teaching English to nonnative speakers was somewhat daunting. In fact, she recalled that her first reaction to teaching that group of non-English speaking students was, "I can't do that. I don't know anything about teaching English to nonnative speakers." As a result, she enrolled in the TESOL Methods class offered at PSU, became excited about the world of ESL instruction, and as they say, the rest is history.

At the time Marge began taking her first courses at PSU, there was not yet a graduate program in linguistics. There were, however, inspiring professors such as Jim Nattinger, who helped introduce her to a whole new world of possibilities. As she explained, "I found that I really loved linguistics more than I had really liked literature classes." At that time, she also joined the ESL teaching staff at PSU. Marge and fellow instructors Jan DeCarrico, Prue Douglas, and Shirley Morrell soon became known as the 'Gang of Four' after attending the TESOL conference in San Francisco and immersing themselves into the professional ranks of ESL. About the same time, Marge became one

of the original officers in the ORTESOL affiliate, which had recently been organized by Jan DeCarrico.

Eventually Marge decided to continue her own education, and she completed a Ph.D. in Curriculum Instruction at the University of Oregon in 1985. Realizing that, in her own words, the Department of Linguistics at PSU did not need someone else in linguistics, she focused her studies on curriculum development and teacher training because "what was needed was someone who knew about teacher training and teacher education." According to Marge, her "timing was good because I got the degree in '85, and in '86 I was allowed to teach the TESOL Methods class." In the next few years she developed and taught courses in Second Language Acquisition, Culture Learning, and English in the Workplace, among others.

Marge's experience developing the Culture Learning course typifies quite well her approach to teaching and research. From the outset, she worked with colleague Kim Brown to develop the course content and research projects related to their work in the course. The collaboration with Kim became a hallmark of the research that she would pursue throughout her career and promote in the courses she taught.

According to Marge, the quality of classroom research is enhanced by "collegiality and working with someone else when you do research." She explained, "Almost everything I've done has been with somebody else, and for a variety of reasons. First of all, I think it's nice to work with somebody. Second, I think that everybody has different strengths. So, when I worked with Kim, she brought the creativity and ability to see the big picture, and I brought the attention to details and some ideas on how to actually carry it out and write it up so that people would understand what was going on. Neither one of us would have been as successful by ourselves, in my opinion."

With Kim, she also "redesigned the whole TESOL Methods program," and early on they worked closely to collect data from students in their methods classes. This research helped inform what they did in those classes and inspired them, as she recalled, "to put the focus on the learner of a language rather than on methods of teaching." They focused on the concept that "people teach the way that they learn." In other words, as she explained, "You need to be aware of

yourself, to have some self-awareness, before you can go out and teach other people." This philosophy was also evidenced in the Culture Learning course, where she promoted the idea that "you need to be culturally self-aware before you can begin to understand other cultures."

In her tenure at PSU, Marge inspired a great number of students to try their hand at research. "A lot of it," she emphasized, "has been cooperating with my graduate students who have done research, to do a conference presentation with them or to write up a paper with them." She added that developing professional research skills is an important task for students and "something I know that very few of them will ever do on their own without a push."

An example of her cooperative research with students was the study she worked on in Japan with two former MA students, Robert Gaynor and Linda Dunn. That research looked at the question of whether teachers who are trained to teach in one culture can effectively transfer those skills to classrooms in another. It helped substantiate the observation of many EFL teachers working in Japan that "western-trained teachers have to adapt what they do in their classrooms. The things that they do (in the US) don't always work over there." For Marge, the study gave her the opportunity to "go into a classroom and see if that's really true, because then," she explained, "I could come back and tell my students here, 'Just because you're hearing all these ideas doesn't mean you're going to be able to put them into practice when you actually start teaching. You need to be able to adapt.'" When you begin teaching in a classroom in a different culture, she added, "don't ever expect to change everything that you find there."

The concept of cooperative learning is one that Marge regularly introduced into her courses, requiring students to work together on the planning and completion of projects. She explained that this reflects her philosophy toward learning and research in general. As an example, she cited her experience with her Research Design class, in which students worked in small groups to develop research questions and carry out a project to answer those questions. As she announced to her class when explaining the assignment, "In case that bothers you, just remember, most professional people work in groups, and do

research in groups, and publish in groups; and they either all get it accepted or don't get it accepted. And this is real life."

No one can argue that Marge didn't introduce you to "real life" in her courses. Those of us who had the privilege of learning from her know well the expectations for quality and attention to detail in assignments completed. Perhaps we never resented the demands because we knew, too, that she always put the same attention to detail in the preparation, presentation, and assessment for each of her courses.

We also learned to value the model of openness that she maintained as both professor and advisor. Part of this, she relates, had to do with her own training: "When I went to graduate school, I remember reading something about classroom teaching as teaching in a closed box. But I don't think it should be that way. I think it should be open, which is part of why I keep the door open to my classroom and the door open to my office. I think that it should be open."

When the doors to Marge's classroom and office finally closed, the legacy of her teaching and mentoring *were* firmly established at PSU, in Oregon, and throughout the world. Former students and colleagues will continue to practice what she has so generously taught, and they will continue to challenge themselves by recalling her questions: "What am I doing differently from what I did before to make myself a better teacher? Do I have the mental set to always be willing to try something different, and to keep track of how successful each technique is, so that when something works I can talk about it, *present it at* a conference somewhere?" Wise words indeed from a valued teacher and friend.

Editor's Note: This interview took place during spring term of 2001, when Marge Terdal was teaching her final full-time course load at Portland State University.

Student and Teacher Beliefs About Language Learning

Leslie L. Siebert
Portland State University

The beliefs about language learning held by English as a Second Language (ESL) students and teachers in intensive English language settings at institutions of higher education in the Northwest region of the US were investigated to explore similarities and differences as well as the influence of national origin/ethnicity and gender on these beliefs. The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (Horwitz, 1985, 1987, 1988) and demographic questionnaires were administered to 181 participants: 156 students and 25 teachers. Questions focused on beliefs about the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, strategies for communication and learning, and motivations and expectations. Results indicate that students and teachers hold definite, albeit different sets of beliefs. Significant differences in beliefs were found on 16 of 28 items ($p < .05$). The variables of national origin/ethnicity and gender were found to have an effect on student beliefs. Findings suggest that differences in the expectations of students and teachers may contribute to student frustration, hidden resistance to activities, inappropriately focused study skills, and lack of motivation. An application of this research in the language classroom is for students and teachers to identify and assess their individual beliefs about language learning so that mismatches can be brought to light and addressed.

Leslie L. Siebert is currently teaching in Portland State University's Intensive English Language Program. Her interests include reading strategies, developing collaborative learning projects, and the pedagogical implications of learner/teacher characteristics.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Marge Terdal, whose patient instruction, encouragement, and professional guidance made this research project a reality.

Individuals hold strong beliefs about how languages are learned. People encounter these notions daily, whether through advertisements in magazines claiming that a person can learn a language in 1 hour a day, or through talking to friends who believe that females are superior language learners or that children are better language learners than adults. These popular beliefs about language learning can influence all facets of the language teaching profession. Teacher educators, program administrators, and curriculum designers, as well as teachers and students, either consciously or unconsciously apply their unique sets of beliefs to classroom situations, instructional practices, and pedagogical decisions. The belief systems that both ESL students and teachers bring to learning environments are important to our understanding of language learning in institutions of higher education (Kern, 1995). This study investigates the beliefs about language learning of ESL students and ESL teachers from three intensive academic English language programs as well as the effects of the background variables of national origin/ethnicity and gender on those beliefs. The purpose of this comparison and investigation is to identify preconceived notions about what is involved in language learning and teaching in an effort to predict possible areas of difficulty. Investigating these differences and the effects of background variables on beliefs about language learning may help shed light on the selection of instructional practices that might best match different types of individuals.

Background

Over the last two decades researchers have set out to identify beliefs about language learning in an attempt to better understand the language learner and identify dispositional tendencies that may have an effect on language acquisition. Within this realm of second language learning research, two researchers in particular, Wendell (1986, 1987) and Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988), ascertained the types of beliefs that language students hold and have discussed the effects of those beliefs on students' learning behaviors. Wenden (1986, 1987) formally investigated students' beliefs about second language learning by questioning learners about their own learning behaviors in response to specific contexts. Wenden found that learners hold certain beliefs and that those beliefs are reflected in the learners' approaches to language learning. Wenden warned that providing learning environments that are

in direct contrast to learner beliefs may result in lack of confidence, motivation, or interest in studying, thus hampering students' progress. Likewise, Christison and Krahnke (1986) found that learner beliefs and attitudes are valuable sources of insight into language learning, especially when in combination with analysis of teacher behavior and classroom activity.

Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) was the first researcher to study large populations of students and their beliefs about language learning. Horwitz (1988) stated:

Although student beliefs about language learning would seem to have obvious relevance to the understanding of student expectations of, commitment to, success in and satisfaction with their language classes, they have remained relatively unexplored. (p. 283)

She expanded the concept of language learning beliefs by asking second language teachers and students to list all beliefs that they or others held about language learning in general. Horwitz proceeded to elicit beliefs in several stages, using free-recall tasks and focus groups of multicultural teachers and students of English and other languages. From these beliefs, she developed the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLO). Horwitz's method of addressing beliefs resulted in a broader classification of beliefs than those posited by either Wenden or Christison (1986, 1987) and Krahnke (1986). She found five areas of beliefs that people commonly hold about second language learning: the difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, strategies for communication and learning, and learner motivations and expectations.

In Horwitz's 1988 seminal study of first-year university foreign language students' beliefs about language learning using the BALLI, she found that many learners held beliefs that were inconsistent with the underlying pedagogical principles of the institution. Similarly, when she administered the BALL! to a group of 32 ESL students enrolled in the intermediate level of an intensive English program, she found some beliefs were consistent with activities and techniques reflected by the communicative approach and some were not (Horwitz, 1987). Horwitz (1985, 1987, 1988) suggested a number of ways that students' beliefs

could influence their learning, including how learners react to particular teaching methods, how they evaluate their learning progress, and how they approach language learning. Horwitz recommended taking disparity between beliefs and classroom practices into account and suggested approaches for dealing with various learner beliefs.

Horwitz's (1985, 1987, 1988) suggestion that students and teachers may view the language classroom differently raises this question: In what ways are the beliefs of students and teachers about language learning similar or different? A few researchers have attempted to answer this question. Kern (1995) conducted a study using the BALLI to investigate the beliefs about language learning of American teachers and students in the foreign language department at a major public university. Kern reported:

When the analysis focuses on group tendencies, students and teachers appear to be quite similar in terms of their beliefs about language learning. When the analysis examines individual responses, however, more differences between students and teachers come to light. (p. 77)

Kern found that awareness of the beliefs that teachers and students bring to the classroom can help both teachers and students set more realistic goals. He also suggests that beliefs can "shed light on our students' frustrations and difficulties, and can allow us to provide more thoughtful (and ultimately more effective) guidance to our students in their efforts to learn a foreign language" (p. 82).

Research detailing differences between ESL students' and teachers' beliefs is limited; however, related studies by Lutz (1990) and McCargar (1993) examined the teacher/student relationship. Lutz (1990) focused on the norms and expectations of Japanese graduate students compared to those of their American teachers. Using both a questionnaire and interviews, Lutz found many mismatches. To study ESL teacher and student role expectations, McCargar wrote the Survey of Educational Expectations. Using this instrument, he found significant differences in expectations across and between eight cultural groups, as well as between the eight cultural groups and ESL teachers. Although these studies suggest that there are differences *between* students and teachers and that those differences have pedagogical

implications, research in the area of ESL teacher and student beliefs about language learning is lacking. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Previous research on beliefs also raises the question of the influence of the background variables of national origin/ethnicity and gender on beliefs about language learning. No published studies have concentrated on the role of national origin/ethnicity of ESL students on beliefs about language learning. However, several studies using the BALL! with culturally homogenous groups of learners have demonstrated that learners from different cultures tend to hold definite, albeit different sets of beliefs about how languages are learned (Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Kern, 1995; Oh, 1996; Truitt, 1995; Yang, 1993). In a study of Korean students' beliefs about language learning, Truitt found that, compared to the American foreign language students in Horwitz's study, Korean participants tend to believe that learning a language requires a greater length of time. The Chinese students in Yang's study were also more likely than Truitt's Korean students to believe that it was easier to speak than understand a foreign language and that they would learn to speak English very well.

None of the reported studies using the BALLI have considered the influence of gender on beliefs about language learning. In a related study about the influence of gender on beliefs about argumentative communication, Rancer and Baukus (1984) administered a questionnaire to 138 participants. Although Rancer and Baukus reported some differences, they found that gender alone was not a powerful discriminator of beliefs about arguing. Studies of beliefs about strategies of communication and learning (one subcategory of the BALLI) have shown some evidence of gender differences in the use of learning strategies. Oxford, Nyikos, and Ehrman (1989), in a review of gender related studies, found that women show a significant advantage overall in using functional strategies in certain environments. Functional learning strategies "involve activities that use the language for communicative purposes, such as conversing with native speakers" (Elbaum, Berg, & Dodd, 1993, p. 320). In general, compared with males, females in these studies tended to engage in more frequent use of strategies associated with language as a social behavior.

Method

Using past research as a base, this study examines similarities and differences in the beliefs about language learning of ESL students and teachers and investigates the effects of background variables on beliefs. The questions to be addressed in this study are the following:

1. What are the prevalent beliefs about language learning among ESL students and teachers in intensive academic English language programs?
2. Is there a difference between ESL students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning?
3. Does national origin/ethnicity have an effect on students' beliefs about language learning?
4. Does gender have an effect on students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning?

Participants

One hundred eighty-one participants from three intensive English language programs took part in this study. Each program—Program A, Program B, and Program C—is an academically focused setting of higher education where students receive from 15 to 25 hours per week of intensive English language instruction.

Of the 156 students who participated in the study, 28 (18%) were from Program A, 36 (23%) were from Program B, and 92 (59%) were from Program C. Student participants ranged in age from 17 to 73, with a mean age of 22.5 years. Approximately 58% of the student participants were male and 42% were female. Twenty-two countries were represented: Angola, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam. The average length of time students had been in the US was approximately 5 months. A total of 83 students (53%) indicated that they had either traveled to or lived in an English-speaking

country before. Of those 83 students, only 4 had lived in an English-speaking country for longer than 9 months. The English language proficiency of students who participated in this study typically began at the lower-intermediate level with an approximate TOEFL score of 425 or higher, a proficiency level deemed sufficient by a contact person at each program for students to be able to complete the BALLI in English.

Twenty-five ESL teachers from the three programs also participated in the study. Of the 25 teachers, 6 (24%) were from Program A, 6 (24%) were from Program B, and 13 (52%) were from Program C. Twenty-eight percent were male and 72% were female. The length of time teachers had been teaching ESL ranged from 3 to 32 years. Eleven teachers had taught for more than 10 years with an average of 20 years, and 14 teachers had taught for fewer than 10 years with an average of 5.5 years. At the time of the study (January-February 2000), 3 had not yet finished their master's degrees, 3 had received degrees in the 1970s, 5 in the 1980s, and 14 in the 1990s. Ten hold master's degrees in TESOL, 1 holds a master's degree in a related field with a TESOL certificate, 11 hold advanced degrees in fields closely related to TESOL, and 3 hold more than one advanced graduate degree. Approximately 50% indicated other relevant teacher training.

Procedure

Students enrolled in lower-intermediate and higher levels at participating institutions, as well as teachers in those institutions, were given the BALLI—Student Version (Horwitz, 1987) or the BALLI—Teacher Version (BALLI; Horwitz, 1985). All also completed background demographic questionnaires. The student version of the BALLI contains 35 items and the corresponding teacher version contains 28 items. The student version contains some linguistically simplified items. The BALLI measures beliefs about language learning in five areas: (a) the difficulty of language learning, (b) foreign language aptitude, (c) the nature of language learning, (d) strategies for communication and learning, and (e) learner motivations and expectations. All items, with the exception of two, are rated by a 5-point Likert scale with the following categories: *Strongly disagree*,

Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly agree. Two other 5-point rating scales are used for the items not rated by degree of agreement or disagreement: one concerning the difficulty level of the target language—*A very difficult language, A difficult language, A language of medium difficulty, An easy language, and A very easy language;* and the other concerning the time needed to learn a foreign language—*Less than 1 year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years, 5-10 years,* and *You can't learn a language in one hour a day.* Because the BALLI was designed to assess opinions and beliefs about language learning, there are no right or wrong answers for the BALLI; therefore, no composite score is reported.

The questionnaires were administered in English to students during class time. Teachers had the option of filling out the questionnaire while they were outside of the classroom and returning it to the researcher by campus mail or regular mail. The identities of neither the teachers nor the students were revealed to the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of this study differed fundamentally from that of other researchers (Oh, 1996; Truitt, 1995; Yang, 1993) who have used the BALLI. This difference lies in the classification of the data. It is well known that many researchers who use Likert scales for data collection employ parametric statistical tests for data analysis. Because parametric tests are designed for interval level data, the assumption is that Likert-scale data are interval level data. The interval level of measurement "has the property that the distances between the categories are defined in terms of fixed and equal valued units" (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975, p. 5). In contrast, I contend that equidistance between Likert-scale items in this study should not be assumed. Furthermore, I maintain that it is mathematically impossible to state with any certainty that the distance between *Strongly agree* and *Agree* is exactly the same distance as between *Agree* and *Neutral*. Instead, I consider that each category in the 5-point Likert scale can be said to have only a position relative to the other categories. Therefore, this study treats the BALLI data as ordinal rather than interval level data.

As a first step, descriptive analysis in the form of percentages was computed. Because it is assumed that Likert-scale data are ordinal, means and standard deviations were not computed. Instead, the modal category (category with the highest number of responses) for each BALL! item was identified. Statistical analysis comparing the responses of teachers and students made use of two statistical tests: Cramer's V and Kendall's tau-b. Cramer's V was run to determine whether a systematic relationship existed between teachers and students and beliefs about language learning. Cramer's V also resulted in information that revealed the strength of the degree of association between the variables. Kendall's tau-b was run to compute the number of concordant pairs and the number of discordant pairs in order to indicate directionality of significant results when comparing students and teachers. When a preponderance of pairs is ordered in the same direction on both variables, the final statistical number is expressed as a positive number. When a preponderance of pairs is ordered in differing directions on both variables, the statistic is expressed as a negative number. All tests of significance in this study were set at the .05 level.

The independent variable of national origin/ethnicity and beliefs about language learning was analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate the rank of students' responses based on percentage of agreement and disagreement. To quantify the degree to which the variables of gender, beliefs about language learning, and status as student or teacher covaried, nonparametric correlational analysis using a two-tailed Spearman rank-order correlation test was applied.

Results and Discussion

Of the 28 BALL! items answered by both teachers and students, 16 items showed significant differences between teachers and students. Differences were found in each of the five subcategories of the BALL!. The Appendix shows the approximate significance, strength of relationship in percent-of-variance-explained, and the directionality of the comparison of teachers and students on all BALL! items with a significant result. Highlights of each subcategory are summarized below.

The Difficulty of Language Learning

The responses of students and teachers supported the concept of a language learning difficulty hierarchy. Students and teachers agreed that some languages are easier to learn than others. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies utilizing the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987; Kern, 1995; Yang, 1993). Students and teachers differed significantly in their opinions about how difficult it is to learn English. The highest percentage of students rated English *as a* language of medium difficulty, whereas a majority of teachers considered English to be a difficult language. In response to the question "If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak the language very well?," 22% of students said *1-2 years*, 29% said *3-5 years*, 19% said *5-10 years*, and 17% agreed with the response *You cannot learn a language in one hour a day*. However, almost half of the teachers answered *5-10 years*. Table 1 illustrates the percentages of student and teacher responses to all BALL! items in this subcategory.

Students' judgments about the difficulty of learning a language play a key role in the development of their expectations and dedication to studying English (Horwitz, 1988). Horwitz (1988) stated:

When students rate the task of language learning as being relatively easy and rapidly accomplished, they are likely to become frustrated when their progress is not rapid. On the other hand, a belief that it will take an extraordinary amount of time to learn a language could be discouraging and cause them to make only minimal efforts. (p. 286)

Interestingly, how students rated the difficulty of the English language did not interfere with their optimistic beliefs about ultimate achievement, with a majority reporting that they expect to learn to speak English very well. This suggests that these ESL students have high hopes for their attainment of English proficiency. However, the findings suggest that teachers may not be surprised when their students do not seem to improve as rapidly as the students expected.

Table 1

The Difficulty of Language Learning
Frequencies of Response

Item	Group	NR'	1	2	3	4	5	Modal category
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	V'	0	4	13	17	34	31	Agree
	V	0	12	4	12	4	32	Agree
*4. English is (1 = very difficult. 5 = very easy. y')	S	1	7	30	49	12	1	Medium difficulty
	T	4	16	56	24	0	0	Difficult
5. I believe that I will learn to speak very well.	S	0	3	4	17	42	33	Strongly agree
	T							
15. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take them to speak very well?'	S	1	9	22	29	19	21	3-5 years
	T	0	0	4	8	48	40	5.10 years
25. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	S	1	15	30	31	19	5	Neutral
	T	0	24	52	20	4	0	Disagree
34. It is easier to read and write a foreign language than to speak and understand it.	S	2	12	20	28	28	10	Neutral
	T	4	4	40	32	16	0	Disagree

Note. Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying student beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies In language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*. is = **Students**. 7 = **Teachers**. d1 = *A very difficult language*, 2 = *A difficult language*, 3 = *A language of medium difficulty*, 4 = *An easy language*, 5 = *A very easy language*. '1 = *Less than 1 year*, 2 = *1-2 years*, 3 = *3.5 years*, 4 = *5-10 years*, 5 = *You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day*.

*Indicates a significant finding at $p < .05$. For details, see the Appendix.

Foreign Language Aptitude

ESL students in this study generally recognize the existence of foreign language aptitude. Seventy-nine percent showed agreement with the popular conception that "it is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language," and 70% were in agreement with the statement that "some people have a special ability for learning languages." Surprisingly, although the majority believed that some people have a special ability for language learning, only 17% agreed that they themselves have a special ability, almost one-third (29%) showed disagreement with the statement "I have a special ability for learning languages," and 52% answered neutrally. Table 2 shows the percentages of student and teacher responses to all BALLI items related to foreign language aptitude.

Comparisons of the responses of teachers and students reveal significant differences on items 6, 10, 30, and 33. Teachers responded either neutrally or with disagreement to item 6, "People from my country are good at learning foreign languages." Students, on the other hand, were more likely to endorse the statement, with 38% showing agreement. Teachers were more likely than students to agree with item 10, "It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one," although the majority of both agreed. Item 30 seems to indicate that teachers do not generally equate aptitude with intelligence. Only 3 out of 25 teachers agreed with the statement that "people who speak more than one language are very intelligent," whereas 50% of students agreed with the statement. This finding suggests that teachers and students may conceptualize some aspects of foreign language aptitude in significantly different ways.

On item 33, teachers and students held opposing beliefs over the idea that everyone can learn to speak a foreign language well. The majority of teachers (60%) disagreed and the majority of students (56%) agreed. It is encouraging that students in ESL programs hold positive beliefs concerning ability and foreign language learning.

Table 2

Foreign Language Aptitude Frequencies
of Response

Item	Group	NW	1	2	3	4	5	Modal category
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	S	0	4	4	11	21	61	Strongly agree
	T	0	4	4	12	12	56	Strongly agree
2. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages.	S	1	3	3	22	49	22	Agree
	T	0	9	4	12	60	24	Agree
*6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	S	0	6	17	40	29	9	Neutral
	T	4	12	28	56	0	0	Neutral
*10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	S	1	6	16	26	39	12	Agree
	T	0	0	0	16	56	28	Agree
11. People who are good at mathematics and science are not good at learning languages.	S	1	26	33	23	12	4	Disagree
	T	4	36	24	32	4	0	Strongly disagree
16. I have a special ability for learning languages.	S	0	6	23	52	18	1	Neutral
19. Women are better than men at learning foreign languages.	S	1	19	20	33	19	9	Neutral
	T	4	32	24	28	12	0	Strongly disagree
*30. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	S	1	6	11	31	33	17	Agree
	T	4	12	20	52	8	4	Neutral
*33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language well.	S	2	3	17	22	35	21	Agree
	T	4	12	48	12	16	8	Disagree

Note. Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying student beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & 3. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

'NR' = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*. 'S' = Students. 'T' = Teachers.

*Indicates a significant finding at $p < .05$. For details, see the Appendix.

The Nature of Language Learning

Students tend to view the nature of language learning differently than do teachers (see Table 3). Although students and teachers agreed with item 12, "It is best to learn a foreign language in the foreign country," more students strongly agreed. In their combined responses of *Agree* and *Strongly agree*, students differed from teachers in how much they emphasize vocabulary (57% vs. 4%), grammar (39% vs. 0%), and translation (23% vs. 0%). The belief that learning grammar and vocabulary are the most important parts of learning a language will most likely lead students to invest a large portion of their time memorizing grammar rules or vocabulary lists at the possible expense of other learning tasks (Horwitz, 1988). Likewise student emphasis on grammar and vocabulary may conflict with the types of learning activities found in classrooms using the communicative approach.

Although 52% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that translation is most important, a significant minority (23%) emphasized translation. Some models of language acquisition suggest that absorbing meaning directly from textual or spoken language is the primary process in developing second language fluency (ICrashen & Terrell, 1983). If this is the case, then translation may change an important focus of the language learning task and impede acquisition (Horwitz, 1988).

Significant differences on items 17, 23, and 28 confirm that students put more emphasis on structural components in language learning than do teachers. As a result, some students may feel their needs are not being met, and teachers may encounter resistance to communicative activities.

Strategies for Communication and Learning

Students in this study were generally supportive of practices necessary for participation in communicative activities, such as guessing. Frequencies of response for all items in this subcategory can be found in Table 4. The significant difference between teachers and

Table 3

The Nature of Language Learning
Frequencies of Response

<i>Item</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>NR'</i>	1	2	3	4	5	<i>Modal category</i>
8. It is important to know about the foreign culture in order to speak a foreign language well.	S'	1	3	7	24	35	30	Agree
	TC	0	0	8	20	64	8	Agree
*12. It is best to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	S	1	4	6	6	20	63	Strongly agree
	T	0	0	4	8	48	40	Agree
*17. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	S	1	2	11	29	40	17	Agree
	T	0	32	44	20	4	0	Disagree
*23. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	S	1	3	22	35	24	15	Neutral
	T	0	24	68	8	0	0	Disagree
*27. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	S	1	3	17	26	36	18	Agree
	T	0	0	8	4	60	28	Agree

Note. Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying student beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & I. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

'NR' = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*. bS = Students. CT = Teachers.

*Indicates a significant finding at $p < .05$. For details, see the Appendix.

students on item 9, "You shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly," was the result of more teachers showing strong disagreement (84% vs. 43%). Similarly, for item 14, "It is okay to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language," the significant finding was the result of more teachers than students strongly agreeing (64% vs. 28%). Only 13 % of the students disagreed. These findings demonstrate that ESL students generally support practices necessary for participation in communicative classroom activities.

On the other hand, 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that "it's important to speak with excellent pronunciation," whereas only 4% of teachers agreed. The apparent paradox that students believe it is important to speak with excellent pronunciation, yet acceptable to speak even if they cannot say something correctly, raises questions for future investigation: What kinds of strategies do students use to help themselves overcome pronunciation difficulties? To what degree does overconcern with accent inhibit their communication attempts? McCargar (1993) states that some approaches and methods for language learning so violate students' expectations that in some cases more traditional methods might be better. For the 13% of students who agreed that "you shouldn't say anything unless you can say it correctly" or who believe that it is not okay to guess, their concern about correctness will probably make it difficult to accept the communicative approaches common in intensive ESL programs (Horwitz, 1987). Teachers should be aware of this as they prepare students to participate in activities that some may perceive as contradicting their preferred strategies for communication and language learning.

The discrepancy between student and teacher opinions about the importance of excellent pronunciation deserves attention. Kern (1995) brings up an important point when he states, "Pronunciation is not emphasized in many teacher education programs, nor is it frequently discussed in the recent professional literature. For learners, however, it remains an important goal" (p. 77). This leads educators to an important question: Should we teach learners what *we* believe about language learning and what *we* believe they need? Or should we teach learners what *they* believe they need concerning language learning?

Table 4

Strategies for Communication and Learning
Frequencies of Response

Item	Group	Nits	1	2	3	4	5	Modal category
*7. It is important to speak a foreign language with excellent pronunciation/ <i>accent</i> .		0	4	5	14	41	36	Agree
	T	4	8	44	40	4	0	Disagree
'T. You shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly.	S	0	43	31	13	8	5	Strongly disagree
	T	0	84	16	0	0	0	Strongly disagree
13. I enjoy practicing English with people who speak English as a native language.	S	0	3	4	7	38	48	Strongly agree
	T							—
*14. It is okay to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.	S	0	3	10	13	46	28	Agree
	T	4	0	0	8	24	64	Strongly agree
18. It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	S	0	4	1	5	38	51	Strongly agree
	T	0	0	0	4	60	36	Agree
21. I feel shy speaking English with other people.	S	0	19	27	28	22	4	Neutral
22. If beginning students are permitted to make errors, it will be difficult to speak correctly later.	S	1	13	33	31	17	5	Disagree
	T	0	32	36	24	8	0	Disagree
*26. It is important to practice with cassettes, videotapes, or computers.	S	1	4	10	30	38	17	Agree
	T	0	8	16	52	24	0	Neutral

Note. Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and thus may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying student beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & 3. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*. bS = 'Students. 1.' = Teachers.

*Indicates a significant finding at $p < .05$. For details, see the Appendix.

Learner Motivations and Expectations

Only two of the questions in the learner motivations and expectations subcategory of the BALLI were on both the teacher and student versions (see Table 5). Both represent significant differences.

In the first case, not surprisingly, 78% of the students indicated agreement with item 20, "People from my country feel that it is important to speak foreign languages." Not a single teacher agreed with the statement; 84% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In the second case, teachers and students weighed differently the connection between English ability and better job opportunities for students. A plurality of teachers (40%) responded neutrally to the item, whereas a majority of students (51%) responded with strong agreement. In fact, 86% of the students either agreed or strongly agreed. Because motivation plays a significant role in the development of second language competence (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), it is important that teachers become aware of what is motivating their students so they can build on that motivation in the classroom to make language learning a more cooperative endeavor. In this study, teachers seemed unaware of the extent to which students perceived learning English to be important for improving their job opportunities, evidence of instrumental motivation.

Other results related to motivations and expectations reveal that 79% of students strongly agree and 15% agree that they want to learn to speak English well. Integrative motivation appears to be slightly lower than instrumental motivation in this study as 78% said that they would like to get to know people who speak English as a native language and 86% reported they enjoy practicing English with people who speak English as a native language (item 13).

National Origin/Ethnicity as a Variable

The variable of national origin/ethnicity, using data from the background questionnaire, was compared with answers on the student version of the BALLI to produce descriptive findings ranked by percentages of agreement or disagreement. The variable of national origin/ethnicity was coded and grouped into four categories with the highest number of participants: (a) Middle Eastern (from United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Syria), 33 respondents; (b)

Table 5

Motivation and Expectations
Frequencies of Response

Item	Group	NW	1	2	3	4	5	Modal category
20. People in my country feel that it is important to speak foreign languages.	S	0	5	3	14	42	36	Agree
	T	0	44	40	16	0	0	Strongly disagree
24. I would like to learn English so that I can better understand people who speak English as a native language.	S	1	2	6	18	42	31	Agree
	T							
n9. If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job.	S	2	3	3	7	34	51	Strongly agree
	T	4	0	12	40	36	8	Neutral
31. I want to learn to speak English well.	S	1	4	0	1	15	79	Strongly agree
	T							
32. I would like to get to know people who speak English as a native language.	S	2	3	3	15	33	45	Strongly agree
	T	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Note. Values represent percentages. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number and *thus* may not add up to 100. Dashes indicate questions that were not asked of teachers. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying student beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

'NR = the percentage of nonresponses per question, 1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*. 3 = *Neutral*, 4 = *Agree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*. *S = Students. T = Teachers.

*Indicates a significant finding at $p < .05$. For details, see the Appendix.

Chinese (from People's Republic of China and Taiwan), 21 respondents; (c) Japanese, 44 respondents; and (d) Korean, 25 respondents. The remaining respondents were not included in the analysis because of low participant populations.

These preliminary findings suggest that national origin/ethnicity does have an effect on students' beliefs about language learning. Some of the most striking differences were found in the areas of ability, length of time it takes to learn a language, and the difficulty of the English language. Middle Eastern students, for example, while rating the English language as a language of medium difficulty, also reported that someone who spent 1 hour a day learning a language would be able to speak the language well in 1-2 years. In accordance with this short estimated time reported to learn a language, a majority of Middle Eastern students (53%) reported that they have a special ability to learn languages. Only 5% of the Japanese students, on the other hand, reported that they have a special ability for language learning. Because a cultural convention in Japanese society is to downplay one's abilities (Ritts, 2001), it is difficult to determine whether these students actually believe they lack ability. Likewise, only 10% of the Chinese students reported they had a special ability, suggesting that Chinese students also downplay ability (Ritts, 2001). Forty-eight percent of the Chinese students also reported that a person cannot learn a language in 1 hour a day.

Other similarities and differences were observed among the four groups in this study. For example, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese students tend to disagree more strongly with the importance of the role of translation in language learning than do the Middle Eastern students. Only the Korean students did not rank the enjoyment of practicing speaking English with native English speakers in their top five responses. They did, however, rank the importance of speaking with an excellent accent in the top five (as did the Middle Eastern students). Future studies are needed to analyze how cultural background interacts with other factors to explain why some students apparently let their concern with accent inhibit their communication attempts and others do

not. Possible factors include the learning environments from which the students came, cultural differences, or differences between students' native languages. In conclusion, these preliminary results suggest that national origin/ethnicity is a variable that has an effect on beliefs, but further studies are needed.

Gender

To quantify the degree to which the variables of gender and beliefs about language learning of students and teachers covaried, nonparametric correlational analysis using a two-tailed Spearman rank-order correlation test was utilized. The findings suggest that men and women differ in some areas of reported beliefs about language learning. Table 6 illustrates the gender differences on eight BALLI items in percentage and category.

Male students were more likely than female students to rate their abilities highly. For example, male students were twice as likely to agree that people from their country were good at learning foreign languages (47% vs. 23%); $r_s = -.21$ ($n = 156$, $p < .05$). Likewise, male students were more likely to respond that they had a special ability (item 16) for learning languages (25%), but only 10% of females agreed and no females strongly agreed, $r_s = -.22$ ($n = 156$, $p < .05$). Male and female students also significantly differed in their assessments of how long it takes to learn a language. When answering the question of how long it would take if someone spent 1 hour a day studying a language, females replied either 5-10 years or that a language cannot be learned in 1 hour a day. Male students, on the other hand, answered that it would take 1-2 or 3-5 years, $r_s = .29$ ($n = 154$, $p < .05$). These findings suggest that male and female students differ in their assessments of beliefs related to ability. One explanation of the origin of these gender differences in beliefs is that they are "presumably located in the socio-cultural behaviors of the two genders" (Baker, 1992, p. 42).

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Table 6

**Gender Differences Between Male and Female Students on
Eight BALL! Items in Percentage and Category**

Item	Females (n = 64)	Males (n = 91)
6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	23% Agree or strongly agree	47% Agree or strongly agree
7. It is important to speak a language with excellent pronunciation.	25% Strongly agree	43% Strongly agree
15. If someone spent 1 hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him or her to speak the language very well?	54% 5-10 years or You can't learn a language in 1 hour a day	60% 1-2 years or 3-5 years
16. I have a special ability for learning languages.	10% Agree or strongly agree	25% Agree or strongly agree
23. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning the grammar.	23% Agree or strongly agree	47% Agree or strongly agree
25. It is easier to speak than understand a foreign language.	35% Disagree	26% Disagree
26. It is important to practice with cassettes, videotapes, or computers.	7% Strongly agree	24% Strongly agree
32. I would like to get to know people who speak English as a native language.	92% Agree or strongly agree	70% Agree or strongly agree

Note. Each value represents the percentage of participants who gave the answer(s) indicated directly below it. Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, *Surveying student beliefs about language learning*, in A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

Men were also more likely than women to endorse beliefs indicative of a restrictive view of language learning. Male students were almost twice as likely as female students to strongly agree with the statement that it is important to speak a language with excellent pronunciation (item 7; 43% vs. 25%), $r_s = -.16$ ($n = 156$, $p < .05$). Male students' overconcern with accent may inhibit their communication attempts in a communicative classroom, whereas female students may be more comfortable with the types of communicative activities often found in intensive language programs in the US. Furthermore, male students were more than twice as likely as female students to agree that grammar (item 23) is the most important part of learning a language, $r_s = -.17$ ($n = 155$, $p < .05$). A belief that mastering grammar rules is the best way to learn English may lead these male students to invest a lot of time focusing on grammar rules at the expense of other language learning practices. These findings indicate that male students could have more difficulty than female students adjusting to the communicative approach that U.S. teachers often employ.

Other findings suggest that female students are more interested in the social aspects of language learning than are males. Ninety-two percent of the females in this study agreed that they wanted to get to know people who speak English as a native language (item 32) compared to 70% of the male students, $r_s = .28$ ($n = 153$, $p < .05$). This finding is consistent with strategy studies (Oxford et al., 1989) that show females are more likely to be involved in activities that *use* the language for communicative purposes. Furthermore, 35% of female students disagreed that it is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language (item 25), whereas 26% of the male students disagreed, $r_s = -.17$ ($n = 155$, $p < .05$). This suggests that females may be more comfortable with receptive tasks in language learning. Farhady (1982) and Eisenstein (1982) found similar results in studies relating to females outperforming males on a listening comprehension test and females significantly outperforming males on a dialect discrimination task.

Finally, it seems that female students place limited value on practice with cassettes, videotapes, or computers (item 26); only 7% strongly agreed compared to 24% of the male students, $r_s = -.24$ ($n =$

155, $p < .05$). Again, this difference might lie in the finding that females are more likely to view language in terms of communication than are males. The results suggest that female students do not consider mechanical/technological language learning devices as beneficial to language learning as do male students.

Only one gender difference was found in the male and female teacher sample. Female teachers disagreed more strongly than did male teachers with the belief in not saying anything in a foreign language until it can be said correctly. This finding may suggest that female teachers value communicative attempts by students more highly than do male teachers. It is important to note that although many gender differences were found in the multicultural student population, only one difference was found in the American teacher population. It is possible that students' national origin and ethnicity and gender together may have had an effect on students' responses to beliefs as measured by the BALL!.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings. First, this study is based on a sample of 156 students and 25 teachers from three intensive academic English language programs in the northwest region of the US. Although the characteristics of students and teachers in these programs are similar to those of students and teachers in intensive English language programs around the US, the generalizability of these results may be limited. However, with some cautions it is expected that these results would apply to other intensive academic English language programs in the US with similar student and teacher populations, curricula, and instructional methods.

A second limitation involves the validity of assessing beliefs with a questionnaire. Kern (1995) pointed out that there are methodological problems of objectivity, sampling, and validity inherent in all questionnaires. It is possible that the language used in the student version of the BALLI, for example, was too difficult for some of the learners to understand well, thereby possibly influencing responses. Second, owing to the characteristics of self-report data, the results are

dependent on the participants' willingness to accurately and truthfully respond to the items. Open-ended interviews with a structured set of topics might yield more valid findings. In the *present* study, however, comparison of students and teachers would have been difficult without a common list of statements to which each group responded.

Third, although the BALLI was considered satisfactory for assessing language learners' and teachers' beliefs about language learning, the results should be interpreted carefully. It is important to question the comprehensiveness and representativeness of the sets of beliefs described in this study. The BALLI does not provide data concerning all current issues in foreign language pedagogy. Additionally, some of the questions on the BALLI appear to be flawed in that they seem to address more than one belief; for example, questions 18, 26, and 34 address more than one construct.

Finally, this study has suggested some possible relationships between beliefs and behavior, but the data can only provide a set of hypotheses. More definitive statements about the relationship between beliefs and behavior require more research. One needs to remain cautious about attributing teachers' and students' language learning behaviors exclusively to their beliefs about language learning.

Implications

For Teachers

Many researchers who have looked at beliefs agree that beliefs about language learning should not be ignored in the language-learning classroom. A plausible application of beliefs research in the language classroom would be to help students identify and assess their individual beliefs by exposing them to beliefs assessments such as the BALLI. Wenden (1986) stated that activities in which learners examine and evaluate their beliefs may lead to increased awareness and/or modification of their expectations concerning language learning. Horwitz (1987) noted that ESL teachers have used the BALLI as a discussion stimulus at the beginning of ESL classes to help students develop more effective approaches to language learning. She wrote, "[The teachers] report that this discussion not only helped their students

clear up some misconceptions about language learning, but also that the activity was one of their most successful discussions as students (and teachers) were vitally interested in the topic" (p. 126). Horwitz further stated that students' beliefs are often based on limited experience and knowledge. She recommended, "The teacher's most effective course may well be to confront erroneous beliefs with new information" (p. 126). Wenden (1987) supported Horwitz and further explained:

The beliefs listed by students . . . point to learning-teaching issues that classroom teachers must confront and resolve. They provide us with learners' views on methodological questions and can be a source of insight into their learning difficulties and to the overt and hidden resistance to some of the activities we organize to help them learn. (p. 113)

Teachers must still realize that no matter what types of explicit messages students receive, they are not likely to just "learn" that language learning is more than grammar and vocabulary and that it is not really very important that they speak with an "excellent" accent. When one looks at this issue more closely, it is especially hard to influence students' beliefs when only traditional learning outcomes such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are evaluated in the language class. Horwitz (1988) suggested that "teachers must show students by example and instructional practice the holistic nature of language learning and reward students accordingly" (p. 292).

For Teacher Educators

Just as it is important for teachers to allow students opportunities to reflect on their beliefs about language learning, it is important for teacher-educators to give prospective teachers the same opportunity by administering some sort of beliefs assessment. Horwitz (1985) stated:

It is a commonly neglected truism that the students in a methods class have preconceived ideas about language learning and teaching. These preconceptions inhibit the prospective teacher's receptiveness to the information and ideas presented in the methods class particularly when the perspectives are not in consonance with the student's own experience as a language learner. (p. 333)

This would suggest that articulating methods students' belief systems in an explicit way is one of the first steps in their development as language educators.

Another application of beliefs and beliefs research in teacher education programs is to provide teachers-in-training data on the beliefs of groups who have already been studied. Providing teachers information on beliefs of different cultures, for example, could help prospective teachers select methods compatible with various teaching situations. Furthermore, teacher-educators could help teachers learn to work with students by helping them build learner training skills. A methods course might provide information concerning the assessment of beliefs and profiles of teachers' and students' beliefs.

Suggestions for Future Research

Suggestions for further research in the area of beliefs about language learning would certainly include replication of this study. In order to make the results more generalizable, this study should be replicated with other programs around the US. Secondly, because the questionnaire used in this study was administered to a multicultural student population in English, in future studies, translated questionnaires might be used to ensure greater understanding of items and more accurate self-reporting. Future studies could also be supplemented by observations or interviews in order to more fully describe students' and teachers' beliefs about language learning. An array of quantitative and qualitative techniques may help facilitate the identification of reliable patterns of teachers' and students' beliefs. Lastly, future studies will also need to consider a large number of variables in order to address the breadth of complexity of the beliefs of teachers and students. Researchers may want to study the interaction of ESL students' beliefs with other variables such as the acquisition and use of learning strategies, anxiety, motivation, or cognitive style to better understand how these variables impact language learning.

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APPENDIX

Significance, Strength Value (in %), and Directionality
Value for BALLI Items

Item	Value	Significance
4. English is:	16.37' -0.249b	.012*
6. People from my country are good at learning foreign languages.	16.7 -0.237	.007*
7. It is important to speak a foreign language with excellent pronunciation/ accent.	23.91 -0.433	.000*
9. You shouldn't say anything in a foreign language until you can say it correctly.	17.14 -0.272	.003*
10. It's easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	16.12 0.237	.016*
12. It is best to learn a foreign language in the foreign country.	15.52 -0.115	.034*
14. It is okay to guess if you don't know a word in the foreign language.	16.94 0.246	.005*
17. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary words.	24.04 -0.435	.000*
20. People in my country feel that it is important to speak foreign languages.	26.22 -0.497	.000*
23. The most important part of learning a language is learning the grammar.	22.51 -0.411	.000*
26. It is important to practice with cassettes, videotapes, or computers.	15.36 -0.206	.040*

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27. Learning a foreign language is different than learning other academic subjects.	15.55 0.183	.032*
28. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning how to translate from the native language.	22.29 -0.393	.000*
29. If I/students learn English very well, I/they will have better opportunities for a good job.	21.14 -0.336	.000*
30. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	16.3 -0.223	.013*
33. Everyone can learn to speak a foreign language well.	18.02 -0.247	.001*

Note: Questions were adapted from The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory in E. Horwitz, 1987, Surveying student beliefs about language learning, in A. L. Wenden & J. Rubin (Eds.), *Learner strategies in language learning* (pp. 119-129), London: Prentice-Hall International. Copyright 1987 by Elaine K. Horwitz. Reprinted with permission.

*Cramer's V statistic = top number (strength of relationship/percent-of-variance-explained). 'Kendall's tau-b = bottom number (indicates directionality).

* $p < .05$.

The Effects of Memorizing Thai Vocabulary Words in Semantic and Thematic Sets: A Replication

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A replication of Tinkham's (1997) experiment comparing the difficulty of learning vocabulary presented in semantic vs. unrelated sets and in thematic vs. unassociated sets was undertaken to determine whether the results could be duplicated using a natural language (Thai) rather than artificial vocabulary items. Twenty-four participants memorized 4 sets of Thai vocabulary words: (a) a semantic set (words of the same part of speech whose meanings are closely related or synonymous), (b) an unrelated set (words of the same part of speech whose meanings are not connected), (c) a thematic set (words of differing parts of speech whose meanings are related in theme), and (d) an unassociated set (words of various parts of speech whose meanings are not connected). The participants' recall and recognition of the words were then tested and recorded. The statistics (found significant at the .05 level) agreed with Tinkham's conclusion that the semantic set took longer to learn than the unrelated words. However, although Tinkham found that thematic sets were easier to learn than unassociated sets, in this study no significant difference was found. The results suggest that foreign language teachers should not present new vocabulary words in semantically related groups, because this can increase the learning burden of the words.

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This article is dedicated to Marge Terdal, who is one of the most organized, efficient and dedicated people that I know. Her enthusiasm for teaching, her knowledge of linguistics, and her devotion to her students is legendary at Portland State University and has inspired countless ESL teachers around the world. We will never forget her!

This study investigates the effects of interference on vocabulary acquisition. It explores whether the presentation of new vocabulary items in semantic sets (groups of words that are related to each other in meaning, such as *pencil, pen* and *marker*) to second language learners increases the learning burden of the new material. It also investigates whether teaching new vocabulary in thematic sets (groups of words that share a common theme but represent different parts of speech) facilitates memory and retention.

Foreign language instructors often present related vocabulary words together as one semantically related set. For example, teachers often choose to teach all the months of the year, colors, fruits and vegetables, or adjectives of emotion in one class period. From a teacher's perspective, this is a logical decision as these words fall neatly into one unit, often the same visual aids can be used to teach several of the new words, and many textbooks are arranged in this manner. For audiolingual substitution drills and functional units, these related vocabulary words can easily be plugged into the same sentence formulas. For example, an instructor could teach the vocabulary for different items of clothing—*vest, jacket, shin, turtleneck,* and *sweater*—and then teach question and answer patterns, such as "*What are you wearing?*" "*I'm wearing a....*"

However, for a learner, such related words can often be confusing. In every classroom there is anecdotal evidence of students who consistently confound *brother* with *sister*, *Tuesday* with *Thursday*, and *over* with *under* (Laufer, 1990b). Stock (1976) reports that English learners of Hebrew have special difficulty learning the two Hebrew words for *blue* (*kachol* and *tchelet*), presumably due to lack of distinction between the two in their own language. Understanding more about these sorts of semantic confusions is significant from both a theoretical and a pedagogical perspective. Investigating the phenomena of memory and interference can help us understand not only how new words are stored and retrieved in the mental lexicon, but also how language teachers can present vocabulary in ways that assist, rather than hinder, the learning process. If semantically related vocabulary words really are harder to learn, then language teachers should be very careful not to introduce new words in such a manner.

Review of the Literature

Research on memory and cognition has shown that recall of stored items is more efficient and successful when those stored items are unique and distinct (Higa, 1963; Hunt & Mitchell, 1982; McGeoch & McDonald, 1931; Underwood, Ekstrand, & Keppel, 1965). That is, as the distinctiveness of the material increases, so does the ease of learning. For example, Hunt and Mitchell (1982) showed that orthographically distinct words (with infrequent consonant and vowel combinations), such as *ukulele* and *llama*, are more easily memorized than words that have more orthodox spellings. Recent experiments support this research by showing that subjects have more difficulty recalling sets of semantically and phonologically similar words than they do sets of unrelated lexical items (Hunt & Mitchell, 1982; Underwood et al., 1965; Laufer, 1990a; Tinkham, 1993; Waring, 1997). For example, participants in the Tinkham (1993) study took longer to memorize sets containing words like *shirt, jacket, and sweater, than* they did sets like *island, beard, and potato*. These findings have led some experts in second language acquisition to claim that language teachers do their students a disservice when they teach them new vocabulary items in semantically related sets (Cohen, 1990; Nation, 1990). However, numerous textbooks present new vocabulary in this way, so that students can plug similar words into substitution patterns (Molinsky & Bliss, 1989, 1995). Rather than facilitate learning, this technique may actually increase the learning burden and make acquisition more difficult.

New research, however, indicates that teaching new vocabulary in related sets may not necessarily be detrimental to learning if the right kinds of clusters are used. In fact, evidence from research done by lexical semanticists and by psychologists indicates that presenting vocabulary words in a different kind of cluster might actually facilitate rather than impede retention. Sets of words related by theme rather than by meaning fit naturally into preexisting mental schemas or organizational frameworks. A thematic set might include words such as *eat, drink, hungry, thirsty, sandwich, and milk*, words of different parts of speech that are all related to the common theme of *lunch* (Tinkham, 1997). The theory states that these words would be easier to learn than a set of words that are all the same part of speech and

very close to each other in meaning, such as *plate, bowl, cup, saucer, fork, and spoon*. The thematic sets may be easier to retain because they form a sort of picture in the mind that corresponds with our mental schema of a particular event (in this case, lunch) (Tinkham, 1997). Brewer and Nakamura (1984) claimed that "schemers serve a crucial role in providing an account of how old knowledge interacts with new knowledge in perception, language, thought and memory" (p. 120), and they asserted that memory is enhanced when new information fits into a preexisting schema or framework.

Experiments by Ross and Bower (1981) and by Tinkham (1997) lend support to the idea that words that can be associated by a common theme are easier to recall than words that are unassociated. Tinkham's study in particular showed that participants were able to recall thematic sets of words more rapidly than sets of unassociated or semantically related words. The study was conducted with carefully controlled artificially created nonsense words.

In this study, an experiment very similar to Tinkham's (1997) was conducted to see whether his conclusions about the negative effects of teaching vocabulary in semantic sets and the possible positive effects of teaching words in thematic sets could be confirmed using a natural language. For the purposes of this study, Thai was chosen as the natural language.

There are several advantages to repeating Tinkham's (1997) experiment with a natural language. One obvious implication is that in natural languages, syllables, stems, and affixes (or bound morphemes) often carry meaning. Thus, in natural language, it is common to find semantically related words that also share a related phonology. For example, in English, the days of the week all end with the same final syllable: *day*. Furthermore, in English, certain suffixes are used to change the part of speech of a given word. Students learning adjectives to describe hair might be confronted with *curly, wavy, and frizzy*. This potential for shared phonology in natural language was not accounted for in the artificial stimulus words used in Tinkham's experiment. Because all of the words in his sets were carefully controlled, there was no repetition of syllables or sounds between any of the words in a given set. When natural language is learned, however, these controls are not

in place, and the shared phonology of semantically related words might further affect their learnability.

Another potential problem with Tinkham's (1997) artificial words is that they all adhere closely to the phonological rules of English. They were deliberately designed to be easily pronounceable by the participants, and thus their pronunciation patterns were the same as those of English words. However, naturally occurring foreign languages do not share the phonological rules of English. Other languages include phonemes, tones, sound combinations, consonant clusters, and stress patterns not found in English. Natural languages are simply not as neat and easy to pronounce for native English speakers as Tinkham's artificial words are. Therefore, pronunciation difficulties inherent in natural language may further affect the learnability of the various sets in ways that were not investigated by Tinkham's study.

Research Questions

In this study, the following questions were examined. For each question, difficulty was measured by the number of trials needed for a participant to memorize and correctly repeat a set of six new vocabulary words.

1. Can the relationship between a set of newly *presented* vocabulary words either increase or decrease the learning burden of the words?
2. Is it more or less difficult to recall new vocabulary words learned in semantic sets than it is to recall the same number of new vocabulary words learned in a random set of unrelated items?
3. Is it more or less difficult to recall new vocabulary words learned in thematic sets than it is to recall the same number of new vocabulary words learned in a random set of unassociated items?

Method

This study borrows much from Tinkham's (1997) experiment but makes certain modifications in the design and implication.

Participants

Twenty-four volunteers participated in the experiment. **The** participants were mostly students at Portland State University or acquaintances of the researcher. They ranged in age from 18 to 36, with the mean age of 27. Only native English speakers who had not studied a foreign language for more than 2 years or lived for more than 1 year in a foreign country after the age of 10 participated because experienced language learners often develop special skills and strategies that might nullify the effects of semantic interference.

Stimulus Words

As in Tinkham's (1997) study, each set contained six words. Whereas Tinkham's stimulus words all had two syllables, the Thai words in this experiment ranged from one to three syllables. However, each set had a combined total of 14 syllables to negate the possibility that one set was easier to learn because it had shorter words. Each set consisted of one monosyllabic word, two disyllabic words, and three trisyllabic words. The words in the semantic set were all labels for different kinds of tropical fruit and were very similar to the kind of vocabulary that would be taught in an introductory Thai lesson. The words in the thematic set all had something to do with the common theme *of frogs*. The unrelated set consisted of words whose meanings had no relationship to one another and which were all nouns (to act as a control for the semantic set). The unassociated words were also unrelated to each other in meaning but were composed of two nouns, two verbs, and two adjectives (to function as a control for the thematic set).

The test words are shown in Table 1 with an English transliteration of their pronunciation in Thai. Participants performed the test orally, so they never actually saw these words.

Table 1

Word Sets

English	Thai	English	Thai
Semantically Related Set		Unrelated Set	
tangerine	<i>som</i>	cloud	<i>mayg</i>
pineapple	<i>saparote</i>	market	<i>whit</i>
coconut	<i>maprow</i>	ice	<i>namkang</i>
<i>banana</i>	<i>glooy</i>	office	<i>borisat</i>
<i>papaya</i>	<i>malagaw</i>	doll	<i>dukatda</i>
mango	<i>mamooang</i>	garlic	<i>grateeum</i>
Thematically Related Set		Unassociated Set	
frog	<i>gape</i>	dance	<i>denram</i>
hop	<i>gradate</i>	sleep	<i>nonlap</i>
<i>slimy</i>	<i>nyooneuna</i>	purple	<i>seemooang</i>
lily pad	<i>baibooa</i>	ugly	<i>naglied</i>
green	<i>seekeeyoe</i>	school	<i>rongrien</i>
swim	<i>weinam</i>	spoon	<i>chawn</i>

Procedure

In this experiment, participants listened to a recorded message similar to the one that Tinkham (1997) used. As in Tinkham's study, the participants heard half of the words (two sets) in English and responded with the Thai equivalent, and half of the words (two sets) in Thai and responded with the English equivalent. First the participants listened as the tape introduced the Thai words, one set at a time, followed by their English equivalents. They then heard one of the words and had 3 seconds to respond with its equivalent. After 3 seconds, the tape supplied the correct answer and continued to the next word. After presenting all six words in the set in this manner, it began the set again. Words in each set were shuffled and reordered each time the set was presented to ensure that participants memorized the actual words and not just the order in which they were said. When the

participant was able to produce all the words in a given set correctly in two consecutive trials, that set was considered completed. Participants were given the opportunity to take a short break (to minimize frustration and fatigue), and then they moved on to the next set. The researcher was present to record how many trials were *needed* for criterion.

When the participants had concluded the tested portion of the study, they were asked to complete a very short questionnaire about themselves and about their perceptions of the study (see the Appendix). This was done to collect qualitative data with which to better understand the quantitative data. The four questions that Tinkham had asked his subjects were included on the questionnaire, as well as seven additional questions related to the participants' backgrounds and learning strategies. It was hoped that the questionnaire would not only provide qualitative information, but also help account for possible discrepancies in the data. For example, participants who developed memorization strategies to help them learn the new words might be better at performing the task than those who did not.

Analysis

After all the data were collected, the mean scores for each condition were tallied and a MANOVA was run to test for overall effects of condition and task. Then paired *t* tests were used to test for differences among individual conditions.

Results

Experimental Data

Tinkham (1997) analyzed his data

employing a 4 (condition: semantic cluster, unrelated set, thematic cluster, unassociated set) x 2 (modality: oral vs. written) x 2 (task: recall vs. recognition) x 4 (order: order 1, order 2, order 3, order 4) x 2 (form: form A vs. form B) mixed multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) with

"condition" and "task" within-subject variables and "modality," "form" and "order" between-subject variables. (p. 156)

This revisit of his study had only one modality (oral) and one form. A MANOVA was first run to determine if there were any main effects for condition, task, or order. Then t tests were run as planned comparisons among the four conditions (semantic, thematic, unrelated, and unassociated). In the interest of elegance and simplicity, paired t tests were also deemed appropriate as they can be easily understood and explained, and the steps of the process are easily isolated and analyzed. The dependent variable was the number of trials required to reach the criterion of two consecutive perfect trials on a given test (see Table 2).

Table 2
Means for the Four Conditions

Condition	Mean	Min.	Max.	Standard deviation
Semantic	15.08	5	30	6.2060
Unrelated	7.92	3	16	2.8729
Thematic	10.79	3	25	5.0302
Unassociated	8.96	3	20	4.5251

Note. Values represent mean, minimum, and maximum number of trials.

Descriptive statistics were first run to establish the means for the four conditions. After the descriptives were run, a 4 (condition: semantic cluster, unrelated set, thematic cluster, unassociated set) x 2 (task: recall vs. recognition) x 4 (order: order 1, order 2, order 3, order 4) MANOVA was used, with the dependent variable being the number of trials to criterion. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3

Mixed Multiple Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Sig. of F
Within cells	1115.17	64	17.42		
Condition (C)	647.07	3	215.69	12.38	.000*
Task (T)	184.16	1	184.16	10.57	.002*
Order (0)	243.94	3	81.31	4.67	.005*
C x T	143.09	3	47.70	2.74	.051
C x 0	271.21	9	30.13	1.73	.100
T x 0	36.57	3	12.19	.70	.556
C x T x 0	146.44	9	16.27	.93	.502
(Model)	1733.46	31	55.92	3.21	.000
(Total)	2848.62	95	29.99		

* Significant at $p < .05$.

As Table 3 shows, using a 95% confidence interval, there are significant main effects for condition, task, and order. However, no significant interactions were found between condition and any of the other independent variables.

Once the results of the MANOVA were determined, a series of paired t tests were run, using a 95% confidence interval (see Table 4). A statistically significant difference was found between the semantic set and all the other sets of words in agreement with the directionality of the hypothesis. It took a greater number of trials for the subjects to memorize the semantic set than it did to memorize any of the other sets. However, there was no significant relationship between the

thematic, the unrelated, or the unassociated sets in the directionality predicted by the researcher. It can therefore not be said statistically that the thematic set was easier to learn than either the unrelated or the unassociated set. In fact, a significant difference exists between the thematic and the unrelated set, indicating that the unrelated set was easier to learn than the thematic one.

Table 4
Results of the Paired *t* Tests

Pairs	Mean	Mean difference	Correlation	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Semantic Unrelated	15.0883 7.9167	7.1667	.376	6.078	.000*
Semantic Unassociated	15.0833 8.9583	6.1250	-.116	3.707	.001*
Semantic Thematic	15.0833 10.7917	4.2917	1.33	2.822	.010*
Unrelated Unassociated	7.9167 8.9583	-1.0417	-.258	-.857	.400
Unrelated Thematic	7.9167 10.7917	-2.8750	.318	-2.853	.009*
Unassociated Thematic	8.9583 10.7917	-1.8333	-.029	-1.309	.204

Note. There were 23 degrees of freedom for each pairing.

* Significant at $p < .05$, two-tailed.

Hypotheses of the Research

Returning to the hypotheses set forth at the start of the research, we can see that one hypothesis was confirmed by the data, but the other one was not. The semantic set took more trials for the participants to

learn than did any of the other three sets. However, the thematic set did not take fewer trials to learn than the unrelated or unassociated sets. In fact, the average number of trials taken to learn the thematic set was greater than that for either the unrelated or the unassociated set, in disagreement with the findings reported by Tinkham in his 1997 study.

Discussion

This revisitation of Tinkham's (1997) research only partially replicated his results. Although participants *did* require a longer period of time to learn the semantically related words than any other combination of vocabulary words, they did *not* take less time to learn the thematically related words than they did to learn the words that were thematically unassociated. Not only did participants not find the thematic words easiest, but they actually took a significantly greater number of trials to learn them than they did to learn the unrelated set of words. Possible explanations for these results are described below.

The Semantic Set

Of the 24 participants in the experiment, 16 found the semantic set most difficult to learn, whereas only one found it easiest. Interesting insights into the relative difficulty of this set can be gleaned from the participants' qualitative questionnaires. When asked why this set was particularly hard to learn, 5 participants said that they were confused by the similar meanings of the words. They gave responses such as "It was all fruits," "I couldn't visualize the fruits easily," "The Thai vocabulary words were similar," "It was difficult to make distinctions in my mind since they are all similar types of fruit," and "[There was a] lack of contrast between images of words." Although other participants might not have been consciously aware of this semantic interference as a cause of difficulty, it is clear that at least one fifth of the participants recognized the related meanings as a source of confusion. This is in agreement with the work on interference theory by McGeoch and McDonald (1931), Higa (1963), and Hunt and Mitchell (1982). Those studies strongly indicate that groups of items that are closely related to each other in meaning or form are more difficult to remember than items that are unrelated.

Six other participants claimed the semantic set was hardest because of the similar sounds involved in the words. Three of the six words began with the prefix *ma* (papaya, *malagaw*; mango, *mamooang*; and coconut, *maprow*), and this proved challenging for many participants. On their surveys, participants wrote answers such as "[There were] similar alliterations," "Lots of words start out with similar syllable," "A lot of the words sounded the same," and "[There were] several words with similar sounds." The design of Tinkham's 1997 experiment had controlled for this phenomenon because his nonsense words were carefully created in such a way that they did not have too many similar sounds repeated within sets of words. However, as explained above, this effect occurs quite naturally when real language is used. Examples of semantically related words that are also phonetically related can be found in every language. In the case of the Thai fruit labels, the initial syllable *ma* is a morpheme meaning *fruit*. As interference has been shown to operate not only on words whose meanings are similar, but also on words whose sounds are similar (Henning, 1973; Laufer, 1990a), this phenomenon may further compound the effects of semantic interference and make these kinds of words even more difficult for learners to memorize when they are taught together.

The Thematic Set

Tinkham's (1997) results showed that the thematic set took fewer trials to learn than the unassociated set, whereas this study did not find similar results. However, a close investigation of Tinkham's results shows that this discrepancy is not quite as dramatic as it first appears.

The first point to notice is that for Tinkham's (1997) results, participants were able to learn the unrelated set (all nouns) in fewer trials than they were the thematic set. This information is not highlighted in Tinkham's study because the thematic set is compared against only the unassociated set (composed of two nouns, two verbs, and two adjectives). The unassociated set was designed as a control for the thematic set, whereas the unrelated set was designed as a control for the semantic set. Tinkham's results suggest, although he does not address this issue, that the unrelated set was actually the easiest of all four of the sets, and the thematic is only easier when compared against the unassociated set. The findings of this study agree with Tinkham's

in that the unrelated set took the fewest number of trials to learn. When t tests were run comparing the results of the thematic set against the results of the unrelated set, the unrelated set took significantly fewer trials to learn. However, it is not really possible to draw a true comparison between these two sets because one contained only nouns, and the other contained verbs and adjectives as well. It is possible that nouns are simply easier to learn than adjectives or verbs, perhaps due to their more concrete nature (Rodgers, 1969).

The t test comparing the thematic set against the unassociated set (which was the original planned comparison of the experiment design) showed no significant difference. It is therefore not possible to determine statistically whether the thematic set was easier than the control, or whether there was no difference in learnability between the two.

There is a second important item to note concerning Tinkham's (1997) findings regarding the relative ease of learning the thematic set. In his discussion of his results, he notes that the positive effects of thematic clustering did not seem as pronounced as the negative effects of semantic clustering, when looking at participants' individual performances. He wrote that "while thematic clustering appears to have been beneficial far more often than detrimental. . . it may be argued that thematic clustering was a benefit to learning only about half the time and actually a detriment about one-fifth of the time" (p. 159). He also noted in his conclusion that "the evidence that thematic clusters are learnt more easily than unassociated sets, while generally positive, was somewhat less strong and somewhat less consistent, a situation that clearly calls for further research" (p. 161).

Although the statistical analyses of the aggregated data for this study do not agree with Tinkham's findings, observations of individual performances do show that the thematic clustering was beneficial to some participants. One fourth of the participants reported that the thematic set was easiest for them to learn, whereas only one sixth claimed it was most difficult. Of the participants who found it easiest, half were consciously aware that the thematic arrangement aided memorization. In response to the question "Why do you think this set was particularly easy?" participants wrote answers such as "Similarity

in theme," "All of the words were related but different: nouns, verbs, colors," and "I could picture the situation—put it in context." Although many participants did not write about the thematic set in their questionnaires, informal discussions with them after the experiment showed that they were all aware and conscious of the thematic relationship among the *frog* words. Furthermore, a preexperiment survey of the target words had shown that students were very likely to recognize a relationship between those words. Finally, the results of Ross and Bower's (1981) study indicate that participants do not need to be told of the theme in advance in order for memory to benefit from the schematic relationship.

To date, only two known studies have been done concerning the relative ease of learning vocabulary in thematic sets: Tinkham's (1997) study and this present study. Given the differing results of the two studies, the evidence that thematic grouping aids vocabulary memorization seems equivocal at this point. It could also be the case that the positive effects of thematic grouping disappear when natural language stimulus is used. Therefore, more research is needed in order to determine the effects, if any, of presenting vocabulary in thematic sets.

Implications for Teaching English as a Second Language

The results of this experiment clearly show that participants took longer to learn the semantically related vocabulary words than they did to learn any of the other sets of words. In addition to taking longer to learn the words, they exhibited the most visible frustration during this part of the experiment. Our job as language teachers is to make language learning as easy and enjoyable as we possibly can. Based on the results of this study (as well as those of Tinkham's 1997 study), teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) and other languages should think carefully and strategically about the order in which we present new vocabulary items. This seems particularly important in the beginning stages of language learning, when learners have a small word base in the target language. When presenting new synonyms and antonyms to students, be aware of the possible deleterious effects of interference. Teach only the most important or frequently occurring

word in the group first, and then introduce new words only when the students have mastered the first word (perhaps several lessons or days later). Vary the visual aids used to represent the new words. For instance, if a measuring tape is used to teach the word *long*, perhaps it should not also be used to later teach the word *short*. Likewise, rather than using the same picture of a market to teach all the fruits and vegetables, use separate pictures or real objects. Present the words using different collocations and different sentence examples. Increasing the difference between the words can decrease the strength of association. Such measures will help minimize the effects of interference.

In addition, be careful when teaching synforms. Synforms are words like *capital* and *capitol*, *principal* and *principle*, and *effect* and *affect*, whose similar forms, spellings, and pronunciations can cause interference and confusion just as semantically related words do. Perhaps the words that pose the greatest difficulty of all are those like *restrict* and *constrict*, whose meanings *and* forms are similar. If these words are taught together, learners may have trouble remembering precise meaning and usage—for instance, which word to use to describe limiting the number of people at an event (Nation, 1990). Help students distinguish between these similar words by giving them mnemonic devices. For example, *desert* and *dessert* can be remembered by telling students that *dessert* is something we usually want second helpings of (and hence, the second *s*). The direction words *west* and *east* are confused by many English learners, but when written in the order that they appear on a compass (read left to right), their initials spell the word *we*. Although these memory tricks make access to the words slower and less direct, they at least give learners a way to safely choose the correct word.

Several ESL vocabulary books seem structured in such a way as to promote rather than diminish interference. Books such as *Word by Word* by Molinsky and Bliss (1995) provide units of vocabulary with lists of semantically similar nouns. One such list in the unit on construction and home repair includes words like *bulldozer*, *dump truck*, *jackhammer*, *lumber*, *plywood* and *shingle*, which could easily cause semantic interference to a student encountering them for the first time. Another vocabulary book, *Common Threads* by Sokmen (1991),

avoids the lists of vocabulary words and instead encourages teachers and students to generate "seed words" that can then be organized, expanded, and analyzed by building on new endings, creating word maps and analogies, and discussing synonyms, antonyms, and etymologies. Although this technique is beneficial in that it enables the students to direct their own learning, and it helps them associate the words in a variety of connections, it seems liable to strengthen the effects of interference by focusing on the similarities between form and meaning of related words.

This study did not show that participants learned the thematically related words in less time than they did the unassociated words. Therefore, there is no statistical evidence to support the idea that teachers should present new vocabulary words in thematic sets. However, because the thematic set was significantly easier to learn than the semantic set, it is logical to conclude that thematic presentation is a better choice than semantic presentation. Furthermore, because the thematic set was not significantly more difficult than the unassociated set, it also seems logical to advocate this method over the presentation of completely isolated and unconnected vocabulary. This method would make it much easier for teachers to plan integrated lessons and would increase their students' opportunities to practice the new vocabulary in meaningful contexts. Furthermore, although the thematic method clearly did not benefit all participants, it does seem to have aided a certain number. Half of the participants who found the thematic set easiest were able to clearly articulate that it was the thematic relationship between the words that made the set easiest for them.

Again, the careful use of visual aids as teaching tools could strengthen the thematic associations in the learners' minds, thus possibly enhancing their beneficial aspect. For example, a teacher presenting the frog-related words used in the experiment could use cut-out pictures, which would then be assembled together on the backdrop of a pond to create a unified picture. Likewise, the teacher could use the vocabulary words in a simple story so that the relationship between the words was clear.

A thematic approach to teaching vocabulary that is student centered and learner directed is practiced by Judith Wild (personal

communication, September 2000), an ESL instructor at Portland State University. First, her students choose a topic for the class to learn about, such as health care in the US or the American election system. Then each student tells the class how that particular system works in his or her own country. When a student lacks a particular word, Wild supplies it and writes it on the board. This generates a lot of new vocabulary that is thematic in nature and includes different parts of speech. The students copy the new words down for further study and can use their dictionaries to find complete definitions. As the students express themselves and share information about their own countries, they draw comparisons between the various systems. Finally, Wild uses the new vocabulary that has been generated to explain that system in the US. Student interest is ensured because they have chosen the topic themselves, have related it to their own experience, and are learning about how the system operates in their new country of residence. Wild pairs up the students and gives them assignments that enable them to use and practice the new words. These can come in the form of role plays, dialogues, and strip stories, and can make use of authentic materials such as hospital forms and doctor bills. This technique allows students great opportunity to practice and explore a set of thematically related words that they have generated themselves.

Another way to teach vocabulary thematically is to choose themes that are not necessarily apparent and to have the students discover the relationships for themselves. The idea for this approach comes from an experiment conducted by Wilson and Bransford (Gairns & Redmond, 1986). In the experiment, three groups of participants were given the same list of 30 words. Only the first group was told that their recall of the words would be tested. The second group was told to rank the items in terms of preference, and the third group was told to decide which of the items would be important or unimportant on a *desert* island. At the end of the task, all three groups were tested on their ability to recall the list of words. Interestingly, the third group scored highest on the test. This experiment shows not only that the intention to learn something is not the highest predictor of whether learning will take place, but also that vocabulary is most memorable when learners engage with it. The semantic processing that occurs in an exercise like this imprints the words in the mind, and students create their own theme to facilitate organization in the memory. **This** experiment could easily be adapted to a classroom activity in which

students are asked to create and defend their own thematic relationships within groups of new words.

Limitations

The most serious limitation of this study is that vocabulary is not commonly taught in isolated lists to be memorized, but rather is linked to some meaningful context. In this respect, the study does not mirror how language teachers really present new vocabulary or how students actually acquire new words. It is possible that using visual aids, realia, and tactile as well as visual and auditory stimulation, and also utilizing new words in appropriate situational contexts, may actually mitigate or diminish the effects of semantic interference. Certainly no teacher would be advised to introduce *new* vocabulary following the method of this experiment, and certainly the range of techniques available to language teachers does ease and facilitate the learning of new vocabulary.

A second limitation concerns the relatively small number of participants. Although 24 is a large enough number to produce statistical results, a greater number of participants might have made the results even more conclusive. Furthermore, this study used only one form for each of the four stimulus sets. If a greater number of participants had been involved, variations of the sets could have been included. This would surely have strengthened the results because there would have been multiple examples of semantic and thematic sets (as well as of unrelated and unassociated sets).

This experiment was designed to measure only immediate acquisition of the new vocabulary words. Therefore, the study gives no indication of whether semantic or thematic relatedness have any effect on the long-term retention of the words. If the participants had been tested a second time, perhaps a week later, it would have been possible to gauge their retention of the words and perhaps to draw some further conclusions about the merits and disadvantages of teaching vocabulary in semantic and thematic sets.

A further limitation concerns the fact that the semantic set contained words with similar sounds and phonologies. Although this

is a common phenomenon in semantically related words of natural language, it could also be considered a confounding variable. Because phonological interference has also been shown to affect ease of learning, it is impossible to tell whether the difficulty of the words in the semantic set lay in their similar meanings, similar sounds, or in some combination of the two.

A final limitation of the study is one that comes with any controlled experiment, namely, the difficulty of generalizing the results from an artificially contrived experiment onto the uncontrolled world at large. Tinkham's 1997 results were only partially duplicated by this study, which modified his design. We cannot assume that the results would be the same if the experiment were extended to a more naturalistic setting involving real language learners in a classroom.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

1. Are you male or female?
2. How old are you?
3. Have you ever lived abroad? If yes, when and for how long?
4. Of the following *sets* of words, please circle the set you found the most difficult to learn:

A: dance	B: cloud	C: frog	D: pineapple
sleep	market	hop	tangerine
purple	ice	slimy	coconut
ugly	office	lily pad	banana
truck	doll	swim	papaya
spoon	garlic	green	mango

5. Why do you think this set was particularly difficult?
6. Of the following sets of words, please circle the set you found the easiest to learn:

A: dance	B: cloud	C: frog	D: pineapple
sleep	market	hop	tangerine
purple	ice	slimy	coconut
ugly	office	lily pad	banana
truck	doll	swim	papaya
spoon	garlic	green	mango

7. Why do you think this set was particularly easy?
8. What strategies did you use to help you remember the new words?

9. What memory devices do you usually employ to help you learn vocabulary in a foreign language?
10. Which second languages have you studied?
11. How would you rate your proficiency for each? (Check the line that best corresponds with your level of ability).

- I can exchange greetings, count, and communicate minimally with isolated words and memorized phrases.
- _____ I can perform basic survival tasks such as ordering food, asking for directions, and shopping.
- _____ I can participate in simple conversations on personal history, e.g., family, hometown, and present job.
- _____ I can handle relatively complicated everyday situations.
- _____ I can explain my opinions and support them.
- _____ I can hypothesize and explain in detail.
- _____ I can debate on current events and social issues.

TEACHING NOTES

Training Students to be Active in Conversation

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I had several classes from Marge Terdal when getting my master's degree from Portland State University. In addition to teaching me a great deal about applied linguistics, she influenced me to have high standards and to be reflective about my own teaching. She was always willing to help those who wanted to do a little extra.

Research by Long (1981) and Holmen (1985) has shown that language learners (LLs) are often passive in conversation with native speakers (NSs) of English. These studies have suggested that in NS-LL conversation LLs rarely ask questions or initiate topic moves. Furthermore, topics in NS-LL conversation are frequently dealt with quickly and superficially. This is because LLs seldom respond to NS statements and often respond to NS questions as simply as possible. Being passive may cause LLs to appear uninterested in others, boring, and less fluent than they really are. This seriously harms their chances of developing interpersonal relationships with NSs.

The Training

The training described here is an 8-hour curriculum that I created with the intent of leading students to be more active in conversation. To my knowledge, a course with this intent has not been used before. However, some of the activities in the training were found in teacher resource books and were created with the stated intent of improving LLs' communicative competence. **Portions of the training are explained below** (for the complete curriculum, see <http://web.pdx.edu/~caleb/lit.html>).

Introduction

The first step in the training is for the students to realize that LLs are often passive in conversation. In the teacher resource book *Conversation*, Nolasco and Arthur (1987) suggest showing LLs a dialogue where one speaker is passive. The goal is for the students to notice characteristics of the passive speaker such as those mentioned above. These characteristics are written down and used as the focus for the subsequent training.

The second part of the awareness training is to help the LLs realize that being passive could harm their ability to form personal relationships in English. Some of the consequences of being passive are elicited by looking at the above-mentioned dialogue where one speaker is passive. The aim is for the students to realize that asking questions shows interest, answering an array of questions is not particularly fun, continuing a topic shows fluency, and initiating topic

moves allows the students to talk about what they are willing and able to discuss. These advantages are written down and reviewed throughout the training. They are key to the whole program because they motivate the LLs to take the training and conversation activities seriously.

After the awareness training, the class moves on to four focuses aiming to lead students to become more active in conversation. The areas are asking questions, elaborating and holding the floor, initiating topic moves, and turn taking.

Asking Questions

As noted above, LLs do not ask many questions to NSs in conversation. The focus on asking questions starts off with the class reviewing the importance of questions in conversation. The LLs then move on to activities where the students practice asking questions in social settings that they are likely to encounter in America. One activity involves the students bringing some photographs or a picture album to class. In pairs, one partner is required to ask three questions per picture.

Another activity is called "the question game." In this activity, the teacher says a sentence like "I just bought a new car." The students, who are divided into two teams, are given thirty seconds to think of as many follow-up questions as possible, such as "How much did it cost?" or "What did you do with your old car?" The teams are given a point for each question.

In "two truths, one lie" (Roemer, 2000), the students write down two truths and one lie about themselves. All the students (in groups or as a class) ask questions to try to find out which one they think is a lie. This and other activities are used in order for the students to practice asking questions and, more important, to develop an active mind set in English.

Elaborating and Keeping the Floor

The next focus is on elaborating and keeping the floor. As mentioned above, LLs often reply to NS questions in a minimal

fashion. One reason for this is that some cultures have different attitudes toward silence. In American English, if an LL is quiet (perhaps trying to think of a word in English), an American will likely seize the turn or *ask* another question. The students discuss this phenomenon and suggest fillers (*well, um, or let me see*) they might use to keep their turn when searching for what to say. The class then does activities in which they use the fillers and try to hold the floor. In one activity, students in groups of three are asked a question. They have to answer the question and "hold the floor" as long as possible. Their turn is timed. If the student pauses for one second without a filler, the group says *stop* and the length of the answer is recorded. The other group members then have a chance to see if they can keep their turn for a longer period of time.

The class also practices elaborating instead of responding as simply as possible. In one activity, students are asked a yes-no question, but the students cannot respond *yes* or *no*. Instead, they have to reply with three sentences. For example if a student is asked if she can swim, she could respond "Well, I like swimming, but I rarely have time. In my country I like swimming in the ocean. But I went to the Oregon coast and the water was freezing!"

Initiating Topic Moves

The next focus is on selecting or changing the topic. The class first reviews the importance of selecting a topic they are interested in and capable of discussing. Next, the students brainstorm topics they are comfortable talking about. The instructor then tries to elicit lexical phrases that the LLs can *use* to initiate a topic move such as *by the way, that reminds me, or guess what*. That is followed with some structured dialogues and communicative activities where they practice selecting or changing the topic. One example is "Judo" (Domyei & Thurrell, 1991). The students are given a certain topic, such as judo. In pairs, one partner is asked a question, and he or she has to change the subject to judo (or the current topic) no matter how strange!

Taking Turns

The last focus is on taking turns. The LLs are first reminded of their tendency to wait for an NS question before they speak. The instructor then introduces turn-taking signals in American English. Speakers may signal the end of their turn by doing one or more of the following: relaxing their hands, looking at their interlocutor, changing their intonation, decreasing the pitch at the end of a grammatical clause, drawing on the final syllable, or laughing (Duncan & Fiske, 1977). The class then practices recognizing the signals. In one activity, groups are given a topic. Each member thinks of one comment to say. When the activity is started, every member has to speak. The order of who speaks first, second, third (and so on) is recorded. Whoever speaks first wins. Whoever speaks next gets second place, and so on. The students need to watch for turn signals of the current speaker and then aggressively take the floor before the other group members.

Conclusion

I have tried this training or portions of it in several classes. The activities are student centered, and the class often gets excited and noisy. Most important, the students take activities seriously because they are reminded of the importance of being active throughout the course. A research project I completed in 2001 showed that the curriculum did help LLs become more active in conversation with NSs in four out of five measures (Prichard, 2001).

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**Making Informed Choices: How Linguistic
Theory Saves My Pronunciation
Lessons**

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To Marge,

A teacher's teacher and inspiring colleague . . .

As an instructor of linguistics and English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) at universities in the United States and in China, I have questions concerning my classes. Among them are

- How can materials best be presented and adapted for my students?
- Which concepts are most important and how should they be explained?
- Why are students struggling with particular aspects of language?
- Which techniques and activities will be the most effective?
- How can a text be supplemented?

Answering these questions involves choices concerning priorities, course content, scope and sequence, textbooks and other materials, techniques and activities, and error correction.

Brown (1994b) stresses the importance of taking into account cognitive, affective, and linguistic principles for understanding why certain choices may be made in the classroom.

By perceiving and internalizing connections between practice (choices you make in the classroom) and theory (principles derived from research), your teaching is likely to be "enlightened." You will be better able to see why you have chosen to use a particular classroom technique (or set of techniques), to carry it out with confidence, and to evaluate its utility after the fact. (p. 15)

To teach a language well, it certainly helps to understand the nature of language, its system and its exceptions, the way it works, and its various uses (Brown, 1994b; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Linguistic theories seek to provide accurate descriptions of these aspects of language. Thankfully, we teachers have access to this theoretical foundation to inform the choices we make.

For example, linguistic principles help me teach pronunciation more effectively. Knowledge of phonetics and phonology helps me to

choose priorities, diagnose and analyze students' errors and problem areas more accurately, choose or create strategies for modification and correction, augment textbooks, and understand why particular choices make sense.

Choosing Priorities

Insights from phonetics and phonology guide me in choosing which features of **English pronunciation to focus on in class**. Intelligibility—the capability of being understood when speaking—is critical for ESOL students. It affects confidence and effectiveness in oral communication as well as overall development of proficiency in English (Morley, 1994). So it makes sense to focus on intelligibility issues first. But what affects intelligibility most? Researchers such as Gilbert (1993, 1994), Morley (1991, 1994), and Wong (1987) suggested that suprasegmental properties (i.e., sound characteristics such as stress, length, tone, and intonation) have a great effect on intelligibility as well as on listeners' attitudes toward speakers. This alerts me to focus on my students' use of stress, syllable length, and intonation, and how these features are used in English, for example, to distinguish words, convey emotion, or organize discourse.

The suprasegmental feature stress, for instance, is a salient part of a word's identification in English (Grant, 1993; Schmitt, 2000). One direct and simple application of this information for my class is having students focus on stress and overtly mark it when writing any new vocabulary. On what aspects of stress, however, should they be focusing? Many dictionaries as well as some pronunciation texts distinguish three degrees of stress: primary, secondary, and weak. Should students then be listening for and trying to pronounce these differences? Does this matter? Ladefoged (1993) suggested that distinguishing *two* levels is sufficient; i.e., English syllables are either stressed or unstressed. Seemingly multiple degrees of stress result from intonational patterns being superimposed onto the words in certain contexts. So, I choose to have students focus on only two levels (stressed and unstressed) rather than struggle with more subtle distinctions. Phonetics and phonology, then, have saved my students from unnecessary stress in more ways than one!

One activity for helping students become more aware of stress is having them tap on the desks while pronouncing a word or phrase. Students should tap on the *stressed* syllables only, being careful *not* to tap on *every* syllable. For example, *important* would have just one tap, on the syllable *por*.

English phonology also directs my choice of priorities at the segmental level. Problems with phonemes (sounds that make a difference in meaning between words such as /f/ and /v/ in *fine* and *vine*) may affect intelligibility more than problems with allophones (variations of a sound, such as the different ways /p/ is pronounced in *pin* versus *spin*). For example, some students pronounce the phonemes /i/ and /I/ with essentially the same vowel. Thus, the pronunciations of words like *sheep* and *ship* or *seat* and *sit* sound the same. This type of problem can be contrasted to the different ways /l/ is pronounced in *like* versus *will* (O'Grady, Archibald, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2001). I choose to work on the contrast of /i/ versus /I/ rather than the allophonic variations of /l/ because the former is more critical for the accurate communication of meaning.

Pronunciation practice of minimal pairs such as *peach* and *pitch* or *feet* and *fit* can easily be included in activities using maps with street names composed of words from minimal pairs (e.g., *Peach Street* and *Pitch Street*). Students take turns giving directions while others try to follow them.

Analyzing Language and Difficulties

Knowledge about English phonology helps me better analyze and address particular pronunciation problems. My students have difficulty hearing and pronouncing the difference between words like *price* and *prize*, *cap* and *cab*, or *back* and *bag*. At first glance, it may appear that the students need to focus on clearly articulating the final consonant sounds. But the "fix" is not in focusing just on the consonants. English phonology informs me that, in this instance, the real cue for the identity of the final consonant lies in the length of the vowel preceding the consonant (Gilbert, 1993; O'Grady et al., 2001). When the vowel lasts a longer amount of time, it signals that the consonant is voiced (produced with the vocal cords vibrating; e.g., the sounds Ebb

[d], [g], [z], [v]). If the vowel lasts a shorter amount of time, it signals that the consonant is voiceless (produced without the vocal cords vibrating; e.g., the sounds [p], [t], [k], [s], [f])• Therefore, we focus on the length of the vowel in addition to the consonant itself. This description of how, in English, the length of a vowel relates to the voicing of consonants at the end of syllables appears in some introductory linguistics texts, e.g., O'Grady et al. (2001) and Finegan (1999). It saves us from "barking up the wrong tree."

An activity to help students get a sense of the length of vowels uses rubber bands. While pronouncing words such as *bet*, *bed*, *price*, and *prize*, students stretch the bands in proportion to the length of the vowels in the words.

Augmenting Textbooks and Providing Explanations

My students need work on the "tens versus teens" distinction, i.e., the difference in pronunciation between the words *thirteen* and *thirty*, *fourteen* and *forty*, etc. A common description given in texts is that tens have the stress on the first syllable, as in *THIRty*, whereas teens have the stress on the second syllable, as in *thirTEEN*.

Although this is true for the words spoken phrase finally or in isolation, phonological analysis informs me that, in other contexts, the stress may shift due to the tendency in English to avoid having stresses too close together (Ladefoged, 1993). Thus, given a phrase such as *thirteen dogs*, *thirTEEN DOGS* would be awkward to say; the stress on *TEEN* seems to shift to *thir* resulting in something more like *THIRteen DOGS*.

This information affects the exercises and activities I choose or create; I make sure students have opportunities to *use* the words in a variety of contexts. For example, a modified game of bingo using only tens and teens can be created. Students take turns calling out the numbers and playing the game. This type of activity uses the numbers in relative isolation.

A second activity involves role plays for pairs of students in which each student receives a list. List A contains items Student A wants to

buy, such as 13 eggs, 40 batteries, and 15 boxes of cereal. List B contains items Student B has in stock, such as 30 eggs, 14 batteries, and 50 boxes of cereal. The role play involves a telephone conversation in which Student A asks about and orders items from Student B. Student B is able to let Student A know whether or not enough of the items are in stock, how much they cost, and other information. This type of activity encourages the use of the numbers in the context of phrases and sentences. In this role play, the students may naturally need to use language for clarification and may also use the numbers in isolation.

There are other changes in stress that occur due to the tendency in English to avoid stresses too close together. A generalization frequently stated in pronunciation texts is that the content words receive stress in sentences. However, this is not the case in sentences in which several content words occur consecutively (Ladefoged, 1993). "The big black dog ate three white bones" is unlikely to have all the content words stressed. "The **BIG** black **DOG** ate **THREE** white **BONES**" is more probable and natural sounding. English phonology gives a more complete description as well as an explanation for these phenomena.

Conclusion

The usefulness and importance of linguistic theory to the teaching of language does not stop at phonetics, phonology, and pronunciation. Although definitions of communicative competence vary (Brown, 1994a), the theory concerning the components involved is generally covered in some measure in introductory linguistics texts, e.g., Finegan (1999), Fromkin and Rodman (1998), and O'Grady et al. (2001). Dickerson (1994) and Kenworthy (1987) show how morphophonemics (word forms, word parts, and their pronunciation) can be useful in helping students make links between spelling and pronunciation. Schmitt (2000) discussed how morphology applies to the teaching of vocabulary. Highlighting the interaction of form, meaning, and *use*, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) show how syntax, semantics, and pragmatics inform the teaching of grammar.

Linguistic theory, therefore, provides a foundation for making choices. It gives us descriptions of language and how it is used, and

provides explanations for why language works the way it does. Having a greater depth of understanding of language itself, how it is produced and understood, its patterns, and the subtleties of its use can have a profound effect on our teaching. We can feel at ease with our subject matter and our classroom choices, renew our own wonder about language, and appreciate what we actually do as language teachers and what our students are accomplishing in learning language.

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