



The ORTESOL Journal

Volume 25, 2007

Features

Corpus Linguistics and the ESL Classroom

Genre and Corpora in the English for Academic Writing Class

**English Language Development in K-12 Settings:
Principles, Cautions, and Effective Models**

Authentic Assessment of Discussion Skills

Columns

In This Issue

Teaching Notes

Beginners and Computers

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In This Issue

Bill Walker & Deborah Healey
ORTESOL Journal Editors

Where will we be five years from now?

Recently, *TESOL Quarterly* published a special edition reflecting on where our profession has been during the last forty years and where it is now in light of our cumulative experience. This year's issue of *The ORTESOL Journal* takes a similar look at where we are now and where we might be headed in the near future. As we see it, technological advances and politics continue to affect our notions about language and language teaching.

The New Media Consortium's annual Horizon Report for 2007 (download from <http://www.nmc.org/horizon>) reviews key trends that predict a shift in the next five years in higher education demographics and budgets, globalization impacting our communication modes, a decline of literacy skills, a redefinition of the term *copyright*, a skills gap between knowing how to use digital media creation tools and "how to create meaningful content" (p. 7), an increase in collaboration and social networking, and a move towards schools providing more "services, content and media to mobile and personal devices" (p. 6).

The Horizon Report for 2007 goes on to predict that within two or three years (by 2009) we should see an increase in the way mobile phones are used in education from "personal safety, to scheduling, to GIS [Geographic Information Systems], photos, and video" (p. 6). We should also see the emergence of virtual campuses, defined as spaces that "offer the chance to collaborate, explore, role-play, and experience other situations in a safe but compelling way" (p. 6). By 2012, we should be seeing new forms of scholarship in which the definition of "author" may become somewhat blurred, as may the notion of copyright. By then, our young

video-game adepts may delight in "massively multiplayer educational gaming" (p. 8) in which they will become engrossed as they absorb (and possibly create) new knowledge.

Three articles in this print issue of *ORTESOL Journal* and one online *OJ* article deal with technology. Jan Beck's "Corpora in the Classroom" describes how computer-based corpora studies can be used in the classroom in a variety of ways. Teachers and students can search through millions of words of text to discover how language works. Viviana Cortes takes a more focused look at how corpus studies can be used in the writing class. Students in her graduate technical writing class become linguistic researchers and develop their own ideas about how writing works in their fields. Sarah Bennett and Jennifer Smyder describe a computer literacy project designed to open doors for low-literacy adult ESL students. If your students are not using blogging to improve their English skills, you may want to go to the ORTESOL website (<http://www.ortesol.org>) and read Mi Gyu Kang's article about how blogging has helped EFL students in Korea improve their English skills.

Political movements and related budget shifts also affect the way we will handle our everyday classroom activities. Karie Mize and Maria Dantas-Whitney take a look at the demands put on K-12 teachers to effectively teach and then test students, while Jennifer and Korey Rice report on an innovative and efficient way test oral skills.

This is Bill Walker's last issue as Editor. We will miss his persuasive skills in encouraging submissions and his clear eye for a good turn of phrase. His garden will no doubt appreciate Bill's having some extra time, and we'll hope for an article or two!

Corpus linguistics and the ESL classroom

Jan Hendrik Beck, University of Freiburg

Although corpus linguistic research has steadily grown in popularity since the appearance of the first computerized text corpora in the 1960s, many ELT professionals are still unaware of the immense potential corpus linguistics has for the improvement of language instruction.

The aim of this article is twofold: first, it provides a basic introduction to the theory of corpus linguistics and shows why corpus linguistics is relevant and interesting not only for language theorists but also for practitioners. To illustrate how corpus linguistics can directly contribute to classroom teaching, the article introduces the reader to *data-driven-learning* (better

known as *classroom concordancing*), which empowers language learners to become their own corpus researchers. Secondly, the article

provides some resources for instructors who might consider using corpus linguistics in their own classrooms. To that end, the last section of the paper points out some introductory readings about corpus linguistics and classroom concordancing, and refers the reader to software, corpora and tutorials. As many of our colleagues work in teaching contexts where money is tight, all corpora and software referred to in this paper are available on the Internet free of charge.

What is corpus linguistics?

What is a corpus?

Corpus linguistics deals with the analysis of large collections of natural language data, the *corpora*, for underlying patterns of language use. Put quite simply, a corpus linguist looks at large amounts of written text, including text transcribed from oral

discourse, either to discover new patterns in how language is used or to test and exemplify theories.¹ To give a few examples, a researcher might be interested in how a word changes in meaning in different linguistic contexts, how frequently it appears in different sorts of texts (informal vs. formal, written vs. spoken), whether it is associated with particular syntactic structures, and so forth. Counting and the quantitative presentation of the findings are integral parts of most corpus linguistic studies. Most instructors have strong intuitions about language, but because the corpora consist of actual language uttered or written by language users, corpus linguistics is always strictly empirical.

*classroom concordancing ...
empowers language learners to
become their own corpus researchers*

Because of the objective nature of corpus linguistics, a corpus should represent a language or a variety of a language as accurately as

possible. Therefore, the designer has to make choices in the selection of the texts. It is important to note that corpora are not conglomerates of random texts, but that any well-designed corpus follows certain principles. A comprehensive corpus such as the British National Corpus (BNC), for instance, which attempts to represent the British English dialect as a whole, must not only contain face-to-face conversations but also phone conversations, newspaper articles, TV speech, novels, etc. For a more detailed discussion on the principles of corpus design, see Biber, Conrad and Reppen, 1998.

A second important characteristic of corpora is their size. Since corpus studies are always empirical, in order to have valid results, the researcher must make sure that the corpus is large enough to be representative of the language or the variety it reflects. According to Sinclair (2001), the first

electronically-stored text corpora were assembled in the United States and Europe concurrently, but the project teams were unaware of each others' projects until 1965. Brown University designed a one-million-word corpus called the Brown Corpus of Standard American English (more commonly referred to simply as the Brown Corpus), which contained written language from various registers. Today, COBUILD (Collins Birmingham University International Language Database), one of the largest English corpora, contains over 600 million words.

By today's standards, a corpus of one million words is fairly small, but it is evident that without the help of computers any kind of analysis is incredibly time-consuming, if not impossible. For this reason, researchers use computer programs that can do much of the quantitative work such as the counting of frequencies and the search for particular linguistic items or collocation patterns.

Concordancing

It is a common misconception that corpus linguistics is only for those who have strong computer skills and who are able to write their own software. Although some linguists need to develop their own software for very advanced corpus analyses, high-quality software capable of performing a variety of investigative tasks is available and is more than sufficient for a multitude of interesting research projects.

The standard program for analyzing corpora is called a *concordancer* and operates somewhat like a search engine on the Internet: the researcher loads a corpus into the concordancer and can then "tell" the concordancer to search for a word or phrase. Laurence Anthony is the author of AntConc, an excellent free concordancer (available for Windows, Mac, and Linux). Most corpora offer a wide variety of analysis functions. The following are available in AntConc.

KWIC (Key Word in Context) is the most basic function of all concordancers and at the same time their most versatile feature. The researcher can look up a search term and be presented with all *hits* (instances of the search term) in their linguistic contexts. These so-called *concordance lines* give the researcher valuable information about linguistic association patterns that go beyond quantitative descriptions provided by the software.

For example, questions that can be answered by looking at key words in concordance lines include: Is the search term associated with a particular syntactic structure? Is it associated with a particular speech style (such as vulgar language)? Concordance lines are also an extremely powerful tool to help language learners interpret meanings or changes in meaning of polysemic words according to their contexts without being presented with direct word-for-word translations.

Table 1 below shows some concordance lines of the word *issue* from a corpus of native speaker undergraduate essay writing.

Even from only these six concordance lines, one can distinguish three quite distinct

meanings of the word. In the first two lines, *issue* has the meaning of *matter*, whereas in the second two lines, it is more likely *problem*. The last two lines refer to a volume in a sequence. While native speakers generally have few problems inferring the appropriate meaning intuitively, this can be a challenging task for learners of English. By looking at keywords in context, however, the learners more likely will be able to "guess" the correct meaning by considering the immediate linguistic context (for example line 3: "this issue will be difficult to resolve..." or line 6: in the *April 4, 1994* issue of the *Wall Street Journal*...). Also by being presented with so many examples of the word, the learners can gain a systematic and broader knowledge of a word's multiple meanings and uses.

*without the help of computers
any kind of analysis is
incredibly time-consuming, if
not impossible*

... their own claims. However, with an	issue	as complex as affirmative action ...
...a prison warden. Finally, there is the	issue	of protecting innocent people from...
... care workers are underpaid, and the	issue	will be difficult to resolve without...
...sensitive, horrifying, and controversial	issue	, its one of the less publicly broadcast problem ...
... community. In the December 7, 1994	issue	of the New York Times, Anna...
...Church and State" in the April 4, 1994	issue	of the Wall Street Journal states ...

Figure 1. Sample Key Word in Context concordance

KWIC can also be effectively used to study grammar patterns. For instance, a learner might be interested in American English usage patterns of the future tenses. Textbooks generally tell their readers that the *going to*-future is restricted to intentions, assumptions, and other non-definite statements about the future. However, performing a concordance search, the learner can see that the distribution of the tenses primarily depends on the register: *going to* is much more common in many spoken registers, and there, it is not restricted to the textbook rules of usage but quite universal.

Evidently, there is no clear-cut line between lexis and grammar (Hunston & Francis 2000); for instance, words are often associated with particular grammatical structures. As Biber, et al. (1998) show, *little* and *small*, often thought to be synonymous, have very distinct preferences for grammatical structures. In both conversation and academic prose, *small* is found much more frequently in predicative position than *little*. In concordance analysis, it is therefore always worthwhile to consider association patterns between lexis and grammar.

Another basic function of every concordancer is the *frequency count*, which tells the researcher how often the search word or phrase occurs in the corpus. Sometimes, this feature alone can yield interesting insights into a language. For instance, the researcher might be interested in the distribution of a particular word over different registers or dialects, in which case he or she would search for the term in question in different corpora (for instance, one containing American English and one containing British English). Another example of the use of frequency counts is to find out more about synonymous or near-synonymous words such as *sofa* vs. *couch*.

Most concordancers can list common *collocates* and *word clusters* of the selected search term in ranking orders. These practical tools are especially interesting for investigating formulaic expressions, which play an important role in native speaker discourse (for a corpus linguistic study on formulaic expressions in second language acquisition, see De Cock, et al., 1998), but also about such learner-

relevant aspects like phrasal verbs and distribution of prepositions.

AntConc is capable of producing word lists from the texts in a corpus, presenting the most frequent words in the corpus in ranked order. This is a great way to identify the most common words in a language or a language variety, such as academic prose. Examples of word lists produced from frequency lists are the General Service List (GSL) (West, 1953), presenting the 2,000 most common word families in English, and the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 1998), containing the 570 most common word families in academic prose (excluding the ones already contained in the GSL). Both are based on corpus research and are important tools for ESL/EFL learners.

On a smaller scale, word lists can also be created for single texts before having students read the texts in the English classroom. Doing so will help

the teacher determine which words are central in the text and should therefore be given special attention. For this purpose, the teacher creates a mini-corpus by simply loading the one text (as a regular .txt file) into the concordancer.

***Most commercially available
ESL/EFL materials do a poor
job of reflecting language as it
is actually spoken and written***

Authenticity: Relevance of corpus-based research

It should be evident that corpus linguistics can contribute to valid linguistic research. Processing vast amounts of authentic language data allows researchers to base their work on reliable empirical evidence, rather than on abstract theories or native speaker intuition. For example, every traditional grammar textbook tells the reader that English requires subject-verb agreement. However, a simple investigation of any given corpus of spoken American English presents many instances where this is not the case, as in *There is + plural* constructions (“There’s four cats on the patio.”). In addition, corpus linguistics encompasses crucial aspects of descriptive research. It describes linguistic phenomena quantitatively and qualitatively and formulates theories based on data that are authentic, rather than stating prescriptive rules of what language “should” be like.

The notion of authenticity has important implications for language teaching. Most commercially-

available ESL/EFL materials do a poor job of reflecting language as it is actually spoken and written by native speakers, focusing instead on what is considered correct grammar or vocabulary usage. On the same note, what is considered correct language is also almost always written language, which presents the standard for assessing any learner's language. McCarthy and Carter (McCarthy & Carter, 1995; Carter, et al., 1998) address this correct-incorrect dichotomy and argue for a stronger awareness of spoken grammar.

From a textbook writer's point of view, a clear-cut definition of what is acceptable English makes sense, and in fact there are good arguments for using a language of instruction that is grammatically correct and consistent with written English. Carter, et al. (1998) concludes that "on the one hand, we have real English which, as far as classroom treatment is concerned, can be unrealistic; and on the other hand, we have unreal textbook English which, as far as classroom treatment is concerned, is frequently handled in pedagogically viable and realistic ways" (p. 50).

Carter also acknowledges the often-quoted argument that learners do not have to sound like native speakers and need not become experts at navigating the vast cultural contexts authentic language brings about, as most non-native speakers learn English to communicate with other non-native speakers (Cook, 1998; McKay, 2003). Yet, from my own experience learning and teaching English, I know that virtually any serious learner of English desires to sound as much like a native speaker as possible and also wishes to connect the target language to a target culture. This is especially true for ESL students, who can profit directly from sounding more natural, as this makes their language use less marked for native speakers and therefore raises the learners' acceptance in the target culture.

Regardless of one's position of which variety of English to teach, it is important to acknowledge that there are numerous varieties of English one could learn and teach. Depending on the corpus used, corpus linguistics can answer questions about many varieties of English and raise awareness of differences in dialects and styles.

Data-driven learning (DDL)

If the class has access to computers and the learners are at least at an intermediate level of English proficiency, the teacher can have the students do their own corpus research. Tim Johns (1991, 1997), the originator of *Data Driven Learning* (DDL) believes that the language learner is at the same time a language researcher, and that to learn the language effectively, the learner needs to have access to authentic linguistic data (Cheng, Warren, & Xu-feng, 2003).

In small groups or on their own, students can perform their own research projects and share their findings with the class. In most cases, learners of English will be interested in meanings and real usage of words, phrases, and constructions. Using a concordancer and a corpus, they are presented with a

large number of items in various linguistic contexts. To stay with the earlier example, a student might be confronted with an instance the word *issue*, which has a number of very different senses as a verb and as a noun. The student could, of course, simply look

up the word in a dictionary, but still might not be able to find the correct meaning, as dictionaries do not usually provide much context. Furthermore, the student is likely to have to look up the word again the next time it is encountered because little cognitive effort is involved using dictionaries, especially bilingual ones.

An alternative is to run a concordance search for *issue* (or in this case, a search for the term *issu** with the wildcard * that allows all forms of the word as a noun and as a verb to be retrieved), presenting the learners with a huge number of examples of how native speakers use the word. Teachers generally agree that presenting learners with ready-made translations and explanations is not a very effective teaching method. DDL, however, engages the learners in an inductive learning process, in which they have to make their own inferences and generalizations about meaning and use until they find what they need. This requires some more time than using a dictionary, but the students will gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and use of the items in question and improve their general problem-solving

students can perform their own research projects and share their findings with the class

abilities (such as hypothesis forming and testing, an integral part of language acquisition). Another benefit of this approach is that student motivation is generally high, as the students feel that they are doing real research and actually accomplishing something.²

Besides such useful ad hoc studies, which can be done by individual students in a short time, teachers should consider larger concordancing projects for small groups. Depending on the needs and the proficiency level of the learners, the scope of these projects can range from basic grammatical or lexical patterns to very complex cross-linguistic or cross-dialectal comparisons. To give some examples of the various possible research topics, Table 1 presents a study by Cheng, Warren, and Xu-feng (2003), who introduced concordancing to English majors at a Hong Kong university.

After the students in the study finished their projects, they were asked for their comments. It speaks well for the method that 81% of the students in the class found it “interesting” or “very interesting” and that 87% found it “useful” or “very useful.”

Concordancers in the classroom

Classroom concordancing is most useful in areas of ELT that are not sufficiently covered in course curricula and standard teaching materials. As

classroom concordancing projects take some time, both for the introduction to the method and for the actual projects, the teacher has to consider carefully what topics are worth including into a concordancing session to make it maximally effective. In ESL contexts, students often might have questions about words and constructions they hear or read outside the classroom, but for which they cannot find an answer in their textbooks. The teacher should also take notes of problematic areas (certain words, phrases, or structures) in the learner language whenever they arise and include chronically troublesome features.

A feature of English that seems to be problematic for many learners is the appropriate use of the words *can*, *to be able*, and *to be capable*. Investigating meaning and use of the three items makes a great concordancing project, as all three words describe roughly the same concept. However, there is plenty to find out about the exact meanings and morpho-syntactic structures associated with the items.

The first step of a concordancing project should always be activating the students’ existing knowledge. In the case of *can*, *to be able*, and *to be capable*, it is sufficient to write the items on the board and ask the students for the meanings. This provides them with a working hypothesis such as “*All three words mean the same.*” Anything works at this point; it is important to keep in mind that the

Table 1. Students’ research areas

Research areas	Examples
Single lexical items	Nouns and pronouns (<i>god, I, you, that, they</i>); adjectives (<i>little, great</i>); modal verb (<i>shall</i>); adverbs (<i>yet, anyway, actually</i>)
Pairs of words	<i>because</i> and <i>since</i> , <i>between</i> and <i>among</i> , <i>after</i> and <i>afterwards</i> , <i>could</i> and <i>must</i> , <i>able</i> and <i>capable</i> , <i>lovely</i> and <i>sweet</i> , <i>almost</i> and <i>nearly</i> , <i>in</i> and <i>into</i> , <i>however</i> and <i>but</i> , <i>enough</i> and <i>sufficient</i> , <i>guy</i> and <i>man</i> , <i>for ever</i> and <i>forever</i> , <i>anyway</i> and <i>but anyway</i> , <i>at the beginning</i> and <i>in the beginning</i> , <i>at the end</i> and <i>in the end</i> , and <i>each other</i> and <i>one another</i>
Taboo words	<i>damn, shit, hell, fuck, fucking</i>
Discourse markers	<i>you know, excuse me</i>
Comparing spoken and written discourses	<i>but, however, shall, I, you, that god, at the beginning</i> and <i>in the beginning, guy and man</i>
Comparing female and male speakers	<i>great, you know</i>
Comparing native & non-native speakers of English	<i>they, because</i>

From Cheng, Warren, & Xu-feng, 2003

learners are the researchers, so the teacher should be careful not to steer the students in a particular direction.

The first task for the learners is to run a concordance search in a first corpus to determine the frequencies of the items.³ For this example, I am using a 4.2 million-word corpus of U.S. conversational English and get the following result:

can: 3,347 / 1 million words
– *able*: 283 / 1 mil.
– *capable*: 7 / 1 mil.

In a second task, the learners run the same search in a different corpus (in my example, academic writing) to compare the frequencies across the registers:

can: 3,091 / 1 million words
– *able*: 309 / 1 mil.
– *capable*: 86 / 1 mil.

It appears that *can* is by far the most common of the three items in both corpora, but it seems to decrease in frequency in favor of *able* and *capable* in academic writing. The data would indicate that *capable* seems to be much more typical for academic writing than for conversations.

In a next step, the students look at the key words in context to investigate individual meanings. In most cases, it is sufficient to have the students look at the first 20 hits of each word. One reason for *can* being so common immediately becomes clear: it has a much broader range of senses than its two counterparts. While *able* and *capable* seem always to refer to actual ability, in only the first 20 of my concordance lines, *can*, besides ability, expresses possibility, permission, request, and suggestion. The teacher should encourage the students to define the meanings of the items as accurately as possible and come up with their own examples to share with their classmates.

Finally, an investigation of collocation patterns and grammatical context is worthwhile. *Can* serves as a modal auxiliary, following the noun and preceding the main verb. *Able* almost always occurs in the form *to be able to [V]*, although in a few cases, it serves as an adjective attribute (“He’s an able person”) or as a predicative attribute (“He’s so able”). *Capable*, being the most restricted item, almost always occurs in the construction *to be*

capable of, except in the rare cases where it serves as a adjective attribute modifying a noun (“He’s a highly capable guy”) or as a predicative attribute (“He’s so capable”). *Able* and *capable* have very similar grammatical associations, except that *able to* calls for an infinitive verb, whereas *capable of* calls for a gerund form. Having the students sort their concordance lines according to the words neighboring the search terms (most concordancers can do this) makes such facts jump to the learners’ attention.

These steps are just some of many basic concordance operations that learners can use to discover language. Other tasks can entail further frequency and context comparisons across registers or dialects (for example, British vs. American English), looking at grammatical and semantic/functional context in more detail, comparing concordance findings to textbook rules, and investigating collocation patterns.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a brief introduction to the concepts of corpus linguistics and concordancing and has discussed some aspects of how the methodology can be relevant to language practitioners and learners. It was shown that the use of authentic language in the ESL classroom can contribute to learning success, and how classroom concordancing can empower learners to be language researchers. The following section describes some free resources that provide a start for those interested in pursuing corpus linguistics and concordancing.

Resources

Websites

Devoted to Corpora: <http://devoted.to/corpora>

David Lee’s website has it all: links and descriptions of corpora, software, tutorials, conferences, and other corpus-related topics make this website the ultimate link collection for everyone interested in corpus linguistics. The hyperlinks are well-maintained; only the descriptions of some references seem a little subjective occasionally.

The Gateway to Corpus Linguistics on the Internet:

<http://www.corpus-linguistics.de/>

The Gateway offers a variety of links to corpora and other corpus-related topics and resources on the web. This clearly-arranged website is in

excellent shape and probably somewhat easier to navigate than Devoted to Corpora.

Tim Johns Data-driven Learning Page:

<http://www.eisu.bham.ac.uk/johnstf/timconc.htm>

Tim Johns is the originator of DDL, and his website provides a useful bibliography of literature on the topic, as well as some links to materials and software.

Data Driven Vocabulary Learning:

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~billwalk/ddvl.htm>

This website presents the script of Bill Walker's (University of Oregon) presentation on the use of concordancing for vocabulary learning at the TESOL 2003 Convention and contains some useful and clear examples of DDL exercises.

AntConc 3.2 Help

http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software/AntConc_Help/AntConc_Help.htm

The AntConc website offers an excellent tutorial on the functions in AntConc.

Concordancers

AntConc: <http://www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp/software.html>

This powerful and user-friendly program by Laurence Anthony is capable of performing all of the concordancing tasks that were discussed in the concordancing section. The website also has a useful tutorial on using the concordancer.

TextSTAT 2.7: <http://www.niederlandistik.fu-berlin.de/textstat/software-en.html>

This excellent and simple concordance tool by Matthias Hüning (Freie Universität Berlin, Germany) allows the construction and analysis of simple corpora by incorporating text either from data stored on the computer or the Internet. Simply adding web addresses, the user can feed the software with whole websites and search them with the concordancing tools included.

Corpora

Unfortunately, most authors do not give their corpora away for free, which is not surprising considering how much time and effort go into a well-designed corpus. However, there are a few high-quality free corpora available. A new corpus of written English is being assembled at Portland State University. The *Viking Corpus of Academic Student Writing* will contain papers and dissertations by

university students and will be in the public domain once it is released.

International Corpus of English: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/ice/index.htm>

The ICE Project gathers corpora in fifteen different research centers in the English speaking world, each corpus containing one million words of spoken and written text. The corpora are free for academic non-commercial use and can be downloaded or ordered on CD-ROM. Unfortunately, the U.S. corpus is not released yet, but there are a number of other corpora available already.

MICASE: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/micase/index.htm>

The University of Michigan brings us MICASE (Michigan Corpus of Spoken Academic English), an excellent on-line corpus, which comes with its own concordancer and can be accessed for free. The corpus' scope is limited to spoken English in the university context but offers a huge variety of social, demographic, and situational search filters. This is an exciting page to explore for learners and teachers alike.

The Compleat Lexical Tutor: <http://www.lextutor.ca/>

This website by Tom Cobb (University of Quebec at Montreal) focuses on vocabulary and offers a rich selection of self-learning tools for learners and resources for teachers. Its online concordancer has access to the Brown Corpus, the spoken and written BNC, and a variety of specialized corpora. Most features of the website are available in French and English.

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Notes

- 1 Some researchers (e.g., Cheng et al. 2003) distinguish between *corpus-driven research*, which develops theories based on corpus research, and *corpus-based research*, which uses corpora to check theories that are not necessarily based on corpus research.
- 2 However, not everyone is comfortable working with computers, and some people even consider themselves “computer-blind“ or feel anxious about working with them. Teachers should be aware of this and make sure affected students get extra assistance while working on their tasks.
- 3 For a tutorial of how to use the different functions of a concordancer, please refer to the resource section of this paper.

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Genre and corpora in the English for academic writing class

Viviana Cortes, Iowa State University

Researchers and instructors in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) have developed an interest in the use of corpora (Flowerdew, 2002; Bernardini, 2004; Mishan, 2004; Swales, 2004). Several studies have stressed the advantages of informing classes with well-designed corpora (Tribble, 2002), while others have pointed out the need to pay attention to context in order to lessen the negative impact of the decontextualized nature of corpora used for pedagogical purposes (Widdowson, 1998; Aston, 1999). Flowerdew (2005), in her review of corpus-based and genre-based approaches to text analysis, highlights the importance of the identification of specific genres to be explored in the ESP/EAP class. In another study that reports pedagogical applications of language corpora, Lee and Swales (2006) emphasized the benefits of creating and analyzing corpora in a course designed to help international doctoral students to improve their academic skills.

This article will describe the design and implementation of a corpus-based and genre-based English for academic writing class that was created for international graduate students. The idea underlying the course design was to teach students to analyze a corpus of texts that are similar to ones they are expected to write. This analysis should help them recognize linguistic patterns and organizational conventions frequently used by published authors of research articles in their disciplines. Students' analyses of the corpus make use of techniques connected to Data-Driven Learning, or DDL (Johns, 1991), where students are guided to discover patterns in the language.

Activities that explore language learning as schema-based restructuring (Bernardini, 2004) have students use corpora to observe and analyze linguistic

conventions that are well-established in their academic communities. Flowerdew (1993) suggested that when students have to create a text in the target language belonging to a genre they are not familiar with, they should examine similar instances of that genre to try to discover "typical lexico-grammatical and discourse features unavailable in dictionaries or grammar books" (Flowerdew, 1993: 312).

The objective of this new course is to better prepare graduate students to write a research article, a task that they may find challenging but which is necessary to their academic success. The course uses a twofold top-down/bottom-up approach to the analysis of the Research Article (RA). Students read current studies that analyze the writing of RAs in different disciplines, particularly studies that use Swales's "Move-schema" (1981, 1990) for this analysis. Students then test these findings in the writing of their own disciplines by exploring a corpus of RAs they collect for the course.

This article will introduce a discussion of key issues that had to be considered prior to and during the design of the new course, offer a detailed description of the course design and implementation, and give examples of course activities and samples of students' work from the course.

Advanced academic writing: The state of the art

International graduate students who come to the United States to complete Master's or Doctoral programs of studies often are very proficient in English. At the university for which this new course was created, a minimum TOEFL score of 213 (230 for Economics) and high quantitative and verbal GRE scores (which may vary across programs of study) are required for students to be admitted into different

graduate academic programs. It is still under debate, however, whether these tests evaluate constructs directly connected to certain academic tasks. That is why at our university, all new international students whose first language is not English are tested for academic skills upon arrival in order to evaluate how good these students are when they complete tasks frequently performed in academic settings.

The battery of tests administered covers academic skills individually. Academic reading, writing, and listening are evaluated through activities that resemble those that students are expected to complete in their daily academic tasks, such as listening and comprehending academic lectures, engaging in academic discussions, writing expository and analytical papers, and reading and analyzing research reports.

Many international graduate students often show a high level of writing skills in English, but their writing sometimes needs some improvement in the use of academic writing conventions and organization. These students are placed in an advanced academic writing class, English 101D, which is a required course.

In general, students take this class in their first or second semester at the university. Four sections of this course are offered every semester. Classes usually have up to twenty students from a wide variety of disciplines, such as Engineering, Business, Architecture, Statistics, Design, Biology, and Chemistry, to mention only a few. Students' first languages are also varied, including Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish, among many others.

The original course, taught by professors, instructors, and graduate assistants from the TESL/ Applied Linguistics program, used to cover a wide variety of genres: formal letters and memos, article and book reviews, conference abstracts, paper proposals, and, most importantly, the research paper. These varied genre analyses resulted in a highly ambitious syllabus. The fourteen weeks of actual instruction, with two eighty-minute classes per week, did not provide enough time to investigate and master each genre. A large segment of the course was

devoted to the investigation of the research report, for which the program focused on the exercises presented on a textbook (Weissberg & Buker, 1990) as well as on specially-designed class materials.

The course was generally well-received by students. They often commented that even though the examples of research reports presented in the textbook were dated and mostly belonged to the humanities, they learned to pay special attention to certain aspects of academic writing. Some students, however, expressed concern about the course materials. Even though they felt the course was good and helped them gain new insights into the writing of research reports, many students still believed that in their disciplines, researchers "do not write like this." The fact that a given section of the course could

have twenty students who belonged to twenty different disciplines and academic programs made it impractical to create a discipline-specific course.

The issue of discipline-specificity has been raised by several

researchers such as Bhatia (2002), who stated that a genre often presents variation across disciplines. Differences in lexico-grammatical resources and rhetorical strategies are shown by different disciplines when expressing, for example, discipline-specific concepts, knowledge, and modes of conducting and reporting research. Bhatia's claim was consonant with the frequent concerns of the students taking this advanced academic writing class.

The design of a corpus-based/genre-based course

The core of the course has three important elements: a corpus made up of RAs, a user-friendly concordancing program, and a selection of reading materials extracted from studies in Applied Linguistics that report findings about the analysis of the different sections of the RA.

The first sections of corpus-based English 101D used a corpus of RAs specially collected for the class, about 500,000 words from ten disciplines. Journal articles were downloaded and stored elec-

that a given section of the course could have twenty students who belonged to twenty different disciplines and academic programs made it impractical to create a discipline-specific course

tronically in the laboratory where classes were held. These articles had been deemed by professors in the disciplines to be good models of writing for students to analyze. After the course was taught using these corpora for several semesters, a survey was conducted which reported that students perceived the corpora to be too large to be analyzed in class and sometimes not very representative of their corresponding academic disciplines. Thus, a new approach that had students collect their own corpora was adopted.

During the first week of classes, students consult their advisors and professors for journals that can be accessed as full text through the university library electronic catalog¹ and that are seen as models of good writing. Then, instructors show students how to choose examples of experimental research articles and save them as whole files, trying to preserve as much of their format as possible. Students separate the files into sections and store them in their own electronic materials folders. The number of papers in each corpus will vary according to the number of journals recommended, but students are instructed to keep no more than thirty texts.

A combined top-down/bottom-up approach

Many corpus-based pedagogical approaches have been criticized because they focus only on bottom-up procedures, i.e., the use of concordances to identify frequent lexico-grammatical features in a genre and to analyze the limited sentences provided by the concordancer. The result is an emphasis on word-level information. Flowerdew (2005) explained that the disadvantages that such a bottom-up approach may bring about can be overcome by analyzing whole texts and adding a top-down view. Rather than just pulling lexico-grammatical features out of context, the analysis would look at these features at the discourse level and note the characteristic patterns and sequences in which they occur.

Drawing on Mishan's (2004) distinction between inductive and deductive data-driven activities, the course uses inductive activities carried out by means of a concordancer specially designed for the course for its bottom-up approach. The top-down approach in the course, on the other hand, is based on deductive activities derived from selected readings

that create a framework of reference for comparison when using the corpus.

Software development: Word Search

The advantages of using concordancing software in the classroom have been highlighted in numerous studies (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Johns, 1988; Barlow, 2004; Sinclair, 2004). The use of the concordancer in this new course would allow students to work on a bottom-up approach to text analysis, looking for linguistic features that are frequently used by published authors in their disciplines. When deciding which concordancing software would be used in the class, three important factors were taken into consideration:

1. The program should be extremely user-friendly. Some commercially available concordancers yield so much information that the output can be a bit overwhelming for a course like this one.
2. The concordancer should provide large stretches of co-text around the searched item (around sixty words, thirty before and thirty after the searched word or expression). In this way, students will be able to have a clear picture of the use of any linguistic feature in context.
3. The program used in the new course should allow searches in a corpus of text files as well as in files saved in other formats (e.g., Word document files).

The program designed for the course, Word Search, is freeware designed by the researcher using Borland Delphi Studio 7. Word Search allows searches for words and expressions of up to four words as well as "wildcards." The wildcards allow the user to search both base forms (lemmas) and derived forms. For example, the wildcard "*" used with *introduce* as *introduc** would bring back not only the word *introduce*, but also *introduced*, *introduction*, and other related forms. Word Search allows users to search as many text or Word files as desired and to save their findings (searched items + co-texts) in a new file.

The program shows the number of matches (tokens) that could be found in the selected corpus, and a special window shows the files that the program is processing. The program also shows a menu

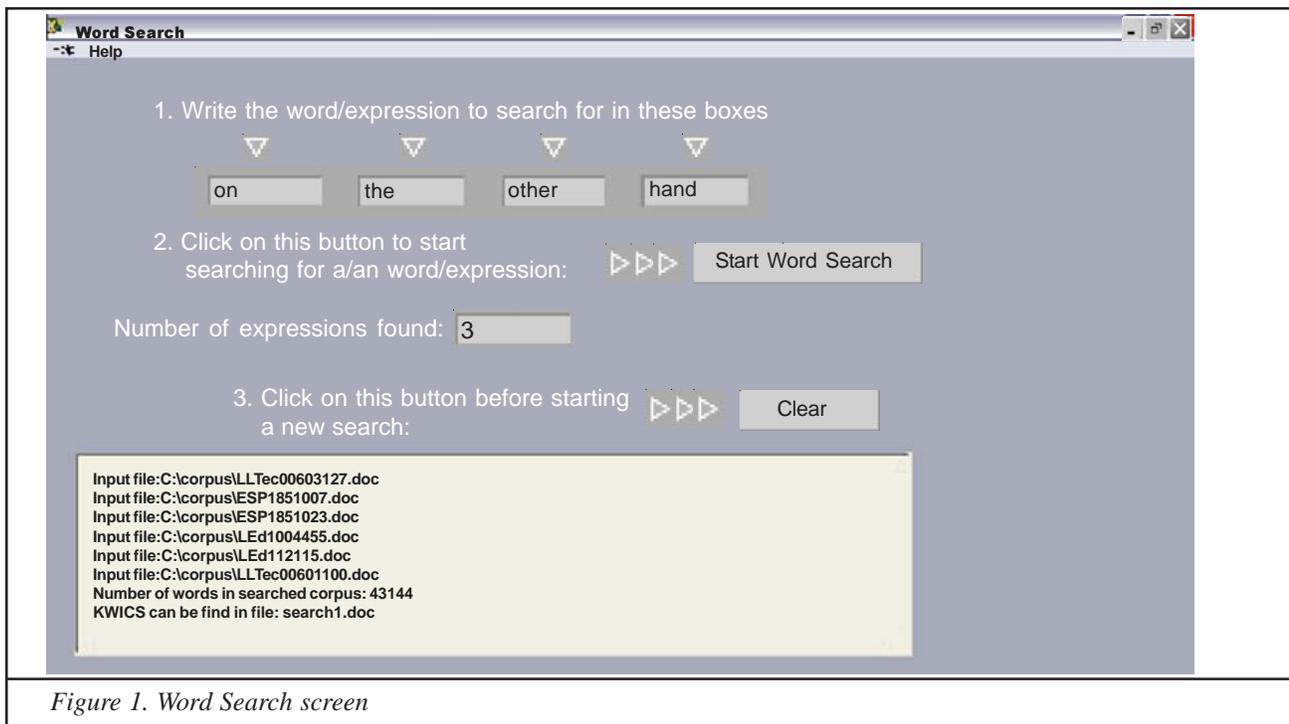


Figure 1. Word Search screen

with a help file that provides detailed steps on how to conduct a word search and how to retrieve the tokens in context. Figure 1 shows a snapshot of the Word Search screen after having searched for the expression *on the other hand*. The screen indicates the files the program opened to search for this expression, the number of tokens found, and the name of the file in which the identified hits can be found.

Word Search was piloted prior to the start of the course with a group of six graduate students. The result of this mini-study showed that it took these students between thirty and ninety minutes to become familiar with the corpora and the use of the concordancer. Thus, after students collect their corpora, they spend a class period working on corpus management activities to get acquainted with the concordancer and the methodology.

Analyzing the RA: Reading materials selection

In order to help students explore the corpus to formulate their own hypothesis on disciplinary writing, the course takes a top-down approach by means of deductive activities. Most of these activities are based on a selection of readings that contain excerpts from RAs in Applied Linguistics, some of them using

corpus-based methodologies. The authors explore disciplinary writing and report their findings with examples taken from published written work. The course uses Swales' (1981, 1990) seminal work on Move-schema in introductions as a core reading, enabling students to note basic patterns in the flow of information in an introduction. Table 1 shows an analysis of introductions in academic papers, adapted from Swales (1981:22). The rest of the reading selections apply similar methodologies to investigate the other sections of the RA.

The reading selections are generally exploited by means of two types of exercises. First, students are expected to answer several reading comprehension questions in writing. These questions help students get deeply involved in the content of the readings and the findings of those research studies. The second type of exercises encourages students to test their hypotheses through the analysis of the specific sections of the articles in the corpus. The exercises in Table 2 correspond to these types of activities.

For some of the exercises, the use of the concordancer is suggested. For other exercises, students are instructed to skim, scan, or read through various articles or article sections on their computer screens in order to test whether the claims reported

Table 1. A Possible Structure for a Major Type of Article-Introductions

Move 1	Establishing the Field a. showing centrality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by interest • by importance • by topic-prominence • by standard procedure b. stating current knowledge c. ascribing key characteristics
Move 2	Summarizing Previous Research a. strong author-orientation b. weak author-orientation c. subject orientation
Move 3	Preparing for Present Research a. indicating a gap b. question-raising c. extending a finding
Move 4	Introducing Present Research a. giving the purpose b. describing present research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By <i>this/the present</i> signals • By move • By switching to first person pronoun

Adapted from Swales, 1981, p.22

in the selected readings are reflected in the writing of their disciplines as represented in the corpus. In this way, both top-down and bottom-up analyses are conducted on the texts. The following excerpts have been extracted from the answers provided by a student in the course to the exercise presented in Table 2:

The way the authors signal that they are about to start the summary of previous research of the introduction is pretty constant in my discipline, Agronomy. In four out of five introductions (because the fifth didn't have Move 2) the authors used the word 'research' or 'studies' followed by a verb in present perfect tense (4 examples are below this paragraph). None of them used the word 'first' (I used the program Word

Search) or the following verb in the past, but present perfect.

We can see that all authors in my discipline (Agronomy) referred to previous research following a subject orientation. All the verbs were in the present perfect. Some verbs were commonly used to report previous studies in my discipline such as: *identify, study, address, and conduct*. Therefore, two more verbs (*address and conduct*) can be added to the list of verbs mentioned by Swales: *suggest, propose, report, show, investigate, find, study, discuss, examine, develop, identify, refine, reveal, stress, summarize, support*. (Agronomy)

In addition, a final exercise for each section of the RA asks students to prepare a written report in which they present the findings of the corpus exploration they conducted in class and compare their findings with those reported in the reading selections.

Course implementation

The class is taught in a computer lab that has twenty computer stations, a projector, and a screen on which instructors show class presentations, introduce new materials, and model exercises. Upon arrival in the classroom, students are instructed to log

Table 2. Sample exercises.

Writing introductions. Move 2: Description of Previous Literature (DPR)
Exercise 2 – Exploring the corpus

A. “Summarizing previous research” in introductions: Looking for examples in your discipline

For this exercise, you will have to read several introduction sections of articles in your discipline from the RAC. You will also need to use Word Search.

Look for examples of ways in which the authors signaled that they are about to start the summary of previous research or the literature review section of the introduction.

B. How do authors in your discipline reference previous research?

Look for ways in which previous research is referenced in articles in your discipline. Do authors prefer a subject orientation or an author orientation?

Write a short response to these issues.

In addition, make a list of verbs of communication often used in your discipline when reporting previous research.

Table 3. Course schedule

Week 1:	Diagnostic Test. Introduction to the course and materials. Corpus collection I: contacting advisors. Identifying journals in electronic library.
Week 2:	Corpus Collection II: Downloading papers from electronic library. Corpus organization.
Week 3:	The research paper sections. RA Introductions. Moves 1 and 2.
Week 4:	RA Introductions. Moves 3 and 4.
Week 5:	Language focus exercises on citations. Group discussion. Preparatory work on final report for Introductions.
Week 6:	The Methods Section. Moves and communicative purposes.
Week 7:	Language focus exercises on materials description. Group discussion. Final report on the Methods Section.
Week 8:	Student Conferences.
Week 9:	Communicative Purposes in results sections. Moves in results sections.
Week 10:	Language focus for reporting results. Reporting Results. Final discussion and report on Results sections.
Week 11:	Discussions and Conclusions. Moves in discussion sections. Communicative purposes in discussions and conclusions.
Week 12:	Group discussion. Final report on Discussions and Conclusions preparation.
Week 13:	Writing RA Abstracts. Moves in Abstracts.
Week 14:	Language focus for abstract writing. Final report on Abstracts.
Week 15:	Reading week. Student Conferences.
Week 16:	Finals Week. Final project due.

on to the private environment created for the course. In this environment they can find a folder called Discussion, in which they save the folders containing their corpora and class materials. Class and home exercises are placed in a different folder called Drop-box. Once students ‘drop’ their exercises in that folder, only instructors can move the files back to their authors’ folders; that is, students have no access to each others’ files or even their own. Instructors can then correct those exercises in electronic form and save them back in the corresponding student’s folder.

Week one is devoted to the administration of a diagnostic test (an evaluation given in order to ensure that students really need this class), instructor and student introductions, and an overview of the course design and class dynamics. Then, students start collecting their corpora, first asking for professors’ suggestions as to which journals to focus on and then downloading and organizing articles in their folders. In the second week, after they finish downloading the articles for their corpora, they work on corpus exploration exercises that call for the use of the concordancer or more exploratory analysis of the texts in the corpus. (See Table 3, Course schedule.)

As of week three, after a brief overview of the overall organization of the RA, the course focuses on one section of the article at a time. The class generally starts with a wrap-up of contents presented to students in the previous class, which paves the way

for the introduction of the new class materials. Table 3 shows a progression of course content and written assignments. The instructor presents the highlights of the section of the RA under analysis and offers a detailed explanation. Students then read the corresponding work file that they copy and paste in their folders for the daily activities they will complete. Students go on to engage in the reading comprehension and corpus exploration activities.

At the end of each section of the RA, students work in small discussion groups in which they share their findings and the conclusions that they drew about the writing of that specific section in their disciplines. These discussions provide students with insights into the writing in disciplines other than their own and give them a better framework of comparison for their own analyses. Their final conclusions on the linguistic conventions, organization, and schema of communicative purposes of the sections of the RA in their disciplines are presented in a final report that students write at home and hand in to their course instructors.

In addition to the class activities and final reports, students meet with their instructors during the semester in private conferences. In these conferences, students and instructors discuss writing process issues, research methodology reports, and prospects for the final project. For the final project, students are encouraged to work on the writing of a research paper they might be required to complete

for one of their disciplinary courses. In this way, students have the chance to transfer the findings of their analysis to the writing of their own research reports. The final projects are completed following a drafting technique: students are allowed to re-write their drafts of the different sections of their final papers, taking into account instructors' feedback and corrections in order to improve their writing in their final drafts.

Further considerations and conclusions

All the sections of English 101D currently offered at our university are now corpus-based. Course evaluations for the new course design have been high. Students consistently say that they have acquired knowledge about the writing of RAs in their disciplines that was unknown to them before taking the course. Several questionnaires that students were asked to complete at the end of the initial academic terms revealed high levels of motivation. Students feel the course provided them with tools they can apply to their own writing of RAs and that it also gave them skills to analyze articles they read for their disciplinary courses. In addition, many students ask their instructors for a copy of Word Search to install in their home computers for further text analysis that they could conduct in the near future.

Instructors who previously taught the traditional sections of the course and had the chance to teach the computer-based class felt that the RAs written by students in the new course as a final assignment presented a better handling of academic writing conventions than those that were produced by students who took the former course. These RAs present, in most cases, an organization that reflects the Move-schema students were introduced to in the new course.

How much of the new knowledge on writing RAs that was imparted through this new course actually transfers to students' disciplinary writing is, however, difficult to verify. Longitudinal studies that follow the same students along their academic and professional careers, focusing on the development of their research report production, should be conducted in order to check whether students are making use of these newly-acquired skills throughout the varied research-oriented writing tasks they complete for their academic communities.

Notes

1. That all the texts in the corpus belong to journals to which the University Library subscribes is essential to conform to the Copyright Act (section 18 (f)(4)).

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English Language Development in K-12 Settings: Principles, Cautions, and Effective Models

Karie Mize & Maria Dantas-Whitney, Western Oregon University

In response to *No Child Left Behind* provisions, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) adopted the new English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards in 2004. Now an integral part of the Oregon content standards for K-12 grades, the ELP standards provide teachers with a blueprint of the forms and functions of English which ELL students (English Language Learners) are expected to master at different levels of language proficiency in order to make continued progress in their academic endeavors.

As a complement to the ELP standards, ODE launched in 2006 the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) to measure the proficiency levels that students have attained in English. The ELPA exam assesses proficiency in the four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), focusing on grammatical competencies (i.e., vocabulary, syntax, and morphology), ideational functions (e.g., descriptions, comparisons) and manipulative functions (e.g., requesting, giving instructions) (See Oregon Department of Education, n.d.).

In an outgrowth of these actions, ODE has recently placed a strong emphasis on the need to provide ELL students in K-12 schools with explicit instruction on the forms and functions of the English language. When monitoring school districts' English Language Learner programs, ODE is now requiring that districts deliver a distinct K-12 curriculum for English language development (ELD) which is aligned with the new ELP standards, accompanied by effective instructional materials, and taught by qualified teachers. Offering separate ELD classes for groups that are developmentally and linguistically

leveled, although not mandated, makes it easier for districts to demonstrate that focused language instruction is happening uniformly across schools (Fielding, 2007).

As ESOL teacher educators, we welcome ODE's new efforts. Oregon schools have recently seen a tremendous growth in ELL enrollment – an increase of more than 200% between 1993-94 and 2003-04 (NCELA, 2006) – but the needs of these students have not been adequately met. We are seeing more and more students who are identified as

LEP (Limited English Proficient) when entering kindergarten, and who are still classified as LEP when they leave school 13 years later (Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

There is an urgent need to

reverse this trend, and ODE is doing its part to ensure that all students in Oregon achieve the language proficiency necessary to succeed in their academic and professional lives.

As a result of these state mandates, Oregon districts have been restructuring their programs to include ELD classes and have been investing in professional development on ELD instruction for their teachers. There is considerable controversy about offering ELD in separate classes, typically in a pull-out model, versus integrating ELD instruction within the mainstream classroom. We agree that there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to ELD instruction. However, in this paper we would like to shift the discussion from programmatic concerns and focus on the components of effective ELD instruction that must be present to ensure student success.

We center our discussion around three principles of second language teaching and learning. It is

there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to ELD instruction

our hope that these principles will serve as guidelines to ensure quality ELD instruction, regardless of whether it is delivered as a separate subject or integrated within a content-based curriculum. We also discuss cautions to consider in implementing ELD pedagogy so that teachers do not succumb to a reductionist curriculum that emphasizes discrete knowledge of grammatical items. We end our paper by providing a framework for ELD lesson planning that thoughtfully integrates language objectives within rich academic content.

Principles of Second Language Teaching & Learning

1. ELD instruction should focus mainly on meaning, but also on language form.

Second language teaching methodologies have historically alternated between two types of approaches: “*getting learners to use* a language (i.e., to speak and understand it) versus *getting learners to analyze* a language (i.e., to learn its grammatical rules)” (Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 3). Today there is overall agreement in the field that our goal as second language teachers should be “to have students use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately,” as opposed to simply teaching them grammatical facts (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 255).

Ellis (2005) points out that language acquisition takes place only when learners are engaged in “encoding and decoding messages in the context of actual acts of communication” (p. 3). Meaning-focused activities foster fluency development and are intrinsically motivating for students. However, Ellis also cautions that learners need to attend to form in the context of communication in order for acquisition to take place. “Teachers who focus students’ attention on linguistic form during communicative interactions are more effective than those who never focus on form or who only do so in decontextualized grammar lessons” (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 251). Contextualized grammar teaching can occur through an inductive approach, in which noticing of grammatical forms is derived through communicative use, or through a deductive approach, which builds awareness of grammatical rules by teaching them in an explicit way (e.g., through corrective feedback).

Larsen-Freeman (2001; 2003) reminds us that grammar teaching should be thought of as a set of

skills to be mastered, rather than a set of rules to be learned. She suggests a grammar framework which we find quite useful in guiding instruction because it reflects the complexity of language. Her framework consists of three dimensions:

1. **form** (phonological, morphosyntactic and lexical patterns),
2. **meaning** (semantics), and
3. **use** (pragmatics or use in social context).

She encourages teachers to answer these questions when planning instruction of a particular grammatical structure: *How is it formed? What does it mean? and When/Why is it used?*

Communicative approaches based on hands-on tasks and projects or on content-based material can effectively address the three dimensions of grammar in Larsen-Freeman’s framework. When grammar teaching has the purpose of supporting students in the completion of a task or in their making sense of the content, then attention to form, meaning, and use can be interwoven within a lesson in strategic and purposeful ways. When students feel the need to focus on grammar, they will be naturally motivated to do so.

2. Learners do not learn grammatical forms one at a time.

Larsen-Freeman (2001) points out that grammatical structures do not simply appear in a learner’s language “fully developed and error-free” (p. 255) once they have been exposed to them. “Learning is a gradual process of mapping form, meaning, and use” (p. 255). Even when students seem to have acquired a certain grammatical form, they often start making mistakes again once new forms are introduced. Since different aspects of form, meaning, and use may be acquired at different stages of language development, it is important to recycle grammar points throughout the curriculum. Rather than adopting a linear sequence of grammatical points for instruction, Larsen-Freeman recommends that teachers assess their students’ needs and introduce new structures thoughtfully according to students’ developmental readiness to learn.

Larsen-Freeman (2007) also warns against a grammatical scope and sequence that is set in advance with prescribed structures to cover. Instead, she advocates for an approach that will let teachers both introduce new forms purposefully within lessons,

and at the same time teach the forms that emerge naturally in communicative activities. As she puts it, “we make the path by walking.” In other words, we build the grammatical curriculum by teaching it to particular learners in particular classrooms.

It is also important to remember that language learning is not simply a linguistic process. Language acquisition is dependent on psychological and socio-cultural factors that may vary greatly from learner to learner. Therefore, two intermediate-level students who seem to be at the same stage of language acquisition may learn certain structures at very different rates because of their individual personality factors (e.g., self-esteem, willingness to take risks) or because of larger sociocultural factors (e.g., family acculturation, attitudes toward the larger community). Teachers should tailor instruction according to the individual traits of their learners and the characteristics of the local context of the school, the student’s family, and the community.

3. ELD instruction should provide extensive input, and it should also give students opportunities for output and interaction.

Krashen (1982) contends that acquisition takes place when learners are exposed to “comprehensible input,” or language that contains some structure that is “a bit beyond” the learner’s current level of competence (p. 21). When learners are exposed to comprehensible input, in Krashen’s view, they are able to understand the language and still are challenged to make progress. Teachers can use different strategies to make input comprehensible, for example, through the use of visuals, gestures, shorter sentences, and simpler vocabulary. To maximize students’ exposure to comprehensible input, teachers can set up structured tasks within and outside the classroom. For example, providing extensive reading programs based on carefully selected literature that is appropriate to the age and the level of the students creates opportunities for students to receive input outside of the classroom (Ellis, 2005).

Long (1985) extended Krashen’s hypothesis by formulating what has come to be called the interaction hypothesis. According to Long, the negotiation of

meaning that occurs during interactions between more and less fluent speakers can facilitate language learning. He found that certain conversational adjustments such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, repetitions, and extensions serve to prevent communication breakdowns and to provide learners with the comprehensible input needed for successful language learning.

Swain (1985) pointed out that input by itself is not sufficient for language acquisition. Learners also need to have opportunities to produce output, which can aid language acquisition in different ways. Output “forces syntactic procession (i.e., it obliges learners to pay attention to grammar) and it allows [them] to test out hypotheses about ... grammar” (Ellis, 2005: 9). Ellis also points out that providing opportunities for interaction and output can serve as

a form of mediation in learning, thereby “enabling learners to construct new forms and perform new functions collaboratively” (p. 10).

Cooperative activities in the classroom and targeted practice in a range of social

and academic contexts can give students a reason to pay attention to language. It is important to remember, however, that language practice must extend to the discourse level rather than stay at the abstract sentence level, and that it needs to occur both orally and in writing (Celce-Murcia, 2002).

language practice must extend to the discourse level rather than stay at the abstract sentence level

Cautions in Implementing ELD Instruction

Unfortunately, in our observations of ELD classes in different Oregon districts, we have seen a tendency to focus on grammatical forms in isolation without much regard to communicative meaning or use. We have talked to several ELD teachers who tell us that they have been encouraged to use the *ELD Matrix of Grammatical Forms* (Dutro, 2005) as their main guide for ELD instruction. In fact, many ELD teachers are encouraged to keep the *Matrix* on hand and, during class, check off the forms they have taught one-by-one. The result, as we have observed, are grammar lessons that consist mostly of repetition of sentence patterns, with very little opportunity for practice at the level of extended discourse.

Dutro's (2005) lesson-planning examples also emphasize this type of decontextualized grammar practice. Table 1 shows an excerpt from Dutro's handbook which exemplifies this reductionist approach to grammar teaching (2005).

The lesson in Table 1 is reminiscent of the audiolingual method of the 1950s and 1960s, which was based on "mimicry and memorization" and the manipulation of language "without regard to meaning or context" (Celce-Murcia, 2001: 7). The emphasis in these exercises on drills and repetition reflects a strong behaviorist approach to language learning. Very few opportunities are provided for meaningful interaction or unrehearsed production of output.

Although there is minimal attention to meaning (i.e., through the use of objects), the question-answer interchanges are quite artificial. In real communicative contexts, individuals do not say things like: "I need glue. What do I need?" In considering Larsen-Freeman's three-dimensional framework discussed above, it would be fair to say that lessons such as these have an exclusive focus on form, at the expense of meaning and use.

We have found Dutro's (2005) *EXPRESS Placement Assessment* to be equally problematic. This test is designed for initial placement in an ELD instructional level, and it focuses solely on the grammatical accuracy of a student's oral responses given to prompts related to a picture. As noted above, learners do not acquire grammatical structures one at a time. This test, however, relies on an arbitrary grammatical sequence to determine students' language proficiency levels. For example, if students are able to produce sentences with the present progressive and to form Wh- questions correctly, they are placed at the Early Intermediate level. If they can produce sentences using the past simple and the comparative form, they are placed at the Intermediate level, and so on.

The test does not measure students' comprehension skills, their communication abilities in interac-

Table 1. Grammar Practice

Teach & Practice Language Pattern: I need _____.

I Do It: *I need scissors.* (Teacher holds out hand. A student gives scissors). Repeat with other objects. Students take turns handing the objects.

We Do It: *Repeat after me:* I need glue. (A student holds out hand. Teacher gives glue)

Choral: I need glue. *What do I need?*

[Beginning student]: glue

[Early Intermediate student]: I need glue.

Repeat for other objects

You Do It: One partner says I need _____. The other partner gives the object.

Partners alternate roles

Taking Language to Application: Teach and review vocabulary for supplies needed for an art project (Ex: red paper, green paper, scissors, glue, white yarn, etc.) Teach and post variation on language pattern: *We need _____.* Each team writes a list of the supplies needed for project. Designated team member comes and requests both the items needed.

From Dutro (2005: 3A.14)

tions, or their pragmatic competence. In answering the question, "What did the girl buy?", for example, the only acceptable answer would be "She bought ice cream." If the student says "Ice cream," as fluent English speakers might reply, the student is not given any points. Again we see an emphasis on artificial language use, focusing exclusively on grammatical competence.

Also worrisome is the emphasis on oral skills and on social uses of language. Cummins (1996) suggests that there two different types of language skills exist: BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency). BICS involves the skills and functions that are necessary for communication in everyday social contexts. It involves simpler language processes because it generally occurs in context-embedded situations. CALP, on the other hand, is the language needed to succeed in school. It involves complex language that is generally more abstract and context-reduced than that for everyday use outside the classroom. CALP is also connected with higher levels of conceptualization and critical thinking skills (Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006) and must be explicitly taught in school in order to be developed.

Unfortunately, because a lot of the ELD instruction that is occurring in schools nowadays has a heavy focus on the oral production of isolated sentences, students are not getting practice in the skills that are necessary for the development of CALP competence, such as reading a variety of texts, giving oral presentations, and writing well-organized essays. A popular ELD set of materials which has been widely adopted in Oregon (*Carousel of IDEAS*, 2006) encourages practice in the use of prepositions through the following commands: “*Put the camel near the bathing suit*” and “*Put the parrot far from the diaper*.” Obviously, this type of oral practice of simple, decontextualized, meaningless sentences will never translate into the robust skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking that are necessary for high levels of academic achievement.

Integrating Content and Language Needs of ELLs

Developing proficiency in the English language is one facet of a solid program for English Language Learners. As we have described, students who are learning English need consistent instruction in the English language, just as a native English speaker needs classes and explicit instruction to develop proficiency in another language, such as Spanish or French. The other facet of a program that meets the needs of ELLs is access to meaningful content instruction (Fielding, 2007).

Because an ELD program addresses the language needs of ELLs but does not address the need for comprehensible content instruction, ELD as a standalone program is not sufficient to meet the academic needs of ELLs (Crawford, 2004). ELD needs to complement a program such as bilingual education or sheltered instruction that focuses on content, such as math, science, social studies, and language arts. Similarly, sheltered or bilingual content without ELD does not sufficiently address the needs of students who are learning English as their second or additional language.

In the ESOL/Bilingual Education program at Western Oregon University, we train preservice and inservice teachers to deliver content that is “sheltered” or differentiated for ELLs at different profi-

ciency levels. Regardless of the language of instruction (native language or English), we encourage content or classroom teachers to learn about different models for sheltered instruction, such as GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) and SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), and implement an eclectic approach. This is not “random eclecticism,” where teachers haphazardly choose activities, but rather “informed eclecticism,” where teachers draw from a wide range of tools to plan, implement, and assess instruction that will benefit ELLs, as well as all other students.

For example, in our lesson plan template at WOU, teachers learn to develop lessons that not only have content objectives that align to Oregon’s standards, but also have language objectives from the English Language Proficiency Standards. Combining content and language objectives is a common feature of SIOP. Teachers are asked to include learning strategies that will be introduced and taught by the

teacher, but over time will be internalized by students, which is emphasized in CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach), another approach to sheltered instruction.

Combining content and language objectives is a common feature of SIOP.

We foster the increased focus on classroom lessons that encourage purposeful speaking and listening to improve the oral skills of ELLs, in addition to literacy. GLAD has many features that address all four language skills, such as chants and collective readings, so we encourage teachers to draw from these ideas. In essence, we encourage preservice and inservice teachers to develop a foundation in the principles of sheltered instruction and purposefully draw from the rich array of resources that will meet the cognitive and linguistic needs of their ELL students.

One way to think about this complementary approach to the content and linguistic needs of English Language Learners is through an analogy of a basketball coach and trainer. The trainer works on physical fitness with basketball players so they have the ability to sprint and jump, as well as have sufficient endurance to play in the game. Fitness is the primary objective, but players are prepared with basketball in mind. In other words, the trainer is cognizant of the fact that they will be playing basketball and not long-distance running. The basketball

coach, in turn, prepares the players to organize an offense, the defense, and “fast breaks.” The coach knows what types of activities were completed in the training session and helps the players to integrate the physical skills that are being developed into knowledge about the game of basketball. Some activities, such as dribbling, will be a focus of both the trainer and the coach. While the trainer would focus on the physical aspects of dribbling, such as sprinting effectively while dribbling the ball, the coach would speak to the strategy of when to dribble and when to pass to another player.

Basketball players need both types of expertise. Without the trainer, they might not have the physical capabilities to finish or excel in the basketball game. Without the coach, players could be superior physically but might not understand the offensive and defensive strategies in order to compete. Similarly, English Language Learners need both types of expertise. They need a “trainer” to help them develop proficiency in the English language, as occurs in ELD. They also need a “coach,” who can help them utilize these developing language skills as they access content, such as math, science, social studies, and language arts.

It may be that a basketball program has two different people: both a coach and a trainer who work together in complementary roles. In other situations, one person could serve the function of both roles. During basketball practice this person may first “train” the players by working on physical skills and endurance, and then later “coach,” by focusing on the game’s philosophy so that players can execute well during a game. There will be times when players are using all of their skills in one setting, such as a practice game or scrimmage, where endurance and execution both are being utilized. During a scrimmage the “coach” might notice that players are not dribbling the ball well and stop the practice game in order to “train”: review the fundamentals, have players work on some physical strengthening, and then return to the practice game.

Similarly, schools may have one person who serves joint roles, such as an ESOL-endorsed teacher who delivers both ELD for their English Language

Learners and sheltered content instruction for the entire class. The challenge for this person is having a set or consistent time for explicitly teaching the linguistic skills that ELLs need to learn in addition to delivering sheltered content lessons that then reinforce those language skills. As in a practice game, there will be lessons that directly reinforce something that was taught in ELD. For example, if the focus of ELD was the conditional tense and the lesson called for students to write a paragraph using the form, “If I were President, I would . . .” the teacher would be developing both English language proficiency and content (writing) skills. It is up to the teacher, as expert, to determine when to focus on language, when to focus on content, and when students are ready to apply their knowledge of both simultaneously.

If schools have both sheltered content (or bilingual) teachers and ELD specialists, they have two experts working with ELLs. The goal for this “ESOL team” is to ensure that their roles complement each other. Ideally, ELD teachers and content teachers will have the opportunity to communicate frequently about their students. Administrators who recognize this need can organize regular opportunities for these ESOL teams to get together, debrief what students have been learning, and determine the next steps for instruction.

At a minimum, ELD teachers can write weekly or bimonthly notes to content teachers letting them know the types of sentence structures and language functions they have been working on, and the language features that students have mastered. In this way, content teachers can reinforce what ELLs are learning in ELD by applying applicable language objectives into their lessons. In turn, content teachers can let ELD teachers know when they have finished a unit because that content and vocabulary is now known or familiar to ELLs, and ELD teachers can use that content as the vehicle for language instruction (Dutro & Moran, 2003).

From conversations with teachers and administrators in schools where there are ELD specialists, it appears that the ELD Pullout model is the most common approach in Oregon’s elementary schools. ELD Pullout has been critiqued as a problematic

Ideally, ELD teachers and content teachers will have the opportunity to communicate frequently about their students

method (Crawford, 2004) because ELL students are missing content instruction when they are removed from the classroom. In addition to the stigma attached to any type of pullout program and the time wasted in having students walk from their classroom to the ELD room (which is often an inferior space, such as a remodeled closet), difficulties in scheduling have created the following concerns, to name a few:

1. ELD groups with more than two consecutive ELP levels in one group, such as beginners (level one) in the same group as intermediates (level three).
2. ELD specialists whose overloaded schedules cannot accommodate ELLs at the higher ELP levels (early advanced and advanced), so those students do not receive ELD. (ELLs need ELD until they are officially redesignated or exit the ESOL program.)
3. ELLs being pulled out of class during content lessons or returning when the content lessons are already in progress.
4. ELLs not receiving daily ELD instruction because ELD specialists service multiple schools.

A model that addresses some of these concerns is having the ELD teacher “push-in” to the classroom. In this approach, all students – ELLs and native English speakers – are working in groups in the sheltered or mainstream classroom. Each group rotates to meet with the teacher, and when students are not with the teacher, they are working on something independently. During one of the “independent” rotations, the ELL students go with the ELD specialist. An added benefit of the push-in model is that the ELD teacher can get to know the classroom context of the ELLs and therefore increase opportunities to share information with the content teacher.

Another model that meets multiple needs is where all students at one or two grade levels have language development at the same time, ideally not at the end of the day. For example, from 11:00 to 11:30, the first and second grade teachers level their students to make homogenous groups based on English language proficiency (from ELPA or Woodcock-Muñoz scores). Beginning and early intermediate ELLs would go to one room with one of the teachers, intermediate ELLs would go with another teacher, and early advanced/advanced ELLs go with

a third teacher. At the same time, the native English speakers are grouped together; the number of groups depends on the number of students, of course. This is an opportunity to teach Spanish as a second language if bilingual teachers are available. Other ideas would be riddles, language-based brain teasers, or other advanced language skills that would not be appropriate for students developing their English.

Conclusions and Recommendations

When designing complementary programs to meet the unique language and content needs of English Language Learners, schools must take into consideration their varied teaching faculties, resources, and student populations. While common components of successful implementation can be identified, different structures will reflect the diversity of teaching contexts throughout the state. Although outside the scope of this article, it is important to point out that any successful program for English Language Learners must also include a strong first language literacy component and meaningful ways to build connections between the schools, students’ homes, and the local community. We hope that the principles of effective ELD pedagogy presented here will serve as a guide for districts to help students develop English language proficiency and reach their academic goals.

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Authentic assessment of discussion skills

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Authentically assessing English language learners' (ELLs') discussion skills has always proven difficult, and this is exacerbated in environments in which one teacher must assess many students in a large class, making individual interviews impractical. Furthermore, the few established tests generally measure overall proficiency rather than achievement with regard to course goals. As a result, many ESL/EFL teachers and programs give up on authentic assessment of oral skills altogether and rely instead on written work, planned and structured presentations, discrete skill tests, or questionable measures such as self-assessments or ambiguous class participation grades as a means of assessing students' abilities to converse and participate in academic discussion (Hinson, 2005; Shohamy, 1983). Faced with this problem at our own institution, we created an authentic, objectives-based, program-wide assessment of discussion skills that involves testing multiple students in groups, but scoring them individually.

Literature Review

Our decision to develop a group speaking exam came from a process which basically followed that described in John Michael Norris's book, *Designing Second Language Performance Assessments* (1998). We did a needs analysis, identifying the uses our learners had for English discussion skills, revised our course objectives (see "Process"), and concluded that the only way to truly assess the skills that we wanted to teach was to develop an exam in which the examiner would directly observe the students' oral production in an environment that was as authentic as possible.

As suggested by Norris, we wanted students to engage in a speaking task that had "collaborative elements that stimulate communicative interactions," (1998: 9) and we wanted to integrate skills with

content, which meant putting students in conversational situations that would demand an understanding of certain functional language and sociolinguistic features. Basically, this meant doing some kind of speaking test involving conversation. We considered three options: a individual interview format (one-on-one between student and teacher), a group format involving more than one student and a teacher as participant, and a group format with the teacher as a non-participant observer.

We eliminated the one-on-one interview style based on logistics and a few other factors. With only twelve to thirteen meetings of ninety minutes each and with an average class size of about twenty-four, we decided that individual interviews long enough to get a reliable sample from each of the program's 560 students would take too much time away from instruction. In addition, as was pointed out by Brown (2003, as cited in Van Moere, 2006) there were several problems with the role of the interlocutor in individual interviews. Having conducted them in several other settings, we found that they did not lend themselves well to a natural conversation, instead putting the burden on the examiner to guide the conversation and make the examinee feel comfortable.

Conversation often does not flow naturally as the examiner tries to elicit speaking samples that can be easily scored. With this burden, the examiner's focus is diverted from assessing the student (Van Moere, 2006). As a result, we decided that a group exam would be more conducive to testing a large number of examinees in a short time while providing samples of the kinds of functional language that were taught in the course.

We were certainly not the first to try to assess more than one learner simultaneously. Even some high-stakes international tests have adopted this

strategy. A notable example is the Cambridge battery of tests, most of which have used a paired format for the speaking portion of the tests since the early 1990s. In these paired exams, one or two examiners engage two to three examinees in loosely structured interviews (Taylor, 2001). In addition to increasing efficiency, Cambridge found that the paired format added to the validity of their results by engaging examinees in a wider variety of discourse functions.

During one-on-one interviews, examinees were engaged mostly in giving information (e.g., expressing opinions). However, the paired format adjusted the power relationships at work and allowed candidates to use functional language for managing (e.g., terminating a discussion) and interacting (e.g., persuading), allowing examiners to evaluate a broader range of language skills. This makes the tests more closely approximate the kinds of interactions that typically go on outside of testing situations (Taylor, 2001).

Furthermore, Egyud and Glover (2001, as cited in Taylor, 2001) found that pairings were popular with students, gave students more opportunity to produce their best language, and supported good teaching through washback. They also added that the paired format “offers students and teachers...an escape route from the prison of dire one-to-one situations.”

Students echoed this sentiment in another study. They commented that they found group exams with other students less intimidating, in part because it gave them more control over the conversation and allowed them to use more natural language than they might in a personal interview (Shohamy, Reeves & Bejarano, 1986 as cited in Van Moere, 2006; Fulcher, 1996 as cited in Van Moere, 2006).

On the other hand, the Cambridge model generally employs the examiner as a participant or at least facilitator of the test, which could divert examiner attention and cause the conversation to be stilted. In our experience, Japanese learners of English tend to always address the teacher rather than other learners if the teacher is participating in the conversation. This would make it difficult for the teacher to

assess turn-taking, one of our target functions. Furthermore, having an examiner as a participant takes valuable speaking time away from the examinees and reduces speech samples on which a score is to be based. Therefore, we decided that a teacher-as-observer model would be most appropriate.

Research done by Van Moere (2006) and Bonk and Ockey (in Van Moere, 2006) has produced a great deal of support for a test format very similar to the one we used for our test. The test they studied was given to over one thousand students at a Japanese university and, like ours, involved non-participant examiners, a variety of randomly-chosen prompts, and an assessment of functional language, among other criteria. Both studies found the test to be an efficient way to assess a large number of students in a relatively short time.

Regarding reliability, Bonk and Ockey (2003)

the test's more natural interactions offer a chance to assess the examinees abilities in the kind of realistic situations for which classes are meant to prepare

found that rater and scale reliability are “achievable under real testing conditions even when the discourse went largely uncontrolled.” Van Moere found that after one

norming session, the rater agreement score was .74. While not as high as it was on some other, more structured tests, the amount of reliability sacrificed by the group testing format is countered by the increase in the naturalness of the interaction (Van Moere, 2006; Bonk & Ockey in Van Moere, 2006).

Van Moere concluded that, within the university's context, reliability was high enough to justify the richer language samples of the participants. Since the purpose of any language education program is to teach its students to communicate more effectively, the test's more natural interactions offer a chance to assess the examinees' abilities in the kind of realistic situations for which classes are meant to prepare—a testament to the validity of the group format. Van Moere reported that his study suggested “good potential for this format to be used as part of an oral test battery,” (2006: 436) but suggested caution in using it in high-stakes situations until more research could be done.

Bonk and Ockey (in Van Moere, 2006) concurred with this conclusion, adding that its efficiency

is likely to provide a feasible way for institutions to provide a performance assessment for oral skills, something seriously lacking in many programs.

Bonk and Ockey (2003) wrote that the group oral discussion format “deserves a place at the main table of L2 testing,” citing its relevancy to the context of today’s L2 educational environment. “[I]f this type of task closely matches what students do in their regular classrooms, it has the potential for drawing valid inferences to those skills and should not be disregarded simply because it ‘seems’ inaccurate. This perceived inaccuracy likely has more to do with the lesser degree of control over the discourse that can be exerted in more examiner-dominated formats,” they concluded (p. 105).

Bonk and Ockey’s test differed slightly from ours in that their test was meant to be a measure of overall conversational ability, whereas ours focuses more on testing the specific objectives of our “Seminar” classes, which train students in academic discussion skills. However, the test we created could be adapted to fit the objectives of any discussion-based course.

Process

To begin improving our objectives–assessment alignment, we reviewed our program’s overall purpose and the specific course objectives. In Kwansai Gakuin University’s School of Policy Studies English Language Program the main goals are to provide students with general academic skills for study in English medium courses; to prepare students for success in academic, business, and international settings; to promote critical analysis and interpretation of information; to encourage various perspectives on current socio-political and environmental issues; and to encourage learner independence (The Coordinated English Language Program, 2007).

The program is divided into reading, presentation, listening, writing, and seminar courses. Each course has a lead coordinator who makes lesson plans and materials for eight to fourteen other teachers. Students in the same courses take the same assessments, regardless of who their teachers are. All first year students at the university are required to take a seminar course with the following objectives:

First semester

Students should be able to

- converse with a small group for five to ten minutes on a familiar topic.
- use a variety of functional language to check for understanding, ask for clarification, give an opinion, agree and disagree, and make polite requests.
- ask follow-up questions to get more information and continue the flow of a discussion.
- support an opinion orally with personal knowledge and experience.
- use simple notes as speaking prompts.
- participate non-verbally by back channeling and making eye-contact.
- make discussion questions.
- show development toward confidence and learner independence by discussing with minimal preparation and accurate (within ten percent) self-assessment of discussion skills.
- clearly pronounce familiar English words and sentences (word and sentence stress, vowel and consonant sounds).
- use new and varied vocabulary to clearly express an idea and execute circumlocution strategies to explain unfamiliar words to other group members in a discussion.

Second semester

Students should be able to

- sustain a conversation for ten to twenty minutes in English about a semi-academic topic.
- use a variety of functional language to clarify or seek additional information, interrupt a conversation and turn the conversation over to another person, and support an opinion orally.
- explore a topic deeply and broadly.
- use self-made notes as speaking cues effectively and unobtrusively.
- understand and use key vocabulary when speaking.
- react appropriately to a text.
- create, ask, and respond in a relevant way to good discussion questions.
- orally attribute ideas and/or quotes to a text or author informally.
- show development toward confidence and

learner independence by discussing with minimal preparation and accurate (within ten percent) self-assessment of discussion skills.

- undertake guided Internet research.
- demonstrate target pronunciation skills in a controlled setting.

After reviewing these objectives, we realized that the methods for assessing students in the seminar course had not been targeting the purely discussion-based objectives. We had been using written homework assignments and ambiguous teacher-assigned participation grades, which were not reflective of whether or not the students were reaching the course objectives. Therefore, we set out to develop a more authentic way of assessing 560 students in twenty-four classes of approximately twenty-four students each through a group speaking test.

First, we created a user-friendly rubric (see Table 1 for sample rubrics) based on the course objectives. This rubric was developed so both the teacher and the students could use it effectively. With a clearly defined rubric, students had a clear target. After completing each speaking task during the term, students looked at the rubric and reflected upon what they did well and what they still needed to work on before test day. This allowed students to see the relevance of class activities. The layout of the rubric allowed teachers to score up to four students at one time in various skill areas.

In the second semester class the skill areas were active listening, meaningful production, clarity, and timing. A score out of ten was given in each of these skill areas, with the specific objectives listed under each skill area. Using this system, teachers were able to give students credit for effectively using target functional language without penalizing them for failing to use language that might not have been appropriate in the context. For example, if students participated actively in a discussion by agreeing, adding information, and expressing opinions, they should score highly on “meaningful production” and should not be penalized because they failed to disagree, even though phrases for disagreement are one of the target functions.

This system focused examiners on the objectives while scoring on larger categories. In addition, by keeping track of which objectives students were reaching and which they were missing using tick-

marks, check marks, pluses and minuses, examiners were able to accurately assess four students discussing at the same time. By creating a user-friendly rubric, we not only gave students a clear goal for the course, but we were also able to authentically assess approximately twenty-four students during one ninety-minute class period.

Armed with a clear rubric, we proceeded to organize the logistics of test day. This turned out to be a complex step in the process that required consideration of many factors: group sizes and

Table 1. Sample rubrics

First semester rubric

Student 1 _____
 Student # _____

Active Listening (receptive) _____/10
 o follow-up ?s
 o clarification

Meaningful Production _____/10
 o giving opinions
 o agreeing & disagreeing
 o supporting opinions
 o discussion questions
 o # of speaking turns

Clarity _____/10
 o pronunciation
 o grammar
 o volume
 o eye contact

Second semester rubric

Student 1 _____
 Student # _____

Active Listening (receptive) _____/10
 o follow-up ?s
 o clarification
 o back channeling

Meaningful Production _____/10
 o giving opinions
 o agreeing & adding info
 o disagreeing
 o supported opinion

Timing _____/10
 o taking turns/pauses
 o interrupting

Clarity _____/10
 o pronunciation
 o grammar
 o volume
 o eye contact

formation, time-allotment for each group, what non-testing students would do during the test, topics for discussion, what resources students could use on test day, how realistically the students should be able to practice before test day, how to norm teachers, and how to ensure reliability of test day results.

Logistical considerations

Considering that the speaking test would be a major portion of a student's grade (twenty to thirty percent) in the seminar course, we wanted to allow ample time for each student to contribute meaningfully in a discussion. However, we had only ninety minutes of class time to test approximately twenty-four students. Therefore, we determined that groups of three students were to be given eight minutes and, if needed due to the number of students in a class, groups of four were to be given eleven minutes for discussion. This left about ten minutes at the beginning of the class period for reminders and two minutes between each group for the teacher to wrap up scores.

Groups came into the classroom one at a time so the teacher could focus entirely on one group without distractions. Since we were in a university setting, we did not have to supervise students at all times and so were able to divide each class into three main pods. Each pod was told ahead of time to come to class on test day at staggered intervals throughout the period. This allowed non-testing students to practice elsewhere and kept the halls relatively quiet. It also kept the actual testing groups a secret from the students until the last possible moment, so that no one group had extra time to practice together.

Group formation

Group dynamics play a significant role in discussions of any kind (Shohamy, 1983; O'Sullivan, 2002). To minimize this effect as much as possible on test day, students were continually being shuffled into new groups for speaking tasks throughout the term. Working in various groupings helped to build student confidence in any student mix and made tasks more communicative in nature by forcing students to share information with others who were not already

familiar with their ideas. From the beginning of our course, students understood that they would be placed in their testing groups on test day, but not before, so they would not be able to memorize a script. In our experiences teaching English in Asia, remembering lines in a planned conversation has been a popular way for students to speak English in EFL settings, and we wanted to steer away from this type of non-communicative assessment. The unannounced test groups eliminated this potential problem.

Although the test groups were unannounced to the students, teachers were encouraged to carefully plan the groupings well in advance. Since we worked in a coordinated program, this meant that fourteen different teachers were implementing the speaking test in twenty-four classes. Forming testing groups of three or four students was ultimately the individual teacher's choice, but we encouraged diverse groups and asked teachers to consider gender, overall English ability, and willingness to communicate in each group.

Working in various groupings helped to build student confidence in any student mix and made tasks more communicative in nature

Topics and resources allowed

Choosing test day topics that were familiar to students helped to ensure that the students were being assessed on their English skills and not on their knowledge of a specific topic. Therefore, the test day topics were ones that students had previously discussed at the beginning of the term. This way, students were able to recycle vocabulary and ideas that they had previously voiced. In the first semester, students agreed several weeks in advance on five possible student-generated opinions to discuss on test day. In the second semester, students were given three possible questions based on articles that they had already read and discussed at the very beginning of the term, such as the following:

1. The Japanese population is declining. How will this affect Japan's future?
2. Should Japan make it easier for foreigners to immigrate? Why/why not?
3. Agree or disagree with this sentence: Women should never work outside the home. Explain your answer.

The potential topics were presented to students two weeks before test day. As the group sat down to start the test, the teacher randomly chose the topic on which they would focus. This system allowed the students to prepare and practice for all possible options, but essentially eliminated the possibility that a student would try to memorize any sort of script for a topic. This guaranteed authentic communication within a group and truly tested the student's discussion skills. It also ensured that, for well-prepared students, a lack of familiarity with the topic or its associated lexicon would not inhibit communication.

Since one of the objectives was for students to be able to use notes unobtrusively while discussing, and this had been practiced throughout the term, we allowed students to use note cards on which there were less than seventy-five words total. This meant that for each possible topic, they could only have ten to twenty-five words, which could include important vocabulary, discussion questions, and quotes or statistics from an article. These note cards were checked before the test by peers and by the teacher. Furthermore, because students had been practicing explaining difficult vocabulary using circumlocution strategies throughout the term, dictionary use was discouraged on test day.

Practice test day

What really made test day function smoothly was a practice run. Prior to the final, we gave students time for pairs to score each other's discussions of test topics using the test rubric. On the practice day, a student stood behind his or her partner and marked the rubric as the partner participated in a discussion with two other peers, each of whom were also being scored by a partner. After each round, students were given time to confer with their partners about the scores.

Informing students well in advance of what to expect on test day helped to alleviate students' anxiety. There were only two differences between the practice day and the actual test day. One was that on test

day, the teacher was a silent observer for one group at a time, filling out the rubric for the students as they discussed. Another difference between the practice day and test day was that on test day, the classroom contained only one group of testing students. All other students waited outside.

Ensuring reliability

In a coordinated program like ours, it is essential that all teachers be normed to ensure reliable test scores. We used previously videotaped student discussions and gathered all teachers together to score them using the test rubric. After a basic discussion of what a score of one versus a score of three actually meant (see Table 2 for rubric specifics), we rated the speakers and compared results. This norming session not only allowed teachers to practice using the rubric and become comfortable with the process before test day, but also helped to create a more consistent grading outcome amongst all 14 teachers.

In addition, all discussions on test day were videotaped. If any students had wanted to contest a score, they could have asked to be re-scored by another teacher. Also, if any teachers had consistently fallen below or above average on scoring, then the videos could have been used to re-rate students. Neither of these occurred.

In a pilot class, students were encouraged to watch their videotaped discussion and complete a self-evaluation of their performance. This self-reflection fit into the program's goal of developing

Rubric rating	Explanation
10	- Not native-speaker-like, but very effective in communicating AND in helping others communicate - Does a lot to facilitate the conversation
8	- Effective but imperfect - Does his/her part in the conversation
6	- Minimum pass - Makes mistakes, but does more to help the conversation than to hurt it
4	- Made an attempt, but was generally ineffective
2	- Either did not make a serious attempt or made an attempt that caused serious problems in the conversation
1	- Was present but did not speak, or seriously hijacked the conversation

learner independence. In future terms, this may be a useful technique to use at midterm; however, the negative nature of students' self-reflections makes us hesitate to implement this for fear that it will hurt students' confidence in their own abilities.

To further ensure reliability, an inter-rater study must be completed in which multiple raters score the same conversations, but this study could not be completed in time for publication here.

Reflection

Since this speaking test was a way to directly observe student success with the specific course objectives, it naturally holds high content and face validity. However, it might be suggested that a test such as this could simply be measuring the learners' general English proficiency. In order to determine whether this is the case, we compared learners' scores on the paper-based version of TOEFL and scores on this test. The comparison suggests that the test was based on the specified course objectives, not on overall English proficiency.

Second term freshman students with paper-based TOEFL scores of approximately 450 or above (high level students, TOEFL=approximately 450-523) performed slightly better on the speaking test than students with TOEFL scores below 450 (low level students, TOEFL 327-approximately 450). High level students scored an average of 30.5/ 40, while the low level students scored an average of 27.7/ 40. Both levels of students had a wide range of scores, however, with standard deviations of 7.18 for the high level students and 7.28 for the low level students.

Table 3. Teacher comments

<p>“Some people had really not spoken at all and then they came out in the discussion. They were these wonderful English speakers... I think it might be fairer ... if we [had a midterm test also].”</p> <p>“Some of the students who are usually quiet came out. I think that’s so important that the other students see that that student can do it.”</p> <p>“Women may be at a disadvantage in stating their views, and therefore receive a lower grade.”</p> <p>“I put my quiet students in bigger groups so they had more time to overcome their shyness.”</p> <p>“It would be really useful if the students were scheduled to watch [the video tape afterward].”</p> <p>“Good idea with the oral exam. It brings the course together and sets a good goal for [students] to work towards.”</p>

Overall, the correlation between speaking assessment and paper-based TOEFL was .40 (based on a comparison of 512 students for whom data was available). This weak correlation suggests that speaking test scores were not strongly bound to English proficiency level. Therefore, if the students successfully mastered the objectives of the course, then they were able to do well on the final speaking test, regardless of their overall English ability prior to the course. More research needs to be done to prove this definitively, but the results were encouraging.

Feedback

The final step in the process was to collect anonymous feedback from teachers (n=14) and students (n=560), which enabled us to modify the process for the following term. Table 3 has quotes from teachers; Table 4, quotes from students. Table 5 offers an analysis of student responses to two questions about the test. Because of the positive feedback received, this type of assessment-objective alignment is being implemented in oral skills classes next term in other levels and in additional departments at our university.

Suggestions for the future

As a result of the overall success of the speaking test at Kwansai Gakuin University's School of Policy Studies freshmen seminar course, the School of Science and Technology is looking into adopting this type of assessment for its freshman and sophomore English communication classes. Also, the sophomore seminar classes at the School of Policy Studies are working to better align the course objectives with assessments.

That said, there is room for improvement in the test. One suggestion for the future includes giving a midterm of the same nature and allowing students to watch the videotape for self-reflection. Students would thus have a chance to practice well before the test day and see if they are truly on track. Another suggestion has been made to make the scores more reliable. This includes having each teacher also watch the final test videos of a different teacher's class and rate the

students. Therefore, each student would be rated by two different people, and an average of the two scores would be taken to ensure a more accurate evaluation.

Doing this multiple times would be best, but impractical due to time constraints. Ideally, if the norming session was effective for teachers, scores should be fairly accurate after one rating. Finally, a suggestion to swap teachers on test day has been made. This would mean that students would be scored by a different teacher on test day than the one who had taught them all term. While this may help to eliminate any bias a teacher may have, the anxiety it would place on students in this EFL setting and the scheduling problems it would cause do not seem to justify the swap.

Aligning assessments with course objectives is important for all education programs, regardless of the subject matter. Learning English as a second or foreign language is often a high-stakes endeavor where students' future jobs and college degrees depend on passing certain courses. We as teachers should be sure that we are giving valid, reliable assessments of what these students are able to do. The speaking test mentioned here moves us one step closer to that goal.

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Table 4. Student Comments

(given anonymously after the test)
<i>Q: What are your opinions about the oral assessment (group speaking test)?</i>
"It was very good way to check our speaking skill"
"I think that it is a good way, but it is affected by member"
"I think having the test is good because student effort for this"
"It is useful to improve my skill"
"It's good. I need more time."
"It was interesting"
"It was good because teacher can graded us fairly"
"I want to choice my group"
"I didn't like it because I was really nervous at that time and I couldn't speak enough"
"That is good system"
"I had fun speaking with my friends even though it was a test"
"I'm sorry. I think I have to do homework"
"It was difficult to participate"
"It's difficult, but I enjoyed it"
"Great experience"
"It is fair and enjoyable"
"It was very difficult, but if I practice more, I can do good speaking"
"The oral assessment is useful for student very much"
"It's important for me to do that"
"I enjoyed it"
"That was good idea. But it can change our grade depends on who we make group with. It can be unfair"

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Table 5: Student Comments

Question on the Evaluation Sheet	Average Evaluation by students 1 = strongly disagree 4 = strongly agree	Standard deviation
The oral assessment (group speaking test) was a good way to test my academic discussion skills.	3.28	.6
The grading system was fair.	3.35	.57
<i>n=560</i>		

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Teaching Tips

Beginners and Computers

Sarah Barrett and Jennifer Snyder, Portland Community College, Sylvania Campus

Although low-level, sometimes low-literacy, adult ESL students increasingly have access to computers at school, at work, and sometimes even in the home, many of them do not. Taking students with little or no access to computers and low or no computer literacy skills to the lab only once or twice each term is usually not enough. What is learned in one visit is often forgotten before the next.

In response, three PCC sites piloted a computer-assisted language learning (CALL) project. This project incorporates one hour per week in the computer lab into the core nine-hour classes in Levels 1 to 3 of PCC's eight-level program. At all levels, the classes support and extend the language content of the core class while integrating computer literacy. Over time, we want students to become more self-sufficient as computer users and as language learners, and by the end of Level 3, we want them to be able to use email and register for classes on-line. To promote this, we give students handouts with step-by-step instructions which they can later use on their own.

In all three levels, we teach basic computer vocabulary, mouse skills, keyboarding, and some basic word processing. For Levels 2 and 3, we also usually teach other email and website navigation vocabulary. To help students become comfortable using a mouse, we teach them how to use the mouse and give them practice on a variety of Internet sites, depending on the students' level and experience. To teach keyboarding, we introduce important vocabulary and then have the students practice with a free Internet keyboarding site. We also introduce students to basic word-processing skills and the associated vocabulary.

In our labs, we use various software programs such as *Live Action English Interactive*, *Oxford Picture Dictionary Interactive*, and *Learn to Speak English*. These programs provide listening, speaking, reading, writing, pronunciation, and grammar practice that supports core class content. Furthermore, students in all three levels use the voice-recording program, Wimba, to post messages to a discussion board or send voice emails to their teacher.

In addition to using these software programs, we use the Internet both for skills practice and for content-based activities. Many websites, such as *manythings.org*, offer excellent skills practice for our students. Examples of activities that extend classroom content include looking up and comparing weather forecasts, researching local attractions and planning transportation to get there, finding information about wedding customs, and reading online job ads.

Obviously we could not have done any of this without access to well-maintained computer labs. It also helped that some of us were able to work together under a curriculum development grant to write objectives and generate resources.

Student response has been overwhelmingly appreciative, and anecdotes reveal that students are indeed using their new skills. In the end, we have learned that building computer literacy is like learning a language—consistent and repeated practice is the prerequisite to competence that extends beyond the classroom.

Sarah Barrett and Jennifer Snyder are instructors in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program at the Sylvania Campus of Portland Community College.

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The *Journal* particularly welcomes submissions that draw on relevant research with a focus on direct application in the classroom (methods, materials, techniques, and activities) at all levels of instruction. Journal articles should be written in a style which is reader-friendly and therefore accessible to classroom teachers. While maintaining a practical focus, the articles should, nevertheless, be well-founded in research and include references to the appropriate literature.

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