



The ORTESOL Journal

Volume 30, 2013

Features

What I Learned from Being a Language Student Again

Student Use of Concordancers for Grammar

Beyond One-size-fits-all ELD Frameworks

L1 Literacy and ESL Reading Instruction

Pronunciation Problems of Chinese Learners of English

Columns

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Teaching Notes

Responding to Writing

Defining Unknown Words from Listening

Screencasts: Zero-Budget Lessons

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In This Issue

Melissa Mendelson & Jodi Weber
ORTESOL Journal *Editors*

We welcome your readership and support this year as we present the ORTESOL Journal's 30th volume. We feel confident that all readers will find something that appeals to their current teaching and/or research interests this year.

Jan Underwood, a Portland Community College Spanish teacher, kicks off this issue with an observational analysis of her experiences in an intensive yearlong German course. She reminds us of the issues our students face in learning a new language and offers insights on how language learning must go beyond what is assigned.

Our first feature article comes from Jaci Mull and Susan Conrad and addresses the use of concordancers in error correction of grammar. In a small case study, Mull and Conrad introduce four intermediate ESL students a corpus and concordancer. They then supply the participants with grammatical errors in need of correction. The results provide a thoughtful analysis of how students use and interact with corpus technology.

We then move to Kathryn Ciechanowski's study in a bilingual elementary school. She spends a year observing two classes and interviewing teachers to see how the context of social justice was used to teach English. She explores the "messiness" of such layered teaching and emphasizes the need to consider the many different social worlds in which students live.

In Catherine Johnston's feature, we hear from the front lines of teaching in adult education. Adult ELLs with low to no literacy

are becoming more the norm than the exception in classrooms. Johnston addresses the teachers' struggles to learn use students' educational histories to inform their teaching while students struggle to work within an educational system that assumes a certain level of literacy.

Our final feature article from Feifei Han explains the difficulties Chinese ELL's will have with English pronunciation. She offers specific segmental and suprasegmental challenges that teachers can expect to see in the classroom.

Finally, we turn our attention to shorter Teaching Notes from experienced teachers currently in the field. Melinda Sayavedra reminds us how important it is to respond respectfully to student writing in order to be effective. Beth Sheppard explains an AWL vocabulary project she created in order to better prepare her IEP Oral Skills students for listening practice. We then shift our attention to Brendan DeCoster and the Screencast as a technological teaching complement to in-person teaching. Finally, we close this issue with a review of an online tool creator called Sharendipity. Ibtesam Hussein and Maysoun Ali explain the benefits of using such free online tools to enhance student learning.

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What I Learned From Being a Beginning Language Student Again

Jan Underwood, Portland Community College

A 20-year veteran teacher of college Spanish, I decided in the summer of 2012 to take an intensive First-Year German course. What I found in German class was not only a delightful opportunity to acquire another language, but a rich source of insight about the language teaching and learning process itself. Alongside my German notes, I filled a notebook with observations about this process, some of which affirmed what I had already discovered, and some of which have altered the way I teach. Below I describe some of these insights.

You must study out loud. When I became a language student again it became very apparent to me that I needed to say aloud everything I encountered, in every study task—in instruction lines, sentences in grammar activities, introductions and explanations, as well as in actual “readings.” Studying aloud gave this learner many needed opportunities to get her mouth around uncomfortable new sounds; it made patterns and turns of phrase more familiar; and, for reasons I have not fully come to understand, it aided my comprehension a good deal. Before I took German I think I had encouraged my own students in this regard, but only in a casual way; I did not hammer the point. Now I hammer it. You cannot learn to speak a language by studying in silence.

You must do more than complete the assignments. Class time, I quickly came to realize, is only an introduction to the material, and homework is only a minor reinforcement. Mastery comes with devising strategies that work to personally address your weak

areas, to answer your questions and to create sufficient practice opportunities. As with all worthwhile endeavors, you get out of it what you put into it. I studied 12-16 hours a week outside of class for my six-credit course, which is along the lines of what the college recommends, but which represents far more than is required to complete homework assignments. As an instructor I realized that students need to be told this information up front. They need to be coached to study—not merely do their homework—and they need to be shown *how* to study a language. I have started giving my own students a greater variety of homework tasks to model and expose them to the variety of tasks they need for themselves in their study time.

You must study every day. I have long told my students that it is better to put in 15 minutes a day than to study for two hours once a week. What I overlooked until I became a student again is that life gets in the way of even the most committed students. It is quite difficult to study every day. As an instructor, I've started giving assignments that have to be completed daily or nearly daily—completing on-line assignments, for example, for which I can set frequent due dates—instead of only having homework due on class days.

The immersion experience is extremely powerful. I learned at least as much German from my instructors' side comments—“Where did I put my marker? Oh, there's no room left on the board. Oops! I've lost the cap...” —as from the lessons themselves. These spontaneous moments, spoken with-

out artifice, became for me a rich source of new vocabulary, syntactic patterns and pronunciation modeling. Students should be coached to pay attention to these moments and even take notes on them. Some students will imagine that only the explicit content of the lesson is important, and they will miss an exciting opportunity to expand their interlanguage. At the beginning of this year in my own teaching, I took my German notebook to class and showed my students how I had taken notes, with the content of the lessons in the center of the page and my teachers' "asides" in the margins. Over time, the marginalia grew to take up more and more of the page, as I realized that that was where most of my learning was taking place.

Chance favors the prepared mind. To my surprise, I found it extremely helpful to read and study upcoming topics before class, precisely because coming prepared to class allowed me to make more of the immersion experience. If the material was entirely new to me, it took all my concentration just to follow the lesson, but if I already understood the points that were being presented, some of my attention was freed up to attend to other details. This experience has changed the way I teach: I used to prefer to be in charge of the way students first encountered a topic, and I assigned homework on a topic only after I had presented it in class, but now I prefer to have students study and practice a topic before I present it. Their time in class is then spent on fine-tuning their understanding, and on absorbing as much as they can of the "marginalia."

Everything they taught me in graduate school is true. My personal bias in teaching has long been toward an inductive, rather than a deductive, approach, and this bias was

very strongly reinforced when I sat in the student's chair. The difference between how much I learned when material was presented in a contextual, meaning-focused, hands-on manner, and how much (or how relatively little) I learned when it was presented deductively, was nothing short of amazing. It became extremely clear that the *least* effective way to present, say, the formation of the past tense, is in a teacher-centered lecture format, with structure separated from a meaningful context, and with a long list of grammar points presented at one time. It is *much* more effective to introduce just one or two points at a time; to present them in the context of a thematically relevant piece of communication, oral or written, in which students have already had time to focus on meaning; to give students time to notice the patterns for themselves; and then turn it over to them to play with and explore. I know why we teach deductively: we do it because we're in a hurry. But students learn more thoroughly, understand more deeply, and are able to use what they've encountered more effectively, if they are given less to work with and more time to work with it, and an active rather than a passive role in the lesson.

Students learn with ... an active rather than a passive role in the lesson.

Reading and listening comprehension are critical. It also became clear to me over the course of the summer that in the language teaching profession we tend to privilege production over reception. In other words, we spend most of our time trying to get students to speak and write, and we downplay, both in the classroom and in our textbooks, the attention we give to reading and listening. This lopsided emphasis is problematic for two reasons. One is simply that the receptive skills are as important to communication as the productive ones. But the other is that learners *rely* on reception in order to develop

production skills. Only with rich, contextual, abundant, comprehensible input can learners internalize new words and patterns. Reading and listening, so often marginalized as “enrichment” activities that take place only if there is time, should in fact be built into every lesson and should *precede* production. Otherwise speaking and writing become exercises that occur in a vacuum. The gears grind, the language doesn't flow—every word must be searched for and struggled over—and the speaker can't hear her own mistakes, because she simply has not been exposed to enough authentic language. My own German took a great leap forward when I set aside the extra grammar exercises I'd been poring over and devoted that time instead to reading. Since then I have reduced the amount of grammar homework I assign to my own students, and I have increased the listening and reading activities I ask them to do.

I have reduced the amount of grammar homework I assign.

Reduce, reuse, recycle. I found it extremely helpful whenever, in German class, we did an activity from a previous lesson at the end of a new lesson—not only because review gave me a little ego-boost and served as a helpful reminder, but because as we go along, we learners understand previous material at a deeper level than we did the first time we encountered it. The old material makes more sense, given the broader context we now have, and we can fine-tune, expand and extend our mastery of it. Activities that recycle previously encountered material should be built into our curricula at regular intervals. A good textbook includes such recycling, but in its absence, it is incumbent upon us, the instructors, to create opportunities for our students to revisit old topics with new eyes.

Less is more. It became extremely clear to me in my study of German that a myopic

focus on grammar instruction was not helpful to me, even when I was enjoying it. My grammar improved only as my overall proficiency—my listening and reading comprehension, my vocabulary, and the fluidity of my conversational skill—improved. In other words, accuracy improves in tandem with communicative proficiency and not separate from it. Beyond a certain necessary amount—perhaps one-sixth of my in-class and study hours—time spent on discrete-point grammar exercises, and on accuracy-focused production, did not improve my accuracy in spontaneous speech and writing. I made exactly the same kinds of mistakes my students of Spanish make—not because I didn't understand the concepts, but I simply could not internalize the patterns, and I could not “hear” my own mistakes, until I had had

more experience using the language communicatively. We must, of course, teach grammar: but only enough that our

students understand the concepts and have targets to aim at. Students are best served if they get a controlled infusion of focused grammar instruction—just the right amount, and on just the right topics—and spend most of their time reading, writing, speaking and listening in ways that focus on the actual exchange of novel information. I knew this before I took German, and decades of second language acquisition research has underscored it, but I appreciate its truth on a deeper level having experienced it from the learner's point of view. My main strategy in teaching grammar now is to focus mainly on receptive activities for new material and to focus on production mainly with review material.

More is also more. What I also discovered early on in my German adventure was that vocabulary was critical, and the more, the better. Vocabulary is both an end in itself

and a language-acquisition tool: the more vocabulary you already know, the faster you acquire more. My German vocabulary not only allowed me to speak and write with greater ease; it allowed me to understand what I read and heard more readily, which in turn led to the acquisition of yet more vocabulary. Yet oftentimes vocabulary is perceived as the “easy” part of language-learning and instructors do not do any explicit vocabulary teaching in the classroom. This is a mistake for a number of reasons. One, as I have previously mentioned, is that many students do not know how to study, and they will not know how to learn vocabulary effectively. Strategies for vocabulary study need to be made explicit, and should be modeled and practiced in the classroom. Another reason is that students will wisely allocate their study time to whatever the instructor most emphasizes in the classroom. They follow the lead of their teachers and of the textbook. If the instructor spends most of her class time on grammar that is what students will devote their study time to, because they believe it is what is most important to the instructor. In most of the many language classes I've taken over thirty years, instructors have said almost nothing about vocabulary. I think they were assuming it would be obvious to us that we needed to study it on our own at home—but the truth is, nothing is obvious. Students need to be guided.

Vocabulary in texts is generally presented thematically, and for good reason: we acquire new words more quickly when we associate them with other related words. However, we must not limit our students' focus to thematic vocabulary. If a student knows the names of 40 kinds of sports and leisure activities, she does not have much communicative ability. But if she knows 40 high-frequency, general-purpose verbs, nouns and adverbs, she can tackle a discussion on sports or on many other topics. In

teaching “themes” we must not neglect the very powerful, all-purpose words that come up in every interaction, regardless of topic.

Students have ESP. My final observation has to do not with the pedagogical but with the affective dimension of second language learning. I had forgotten, until I sat in the student's chair again, how much authority an instructor wields, how badly students want their instructors' approval, and to how fine a degree students are attuned to their instructors' moods. Instructors are not saints, but watching my own emotional life and those of my classmates over the summer, I was re-inspired to be as sunny, as encouraging, as understanding and as supportive as I possibly can be—holding high expectations of my students while always respecting their intelligence and their efforts. It matters.

My experience studying beginning German was so exciting to me from a professional standpoint that I began to feel that all language instructors should take on another language from time to time: to remember what it feels like to be a beginner; to remember that the characteristics of the foreign language, while obvious to the teacher, are not at all obvious to the learner; to remember that students do perceive the difference between adequate and good, and between good and excellent; to remember what an enormous undertaking language learning is. I am now in a Second Year German class, and I intend to keep studying this and other languages throughout my career. It has been a challenge and a joy, and I am a better teacher for it.

Jan Underwood has taught Spanish at Portland Community College since 1992. She holds a Master's degree in Spanish and French with a secondary focus in Applied Linguistics from Portland State University. Over the years she has studied Spanish, French, Italian, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and German.

Student Use of Concordancers for Grammar Error Correction

**Jaci Mull, Research Institute of English Language Education
Susan Conrad, Portland State University**

Emmy and Maria, two intermediate-level ESL students, are given a peer essay and asked to correct five errors highlighted in it. When they discuss the error, *They can save money for better future*, they can't agree on what to do. Emmy believes *better* should be changed to *best*. Maria believes they need to insert *the* before *better*. At this point, they reach for a concordancer and search a corpus. They do a search for *best future* and *better future* with no results. Then Emmy suggests they search for *better* alone, and they find many samples. Emmy notes that several samples, including *a better chance* and *a better understanding*, use the indefinite article. She suggests, "Put an article in front of better. So, 'a better'." The pair corrects the error and moves on to the next.

This scenario shows the potential power of students using concordancers to correct written errors. In the example above, the students would have falsely corrected the error had they been editing the paper with only their prior knowledge. Instead, the pair conducted their own small research study of English and noticed a gap between their hypothesized corrections and the target language. They then used the authentic target language samples they had found to establish an accurate and appropriate language pattern which they applied to the error in order to correct it. No teacher was needed to guide them through this process; the students were in full control of their language learning.

In fact, Emmy and Maria were real students in a small case study conducted to

investigate what upper-intermediate level ESL students with little prior training could do with a concordancer when correcting grammar errors. In this article, we first provide some background information about student use of concordancers. We then describe the methods and results of the study, and discuss suggestions for future research and how to teach concordancing to students.

Background

Concordancers are software programs that, when connected to a corpus, allow users to search for all occurrences of a word or sequences of words. Early descriptions of the potential for student concordancing were given by Tim Johns, who called it Data Driven Learning (DDL). Johns (1991) explains DDL as an investigation allowing students to form their own questions about the language, ask for authentic language samples via a concordancer, and use those language samples to help them find an answer to their question. DDL relies on the students to form their own generalizations about the language once they are presented with samples of the target language. Johns strongly connects DDL to induction, in which the language "rule" students are trying to learn is unknown to them and they must discover it for themselves by making generalizations from target language samples. The only difference Johns notes between DDL and traditional induction is that, for DDL, the teacher need not know exactly what patterns await, and may be equally surprised as the students by the results. This sense of

mutual exploration gives the learners a sense of autonomy and power in their language learning. Showing similar enthusiasm for students as researchers, Tribble and Jones (1990) suggested a variety of ways that teachers could prepare concordance lines for students to analyze or allow students to conduct their own searches for lexical or structural patterns.

While some educators may still be wary about focusing on form in more communicative or task-based classrooms, it is important to note that DDL has nothing to do with progressive grammar teaching. Johns (1991) himself notes that educators should not be trying to teach students a structured set of grammar. Instead, he sees DDL as an unparalleled opportunity to explore difficult areas of language that progressive grammar teaching traditionally avoided. He champions allowing students to find answers to their questions free of teacher intuition, which may not be based on close analysis of data and can be fallible. Johns suggests that through DDL, students are able to come to a far more subtle understanding of the target language than through other methods.

Several studies following Johns (1991) and Tribble and Jones (1990) focused special attention on students' ability to learn lexical patterns with concordancers (Cobb, 1997; Todd, 2001). Lexical patterns are fairly easy to spot in a Key Word in Context (KWIC) concordance search. The student simply types in one word and sees all instances of that word lined up with context on either side. It is easy to see what words associate with the search term. For grammar structure patterns, however, the task is more challenging. Students must be aware of parts of speech and not simply exact

words. Even so, several studies have found that students can make generalizations about structure as well as lexis from concordance results (Gaskell, 2002; Gaskell and Cobb, 2004; Kennedy and Miceli, 2001 & 2010). Of course, when students are engaged in error correction with a concordancer, the task is slightly different from what Johns (1991) was describing. With error correction, the teacher has already identified an error and therefore has more control over what the student will discover.

In order to guide students through an inductive process and consolidate their learning, Gaskell (2002) created a set of five steps for students to complete while correcting grammar errors (see Figure 1). These five steps instruct students to first identify the error they wish to correct, and then to search with the concordancer for samples of English that show more accurate uses of the grammatical form. Students are then asked to summarize the pattern they see emerging from the concordance samples, followed by stating a grammar rule based on the samples they see and finally correcting the error. The hope with guiding steps like those in Gaskell (2002) is that students will follow the steps in order and by doing so induce the structure patterns needed to complete the editing task. At the end of the project, students also have a record of the grammar errors they have corrected. However, up to this point there is little evidence about whether or not students actually follow this process when they use a concordancer and

- 1) Example of the error
- 2) How the word/structure was used in the concordancer
- 3) What was learnt from the concordancer
- 4) How to fix the error
- 5) Correction of the error

Figure 1: Gaskell (2002) steps for correcting grammar errors

whether or not students can actually generalize structure patterns solely from looking at concordance lines.

Research Question

As teachers, we know that students do not always complete tasks using the processes that we anticipate. While we might look at their end product and assume they have, for instance, induced patterns in the target language, we cannot be certain without direct observation. They may, after all, simply be guessing or relying on previous knowledge. We were therefore interested to investigate what students are actually doing with the tools we gave them. With this in mind, we asked the following questions:

1. How do students with little training employ a concordancer to investigate and correct errors in written work?
2. To what degree does a worksheet help guide the students through the inductive process for grammar error correction with a concordancer?

Methods

Four ESL students participated in this case study. All were enrolled in upper-

intermediate English classes in the intensive English language program at Portland State University, had achieved a score of 520 or higher on the TOEFL, and hoped to enroll in the university eventually. All the participants were comfortable with computers, but none had used corpora or concordancers for English language learning previously.

The participants completed the project in pairs to encourage verbalizing their thought process as they worked with the concordancer. All pairs had studied together in the same class and were familiar with each other before the study. The first pair consisted of Edison, a 27 year-old male student from South Korea and Y, a 23 year-old female student from Thailand. The second pair consisted of Maria, a 23-year-old female student from South Korea, and Emmy, a 36-year-old female student from Thailand (all names are pseudonyms). The diverse first language backgrounds encouraged students to verbalize their ideas in English.

The study was broken up into four sessions (see Figure 2). In the first session, the pairs of students were introduced to a concordancer and allowed 30 minutes to experiment with it using a guiding worksheet.

Session	Activity	Materials	Time
1	Training with concordancer and time to experiment	Essay with 10 errors	30 min.
	Journal writing	Journal	10 min.
2	Interview about session 1	NA	10 min.
	Work session: Error correction time with concordancer and required worksheet	Essay with 5 errors Worksheet (required)	20 min.
	Journal writing	Journal	10 min.
3	Interview about session 2	NA	10 min.
	Work session: Error correction time with concordancer and optional worksheet	Essay with 5 errors Worksheet (optional)	20 min.
	Journal writing	Journal	10 min.
4	Final Interview	NA	30 min.

Figure 2: Sessions in the study

The training session was kept short because average classrooms do not have an abundance of time with which to train students on new technologies and we wanted to see what students could do given modest training. Students were taught searches only with words and word sequences, not with grammatically “tagged” sequences (which make grammar searches easier but require more advanced training). In the second session, students were briefly interviewed about the training session and then were given 20 minutes to edit grammar errors in a prepared essay using a concordancer. They were also given a guiding worksheet to aid with induction. The third session was set up exactly as the second session, including the brief interview and work time, but the worksheet was optional. Finally, in the last session, students met with the researcher for a lengthier interview.

They had to determine for themselves what kind of error they faced.

Materials

In their ESL class, the students were working on writing persuasive essays, so we designed the study to ask students to correct errors in similar essays. A corpus was specially created for them using 80 persuasive essays written by native speakers of English. The essays were found in the free use sections of two essay sharing websites: www.123helpme.com, and www.allfreeessays.com. Students used a copy of MonoConc 2.2 (Barlow, 2002) as their concordancer to search through the essays.

To develop the error correction task, three persuasive essays were created to match the style taught in upper-intermediate writing classes. One essay was for the training session, and the other two were for the work sessions. In order to use errors appro-

priate for these students, incorrect sentences were selected from diagnostic essays written by students of the same class level from a previous term and incorporated into the created essays. In order to be selected for incorporation into the new essays, the errors had to satisfy two criteria. First, they had to fit one of five grammatical categories students at this level typically struggle with: articles, prepositions, tense, clause construction, or agreement. Finally, they had to be searchable in the corpus. Specifically, by searching for words in the highlighted sentences, the students had to be able to find at least 10 samples that could help them correct the error. The training essay included 10 of these errors to ensure students had plenty to practice with the concordancer.

Five errors were then incorporated into each of the work session essays, and the sentences were highlighted. One

representative error from each grammar category was included in each work session essay. Students were aware that the highlighted sentences had grammar errors, but aside from that, they had to determine for themselves what kind of error they faced.

Rather than simply handing students the Gaskell (2002) steps as seen in Figure 1, a guiding worksheet was written to walk students through the five steps (Figure 3). It posed the steps in the form of directions. For example, instead of “example of the error” students were instructed to 1) *Choose an error to correct* and 2) *Write the error below*.

Data Collection Instruments and Analysis

During the first three sessions, video recorders were pointed at the students’ computer screens to capture the searches they made with the concordancer and to record their voices as they negotiated how to cor-

rect the error and use the concordancer. At the end of each error correction session, students were asked to write a journal entry about their experience using a concordancer. Throughout the sessions the students were also interviewed about their opinions and to clarify points made in their journals.

For the analysis, we qualitatively described the process used by each pair for each error. We used evidence in the journals and interviews to interpret the processes more fully, and identified common opinions and attitudes about using the concordancer.

Results and Discussion

Each student pair had 10 errors to correct (5 in each work session). Both pairs

thought that some of the errors had obvious corrections that they could make based entirely on their previous knowledge. Feeling confident, they did not see a need to use the concordancer to confirm their knowledge of how the structures worked. The fact that time was short – only 20 minutes of work time for correcting 5 errors in each work session – might also have made them feel they needed to focus on the answers they felt least sure about. In fact, all of the corrections made without the concordancer were accurate (3 for Emmy and Maria, and 6 for Edison and Y).

How students employed the concordancer

In the end, a total of 11 errors were addressed using the concordancer (7 by Em-

Worksheet	
Please answer the questions below, in order, while you work on the computer to find corrections for the error you are investigating.	
1.	Choose an error from the essay.
2.	Write the sentence containing the original error below: _____ _____
3.	Use MonoConc (the computer program) to find examples of better grammar to correct the error in the essay.
4.	Look for a grammar pattern in the examples you find. Write down three examples you see that have a grammar pattern similar to the error you are correcting: A. _____ B. _____ C. _____
5.	Based on the grammar pattern you have found, think of a rule to explain why these examples are correct (and the original error is incorrect). Rule: _____ _____
6.	Use the rule you just wrote to correct the original error that was in the essay. Write the corrected sentence: Corrected Sentence: _____

Figure 3: Student worksheet

my and Maria and 4 by Edison and Y). With regards to the first question, “How do students with little training employ a concordancer to investigate and correct errors in written work?” we found only one instance of a full induction process as set out by the worksheet, which asked students to look at examples before generating a rule about the structure. Instead, students used shorter processes that focused on hypotheses they already held, with the pairs having mixed success when they found a lack of evidence for their hypotheses. While analyzing the students’ processes, we found the following three points especially important.

1. A full induction process occurred for one pair but not the other.

As described in the opening of this article, Emmy and Maria began one of their concordance searches to correct the error *they can save money for better future* with two incorrect theories on how to change the error. Once they realized there was no support for either of their theories, they had to reconsider. In an interview Emmy admitted she first doubted the evidence from the concordancer, but, knowing the corpus was composed of all native speaker essays, she decided to trust the results and look for another solution. After searching for *better* alone, she was able to spot the regular use of an indefinite article and create a generalization from that.

We were surprised that there was only this one case of induction. It occurred when Emmy and Maria acknowledged the lack of evidence for their previous hypotheses and had no other hypothesis to check, but found a useful search to gather new evidence. Edison and Y found the same error challenging, but they were not able to create

a new generalization using evidence from their concordancing. Just like Maria, Y believed the correction should be *they can save money for the better future*. When she found no results to support her answer, she abandoned her hypothesis, but she was unable to conduct a new search and generate a new hypothesis. Her partner Edison suggested a completely different but inappropriate correction (discussed in point 3 below). Y did not accept this correction, but she offered no alternative. This pair appeared unable to figure out how to search for results that would generate a new hypothesis rather than just confirm what they hypothesized. They may also have felt constrained by the short

Once they realized there was no support for either of their theories, they had to reconsider.

amount of time for the task. In any case, this pair’s inductive process never fully developed, and they never successfully corrected the error.

2. Students used the concordancer to support or challenge their hypotheses from previous knowledge.

The most common way that these students used the concordancer was to confirm patterns that they expected but were not entirely confident about. For every error correction attempted, students started with their own hypothesis (or competing hypotheses) about the correction and then consulted the concordancer. In most cases (7 out of 11), students found support for the first or second hypothesis they checked and could then confidently correct the errors.

Two of the other four cases where students used the concordancer are covered by points 1 and 3 (concerning full induction and generalizations that change meaning). The final two cases add more support to the interpretation that students can find it difficult to search with a concordancer when they

do not already have a clear hypotheses to test. For example, Emmy and Maria could not figure out a useful search when they were working on a structure that had an omitted relative pronoun: *if you take two different people have the same commitment*. They did not know what the error was and did four searches that focused on the verb *take*, which did not help them. Eventually Emmy remembered the need for a relative pronoun, based solely on her previous knowledge, not on anything she saw in the searches. Both students then felt confident about the correction and did not feel the need to confirm it.

3. Students could make generalizations that were grammatically accurate but changed the original meaning.

For the phrase *for better future*, Edison decided the best way to correct the error was to use the chunk *in the future*, which he had heard many times. He did a search and found plenty of evidence in concordance lines to support use of this phrase. He therefore corrected the sentence to read *they can save money in the future*. While this sentence is grammatically accurate, the meaning had changed significantly from the original text. This example illustrates one of the limitations of concordancing: if a reader does not already understand meaning differences of similar wordings, it is difficult to see the difference without more extensive analysis of the context in the corpus. For students at this level, teacher input would likely be a more efficient means of helping the student understand the meaning change than corpus analysis would.

The guiding worksheet

Our second research question asked, “To what degree does a worksheet help

guide the students through grammar error correction with a concordancer?” In general, the answer appears to be that the worksheet was not helpful. Even when the worksheet was required, the students usually completed the steps in a different order or back-filled the worksheet after they were satisfied they knew how to correct the error. During the one full process of induction, Emmy and Maria had the guiding worksheet with them, but - even though they eventually went through all the steps in the order listed - they didn’t refer to the worksheet until after they had analyzed the concordance lines and decided on a correction. During the third session, when students were free to choose whether they used the worksheet or not, both pairs ignored it completely.

The students were keen to use the concordancer in this way.

The usefulness of a worksheet, of course, depends on the design of the worksheet. The worksheet in this study did provide a structure for the training session and forced the students to record what they had learned. In trying to encourage a full inductive process, however, the worksheet did not allow enough of a role for students’ use of their previous knowledge. It did not allow them a quick way to state and confirm their hypotheses when they were correct. At the same time, it did not guide students through what appeared to be the most challenging aspect of concordancing: determining new searches to try to identify patterns when they didn’t already have a clear hypothesis to test. If a guiding worksheet is to be used in the future, it seems more appropriate to follow the students’ natural inclinations. Rather than start with the concordance lines, the revised worksheet could, like many other corpus-based materials, ask students to use previous knowledge to state a hypothesis, and then prompt students to search the concordancer for support (or a lack of support)

for the hypothesis. Students could revise their hypothesis as many times as they wanted until they had found appropriate support. At that point they could state a rule and give a final correction for their error. If the students ran out of their own hypotheses to try, the worksheet could guide them through steps for new searches that might reveal patterns they had not thought about previously.

Student enthusiasm

This study was not set up to investigate student use of concordancers during writing production, but the students in the study were keen to use the concordancer in this way, even after only 90 minutes with the concordancer spread over three days. In interviews, all four students compared the concordancer to other reference tools they already used at home and saw the concordancer filling a gap in their resources. They trusted the concordancer and corpus because they saw native speaker examples, and they felt it could give them ideas for language patterns they might not find in a standard dictionary search.

Bernardini (1996) argues student concordancing should focus more on discovery learning in which students search a target language corpus openly in a more exploratory fashion. Giving students concordancers as exploratory tools to inform their writing is not unprecedented. Kennedy and Miceli (2010) have produced two studies investigating just that and have found that students were able to create personal strategies for using the concordancer. Their students used the concordancer to hunt openly for new words and expressions that they could use in their writing, to generalize lexical and structure patterns when they had a specific question in mind, and to find target language equivalents for what they wanted to say.

In our study, the students themselves suggested that they might have been better able to induce language patterns had they been investigating the corpus freely as opposed to correcting errors. Both pairs of students came to this conclusion independently and with no prompting from the researchers. Interestingly, Edison and Y, who never showed a tendency towards induction both agreed that the concordancer would be more useful when exploring it openly rather than correcting grammar errors. Both pairs also suggested during interviews that they thought the concordancer would be best used as a reference at home where students have more time to explore and feel more relaxed. It is interesting to note that by following the students' suggestions, teachers would be able to use their valuable class time to focus on their regular lesson plans, while still allowing students the chance for autonomous language research outside of class.

Conclusion

Concordancing and error correction

The results of this study were mixed with respect to using concordancing for error correction. In the majority of cases, students felt so confident correcting the given errors that they did not use the concordancer to find supporting evidence. The chosen errors thus appeared to be too easy for the students in the study. Concordancers are most useful when the students need more evidence about how a structure works – not when students just need more time to apply their declarative knowledge to correct an error – but this can be a difficult judgment to make when planning an activity for numerous students. At the same time, when one pair of students did have the opportunity to use new evidence to revise their inaccurate hypotheses, they did not use the concordancer effectively.

Despite the shortcomings found in this study, however, the students also demonstrated some productive uses of concordancing that facilitated their autonomy as language learners. They used the concordancer to find evidence that confirmed their hypotheses about how to correct errors. In some cases, they also recognized evidence that their hypotheses were wrong, and in one case, induced a new, accurate generalization that allowed them to correct an error.

Student ability to use the concordancer

Many studies have argued in favor of gradual, structured training activities in the classroom before allowing students to work more independently with a concordancer. For example, Kennedy and Miceli (2010) created an

“apprenticeship” program to train their students in concordancing and dedicated roughly 30% of their writing class, to it. Chambers (2005) argued against training students as if they were future corpus linguists, but still had students in her study complete 9 hours of corpus linguistics training.

Realizing that the average instructor is not in a position to squeeze hours of concordancing training into their already tight curricula, this study took a different tack and examined how students used a concordancer after only 30 minutes of introduction to basic word searches. While the students in this study expressed some frustration with the software initially, and would likely have benefitted from more training focused on how to design searches, they did not seem discouraged by their lack of training. They used the concordancer when they felt unsure about how to correct errors. In addition, the more the students used the con-

cordancer, the more ideas they reported for applying it to their regular studies and doing investigations when they had more time at home. Thus, even with minimal training, concordancing might be a useful activity for some students. Even instructors who do not want to spend much time with concordancing in the classroom might consider introducing their students to concordancing at least as a reference tool. Students can then judge for themselves whether it is compelling enough to pursue at home or in extra study time in a computer lab.

Introducing students to concordancing

Introducing students to concordancing requires access to two things: a corpus and a concordancer. In this study the researchers chose to create a corpus tailored to the type

of essays the class was working on, and if teachers are able to do the same, it appears to be quite beneficial. Simply being able to tell students “this is a collection of writing just like what you are trying to do” seemed to add a level of credibility and authority to the corpus in the students’ eyes. There are now a number of free or relatively inexpensive concordancers that can be used with your own corpus (e.g. AntConc is available free at www.antlab.sci.waseda.ac.jp, MonoConc is available for order at www.athel.com). However, teachers need not make their own corpus or invest in a concordancer. The Corpus of Contemporary American English (corpus.byu.edu/coca) contains 450 million words of American English with a free searchable interface. Searches are possible in categories such as academic texts, newspapers, and popular magazines – thus allowing students to focus on a more specific type of writing than, say, searching for a common

The students demonstrated some productive uses of concordancing that facilitated their autonomy as language learners.

word using Google. The corpus also includes grammatical tags if teachers want to introduce students to more advanced grammar-related searches.

Student use of concordancers has probably not yet lived up to the ideal Johns envisioned when he first wrote about DDL in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Much research is still needed into the best ways to use concordancers, both when applied to error correction and during language creation. Longitudinal research into the development of student skills with concordancers is also needed. It is still largely unknown whether students will slowly develop strategies on their own over time, or whether training is the only way to improve students' skills. Even while research continues, however, there is reason to believe that students can get some benefit from consulting a concordancer, whether they fully induce patterns from the results or simply confirm what they already hypothesize.

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Beyond One-size-fits-all ELD Frameworks: Bringing English Learner's Lives and Social Justice to the Center of K-12 Instruction

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Four years ago, I began collaboration and research at an elementary school that had a high percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs), primarily from Spanish-speaking heritage, where teachers were in the early stages of exploring uses of English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards for English Language Development (ELD) (Oregon Department of Education, 2006). The teachers relied mostly on pull-out ELD instruction conducted by an ELL specialist in addition to Spanish/English dual language instruction by the classroom teachers. At the time, I wondered whether the teachers had considered a different model to integrate ELD to provide a connected and coherent program for the students. I asked whether they were inclined to explore English forms and functions within the functional contexts of the subject areas, such as science or social studies, which is important to the development of academic language with ELLs (Schleppegrell, Achugar, & Oteiza, 2004).

During the 2008-09 year, two third-grade teachers and the ELL specialist agreed to work with me around questions of weaving together ELD and content using science and social studies as two academic contexts through which to teach English forms and functions. It quickly became clear that we also needed to attend to the social realities of our students, especially Latinos, because they brought many social and cultural experiences to bear on learning. In social studies, which is the focus of this article, topics such as immigration, culture, and social activism

seemed like a natural fit not only for particular English functions (e.g., generalizing) and forms (e.g., modifying adjectives) but also for discussing the social realities of being an ethnic minority and non-dominant language group. In the part of the study reported here, questions considered included: (1) How did a teacher-researcher team plan lessons that moved beyond ELD and content to include social justice? (2) How did a teacher navigate the “messiness” of socially-relevant instruction with multiple objectives?

Beyond generic instruction

For teachers, it is critical to attend to the social realities and lives of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in addition to the prescribed curriculum and instruction. Bartolomé (2003) describes the misguided urgency of educators to seek “easy answers in the form of specific instructional methods” and “solutions... technical in nature (e.g., specific teaching methods, instructional curricula and materials)” that will help linguistic and cultural minority students catch up and narrow the achievement gap (p. 409). These types of methods are often generic in nature and intended to work with a variety of populations regardless of their cultural and linguistic diversity. Little attention is paid to how instruction for any group of students should be shaped and individualized to meet the social context and needs of particular students. Yet Hawley and Nieto (2010) argue that race and ethnicity matter and affect how students re-

spond to instruction and curriculum. Students have their own understandings of discrimination and differing approaches to learning opportunities in their lives. “Being more conscious of race and ethnicity is not discriminatory; it’s realistic” (Hawley and Nieto, 2010, p. 66). Bias and discrimination are a real part of life for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Along these lines, Mize and Dantas-Whitney (2007) claim, “Teachers should tailor instruction according to... the local context of the school, the student’s family, and the community” (p.

19). However, they report that there is a tendency to teach ELD in decontextualized and disconnected ways in the current systematic

ELD framework (Dutro, 2005). Mize and Dantas-Whitney describe two pitfalls in ELD instruction: (1) teachers are encouraged to use a grammatical matrix as a guide for ELD instruction and to check off English forms when covered in a list-like and limited manner, and (2) the Dutro (2005) framework for explicit and systematic ELD instruction (i.e., based on English grammatical forms and functions) provides example lesson plans that are reductionist and behaviorist in nature. Instead, the authors argue that ELD should be integrated with meaningful subject area topics to contribute to grade-level content learning and overall cognitive development. Furthermore, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) suggest that educators must look beyond academic-based knowledge to include “the lived experiences and perspectives that marginalized groups bring to bear on an issue” (p. 4); otherwise, students may only gain partial or limited knowledge about topics. Bartolomé (2003) calls for “a shift from a narrow and mechanistic view of instruction

It is critical to attend to the social realities and lives of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

to one that is broader in scope and takes into consideration the sociohistorical and political dimensions of education” (p. 411).

Observing and collaborating

During 2008-09, I collaborated with two teachers, Kim May and Tish Derko, (all names are pseudonyms) and an ELL specialist, Helena Beck, at an elementary school in the Pacific Northwest for the purposes of exploring new models of ELD instruction and connecting ELP standards to content and student lives. The study consisted of two parts: (1) after school collaborative meetings with

teachers and the specialist, and (2) in-class observations during ELD, social studies, and science. I digitally audio-recorded each meeting and class session, took

field notes, and collected curricular and student artifacts. Additionally, I gathered standardized test scores (e.g., IPT, ELPA) and conducted pre-/post-unit assessments based on content and language objectives for the science and social studies units.

Ms. May’s dual language third grade class had 42% Spanish-speaking ELLs (14 of 33 students), representing various English proficiency levels. Ms. Derko’s regular education 3rd grade class of 13 students had three ELLs from different countries (e.g., Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Mexico). For the purposes of this article, the primary focus is on the dual language class because of the higher percentage of ELLs and need for extensive ELD. Kim May was a recent graduate of a university Immersion MAT program, focusing on cultural and linguistic immersion in diverse schools and teaching for social justice. I was a faculty member in the university program and previously had Ms. May enrolled in my courses. Ms. Beck had a Masters

degree in Applied Linguistics and robust training in ELP standards and ELD instruction.

The portion of the study reported on here includes transcripts of digitally recorded collaborative meetings and in-class discussions. I analyzed transcripts of teacher meetings and classroom conversations using discourse analysis (Gee, 2011) to describe: (1) how each adult participant contributed to planning for a layered approach to ELD integrating content and social justice and (2) how students interacted with the teacher in class showing relationships between social realities and ELD. Discourse analysis of collaborative meetings involved close study of how expertise and authority played out in conversations and how knowledge and plans were socially constructed to allow for a flow of ideas over time and context. For example, as a researcher with a focus on social justice, I restated and resurfaced ideas that the ELL specialist had discussed months earlier with me because they involved aspects of social justice. Discourse analysis of classroom conversations focused on how specific words revealed information about students' positioning (i.e., "they" or "us") and how turn-taking between students and teacher showed power dynamics (i.e., Ms. May limited a student's contribution by correcting his grammar usage). Discourse analysis of both data sources demonstrated the complexity of teacher collaboration and class conversation when multiple priorities are at stake.

Themes revealed in the transcripts

In a planning meeting, the teachers, specialist, and I discussed the target English function and forms in the district's ELD pacing guide (i.e., generalizing and modifying adjectives, discussed in the example below) and the focal social studies topics of culture, immigration, and activism. With an eye towards broad and inclusive pedagogy, we

delved deeply into connections between generalizing, quantifiers, culture and immigration, and the students' own lives. We were not satisfied to take a "one size fits all" approach to teaching adjectives and sought ways to personalize instruction to fit students' social and cultural realities. In this excerpt, I had remembered the specialist Helena's earlier account about playground troubles in which Latino students faced negative stereotypes about Mexicans. It seemed that the English function *generalizing* was similar to the idea of stereotyping. By exploring this similarity, lessons could center on a "big question" that was personal to the students and potentially lead to an enhanced sense of social justice. Ms. Beck talked about an activity on quantifiers that served as a springboard for our discussion, as depicted below.

MS. BECK: I was using quantifiers and taking a statement that's a general statement and correctly quantifying it. So they had all these statements like, "baseballs are white." And one of them was, "Poor people are lazy." And then they had to check off that they thought that you should add *some, few, all, almost all*, whatever. So they have to figure out ... how they could role-play for the activism, how they could role-play polite ways of correcting somebody. So if your friend says, "Girls are stupid", what could you say? "Well maybe not all girls, my sister is pretty smart." So maybe it'd be better to say, "Some girls are stupid".

KATHRYN: It includes the ...quantifiers, the specific words, those are forms of language. So pairing that up, but then the social activism part, and it's tied to the immigration because the issue you talked about on the playground where they're saying, "Mexicans are lazy." But then the social activism

piece because you can help kids learn socially how to appropriately respond to that. Is it really that a lot of Mexicans are lazy or maybe we created a stereotype out of that? You know, weaving those all in together. Or you could even talk about the media. There are a few Mexicans who are in gangs and those are the ones that we see over and over again on TV so then we develop these stereotypes. Does that actually mean that a lot of Mexicans are in gangs? That sort of weaving together.... Using these quantifiers so that you're building the language; it's generalizing....

MS. BECK: You would probably be explicit. I think that's the piece that usually gets left out is explicitly saying, "This is how we say this..." But once you do that and you have it somewhere, where language learners can look up at, and the activity....

KATHRYN: I think that's a great fit with this chapter. Because you could go through this [text] and they used the words *most*, *many* in "Almost every culture has a traditional dance, almost every..." I mean I was noticing, if you look at the language that's naturally there, it's just..."Many Americans like to eat food."

The lesson was anything but generic, as it drew upon the harsh reality of stereotypes and the damage that comes from negative unsubstantiated generalizations made about groups. Yet, it also addressed content and ELP standards through multiple objectives. Through a focus on student social realities and natural uses of language (in addition to explicit teaching about language), we questioned how the ELD framework would fit and how concepts meshed together, hoping to make lessons deeply personal and motivating for learners. As a team, we followed

a layered integrated approach that focused on multi-stranded relationships among social experiences, content, and English forms and functions.

When this unit was implemented, in class, Ms. May experienced the complexity and tensions that arose from this multi-layered approach to teaching. She juggled ELD objectives and social justice goals within a larger class conversation, having to navigate back and forth across priorities. She modeled and suggested accurate uses of quantifying adjectives and helped students negotiate generalizations about groups. In the excerpt below, Ms. May cautioned Angelo about use of the word "none" and probed Maria's generalization about American diet.

MS. MAY: Let's pretend I come from Jupiter.... We have our own culture there. But I want to know about American culture in the United States. Use *none*, *few*....

MS. MAY: Most Americans eat pizza. Few Americans eat eyeballs.

ANGELO: None Americans eat...

MS. MAY: Be careful. None Americans are... Does that sound right? You could say "No Americans..." or you could say "None of the Americans..."

BRIANA: Most Americans eat pizza, drink soda, and watch TV.

MARIA: Most people eat fattening food and sit and

MS. MAY: Many Americans??? [Maria changes to the word *some*.]

When Ms. May welcomed student perspectives, the lesson was anything but "cut and dry" because students drew from rich knowledge and understandings of stereotypes. Although the initial planning involved stereotypes about Mexicans, the class conversation took a different path and per-

petuated stereotypes about Americans in the U.S. The students were brimming with ideas about how to characterize American culture (un)fairly, as the teacher tried to emphasize accuracy and precise use of English adjectives. Indeed, she limited Angelo's input by warning him about appropriate use of *none*.

On another day, class conversation continued to focus on negative perceptions of American culture. Ms. May repeatedly questioned students' uses of the adjective *most* and their inaccurate generalizations. The evidence suggests that introducing a relevant and humanizing pedagogy (Bartolomé, 2003) is not a straightforward path from the delivery of a lesson to the mastery of ELD or content objectives. In fact, a teacher may seem to get derailed from language goals, especially reductionist and isolated language goals, unless the goals explicitly target engagement in extended discourse and communicative uses of grammatical features. Language goals for this lesson include trying out and practicing socially appropriate uses of English forms. Yet, as Lucero demonstrates in this excerpt, students were persistent in their inaccurate use of adjectives and reflected social positions in a stratified society.

JANET: This is true: Some Americans lay around and watch video games.

ADELINA: Some Americans have blond hair.

DANIEL: A few Americans are lazy and fat and drink a lot of soda.

MS. MAY: So if I come from Jupiter, I guess I don't want to come back, sounds like Americans are lazy and sitting around.

LUCERO: Most Americans, they get like a *mesera* and sit on the ground and see the TV.

MS. MAY: Like a maid? Most Americans have maids? Most, Lucero?

LUCERO: Yah. Up the hill, it's like a full house, all the street

MS. MAY: Maybe *some*... some Americans have maids

Earlier in the year, the Latino students had faced stereotypes about Mexicans being lazy, but the instructional path during class conversations shifted to stereotypes about Americans being lazy. Lucero added the image of Americans as rich and indulgent, employing maids and owning houses spanning a city block. For Lucero, there seemed to be a disjuncture with the American lifestyle, power relationships, and affluence. Student responses had undertones of marginaliza-

The lesson . . . drew upon the harsh reality of stereotypes.

tion from the upper- or middle-class mainstream society, with comments about big houses and hired servants. Generally, students perpetuated stereotypes of Americans as unhealthy, inactive, and tuned in to electronic media. As Ms. May tried to stay focused on the English form of quantifying adjectives, students veered off onto socially-motivated and power-laden topics that possibly distracted from the accurate use of adjectives in this lesson. Ms. May's layered, multi-faceted approach in this lesson was anything but simple or reductionist because it opened the doors to a wealth of critical questions and fodder for study.

Where do we go from here?

A broad and complex approach to teaching and learning invites the "messiness" and multiple foci of ELD and content lessons. In this study, although the lessons were challenging for the teacher, students contributed vigorously to conversations that were personal and relevant to their lives. They

used their voices and tried out variations of adjectives, demonstrating a communicative model of learning, although not always applying them in socially appropriate ways. Following this complex approach, teachers have to become jugglers to navigate across multiple objectives within a lesson and explorers to embrace opportunities to question and investigate social dilemmas with students. But this perspective is important for countering reductionist and decontextualized language pedagogies evident in ESOL education today. According to Bartolomé (2003), to promote academic success for students historically underserved by schools, we need to select reciprocal teaching approaches—in which power is shared by teacher and students—that embrace students’ backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences in language and content lessons.

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L1 Literacy and ESL Reading Instruction: Strategies for Maximizing Student Success

Catherine Johnston, Clark College

Teaching reading to low-level ESL students is, quite simply, a challenge. At times, we are teaching adult students to read in English when some in class are not literate in their first language. In such a situation, we are not mapping a sound-symbol correspondence onto a known oral language, as in native-language reading instruction, but instead teaching the decoding of language while also teaching vocabulary and oral/aural aspects of language. Furthermore, literacy students—those learning to read for the first time—are often a minority in ESL classes to students with higher levels of formal education and thus, have an advantage in learning to read—often more swiftly. Accommodating the needs of literacy students alongside “traditional” low-level ESL students is an organizational and pedagogical challenge for even the most seasoned ESL professionals.

I have noticed the following challenges in working with literacy students:

- How can teachers know if our students have a low literacy level or education level? Even when low-level students are proficient enough in speaking and listening to make such a conversation possible, the subject matter is quite sensitive. What are teachers permitted to ask while honoring a student’s privacy and/or comfort level?
- Even when we know that a student has low or no literacy in L1, we might not know why. Is it the result of a learning disability? Is it simply because the student never attended much/any school, or

because the methods in school failed to serve this particular person?

- It’s difficult to teach literacy students along with traditional low-level ESL students. A student who possesses a doctorate may be sitting next to a student who has never operated a pencil sharpener. These two students will have different paths to proficiency in ESL. Students who are not literate in any language typically have little to no awareness of grammatical structures meaning that their language-learning process will differ from that of a student who can transfer grammatical knowledge from an L1 (Spiegel & Sunderland, 2006).
- It’s not easy to find appropriate materials for literacy students. Many series start above literacy level, making the work inaccessible for someone who is just becoming accustomed to taking meaning from print or holding a pencil and forming letters. Others begin at an appropriate point but advance at a faster rate than a literacy student can progress.

With these challenges and characteristics in mind, and with a commitment to maximizing the success of this vulnerable student population, I began to focus on how my students’ literacy level in their first language affected their process of learning to read in English. My goals, based on the aforementioned concerns and my experience, for this research were:

1. To develop an understanding of how

awareness of adult ESL students' L1 literacy level and education level can inform teachers' decisions about which strategies and materials in ESL reading are most appropriate.

2. To explore and/or invent teaching strategies, materials, and innovative practices in order to maximize students' success and progress in L2 (English) reading.

Methods of Observation

My process was to:

1. Have interpreters administer surveys and conduct interviews with selected and willing ESL CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, 2006) levels' 1 and 2 students outside of class in order to determine (a) L1 literacy and (b) education level in their native country, among other information.

2. Explore, develop, and implement techniques and strategies in reading instruction in my classroom of level 1-2 ESL learners based on the results of interviews, surveys and observations.

3. Assess and determine the effectiveness of the techniques and strategies.

Step 1 of the process, having interpreters administer surveys and conduct interviews with consenting students from my level 1-2 ESL class, yielded interesting and helpful information I do not usually possess about my students. These details, along with what I observed about the students, established a baseline from which to consider their needs and appropriate strategies for instruction.

Results

In the case of Fatima, a 45-year-old resident of the United States for nine years, she reported to her Arabic-English interpreter that she was unsuccessful during her six years of primary school in Saudi Arabia. She could read and write a little in Arabic, but had found no pleasure in school at that time. This information supplemented my observations in the classroom: Fatima, who could neither write nor recognize her name in English at the beginning of class, had very undeveloped small motor skills, extreme disorganization and forgetfulness, and inappropriate behaviors for a classroom setting (for example, until gently corrected, she would sometimes approach me at the board to share an interesting illustration in a book or to offer me something to eat while I was in the midst of whole-class instruction).

Some of my observations left me with the impression that she could have a learning disability, a notion that was strengthened by some of the difficulties she described to the interpreter. However, some of her challenges are typical of a beginning ESL reader/writer (Spiegel & Sunderland, 2006).

Fifty-four-year-old Maria, who had arrived from Mexico nearly twenty years ago having had only one year of schooling in that country, was a so-called zero beginner in all skills and not literate in English or Spanish. During the first days of class, I noticed her slow and juvenile handwriting, her unfamiliarity with a world map, pencil sharpener, and other classroom materials as well as her confusion with page orientation and printed tasks. Being new to the classroom and everything that happened there (Shaughnessey, 2006), she fatigued easily and seemed to

A student who possesses a doctorate may be sitting next to a student who has never operated a pencil sharpener.

have trouble concentrating. I learned from the interpreter that she also suffered from chronic pain due to a shoulder injury, making it even more difficult for her to learn and perform.

Peng, a 38-year-old man who had arrived in the United States two years before, had had a few years of primary education in China. He told his interpreter that he could not read or write well in Mandarin and that his current work schedule allowed him very little time to study or even sleep. I had observed that he seemed tired and disorganized in class and was also uneasy about working with his peers during group or pair tasks. I learned from the interpreter that Peng had different expectations of the classroom, his classmates, and the teacher. Due to his education in China, albeit short, he expected whole-class instruction and little student-student interaction (Koda & Zehler, 2008).

These are just a few examples of literacy students and their obstacles to learning. My past experiences with students like these and my foray into academic research on such students provided ideas for strategies and techniques in reading instruction.

For Fatima, emphasis on study skills and organization of her materials was instrumental, as was becoming familiar with the process of taking a standardized paper-pencil test such as the CASAS (Shaughnessey, 2006). Games, hands-on materials, and group work suited her social nature; her speaking and listening were a bit stronger than that of a typical level 1-2 student, and she greatly enjoyed working and interacting with other students in the classroom. Working with a tutor outside of class, often with the textbook *Literacy Plus A*, helped her to

improve her handwriting and writing fluency, which in turn resulted in better reading and word recognition. Now better able to recognize words by sight, she is beginning to learn how to decode, which is a hallmark of reading mastery (Dehaene, 2009). Most importantly, she feels successful and is pleased with her progress.

Maria's breakthrough came in learning about the relationship between letters (and blends and diagraphs) and their sounds, partly through use of the *Taking Off Literacy Workbook* and its phonics section. Additionally, due to her minimal educational background and her physical pain, Maria

Maria's breakthrough came in learning about the relationship between letters and their sounds.

received permission from the ESL program director to postpone CASAS testing until a subsequent quarter of instruction. A student like this will require more time to make progress (Shaughnessey, 2006). Nevertheless, it was a joy to watch Maria become more comfortable and familiar with the conventions of a classroom. While still working hard on literacy issues, she is happy with her progress, particularly in listening and speaking, as these skills feel more urgent to her.

In Peng's case, collaborative tasks provided a refreshing break from the more tedious paper-pencil tasks, particularly when he was fatigued, once the interpreter was able to explain the purpose and rationale of these practices. Peng then became less resistant to working with partners and playing educational games. He also made time in his schedule to attend a weekly pronunciation class, which assisted him in learning to sound out words when reading as well as improving his spelling (Koda & Zehler, 2008).

Implications for the Classroom

Based on these and other close examinations of literacy students in my level 1-2 ESL class, and considering the challenges and goals presented earlier, I propose the following solutions and conclusions:

Challenge 1: “How can teachers know if/when our students have a low literacy level or education level?” and Challenge 2: “Even when we know that a student has a low literacy level/education level, we don’t always know why” are related to Goal 1 of my research: To develop an understanding of how awareness of adult ESL students’ L1

literacy level and education level can inform teachers’ decisions about which teaching strategies and materials in ESL reading are most appropriate. I

believe teachers should ask about students’ educational level, or refer to files and paperwork as permitted to obtain such information. Additionally, observing students carefully in class will allow teachers to notice behaviors of difficulties that might indicate a low level of literacy or education level, such as fine motor problems, visual discrimination difficulty, or trouble with spatial organization (Croydon, 2011). Teachers can also make an effort to accommodate students with little or no educational background by providing specific strategies for testing, studying, and organization.

Challenge 3: “It’s difficult to teach literacy students along with low-level students with more education/proficiency in L1” and Challenge 4: “It’s not easy to find appropriate materials” relate to Goal 2 of my research: To explore and/or invent teaching strategies, materials, and innovative practices in order to maximize students’ success and

progress in L2 (English) reading. Classroom management can help address these challenges: teachers can vary the grouping of students by sometimes pairing literacy students with their traditional-student peers for mutual benefits and other times grouping literacy students with others like them. It would probably be useful for all ESL students to receive direct instruction in phonemic awareness as they learn to read English—literacy students didn’t learn it, or much of it, in their L1; traditional students need to see how the English system works as their L1 utilizes a different system (Koda & Zehler, 2008). Teachers should allow students to obtain some proficiency in English

before inundating them with phonics work.

Additionally, because it can be difficult to find appropriate

materials, teachers can make their own. Stations allow students to work autonomously, freeing the teacher to offer different activities or assignments to various groups or individuals. This may be the most effective way to accommodate literacy students (Sunderland & Spiegel, 2006). Stations offer a multisensory approach to learning—and a break from paper/pencil tedium—that lends itself to a more universal design in terms of curriculum.

Conclusion

Through this research, I obtained a deeper understanding of the process of learning to read and the effects of low literacy and low educational level. It is difficult to quantify the results of these texts and techniques in CASAS scores and reading assessment results. Instead, to assess and determine the effectiveness of the techniques and strategies, I turned to qualitative information: the

Stations offer a multisensory approach to learning — and a break from paper/pencil tedium.

students' sense of progress, their proud remarks, and their confidence. The question of effectiveness is ever-present, but students will respond differently depending on their learning style, goals, background, and particular challenges.

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Table 1: Resources for student use

<i>Taking Off Literacy Workbook</i> with audio CDs Fesler & Newman ISBN 0-07-331433-1	Offers practice in basic writing and letter formation.; the phonics section serve as a systematic introduction of the English sound-spelling system
<i>Literacy Plus A</i> Saslow ISBN 0-13-099610-6	Aimed at pre-literate adult immigrant students, this text begins at the beginning: tracing lines, recognition of shapes, tracing numbers,; Ancillaries include audiocassettes, teacher's edition (including CD-ROM with tests), flashcards, and a guide for native-language tutors.
<i>BOB Books</i> , set 1 Maslen ISBN 0-439-145-449	Designed for native speakers of English ages 4+, this initial set of 12 mini-books uses simple line drawings and brief, simple sentences.
<i>Sam and Pat 1: Beginning Reading and Writing</i> Hartel, Lowry, & Hendon ISBN 1-4130-1964-1 Audio CD ISBN 1-4130-1966-8	Reading and writing lessons focus on introduction and practice of target sounds and how they are represented in print; flashcards included.
<i>Focus on Phonics</i> Rice ISBN 987-1-56420-942-9	A four-level series of word-attack skills; aural/visual discrimination.

Pronunciation Problems of Chinese Learners of English

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Increasingly Chinese students are pursuing their studies abroad in English speaking countries, such as the USA, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Despite the fact that they have studied English as a compulsory subject for a number of years and have passed multiple English proficiency tests, many still find it is difficult to communicate well in spoken English. One of the major obstacles for oral communication is undoubtedly English pronunciation, which hinders many Chinese students' ability to be understood by native speakers or English learners from other language backgrounds.

Foreign language (FL) learners' mispronunciations are not random, as a foreign accent produced by learners largely reflects the phonetic features and intonation characteristics of their first language (L1) (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Ohata, 2004; Swan & Smith, 1987). This article first examines some of the differences between Chinese and English phonological systems and then summarizes some of the English pronunciation problems for Chinese learners. Ideally, this article will help TESOL practitioners become aware of the way in which learners' L1 backgrounds may influence their English pronunciation. In particular, it is useful for English teachers with Chinese students to have some knowledge of the phonological differences between English and Chinese as well as the major problematic areas in terms of pronunciation.

Analysis of problems

Chinese learners of English have problems with English pronunciation both in segmental aspects and in suprasegmental aspects.

Problems in segmental aspects are primarily concerned with the articulation of single phonemes or combinations of phonemes in both vowels and consonants. In suprasegmental areas, Chinese learners are found to have problems with stress and intonation. In the following paragraphs, these problems are presented by contrasting the phonology of Chinese and English. Additionally, possible causes are identified and detailed examples are provided to illustrate problematic pronunciation.

Problems with vowels

In comparing the phonological systems of Chinese and English, Chinese and English differ greatly in the number of vowels. While English has 15 vowels (Ohata, 2004), Chinese has only 5 vowels (San, 2007). Because of this difference, Chinese learners need to learn how to pronounce many new vowels when they start to learn English.

Even when a vowel exists in both Chinese and English, the sound's manner of articulation and place of articulation is different from that in English. With respect to the manner of articulation, consider the Chinese vowel [ɪ] and English vowels [ɪ:] and [i]. In Chinese, there are no minimal pairs of the long vowel [ɪ:] and short vowel [i], whereas in English the long [ɪ:] and short [i] form minimal pairs. This means that the length difference for articulating the two vowels changes the meaning of words in which the sound appears. Most Chinese learners do not distinguish the long [ɪ:] from the short [i] when they speak English. In-

stead, they tend to maintain the same length when articulating them in different words, such as ship /ʃi:p/ (sheep) and /ʃɪp/ (ship). It is also common for Chinese learners to replace both English [ɪ:] and [ɪ] with the corresponding Chinese vowel, which requires a higher and more frontal position of the tongue for pronunciation. Hence, this illustrates how the location of articulation can be problematic, even when a vowel exists in both languages. A similar problem caused by differing locations of articulation between Chinese vowels and English vowels is evident in Chinese learners' pronunciation of the English [ɑ:] and [ʌ], which is similar to the Chinese vowel [ɑ]. Although the position of articulation for the Chinese [ɑ] is higher compared to English [ɑ:] and [ʌ], Chinese learners only try to extend or reduce the length of the Chinese [ɑ] to produce [ɑ:] and [ʌ] respectively. When Chinese learners pronounce the words "cart and cut", which are minimal pairs, there is often only a difference in the duration of articulation, whereas English speakers change the tongue's position to generate the two vowels.

Just as English monophthongs tend to generate problems for Chinese learners, the diphthongs can also cause difficulties. For instance, because of the mispronunciation of monophthongs [ɑ] and [ɪ], the diphthong [ɑɪ] resulting from [ɑ] and [ɪ] also tend to be misarticulated. In fact, Chinese learners often confuse [ɑɪ] with [æ] and [ɛ]. Consequently, native English speakers often find it hard to follow Chinese learners when they try to say "bide", "bad" and "bed". Likewise, the English diphthong [aʊ] tends to be mixed with [ɔ:] and [ɔ]. Therefore, it can be hard to distinguish Chinese learners' pronunciation of "house" and "horse".

Problems with consonants

Chinese and English have roughly the same numbers of consonants. However, some

English consonants do not exist in Chinese. This poses difficulties for Chinese learners trying to produce these consonants. As noted by Zhang and Yin (2009), one common strategy used by FL learners to produce phonemes that do not exist in their L1 is to substitute similar phonemes from their L1. Such substitutions by Chinese learners are frequently evident in their English pronunciation of consonants.

For instance, Chinese speakers generally have trouble with dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] in English as there are no dental fricatives in Mandarin Chinese (though there are dental fricatives in other Chinese dialects). Typically, the two dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] are substituted with two similar alveolar fricatives, [s] and [z]. In order to counter these problems, experienced teachers should always emphasize the differences between dental fricatives [θ] and [ð] and alveolar fricatives [s] and [z].

Sometimes Chinese learners will produce two English consonants interchangeably because the two consonants, which form a minimal pair, have only one similar consonant in Chinese. For example, in Chinese the consonant [v] only appears as an allophone of [w], therefore, altering the two does not create a difference in meaning. In English pronunciation, Chinese students often mix up the English [v] and [w] and consequently articulate "village", as /'wɪlɪdʒ/ or articulate "window" as /'vɪndəʊ/.

Although some English consonants have counterparts in Chinese, the manner of articulation is very different in the two languages. Chinese learners often attempt to use the Chinese method of articulating the consonants to produce the English consonants. Because of this practice, native English speakers always perceive such pronunciation as accented even though it does not influence

intelligibility. Alveolar glide [r] is a problem of this kind. [r] is a consonant in Chinese phonology. When producing Chinese [r], the position of tongue is more forward and flatter compared to the position of tongue when producing it the English [r]. The Chinese [r] can be placed in both initial and final positions of a syllable. When it is placed in the final position in English it is a retroflex. When some Chinese learners try to imitate American English pronunciation, they add the retroflex [r] randomly at the end of a syllable. The added retroflex [r] moves the pronunciation of a previous syllable backwards in the mouth. Consequently, it is common to hear a Chinese student's erroneous pronunciation of "early" as /'ɜrlɪ/, which in fact does not need a retroflex even in American English.

Phonotactic problems

Not only do Chinese and English differ in phonemes, but the two languages are also different in terms of the combination of phonemes. In Chinese, each syllable commonly starts with a consonant and ends with a vowel, whereas in English a syllable can start with a consonant cluster and can end with either a vowel or a consonant. Due to this phonotactic distinction between the two languages, Chinese learners face difficulties when producing words ending with consonants.

Chinese learners tend to add a vowel after a stop consonant, such as after [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], and [g], as these consonants only appear in the initial spot in a Chinese syllable. For instance, Chinese students tend to pronounce "hot" as /'hɒtə/, "good" as /'gʊdə/, and "map" as /'mæpʊ/. An observation of Chinese students' pronunciation shows a tendency to add [ə] after [t], [d], [k], and [g], whereas they tend to add [ʊ] following [p] and [b]. This might be because there

are similar words pronounced as /tə/, /də/, /kə/, /gə/, /pʊ/, and /bʊ/ in Chinese. Similarly, since the Chinese consonant [l] is only articulated at the beginning of a syllable, Chinese students exhibit a tendency to replace final [l] with a vowel [ə]. As a result, the word "pool" is often confused with "poor".

Suprasegmental problems

Suprasegmental aspects of pronunciation deal with rhythm, stress, and intonation in pronunciation (Ohata, 2004). Comparing Chinese and English phonology, it is evident that the two languages have distinct features in terms of rhythm, stress, and intonation. These differences are discussed in turn and potential difficulties in pronunciation that result are also discussed.

Rhythm problems

Depending upon the types of rhythm presented in pronunciation, a language can be classified as either stress-timed or syllable-timed (Ladefoged, 1982; Ohata, 2004). In a stress-timed language, the production of stressed syllables takes the majority of time for completing a sentence. On the other hand, in a syllable-timed language, each syllable receives an equal amount of time for production. To be more specific, to articulate an English sentence, the amount of time for completion of the sentence depends largely on how many stressed syllables are in the sentence, as "the intervals between stressed syllables in speech are either equal or at least more nearly equal than the intervals between the nucleus of each successive syllable and next" (Matthews, 1997, p. 355). In contrast, the time taken to generate a Chinese sentence depends upon the total number of syllables, and all the syllables contribute to the recurring pattern of rhythm in a sentence. Often one can hear Chinese learners devote equal time to each syllable when speaking English,

and as a result using a syllable-timed rhythm to produce English can make speakers sound strange to English speakers.

Stress problems

Another sharp distinction between Chinese and English in terms of the suprasegmental aspects of their phonological systems has to do with tone and stress in the two languages. Chinese is a tonal language, which means that a high-low pitch pattern is associated with a Chinese morpheme permanently. In Mandarin Chinese, the same syllable can be pronounced in four different tones; these tones are the high-level tone, high-rising tone, low-rising tone, and high-falling tone. English is a stress accent language, which marks a stressed syllable by lengthening the vowel in that syllable. A change of stress in a word can even alter the part of speech of that word. The feature of stress in English poses a great challenge for Chinese learners of English. Learners tend to ignore stress when first learning how to pronounce a new word. Even with a known word, learners generally appear uncertain when marking the stress in multi-syllabic words. Some Chinese learners try very hard to memorize the stress of a particular word, while unaware that shifting the stress could alter the word's part of speech. For example, Chinese learners often say, "He broke the / rɪ'kɔ:d/" as opposed to "He broke the / 'rɛkɔ:d/. In order to overcome difficulties caused by the differences between a tonal language and a stress accent language, teachers of English learners, such as Chinese speakers, need to explain the differences explicitly and emphasize the importance of stress in English pronunciation.

Intonation problems

Although there are some similarities between Chinese and English in terms of intonation contour, differences can be found in

the intonation of the two languages. Both Chinese and English use final rising-falling intonation in sentences such as propositions, imperatives, and wh-questions. However, in Chinese the final rising-falling intonation is also applied to yes-no questions. In contrast, English uses a final rising intonation in a yes-no question. Under the influence of the mother tongue, Chinese learners normally speak a yes-no question with rising-falling intonation. Such a situation is especially common among learners at elementary levels. Under intensive training and drills from English teachers, students are very likely to get used to using rising intonation in yes-no questions. However, they sometimes over-generalize to include wh-questions as well. In fact, the most difficult types of questions, in terms of using appropriate intonation, for Chinese learners is alternative questions. Chinese learners either use falling intonation for both of the choices in those questions or speak with rising intonation for the two choices when generating alternative questions. Through practical training and repeated corrections made by English instructors, most Chinese learners are able to overcome this problem and articulate all types of questions with proper intonation when they reach the intermediate level and above.

Implications and conclusion

The current study presents contrastive analysis of phonological systems between Chinese and English and detailed examples of potential problem areas in English pronunciation among Chinese learners. The above information is valuable as it helps to raise awareness for English instructors of weaknesses in Chinese learners' pronunciation. Teachers could explain some of the major differences between the phonological systems to students, and they could also utilize the above information to design teaching materials, classroom activities, and practical pronunciation drills to address these areas (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Kelly, 2000).

To deal with segmental problems, such as difficult and problematic phonemes, teachers could use proverbs to drill students so that learners have ample opportunities to practice a few phonemes extensively (e.g. A friend in *need* is a friend *indeed*. *Haste makes waste*.) To effectively counter suprasegmental problems, such as rhyme, teachers could use an activity recommended by Dauer (1993) --- Rhythmic Grouping: Pausing and Linking. Teachers could select a short passage or a few unrelated sentences and ask students to put a “/” in where they think pauses should occur. Then teachers could compare students’ answers and offer more appropriate solutions. Finally, teachers could ask students to practice reading the passage or the sentences by paying attention to pausing. For stress problems, teachers could use activities such as listening for stressed words. Teachers can read out prepared sentences or play recordings and ask students to underline stressed words. Then teachers could ask students to read out the sentences themselves by paying special attention to stressed words (Chen, Fan, & Lin, 1996). Teachers should always try a variety of activities to make teaching English pronunciation interesting, such as reading aloud poems, song lyrics and jazz chants.

It should be pointed out that emphasizing good pronunciation by no means guarantees fluent spoken English and effective communication (Ohata, 2004). In order to maintain fluent communication, learners also need to be equipped with other kinds of knowledge and skills, such as grammar, vocabulary, communication strategies, and discourse knowledge.

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Teaching Notes

Responding to Writing

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When you write, you are a writer. When students write, they are writers. Some writers are more skilled than others, but regardless of skill, writers at any level deserve to have their writing treated respectfully.

How you respond to writing is important. Too often teachers respond first to the glaring errors in a student's paper and not to the message the writer is trying to share. A paper full of red question marks, circles and arrows is both confusing and disheartening. Following are suggestions for responding to students' papers that show respect for the writer and help move students forward in their writing skills.

1. Don't pick up a pencil before reading the paper because you might be tempted to use it. You would very likely be reacting to errors rather than responding to the ideas (Raimes, 1983).
2. Read the whole piece of writing through once before you respond. Matsuda and Cox (2011) caution that "...if a paper isn't read to the end, the reader may miss out on information that could clarify the meaning or organization of the paper" (p. 11).
3. Respond to what is interesting about the content. Ask questions about content and meaning. Be genuinely interested in finding out more. If there are things in the paper that are unclear ask, "What do you mean here?"; "Can you give me some ex-
- amples?" Ask questions specific to the topic that will help the writer articulate ideas more clearly. Focus on what the writing communicates to you. Writing is about communicating ideas. Research supports responding to those ideas before responding to problems with form. In a multi-draft, process-oriented writing class, a response that focuses on content should come first (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Zamel, 1985). One of my favorite quotes about responding to writing comes from Paul Diederich (1974) who wrote, "...noticing and praising whatever a student does well improves writing more than any kind or amount of correction of what he does badly."
4. Look for the strengths in the writing and let the writer know what they are (Raimes, 1983). Give specific praise, for example: "These particular words you've chosen really help me get a clear picture."; "This paper is very easy to follow because you've organized it like this..."; "Your first sentence grabs my attention and makes me want to read more"; "The examples you gave helped me understand this part of your paper." Again, be genuine. You don't have to comment on everything, just what strikes you as real strengths of the writing. I have noticed that when I make students aware of specific things they have done well, I see those same attributes in subsequent papers. When there are multiple errors in grammar and mechanics, it is easy to

overlook the strengths of the paper (the ideas, the flow of the text, or the rich word choice). Hernández (2001) suggests that teachers focus on the strengths and avoid concentrating solely on writing deficiencies.

5. Respond to higher-order concerns: coherence, cohesiveness, content, organization, and global errors before addressing lower-order concerns such as punctuation, spelling and sentence structure. Nothing is more discouraging than to have someone ignore what you're trying to say and instead point out that you've misspelled something or put a comma in the wrong place. English language learners don't need to have full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar before tackling writing concerns such as audience, purpose, ideas, and organization (Hernández, 2001). Additionally, some errors in grammar and mechanics simply disappear during revision of content and organization. Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) provides a useful handout about higher and lower-order concerns in writing for students to use during the revision process. Teachers and writing tutors can also benefit from the information outlined in it.
6. Respond to a few local errors and lower-order concerns. After you've responded to purpose, content, clarity, organization, logic, relevance, transitions, etc. and the writer has revised, you can move on to mechanical errors: spelling, punctuation, structure and other errors that do not affect overall comprehensibility. Guide students to self-correct, to use tools such as dictionaries, spell checks, punctuation guides, grammar books and online resources. Kazule and Lunga (2010) note "that students appreciate the role of self-editing in minimizing errors in their texts and that it helps in eventually producing well-written texts" (p. 61). They

suggest that error detection and aid in making corrections can come from a number of different resources including the teacher, peers, or computers. If many students are making the same error, consider a mini-lesson.

7. Give clear directions on how to improve the paper. In reviewing research on feedback specificity, Ravand and Rasekh (2011) found that specific feedback that guides the learner on how to improve or correct the writing was more effective than just pointing out the errors. The research indicates that students learn more and are more motivated to make changes in their writing when provided with details on how to improve the paper. This is true in working through both higher and lower-order concerns.
8. End with a positive comment about the paper that will help motivate and encourage the writer in revising. A balance of offering constructive steps in making improvements and giving specific positive feedback serves to encourage L2 learners to revise their papers thoughtfully and carefully.

Responding to writing is part of the teaching process and must be done with care and respect for the individual learner. Research on providing optimal feedback to L2 writers continues. In the meantime, these simple steps provide us with some tools to respond effectively and respectfully.

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Defining Unknown Words From Listening **Beth Sheppard, University of Oregon**

I teach oral skills to IEP students in their last term before entering the university, and listening is often a bigger challenge for this group than speaking. When students reflect on why listening is difficult for them, one of their most frequent comments concerns vocabulary: “The speaker uses too many words that I don’t know.”

When listening, just as when reading, students need to accept some ambiguity and search for the main idea even in the face of a certain proportion of unknown words. Sometimes, however, students determine that a certain unknown word is important to their

comprehension of the passage, and they should look it up. Here, the situation of a listener is different than that of a reader. It is easy enough to look up a word seen in print, but how can students look up an unknown word that they hear, if they don’t know how to spell it?

Since students often face this situation, it seemed worth considering. In order to look up an unknown word from oral input, students first need a strong understanding of English orthography to make a reasonable guess at the spelling. When using the dictionary, making a good guess at the beginning of

the word is the most important part. Secondly, students need to know how to use the tools at their disposal to refine their guess to the written form of the word. Finally, once students look up the word they think they have heard they need to be able to use their global understanding of the co-text to check the result to see if the definition they have found makes sense.

This term, I had my students do a brief exercise to practice and develop all of the skills mentioned above. I start by selecting three to five words from sublists 9 and 10 of the Academic Word List (AWL). The words on these last two sublists are more infrequent and, therefore, likely unknown to all or most students in the class, but still likely to be useful to my students in their future studies. I ask my students to take out their phones or other electronic dictionaries.

I then dictate my short list of words, repeating each one three or four times. Students try to write what they hear. Then they put their best guess into their dictionary. If this guess is not a word, the phone will suggest possible corrections. I walk around the class and check on progress, repeating the words for individual students at their request. Occasionally I will offer a clue (e.g. “How else can you spell the /f/ sound?” “Try it with two Cs instead of the X.”).

When most students have found most of the words on the list, pairs compare their results and tell each other the definitions of the words they have found. Then I say a simple sentence for each word and ask pairs to

discuss how their definitions fit the context and then paraphrase the sentence using synonyms for the new word. Finally, I confirm the answers.

Another option is to copy or post simple sentences with blanks for potentially unknown words (e.g. “I am confused because this is an _____ (ambiguous) situation.”). Then I read the whole sentence a few times at a natural rate and students fill in the missing words, following the steps mentioned above. This variation allows students to check the meaning of the word as part of the process of considering possible written forms. It also requires students to perceive the unknown word in connected speech, which is a challenging but more realistic task.

It is best to repeat this activity throughout the term, and to make sure to give students opportunities to discuss strategies and reflect on what they learn about listening and about orthography in the process. The whole activity can be done in 5-15 minutes, depending on the number of words dictated, so it can easily fit into lulls or transitions during class. I find it helpful because it helps students better use the tools available to them, and it increases their confidence in their listening skills as they prepare to study at the university.

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Screencasts: Zero-budget Lessons for Everyone

Brendan DeCoster

Screencasting offers a zero-budget opportunity to create videos with narration which can be published to the internet on YouTube or other platforms, thus allowing students easy access to class content on their own time. A screencast is a video recording of what is shown on a computer monitor. Thus, a screencast shows exactly what the mouse is doing, what is being typed, what links are being clicked, and anything else that the computer user is doing. Because of this, it is possible to show, step-by-step, various grammar exercises, formatting exercises, explanations of readings, and many other topics as well, provided that they lend themselves to a visual representation. Essentially, a screencast can be thought of as the computer projection behind the teacher as he or she is teaching (though there is definitely the possibility to explore other avenues of instruction).

In recent times, Khan Academy, an online learning/tutoring tool, has notably created entire courses out of screencasts (Young, 2010), which several school districts have started to use to complement their in-person teaching. The best part of these

videos is that they can be adapted to any class, any level, any situation, any budget, and require very little prep. There have been very positive initial reactions and results to the incorporation of screencasts in teaching (Jordan, Loch, Lowe, Mestel, Willkins, 2012). Although there has been little research into the effectiveness of language learning using screencasts, there has been a great deal of research suggesting that screencasts aid in the learning of many other subjects (2012). See Figure 1.

Every screencast begins with a script of the content to be covered and the exercises which will be included in the practice of the content. It is best to create this script in MS Word or an equivalent so that the content can be easily copied into other programs. Once this script has been written, it remains for the teacher to decide whether to continue to use MS Word or to copy the content into another program such as Power Point. At this point, it is very important to create each step of how the content will be taught, since it is best to separate lesson content into sections of the document or presentation.

When creating a screencast, it is important to consider the following questions:

- 1. What are the details of the content I wish to teach?*
- 2. How can I explain this content both verbally and visually?*
- 3. How can I allow students to practice and interact with this content?*
- 4. How can I allow students to check, on their own, how accurately they have performed and mastered this content?*
- 5. What programs can I use to create the lesson?*

(see Sugar, Brown, & Luterbach 2010)

Figure 1

Next, it is time to record the screencast. This requires a microphone connection and a program to record the screen. Most easily, QuickTime can be used, as shown in Figure 2. However, another commonly used program is Jing, which you can download at <http://www.techsmith.com/jing.html>. Both are available free of charge. Simply press the record button and begin recording according to the script.

Once this is complete, review the recording and decide whether it is acceptable. If it is, publish the recording to YouTube or the Jing server (Small, 2010), using your login credentials. Once this has been done, provide students the URL for the pertinent link.

This is all that needs to be done. With most devices, your content will be readily accessible and reviewable. This provides students the opportunity to view and review your content as many times as they wish, enhancing instruction and allowing more effective learning.

Example

Please feel free to observe the following example of an ESL screencast:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKFc57KGN9M>

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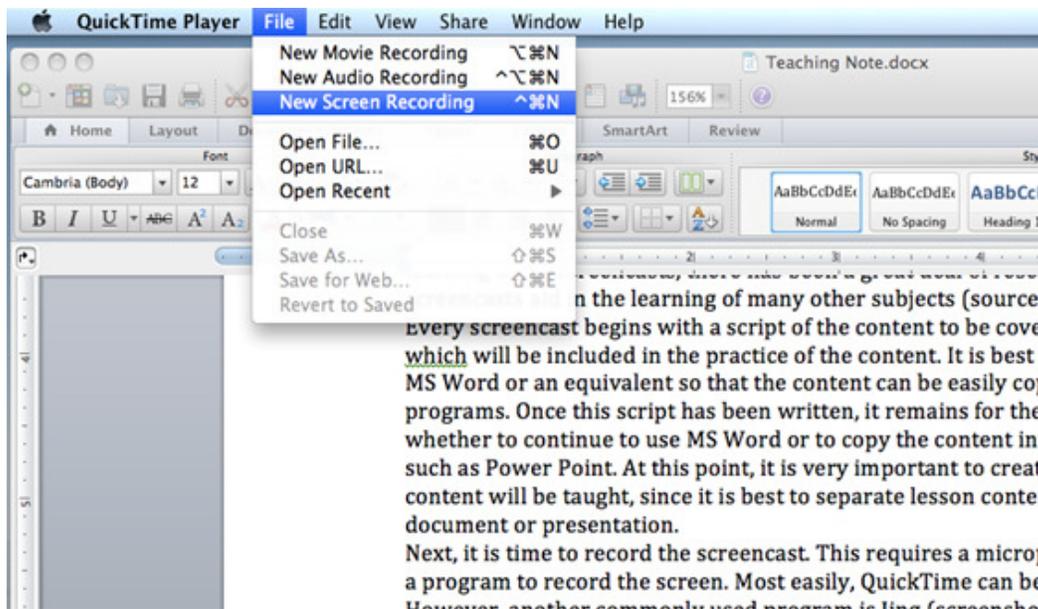


Figure 2

Young, J. (2010, June 6). College 2.0: A self-appointed teacher runs a one-man 'academy' on YouTube. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/A-Self-Appointed-Teacher-Runs/65793/>

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Software Review: Sharendipity

Ibtesam Hussein & Maysoun Ali, Washington State University

Sharendipity.com is a website that can be used by teachers and students alike helping users to create interactive games and web applications that they can share with others through social networking sites. The site provides users with free creation tools found inside the browser. In addition, this website provides the user with the chance to create learning materials in the section that is concerned with education, which, in turn, develops and strengthens different types of literacies for users. According to Lankshear and Knobel (2006) new literacies could be defined and related to three types: cultural, critical and technological literacies Therefore, they argue that individuals need to be socialized into new literacy practices in order to be able to participate effectively and productively. In addition, Coiro (2003) asserts that new literacies should be highly engaging for learners to motivate them to learn and foster their learning. Thus, the website could be a useful source for teachers who want to engage students in the technological literacy learning process.

Evaluation of the Main Features

Sharendipity.com provides the user with many opportunities to apply critical thinking skills. In fact, the website allows

users to create their own applications (including games, widgets, and education tools) from scratch. When users design their own games and widgets, they have to think critically before selecting among different game creation tools offered by the website. This requires users to question, compare, and evaluate the effectiveness of tools as they create. For games, users might create a Scramble Puzzle Game in which they can add their own images and choose how many rows and columns they want to include in a scrambled version. Again, students or teachers can use this to enhance and develop technological literacies.

Additionally, Sharendipity.com provides users with ample opportunities to interact, cooperate and collaborate with each other in order to create and develop. In fact, the website is connected to social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs, in which users can argue, discuss, and comment on products that they or other users create. It also helps students create games that are tailored to their learning needs that they might then share with other learners.

There are several features that make Sharendipity.com engaging and contribute

to online literacy development. For example, users can create their own games from scratch, cooperate with fellow students in creating game kits, or create templates that others can further develop. Additionally, what makes the site engaging is its simplicity. That is to say, it is clutter-free focusing on necessary, but not superfluous, content. In addition, it does not have any distracters such as advertisements and images that hinder the visitor from focusing on the important icons on the page.

Conclusion

Sharendipity.com provides users with the opportunity to be creative by building and creating interactive web applications. In addition to the creativity aspect of the website, Sharendipity.com connects its users with each other through diverse social networks in which users can evaluate, comment on, or exchange their applications. Since there is a section for creating learning games, teachers can encourage their students to log in and try to create a game related to what they have been taught in the class. For example, if the lesson presented is about the imperative form of the verb, the teacher can direct students to follow the instructions on the website to create a certain game. By doing so, students practice using the imperative both by following the instructions given and creating their own game's instructions. One shortcoming of the website is that it is based more on creating and playing social games. Thus, ESL teachers must have technological adept learners with Internet access in or

out of the classroom. Overall, Sharendipity.com is unique in the sense that it fits the interests of a large group of teachers, learners and educators.

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