



Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario

Volume 29, No. 2
Spring Special Issue 2003

Publication number 40038620

Special Research Symposium Issue

Acknowledgements

TESL Ontario would like to acknowledge the support it received for organizing the Research Symposia and for the publication of these proceedings.

*The Ontario Ministry of Education
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
TESL Ontario Conference Committee
The Participants in the Research Symposium
Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario*

Committees

*The Contact Editorial Committee
Brigid Kelso (Editor), Robert Courchêne, Jacqui Jeffers, Heather Saunders*

*The Reading Committee
Judith Bond, Workplace Training & Services, Inc.
Heather Lotherington, York University
Hedy McGarrell, Brock University
Mari Wesche, University of Ottawa*

Foreword

It is again our pleasure to offer you the Proceedings of the Third Annual Research Symposium, part of the 30th Annual TESL Ontario Conference held in Toronto in November, 2002. Our previous publications have been well received; articles from their papers are assigned on a regular basis in TESL courses in Ontario and across Canada and are cited frequently in academic journals. Anecdotal evidence from our members has also confirmed the important contribution we are making to the field in publishing such proceedings. They help keep our members current in terms of new developments in the field of L2 teaching and learning. TESL Ontario appreciates the fact that both Citizenship and Immigration Ontario (Ontario Access to Settlement and Information Services) and the Ontario Ministry of Education have continued to fund this project. We are hope that it will become an annual part of our conference.

In establishing the Research Symposium and publishing its proceedings, our objective was to focus on issues of importance to our members. As ESL professionals, we have heavy teaching loads, lesson preparation, marking and administrative duties; consequently, we rarely have an opportunity to attend Research Symposia and ponder recent developments in our field. This issue is meant to provide us the possibility of doing so.

As in past years, four themes form the focus of this symposium issue: Reading and Writing; LINC; Technology and Evaluation. These themes were selected in response to the expressed needs of our membership and also to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the implementation of the LINC program in Ontario. In different ways, they all represent challenges that language teachers and administrators are facing now and will face in the foreseeable future. We certainly hope that you will enjoy reading the research presented in this volume and that it will be a source of new ideas for your teaching.

We would like to thank all the researchers who participated in the symposia and, particularly those who took the time from their busy schedules to write and submit articles.

I would like to thank Sharon Rajabi, Co-Chair of the Symposium, the Reading Committee, the Conference Chair and her Committee, the Contact Editor and the Editorial Support Committee for their assistance. I trust that you find these proceedings an enjoyable and informative read.

Robert Courchêne
Guest Editor

Contact is going on-line!

This is the **last** regular issue of *Contact* that is being mailed out to all members. The next issue of *Contact* will be available on-line as of July 30, 03. For this purpose, we have set up a member's only page, available to all TESL Ontario members only, where they can access issues of *Contact* as well as checking out contributions by other members such as sample lesson plans, activities, etc. In order to access this page, members need to follow these instructions:

1. Go to <http://www.teslontario.org/mem/corner.html> or click on Members, then Members' Corner on the main TESL Ontario page.
2. Click on **Members Set up your user id and password!** to set up your user id and password.
3. Once you have received confirmation that your user id and password has been set up successfully, click on **Sign in Here!**
4. You are then able to print current or back issues of *Contact*.

If you are unable to access the Members' Corner page or retrieve the current issue of *Contact* on-line, please contact the TESL Ontario office at 416 593 4243 for a print copy to be mailed to you.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Foreword	2
Preface	4
Theme 1: LINC: A Behind the Scenes Look	
<i>Barbara Burnaby</i> : ESL for Adults and the Status of Those Who Teach Them	11
<i>Hanna Cabaj</i> : A School Board's Perspective: Toronto Catholic District School Board	18
<i>Carolyn Cohen</i> : From Art to Science with Art: LINC Assessor as ESL Professional	21
<i>Elisete Bettencourt</i> : LINC Then and Now: 10-Year Anniversary	25
Theme 2: Teaching Reading and Writing: More than Meets the Eye	
<i>Patricia Raymond</i> : The New Literacy L1/L2	29
<i>Alistair Cumming</i> : What Are Students' Goals for Improving Their ESL Writing?	34
<i>Susan Parks</i> : Reconstructing Research on Writing from within an Activity System Perspective: The Game Board Project	38
<i>Valia Spiliotopoulos</i> : Fostering Interactive Academic Writing Using Electronic Bulletin Boards	48
Theme 3: Technology: What is Possible?	
<i>Louise Paoli de Prisco</i> : Integration of Online Computer Technology in the L2 Classroom in a Technology-Rich School	69
<i>Aline Germain-Rutherford</i> : Teaching and Learning Oral Communication in a Distance-Learning Setting: A Case Study	74
Theme 4: Evaluation: Do Scores Tell the Whole Story	
<i>Nick Elson</i> : Ethical Considerations in ESL Assessment and Evaluation	90
<i>Jennifer St. John</i> : Oral Proficiency Test Design, Techniques and Evaluation	97
<i>Doreen Bayliss</i> : How Well Do Official Writing Scores Predict Performance?	105

Preface

Building a research symposium around themes allows for a multi-perspective examination of selected topics. Researchers, working within their individual, yet connected space share insights, raise concerns, and identify future problems to be studied. Collaboratively, they advance our knowledge in given areas and challenge us to see possible connections between their work and our classroom practice. As in past years, we choose four themes for our symposium - Reading and Writing, LINC, Technology, and Evaluation - and invited researchers, principally from Ontario, but also other areas of Canada, to share the fruits of their scholarly labour with us. The result was a very stimulating and relevant three days of symposia. Of the 16 presentations that comprised the symposia, 13 are presented in this volume.

Theme I: LINC: A Behind the Scenes Look

As mentioned above, 2002 marked the 10th anniversary of the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomer Canadians) program. To celebrate this event, we invited four speakers - a CIC representative, a researcher, an assessor, and a LINC program administrator to talk about their experiences in the program. In the first article, *ESL for Adults and the Status of Those Who Teach Them*, Barbara Burnaby provides a historical overview of the various ESL programs for adult immigrants along with the concomitant development of TESL training programs for instructors. She points out that until WWII, ESL for adults was mostly undertaken by charitable organizations. Then waves of new immigrants arrived in Ontario in response to economic changes. As a result, the government was faced with the challenge of providing language training for these new Canadians. In the 1960's, experienced workers from the volunteer sector and school teachers became the core of a growing number of recognized professional ESL teachers. By the 1970's, a complex network of programs, including a new three-part Ministry of Education Additional Qualifications program for ESL, was developed and offered at various Ontario institutions. These programs turned out a new breed of instructor-specialists in the teaching of ESL. This drive toward improved training and professionalization also spawned TESL Ontario and its annual TESL Conference.

Burnaby continues her history by describing the roles the Ontario and federal governments played in

creating various programs to meet the needs of newly arriving immigrants (e.g., Continuing Education, CILT, Settlement Language Training Program) culminating in the creation of LINC in 1992 by the federal government. This program, currently funded by the federal government and administered by CIC (OASIS) in Ontario, now accounts for 39% of all ESL teaching in the province (Power Analysis, 1998). Over the decade of its existence, the program has been modified to meet the needs of its changing clientele. Burnaby concludes her historical overview by stating that the success of this program and the need for quality control and accountability have led to important developments: The creation of the Centre for the Canadian Language Benchmarks, the writing and publishing of the *Canadian Language Benchmarks*, (national proficiency standards for ESL) and, finally, certification programs for instructors in LINC programs at both the provincial and national levels. While a number of challenges remain in the future, the progress has been encouraging.

In the second article, *A School Board's Perspective: Toronto Catholic District School Board*, Hanna Cabaj provides us with an historical overview of the major accomplishments as well as the challenges her board has faced in the delivery of various types of LINC programs since their creation in 1992. She begins by outlining the two modes of delivery - direct agreements between the TCDSB and CIC, and co-sponsored programs: communities having delivery agreements with CIC but subcontracting the language instruction to the TCDSB. In either format the contracting agency is responsible for all aspects of the program from its administration to intake and placement of students to reporting to CIC. As well, Cabaj points out that both models have their advantages and problems such as areas of responsibility, and duplication of costs. In the next section, she describes other settlement support services such as HOST and the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) which, though not offered by the TCDSB, are by other community organizations to new immigrants. In the last sections of the paper, she lists some of the contracts in which her board has been involved - curriculum design, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), LERN, the benefits of undertaking such projects, milestones in the delivery of LINC and, finally, challenges for the future - standardizing contracts, long-term negotiation agreements, etc. In an appendix, Cabaj presents data related to the TCDSB's participation in LINC from 1992 to 2002.

In her article entitled, *From Art to Science with Art: LINC Assessor as ESL Professional*, Carolyn Cohen traces the evolution of the role of language assessors and assessment centres within the LINC program over the last 10 years. At the outset, Cohen points out that assessors were co-opted ESL professionals who practiced more art than science in the placement of students within programs and classes. In a short 10 years this has changed radically with the establishment of assessment centres and the Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) test, which is administered in 48 centres across Canada. The development of the CLBA also led to the establishment of minimum qualifications for assessors and the creation of assessor training programs. These two developments, according to Cohen, have been important steps in transforming assessment from art to science.

In the next sections of the paper, she outlines the ongoing participation of LINC assessors in professional development, their role in LINC programs beyond the assessment and placement of students (liaison, marketing, information officer, greeter, counsellor), and finally their planning and advisory roles on various committees through partnerships with community organizations and in formulating policy regarding language assessment.

She concludes by providing us with a LINC assessors' wish list (e.g., Guidelines for Assessment Centres) while at the same time insisting that assessment has been, and remains, a dynamic blend of art, 'imaginative skill applied to design' and science.

In the last article, *LINC Then and Now: 10-Year Anniversary*, Elisete Bettencourt, Program Consultant for OASIS, uses existing records and anecdotal accounts to describe the 10-year evolution of the LINC program in Ontario from the perspective of the funding agency. In the first part of her article, Bettencourt presents a brief history of how Canada provided for new immigrants, beginning with those already settled here, providing support to newcomers, to companies such as the Hudson's Bay, CPR and CNR, to our present day ministries that offer a wide range of support services. The LINC program was launched in 1992 to support the integration of new immigrants by providing language training and an introduction to the values, rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship. After a rocky start, Bettencourt states that "community partnerships developed, and support for LINC grew".

In the next section of her paper, she outlines the services offered to, and the eligibility requirements for, those being admitted to LINC: Only adult landed Immigrants or those legally allowed in Canada can be

admitted for training for periods of up to three years of full time training. She then briefly examines the role LINC assessment has played in the program in terms of providing standardized measures of assessment, more accurate placement procedures, the training of skilled assessors and the development of reliable and valid assessment instruments (CLBA and CLBLA). In support of assessment and placement, CIC has also funded the development of the Automatic Reservation System (ARS) to track the placement and progress of students in LINC Programs.

In the last two sections, she outlines changes that have taken place over the last 10 years (e.g., expansion of LINC from Levels 1 through 3 to 4 and 5, higher educational levels of clientele, the changing source countries) and possible changes for the future (e.g., implementation of new childminding requirements, new LINC 1-5 guidelines, TESL Ontario certification of LINC instructors). According to Bettencourt, while the changes may be unpredictable, LINC has the flexibility to meet them.

Theme 2: Teaching Reading and Writing: More than Meets the Eye

The four papers presented under this theme focus principally on writing, with the exception of the first by Patricia Raymond entitled, *The New Literacy L1/L2*. In her paper, Raymond "focuses on the New Literacy, on shifts in research perspectives, on theories about literacy, on how these shifts have influenced current research in second language reading and finally on the concept of multiliteracies which is an extension of the NL". In the first section of her paper, she presents an overview of the definitions of the NL. According to Raymond, NL is only new in the sense that it has integrated the insights from language across the curriculum, reader-response theory and whole language into a dynamic new theory that emphasizes the students' experience with the text and the shared, socio-cultural nature of reading. Reading is not an isolated activity. This view, as she points out, is not shared by all reading theorists, especially those who see it as a cognitive activity, "a private act...the least sociable of human activities".

This new view of what literacy is has also had an effect on the types of reading research being conducted. Using the research of Heath (1983) and Scollon et al. (1997), Raymond shows how reading researchers are now interested in studying subjects in natural "messy" contexts, and that to capture the true nature of the reading process one must examine it in the social contexts in which it is enacted. Antiseptic, highly con-

trolled studies cannot capture the complexity that is reading. In the last two sections of her paper, NL and L2 Reading and Multiliteracies, Raymond presents studies that examine L2 reading from a social and cultural construction perspective and discusses the development of a pedagogy of multiliteracies - "one which focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. In this new perspective, all learning is seen as multimodal".

Alistair Cumming in, *What Are Students' Goals for Improving Their ESL Writing?*, provides a brief description of the theoretical framework he and his research team have developed to examine the nature and role of goals in L2 students' writing. In the first section of this paper, he lists a number of reasons why "understanding the goals that students have for improving their writing is crucial for teachers, curriculum planners, and learners themselves"; i.e., goals form the basis for motivation and for strategies, ESL writing cannot be explained easily. In the next section, using 'Tommy' as exemplary subject, he describes the framework for his research and reports on some of the findings to date. The study involved 44 adults who were interviewed concerning their goals for writing improvement. In the interview process, goals, which needed to be expressed as fully stated propositions, took the form of intentions (wants to be accomplished), dilemmas (problems to be solved) and outcomes (goals to be achieved).

In researching goals, Cumming insists on the importance of realizing that students often have a wide range of goals and that they take different actions (e.g., asking teachers, peers) in trying to realize them. Of equal importance is understanding the contexts in which students act on their goals. Cumming, harkening back to what Raymond presented in her paper, also draws our attention to how social context contributes to the nature of goals. Finally, as part of his study, researchers are focussing on the origin of goals and who takes responsibility for them. The paper concludes with possible pedagogical implications of the research: specifically, how teachers conceive goals for fostering students' development in writing.

In the third article, *Reconstructing Research on Writing from within an Activity System Perspective: The Game Board Project*, Susan Parks, Dian Huot, Josiane Hamers and France Lemonnier (henceforth Parks et al.), working within the same perspective as Cumming and Raymond, describe a research project that was carried out with a group of grade 8 francophone students in a Quebec high school. After reviewing the trends in reading research over the last 30 years, the authors explain why they have chosen to use Engeström's

Activity System based on the genre work of Miller (1984) and the research of Vygotsky (1978): "as a theory it suggests a relationship between the way an individual (a subject) orients to an activity, the means (tools) to carry it out, and the resultant outcomes". Within such a framework, the role of the subject situated in a given context is central to the writing process. The unit of analysis for research is the activity and the various interactions it generates.

The activity described in the paper is the creation of a game/gameboard, in this particular case, one based on an Austin Powers movie, with accompanying documentation and rules for the game. During the study, two teams were observed and video-taped on an intensive basis. All participants in the study had laptop computers, as the researchers were also interested in examining the impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on students during the activity. In conducting their research, the authors focused on three principal lines of inquiry: 1) the relationship between teachers' conceptualization of teaching and classroom practice; 2) text production and writing as socially mediated practice; and 3) issues of student investment in writing tasks and their outcomes.

Results from the study indicated that the teachers' beliefs about writing had a direct effect on classroom practice in terms of rules, the construal of community and the division of labour; differences in beliefs result in differences in classroom practice. In terms of how participants appropriate the various materials and psychological tools available to them in order to create text *in situ*, the researchers identified four types of classroom collaboration: joint (two writers assuming equal responsibility for a text, parallel (two writers working on the same text but with unequal contributions), incidental (spur-of-the-moment requests for help) and covert (information from documents or other previously used resources). In most projects, including this one, the students used more than one form of collaboration. Finally, in terms of student investment, the researchers found that the type and degree of commitment to a project was influenced by both linguistic and non-linguistic factors but that factors related to commitment need further research.

In the last article, *Fostering Interactive Academic Writing Using Electronic Bulletin Boards*, Valia Spiliotopoulos "reports on an action research project that assessed whether using electronic bulletin boards was effective in improving academic writing through on-line interaction among low-advanced students at the English Language Institute at the University of British Columbia". In the study, she addresses three

questions: the effectiveness of the electronic bulletin board in promoting student interaction, the effect of reflection and interaction on student writing, and, finally, students' perceptions of the relationship between their writing improvement and the use of electronic bulletin boards. Her review of the literature reveals that for interaction through networked technologies to be successful, one has to create communities of learning in the classroom that encourage students to problem solve, to scaffold activities and tasks together, and to peer and self-evaluate in a constructive manner. In addition, research has shown that on-line technology provides students with time to reflect, and to develop metacognitive awareness and advanced grammatical competence. According to Spiliotopoulos, what was lacking in the previous research was the use of both experimental and control groups as well as the use of quantitative methods for analyzing the effectiveness of CALL tasks. This became the focus of her study.

Using control (N = 25) and experimental groups (N = 18) drawn from students enrolled in an Essay Writing Course (520W) at the English Language Institute, she set up the three-month study. Students in the experimental groups used WebCT software; as well, they spent one of the four 100-minute weekly classes in the lab. Assignments included essay and journal writing, peer and self-correction, and participation in groups set up by the professor. Students were also given a pre- and -post writing exam and were invited to participate in an interview at the end of the course.

Results indicated that there was frequent and varied interaction among students; the electronic bulletin boards allowed students to obtain clarification and explanation of tasks, to engage in reflective and meaningful interaction with their peers and to offer and receive feedback from their peers and professor. The instructor's comments on their essays enhanced the quality of the feedback they could give their peers. Although there were no significant differences in the quantitative gain scores of the two groups, the qualitative results indicated that the experimental groups showed a greater improvement in peer review and editing skills and aimed for a greater degree of accuracy, formality and sophistication in their writing. These same students also indicated that they had improved in a number of other areas: revision, vocabulary, grammar, etc., in increased participation in the writing process and heightened levels of motivation and confidence.

After discussing the results, the author concludes the paper with a series of implications for the teaching of writing, namely, the importance of the teacher's role in structuring and responding to tasks, the extra time

required for them to learn and use the courseware as well as adjustments in how they perceive their role.

Theme 3: Technology: What is Possible?

Technology has been a recurring theme in our Research Symposium. The rapid developments in hardware along with the increased application of technology to the field of L2 learning and teaching have generated an ongoing interest in this theme. Of the four papers presented at the symposium, only two have been included in this issue; the first focuses on fostering the use of technology in the L2 classroom, and the second is a study on the technology used to teach a distance-learning oral French course.

In the first paper, *Integration of Online Computer Technology in the L2 Classroom in a Technology-Rich School*, Louise Paoli de Prisco examines why the availability and support for technology did not automatically translate into its application in the L2 classroom. After presenting the context of her study at Lakefield College, a technology-rich networked school in which every student and teacher has a laptop and technology is supported by four full-time professional staff, she questions why many of the L2 teachers were not embracing technology, as was the case with teachers in other disciplines. To answer this, she undertook a study focusing on two principal research questions: 1) How do the L2 teachers use technology in their classrooms?, and 2) Do L2 teachers believe online technology supports learning and, if so, how?

To answer these questions, she interviewed teachers in the Modern Languages Department (N = 4) concerning their beliefs about L2 acquisition, the role of computers as a teaching tool and, finally, the teachers' own experience at Lakefield with computer use focusing on online forums. From her interviews, a number of issues were identified in relation to the first research question: 1) the challenge of monitoring student use in class, 2) the amount of time students spend isolating, rather than interacting with other students, 3) the technological problems, 4) the time required to find and prepare suitable websites, and 5) the lack of knowledge about teaching L2 with computers. In terms of forum use, the teachers had all tried it but doubted its usefulness as a teaching tool, with teachers indicating that they preferred face-to-face interaction with their students.

Paoli de Prisco discovers that the usual reasons teachers given in research for hesitating to integrate technology in the classroom did not apply in this technology-rich school. The teachers had the technol-

ogy, knew how to use it and had the support. Then, why the resistance? At a professional development day held at the school, the answer became apparent - it is not enough to show teachers how to use technology in the classroom; they must be shown how to apply it to their specific discipline areas and this application must be supported by peer coaching and collaboration among the discipline-specific teachers (the two main recommendations of the study). She concludes her study by stating, "Even teachers with positive attitudes towards the computer's potential in the classroom require specific guidance and professional development on how to harness that potential in the context of teaching a second language".

In the second article, *Teaching and Learning Oral Communication in a Distance Learning Setting: A Case Study*, Aline Germain-Rutherford reports on a two-part study that describes the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools and information and communication technologies to build an interactive teaching/learning environment fostering oral communication amongst participants at different sites. French 524, French Oral Proficiency, was offered in the Spring of 2000 and the Fall of 2001 as a distance-learning course with each session opening and closing with an intensive weekend together to build group solidarity and to encourage interaction among the participants over the duration of the course. A number of distance-education technologies for synchronous and asynchronous interaction were used by the students and professor: videoconferencing, electronic mail, several components of WebCT (a web-based course management system) such as the forum and the on-line chat rooms were used as well as WinPitchLTL, specialized software to teach oral expression and pronunciation at a distance. Based on the evaluation completed at the end of the first phase, measures were implemented to enhance and fine-tune the distance education capability, in particular, with web-based instruction and videoconferencing.

The main objective of the course was to teach linguistic and socio-cultural skills of oral and written communication in professional situations, with a particular emphasis given to oral communication as the course prepared the students for an eight-week (minimum) internship abroad in a French-speaking international organization whose work was directly related to the student's chosen area of specialization. Germain-Rutherford points out that the decision to offer the oral proficiency course using distance education was initially predicated on the success of CMC in other areas of L2 learning (e.g., writing).

Evaluations (on-line questionnaires and live group discussions) at the end of the first course clearly indicated that the learning environment for this course was totally new to the students. They did not take advantage of the Discussion Forum to interact with each other to enhance their learning on a regular basis; as well, though they were familiar with the tools, they were not utilized to capacity; finally, they felt strongly about the importance of the face-to-face intensive weekends.

In reaction to the evaluation, three important changes were made for the second course in the fall of 2001: more interaction during video conferencing, more structure in the forums and more metacognitive mechanisms to reinforce autonomous learning. Using excerpts from the students' on-line activities, Germain-Rutherford clearly demonstrates how these changes were very successful in increasing the effectiveness of the course in terms of the level of student interaction, student satisfaction and overall learning. By the end of the second course, students began taking charge of the videoconferencing sessions, became more autonomous, and developed an ability to analyze their own performance and to act upon it. "Overall, the performance of the students in the second phase was of a much higher quality, due, in part, to more meaningful interactions in the forums to build knowledge and stronger abilities to reflect on one's learning process and to act upon it".

Theme 4: Evaluation: Do Scores Tell the Whole Story?

Evaluation, as was mentioned by Cohen (this volume), has not only been an important part of LINC, it has also played a significant role in L2 learning and teaching, in general. It is certainly an area that is not without controversy and disagreement – the "who", "what", "why", "how" and "for whom" of assessment are constantly being debated, especially in high-stake contexts such as admission to post-secondary institutions, immigration, certification and credentialing. When a person's livelihood depends on evaluators' decisions, ensuring the reliability and validity of the test instruments must be an overarching priority.

Three papers dealing with very different, yet relevant aspects of evaluation comprise this section: ethical issues, design and evaluation issues in oral testing, and the relation between scores (writing) on standardized tests and actual performance. In the first article, *Ethical Considerations in ESL Assessment and Evaluation*, Nick Elson examines ethical considerations in the evaluative aspects of daily teaching, research, and adminis-

tration and suggests that the situations many of us work in present ethical dilemmas that defy neat resolution. His paper purports that effective teaching can only occur if there is fairness, accountability and respect for the learner. Elson then talks about ethics and its importance in all areas of human activity. In education, the demand for evaluation based on accountability has placed teachers in the difficult position of having to make high-stake decisions in regard to their students, often without the benefit of a clearly defined series of guidelines. To make such decisions, Elson proposes the adoption of a reflective and critical stance by all involved in education, from students to teachers to administrators to assessors. For ESL students, this means the creation of equitable and fair learning environments.

To add credence to these issues, Elson presents the results of a study that examined the evaluation of ESL students who found themselves in mainstream classrooms. Such students are constantly reminded that they are “learners”, that they are “on the way but not there”. In terms of their assignments, they are evaluated on both the language and content of their assignments rather than on the content alone, with the value given to language often unknown. Such evaluative judgments of ESL learners, according to Elson, are not limited to language alone, but encompass the whole range of behaviours in the classroom.

To level the playing field for ESL students, teachers need to make the criteria for evaluation explicit, and to involve all students in the evaluation process. They also must recognize that learners bring a variety of learning backgrounds to the classroom which makes a single approach to evaluation unfair. Elson studied the comments non-ESL instructors made on assignments of ESL and non-ESL students. He found that many of these instructors were either hostile to ESL students or, if sympathetic, did not know how to help them improve their writing. To demonstrate this point, he presents instructors’ comments on both ESL and non-ESL students’ essays. In many cases, the comments on ESL students’ essays were terse and brief, bordering on the impolite and rude, and frequently of no help – “A little confusing, try to be a bit clearer”, obscure, useless and often less elaborated than those on native-speaker students’ essays – not exactly the kind of feedback students want and need to improve their writing.

He concludes his paper by suggesting that we find alternative modes of academic expression for evaluating students’ knowledge, suggesting that assignments be explained in a clearer manner and that evaluation criteria be made explicit. In a word, Elson calls for a critical and reflective look at the whole evaluation process.

In her article, *Oral Interview Test Design, Techniques and Evaluation Criteria*, Jennifer St. John discusses the challenges test developers face in formally assessing an individual’s ability to communicate orally in a second language using an oral-interview format. Using the Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees (CanTEST) and the English Oral Proficiency Test (EOPT) as examples, she identifies a number of important test variables and practical considerations and describes how they are dealt with in each of these tests. She begins her paper by outlining the variables related to the qualifications for, and training of, interviewers as well as those related to the evaluation of the elicited speech sample. Research on the role of interviewers supports the inclusion of standardization training prior to all testing sessions and the use of two independent assessments of a candidate’s performance or “double ratings” to enhance an interview’s reliability. Another important finding in reviewing the research is that non-native speakers, given adequate training, can perform as well as native speakers in evaluating L2 speech samples. Finally, studies on various instruments for evaluating speech samples pointed to two principal rating scales: analytic (the speech sample is analyzed in terms of its various components) and holistic (analysis on the basis of minimal or highly idealized descriptions on a singular linear scale). According to St. John, each has its pros and cons and the ideal might be some combination of the two.

In the next two sections of her paper, she describes the two tests in terms of design and evaluation criteria. The CanTEST (a French equivalent, TESTCan, also exists), a performance-based test that grew out of a project in China, is principally used for post-secondary admissions and credentialing purposes. The interview, typically lasting 15 minutes, uses two active interviewers, each making independent evaluations at the end of the interview using analytical and holistic grids. Scores are reported on a five-band-level holistic grid including half-band levels. If the evaluators cannot agree on a band score, cases are adjudicated by a second interview team.

The EOPT was developed for clientele at University of Ottawa in the Faculty of Education to assess candidates “seeking placement in a teacher training course or program for teaching either English or French as a Second Language”. It has subsequently been used for admissions to the graduate program in Speech Language Pathology and Audiology, as these candidates also need to be able to function and assess in both English and French. This test also uses two interviewers: one as the active interviewer and the other a silent evaluator; during the interview, the silent evaluator

completes a diagnostic sheet. The four-phase interview lasts 17 minutes; in contrast to the CanTEST, the stimulus for parts 2 (recall/rephrasing) and 3 (opinion/recommendation) is a written text chosen by the interviewer from a text bank. While the EOPT has both an analytic and a holistic grid, the analytic one serves more as a guide. Finally, because the aim of the test is to identify admissible candidates only, the rating scale is not divided into equal intervals.

The paper concludes by exhorting test designers to take every precaution necessary to ensure the reliability and validity of their assessments.

In the last paper, *How Well Do Official Writing Scores Predict Performance?* Doreen Bayliss reports on a study conducted at the Second Language Institute of the University of Ottawa. The research attempted to determine if candidates admitted to an advanced writing course (ESL 2361) as a result of meeting the necessary prerequisites or having scores of 4.0 on the TWE (CanTEST 3.5), could attain a TWE score of 4.5 (CanTEST 4.0) on a similar test by the end of the course. The 13-week, three-hour-a-week course focused on the organization and development of expository prose. Data was gathered to track the progress as it related to the aims and goals of the course and the attainment of the accepted admission writing standard. Students (N = 65) wrote an incoming placement essay and grammar test and were subsequently marked on six other in-class grammar and writing assignments over the 13-week period. Essays were marked blind by two raters and scored using the CanTEST Writing Grid (a score of 4.0 on the CanTEST is the equivalent of 4.5 on the TWE). The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, analysis of variance and correlational studies.

The most important finding of the study was that the majority of students (60%) did not achieve a score of 4.0 on the CanTEST by the end of the course. Most obtained 3.5, presumably what they entered the course with. A second finding revealed that all students had mastered the organizational patterns of the canonical five-paragraph essay, independent of their scores on four essays. Further analysis of the results revealed other important differences: successful candidates had scores on the Grammar Test, Baseline Essay Language Use, and Vocabulary measures that were significantly higher than those of their unsuccessful counterparts. While none of these variables individually would predict success at the end of the course, as a group, they do provide a fairly reliable indication of a candidate's chances of obtaining the desired score of 4.5 on the TWE or 4.0 on the CanTEST.

In discussing the results, Bayliss draws the reader's attention to the fact that while the successful and unsuccessful candidates had similar scores on certain measures, the former group was better able to use their knowledge and better integrate it into their overall language proficiency. For the candidates who scored 3.0 or lower on the final essay, a lack of general language proficiency seems to have been a factor, a finding supported in other research studies (Cumming, 1989; Sasaki and Hirose, 1996). For the latter group, Bayliss suggests that a lower-level course focussing on productive language use in context might help these students acquire the prerequisites necessary to be successful in the advanced writing course.

While concluding that that a single mark cannot be taken at face value, and that admission into advanced writing courses should be more carefully controlled, Bayliss leaves us with a "professional call to arms":

Many of the students in this study are landed immigrants whose future in the work place may depend on their ability to write. ... However, it [the ability to write] should represent an attainable goal for most ESL writers in an academic context...then those of us who understand the difficulties inherent in learning to write adequately need to be more involved in increasing awareness in others so that while we try to sort out what it is we need to know to teach writing successfully, ESL learners will have more of the support that they need.

Cumming, A. (1989). Writing Expertise and Second Language Proficiency. *Language Learning*, 39, 1, 81-141

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, C. (1984). Genre as Social Action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 151-167.

Power Analysis Inc. (1998). *Study of ESL/FSL Services in Ontario: Final Report*. London, Ontario: Power Analysis Inc.

Sasaki, M. and Hirose, K. (1996). Explanatory Variables for EFL Students' Expository Writing. *Language Learning*, 46:1, 137-174.

Scollon, R., Bhatia, V., Li, D. & Yung, V. (1997). Blurred genres and fuzzy identities in Hong Kong public discourse: Foundational and ethnographic issues in the study of reading. *Applied Linguistics* 20, 22-43.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

ESL for Adults and the Status of Those Who Teach Them¹

Barbara Burnaby

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Introduction

The main focus of this paper is the history of the professionalization of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, especially those who teach adult learners in non-credit programs and courses in Ontario. Education in Canada is a provincial responsibility, so teacher professionalization tends to differ considerably from province to province. Ontario is highlighted here as Canada's largest immigrant receiving province. The professionalization of ESL teachers only began in the relatively recent past (since the 1970s) but has been eventful and contentious ever since. In order to understand it, one must appreciate that it is deeply embedded in the only slightly less recent initiation in the 20th century of the formal teaching of ESL to immigrant adults and children in Canada, and the professionalization of teachers who are certified to teach in our elementary and secondary schools. The discussion in this paper follows a chronological format and necessarily entwines these three histories:

- grass roots movements to provide ESL teaching,
- the creation of policies on ESL and related issues at all levels of government,
- the establishment of actual ESL programs,
- the training and support of teachers,
- the setting of standards for ESL teaching, and
- the certification of teachers and their deployment throughout the education system².

Early ESL for Adults Focusing on Citizenship and Settlement

A starting point for this discussion is soon after World War II, and consists of initiatives building on existing ESL practice. From early days in Canada, whatever accommodation there was for immigrants who did not speak English, was in the hands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Burnaby, 1998a; Cook, 1987; Pal, 1993, Selman, 1998), school boards, and individual citizens. In 1947, new federal policy resulted in a series of programs called the Citizenship and Language Instruction and Language Textbook Agreements (CILT). These were to fund adult ESL in school

boards and NGOs through provincial departments of education. One part of the program paid the entire costs of textbooks for citizenship and language classes while the other paid half of the direct costs for instruction. The apparent focus was preparing immigrants with the language, knowledge (and allegiance?) to pass the citizenship test, but it is difficult to know how this intention was actually incorporated into classroom instruction. It is virtually impossible to trace the expenditures under this program, nor can we tell what volume of programming on ESL and orientation training generated through CILT was actually delivered. Certainly demand for both ESL and settlement information by immigrants exceeded supply. For constitutional reasons, the federal government stood well back from the provincial responsibility of deciding the educational content of such programs and of providing actual service. Thus, in taking this step, the federal government was supporting at arm's length some of the settlement and citizenship focused ESL training that had previously existed at a more rudimentary level in school boards and NGOs. The Provincial Department of Education's role was as a conduit for the funds.

Expertise in developing policy for or providing ESL was very scarce in this educational scenario. The province of Ontario had to find ways of implementing the CILT Agreement as well as handling immigrant children in the school system. The Ministry of Education did not have policy on accommodating immigrants, nor did it have experts among its staff in this field. It was up to the school boards to deal with specific issues such as ESL. There was little expertise among school board teachers and administrators about ESL other than the experience gained by individuals in actually working with immigrant students (Mewhort et al., 1965). NGOs, from their own experience, continued to provide and develop expertise and models for dealing with ESL and settlement. Academia had no appropriate pedagogical solutions. Theories about second language teaching for adults were growing in the U.S. and Britain along rigid linguistic and psychological lines which were based largely in theory or were developed from the situation of adults learning English as a foreign language overseas or in American or British universities.

In the late 1950s, for settlement oriented interventions for adult immigrants in general, and with the incentive of CILT funding, the provincial government created the Citizenship Branch in the Department of the Secretary of State. The Citizenship Branch initiated, among other things, a series of supports for ESL teachers such as newsletters, conferences, and textbooks for adult ESL learners. In 1958 the Ministry of Education started a summer program to train ESL teachers. It employed the expertise of members of the Citizenship Branch, many of whom had had experience in teaching adult ESL. Throughout the '60s, the students in these courses were mostly people intending to teach adults, although a growing number of elementary and secondary teachers took the course (Mewhort et al., 1965, p. 42). The focus on teachers of adults was clear since students were not required to have a teaching certificate. Also in the 1960s, the Citizenship Branch piloted ESL classes for immigrant parents and preschool children. These were taught by volunteers who were trained by ESL and pre-school program supervisors under contract to the Citizenship Branch.

In school boards, a good deal of what became adult ESL in evening and adult day classes started with adaptations of adult basic education and business classes. The Toronto Board of Education had three adult day schools for academic upgrading subjects and basic business related courses. In 1965, one school was dedicated to teaching ESL to adults on a full-time basis. Other adults took ESL in evening classes in schools.

In sum, then, we can see the development of ESL programs for adults and pre-school children expanded largely on previous community-based models and relied on those practitioners in the community and school system who had developed skills as a result of dealing first-hand with ESL and more general settlement issues. The provincial government opened a new agency, the Citizenship Branch, with a focus on adult immigrant settlement; it employed people from the community with relevant experience from their work with immigrants over the years, and worked actively to support a range of ESL and settlement related activities. While the Department of Education had very little officially recognized ESL expertise in its civil service, it supported an ESL teacher training program for teachers of adults in collaboration with members of the Citizenship Branch.

Major Developments in Teacher Professionalization

In order to appreciate fully the complexity of efforts at this time in teacher training for ESL, one should take

into account that it was in the 1970s that the decision was made to radically change the way regular teachers of elementary and secondary schooling under the Education Act would be certified. Up to this point in Ontario, primary and elementary teachers were not required to have a university degree and they gained certification through several years of training in teachers colleges. Teachers of secondary school were required to have a university degree and then become certified as teachers by taking summer school programs at university faculties of education. The new regulations, which took effect in 1980, required that primary and elementary school teachers have an undergraduate degree, and that all prospective teachers take a Bachelor of Education degree through a university faculty of education. This decision also involved the creation of standards by which teachers would be credited with specialized learning (Additional Qualifications) throughout their careers as well as their basic training for certification.

In 1970, the Citizenship Branch supported the creation of TESL Ontario, an organization of ESL teachers and other interested parties, to support the provision of ESL to immigrants. The Branch provided a good deal of the funding to keep this organization and its conferences going until about 1978. In 1973, TESL Ontario studied the provisions in ESL teacher training and standards. The summer programs funded by the Ministry of Education and conducted by the Branch were continuing, but questions were raised about the ways in which certified teachers who took the course would be credited in terms of their certification. In addition to the Ministry's summer courses, eleven other ESL teacher training courses in post-secondary institutions were in place or about to begin, increasing the need for the coordination of program offerings and standards (Robinson, 1975; TESL Ontario, 1978). The final outcome for ESL, starting in about 1976, was the evolution of the old Ministry of Education summer course in ESL into the three-part Additional Qualification program in ESL, taught by the faculties of education. By completing all three parts of this program, a certified teacher becomes an ESL specialist. The impact of this teacher certification was substantial in that school boards and other institutions could assess candidates for skills in ESL and even require qualifications. Teachers with special qualifications could expect to be compensated for their extra skills. These developments were, in effect, the professionalization of ESL teachers and their integration into the schools, with significant but lesser impact on the colleges and NGOs.

Issues of Economics Start to Dominate Adult ESL

In the late 1960s, the federal government became concerned about human resources for the country's booming economy and paid increasing attention to the role of immigration in the country's labourforce development. In 1967, it built into the Immigration Act an emphasis not only on the selection of the most suitable workers, but also on cooperation with the provinces in bearing the costs of immigration. In 1966, it created what will be called here the Manpower Program, which provided funding for a range of full-time occupational and pre-occupational training for immigrant and other Canadian adults. In taking this step, the federal government came close to trespassing on the provincial governments' constitutional rights to education; it avoided conflict by having the provinces provide the training purchased for students chosen by federal officials (Thomas, 1987, p. 112).

ESL for immigrants comprised a considerable proportion of the training offered. ESL students received about 24 weeks of full-time training with a living allowance. These programs were in very high demand by immigrants because of the training allowance and the possibility of being sent for further employment related training after the basic ESL course was finished. The training was conducted in the newly created provincial community colleges. The colleges developed their own qualification requirements and unionized scale for paying their teachers quite apart from those used for the employment of teachers in the elementary and secondary schools. Colleges at first had to recruit ESL teachers from the very small pool available through the NGO sector or from the schools, and some eventually started in-house training programs to train new teachers for their ESL programs.

The provinces quickly followed the federal example in creating training for immigrants and others which was directed towards preparing them to fill labour needs in the workplace. In the 1970s, the province divided education and training delivery into two and then three ministries: one with responsibility for the schools; a second with responsibility for post-secondary, mainly credit education and training, but also including the Manpower adult ESL programs in the colleges; and a third with responsibility for mainly non-credit training relating to the labourforce, including adult literacy and private sector interests. All three of these jurisdictions included adult non-credit programs for immigrants and others.

In about 1980, the Ontario Ministries of Education and Colleges and Universities published a discussion paper about continuing education, that is, non-credit formal education that is neither elementary/secondary nor post-secondary (colleges and universities) (Ontario Ministries of Education & Colleges and Universities, n.d.). This paper focused rather narrowly on the need for employment related training and adult literacy. It did not mention ESL. The underlying issue appeared to have been which ministry(ies) would have the fiscal burden for continuing education.

The matter then disappeared from public view for six years, during which time adult literacy, as a supposed damper on the economy, became a high profile issue both federally and provincially. Then in 1986, the Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities published *Continuing Education Review Project: Project Report: For adults only*. It established separate responsibilities for secondary schools, colleges, and universities with respect to adult literacy, ESL and French as a Second Language, Franco-Ontarians, older adults, and people with special needs. It ensured that school boards could not charge a tuition fee for adult basic education or ESL (to immigrants) and that universities and colleges would be restricted in the amount that they could charge (p. 26).

A clear distinction was drawn between credit and non-credit courses; ESL and adult literacy were largely in the latter category. A result of this division of responsibilities was that people teaching adult non-credit courses in the schools were not required to be certified teachers. Although the report comments about the need for well trained ESL teachers, it does not specify what suitable qualifications might be (p. 38). Thus, we see the province reorienting itself from its earlier emphasis on training teachers for adult non-credit ESL. Instead, it sets clear credential requirements and rewards for ESL teaching in the elementary and secondary schools, and separates these functions from the teaching of non-credit ESL in provincial institutions. The colleges could set their own criteria for ESL teacher qualifications. Funds could be recovered from the federal government for the teaching of Manpower programs, but the colleges would have to decide whether to teach other ESL programs and how they would compensate those teachers.

The Federal Government Reorganizes its Programs in Favour of Less Costly Ones

Coordination in the arcane and incomprehensible system of language training funding and delivery has

been a constant problem (e.g., Burnaby, 1992; Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, 1991, pp. 51-54). The federal ESL Manpower program had been criticized on a number of serious grounds including discrimination and poor quality (Burnaby, 1998b, p. 250). Therefore, in 1983, Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (CEIC) sent out a discussion paper proposing to amalgamate the Manpower program and CILT, and to create one new program. The main part would be a general purposes program for all newcomers right after their arrival in Canada. Stipends for students would not be available, but services such as childcare and transportation might be arranged. A second smaller part would be made available for those who needed specific language training before they could enter the laborforce (CEIC, 1983). The delivery model for this proposed program was that it would contract directly with NGOs or any other educational institutions rather than going directly through a provincial government. Such a change would permit the federal government to:

- (1) make its own decisions about service programs and delivery agencies;
- (2) avoid the wage scales of unionized teachers in provincial educational institutions; and,
- (3) keep delivery agencies competitive and accountable on one-year contracts while being reimbursed for fewer sustaining administrative costs.

In 1986/87, CEIC launched a pilot of the general program for newly arrived immigrants, called the Settlement Language Training Program. It was judged to be successful except that delays in the financing caused severe problems for some of the delivery agencies (Burnaby, Holt, Steltzer & Collins, 1987). Meanwhile, the CILT program was eliminated, thus reducing the federal programs from two to one. The federal government was getting very little recognition for its expenditures through CILT and had virtually no control over what the provinces would charge back against the program.

Despite this experiment in the direction of the 1983 proposal towards a more general yet flexible federal language training program, the federal government revamped the Manpower program in the late 1980s. The political focus on the need for immigration was changing from an emphasis on additions to the labourforce to the need for younger immigrants to balance the unique demographic patterns that had been developing in the second half of the 20th century. In 1990, the federal government introduced a new

immigration plan including completely revised adult language training programs, replacing the Manpower program with a new one for all immigrants in their first three years in Canada. It was called Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and a smaller, more restricted one was added for LINC graduates called Labour Market Language Training (LMLT).

Delivery agencies and their teaching programs were selected as they were for the Settlement Language Training Program, that is, through an annual competition of proposals from any suitable agency (colleges, school boards, NGOs, private agencies) (Immigration Canada, 1993), thus by-passing the community colleges unless they could come in with a competitive bid. In addition, all immigrants who wanted to enter the program were assessed at a special centre on the basis of national language benchmarks, including one level for those not literate in their first language. After assessment, immigrants were given a list of local programs that could serve their needs. These benchmarks also related to curriculum in order to coordinate the content of programs across the country. (See other papers in this volume about contemporary developments in LINC and the benchmarks.) This process for LINC remains the same today.

This program was criticized in that it only served immigrants in their first three years in the country, that its annual proposal and reporting structure cause a great deal of stress to delivery agencies, especially small organizations, and that the national benchmarks may be a good description of language levels, but do not address the many kinds of diversity (particularly lack of literacy skills) that immigrant language learners bring to the classroom (Cray, 1997; Goldstein, 1993). Flemming (1998) objected to the benchmarks on the grounds that they are a throwback to the era of experts imposing on teachers' autonomy and professionalism, and added that they represent some potential dangers if they are proposed as a reliable indicator of what actually is needed in ESL classrooms.

In 1998, a study was commissioned of all adult ESL/ FSL services in Ontario (Power Analysis Inc., 1998). Among training providers who serve adult immigrants (rather than universities and private sector firms who largely serve foreign students), LINC programs accounted for 39 % of all the Ontario programs, and 48 % of the programs combined LINC with ESL supported from other sources. It is unfortunately not possible to work out the extent to which LINC classes took over the load from the Manpower program. Community agencies provided most of the LINC pro-

grams and half of the combined LINC/ESL programs. School boards offered almost all of the ESL programs, about 35 % of the combined LINC/ESL programs, but very few of the LINC only ones. The ESL only classes were about 80 per cent non-credit. Classes typically had about 17 students; almost all had continuous intake of students; a quarter were multilevel classes; and few used alternate forms of delivery (e.g., distance education, etc.). Four percent of students had no education at all and 13 % had not reached high school (Power Analysis Inc., 1998). These educational conditions, except for the class sizes, are significantly challenging (Cray, 1997). Women comprised 69 % of the students.

As for the teachers, school boards employed 70 % of the LINC/ESL instructors while community agencies employed only 10% because the boards sub-contract many of the instructors to agencies for the classes. For all types of programs, 86% of the teachers were women, 35% were non-native speakers of English and 56% considered themselves fluent in another language as well as English. Although they were almost universally highly qualified, the teachers averaged 20.6 hours of work a week; only 29% were permanent employees; the average hourly wage was \$28.65; 40 per cent had no benefits (most of those who did only had sick days); and 42% belonged to a union. The teachers and administrators agreed that funding was by far the biggest problem (Power Analysis Inc., 1998).

Whatever the strengths and shortcomings of LINC, it appeared that the federal government aimed to devolve all of its responsibility for adult ESL programs for immigrants to the provincial governments, as it has in a number of provinces; but LINC remains in Ontario. Work continues at the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, now a federal agency at arm's length from the government, with respect to how these standards will be used by the provinces. Ontario simplified its own operations related to adult ESL. It closed down, by 1996, all of the ESL programs in what was called in this paper the Citizenship Branch except for those which are settlement related such as access to the professions and trades in Ontario. TESL Ontario was funded to produce a set of standards for non-credit adult ESL instructors in Ontario. In research for this project (Sanaoui, 1996, 1997, 1998) it became clear, as it did in the Power Analysis Inc. (1998) report, that current instructors of adult non-credit ESL are generally very well qualified. TESL Ontario has accepted the standards proposed through Sanaoui's project for its non-credit instructors, and TESL Canada is currently working towards the ratification of similar standards at a national level. The resulting standards are likely to be

used in the current LINC process and in future programs in choosing among proposed programs and in accountability efforts.

Conclusions

In sum, then, the federal government started in the 1940s to fund the provinces for ESL for adult immigrants through NGOs and school boards for settlement purposes, and in the '60s through community colleges for labour development. As economic problems arose in the '80s, it sought to reduce its costs by contracting out adult ESL, not through the provinces but directly to delivery agencies, thus largely bypassing union wage standards and the power of the provinces themselves. As a result, the federal government has transferred its whole enterprise of ESL delivery for adults in Ontario mainly to school boards and NGOs, most such programs having challenging teaching conditions. The employment conditions for the teachers under LINC (and most other adult ESL programs) are highly unfavorable despite the instructors' high qualifications, and funding is precarious.

Like the federal government, the Ontario government began by dealing through the Ministry of Education with educational programs for adult immigrants offered by school boards and NGOs, then expanded its programs in the '60s into other areas under the Citizenship Branch and other government bodies: Currently, it is in the process of re-consolidating most of these activities again under the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has fiercely and effectively guarded itself against any changes that would impinge on the Education Act directly and its responsibility for the qualifications of teachers. Instructors of non-credit adult ESL through school boards do not have to have the same credentials as those teaching regular school programs. The school boards' continuing education programs are now much more like those in NGOs than they are like schooling under the Education Act. (One partial advantage that they have over NGOs in the competition for training dollars is that they have a somewhat more secure infrastructure to sustain them in the competitive process as long as the boards consider it worthwhile to continue to compete.) The Citizenship Branch and the school boards originally were creative in supporting NGOs and developing outreach programs on language and settlement, but the Citizenship Branch was closed down in the mid-1990s.

In all this process, both levels of government have been instrumental in the early professionalization of ESL teachers overall but eventually deprofessionalized

instructors of non-credit ESL and allowed their job conditions to deteriorate. Once the flow of money in the 1980s slowed down and the federal government started to fund on a competitive basis, both mainstream and immigrant-group specific NGOs and school board adult ESL programs have increasingly struggled under the competitive and accountability demands of current adult ESL funding (Owen, 1999). Such circumstances for adult ESL are reported as similar in the U.S. (Chisman, Wrigley & Ewen (1993)). Now it is likely that professional standards could be used to screen instructors of adult non-credit ESL even though the quality of their working conditions is generally not maintained through legislation or union support.

Barbara Burnaby is a member of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her research interests include ESL for adult immigration, adult literacy, language and literacy in education for Aboriginal peoples and language policy.

References

- Burnaby, B. (1992). Official language training for adult immigrants in Canada: Features and issues. In B. Burnaby & A. Cumming (Eds.), *Socio-political aspects of ESL in Canada* (pp. 3-34). Toronto: OISE Press.
- Burnaby, B. (1998a). English as a second language for adult immigrants. In S.M. Scott, B. Spencer & A. Thomas (Eds.), *Learning for life: Canadian readings in adult education* (pp. 283-295). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- Burnaby, B. (1998b). ESL policy in Canada and the United States: Basis for comparison. In T. Ricento & B. Burnaby (Eds.), *Language and politics in the United States and Canada: Myths and realities* (pp. 243-267). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Burnaby, B., Holt, M., Steltzer, N., & Collins, N. (1987). *The Settlement Language Training Program: An assessment* (Report on behalf of the TESL Canada Federation). Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada.
- Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council. (1991). *Immigrants and language training*. Ottawa: Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.
- Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. (1983) *A discussion paper on a new framework for immigrant language training*. Ottawa: CEIC.
- Chisman, F., Wrigley, H.S., & Ewen, D.T. (1993). *ESL and the American dream*. Southport, Connecticut: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.
- Cook, G.I. (1987). Educational justice for campmen: Alfred Fitzpatrick and the foundation of Frontier College. 1899-1922. In M.R. Welton (Ed.), *Knowledge for the people: The struggle for adult learning in English-speaking Canada 1928-1973* (pp. 35-51). Toronto: OISE Press.
- Cray, E. (1997). Teachers' perceptions of a language policy: "Teaching LINC". *TESL Canada Journal*, 15:1, 238.
- Flemming, D. (1998). Autonomy and agency in curriculum decision-making: A study of Instructors in a Canadian adult settlement ESL program. *TESL Canada Journal* 16(1), 19-35.
- Goldstein, T. (1993). Working with learners in LINC programs: Asking ourselves some questions. *Contact: Newsletter of the Association of Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario*, 18(2), 12-13.
- Immigration Canada (1993). *Immigration consultations 1993: The Federal Immigration Integration Strategy in 1993: A progress report*. Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada.
- Mewhort, D.S., Milloy, A.B., Sweetman, N.A., & Gore, G.M. (1965). *Untitled report*. Toronto: Board of Education of the City of Toronto, Office of the Director of Education.
- Ontario Ministries of Education & Colleges and Universities (n.d.). *Continuing Education: The Third System*. Toronto: Ontario Ministries of Education & Colleges and Universities.
- Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities (1986). *Continuing Education Review Project: Project report: For adults only*. Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Colleges and Universities.
- Owen, T. (1999, January). *The view from Toronto: Settlement services in the late 1990s*. Paper presented at the Third National Metropolis Conference, Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Pal, L.A. (1993). *Interests of state: The politics of language, multiculturalism, and feminism in Canada*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Power Analysis Inc. (1998). *Study of ESL/FSL services in Ontario: Final report*. London, Ontario: Power Analysis Inc.

- Robinson, M. (1975). State of the art: Teacher training and professional development in ESL. *TESL Talk*, 4(3): 160-172.
- Sanaoui, R. (1996). Characteristics of instructors teaching non-credit adult ESL in Ontario: A progress report on TESL Ontario's research study. *Contact*, 21(2), 29-30.
- Sanaoui, R. (1997). Professional characteristics and concerns of instructors teaching English as a Second Language to adults in non-credit programs in Ontario. *TESL Canada Journal*, 14(2), 32-54.
- Sanaoui, R. (1998). *The development of a protocol and uniform standards for the certification of instructors teaching non-credit ESL to adults in Ontario: Phase 3: Draft report on the Steering Committee's recommendations*. Toronto: TESL Ontario.
- Selman, G. (1998). The imaginative training for citizenship. In S.M. Scott, B. Spencer & A.M. Thomas (Eds.), *Learning for life: Canadian readings in adult education* (pp. 24-34). Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing.
- TESL Ontario. (1978). *The teaching of English as a second language in Ontario: Current issues and problems*. Toronto: TESL Ontario.
- Thomas, A.M. (1987). Government and adult learning. In F. Cassidy & R. Faris (Eds.), *Choosing our future: Adult education and public policy in Canada*, Symposium Series 17 (pp. 103-130). Toronto: OISE Press.
1. This paper is based on research on the impact of immigration on education in Toronto from the 1960s to the 1990s conducted with funding through the Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Centre in Vancouver. Preliminary results were published in 2000 as: B. Burnaby, C. James & S. Regier, *The Role of Education in Integrating Diversity in the Greater Toronto Area*. CERIS Working Paper No. 11. Toronto: Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement – Toronto (CERIS).
 2. French is relatively little in demand as a second language by immigrants in Ontario, so issues related to it are not considered here.

LINC – A School Board’s Perspective, Toronto Catholic District School Board

Hanna Cabaj

Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)

TCDSB LINC programs are the responsibility of the Continuing Education Department. The Department is accountable for such non-mandated programs such as secondary credit, adult education non-credit, International Languages, and elementary and secondary credit programs funded by the provincial Ministry of Education.

Adult Education programs within the Continuing Education Department include:

- English as a Second Language (ESL) and Citizenship Preparation programs,
- Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC),
- Literacy and Basic Skills programs (LBS).

These are funded respectively by the provincial Ministry of Education, Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Two models of LINC delivery

The TCDSB has been involved in the delivery of LINC programs since 1992. The TCDSB’s Continuing Education Department operates two models of LINC delivery:

1. TCDSB LINC: direct delivery agreements with Citizenship and Immigration Canada
2. LINC Cosponsored Programs: community agencies have delivery agreements with CIC and sub-contract instruction through written partnership agreements with the TCDSB.

The TCDSB LINC Program is funded by direct, annual contribution agreements between Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Toronto Catholic District School Board. As the contract holder, the TCDSB is responsible for all aspects of program delivery: securing and maintaining physical facilities, intake and placement of students, student progress and promotions, classroom resources, staff support and supervision, curriculum delivery, professional development, program administration, childminding services, budgeting

and reporting to Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The programs are housed in five leased sites and one board owned facility situated in different areas of Metro Toronto. They constitute 26% of the total annual budget of the Adult Education program and provide 24 full time LINC classes, Levels 1 - 5.

In the LINC Cosponsored Programs, community agencies hold program delivery agreements with CIC. As contract holders, the agencies are responsible for securing and maintaining physical facilities, intake and placement of students, student progress and promotions, program administration, childminding services, budgeting and reporting to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The agencies subsequently sign partnership agreements with the TCDSB for the delivery of LINC classroom instruction. As the subcontractor for the delivery of classroom instruction, the TCDSB provides classroom resources, permanent, occasional and supply instructional staff as well as professional development and support and supervision of staff in the delivery of the LINC curriculum. In this model, the partnership agreements that TCDSB signs with all community partners are standardized. The agencies are invoiced by the TCDSB at the conclusion of each month of instruction at the same cost per instructional hour.

The comparison of these two models reveals the different strengths and limitations of each and attests to the variety of models that meets the needs of our different clients.

The two-tiered negotiation of agreements, (an agency with CIC, then the agency with TCDSB) creates challenges at the beginning of each new contract year. A clear division of responsibility for each partner staff and agents is required in order to avoid the possibility of the duplication of services and associated costs.

The TCDSB does not hold contracts for other settlement support services like HOST or Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP). Community agencies that do so have the capability of offering their clients a whole array of settlement support in the

same location as their classes. The Host Program matches Canadian volunteers with immigrants to lend them support, to help with language barriers, and to teach them about life in Canadian communities. ISAP funds organizations to provide immigrants with the essential bridging services to facilitate their access to community services. These services may include reception and orientation services, translation and interpretation services paraprofessional counseling and referral to mainstream services and employment-related activities such as job-finding clubs. The TCDSB continues to find that simply referring the students in direct-delivery classes to settlement support services does not necessarily result in the students' ability to access them.

ALL TCDSB classes are multicultural and multilingual while some community-based program may be entirely dominated by one language group. The initial benefits of comforting support in the first language may be offset by the challenges of the one-ethnic group, one-first-language "ghettoization" phenomenon with a variety of implications for the language classroom (the challenge of introducing English as the medium of instruction and communication, managing classroom interactive tasks without the constant interference of the native language, the continued dependency on the first language intermediation) and beyond (a possible slower rate of language acquisition and acculturation, more limited exposure to the culture of mainstream as well as that of other groups within the Greater Toronto Area).

By inviting the school boards to supply classroom instruction, the community agencies offer programs that access a wider human-resource pool for regular and substitute staff, enhanced curriculum support and supervision, more professional development opportunities for instructional staff. At the same time, however, collective agreements between the TCDSB and LINC instructional staff generally diminish or inhibit "third party" powers of the co-sponsoring partners in areas of staff hiring, promotion and discipline.

One-time Projects

Over the last several years, Citizenship and Immigration Canada contracted with the TCDSB Continuing Education Department for the development of several one-time projects related to LINC resources and programs:

- LINC 4 & 5 Curriculum Guidelines
- LINC Computer, Train the Trainer Project

- Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) – A Software Guide for the LINC Classroom
- LINC Literacy Employment Resource
- LERN – Language for Employment Related Needs Project
- LINC 1-5 Curriculum Guidelines, based on the CLB 2000 document.

These projects benefited the Department as the products that were developed continue to enhance both the quality and the effectiveness of the language programs offered. The projects created opportunities for the professional growth for project staff and the department as a whole. The need to hire or release staff for short periods of time to write and submit for proposals and to setup as well as difficulties with the retention of staff experienced in different areas of project delivery continued to pose challenges along the way.

Milestones in LINC Delivery

The 10 years of LINC programs in the TCDSB have witnessed a number of significant improvements to the direct-delivery model such as the introduction of several LINC curriculum documents, the introduction of LINC computer labs and the inclusion of CALL in LINC curricula, the introduction of LINC levels 4 and 5, childminding guidelines, TESL Conference sponsorship and the childminders' conference.

Remaining challenges and hopes for the future

Many of the challenges faced over the years remain the same. They include short negotiation timeframes for CIC agreements and even shorter timeframes for the negotiating of subcontracting agreements. Longer contract timeframes and the early negotiation of new contracts as well as a standardization of program requirements would be the hopes and wishes for the future of TCDSB LINC programs.

LINC CO-SPONSORED

Contract year	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/1997	1997/98	LINC 3+ Jan-June 1998	1998/99	1999/ 2000	July 2000 Dec 2001	2002
No. of partners	16	14	16	15	10	13	8	11	10	10	8
No. of sites	28	24	24	21	15	18	12	19	17	17	14
No. of classes	86	96	101	89	70	76	24	99	98	95	86
LINC levels	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3	4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
No. of LINC instructors	85	82	83	74	58	63	24	79	79	81	72
No. of students	7,340	10,647	10,260	12,518	9,585	8,560	combined with 1997/98 enrolment	6,838	8,452	16,324	no longer collecting LINC enrolment
Contracted hours	44,447	51,507	75,021.50	53,885.50	43,086	52,000	11,299.50	71,424	72,256	108,264	61,863.00

TCDSB LINC

Contract year	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/1997	1997/98	LINC 3+ Jan-June 1998	1998/99	1999/ 2000	July 2000 Dec 2001	2002
Nr of sites	NO PROGRAMS	NO PROGRAMS	5	5	4	4	4	5	6	6	6
Nr of classes	NO PROGRAMS	NO PROGRAMS	13	13	12	11	8	26	25	25	24
LINC levels	NO PROGRAMS	NO PROGRAMS	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	1,2,3	4 & 5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5	1,2,3,4,5
Nr of LINC instructors	NO PROGRAMS	NO PROGRAMS	13	13	12	11	8	26	25	25	24
Contracted hours	NO PROGRAMS	NO PROGRAMS	12,675	11,665	12,000	12,435	No data	30,000	28,510	27,675	25,680

From Art to Science with Art: LINC Assessor as ESL Professional

Carolyn Cohen

Centre for Language Training and Assessment

Introduction

The role of the English as a Second Language (ESL) assessor in government-sponsored non-credit language training programs has evolved significantly from art to science over the past decade. If, as Herbert Spencer wrote in his treatise on education, "*Science is organized knowledge*"¹ or as the Oxford dictionary defines it, science is "*systematic and formulated knowledge*", then it is certainly true that the work of ESL assessment has become a more scientific pursuit, without the loss of its essential art.

We have come a great distance in looking at learners' language skills, understanding what they know and what they need, and effectively and efficiently placing them in programs where growth and development in language ability has an optimal chance of occurring.

Pre-LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) days of ESL bring to mind early experiences of assessment in non-credit ESL programs, 12 to 15 years ago. At that time, on registration days, students were often lined up from as early as 7:00 a.m. along the sidewalk to the road outside the Adult Education Centre where I taught. Teachers in turn were seated at long tables in the gymnasium awaiting their first charges.

Students filed in and were directed to line up in front of one of the seated teachers. When a student's number was finally called, a teacher would show each student a picture of a peculiar, bedraggled, rain-soaked pair of people standing at a bus stop. Conversation prompts were questions based on this pen and ink sketch. Questions were limited in scope, as was the interview process. When time permitted, some students were asked to write briefly on a choice of topics. I remember on one such occasion, overhearing a teacher confide to the one beside her that she wasn't sure where to place a particular student. After checking that the student had completed an interview and writing task, my colleague asked, "*Does he know the past tense?*" "*Yes, he seems to*" was the response. "*Well then put him in Level 2!!*" was the confident reply.

Language assessment in ESL programming pre-LINC in Ontario was typically developed in-house to reflect the program levels and course offerings of local training providers. Teachers drew on their experience of teaching and learning in second language acquisition, rather than formalized, rigorously validated tools. The teacher's skill and experience provided the means of assessment of learner competence for the purpose of placement in appropriate training programs. In-class needs assessment by teachers offered a more diagnostic picture of learner skills and gaps. In a survey of Canadian ESL providers prior to release of the Benchmarks 2000 document, 62% of respondents reported that assessment practices included a combination of in class and centralized assessment.

The impetus of the implementation of the LINC program in 1992 began the move to more formalized, standardized assessment practices in non-credit ESL programs across Canada. We now use nationally standardized tools that have been pilot tested with hundreds, used by tens of thousands of learners across Canada and subjected to the scrutiny of ESL and test measurement experts. Assessment is more of a science than in earlier years, and yet there is still some art to creating optimum conditions for a learner to engage in speech and writing activities that demonstrate his/her skill and knowledge.

The assessor's role has grown from one of full-time teacher on special intake assignment, to that of a dedicated, skilled professional whose work offers a significant contribution to the effectiveness of ESL language-training delivery in Canada.

LINC assessors in Ontario are annually certified professionals whose skill and knowledge are often integral components of the first experience of newcomers on the path to settlement.

Assessor Qualifications

The Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment (CLBA) is currently administered in 48 LINC Assessment Centres across Canada. The CLBA tests 4 lan-

guage skills in a task-based, CLB referenced framework. Prior to the use of the CLBA (1996), the A-LINC, developed at Vancouver College, was mandated for use by CIC in federally contracted LINC training programs. The A-LINC was administered by ESL trained assessors as well as CIC staff in all regions of the country. Following implementation of the CLBA and the forming of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, it was determined that a policy should be developed to set standards for access to CLBA training. It was agreed that use and scoring of the CLBA required a level of expertise and knowledge in specific areas of second language acquisition. A committee comprised of assessment centre administrators, the CLBA development team and CCLB Board members worked together to develop *Access to CLBA Training Guidelines*². These guidelines specified experience and knowledge in the following areas:

- 1) Second Language Acquisition in Adult Education
- 2) Assessment in the Adult Education Field
- 3) Interview Skills
- 4) Cultural Sensitivity
- 5) Decision-making Skills
- 6) English Language Proficiency

The qualifications necessary to be an assessor include:

TESL / TEFL Training Course: 100 hours, plus practicum

OR post secondary degree in English, linguistics or modern languages

OR provincial teaching qualifications

AND at least 300 hours of adult ESL teaching.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS), an internationally recognized assessor course requires teaching experience in the language field and a degree in English or an ESL background for candidates who wish to administer the Test of Spoken English (TSE)³.

Training

The training for LINC assessors since the introduction of the CLBA has been delivered by the Centre for Language Training and Assessment in Ontario. The training consists of a four-and-a-half-day program in which assessors are introduced to the principles behind the content and scoring of the CLBA as well as the practical administration of the test. Ample opportunity is provided to observe and conduct interviews with real clients, students in CLTA's ESL programs. Assignments

and practice include scoring of multiple writing samples from ESL learners at Benchmarks 1 – 8. Training is conducted by staff with extensive backgrounds in ESL teaching and assessment and is based on training manuals developed in consultation with assessment experts.

CLBA training compares favourably with that required by other standardized test deliverers. IELTS training, for example, includes two and one half days of Examiner Training as well as preparatory work through the study of the IELTS background and format of the Speaking test. Training consists of practice interviews and the scoring of Writing and Speaking interviews. Certification for Writing and Speaking tests is dependent upon the rating of tests to IELTS British Council standards. Biannual recertification is required to maintain status as an IELTS examiner. The minimum qualifications for IELTS certification include Band 9 proficiency in English and a postgraduate diploma in TEFL or TESOL⁴.

The Education Testing Service (ETS) hosts training workshops for TSE candidates in which training is provided in the accurate application of TSE scoring scales and standards. ETS requires prospective candidates to achieve a specified standard in a qualifying test for designation as a TSE evaluator.

Professional Development

LINC Assessors in Ontario have taken part in an annual professional development conference for the past ten years. The conference is sponsored by Ontario Region CIC (OASIS) and coordinated by the Centre for Language Training and Assessment. The conference is organized and attended by administrators and assessors from across the Ontario Region. The needs and interests of assessors determine the theme and content for the annual conference. A conference planning committee includes representatives from Ontario LINC assessment centres.

Conference presentations have included:

- International Standardized testing systems including TOEFL, TOEIC and IELTS,
- Immigration Trends,
- New Practices Implementation for LINC,
- Immigrant Services Referral,
- Professional Skills Training.

Role of LINC Assessor

The primary role of LINC assessors is to administer a language assessment tool and place learners in lan-

guage training programs. During the client-assessor exchange considerably more occurs. The assessor is often a national greeter/reception service, information officer, referral agent and encouraging face to newcomers seeking advice and information on training options and other services available to them and to their families.

According to the Ontario Region Guidelines on the role of Assessment Centres ⁵, the following are also responsibilities of assessment centre staff:

- To verify eligibility for LINC;
- To determine client access barriers;
- To make available to Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) settlement trends that may impact on program offerings;
- To provide outreach and referral to appropriate agencies when a need is determined;
- To develop a resource centre with information relevant to clients;
- To serve as a liaison within the LINC community;
- To maintain membership in local planning committees;
- To market the LINC program to newcomers;
- To participate in pilot projects that may contribute to the improvement of services to newcomers;
- To maintain staff professional development on issues related to the delivery of the assessment service.

As well as possessing and continuing to develop assessment expertise, the assessor clearly is a skilled professional whose role extends beyond that of test administrator.

Planning/Advisory Roles

An important role of many assessment centres and staff is to assist with planning. Centres collect, analyse and report on data regarding client location and needs related to training and other services to assist in the formation, implementation and management of local service delivery plans. Information regarding appropriate classes, schedules, childminding services, advice concerning geographic locations for potential training sites is often provided to CIC based on data collected through the Automated Reservation System and maintained by assessment centers.

LINC assessors continue to serve in a voluntary capacity on a variety of councils and committees from the local to national level. These include:

Planning

- Local training advisory boards
- Local LINC partnerships

Development

- Steering committee, Automated Reservation System (ARS)
- CLBA, CLBLA, Canadian Language Benchmarks Streamlined Placement Test (CLBPT)
- LINC Curriculum Guidelines

Policy and Operations

- Regional Assessment Centre Coordinators' forum (This coordinators' body provides a forum for the exchange of information: new initiatives, procedures, Best Practices)
- Board of Directors, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB)
- National Performance Management Advisory Committee (PMAC)
- National Working Group, Accountability Framework, Performance Management

Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC)

ORLAC's Mandate:

- To provide advice and guidance to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC-OASIS) on operational issues and policies relating to the LINC program
- To review, assess and make recommendations on proposals of regional scope for funding under the delivery assistance component of LINC

Examples of Initiatives/Issues:

- LINC Curriculum Guidelines
- CLBPT
- Childminding Guidelines
- Understanding LINC (program guidelines)
- TESL Ontario Conference
- Automated Reservation System
- Distance Education
- Settlement.org web site

- LINC computerization evaluation
- TESL teacher certification
- PMAC updates
- LINC tenth anniversary

Into the Future

While much has been achieved, continuing to build on this solid foundation will strengthen and ensure the effective operation of LINC assessment. *What do LINC Assessment services wish for?* Feedback from assessment centres across Ontario suggests the need for:

- Guidelines for Assessment Centres
A clear and living document that will promote consistency and standards of practice in providing service to LINC clients
- statements of CIC policy changes affecting LINC assessment to be sent to all centres and posted on appropriate web sites
- greater representation in professional development settings including TESL Ontario and CESBA conferences as well as one time initiatives for LINC delivery assistance
- continued development of the LINC Assessment Centre Coordinators' Forum as a medium for conveying new information and for building consistency and effective delivery of assessment services
- representation on professional ESL bodies including: TESL Ontario and the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

Conclusion

The roles, responsibilities and tools of ESL / LINC program assessors have developed significantly over the past decade in Ontario and across Canada. In the past, many assessors were teachers recruited several times a year to assist with learner placement.

Today, in LINC programs in Ontario, assessors are test administrators, development experts and program, funding, accountability and operations planning advisors. They are also a welcoming, encouraging, informative presence to immigrants to Canada. They are individuals who provide service and assistance to those who arrive, sometimes eagerly, sometimes apprehensively, at Canada's doors. Assessors provide information to those who want to know more. They have learned and applied much about the science, the body of knowledge, of assessment. They maintain current information on settlement, training and em-

ployment preparation services to which they can refer clients. Assessor representation is found on planning and advisory boards which inform development and policy.

Still, where art can be defined as "imaginative skill applied to design", assessors continue to work with art in interacting with immigrants to Canada in empathetic, responsive communication. Their contribution is to be appreciated as we recognize 10 years of LINC in Ontario.

Further Reading

- Bachman, L.F. (1990). *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bachman and Palmer (1996) *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brindley, G. (1995) *Language Assessment in Action*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie, University.
- Ellis, R. (1997) *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ross, S. (1998) *Measuring Gains in Language Programs: Theory and Research*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie, University.

Carolyn Cohen is a senior manager with the Centre for Language Training and Assessment (CLTA). She has worked in the field of ESL for twenty years in teaching, assessment, teacher training, program development and administration. Carolyn managed development of the CLBA / LA ,CLBPT and manages LINC assessor training and recertification. She has worked on a number of initiatives related to the use of Benchmarks in language standards setting and testing. Carolyn currently serves as assessment centre representative to the Ontario Region LINC Advisory Committee.

- 1 Spencer, H. *Education* (1861) Ch. 2.
- 2 Criteria for Candidates for Assessor Training, Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, July 1998.
- 3 Educational Testing Service, Princeton New Jersey, 2002.
- 4 IELTS Examiners Code of Practice, University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate.
- 5 Ontario Region Guidelines on the Role of Rating Centres, Contribution Agreement, www.settlement.org.

LINC Then and Now: LINC 10-Year Anniversary

Elisete Bettencourt, Program Consultant
The Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services
Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Historical Overview

Settlement programming in Canada can be said to be rooted in two main movements: the self-help movement and the philanthropic voluntary action movement. As early as 1869 and the first Immigration Act, newly arrived immigrants looked to “those who had come on the previous boat” to help them understand Canada and how to survive its realities. At about the same time, philanthropic associations, many of them based on religious affiliations, also helped immigrants to become self-sufficient.

Prior to the Second World War, the settlement of immigrants was the responsibility of immigrants themselves or those groups that were responsible for bringing them to Canada. For example, the Canadian National Railroad, the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the Hudson’s Bay Company and volunteer agencies also played a role in assisting newcomers adjust to their new lives in Canada.

In 1948, the federal government by Order-in-Council authorized the payment of hospital, medical and incidental expenses of indigent immigrants for up to six months following their arrival in Canada. In addition, the federal government created a Settlement Service and appointed settlement officers throughout the country to assist in the reception and placement of immigrants and to provide advice and guidance to newly arrived entrepreneurs and farmers. Historically, it was the settlement officer that would receive immigrants at the train station and work with them until they had found accommodation and employment.

In 1966, the Department of Manpower and Immigration was established and the Settlement Service was discontinued. The Department’s policy direction, at that time, focused on meeting the needs of employers and employees. However, the Department of Manpower and Immigration, from its inception, provided financial assistance to indigent newcomers as an element of its employment program delivery and some funding for voluntary agencies to provide settlement services to immigrants. By 1974, this resulted in the

creation of the Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP).

The Immigration Plan for 1991-1995 introduced the federal integration strategy, which placed a new emphasis on helping immigrants learn Canadian values and helping Canadians better understand the diverse backgrounds of newcomers. The strategy made additional resources available to existing programs and introduced new initiatives to provide services at all stages of settlement, from pre-arrival to citizenship.

This new strategy introduced the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program (LINC). LINC was seen as a new initiative that could address the broader language training needs of immigrants. LINC was intended to support the integration of immigrants and LINC placed a greater emphasis on introducing newcomers to shared Canadian values, rights, and responsibilities. In addition, it was expected that LINC would teach participants the basic communication skills essential to function in Canadian society.

LINC was founded on the idea that the ability of newcomers to communicate in one of Canada’s official languages was the key to integration and that settlement and integration services should be directed at assisting newcomers to become self-sufficient as soon as possible after their arrival in Canada.

The introduction and implementation of the LINC program and the new federal language training policy received an initial onslaught of criticism from established institutions and community-based groups from across Canada.

In Ontario, community consultations were held across the province to receive input into how the LINC program would be implemented. These consultations took place from February to June 1992. A total of 18 took place and included representatives from provincial ministries, community colleges, school boards, non-governmental organizations, ESL professionals, private training organizations and learners. Eventually, community partnerships developed and support for the LINC program grew and this support has impacted on how LINC programs are delivered today.

One of my colleagues, Doug Ryan, described the early years of implementation of the LINC program as follows, "There was a lot of excitement in developing and launching the program. There were no computers, just a few IBM electronic typewriters that shook and rattled like they would explode at any second. It was a lesson in patience trying to do a LINC contract by typing in tiny boxes without going over the line or outside the box. The service providing agencies also worked very hard in co-operation with our team to implement LINC and ensure the program was a success." (Doug Ryan, Settlement Officer, CIC, OASIS).

LINC Program Overview:

The LINC program provides basic language training to adult newcomers in one of Canada's official languages. The process begins as soon as possible after their arrival in Canada so that they may acquire the necessary language skills to integrate into Canadian society. LINC training is expected to facilitate participation in everyday Canadian life by including in the courses some orientation to Canadian subject matter. Examples of such topics include but are not limited to basic information about Canadian laws, vocabulary for shopping, simple banking tasks, using public transportation systems and employment. LINC training providers may also incorporate field trips to familiar community institutions such as banks, hospitals, bus stations or the grocery store.

LINC training can be taken full-time or part-time, in the workplace or in a community setting, and can include alternative training methods such as home study. Where necessary, transportation and childminding may be available to LINC students for whom language training would be otherwise inaccessible.

In addition to basic language training, there is a linguistic eligibility determination and other related services built into the LINC program. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBS) are used to determine client eligibility and assess their language skills. The assessment process allows the language needs of newcomers to be matched with appropriate language training options.

Another component of the LINC program is delivery assistance. Delivery assistance is used to obtain expertise or specialized help to support the delivery of LINC activities for the direct benefit of our clients. This component might include activities such as the analysis of the language needs of particular client groups, research, development of audio/visual materials or related products, and professional development training.

Eligibility requirements for LINC programs have not changed since 1992. In order to be eligible, a person must be an adult immigrant, older than legal school-leaving age and either a permanent resident or a newcomer who has been allowed to remain in Canada, to whom CIC intends to grant permanent resident status. Canadian citizens and refugee claimants are not eligible. Also, eligible individuals may participate in LINC training regardless of whether they are destined for the labour market or not.

Another LINC requirement that has not changed is the requirement that a client's level of language proficiency must be rated and a client is screened for eligibility before being placed in a LINC class.

The Ontario Regional LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC) continues to provide advice and guidance to CIC on operational issues and policies relating to the LINC program. ORLAC representatives continue to review, assess, and make recommendations on proposals for funding under the delivery assistance components of the LINC program that are of a regional scope.

Overview of LINC Assessment

At present, the Canadian Language Benchmark's Assessment (CLBA) and the Canadian Language Benchmarks Literacy Assessment (CLBLA) are used to determine a newcomer's language proficiency. Both tools are based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), a set of task-based level descriptors of English language abilities.

Prior to the use of the CLB-based assessment tools, the A-LINC assessment was used. A-LINC was developed at Vancouver Community College in 1992 and was the original tool used to rate and place LINC students. In the early stages of LINC implementation, Canadian Immigration and Employment Canada staff was trained to conduct A-LINC assessments. The first assessors in Ontario were trained back in March of 1992 and included Elizabeth Gryte, Colette Snyder, Jean Zajac, Joy Baxter and Lee Cobb. From August to October of 1992, the first assessors from community based agencies were trained.

In 1993, a National Working Group was formed to study and develop a national standard for adult education in English as a second language. This standard became known as the Canadian Language Benchmark or the CLB. Both the CLBA and the CLBLA were developed based on the CLB. The CLBA and the CLBLA indicate the amount of training that may be required for clients to achieve LINC program competency levels.

Assessment results are provided to both clients and language training providers. In the early years of LINC, a fold out pocket size card containing the results of the linguistic eligibility process was issued to clients. Training providers would record participants' LINC training history and completion of training designed to address A-LINC levels. Today in Ontario, the Automated Reservation System (ARS) provides assessment agencies and training providers with an efficient method of client inventory, referral and statistical information.

Over the years, a number of projects to assist LINC delivery have been funded. Some examples of projects funded over the past ten years include:

- the development of the ARS,
- consultations on the LINC program,
- the LINC assessor's conference,
- TESL Ontario (e.g., annual conference),
- the LINC childminders conference (as of 2002).

The development in Ontario of the revised LINC curriculum guidelines is also considered to be a LINC delivery assistance project.

Changes in LINC

As I was reviewing some old files, I came across some interesting historical information. The LINC program in Ontario originally included LINC levels 1-3. In June of 1992, just over 51 million dollars was allocated for the LINC program in Ontario with an estimated 11,544 seats contracted and just over 75 organizations funded to deliver LINC training, assessment and delivery assistance. The top ten source countries for immigration to Ontario in 1991 were Poland, Hong Kong, Philippines, India, China, Sri Lanka, Portugal, Jamaica, Vietnam and Lebanon.

In 1996, the LINC program in Ontario was expanded to include LINC levels 4 and 5. The expansion was, in part, a response to a changing client base. Immigration patterns in the 1980's and 1990's showed a large proportion of immigrants arriving from developing and newly industrialized countries. By the mid 1990's source countries had shifted with greater representation from Asia and Pacific Rim countries. The top ten source countries for Ontario for the last eight months of 2002 were India, China, Pakistan, Philippines, Iran, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, Korea, USA and the Ukraine.

Another shift that has occurred over the past ten years is the higher educational levels of newcomers.

Many have some form of post-secondary education. These shifts in immigration patterns and newcomer needs have been reflected in programming changes. The need for higher LINC levels was also brought to the attention of CIC Ontario Region by the Ontario Regional LINC Advisory Committee (ORLAC), on behalf of Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) that felt there was a gap in LINC training. Further consultations also validated the identified need.

In 2003, we expect to fund approximately 117 SPOs to deliver LINC training and assessment, with an estimated 16,300 seats and 3200 childminding spots. We anticipate at this time that the Ontario budget for LINC training and assessment will be about 76.5 million dollars.

The LINC Childminding Program has evolved since 1992 and now Early Childhood Educators are at every LINC childminding site. Professional development for childcare workers is provided through conferences like the Annual Regional LINC Childminding Conference. The Childminding Monitoring, Advisory and Support (CMAS) group provides support to childcare workers in the LINC childminding program. There has also been a shift from "guidelines" for the program to National Requirements for LINC childminding programs.

Perhaps one of the greatest changes in the LINC program in Ontario has been in the administration model. Originally, local settlement offices in various communities across Ontario managed LINC contracts. The new model is a centralized office in Toronto under the name of OASIS or the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration services. OASIS is responsible for the administration of LINC contracts across all of Ontario. With the centralization of administration there has been a push towards greater standardization of contracts, policies and negotiations.

While reviewing materials in order to prepare for the TESL Ontario conference presentation, I came across two stories that I thought were revealing examples of how the LINC program has evolved over the past ten years.

First, I discovered that approximately 10 years ago, during the November 26-28, 1992 Annual TESL conference in Toronto, there was a half-day session dedicated to the LINC program. Compare that to today's workshops.

Then, while sifting through some old newsletters, I discovered that back in February 1995, Valentines Day to be exact, two LINC students, Jorge and Magdalena were married in a LINC classroom at the Lakeshore

Immigrants Aid Centre. The LINC students helped make the wedding decorations and invitations, as well as preparing dishes for the lunch reception ceremony.

Future Changes

What changes are ahead for LINC you may ask? Well, the Bob Dylan Song, “the times they are a changing” comes to mind. After all, one of the key characteristics of the LINC program has always been change. Although frustrating at times, change is necessary when responding to the shifting needs of learners.

There are several initiatives and changes on the horizon that will impact on the LINC program over the next few years:

- the implementation of the New LINC National Childminidng Requirements,
- the ICAMS data system,
- the introduction of the Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test (CLBPT),
- the implementation of the new national grid that aligns CLB levels with LINC levels,
- changes in the rating eligibility for LINC level 5,

- the new LINC 1-5 Curriculum guidelines, and TESL Ontario certification of Ontario LINC instructors.

Some of you may be wondering how changes to the new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), the directions for newcomers identified in the recent throne speech, and the innovation strategy will impact on LINC. To quote Bob Dylan again, “the answer my friend is blowing in the wind”. It is difficult to say what changes will result from changes in national policies. The one thing that all groups and individuals that have worked in the LINC program for the past ten years *do* know is that change is at the core of the LINC program and always will be.

On behalf of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, I would personally like to thank everyone who has contributed in anyway to the LINC program over the past 10 years; your commitment and hard work have made it the success it is today.

Elisete Bettencourt is a Program Consultant with the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services (OASIS), Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The New Literacy: L1/L2

Patricia M. Raymond

The New Literacy is not really new in first language reading, but it has had an impact on recent research in second language reading and in this sense, it can be considered new. This paper focuses on the New Literacy (hereafter NL), on shifts in research perspectives in theories about literacy, on how these shifts have influenced current research in second language reading and, finally, on the concept of multiliteracies, which is an extension of the NL.

The New Literacy: Definitions

The NL is above all a classroom movement, and, as such, it attempts to make reading and writing more personally meaningful as well as to make the processes of the formation of literacy more powerful (Willinski, 1991). The NL contains "Language across the curriculum", which began in 1966, "Whole language", which began in the 1970's and "Reader response theory", which began in 1938. Indeed, in this sense, it is not new.

Language across the curriculum means that every teacher, whether he or she teaches math, history, or geography, is a language teacher. He or she becomes responsible for teaching language as well as math, history or geography. *Whole language* is a natural language framework developed by K. Goodman. This framework puts emphasis on accomplishing activities through text. Edelsky (1993, p. 548) aptly defines it in the following way:

"Whole language (WL) is, first of all, a perspective-in-practice, anchored in a vision of an equitable, democratic, diverse society. A WL perspective highlights theoretical and philosophical notions about language and language learning, knowledge and reality. In a WL perspective, language is an exquisite human tool for *making* (not finding) meaning. The WL view purports that what people learn when they learn a language is not separate parts (words, sounds, sentences) but a supersystem of social practices whose conventions and systematicity both constrain and liberate. And the way people acquire that system or are acquired by it is not through doing exercises so that they can really use it later but rather by actually using it as best they can with others who are using it with them, showing them how it works and what it is for."

The *Reader-response* view of reading places emphasis on a reader's immediate reactions to a text. Rosenblatt

(1938), its creator, maintains that during all reading transactions, both public (cognitive) and private (affective) elements are drawn from the reader's linguistic-experiential reservoir. She terms 'efferent' those readings which focus on what is to be abstracted and retained after a reading such as information, directions for action, conclusions concerning an argument, solutions to a problem, etc. She terms 'aesthetic' those readings in which attention is given primarily to the sensations, feelings, images and ideas called forth into consciousness during reading; in other words, to what is experienced during the reading itself. No matter how an author intended a text to be read, the same text can be read either efferently or aesthetically and the readings can fall on a continuum ranging from efferent to aesthetic. These two stances are not opposites (Rosenblatt, 1993), but represent a continuum because readings of the same text can fall at different points on the continuum. More recently, Rosenblatt (1994, p. 1090) stated that "the activation of the reader's linguistic-experiential reservoir must be the basis for the construction of new meanings and new experiences." Rosenblatt has always maintained the importance of students' responses to a text so that these students and their readings of a text become the central issue in discussing the reading. Her view gives credence to a reader's response to text. Extensions and refinements of this view have become known as *Reader-response theory*.¹

Willinski (1991, p.8) defines the NL as: "New institutional goals for the schools, new professional goals for teaching and new educational goals for literacy". He emphasizes this principle of shifted goals in the work of the classroom as a defining characteristic of the NL when he states (p. 8) : "The New Literacy consists of those strategies in the teaching of reading and writing which attempt to shift the control of literacy from the teacher to the student; literacy is promoted in such programs as a social process with language that can from the very beginning extend the students' range of meaning and connexion."

The NL proposes that purpose and intent be foremost concerns and that the locus of purpose and intent be shifted to students. The students are the meaning makers; the teachers are often cast as coaches. They later act as agents promoting the work around the

school and community (p. 10). The point is that the teacher takes on a new array of roles. The NL proposes an alternative sense of reading that has two principal dimensions of meaning. Firstly, it is rooted in the students' experiences with text. It helps them to find their voices. Indeed, this is exactly what Rosenblatt claims for Reader-response theory. Secondly, it is rooted in the sociability of the classroom setting (via Whole language). Literacy is to be shared. The NL deemphasizes the role of the autonomous reader. Students "have to experience the reading of others, to play with the politics of reading, the contest of meanings and sources of the author" (Willinski, 1991, p. 87).

Street (1993), an anthropologist, embraces a social-cultural model of literacy and, as such, is a proponent of the NL. For him, literacy represents the social practices of reading and writing rather than the cognitive processes of reading, e.g., decoding. Street is opposed to an autonomous model of literacy which considers it a single entity- separable from society. Literacy is socially and culturally defined; thus, there exist as many literacies as there exist social groups to define them. Literacy is relative to all; it means different things to different people. Literacy practices are always embedded in social and cultural contexts.

Bloome (1993), another proponent of the NL, echoes Street's position and expands it to include the concept of a reading "event". He sees reading and writing as social and cultural processes which represent ways to establish, maintain, or change social relationships and social activities. The author of a text structures a social relationship with the reader. Such author-reader interactions depend on the reader's interpretation of the linguistic forms in the text. These interactions occur during reading and involve power and control. Bloome foregrounds the social relationships among people during reading events such as a bed-time reading, a classroom reading or a person reading alone. In each of these events, including the last one, reading alone, reading is social because people are the context for each other. In this way, reading is primarily about social relationships among people during a reading event and the reader-text interaction is about these social relationships.

Objections to the NL: A Cognitive View of Reading

Gough (1995) opposes the NL. He embraces an autonomous view of reading which emphasizes the importance of the cognitive process of reading. For Gough, the private act of reading is the least social of human activities. Reading is an all or nothing phenom-

enon: either a person can decode or cannot do so. Reading is a skill that can be understood independently from issues of general comprehension. Gough insists that while comprehension is relative to a subject matter domain, decoding is not. He relates an experiment involving two groups of adult anglophones each reading two texts: one in their field and one unrelated to their field. Measures of decoding ability across the two domains were high and virtually independent of background knowledge (p. 84). Clearly, Gough maintains that decoding is not relative for first language readers.

For second language readers, however, it most certainly is. The processes associated with word recognition and text comprehension differ across languages. A good example of this is a study by Ryan and Meara (1991) with Arabic, non-Arabic and native speakers of English. The authors show that Arabic speakers confuse words with similar consonantal structure in English. The Arabic speakers (n = 10), all of a high-intermediate proficiency in English, read the English word P R O V I D E D as P R O V E D because of their similar consonantal structure (p r v d). Ryan and Meara claim that these Arabic speakers might be using mental representations of English words which ignore vowels and rely heavily on consonants as they do in Arabic, their L1. These L2 readers thus bring their L1 orthographic knowledge to their reading in English. Stating this more generally, the reading process is different for different orthographies –whether they involve Japanese script, Chinese script, Korean script, etc. And differing L1 orthographies will affect L2 reading ability.²

Shifts in Research Perspectives in Theories about Literacy

Shifts in definitions of what literacy is, as reflected in the NL, have brought about changes in the kinds of research being conducted. Of note in this regard are the Heath (1983) and Scollon *et al.* (1997) studies. Heath, an anthropologist and linguist, documents the variability in literacy practices within an English speech community. From 1969 to 1978, she lived and worked in two communities located a few miles apart from each other in the Piedmont mountains of North and South Carolina. She called these communities Roadville and Trackton, fictitious names for a black working class community, and a white working class community, respectively. Her goal was to study how the cultural aspects of each community influenced the use of words, hence the title of her book, *Ways with Words*. She recorded the language learning habits of the children in each community or the enculturation of the children in Roadville and Trackton. Heath studied (among other

things) how adults used written text in interactions with children. She examined the origin of the children's attitudes toward printed text. In both Roadville and Trackton, magazines, newspapers and books were to be found in the homes. However, in Trackton, children never saw their parents reading alone because this act indicated social failure for the parents. In Roadville, the parents did not read at home because such reading had no value for them.

In both communities, the ways that children learned to use language depended on how each community structured its family, on how each community defined the roles that community members could assume. In addition, for each community, the place of religious activities was inextricably linked to the valuation of language in determining an individual's access to goods, services and estimations of position and power in the community. These affected the way in which the children learned to use language. With respect to reading, in the church in Roadville, oral commentary on written text was reserved strictly for men and elderly women. Children were not permitted to interpret the printed word in the presence of adults. They were mere spectators whose church reading roles were limited to memorizing written texts and responding to adults asking questions about these texts. In contrast, in Trackton's churches, the children were provided with many opportunities to discuss written text, such discussions remaining open to everyone at all times. In this way, Trackton's children were given a voice in discussions about written texts while those of Roadville remained mute.

Heath's 1983 study focused on culture as learned behaviour and on language-learning habits as part of that shared learning. The children in Roadville and Trackton came to have different ways of communicating because their communities had different social legacies and ways of behaving in face-to-face interactions which shaped their different patterns of using language. Her study revealed, among other things, that each of the two communities within the same geographical area had distinct reading practices.

Scollon *et al.* asked students attending City University in Hong Kong to record in a notebook their patterns of use of public discourse. This discourse included: commercials, posters, government and business documentation, photographs, notices, billboards and announcements. Students read such discourse in four sites: 1) the campus of the university, 2) their homes, 3) in transit between home and the university and 4) in small restaurants. The authors studied each site to elucidate how public discourse is appropriated

within it. At home, for example, the students read newspapers and magazines, listened to music and watched TV. In transit they also read newspapers and magazines. Or looked at signs and posters. At university they concentrated somewhat more on university assignments which could be in English, but public discourse was never far from their attention. The authors discovered that in all four sites, the students' attention was polyfocal i.e., there was no concentration on any single text or medium. When watching TV at home, for example, they also listened to music and read or carried on a conversation; when in transit, they read and listened to music; they read while chatting, watching TV and listening to music. The authors claim that such polyfocal attention is a social practice.

What the students read was short, feature and entertainment pieces found mostly in weekly newspapers. They generally skipped the news and editorials and went directly to lighter entertainment which was read particularly in transit. They obtained their knowledge of current events and public issues from TV. In fact, they watched and listened more than they read.

The student who read public discourse was the mechanical receiver of the communication, but during the group discussions in small restaurants so popular in Hong Kong, the small group functioned in the interpreter and judgemental roles. Reading was largely socially constructed within these small groups. In this way, the role of the individual reader was constrained by social practice. The authors state: "It seems clear that the notion of the isolated reader/writer sometimes presupposed by academic instruction and assignments bears little resemblance to the social practices of students at City University" (p. 37). More importantly, they conclude: "While we have focused our research on students at a university in Hong Kong we do not believe that our findings represent solely a predominantly Chinese East Asian population. Most likely, they will be found to represent a global young generational and highly mediated post-modernism, which to some extent remains at odds with current academic practices." (P.39)

Through both the Heath and Scollon *et al.* studies, it can be seen that reading is a deeply embedded social and cultural act. Such research is oriented to descriptions of the social and cultural practices of individuals. It brings a variety of different kinds of data as well as multiple perspectives enabling more valid accounts of complex social realities. Rigg (1991, p. 536) mentions that this type of research is part of the whole language movement because it bears the following characteristics. It is concerned with the people being studied as people, rather than as unnamed subjects as in experi-

mental research. Researchers want to know what people think and how they go about developing their knowledge. In other words, they observe the sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds of individuals under natural conditions. Laboratory sites no longer matter. This type of research recognizes context as a vital factor affecting results; these contexts include physical, social, economic and political. In other words, researchers study the settings in which attitudes toward literacy are formed. Such a social approach to literacy requires research that can handle social context and an acceptance of the messiness that comes with opening the study to real people, living real lives, seeking insights through personal histories and through reflections on those histories.

The New Literacy in L2 Reading

Over the past 10 years, research in L2 reading has begun to reflect the NL. Pritchard (1991) examined how cultural schemata influenced students' reported strategies and their reading comprehension. Sixty proficient 11th grade readers – 30 from the US and 30 from the Pacific Island nation of Palau – read culturally familiar and unfamiliar passages in their own language. The students provided verbal reports of their reading strategies as they read and then retold the passage after the reading. As expected, in their retellings, students recalled significantly more idea units and produced more elaborations as well as fewer distortions for the culturally familiar than for the unfamiliar passage. Thus, the influence of the reader's native culture was clearly evident in his or her retelling. The Americans used a wider range of strategies as well as a significantly greater total number of strategies than the Palauan subjects did. They exhibited a greater willingness than the Palauans to apply strategies that seemed to require a flexibility and an inclination for risk-taking, such as considering alternative inferences and responding affectively to texts. Pritchard states that this would be consistent with the cultural background and instructional history of the Palauan subjects. Palauan culture in general discourages the type of behavior that the Americans exhibited. Further, the rote memorization and oral recitation which characterize Palauan schools serve to reinforce the message that the students receive from the culture at large. The author adds (p. 289): "These converging forces suggest that strategy usage may be determined by a combination of culture and educational practice."

As in the Heath and Scollon *et al.* L1 studies, Parry's research reflects the social and cultural construction of reading strategies. She (1993) has focused on the

relationships between cultural membership and individual language learning behaviour. She views L2 reading strategies as representations of a narrower range of language learning behaviour. In 1996, she documented the reading strategies of individuals and explained them as socially constructed behaviour. Specifically, she elaborated on two distinct groups of EFL readers, a Nigerian group and a Chinese group. She described the Nigerians as top down readers because of the literacy practices that they learned during their schooling. When reading in English as a foreign language, these 20 male Nigerian students had a weak grasp of individual lexical items and no precise lexical knowledge. They could not substitute lexical items in a syntactic slot. They had greater success with paraphrasing and summarizing, and tolerated ambiguity. They all spoke at least three languages, did not use translation in reading English and thus did not expect linguistic accuracy. They did not look up unknown vocabulary items. They had little exposure to written language of any kind in their homes e.g. no food labels, few had books in the home, no billboards were available in Nigeria. Their reading was thus confined to school settings where passages were read by the teacher with students responding in chorus. They memorized whole texts; there was no need to manipulate particular words. All textbooks were in English, with no control for vocabulary or syntax. Parry thus explains that the ways in which these Nigerian men learned to read during their schooling and in their homes supported the global approach that they took during EFL reading (p. 682). (See article for details about the bottom-up strategies of the Chinese group). Reading is social action.

Multiliteracies

In September 1994, 14 researchers from Australia, South Africa, the US, and England met in New London, New Hampshire to consider the future of literacy teaching. This New London Group concurred that what students needed to learn was changing and this for two reasons. No singular canonical English should be taught any more. Teachers had to accept many different Englishes, marked by accent, national origin and professional affiliations. Secondly, cultural differences and the communications media meant that the nature of literacy pedagogy was rapidly changing. The amount of linguistic and cultural diversity was increasing as was the number of communication channels. The solution lay in a pedagogy of multiliteracies—one which focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone. These modes differ according to culture and context. Additionally, new communications media are reshaping the way we use language; computer

media have spawned new hybrid genres such as hypertext and three-dimensional visualizations. This means that there can no longer be one set of skills that constitutes the ends of literacy learning, however taught. For this New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000), the textual is also related to the visual, the spatial, the audio. Literacy practitioners must consider the visual, the audio, the gestural and the spatial meanings in texts in addition to their linguistic meanings. In other words, texts themselves are multimodal; they are activities. ³ More importantly, all meaning making is viewed as multimodal. A pedagogy of multiliteracies can be viewed as an extension of the NL in that it is a classroom movement focusing on the acceptance of different Englishes, of the saliency of cultural and linguistic diversity and of the multimodality of meaning making.

Notes

1. See Raymond (1995) for classroom applications of reader response theory in an advanced ESL class.
2. See Koda (1996, 1998, 1999) and Chikamatsu (1996) for the influence of L1 orthography on L2 reading.
3. See Lemke (2000) for the multimedia demands of a scientific curriculum. This article is a fine example of the multimodality of meaning making.

References

- Bloome, D. (1993). Necessary indeterminacy and the microethnographic study of reading as a social process. *Journal of Research in Reading* 16, 2, 98-111.
- Chikamatsu, N. (1996). The effects of L1 orthography on L2 word recognition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18, 403-432.
- Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (2000). *Multiliteracies Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Edelsky, C. (1993) Whole language in perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 2, 1, 548-50.
- Gough, P. (1995). The new literacy: caveat emptor. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 18, 2, 79-86.
- Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koda, K. (1996). Second language word recognition research; A critical review. *Modern Language Journal*, 80, 4, 450-460.
- Koda, K. (1998). Role of phonemic awareness in second language reading. *Second Language Research*, 14, 194-215.
- Koda, K. (1999). The development of L2 intraword orthographic sensitivity and decoding skills. *Modern Language Journal*, 83, 1, 51-64.
- Lemke, J. (2000). Multimedia demands of the scientific curriculum. *Linguistics and Education*, 10, 3, 247-271.
- Parry, K. (1993). The social construction of reading strategies: New directions for research. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 16, 2, 148-158.
- Parry, D. (1996). Culture, literacy and L2 reading. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 4, 665-691.
- Pritchard, R. (1990). Effects of cultural schemata on reading processing strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 25, 4, 273-295.
- Raymond, P. M. (1995). Reader response theory in an advanced reading course: An application. The 25th anniversary book of the Second Language Institute, Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press.
- Rigg, P. (1991). Whole language in TESOL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 3, 521-542.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1938). *Literature as Exploration*. New York: Noble & Noble, (1968, 1983 editions).
- Rosenblatt, L. (1993). The transactional theory: Against dualisms. *College English*, 55, 377-386.
- Rosenblatt, L. (1994). The transactional theory of reading and writing. In R. B. Ruddell, M.R. Ruddell, and H. Singer (Eds.) *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*, 4th edition, Newark: International Reading Association
- Ryan, A. & Meara, P. (1991). The case of the invisible vowels: Arabic speakers reading English words. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 7, 2, 531-540.
- Scollon, R., Bhatia, V., Li, D. & Yung, V. (1997). Blurred genres and fuzzy identities in Hong Kong public discourse: Foundational and ethnographic issues in the study of reading. *Applied Linguistics*, 20, 22-43.
- Street, B. (1993). New literacy studies. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 16, 81-97.
- Willinsky, J. (1991). *The New Literacy Redefining Reading and Writing in the Schools*. New York: Routledge.
- Patricia Raymond is Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa's Second Language Institute. She is cross-appointed to the Faculty of Education where she teaches graduate and undergraduate programs in pedagogical grammar and conducts research on L2 reading and writing.

What are Students' Goals for Improving Their ESL Writing?

Alister Cumming, Modern Language Centre, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

As I was starting to write this article for *Contact*, one of the M.Ed. students participating in an online course I was teaching submitted the following note, highlighting the importance of motivation for ESL writing, particularly for the classroom situation in which she works:

The question of motivation arises again in this study, as...the social pressure to write certainly motivated at least the one student to try to get his writing "right". With grade seven level students, for example, what exactly is the motivating factor to write something? I wish there were more ways to incorporate meaningful writing tasks into the day, not artificially meaningful ones (such as, "pretend you are writing your letter to the editor of a major newspaper"). It is difficult to find the means to motivate at times, more so with some genres than with others.

Her concerns to understand better what might motivate her students to write in ESL underscore, from a very personal yet professionally committed perspective, a question I have been trying to address in a recent research project. A team of graduate students¹ and I have over the past year been trying to describe systematically the goals that adult ESL learners have for improving their writing in pre-university ESL courses.

Why Goals?

There are several reasons why understanding the goals that ESL students have for improving their writing is crucial for teachers, curriculum planners, and learners themselves. The first reason is that learning ESL writing cannot be explained easily. Writing and second-language learning are multi-faceted and complex, including so many diverse textual, psychological, and sociocultural aspects that research and theories have only started to describe, let alone explain them (Cumming, 2001a). Finding out what ESL students think their goals are can help to put these matters into a concrete perspective, orienting educators to under-

stand what learners think they are doing and why. Second, learning to write in a second language is highly personal, unique and intentional. It is rooted in the identities, aspirations for academic studies and careers, and social values that a student may have, or wish to have. It may be necessary for teachers to ask students what their goals for improving their writing are because these cannot easily be predicted, particularly among students with diverse backgrounds. Third, their goals guide how students mediate the educational, work, and professional contexts they may write in, determining the strategies they may use in these settings. So if we wish to improve students' strategies for writing, we need to grasp these in reference to the contexts in which they write, not as some kind of autonomous strategies that may not exist outside of these contexts, as has been shown in studies of oral communication (e.g., Firth & Wagner, 1997) or mathematics learning (e.g., Bereiter, 1997).

A fourth reason for understanding students' goals is that it helps to put learning ESL writing into the perspective of long-term learning. Students can be prompted to plot the goals they have achieved to date, and aim to achieve new ones in the future, thereby gaining greater control over their own learning processes (c.f., Trim, 1998). Fifth, understanding individuals' goals for improving their writing is a way to make personal the abstract goals for achievement that typically appear in curriculum standards or attainment levels, which may have a normative value for groups of people but not a personal realization useful for teaching or learning in specific situations, or assessment of such learning (Cumming, 2001b; Norris, 2002; Olson, in press).

Theoretically, goals form the basis for motivation and for strategies, as articulated in Activity Theory (e.g., Engestrom, 1991; Leont'ev, 1972; Wells, 1999; Wiemelt, 2001; Winsor, 1999) and Goal Theory or theories of Self-Regulated Learning (e.g., Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Locke & Latham, 1990; Midgley, 2002; Rueda & Moll, 1994, Zimmerman & Schunk,

2001). These are well-founded bases on which to develop conceptualizations of the goals people have for learning, and how these may be realized in the context of ESL writing. Finally, previous studies about goals in second-language writing have demonstrated pedagogical utility as a focus of learning and teaching (Cumming, 1986; Hoffman, 1998), for their capacity to explain differences in students' uses of instructor feedback on writing (Haneda, 2000), and in their development over time in the context of self-assessments in portfolios (Donato & McCormick, 1994). In a pilot study leading up to the present research, we found potential value in interviewing ESL students about their goals for improving their writing (Cumming, Busch & Zhou, 2002).

Describing Goals: A Framework and Case-Study Example

To clarify some of these ideas, let me describe the goals that one ESL learner expressed for his writing when we interviewed him last year at the beginning and end of his intensive, pre-university ESL course. At the same time, I will summarize key aspects we have found in the ways that ESL learners describe their goals for writing improvement. Tommy (a pseudonym) was one of 44 adults that we interviewed. Tommy's goals were relatively explicit because he had clear ideas about his future career (to study architecture, which he is now doing in Paris) and because of his previous work experiences (designing sets for TV and movies in Mexico), prior to coming to Canada six months previously. In this respect, Tommy serves as a useful example for introducing the framework we have developed in our research for describing ESL learners' goals for improving their writing.

To describe ESL learners' expressions about their goals reliably, we realized that we had to be able to perceive each goal in our interview data as a fully stated proposition. For example, Tommy stated the proposition, "I would like to improve my grammar," then elaborated as we questioned him further, "Like complex structure. Punctuation. I had some problems with run-ons and semi-colons and stuff like that." Secondly, we realized that goals could be expressed in three ways, either as *intentions* (i.e., things that people say they want to accomplish in the future, as in the statement quoted above), as *dilemmas* (i.e., problems people are starting to become aware of, which later may take the form of goals as the problems are resolved), or as *outcomes* (i.e., goals that were already accomplished). An example of a dilemma appeared when asked about how he feels when writing in English, Tommy replied, "Sometimes hesitant because I don't want to make

mistakes. And if I doubt if it's wrong, it's right. But general I feel good."

As illustrated in the goal about grammar cited above, goals for writing improvement can focus on a variety of objects. In our data, these objects for goals tend to include: language (as in the example above about grammar, or often also vocabulary: "to have a wider vocabulary and try to see words"), rhetoric or genres ("I'm trying to improve the essay"); composing processes ("to edit writing"); ideas and knowledge ("I wanted to show the main, the main point of the article"); affective states ("To feel more confident"); learning and transfer ("I'd like to try to make people think of different things and try to appreciate more things that does exist"); and identity and self-awareness ("the Spanish Tommy is very easy-going, but in English is a little bit shy"). People tend to have a range of goals, typically citing many different objects for their goals over the period of one interview. Of particular interest pedagogically are the actions that students say they take in respect to their goals. These actions typically involve: seeking assistance from teachers, seeking assistance from other people, using tools or resources, studying, altering conditions for writing or stimulation, or reading. For instance, Tommy said that he was trying to improve his grammar by "Reading books, magazines, newspapers, and taking the course because it's practice."

It is important to understand the contexts in which students act on their goals. Most of these actions appear in reference to ESL classes (presumably because, in our data, that is what the students were doing full-time). For instance, Tommy observed how his teacher was "teaching us how to edit writing because that's very good...And we are editing the writing of other classmates." Those who had taken academic classes also referred to goals for writing improvement related to them, for example, in reference to the requirements of assignments or professors. Some students' goals were to be able to write English well enough to pass tests such as the TOEFL. Those who had work experience cited certain goals for writing arising from that experience. Interestingly, some of the goals were described in respect to family members (e.g., with whom students communicate by e-mail or letters) or their home contexts, particularly for those students with spouses who were helping them improve their English writing. In a similar manner, the long-term aspirations that people have are integral to their goals, either in respect to university studies; to pass certain tests; to prepare for their future careers, or for self-improvement. For Tommy, a major long-term aspira-

tion was to improve his writing related to architecture, his intended field of study: "I would like to improve more professional article. I think for the moment it is okay because I'm very weak in business writing. But I'm not ready yet because I need to learn some technical language, jargon of my career. And then I could write about it." In his second interview, Tommy reiterated, "I'd like to write for magazines or newspapers some articles about architecture...Not now but maybe ten years in the future."

Two final aspects of students' goals we have been documenting are the origins of the goals (do they come from students themselves, their teachers, peers, family, or work?) and who is seen to assume primary responsibility for the goals (themselves, teachers, peers, or others). Tommy described his goals in a way that conveyed his own personal sense of responsibility for goals that he defined himself: "I'm trying to read the books, magazines about art, to learn some new vocabulary because it's quite difficult to express myself. You know, technical words and emotion, it's quite difficult." But he also acknowledged how his teachers, classmates, and previous work situations had contributed to some of his goals.

Implications

The framework for describing goals documented above is just a preliminary step toward the awareness that teachers and learners might usefully develop about how ESL learners conceive of their goals for writing improvement. Tommy is but one unique ESL learner among many who are preparing for university studies. Our next steps in this research are to assess how students' goals compare to their teachers' goals, and to see how the students' goals might change as they enter academic courses at university a year after their ESL studies. The implications we see for teaching and learning are a better understanding of the integral, goal-based dimensions of people's learning and how that shapes their writing activities and aspirations for self-regulated improvement. As the M.Ed. student I quoted at the start of this article indicates, teachers have very little guidance from theory or research about motivation for writing, so we hope our present research starts to provide some.

References

Austin, J. T. & Vancouver, J.B. (1996). Goals constructs in psychology: Structure, process, and content. *Psychological Bulletin*, 120, 338-375.

- Bereiter, C. (1997). Situated cognition and how to overcome it. In D. Kirshner & J. Whitson (Eds.) *Situated cognition: Social, semiotic, and psychological perspectives* (pp. 281-300). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cumming, A. (1986). Intentional learning as a principle for ESL writing instruction: A case study. In P. Lightbown & S. Firth (Eds.), *Special Issue of TESL Canada Journal*, 69-83.
- Cumming, A. (2001a). Learning to write in a second language: Two decades of research. In R. Manchon (Ed.), *Writing in the L2 classroom: Issues in research and pedagogy*. Special issue of *International Journal of English Studies*, 1, 2, 1-23.
- Cumming, A. (2001b). The difficulty of standards, for example in second language writing. In T. Silva & P. Matsuda (Eds.) *On second language writing* (pp. 209-229). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Cumming, A., Busch, M., & Zhou, A. (2002). Investigating learners' goals in the context of second-language writing. In S. Ransdell & M. Barbier (Eds.) *New directions for research in L2 writing* (pp. 189-208). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.
- Donato, R. & McCormick, D. (1994). A sociocultural perspective on language learning strategies: The role of mediation. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 453-464.
- Hoffman, A. (1998). An exploratory study of goal setting and the nature of articulated goals in second language writing development. *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, 4, 33-48.
- Engestrom, Y. (1991). Overcoming the encapsulation of school learning. *Learning and Instruction*, 1, 243-259.
- Firth, A. & Wagner, J. (1997). On discourse, communication, and (some) fundamental concepts in SLA research. *Modern Language Journal*, 81, 285-300.
- Graham, S. & Harris, K. (1994). The role and development of self-regulation in the writing process. In D. Schunk & B. Zimmerman (Eds.) *Self-regulation of learning and performance: Issues and educational applications* (pp. 203-228). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Haneda, M. (2000). *Negotiating meaning in writing conferences: An investigation of a university Japanese-as-a-foreign language class*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto.
- Hoffman, A. (1998). An exploratory study of goal setting and the nature of articulated goals in second

- language writing development. *New Zealand Studies in Applied Linguistics*, 4, 33-48.
- Leont'ev, A. (1972, trans. 1979). The problem of activity in psychology. In J. Wertsch (Trans. & Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology* (pp. 37-71). Armonk, NY: Sharpe.
- Locke, E. & Latham, G. (1994). *A theory of goal-setting and task performance*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Midgley, C. (Ed.) (2002). *Goals, goal structures, and patterns of adaptive learning*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Norris, J. (Ed.) (2002). *Interpretations, intended uses and designs in task-based language assessment*. Special Issue of *Language Testing*, 19, 4.
- Olson, D. (in press). *Psychological theory and educational reform: How school remakes mind and society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rueda, R. & Moll, L. (1994). A sociocultural perspective on motivation. In H.F.O'Neil & M. Drillings (Eds.) *Motivation: Theory and research* (pp. 117-137). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Trim, J. (1998). European perspectives on modern language learning. *Language Teaching*, 31, 4, 206-217
- Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Towards a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wiemelt, J. (2001). Toward an activity-based conception of writing and school writing contexts. *Written Communication*, 18, 107-179.
- Winsor, D. (1999). Genre and activity systems. *Written Communication*, 16, 200-224.
- Zimmerman, B. & Schunk, D. (Eds.) (2001). *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theoretical perspectives*. 2nd edition. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Notes

- In addition to the ESL students and teachers participating in this research study, I thank the graduate students who have been working with me on this project as research assistants: Kyoko Baba, Michael Busch, Jill Cummings, Usman Erdosy, Keanre Eouanzoui, Cheryl Fretz, Tae-Young Kin, Luxin Yang, and Ally Zhou. We gratefully acknowledge funding for this research from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, standard grant 410-2001-0791.

Reconceptualizing Research on Writing from within an Activity System Perspective: The Game Board Project

Susan Parks, Diane Huot, Josiane Hamers, France H.-Lemonnier
Université Laval

When reflecting on how research on writing is conducted, it is important to recall that the theoretical frameworks underlying the research are not neutral. Different theoretical frameworks offer different perspectives as to what constitutes good research in terms of such key dimensions as the types of research questions which are most valued and the methodologies typically resorted to to carry out the study. Acknowledging the way in which our preferred frameworks for doing research may obscure our vision as to other ways of seeing and doing, Sullivan and Porter (1997) caution us to be more sensitive to their status as frame. As they point out:

Some frames of reference become powerful through repeated use and social consensus - for example, ways to measure and position subjects—and then they can become ‘reified.’ Their status as frame is forgotten, and they become ‘natural’, or ‘real,’ or ‘things as they are.’ They affect our rhetoric and our methodology in that whether we like them or not we are forced to deal with these frames. (p. 79)

Thus, rather than consider particular approaches to research as all encompassing truths, Sullivan and Porter suggest the latter be viewed as heuristics, to be used with discrimination depending on the nature of the problem to be investigated. Such a critical stance, qualified by the authors as postmodern, also underscores how decisions pertaining to the choice of theories and methodological tools offer up to the researcher both possibilities (or affordances¹) and constraints in terms of the way research can be done. These choices in turn influence the outcomes of research as well as the nature of the pedagogical implications which may be drawn.

Within this paper, we would like to examine how one particular theoretical framework, namely Engeström’s (1991) activity system, may be useful in helping researchers reconceptualize their approach to research on writing. As will be argued below, in contrast to previous approaches to such research,

Engeström’s framework enables us to better comprehend and account for activity involving writing in situated contexts, e.g., in real classrooms. To better illustrate this, we will refer to a team project involving the production of a game board by Grade 8 students enrolled in an ESL language arts class in a Quebec francophone high school. Drawing on this project, we will suggest that three lines of inquiry are of particular interest:

- 1) the relationship between teachers’ conceptualizations of teaching and classroom practice,
- 2) a view of text production and writing development as socially mediated practice, and
- 3) issues of investment in terms of students’ orientation to writing tasks and the resultant outcomes (i.e. written products).

However, prior to discussing Engeström’s activity system, we will first briefly situate how theory has been used to frame approaches to research on second-language writing since the 1970s.

Research on Writing: Theoretical Influences and the Framing of Research Questions

Over the past 20 to 30 years, research on first (L1) and second (L2) language writing has tended to focus on analyses of product or process in response to evolving theories, primarily in the fields of linguistics and psychology, in particular, the cognitive sciences. In the case of product-oriented approaches to research, notions of what constitutes good writing have been largely influenced by linguistic theory. In the 1970s, for example, notably in L1 research, an important indicator of good writing was sentence complexity, a view which reflected the theoretical influences of both descriptive and generative models of grammar where language was defined as a sentence level phenomenon. With the emphasis on sentence complexity, t-unit analysis be-

came a widespread research tool. More recently, a view of genre as textual product has given rise to a conception of writing competency based on the analysis of genre-specific rhetorical features. Within L2, this approach, often referred to as text or discourse analysis, has been widely used to compare differences between L1 and L2 writers or developmental growth amongst L2 writers (Swales, 1990). Whereas in the first instance a major pedagogical implication was the use of exercises featuring sentence combining, the view of genre as textual product has promoted teaching strategies designed to enhance the writer's awareness of relevant rhetorical features.

Since the mid-1970s, research conducted within the domain of cognitive psychology has fostered a view of writing as process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Emig, J., 1971; Flower & Hayes, 1980, 1981). In response to the need to focus on writers' mental processes, a new research tool emerged – oral protocol analysis (Ericsson & Simon, 1984; Levy, Marek, & Lea, 1995; Janssen, 1996; Smagorinsky, 1994)². In experiments featuring this tool, subjects were typically asked to compose aloud in isolation in response to a writing topic given by the researcher. A major objective of cognitive-based research was to identify writing processes, especially as they served to distinguish good and poor writers or L1 and L2 writers (Cumming, 1990; Flower & Hayes, 1980). Research conducted within this framework has also given rise to a large body of work aimed at identifying the nature of the changes in various drafts (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Hyland, 1998; Kroll, 1990). From a pedagogical point of view, process-oriented conceptions of writing have been instrumental in promoting strategy-based instructional approaches.

In terms of the limitations which may be associated with product- and process-oriented approaches to writing, three points are of particular note. First, as the studies tend to involve experiments, little research has been conducted in real classroom settings. As a result, the way in which social context may be implicated in the development of writing skills has not been investigated. Secondly, the types of tasks subjects are asked to engage in typically involve individual writing in isolation. Pedagogies which might favour project-based teaching or collaborative writing tasks have not been attended to. Thirdly, little attention has been given to how or why individuals might differentially invest in the assigned writing tasks. Within the experimental paradigm, the way subjects might orient to writing tasks is not viewed as problematic insofar as research protocols are adhered to.

However, since the mid-1980s, other lines of research, first in L1, and more recently in L2, have begun to address the above shortcomings. In this regard, two lines of theory have been particularly influential. The first involves a renewed conception of genre inspired by Miller's (1984) seminal work in which the latter is viewed not only as textual product but also in terms of the social process which supports the reproduction of the particular genre (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Hyon, 1996; Parks, 2000a; Parks & Maguire, 1999; Raymond & Parks, 2001). The second influence, which may be evoked in combination with genre theory (Dias et al, 1999; Parks, 2001; Raymond & Parks, 2002), involves Vygotskian and Neo-Vygotskian theory (Chaiklin & Lave, 1996; Rogoff & Lave, 1984; Salomon, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). These latter influences include activity theory (Leont'ev, 1981), specifically Engeström's (1991) version, referred to as an activity system. Although versions of Activity theory are intended to apply more broadly to the way learning may be mediated in regard to any type of activity (e.g. young children learning to put puzzles together, Wertsch, Minick, & Arns, 1984, or apprentice tailors' initiation into their craft, Lave & Wenger, 1991), we suggest that its use in contexts involving research on writing is of particular interest. (For a recent review of L2 writing research, also see Cumming, 1998).

Engeström's Activity System

The components of Engeström's (1991) activity system are shown in Figure 1. As shown in this Figure, activity theory suggests a relationship between the way an individual (the subject) orients to an activity, the means (or tools) used to carry it out, and the resultant outcomes. Within this model, the inclusion of a subject position serves to acknowledge the fact that individuals—teachers or students, for example – may variously invest in particular activities due to their different backgrounds and experiences. In the case of teachers, this could mean understanding differences in their prior conceptions and beliefs about teaching. Factors that might be relevant for students could include their personal interests, cultural backgrounds, gender or attitudes (e.g. in terms of how they view language learning, Parks, 2000b; Raymond & Parks, 2002). The means or tools selected to enact a particular activity are done so in function of the goals as perceived by the individual (and, of course, constrained by their availability). It is further important to note that in a Vygotskian perspective, tools refer to both concrete instruments (e.g. pencils or computer software) and psychological

tools (e.g., language). Within a classroom context, language may be further viewed as the particular discourses or modes of interaction which come to characterize classroom routines.

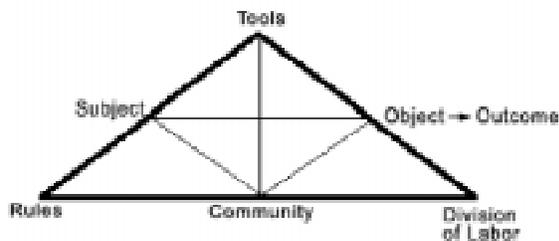


Figure 1. Engeström's (1991) model of an Activity System.

In contrast to the top portion of Engeström's (1991) model, the bottom portion moves beyond the subject position as represented by a teacher or student to suggest how other aspects of the activity system may mediate the activity of teaching and learning. These other aspects pertain to the construal of community (i.e., "those who share the same object of activity", p. 249), the division of labour (i.e., "division of functions and tasks among the members of the community", p. 249), and rules (i.e., "the norms and standards that regulate the activity", p. 249). Thus, as Engeström elaborates, within traditional teaching, the notion of community – who is involved in the activity of teaching – extends solely to teachers and students located in the physical space of the classroom. In terms of the division of labour, teachers teach and control and students study; the participant structure privileged is that of a teacher-centered classroom where the flow of talk is between the teacher and the student. Strict codes of behaviour and standards of grading are particularly emphasized. Although the description here is of traditional teaching, the model also serves to characterize and differentiate various approaches to teaching. As within activity theory, the unit of analysis is the activity one wishes to investigate; this model is particularly apt for exploring learning processes in regard to specific pedagogical practices such as the game board project discussed herein.

Focus Study: Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Francophone High Schools

Data for the game board project discussed below were obtained while conducting a four-year longitudinal research project which more generally focused on

how information and communication technologies (ICTs) were being used in four francophone high schools in the Quebec City area (Hamers et al., 2001; Lemonnier et al., 2001; Parks et al., 2001). The school from which these particular data were collected involved a Grade 8 class, part of a special program, here referred to as the New Technologies (NT) program, in which students and teachers all worked with laptop computers in their respective classrooms. Typically, students sat at large tables in groups of three or four and plugged the laptops into a central socket. The school was networked so students could access documents in each other's and the teacher's computer. All the laptops were connected to the Internet. Other resources included printers, a scanner, CD-Roms, an LCD projector and a digital camera. Although students coming into the program had to indicate an interest in working with computers, in most cases their knowledge was initially limited to basic word processing skills.

The game board project was designed by the Grade 8 teacher of the ESL language arts class, Mark Miller³. Although the students in this class were in a language arts class which tended to include more reading and writing than regular ESL classes, the English proficiency level of most of the students ranged from elementary to low intermediate. For this project, the objective was to have teams of students create a real functioning game with a game board, based on a theme from a book or video. Students also produced a document that contained various items including information about the characters from their book or video and the rules for the game. During this project, we observed two teams intensively throughout the duration of the activity. We collected materials, videotaped and interviewed team members and their teachers. One of the teams we observed based their game board on the Austin Power movie (see below), which had recently been released.

Framing Writing Research Issues from within an Activity Systems Perspective: The Game Board Project

Three issues related to research on writing based on Engeström's model are:

- 1) relationship between teachers' conceptualizations of teaching and classroom practice,
- 2) view of text production and writing development as socially mediated practice, and
- 3) issues of investment in regard to students' orientation to writing tasks and the resultant outcomes (i.e. written products).

To illustrate more fully how these questions might be investigated in the context of a study, we discuss them in relation to the game board project in the Grade 8 ESL language arts class observed in the New Technologies program.

1. Relationship between teachers' conceptualizations of teaching and classroom practice

In research on writing, teachers' views on writing and their relevance for pedagogy are rarely foregrounded (Shi & Cumming, 1995; Pennington, 1995). However, research conducted within other educational contexts, including the use of ICTs, suggests that attention to this issue is crucial to understanding classroom practice (Maguire, 1997; Platt & Troudi, 1997; Woods, 1996). More specifically, with respect to ICTs, although it is at times assumed that the availability of these tools will lead to more innovative approaches to teaching, such is not necessarily the case (Cuban, 1986; Mehan, 1989). In a study by Warschauer (1998), for example, despite access to the Internet, computer technology was used merely to reinforce such traditional writing activities as the five-paragraph essay and grammar exercises. Other studies (Murphy, 2000; Sandholz, Ringstaff & Dywer, 1997; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000) suggest that the more innovative uses of ICTs tend to be by teachers who are committed to constructivist/socio-constructivist conceptions of teaching rather than more traditional transmission views.

In our own study involving the special NT program, we investigated the way in which innovations in the use of ICTs and project-based teaching reflected teachers' beliefs about teaching (for a fuller report, see Parks et al., 2001; Parks et al., 2003). In the case of Mark, the Grade 8 teacher who set up the game board project, aspects of teaching which he considered important included:

- projects which were challenging and meaningful
- integration of multimedia technology into classroom activities
- learning with emphasis on process (including the writing process and critical reflection by individuals and teams)
- portfolios to document students' progress
- evaluation based on letter grades intended to gauge the degree to which students invested in a particular project and completed the specified tasks

Observation of his classroom practice revealed that the above values which he articulated in interviews were also well integrated into his classroom practice. In this regard, the game board project provided an excellent illustration of his views, including how he dealt with writing. The project which took place over a period of approximately two months not only involved the creation of a game based on a video or book with an accompanying written document but also the physical creation of the game board. As a test of the game's viability and appeal, at the end of the project teams took turns playing each other's games and voted for the one they felt was the best. During this project students engaged in the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing), an approach to text production which the teacher had initiated in Grade 7. ICTs were used not only to produce a Word document but to search for information on the Internet. Thus the team whose game board was inspired by the Austin Powers movie, used Internet sites to get information about the storyline and characters as well as download pictures which they could use to embellish their written document. As seen in other projects, the teacher required that students reflect on how they worked, both individually and as a team. The reflections and other documents related to the project were placed in their portfolios as evidence of their evolving competence in English.

At a theoretical level, Engeström's model through the provision of a subject position, suggests how agency, as manifested in this case by the teacher, mediates classroom practice in terms of the broader contextual aspects pertaining to the rules, construal of community and division of labour. Examining teachers' views on teaching (and writing), such as those of Mark, sheds light on why classroom practices differ and the nature of these differences. Thus, in contrast to studies such as the one involving the ESL college teacher in Warschauer's study (1998), the teachers we observed in the NT program harnessed the power of ICTs to promote more innovative approaches to teaching. Within the area of L2 writing, greater attention needs to be given to elucidating how teachers' beliefs about teaching (and writing) relate to specific classroom practices as well as facilitate (or inhibit) innovation. In the following section, we discuss how classroom organization relates to text production and the development of writing ability.

2. Text production and writing development as socially mediated practice

Within a Vygotskian-inspired activity perspective, writing development, as one type of learning within this

more comprehensive cognitive framework, may be viewed as socially mediated practice. Of particular note here is how tools, interpreted both in terms of the material means (e.g. pencils, ICTs) and the discourses (psychological tools), which guide and shape classroom interaction, are used and appropriated by learners. In the context of activities involving new skills, the appropriation may be viewed as progressive as the learner moves from other- to self-regulated behaviour. Other-regulated behaviour refers to the support or scaffolding (Bruner, 1990), which may be provided by more expert others (e.g. more experienced peers or teachers); self-regulated behaviour refers to an activity which the individual can do independently and thus no longer requires help from others (within language learning, such mastery can refer to linguistic forms such as verb tenses or discursive forms / particular genres). The mediation process by which new skills are appropriated is often referred to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

Unlike cognitive/psycholinguistic approaches to language acquisition, activity theory fully acknowledges the socially mediated nature of learning. In the area of writing research and pedagogy, the importance of such explicit acknowledgement becomes particularly apparent when dealing with writing activities in the context of project-based teaching. Within experimental approaches to writing, the use of individual tasks performed in lab-like conditions fosters a perception of writing as a highly individual, self-contained activity; classroom pedagogies where writing tasks are performed in solitary conditions with little interaction also promote such a view. By contrast, classroom pedagogies that favour more socially constructivist modes of interaction, such as that exemplified by the game board project, require approaches to research which enable the researcher to account more fully for the way in which learning takes place (or fails to take place) *in situ*. As individual tasks in lab-like conditions fail to recreate the social conditions that underlie such learning, long-term ethnographic type research in classrooms becomes a vital necessity. Within this more complex view of literacy development, it is important to account for the ways in which the use of tools – both instrumental and psychological – are intertwined and appropriated during the execution of various activities. Understanding how these resources may be distributed within a particular classroom environment and how students individually appropriate (or fail to appropriate) them becomes henceforth an important avenue of inquiry.

As one means of accounting more broadly for the way in which individuals (or teams) appropriate linguis-

tic and discursive resources during text production, we have identified four types of collaborative processes: joint, parallel, incidental and covert. Definitions of these processes (Parks & Maguire, 1999; Parks, 2000b, 2003; Parks et al., 2003)⁴ with examples of actual behaviours, as observed in the team that produced the Austin Powers game board, are given below.

Joint collaboration. This refers to two or more writers working on the same text who assume equal responsibility for the text produced (i.e., in terms of official authorship); actual involvement in terms of contributions to the finished product may vary or be more equally shared. Within the context of the Austin Power game board, observation of the way the team proceeded revealed that students jointly participated in various tasks related to the completion of the project, including brainstorming for ideas, searching for information, drafting, revising and editing. Despite contributions in these tasks to varying degrees, at the end of the project all put their names on the assignment. As pointed out below, the signalling of official authorship is the main difference between joint and parallel collaboration. It is also to be noted that this mode of text production in which individuals who are signalled as authors have variously contributed to the actual final product is a mode of text production more frequently associated with workplace environments rather than traditional school contexts better known for individual authoring.

Parallel collaboration. This refers to two or more writers, who, although working on the same text, do not assume equal responsibility for the text produced (in terms of official authorship); actual involvement in terms of contributions to the finished product may vary or be more equally shared. One of the main illustrations of this type of collaboration was the feedback provided by the teacher, either in the form of individual conferencing or feedback to the team on a draft or feedback provided by other students (from another team). As students worked in a networked environment, exchange of texts was facilitated by the fact that they could give peers (or the teacher) ready access to Word versions of their texts.

Incidental collaboration. This refers to generally brief, spur-of-the moment requests for help directly related to the task at hand. Within the NT classes, students were frequently observed asking their peers for help as the need arose in the context of specific tasks. This collaboration appeared to be facilitated by the fact that students were seated beside each other at tables and were allowed to get up to consult students

at other tables. Numerous instances of incidental collaboration were observed in the context of the team involved in producing the Austin Power game board.

Covert collaboration. One aspect of covert collaboration refers to the appropriation of information from documents or other resources (linguistic or non-linguistic) during the process of producing a text. During the game board project, examples of this type of covert collaboration included recourse to such tools as paper dictionaries, electronic translators (e.g. Babylon at <http://www.babylon.com>) spelling checkers as well as various types of documents (e.g. Internet sources, Word documents stored in their computers or on the teacher's website, books), and information on the board. For example, at the start of the project, when students were unsure what the names of the Austin Powers characters might be in English, they immediately searched on the Internet to find a relevant site. This site provided them both with the names of the characters as well as information about the characters which was also needed to complete part of the written document. In addition to using previously existing textual information, covert collaboration also refers to prior interactions or verbal exchanges which are retroactively perceived to be of use in the actual writing of a document. In this classroom context, such prior interactions could include the teacher's in-class discussion of instructions for the game board project or previous pedagogical activities including such things as grammar, use of the writing process or strategies for carrying out tasks such as the analysis of plot through use of a plot diagram. In this latter instance, students were asked to include a plot diagram to illustrate the storyline of the video or book that had inspired the creation of their game. First introduced in Grade 7, the plot diagram involves a visual representation of the storyline in terms of the problem, main events, climax and resolution. Whereas Grade 7 students needed to be guided in their use of this tool, by Grade 8 they could use it independently. Such an appropriation of a tool suggests how learning progresses from other- to self-regulated behaviour.

In observing how students produced texts, it is of note that a given written product was generally mediated by more than one type of collaborative activity, a point which was confirmed in the case of the team that produced the Austin Powers game board. Although in previous research from within a psycholinguistic/cognitive perspective, the social aspect of writing development has been reflected in certain aspects of the revision process, research situated within a sociocultural perspective (as illustrated here by Engeström's

activity system) requires that one explore these processes at a more micro-level within actual classrooms. Thus, in terms of research, questions such as these are particularly pertinent:

1. How do writers appropriate resources within a given classroom context to produce a given text? (or What is the nature of the scaffolding observed in the production of a given textual product? or How is the development of writing skills socially mediated within a specific classroom context?)
2. What is the nature of the collaborative activity (or forms of mediation) observed in project work or team work requiring the production of written texts?
3. How do students appropriate genre-specific writing skills over time? (or How do students appropriate resources as they move from other – to self-regulated activity?)

In addition to more detailed accounts of how the production of specific written texts is mediated, attention also needs to be given to how pedagogical activities contribute to learning more longitudinally, both during a whole school year and over two or more school years. As predicated by Engeström's model, the way learning is mediated must be viewed more broadly to account for such aspects of the classroom context as the types of activities or tasks, teachers' approaches to teaching, and the modes of interaction typically enacted. In addition to the latter, however, another factor that needs to be considered pertains to the way students themselves invest in the tasks- a point discussed in the following section.

3. Issues of investment in regard to students' orientation to writing tasks and the resultant outcomes (i.e. written products).

As suggested above, research on writing has typically focused on the analyses of written products or on individual writer's strategies (e.g. oral protocol analysis) in experimental settings. Within experimental research, insofar as the research protocol is respected, the assumption is that subjects are all engaging in the task in the same way. However, research conducted within an activity theory perspective has drawn attention to the ways that individuals, both in experimental research and classroom settings, differentially invest in specific tasks. Coughlin and Duff (1994) have, in this regard, made a useful distinction between "task as blueprint", in terms of the researcher's or teacher's

conception of what the task should be, and “task as activity” in terms of the way an individual appropriates (or fails to appropriate) a given task. In explaining these differences, it has been necessary to explore how the individual’s personal history (including, as relevant, such factors as gender, cultural origins, race) may be implicated in regard to the specific activity under investigation.

As pertains to the game board project, close observation of teams revealed how individuals and teams differentially invested in this project. It is also of note that some of the students we were observing were particularly well known to us as we had observed and interviewed them as well as their teachers in the previous year in Grade 7. During the project, we had also informally interviewed students to better understand their reactions and reasons for involving themselves the way they did. Within the team that produced the Austin Powers inspired game board, one noteworthy approach was allocating certain tasks based on the strengths of various members. Thus, for example, Pierre, whom everyone in the team knew to be stronger in English frequently took a lead in the drafting or editing of texts. By contrast, Valérie, who had a rather elementary level of English and was the weakest member of the team linguistically, took a more active role in the artistic aspects related to the creation of the game board. Valérie, for example, was in charge of the actual design of the board and also searched the Internet for illustrations to be used to produce the written document. Although all contributed to the final project, some were more centrally involved in certain aspects of the activity than others, a mode of task-sharing which evokes Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of legitimate peripheral participation.

Although the Austin Powers team faced challenges during the course of this project, their efforts at collaboration were highly successful based on the fact that they finished the project on time and received an A. By contrast, another team that we observed were much less successful at carrying out the project. Although they completed their project on time and managed to get a B, a closer examination of the interpersonal dynamics revealed that they were not working optimally and team members were variously satisfied with their actual contributions. One problem observation of this team brought to light was the tendency of one team member to want to write texts independently and not allow for the input of others; true collaboration was minimal. Despite the emphasis given to task design within ESL, understanding how students actually involve themselves, the nature of the problems, and the

way their personal histories surface to facilitate or impede successful completion needs to be more thoroughly investigated. The role and extent of training in effective collaborative strategies also merits attention.

Conclusion

In considering how we conduct research on writing, it is important to remember that our conceptions of this object are mediated by the theories and methodologies used to explore it. As suggested by our overview of research on writing since the 1970s, interest has shifted from product- and process-oriented perspectives to a more in-depth understanding of how writers develop expertise (or fail to do so) in situated contexts. In contrast to past research which has tended to be experimental and involve isolated writing tasks, qualitatively oriented classroom research may challenge the researcher to account for more complex writing activities, which, as in the game board activity discussed herein, may involve substantive project-based team work. As a theoretical framework for orienting such research, we have proposed that consideration be given to Engeström’s activity system. We have further suggested that this framework seems particularly appropriate to situate three lines of inquiry: the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of writing and classroom practice, writing development as socially mediated practice and issues of investment in terms of the way writers orient to the task at hand.

Acknowledgments

We wish to extend thanks to the students, teachers and administrators of the schools in the Quebec City area where our study involving the use of information and communication technologies was carried out. Funding for this project was provided by a joint Quebec Ministry of Education – *Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l’Aide à la Recherche* (FCAR) grant, reference 98-NT-0035. We also wish to thank the editor of this special issue and reviewers for their useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

References

- Bereiter, C., & Scardamalia, M. (1987). *The psychology of written composition*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T.N. (1995). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition/culture/power*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Block, E. (1986). The comprehension strategies of second language readers. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 463-493.
- Bruner, J.S. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Chaiklin, S., & Lave, J. (1996). *Understanding practice: Perspectives on activity and context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coughlin, P., & Duff, P. (1994). Same task, different activities: Analysis of SLA task from an activity theory perspective. In P. Lantolf & G. Appel (Eds.), *Vygotskian approaches to second language research* (pp. 173-191). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Cuban, L. (1986). *Teacher and machines: The classroom use of technology since 1920*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cumming, A. (1990). Metalinguistic and ideational thinking in second language composition. *Written Communication*, 7, 482-511.
- Cumming, A. (1998). Theoretical perspectives on writing. In W. Grabe (Ed.), *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 18, 61-78.
- Dias, P., Freedman, A., Medway, P., & Paré, A. (1999). *Worlds apart: Acting and writing in academic and workplace contexts*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Emig, J. (1971). The composing processes of twelfth graders (Research Report No. 13). Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Engeström, Y. (1991). Non scolae sed vitae discimus: Toward overcoming the encapsulation of school learning. *Learning and Instruction*, 1, 243-259.
- Ericsson, K.A., & Simon, H.A. (1984). *Protocol analysis: Verbal reports as data*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J.R. (1980). The cognition of discovery: Defining a rhetorical problem. *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 365-387.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J.R. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 365-387.
- Freedman, A., & Medway, P. (Eds.) (1994). *Genre and the new rhetoric*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Hamers, J., Huot, D., Lemonnier, F. & Parks, S. (2001). L'utilisation des TIC influence-t-elle la motivation et les attitudes langagières? In F. Lemonnier & L. Duquette (Eds.), *L'impact de l'utilisation de l'ordinateur et des nouvelles technologies dans l'apprentissage des langues* (pp. 87-105). Montréal: Association francophone pour le savoir – ACFAS.
- Hedgcock, J., & Lefkowitz, N. (1994). Feedback on feedback: Assessing learner receptivity to teacher response in L2 composing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 3, 141-163.
- Hosenfeld, C. (1977). A preliminary investigation of the reading strategies of successful and unsuccessful second language learners. *System*, 5, 110-123.
- Hyland, F. (1998). The impact of teacher written feedback on individual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7, 255-286.
- Hyon, S. (1996). Genre in three traditions: Implications for ESL. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 693-722.
- Janssen, D., van Waes, L., & van den Bergh, H. (1996). Effects of thinking aloud on writing processes. In C.M. Levy & S. Ransdell (Eds.), *The science of writing: Theories, methods, individual difference, and applications* (pp. 233-250). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Kroll, B. (Ed.). (1990). *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lemonnier, F., Gagnon, O., Huot, D., Hamers, J., & Parks, S. (2001). Apport des conceptions pédagogiques et de l'utilisation des TIC dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais et du français. In F. Lemonnier & L. Duquette (Eds.), *L'impact de l'utilisation de l'ordinateur et des nouvelles technologies dans l'apprentissage des langues* (pp. 125-152). Montréal: Association francophone pour le savoir – ACFAS.
- Leont'ev, A.N. (1981). The problem of activity in psychology. In J.V. Wertsch (Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology*. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology* (pp. 37-71). Armonk, NY: Sharpe.
- Levine, A. & Reves, T. (1998). Interplay Between Reading Tasks, Reader Variables and Unknown Word Processing. *TESL-EJ*, Vol 3, No. 2. Available at: <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ej10/a1.html> (Retrieved February 2003).

- Levy, C.M., Marek, J.P., & Lea, J. (1995). Concurrent and retrospective protocols in writing research. In G. Rijlaarsdam, H., van den Bergh, & Couzijn (Eds.), *Theories, models and methodology in writing research* (pp. 542-556). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, 151-167.
- Maguire, M. (1997). Shared and negotiated territories: The socio-cultural embeddedness of children's acts of meaning. In A. Pollard, A. Filer, & D. Thiessen (Eds.), *Children and their curriculum* (pp. 51-80). London, UK: Falmer Press.
- Mehan, H. (1989). Microcomputers in classrooms: Education technology or social practice? *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 20, 4-22.
- Murphy, E. (2000). *Strangers in a strange land: Teachers' beliefs about teaching French as a second or foreign language in online learning environments*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Université Laval, Quebec City, Canada.
- Parks, S. (2000a). Professional writing and the role of incidental collaboration: Evidence from a medical setting. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9, 101-122.
- Parks, S. (2000b). Same task, different activities: Issues of investment, identity and use of strategy. *TESL Canada Journal*, 17(2), 64-88.
- Parks, S. (2001). Moving from school to the workplace: Disciplinary innovation, border crossings, and the reshaping of a written genre. *Applied Linguistics*, 22, 405-438.
- Parks, S., & Maguire, M. (1999). Coping with on-the-job writing in ESL: A constructivist-semiotic perspective. *Language Learning*, 49, 143-175.
- Parks, S., Huot, D., Hamers, J., & H.-Lemonnier, F. (2001). Apport des conceptions pédagogiques et de l'utilisation des TIC dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais et du français. In F. Lemonnier & L. Duquette (Eds.), *L'impact de l'utilisation de l'ordinateur et des nouvelles technologies dans l'apprentissage des langues* (pp. 107-124). Montréal: Association francophone pour le savoir – ACFAS.
- Parks, S., Huot, D., Hamers, J., & H.-Lemonnier, F. (2003). *Language Learning & Technology*, 7(1), 28-45. Retrieved from <http://llt.msu.edu/vol7num1/parks/>
- Pennington, M.C. (1995). The teacher change cycle. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 705-731.
- Platt, E., & Troudi, S. (1997). Mary and her teachers: A Grebo-speaking child's place in the mainstream classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 28-49.
- Raymond, P., & Parks, A. (2001). Les genres textuels et leur pertinence dans l'apprentissage et l'enseignement d'une langue seconde. In C. Cornaire & P. Raymond (Eds.), *Regards sur la didactique des langues secondes* (pp. 45-69). Montréal: Les Éditions Logiques.
- Raymond, P., & Parks, S. (2002). Transitions: Orienting to reading and writing assignments in EAP and MBA contexts. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59, 152-180.
- Rogoff, B., & Lave, J. (Eds.). (1984). *Everyday cognition: Its development in social context*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Salomon, G. (Ed.), (1993). *Distributed cognitions: Psychological and educational considerations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandholz, J.H., Ringstaff, C., & Dwyer, D.C. (1997). *Teaching with technology: Creating student-centered classrooms*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shi, L., & Cumming, A. (1995). Teachers' conceptions of second language writing instruction: Five case studies. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 4, 87-111.
- Smagorinsky, P. (1994). Think-aloud protocol analysis: Beyond the black box. In P. Smagorinsky (Ed), *Speaking about writing. Reflections on research methodology* (pp. 3-19). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Sullivan, P., & Porter, J. (1997). *Opening spaces: Writing technologies and critical research practices*. Greenwich, FT: Ablex.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Warschauer, M. (1998). Online learning in sociocultural context. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 29(1), 68-88.
- Warschauer, M., & Meskill, C. (2000). Technology and second language teaching. In J. Rosenthal (Ed.), *Handbook of undergraduate second language education* (pp. 303-318). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Wertsch, J.V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wertsch, J.V., Minick, N., & Arns, F.J. (1984). The creation of context in joint problem-solving. In B. Rogoff & J. Lave (Eds.), *Everyday cognition: Its development in social context* (pp. 151-171). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Witte, S. (1992). Context, text, intertext: Toward a constructivist semiotic of writing. *Written Communication*, 9, 237-308.

Woods, D. (1996). *Teacher cognition in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Susan Parks is an Associate Professor and Director of the undergraduate teacher education program for ESL teachers (Baccalauréat en enseignement de l'anglais, langue seconde) at Université Laval. Her research focuses on L2 literacy in academic and workplace contexts. Dianne Huot is a Professor in the Département de langues, linguistique et traduction and Director of the French Second Language Programs (Programmes de français langue seconde) at Université Laval. Her research focuses on L2 acquisition and computer education. Josiane Hamers is a Professor in the Département de langues, linguistique et traduction at Laval Université. Her major research interest is in the area of bilingualism. She is co-author of *Bilinguality and Bilingualism* (Cambridge University Press, 2000). France H. Lemonnier is a Professor in the Département de langues, linguistique et traduction at Laval Université where she conducts research on L2 writing and text linguistics. She is co-author of *L'impact de l'utilisation de l'ordinateur et des nouvelles technologies dans l'apprentissage des langues* (ACFAS, 2000).

1 As explained by van Lier (2000), the word *affordance* was first coined by James Gibson to refer to "a reciprocal relationship between an organism and a particular feature of its environment" (p. 252). From an ecological viewpoint, a hermit crab, for example, may examine a shell on the ocean floor in terms of the possibilities (or affordances) it may offer as a potential new home. In a similar vein, Van Lier suggests that the linguistic world to which a learner has access and is actively engaged in offers up various enablements and constraints (or affordances). Van Lier further makes the point that an ecological perspective (with the attendant notion of

affordance) is particularly apt when applied to sociocultural perspectives of language learning, which draw on Vygotskian and neo-Vygotskian frameworks. In such frameworks, the unit of analysis is the active learner or the activity itself, rather than, as in the case of psycholinguistic theory, the perceived object or linguistic *input*. In the present article, we use the word "affordance" to draw attention to the fact that the potential of computers for language learning is related to both the technological features of the tool itself – its enablements and constraints – and the way in which individuals choose to engage with them.

- 2 Within the cognitive sciences, oral protocol analysis was used to explore mental processes in other domains as well, notably in the area of reading. See, for example, Hosenfeld (1977), and Levine & Reves (1998).
- 3 Real names are used in the case of teachers or students who wished to be identified.
- 4 Witte (1992) defined collaboration in terms of four types: *traditional*, *committee*, *incidental* and *covert*. Although in a study involving the appropriation of a workplace written genre (Parks & Maguire, 1999; Parks, 2000a) these terms were retained, the definitions were adapted to more aptly account for the data. In a subsequent study (Parks et al., 2003), the terms *traditional* and *committee* were replaced by *joint* and *parallel*, respectively, as they seemed to be better suited to a school context.

Fostering Interactive Academic Writing Using Electronic Bulletin Boards

Valia Spiliotopoulos, University of Toronto

Introduction

It would be difficult to find in the industrialized world academic and professional writers who resist computers: major journals are published on-line, assignments and papers are submitted by e-mail, and collaborative research projects are carried out via the internet. Academics who have resisted such changes are slowly being marginalized. This technological revolution, long since established in other academic disciplines, is now beginning to filter into the L2 and FL classroom. While the initial uses of information and communication technologies (CIT) resembled stimulus-response learning of the 50's and 60's, better designs and advances in technology have produced programs that can provide students with relevant and tailored feedback for all skill areas, including writing, the focus of this study.

Whereas initially use of ICT in the L2 classroom focussed on how to use computers to teach language, teachers realize that "it is now essential also to consider how to teach language so that learners can make effective use of information technology" (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, p. 172). In terms of writing, we need to learn how to prepare students for the future by giving them the writing skills they require to succeed in academic contexts and to communicate on-line with native and non-native speakers for a variety of purposes (Shetzer & Warschauer, 2000, p. 172). In doing so, it is hoped that the electronic literacy skills students gain through networked-based language teaching will help them become better academic writers, and will also assist them with participating and writing in on-line environments in academic and professional contexts. Achieving this goal will enable them to become autonomous learners and broaden their knowledge base, interpret, express, and share what they have learned, and slowly become part of a discourse community that includes native and non-native speakers of English.

This long-term goal and students' expressed need to improve their writing skill spawned this study. To meet these objectives, a decision was made to use innovative technologies to supplement regular face-to-face classroom sessions to improve students' academic

writing skills. By using electronic bulletin boards interactively, it is hoped that students would view writing as a means of communicating to a specified audience within a particular socio-cultural context. They would come to regard writing not only as a product, but also as a process that is experienced in collaboration with others through on-going interaction and peer revision in a networked, virtual environment. Finally, by using this technological tool, students would improve their second language writing skills in the areas of accuracy, fluency, complexity, and coherence. Consequently, the importance and uniqueness of this study lies in its integration of networked technology into the teaching of second language writing.

Current literature contains only a limited number of studies done on how interactive computer writing environments affect academic writing skills. The majority of the studies conducted relate to how word-processing affects writing quality and second language acquisition. Other studies evaluate a variety of educational software programs for organizing and revising written texts. By using software, however, the student is interacting with the computer, and not with another student *via* the computer. In this study, it is the opportunity for student interaction that allow for the negotiation of meaning in a group setting that are being emphasized, not the word-processing programs or writing software. As well, few research studies examining the role that networked technologies play on improving second language writing skills use both quantitative and qualitative approaches for obtaining results and making implications. Given the existing state of research in the area, in my study, I wanted to answer the following questions:

- 1) How effective is the electronic bulletin board in promoting student interaction?
- 2) How does the reflection and interaction that the electronic bulletin board allows affect students' performance in academic writing?
- 3) What are students' perceptions regarding their writing improvement resulting from the use of the electronic bulletin board?

Although few studies report that technology does not make a significant difference in writing improvement when compared to traditional, face-to-face methods, most studies support the hypothesis that technology can more effectively assist students in developing their second language writing skills than traditional pencil-and-paper activities in face-to-face classrooms. In recent studies analyzing the effects of electronic forums on writing, student writing has been examined through text analysis by looking at both form and content. The quality and type of written interactions have been classified by using discourse analysis or Brown and Yule's (1983) classification of discourse sequences (i.e., giving directions or advice, telling a story, or soliciting an opinion). The current study also used similar methods for analyzing student texts and interactions as the patterns identified provided support that electronic writing allowed students to produce texts that were both meaning and form-focused.

Literature Review

In the 1990s and into the new millennium, there has been a shift from "learners' interaction *with* computers to interaction with other humans *via* the computer" (Kern & Warschauer, 2000, p. 11). The socio-cultural approach towards language learning with the aid of computers emphasized meaningful interaction in authentic discourse communities through computer networking. In the language classroom, computer-mediated communication (CMC) enables language learners to communicate with other learners, as well as with speakers of the target language in asynchronous (not simultaneous) or synchronous (simultaneous) modes. In addition, CMC permits one-to-one as well as one-to-many communication.

The importance of interaction in the process of language learning using networked technology is central to much theory and research in previous studies in this area. Douglas Brown, a prominent educational researcher and theorist claims, "After several decades of research on teaching and learning languages, we have discovered that the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself." (Brown, 1994b, p. 159). He defines interaction as "the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other" (Brown, 1994, p. 159). Interaction encourages the curiosity and intrinsic motivation needed for learning so that students can formulate questions to ask one another or the teacher, and "negotiate" meaning, or share a common understanding. The notion of creating networks using computer technology in order to share

knowledge and skills is of utmost importance in the change from the hierarchical/linear structured model of a classroom, to one that is a 'community of practice'—a community that engages productively in a common endeavor, seeks innovative methods for group problem-solving, and adapts to a variety of contexts (Wenger, 1998).

Teachers have a responsibility to create a community in which students interact, problem-solve, and share knowledge with others, since this is the way that students will be expected to behave in the social and educational sphere in the western world where the New Economy has emerged (Gee, 2000). According to Gee, teachers need to implement interactive activities, such as peer review and group writing in their classroom in an optimal environment for knowledge-building — one that includes the "pervasive use of modern computer, telecommunications, and network technologies, that render them much like new capitalist work spaces" if they want to create such communities (2000, p. 52). The benefit of having technology in the classroom is that the other students and structured activities take on the role of the scaffolding, structuring expert in the 'zone of proximal development' framework (Vygotsky, 1978). It is not only the traditional classroom teacher or 'expert' that helps the student accommodate the goals, understanding, and competencies needed for a task, but the "scaffolded joint activity with other students and their associated tools and technologies" that help the student and the group reach optimal intellectual development (Gee, 2000, p. 52).

Network technology that allows for on-line forums and discussion groups in the classroom has many advantages (Warschauer & Kern, 2000). It can create an environment where students learn from one another, and it can help students overcome many of the obstacles that prevent opportunities for interaction and knowledge-building: the constraints of time and space in elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools, overcrowded classrooms, few teachers, and limited interaction in the target language. We can speculate that not much interaction time is provided to students in an even bigger university lecture hall where international and immigrant students find themselves struggling to understand the English spoken by the teacher. Furthermore, students do not have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss content knowledge and ideas with their peers because of conflicting schedules and cultural, linguistic, and psychological barriers.

On-line interaction using electronic bulletin boards gives students that extra time they need to receive

comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), and to filter through and reprocess all the ideas and information (throughput) so that they can interact and respond to others in a forum that is free from the temporal and spatial barriers of the school classroom (Carey, 1999). According to Cummins and Sayers (1995), "asynchronicity allows second language learners the extra time they need to elaborate and polish writing based on 'models' of native speakers of the target language, while seeking and relying heavily upon assistance from their local language and cultural resources in the form of teachers, peers and community members" (Cummins & Sayers, 1995, p. 32-33). By carefully writing their own thoughts on an electronic bulletin board in response to a student or teacher-generated question or comment, students communicate their ideas through authentic interaction within a discourse community. This interaction also encourages risk-taking since students try to ask and answer their peers' or their own questions, give opinions, advice, and information, as well as make hypotheses, or provide critiques. By performing these kinds of sociolinguistic acts, students slowly start to assume different roles within the community of learners, and the dynamic interaction helps students learn and grow and expand their zone of proximal development (Carey, 1999).

Another advantage of CMC (or its offshoots,) 'Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning' (CSCL) and 'Computer-Assisted Language Discussion' (CALD)] is that it is democratic; it provides equality of opportunity for students to participate (Ortega, 1997). It is common in a classroom that those students with more extroverted personalities tend to dominate class discussions, which may intimidate and limit the risk-taking behaviour of shy, more reserved ESL students. Since there is more opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues, a student can assume a more active role in the on-line classroom, and in the process, students take greater ownership of their learning and are more motivated to participate and learn (Zvacek, 1992).

Recent research conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of on-line interaction for second-language learning (Pellettieri, 2000; Davis and Thiede, 2000; Schultz, 2000) has found evidence of interaction using on-line forums and discussion groups, and also demonstrated how the interaction lead to the improvement or development of certain language learning skills, such as metalinguistic awareness, self-correction, development of style and peer revision skills. In the study conducted by Pellettieri, the researcher analyzed modifications that students made using a chat line as a result of negotiating meaning with other students and of receiving

corrective feedback from the teacher. According to Kern and Warschauer (2000), Pellettieri "provides evidence that computer-mediated interaction provides a useful mechanism for helping learners achieve higher levels of metalinguistic awareness" and grammatical competence (Kern & Warschauer, 2000, p. 16). In Davis and Thiede's study, student interaction by L2 and L1 writers in asynchronous computer conferences was examined to investigate the nature and degree of language learners' imitation and accommodation of writing styles. Their analysis suggested that L2 learners changed their style to accommodate to the L1 students, thus suggesting that communicating with peers provides the 'scaffolding' necessary for learning a variety of rhetorical styles from others. Jean Schultz (2000) compared the results of student interactions occurring during peer review in computer-mediated discussions with those occurring in oral discussions, and made interesting observations about the advantages of using both on-line peer-review and face-to-face peer review. Although face-to-face peer review can be beneficial, on-line peer review sessions allow students adequate time to think out a response in a more focused and articulate manner. Also the on-line communication on the WebCT bulletin board is text-based; it can be easily transmitted, stored, re-evaluated and rewritten (Davis & Thiede; 2000, Pellettieri, 2000). As such, electronically written texts can be reviewed, rethought, and discussed in writing by pairs, thus promoting greater reflection and critical thinking on the part of the students. Many other researchers have also studied the advantages of on-line peer review over face-to-face peer review (Sengupta, 2000; Nelson, 1997; Topping, 1998; Zhang, 1995; Braine and Yorozu, 1998; Curtis & Roskham, 1999; Davis & Thiede, 2000).

The research to date demonstrates that the effective use of electronic bulletin boards has the potential to improve writing ability; however, more research needs to be conducted on the viability of technological supplements, such as on-line forums or corpora, for language learning. Few studies have used quantitative methods for analyzing the effectiveness of a CALL task, and many studies do not have an experimental group, as well as a control group to determine more clearly if the technological tool is more effective in providing effective language learning than regular, face-to-face classrooms. As we will see in the next section, the present study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and includes a control group and an experimental group to compare results in pre-and post-test writing measures.

Methodology

Setting and Participants

This research study took place at the English Language Institute at the University of British Columbia. Established in 1969, the Institute's main objective has been to provide English language and culture programs to international and immigrant students. Their primary approach towards English language teaching has been communicative, but a variety of approaches are also used to meet the academic and professional needs of students. More recently, the English Language Institute has been very involved in the use of innovative technologies for second language-learning, and was, therefore, very supportive of this project.

There were 43 participants involved in this study: 18 in the experimental group and 25 in the control group. The participants included international students or immigrants enrolled in an upper-intermediate/lower-advanced academic writing course (520W). They ranged in age from 16 to 35, and came from Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Thailand, Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, Germany, Sweden, Iran, United Arab Emirates, or India. From the needs assessment questionnaire distributed during the first class, it was determined that students' main purpose was to improve their academic writing skills in English in preparation for attendance at colleges or universities that use English as the language of instruction. What students expected from the course was improved fluency and accuracy in writing, and practice in writing using various academic genres or rhetorical styles, such as summaries, comparison-contrast, cause-and-effect and argumentative essays.

Materials

Students in the experimental group utilized the courseware WebCT, which was first developed at the University of British Columbia and is now commercially available to public and private schools and universities all over Canada, the United States, Europe, and Asia. The courseware has a variety of components including quizzes, web-based resources and links, an assessment grid, a calendar, a private chat feature, and an electronic bulletin board. It also has a series of features that could encourage written interaction:

- Students' entries can be organized chronologically or in discussion threads that follow a particular theme or topic.
- Students can view all postings or only the ones that they have not yet read.

- Students can initiate a new topic for discussion by using the 'compose' button, or they can respond to another student's question or entry by pressing the 'reply' button.
- Each posting includes the student's name, the date the article was posted, and the subject of the article.
- The teacher and students can use the quote function to incorporate text from a previous posting in order to comment on it in a new posting. This feature is particularly useful as it allows the teacher and the students to make comments or corrections on student writing using the bulletin board during peer review.

Twenty percent of the student's grade was based on the use of the electronic bulletin board. The courseware was used in conjunction with regular face-to-face classes. Out of four classes a week (each lasting 100 minutes), one class was conducted in the computer lab where the students had the opportunity to practise written interaction using WebCT.

Although students were given class time to use WebCT, students could access the website outside of class time. All messages were stored and could be retrieved at any point, but once a message had been posted, no further changes could be made. Students posted their academic essays onto the electronic bulletin board by using an attachment, or by copying and pasting their document into a message. Students and the teacher could therefore look at the development of their writing over time, and could learn about and from other students by reading their postings.

Procedure

A significant percentage of the course was allocated to assessing the process of student writing. Twenty percent of a student's mark was allocated to reflective journal writing, which was done on the electronic bulletin board. Their writing was not personal writing (writing that is only seen by the student-writer, and perhaps the teacher), but was made very public as their journal entries were posted on the electronic bulletin board for all of their classmates to read. Students used the computer lab ten times over the course of the term (once a week for ten weeks). In each lab, they were provided with explicit instructions as to what to do on the bulletin board (please refer to Appendix A for a sample of the lab assignments). Students were allowed time to reflect and write on issues related to second language writing and computer-assisted language learning. They were also provided with a list of questions

that served to prompt their thinking and writing. Writing a journal on the electronic bulletin board also permitted them to practise the different rhetorical structures that they had to use for their formal academic essay assignment.

After writing a journal entry on a topic for about half an hour, students were given the opportunity to read and respond to other students' entries. To prevent students from getting into cliques and favouring friends, I divided the students into groups of three or four and changed the members of the group at every lab session. The students then had to read and ask questions on the entries of only those students who were in their group.

As students were working on their journal entries, reading, questioning, and responding to each other's contributions, the teacher read the students' entries and provided feedback privately on the form and content of their messages using the electronic bulletin board. Students could access this feedback through a personal mail folder and had the opportunity to ask the teacher some questions privately as well.

As noted above, the first part of each lab was used for reflection, and the second part, for interaction. The remainder of the lab time was used for the word-processing of their academic essays, which they would post on the electronic bulletin board upon completion. Students then had an opportunity to peer review each other's essays on-line.

Writing done on the electronic bulletin board reflects a more process-oriented approach to teaching writing, whereas the other classroom tasks and activities (formal essays, and essay exams) assumed a more product-oriented approach. To assess the effectiveness of the Web-CT for improving second-language writing, pre- and post- test and essay results were compared over time with the results of the control group.

Also, at the end of the course, students were invited to participate in an in-person interview (see Appendix B) during which they could provide feedback on their experience using the electronic bulletin board. However, in keeping with the Code of Ethics for research studies set by the university, the interviews were optional and had no bearing on the students' final grade. As such, not all students chose to participate in these measures.

Data Collection and Analysis

There were four data sources for the study:

1. The electronic bulletin board protocols (long, reflective entries, short, conversational entries, and formal essays),

2. Academic essay assignments,
3. Pre- and post-test Cambridge exam results,
4. In-person, individual interviews conducted with all of the students in my classes who participated on the bulletin board.
5. The qualitative and quantitative data gathered from these sources was so excessive that only certain excerpts of student protocols and transcripts are shown to illustrate a point relevant to the findings of this research project. More detailed information of the findings can be found in the Ph.D. thesis dissertation, *ESL academic writing and electronic bulletin boards* (Spiliotopoulos, 2002), on which this article is based.

The criteria used to evaluate the effectiveness of the CALL task were based on the criteria that Carole Chapelle (2001) recommends in her book on *Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition*. After a review of the literature to date, I found that Chapelle has provided the most comprehensive guidelines for conducting research in CALL. Three of her criteria were used in evaluating CALL tasks in this project: 1) focus on meaning through interaction, 2) focus on form, and 3) positive impact. These criteria were applied when conducting an empirical analysis of student written texts and tests to determine the quality of interaction, the degree of writing improvement, and the impact that CALL tasks using WebCT had on students.

Firstly, measures were used for analyzing the effectiveness of the intervention, the WebCT, as well as the CALL tasks, by observing if and how they contributed to enhancing interactivity through computer-assisted classroom discussion (CACD). As the computer is able to record student written texts, it allows for a more detailed analysis of both the written process and product. The protocols were analyzed for a variety of discourse acts that were identified in on-line interactions. Below is a list of the codes used to analyze discourse patterns and negotiation of meaning in on-line discussion and peer review:

1. Questions: request an opinion, request a fact, request feedback, request clarification, request advice
2. Statements: respond to a question of fact or opinion, acknowledge the speaker, express agreement or disagreement, praise, recommendation, or advice

The bulletin board protocols for each student were printed and analyzed by counting and categorizing the above discourse acts. I also conducted a content analy-

sis of all of the on-line essays and discussions for the experimental group by reading and noting the topic of each protocol. In doing so, I was able to determine if the interactions were meaningful and reflective, not empty or superficial.

After conducting a discourse and content analysis of the writing on the electronic bulletin board to determine if meaningful interaction occurred, a quantitative analysis was conducted by using both direct (Cambridge exam) and indirect measures (student expository essays) to determine if students' writing improved as a result of on-line interaction (for more in-depth information about the measures, please see Spiliotopoulos, 2002). The gains of both groups were compared using a two-way analysis of variance. In addition to the quantitative analysis used to determine writing improvement, general observations by the teacher/researcher were also made as to the degree of formality, accuracy, coherence, and improvement of student writing on-line.

Also, to determine the kind of impact this CALL activity had on students, student perceptions and opinions of their experience using CALL were elicited. Interviews with students were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. For about 25 minutes, students were asked approximately 15 questions (please refer to Appendix B) on their perceptions of how the interactive electronic bulletin board affected their writing ability in English and how they felt about using this tool. Transcriptions were analyzed for content relating to attitudes about on-line communication, and the data were compared to responses of similar questions on the bulletin board to check for reliability. Students' responses were analyzed by tallying the number of positive and negative responses related to questions on the following areas: organization, revision, vocabulary/fluency, grammar, reading, and overall writing improvement.

Conducting a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data study allowed for multiple perspectives in viewing the results, and provided a means for validating the findings.

Results

A. Interaction

1. Interaction was evidenced through discourse acts or sequences.

In the first class of the experimental group, 140 of the 470 postings were interactive question-response type sentences of approximately 150-200 words in

length. The second class composed 50 question-response type postings, out of a total of 220, but the postings were of greater length (approx. 300 words). The following is a sample of students engaging in authentic discourse, as one student seeks advice from another on how to find ideas for writing. (The samples of student writing hereafter are unedited, original texts.)

Message no. 56[Branch from no. 3]
Posted by xxx on Tuesday, October 9, 2001 2:56pm
Subject Re: how I learned to write

Hi, this is xxx. In China, we are also required to write journals, and I don't like it too. Because I always have to find something to write. Sometimes, it's really a hard work. However, we must be interested in writing, because of the importance of writing. So do you have some ideas of how we can find something interesting to write?

Figure 1. Sample of student discourse sequence: seeking advice

Message no. 57[Branch from no. 56]
Posted by xxx on Tuesday, October 9, 2001 4:49pm
Subject Re: how I learned to write

Hi! Xxx, thank you for reading my journal. I didn't know your Chinese name. Anyway, I also feel bothering when I write a journal or an essay. Everytime I should think what I should write. I have asked some question to my friend. My friend said I have to read magazines, newspaper and watch TV, and widen my knowledge. I should try to do these. We will do our best in the writing class.

Figure 2. Sample of student discourse sequences: expression of appreciation and offering suggestions

As we can see, students engaging in these kinds of discourse acts were not only participating in authentic discourse, but they were also learning strategies and gaining insights from other learners about the challenges of second language writing. (Further examples of authentic discourse acts are available in chapter 4.7 of Spiliotopoulos, 2002.)

2. Interaction was achieved through negotiation of meaning

Interaction occurred when students read and responded to other students' texts. The on-line threaded discussions enabled students to ask for further clarification and explanation if they did not comprehend another students' writing. This negotiation of meaning led to modified output from the learners so that they could be fully understood. Here is an example of a student who read another student's narrative essay about her experience of being in a car accident. The reader asked for clarification or a better explanation of her experiences.

Message no. 104[Branch from no. 88]
Posted by xxx on Monday, February 18, 2002 9:02am
Subject Re: essay/ my car accident!

Hi xxx. I've read your narrative essay. It is very interesting. As feedback I can tell you that I would like to read more about details in the crash. How was the impact, how damage was your car, where the other car crashed into your car, etc. Other thing is when you wrote that you lose your job, I didn't know exactly why?. What was the problem. I think that it was because you miss many days to your job, but may be you have to be specific.

The last is that I didn't see paragraphs, may be it was a copy-paste problem.

These are my comments.

Have a good week. Regards...

Figure 3. Student engaged in negotiation of meaning by asking for clarification

In the next example, a student actually recopied a part of another student's text to point out an area of confusion as a result of improper word choice in an effort to gain greater clarity. The other student responded with an expression of appreciation for the noted oversight.

Message no. 146[Branch from no. 125]
Posted by xxx on Monday, March 4, 2002 9:19am
Subject Re: My comparasion and contrast essay

Hi xxx, I like your essay very much. The idea of putting Michael Jordan as an example was very good and it help to express your idea in a simple form.

I just have a question from the next sentence that you wrote.

"The easiest way, the optimist way, was to fire her. However, I decided to keep he because I thought optimistically and I believed she could change her mind."

If you will fire her, will that be an optimistic Decision?

Figure 4. Student asking for clarification

Message no. 147[Branch from no. 146]
Posted by xxx on Monday, March 4, 2002 9:24am
Subject Re: My comparasion and contrast essay

Thanks xxx for your feedback. I did a mistake in my sentence. I was refering to the pessimistic way, not the optimistic. Have a good week. Alberto.

Figure 5. Student expressing appreciation for peer correction

As we can observe, the public nature of the e-bulletin board allowed students to read each other's writing and respond to it. The on-line threaded discussions enabled students to ask for further clarification and explanation if they did not comprehend another student's writing. This negotiation of meaning led to modified output from the learners for the purpose of being fully understood.

3. Interaction was reflective and meaningful

Students were also able to engage in meaningful exchanges and build their meta-cognitive skills by holding on-line discussions on the act and purpose of writing in a second language. As Lamy and Goodfellow state, "certain kinds of exchanges appear to manifest more of the conditions for both 'input modification' and 'social-interactionist' types of interaction, and that these interaction-rich exchanges are likely to occur when topics focus around language and language-learning; in other words, when the interaction functions as reflective practice" (Lamy & Goodfellow, 1999, p. 44). As found in Lamy and Goodfellow, my students also wrote reflective entries on their experiences in writing in a second language, and then asked each other about their views. The medium of asynchronous conferencing was ideal for allowing both because it is flexible in 'place and pace' and because it encourages both monologic and dialogic kinds of written language exchange. This com-

bination of reflection and interaction on writing issues was richer and more meaningful to students than the kind of 'empty' exchanges that can sometimes occur in on-line chats. This is illustrated in the exchange below in which a student expresses her frustration about not being able to use new words in the right context. She asks for advice as to how to solve this problem:

Message no. 28

Hi: This is xxx, and I have read your message right now. I think you must do quite well in writing. Here is a question: I totally agree with you that use language is very important for learner, but you know there's so many different usage of one word according to different situation and it is likely for us to use them in wrong ways, then how to deal with these problems?(if without a teacher)

Figure 6. Student perception of word usage as a problematic area in SL writing

The student to whom the question was addressed responded promptly by acknowledging her problem and providing a helpful strategy to solve her problem. He wrote the following:

Message no. 73[Branch from no. 28]

Posted by xxx on Wednesday, October 10, 2001 8:56am

Subject Re: XXX

It is true. There are many other usages in only one word. That's one of the factor which can make learning language more difficult. If you want to correct the problem, you should read and read more often. Through reading books, you can improve your language skills, and can learn about various usage of a word. You should try your best to master the language. Try and get some experience. That's the only way to improve your language skill, include many usage of a word.

Figure 7. Student recommendation of extensive reading in the target language as a strategy for writing improvement

Recurring themes in the on-line reflective journals and interactive protocols in the present study included a discussion of the kinds of problems and challenges ESL students had with L2 writing and the strategies they used to overcome them. Students empathized with each other's language difficulties and gave each other advice as to how to solve these problems. Among the solutions were: extensive reading in L2, memorization and translation of words and expressions, and using new words by learning from their peers, native speakers, and L2 texts. Most of the student reflections and exchanges involved the expression of deep insights and realizations, and students engaged in the discourse functions of questioning and problem-solving. (For more detailed examples of reflective and meaningful student interactions, please see Spiliotopoulos, 2002.)

4. Interaction occurred through peer review and teacher feedback

Interaction occurred when students engaged in peer review, and when they were provided with teacher feedback. The following is a sample of the kind of corrective feedback that the instructor provided in order to encourage students to focus on form in their writing, and thus increase their language learning potential. (Given the space limitations, only a part of the protocol is presented.)

Sent to XXX on Monday, January 28, 2002 9:23am

Subject Introduction

In message 18 on Tue Jan 22, 2002 09:19, XXX Writes:

- > How I learned to write.
- > There are four basic elements of learning language
- > which are listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- > Everybody knows how to write, but write a good
WRITING
- > composition is quite difficult. We have to know how to
- > write the words, then think about what we are going to
- > write and organize them. Writing is a lot of work then
MORE WORK THAN
- > we think because there are a lot of rules in writing,
- > especially in Chinese writing. My first language is
- > Mandarin, so I have to learn how to write the different
- > words first. I remember that when I was in elementary
- > school, I had to learn how to write the words which
- > looks (LOOK) like pictures. This is the first step of learning
- > writing. The second step is the teacher wanted the
- > students to copy the short compositions because we were
- > too young to know how to write. While we are copying,
WERE
- > we learned how to write the words and how to organize
- > the composition. Copying the book is quite easy, but
COPYING FROM
- > when I was in secondary school, I had to write my own
- > composition, and it was not easy anymore, because I have
- > to think independent and I usually got confused about
INDEPENDENTLY
- > the rules of Chinese writing. I couldn't remember my
- > first writing paper, but I believe that it should be an
- > awful writing! My second language is English and I
- > learned how to write it in secondary school. Learning
- > how to write English words is easy for Taiwanese because
- > our own words is more difficult, especially our words is
ARE SINCE... ARE
- > traditional Chinese, not simple Chinese. I think the
- > step of how I learned to write English was the same with
- > how I learned to write Chinese. Writing English was
- > easy for us in secondary school because all we had to do
- > was copy the book or write a short composition.

[...]

WELL DONE xxx! I LIKE HOW YOU OUTLINE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN
WRITING IN YOUR CULTURE AND IN CANADA.
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!
VALIA

Figure 8. Corrective feedback provided by the teacher on-line

As we can see, the kind of correction the teacher provided was in response to typical ESL writing errors. Feedback was given on word choice, sentence structure, article usage, subject-verb agreement, choice of verb tense, and pronoun reference. This student wrote later that she appreciated the feedback and felt moti-

vated by the fact that the instructor was monitoring her writing.

Students also provided feedback to one another on both the content and form of their messages and essays. Here is an example of one student pointing out an important error on form to another:

Message no. 142[Branch from no. 129]
Posted by xxx on Monday, March 4, 2002 8:56am
Subject Re: Do you like to drive a motorcycle?(C&C essay)
I was surprised at that you revised enough. You Added more details to surport main ideas and developed The introduction and the conclusion. In your Conclusion, you should check the condition sentence,"If people could..., a car was...". I think "If people could..., a car would be.." is correct.
xxx

Figure 9. Student feedback on form

As we will see in the student protocols, the participants were able to observe the way that I was responding to and correcting student writing on the electronic bulletin board. Slowly, they would start to comment on grammar or ask questions about meaning to each other

in the same way that I did. The following figure is an example of one student providing feedback on form to another student using the on-line bulletin board. (The entire protocol is not presented because of space limitations).

Message no. 164[Branch from no. 158]
Posted by xxx on Monday, March 11, 2002 8:55am
Subject Re: plagiarism
Hi xxx. You expressed the idea of plagiarism with a very good example. It was very clear to me. Congratulations. I'm sending you some corrections that I could see:
In message 158 on Mon Mar 04, 2002 10:08, xxx writes:
> What is plagiarism? There are many definitions of to
> plagiarize; "to take (words or ideas) from (someone's
> else work) and used in one's own work without admitting
> one has done so". If you plagiarize in a university
> maybe you will be refuse of a degree. (Longman
> dictionary). That is a dictionary definition, now I need
> to write all the causes and the effects of plagiarism.
> Cheating, copying, dishonesty, not educated, not
> intelligent, in moral, those are some words related
WITHOUT ETHICS with
> the word plagiarism. But, what are the causes of
> plagiarism? When I was in high school, a great friend of
> I make a very big mistake that will affect all his
ME MADE AFFECTED life.

>We were taking the same course (Linguistics) and we had
 . WE HAD
 >to hand-in a final essay writing that will count ten
 ESSAY THAT WOULD
 >percent of our grade. He was a very smart person.
 >Actually, before handing-in the essay, He already had 85
 >percent of its grade. Hi did not need to hand-in the
 HIS
 >essay to pass the course. No matter what, He decided to
 >copy it from the Internet. He had a lot of confidence
 COPY AN ESSAY FROM THE INTERNET. In
 >that essay that he did not even read it all.
 >Unfortunately, in the middle of the essay was a sentence
 >that says “ here, in Spain we have...) Then, the teacher
 THAT SAID,” “.
 >realize that was a copy-paste essay, and accuse him of
 REALIZED THAT IT WAS A AND REPORTED HIS
 PLAGIARISM TO THE DIRECTOR.
 >plagiarism with the director. My friend get a cero in
 GOT
 >the course, and in its record will always appear the
 HIS
 >word plagiarism. What a tragic story, [...].

Figure 10. Student feedback on form

Peer feedback included corrections on word choice, verb tense, sentence structure, and pronoun reference. Of course, not all the errors made by the writer were detected, but this attempt at peer review indicates that the student editing the other student's writing made an honest effort to apply the grammar rules learned in class to help another student.

Previous studies focussing on on-line student interaction and peer-review suggest that students find peer response in CACD more effective than in a regular face-to-face classroom. In a study conducted by Sullivan and Pratt (1996), an analysis of between-group comparisons of electronic and non-electronic peer response suggests that “face-to-face oral discussions were dominated by the author of the essay and discussed, whereas there was no one individual dominating the floor in the same type of discussions on the computer. As a result, [...], the quality and efficacy of peer suggestions for revision increased in the electronic mode” (Ortega, 1997, p. 86).

Based on the discourse and textual analysis above, it is evident that the CALL activities on the electronic bulletin board allowed for interaction among students. The interaction was representative of authentic discourse, and it allowed for negotiation of meaning and effective peer review. Furthermore, student exchanges were not empty and superficial; rather, they were meaningful and demonstrated that students had reflected on a variety of issues related to the act of writing.

B. Writing improvement

1. Quantitative results did not reveal a significant improvement in writing

In Table 1 below are found the pre and post-test results for the experimental and control groups of the Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English (Paper 3).

Table 1
Mean Performance Levels of Indirect Writing Assessment

	Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	SD	M	SD
Experimental	35.8	11.05	39.8	7.9
Control	39.1	7.13	41	6.08

To determine if the differences were significant, the results were subjected to a two-way analysis of variance (see Table 2). On the basis of the analysis, it is determined that the differences between the two groups at the end of the three-month study were not significant.

Table 2
Analysis of Variance for Indirect Writing Assessment

	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Group	1	141.367	141.367	1.48	2.3

These results suggest that the intervention—computer-assisted classroom discussion using an electronic bulletin board—did not help students improve their writing skills any more than working in a regular, face-to-face classroom.

In addition to comparing pre- and post-test scores using an indirect measure (the standardized exam), a direct measure of writing (academic essays) was also used to ensure the validity of the results related to writing improvement. The averages on student essays in the experimental group were compared with those in the control group over time (Table 3).

Table 3
Mean Performance Levels of Direct Writing Assessment

	Pre-essay		Post-essay	
	M	SD	M	SD
Experimental	21.7	2.7	24	1.7
Control	22.8	1.5	24	1.2

Although the average of the final essay is the same for both groups, the level of improvement of the experimental group is greater than that of the control group. However, once again, based on the analysis of variance, the improvement was not statistically significant (Table 4).

Table 4
Analysis of Variance of the Direct Writing Assessment

	df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Group	1	10.208	10.208	3.378	.074

To summarize, the quantitative results of both the direct and indirect measures do not strongly support the hypothesis that on-line interactive writing using an electronic bulletin board improves writing more than learning in a traditional, face-to-face classroom.

2. Qualitative results revealed that student writing improved

Evidence of writing improvement can also be obtained through qualitative methods, such as interviews with learners who have participated in CACD (Beauvois, 1998) by observing and analyzing evidence of modified interactions and modified output (Chapelle, 2001). The evidence of these interactions and output is manifested in the written protocols on the electronic bulletin board. In this study, the qualitative data obtained from the protocols and interviews support the view that CACD activity increases language learning potential. The following general observations were made on the quality of students' postings over time.

At first, I noticed that some students were producing informal messages and writing on the electronic bulletin board as if they were writing an e-mail to their friends. Here is one example of student writing in the first week of using WebCT.

<p>Message no. 113[Branch from no. 37]</p> <p>Posted by xxx on Thursday, October 11, 2001 11:23am</p> <p>Subject Re: how I learned to write in English</p> <p>hi,it is xxx,i just wanted to tell u that i strongly agree with u that difference in culture causes misunderstanding and I have faced this problem since I came to Canada,at last I hope we solve it very soon.</p>

Figure 11. Sample of informal style of student writing on-line.

Using lower case letters, improper sentence structure, emoticons, and phonetic spelling of words are examples of informality in student writing that are inappropriate in academic contexts. From one point of view, this relaxed style may have eased students into

the act of writing since young adult learners usually have a positive experience with e-mail exchange. It appeared that they transferred those positive feelings when writing on the electronic bulletin board. However, I continued to remind students of the academic nature of the writing course, and I provided them with immediate feedback on-line on the content as well as the form of their written protocols. By the third week of the course, I noticed that students were paying more attention to the accuracy of their writing by asking me questions about grammar and usage, checking an on-line dictionary for spelling, and by taking more time to revise their message before posting it. After frequent reminders about the academic context of this kind of electronic communication, students made a greater effort to write more formally and accurately. The following is a sample of one of the students' writing after six weeks of using the electronic bulletin board:

Message no. 390
Posted by xxx on Monday, November 26, 2001 10:05am
Subject Computer technology

In all around the world, every technological Innovation is positive and negative. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to find something just with one side. However, in reality this is people who make the effects of computer on a variety aspects of life. For example, a student can use the computer wisely in order to improve his/her knowledge in science, other languages and cultures. While a student can use the computer in that way, another student can just waste the time on unimportant or sometimes harmful information on the internet. In fact, computer, especially internet is a source to get good knowledge and also bad knowledge. In my opinion, the bulletin board has really helped the student in improving both their knowledge and writing skills. First, when a student read other students' essay, he/she will become familiar with different styles of writing. For example, different cultures have different ways of describing. In addition, people show their point of view about a similar subject so different from others. In fact, by reading other students' essay we will learn about other cultures and see the world through their eyes. Second, writing on the bulletin board will help the students to improve their writing skills by writing in a limited period of time. For exam-

ple, when the students must think about a topic and start writing whatever comes to their mind, afterwards they become more comfortable with writing. They will learn how to jot down their opinions in the correct way. In conclusion, I strongly believe that working on the bulletin board will be so helpful for students to discover their talents in writing and other students' way of thinking.

Figure 12. Sample of formal style of student writing on-line

In this sample, we see that the student's ideas are more organized and coherent, as she uses transitional phrases and words such as 'however', 'in fact', 'first', 'for example, and 'in conclusion'. There are very few spelling mistakes and errors in subject-verb agreement. Sentences are joined effectively through the use of subordinating and coordinating conjunctions, and there are no colloquialisms or informal words.

As the session progressed, some students were so concerned about the quality and accuracy of their writing before posting their work publicly that they would type their message or essay onto a Microsoft Word document first, and then post their writing on the electronic bulletin board. The Word auto-correct program provided them with the feedback on the spelling and mechanics of their writing and gave them the impression of creating a more polished document. However, student use of the Word program before posting their message was discouraged because they realized that the point of the on-line bulletin board was to hone their own editing and revising skills, rather than have an editing program do it for them. Also, the focus of CACD was to encourage peer review to build Krashen's 'internal monitor' skills, and to receive more effective and accurate feedback on their writing from the instructor.

Near the end of the course, it was clear to me that students in the experimental group had made progress in their peer review and editing skills, and had aimed for a greater degree of accuracy, formality and sophistication in their writing. I believe that this change occurred because of the public, interactive nature of the electronic bulletin, the instructor's guidance, and the continued motivation of the students. In my observations of CACD, this activity helped students not only use the language extensively, but also learn language for the purposes of academic writing. Since most students

claimed that they had never written an academic essay in English before, I felt that they had made a tremendous improvement over the three-month session because of the opportunities for open interaction and reflection that the WebCT encouraged.

In addition to my own observations on the language learning potential of CACD, most students' observations and reports clearly indicated that they thought that CACD did play a pivotal role in improving their academic writing. To determine if on-line interactive writing was responsible for these improvements, students were asked directly during an interview. Sixteen of the 18 students in the experimental group were asked if they felt that they improved their grammatical accuracy, their fluency and organizational skills in writing English (please see Appendix B for a list of the interview questions). They were also questioned about their ability to revise and edit their own and other students' essays and about their overall improvement in writing as a result of using the on-line bulletin board. Their opinions were also solicited regarding the effectiveness of feedback received from the instructor and about the usefulness of peer review.

Two of the students in the experimental group chose not to participate in the interviews. Fourteen out of 16 (88%) students interviewed indicated that at least 50% of their writing improvement was due to the on-line writing practice and written interactions with other students on the electronic bulletin board (see Table 5). Eleven out of 16 students (69%) believed that their grammatical accuracy had improved as a result of using the on-line bulletin board. Interestingly, 15 out of 16 students (94%) felt that on-line writing really helped them to expand their vocabulary by reading other students' essays, learning new words, and using them right away. Ninety-four percent of the students interviewed also felt that on-line writing helped them improve their revising skills because of the feedback they received from the teacher and because they learned from student models. In addition, students expressed that they had a greater sense of audience when writing and were thus very careful not to make errors. Sixty-nine percent of the students believed that their reading skills had improved by reading other students' essays, but the remaining 31 percent claimed that reading student writing did not help them learn anything above their level of proficiency in English vocabulary. However, by reading student essays and having the extra time to reflect on their writing, 100 percent of the students felt that they learned how to organize their ideas in a more coherent manner. As one student clearly admits: "When we use WebCT, we have time to

think and organize our ideas." This additional time allowed students to focus on form and formulate sentences that more accurately represented their ideas.

The following table illustrates the areas in which students felt they had improved, from most popular to least popular, by using computer-assisted classroom discussion:

Table 5
Student Perceptions of Areas of Writing Improvement

	Improvement	No improvement
Organization	16	0
Revision	15	1
Vocabulary/ Fluency	15	1
Overall Writing Improvement	14	2
Grammar	11	5
Reading	11	5

Although most students felt that they learned from the contributions of others, some were less convinced that their grammar and reading skills improved because they realized they were exposed to 'learner writing' or 'interlanguage writing', which can be considered imperfect or inferior to the native speaker standard. Although interlanguage is of great interest to language researchers because it provides insight into the process of second language learning, it is questionable whether second language learners regard it as a useful practice. Some learners would rather exchange the time spent gaining input from student writing with gaining input from native-speaker writing.

Even though students read each other's 'learner language', the student interaction and the public, permanent nature of the writing on the on-line bulletin board encouraged students to focus on form and become more aware of their errors. Although some students enjoyed writing freely and fluently in the beginning, they later realized that their writing was not very accurate grammatically once they had a chance to reread their own writing on the electronic bulletin board. One student explained his experience:

At the beginning, I wrote my first thought in WebCT, but maybe I had a lot of mistakes[...]. And with the pass of the time, with the corrections, [...] you learned that you had to think before to write.

This student indicated that he liked the opportunity to build his fluency in the beginning, but felt that what

he was gaining in fluency, he was losing in accuracy. He became more aware of his grammatical errors once the teacher provided on-line corrections. He started paying more attention to form and spending more time on the revision process. He stated: "When I wrote my first essay, I wrote, maybe I spend like an hour and a half or two hours. Maybe the second essay, more like four hours. The third essay, like five hours or more. Well, the last essay, more than eight hours."

From the comments made in the interviews, students felt that their writing improved through peer review on the electronic bulletin board because it allowed them the time and space they needed to develop their 'internal monitor'. One student admitted to correcting her errors after having reviewed another student's writing. She stated: "You can read other people's [writing] and sometimes you think there's something wrong maybe and you find that you can avoid in your writing." Another student mentioned that he had gained a higher degree of metalinguistic awareness through the practice of on-line peer review: "If I read now [the] newspaper, automatically I began to correct something if it's written wrong... Every time I got from other people an essay to correct it on WebCT, I had to look very carefully and so I think it's this effect [that it] has instilled in me." (For further testimonials as to the positive effects of on-line peer review, please see Spiliotopoulos, 2002.)

In addition to on-line peer review, most students stated that the teacher's high standards and ongoing feedback on the electronic bulletin board helped them to put into practice what they had learned in the classroom and learned from each other's writing. One student states: "I practice every Monday writing essays, and the feedback that my teacher gives me, it's like, it's the way that I learn more because I can see my mistakes and my errors and then I can correct them." This positive reaction to teacher feedback emphasizes the importance of the teacher's role for helping students reach the zone of proximal development.

Students believed that the responses received by peers on their work created a greater awareness of audience which in turn helped students focus on form in their writing in order to present the best piece of writing possible. One student admitted to his increased effort in knowing that his writing will be seen by others: "For me, if I posted my essay, I have to try my best to write it better or try my best to write it well [...] because other people they will read my writing." Still another expressed a similar sentiment: "Whenever I have a class in the lab, I really try to make my essay beautiful because someone is looking at my essay, so I

force myself to work hard. I think it's a good thing, I think."

Some writing teachers may feel that when they monitor writing on the electronic bulletin board, they may have a tendency to over-correct, and thereby discourage students' risk-taking ability. Although the corrections were made privately, at times I was hesitant to point out every single error for fear of decreasing students' motivation and opportunities for writing practice and learning. However, most students insisted that they preferred the attention of the teacher, and felt more motivated by the feedback. One student bluntly stated: "I want to know my mistake."

Overall, most students felt that the feedback provided by the teacher and the students allowed them to focus on form and have a greater awareness of audience. The peer review sessions and reading other students' writing enabled students to learn how to use grammatical patterns in context, and helped with the development of their vocabulary. They affirmed that the environment of the electronic bulletin board provided the extra time to reflect before writing, as well as the opportunity to participate on an equal basis.

C. Positive Impact

I. Increased student participation

As a teacher, it was interesting to observe that students who were more introverted or shy about their accent participated more often on the electronic bulletin board than in class. In general, I observed that students' willingness to participate increased with time because they came to know other students on a more personal level through the electronic messages. If the classroom networked activities involved both native and non-native speakers, perhaps the ESL students would have felt more intimidated and would have participated less. However, in this class, students stated they were experiencing the same learning curve together and were supportive and empathetic towards one another. They all felt that despite their different personalities, strengths and differences, they had an equal opportunity to express themselves and learn from their writing and from the writing of others.

This finding is consistent with other research done on the improved degree of participation and motivation in CACD (Warschauer, 1997; Beauvois, 1998; Markley, 1998; Carey, 1999, 2001). For example, Warschauer found that oral classroom discussion revealed uneven patterns of discussion, whereas CMC produced more even patterns of participation. According to Chapelle, this study and other studies of CMC in the L2 classroom

have shown “the written non-face-to-face discussion of the CMC diminished the effect of individual differences that may hamper communication in the classroom, thereby resulting in more comprehensible output produced by those who would otherwise produce little” (Chapelle, 2001, p. 82).

2. Increased student motivation and confidence

In the interviews, students mentioned that the interaction involved in writing on the electronic bulletin board was more motivating and meaningful to them than writing to get a mark. As such, interactive tasks on the electronic bulletin board appeared to have an overall positive impact on the learners. Students did not view the tasks as chores, but as opportunities to express themselves and to get to know each other better. When asked what the main reason students thought CACD helped improve their writing, one student answered: “Main reason? Well, first it’s not so boring as writing in the paper and just hand it in [to the teacher]. Yes, the interaction makes it interesting and well you feel that you are writing for someone and not only for handing your work and getting a grade. That’s my main reason.”

Apart from feeling motivated, most students did not perceive the writing activity on the electronic board as anxiety-provoking. In fact, they admitted that it made them feel more confident in expressing their ideas and opinions. One student stated: “You don’t have to be nervous. You don’t have to hesitate [to express] you opinions of feelings to others.” When asked if communicating on-line with other students has improved his self-confidence, one learner admitted that he feels more confident not only with his ESL peers, but also with native speakers of English: “Yes, yes, I feel more confident to write an e-mail for an American person.[...] Yes, I feel more confident than at the beginning. For example, I have sent some messages to the faculty of business here to ask information about my future and I feel better writing.” Their confidence is also increased when students compliment one another on the quality of their writing as shown in the following quote: “Students sometimes ask me, they tell me that ‘Oh, you are good!’”

Interestingly, although most of the students felt that this collaborative electronic writing exercise had an overall positive impact on their writing skills and provided them with affective and sociocultural gains, a few students were not so enthusiastic about using this technology in the beginning. Some were shy about posting their writing for everyone to see. A few did not feel very confident about their typing skills and did not

feel comfortable using this computer program. Others complained about eye-strain, neck pain, and general frustration about being in front of the computer for almost two hours. Still others complained about information overload, and some felt neglected because no one seemed to respond to their particular message or answer a question that was asked of another student. Finally, some students have different priorities and different needs.

Discussion

In analyzing the results, the first issue that arises is the discrepancy between the quantitative and the qualitative results. From studying the various discourse sequences and themes of the on-line protocols, it can be assumed that the electronic bulletin board allows for student-student and teacher-student interactions that are meaningful. However, the quantitative findings do not support the hypothesis that the on-line interaction of the experimental group helped students improve their writing significantly more than the control group. It is important, however, to note that there was an improvement in writing in both the direct and indirect measures, and the experimental group improved twice as much as the control group. Nevertheless, it cannot be suggested that this improvement was a result of the interactive writing activity on the electronic bulletin board.

I believe that more significant and valid findings could have resulted if the students in the experimental group had used the electronic bulletin board exclusively, without any face-to-face classroom instruction. This would have made for a more experimental study. However, the Institute could not allocate that much time in the computer lab to one class, and as a teacher/researcher, I had to abide by the rules set by the school. Secondly, it is difficult to arrive at significant findings in writing improvement over a period of three months. Further research should allow for the study to be conducted for over six months to one year in order to give students a fair chance at making significant changes in their writing.

It is interesting to note that a qualitative analysis of the findings did not yield similar results. The observations of the teacher/researcher and the self-reports of the students suggested that interactive writing on the electronic bulletin board helped students improve their academic writing, and provided them certain affective gains. As a researcher, it would have been more reassuring if the quantitative findings were consistent with the qualitative findings. But as a teacher, I am content that the students felt that the electronic bulletin board

had an overall positive impact on them. I would have been more concerned if the quantitative results revealed that students' writing improved, and if the qualitative results revealed that students disliked the experience of on-line interactive writing, or that they had found it ineffective.

Implications for Teaching

In discussing the implications that this research has for teaching, much emphasis needs to be placed on the importance of the teacher's role in the success of the CALL task. Teachers using the electronic bulletin board for the first time have to see their role in the on-line classroom as now being facilitator and guide. They can set the stage for student writing and interaction, then observe students more carefully from the sidelines. The teacher also plays a very active role in preparing the right environment, creating the right guidelines, and providing effective feedback. Kern (1996) states that "the degree to which computer-mediated communication promotes language and content learning, cultural awareness and critical reflection depends fundamentally on the teachers who coordinate its use" (p.118). Even if students have unlimited access time to the technological tools, but are not properly guided while using them, they will not necessarily succeed in their learning. Although the electronic bulletin board has been praised for allowing activity that is student-centred, this does not mean that the teacher's presence, guidance and feedback are not necessary. Some instructors may have falsely assumed that technology would replace them, or require less work from them. In my experience, this assumption is false.

Technological tools used to improve second language learning are just like any other tools. If they are not used properly, they will not help students learn, and can waste time and money. Also, I found that my workload greatly increased when I had to monitor student writing on the electronic bulletin board. It is for this reason that teachers using an on-line open forum in their classroom need assistance. They need another teacher to help monitor and provide corrective feedback to student writing. The importance of providing feedback to second language students should not be underestimated. The opportunities for language use that the electronic bulletin board allows do not automatically transfer into opportunities for language learning. The instructor is the one who enables students to make that transfer by paying attention to their writing over time. To determine the degree of importance of teacher feedback, further research could be conducted comparing one group using an electronic bulletin board

and receiving teacher feedback with another group using the same technology, but not receiving teacher feedback.

The instructor using a CALL task must also be aware of the extra time it takes to create instructional materials and resources that students can use when engaging in an on-line activity. Teachers should not just assume that ESL learners will contribute in an open forum. They need to be encouraged through a series of questions and topical essay choices. The on-line classroom requires no less preparation than a face-to-face classroom, and teachers should be prepared to put in the extra time.

An instructor must also be prepared to invest time in becoming familiar with the courseware and how to use it effectively. Teacher training programs should train candidates on how to use new technological tools so they can instruct their students accordingly. Schools should include professional development courses to prepare practising teachers to use electronic bulletin boards, concordancers and other computer software used for pedagogical purposes. This would help instructors be more knowledgeable and feel confident when helping their students implement technology in their language learning. Teachers have a positive attitude about using the technology if they expect the students to embrace the CALL activities in the same manner.

To ensure that students improve their *academic* writing skills on the electronic bulletin board, teachers must impress upon them that electronic writing is not only an informal writing genre. It is true that some electronic communication does have a degree of informality, but as with many other kinds of communication and language, the degree of informality depends on the context and audience. It is understandable that young adults tend to express themselves informally on e-mail if their previous experience in using electronic communication has been writing for personal reasons. However, as they are making the transition into academic (post-secondary) and professional environments, it is the teacher's responsibility to create an awareness of the different registers of electronic communication. Since many courses at the post-secondary level now have a webpage with an electronic bulletin board, it is important that the second language instructor underline the importance of clear and effective communication in an academic context. The new writing habits and standards that they will learn from this experience will assist them with the kind of professional correspondence they will be conducting in the future with colleagues, supervisors and clients.

Teachers should also train student questions in reading 'learner writing' in their online peer review. According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), the effect of ill-formed, ungrammatical, or 'deviant' input on subsequent language learning has attracted surprisingly little research to date (pp. 128-29). It seems reasonable to expect that a second language learner exposed to predominantly 'deviant' input of non-native speakers will acquire, at best, a substandard variety of the target language. Larsen-Freeman and Long claim that, although no clear causal relationship has been established, there is some suggestive evidence that this is the case since "the kinds of SLA environments most often associated with ungrammatical input are also those in which a 'pidginized' variety of the SL has been found to develop" (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991, p. 129). This issue has been an area of importance and controversy in second language pedagogy, particularly in immersion programs (Spanish immersion in the USA and French immersion in Canada) where fossilization occurs with student output errors, even when the teacher provides well-formed input (Harley & Swain, 1978; Carey, 1984).

Despite the findings, which question the effectiveness of non-native ungrammatical input for second-language learning, recent findings of non-native/non-native conversation ('interlanguage talk') show that this kind of conversation is as useful, if not *more* useful, than NS-NNS conversation (Pelletierri, 2000, Porter, 1983; Pica and Doughty, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985). The claim these researchers make is supported by the fact that breakdowns of communication occur more frequently between non-native speakers and thus provide more opportunities for the negotiation of meaning. This negotiation is central to the learning process for non-native speakers. When a NNS communicates with a native speaker, most of the negotiation and output comes from the native speaker and, therefore, decreases the NNS' opportunities for experimenting with the language and learning from his or her attempts. Also, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many other experienced second language teachers in the ELI, it appears that exposure to authentic materials in the target language and models of native speech and writing as input are insufficient for second-language learning. The student must actively go through the process of generating output, making errors, recognizing those errors and correcting them. Teachers can explain to students that communicating in speech and writing with a non-native speaker may lower learners' affective filter and encourage them to create more output and negotiate meaning more than if they were communicating with a native-speaker. Furthermore, by reading

'imperfect' samples of peer writing, ESL students will develop their 'internal monitor' so that they can more effectively correct and edit their own writing.

If students are fairly advanced and confident in English, instructors could also set up exchanges with native speakers of English to enlarge the students' zone of proximal development and increase ESL students' exposure to the target language. Students could then modify their interlanguage so that it more closely approaches standard English. In addition, they could also get to know members of the university or general community outside of the language school and better understand Canadian culture, customs and people.

Critics of electronic communication may argue that technology is not necessary for creating written discussions. It could be argued that the same kind of exchange could be achieved by using pen and paper in a peer review session guided by an instructor. However, one main reason that the technology is often used and preferred by some instructors is that it is a more efficient and effective way of conducting computer-assisted classroom discussions. Students have permanent records of their own and other students' writing that they can refer back to and revise. Also, an on-line peer review session does not need to be limited to a specific time and place, as in a regular face-to-face classroom. It can occur outside of class time at the learner's convenience. In addition, the asynchronous nature of the on-line discussions gives students more time for reflection and the opportunity to build on others' ideas at their own pace.

Critics' ambivalence about technology may be legitimate because it is not the technology *per se* that makes a difference in the students' learning. As I noted earlier, the teacher's role and ability to use the technology and the kinds of activities she or he creates with these tools are critical to increasing the language learning potential of ESL students. Every effort has to be made to prepare the students properly for on-line tasks, to provide them with formal and informal feedback, and to create an awareness of the academic context and the audience of the electronic bulletin board activity.

In closing, teachers using the electronic bulletin board as a pedagogical tool may need to rethink their role, and they may have to change the assumptions they have about using technology in the second language-classroom. If students are properly guided, this tool has the potential to improve academic writing skills. As Warschauer claims, "The existence of the Internet provides the potential for purposeful, powerful use of

on-line communication in language and writing classes. It is up to us [teachers] to give life to that purpose and thus achieve the full potential of computer networks in second-language teaching" (Warschauer, 2000, p. 57).

Valia Spiliotopoulos is currently a Lecturer for the Office of English Language and Writing Support at the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto. She has recently completed her Ph.D. in Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, and has taught ESL and FSL at the post-secondary level at Laval University and at U.B.C. for the last 10 years.

Acknowledgments

My deep appreciation goes to Dr. Stephen Carey for his guidance and insights throughout the course of this research.

References

- Beauvois, M.H. (1998). E-talk: Computer-assisted classroom discussion – attitudes and motivation. In J. Swaffar, S. Romano, P. Markeley, & K. Arens (Eds.), *Language learning online: Theory and practice in the ESL and the L2 classroom* (pp. 99-120). Austin, TX: Labyrinth Publications.
- Braine, G., & Yoroazu, M. (1998). Local area network (LAN) computers in ESL and EFL writing classes: Promises and realities. *JALT Journal*, *20*, 47-59.
- Brown, D.H. (1994a). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Brown, D.H. (1994b). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Brown, A.L., & Campione, J.C. (1994). Guided discovery in a community of learners. In K. McGilly (Ed.), *Classroom lessons: Integrating cognitive theory and classroom practice* (pp. 229-270). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Carey, S. (1984). Reflections on a decade of French immersion. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, *41* (2).
- Carey, S. (1999). The use of WebCT for a highly interactive virtual graduate seminar. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, *12* (4), 371 - 380.
- Carey, S. (2001). Principles and practice of using interactive international technology for ESL. Invited paper in *The 10th International Symposium on English Teaching*. English Teachers Association, 21-29, ROC, Taipei.
- Chappelle, C. A. (2001). *Computer applications in second language acquisition: Foundations for teaching, testing and research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cummins, J., & Sayers, D. (1995). *Brave new schools: Challenging cultural illiteracy through global learning networks*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Curtis, A., & Roskams, T. (1999). Language learning in networked writing labs: A view from Asia. In J.A. Inman & D.N. Sewell (Eds.), *Taking flight with OWLs: Examining electronic writing center work* (pp. 29-39). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Davis, B., & Thiede, R. (2000). Writing into change: Style shifting in asynchronous electronic discourse. In M. Warschauer & R. Kern (Eds.), *Network-based language teaching: Concepts and practice* (pp.87-120). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (1980). Classroom interaction and its relation to second language learning. *RELC Journal*, *11*, 29-48.
- Gee, J. P. (2000). New people in new worlds: Networks, the new capitalism and schools. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp.43-68). New York: Routledge.
- Harley, B. & Swain, M. (1978). An analysis of the verb system by young learners of French. *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin*, *3* (1), 35-79.
- Kasper, L. (2000). New technologies, new literacies: Focus discipline research and ESL Learning Communities. *Language Learning and Technology*, *4* (2), 105-128.
- Kern, R. (1995). Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity of language production. *Modern Language Journal*, *79*, 457 - 476
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London: Longman.
- Lamy, M., & Goodfellow, R. (1999). "Reflective conversation" in the virtual language classroom. *Language Learning and Technology*, *2* (2), 43-61.
- Larsen-Freeman, D., & Long, M. H. (1991). *An introduction to second language acquisition research*. London, UK: Longman.
- Leki, I. & Carson, J. (1994). Students' perceptions of EAP writing instruction and writing needs across the disciplines. *TESOL Quarterly*, *28* (1), 81-101.
- Markley, P. (1998). Empowering students: The diverse roles of Asians and women in the ESL computer

- classroom. In J. Swaffar, S. Romano, P. Markley, & K. Arens (Eds.), *Language learning online: Theory and practice in the ESL and the L2 computer classroom* (pp.81-96). Austin, TX: Labyrinth Publications.
- Nelson, G.L., & Carson, J.G. (1998). ESL students' perceptions of effectiveness in peer response groups. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 7 (2), 113-131.
- Ortega, L. (1997). Processes and outcomes in networked classroom interaction: Defining the research agenda for L2 computer-assisted classroom discussion. *Language Learning and Technology*, 1 (1), 82-93.
- Pellettieri, J. (2000). Negotiation in cyberspace: The role of chatting in the development of grammatical competence. In M. Warschauer & R. Kern (Eds.), *Network-based language teaching: Concepts and practice* (pp. 59-88). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Pica, T., & Doughty, C. (1985). Input and interaction in the communicative language classroom; a comparison of teacher-fronted activities and group activities. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 115-132). Rowley, MA: Newbury House
- Porter, P. (1983). *Variations in the conversations of adult learners of English as a function of the proficiency level of the participants*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.
- Schultz, J.M. (2000). Computers and collaborative writing in the foreign language curriculum. In M. Warschauer & R. Kern (Eds.), *Network-based language learning: Concepts and practice* (pp.121-150). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sengupta, S. (2001). Exchanging ideas with peers in network-based classrooms: An aid or a pain? *Language Learning and Technology*, 5 (1), 103-134.
- Shetzer, H., & Warschauer, M. (2000). An electronic literacy approach to network-based language teaching. In M. Warschauer & R. Kern (Eds.), *Network-based language teaching: Concepts and practice* (pp.171-185). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Spiliotopoulos, V. (2002). *ESL academic writing and electronic bulletin boards: The viability of technological supplements for writing improvement and socio-cultural development*. Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia, Canada.
- Stepp-Greany, J. (2002). Student perceptions on language learning in a technological environment: Implications for the new millennium. *Language Learning and Technology*, 6 (1), 165-180.
- Sullivan, N., & Pratt, E. (1996). A comparative study of two ESL writing environments: A computer-assisted classroom and a traditional oral classroom. *System*, 24 (4), 491-501.
- Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235-253). Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.
- Topping, K. (1998). Peer assessment between students in colleges and universities. *Review of Educational Research*, 68 (3), 249 – 276.
- Varonis, E. & Gass, S. (1985). Nonnative/nonnative conversations: A model for negotiation of meaning. *Applied Linguistics*, 6 (1), 71-90.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Warschauer, M. (1997). Computer-mediated collaborative learning: Theory and practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 470-481.
- Warschauer, M. (1999b). *Electronic literacies: Language, culture, and power in on-line education*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Warschauer, M. (2000). The changing global economy and the future of English teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34 (3) 511-535.
- Warschauer, M. & Kern, R (Eds.) (2000). *Network-based language teaching: Concepts and practice*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Zhang, S. (1995). Re-examining the affective advantage of peer feedback in the ESL writing class, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 4 (3), 209-222.
- Zvacek, S.M. (1992). Word-processing and the teaching of writing. In J. Hartley (Ed.), *Technology and writing: Readings in the psychology of written communication* (pp. 57-64). London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd.

APPENDIX A

Sample Writing Tasks Using the Electronic Bulletin Board
LAB 2 ACADEMIC WRITING 520

A.Instructor: Valia Spiliotopoulos Winter 2002

WebCT url: <http://www2.cstudies.ubc.ca:8900/webct/public/home.pl>

PART I: INTERACTION: 30 min.

1. Read all the messages of the other three students in your group.
2. After reading each message, click on REPLY, and ask your classmate a question or make a comment based on the content of their message. Click on SEND to send your message.
3. Click on UPDATE LISTING, and see what questions or comments your classmates have written to you.
4. Answer their questions by clicking on REPLY. Then type your message with an answer. When you are finished composing your message, click on SEND.

PART II: REFLECTION: 30 min.

1. Click on COMPOSE MESSAGE
2. Write on the following topic. I have provided some questions to get you thinking about the topic and to help you write.

What is academic writing?

- a. What is an essay?
- b. Why do we write essays in school?
- c. How do academic essays and other kinds or genre differ in terms of content, organization, word choice and usage, sentence structure and point of view?
- d. Why aren't other types of writing (poetry, letters, stories) not as common as essays in the academic environment?
- e. Do you think there are cultural differences between academic writing in your country and academic writing in North America?
- f. What steps do you usually take to write an essay?
- g. Have you been a successful essay writer? Why or why not? What were your strengths and weaknesses?
- h. What kind of writing do you prefer? - academic writing or other kinds of writing?

PART III: ESSAY WRITING

1. Exit Web CT.
2. In a Word document, please start typing the rough/first draft of your narrative/descriptive essay. Review your essay for coherence, organization, expression, grammar and mechanics.

APPENDIX B

Sample Interview Questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe yourself? How long have you studied English? How long have you been studying English in Canada?

2. Why do you want to improve your writing in English? What do you want to improve? What do you think is the best way to improve it?
3. Have you used the electronic bulletin board in a second-language classroom before? If yes, describe your experience.
4. How do you feel about presenting your writing on-line in a class or school that has many international students?
5. Do you think you have learned to write better by reading other students' writing in this class?
6. Do you prefer it if the teacher corrects your writing on-line? Do you feel that the teacher's corrections may impede your fluency?
7. Do you think the English writing skills you have practised on the electronic bulletin board will help you at your job or at school?
8. Did writing on the electronic bulletin board help you improve your accuracy/ fluency / vocabulary? Your grammar skills? Your reading skills? Your organization skills? Your revision skills?
9. Do you think your overall writing skills have improved over the course of this term as a result of using the electronic bulletin board? Why or why not? To what extent have they improved?
10. What exercise on the electronic bulletin board do you find improves your writing the most?
11. How is writing on-line different from writing on a page? Do you prefer written interaction or verbal interaction with students and your teachers? Why?
12. Have your attitudes and motivation towards writing differed or improved over the course of this term by using the electronic bulletin board? If so, how and why?
13. Do you think that your confidence has improved as a result of using the electronic bulletin board?
14. Do you think that the objectives of this course have been met as a result of using the electronic bulletin board?
15. What did you like and dislike about using the electronic bulletin board? How can this tool be improved to meet your needs?
16. Would you take a writing class using WebCT again? Why or why not?

Integration of Online Computer Technology in the L2 Classroom in a Technology-Rich School

Louise Paoli de Prisco
Lakefield College School

Introduction

Despite the long-winded title, the findings of my research are simple, straight-forward, and directly applicable to second-language teachers planning to implement online technology in their classrooms. I intend to share with you the results of a case study which I conducted in 2001, but I would like to begin with an explanation of what I mean by a “technology-rich school” by describing the school where I was teaching, because this study grew directly out of that context.

The Context

The school where I was teaching is a private co-ed day and boarding school for students in grades 7 through 13. There were 335 students attending the school at the time. All teachers and students in grades 9 through 13 have laptop computers, leased through the school, and every classroom and boarding residence has ports linked to the school’s network and the Internet. The fact that there is more than one LCD projector for every 2 classrooms is further evidence that the school is technology rich. In addition, there are four full-time, professionally-trained staff dedicated to providing Information Technology support to staff and students. Professional development in the use of computer technology is offered to teachers on site, throughout the year. Each course has three online databases, maintained through the school’s “Online Learning Centre.” The school was networked in 1996, and laptops were introduced, incrementally, starting in 1997.

In the early stages of completing my M.A. program in Second Language Education, I recall reading articles about the potential of computers to revolutionize the language classroom and to provide teachers and students with powerful new strategies and materials to facilitate teaching and learning. The greatest barrier standing between schools and this revolutionary style of learning, according to researchers, was access to computers and technical support.

Yet my personal experience suggested to me that this was an oversimplification because in the technol-

ogy-rich school that I have just described, not all teachers were as enthusiastic about the educational benefits of computer technology as the authors of those articles had been. Despite having ready access to computers and technical support, many of the teachers, especially the second-language teachers, had not found their classrooms transformed by the powers of technology as promised. “Perhaps,” I thought, “there are other barriers that need to be identified and studied.”

So I went back to take a closer look at the theory and research into the successful integration of computer technology and found the following key pre-requisites. Sufficient funding is required to finance the acquisition of appropriate hardware and software, and to provide sufficient technical support (McCarthy, 1999; Levy, 1999), computer training for teachers (*Investing in Teachers*, 1995; Moore et al., 1998; Sofranova, 1993), and a positive attitude towards technology (Lawrence, 2000). In theory, with these elements in place, teachers could effectively integrate online technology into their classrooms.

In my teaching context, all of these ingredients appeared to be in place for teachers to integrate technology into their teaching. And while throughout the school, many teachers were embracing the benefits of this technological innovation, the second-language teachers were not.

So, what was missing? What else would it take to help these second-language teachers integrate online technology into their teaching methodology?

The Case Study

I decided to conduct a case study at the school to investigate the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of the second-language teachers towards online computer technology in their classroom, and the reasons for their decisions about how and when to use it. My primary research questions were:

- How do L2 teachers use educational technology in their classrooms at this school?

- Do teachers believe that online computer technology supports second-language learning? If so, in what ways?

The first question was intended to gather more information about the actual practices of the second-language teachers. The second question tried to uncover the teachers' beliefs and attitudes about the role of online computers in enhancing student-language learning.

I conducted interviews to understand how the second language teachers at the school were implementing computer technology in their courses. There were four teachers in the Modern Languages Department; three taught French as a Second Language (FSL) in grades 9 to OAC, and the fourth taught Spanish, grades 10 to OAC. Each teacher was interviewed separately, and interviews were tape-recorded for later transcription. While there was a list of specific questions to be asked, the interview structure was open as occasionally the teacher had already discussed an issue before it was specifically raised in a question. The teachers spoke frankly about their experiences, often elaborating beyond the question they had been asked. As a result, the interviews were longer than anticipated, ranging in length from 45 to 75 minutes.

The interview questions focused on three different topics. The first set of questions was intended to gain insight into each teacher's beliefs about second language acquisition. This information was gathered in order to provide possible explanations if there was a significant discrepancy among teachers' responses to the questions related to computer use. The second set of questions dealt with the role of computers in education in general, and, more specifically at the case study school, with their effectiveness as a teaching tool. The third set of questions concerned the teacher's own experience with computer technology at the school, focusing on the use of the online forums and the course databases.

Despite differences in age, gender, years of experience, and preferred teaching style, there were common threads in all of the teachers' responses to questions about their use of online computer technology in the classroom. In the course of the interviews, the following five key issues were cited as areas of concern by all four teachers:

1. the challenge of monitoring student use of the computer during class:
 - *"Many students can't resist the temptation to use their laptop for purposes other than what we're*

asking them to do, and they are actually able to run several programs at once, which makes it very difficult for the teacher to monitor their use."

- *"Students want to play, check their e-mail, chat online; it creates a lack of focus, a distraction in class."*
2. concern about the amount of time students, especially in younger grades, spend playing on their computers instead of interacting with their peers, outside of class time:
 - *"I worry about these students and their social skills. For some, their socialization revolves around the computer. When they are using their computer they are 'somewhere else,' not here, not interacting with the people around them."*
 3. lingering concerns about technical problems which are perhaps inevitable: network interruptions, difficulties accessing some legitimate websites and downloading useful files (especially audio and video) which are blocked by the school's Internet security firewall:
 - *"The negative experiences that I've had with computer technology have usually been technical in nature. Although things are improving yearly, the unreliability of technology is still a factor. Even when I find a good website, 10 to 15% of my students won't be able to get into it right away; I spend a lot of time in class dealing with technical issues."*
 4. the lack of time for teachers to find suitable websites, and then to make meaningful related activities:
 - *"I find it time-consuming if I have to adapt an online activity prior to using it in the classroom."*
 - *"The computer is not always a time-saver; it creates a lot of extra work."*
 5. arguably the most critical factor in the decision of these teachers to limit their use of the computer in their language classes was their self-described "lack of knowledge about teaching L2 with computers" (Lam, 2000; Murphy, 2002). Their professional development in the use of computers and software had been general in nature. They had received no training on the specific application of computer technology in the second language classroom. The issue for them was not a question of whether or not the computer was an effective teaching and learning tool, but rather

a question of how to harness that potential, and incorporate it into their second language teaching methodology.

- *"I feel torn between two elements: progressing within a given course and, somewhat tangentially, what you can find in a computer. It is hard to marry the two."*

Another area of concern was the use of the online forum. Each course in the school has a database to support online academic written discussions, also known as computer-mediated-communication (CMC). During CMC, learners communicate with one another in the written form, either in real time (synchronous) or at different times (asynchronous). In the case study school, despite expectations by the school's administration that every course include a CMC component, L2 teachers rarely used it. All of them had tried it, with limited success, in one or more courses, but they remained sceptical of its usefulness in their teaching context. They were all clearly aware of the intended purposes of the forum, and seemed to understand and accept the theory behind its use, but none had been able to successfully integrate online discussions into their teaching methodology. Why not?

In my discussions with the four teachers about their decisions not to use CMC, a number of common concerns surfaced:

- the dilemma of whether to focus on form or on content;
- general concern about students' inattention to proofreading and accuracy in their forum writing;
- teacher preference for face-to-face oral discussion over online discussion.

Some studies have found that students who are quiet or reserved in a traditional classroom setting are more likely to contribute to a CMC discussion (Warschauer, 1996; Kern, 1995). But in their interviews with me, the second language teachers all pointed out that quiet students are likely to participate more through the online discussion only if their linguistic skills are strong. They have found that reserved students who lack confidence in their L2 writing skills are unlikely to share their opinions through CMC more than they would in a class discussion.

Although previous studies have found evidence of improved reflective thinking in students' asynchronous CMC writing (Lamy & Goodfellow, 1999; Warschauer, 1997), the second language teachers in my case study

claimed they had seen only very occasional evidence of this.

Discussion

Previous studies have identified key reasons for teacher hesitation to integrate computer technology in their classrooms. Lack of training in computer use (*Investing in Teachers*, 1995; Moore et al, 1998) has been identified, along with "technophobia" (Connor, 1984), a lack of access to equipment and technical support (Lam, 2000; Granger et al., 2002), and the belief that computers are not effective tools in the classroom (Kassen & Higgins, 1997). But none of these factors appeared to play a significant role in the present study.

Each of the second-language teachers who participated had received on-site computer training and knew how to use several kinds of software, including word processing, to make PowerPoint presentations, to post documents to various databases, to use e-mail and CD-ROM's, and use search engines to locate information on the Internet. They had used a personal laptop daily for the previous three years. They received significant technical support from the staff of the school's IT department. The teachers also had ready access to LCD projectors, which they knew how to use to project information from a laptop computer, or from a VCR or DVD player. In other words, these teachers had easy access to a wide array of technology, they knew how to operate all of it, and they had considerable computer skills and resources. They were neither unskilled nor technophobic. So what, then, was lacking? Three years into the implementation process, why had they not integrated computer technology more fully into their teaching?

For the L2 teachers in this case study, one of the missing pieces was specific training in the use of these resources in the second language classroom. These teachers knew how to do word processing, but they lacked direction on how to use it to help their students learn French or Spanish. They knew how to navigate the Internet, but they were not always sure how to fit it into their lessons. They could make impressive PowerPoint presentations, write and send e-mail, and download files, but they were unsure of how to incorporate these forms of technology into their lessons: *"I can see the purpose and use for some applications in other courses, but I can't see how to make meaningful use of the computer in my language courses."* Although they had general knowledge of the resources, they were uncertain of how to make these tools work for them as

integral parts of their second-language teaching methodology.

Studies have shown that teachers are far more likely to be successful in the implementation and continuation of a new strategy if the initial training sessions are followed up by peer coaching or collaborative work with colleagues (Showers, 1982, 1984). Showers proposes “coaching” as an effective, if often overlooked, implementation strategy. In their analysis of data from case studies of four Canadian schools, Granger et al. (2002) determined that supportive and collaborative relationships among teachers were of critical importance in successful implementation of computer technology. In fact, during the interview process of this case study, several of the language teachers identified the need for colleagues to work together, sharing ideas and strategies for computer integration, and they admitted that this rarely occurred in their department.

During a Professional Development workshop in June, at the end of the case study period, the teachers were given several hours to work independently or cooperatively to design and develop a computer application that would allow their students to make meaningful use of technology. Even with free time to develop course materials, with all of their training, with all of the technical support and resources available, individually the teachers had been frustrated and had found it difficult to come up with computer applications for their courses. But when they chose to work together, to share knowledge and ideas, they were able to come up with a creative solution to a problem they all shared. Here was another missing link: collaboration.

The research of Showers (1982, 1984, 1987) suggests that the greatest barrier to implementation is cognitive: “understanding when and where to use the new strategy, choosing appropriate objectives for the strategy within a given curriculum...” (1987, p. 64). Like the subjects in Showers’ 1984 study, the second-language teachers in this case study “believed the new skills were worthwhile but reported difficulty in implementing them without additional training and on-site assistance” (1987, p. 62). The facilitation of collaborative teacher triad networks (composed of teacher, school librarian, and computer specialist) is an example of an innovative strategy that has proven successful in supporting teachers’ attempts to integrate information technology into their teaching methodology (Lotherington et al., 2001).

Recommendations

Two major recommendations emerge as a result of this study.

1. Discipline-specific professional development on integration of technology

Teachers need to be offered professional development on how to incorporate computer technology to better deliver their specific discipline (Music, Physics, Canadian Studies, etc.). Generalized computer training is insufficient; too often this results in teachers who are competent users of technology but who are not using it in meaningful, purposeful ways in the classroom. Learning to apply the technology to enhance student learning has proven to be a challenging and complex process. Professional development should be tailored to fit the needs and circumstances of each discipline.

In the case of second language learning, the need for specific strategies and applications of computer technology is even greater. The needs of second-language learners and teachers are not necessarily met by applying what works in the L1 setting to the L2 classroom. Modifications and adaptations are frequently required to render a computer application effective in the second-language context. Teachers need to learn how to harness the computer’s potential to be an effective language-teaching tool.

2. Peer Coaching and Collaboration Among Teachers

During the process of implementing an educational innovation, it is crucial that teachers work in a supportive environment that encourages sharing and collaboration among colleagues. Working in isolation does not support successful implementation. Teachers need to work together to solve common problems. Studies have shown that during the processes of implementation and continuation, collaboration is a key factor for success (Granger et al., 2002; Lotherington et al., 2001; Showers, 1982, 1984). This study confirms these findings. Opportunities for collaboration and peer coaching should be created to help teachers transfer new strategies to their teaching repertoire.

Conclusion

Even under what appear to be ideal conditions, the integration of computer technology into the classroom is a complex and time-consuming process. This study suggests that, although they are crucial elements, it is not enough to provide technical resources and support, and general computer training for teachers. Even teachers who embrace the computer’s potential in the classroom require specific guidance and professional development on how to harness that potential in the context of teaching a second language. Peer coaching

and collaboration among teachers would further improve the chances of successful integration of the technology into their teaching methodologies.

Louise Paoli di Prisco is Curriculum Leader of the Arts and Languages Department at Lakefield College School, Lakefield, Ontario. lpaolidiprisco@lakefieldcs.on.ca

References

- Connor, S. (1984). Language teachers and technophobia. In P. Westphal (Ed.) *Strategies for Foreign Language Teaching*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Co., 59-67.
- Granger, C.A., Morbey, M.L., Lotherington, H., Owsten, R.D. & Wideman, H.H. (2002). Factors contributing to teachers' successful implementation of IT. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 18 (4), 480-488.
- Kassen, M.A., & Higgins, C.J. (1997). Meeting the technology challenge: Introducing teachers to language-learning technology. In M.D. Bush & R.M. Terry (Eds.), *Technology-enhanced language learning* (pp. 263-285). Lincolnwood, IL: NTC.
- Kern, R. (1995). Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity and characteristics of language production. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79 (4), 457-476.
- Lam, Y. (2000). Technophilia vs. technophobia: A preliminary look at why second-language teachers do or do not use technology in their classrooms. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 56 (3), 389-420.
- Lamy, M., Goodfellow, R. (1999). "Reflective conversation" in the virtual language classroom. *Language, Learning and Technology*, 2 (2), 43-61. Retrieved September 12, 2002 from <http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/llt/vol2num2/article2/index.html>
- Lawrence, G. (2000). Teacher belief systems towards computer-mediated language learning: college ESL instruction. Master's thesis, University of Toronto.
- Levy, M. (1999). Computer-assisted language learning: What teachers need to know. In C. Ward & W. Renandya (Eds.), *Language Teaching: New Insights for the Language Teacher*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre.
- Lotherington, H., Morbey, M., Granger, C. & Doan, L. (2001). Tearing down the walls: new literacies and new horizons in the elementary school in B. Barrell (Ed.), *Technology, teaching and learning: issues in the integration of technology* (131-161). Calgary, AB: Detselig.
- McCarthy, B. (1999). Integration: the sine qua non of CALL. *CALL-EJ Online*, 1,2. Retrieved September 12, 2002 from <http://www.clec.ritsumei.ac.jp/english/callejonline/4-2/mccarthy.html>
- Moore, Z., Morales, B., & Carel, S. (1998). Technology and teaching culture: Results of a state survey of foreign language teachers. *CALICO Journal*, 5 (1-3), 109-128.
- Murphy, E. (2002). New tools in an old trade: Teachers talk about use of the Internet in the teaching of French as a second or foreign language. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59 (2), 215-235.
- National Academy of Sciences (1995). Reinventing schools: The technology is now! *Investing in Teachers*. Retrieved September 12, 2002 from <http://search.nap.edu/html/techgap/investing.html>
- Showers, B. (1982). *Transfer of Training: The Contribution of Coaching*. Eugene, Ore.: Center for Educational Policy and Management.
- Showers, B. (1984). *Peer Coaching: A Strategy for Facilitating Transfer of Training*. Eugene, Ore.: Center for Educational Policy and Management.
- Showers, B. (1987). The Role of Coaching in the Implementation of Innovations. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 54-57.
- Sofranova, N.V. (1993). Teachers' attitudes towards the use of new information technologies. *Russian Education and Society*, 37, 5-28.
- Warschauer, M. (1996). Comparing face-to-face and electronic discussion in the second language classroom. *CALICO Journal*, 13, 7-26.
- Warschauer, M. (1997). Computer-mediated collaborative learning: Theory and practice. *The Modern Language Journal*, 81, iv, 470-481.

Teaching and Learning Oral Communication in a Distance Learning Setting: A case study

Aline Germain-Rutherford, University of Ottawa

Keywords: Distance Learning, Autonomous Learning, Computer Mediated Communication, Videoconferencing, Oral Communication

Abstract

Oral communication, an inherently social activity, is traditionally taught through extended face-to-face contact between instructors and students. The French Masters Program of the University of Wisconsin has decided to offer a distance education language proficiency course with a particular emphasis on oral communication. This paper will describe the use of computer mediated communication tools and information and communication technologies to build an interactive teaching/learning environment fostering oral communication between participants located at four different sites. It will then present the evaluation done at the end of each of the two phases of the project. Finally we will discuss how teaching strategies and the use of tools were modified to counter the limits of the distance-learning setting and to reinforce three important areas: students' computer literacy, the quality of an inter-related / inter-active dynamic space, and metacognitive mechanisms to reinforce autonomous learning.

Context and Course Implementation

French 524 is a French Oral Proficiency course that has been redesigned to fit the needs of a new *Professional French Masters Degree* offered by the Department of French & Italian at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This interdisciplinary program combines graduate-level coursework in French language and culture with specialized expertise in one of five professional concentration areas: French & Business, French & Education, French & European Union Affairs, French & International Development, and French & Media/Arts/Cultural Production. It responds in part to a growing interest expressed by French majors and graduate students to pursue French studies that would lead to careers outside of academia.

The course was implemented in two stages, with the first phase during the Spring of 2000 and the second phase during the Fall of 2001. For the first phase, the focus was on collaboration between UW-Stevens Point, UW-Madison, and Trent University in Ontario. The curriculum was designed for distance learning to allow students at both UW campuses as well as one UW special student located in Texas to enroll in the course. We explored distance education technologies for synchronous and asynchronous interaction: videoconferencing, electronic mail, several components of WebCT (a Web-based course management system) such as the forum and the on-line chat rooms as well as WinPitchLTL, a specific software program to teach oral

expression and pronunciation at a distance.

From the evaluation performed at the end of the first phase (Germain-Rutherford and Halzen, 2000), we worked at enhancing and fine-tuning our distance education capability, in particular with web-based instruction and videoconferencing for the second stage of implementation.

Although initially, French 524 focused mainly on oral communication, the new course includes several aspects of written communication¹.

Course Objectives and Pedagogical Approach

The main objective of the course was to teach linguistic and socio-cultural skills of oral and written communication in professional situations to on-and-off-campus students. However, a particular emphasis was given to oral communication as the course prepared the students for an eight-week (minimum) internship abroad, in a French-speaking international organization whose work is directly related to the student's chosen area of specialization.

Even though we were teaching in a distance-learning environment with technological tools, the design of the course and the choice of the technological tools to offer the course revolved around our wish to keep an emphasis on human interaction.

“Métier de relations humaines, l’enseignement exige donc des interactions humaines. [...] Seuls des êtres humains peuvent former humainement d’autres humains. Cette vérité fondamentale est à la base même de cette réalité anthropologique fondamentale qu’est l’activité éducative : l’être humain est un être qui a besoin des autres pour devenir humain, et c’est par la médiation avec les autres humains que sa propre humanité est rendue possible. »² (Tardif & Mukamura, 1999 : 15).

Furthermore, following the constructivist approach of learning, collaboration, reflective interactions and discussions among learners, key elements to facilitate the construction of knowledge, were systematically included in the design of the course (Dalgarno, 1996, Lefoe, 1998, Ferry & Brown, 1998, Agostino, Lefoe & Hedberg, 1997).

Phase I – Spring 2000

Oral communication, an inherently social activity, is traditionally taught through extended face-to-face contact between instructors and class participants. Our challenge here was to build a learning environment interactive enough to foster oral communication between participants located at four different sites: three students in the UW-Stevens Point class, six students in the UW-Madison class, one student from her house in Marfa, Texas, and the lead instructor located at Trent University, Ontario, Canada. Keeping in mind the two above-mentioned principles revolving around the design of the course (human interaction and construction of knowledge), we chose a mixed-mode delivery approach for this course. To reinforce collaboration, reflective interaction and discussion, we used different kinds of tools:

Face-to-face interaction. In order to “break the ice” and meet all participants in the course, the session started with an intensive weekend at the UW-Madison Campus. For two days students from both UW campuses, as well as the student from Texas, met the entire pedagogical team who presented the course objectives, the software and the videoconferencing facilities. But most of the weekend involved a “Simulation Globale” (Yaiche, 1996), an intensive collaborative oral language activity where students and instructors interacted to build and simulate an international conference with a variety of oral presentations developed and delivered by the students. Camcorders were used by the students to film and view their work at every stage of the simulation. The objective was to begin to develop a self-assessment awareness which would be encouraged

throughout the semester³. The course concluded with a second intensive weekend at the UW-Madison Campus, where students completed and presented the last oral assignment they had researched and built collaboratively during the final weeks of the course.

In addition to these two intensive face-to-face group sessions, each student was assigned an on-site facilitator for a weekly 20 minute meeting to discuss any aspect of the course or assignment. The student located in Texas was to meet her “distance” facilitator every week via a Chat room.

Computer Mediated Communication. Research has shown that the use of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), allowing learners in various geographical locations to interact with one another either in a synchronous or asynchronous mode, helps learners construct because it lets them first put their ideas into words, reflect on them, and build on these ideas through feedback from their virtual classmates. (Agostino, Lefoe & Hedberg, 1997, Esch, 1997, Kern, 1995, St John & Cash, 1995, Warschauer, 1996, 1997). Studies have also demonstrated that this type of interaction, in a language-learning setting, allows a greater metalinguistic awareness, a higher level of syntactic and lexical complexity, and a less stressful and, therefore, more risk friendly environment than a face-to-face interaction (Esch, 1997, Kern, 1995, St John & Cash, 1995, Warschauer, 1996, 1997).

Although CMC is a text-based interaction and that, “while it is reasonable to assume that computer-mediated discussion contributes to written fluency [...], any claim that this transfers to oral communication is at this stage purely speculative” (Warschauer, 1997: 5), we chose, nonetheless, to favour this type of communication for our distance oral course to encourage metalinguistic awareness and conscious language learning, reflective processes shown to help construct knowledge. The whole course was built in a WebCT environment, using several of the CMC tools this Web-based course management system offers. Students and instructors could interact synchronously and asynchronously via a Discussion Forum, several Chat rooms and individual e-mail accounts.

Videoconferencing. The main part of the course was delivered via weekly or fortnightly one hour or two-hour videoconferencing meetings conducted from Ontario by the lead instructor to the students at the two UW campuses. An audio connection was arranged for the student in Texas, in order for her to hear and orally participate. Each visual document presented during the videoconferencing sessions was previously

posted on the WebCT site and therefore accessible via her computer. Each videoconference was also recorded and sent to her or any student who missed the class. At each of the UW sites, an on-site facilitator was present during all or part of the videoconference session, to assist students technically or linguistically if needed.

The software WinPitchLTL. The importance of feedback in the learning process is a widely accepted fact. Research has shown that timely, precise and direct corrective feedback results in a greater “consciousness-raising” and “conscious learning” environment (Kwong, 2001, Lamy & Goodfellow, 1998, Little, 1996, Long, 1996, Nagata & Swisher, 1995, Oxford, Rivera-Castillo, Feyten & Nutta, 1997, Théberge & Leblanc, 1998, Warshauer, 1996, 1997).

In order to reinforce effective corrective feedback in response to students’ oral presentations, we decided to use as our main speech software WinPitchLTL, a real time speech visualizer and synthesizer which falls, in our opinion, into the category of mindtools⁴ (Ferry & Brown, 1998), as it offers a plurality of functions enhancing conscious learning through precise and explicit corrective feedback, provided by the teacher at a distance or on-site, or by the program’s functions (Germain-Rutherford and Martin, 1998, 2000, 2002).

Evaluation of the First Phase and Recommendations for the Second Phase of the Project.

The course was evaluated through on-line and hard copy questionnaires sent to the students (Appendix A), as well as a live group discussion involving the students and the pedagogical team at the end of the session. The seven members of the team were then asked to put in writing their own evaluation of the course. At the end of the first stage of this experiment, several conclusions were drawn and several recommendations were made.

1. Distance learning via videoconferencing and/or CMC changes the teaching/learning relation students have been confronted with for most of their student lives. An awareness and progressive training towards gaining a higher degree of responsibility, initiative taking and autonomy seem necessary for the students to profit fully from this new form of learning (Larose, Lafrance, Grenon, Roy & Lenoir, 1998, Larose, David, Lafrance & Cantin, 1999, Guillemet & Provot, 1999, Benson & Hewitt, 1998). Although the students found the WebCT CMC tools very useful, only a few used them spontaneously to

interact with the others. The Discussion Forum, considered by them as the most frequently used tool, was generally consulted to read messages posted by the instructor and less frequently to contribute to the ongoing discussion. “*Managing the interactions with strong leadership and direction is considered a sine qua non of successful conferencing*” (Mason, 1991:2). A more precise “agenda” for the Forum discussions, with well-set objectives, timetable and procedural rules, would help the students to take full advantage of this tool (Berge, 1999, Mason, 1991). Indeed, during the first phase of the project, students were only encouraged to participate in weekly discussions on topics posted by the instructor and related to the readings of the week. No precise instructions concerning a required frequency of postings, limits to the length of contributions and types of interactions (i.e. respond to your peers’ point of view) were given.

2. As shown by several studies done in post-secondary institutions (Larose *et al.*, 1998, Larose *et al.*, 1999, Lefoe, 1998, Benson & Hewitt, 1998, Agostino, Lefoe & Hedberg, 1997, Proulx & Campbell, 1997), computer literacy among university faculty and students was still pretty low at the time of this first phase. Saving documents, sending attachments, downloading files from the Internet and zipping or unzipping files were still difficult operations for many. However, even though students’ skills with computers is growing rapidly, adequate training in using the technology as well as strong technical support, both for the instructors and the students, are still essential components of any computer-assisted course. An under-utilization of WinPitchLTL, at first, as well as WebCT CMC tools, although considered by the students and instructors as very effective language tools, demonstrated a lack of proper technical training for many participants. However, by the end, students appreciated the potential of these tools. Explicit training combined with small collaborative projects involving the use of the technological tools before the session begins, and extensive collaboration with the technical support people of each campus could help students and staff to overcome difficulties and profit fully from this technology. But equipment availability, at home and on campus, as well as connection costs, are also important issues to be addressed.

3. All the students saw the usefulness and benefits of the face-to-face opening and closing weekend sessions. To meet their peers and the pedagogical team, to interact directly with students and facilitators during the simulations, to be immersed for a whole weekend in the second language, as well as to be introduced to the format of the course and the technology it required, were seen as important elements of the program.

Phase Two – Fall 2001

From the results of the evaluation of Phase One, certain changes were made before implementing the second phase of the project (Appendix B: Course outline for the second phase).

Three important areas had to be reinforced: the technical preparation of the students, their interactions within the course, and their level of autonomy and control in their learning process.

1. More interaction during the videoconferences:

Since all the videoconferences of the first phase had been recorded, we developed a CDROM (Germain-Rutherford, 2000) containing all the lectures on the different theories of communication and oral speech concepts⁵. The videoconferences of the second phase of the project could therefore be completely devoted to interactive and oral activities and not to the presentation of theoretical principles which students could find on the CDROM. The videoconferences were mostly devoted to applications, students' presentations of their work, and self- and peer-assessment activities.

2. More structure in the forums

As mentioned above, the theoretical content of the course was now presented and explained in the lectures contained in the CDROM. Interactive reading and writing activities to help students understand this content were developed to be performed by using two online forums: a forum devoted to the weekly discussions on the readings of the specific week and a forum devoted to the weekly or bi-weekly activities derived from the readings or the oral activities/assignments of the course. For instance, in one activity, students were asked to select one of eight models of speech introductions and write their introduction following the model they chose. Then they had to post their individual introductions on the forum with instructions to critically read and exchange editing commentaries with each other.

Another activity was related to the different models of argument (deduction, alternative hypothesis, induction...). Students had to write and post on the forum a short argument (including relevant facts and conclusion) following one of these models. The others had to identify which model was chosen and attempt to refute the argument with relevant facts and conclusion. Following this, a succession of counter-arguments and refutations were expected, resulting in several parallel arguments being built collaboratively via the forum. Other activities were more self-reflective, and students were asked to share in the forum's self-assessment commentaries on assignments already submitted or still due.

A third forum, called "the collective journal" reinforced self-reflection and offered a place where students could share reflections on their learning process and performance, as well as the unfolding of the course.

Contrary to the first phase, it was made explicit in the course description and syllabus that students were expected to spend, on top of the weekly hour of videoconferencing, a minimum of two hours per week to contribute to these three forums. Furthermore, students' contributions to the forum would form the basis of oral activities during the videoconference sessions. Contributions were therefore compulsory.

However, meaningful on-line interaction can be difficult to trigger: "*Online environment can fail because the learners are left in a social vacuum and do not have the motivation to work together. ... Challenging too early can be futile if members have not really established commonalities*" (Rich, 2001, p7).

Before any meaningful interaction takes place, Sharon Rich recommends four steps:

First, it is important to *establish commonalities*, that is, to have informal online introductions establishing personal background. Indeed, the more students know about each other, the more they will likely contribute in the online community. It is then necessary, secondly, to *sustain commonalities*. When participants are commenting on what is currently happening in the online discussion in messages such as, "Oops, ça se voit que j'ai répondu avant de lire le commentaire de Tony » or « Bonjour tous ! Que de commentaires cette semaine ! » or « C'est drôle comme presque tout le monde a choisi le même modèle d'organisation. »¹ they bring a sense of immediacy which reinforces the interaction. Thirdly, the instructor has a role in helping to *elaborate commonalities*. If students are probed to talk about themselves, the others can further identify with one another and strengthen a sense of community

which will facilitate meaningful interaction later on. Lastly, any statements of solidarity and support will help bring a sense of *empathy* even in a virtual environment. Then, with commonalities established, online interactions and discussions become real learning opportunities. (Rich, 2001, p.7).

Following these principles, a balance of informal and formal tone and content was set from the start in the forums, which led the way to more productive interac-

tive work. Questions and collaborative activities on two of the forums (Forum for Readings, and Forum for Activities) also pushed students to react to or to expand on the contributions of the other students, to write in different ways or transform contributions of other students. Table 1 displays a sample of an online interaction requiring the completion of a written activity. The instructor's message (message No.60) explains the task, with an emphasis, on interaction.

Description of the Interaction Messages posted on the "Forum of Activities" (The students' entries are faithful to the original with errors. A brief summary in English of each student's contribution is offered in the left column)

The Instructor explains the activity and puts the emphasis on interaction: students have to react to each other's contributions.

Message no. 60 Posted by *The Instructor (french524_001_fa01) on Tue Oct 09, 2001 18:29**

Relisez bien le document : "Introduction et conclusion" de J. M. Cotteret dans "la magie du discours" (Coursepack, document 2 des lectures des vidéoconférences 6 et 7). Choisissez dans l'actualité un sujet spécifique (regardez de quoi on parle dans les journaux, etc...). Dites en 1 phrase quel est ce sujet. Puis choisissez une des 8 méthodes d'introduction décrite dans l'article de Cotteret et introduisez en quelques lignes le sujet choisi. Vous pouvez reprendre le même sujet d'actualité choisi par un de vos camarades, et l'introduire d'une façon différente.

Réagissez ensuite à ces introductions sur le forum. Introduction réussie? Motivante? Originale? ²

Student A writes an introduction on the Cayman Islands as a tourist destination.

Message no. 82 Branch from no. 60 Posted by *Student A on Tue Oct 16, 2001 23:05**

Les Iles Caïmans, une colonie anglaise au sud du Cuba, est un lieu très beau et magnifique. Premièrement, il fait à peu près 27 degrés toute l'année. Deuxièmement, la mer autour des Iles est claire et pleine de poissons et animaux (photo de la mer). L'architecture dans les villages est très typique des Iles, même avec les couleurs très vivantes et gaies (photo des villages).

Students B reacts to *Student A*'s introduction, and its visual components (more directed to a TV audience)

Message no. 91 Branch from no. 82 Posted by *Student B on Wed Oct 17, 2001 11:28**

Cette présentation est surtout pour le téléspectateur. L'aspect spatial donne a une présentation avec des images, pour lesquelles elle donne des indications ou les mettre dans son plan.

Students C and D have decided to work together and propose a variant of *Student A's* text.

Message no. 98 Branch from no. 82 Posted by *Students C and D** on Fri Oct 19, 2001 15:46

Une autre introduction de la réponse de *Student A** :

I.Fermez les yeux (!) et venez avec nous aux îles Caïmans où la mer est claire et le temps fait beau presque chaque jour. Maintenant, imaginez un lieu des vacances où vous pouvez prendre l'avantage de cette beauté pendant que nous vous donnons le service extraordinaire. C'est le J.W. Marriott des îles Caïmans et nous vous invitons de nous joindre pour les vacances d'hiver 2001. *Students C and D**

The Instructor offers feedback to *Student A* and *Students C and D's* introductions to redirect them, and clarify the work for the others who have not yet contributed. The tone of the message is formal in its explanations, informal in its encouragements.

Message no. 103 Branch from no. 99 Posted by *the Instructor on Sat Oct 20, 2001 11:14**

C'est un beau texte, mais encore une fois (comme je l'expliquais pendant le cours), vos textes ressemblent plus à des slogans publicitaires qu'à une introduction d'un exposé informatif sur votre thème. Vous essayez d'attirer l'oreille de votre audience, c'est bien, mais vous devez aussi faire figurer dans votre introduction un paragraphe qui permet d'annoncer les objectifs spécifiques et l'organisation de votre présentation (reprenez bien les 4 éléments qui doivent être présents dans une introduction et que nous avons définis en classe la semaine dernière).

Continuez votre beau travail!

The *instructor**

Student E offers his feedback on the two introductions written by *Students A, C and D*. He offers as well insight into the difficulty of the task (Having to write an introduction for a text not yet written).

Message no. 118 Branch from no. 99 Posted by *Student E on Mon Oct 22, 2001 10:04**

une critique de cette introduction...

J'ai du mal à voir de quoi on va parler après avoir lu cette introduction. Ça a l'air d'une publicité et non pas une introduction à un discours. Les images attirent très facilement l'intérêt du lecteur, surtout ce qui aime le soleil ou qui en a marre du froid, mais pas d'avantage. A la fin, l'idée d'introduction est d'introduire quelque chose et cela s'avère très difficile dans ce type d'exercice parce qu'on doit 'savoir' de quoi s'agira le discours sans l'avoir vraiment écrit. C'est une exercice où il faut 'imaginer' la suite sans avoir besoin de la préparer, d'où la difficulté. *Student E**

Students C and D answer *Student E's* feedback and justify their choice: they have decided to change the topic and to focus on the services offered by Marriott in the Cayman Islands.

Message no. 126 Branch from no. 118 Posted by *Students C and D on Tue Oct 23, 2001 11:46**

En réponse de ta question, *Student E**, *Student C** et moi ont re-écrit l'introduction de *Student A** et ont aussi change son sujet (peut-être cela n'était pas une bonne idée). Au lieu de décrivant les isles Caimans, nous avons décidé de changer le sujet à une lecture d'un lieu des vacances Marriott aux isles Caimans. Le texte suivant aurait été au sujet du Marriott et leurs services spéciales, etc aux isles Caimans...

Student F takes *Student A*'s topic and offers a third introduction. She has integrated the feedback from *Student E* who was complaining that he could not predict the rest of the text from the two previous introductions.

Message no. 139 Branch from no. 105 Posted by Student F* on Tue Oct 23, 2001 20:26

J'ai repris le thème de Lillie des Iles Caimans.

Que la mer est chaude ce matin! Et que le ciel est claire! Attends, est-ce que je rêve, moi? Heureusement que non! Je me baigne dans une mer limpide et bleu sous un ciel des mêmes qualités. Ou je suis-je? Mais, dans Les Iles Caimans bien sur!! Ces îles, ancienne colonie anglaise, vous attend quelques heures au sud du Cuba en bateau. Connues pour leur beauté naturelle ainsi que leurs bijoux d'architecture, il est facile a voir pourquoi elles ont si populaire parmi les touristes. Venez avec nous pour une tour imaginaire des îles. Nous allons apprendre de leur histoire naturelle, leur histoire coloniale, et leur histoire culturelle.

Student G offers feedback on student F's text, noting the improvement compared to the two previous introductions (goal and content are explained), but offering also insights on what could still be strengthened (e.g. Who is the text for?).

Message no. 148 Branch from no. 139 Posted by Student G on Wed Oct 24, 2001 01:37

J'aime bien ce qu'elle a fait *Student F* pour mieux refaire cette introduction. Elle décrit la beauté des îles caraïbes et aussi son but de discuter 3 points des îles mais donc c'est claire le contenu de discours. Mais je cherche pour qui elle parle des îles. J'avais besoin tout simplement un raison qu'il faut parler des îles en fonctionne de leur histoire, etc.

Merci,
Student G

*Names have been deleted

Table I : A thread of interactions for one activity

William La Ganza (2001) addresses the problem of "Inter-relation" (with a more affective connotation), as an essential element to a meaningful interaction (a more social connotation). To be meaningful, interactions should take place in a dynamic inter-relational space between the teacher and the students, or between students. This reciprocal connection and psychological relation will allow reciprocal actions and learning interactions.

"Meaning is created as human beings relate to each other, taking into account past and anticipated future experience. Meanings are created in interaction with others and therefore negotiated." (Mead, 1934, quoted in La Ganza, 2001, p. 28).

For La Ganza, the role of the teacher in this inter-related/inter-active dynamic space will be to balance his/her interventions to help maintain contact in the interactions, and the formal/informal tone of the interactions. The teacher has to learn to be visible and invisible at the same time in the forums, to foster meaningful interactions without taking away students' spontaneity and initiative in the forums: "*Holding the context together but letting the learner be autonomous within the context*". (La Ganza, 2001, p.40).

A careful monitoring of interventions, to redirect the debate or to praise when appropriate, allowed students to lead online discussions during the second phase of the project. Table I shows that students took a bigger role in offering feedback to each other, and the instructor intervned only once to clarify instructions for the activity.

3. More metacognitive mechanisms to reinforce autonomous learning

Research shows that autonomy is reinforced by a greater metacognitive process during learning (Dickinson, 1987, Holec, 1981, 1988, 1989, Rodgers, 1969). By helping the students enhance their ability to analyze their learning situation, we help them to make appropriate, sound decisions to advance their learning. Therefore, the design of the activities students had to complete for the course favoured the reflective practitioners' model whose aim is to develop students' analytical awareness (Donnay & Charlier, 1990 and Lafortune & Deaudelin, 2001). The Donnay & Charlier model includes six steps: (1) to observe and describe the situation, (2) to analyze the situation based on past experience and tacit theory, (3) to put this analysis within a theoretical framework, (4) to generate alterna-

tives based on the above, (5) to apply this knowledge in context, and (6) to seek feedback on its application (Donnay & Charlier, 1990, pp. 125-127).

Several of the activities designed for the course took all or several of these steps into consideration, as

shown in Table 2. This table displays a message from the instructor explaining a self-assessment and peer-assessment activity to be performed individually at home and collaboratively on the forum, followed by the answer of one student, reflecting on her work and asking for more feedback from her peers.

Reflective steps	Message no. 106 Posted by <i>The instructor*</i> (french524_001_fa01) on Sat Oct 20, 2001 11:50
Step 3 : Go back to the theoretical framework.	Relisez bien les lectures de la semaine dernière, en particulier dans votre livre les pages 85 à 89 sur les modèles de conclusion et les pages 93 à 121 sur les modèles de présentation et d'organisation d'une information .
Steps 1 and 2: Observe and analyze. (Self-assessment)	À partir de ces lectures, examinez le devoir écrit 1 que vous avez rendu et le devoir oral 2 que vous êtes en train de préparer: retrouvez-vous dans vos devoirs les principes expliqués dans vos lectures? Que manque-t-il dans vos devoirs, ou bien quels principes y avez-vous bien intégrés?
Step 6: Seek feedback from others. (Peer-assessment)	Partagez avec nous sur le forum votre réflexion auto évaluative sur ces 2 devoirs, et les autres n'ayez pas peur d'apporter des suggestions.
Step 4: Generate alternatives.	Ce travail de réflexion commune vous aidera à mieux préparer le devoir oral 2 que vous pourrez présenter lors de la vidéoconférence du 31 octobre.
Formal and informal balance in the tone.	N'oubliez pas aussi de faire l'activité proposée sur le Forum des activités de cette semaine ;o) Bon week-end, <i>The instructor*</i>
Answer from student H	Message no. 115 Posted by <i>Student H*</i> on Mon Oct 22, 2001 00:35
Informal tone to engage the interaction.	A tous et toutes, j'aime bien ce mot "autocritique" et vous? Et j'aime bien parler de moi...et vous?
Step 6: she seeks feedback from others. (Peer-assessment)	Bon, arrêtons les bêtises philosophiques et lisez mon Autocritique:
Step 1: she describes the topic and context of her text.	En relisant l'introduction de mon devoir écrit 1, je trouve d'avoir utiliser plutôt un appel à l'auditoire. Je parle au comité exécutif d'une entreprise qui fournit les aménagements pour les personnes handicapées: les prothèses, les chaises roulantes, les béquilles, etc... Cette entreprise donne l'argent à l'ONG Handicap International depuis quelques ans, et c'est à moi de présenter les activités de H.I. à cette réunion annuelle pour que le comité continue à soutenir l'organisation.

Step 2: She analyzes the construction of her text.	Dans l'introduction j'interpelle l'auditoire de se rappeler de l'histoire de l'association entre l'entreprise et Handicap International et aussi de reconnaître que nos missions sont semblables. Est-ce que mon introduction arrive à faire les quatre fonctions? Elle présente bien le sujet de l'association entre l'entreprise et Handicap International. Et je crois qu'elle révèle l'objectif poursuivi. Je dis très franchement que le but est de décrire l'organisation en trois aspects: la mission générale, activités de 2001, le bilan financier, afin de persuader le comité de continuer à soutenir H.I. Est-ce que l'introduction attire l'attention et suscite l'intérêt? Oui, mais seulement si on s'intéresse aux missions de l'entreprise et l'association avec H.I. Sinon, il n'y a pas grand chose qui susciterait l'intérêt de l'auditoire.
Step 4: She is looking for alternatives.	Il existe peut-être une manière d'ajouter une histoire personnel d'un client par exemple pour assurer l'attraction de l'attention de tout le monde.
She self-assesses her work.	Conclusion: Mon introduction n'est pas mal.
Step 2: She analyzes another part of her work.	Par contre ma conclusion n'est pas terrible. D'abord elle est un peu trop courte. (Une fois sur un essai que j'avais fait, un prof d'anglais m'a écrit simplement la définition de l'entropie: la dégradation de l'énergie qui traduit un état de désordre toujours croissant de la matière. J'ai aimé ça.) J'ai trop concentré sur les phrases dans les contraintes pour le devoir qui parlaient de "limites de dossier," "d'autres sources de renseignements," etc... Et je n'ai pas assez conclu le discours. J'ai résumé mon objectif, de persuader le comité de continuer et avancer l'association mais
Step 4 : She is looking for alternatives.	j'aurais pu aussi résumé les raisons d'avoir confiance en Handicap International comme organisation.

Table 2: Self- reflective steps

Evaluation of the second phase of the project

Contrary to Phase One, where the videoconferences followed a knowledge transmission model with the teacher as the main speaker, videoconferences this time were mostly used by students to perform various oral discourses, and to have them peer- and self-assess. This opportunity to apply, in class, the theoretical notions learned through the readings and presented on the CDROM gave them much more oral practice time during the course (the lack of which students complained about during Phase One), to try, assess, and try again, oral strategies for the various oral communicative situations they were studying.

Yet, contrary to the first phase of the project in which just half of the students contributed on an irregular basis, each of the 13 students in the second

phase contributed a minimum of one interaction per week to one or both forums, to discuss the questions on the reading and to complete the online activities.

Furthermore, students interacted online this time in a much more meaningful way; they built meaning together, reflected together on concepts and tried to apply these concepts in texts they would self-and-peer-assess in the forums (cf. Tables 1 and 2 presented above). The results of these meaningful interactions are seen in the superior quality of work students in the second phase were able to achieve. The students' assignments were more developed and better structured, and the notions discussed and applied in the forum activities were better mastered in the assignments.

Students seemed also to take more initiative and appeared more autonomous throughout the semester. During the last third of the course, they were able to

completely take charge of the videoconferences. They would lead the videoconferences by presenting various types of oral discourses and would often take charge of some technical aspects (i.e. controlling the cameras and the data projector as well as the microphones). The self-and-peer-assessment comments they offered during the videoconferences or sent to each other via the forum or email system of the website were progressively more precise in their content, and, instead of commenting on a presentation as a whole, provided constructive criticisms on text organization, visual aids and gestures were more frequently from the middle of the course onwards.

In addition, students progressively developed an ability to analyze their own oral performance (to prepare each assignment they were asked to use a camcorder to videotape themselves), to evaluate their work, and to act upon this assessment. This was made obvious by the number of video takes they recorded before presenting their work. In the first phase, students often submitted their first or second take, but most in the second phase did three or four takes before presenting to the class. This should indicate they fully embraced the formative dynamic this reflective process encouraged. Overall, the performance of the students in the second phase was of a much higher quality, due, in part, to more meaningful interactions in the forums to build knowledge and stronger abilities to reflect on one's learning process and to act upon it.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations videoconferencing, (i.e. "chunky" images, delayed speech which can hinder interaction, sequential speech preventing free-flowing conversation, inability to move among the students, anxiety of students in "broadcast" peer-and-self-assessment and reflections, etc...), the students of both phases of this case study evaluated the course very positively.

However, in the second phase, students' answers to the evaluation questionnaires and students' comments in the journals they were asked to keep showed that the "distance" element was much more heavily felt this time than during Phase One of the project. There might be two reasons for this:

- 1) The first phase of the project involved four sites: two in Wisconsin, one in Texas, and one in Ontario. The distance was not felt to be a problem; on the contrary, students commented that they thought it was really nice to meet

students from somewhere else and work with them. The videoconferences and the online course were therefore perceived as necessary to unite all the students in the course.

During the second phase of the project, there were only two sites. The 13 students were on one campus in Wisconsin, and the teacher was in Ontario. Students often complained that they would have preferred to have the teacher with them in Wisconsin. They didn't see, this time, the necessity of a distance course, since they were all together on the same campus. Therefore, the technology, although better introduced (before the start of the course, workshops were offered on how to use the technological tools of the course), was not perceived to be uniting, but rather divisive (teacher separated from students) and, hence, alienating.

- 2) In 2000, the course started directly with the intensive weekend, allowing everybody to meet, to break the ice and to start activities which would set the tone for the whole course. In contrast, in 2001, the intensive weekend was delayed because of the events of September 11, and was held three weeks after the beginning of the course. It therefore took longer for the instructor and the students to really connect and interrelate via the forums and the videoconferences. This explains, perhaps, why distance was also more consciously perceived by the students this time than during Phase One.

"Teleconferencing is essentially a solution to a logistical problem rather than a pedagogical problem, normally used to overcome the problem of communicating with students who are geographically distributed" (Laudrillard, 1993, p. 164, cited in Scovil, 1997, p. 135).

Although this statement might sound true to the students of Phase One of the project who were spread among three locations, videoconferencing technology, coupled well with mastered CMC tools, can become a useful pedagogical tool to strengthen autonomous and collaborative teaching and learning strategies. With the regular oral presentations "broadcast" by the students during weekly videoconferences, their meaningful online interactions and the high performance of Phase Two students certainly demonstrated that learning happened.

Aline Germain-Rutherford is the Director of the Centre for University Teaching at the University of Ottawa. For several years she has been involved in L2 language acquisition and distance education and learn-

ing at Trent University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She is the author of several papers on new technologies and L2 teaching.

References

- Agostino, S., Lefoe, G., & Hedberg, J. (1997). Online Collaboration and Problem Solving for Effective Learning: A Case Study of a Post Graduate University Course. *Proceedings of AUSWEB97 the Third Australian World Wide Web Conference*, Southern Cross University, Lismore. <http://ausweb.scu.edu.au/proceedings/index.html>
- Benson, R. & Hewitt, L. (1998). Breaking down the barriers: developing online communication in an offline environment. *15th Proceedings of Australasian Society for Computers in Tertiary Education*. (ASCILITE) Wollongong: Australia. <http://cedir.uow.edu.au/ASCILITE98/ascpapers98.html>
- Berge, Z. (1999). The role of the Online Instructor/Facilitator. *eModerators.com*. http://www.emoderators.com/moderators/teach_online.html
- Dalgarno, B. (1996). Constructivist Computer Assisted Learning : Theory and Techniques, in *Proceedings of the ASCILITE 96 conference*. F. Brown (ed.) Adélaïde, (Australie): Australasian Society for Computers in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE), pp. 127-148.
- Dickinson, L. (1987). *Self-Instruction in Language Learning*, Cambridge University Press.
- Donnay, J. & Charlier, E. (1990). *Comprendre des situations de formation : formation de formateurs à l'analyse*, Bruxelles: De Boeck-Wesmael.
- Esh, E. (1997). Environnement Virtuel et Réalités Sociolinguistiques, *Les nouvelles Technologies éducatives dans l'apprentissage des langues vivantes: réflexion théorique et applications pratiques*. INSA de Lyon. <http://www.insa-lyon.fr/Departements/CDR/environnement.html>
- Ferry, B., Brown, C. (1998). The influence of reflective tools on teaching strategies and subject design, in *15th Proceedings of Australasian Society for Computers in Tertiary Education*. (ASCILITE) Wollongong: Australia, pp. 231-239. <http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/wollongong98/asc98-pdf/ferrybrown.pdf>
- Germain-Rutherford, A. (2000). Cours de communication orale et écrite en situations professionnelles : les vidéoconférences sur CDROM. University of Wisconsin-Madison. <http://frit.less.wisc.edu/pfmp/extraits.htm>
- Germain-Rutherford, A., & Halzen, N. (2000). "Collaborative Distance Learning for Advanced French Oral Proficiency", *Proceedings of the 16th Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning*, U. of Madison, USA , pp. 165-172.
- Germain-Rutherford, A., & Martin, P. (2002). "Integration of Speech technology in oral expression courses: focus on feedback", *Proceedings of the conference "Technology in Language Education: Meeting the Challenges of research and Practice*, Hong Kong and Nanjing, Republic of China.
- Germain-Rutherford, A., & Martin, P. (2000). Utilisation d'un logiciel de visualisation pour l'apprentissage de l'oral en langue seconde. *Apprentissage des Langues, Systèmes d'Information et de Communication (ALSIC)*, Vol. 3 No.1, pp.71-86.
- Germain-Rutherford, A. & Martin, P. (1998). WinPitch Language Teaching, Easy Learning (LTEL): Un outil multimédia pour faciliter l'apprentissage de l'oral en langue seconde. *Conférence virtuelle sur les applications des TIC dans l'enseignement du français langue Étrangère*. Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie. <http://cifad.francophonie.org/CONFLE/RESSOURCES/contrib-martin.html>
- Guillemet, P. & Provot, G. (1999). Les NTIC et la formation à distance: vers une industrialisation insolite? *Éducation et Francophonie*, Vol. XXVII , N° 2. <http://www.acef.ca/revue/XXVII-2/articles/Provost.html>
- Holec, H. (1981). Autonomie dans l'apprentissage et apprentissage de l'autonomie, *Études de Linguistique Appliquée*, N° 41.
- Holec, H. (1988). *Autonomy and self-directed learning*, Council for Cultural Co-operation, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.
- Holec, H. (1989). Autonomie et apprentissage des langues étrangères, dans *Autonomie et enseignement/apprentissage des langues étrangères*, Bernard André (ed.), Didier-Hatier, pp.31-33.
- Kern, R. G (1995). Restructuring the classroom with networked computers: Effects on quantity and characteristics of language production. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79, pp. 457-476.

- Kwong, I. Y. (2001). Motivating Students by Providing Feedback. *CDTL Brief*, Vol. 4 No. 2. <http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/brief/v4n2/4-2-3.htm>
- La Ganza, W. (2001). Out of sight – not out of mind: learner autonomy and interrelating in online language teaching, *Information Technology, Education and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 27-46.
- Lamy, M.N. & Goodfellow, R. (1998). Conversation réflexives dans la classe de langues virtuelle par conférence asynchrone, *Apprentissage des Langues, Systèmes d'Information et de Communication (ALSIC)*. vol 1, 2. pp 81-99. <http://alsic.univ-fcomte.fr/Num2/lamy/default.htm>
- Larose, F., Lafrance, S., Grenon, V., Roy, G-R., & Lenoir, Y. (1998). Du discours officiel à la prise en considération des attitudes des clientèles face à l'informatique en pédagogie universitaire : bilan d'une enquête menée à la Faculté d'éducation de l'université de Sherbrooke. *EducaTechnologies*. <http://www.fse.ulaval.ca/fac/ten/reveduc/>
- Larose, F., David, R., Lafrance, & S., Cantin, J. (1999). Les technologies de l'information et de la communication en pédagogie universitaire et en formation à la profession enseignante : Mythes et réalités. *Éducation et Francophonie*, Vol. XXVII, N° 1. <http://www.acelf.ca/revue/XXVII/articles/Larose.html>
- Lefoe, G. (1998). Creating Constructivist Learning Environments on the Web: The Challenge in Higher Education, in *15th Proceedings of Australasian Society for Computers in Tertiary Education*. (ASCILITE) Wollongong: Australia. <http://cedir.uow.edu.au/ASCILITE98/ascpapers98.html>
- Lafortune, L. & Deaudelin, C. (2001). *Accompagnement socioconstructiviste pour s'approprier une réforme en éducation*, Louise Lafortune et Colette Deaudelin., Sainte-Foy : Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- Little, D. (1996). Learner autonomy and learner counseling. In D. Little et H. Brammerts (Eds.), *A guide to language learning in tandem via the Internet*. Centre for Language and Communication Studies Occasional Paper No 46. Dublin: Trinity College.
- Long, M.H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W.C. Richtie & C. Kramsch (Eds.). *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 413-468). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Mason, R. (1991). Moderating educational computer conferencing. *DEOSNEWS*, Vol.1, No.19. <http://www.emoderators.com/papers/mason.html>
- Nagata, N. & Swisher, M.V. (1995). A study of consciousness-raising by computer: The effect of metalinguistic feedback on second language learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 28, 337-347.
- Oxford, R. Y. Rivera-Castillo, C. Feyten & J. Nutta.(1997). Computers and More : Creative Uses of Technology for Learning a second or Foreign Language. Les nouvelles technologies éducatives dans l'apprentissage des langues vivantes: réflexion théorique et applications pratiques, INSA de Lyon. <http://www.insa-lyon.fr/Departements/CDRL/computers.html>
- Proulx, M., Campbell, B. (1997). The professional practices of faculty and the diffusion of computer technologies in university teaching. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 2, No 3. <http://www.sociology.org/vol002.003/proulx.article.1997.html>
- Rodgers, C. (1969). *Freedom to learn*, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co.
- Rich, S. (2001). Electronic Discourse: An Amalgam of Written and Spoken Language”. *Distance Education Report*, 15, p. 7.
- Scovil, N. (1997). The Challenge of Videoconferencing: More Than Teacher Training. *Journal of Staff, Prog., & Org. Development*, Vol.14. No.3, pp.135-144.
- St. John, E. & Cash, D. (1995). Language Learning via e-mail: demonstrable success with German, in M. Warschauer, *Virtual connections: Online activities and projects for networking language learners*, University of Hawaii Press.
- Tardif, M., & Mukamurera, J. (1999). La pédagogie scolaire et les TIC: l'enseignement comme interactions, communication et pouvoirs, *Éducation et Francophonie*, Vol. XXVII, N° 2. <http://www.acelf.ca/revue/XXVII-2/articles/Tardif.html>
- Théberge, M. & Leblanc, R. (1998). Étude du style d'apprentissage d'étudiants inscrits à un programme de didactique de langues secondes. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*. 55(2), 191-218.
- Warschauer, M. (1996). Computer-Assisted Language Learning : An Introduction, in S. Fotos (Ed.), *Multimedia language teaching*, Tokyo : Logos International, pp.3-20.
- Warschauer, M. (1997). Computer-mediated collaborating learning: Theory and practice. *Modern Language Journal*, 81, pp. 470-481.

Yaiche, F., (1996). *Les simulations globales: mode d'emploi*. Paris: Hachette

- 1 The whole course can be viewed online at the following address: <http://frit.lss.wisc.edu/pfmp/index.htm> (link last visited in March 2003)
- 2 “As a profession with a focus on human relations, teaching requires human interaction. [...] Only human beings can educate other human beings in a humane way. This basic truth grounds the fundamental anthropological reality that is educational activity: a human being is a being who needs others to become human, and it is only through the mediation of other human beings that one’s own humanity is made possible.”
- 3 The description of the intensive weekend and the “Simulation globale” can be viewed online at the following address: <http://frit.wisc.edu/pfmp/page14.html>
- 4 “Cognitive tools that function as mindtools are those that engage the learner in higher order thinking skills such as critical, creative and complex thinking. An example of a mindtool is a computer-based concept mapping tool that learners use for knowledge construction. During the process of knowledge construction learners may employ critical thinking skills to evaluate, analyse and connect concepts and information.” (Ferry & Brown, 1998: 233)
- 5 Samples of the CDROM can be viewed at the following address: <http://frit.lss.wisc.edu/pfmp/extraits.htm>
- 6 These are comments taken from the forum of Fr 524 : “Oops, you can see that I answered before reading Tony’s” or « Hi every one! So many comments this week! » or « How strange that almost everybody chose the same organizational model”.
- 7 “Read the document carefully : “Introduction et conclusion” by J. M. Cotteret in “La magie du discours” (Course pack, document 2 in the readings for the videoconferences 6 and 7). Choose a specific topic from the news (consult the newspapers for current topics...). In a single sentence present the topic. Then choose one of the eight ways of introducing a topic described in Cotteret’s article and use it to introduce yours in a few sentences. You can select a topic used by another student but introduce it in a different way. Finally, provide feedback on the different

introductions found in the forum. Successful introduction? Motivating? Original?... ».

Appendices

Appendix A : Course evaluation questionnaire

The questionnaire can be viewed online at the following address: <http://frit.lss.wisc.edu/pfmp/fr524cours/Page1.html>

English translation of the questionnaire:

I. Course format

a. Orientation week-end (to meet the other participants and instructors, to introduce the course, to start the course with a « Simulation globale »):

- Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box :
- Why? Strengths? Limitations?
- Comments

b. Final week-end (preparation of the final exam, final exam, course conclusion):

- Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box :
- Why? Strengths? Limitations?
- Comments

c. Videoconferences

1. In your opinion, were they: Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box
2. Their frequency: would you prefer: 1 hour /week? 2 hours every 2 week? Other? Specify in the comments box
3. Communication (The interaction at a distance with the instructor and the students during the videoconferences: Efficient? Not efficient? Other? Specify in the comments box
4. Comments:

d. Communication via the WebCT site of the course

1. Fora : Efficient? Not efficient? Other? Specify in the comments box
2. E-mail: Efficient? Not efficient? Other? Specify in the comments box
3. Online Chat : Efficient? Not efficient? Other? Specify in the comments box

4. How often did you use these tools (Tools 1, 2 and 3). Rank these tools by order of use frequency (the most used to the least used)
 5. Explain the reasons of your ranking
 6. Comments:
- II. Technological tools and resources, online or printed.
- a. Books and course pack
 - Relevant? Not relevant? Other? Specify in the comments box
 - Frequency of use: Very regularly, often, sometimes, rarely
 - b. The online resources available on the website of the course.
 - Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box
 - Frequency of use: Very regularly, often, sometimes, rarely
- c. WinPitchLTL software**
- Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box
 - Frequency of use: Very regularly, often, sometimes, rarely
- d. The WebCT website of the course**
- Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box
 - Frequency of use: Very regularly, often, sometimes, rarely

e. The multimedia lab

- Useful? Not useful? Other? Specify in the comments box
- Frequency of use: Very regularly, often, sometimes, rarely

Comments:

III. Evaluation

Comment on :

1. The frequency of the written and oral assignments (too many? Not enough? Fair?)
2. The type of assignments (preparation of different written communications and oral speeches)
3. The feedback received after each assignment (written comments, audio comments, WinPitch files, etc.)
4. The way assignments were sent (by e-mail, attached files, ftp files, postal mail, during the videoconferences)

IV. Course content

Comment on :

1. The theoretical content of the course
2. The applied content of the course

V. General impression

What is your general impression of this course? Was the distance a problem or not? Did the technological tools used for this course (videoconference, website, WinPitchLTL, forums, etc.) facilitate or hinder your learning experience?

Appendix B : Course outline for the second phase, Fall 2001 (translated from the French outline). The whole course can be viewed online at the following address: <http://frit.lss.wisc.edu/pfmp/fr524cours/description.htm>

Week	Theoretical content	Learning objectives	Work modality	Interaction
Introduction				
0	Preparation for videoconference # 1	Presentation	Individual	Forum
Objective 1: Appropriation of the virtual learning environment				
1	Exploration of the new learning environment and technological tools	To meet the other participants To get used to the videoconferencing learning environment and technological tools	Individual	Forum WinPitchLTL
Objective 2: To master the fundamental principles of the act of communication				
2	The different models and modalities of communication.	The speech of the lecturer	Group or Individual	Forum WinPitchLTL
Intensive Weekend #1				
3	Intercultural communication			Forum WinPitchLTL

Week	Theoretical content	Learning objectives	Work modality	Interaction
Objective 3: To work on one's voice and master the phonetic system of French				
4	Speech physiology and voice	To learn and better know about one's voice	Individual	Forum WinPitchLTL
5	French phonetic and French prosody	To identify and self-correct one's pronunciation problems	Individual	WinPitchLTL
Objective 4: To identify and define communication objectives – to communicate to inform				
6	Information or persuasion? How to organize a speech to inform and to report	To organize and write a speech to inform	Group	Forum
7		How to present a report	Group	Forum WinPitchLTL
Objective 5: Analysis of non-verbal communication				
8	Non-verbal communication and semiology of gestures	To identify and work on one's gestures during an interaction	Individual and group	Forum WinPitchLTL
9	The interaction : Pragmatism and Gestures		Forum WinPitchLTL	
Objective 6: To identify and define communication objectives – to communicate to persuade				
10	Seduction in the act of communication	Speak to convince	Individual	Forum WinPitchLTL
11	Reason and persuasion Emotion and persuasion	The motivation letter: write to persuade	Individual	Forum WinPitchLTL
Objective 7: To build and structure an argument				
12	The argumentative speech: to build and structure an argument	To present an hypothesis and its argument/to moderate and facilitate a debate	Group	Forum WinPitchLTL
13	The refutation of an argument and the speech of the moderator		Group	Forum WinPitchLTL
14	Preparation for the defence of a mini-thesis		Group	Forum WinPitchLTL
15	Preparation for the defence of a mini-thesis		Group	Forum WinPitchLTL
Final Intensive Weekend : Final Exam				

Ethical Considerations in ESL Assessment and Evaluation

Nick Elson
York University

“Evaluation, then, is a natural activity...”
Rae-Dickens, P., Germaine, K. (1992).
Evaluation.

“Grades are a deeply ingrained aspect of our culture and are seldom open to rational discourse.”
Cunningham, (1998). *Assessment in the Classroom*

“Tests probe for difficulties the way a dentist probes for cavities.”
(Smith, F. (1986). *Insult to Intelligence.*)

Whether it's wine, the weather, the mood of an acquaintance, the quality of play of the Leafs or the effectiveness of a teacher, it's clear that humans are hardwired to evaluate. Like many aspects of human behaviour, it seems likely that the roots of evaluation lie in the reptilian brain and basic survival mechanisms. Where once we might have evaluated a creature lurking in a nearby tree as to the degree of danger it represented, now a student judges whether an assignment is a threat or not, or the teacher evaluates the student in order to determine subsequent appropriate pedagogy.

The concern with ethics seems to have taken on a new life and currency in the media, with recent revelations that companies run by (previously) respected business people, some the products of leading business schools, had deliberately filed fallacious accounting statements with the support of auditors, set up dummy companies, and misled investors in order to enrich themselves.

While unethical behaviour in the educational system is less likely to lead to the edifying spectacle of top officials being led away in handcuffs, a consideration of what is ethical in education generally and in classroom practice, particularly in evaluation, is just as important in the educational context. Power, its perception and use, is inherent in evaluation.

The application of ethical considerations – essentially issues of what actions are right, fair, and appropriate – has particular resonance in the field of ESL. In areas such as the language testing of immigration appli-

cants or ESL students in province-wide assessment, courses that teach how to pass language proficiency tests, discouragement of mother-tongue maintenance, and the ambivalent reactions of the education system to ESL students, issues of fairness and equity are critical.

The question structuring this symposium is: “Evaluation: Do Scores tell the Whole Story?” To dispel any suspense, my answer is “no”. But it is a complex “no,” in that scores often do tell a story, but these stories are sometimes a mix of truths, half-truths, outright lies, and sometimes:

... a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.
(Shakespeare, W., *MacBeth*)

This paper examines ethical considerations in the evaluative aspects of teaching, research, and educational administration and suggests that the situations many of us work in present ethical dilemmas that defy neat resolution. Nor are these ethical issues always obvious. Actions or attitudes which have little consequence in our non-professional lives can have far more significant implications in the high stakes context of second-language teaching and learning. As we go through the day making judgements about the people and behaviours we encounter, most of these acts are phatic, involving little risk of offence or damage to the person or object assessed. The ESL classroom, however, is a high-stakes context.

The damage caused by unfair or inappropriate assessment practices can have devastating, long-term consequences for learners, and even for the system as a whole. Students can be unnecessarily discouraged, curricula may be refocused to more narrow assessment goals, and students may be distinguished from one another by evaluation processes that are frequently unfair and inconsistent.

The premise of this paper, therefore, is that an awareness of, sensitivity to, and understanding of issues of fairness, accountability, and respect for the learner are fundamental to effective teaching and learning and every bit as consequential in their outcomes as

the instances cited above from the business context. False assessment, like false accounting, has immediate as well as long-term consequences.

This is not a discussion of the nature of ethics itself, for that is beyond both the time available and the focus of this roundtable. Indeed, the notion of “ethics” for many people evokes vaguely disturbing memories of discussions in first year philosophy courses about when it is acceptable to kill or who should be thrown out of the lifeboat. Some points are worth reflection, however.

Ethics is about good and bad, right and wrong behaviours, values and motives. Interest in “correct,” proper, or good behaviour goes back to earliest recorded history. But it seems fair to say that there has probably been no time in recent memory during which ethical issues have received such prominence in the media. Discussions centre on not only the egregious actions in the business world cited above, but on whether it is unethical not to label genetically modified foods, on the appropriateness of the genetic manipulation of humans, and on involvement or non-involvement in the international human disasters that confront us daily.

The advent of courses in practical ethics at universities and their recent inclusion in the curriculum of business schools point to a revitalized concern for what is “right.”

In an article on ethics in language testing, Glen Fulcher (n.d.) argues that teachers are in a period of moral and ethical relativism:

Theories, especially ‘big’ theories, are very much out of fashion. There is no explanation for ‘everything.’ The new shopping mall is the Internet, where knowledge is available in many shapes and forms for the choosing. Similarly, we are now free to choose our own ethical base, our own values.

Along the same lines, Cunningham (1998) comments:

Unfortunately, there are no written ethical standards, endorsed by a single professional organization, that govern the assessment activities of educators. There is no single ethical code that applies to teachers, administrators, test publishers and the directors of testing for school districts. (p.181)

At the same time, there are many groups who are more than happy to have others adopt the ethical values that they themselves espouse. Often, this enthusiasm

for particular ethical stances is directed towards the educational system. Teachers might well find themselves pressured and in conflict or uncertain about methodological approaches, course content and materials, as well as evaluation standards and procedures. There are good reasons to look objectively at some of the evaluation issues we face.

In education, ethical issues take on a particular significance. As teachers we are always evaluating our students, formally or informally, indeed, that is something that in many people’s minds defines what teachers do. In addition, teachers are themselves evaluated in a variety of ways, sometimes formally, sometimes by students who form judgements about who is the most entertaining or the most demanding teacher, sometimes by the media, sometimes by parents, sometimes by colleagues and supervisors.

In education, the demand for evaluation, under the banner of accountability, has reached a near-fever pitch. Teacher testing appears to be imminent. The virtues of province-wide standardized testing are accepted virtually without question by current governments, who appear oblivious to credible research indicating it is unfair, misleading and ineffective. Naomi Klein (2002) muses critically on the ironic spectacle of “semi-literate politicians imposing province-wide testing on the school population.”

Rather than attempting to lay down an ethical code, I am arguing for the adoption of a reflective and critical stance on the part of those involved in education about the actions, methodologies, procedures and policies that make up the educational system. This is reflection by all those involved in the process, not just those in the classroom, and all who have any contact with or responsibility for ESL students including:

- Students,
- Teachers,
- Principals
- Deans and department heads,
- Administrators,
- School Boards,
- Those who prepare and develop teaching materials,
- Those who publish and market materials,
- Those who develop, administer, score and use language tests.

The goal of looking at ethical aspects of evaluation in the ESL context is to create an equitable and fair learning environment for students whose primary language is not English. This is a group that is disadvan-

tagged in a variety of ways in an educational system that uses English as its primary vehicle for instruction.

The Classroom

Only certain people have the power to evaluate. Evaluation is typically a top-down process. The students who ask a teacher to correct their grammar are not setting aside this power relationship, but acknowledging it by deferring to the power of the “corrector” to set an acceptable level of language use. In typical, mixed classes, whether at the elementary, high school, college, or university level, every comment by a native speaker can be a reminder to the non-native speaker that he or she is an outsider, is “other,” and, in some way, inferior.

My concern in this discussion is with the ESL student in both the ESL and the “mainstream” classroom. In the case of the mainstream classroom that includes ESL students, the inherent power of language takes on significant socio-cultural and socio-political meaning. The power advantage imposed by fluency in the majority language, the language of instruction, raises critical ethical issues, particularly as it relates to evaluation.

- Does language performance tend to skew evaluation of knowledge?
- How can the teacher treat a diverse mix of students equally?
- How can ESL and non-ESL students in the same class be given equal time?
- What are appropriate responses to language and content in student work?

ESL Students’ Perceptions of the Learning Process

In a study of university-level ESL students’ awareness of themselves as language learners and what language learning strategies work for them (Elson, 2000), ESL students were forthcoming about how they viewed their experiences as learners of English. They clearly do not need to be reminded that they do not speak, write, or use English perfectly, that they make mistakes and that they are not part of the mainstream. Many of the respondents have had ten years of being told that their use of English is incorrect.

Evaluating ESL students’ performance in other disciplines in a manner that unnecessarily factors in their perceived deficiencies as learners or users of English is unfair. Evaluation approaches that do look at language use need to take into account the substantial variables

in the learning process such as access to learning opportunities, the use of English at home, the degree of social access to English and opportunities for formal instruction.

We identify with language, first or second, because language projects our sense of self into the world. If the “self” being presented is repeatedly confronted with evaluation procedures that remind the language users of their inadequacies, ESL becomes a source of doubt and frustration. The study of student attitudes cited above makes it clear that for the majority of respondents, the study of ESL (or EFL) has been a negative experience. If native speakers are being evaluated primarily on the content of the classroom activities, but ESL students are being judged on both content and language use, the ESL student is disadvantaged.

In calling for critical reflection on what we are actually doing in evaluation, I have in mind Cunningham’s (1998) expression of concern about grading as a relatively unexamined phenomenon:

Teachers tend to grade the way they have always graded, the way their peers grade, or the way their own teachers graded. In too many cases, this leads to a system of student evaluations that makes little sense. Rational discussions of grading methods are often avoided because existing grading practices are often difficult to defend. The process of evaluating students can have a rational basis, but unfortunately, information about the best ways of assigning grades, and the grading systems to be avoided, has been poorly disseminated. College professors who lack formal training in teaching methods are usually unaware of the accepted knowledge of how best to grade students as are certified teachers who have taken numerous teaching methodology courses. (p.150)

We tend to think of evaluation in terms of grades and scores, but as I have suggested, evaluation manifests itself in a variety of forms, and we could broaden concerns about the need to examine what we do in the classroom to virtually any aspect of classroom activity. The informal evaluation is possibly more damaging than the formal one, as suggested by Norton and Starfield (1997) in “Covert language assessment in academic writing:”

We do not take the position, however, that language should not be assessed in academic writing tasks. The extent to which language proficiency is assessed may depend on many

factors, such as the purpose of the assignment and the nature of the course. However, in the interests of accountability, departments and institutions need to be explicit about the extent to which language proficiency is taken into account in the assessment of academic writing by L2 students. (pp. 292-293)

Messick's (1989) concept of consequential validity, the observation that all test constructs involve questions of values, can be extended to most materials, actions and behaviours in the classroom. The implication of this is that recognition of the values implicit in materials, pedagogy, students' responses, teacher expectations, and the like, seems to be a pre-requisite for fairness in the classroom.

Evaluating ESL students

In the study described above (Elson, 2000) it is apparent that in many cases students have an inadequate understanding of what is expected of them. In a class of mixed ESL and non-ESL students – which is many of the classes in Canada- a teacher can sometimes assume that students share a common background and possess the same kind of interpretive information. But this is often not the case. Evaluation in such instances, even if applied with consistent criteria, disadvantages those who have less familiarity with classroom assumptions.

It is incumbent upon us then to be explicit with ESL students about what our expectations are and to consider theirs, to describe the evaluative process and what it means. Not to do so places ESL students in a fundamentally unfair, unethical situation. Not to do so means they are being evaluated based on unfair premises.

Including students in evaluation

The study suggests that students need to be brought into the evaluative process, to be given a sense that they are participants and stakeholders in the process. This is particularly true of ESL students, who do not bring the same experiences to the classroom as many other students and are more likely to be outside the class mainstream. Sometimes the administrative structures within which teachers work do not make this kind of sharing an easy process. This argues that the people in administrative and supervisory positions need to be made aware of relevant considerations in the evaluation of ESL student work. Teachers who are not-ESL trained need to be informed about responding to the work of students from ESL backgrounds. Too often, damage is done by even well-meaning teachers who have no

training in how to work with ESL students or how to respond to their class contributions.

Instructors often respond to what they are presented with by an ESL student by pointing out grammatical and mechanical errors, unaware that what they are commenting on may be a rule-governed stage of interlanguage over which the student can exert relatively little control. In addition, they may be unaware that there is little in the literature to suggest that pointing out errors, or making corrections in this way has any positive impact on the students' use of English. In one sense, evaluating this kind of language has as little point as commenting on a student's height. This is not to say that useful feedback is not possible, but the instructor will have to be selective, focusing on those critical elements the student is most likely to be able to absorb and adapt.

Cunningham (1998) also observes:

Grades should not be based on neatness, legibility or the use of correct mechanics of written or oral expression except when those skills are included in the instructional objectives for the course. The same holds true for other factors such as attitude, motivation, effort and personality. (p. 152)

If we examine our own grading practices, we might find that such factors do indeed have an impact on the grades we assign to student work. Often, the evaluation criteria appear to be the marker's own personal sense of what constitutes "good" English, a vision the ESL writer is likely unaware of. The process is made even more mysterious for the ESL student because of the student's exposure to clearly non-standard, or non-textbook, forms of English on TV, in the media, on the street and in school.

Comparison of responses of non-ESL instructors to the writing of ESL and non-ESL writers, with collection and analysis of comments on essays

In a study of non-ESL instructors' responses to student writing, Elson (2002) surveyed non-ESL-trained university instructors with mixed classes on how they responded to the writing of ESL as opposed to non-ESL students. Results were linked to an analysis of instructors' written comments on ESL and non-ESL essays.

The study suggests that the ESL students in non-ESL university classes in this study suffered significantly in evaluation. While some instructor respondents are

clearly hostile to ESL writers, many non-ESL instructors are sympathetic to the situation of ESL learners, but as frequently indicated in the survey, they do not know how to work with them. With some instruction on ESL writing, they could design assignments better suited to ESL students and respond more usefully to their work. Departments could discuss how to integrate language skills into the curriculum and how to acknowledge the presence of ESL students in classes in positive ways.

Instructors need to recognize that different versions of English are part of the Canadian multicultural/multilingual reality. Criticizing ESL writers for their non-English structures misses the point. There needs to be a broader definition of what constitutes writing. What extent of L2 proficiency is reasonable? How are students going to acquire that proficiency while in courses that assume they have it? How can writing development time be integrated into the course? Questions like this need to be considered and resolved if ESL students are not to be disadvantaged.

Leki (1992) observes:

ESL students can become very fluent writers in English, but they may never become indistinguishable from a native speaker, and it is unclear why they should (p. 7).

ESL students in university classes, with distinctive “non-English” markers in their language use are not lazy, careless or stupid: they are at various stages of development towards target language proficiency. They are, in many cases, getting essays back which in a variety of ways highlight, often negatively, the fact that they are still working their way towards target language fluency, that they are “other,” and that the “how” of what they say appears to be significantly more important than the content.

Instructor Comments

If there are also comments on written assignments about aspects of writing that the students have not been taught, then a fundamental principle of evaluation – “Don’t assess what you haven’t taught” – is being violated. Comments on essays need to be carefully considered as to what will actually be useful. In the analysis and comparison of instructor comments on ESL and non-ESL writing (Elson, 2002) instructor comments reveal a bizarre academic sub-register. Implicit in the tone of many of the evaluations is the assumption that the person making the comments is busy and in a superior position. The frequency of phrases such as “No!” “Why?” “Confusing.” “Unclear?” is alarming as

well as unhelpful and non-directive to the writer. Nor are evaluators immune to making the same mistakes they criticize: the marginal comment “Sentence fragment” written next to a sentence fragment being a case in point.

- The terseness and brevity of many of the comments would be rude, abrupt, and confrontational in virtually any context, although they are the norm in the essay context. If students see them as rude, or not reflecting careful consideration of their work, they could be offended. The process-based approach described below goes some way towards making comments more helpful.
- The high frequency of abrupt demands, or directions, which rarely follow the norms of polite discourse could hardly be seen as helpful to a writer [numbers designate source essays]:
 “A little confusing, try to be a bit clearer” (30)
 “What do you mean by this?” (29)
 “Use a different word for “eminent” (23)
 “Use course article.” (37)
- Comments on papers by ESL writers tend to be less extended or loquacious than on papers by non-ESL writers.

ESL Comments

- Make sure you look at # 5 on the (unclear)? (31)
- please make sure someone helps you edit your paper to improve language rough. (31)

Non-ESL Comments

“This is a thoughtful and intelligent essay. You have demonstrated a clear understanding of the course readings international – I like your use of Freire’s ideas as a framework for exploring your own experiences. Good job. A” (32)

Survey results were linked to the collection and analysis of instructor comments on ESL and non-ESL essays.

Useless comments

“be careful with your writing; edit your paper carefully.” (43)

“There are some serious writing problems here” (37)

“The English desperately needs work.” (34)

And the truly obscure:

Opening sentence of an essay:

“This essay will explore the theory of the Imposter Phenomenon twofold. First, to take a direct look at the relative research to establish characteristics and possible causes, and second, to apply the findings to teachers in all classrooms, to the school, and to the community at large.

(Marginal comment: “Nice layout”) (56)

“The world standards Canada as a country that respects and protects its citizen’s human rights.”
(Marginal comment: “incomplete sentence”) (27)

- **Terminal comments**, at the end of an assignment, appear to be created for that particular paper, with no sense of a broad framework of expectations. It appears sometimes that the criteria are defined within the specifics of each essay, even with the same instructor.

ESL students sometimes even insist on correction, suggesting that whatever the instructor thinks, they see essays as means of improving their English. But we would do well to take the time to critically re-read our own comments on essays, or, more broadly, on student writing, before returning them to the writer. Feedback should be part of a critical dialogue. A process-based approach, which allows discussion starting with the expectations of the activity and periodic review of the work being done, while in progress, as well as a summary discussion of the work at completion, all contribute to an evaluation process that is cumulative and participatory, rather than simply summative.

Alternative Modes

Alternative modes of academic expression need to be examined as vehicles for evaluating students’ content knowledge. Letters, reviews, article summaries, oral presentations, video tapes, PowerPoint presentations, a series of short assignments as opposed to longer ones, are all currently being used in classrooms, and have no less legitimacy academically than the standard essay. These offer the possibility of varying approaches to evaluation, the possibility that across several types of activity, a cumulatively fairer evaluation takes place.

Explaining Assignments for Better Results

The study also brings out the need for assignments to be thought through by the instructor and to be discussed in class, as well as designed to give ESL

students a chance to draw on their own experience and background. Students who have been in Canada for only two years are at a substantial disadvantage compared to students who are native speakers of English and who have lived here all their lives. Discussion needs to take place on the relevance of the assignment not just to the course, but to the students’ academic work in general, and even to the students in the larger socio-political context. If students can see a relevance to the assignment beyond its status as an academic requirement, they will be more committed to putting care, time and effort into it, leading, one hopes, to better work and better evaluation.

Explaining evaluation criteria

The instructor needs to take the time to discuss with the class what criteria are going to be applied in assessing written work. In terms of engaging the students, and involving them in the class, they should be allowed to comment on these criteria. Student expectations about the evaluation of the assignment should be brought into line with the instructor’s.

Follow-Up

In conclusion, an examination of ethical issues in evaluation suggests several responses.

- As the experts, ESL teachers need to work as much as possible with administrators and non-ESL teachers to build a better appreciation of fair treatment for students from ESL backgrounds. Unfair evaluation of ESL students often stems more from a lack of understanding of their background and situation than ill-intent.
- A common mistake is assuming too easily that ESL students share the same assumptions as others in the class. They frequently do not, and teachers need to take time to explain not just the purpose of assignments and class activities, but how they fit into course objectives, and how they are being evaluated.
- Discuss evaluation criteria and procedures with students. To diminish the tyranny of grading, students should know not only what the grade or score means but what the broader, more meaningful goal of evaluation is.
- Develop clear ideas as to *what* is being evaluated, and stick with that framework. As the earlier Norton/Starfield reference indicates, it is not unusual to have evaluation influenced by factors

that have little to do with the intent of an exercise.

- Only evaluate according to what students know is being evaluated, and according to the purpose of the activity being evaluated.
- ESL students carry a disadvantage into exams, in that they may have a conflict between form and content that native speakers may not have to the same degree. Fair and ethical evaluation would seem to argue that ESL students, caught in the tension between form and content, should be entitled to additional time on exams to help them work out the language and content issues.
- Above all, effective evaluation requires that all those in a position to evaluate the work of students from ESL backgrounds have an understanding of the context within which the ESL learner functions and a good sense of approaches and responses that are fair and equitable.

Cunningham, G. (1998). *Assessment in the Classroom: Constructing and Interpreting Tests*. London: The Falmer Press.

Elson, N. (2000) "ESL Student Perceptions of L2 Learning," TESL Canada National Conference. Halifax, Nova Scotia. September, 2000.

Elson, N. (2002) "Get some help!" Responses to ESL student writing in non-ESL university courses." TESL Canada 2002. Regina, Sask., May, 2002.

Fulcher, G. (No Date). "Ethics in Language Testing." [wysiwyg://http://taesig.8m.com/news1.html](http://taesig.8m.com/news1.html)

Klein, N. *Studio 2*, November 2002, TVO. Interview with Allen Gregg.

Leki, I. (1992). *Understanding ESL Writers*. Portsmouth, N.H: Heinemann.

Messick, S. (1989, 1993) "Validity," in *Educational Measurement*, R. Lynn, Ed. New

York: American Council on Education/Oryx Press, 13-103.

Norton, B. & Starfield, S. (1997) "Covert writing assessment in academic writing." *Language Testing* 14 (3) 278-294.

Rae-Dickens, P. & Germaine, K. (1992). *Evaluation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smith, F. (1986) *Insult to Intelligence: The Bureaucratic Invasion of Our Classrooms*. New York: Arbor House, 1986

Nick Elson is ESL Coordinator in the Faculty of Arts, York University and Chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Linguistics. His research generally reflects an interest in the socio-political context of second-language teaching and learning. His most recent work has involved studying student perceptions of ESL and ESL learning and non-ESL teacher reactions to the work of ESL writers.

Oral Proficiency Test Design, Techniques and Evaluation Criteria

Jennifer St. John

Second Language Institute, University of Ottawa

Part One Oral Interview Design Issues

Introduction

The task of formally assessing an individual's ability to communicate orally in a second language is one which often takes the form of an oral interview. The "typical" oral interview is structured to be administered by a trained interviewer who simultaneously conducts the interview and evaluates the candidate's ability to communicate. Among novice and experienced interviewers, this dual focus (i.e., conducting the interview and evaluating the speech sample) is considered to be the most challenging task an interviewer faces. The responsibility of leading the oral interaction and reliably assessing a candidate's ability is a considerable burden for a single interviewer. The design of an oral interview must be sensitive to this burden and thus be structured to favour not only an optimal candidate performance but also an optimal interviewer performance. With reference to research on second language oral communication test design, this paper describes two interviews in which the designs vary and reflect different features related to the interviewer's dual focus.

Language test developers have long theorized and debated the complexities and definitions of language proficiency. (Bachman 1990) The definition to which one subscribes, that is, the detailed descriptions of the components of an oral proficiency skill set, determine in a major way how one assesses a candidate's level of oral proficiency. Before developing a test, one must first decide how best to describe oral communication skills. This detailed description guides the test development process in determining how one samples the skills (i.e., the tasks, the prompts and the topics discussed) and in determining how the elicited speech sample will be assessed and ultimately described for the stakeholders of the test. It is understood that the focus of any interview, by its very nature, is to obtain a natural, rich and representative speech sample and to have it accurately reflect the larger, complete set of oral communication skills used by the candidate in the real world.

Although test development issues must reflect one's definition of oral communication skills, practical considerations surrounding any testing context often dictate the extent to which the test design accurately reflects the theory underlying it. Practical issues include, but are not limited to, time constraints for administering the oral interview, human resources for test administration, physical resources, such as recording equipment and technical support; and, financial resources for training, development and research. These are all factors which affect the design of the test and might run at cross-purposes to the idealized theoretical model for evaluating oral proficiency.

The Interviewer

A number of issues concerning interviewer qualifications, training and a test design's dependency on the interviewer as rater, are present in the research literature. Lumley and McNamara (1995) underline the need for thorough training and the standardization of interviewers' interpretations of interviewing procedures, techniques and evaluation criteria. In a study on rater characteristics, Lumley and McNamara concluded that "moderation" sessions or standardization sessions were critical before each test administration to allow raters to re-establish an internalized set of criteria for their ratings. Bachman and Palmer (1996) concluded that weaknesses in oral interviews centered around an inconsistency of rater interpretation of the evaluation criteria, thus pointing to the need to monitor the level of rater severity in interpreting the criteria and the randomness of interviewer judgement.

In summary, these research studies support the inclusion of standardization sessions in the rater training process and the inclusion of evaluation procedures involving two independent assessments of a candidate's performance, or "double ratings" to enhance an interview's reliability. As an extension of this second recommendation, the number of roles which an interviewer is expected to play during the interview may influence the level of consistency and objectivity of an interview. Having the task of rating as well as administering the interview requires a high level of "multi-

tasking” on the part of the interviewer, a requirement which contributes to interviewer fatigue. This may compromise the objectivity he/she has in assessing the speech sample and in determining the level of “success” in having effectively and reliably conducted the interview. This may compromise the objectivity of the assessment as well as the overall effectiveness and reliability of the interview itself. Consequently, the interview design ideally includes not only double ratings, but also double ratings done in real-time (i.e., two raters present at the live interview).

The importance of training interviewers is underscored by the research done by Brown (1995) and puts in question the assumption that minimal training is adequate as long as an interviewer is a native speaker. Brown probes the question of rater qualities in a research study on an occupation-specific language performance test. In this study, the test candidates were students in training to become tour guides. The first group of trained raters worked as tour guides and were highly proficient non-native speakers while the second group of trained raters had teaching backgrounds and were native speakers. The researchers concluded that when native-speaker raters and non-native-speaker raters are “given adequate training and use explicit assessment criteria, there is little evidence that native speakers are more suitable than non-native speakers”.

One key rater variable identified in this research study was that the differences in professional background of the raters might explain the variations in interpreting the evaluating criteria as well as assigning the overall level of the success of candidates. The raters who were specialists in the target profession of the candidates applied the rating scale in terms of success in “task accomplishment” whereas the raters with teaching backgrounds perceived the success of the candidates in primarily linguistic terms (i.e., in terms of the relative linguistic distance of the candidates from a native-speaker norm). Thus, training is the primary requirement in interviewer preparation; being a native speaker should not be used as a sole criterion for interviewer qualifications.

The Evaluation Criteria

Through descriptions of performance placed on a scale, one’s theoretical definition of oral proficiency is made explicit. These descriptions of performance, or the rating scales, that an oral interview uses are often categorized as either holistic or analytic in format. Both formats are used for the same purpose – to describe an idealized “typical candidate” range of speech performance. However, they each present a different set of

advantages, a fact which suggests that the inclusion of both types would enhance an oral interview’s design. An analytical scale, as defined by Alderson, Chapam and Wall (1995), is one in which the speech sample is analyzed in terms of its various components, within which there are different levels of descriptions.

The analytical approach is useful in that:

1. it allows the rater to reflect the inevitable variability in component skills of language proficiency (e.g., a candidate’s strength in phonetic accuracy and weakness in syntactic accuracy);
2. it has the potential of providing diagnostic information to the candidate on strengths and weaknesses; and,
3. most importantly, it provides a systematic, component approach to analyzing and rating the speech samples.

The holistic rating scale, as defined by Alderson, Chapam and Wall (1995), is also known as impressionistic rating. The scale is composed of minimally or highly detailed, idealized descriptions of performance on a singular, linear scale. At one point on the scale, the description might include a number of statements which detail a global impression of a speech sample. The rater is asked not to pay too much attention to any one aspect of a candidate’s performance but to judge its overall quality. The rater’s interpretation of the scale requires the rater to employ a “best fit” approach. That is, the rater evaluates the speech sample in terms of the level description it most accurately reflects. In detailed holistic scales, the candidate’s performance might not demonstrate all features as described in a particular level description but it does include most of the features described. The holistic approach is useful in that

4. its “typical learner” descriptions are easily interpreted by all stakeholders;
5. it provides a time-efficient means of evaluating; and,
6. it encourages a “consensus” focus among raters, in that the final decision about the speech sample is only one score.

In considering the shortcomings of the analytical scale, raters are faced with the question of how to interpret a profile of component scores and arrive at the final calculation of the candidate’s overall test score. In considering the shortcomings of the holistic scale, candidates and raters work with test results which might camouflage important information or interpreta-

tions of a candidate's performance, in part due to the "impressionistic" perspective of the rating scale. As demonstrated through experience with the interview formats presented in part two of this paper, it appears the selection of one type of rating scale over the other may not be necessary. A realistic and practical alternative is to combine both types of scales and benefit from their combined strengths.

In summary, one might envision the ideal design of an oral interview as involving, among many other features: interviewers who are trained and participate in standardization sessions to ensure consistency in testing procedures, rating criteria and scales which reflect current oral proficiency definitions and which are sensitive to the needs of the members of the testing system (i.e., stakeholders, the interviewers, test administrators), and procedures to ensure consistency and ease in application of the criteria, including "double rating" and "double grid" evaluation procedures.

It is certain that given any testing system's practical constraints, there are risks of compromising objectivity for the sake of administrative ease and that theories and definitions of oral proficiency will continue to evolve. Consequently, it is essential that an interview's design, the standards in interviewer training and the evaluation procedures be reviewed during the operational life of an interview and be revised as needed.

Part Two Oral Interview Descriptions

The two oral interviews described below are the CanTEST¹ Oral Interview and the English Oral Proficiency Test (EOPT) for admission purposes². The context in which these interviews are conducted is considered "high stakes". That is, the test candidate is being assessed at the request of a certifying organization, a potential employer or an educational institution and the information obtained about the candidate's performance during the test can have an impact on the candidate's professional and/or academic career path. Without a doubt, the expectations from these stakeholders are that the test results accurately reflect the abilities and knowledge of the candidate, not only during the test but also in real-life language use.

The Stakeholders

The primary stakeholder for these tests is the candidate. In the contexts mentioned above, a candidate often has no choice but to take this test. The candidate has the expectation that the test results will provide useful information about his/her skill level and that it will reflect his/her level of linguistic readiness to

participate as a full member in the target academic program and/or profession. Additional stakeholders include employers, certification bodies, academic program supervisors, thesis directors and ultimately the general public. The expectations of these stakeholders are that the test be fair and reasonable in its demands of the candidates, that it provide reliability through consistency in evaluating all candidates and that its content (i.e., subject matter and tasks) be realistic, linguistically speaking, for their purposes.

The oral interviews are described briefly with respect to

- the purpose and the test population,
- the structure of the interview,
- interviewer qualifications and roles, and
- evaluation criteria and procedures.

I. The Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees Oral Interview (CanTEST)

Purpose and Test Population

In the context of a CIDA funded project between the Chinese and Canadian governments in the 1980s, and under the direction of Margaret Des Brisay at the University of Ottawa, a testing project was mounted, out of which evolved the CanTEST/TESTCan. At that time, Chinese students, who were enrolled at the Canada China Language Training Centre (Beijing, PRC), received language training and language assessments in order to assist the Chinese government in selecting candidates for academic or work-related placements in Canada. The test development project for this language training centre laid the foundation for the CanTEST/TESTCan.

At present, in a number of CanTEST test centers in Canada, the CanTEST Oral Interview is administered to candidates requesting information about their overall oral communicative effectiveness. This information is used for either admission purposes to post-secondary institutions in Canada or for accreditation purposes with a professional licensing body (e.g., Ontario College of Pharmacists). The current test population is composed of individuals from a variety of first language backgrounds whose specific language use has an academic focus.

Structure of the Interview

The CanTEST Oral Interview is a face-to-face 15-minute three-part oral interview, conducted by two

trained interviewers, both of whom are raters. The three parts include a warm-up, a probe of topic/functional language use and a wind-down. The oral interview is recorded for record-keeping purposes and for the purpose of providing a team of interviewers with the option of confirming decisions about a candidate's performance. The format of the oral interaction is essentially question, answer and discussion. The questions are interviewer-generated and the discussion is interviewer-directed. At the foundation of the interview's design is the concept of a hierarchy of linguistic functions, which the interviewers are trained to use as a guide in question formation. Several topics of discussion are developed by the interviewer and are selected as a function of the candidate's professional and personal experiences.

Interviewer Qualifications and Roles

The interviewers, native English speakers with experience in language teaching, are required to undergo an initial training session and are usually required subsequently to participate in formal or informal standardization sessions. Each interviewer is active throughout the interview, assuming responsibility for eliciting the richest speech sample possible. The two interviewers take turns in asking questions and interacting with the candidate. While one interviewer is engaged in a question/answer sequence, the second interviewer may observe the interaction and assess the speech sample but is not required to participate in the interaction. At the conclusion of the interview, each interviewer makes an independent judgment, using first an analytical grid and then a holistic grid. With reference to both of these grids, the interviewers discuss their assessments in order to reach a consensus on the final band-level score. (See Appendix)

The operational definition of oral proficiency used by CanTEST is reflected in the speech elicitation techniques as well as the performance descriptions in the evaluation grids. It is assumed that through direct question and answer interaction between the interviewer and candidate, on a topic somewhat familiar to the candidate, that a representative and natural sample of speaking ability will be obtained. The evaluation criteria described below reflect the definition which was current at the time of this test's development and for the most part remain relevant in today's understanding of oral proficiency.

Evaluation Criteria and Procedures

The CanTEST evaluation criteria appear in both the analytical and holistic grids. The analytical grid de-

scribes five components of oral language proficiency: listening comprehension, accuracy, range, fluency and pronunciation. For each component, there are five detailed band levels, with each having its own corresponding value. An equation is applied to the component scores, and the resulting score is then confirmed against a second rating scale, the five point holistic scale, used to assist the raters in confirming their analytic assessments. It is the holistic "band-level" score which is reported to the stakeholders for the test.

Given the insights and issues raised in the research literature mentioned above, the CanTEST Oral Interview is particularly effective in its evaluation procedures in that it provides the interviewer/ rater detailed discrete descriptors of components of the speech sample. This facilitates the raters' discussion following the interview in that it provides concrete areas for discussion often required in the consensus-reaching process. The interviewers are not permitted to take notes during the interview so this component-focused analysis assists the interviewers in focusing on specific details of the speech sample. Furthermore, when converting an analytic, numeric result to the holistic scale, the raters rely on the analytical assessment and simply confirm their judgements with the holistic grid. The holistic grid has 5 full band-level descriptions, and half band-level scores are also reported. This is essential as a "half-band" reflects the observed variability within a speech sample in the range it may represent between band levels (i.e., too strong for band-level 4 and not strong enough for band-level 5 results in a band level 4.5). In the CanTEST holistic grid, the half-band levels do not have corresponding detailed descriptions.

2. The English Oral Proficiency Test (EOPT)

Purpose and Test Population

In the early 1990s, the English Oral Proficiency Test was developed at the University of Ottawa (along with a corresponding French version) at the request, initially, of the Faculty of Education to assess for admission purposes candidates seeking placement in a teacher training course or program for teaching either English or French as a second language. After two years of use with this test population, a second test population was identified. Speech Language Pathology and Audiology candidates applying to these graduate programs are required to be assessed, prior to admission, for their level of proficiency in both English and French as their clinical placements may be in either language. The classroom instruction is primarily in French, and a large

body of the research literature is written in English. This oral interview comprises only one part of the complete test battery the candidates undergo. The consequences of the test results for prospective candidates will vary depending on a number of administrative issues and linguistic variables. In terms of the linguistic variables, if the candidate is identified as not having the required level of proficiency, he/she may still be admitted to the program of study but only on the condition that he/she follows appropriate language instruction and is possibly re-tested to confirm attainment of the required level of proficiency. Only candidates assessed at being "very close" to the required level may be permitted this option of conditional admission.

Structure of the Interview

The EOPT has been modeled, in part, on the Ontario Test of English as a Second Language (OTESL) Oral Interaction Interview (Wesche et al., 1987). This face-to-face recorded interview is conducted by two trained individuals (i.e., an active interviewer and a silent evaluator) and lasts approximately 17 minutes. The oral interview is recorded for record-keeping purposes and for the purpose of providing a team of interviewers the option of confirming decisions about a candidate's performance. There are four parts to the interview: a warm-up, recall/rephrasing, opinion/recommendation, and wind-down. The focus of the second and third parts of the interview is a short 1-2 page text, on a topic selected by the interviewer from a bank of texts. The selection is done based on information obtained during the first part of the interview and is sensitive to the professional and personal experiences of the candidate. In part two, the candidate reads the text silently and is asked to summarize and outline the details presented in the text. Part three of the interview dovetails with part two in that the interviewer leads the candidate through an oral recall of the text into an interaction and discussion of the candidate's opinions and recommendations about the factual information and theories related to the content of the text.

The structure of this interview is intended to elicit an extended speech sample, representative of language use in an academic context. More specifically, the task of reading and discussing an article originating from a plausible area of interest for the candidate and within the realm of academic research, has been identified as an authentic, realistic task for this test population.

Interviewer Qualifications and Roles

The raters qualified to administer this interview are trained both as active interviewers and silent evalua-

tors. They undergo an initial training session and then on an annual basis, prior to the annual testing session, follow a standardization session. All are native speakers of English and are experienced language teachers.

The two individuals who administer this interview work closely as a team, each with specific roles. The active interviewer works through the four parts of the interview structure while the silent evaluator completes a diagnostic comment sheet (See Appendix), observes the interaction between the two interlocutors and provides valuable insight into the interview's effectiveness, the quality of the interaction, and the characteristics of the speech sample. At times, following the conclusion of the interview, the silent evaluator may provide guidance to the active interviewer on interviewing techniques. An individual is trained to perform both the active interviewer and silent evaluator roles. In contexts where the interviewing schedule is particularly heavy, the teams are required to alternate active and silent roles. This lessens the burden of being "on stage" as an active interviewer and reduces interviewer fatigue to some extent.

Evaluation Criteria and Procedures

At the conclusion of the interview, the active interviewer and silent evaluator independently assess the performance of the candidate, according to a holistic grid. In order to guide this decision making process, a descriptive, analytical grid composed of a number of components of oral proficiency is used as a reference: listening comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, discourse organization, interactive skill, non-verbal communication and overall communicative effectiveness. Quantitative and qualitative statements related to these components appear in the level descriptions of the holistic grid. These components also make up the skeletal outline for the diagnostic comments recorded by the silent evaluator. The candidate receives a final band score representing his/her oral proficiency. Should the candidate request additional information and guidance for future language training, the academic advisor will use the information provided on the diagnostic comment sheet as a reference.

The rating scale for the holistic grid was created using a criterion-referenced approach. Speech samples from the target test population were collected, analyzed, ranked, described, and rated for their most salient qualities. As a consequence, the grid does not reflect an "equal interval" scale which is typical of a general oral proficiency scale. Rather, it reflects a classification of different groupings of samples. The perceived distance

from one group to another is not equivalent at each step, from one level to the next. As the purpose of the test is to identify those candidates who exceed, meet or fail to meet the linguistic requirements for admission, the scale does not need to describe the multitude of levels which fall below the levels required for admission. In addition, program administrators require the identification of those individuals who failed to meet the requirements but would probably be able to meet the requirements after a minimal amount of language training. A specific "B-" band level was created to meet this need. These evaluation criteria contrast to those of CanTEST in the narrowness of the range of oral proficiency being assessed and described.

The EOPT draws strength from its format but also from its dual, active interviewer/silent evaluator feature. As the interview is intended to serve a very specific test population, this allows for the stimulus material and task type to more accurately reflect the real-life linguistic tasks of these candidates. The silent evaluator's presence enhances the objectivity of the interview by allowing a trained rater to observe the live interaction, comment upon the interaction and specify in detail the qualities of the elicited speech sample. Although not directly contributing to a calculated score converted to a designated point on the holistic grid, the analytical grid plays a key role in guiding and reminding all active interviewers and silent evaluators of the expected interpretation of the grids, a role, which contributes to an enhanced level of test reliability.

Conclusion

The CanTEST Oral Interview and the EOPT are two examples of interviews currently in use at the University of Ottawa. Each interview is designed to accommodate specific test population characteristics and certain administrative constraints. Regardless of their differences, these two interview models illustrate the characteristics of an ideal interview design. The interviewers are trained and attend standardization sessions, the evaluation criteria are reflective of current descriptions of oral proficiency and have safeguards in rating through the use of double ratings. More importantly, the evaluation procedures are sensitive to the expectations and needs of the stakeholders and also accommodate the needs and limitations of the interviewer who plays the dual role of interviewer and evaluator.

In conclusion, the primary obligation of a test developer is to ensure that the test is fair, representative,

reliable and valid in its assessment of a candidate's performance. The key factor in any interview is the interviewer, and, as such, how the interviewer elicits, interprets and evaluates the speech sample are critical to ensuring a valid assessment of the candidate's performance.

As stated by Lynch and McNamara,

Oral interviews reflect the notion that it is a means of achieving a close link between test design and the target language use. This close link is thought to enhance the validity of the inferences we draw from our test results. While we may be able to closely mirror authentic language use in our assessment procedures and thus make an argument for the validity of inferences on content grounds, we still need to provide additional evidence of reliability and validity for our assessments. (1998, p. 158).

References

- Alderson, J.C., C. Clapham, D. Wall. *Language Test Construction and Evaluation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1995
- Bachman, L. *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1990
- _____ and A. Palmer. *Language testing in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996
- Brown, A. The effect of rater variables in the development of an occupation-specific language performance test. *Language Testing*. Vol. 12, no. 1. March 1995, p. 1-15
- CanTEST – The Canadian Test for Scholars and Trainees. For information, contact the CanTEST Project Director, Dr. A. Hope, Second Language Institute, University of Ottawa, e-mail:cantest@uottawa.ca
- Lumley, T. and T. McNamara. Rater characteristics and rater bias: implications for training. *Language Testing*, Vol. 12, no. 1, March 1995, p. 54-71
- Lynch, B. and T. McNamara. Using G-theory and Many-facet Rasch measurement in the development of performance assessments of the ESL speaking skills of immigrants. *Language Testing*. Vol. 15, no. 2, July 1998, p. 158-180
- Wesche, M. et al. *The Ontario Test of English as a Second Language (OTESL). A Report on the Research Toronto: Ontario Ministry of Education. 1987*

Appendix

Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees CanTEST Oral Interview Holistic Evaluation Grid

Band 5 and 5+

Communicates simple and complex ideas consistently. Interacts without hesitation. Uses a wide range of expressions appropriately. Delivers message without ambiguity. Some errors may exist but they do not impede communication. Interlocutor uses little or no effort in discerning message and may feel as an equal participant in the discussion. Discourse markers are used to organize and present ideas effectively. Able to support opinions, make recommendations and challenge interlocutor's statements. Accent may be noticeable but in no way interferes with communication. *Able to participate fully in seminar and discussion groups. Not required to attend a course(s) in oral communication skills.*

Excerpt from the CanTEST Oral Interview Holistic Evaluation Grid

CanTEST ORAL INTERVIEW LANGUAGE PROFILES

Listening Comprehension

Band 1 - 1.5

Needs frequent repetitions, may even request translation.

Band 2 - 2.5

Understands only very simple predictable questions.

Band 3 - 3.5

Usually understands the question or is able to identify the source of his/her confusion and/or asks for clarification.

Band 4 - 4.5

Understands most of what is said to him or her in a one-on-one situation and responds appropriately without undue hesitation.

Band 5 - 5.0+

Understands readily both predictable questions as well as and above those relating to a variety of topics. Only occasionally (rarely) requires clarification.

Accuracy

Band 1 - 1.5

Abundant errors that generally confuse meaning.

Band 2 - 2.5

Meaning frequently obscured by errors.

Band 3 - 3.5

Language use problems obvious and sometimes impede communication.

Band 4 - 4.5

Language use problems occur, but only rarely impede communication.

Band 5 - 5+

Language use problems are minor and do not impede communication.

Excerpt from the CanTEST Oral Interview Analytical Grid

English Oral Proficiency Test Evaluation Grid

Level A Communicates effectively

Presents information and expresses ideas and opinions in a well-constructed, clear, concise fashion. Offers well-reasoned arguments and can defend point of view when challenged. Initiates conversation. Can shift register (effortlessly). Sophisticated use of and variety in structures and vocabulary. Pronunciation is clear and accurate; speed of speech is appropriate to the context. No grammatical errors.

Level B Communicates clearly and comprehensibly but at times with imprecision.

Presents information and expresses ideas and opinions in a coherent fashion, however not always with sophistication. Communicates with ease; however, may need some prodding to elicit an adequate speech sample. Explains arguments and defends point of view, however with limited success in performing some functions such as persuading and convincing. May demonstrate an inability to shift register or to perceive a need to shift register. May use some casual speech mannerisms. Comprehension is clearly demonstrated. Pronunciation is clear and accurate; speed is appropriate to the context. Native-speaker-like errors. No errors impede communication, however they may limit effectiveness of communication.

Level B-

Candidate demonstrates an ability which is stronger than that described in level C; however, he/she fails to attain level B because of consistent weaknesses which at times render communication less than effective. It is highly recommended that the candidate take a language course. He/she is required to be re-assessed at a later date.

Level C Communicates less than effectively

Presents information and expresses ideas and opinions coherently but at times may need to clarify, restate or illustrate to render communication effective. May experience difficulty with material and require prodding, guidance or encouragement. Listening comprehension may be faulty and lead to misunderstandings. Inability to shift register when required. Language use

may be inappropriate for context and characterized by errors in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. Limited range in structures and vocabulary. Errors do interfere with effectiveness of communication.

Level D Candidate not able to perform at a C level of ability

© 1993, St.John/University of Ottawa

English Oral Proficiency Test Diagnostic Comment Sheet		
	Strong	Weak
Listening Comprehension		
Accuracy	_____	_____
Ability to deal with problems	_____	_____
Pronunciation		
Delivery: speed	_____	_____
Segmentals	_____	_____
Suprasegmentals: Intonation	_____	_____
Vocabulary		
Range	_____	_____
Sophistication/Precision	_____	_____
Accuracy	_____	_____
Grammar		
Range	_____	_____
Sophistication/Precision	_____	_____
Accuracy	_____	_____
Organization		
Discourse markers: coherence, cohesion	_____	_____
Clarity of expression	_____	_____
Interactive Skill		
Register appropriacy	_____	_____
Initiative in interacting	_____	_____
Non-Verbal Communication		
Gestures and body language	_____	_____
Overall Communicative Effectiveness		
	_____	_____

© 1993, St.John/University of Ottawa

- For more information about CanTEST, the Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees, refer to the CanTEST website at www.uottawa.ca/arts/sli-ils.

- This is the oral interview component of a second language test battery used for candidates applying to programs whose academic focus is language instruction and/or language processing (i.e., the FLS /ESL Teacher Training program and the Audiology & Speech Language Pathology programs).

How Well Do Official ESL Writing Scores Predict Performance?

Doreen Bayliss
University of Ottawa

Introduction

A study was carried out in the fall of 2001 with students enrolled in an advanced ESL writing course which serves as a gatekeeper for conditionally admitted students who do not quite meet University English entry requirements. Because of the recurrent concerns expressed by course professors about the variable writing ability of in-coming students, student progress in two parallel course sections was tracked for the duration of the course. In addition to clearly demonstrating that presumably equivalent official scores represent a wide range of academic writing ability, the results of the study raised many questions about the kind and consistency of student progress in English writing that can be expected over one semester (39 contact hours).

Recent changes in the University's admissions policy to require official scores on academic writing tests reflected the continuing concerns of English language tertiary institutions with the writing ability of incoming ESL students. For the past two years, with the decision by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) to regularly offer the Test of Written English (TWE) along with the TOEFL, tertiary institutions have had the practical option of requiring from international student candidates not only a minimum reading and listening score but also a minimum writing score. In the spring of 2001, the University of Ottawa changed its regulations to include a TWE score of 4.5 or an equivalent (e.g. 4.0 on the CanTEST¹ writing test). The Second Language Institute was asked to provide an estimate of how many ESL writing courses might be required of those who met the TOEFL ESL requirements but not the TWE. After a review of the available evidence, tables were drawn up to help guide admissions staff in offering conditional admission to otherwise qualified candidates on the condition that they successfully complete a specified number of advanced ESL credit courses (generally writing).

The main issue under investigation in this study was whether candidates admitted with TWE scores of 4.0 could in fact meet the University's admissions stand-

ards by completing the one-semester advanced level ESL 2361 writing course. The main objectives of this course are, 1. to increase skills in handling the four stages of the writing process (identifying audience, planning, writing and revision), 2. to refine the skills necessary to write grammatically correct and stylistically effective sentences as part of extended discourse and 3. to handle various text organization patterns at both the paragraph and text level (e.g., description, narrative, extended definition, procedure, comparison, contrast, cause-effect and argument). Although class time and homework assignments touched on all of these objectives, the primary focus was to prepare students to be able to write acceptable expository essays, with attention to improving their grammatical accuracy. The expected outcome of the course was that students would minimally be able to write in the following manner, the official description of a CanTEST Band 4 in writing:

Usually communicates intended meaning; extra effort occasionally required of the reader. Some errors present, but they seldom interfere with understanding. Effective simple constructions; some problems with complex constructions may be present. Displays a range of vocabulary and structure. Text usually "reads like English" with respect to word usage and style, although some expressions may be awkward. Structure of presentation and development of topic is logical but may be choppy and not completely cohesive.

This description of an essay closely resembles that of a TWE score of 4.5, the composition score required for admission by this and many other universities. Given this apparent and officially recognized equivalence and the need for a standardized final evaluation of students' writing, the decision was taken to evaluate all final essays using the CanTEST scoring system (each essay marked by two trained evaluators). In this paper all references will be to the CanTEST band system of marking unless otherwise noted. See Appendix A, for the CanTEST Writing Band descriptors from 1.0 to 5.0. It should also be noted for purposes of comparison that

a CanTEST mark of 3.5 is considered roughly equivalent to a TWE mark of 4.0.

In the past, the received wisdom in preparing ESL students to write in English was based on the writing research done with native English speakers (Silva, 1993). Silva went on to say that researchers had begun to realize that ESL writers differed from native speakers in some important ways and that to address their problems adequately, researchers needed to understand the underlying dynamics of writing in a second language. Major areas of interest have been contrastive rhetoric, in which researchers have examined the influence of a writer's L1 rhetorical pattern on L2 writing (Connor, 1997; Kaplan, 1987), cognitive factors, including the influence of a person's L1 writing ability especially in the acquisition of an academic style of writing (Ellis, 1994; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990), teacher feedback and revision practices (Silva, 1993), attitude and motivational studies (Gardner, 1985; McGroarty, 1996), and error analysis (Carson, 2001; Connor & Kaplan, 1987; Odlin, 1994; Shaughnessy, 1977). For those interested in a more detailed description of the L2 writing literature, Myles, 2002, provides an excellent review both of factors which may affect the acquisition of L2 writing skills and of the theoretical models of L1 writing which have influenced thinking about L2 writing acquisition.

This study was undertaken to determine the usefulness of official writing scores as well as to explore other factors which might help predict whether students would meet the outcome criterion, a mark of 4.0 as measured by the CanTEST's standardized writing test, by the end of 13 weeks of instruction.

Methodology

All the students (N=65) enrolled in two sections of the writing course took part in the study, which was planned in conjunction with the two instructors. The instructors worked closely with each other to ensure that the course content and expectations for their respective students remained closely parallel.

Most of the measures used in the study either formed part of the initial placement process for advanced courses or were those used in the ongoing evaluation of the students. This approach ensured a minimum loss of class time for the students while still allowing a reliable means of tracking their progress. The placement instruments, regularly used with advanced students, consisted of a grammar test and a short composition done during the first week of class. (See Appendix B).

It was agreed that progress in the course would be monitored in the following ways, based on in-class assignments:

1. Week 1: Base-line to be established using the incoming *placement composition*
2. Week 4: In-class assignment paragraph construction
3. Week 8: Rewrite by each student of his or her *placement composition* following analysis of the original work
4. Week 12: A narrative essay, topic provided
5. Week 7: Grammar quiz 1, focusing on material covered up to week 6
6. Week 13: Grammar quiz 2, focusing on all of the grammar covered in the course
7. Week 14: A persuasive essay (part of the final exam), based on contradictory texts, in which students expressed their own views

The same person marked the Week 1 Baseline essay and its Week 8 Revision, blind, using as criteria the organization, language use and vocabulary of each essay.² As noted above, the final essays were scored by two CanTEST markers so that it could be determined whether students had met the university entrance criterion, a CanTEST writing score of 4.0. Since evidence suggests that time allowed does not unduly influence results (Kroll, 1990), the fact that all of the compositions were produced under time constraints was not considered.

Students also filled out a voluntary questionnaire on their first language, any previous scores they had received on an official ESL test for university entry, their program of study, whether they had to write an honours paper or thesis, and whether they expected to work in English either in Canada or abroad. These data were used to provide a group profile of the students and to link each student's responses with the other data collected during the study.

The results were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency counts, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlational studies depending on the nature of the variables and the null hypothesis under investigation. All computations were made using SPSS under the default conditions of the program (two-tailed tests of significance).

The primary issues were 1) how much progress in academic writing had students made over the 13 weeks

of instruction, and 2) what factors including the official admissions English test score helped predict which students would be successful in achieving 4.0 on the CanTEST.

Results

Of the 54 students who completed the course, 30 reported pre-admission TWE scores. Almost without exception, the scores reported were from testing sessions six to eight months before enrolment in their programs. Most were young adults with slightly more men (56% of sample) than women in the group.

The most important finding was that the majority of students had not reached a CanTEST 4.0 by the end of the course. The range of marks obtained on the final essay is shown in Table 1 presented below.

Table 1
Frequency Distribution of Marks for the Final Essay Scored According to the Exit Criterion for All Subjects and for Those Reporting a TWE Score

Score	Frequency All Subjects (N=54)	Frequency TWE Group (N=30)
2.5	4 (7%)	2 (7%)
3.0	11 (20%)	6 (20%)
3.5	18 (33%)	12 (40%)
Total 2.5-3.5	33 (61%)	20 (67%)
4.0*	8 (15%)	4 (13%)
4.5*	10 (19%)	5 (17%)
5.0*	3 (6%)	1 (3%)
Total 4.0-5.0	21 (40%)	10 (33%)

*4.0 and higher reached the exit criterion

The frequency distribution of first languages reported for all subjects and broken down according to their success on the final essay are reported in Table 2 below.

Table 2
Frequency Distribution according to First Language Reported for the Total Group and for the Successful and Unsuccessful Groups

Language	All Subjects N=53	Successful Group N=20	Unsuccessful Group N=33
Chinese	33 (63%)	7 (35%)	26 (79%)
Slavic	6 (11%)	4 (20%)	2 (6%)

Arabic	5 (9%)	3 (15%)	2 (6%)
French	5 (9%)	5 (25%)	0
Turkish	2 (4%)	0	2 (6%)
Korean	2 (4%)	1 (5%)	1 (3%)

The largest language group represented is Chinese, the majority of whom did not meet the end of course CanTEST writing criterion. The most successful in terms of meeting the criterion were those with French as their mother tongue, although, in general, at least half of those reporting other first languages were in the *successful* group about half of the time except for those reporting Turkish as their first language in which both students failed to meet the criterion. Most language groups have such a small representation that no conclusions, other than to note this distribution, are warranted here.

In terms of students' expectations about the necessity of working in English, about 70% of the sample (N=28) reported that they expected to have to work in English in Canada. Three of the five francophones expected to work in both languages (four of them were born in Canada, while the fifth was an exchange student). For those who reported this supplementary information, there was no link between success in achieving an exit score of 4.0 or better and whether they expected to either write a thesis or work in English.

To understand what sort of writing the scores in the table represent, refer to the examples drawn from the final essays and representing CanTEST marks of 2.5, 3.5, 4.0 and 5.0 (Appendix C). What is evident from even a brief glance at the essays is that they represent a wide range of ESL writing ability. The largest number of students obtained a score of 3.5, the minimum level that all students were thought to have upon entering the course. The chief difference between a CanTEST mark of 3.5 and one of 4.0 is that for a 4.0, language use hardly ever obscures intended meaning. This is not true of an essay awarded a mark of 3.5, although in other respects the descriptors are fairly similar. This is one reason why the original assumption was made that one advanced level writing course would be enough to bring students entering at the 3.5 level to the desired level.

It is also evident from an examination of the sample essays that regardless of CanTEST band level, all four essays demonstrate that students have mastered the rudiments of organization. All have attempted an introduction, some development and a conclusion, so that the most obvious distinguishing feature of the four is language use.

If the students are divided into groups of those who were *successful* on the final essay and those who were *unsuccessful*, there are some observable differences on the measures. Descriptive statistics for pre-course data for each group are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for
Pre-course Measures: Successful
and Unsuccessful Groups

Variable	Successful Group		Unsuccessful Group	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Grammar Test	12.9 **	2.8	9.8	1.9
Baseline Essay Organization	9.0	2.6	8.4	3.0
Baseline Essay Language Use	9.0 *	2.6	8.2	1.4
Baseline Essay Vocabulary	5.8 ***	1.3	4.7	1.5
TOEFL ¹	594	29.7	582	28.4

¹ Although there were other admission tests mentioned, only TOEFL had large enough numbers to warrant inclusion here. Successful = 11, Unsuccessful = 21. Significant difference in mean scores at *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001 using ANOVA

The means of the two groups are significantly different for the Grammar test and Baseline Essay Language Use and Vocabulary scores.

Descriptive statistics for the variables tracking writing progress for the two groups are presented in Table 4. These variables include the marks for the Week 4 paragraph writing assignment, the organization, language use and vocabulary for the Week 8 Rewrite of the Baseline composition, Week 12 narrative essay, Week 7 and Week 13 grammar quizzes and the Week 14 persuasive essay mark.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics In-course and Grammar
Measures for Successful and Unsuccessful
Groups

Variable	Successful Group		Unsuccessful Group	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Week 4 Paragraph Formulation max = 10	6.9	1.2	6.6	1.9

Week 8 Rewrite Placement Composition max = 10	8.2 ***	.9	7.0	.9
--	---------	----	-----	----

Week 8 Rewrite Organization max = 16	11.9	3.0	12.2	3.0
---	------	-----	------	-----

Week 8 Rewrite Language Use max = 12	10.2 **	1.7	8.5	1.5
---	---------	-----	-----	-----

Week 8 Rewrite Vocabulary max = 8	7.2 ***	2.7	5.2	1.5
--------------------------------------	---------	-----	-----	-----

Week 12 Narrative Essay max = 10	7.9 *	.8	7.4	.9
-------------------------------------	-------	----	-----	----

Week 7 Grammar Quiz 1 max = 10	6.8	1.9	6.9	1.8
-----------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----

Week 13 Grammar Quiz 2 max = 10	7.8	1.1	7.3	1.2
------------------------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----

Week 14 Persuasive Essay max = 20	16.0 ***	1.2	14.2	1.6
--------------------------------------	----------	-----	------	-----

Significant difference in mean scores at *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

The means for paragraph production, Rewrite organization and grammar quizzes for the two groups are not statistically different from each other. For the other variables, mean comparisons were made; in the case of Rewrite essay organization, language use and vocabulary by means of a multivariate repeated measures analysis of variance while the other values were calculated using analysis of variance. The multivariate outcome for all subjects using the grand means for the three variables at Baseline and at Rewrite shows a significant gain for each of the three variables: organization, language use and vocabulary as is to be expected after eight weeks of writing instruction and practice. Although there is only a moderate correlation (.63) between the final essay mark and the CanTEST writing mark, it is still clear from the difference in means noted above that the Unsuccessful group wrote essays that were on the whole weaker than those written by the Successful group.

A correlational analysis was also done between the final CanTEST criterion score and all of the variables used in the study to establish those with predictive value. The results for the sample as a whole are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Correlations Between the
CanTEST Scores on Final Essay and All Other
Variables for All Subjects

Variable	Total
Grammar Test for Placement	.63 *** (45) ¹
Baseline Organization	n.s.
Baseline Language Use	.41 (52)**
Baseline Vocabulary	.51 (52)***
Baseline Total Score	.34 (52)
Week 8 Rewrite Organization	n.s.
Week 8 Rewrite Language Use	.55 (51)***
Week 8 Rewrite Vocabulary	.49 (51)***
Week 8 Rewrite Total Score	.67 (53)***
Week 4 Paragraph Formulation	n.s.
Narrative Essay	.49 (53)***
Grammar Quiz 1	n.s.
Grammar Quiz 2	.32 (51)*

¹ The number in brackets represents the number of subjects in the analysis

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ two-tailed test of significance

For the pre-course placement measures, the highest correlation with the final CanTEST essay score is with the Grammar test, followed by the Baseline essay part scores for Vocabulary and Language Use. The correlation for the Baseline Total score with the CanTEST essay score is lower than for either of the part scores, suggesting that the Organization score is not a useful predictor.

For measures taken during the course, the highest correlation is with the Rewrite Total Score followed by Rewrite Language Use (.55), the Rewrite Vocabulary and Narrative Essay (both .49) and Grammar Quiz 2.

To determine whether any of these measures could be used to predict a successful final CanTEST outcome, a regression analysis using the stepwise method was performed using all the placement measures. The two variables which emerged as important were first, the

initial Grammar test score ($R = .58$), followed by the Baseline Vocabulary score ($R = .65$), together accounting for 42 percent of the variance of the final CanTEST score.

A similar regression analysis was performed to see which of the in-class measures predicted the CanTEST final essay score. The Rewrite Essay score was entered first ($R = .71$) followed by the Rewrite Language score ($R = .73$) together accounting for 53 percent of the variance of the final CanTEST score.

As was mentioned earlier, the most apparent characteristic that separates those obtaining a CanTEST score of 3.5 from those with 4.0, is usually language use. Thus, although students achieving a mark of CanTEST 3.5 have not made the expected progress, they, at least, appear to have maintained the assumed pre-course level or have improved marginally. There remains, however, a group of students who even after 13 weeks of instruction have not managed to either achieve or duplicate what was theoretically their incoming writing score, a CanTEST 3.5. This group of fifteen students bears closer examination.

For the four students with a final mark of 2.5, one was admitted with CanTEST reading and listening scores below the recommended admission minimum; one had a TOEFL score of 567 and a TWE score of 4.0 and two provided no information regarding admission scores (although one reported being in the second year of an undergraduate commerce program). All four students had a placement Grammar test score below 10.0. Generally, if students are placed directly into the course using their score on the Second Language Institute's Placement Test (testing listening and reading skills) and the Grammar test score, the required Grammar test score is 12.

Of the 11 students with a final mark of 3.0, three reported CanTEST reading and listening scores below the recommended minimum, one had been admitted with appropriate CanTEST listening and reading scores achieved after 12 weeks of being in the intermediate level of the Institute's English Intensive program, five reported appropriate TOEFL scores of 550 or more and four TWE scores of 4.0 and one of 4.5, one was taking courses for personal interest only and had not formally been admitted to the University and the remaining student provided no admission information, but reported being registered in the second year of an undergraduate computer science program. Eight of the eleven students had placement Grammar test scores of 10 or below.

Discussion

It is clear from these findings that the original assumption is not borne out in this study – that students identified as having a requisite official language score at admission would achieve the target level after 13 weeks of instruction. For those completing the course, only 40 percent overall and 33 percent of the TWE group successfully met the criterion.

Of the pre-course measures, none can be used to guarantee a successful outcome although several provide useful information. There is evidence to suggest that establishing a minimum Grammar score (10.5 in this study) would improve the pass rate (from 40 percent to 55 percent), but this by itself still falls far short of the goal. Regression analysis indicates that the Grammar test score alone accounts for 34 percent of the variance on the final CanTEST scores and in combination with the Baseline composition, Vocabulary score accounts for 42 percent of the variance. What is not known is precisely what this represents in the evolution of writing mastery and precisely how to test for the appropriate stage of development.

From the correlational analyses, pre-course Language Use is also related to the final outcome, although not as strongly as pre-course Vocabulary Use, or at least part of what is measured before the course began appears to be variance shared with Vocabulary Use. However, by Week 8 of the course, when the Baseline composition rewrite took place, language use has replaced vocabulary in the regression equation to predict the final CanTEST score. As was mentioned earlier, language use is the crucial factor in whether an essay marked using the CanTEST grid is awarded a 3.5 or a 4.0. Another correlation of interest is that between the final grammar quiz and the final CanTEST essay (.32), this correlation is .46 for the *successful* group and not significant for the *unsuccessful* group. This grammar quiz given in Week 13 included all of the grammar points which had been covered during the course, and the response format for all parts of the test required production on the part of the student. Given the fact that the means for the *successful* and *unsuccessful* groups on this measure were the same, indicating that both groups had a similar range of marks on the quiz, only the marks of the *successful* group are systematically related to their ranking on the final essay. Perhaps this means that their grammatical knowledge as measured by the test is more firmly integrated as part of their writing ability than is the case for the *unsuccessful* group.

Students' success on the Week 8 Rewrite is also significantly correlated with the final essay outcome,

particularly for the TWE group for whom this correlation accounts for just over half the variance of the final CanTEST score. The rewrite task gave students the opportunity to demonstrate not only that they had grasped the principles of what they had learned so far, but also that they knew how to apply it, having had eight weeks of practice and feedback on their previous work.

It should also be noted that although all students measurably improved in their ability to organize their compositions, their scores for organization never correlated with the final CanTEST score nor were the means for organization statistically different for the *successful* and *unsuccessful* groups, either at Baseline or Rewrite, unlike the language use and vocabulary scores. On the other hand, the *successful* group increased their superiority in language use and vocabulary from Baseline to Rewrite, gaining as a group 1.2 points versus .3 points for the *unsuccessful* group in language use and 1.4 points versus .5 points in vocabulary. This probably indicates that gaining control of the writing process has more to do with factors allied to control of language than to control of organization.

There is some evidence from the analysis of the group who had scores of 3.0 or lower to suggest that general ESL proficiency might be linked to this group's final CanTEST scores, and that the course was too difficult for them to benefit fully. Of the 15 identified, four had been admitted with listening and reading scores below the acceptable minimum, the test scores of another who had just completed the intermediate level of an intensive program probably represented a temporary "best performance," and one had been admitted as a special student to take courses for self-interest without prerequisites. No other language profiles like these were recorded for those with a score of 3.5 or higher. Cumming (1989) found that second language proficiency, although not interfering in the process of writing, did provide an additive factor 'enhancing the overall quality of writing produced' (p.81). In his study, ESL proficiency was a measure of oral ability rather than listening and reading ability. Sasaki and Hirose (1996) similarly found that L2 proficiency using a standardized paper and pencil test accounted for the largest portion of the variance (52%) in the writing score in their study. Thus, the weak performance of these students most likely can be attributed in part to their weak general ESL proficiency. This interpretation is supported by two other relevant facts. The majority of students enrolled in the MBA program were in the *unsuccessful* group. Three years ago the University created a special section of the MBA program for Chinese students which included eight weeks of ESL

academic language preparation before beginning their program. Unfortunately, the amount of language training was not sufficient for all students because of incoming differences in ESL proficiency which were perceived only after the students had started this course. Because of time constraints, it was impossible to hold back the weaker students. This probably accounts for the imbalance observed between *successful* and *unsuccessful* students for this group (for a detailed discussion, see Raymond and Parks, 2002). The second point is that more in the *successful* group reported being in at least the second year of their program, which probably reflects increased opportunities to practise English compared to those in the first year of their program. Thus, their official scores may underestimate their ability at the beginning of the writing course.

No differences in success were observed between those who expected to work in English at the conclusion of their programs and those who did not, nor between those who expected to write a thesis or honours paper and those who did not. From the number who expected to work in Canada following graduation, it would appear that most either have or expect to have landed immigrant status and intend to remain in Canada.

Regarding opportunities for feedback and practice, the evidence is somewhat mixed. All students received the same extensive feedback on various aspects of their writing assignments and all who finished the course had had to complete a number of projects in English. However, it is not known how much time they individually spent on their assignments or on extra-curricula study. Anecdotal evidence from the professors suggests that this may be an important consideration. Extended social contact with native speakers was not one of the variables under study although as mentioned above there is a suggestion that being in the second or higher year of studies conferred some benefit in terms of the probability of success (41 percent of those in the *successful* group reported being in second year or higher versus 17 percent of the low group). A separate study to assess the ESL needs of students found that, in general, there was relatively little spontaneous interaction between ESL students and native speakers.

Conclusion

The most striking difference between the two groups appears to be related to their ability to use the language accurately although this is not related to their theoretical knowledge of the grammar points covered. The Week 13 Grammar test task required some elements of production which those who were not suc-

cessful, for the most part, were not able to do, especially among those scoring 3.0 or lower. Since the results were not entirely clear, it is evident that this is not a sufficient barometer of success although in combination with the score on an entry composition should help flag those students who may need two or more ESL writing courses to achieve success.

In addition, the two groups differed in their ability to use language and vocabulary in the Baseline writing task. This might be an indication of a broader, slightly more sophisticated level of ESL proficiency which enables the *successful* group to handle productive tasks better. From the evidence available, this proficiency is not related to their admission test score so it is impossible to characterize precisely what this might be. On a speculative level, it may be related to past real writing practice as opposed to practice to pass a writing test. ESL teachers marking essays have become used to encountering stock phrases such as 'This is a much debated topic nowadays' inserted in the midst of otherwise chaotic prose. What is certainly clear is that although both groups received exactly the same sort of feedback, the two groups did not make the same level of gains from the baseline essay to the Rewrite. In this instance linguistic feedback appears to work best when a certain level of mastery has already been attained. It would seem that the more successful writers were better able to incorporate feedback on grammatical accuracy into their writing repertoire. There was also some corroborative evidence in the observed correlation between the Week 13 grammar test mark and the final essay which suggests that the *successful* group was able to produce what they knew about language use more consistently in their final essays than the *unsuccessful* group was, even though, in terms of their marks on the final quiz, it appeared, on paper at least, that they had similar knowledge. Obviously more work needs to be done in this area before being able to characterize this state of readiness more fully.

One other factor, which could not be addressed in this study, is how much time students spent on the course work. All homework assignments were completed, but it is very likely that some students spent a minimum amount of time on this course because of the pressing demands of their programs. Whether these are the same students who failed to meet the exit criterion is impossible to say.

What we have learned from this study is that single marks cannot be taken at face value and that admission into an advanced writing course should be more carefully controlled. Furthermore, the equivalence of differing official writing scores cannot be assumed. Basic

proficiency needs to be established and then productive tasks completed and evaluated before admission to a particular course. This should probably be done before the start of classes if possible so that teachers are not seen as gatekeepers, and timetables are not cast in stone.

Another of the recommendations arising from this study is to consider the possibility of a prerequisite course which focuses primarily on language use in the context of less ambitious production. If the assumption can be made that the majority of those who were unsuccessful just needed more time in which to acquire the skills already present in their more successful counterparts before tackling the challenge of academic writing, then taking a more basic writing course first should result in a more successful outcome over the longer term. The one caveat is that if these courses arise from conditional admission, then we will be imposing an additional burden on students. Clearly, some provision should be made so that students have a reduced course load while working on their ESL skills without losing their status as full-time students.

The problem is always to balance reality with the ideal. In the best of all possible worlds, marks would represent a consistent level of performance so that students would be free to begin their programs, and faculty and administration could be sure that academic endeavours would not be undermined by poor writing performance. As it is, most university administrations do not appear to have taken seriously the fact that the increasing number of international students arriving on campuses necessitates offering more formally organized ESL support programs to students pressed by time and economic necessity. Improving ESL writing skills takes time and effort (Silva, 1993; Spack, 1997) which for students trying to complete their programs as quickly as possible may seem like an unaffordable luxury. Many of the students in this study are landed immigrants whose future in the workplace may depend on their ability to write comprehensibly, which in the case outlined here still falls well below that of native speakers. However, it should represent an attainable goal for most ESL writers in an academic context and would ensure that they will have the minimum tools with which to move forward. If this is a desirable goal, then those of us who understand the difficulties inherent in learning to write adequately need to be more involved in increasing awareness in others so that while we try to sort out what it is we need to know to teach writing successfully, ESL learners will have more of the support that they need. This study has attempted to provide some factual background for this effort.

References

- Carson, J. (2001). Second language writing and second language acquisition. In T. Silva and P. Matsuda (Eds.), *On second language writing* (pp.191-200). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Connor, U. (1997). Contrastive rhetoric: Implications for teachers of writing in multicultural classrooms. In C. Severino, J. Guerra and J. Butler (Eds.), *Writing in multicultural settings* (pp. 198-208). New York: Modern Language Association of America.
- Connor, U. and Kaplan, R. (Eds.), (1987). *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2 text*. USA: Addison-Wesley
- Cumming, A. (1989). Writing expertise and second language proficiency. *Language Learning*, 39, 1, pp.81-141
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, R. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: the role of attitude and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Grabe, W. and Kaplan, R. (1996). *Theory and practice of writing: An applied linguistic perspective*. New York: Longman.
- Kaplan, R. (1987). Cultural thought patterns revisited. In U. Connor and R. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing across languages: Analysis of an L2 text* (pp.9-21). Reading, Mass: Addison Wesley.
- Kroll, B. (1990). What does time buy? ESL student performance on home versus class compositions. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom* (pp.140-154). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- McGroarty, M. (1996). Language attitudes, motivation, and standards. In S. McKay and N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language teaching* (pp.3-46). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Myles, J. (2002). Second language writing and research: the writing process and error analysis in student texts. *TESL-EJ*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (pp. 1-20).
- Odlin, T. (1994). Introduction. In T. Odlin (Ed.), *Perspectives on pedagogical grammar* (pp. 1-22). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Malley, J. and Chamot, A. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Raymond, P. and Parks, S. (2002). Transitions: Orienting to reading and writing in EAP and MBA contexts. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 59,1, 152-180.

Sasaki, M. and Hirose, K. (1996). Explanatory variables for EFL students' expository writing. *Language Learning*, 46:1, pp.137-174.

Shaughnessy, M. (1977). *Errors and expectations*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research and its implications. *Tesol Quarterly*, 27, 657-677.

Spack, R. (1997). The rhetorical construction of multilingual students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 765-774.

Doreen Bayliss is the Head of Testing and Research Support Services at the Second Language Institute, University of Ottawa. Her primary interests are in test development and its application as a research and evaluation tool in the second-language classroom and in standard settings.

Appendix A

The CanWRITE Evaluation Grid

Descriptions of Band Level Performance

5+ Advanced writer. Writes with style, authority and accuracy. Fluent expression presented in a clear and logical manner. Errors in sentence structure and word usage are infrequent but reveal writer is a non-native. Writing skills are clearly adequate for intended purpose. Could cope with writing demands of academic program independently and without further instruction.

5.0 Very good writer. Consistently communicates intended meaning with no extra effort required on the part of the reader. Displays wide range and variety of vocabulary and structures. Accurate use of language forms. Clear and logical structure of presentation. Systematic development of topic. Minor grammatical errors. Present level of skill clearly adequate for intended purpose. Could write independently except for occasional help with editing minor grammatical errors.

4.5 Competent writer. Almost always communicates intended meaning with little extra effort required on the part of the reader. Well-structured presentation and development of topic. Use of language forms reasonably accurate. Minor

problems in complex sentences. Displays a good range of vocabulary and structure. Would likely require help editing and occasionally with re-writing. Could produce comprehensible text in most academic situations. Could cope with the writing demands of most academic programs.

4.0 Modest writer. Expresses and organizes simple ideas without meaning becoming obscured. Structure of presentation and development of topic is logical but may be choppy and not completely cohesive. Effective simple constructions; some problems in complex sentences. Displays an adequate range of vocabulary. Fails to fulfil description of Band 4.5 in part because of the number of errors. Could handle routine workplace documents independently with help in editing. Would require guidance in drafting formal papers. Would benefit from a writing course if following an academic program with heavy writing demands.

3.5 Marginal writer. Text largely comprehensible. Requires some re-writing and thorough editing. Expresses and organizes simple ideas with meaning sometimes obscured. Several errors in grammar and word usage. Structure of presentation is loose; main ideas stand out. Competence is doubtful at times. Could produce simple documents independently if syntactic accuracy and style were not critical. Requires additional instruction before meeting the demands of an academic program.

3.0 Limited writer. Problems with language use and vocabulary often interfere with communication of ideas. Meaning often confused and obscured. Structure of presentation lacks clarity. Frequent grammatical errors. Level of skill would constitute a very serious handicap in any academic program. Would require assistance with anything other than straightforward routine documents.

2.5 Very limited writer. Errors of syntax, vocabulary and organization interfere with communication of ideas. Writer is able to produce few comprehensible phrases and sentences. Structure of presentation appears incoherent and/or illogical. Non-fluent writer. Requires further instruction (possibly two full semesters) to reach level of ability for a non-academic placement.

2.0 Extremely limited writer. Meaning almost always obscured. Dominated by errors. Not an essay-type of presentation. Skill level such that might

require more than two semesters to develop the skills required of a non-academic placement.

I.5 Virtual non-writer. Few recognizable phrases. Paper difficult to assess due to the abundance of errors, unclear structure of presentation and/or lack of content. Would likely experience difficulty completing a form which requires basic personal information.

I.0 Prepared text which is completely off-topic OR Candidate copied the question only OR Not enough of a sample to evaluate (i.e. one or two phrases).

Copyright 1993 – CanTEST Project

Appendix B

Diagnostic Grammar Test – Version A

Instructions: Write complete sentences using all the words IN THE SAME ORDER as they are given. You need to supply the DETERMINERS (the, a, some, etc.), PREPOSITIONS (of, on, to, etc.), PRONOUNS (I, him, you, etc.), AUXILIARY VERBS (do, be, have, can, etc.) and ENDINGS (ed, s, ing, etc.) where these are necessary. For some of the sets of words, an ADVERB is given in parentheses; you should insert this ADVERB in the correct place in the sentence. NOTE: For some sets of words, question formation is required.

Study the examples before you begin.

Example 1:

wife / ask / Tom/ come / home / last night (early)

His wife asked Tom to come home early last night.

Example 2:

student / difficulty / pronounce / letter “r”(often)

Students often have difficulty pronouncing the letter “r”.

I.what / you/ think / live / United States ?

if / I / register / another course / last semester / I / have / too much / do

university / want / everyone / pay / fees / end / third week / term

ESL instructor / want / student / correct / own error (usually)

5. father /satisfy / amount / time / he / spend child (never)

6. Larry / suggest / go / concert / Arts Centre (this weekend)

7. Leslie / look forward / play / soccer / after / class / finish (very much)

8. Doug / worry / complete / assignment / time (always)

9. increase / tuition fees / prevent / Alex / continue / studies (probably)

10.I / like / apologize / what / I / do (sincerely)

The prompt for the placement composition was *The responsibility for the environment rests with the individual and not only with the government. Do you agree?*

Appendix C

The following essays are based on two articles discussing the pros and cons of cloning human embryos. They were allowed no more than two direct quotes from the articles which had to be clearly signalled, but they could use information or ideas expressed in their own words from the material provided.

Essay I: CanTEST writing score of 2.5 Cloning Technology Can Benefit Human Being's Life

method: persuasion, description, comparison, cause-effect

Cloning human being's organ, as a critical high technology, which is developed by the scientist in recent years. Some people say it can be acceptable because it can benefit the human being's life, but others think it is too dangerous to implement to human being. In my opinion, I do agree with the former theory. Admittly, the cloning technology as a man-artificial method has a certain dangerous factor to the real human beings. However, let's look at those patient how they suffer from their disease, the cloning technology can not only save these patient's life, but also accelate the economic development.

According to a statistic issued on the 'Medical Care' magazine, nealy 40 percent of people who suffered from diabet between 40 and 60 years old; morover on a range of ten years-old, there are almost 200 children who suffer from heart attack, or they lose their legs. Therefore, the only thing they can do is to struggle with these painful and those children who may never have a happy life as they should. Thus, the cloning technology is a fresh air and bring in the medical technology field a real hope to them.

Certainly, the cloning technology was a certain dangerous factor, but it still provide real hapness to

those patients, both involved in a heart attack, disease. One lived on the country, there is no such a cloning technology, and the patient deeply suffered from the disease, finally he end up his life in his early age; another patient live on a rich nation he took the doctor's advice and got a medical treatment as the cloning treatment, since then it not only save his life, but also also he establish his family as well.

In summary, the cloning technology is the newest medical treatment which not only bring the patient back from the dead eage, but also provide a motiva-tor to improve the modern economic development. I really believe that, as the time passes, the cloning technology will be improved, and more and more people regain their social life, reestablish their family, and benefit the modern society.

Essay 2: CanTEST writing score of 3.5
Do we need to stop it?

A few day ago, a U.S. company announced that they had cloned a human embryo for the first time. This breakthrough immediately aroused lots of arguements, in most of which, people strongly disagreed with it. But I believe, this will be the turning point of the human being's history. it is inevitable. We should make effort to control it instead of forbid it.

As we all know, a healthy people will die in his/her 80's or even 90's. Most people die in different kinds of diseases. As the human being develops, many new diseases are created because of the environment, food or stress. It is no doubt that people want to live longer. Several hundreds years ago, people can only live for 40 years because of many factors, but we need more cloning human embryo is a solution being developed all these years (break)

In today's arguments, what we see and what we hear are mostly about shall we or shall we not allow cloning human embryo. But there are also some good points being made how to control cloning technology. Since industry revolution in near past, human beings are making and experiencing times and times of new evolutions, from plane, television to fiber optical communication. Now the appearing of clone is also a kind of evolution which is going to happen to ourselves. Again when we review the history, each time a new thing appears, there were always two kinds of opinions which stand for it and against it. And like those inventions in the past, the development of clone technology is also a great invention which is inevitable. What we should do is not to forbid it, but to control it, to let it be made

good use of. We have succeeded for many times in the past, experiencing being curious, interested, defensive and acceptive. So same this time.

Cloning will be in the past when next new invention comes to change our lives. They are all inevitable evolutions in our history. We will have longer lives, faster created technologies and civilizations. All we should do now is to think of how to control it, not how to stop it.

Essay 3: CanTEST writing score of 4.0
Should Cloning research be continued?

Methods: persuasion, comparison/contrast

There are more and more arguments recently about a piece of news that a U.S. firm has cloned a human embryo. Most people think cloning a human is unacceptable, therefore, using cloning technology on cloning human embryo is evil and supposed to be stopped immediately. However, others think it is a medical breakdown to clone human embryo successfully, because it could produce treatments for some of humanity's diseases. Should the U.S. firm continue cloning human embryo? Considering both the advantages and disadvantages of cloning technology, I would consider the cloning research to be acceptable.

One, and probably the most important, reason of these people who are against cloning human embryo, is that cloning human beings is grossly absurd. According to Raymond Flynn, president of the National Catholic Alliance and a former ambassador to the Vatican, "Human reproduction is now in the hands of man, when it rightfully belongs in the hands of God." The propagation of human beings should be natural. Everyone has the right of birth and death. No one can actually imagin what will happen if oneday he himself is cloned. What will a person think when someone who looks exactly like him/her is standing in front of him/her? Will the cloned person have the same mind with the "mother body"? Should a pair of people like this be called "one person"? ...people, therefore, will be trapped into confusion. Moreover, the whole world will be messed up. At that time, what will be called "birth"? What will be the definition of "life"?

What can be found more in people's arguments is that, "what will happen if the cloning technology is controlled by terrorists"? Cloned human beings may become the tool of terrorists to control the world. It is said some cells of Hitler are still kept by terrorists, so what will the world look like when a new-born Hitler is standing there again?

However, can the cloning technology only be used to clone human beings? Obviously not. Skin can be cloned for burn or accident victims; heart or liver can be cloned for transplant; human brain can be cloned to treat diseases including diabetes, stroke, cancer and AIDS. Consequently, who can say this is not a “medical breakthrough”? Everything has its advantage and disadvantage to exist in the world; cloning technology is not an exception. The above examples can show us how many effects the clone technology can have in the medical science.

Taking into account all these factors, I think the advantage of cloning human embryo weights more. Therefore, I agree that the research on cloning human embryo should be continued. I’m waiting for another great success in the medical science area one day!

Essay 4: CanTEST writing score of 5.0
Where do we draw the line on cloning?

Text development methods: persuasion, classification

The year 1997 was marked by a breakthrough in medical research: Dolly, the cloned sheep, was born. Since then, scientists around the world explore the possibility of cloning a human being. This situation quickly turned into a global controversy. The question is: should we put an end to any form of cloning right now and forever, or should we give it a chance, and if we do, where do we draw the line?

There are several reasons why we should prevent cloning of a human. For example: as indicated in the *Globe and Mail* of June 16, 2000, a person has the right to his or her own genetic identity. After all, our identity is what makes everyone of us unique in this world. Besides, there are also religious and spiritual reasons. One thing is very clear in most, if not all religions: humans were not meant to give life without God, or the God’s blessing. Finally, it could also prove to be quite expensive to have your own artificial human.

However, maybe if those people were put in a situation in which cloning would be their only solution, they would change their mind. *Time* magazine, February 16, 2001, shows some people who were put in that situation. For example: Mr. Dorn was left infertile because of a cancer therapy; therefore he and his wife Nancy made the decision to have a baby through cloning. Furthermore, what if a member of your family or someone you loved very much, passed away way to early, then would you consider having him or her reborn thanks to any form of his own DNA? Suddenly, the idea of cloning doesn’t seem too bad, does it?

But in the end, I rather choose the way of the philosopher: balance lies in the middles of two extreme ways of thinking. I must agree with the *Globe and Mail* of June 16, 2000, for I believe that replicating organs, not entire humans, is acceptable. Cloning animals so the poor can finally eat seems like a better solution than letting them starve when we could have easily prevented it, doesn’t it? However, cloning humans for no apparent reason unless it is an emergency, I find unacceptable. We should only rely on cloning to save lives, not to create life without a reason for it to exist.

In conclusion, I believe that the recipe to have controlled cloning is to have a bit of moral, add a bit of religion, finance issues, health issues and finally read the chapter on human conditions around the world.

- 1 The CanTEST system includes an evaluation of all four ESL skills and was developed at the Second Language Institute to provide an ESL admission equivalent to tests such as TOEFL.
- 2 Intra-rater reliability done three months after the original marking: for Language use=.84, for Vocabulary=.77, for Organization=.67