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Special Research Symposium Issue

Task-based Language Learning and Teaching

Canadian Language Benchmarks, Evaluation and Assessment

Blending Technology with Traditional Classroom

TESL Ontario

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Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

IN THIS ISSUE

Editors' Notes

Theme 1 :   Task-based Language Learning and Teaching

Theme 2 :   Canadian Language Benchmarks, Evaluation and Assessment

Theme 3 :   Blending Technology with Traditional Classroom Techniques for Learning and Teaching

CONTACT

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TESL ONTARIO

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Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

EDITORS' NOTES

FOREWORD

This issue offers the refereed proceedings of the fourteenth Annual Research Symposium, part of the 41th Annual TESL Ontario Conference held in Toronto in October 2013. The three themes that provided the focus of the Research Symposium were as follows:

- Task-based Language Learning and Teaching
- Canadian Language Benchmarks, Evaluation and Assessment
- Blending Technology with Traditional Classroom Techniques for Learning and Teaching

As in previous years, the three themes covered topical issues that affect the classrooms and practice of ESL professionals in varied ways. Teachers who encounter problems and challenges related to these themes on a daily basis in their classrooms look for background information and practical ideas that will help them meet their learners' needs and the needs of their own professional development. In organizing the Research Symposium around topical themes and in publishing the proceedings, TESL Ontario offers ESL professionals relevant information on recent research and new initiatives; this information informs both classroom practice and the development of the profession.

Following past practice, the different themes were selected in consultation with members of TESL Ontario. Symposium presenters were invited to submit a written version of their oral presentation after the Research Symposium. Selected reviewers, subject experts on the review topic, commented on the manuscripts for final inclusion in the proceedings. Those papers included in these proceedings offer readers theoretical, research and practical insights on pedagogical challenges that classroom teachers, administrators, and other ESL professionals deal with on an on-going basis as they endeavour to provide learners with optimal learning conditions. We are confident that readers will find the selected papers interesting and relevant to their teaching and professional development. We hope teachers and researchers will feel inspired by the ideas presented, and that teachers will launch their own inquiries into an aspect of their teaching context, then report their insights at future TESL Ontario conferences.

On behalf of TESL Ontario, we express our thanks to the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (Canada) for supporting the Research Symposium and the publication of this special refereed issue of *Contact*. Their commitment to this important event for ESL professionals has been a source of encouragement and strength for TESL Ontario and its members for over a decade. We look forward to continued cooperation and support from the different ministries involved in language, immigration, settlement, education and training issues. We also wish to thank all the presenters who participated in the different topics of the Symposium for their dedication to their work and for sharing their expertise

and insights. Without them, we could not have organized the Symposium and compiled these proceedings.

Finally, we thank the many individuals who contributed in one way or another to the success of the Research Symposium. We particularly wish to thank the editor of *Contact* magazine, Brett Reynolds, and TESL Ontario's administrative office and conference staff for supporting us in organizing and preparing the Research Symposium and for the opportunity to assemble this refereed Research Symposium issue of *Contact*. Without their continued support, our work would have been considerably more difficult and markedly less pleasant.

Hedy McGarrell
David Wood

Co-editors

INTRODUCTION

The Research Symposium and the ensuing refereed proceedings of contributions to the symposium have become an integral part of the annual TESL Ontario conference. The symposium at the 2013 TESL Ontario conference brought together researchers and language professionals who addressed one of the three topics that had been selected for inclusion. While some of the contributions included present data from individual researchers' recent studies, others summarize areas of activity in areas that have become topical in ESL learning and teaching. The contributors link theoretical insights with practical issues in pedagogy and consider the implications to classroom practice. All three themes addressed at the 2013 Research Symposium are represented in these proceedings. They are grouped according to theme and, within each theme, presented in alphabetical order of the presenters.

Theme 1: Task-based Language Learning and Teaching

Task-based language learning and teaching (TBLT) was explored from the perspectives of both teachers and learners. Scott Douglas from the University of British Columbia's Okanagan Campus describes an online questionnaire survey designed to investigate how teachers recruited from the TESL Canada membership perceive TLBT. The 217 respondents to the survey were asked to answer a number of questions developed around Ellis' (2009) definition of TBLT. The findings reflect how Canadian teachers of adult ESL students view successful examples of TBLT tasks, the benefits of TBLT, and the drawbacks of TBLT, including participants' further thoughts on the topic.

Go Back to Menu

The second paper on TBLT is by Carleton University's Eva Kartchava, and Concordia University's Elizabeth Gatbonton. Entitled "ACCESS, TBLT, and Adult ESL Learners' Noticing of Corrective Feedback," it presents an investigation of the role of corrective feedback in a specific type of task called ACCESS, which encourages automatization of language though repetition in a meaningful context. Kartchava and Gatbonton engaged high beginner learners in an ACCESS task and discovered that they benefitted as much from the meaningful interaction and repetition in the task as from corrective feedback itself.

The third paper on this topic is from Kim McDonough, Concordia University. Entitled "Using Structural Priming Tasks in an EAP Context," the paper represents an exploratory study designed to determine how priming tasks might serve to help elicit target structures, in this case relative clauses, from learners engaged in collaborative tasks. Twenty-five students in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course participated in versions of two different tasks during a 13-week course. Each task included prime sentences with the target structure and sentence fragments that helped students complete each sentence with information from the task material. Analyses of the students' output indicated that more target structures were produced on one of the task types; structural priming occurred during one of the two tasks only. McDonough concludes with a discussion of issues and considerations around the design and use of collaborative priming tasks in similar language learning contexts.

Theme 2: Canadian Language Benchmarks, Evaluation and Assessment

The use of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) in language evaluation and assessment was explored from two perspectives. "Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) in Canadian Immigrant Language Training: Have we Got it Wrong?" by Janna Fox from Carleton University compares information about the initial impact of PBLA on the LINC classroom with current practices in the classroom. The longitudinal case study of the PBLA experiences of five LINC teachers examines issues around PBLA. These issues centre around the shift towards using PBLA for summative assessment, and away from formative assessment. The paper calls for a strengthening of the formative use of PBLA.

Carla Schnitzler Hall and Amelia Kreitzer Hope from the University of Ottawa focused on CLB and assessment in their paper "Interactional Competence: Can it be Tapped on CLB-Based Tests?" The authors report on a study in which they examined the interactional features of candidate responses to different CLB task types. They developed a checklist of operationalized features of IC and applied it to speech samples from role plays and semi-structured interviews. Their findings suggest that the two different task types their participants carried out presented different opportunities to display features of IC. The findings of their study are discussed in terms of implications for the development of test tasks and rating scales, implications that affect test developers as well as test takers.

Theme 3: Blending Technology with Traditional Classroom Techniques for Learning and Teaching

The third area of focus in the 2013 Research Symposium was the rapidly developing use of e-learning pedagogy, specifically, issues around the combining of e-learning and face-to-face classroom pedagogy, called *blended learning*. The first paper on the topic of blended learning is by Iryna Kozlova from Carleton University, entitled "Collaborative Tasks for Beginner-level Language Learners: Issues and Implications." Kozlova examines online collaboration among four beginner-level learners of Russian in a jigsaw task with a decision-making component, in a synchronous environment. The data suggest that when participating in certain types of tasks in an e-learning environment, students learn how to utilize limited linguistic resources to complete the task.

The second paper on blended learning is by Geoffrey Lawrence from York University. Lawrence's paper, entitled "A Call for the Human Feel in Today's Increasingly Blended World," addressed the apparent need for a social presence in e-learning and blended environments, arguing that this can deepen learner engagement and enrich the learning experience. He reports on a feasibility study conducted in Ontario in which participants call for "the human feel" in e-learning and express a preference for blended language program delivery over purely computer-mediated instruction. Lawrence provides examples of effective ESL e-learning strategies.

We have enjoyed preparing this Special Research Symposium Issue for readers of *Contact* and wish to thank the contributors for submitting written versions of their papers. To grow, members of the TESL profession need to continue to investigate research and teaching practice; this continual striving for more sophisticated research questions and teaching techniques allows them to meet the challenges encountered in their classrooms. We hope that the stimulating contributions contained in this issue of the referred proceedings of the 2013 Research Symposium will inspire teachers to experiment with a new methodology or new techniques in their classrooms.

Hedy McGarrell
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Go Back to Menu

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING ACROSS CANADA

Scott Roy Douglas, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus

Abstract

This paper presents results from an online survey designed to explore teacher perceptions of Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the Canadian context. The survey was grounded in Ellis' (2009) definition of TBLT as focusing on communication and meaning with a necessary exchange of information, a reliance on students own linguistic resources, and an ultimate outcome. Participants were recruited from the Teachers of English as a Second Language Canada Federation (TESL Canada) membership, with a total of 217 out of a possible 6,833 members taking part. Through the coding and grouping of participant responses, emergent themes arose in the data regarding successful examples of TBLT tasks, the benefits of TBLT, the drawbacks of TBLT, and participants' further thoughts on the topic.

A multiplicity of teaching methods exist side by side in the Canadian context. From more traditional grammar translation approaches that focus on mastering complex grammar rules to participatory approaches designed to empower English language learners, Canadian teachers have a vast range of methodological choices from which to build their particular teaching practice. This paper presents results from a survey partially designed to explore the relationship between English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the Canadian context (Results of question 7, related specifically to EAP contexts, are presented in Douglas & Kim, in review). In addition to focusing on EAP and TBLT, the survey offered English as an Additional language (EAL) teaching professionals the opportunity to share their perceptions of TBLT in a wider variety of contexts. As a result, EAL professionals from coast to coast in a wide variety of teaching situations responded to the survey. The survey results present a picture of the prevalence of TBLT in Canadian classrooms, as well as successful examples, and allow exploration of the potential benefits, the possible drawbacks, and other pertinent ideas participants associate with TBLT and English language teaching.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

Background Literature

Definition of TBLT

There are a number of different definitions of TBLT, but generally TBLT is agreed to involve language use for communicative purposes in the pursuit of a final outcome. Rather than a specific teaching method, Ellis (2009) understands TBLT to be an approach to language teaching that utilizes tasks. Nunan (2004) defines tasks as communicative acts that are able to stand on their own. He draws a distinction between real-world tasks, which involve language usage outside of the classroom, and pedagogical tasks, which occur in the environment of a classroom. For Nunan, during a pedagogical task, the target language is used to comprehend, manipulate, produce, and interact in order to express meaning, with the focus on communication rather than grammar. Pedagogical tasks are free-standing activities that can exist as individual communicative acts. The focus on meaning is important (Ellis, 2009), with Van den Branden (2006) also emphasizing the idea that tasks require language for their completion. Ellis complements the emphasis on completion by adding that there should be an element of information sharing, opinion expression, or inference making. Additionally, Ellis maintains that tasks should force students to rely on their own abilities to finish something that has clear objectives. Students carrying out pedagogical tasks focus on the end goal rather than the language used to achieve that goal. By and large, Ellis' conceptualization of tasks in TBLT relates to how Skehan (1998) understands TBLT as focusing on the importance of meaning, progressing towards a goal, evaluating outcomes, and connecting to the real word scenarios. Van den Branden (2006) concurs with Skehan's (1998) contention that tasks are related to something people do in real life. Many of the above elements of task-like activities are echoed in the conceptualization of tasks by Willis and Willis (2007). Willis and Willis point to six guidelines for designing tasks that ensure authentic use of language and facilitate participation in meaningful activities: When designing tasks, classroom activities are increasingly task-like when they engage learners' interest, have a primary focus on meaning, incorporate a clear outcome, judge success in terms of the outcome, aim for completion of the task, and relate to real world activities. By taking part in these types of tasks, learners are relying on their own language repertoire in order to make meaning, and the teacher may be a participant in the making of meaning but an enforcer of grammatical accuracy.

Benefits of TBLT

A number of benefits to TBLT have been identified in the literature. Primarily, Nunan (2004) contends that TBLT promotes language learning with a real purpose. Having such a purpose is in line with the findings that TBLT appears relevant to students' real world needs. In a Thai university setting, McDonough & Chaikitmongkol (2007) found that their participants acknowledged that TBLT connected to real world academic needs and that the skills gained in TBLT activities were applicable to other academic subjects. By connecting with real world needs, TBLT is intrinsically motivating, and it can bring authentic language into the classroom, providing useful language input that is compatible with a student-centred

teaching approach (Ellis, 2009). Another perceived benefit of TBLT is the greater learner interaction that can result from this approach (Plews & Zhao, 2010). This benefit complements the idea that TBLT is an active language learning approach that develops communicative fluency (Ellis, 2009 ;Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011) as well as reading and writing skills (Willis & Willis, 2007) and skills promoting the conveyance of meaning (Ellis, 2003; 2009). Another major benefit reported by McDonough & Chaikitmongkol (2007) was that employing TBLT led to higher levels of learner independence by providing learners with the chance to complete tasks and organize their own learning. This greater independence led to increased pride, responsibility, self-confidence, and curiosity. It was also accompanied by an increased use of autonomous learning strategies, such as the keeping of vocabulary notebooks for new words not covered by the teacher or the course materials. Finally, TBLT can lead to gains in English language proficiency. For example, O'Brien (1996) found that TBLT approaches can enhance learners' English language proficiency, particularly in the language areas in which students themselves wish to see improvement. For example, learners in her study, who were enrolled in an Intensive English Program at an American university, reported gaining a variety of language skills as a result of participating in a task-based advanced speaking course.

Drawbacks of TBLT

In addition to the benefits of adopting a TBLT approach, a number of wide-ranging concerns have also been raised in the research literature. In particular, Swan (2005) contends that a TBLT-only approach may, in fact, be less effective than other methods at promoting language learning. Carless (2004), researching in primary schools in Hong Kong, and Littlewood (2007), investigating primary and secondary schools in East Asia, recognized that TBLT can be perceived as creating classroom management issues. For example, Carless found that the desire to have a quiet, well organized classroom environment could conflict with the wish to implement speaking tasks. Littlewood further draws attention to the idea that there are practical difficulties in using TBLT with large classes of perhaps unmotivated children. The practical difficulties may arise because of teachers having less control over their classroom environments when students are taking part in task-based activities.

Both studies also highlight concerns regarding students' first language use as opposed to the target language when completing assigned tasks. In general, Carless (2004) notes the possibility for short cuts and a lack of engagement when completing tasks, resulting in poor quality target language output. Swan (2005) also notes that the possibility is present that learners can bypass communication problems in a task without having to negotiate language forms or language development. Although the specific kinds of tasks utilized were not mentioned, Littlewood (2007) concurs that some tasks may be completed without encouraging much production of the target language and only requiring minimal effort on the part of learners. Unfortunately, as with many other approaches, the efficacy of TBLT may be vulnerable to unfavourable classroom conditions (Swan, 2005).

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Further issues have been raised in the literature regarding perceptions of inadequate grammar instruction (Ellis, 2009) and poor exam preparation (Littlewood, 2007). Swan (2005) contends that there can be a language coverage issue associated with TBLT in that a purely TBLT approach may fail to expose learners to all of the most common and useful language items they may need and that, as a result, there is still an important role for a systematic grammar-based syllabus. Concomitantly, some teachers are unsure about the usefulness of TBLT for English language education in certain countries (Hu, 2013). In fact, it has been proposed that TBLT may be unsuitable for the pedagogical contexts of most English language learners around the world (Swan, 2005). These criticisms may be connected to what is seen as a cultural mismatch between TBLT and local teaching methodologies, where other approaches may be seen as more effective (Littlewood, 2007). Cultural issues are also highlighted by Ellis (2009) as possibly inhibiting the adoption of TBLT. Willis (1996) further points out that in addition to teacher resistance, TBLT can alienate students if it does not conform to their educational expectations. These concerns are not restricted to non-Canadian contexts. In Canada, Ogilvie and Dunn (2010) found that positive feelings for TLBT do not necessarily lead to its implementation as a teaching method. Pre-service teachers in the study did not use TBLT methods although they learned about them in their teacher education program. Pre-service teachers reported not implementing TBLT because cultural norms in education can act as a counter force towards successful TBLT practice. Instead, language expertise, particularly in regards to grammar, is what may be expected in a Canadian language classroom by both the pre-service and in-service K–12 teachers teaching in the research sites of the Ogilvie and Dunn study. Being able to show expertise through grammar explanations and controlled pedagogical activities appears to help to establish legitimacy for new teachers.

Another drawback identified in the research literature is related to misunderstandings and misconceptions surrounding the definition of TBLT (Ellis, 2009). Karavas-Doukas (1995) proposed that what constitutes TBLT may not be completely understood by English language teachers. These findings were also echoed by Carless (2004) who found that some Hong Kong primary school teachers in his study seemed not to understand what TBLT entailed. In addition to a lack of understanding, a lack of experience using TBLT was a factor for English language teachers in Japan (Moser, Harris, and Carle, 2012). The confusion surrounding what makes up TBLT is also found in Canada (Plews and Zhao, 2010). Rather than using TBLT as it is generally conceived, Canadian EAL teachers in the Plews and Zhao (2010) study from English speaking backgrounds tended towards turning TBLT into something more traditional, such as the Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) approach. As a result, Plews and Zhao (2010) contend that both teachers from non-English speaking and English speaking backgrounds may be ill-prepared to use a TBLT approach. Furthermore, they may modify TBLT in ways that alter the original intention of the TBLT approach.

Finally, another recognized drawback of TBLT is the perceived difficulty in implementing it (Ellis, 2009). For example, in a South Korean study investigating the introduction of the

communicative approach, a lack of classroom time available to use TBLT activities was a factor for Li (1998). In the Canadian context, Ogilvie and Dunn (2010) also found a lack of support for pre-service teachers who chose to try and use TBLT during their practicums. Pre-service teachers on practicum wanting to use TBLT had to adapt or develop their own materials, requiring an amount of time that they did not always feel they had. TLBT was not a particularly practical methodological choice for these pre-service teachers because of the preparation time required, and the perceived lack of preparation time available. Furthermore, it was also cognitively exhausting to create new materials for TBLT lessons. As a result, it was easier to use the non-TLBT resources that were more readily available, particularly when provided by their in-service teacher partners (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010).

Research Questions

Taking into consideration the varying definitions of TBLT, as well as documented benefits and drawbacks associated with this language teaching approach, the purpose of the current study is to investigate teacher perceptions of TBLT in the Canadian context by examining examples of TBLT in use along with reported benefits and drawbacks of the approach. This purpose led to four refined research questions. The answers to the research questions come from the perspectives of the survey participants. The overarching question in this research study is concerned with the perceptions of TBLT across the Canadian context as understood by EAL educators. Based on this understanding, the refined questions are as follows:

1. What is the classroom prevalence of TBLT?

2. What are common examples of TBLT?

3. What are the benefits of TBLT in the contexts of the participants?

4. What are the drawbacks of TBLT in the contexts of the participants?

Method

Research Population

Participants were recruited from the membership of the Teachers of English as a Second Language Canada Federation (TESL Canada). TESL Canada is a national organization whose mission is to "promote excellence in the teaching and learning of English as a second or additional language in partnership with its constituent provincial and territorial associations, and like-minded national and international organizations" (TESL Canada, 2013). TESL Canada is made up of the members of provincial and territorial organizations concerned with the teaching of English as a Second/Additional language in the broadest sense. TESL Canada's constituent provincial and territorial associations can be found in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, and Yukon (TESL Canada, 2013). Provinces and territories not specifically represented in the TESL Canada Federation

include Quebec, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. Total membership at the time of the study consisted of 6,833 members.

Instrumentation

Data were gathered through an online questionnaire (see Appendix 1) designed to elicit teacher perceptions of TLBT. To ground teachers' perceptions of TLBT in a common definition, they were first asked to consider Ellis' (2009) definition of TLBT, and to keep that definition in mind as they were completing the survey. Ellis' (2009) definition of TLBT was presented as follows in the online survey:

Ellis (2009) summarizes task-based language teaching activities as including:

- a focus on communicating and understanding meaning
- a requirement for a transfer of information, a sharing of opinion, or an inference of meaning
- a dependence on students' own linguistic and non-linguistic abilities to finish the task
- a final outcome in addition to language use for which language is a means to reach a goal.

Once a working definition of TBLT was established, the questionnaire consisted of a total of 11 questions that could be completed in less than 15 minutes. The first four questions gathered demographic information. The fifth question was a priming question designed to prepare participants to think of TLBT in relation to the Ellis (2009) definition provided at the start of the questionnaire. Questions 6 to 11 were directly connected to the research questions, with question 7 of the questionnaire related to EAP and reported in a separate study focusing on a narrower set of data (Douglas & Kim, in review). The last six questions consisted of two closed-ended questions with Likert-like responses and four open-ended questions with descriptive responses.

Recruitment and Data Analysis

After receiving university research ethics board approvals, participants were invited through mail, using the appropriate TESL Canada and TESL Ontario protocols. A posting with information about the study was also placed on the TESL Ontario research website. In total, initial email invitations were sent to 6,833 TESL Canada members. Out of the TESL Canada members contacted, 217 responses were received, representing 3.18% of the TESL Canada membership. Because of the low response rates often associated with email and web-based surveys (Monroe & Adams, 2012), the response rate was deemed adequate to capture the perceptions of survey participants in connection to TBLT in Canadian contexts. Although the results are not generalizable outside of the current group of participants, respondents from across the membership of the TESL Canada Federation did take part in the survey, with Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta providing the largest numbers of participants. Table 3 summarizes the locations of origin for the survey respondents.

Open ended questions were analysed qualitatively by an inductive process in which responses were coded based on the themes and patterns arising from the responses (Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2012). Each response was assigned a primary code representing an emergent theme, and the total number of responses associated with each theme was tabulated to capture trends in the data. In weaving together the results of this study, representative quotes were pulled from the data to exemplify thematic trends. Representative quotes came from different respondents and are combined to create a narrative illustrating the thematic findings. As a researcher reading the raw data, I was careful to compound the emergent themes without searching for preconceived categories. During the coding process, I remained aware of my own experiences as an EAL researcher, teacher and teacher-educator in order to avoid imposing my own particular ideas regarding TBLT. However, as a teacher-researcher, the research results necessarily pass through my own particular prism of understanding (Gay, Mills, Airasian, 2012). To create more distance between my interpretations and the reality presented by the participants, I reviewed the primary codes and emergent themes after a one week break from working with the data to encourage detachment when evaluating the results.

Findings

Demographic Information

Demographic findings consisted of the educational qualifications, teaching contexts, locations of practice, and years of experience. Findings show that study participants held a variety of educational qualifications related to teaching EAL. Participants checked off the responses that described their educational backgrounds, with the majority of participants reporting a bachelor's degree followed by a sizable minority reporting a master's degree. Information on the educational qualifications of the participants is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Educational Qualifications (n=217)

Response	Percentage	Count
Bachelor's Degree	69%	149
Certificate (< 120 hours)	23%	49
Certificate (≥ 120 hours)	33%	72
Diploma	18%	39
Master's Degree	44%	95
Doctoral Degree	6%	14
Other	12%	27

In addition to holding a variety of educational qualifications, participants also taught in differing teaching contexts. Participants checked off the responses that described their current teaching contexts. The largest response category consisted of participants teaching

in government sponsored EAL classes for newcomers to Canada. This was followed by participants in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) contexts. Results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Teaching Contexts (n=217)

Response	Percentage	Count
K–12	4%	8
LINC / ELSA / Newcomers	41%	88
Volunteer ESL	6%	12
English for Academic Purposes	34%	73
English for Specific Purposes	14%	30
Intensive General English	7%	16
Teacher Education	13%	29
Other	20%	44

Participants represented eight provinces as well as a small number of responses from TESL Canada members currently located outside of the country. Six participants declined to answer this question. Results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Location of Participants (n=211)

Response	Percentage	Count
Nova Scotia	1%	2
New Brunswick	0%	1
Prince Edward Island	1%	2
Ontario	49%	103
Manitoba	9%	20
Saskatchewan	3%	7
Alberta	14%	29
British Columbia	17%	35
Outside Canada	6%	12

Rounding off the demographic findings, the average number of years teaching experience was also calculated. A total of 215 participants reported the number of years they had been involved in the teaching EAL profession. Participants had an average of 14 years of teaching experience as a whole (n = 215, M = 14.07, SD = 8.90, range = 1–46). Data pertaining to the gender distribution of the participants was not collected.

Priming and Prevalence

A priming question designed to prepare participants to engage with the topic of TBLT was answered by 215 participants. Seven possible examples of tasks (See Appendix 1, Question 5) were presented to participants, and participants were asked to check off all of the examples that represented tasks in a TBLT approach. Four of the choices garnered over 85% of the responses, with one choice receiving just less than 50% agreement. The last two choices received less than 40% agreement. Results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Representative Tasks in a TBLT Approach (n=215)

Response	Percentage	Count
Reviewing test taking strategies	32%	68
Planning a class pot-luck party	82%	176
Giving directions	82%	177
Giving a presentation	81%	174
Making a YouTube video	80%	172
Writing a timed essay	37%	79
Revising an essay after feedback from the instructor	46%	98

Once participants had considered a task in relation to the Ellis (2009) definition, the next question surveyed participants' use of tasks in their teaching practice. A total of 213 participants responded to this question, and only 1% of respondents reported never using TBLT activities with their students. The largest numbers of responses were from teachers using TBLT activities in about half or a majority of their lessons. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Prevalence of TBLT Activities in Participants' Teaching Practice (n=213)

Response	Percentage	Count
Never	1%	3
In the occasional lesson (approximately 25%)	14%	29
In about half of my lessons (approximately 50%)	31%	67
In the majority of my lessons (approximately 75%)	33%	71
In all of my lessons (approximately 100%)	16%	35
Other, please specify*...	4%	8

Note. * 1. I'm not actually teaching right now, I direct a program; 2. because at present I am not employed; 3. I'm not teaching it right now; 4. When I taught, I think it was 75% of the time, but I'm not sure.; 5. I'm not sure—I don't think about it.; 6. blank; 7. Blank; 8. In the current teaching context, we have to follow a pacing schedule based on text books, which does not leave much room for teacher/student autonomy :(;

Examples of TBLT across Canada

The first open-ended question of the questionnaire elicited examples of typical task-based teaching activities participants had used in their current teaching contexts. There were 168 responses to this question. Out of the 168 responses, five major categories of perceived TBLT activities commonly used by the study participants arose. These categories, along with the number of examples of each found in the data, are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Examples of TBLT Reported by Participants (n=168)

Code	Responses	Percentage
presentation	31	19%
role play	29	17%
essay	16	10%
discussion	11	7%
interview	8	5%

The largest category of examples of TBLT was that of presentations. 19% of participants indicated a presentation as being the final outcome of a successful task they had implemented with their students. Examples included tasks such as researching and presenting on a non-profit organization, designing and presenting on a dream city, delivering a live cooking demonstration, and presenting on a weekly topic of interest. Representative of having a presentation task as a final outcome is a task sequence reported by one participant as designed to explore and share information about a local city neighbourhood:

> Students were given a group presentation assignment where they were asked to present a Toronto neighbourhood to the class. They were given tasks that had to be completed in the neighbourhood, for example, interview a store owner who works in the area, find a popular restaurant or attraction and review it, etc. Once their tasks were completed, they compiled all the information to make a 15 minute presentation.

The next category, with 17% of the responses, was that of role plays. Examples of role plays facilitated by participants for their students included opening bank accounts, planning a trip, phoning a government agency for information, and practicing job skills. A representative example from a participant includes acting out returning something to the store:

> They must create a dialogue with a partner on a topic and then demonstrate the task. For instance, return something to the store that doesn't fit. They role play the situation and then take turns being one or the other person.

After role plays, essays represented 10% of TBLT task outcomes described by participants. Essay examples included students choosing and researching their own topics and further

specific academic skills practice. A representative response indicated that a narrative essay was used as a culminating task for which students were "to write an essay about [a] more recent visit to a doctor." Essays are used "to show use of written language and the improvement of their written skills."

Discussions and interviews followed with 7% and 5% of responses, respectively. Typical examples of discussions as a task outcome included talking about current events or potential problems in a work environment. For one workplace-readiness example, students read the profiles of patients and then they needed "to work in groups and discuss and agree on which patient they'd help first." Typical examples of interviews as a task outcome included interviewing local business owners and talking to future workplace professionals, with one participant indicating that "interviewing people in public and in students' place[s] of residence is also a frequent task I assign."

Perceived Benefits of TBLT

The next set of data focused on the perceived benefits of TBLT. A total of 190 participants responded to the open-ended question eliciting the possible benefits of TBLT in their current teaching contexts. Out of the 190 responses, five major themes associated with the benefits of TBLT arose. These themes, along with the number of responses associated with each, are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Benefits of TBLT Reported by Participants (n=190)

Code	Responses	Percentage
authenticity	56	29%
relevance	32	17%
motivation	32	17%
confidence	11	6%
cognitive skills	9	5%

The most striking theme connected to TBLT benefits to emerge from the descriptive responses of the participants was that of authenticity, with 29% of the respondents indicating that they felt the authenticity of TBLT was one of its major benefits. TBLT was repeatedly lauded for emulating authentic situations that mirror the daily lives of students. This ability to replicate real life seemed to make the learning experience more realistic because TBLT "encourages using language for real life or simulated real life situations; thereby increasing the meaningfulness of the language use; giving the learners a sense of purpose."

A closely related theme to authenticity was that of relevance, with 17% of responses emphasizing how TBLT connects to learner needs. TBLT was perceived as being able to provide students with the language required for doctor's offices, grocery stores, banks, and

schools, among other places. One respondent emphasized that "students want and need practical language skills that they can use in the workplace, in social and service contexts."

Also with 17% of responses, the theme of motivation was prominent in the data on TBLT benefits. Respondents felt that this teaching approach was "intrinsically motivating" because students "see the value of the skills they are learning in class." Intrinsic motivation was closely connected to self-motivation and students' "interest in carrying out the tasks related and applicable to each individual's needs." When taking part in TBLT activities, "students are more engaged in the lesson" because they "have more interest in content and therefore [are] more motivated to participant in tasks." Additionally, TBLT appeared to be motivating because of its goal centred nature. TBLT "helps the students stay focused on their goal" and "it forces the students to do well and to work harder than normal." In general, "students are more motivated to learn because they see the end point of their learning" and "there is a real goal that they need to achieve" leading to "a sense of accomplishment regardless of their level."

Confidence and cognitive skills were the two themes that rounded out the top five benefits of TBLT in the data, with 6% and 5% of the responses respectively. TBLT activities were seen as boosting confidence in learner ability to use their own language to achieve certain goals, with one respondent indicating that confidence gained in the classroom translates to self-assurance outside the classroom because TBLT leads to students having increased "confidence in dealing with the demands and expectations of the Canadian workplace." TBLT is also seen to promote critical thinking and the processing of ideas because students "get thinking critically about the problem and the solution, and work towards getting it completed."

Perceived Drawbacks of TBLT

One hundred and eighty-two responses related to the open-ended question on the negative aspects of TBLT. While 24 participants, representing 13% of the responses, reported that there were no drawbacks to using TBLT with English language learners, a number of themes connected to drawbacks in TBLT did arise. The top five themes, along with the number of responses associated with each, are summarized in Table 8.

Table 8

Drawbacks of TBLT Reported by Participants (n=182)

Code	Responses	Percentage
time consuming in class	30	16%
student expectations not met	28	15%
excessive teacher preparation	23	13%
mismatched student levels	21	12%
lack of focus on form	17	9%

The issue of time was a primary drawback identified. Sixteen percent of participants indicated that TBLT was time consuming in the classroom and that it "used more class time than some other methods." From the perspective of some of the participants, it appears that class time is a limited commodity, and that

> Often it seems TBL[T] at higher levels of proficiency entails a multi-step project/process that requires more in-class time. In an intensive course, this can be a drawback when there are competing demands on instructional hours.

Close in number to participants reporting issues with time in class were the 15% of participants who felt that TBLT activities did not meet student expectations for how an English language class should be taught. TBLT activities could be very disconcerting for students not used to this teaching method, and they may "have a hard time relaxing and enjoying the learning." One participant also claimed that "some students are not very fond of learner-centred tasks," with another participant expressing concern that students may not be "accustomed to task-based language teaching." In fact, one participant responded that "many students want and ask for 'paper based' lessons, or grammar lessons."

The amount of teacher preparation time involved in TBLT was another drawback found in the data, with 13% of respondents indicating this was an issue. Some participants felt that instructors do not have enough time to carefully prepare TBLT lessons; it was even mentioned in the data that TBLT activities require a significant amount of preparation time for which teachers are not necessarily paid. A representative quote from one respondent summarizes the sentiments of other participants with the statement:

> Teachers may be reluctant to take this approach as it takes time to plan and takes creativity to pull from different resources to come up with a cohesive plan. If there is no syllabus or curriculum, the teacher needs to develop their own long term and short term plan. It is easier to follow a textbook that may not meet the contextual learning needs of all the students but fills teaching time... Typically, ESL teachers are not paid adequately for the prep time needed to plan for this type of task-based teaching. Consequently, the incentive to develop a cohesive plan is not there.

The last two themes found in the data connected to TBLT drawbacks were those of mismatched student levels, with 12% of the responses, and a lack of focus on form, with 9% of the responses. Some respondents felt that TBLT did not work well with lower-level students, and that TBLT could "overwhelm" them. It was also a concern that TBLT activities neglect what was perceived as important language practice, and that "this kind of practice isn't always task-based in nature." It was further counted as a drawback in some of the data that TBLT activities could be completed with repeated student language errors because of the lack of a focus on form. As a result, a more traditional type of practice was advocated in one of the responses:

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Sometimes repeated language practice (e.g. drills) is necessary to unlearn old practices and relearn new ones or to establish patterns (language or soft skills) to call upon without a lot of effort. This kind of practice isn't always task-based in nature.

Further Comments and Concerns Related to TBLT

The last open-ended question in the survey provided space for participants to share any further thoughts they may have connected to TBLT, and 116 participants took advantage of this question. The top five themes that were coded in the data connected to participants' further thoughts are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9

Other Thoughts Connected to TBLT (n=116)

Code	Reponses	Percentage
Complementarity	17	15%
Effectiveness	14	12%
Teacher preparation	13	11%
Importance	11	9%
Student-centred practice	7	6%

15% of participants who contributed further thoughts on TBLT felt that this approach was not a stand-alone methodology. Rather, it is part of a battery of approaches that could be used to facilitate students' additional language acquisition, with one participant emphatically stating "like most approaches, it is best used in combination with others." This is mirrored in the sentiments of another participant:

> Elements of TBL[T] when combined with other communicative, inductive and deductive approaches—an eclectic approach to language instruction—have proven to be most effective, most of the time for the vast majority of my students.

TBLT was also seen as a highly effective teaching approach by 12% of respondents to the final question on added thoughts. For these participants, the approach helps to improve "general language skills," and TBLT was seen as "highly beneficial in language acquisition." Some participants reiterated that there were drawbacks, but that "the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages." TBLT was "well worth the effort," and from the point of view of participants, it appears that TBLT achieves effective results:

> Participants in my classes whose English skills coming into the course were of the correct level reported that they found the task-based activities extremely useful. Many have obtained jobs while in the programme and credited their comfort level with Canadian business English with their success.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back
to Menu

Mirroring comments in the drawbacks question of the survey, 11% of participants reiterated concerns with teacher preparation. Professional development issues in particular were of concern in the data, with the opinion that "teachers need to be trained about it [TBLT] more and more." Additional concerns about the lack of resource materials to support teacher preparation were also voiced by participants "constantly looking for relevant resource material" and wishes that "there were more task-based material available." It appears that "incorporating task-based language activities in one's courses takes careful preparation and planning," and that TBLT is not a practical instructional choice if there is not "sufficient time and resources allocated to materials development." However, on a positive note,

> [TBLT] is more difficult to preplan but once the teacher has had more experience and good resources to draw on, allowing students more control and flexibility releases the teacher to become a facilitator and makes the classroom a dynamic place to collaborate in.

The fourth and fifth most common themes to emerge from the data produced from the further thoughts of participants were connected to the importance of TBLT (9% of responses) and student-centred practice (6% of responses). Participants wanted to reinforce the importance of incorporating TBLT instructional strategies into English language teaching practice. Task-based teaching activities were labelled as "crucial," "useful," "extremely important," and "a better bet" for students' language acquisition. These observations were complementary to the emphasis on the student-centred nature of TBLT. Responses emphasized that in TBLT students "are in control of their own learning," and one participant captured the mood of the student-centeredness theme by stating,

> Task based learning is the way of the future as it provides a goal that is defined by the teacher in dialogue with the student...Task based learning activities are a means of allowing students to shine, be creative, and at the same time feel that they have a stake in their own learning.

Discussion and Conclusion

As many of the participants are coming to the study with advanced education in Teaching English as an Additional Language as well as an average of 14 years working with English language learners, it appears that they are coming to the survey questions as informed and experienced practitioners, lending credibility to their responses. They further appear to proportionally represent the EAL teaching profession as a whole both in terms of location and teaching specialization. Thus, the participant sample appears to capture a microcosm of the Canadian EAL profession. In addition, it appears that the participants are a group of practitioners who are highly motivated to use TBLT approaches in their teaching. In responses to the survey questions exploring the prevalence of TBLT in the participants' classroom practice, a mere 1% reported that they never used this methodology. On the

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

other hand, 80% of the respondents reported using some form of TBLT in more than 50% of their lessons.

By soliciting commonly conceived successful examples of TBLT used by participants in their own practice, it was revealed that presentations, role plays, essays, discussions, and interviews were the most commonly stated task outcomes. Interestingly, four out of the five themes categorized had oral/aural tasks as their final outcomes, with essays being the sole writing task in the top five themes. Furthermore, role plays, discussions, and interviews are all examples of dialogic tasks involving both listening and speaking, underscoring the group dynamic of TBLT as conceived by the participants. The pedagogic implications of the gathered examples point to the perceived efficacy of TBLT for developing oral/aural skills in a dialogic framework on the part of study participants.

The perceived benefits of TBLT that emerged in the current study included authenticity, relevance, motivation, confidence, and cognitive skills. The first four of these themes are also readily found in the literature on TBLT, as discussed above, thus corroborating study findings. The boosted motivation and confidence levels reported in this study are also mentioned by other TLBT scholars (Plews & Zhao, 2010; Ellis, 2009; Van den Braden, 2006). The nation-wide group of participants in this study appear to be in tune with global perceptions of TBLT in that motivation was tied for the second most reported benefit of employing TBLT activities with additional language learners. One result that is not readily encountered in the TBLT literature is the cognitive benefits of TBLT. Ellis (2003) does recognize that cognitive processes play a necessary role in the definition of a task, with scholars such as Prabhu (1987) emphasizing the thought process engaged in during a task. However, Ellis (2003), points out that not much focus has been put on a task's cognitive dimensions. Despite this, it seems that the study participants found the perceived benefit of students learning "how to think and process ideas quickly" as an important outcome of the TBLT approach. This result of improving thinking and processing skills may be in part due to the tendency of tasks to engage learners in processing both semantic and pragmatic meaning, with more complex tasks encouraging the production of linguistically rich communication (Ellis, 2009).

Along with the reported benefits, many of the drawbacks that emerged in this study, such as time consumption, mismatched student expectations, excessive teacher preparation, mismatched student levels, and lack of focus on form, were also reported by previous scholars. For example, the difficulty of implementing TBLT has been recognized in the literature, with the lack of instructional time (Li, 1998) and the burden on instructors (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010) echoing participant concerns in this study. Reacting to the perception of inadequate instructional time available, Willis and Wills (2007) suggest that time can be made in class for TBLT activities. For teachers worried about a lack of instructional time, Willis and Willis point to the importance of making time to allow learners to learn and use the language rather than focusing in covering a syllabus or finishing a textbook. Willis and Willis also remark on how much of what is done in the classroom, such as

grammar activities, readings, listening passages, and vocabulary learning, can actually be carried out by students at home, thus freeing up instructional time for TBLT. Plus, the time engaged in TBLT is an opportunity for instructors to pay attention to the individuals in their classrooms, and Willis and Willis affirm that "this is a good use of class time" (p. 213). Willis and Willis also have suggestions for lowering the burden on instructors. They maintain that instructors can make use of textbooks to lower the amount of time they put into preparing for classes adapting the activities to fit with TBLT approaches, such as adding outcomes, moving grammar instruction post-task and focusing on listening skills first. Collaboration with colleagues is another suggestion Willis and Willis present for saving instructor preparation time, along with collecting texts (or having students collect them) and recordings on an ongoing basis so that a repertoire of reusable materials is built up over time.

Participant concerns were also seen in the literature concerning mismatched student expectations, which can be a challenge to using a TBLT approach. Furthermore, cultural concerns are often coupled with student and teacher expectations (Ellis, 2009; Willis, 1996). However, these concerns are not restricted to an overseas context. Pre-service teachers in a Canadian context also felt pressure to utilize more traditional teaching approaches (Ogilvie & Dunn, 2010). To change the attitudes of students not expecting to learn through TBLT approaches, Willis and Willis (2007) emphasize the need to explain to students how TBLT can help them reach their goals. For Willis and Willis, it is important to share with students that learning to speaking in English is best achieved through talking, and that many other learners have successfully acquired English in TBLT classrooms. Once the rationale for TBLT has been shared with learners, instructors can begin with short simple tasks that have a clear goal in order to help learners because used to learning English through TBLT.

Another drawback thematically emerging in the current study, a lack of focus on form, was also to be found in the literature on TBLT. Participant concerns that "the structure and function of language may get missed" are further shared by other teachers around the world, such as in the East Asian context (Ellis, 2009; Littlewood, 2007). However, Willis and Willis (2007) hold that a focus on grammar is part of the TBLT task sequence. TBLT lessons can end with a grammar focus, and students can work on learning new grammar and doing grammar exercises as homework. These homework activities can then be taken up again in the next class so that TBLT becomes sandwiched between grammar review and grammar learning. As a result, grammar is an important part of the TBLT task cycle.

Of greater emphasis in the current study as a drawback compared to those found in the TBLT literature was concern about the appropriateness of TBLT for certain student levels, particularly lower levels. Ellis (2009) too has remarked that "tasks must be tailored to the proficiency levels of students" (p. 241). For Willis and Wills (2007), TBLT can be appropriately used with lower levels of learners because the focus on meaning associated with TBLT results in learners being able to complete tasks within their own set of

Go Back to Menu

capabilities. With TBLT, lower levels of learners can complete their share of a task as well as they can, resulting in a sense of satisfaction that their abilities have improved.

Finally, other pertinent themes coming out of the study data included TLBT's complementary potential, its effectiveness, its importance, and its student-centeredness, but also the need for teacher preparation. The sentiment regarding the potential for TBLT to complement other approaches is in line with Ellis' (2003) conception of Task-supported Language Teaching (TSLT) in which tasks can be employed to facilitate the free language production stage of a lesson. For Ellis (2009), there is no one correct way of implementing TBLT. It does not have to replace other ways of teaching language. In fact, Ellis (2009) confirms that tasks can serve a complementary function to more traditional teaching methodologies. Participant responses on the complementary nature of TBLT tasks to other teaching methodologies revealed examples of teachers putting into practice the idea of principled eclecticism, in which teachers utilize the methodologies best suited for their situated context (Mellow, 2002; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Ur (2013) points out that many teachers adapt teaching methods to suite their teaching situations, and this appears also to be the case with some participants in the current study. Survey results tabulating perceived benefits and drawbacks to utilizing a TBLT approach have professional development implications, and based on the various benefits and drawbacks arising in the current study, teachers can reflect on how best to incorporate TBLT activities that foster the benefits while at the same time mitigating the drawbacks.

Limitations

While this study aimed to present a picture of how TBLT is perceived by EAL professionals across the Canadian context, there are some mitigating factors that limit possibilities for generalization. Because the sample population for this study only included members of TESL Canada, participants in the province of Québec were not represented due to the absence of a TESL Canada affiliate there. In addition, no participants residing in Newfoundland and Labrador or the three Canadian territories took part. Partially missing geographical representation was also combined with a 3.18% response rate, also lowering the ability to generalize the findings to TBLT practice as a whole in Canada. However, despite these factors, the results do point the way to certain informative trends within the available participant data. Finally, as with all surveys, there is the potential for motivated respondents with strong beliefs (either favourable or unfavourable) associated with TBLT being triggered to answer the call for participants. While this may be true, a tempered understanding of data can still be made due to the mirroring of many of the emergent themes in the current body of international research literature. Keeping in mind the limitations of the current study, future directions for research could include a wider more representative sampling of Canadian EAL professionals as well as the opportunity to engage participants in more in-depth interviews to explore their perceptions of TBLT.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

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Appendix 1: Task-Based Teaching Questionnaire

Ellis (2009) summarizes task-based language teaching activities as including:

- a focus on communicating and understanding meaning
- a requirement for a transfer of information, a sharing of opinion, or an inference of meaning
- a dependence on students' own linguistic and non-linguistic abilities to finish the task
- a final outcome in addition to language use for which language is a means to reach a goal.

Please answer the following questions with the above definition of task-based language teaching activities in mind.

Question 1: What are your educational qualifications? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Certificate (< 120 hours)
- ☐ Certificate (≥ 120 hours)
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Doctoral Degree
- ☐ Other, please specify... _____

Question 2: What is your current teaching context?

- ☐ K–12
- ☐ LINC / ELSA / Adult EAL for Newcomers
- ☐ Volunteer ESL
- ☐ English for Academic Purposes
- ☐ English for Specific Occupational Purposes (Nursing, Accounting, Engineering, etc.)
- ☐ Intensive English Programs for General Purposes (summer programs, travel, etc.)
- ☐ Teacher Education
- ☐ Other, please specify... _____

Question 3: Where do you teach?

Question 4: How many years have you been teaching English Language Learner?

Go Back to Menu

Theme 1: Task-based Language Learning and Teaching

Question 5: In your opinion, which of the following ideas represent tasks in a task based language teaching approach? Check all that you feel apply.

- ☐ Reviewing test taking strategies for a high-stakes English language proficiency exam
- ☐ Planning a class pot-luck party
- ☐ Giving directions
- ☐ Giving a presentation
- ☐ Making a YouTube video with advice for new international students
- ☐ Writing a timed essay
- ☐ Revising an essay after feedback from the instructor

Question 6: How often do you use task-based language teaching activities with your students?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ In the occasional lesson (approximately 25%)
- ☐ In about half of my lessons (approximately 50%)
- ☐ In the majority of my lessons (approximately 75%)
- ☐ In all of my lessons (approximately 100%)
- ☐ Other, please specify... _____

Question 7: To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Task-based language teaching activities are appropriate for teaching English for Academic Purposes.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Question 8: If applicable, describe an example of a typical task-based language teaching activity you have used in your current teaching context.

Question 9: Taking into consideration your current teaching context, what are the possible benefits of employing task-based language teaching activities?

Question 10: Taking into consideration your current teaching context, what are the possible drawbacks of task-based language teaching activities?

Question 11: Please use the following space to share any other thoughts connected to task-based language teaching activities.

Acknowledgements

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

ACCESS-TBLT AND ADULT ESL LEARNERS' NOTICING OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Eva Kartchava, Carleton University and Elizabeth Gatbonton, Concordia University

Abstract

The noticeability of recasts and prompts, corrective feedback (CF) techniques recognized for their efficacy in promoting linguistic accuracy, has been widely investigated but not in genuinely communicative and repetitive tasks. This study examined the noticeability of these CF techniques in tasks designed according to the principles of ACCESS (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005), a task-based language teaching approach (TBLT) that was designed specifically to promote the automatization through repetition of useful utterances in genuine communicative contexts. Participants, four groups of high-beginner students, were asked to perform tasks developed according to ACCESS principles. During their performance of these tasks, the participants' errors with simple past statements and questions were addressed using different corrective strategies, and their ability to notice and use the provided CF was also tested. Analyses of noticing and learning in this pre-test/post-test study suggest that CF's noticeability might be positively affected when CF is provided in tasks promoting meaningful repetition.

The issue of noticing teachers' corrective feedback (CF) on learners' L2 output has been the focus of interest of a number of investigations in the last few years. However, most of these investigations have been carried out in laboratory settings and language classrooms, using a variety of activities that are often not developed within the framework of a Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach. In this paper we re-examine the noticeability of CF in the context of TBLT type tasks that are themselves already designed to provide learners with opportunities to attend to form once the meaning of the forms have been established in the process of communication. These tasks are designed to provide multiple opportunities for the same form-meaning pairings (i.e., an utterance and what it means) to be used while the learners are engaged in genuine communication. In these types of tasks we assume that the first time learners hear an unfamiliar utterance, their attention will be drawn towards figuring out its meaning in the context in which it is used rather than figuring out how it is constructed or formed. This assumption is based on Van Patten's (2004) suggestion that learners find it difficult to focus on form and on meaning at the same time. Thus, at any one point, especially in the early exposure to a form-meaning pairing, only one or the other will be attended to. Once learners have figured out the sentence meaning, however, subsequent

Go Back to Menu

exposures to the same sentence will no longer necessitate their attention to its meaning and so they can turn attention to aspects of the form itself instead (e.g., noting how is it constructed, in what context it is used, what other sentences are related to it). Thus, in these multiple form-meaning pairings, repetition becomes a mechanism for promoting some form of noticeability, albeit implicitly. The question we are asking in this study is what happens to learner noticing of CF in situations when explicit efforts to call attention to CF are made in the contexts of tasks that have a noticeability strategy built into them through contextual repetition.

Before describing the details of the study, we will discuss the theoretical framework in which the tasks we are talking about were developed. We will begin with TBLT (Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Van den Branden, Bygate & Norris, 2007, Willis & Willis, 2007), one of the currently widely used language teaching paradigms. TBLT grew out of the need for a Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) that promotes both fluency and accuracy. In supplanting grammar teaching as the main language teaching approach in the early 60's, CLT succeeded in making fluency an attainable goal. Students acquiring language through the CLT teaching approach are able to develop the ability to express their ideas fluently in their second language, without unnecessary hesitations and pauses. CLT's success, however, is mitigated by the fact that these learners' fluent speech may be riddled with inaccuracies (Lightbown, 2012). CLT's failure to show success in this area has propelled scholars and practitioners to research and develop TBLT, which can be characterized as an approach that recognizes the need to promote the simultaneous acquisition of both form and meaning (Ellis 1994, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Van den Branden et al, 2007).

TBLT retains CLT's main assumption that learners' consistent use of language in genuine interaction gradually leads them to internalize the knowledge and skill systems required for L2 comprehension and production. However, this goal seems best achieved if language use occurs in the pursuit of tasks that have mutually agreed upon outcomes or goals (Skehan, 1996, Nunan 2004, Willis & Willis, 2007). Thus, TBLT tasks are designed so that in pursuing their goals, participants engage in interaction (Ellis, 2003; Long, 1983) and use language that is slightly more demanding than their current ability allows them to produce (Krashen, 1985). Attempts to make this slightly difficult language comprehensible are assumed to lead participants to try out different form-meaning mappings whose accuracy and appropriateness they can check as they succeed in communicating. Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1983, 1996) assumes that this process leads to acquisition. Placed in positions where they have to communicate, participants map meanings they wish to convey onto appropriate linguistic forms. If the form-meaning mappings are unfamiliar, they form a hypothesis about what works. Swain (1995, 1998) suggests that confirmation or disconfirmation of the accuracy and appropriateness of these mappings through production of output (Output hypothesis, Swain, 1995; 1998) triggers acquisition.

Attempts to apply these ideas pedagogically have led to the development of numerous TBLT tasks in use today, particularly, in meaning-based instruction situations such as L2

immersion (Housen, 2012; Lightbown, 2012) and Intensive (English or French) language teaching (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). The evaluation of many aspects of these tasks (including their efficacy) in immersion and intensive language teaching programs have made these programs the main forum for research on TBLT issues today (Housen, 2012; Lightbown, 2012). These programs have different goals in that immersion promotes subject matter mastery, with language learning seen as a by-product, while intensive English promotes language mastery directly but intensively in a short time. However, they share the assumption that language learning is driven by exposure to and use of comprehensible language, without direct explicit instruction. Research on these programs, however, has consistently shown that engaging in genuinely communicative interactive activities could result in overall fluency gains (Swain, 1984; Lightbown & Spada, 1990, 1994), but not necessarily in linguistic accuracy and complexity. In other words, genuinely interactive tasks in meaning-based programs expose learners to rich and varied input and provide them with ample opportunities to produce output. However, they seem to fail in creating conditions conducive to promoting linguistic accuracy and complexity. As a result, many learners emerge from these programs able to express themselves fluently in the L2 but with speech that, for the most part, remains linguistically inaccurate and at complexity levels lower than expected based on the fluency they have attained.

For a possible explanation of this phenomenon, investigations of the classroom language produced by teachers and/or students have been conducted to determine the incidence of linguistic structures normally targeted for acquisition in TBLT (Collins, Trofimovich, Cardoso, White & Horst, 2009; Lightbown, Meara & Halter, 1998; Meara, Lightbown, & Halter, 1997). Collins et al. (2009), for example, examined teacher talk in 400 hundred hours of intensive English instruction and found, among other things, (a) low incidence of the regular simple past in the corpus and (b) rare occurrence of multiple repetitions of these items (see also Horst, 2010), casting doubt that these structures could be learned just from exposure and task performance. These findings, which confirm observations about CLT that participation in genuine interaction does not naturally translate into linguistic accuracy, suggest that even in TBLT, where the need to integrate form and meaning instruction prompted its creation, this issue still warrants attention.

Strategies proposed to integrate form-focused teaching in communicative language teaching can be divided into two types depending on whether task implementation factors or task design factors are involved. CF (a teacher's reaction to a student's ill-formed utterance) and incidental grammar teaching represent the set of strategies that we are calling here *Task-implementation strategies* because their use depends on task performance factors such as whether errors exist and whether they are worth correcting or subjecting to a quick grammar treatment, based on the teacher's perception. The other set of strategies (*Task-design strategies*) involve task design manipulation. One such strategy is adding a grammar component at the pre-task stage of the lesson in order to explain structures likely to be used during task performance or adding the same at the post task stage to consolidate structures used earlier. This strategy is largely associated with CLT in its early development stage

(e.g., Paulston, 1971; Rivers, 1972) but is still popular among many TBLT practitioners. A second task-design strategy involves incorporating a pre-task planning component to the task design or changing it to allow the many language elements to be repeated several times while maintaining genuine communication (Ellis, 2005). In the first case (Pre-task planning) (Bygate, 2009; Bygate & Samuda, 2005; Ellis & Yuan, 2005; Foster & Skehan, 1996) learners plan how they will perform the task and then practice the language they are likely to use during its performance before they actually perform the task.

A third design strategy is task repetition in which the task is repeated at least 3 or 4 times with different interlocutors to preserve its communicative nature, decreasing performance time at each repetition in order to draw focus away from the meaning of sentences to their form (e.g., Arevart & Nation, 2003; Gass, Mackey, Alvarez-Torres & Fernandez-Garcia, 1999). A third strategy can be represented by efforts to produce so-called focused tasks or structure-specific tasks (Nunan, 2004; Ellis, 2003). Here, task design is manipulated so that task performance will elicit numerous tokens of the targeted structure (e.g., questions, relative clauses).

A fourth and final strategy is exemplified by task design according to the principles of ACCESS, a TBLT methodology developed by Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005) to promote language automatization (see below for a more detailed explanation).

Although varied in their intent and design, these form and meaning integration strategies share the common goal of creating conditions conducive to developing not just fluency but also accuracy through such means as (a) increasing opportunities to use the targeted forms, (b) making them noticeable by drawing attention to errors committed with them, and (c) by drawing attention away from their meanings to their forms through constant repetition.

Each of these strategies has been examined for their role in promoting linguistic fluency, accuracy and complexity and related issues. CF, for example, has been the subject of more than a decade of investigations (Long, 1996; Long & Robinson, 1998; Robinson, 1995, 2001, 2003; Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2001) to determine, among other things, the amount of student uptake (e.g., Loewen, 2004; Lyster & Ranta, 1997) and the noticeability of errors (e.g., Ammar & Sato, 2010; Egi, 2007; Mackey, Gass, & McDonough, 2000), triggered by the different CF types. The other strategies (pre-task planning, task repetition, focused tasks) have likewise been each investigated, to determine whether their use in a task increases the incidence and repetition of the targeted structures (Ellis, 2005; Gatbonton, Iwashita, Dao, & Yang, 2013) and whether and how they impact the acquisition of fluency, accuracy and complexity (e.g., Ellis, 2005). However, the contribution of one strategy in relation to another strategy has yet to be investigated. This present paper reports an exploratory study on the relationship between the strategy employing CF and that of incorporating inherent repetition into the tasks.

In this study the noticeability of three CF techniques (recasts, prompts, and a mixture of the two) and the impact of such noticing on L2 learning outcomes are examined in two tasks (i.e., creating an alibi for a given weekend and describing witnessing an accident). Both tasks are designed in the framework of ACCESS to maximize learner exposure to and use of the targeted structure; namely, the simple past in utterances (questions and answers). Before describing the study, we will describe ACCESS and illustrate the methodology with one of the tasks used in the study. Then we will present a brief review of the relevant literature on CF. Finally, we will describe the methodology of the study, the findings and their implications for the TBLT classroom.

ACCESS Methodology

ACCESS (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005) was designed to promote automatization through the use of tasks that generate repeated occasions requiring learners to be exposed to or to use utterances verbatim or with slight modifications. Though the focus is automatization, ACCESS is primarily a communicative approach. ACCESS is similar to both CLT and TBLT in that it recognizes the importance of engagement in genuine communication to promote the knowledge systems required for the comprehension and production of language. Like TBLT its classroom implementation is centered on the use of goal-oriented tasks. However, it differs from both CLT and TBLT in two ways. One, it is an utterance-based approach. That is, its focus of teaching is utterances. An utterance can be a sentence, a phrase, or a single word produced between pause and carries a pragmatic function (that is, it is useful in conversation). In an utterance-based approach every lesson revolves around a set of utterances that are explicitly chosen to be the object of teaching. The same set of target utterances is elicited and practiced throughout the lesson while the learners are actively engaged in genuine communication as they pursue the tacitly agreed upon common goal.

Second, ACCESS is more selective than CLT and TBLT about the tasks it considers effective to promote learning. To be effective, these tasks have to meet three additional design criteria. They have to be genuinely communicative, inherently repetitive, and formulaic. *Genuinely communicative* means that the interaction between participants must result not only in an exchange of new information (one interlocutor has one information that the other does not have) but that the information exchanged is genuinely needed. That is, the person seeking this information needs it because some other outcome cannot be attained without it (e.g., someone needs the name of a woman he or she has just met so that he or she can introduce her to another person). *Inherently repetitive* means that repetition is not just artificially added on to the task in order to practice language but it is built in into its design as the main means for attaining the expected task outcome. The task is also designed so that in the first set of repeated exposure to and use of the utterances in meaningful contexts the students' attention will be on the form and meaning mappings that they have to do in order to negotiate the meaning and intent of their communication. Once they have understood from context the significance of these form-meaning pairings, in subsequent repetitions their attention will no longer need to be focused on deciphering the

Go Back to Menu

meaning of utterances but on understanding the form that is used to convey the meaning of these utterances. Repetition in context thus becomes a device for driving noticing of forms and subsequently learning. *Formulaic* means that the utterances elicited through these tasks are multi-word chunks (Wray, 2000) that have the potential for being used again verbatim or with only a slight modification when a similar topic is raised in communication (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005).

The Alibi Game

The Alibi game is not original to ACCESS; it was first described by Lee (1979). The game has two parts. In the first part, the students work in pairs to create an alibi in order not to be accused of having committed a crime. In the second, the pairs are interviewed separately about their alibi, and inconsistencies in their stories will decide their guilt. To design the game within the ACCESS framework, we defined a clear goal for the game. It is not just to create a story but to convince their interrogators (actually, their classmates and the teacher) that they were not at the scene of the crime. The stipulation of this overarching goal is to enhance genuine involvement in the game. Once they accept this goal, the students have to work together to create an alibi, that is, build a story of being together but away from the crime scene as convincingly as they could. To be convincing they will be compelled to negotiate with each other what details they have to give and they have to ensure that both are involved. They will also have to rehearse the story so that they will have the same answers when interrogated. In the interrogation phase, the students will have to stick to the story they created so that they will not be inconsistent with their partner. When they are asked questions they have not prepared answers to they will try to guess what their partner is likely to have said. Note that if the goal to convince is removed, the students will still create the story but not with the same involvement as when they accept the goal. Stipulating an overarching goal as this will ensure that the pattern of behavior will be same for each group of students who will use this game.

The task is genuinely communicative because it is the students themselves who decide what to say. In creating the alibi they ask questions that they really want answers to. They pay attention to the answers because they will not be able to build their alibi otherwise. The task is inherently repetitive because they have repeated occasions to use the same utterances. They use these utterances to tell a story, and to rehearse the story individually and together. In the interrogation phase, they tell the same story at different times. If they are the interrogators, a role they cannot escape playing, they need to interview each pair separately and all pairs if they need to establish who is guilty. To establish each pair's story they need to ask the same set of questions, albeit every now and then they can ask questions that the pairs may not have prepared answers to in order to "catch them". As a participant in this game each person has repeated opportunities to ask the same questions and tell the same story as well as to hear the same questions used by others and the same utterances to tell their story. The task is formulaic because it is all focused on the same set of utterances, those needed to describe past daily and weekend activities. They have high re-use potential.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Corrective Feedback

Research into oral CF has, in the last fifteen years, produced an immense body of literature that has primarily considered the types of feedback (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, 1999) and their distribution (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Sheen, 2004), the effectiveness of such techniques (e.g., Ammar, 2008; Ammar & Spada, 2006; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Lyster, 2004; Yang & Lyster, 2010) and their noticeability (e.g., Ammar & Sato, 2010; Egi, 2007; Mackey, Gass & McDonough, 2000; Mackey, Philp, Egi, Fujii & Tasumi, 2002; Philp, 2003; Trofimovich, Ammar, & Gatbonton, 2007).

Recasts, explicit feedback, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, repetition, and clarification requests are the different CF techniques found in the literature to describe the ways feedback can be provided. Originally coded by Chaudron (1977), they represent the taxonomy developed by Lyster & Ranta (1997) for the second language (L2) classroom. Later, they were re-classified (Lyster, 2004) into three categories of (a) recasts, (b) explicit correction, and (c) prompts, and most recently regrouped again into "reformulations" and "prompts" by Ranta and Lyster (2007). As Example 1 and Example 2 (adapted from Kartchava & Ammar, 2014) show, recasts and explicit correction were categorized together under "reformulations" because both supply the learner with either an implicit or explicit reformulation of the target form and are thus input-providing. Recasts can be full, partial, interrogative or integrated.

Example 1 (Recast)

Student: *I go to the movies yesterday.

*Teacher***:**
Full Recast: You went to the movies yesterday.

Partial: (you) Went

Interrogative: Where did you say you went yesterday?

Integrated: You went to the movies yesterday. Did you go alone or with a friend?

Example 2 (Explicit correction)

Student: *I go to the movies yesterday.

Teacher: We don't say **go** [stressed]; You should say **went** [stressed].

The "prompt" category (Examples 3, 4, 5, and 6), in turn, is made of four output-promoting corrective techniques, all of which are designed to push learners to recognize the corrective intent of CF and to help them fix the error on their own. It is, however, important to note that each category can differ greatly in terms of implementation and the degree of explicitness or implicitness (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006).

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Example 3 (Prompt: Metalinguistic feedback)

Student: *I go to the movies yesterday.
Teacher: It happened yesterday. What should you say?
Example 5 (Prompt: Repetition)
Student: *I go to the movies yesterday.
Teacher: You go to the movies yesterday?
Teacher: Go yesterday? Go?
Teacher: Pardon?

Example 4 (Prompt: Elicitation)

Student: *I go to the movies yesterday.
Teacher: You ***what*** [stressed] yesterday?
Example 6 (Prompt: Clarification request)
Student: *I go to the movies yesterday.

The instructional setting can also determine the frequency with which each technique is used. While recasts have been observed more often across instructional settings (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Lyster, Saito, & Sato, 2013; Sheen, 2004), explicit correction was observed to be least used (Lyster et al., 2013), with a notable exception in French as a second language classrooms in Quebec, where it is used the most (Simard & Jean, 2011). Prompts, on the other hand, seem to dominate English and Spanish immersion classes in Senegal (Vicente-Rasoamalala, 2009, cited in Lyster et al., 2013) as well as high school language classrooms in China (Yang, 2009) and Belgium (Lochtman, 2002). Interestingly, the only context where both recasts and prompts have been observed in equal proportions (41%) is high school ESL classes in Quebec (Simard & Jean, 2011).

The rate of recurrence of a particular CF technique, however, is not a guarantee that it will be noticed. In fact, despite their frequency, recasts have been observed to elicit the least amount of uptake—learner's immediate response to the teacher's feedback (Lyster & Ranta, 1997)—and repair—learner's successful repetition of the correct form or self- or peer-correction—especially in meaning-oriented contexts of Canadian ESL (Panova & Lyster, 2002) and French immersion (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). In structured adult ESL language learning contexts in New Zealand (Ellis et al., 2001) and EFL classes in Korea (Sheen, 2004), however, recasts tend to yield more uptake and repair. Yet, the absence or limited uptake does not necessarily mean that feedback has not been perceived. It could simply mean that the learner (a) does not see the importance of reacting to the correction, (b) is unable[1] or developmentally "unready" to overtly react to the feedback, or, in the case of content-based classrooms, (c) the learner perceives a recast as another way to say the same thing or as a positive reinforcement of meaning, not as a reaction to a problem of form (Long, 1996). On the other hand, simple repetition of feedback does not necessarily imply that the correction has been noticed, understood, or incorporated (Gass, 1997). Instead, it may simply be a "mimicking" (Gass, 2003, p. 236) of the feedback received, with

no analysis or revision done to the learners' interlanguage. After all, simple repetitions of recasts have been shown not to lead to L2 learning, with Mackey and Philp (1998) calling them "red herrings" (p. 338).

Investigations into the effectiveness of CF have revealed that provision of feedback yields significantly more gains in learners' performance than when no CF is offered (Lyster & Saito, 2010; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006), but it is still not clear which technique does so best. In laboratory settings, recasts have been demonstrated to facilitate L2 learning (e.g., Mackey & Philp, 1998; Leeman, 2003), but the investigations that compared recasts to other feedback types either found them more effective (Long et al., 1998; Mackey & Philp, 1998) or yielded no differences across the CF types (e.g., Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009; McDonough, 2007). In classroom-based studies, however, prompts (and in some cases, explicit correction, see Sheen, 2011; Ellis, 2012) have produced more gains than recasts (e.g., Ammar & Spada, 2006; Ellis et al., 2006; Havranek, 1999; Lyster, 2004; Yang & Lyster, 2010), suggesting that these feedback techniques differ in the type of learning opportunities they afford (Lyster & Izquierdo, 2009; Lyster & Saito, 2010). That is, whereas the effectiveness of recasts depends on their saliency and the opportunities they provide to infer corrective intent, the corrective role of prompts is signified through ample cues and output modifications.

The majority of studies into the noticeability of CF have primarily focused on the noticeability of recasts alone. However, to date, only two studies have compared the noticeability of recasts to that of other CF types such as prompts and found that prompts are not only noticed more (Ammar, 2008; Kartchava & Ammar, 2014), but that they are also more easily detected by learners who either explicitly indicate the presence of error or explain what was incorrect Ammar, 2008). The superior noticeability of prompts has been explained in terms of their saliency, since they do not only provide learners with a clue that something is wrong (i.e., they provide negative evidence) and cue the locus of the problem, but they also push them to come up with a correct form on their own (Ammar, 2008). Recasts, on the other hand, are usually initiated and completed by the teacher (Panova & Lyster, 2002), placing a burden on learners to recognize that the CF is corrective in nature. In addition, the learners have to understand the nature of the error as well as its locus, all in a short span of a discourse turn (Sheen, 2006). The combination of recasts and prompts in a classroom setting, however, has been shown to increase the noticeability of recasts since exposure to prompts can prime learners to recognize the corrective nature of recasts (Kartchava & Ammar, 2014). What has yet to be determined is whether the nature of the tasks in which CF is examined affects noticeability in any significant way. Specifically, would an ACCESS based task that is already designed to promote constant repetition of targeted structures, which can be considered to lead attention away from meaning of utterance to its form, affect the noticeability of CF in this context? The present study aims to explore this question.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

Methodology

The participants were teachers and high-beginner[2] francophone students (mean age: 20.75) of English as a second language (ESL) at a French-medium post-secondary institution (CEGEP) in the province of Quebec. The study involved four intact classes of learners ($n = 99$) and their three male teachers. At the time of the study, the participants had received three years of ESL instruction in primary school (approx. 120 hours) and five years in high school (approx. 670 hours). The teachers, in turn, were English/French bilinguals, who had taught English extensively in various settings. Each teacher was first observed[3] and then assigned to a treatment condition that fit his CF style, but the first author taught the controls (i.e., the fourth group).

Three CF types were employed: recasts, prompts, and a combination of the two types (i.e., mixed). Recasts were operationalized as a teacher's (full, partial, interrogative, or integrated) reformulation of the learner's incorrect utterance, and prompts were defined as techniques that elicited self-correction from the learner and included metalinguistic feedback, elicitation and repetition. The mixed type included both recasts and prompts.

Feedback was provided during the student-fronted portions of the ACCESS-based task (i.e., Alibi) in response to errors with the simple past and questions in the past. These linguistic targets were chosen for a number of reasons (see Kartchava & Ammar, 2014), but especially because they have been shown to be good candidates for learner improvement when targeted with CF (e.g., Mackey, 2006; McDonough, 2005; McDonough & Mackey, 2006 for questions; e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; McDonough, 2007; Yang & Lyster, 2010 for past tense). No instruction on these two structures was given prior to the intervention. The teacher of the control group ignored past tense errors, reacting to content instead.

To measure the noticeability of the CF provided, the students were instructed to write down what they were thinking when they saw a red-coloured card lifted. The card prompted the participants to respond to the following cue "*Each time you see the RED CARD, write what you are thinking <u>in relation to the lesson</u>*". The card was flashed a total of 95 times: 43 times after the past tense errors, 39 times in response to the question errors, and 13 times to divert the participants' attention from the target of the research. Learner responses were analyzed to identify the types of noticing reported and to calculate noticing scores (i.e., total reports of noticing divided by total recall instances, multiplied by 100) per learner. For the purposes of this report, only the noticing scores are considered.

Picture description and spot-the-differences tasks administered through a pre-test/post-test design were used to determine learning. In the picture description activity (designed to elicit the past tense) the participants were asked to write a story about what happened in a cartoon strip at a specified point in the past (i.e., yesterday, last week). They were also given ten telic verbs, verbs such as enter and drive that naturally call for the use of the past tense (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998; Collins, 2007) to use in their stories and were instructed to incorporate each verb at least once. The accuracy scores were calculated for each learner

Go Back to Menu

by dividing the total number of correctly supplied verbs by 10 and multiplying the total by 100.

To elicit past tense questions, students worked in pairs and were given separate accounts of a fictional character's written biography. Because the accounts differed in ten ways, the students were instructed to ask each other a minimum of ten questions to identify the differences. Each time a question was asked, it was written down by the student who asked it; these conversations were also audio-recorded. To determine the scores, the number of correctly formed questions was divided by the total number of questions supplied and then multiplied by 100 to account for the different number of questions produced by each learner. Two versions (pre-test and post-test) of the tasks were developed to counter the test-retest effect.

Results

Noticing of CF

As shown in Table 1, the students in all groups noticed the feedback provided, but the learners in both the Prompt ($M = 22.00\%$) and Mixed ($M = 29.28\%$) groups noticed the teacher's corrective intent more than those in the Recast group ($M = 6.70\%$). Analyses of variance indicated that the differences between the groups were statistically significant ($F_{(2, 76)} = 12.6$, $p = .01$). The Recast group reported significantly less noticing than both the Prompt ($p = .006$) and Mixed ($p < .001$) groups. The difference between the Prompt and Mixed groups was not statistically significant ($p = .214$).

Table 1 Reported noticing across the experimental groups (maximum score: 100%)

Group	n	M (%)	SD
Recast	31	6.70	6.57
Prompt	25	22.00	21.77
Mixed	23	29.28	24.07
Total	79	18.11	20.47

In terms of the two linguistic features, a paired-samples t-test conducted on the noticing scores per target (Table 2) yielded a statistically significant difference between the past tense noticing scores ($M = 10.11\%$) and the questions noticing scores ($M = 8.00\%$), $t_{(78)} = 3.07$, $p = .003$), suggesting that the CF on past tense errors was noticed more overall than that on questions.

Table 2 Reported noticing across the grammatical features (maximum score: 100%)

Target	M (%)	SD
Past tense	10.11	11.02
Questions	8.00	11.38

Using the data in Table 3, separate analyses of variance for each morphosyntactic feature confirmed the difference in the noticing of these two features (F (2, 76) = 23.8, p = .01 for the past errors, and F (2, 76) = 6.08, p = .004 for the errors with questions) and revealed that the Recast group reported significantly less noticing of CF for the past tense than did the Prompt (p = .039) and Mixed (p < .001) groups. For questions, the Recast group reported significantly less noticing than did the Mixed group (p = .003), but the Prompt group (p = .090) did not differ significantly from either the Recast or the Mixed group.

Table 3 Reported noticing across the grammatical features and groups (maximum score: 100%)

Group	n	Simple Past		Questions	
		M (%)	SD	M (%)	SD
Recast	31	3.47	4.37	3.22	4.65
Prompt	25	11.67	11.78	10.33	11.85
Mixed	23	17.39	11.52	11.88	14.90
Total	79	10.11	11.02	8.00	11.38

In sum, all the groups were able to notice the CF provided, but the Prompt and Mixed groups reported more noticing overall than did the Recast group. Feedback on the past tense errors was noticed more than that on the questions in the past; this was especially true of the Prompt and Mixed groups.

Learning outcomes

Table 4 shows the accuracy means across the two linguistic features and groups for the pre- and post tests. Descriptively, the means are higher for the past tense on the post test than for the questions. A paired-samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores on past tense (M = 28.70) and those for questions (M = 15.70), t (98) = 3.82, p = .006 (two-tailed), with the past-tense scores being higher than those for questions.

Table 4 Accuracy means for the past tense and questions test scores by group (maximum score: 100%)

Group	n	Past tense				Questions			
		Pre-test		Post-test		Pre-test		Post-test	
		M (%)	SD	M (%)	SD	M (%)	SD	M (%)	SD
Recast	31	22.90	31.00	22.26	27.53	15.40	19.59	14.50	18.01
Prompt	25	32.80	36.12	40.40	37.58	11.96	19.18	19.77	26.33
Mixed	23	24.78	26.95	34.34	34.62	12.43	14.46	14.56	24.71
Control	20	19.00	29.72	17.50	25.52	12.19	20.03	13.78	19.26

However, when the analyses of variance were conducted for each of the targets to determine a possible effect of intervention on the post-test scores, no significant results were found. That is, for the past tense, there was no significant relationship between test scores and group (F (3, 95) = 1.558, p =.205, partial eta squared = .047), test scores and time (F (2, 190) = 4.438, p =.10, partial eta squared = .045), and group and time (F (6, 190) = 4.342, p =.104, partial eta squared = .121). The same was true for the post-test scores for questions: there was no significant relationship between test scores and group (F (3, 95) = .530, p =.663, partial eta squared = .016), test scores and time (F (2, 190) = 1.120, p =.329, partial eta squared = .012) and group and time (F (6, 190) = 2.073, p =.058, partial eta squared = .061).

Thus, despite the significant difference between the post scores for the past tense and questions, no differences between the groups on the two linguistic targets were found.

Discussion and Implications

The goal of this study was to determine whether a task (specifically, an ACCESS-based task) affects CF noticeability and thus plays a role in promoting learning of the targeted features. The results suggest that learners noticed feedback, albeit in different amounts, and that CF may lead to learning, at least for the past tense. Yet, a closer look at the scores in Table 4 reveals that even the learners who were not given the opportunity to receive feedback on errors (i.e., the Control group) improved their post scores on the questions. It is possible, of course, to attribute this to other causes not evident here, but it is also possible that meaningful L2 practice provided by the tasks may be the reason for such learning. Investigating the direct relationship between the noticeability of CF and L2 development, Kartchava and Ammar (2013) conducted qualitative and quantitative analyses on the data reported here. They found that no direct link between the two could be unequivocally established and based the conclusion reasoning on a number of factors such as the noticing measure utilized (i.e., immediate recall), the length of intervention (i.e., 240 minutes), learners' individual cognitive (e.g., analytical ability, memory span, attention capacity) and affective (e.g., anxiety, beliefs about language learning) differences, and even the role of the task. What they did not consider, however, is the nature of tasks developed within the framework of ACCESS, the approach that requires tasks not only to be goal-oriented but also to be genuinely communicative, inherently repetitive, and formulaic, triple design criteria that turn tasks into genuine contexts for repetitive communicative language practice. This is a speculation at this point because we did not directly test the use of ACCESS tasks compared to other types of tasks, which would have been the real test of the contribution; but this particular finding of the task suggests the need to empirically test this issue.

Lightbown (2000) defined "practice" as "opportunities for meaningful language use (both receptive and productive) and for thoughtful, effortful practice of difficult linguistic features" (p. 443). Later, Ortega (2007) suggested that in order for practice to become meaningful, tasks that enable peer collaboration and are purposefully selective yet unobtrusive in terms of the linguistic code need to be employed. Specifically, she argued for a task-based

approach that marries practice with a systematic focus on form, "optimal L2 practice [...] should be interactive, truly meaningful, and with built-in focus on selective aspects of the language code that are integral to the very nature of that practice" (Ortega, 2007, p. 182).

Tasks completed in collaboration with one or more peers are argued to be advantageous over teacher-fronted activities because they allow for more student talk (Pica & Doughty, 1985), produce more opportunities to negotiate meaning (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Long, 1996), and prompt learners to pay attention to the form of their utterances (Slimani, 1991; Williams, 1999). A truly meaningful practice, in turn, refers to the personal and cognitive investment that the learner brings to a given task. The cognitive investment has to do with the cognitive demands of a task and the linguistic complexity embedded into it (Robinson, 2001). If, for example, the task is beyond the learner's current proficiency level, the task is said to be cognitively demanding and is likely to engage additional resources to execute. Similarly, if the task is cognitively challenging, the language that is needed to complete it would also need to be more complex, which will force the learner to either utilize knowledge already internalized or to seek it from an outside source (e.g., teacher, peer, resource). This is believed to engage both attentional and communicative processes that are likely to bring about more noticing of form, which will consecutively push learners to rework their existing interlanguage hypothesis as well as to establish new form-function mappings. The personal investment with a task is also considered to be important to L2 learning because a learner that is motivated to carry out a task (Dörnyei, 1994) will be more invested in the topic and more willing to take risks (Ortega, 2007). Finally, tasks with a built-in focus on form not only enhance the saliency of the target language, but also demand for learners to use the structure(s) to successfully perform the activity. As such, collaborative tasks that are engaging on the cognitive and personal level and are designed to promote both receptive and productive language use are believed to stimulate meaningful practice, which, in turn, yields optimal L2 learning.

Hence, because the two tasks reported here were completed in groups, carried personal and cognitive involvement, and naturally depended on the use of the past tense and questions in the past, it stands to reason that they may have contributed to the learning among all the participants, regardless of whether or not they were aware of the target structures. The findings here underline Ortega's (2007) assertion that language learning happens as a result of the interaction of many factors that can be learner-internal (e.g., attention to form), learner-external (e.g., a task that offers essential L2 input and feedback) or both. As such, teachers need to recognize that the tasks they utilize in the L2 classroom may be more powerful than they realize. Their power lies, among other things, in the way they are designed and carried out as well as in the opportunities they provide for an engaging "meaning-making through language and action" (Ortega, 2007, p. 198).

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Go Back to Menu

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Endnotes

1. Due to context, for instance – as in interaction, where recasts do not require a reaction from the interlocutor.

2. The participants' linguistic knowledge was determined by the in-house English language placement test administered in their first semester at the College.

3. To determine how the teachers provided feedback, the negative feedback observation scheme originally developed by Ammar and Spada (2006) was employed. The scheme, which included five columns: (1) error, (2) ignore, (3) recasts, (4) prompts, and (5) other, was used to keep a record of the errors students made in speaking as well as the CF strategies the teachers used to correct them. Every time an error was committed, it was recorded in the "error" column. If it was ignored by the teacher, a mention of this was made in the "ignore" column. However, if the teacher reacted to the error, the corrective technique used was recorded in one of the three CF columns. While Albert chose to respond primarily with recasts (Recast group), Brian showed a clear preference for prompts (Prompt group); Charles, in turn, appeared to consistently alternate between recasts and prompts (Mixed group).

USING STRUCTURAL PRIMING TASKS IN AN EAP CONTEXT

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Abstract

Using tasks in second language (L2) classrooms has been shown to create L2 learning opportunities because they encourage students to provide each other with interactional feedback, produce modified output, and attend to language form in the context of meaning. More recently, researchers have suggested that collaborative tasks may be useful because they generate opportunities for structural priming, which is the tendency to produce structures that were present in the recent discourse. This article reports on the effectiveness of structural priming tasks for encouraging students to produce relative clauses. Students in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course (*n* = 25) completed two trivia tasks and two summary tasks over a 13-week semester. Each task provided prime sentences with relative clauses, followed by prompts in the form of sentence fragments that the students completed using information in the task materials. The prompt-generated sentences that the students wrote in their task materials and produced while interacting with their peers were analysed in terms of the presence or absence of relative clauses. The findings indicated that the students produced more relative clauses during the trivia tasks than the summary tasks, and that structural priming occurred during the trivia tasks only. Issues in the design and implementation of collaborative priming tasks are discussed.

Although numerous definitions of tasks can be found in the second language (L2) acquisition and pedagogy literature (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2000; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998; Willis & Willis, 2007), they all emphasize that tasks elicit language for the purpose of communicating meaning. This key characteristic is helpful when differentiating between activities, a general category referring to all types of things instructors ask students to do in L2 classrooms, and tasks, which have a primary focus on meaning. To give a concrete example, an instructional unit about sports might have several activities, such as vocabulary building activities, a grammar review with practice items, and a reading passage with comprehension questions. And at some juncture in the unit, an instructor may ask students to exchange information about their favourite athlete with a partner, and then use the information to create trivia cards for testing their classmates' knowledge about different

Go Back to Menu

sports and athletes. Because its focus is on the communication of meaning to achieve a goal, this last activity represents a task, whereas the others were not tasks because their primary purpose was to learn or practice language forms or skills. The conceptualization of a task within the broader category of activities is captured in Bygate and colleagues' definition of a pedagogic task as "an activity, susceptible to brief or extended pedagogic intervention, which requires learners to use language, with the emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001, p. 11). Put simply, although all tasks are activities, not all activities are tasks. And the key feature of a task is that it focuses on meaning and has a goal, objective or purpose that transcends language or skill practice.

Besides debate about the definition of a task, another topic in the L2 acquisition and pedagogy literature is how to incorporate tasks into L2 teaching. In my own work, I have found Ellis's (2003) three-way distinction among task-based, task-referenced, and task-supported language teaching to be helpful for clarifying the role that tasks serve in a particular instructional context. Task-based language teaching typically follows from a needs analysis to determine what purposes learners have in studying the language and to identify the types of tasks they need to accomplish in the target language. The curriculum is then organized around these tasks, which form the basic unit of syllabus design. In task-referenced language teaching, however, tasks serve as a reference point whose accomplishment serves as the goal of instruction. In other words, being able to do the task is the desired outcome of instruction, and the skills required to accomplish that task become the focus of instruction. However, tasks might not serve as the basic unit of syllabus design and not all of the instructional activities are tasks. Finally, task-supported language teaching involves the incorporation of tasks into an existing curriculum that is neither designed around nor referenced to tasks. In my research in EFL classrooms in Thailand and EAP writing classes in Canada, task-supported language teaching has been the most common approach to using tasks. These courses were organized around benchmarks or program objectives, such as reaching a certain level of proficiency, demonstrating key competencies, or achieving certain skills that are a prerequisite to the next course, and tasks were integrated into a global approach to instruction in ways that supported specific objectives within a unit or lesson.

Having outlined what tasks are and how they can be incorporated into different approaches to L2 teaching, the next important question to address is why L2 instructors should use them. From the perspective of the interaction hypothesis (Gass, 2003; Long, 1996; Mackey, 2012), the meaningful interaction that occurs when learners carry out tasks creates opportunities for them to provide and receive interactional feedback, modify their language use in response to that feedback, and attend to form in the context of meaning, all of which have been associated with L2 development. From the perspective of sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2011; Swain, 2006), task interaction encourages learners to co-construct meaning by contributing aspects of language and content to the conversation in ways that help them appropriate new knowledge and consolidate their existing knowledge. More recently, my colleagues and I have suggested that task interaction also may be

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

useful because it provides learners with language production opportunities in the form of structural priming (McDonough, 2011; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2010; McDonough & Trofimovich, 2008), which is the tendency to produce structures that were present in the recent discourse. Tasks designed to elicit structural priming provide models of target structures (i.e., primes) and elicit production of those structures through fragments that the students use to generate their own utterances (i.e., prompts), but the primary focus remains on the communication of meaning to obtain a goal or objective. Structural priming tasks may help L2 students access language forms during spontaneous, meaningful communication, thereby helping them consolidate their linguistic knowledge and develop automatic procedures for accessing that knowledge. For students who are acquiring developmentally-advanced or complex forms, structural priming activities may encourage production of those forms, as opposed to interlanguage or simple forms.

Structural priming research originated in psycholinguistics and only recently has been applied to L2 acquisition and pedagogy. Originally defined by Bock (1986), structural priming is a cognitive repetition phenomenon, specifically the tendency for a speaker to produce a structure that was encountered in the recent discourse rather than an alternative structure (for an overview of structural priming see Pickering & Ferreira, 2008.) More simply, language users are sensitive to the language forms that occur in their own or their interlocutors' prior speech. The presence of a specific structure in the prior speech (referred to as a prime) essentially leads speakers to subsequently produce that same structure. Even though different lexical items might be used to express new ideas, the underlying structure of a subsequent sentence is more likely to be the same as a sentence that was just spoken or heard. When speakers repeatedly produce their own prior structure, it is called within-speaker priming, but when speakers reuse structures initially produced by an interlocutor, it is called between-speaker priming. In structural priming research, participants are exposed to prime sentences that have a specific target structure, after which they are asked to generate new utterances using prompts that contain a few key words (such as a verb or noun) or a sentence fragment. The expectation is that participants will generate utterances from the prompts that have the same underlying structure as the prime sentences.

An example of within-speaker priming from the data in the current study is provided in (1). Student A received task materials that contained some sentences with relative clauses, which were the primes, and some fragments that needed to be completed using information that had been provided, which were the prompts. In turn (i), the student shared the prime sentence with her partner, who guessed incorrectly that the statement is true, and then she explained why the sentence is actually false. In turn (v), the item in the task materials was a prompt, so it only provided the fragment *people are influenced by being in environments*. She completed the prompt by producing a new relative clause (*where happiness or sadness influences behaviour*). This is taken as evidence of sensitivity to structures in the prior discourse because student A could have produced a variety of forms to complete the prompt, such as a preposition phrase (*with emotions*).

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

(1) Within-speaker priming

i	A:	A test that measures animal intelligence is currently available for several species
ii	B:	True?
iii	A:	It's false 'cause there's no test for measuring animal's intelligence. This makes it very difficult to compare intelligence across species.
iv	B:	okay
v	A:	Only people are influenced by being in environments where happiness or sadness influences behaviour. It's true or false?
vi	B:	True.
vii	A:	It's false because for example happy experience will make a cat friendly.

An example of between-speaker priming is shown in (2). In this example, student A produced a belief statement with a relative clause (*who are first born*) in (i). Student B guessed that the statement is false, and student A confirmed the guess and provided more information. When it was student B's chance to state a belief in turn (iv), he generated a sentence from the prompt in his task materials, which was a head noun (*animals*) without any modifying information. He produced a sentence with a relative clause (*that can understand and use mirrors*). Because other structures could have expressed a similar meaning, such as a prepositional phrase (*with the ability to use mirrors*) or a participle (*using mirrors*), speaker B's use of a relative clause can be considered sensitivity to his interlocutor's previous language form.

(2) Between-speaker priming

i	A:	Okay, children <u>who are first born</u> have greater achievements than their later-born siblings.
ii	B:	False?
iii	A:	Yeah. Birth order does not determine your children's IQ. It's yours.
iv	B:	okay. Animals <u>that can understand and use mirrors</u> show the highest sign of animal intelligence.

To create a task that maximizes speakers' tendency to reuse their own and their interlocutors' previous structures, task materials provide primes to model the target structure, and prompts that can be completed using the same structure as the prime or an alternative structure. It is expected that speakers will use the prompts to generate sentences that have the same structure of the prime, even though they could express similar meanings using alternative structures. In order to provide evidence of either within-speaker or between-speaker structural priming, a speaker's production of the target structure should be greater following a prime sentence than in the absence of a prime sentence. Previous classroom-based studies have shown that structural priming tasks were successful at eliciting English *wh*-questions with obligatory auxiliary verbs during face-to-face interaction (McDonough, 2011; McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2010) and Spanish nominal clauses during computer chat sessions (Collentine & Collentine, 2013), which suggests that priming tasks may be another way for L2 instructors to provide students with opportunities to access target language structures during meaning-based peer interaction. By eliciting production of a

grammatical structure with a wide variety of lexical items during meaningful communication, structural priming tasks may help L2 students develop automatic procedures for accessing their linguistic knowledge, build and strengthen form-meaning mappings, and move away from lexically-specific constructions toward more abstract representations.

However, little is known about what kinds of structural priming tasks are more effective at encouraging L2 students to produce target structures during task-based interaction in classroom settings. Research in laboratory contexts has shown that priming tasks that have the same key lexical item (a noun or verb) in both the prime and the subsequent prompt encourage both L1 (Pickering & Branigan, 1998) and L2 speakers (Kim & McDonough, 2008; McDonough, 2011) to produce more target structures than tasks with more lexical diversity across primes and prompts. However, tasks with more varied lexical items in the primes and prompts may have a longer lasting effect on speakers' subsequent production (McDonough & Kim, 2009). As part of a larger research project (McDonough, Neumann, & Trofimovich, in review; Trofimovich, McDonough, & Foote, 2014), this study further explores the impact of task design on structural priming tasks by comparing the effectiveness of two task types, trivia tasks and summary tasks, at eliciting L2 students' production of relative clauses. The larger project targeted two additional structures (passives and adverbial clauses) and included a comparison group, but the manuscripts to date only have reported the findings for the trivia tasks. Therefore, the current study focuses on comparing the effectiveness of the trivia and summary tasks for eliciting one of the target structures, specifically relative clauses. This study investigates two research questions: (a) which task is more effective at encouraging EAP students to produce relative clauses? and (b) while carrying out both task types, do the students produce more relative clauses after prime sentences?

Method

Participants and Instructional Context

The participants were 25 English L2 students (17 men, 8 women) enrolled in undergraduate (24) and graduate (1) degree programs at Concordia University. Approximately half of the participants were international students who recently had arrived in Canada to pursue academic degrees, while the other half were permanent residents of Canada. Reflecting this difference, their length of residence in Canada varied considerably from two weeks to six years, with a mean of 16.2 months ($SD = 14.2$). Their age ranged from 17 to 25 years, with a mean 20.6 years ($SD = 1.5$). They were studying academic disciplines in the faculties of Business (10), Engineering (10), and Arts and Sciences (5). In terms of their prior amount of English instruction, the students had studied from one to 14 years, with a mean of 8.4 years ($SD = 3.4$). They spoke a variety of first languages (L1), which included Chinese (16), Arabic (3), Spanish (3), and French (3).

The students had fulfilled the university's basic English proficiency requirement for admission to academic degree programs (i.e., a TOEFL iBT score between 75 and 89 or equivalent), but they were required to take an English for academic purposes (EAP) writing

class due to their performance on a university placement test. The EAP class met for two, three-hour classes per week, and targeted general academic language skills, specifically reading strategies, vocabulary and grammatical structures commonly found in academic texts, and paragraph-level writing. The class did not focus on oral academic English skills, but students had opportunities to speak English with their peers during pair or small group activities, such as when brainstorming ideas before writing and discussing comprehension questions about reading passages in the textbook. The course textbook was organized by themes, and each chapter included metalinguistic information about vocabulary and grammatical structures, along with sentence-level grammar practice activities. However, the grammar practice activities were not integrated with the content or theme of the chapters, and did not have a communicative function. The instructor typically asked the students to read the grammar information in the textbook and complete the practice activities outside class, and then provided correct answers and addressed any questions in a subsequent class period.

Materials

Four collaborative priming activities were designed to provide students with opportunities to discuss two chapter themes (socialization and intelligence) and use relative clauses during their discussions, which was the target structure of those chapters. The task design principles were that the tasks had to elicit meaning-focused interaction (as opposed to mechanical grammar practice), provide content information that complemented the textbook themes, and serve multiple pedagogical functions simultaneously. Representative pedagogical functions included introducing the theme of a new chapter, highlighting key ideas about the topic, soliciting students' prior knowledge and beliefs, and providing ideas that students could refer to in their subsequent writing assignments. Two task types were created, which were a trivia task and a summary task, and one task of each type was designed for use in each chapter, which resulted in a total of four tasks (see Table 1).

Table 1

Tasks by Unit, Theme, Type and Topic

Unit	Theme	Task type	Topic: Student A	Topic: Student B
4	Socialization	Trivia	Domestic violence	Marriage & divorce
		Summary	Canadian residential schools	American boarding schools
9	Intelligence	Trivia	Human IQ	Animal cognition
		Summary	Dolphins & sea mines	Rats & land mines

The goal of the trivia task was for the students to test their partners' knowledge about the topic by asking whether they thought a set of statements about the topic was true or false. The task materials contained ten statements and provided supplemental information that students could use to explain their answers. The goal of the summary task was to consolidate

a reading passage into a short summary, which was then shared with a partner before comparing how the content of both passages related to a more general topic. The summary task materials consisted of a short passage about the topic, and a series of statements that paraphrased information from the texts. After the trivia or summary components, both task types presented open-ended discussion questions that linked the topics to the theme and activities of the textbook.

In terms of the structural priming design element, all four tasks provided each student with five primes which contained a relative clause and five prompts which were fragments with a head noun. The task materials provided information that the students used to complete the prompts, and they were free to express that information in any way they wanted. The prompts were created to make a variety of responses possible in order to determine whether the presence of a prime sentence would lead the students to generate sentences from the prompts with relative clauses, as opposed to alternative structures, such as prepositional phrases, infinitive clauses, or participial phrases.

An example of a prime followed by a prompt for the divorce trivia task is provided in Table 2. The left column of the task materials contained statements about the topic, while the right column provided supplementary information that the student could use to complete the prompts, explain why a statement was true or false, or elaborate. In Table 2, the first statement is a prime sentence with a relative clause (*who get married again after divorce*), while the second statement is a prompt in the form of a sentence fragment with a head noun (*people*) and main clause that students can modify by using information in the supplementary information column. If students are influenced by the relative clause in the prime sentence, they are likely to modify the head noun in the prompt with a relative clause, such as *people who live together before marriage*. However, alternate structures could be used to complete the prompt, such as a prepositional phrase (*people with live-in partners*) or a participial phrase (*people living together*).

Table 2

Prime-Prompt Sequence: Divorce Trivia Task

Statements	Supplementary information
People who get married again after a divorce presumably have a more successful second marriage.	Although presumably people learn from their mistakes, research shows that the divorce rate of second marriages is higher than the divorce rate of first marriages.
People..................................reduce their chance of going through an eventual divorce. Hint: *Before marriage?*	Many studies find that living together before marriage is linked to a considerably higher chance of going through an eventual divorce.

The summary task provided each student with a short text to summarise, along with five primes and five prompts. The primes and prompts consisted of noun phrases that could

serve as the subjects of students' summary sentences. To help them locate the relevant information in the text, hints about the key ideas to be summarised were provided. However, while the noun phrases of the primes included a relative clause, the noun phrases for the prompts contained head nouns only. For example, the dolphin sea mine task shown in Table 3 contained a prime with a head noun (*enemy mines)* and a relative clause (*that have been left in the ocean*) and the students completed the sentence by stating what happened to those mines. In contrast, the prompt presented a head noun only (*damage*), along with the hint about what information could be used to complete the sentence. If influenced by the prime, the students would complete the prompt by producing a relative clause (*damage that is caused by sea mines*), instead of using an alternate way of modifying the head noun, such as prepositional phrases (*damage to Navy ships*) or an adverbial phrase (*damage since 1950*).

Table 3

Prime-Prompt Sequence: Dolphin Sea Mine Summary Task

Text	Summary sentences
Enemy sea mines on the ocean floor explode when large ships pass by. Since 1950, almost all of the damage to US Navy ships has been caused by sea mines. During the first Gulf War, two Navy ships—the USS Princeton and the USS Tripoli— were severely damaged. Many crew members suffered injuries caused by mines in the Persian Gulf.	1. Enemy mines that have been left in the ocean…. *Hint: what happens?* 2. Damage… *Hint: To/by what?*

Procedure

All four tasks were given to the EAP class instructor at the beginning of the semester, and she incorporated them into her lessons based on how she wanted to link the tasks to the other activities in the unit, such as by introducing the chapter theme or to provide additional ideas to supplement a reading passage in the textbook. Depending on when she incorporated the tasks into the unit, the students may or may not have reviewed the grammar information in the textbook. For example, if a task was used to introduce the chapter theme, then the students would not have been asked to review the grammar beforehand. In order to use class time efficiently, she distributed the task materials at the end of a class and asked the students to read the materials and complete the prompts as homework. This created opportunities for within-speaker priming in the written modality to occur prior to the students' peer interaction in the following class period. There was considerable variation, however, in the students' use of the task materials outside of class. While some students read the task materials, completed the prompts, and brought them to the next class, other students failed to complete the prompts or forgot to bring them. In the subsequent class period, the students worked in pairs to carry out the tasks, which

Go Back to Menu

created opportunities for both within-speaker and between-speaker priming to occur in the spoken modality. Once the students had finished sharing information, they then discussed the open-ended questions that further linked the topics to the chapter theme and elicited their opinions. After the students finished the discussion questions, the instructor then transitioned from the tasks to the next activity in the lesson, such as a reading or prewriting activity. The interaction between the students while carrying out the tasks was audio-recorded using individual digital recorders (one recorder per pair), and their written task materials were photocopied.

Analysis

The audio-recordings were transcribed and verified by research assistants. The prompt-generated sentences that the students had written on the task materials and produced while interacting with their peers were coded in terms of their grammatical structure, specifically whether they contained a relative clause. Prompt-generated sentences were coded as having a relative clause if there was an overt relative pronoun (*that, who, which*) or adverb (*where, when, why*) and a tensed verb in a subordinate clause that functioned to modify a head noun. When coding relative clauses, grammar errors unrelated to relative clause formation, such as subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, or articles, were not considered. Examples of prompt-generated sentences coded as having a relative clause are provided in (3). The transcripts were also checked to ensure that the relative clause primes were produced, as students could choose to skip, ignore, or modify the primes when carrying out the tasks.

(3) Prompt-generated sentences with relative clauses

a. Mine is about Canadian resident school system and the children *that go to the schools.*

b. People *who listening to classical music* are creative and smart.

c. Goldfish *who live in small fish bowls* have no awareness of their environment.

d. If the rat go to the uh place *that has landmine* they will stop and dig.

As part of the larger study (McDonough et al., in review), a research assistant coded a subset of the entire data set (28%) for interrater reliability. Cohen's kappa was .95, which indicates a high level of agreement. There were eight disagreements (out of 442 coding decisions) which were resolved through discussion. The final coding decisions reached through discussion were included in the analysis.

To answer the first research question about the effectiveness of trivia and summary tasks at eliciting relative clauses, the proportion of prompt-generated sentences with relative clauses produced by each student for each task type was calculated, with separate scores obtained for the written task materials and oral peer interaction. Proportion scores were calculated by dividing the number of prompt-generated sentences with relative clauses by a students' total number of prompt-generated sentences. Proportion scores were used instead of raw frequency counts because the total number of prompts that each student

completed varied across the four tasks, and the proportion scores were converted to percentages, which are more intuitive measures. Because the focus of the study was on task types instead of individual tasks, the students' performance on the two trivia tasks was combined, as was their performance on the two summary tasks.

For the second research question, which asked whether the students produced more relative clauses after primes, proportion scores that reflected two discourse contexts were compared: when the prompt-generated relative clauses were preceded by prime sentences or when they occurred in the absence of prime sentences. The prime sentence could be produced by the same student (within-speaker priming) or a peer (between-speaker priming). Because the prompts in the written hand-outs were always preceded by a prime sentence, only the oral peer interaction data was included in the analysis for the second research question. The proportion scores were converted to percentages to facilitate interpretation. Due to the small sample size and high variability in scores, non-parametric statistics were used. Alpha was set at .05 for all statistical tests.

Results

The first research question asked which task type was more effective at encouraging the students to produce relative clauses. The percentage of target sentences with a relative clause in the students' written task materials and during their oral task interaction is shown in Table 4. Whereas 16% of the prompt-generated sentences that the students wrote in trivia task materials contained relative clauses, only 4% of their prompt-generated sentences in the summary task materials had relative clauses. The same pattern was found in the students' oral production while carrying out the tasks with a peer. Whereas 37% of their prompt-generated sentences contained relative clauses during the trivia tasks, only 4% had relative clauses for the summary tasks. Wilcoxon signed-ranks tests (a non-parametric paired-samples t-test) indicated that the difference in scores for the trivia and summary tasks was significant for both the written and oral data (see Table 4). The effect sizes (Cohen's d) indicate that the task differences fell within the range of values typically described as large. In sum, the findings for the first research question indicated that the trivia task was more effective at eliciting relative clauses in both in the written task materials and during oral peer interaction.

Table 4

Percentage of Relative Clauses by Data Source and Task Type

	Trivia task (n = 22)		Summary task (n =24)		Statistics		
	M %	SD	M %	SD	Z	p	d
Written task materials	16	13.29	4	3.47	3.27	.001	1.19
Oral task interaction	37	18.61	4	7.89	3.99	.001	2.26

The second research question asked whether the students' production of relative clauses was greater after prime sentences. Based on the structural priming research, it was expected that students would produce more prompt-generated sentences with relative clauses when relative clause primes had appeared in the previous discourse context. Because the prompts in the written task materials were always preceded by a prime sentence, only the students' oral interaction while carrying out the tasks was analysed for evidence of structural priming. For each task type, the percentage of relative clauses produced from prompts following a prime sentence was compared to the percentage of relative clauses produced from prompts in the absence of primes. As shown in Figure 1, the trivia task elicited a greater percentage of relative clause targets when there was a preceding prime sentence ($M = 22$, $SD = 16.95$), than when no prime had occurred ($M = 11$, $SD = 13.53$). A Wilcoxon signed-ranks test indicated that the difference was significant ($Z = 2.30$, $p = .022$, and the effect size fell in the range of values typically described as medium ($d = .71$).

However, the students' production of relative clause targets during the summary task was minimally affected by discourse context, with a mean of 3% ($SD = 3.58$) following primes and 2% ($SD = 6.94$) in the absence of primes, which was not a significant difference ($Z = 1.08$, $p = .279$) and had an effect size below the value described as small ($d = .17$). In sum, the students' production of relative clause targets showed evidence of structural priming for the trivia task only.

Discussion

The goal of this classroom-based research study was to explore which type of structural priming tasks was more effective for providing students with opportunities to produce relative clauses in meaningful contexts. The trivia tasks were more effective than summary
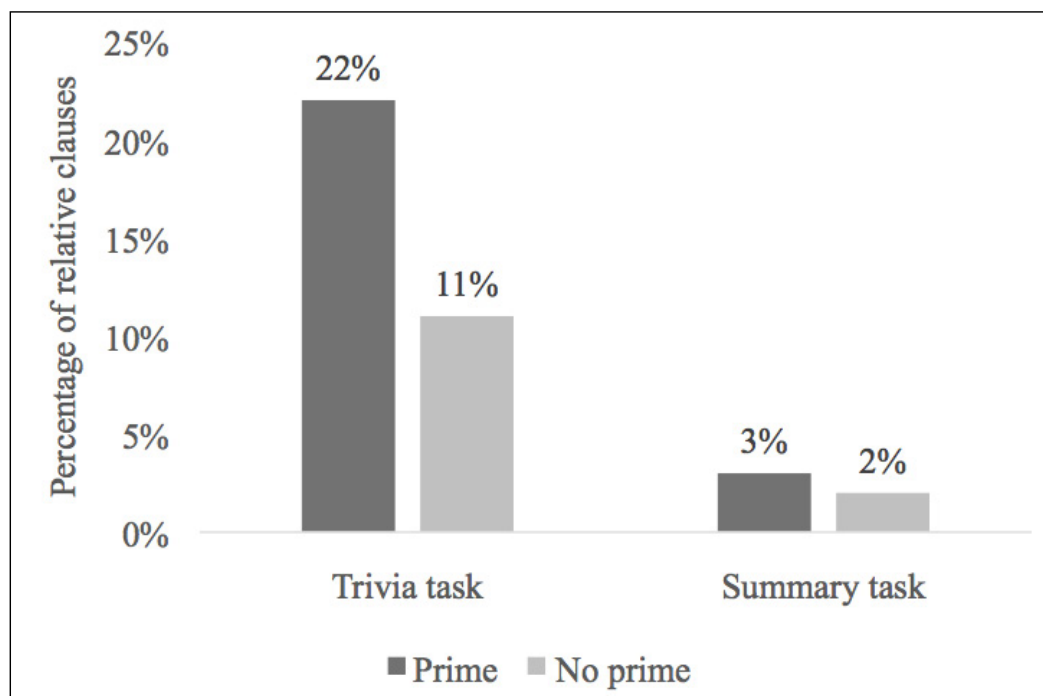

Figure 1. Percentage of prompt-generated sentences with relative clauses by task and discourse context.

tasks at eliciting relative clauses in both the written task materials and during oral peer interaction. Furthermore, only the students' interaction while carrying out the trivia tasks showed evidence of structural priming, which was operationalized as greater production of relative clauses following prime sentences than in the absence of primes. Thus, the study confirmed previous classroom-based studies that described the occurrence of structural priming during computer-mediated peer interaction (Collentine & Collentine, 2013) and the use of collaborative priming tasks to elicit target grammatical structures (McDonough & Chaikitmongkol, 2010). However, the findings revealed a task difference, as trivia tasks elicited more relative clauses and showed evidence of structural priming whereas the summary tasks did not.

An interesting question then is why the trivia tasks were more effective than the summary tasks. One possible explanation is that the trivia tasks were more interactive than the summary tasks, and this greater interactivity created opportunities for both within-speaker and between-speaker priming. Similar to other types of communicative tasks, such as jigsaw tasks, the trivia tasks had what Pica and colleagues (Pica, Kanagy, & Faludon, 1993) referred to as a required exchange of information. In other words, it was not possible to accomplish the task goal without each student sharing statements and responding to the statements of a partner. An example of the interactivity typical of the students' interaction while carrying out the trivia task is provided in (4). Student A provided her partner with a prime sentence in turn (i) and clarified the answer in turn (iii). When student B has an opportunity to state a belief, he used a prompt to generate a sentence with a relative clause in turn (iv).

(4) Interactivity during trivia tasks

i   A: Animal don't communicate the same emotion that people experience.
ii   B: true.
iii   A: No it's false. The research show that animal do communicate some basic emotion like joy, anger and grief.
iv   B: Children who first born have greater achievements than their later born siblings.
v   A: uh true?
vi   B: no uh false. First born children do not have more achievements than their later born siblings. It doesn't determine a child's IQ.

In contrast to the interactivity associated with trivia tasks, the summary tasks were characterized by long turns in which each student summarised the entire content of their reading passage while the partner listened, which limited priming opportunities to within-speaker priming only. Because the goal was to summarise the entire content of the reading passage, there was no need for the students to interrupt each other or take turns while they were summarising. In fact, it would have been more difficult to comprehend each other's information if the students had taken turns to state one sentence at a time. Consequently, it was more efficient and comprehensible to deliver the entire summary in a single turn, which resulted in few opportunities for them to "pick up" the language

Go Back to Menu

structures produced by their peers. An example of the long turns commonly found during the summary tasks is provided in (5). After student A finished describing the passage he had read about residential schools for aboriginal children in Canada, student B began to summarise her passage about Native American boarding schools in the U.S. After a single clarification question in turn (ii), student B explained the entire content of the passage for her partner without any interruptions or clarifications. Because student B never produced a single relative clause, including the primes with relative clause that were provided in the task materials, there was no opportunity for within-speaker priming to occur. And because student A did not have any reason to interrupt, clarify, or participate while student B was delivering information, she did not produce any language that could prime student B.

(5) Long student turns during summary tasks

i   B: My story is like similar as yours. Story talk about the Native, Native American.

ii   A: Native American?

iii   B: Canada and United States, two countries like before white people only native people there, so after the white people come from like British and French, they come and built settlement in U.S., and in U.S. it has Native American boarding school. This school is kind of similar as your school. It take student only for native people. They take them from they are very little, and take them to the boarding school and do the haircuts and told them they only can speak in English. Also, they need to wear uniform and they are taken from school, and during the summer vacation, they cannot come back to their family, and they need to work in the farm. And if the family don't want to give their children to the school, they were punished by violence. So, during those time like from the late nineteen century and until nineteen twenty eight, it's like hundreds of thousands of Native Indians are attended Indian boarding school.

Even though the summary task did require that the students exchange information in order to complete the open-ended discussion questions (i.e., *which government eventually showed better behaviour or policy?*), there was no communicative obligation to interact with a partner while listening to the summary. Furthermore, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, summarising a text may lend itself to descriptive rhetorical structures that can be accomplished through relatively basic grammatical forms, whereas the trivia task may have required rhetorical structures that involve more complex grammatical forms.

Another possible explanation for the divergent findings for the trivia and summary tasks is prompt design. The prompts for the trivia task were fragments that consisted of a head noun and a main clause, and the information to be supplied functioned to modify the head noun. By creating such a constrained prompt, the students had fewer options for completing the prompt because there are a limited number of grammatical forms that can function as post-nominal modifiers (i.e., relative clauses, infinitives, participles, and prepositional phrases). In contrast, the prompts for the summary tasks consisted of a head noun only. Consequently, the students had more options about how to complete the prompts using the information provided. Although using more constrained prompts may have resulted in greater production of relative clauses during the summary task, it may

not have been as effective for helping students acquire the ability to summarise. One of the key skills in summarising is deciding which information in the texts is a main idea that needs to be communicated, as opposed to minor details that do not need to be mentioned. Having constrained prompts in the summary tasks, although they might elicit more relative clauses, would not allow students to make decisions about what information is important to mention when summarising.

Based on the findings of the current study, there are several implications for the design and implementation of collaborative priming tasks in L2 classrooms. One consideration in using structural priming tasks is how to integrate them into a broader instructional sequence, such as a lesson or unit, in ways that maintain a primary focus on the communication of meaning rather than mechanical grammar practice. The tasks described here were used to bridge the gap between the chapter themes and grammar information in textbook by providing students with opportunities to exchange information and opinions about the chapter themes while using target grammar structures. Both tasks were designed to provide students with content that they could use to clarify their ideas about the chapter theme, provide additional information to support ideas expressed in the textbook, or provide examples that could be referred to in their writing assignments. It may be useful for L2 instructors interested in using structural priming tasks to identify key goals or objectives that the tasks should serve besides providing language production opportunities, in order to ensure that the primary focus of the tasks remains on the communication of meaning.

In terms of more specific design principles, when possible, it may be helpful to create priming tasks that are interactive. The inherent interactivity of the trivia tasks may have contributed to their greater effectiveness, which is suggested by previous priming studies that also implemented tasks with a required exchange of information. However, as was the case for the summary tasks, not all tasks lend themselves to interactivity. The rhetorical structures associated with different task types should be considered, as some genres may naturally elicit basic or complex grammatical structures. Another important consideration concerns prompt design. Although constrained prompts may limit the pool of possible structures and elicit more target structures, using more open prompts provides students with greater autonomy in deciding what information to communicate. In terms of the primes embedded in the tasks, a variety of factors will influence how many to include, but incorporating as many primes as possible may be useful. For example, the trivia and summary tasks each had five primes per student, but not all primes were produced when the students interacted with their peers. For both tasks, an average of only three prime sentences were produced by each student per task. Students may have omitted some primes for a variety of reasons, including being unsure of or uninterested in the content, having to share task materials with another student, such as if there were an odd number of students in class, or not having enough time to complete the tasks. In light of all these factors, it can be useful create tasks with enough primes so that each student will have sufficient opportunities to prime themselves and their partner.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

It might be advantageous to mix the primes and prompts into a task in a more varied order than used in the current tasks. These task materials were organized so that students had a prime as their first sentence followed by a prompt, and this alternation between primes and prompts was maintained. It was expected that students would work through the primes and prompts as they were presented in the task materials, and many pairs did so. However, some students chose to share information with each other in ways that deviated from this pattern. For example, some students shared all their prime sentences first, only after which they generated sentences from the prompts. Because it is difficult to predict how students will chose to implement task materials, it can be useful to embed multiple opportunities for priming into the tasks, both between- and within-speaker priming.

And finally, priming tasks may still be useful for eliciting production of target structures even if students do not complete task materials in advance. As evidenced by the greater production of relative clauses during peer interaction (.37) than in the written task materials (.16) for the trivia tasks, the students were able to generate target structures without prior preparation. The divergence between the students' written and oral task performance also suggests that it is not the case that they simply read previously prepared sentences from their task materials to each other. If that were the case, the percentage of prompt-generated sentences with relative clauses would be the same for both data sources. Instead, their production of relative clauses during peer interaction was greater than their use of relative clauses in the written materials, which suggests that they were producing relative clauses spontaneously while carrying out the tasks with their peers.

As is the case with most research, the current study has several limitations that highlight avenues for future research. Because the priming tasks were implemented in a single EAP class, the sample size is relatively small and limited to academically-oriented L2 students. Further studies with more students in a variety of instructional settings are needed to confirm the findings. Even though the larger research project (McDonough et al., in review) included two additional structures (passives and adverbial clauses), the range of English structures targeted in priming research remains fairly limited. Future research that targets additional structures is needed, particularly structures that are taught to students at different proficiency levels or have been shown to be difficult for students to acquire. As mentioned previously, the structural priming tasks in previous studies have been information-exchange tasks, so little is known about which task design elements are most important for creating effective priming tasks. The current study included a new task type, the summary task, but found that it was not as successful at eliciting relative clauses as the information-exchange trivia tasks, which highlights the need to investigate tasks that target a wide range of rhetorical structures. Additional research is needed to identify more diverse priming task types so that instructors across L2 settings have access to tasks that support their objectives and complement their students' proficiency levels. By investigating these issues through classroom-based research, hopefully future studies will be able to identify the key task-design and implementation principles necessary to create effective structural priming tasks.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

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Acknowledgements

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PORTFOLIO BASED LANGUAGE ASSESS-MENT (PBLA) IN CANADIAN IMMIGRANT LANGUAGE TRAINING: HAVE WE GOT IT WRONG?

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Abstract

In 2013, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) announced that Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) would be implemented across Canada in all Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) programs. Although the use of portfolio approaches to support language learning for immigrants is well-considered in the research literature (cf. Little, 2005; 2007), the PBLA approach was new to most LINC programs in Canada, and research exploring its use has largely taken place in the context of field tests or initial implementation (Fox & Fraser, 2012; Ripley, 2012). The present longitudinal case study (Yin, 2009) reports on issues arising from PBLA use over time, namely, the shift in emphasis to summative (i.e., achievement or product-centred) assessment, and away from formative (i.e., feedback in support of learning or process-centred) assessment. Drawing on the accounts of five LINC teachers over two years of PBLA use, evidence suggests there is a critical need to reinforce the formative use of PBLA as an important teaching and learning resource in the on-going development of LINC students' self-assessment, goal-setting, and autonomy.

The impetus for this article was a bulletin issued by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in March 2013, announcing the forthcoming implementation of Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) across Canada, in all Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes:

> Citizenship and Immigration Canada is introducing Portfolio-Based Language Assessment (PBLA) as a standard feature of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and the Cours de langue pour les immigrants au Canada (CLIC) programming beginning with contributions for 2013–2014. The PBLA will be phased in across LINC and CLIC over a three-year period... **The PBLA is being introduced to address the need for a standardized in-class language assessment protocol** in LINC and CLIC. (CIC Operational Bulletin 510, 2013; Emphasis added)

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

What is concerning in the above excerpt from the CIC bulletin, is the stated purpose for the PBLA, namely, to address "the need for a standardized in-class language assessment protocol." *Standardized* language assessment is measurement-driven assessment, most often associated with statistical or psychometric approaches to tests and testing (McCallin, 2006). "Standardization is an environment in which the test taker instructions, the test settings, and the scoring...follow the same detailed procedures...[which lead] to comparable measurement" (McCallin, 2006, p. 635). Standardized assessment *protocols* are systematic, controlled procedures outlined and enforced across contexts for purposes of reliability and validity, and are also associated with measurement models and testing. As Downing (2006) points out, "Standardization is a common method of experimental control for all tests" (p. 125). In the context of portfolio assessment, therefore, these may be considered code-words for a summative assessment emphasis (i.e., assessment *of* learning outcomes or end products), but the history of portfolio assessment use for summative purposes is highly problematic (Fox, 2008).

Before considering the use of PBLA in LINC, it is important to provide background on two distinct types of portfolios, drawing on the long history of portfolio assessment in the language assessment literature (Fox, 2008, 2009; Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000; Hirvela, 1997, Ripley, 2012). In general, portfolios require learners to collect multiple samples of their work over time in a binder, folder, or dossier, as evidence of their learning. Whereas *showcase* portfolios, as the name implies, provide a site for showcasing samples of end-of-unit or course achievement, *working* portfolios are repositories of work-in-progress, highlighting development over time. Thus, showcase portfolios tend to serve *summative* (achievement) purposes, allowing for assessment of performances or "competencies in a given standard, goal or objective" (Johnson, Mims-Cox & Doyle-Nichols, 2010, p. 5). On the other hand, working portfolios serve primarily *formative* assessment purposes (Black & Wiliam, 1998, 2001), that is assessment *for* or *while* learning. Although at the end of a unit or course, examples of student work may be selected to serve summative evaluation purposes, the primary emphasis in a working portfolio is on development of learning over time. The working portfolio serves as the evidentiary base of that development.

Showcase portfolios have occasionally been used for summative purposes in some large-scale contexts (Fox, 2008), but challenges to the validity, reliability, and consistency of such assessment have been widely discussed in the testing literature (Bachman, 2002). Portfolio assessment relies on procedures that require subjective judgment not only in *evaluating* performance, but also in selecting *what* is to be assessed.

Even with on-going training, rater consistency in traditional approaches to language testing is an on-going issue. In such testing, however, the test typically remains as *constant* as possible, so that all raters are rating performances elicited by the *same* test tasks, under conditions which are as similar as possible (e.g. in terms of task demands, time allowed, resources drawn on to support the task); whereas, in portfolio assessment, both tasks and performances vary, because they originate in individual work undertaken in unique

classroom settings or outside the classroom, and they are subject to differing teaching conditions and constraints (Haque & Cray, 2010).

Further, the summative use of portfolio assessment, particularly that which results in external (i.e., outside the classroom) review of some kind, can create considerable stress for teachers, who may be required to select student work for display and evaluation as evidence of achievement during a course. In some contexts, teachers are required to showcase work predetermined by curricular specifications (rather than having the freedom to select what they consider a students' best evidence of achievement; Callahan, 2001; Spalding & Cummins, 1998; Ripley, 2012). Students may not view a selection of their work as convincing evidence of their performance or capability in a language. They may continue to place more stock in traditional tests and grades as evidence of their achievement (Lam & Lee, 2010).

At the same time, other research on portfolio assessment (Fox, 2009; Fox & Hartwick, 2011; Little, 2005, 2007, 2013) suggests considerable benefits to learners when portfolios are used primarily for *formative* assessment purposes. Encouraging learners to take a more active role in their learning through the development of their portfolios, in which they collect evidence of their work over time, has been shown to increase their engagement and has resulted in improved attendance and increasing self-reflection (Little, 2005, 2013). As a result, learners are more likely to develop increased skill in self-assessment, in setting personal goals for their learning, and in becoming more autonomous. These benefits are, however, largely associated with dynamic working portfolios, active repositories of both students' work-in-progress as well as completed projects. Such portfolios provide evidence of language development over time and become the nexus of teacher-student interactions about learning and the context for student (and teacher) reflections on learning. In other words, they serve as assessment for learning or formative purposes, which are at "the heart of effective teaching" (Black & Wiliam, 2001, p.1).

Thus, working portfolios are distinctly different from showcase (i.e., summative) portfolios, which display tests or end-of-unit projects and are achievement-centred. Although over an expanse of time if work from multiple courses is collected and displayed in a showcase portfolio, it is possible for conscientious learners to review their progress and become more aware of it through increased reflection, the gains are necessarily limited. First, work that is included is most often selected (or heavily influenced by) the teacher as evidence of learning at the end of a unit or course. Typically, performances on assessment tasks or language tests are favoured for *show* over class work (i.e., exercises, plans, drafts, etc.) that is evidence of learning-in-progress. Second, there is little day-to-day interaction between teachers and learners over a showcase portfolio. It is like a folder-sized report card, rather than a gradually developed repository of student work-in-progress. Third, the contents are fixed and static reflections showcasing what a learner could do at a particular point in time. The showcasing of student learning differs from the dynamic process of development

captured by the working portfolio, which encourages interaction between teachers and students over time, and while learning is taking place.

Little's (2005) research highlights the potential of portfolios developed for formative purposes in his consideration of the European Language Portfolio (ELP). The ELP is used in relation to the proficiency criteria elaborated in the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2011). In language teaching provided to immigrants in many of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, evidence of learning is collected in the ELP and referenced to the CEFR criteria (cf. the Canadian Language Benchmarks (2012) in the Canadian context).

Little (2005) emphasizes the formative potential of the ELP in his consideration of the key questions that can be addressed through its use, namely: "What are we learning? Why are we learning it? How are we learning it? With how much success? [and] What are we going to learn next?" (Little, 2005, p. 322). He points out that only one of these questions (i.e., *With how much success*?) is responded to with a showcase approach to portfolio assessment.

The ELP experience has demonstrated how much more is possible when the other four questions are also considered, and formative assessment is central to portfolio use. In general, proponents of portfolio assessment (Fox & Hartwick, 2011; Little, 2005; Hirvela, 1997) consistently argue its merits as a vehicle for enhanced formative assessment.

Research on the impact of PBLA in LINC classes in Canada

The CIC announcement that the PBLA would be implemented in all LINC classes across Canada followed years of field testing the approach in several Canadian provinces and multiple programs (Pettis, 2010; Ripley, 2012). Research conducted on the initial impact of the PBLA approach on teaching and learning is of particular interest as background to the present study. For example, Ripley (2012) reports on a small-scale, qualitative exploration of PBLA implementation in a field test of the approach in a large Canadian city. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with four LINC teachers, Ripley highlights their increased understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses as a result of the PBLA. This understanding was linked by the participants to the collection of multiple samples of student work produced over time, in other words, to PBLA's formative potential. The participants noted that such collections afforded far more evidence of language development than the test scores and grades resulting from traditional assessment approaches (e.g., final essays, tests). At the same time, there was general acknowledgment that the approach increased the use of rubrics and consistency in the assessment of proficiency using CLB benchmarks.

Ripley concludes by calling for a large-scale, quantitative study of PBLA impact to extend his findings. Such a large-scale, quantitative study (Fox & Fraser, 2012) was conducted in another province from 2010-2012 in the context of a subsequent PBLA field test. This study examined the impact of PBLA on LINC teachers (N=119), teaching in literacy-level to level-4 classes in a large Canadian city in 17 programs and LINC students in

those levels (N=774)[1] who were enrolled at any time during the field test. Fox and Fraser report statistically significant changes in LINC teachers' accounts of the CLB, task-based instruction and assessment, and portfolio-based assessment as an outcome of initial PBLA implementation. They also report on statistically significant changes in students' responses to how much time they reported reviewing and reflecting upon their work and how well they maintained a record of their learning. Their findings of students' increased reflection and better management of their class work are in keeping with other reported results of increased learner engagement, reflection, and autonomy (Little, 2005).

To date, both the Ripley study of PBLA implementation and that of Fox and Fraser have suggested its potential to enhance teaching and learning. The questions explored by the present study are

1. How are LINC teachers using PBLA two years after implementation?

2. Are there noticeable trends in use over time?

3. Is there evidence that PBLA is realizing its formative potential?

Specifically, the present study documented benefits and challenges of PBLA in LINC over a two-year period through a narrative of experience of one LINC teacher, working in a LINC program in a large Canadian city. Her narrative of PBLA in practice is examined in relation to the responses of four other LINC teachers, three who participated in semi-structured interviews periodically during the same period, and one who acted as a key informant (Yin, 2009). These roles are further explained in the Method section below.

Method

As indicated above, a case study approach (Yin, 2009) was used to explore the use of the PBLA over a two year period (from 2012-2014) in four LINC programs in a large Canadian city.

Participants

The LINC teachers who participated in the study had taken part in the PBLA orientation workshops and the initial introduction of the approach during 2010–2012. They were female, between the ages of 26 and 54. The participants (Table 1) differed in teaching experience, from four years to over 20 years, had taught multiple LINC levels prior to their participation in the study, and had either completed or were in the process of completing Master's degrees with an emphasis on Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

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1. Data were collected and entered for a total of 774 students, however only 159 of these students responded sufficiently (i.e., by answering a minimum of 4 of 7 key questions) to the three questionnaires (i.e., baseline, mid- and final). There was a 20% return rate across the three questionnaires. These data were used for the analysis of PBLA impact in the study.

Table 1. Overview of Participants by role, PBLA experience, context and age (n=5)*

Pseudonym	Role	LINC	School	Age
Molly	Respondent (interviewee)	Levels 2/3	Small language school; fixed intakes	26
Min	Respondent (interviewee)	Level 3	Same school as Molly	44
Mickey	Respondent (interviewee)	Level 4	Large program with continuous intake	46
Alice	Participant-observer (contributed field notes; diary; personal narrative)	Level 3/4	Large program with fixed intakes	35
Grace	Key Informant (extended interpretation; commentary)	None	Large program with fixed intakes	54

*The participants were also teaching LINC classes at levels other that those where the PBLA was introduced (e.g., Levels 5 and above), but only the classes affected by PBLA implementation were discussed here

Pseudonyms are used in describing the participants in relation to the roles each played in the study. Further details are provided below about the backgrounds and roles each of the participants played in the study.

Alice (participant-observer)

Alice had been teaching in LINC programs for seven years at the time of the study. She was particularly interested in the PBLA because she was also studying in a Master's program in applied linguistics and the focus of her interest and thesis research was curricular reform. She saw the PBLA as an example of potentially positive curricular reform and agreed to keep field notes and diary entries over the course of the study. In addition to field notes and diary entries, she also agreed to write a narrative of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), which would account for her lived, personal practical experience with the approach in her own classroom and school. Her narrative of experience provided an insider's perspective, perceiving "reality from the viewpoint of someone inside the case study rather than external to it" (Yin, 2009, p. 116). She was teaching LINC levels 3/4 (combined in one class for grouping purposes) in a large program, which was administered through a local school board.

Grace (key informant)

Grace had completed her MA in TESL several years before becoming a LINC teacher. She had developed familiarity with portfolio assessment approaches as part of her experience teaching writing in Toronto to adult language learners. She participated in the initial PBLA orientation workshops and volunteered for the study, but by 2012 she was teaching at LINC levels 5 and 6 (where PBLA was not implemented). Grace *informed* the present research, commenting on its interpretation as a *key informant,* providing corroborating and contradictory evidence of how PBLA was playing out in practice in another school. Grace was also an insider, but her role differed from that of Alice in that she helped to clarify, extend, and interpret the study's findings by relating them to her experience in another large LINC program. Although she has since retired, she continued to review and comment on the study's findings until its completion early in 2014.

Molly, Min, and Mickey (respondents)

Molly was the youngest participant at 26. She had been teaching in two different LINC programs for a total of four years. At the time of the study, she was teaching LINC levels 2/3 in a small private language school with fixed intake. Min, who was in her mid-forties at the time of the study, was teaching in the same school at level 3. Mickey was also in her mid-forties, teaching in a large program with continuous intake at level 3/4. The respondents participated in semi-structured interviews (Appendix A) at intervals during the course of the study.

Analysis

Applying a modified constructivist grounded theory analytical approach (Charmaz, 2006), we identified commonly recurring themes through analysis of (a) the narrative of experience provided by Alice, (b) the commentary and insights provided by the key informant, Grace; and (c) the semi-structured interviews with other LINC teachers, Molly, Min, and Mickey. Two researchers coded a sample of written transcripts of the data. Inter-rater reliability was satisfactory (r=.96) with 92% agreement. The actual wording of themes and categories was negotiated.

The role of the key informant, Grace, became increasingly important over the course of the study. Whereas the four LINC teachers who actively participated in the study knew that I would be asking them about PBLA and were thus more likely to have specific commentary on its use, Grace provided commentary on the participants' accounts in relation to PBLA use where it was only one of many elements at play (i.e., where PBLA was occurring, in its *natural habitat*), and not influenced by the study's focus. Without Grace's commentary, the account of PBLA use presented here might have been distorted by the focus of the research itself.

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Findings and Discussion

Over the period of the study, and drawing on all of the data provided by the participants, I clustered comments into two principal categories: benefits and challenges. Within these categories, recurring themes (and at times sub-themes) were also evident in the data. Four of these themes are discussed below in relation to the questions guiding the study: How are LINC teachers using PBLA two years after implementation? Are there noticeable trends in use over time? Is there evidence that PBLA is realizing its formative potential?

Theme 1: Increased planning and accountability

There was evidence in the comments of the participants that one benefit of the PBLA was an increased focus on planning and structuring lessons in relation to the learning outcomes identified in the CLB. As Alice noted, "In a nutshell, the benefits of the PBLA are that it has improved my CLB assessment practices and increased my use of CLB in my planning."

Similar accounts were evident in the responses of the three participants to the one-on-one interviews. Mickey pointed out, "The whole process [referring to PBLA] has made us more accountable, you know. I really think about planning my lessons now with the CLB. I'm much more aware of this in my planning now." *Accountability* was mentioned in another interview with Molly, who also linked it to on-going portfolio assessment: "I think we really see the work in a different way now and so do the students, although at times it's hard to agree on exactly what we should put in there [referring to the portfolio itself]." Min also referred to accountability when discussing the renewed emphasis on planning in her school. Referring to the PBLA she noted, "it's a good thing . . . it makes teachers more accountable."

Although at the beginning of the study, Grace also commented on increased planning and accountability as a result of the implementation of PBLA, she attributed this to teachers' fears and concerns that they might be monitored by what she referred to as the "portfolio police." She observed that over the period of the study the impact of PBLA on planning and accountability changed considerably:

> Last year they [LINC teachers] made a big effort with it [PBLA]. This year they let it go by the wayside. They are not as obsessed with it as they were a year or two ago when they felt much more pressure. There's no monitoring. There's a lot of flexibility. I don't think that teachers think about [PBLA] and how they use it when they plan lessons now; not the CLB either, when they plan, not directly. They use their general knowledge of CLB perhaps.

As she read over the comments of the four other LINC teachers participating in the study, she observed, "I just don't know teachers like this". In her view, there was "100% variability" in the approaches taken by individual teachers to both the use of the CLB and PBLA. She noted in her final contribution to the study early in 2014, there is "no one watching," and so "teachers are free to do what they choose." She observed:

No one's really talking about it. Teachers are doing different things. Most have said, I'm not doing it now as well as I did last year. It's there but I'm not using it as much. Not that they don't do testing; they are thinking of the portfolio and the task, and coming up with an evaluation strategy, activity, objectives. . . some have adopted it , but I'm only aware of one other teacher who is actively using PBLA -- like the teachers in the study are. Most of the teachers I know don't think about PBLA when they plan lessons. They don't think about CLB when they plan. Not directly, anyway. They may use their general knowledge of it I suppose.

As Grace's comment suggests, although the four teacher-participants in the study actively continued to incorporate PBLA, to use the CLB in their planning, and to see this activity related to accountability and improved structuring and organization of their lessons, the key informant suggests that this recurrent theme may have had more to do with their participation in the study than may be the case in LINC programs in general.

Theme 2: Clearer articulation of rationales for activity and expectations

Over the period of the study, Alice repeatedly noted in her field notes that she was spending a lot more time explaining why she was introducing particular activities in her classes. For example, early in September she wrote, "[I] am informing the students on a regular basis *why* we were doing a certain task and what CLB outcomes we could achieve by doing the task." As she gained more experience with PBLA, her attempts to clearly define the rationale for specific in-class activity in relation to the CLB became increasingly sophisticated:

> So this term, which started Jan. 24th, I have given the students a course outline with CLB outcomes required to move a level; themes and topics that will be covered; expectations for attendance, etc. I went through the course outline and I asked the PBLA lead to go over the CLB outcomes. (I divided the outcomes into four groups according to the CLB, e.g., interacting with others, giving instructions, getting things done, and sharing information). Now we do a task and after completing the task I ask the students to look up the outcomes and tell me which outcome we worked on.

Although the teachers in the study reported that they were increasingly clear themselves about the outcomes which they hoped to achieve as a result of activity they were undertaking in a class, they did not feel their students generally understood, or had the capacity to (or interest in) evaluating their own progress. As Alice noted in a field note comment after a particularly frustrating class,

> After conferencing for twenty minutes with each student, explicitly and implicitly discussing CLB benchmarks, four of my students asked me about citizenship.

When I told them they do not have the required benchmark to apply for citizenship, they asked me "What is a benchmark"?

Or, as Mickey explained in one of the semi-structured interviews,

I use the CLB now, and I explain like a benchmark to my students, but "telling won't make it so." It's a real challenge figuring out how to help them understand what we are doing and why we are doing it. It's a leap in thinking for them –more than just a language issue.

However, Mickey goes on to explain how the portfolio helps support her students' understanding:

The portfolio can help here though, because we can look back at what they did and how they did it, and then we can use this to help them see there were changes and that these changes are described by the benchmarks. This doesn't automatically work though, but it is useful.

Grace also confirmed that teachers had found the portfolio helpful when they reviewed the collected work together with their students. For example, she commented, "One of the main things is PBLA is good if a student thinks he should be moved to a higher level. The teacher can look in the portfolio at results and attendance with the student as proof he is not ready."

As a group, the teachers reported some on-going resistance and reluctance on the part of some students to take some responsibility for their own assessment. As Alice pointed out in her field notes:

My students were again assessed at regular intervals and asked to collect evidence, but some refused to choose their best work to include as a sample of their learning:

Student 1: "I don't know which my best is. You should tell me what to put in."

Student 2: "I don't know in which section to put in my work."

Grace confirmed that most teachers felt that asking students to select what they put in their portfolios "just created confusion." She observed that, "usually the teacher decides what goes in the portfolio."

Grace also commented on the challenges involved in encouraging students to self-assess their own work, "I don't think anyone—teachers or students—is talking about reflection. No one is using self-reflection or pushing self-assessment." She also suggested that such self-assessment had limited value, explaining, "There's too much to teach and assess."

Throughout the two years of the study, Grace's comments consistently suggested great variability across LINC teachers in her program. She noted that some teachers were using

the portfolio for final benchmarking; others were putting work in the portfolio, but not using it for benchmarking because, in her view, "they already know what their students are capable of." As a result, she didn't see that they needed the portfolio for this. She also pointed out that other teachers were "ignoring it entirely," explaining, "it's in the back of the room and there it sits."

Theme 3: Increased awareness of assessment

Over the period of the study, comments of all the participants suggest that the trend across LINC classes and programs has been toward increased assessment. For example, in her narrative of experience, Alice emphasized the formative potential of the PBLA as a key benefit of the approach:

> I find that when my students understand the explicit objective behind a task or an activity and the learning processes that are engaged by the task, it increases their active participation. When my students are more involved, they tend to reflect on their learning more actively, to self-assess their progress, and hopefully this will support their goal setting. Because of the portfolio, I accumulate more evidence of individual students' progress, which can also promote self-assessment and goal setting for my students, and support my own understanding of and reflection on what to do next, how to do it, what is working, what is not working, and so on.

Although all of the participants reported an increased awareness of assessment and generally saw this increase in awareness as beneficial, they did not agree on the primary purposes it served. The majority of the participants in this study responded to PBLA as primarily a summative resource. Alice, however, frequently identified its formative potential as key. In her narrative of experience she reflects on developmental changes that have occurred as a result of patient and persistent work with her students, using the PBLA approach:

> From the outset, then, the students' responses clearly indicate a lack of awareness of their language abilities, their needs, limitations, and proficiency. However, asking these questions explicitly is having some impact. I am working with my students to develop more self-awareness. Just having collected evidence of what they have done in their portfolios give us a place to jointly reflect on what was clear and what wasn't. Like all learning, the gradual development of self-assessment, realistic goal setting, and taking responsibility for setting a personal agenda for learning, requires a lot of support and patience on my part. The good news is, over time, I have seen a change.

Grace confirmed the overall increase in assessment, but primarily with regard to rubrics and testing: "[one result of] the use of the portfolio, I agree, is more testing being done, more than previously. Testing has increased."

All of the teachers reported challenges in supporting students' active involvement in assessment. For example, Mickey explained:

> My students wanted me to be the teacher. They think I should be the one to evaluate and they often don't see the value of their own reflections. They say, "if I knew how to assess what I'm doing, I wouldn't need to study English. I don't know enough. And I like knowing what you [the teacher] thinks (sic)."Min also reported similar experiences with her students: "it's a long and difficult road to get them to take up some of the responsibility for assessment; it's just not part of their experience of, you know, what school is all about, of school culture."

In her narrative of experience, Alice wrote:

> I found that the students were hesitant to choose samples for the portfolios. I still had to give summative assessment to accumulate evidence of students' learning. Even after doing this, at the end of the term before the benchmarking and conferencing, 50% of the students did not put their tests in the portfolio binder. When asked, the students said that they wanted to take it home to look at it.

She goes on to report,

> My students' lack of involvement in selecting their work samples to show progress in the portfolio, and the requirement to collect evidence of students' learning, has increased the need for classroom assessment. Some students still do not understand the use of their portfolio binder. When they come from other schools, they either do not bring their portfolio or they bring an empty portfolio to the class, which defeats the whole purpose of the portfolio.

Although most of the research on portfolio assessment suggests that students who engage in portfolio assessment develop skills in self-assessment and are more reflective, more likely to set goals, and more autonomous (cf. Little, 2005), clearly this is a challenging aspect of implementation. As Alice writes in her narrative of experience:

> It also takes time to involve students in organizing their portfolios and taking more responsibility for their learning process. If I do not monitor every step, students will just file their rubrics and feedback from the assessment in their portfolio and pay no attention to the feedback. The assessments, instead of encouraging learner self-assessment, undermine the impact of the feedback I give them on exercises and activities we undertake in class.

The evidence collected over two years in the context of this study suggests that the dominant trend in PBLA use has been toward increased assessment which serves summative (not formative) purposes (see, Theme 4, below).

Go Back to Menu

Theme 4: The emphasis on summative assessment

In both her field notes and her narrative of experience Alice noted that if students are not supported over time in collecting and reflecting on their work in their portfolios, the portfolio can become a "static" (i.e., *showcase*) repository of documents. Given the challenges the teacher-participants faced in supporting student understanding of and participation in active portfolio use, the "easy way out", Min reported, was to use the portfolio solely for summative purposes. As Grace observed, "In my experience, observing how teachers are using the portfolio, it's mostly something that they put things in, and it is summative!"

The increasing emphasis placed on summative assessment was evident in the comments collected over time for this study. For example, after the first year of implementation Molly commented, "It seems to me there are actually two different groups in my school. Some of the teachers seem to test a lot more; and some just seem to ignore it [PBLA], although I think the group of teachers who are actively using it is increasing." At the end of the study, however, Molly consistently related the PBLA to the "testing of end products or outcomes", the "best work in the course" or to "rubrics we develop to mark what students actually produce". Only rarely did she refer to the portfolio as a collection of work in progress, which might be used for formative assessment purposes.

Molly's increasing emphasis on summative assessment was similar to the trends reported by the key informant, who provided the following description of her own program during the first year of PBLA implementation:

> Right now there's complete silence on the issue. Basically no one is talking about <u>rubrics</u>, about <u>tests</u>, about filling the portfolio, or about how to create authentic tasks. The only conversation will likely come in January when <u>progress reports </u>have to be completed, although even there, the number of complaints has dropped significantly.

Thus, even early in its implementation, as the underlined phrases in the above quote suggest, the emphasis in PBLA use seems to have been summative. Alice and Mickey were exceptions to this, attempting to use the portfolio for formative purposes, and at times reporting substantive benefits to their teaching and their students' learning as a result of their efforts. However, as discussed above, they also experienced considerable frustration and limited success. Grace's observations may be far more representative of what is happening generally with the PBLA in LINC classrooms two years after its implementation: "Binders sit at the back of the classroom. They sit in the back; they are not central. At times there's a flurry of activity to put stuff in. But, it's just for show!"

Conclusion

This two-year longitudinal case study was guided by these three research questions: How are LINC teachers using PBLA two years after implementation? Are there noticeable trends in use over time? Is there evidence that PBLA is realizing its formative potential?

Analysis of the five LINC teacher-participants' responses to *PBLA-in-practice* resulted in the identification of four recurring themes, which accounted for trends in its use over time: (a) increased planning and accountability; (b) the clearer articulation of goals for activity; (c) increased awareness of assessment; and (d) increased emphasis on summative assessment. Of these, only "clearer articulation of goals for activity" is consistent with formative purposes for portfolio assessment, and yet, portfolio assessment is most useful when it is used for formative purposes (Fox, 2008; Little, 2005), when working portfolios become an interactional site for teachers and learners to reflect on learning past and present and set individual goals for learning in future. Conversely, there is considerable evidence (Fox, 2008; Hargreaves, Earl, & Schmidt, 2002) that when portfolios are used for summative purposes, they are problematic. The findings of this study suggest that, two years after initial implementation, the PBLA may not be realizing its full potential.

Further, the evident variability amongst LINC teachers in their use (or non-use) of PBLA in the context of the study is concerning. Perhaps new curricular support materials for PBLA, which are to be available to LINC teachers in the coming months, will help to reinforce consistent use of the PBLA and reassert a formative assessment purpose. However, as discussed at the beginning of this study, recent CIC policy statements suggest a context in which PBLA is expected to be *summative* in-class assessment, and this may be reflected in the trend to summative use. If the summative or showcase approach continues to dominate, it will undermine PBLA's potential as an important support for learning and teaching and a useful alternative to traditional language testing.

Little (2005, 2007, 2013), like the other portfolio advocates cited in this article, emphasizes the formative assessment function of a portfolio as its main benefit and provides empirical evidence of its success as a strategy which can develop a learners' self-assessment, autonomy, and goal setting ability. Although the ELP, which Little references in his work, is also used for summative purposes, these do not dominate. Indeed, it is the formative assessment role the ELP plays that provides the essential rationale for its use.

This study suggests that we may be getting portfolio assessment wrong in LINC classes. Although the focus of the present article was on the drift to summative assessment, other issues were clear in the data considered for this study, including increasing demands on teachers' time due to portfolio assessment, excessive work load burdens created for teachers due to a lack of curricular resources, and problems and confusion in using the CLB as an "index of proficiency" (Larsen-Freeman, 2013, p. 10). Given space limitations, these issues were not discussed here.

As PBLA is currently being rolled out in LINC classrooms across Canada, there is a critical need for rethinking and rearticulating the purposes for portfolio assessment in LINC, to prevent it from becoming just a bulky file of student work, and to realize its potential as a dynamic mediating support for learning.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

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Go Back to Menu

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Appendix A

Questions used for semi-structured interviews (Molly, Min, and Mickey).

1. So, tell me, how are things going?

2. Have there been any changes since we last spoke?

3. Has anything surprised you?

4. What seems to be working really well?

5. Have you encountered any issues?

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Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

INTERACTIONAL COMPETENCE: CAN IT BE TAPPED ON CLB-BASED TESTS?

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Abstract

Interactional competence (IC) is identified by many scholars as important to the success of communication in first (L1) and subsequent (L2) settings. The Canadian Language Benchmarks acknowledges this importance in two ways: 1) by including aspects of IC, such as turn-taking and register, among the proficiency level descriptors, and 2) by the numerous examples of tasks that require IC to be successfully managed by L2 users. The study reported on here is an analysis of the interactional features of candidate responses to different CLB task types. A checklist of operationalized features of IC was developed and applied to speech samples from role plays and semi-structured interviews. The analysis indicated that the two different task types presented different opportunities to display features of IC. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for the development of test tasks and rating scales.

The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) "is a descriptive scale of language ability in English as a Second Language (ESL) written as 12 benchmarks or reference points along a continuum from basic to advanced" (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012, p. V). In addition to acting as a national standard for planning curricula, the CLB serves as a framework for assessing adult second language (L2) learners in Canada. The framework is used in a number of spoken proficiency tests, including the CLB Exit Tasks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2007), The Canadian Language Benchmarks Placement Test (CLBPT; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2011) and the Workplace Language Assessment (WLA; Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2009). These different tests use a variety of language elicitation tasks; among them are semi-scripted interviews, role plays, and long-turn responses to a written stimulus.

In direct tests of spoken English, that is, tests that involve a face-to-face interaction with an interlocutor, the test task plays a critical role in the nature of the language produced in the interaction between the test taker and the examiner. Tasks and their associated scoring criteria reflect and inform the construct being tested (Vidaković & Galaczi, 2013), and therefore need to be investigated as part of the on-going validation process to confirm or disconfirm the assumptions that underlie the test construct (Messick, 1996). Recent

conceptualizations of what it means to be competent in a second language have begun to emphasize the social nature of communication and the importance of interaction in making meaning (Chalhoub-Deville, 2003; McNamara, 2001). This has resulted in a shift in the understanding of competence from one that sees it as an individual trait or a mental activity within an individual (Canale & Swain, 1980), to one that recognizes that interaction is a social activity and that competence is "mediated by moment-by-moment interactional contingencies" (Young & He, 1998). Theorists working from this latter perspective contend that all communication involves the co-construction of meaning and that therefore all participants in an exchange are responsible for creating meaning in an interactive practice (Hall, 1995). To be competent, then, means to be interactionally competent, a conceptualization of competence in which participants draw on resources to shape co-constructed meaning in a dynamic process. An apt metaphor is the tennis match, where two players together, acting and reacting to each other's moves, create "the game." Walsh (2012) employs another useful metaphor, when he clarifies that interactional competence concerns "confluence: the act of making spoken language fluent together with another speaker" (p. 3).

The purpose of this study was to identify and better understand the features of IC that occur in CLB-based tests of L2 spoken English. Building on previous inventories of operationalized features of IC, we developed a checklist and applied it to the performances of L2 speakers completing CLB role plays and semi-structured interviews. A modified conversation analysis approach was used to identify and analyze the interactional resources candidates deployed in completion of these test tasks.

Interactional Competence and Validation

The way that competence is conceptualized in a language test has important implications for the development of language elicitation tasks and for the assessment tools used for the rating of language (Vidaković & Galaczi, 2013). Historically, competence has been seen to reside in the individual as knowledge that is retrievable with differing degrees of success depending on the context in which it is used (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980). A socio-cultural perspective of communication (Jacoby & Ochs, 1995; Vygotsky, 1981), on the other hand, sees competence as always co-constructed in a dynamic process where the responsibility for creating understanding is distributed between or among interlocutors. This conceptualization of the shared responsibility of meaning-making is captured in what Kramsch (1986) coined "interactional competence" (IC), whereby successful interaction "presupposes not only a shared knowledge of the world, the reference to a common external context of communication, but also the construction of a shared internal context or 'sphere of inter-subjectivity' that is built through the collaborative efforts of the interactional partners" (p. 367). Young and He (1998) also stress the co-construction involved in performance and the situated quality of competence: "interactional competence is not an attribute of an individual participant, and thus we cannot say that an individual is interactionally competent" (p. 7).

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

A key underlying assumption of IC, then, is that meaning is co-constructed and that the responsibility for the quality of the interaction is shared. This assumption has important implications for the direct testing of language proficiency. First, it raises the issue of whether or not individual scores should be awarded for what is seen as a joint performance. Another concern is what role examiner contributions play in the interaction. There is ample research to suggest that in direct testing of oral proficiency there is always an interlocutor effect on interaction, whether the interlocutor is an examiner (Johnson, 2001; Lazaraton, 1996; Lumley & Brown, 1996; Ross & Berwick, 1992) or a peer (Egyűd & Glover, 2001; Galaczi, 2008; Iwashita, 1998; Kormos, 1999; Lazaraton, 2002). Even when examiner contributions are strictly controlled through the use of completely scripted interviews, the presence of the examiner is always evident in the interaction (O'Loughlin, 1997). The question is whether attempts should be made to control for the effect of the examiner-interlocutor interaction or whether the examiner-interlocutor interaction should be included in the construct. From an IC perspective, the examiner is clearly part of the construct of competence and one which needs to be addressed and accounted for in task design, examiner training, and scoring criteria and procedures.

Although not explicitly mentioned in CLB documents, principles of IC underlie the CLB's approach to language competence. Modelled on a communicative language ability framework (Bachman & Palmer, 1996), the CLB includes strategic competence descriptors in all levels of the speaking scale. There are different definitions of strategic competence including Canale & Swain (1980), Bachman (1990) and Tarone (1981). The latter defines it as "the mutual attempt by two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where the requisite meaning structures do not appear to be shared" (p. 288). The organization scheme for the CLB performance tasks, *interacting with others, giving instructions, getting things done,* and *sharing information*, also appears to recognize the importance of interactional competencies in communication (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2012).

The CLB test tasks and scoring parameters also implicitly acknowledge the importance of interaction in the assessment of spoken competence. The CLB Exit Tasks (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2007), the CLBPT (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2011) and the WLA (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2009) are all direct tests of spoken English conducted between an examiner-interviewer and a test taker. A basic assumption in direct proficiency testing is that competence can be observed only in meaningful communication between two or more people, a view of competence aligned closely with the principles of IC. The CLB-based language elicitation tasks—interviews, role plays, and long-turn responses to written prompts followed by a question-answer session—all involve differing degrees and types of interaction between the test taker and the examiner. The scoring criteria of CLB speaking tests also reflect features of IC. For example, the CLBPT scoring criteria require raters to consider whether the test taker "responds appropriately" and "can interact comfortably and appropriately" (Centre for Canadian Benchmarks, 2011, p. 69). In addition, the overall scoring descriptor, "The speaker effectively meets all the task requirements," in the CLB Exit Tasks Speaking

Task Scoring Grid subsumes many of the features of IC (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2007, p. 107) because it acknowledges the goal-oriented nature of interaction. The WLA rubric includes the descriptors, "sample provided exhibits the quality of a friendly conversation" and "speech exhibits the qualities expected in an employment interview", both of which can be interpreted as addressing the test taker's ability to understand the interactional conventions of these two genres (Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2009, p. 9).

Assumptions underlying the test construct are just that—assumptions. Evidence needs to be amassed to support the assumptions and inferences we make based on test takers' performances on test tasks (Cronbach, 1971; Kane, 2013; Messick, 1996). This on-going validation process generally involves either making *a priori* judgments about a task's potential to elicit operationalized features of the construct or conducting empirical investigations of actual samples of the interactions that occur during testing events. This study takes the latter approach in order to understand what features of interactional competence (IC) are evident in the interactions in Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) tests of spoken English.

Operationalizing the Construct of IC

However one conceptualizes competence, the construct needs to be operationalized in meaningful, observable terms that illustrate the potential of tasks to elicit a range of features that comprise IC. As a starting point, Young (2000) identifies three general types of interactional resources that participants can deploy in an interaction: identity, linguistic, and interactional resources. Kramsch provides a description that relies less on resources and more on behaviours, when she notes that interactional competence involves

> negotiating intended meanings, adjusting one's speech to the effect one intends to have on the listener, anticipating the listener's response and possible misunderstandings, clarifying one's own and the other's intentions, and arriving at the closest possible match between intended, perceived, and anticipated meanings. (1986, p. 387)

In an attempt to provide clear descriptors of behaviours that comprise IC, several researchers have analysed the actual speech samples produced in the context of group and paired-format testing (Galaczi, 2003; O'Sullivan, Weir and Saville, 2002). Through an iterative process of drafting, applying, and evaluating their checklist, O'Sullivan et al. (2002) developed a list of language functions representing the construct of spoken language ability, including interactional features that test takers use in different tasks. They identified two general categories of interactional features that test tasks may elicit: interactional functions (e.g., challenging, (dis)agreeing, persuading) and managing interactions (e.g., initiating, changing, reciprocity). Galaczi (2003) also examined the interactions between test candidates in paired format tests and found that these interactions could be characterized as one of four main types of co-construction: collaborative interaction, parallel interaction,

asymmetric interaction, and blended interaction. Researching group test format discourse, He and Dai (2006) identified interactional language functions as (dis)agreeing, asking for opinions, challenging, supporting, modifying, persuading, developing and negotiating meaning. In her research, May (2011) examined the features of IC that are salient to raters of oral proficiency. From the comments made by raters scoring paired format tests, she identified the three macro-categories of "the extent to which the candidate was able to understand the interlocutor's message, respond to the interlocutor appropriately and use communicative strategies appropriately" (p. 9). Brooks (2009) compared the interactional features that occur in paired formats and traditional oral proficiency interviews. Applying a form of conversation analysis to two different test formats, she identified a number of interactional features and their frequencies. Another body of research has examined interview format tests for their potential to elicit features of IC and how the nature of test interview discourse differs from ordinary conversation (Johnson, 2001; Lazaraton, 1992; 1996; Van Lier, 1989). Generally, these researchers found that the test interview format has limited ability to tap the full range of interactional features that are found in other forms of discourse such as conversation.

The Study

The present study is situated within the body of research mentioned above. The goal of this study is to understand the potential for CLB tasks to elicit features of IC. Specifically, it seeks to answer the question: What interactional resources do test takers use in different CLB test tasks?

To answer this question, samples of test-taker responses to different CLB-based test tasks were examined. The test-taker responses came from support materials included in the testing packages. These materials were originally produced by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks for the purpose of training test personnel to (a) identify the correct CLB level of performance and (b) follow appropriate procedures in eliciting speech samples. The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks authorized our use of these samples for the purpose of this research, with the stipulation that the exact prompts be kept confidential.

Nine role plays and five semi-structured interviews from the CLB Exit Tasks, one semi-structured interview from the Workplace Language Assessment Exit Tasks, and two semi-structured interviews from the CLBPT assessors' training videos were analysed. All test tasks were completed by different test takers; the proficiency levels of the performances in the interviews ranged from CLB levels 5–7, and 4–10 for the role plays.

A checklist of the operationalized features of IC was developed and applied to the speech samples to identify which features were present in each interaction. A modified conversational analysis was used to complete the analysis. Conversational analysis is an inductive data-driven approach that seeks to identify recurring patterns of interaction (Liddicoat, 2011; Heritage & Clayman, 2010). The overall goal of conversational analysis is to understand how participants in a conversation maintain the interaction (Woofitt, 2005)

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

and to "identify and describe recurrent patterns of organization, present in a variety of materials produced by a range of speakers, and to do the same for deviant cases, in which some regularly produced form or procedure is not used or realized" (Lazaraton, 2002, p. 31). Utterances are not analysed in isolation, but rather in relation to previous utterances. In this study, therefore, the utterances of both interviewer and the test taker were examined; however, the focus of this report is on the test takers' behaviours.

Developing the Checklist

The choice was made to develop a checklist of interactional features comprising IC because this format offers a cost-effective, practical method of analysing speech samples as it eliminates the need for the transcription of the interactions between examiners and test takers (O'Sullivan et al., 2002). However, it should be noted that with any method that reduces experience to a list of descriptors, some of the richness and complexity of language is lost (Cumming, 1990). Thus, a checklist represents only one source of validity evidence and should be complemented with other forms of data in the on-going validation process (O'Sullivan et al., 2002).

Development of the checklist involved an iterative process similar to that described in O'Sullivan et al., (2002), which entailed drafting the checklist, applying it to performances, evaluating its effectiveness, and revising the checklist. The first step in designing the checklist was to review previous attempts at operationalizing IC (Brooks, 2009; Galaczi, 2003; May, 2011; O'Sullivan et al., 2002). From these lists we identified and merged features and organizational patterns common to different lists and features distinctive to particular lists.

Although our initial intention was to apply the checklist in real time while listening to or watching recorded tests, we found that the samples could not be adequately analysed using this method. Therefore, all interactions were transcribed verbatim and analysed using both the transcripts and the recordings. During this process, extra-linguistic aspects of the interactions such as pauses, emphasis, overlapping, and intonation were taken into account even though they were not featured in the transcriptions. Even with the transcripts, it was impossible to use the checklist while listening to the recordings in real time. Instead, we often solely focused on sections of the written transcripts and then referred to the audio to confirm the analyses of what transpired during the exchange.

Through this procedure, we found that some of the features seemed to apply to the exchanges at the different levels of interaction. For example, certain utterances in the exchanges seemed to be best analysed at the level of the individual turn or adjacency pair or what we called the "micro-level" of discourse, while others were best examined for their effect at the level of more extended or macro-level discourse. In the micro-level part of the checklist we included features such as demonstrating comprehension, demonstrating appropriate response to adjacency pairs, back-channelling, requests for help, correction uptake and appeals for agreement. The macro-level section of the checklist (Appendix)

identifies features of the interaction that served larger goals of the interaction. These included such features as extending a topic, opening and closing a practice, initiating a topic change, and moving the interaction toward a desired goal.

In addition, in order to identify and understand the IC features that characterize the interaction as a whole, we included a category in the checklist that would address the global features that resulted in the exchanges. The features included in this section of the checklist included the number of turns per topic, the achievement of cohesion, the balance of quantity of talk between the interviewer and the candidate and the range of social actions accomplished in the task. (See the Appendix for the complete checklist).

Results

Features of IC at the Micro-Level of Discourse

At the level of micro-categories, we observed that several aspects of IC occurred in both the role plays and in the semi-structured interviews. These included demonstrating comprehension, back-channelling, repairing the other's utterance, asking for help, asking for clarification, establishing common ground, and demonstrating the appropriate response in adjacency pairs. There were, however, features of IC that appeared only in role plays, for example, the opportunity for the candidate to elicit an opinion. Excerpt 1 is from a role play in which the test taker and examiner play neighbours and the candidate is instructed to persuade the interviewer to agree to help pay for a fence between their properties. After the interviewer responds to the test taker's question about how she likes living in the neighbourhood, the test taker broaches the subject of putting up a fence between their properties and asks for the interviewer's opinion with the utterance, "*What do you think, Mrs. Nelands?*"

Excerpt 1: Role Play 9

6. Interviewer (I): *yes, it's a lovely neighbourhood. I really enjoy the the uh people. Seems very friendly.*

7. Test taker (T): *Yes it is very friendly neighbourhood and is quiet and very secure as you should have uh should know. And you know I'm on your left side and we share very big space between our gardens and we don't have a fence and I have been working on it lately and I've found really very reasonable prices and very efficient fences. And uh if you would agree I would like to build it up in a couple of weeks' time. It will help us a lot to keep our privacy and you know you have your dog and maybe he would he would not wander so much and you don't have to look out and find it out every evening. I have seen you looking for him. **What do you think Mrs. Nelands?***

The other interactional feature that was observed only in role plays was appealing for agreement, an example of which is illustrated in Excerpt 2. In this same role play, the interviewer offers to pay less than half of the cost. The test taker responds by justifying the 50-50 split in cost and then appealing for agreement in the statement, "*It's not fair on me don't you think so Mrs. Nelands?*"

Excerpt 2: Role Play 9

16. I: *Well maybe I can get a bit of a break on the price. You know, 40-60 because I don't really want it*

17. T: *mhm, I I understand it's uh I understand your point of view, 40/60 break but we are going to get benefited at the same level so how about getting the break in the price from the saler and uh putting it half and half because it will, it will be for both of us.* **It's not fair on me don't you think so Mrs. Nelands?**

The fact that these two features of IC are present in role plays and not in the interviews is easily explained when one considers the rights and responsibilities that each task entails (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). In the interviews and in the role plays, the interviewer and the test taker have some flexibility to shape the interaction the way they like and are at liberty to use any interactional resources that serve their needs as long as they work towards the prescribed goal set out in the instructions. However, at the same time, they are bound to the conventions or rhetorical scripts (Young & He, 1998) that each context demands. In an interview, most candidates understand that their role is to answer interviewer questions, and not to elicit the interviewer's opinion or appeal for agreement from the interviewer. In a role play, on the other hand, the instructions outline the roles and the goals of both the candidate and the interviewer, and in the case of the CLB role plays, the instructions expand the candidate's rights and responsibilities to allow for interactions that include appealing for agreement or eliciting an opinion.

What is also notable is that the test taker only initiated appeals for agreement and eliciting an opinion when the power relationship prescribed in the role was equal (three role plays) or asymmetrical with the candidate in the power position (two role plays). Although the sample of role plays in this study was too small to generalize, the results may indicate that the nature of discourse is tied to the perceived power relationships outlined in tasks.

The micro-level feature of IC that appeared only in the interviews was correction uptake on the part of the test taker. In Excerpt 3, the test taker is responding to the interviewer's request for him to compare his leisure activities on weekends to those when he is on vacation. When the test taker has trouble finding the correct expression to complete his thought, the interviewer supplies him with the phrase, "*longer time*?" and he incorporates this into his next utterance, "*longer time*".

Excerpt 3: Interview 4

6. T: *"... sometimes we go to video house or friend's house but uh the weekend uh we spent uh smaller distance to travelling because uh, two days, but vacation we uhh lots, lotta days so we spend uhhh..."*

7. I: *"longer time?"*

8. T: *"longer time"*

It is conceivable that a repair sequence similar to the one in Excerpt 3 could occur in a role play as well as in an interview. In other words, providing and taking-up repair is not a convention unique to either interactive practice. What might affect whether or not this type of interaction transpires may have more to do with how the test construct is conceptualized and then manifested in the training of interviewers. If competence is seen as an individual, cognitive ability, interviewers may be trained to withhold repair, resulting in no opportunity for candidates to demonstrate the use of repair uptake. Similarly, opportunities for repair uptake and possibly other features of IC would also be limited, or non-existent, in completely scripted tests.

Features of IC at the Macro-Level of Discourse

Macro-level aspects of IC are features that serve the larger goals of the interaction. Of the features outlined in our checklist in the macro-level category, the only aspect of IC that was observed in both the role plays and the interviews, was extending or expanding a topic. The role plays also exhibited test takers opening and closing a practice and initiating a topic change. Defining boundaries between topics was quite straightforward for interviews because new topics were always initiated by the interviewer in the form of a question. However, defining and distinguishing between a topic expansion and a topic shift was somewhat more problematic for the raters in the role plays. There, it was more difficult to determine when a new topic was being introduced because there was no clear right for one party to initiate a topic shift, nor was there always a clear syntactic clue, such as a question, to indicate a shift in topics. Brown and Yule (1983) acknowledge the problematic nature of identifying topic shifts in conversation and state that "formal attempts to identify topics are doomed to failure" (p. 68); however, we were able to use the guidance of West and Garcia (1998), who define topic shifts as "lacking sequential or referential relationship to the preceding discourse" (p. 565). A new topic, then, lacks inferred or stated reference to previous utterances and may include features of the sequence (e.g., an acknowledgement token plus the introduction of new content; a question) that indicate a topic change. With this definition of topic change, we were able to identify some instances when test takers did initiate a topic change during the role plays.

One interesting aspect of the way test takers extended or changed topics in the role plays was that they sometimes accomplished this action by bringing in content that was not given in the instructions. For example, in Excerpt 4, the test taker is instructed to reprimand an employee (the interviewer) for unprofessional behaviour. After the test taker confronts the interviewer with the allegations, the interviewer tries to justify her behaviour. The role play instructions simply state that the test taker should inform the interviewer of appropriate office behaviour and attire. The test taker responds by referring the interviewer to a company policy document, something which is not at all mentioned in the role play instructions, but nevertheless fulfils the required social action.

Excerpt 4: Role Play 2

> I: *hhhm well I just say what's ...I'm... what's on my mind. How am I supposed to talk? I wasn't told there was a dress code, what difference does it make what I wear?*
>
> T: *I would like it you read the policies and proceed read the thing about this company in order to, you can understand what is there uhm wear.*

This ability to go beyond the prompt on the part of both the interviewer and the test taker contributes to the unpredictability of the interaction and allows for opportunities for the use of IC resources to co-construct meaning in a dynamic process.

Another macro-category aspect of IC that was observed in the role plays was moving the interaction toward the desired goal. In Role Play 5, the test taker is instructed to persuade his upstairs neighbour to make less noise late at night. He has just suggested that the interviewer turn down the volume on her music equipment at night, and the interviewer responds by trying to end the conversation in line 10. The test taker then refocuses the conversation by suggesting a possible solution to the problem.

Excerpt 5: Role Play 3

> 10. I: "*oh well you know I can hear you when I'm trying to sleep in the mornings, so we're even.*"
>
> 11. T: "*oh yes but maybe I can uhm I can try to be a little bit quiet in the morning when I wake up and, and you could also eh uhm try to make less noise or maybe put your instruments in another room further my house.*"

While acknowledging that the instructions dictate the goal of the interaction, it is nonetheless true that candidates, as well as interviewers, must draw on their interactional resources to respond to previous and unpredictable utterances while at the same time shaping the interaction in a desired direction.

Global Traits of the Interaction

The third category in the checklist was used to analyse the global traits of the interaction. We examined the exchange in its entirety to identify the distribution of rights and responsibilities for shaping the interaction, the variety of adjacency pairs produced, the amount and nature of cohesion present, and the number of turns uttered per topic.

In the interviews, the interviewer was exclusively responsible for initiating topics and shaping the interaction. Candidates recognized their responsibility in this task as responding to interviewer questions. The interview task was, therefore, "successful" in producing what it was designed to produce, but the opportunity was not there for candidates to demonstrate the ability to take on the responsibility for shaping the interaction; thus, this feature of IC could not be measured in such a task.

Go Back to Menu

There was very little variety in the types of adjacency pairs produced in the interviews—these were limited to question-answer sequences. The role plays, on the other hand, produced a large variety of adjacency pairs. In addition, unlike in the interviews, the candidate had the opportunity to complete the first-pair part as well as the second-pair part of the many adjacency pairs in the role plays. In other words, the candidate more often initiated the pair sequence.

Higher levels of cohesion and smooth transitions were observed in role plays than in interviews. Cohesion was achieved through lexical and syntactic reference to previous utterances, acknowledgement tokens and overlapping speech. It was evident in the role-play exchanges that both speakers were building on and anticipating the utterances of the other speaker.

Although cohesion and smooth transitions were more evident in role plays; they were also evident in the interviews, which seemed to be the result of the flexibility the interviewer had in shaping the conversation. Excerpt 6 illustrates how both the interviewer and the test taker acknowledge and build on the previous utterances of the other speaker through lexical cohesion, acknowledgment tokens and syntactic reference.

Excerpt 6: Interview 3

> T: *... and I have been in Canada 8 months ago*
>
> I: *only **8 months**? (lexical cohesion)*
>
> T: *yea, yea, (acknowledgement token) **just 8 months** (lexical cohesion)*
>
> I: *And you speak a lot of English already*
>
> T: *Yea*
>
> I: *that's good*
>
> T*: **because** I uh have uh, I am an accountant and I read English in my
> school...*

A hallmark of conversational behaviour is smooth transitions between utterances produced by different speakers (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Smoothness in transitions between speakers and turns is achieved when there is no gap or only a slight overlap of participants' speech. The underlined sections of text in Excerpt 7 indicate speech overlapping with previous utterances. This overlapping shows that both the interviewer and the test taker anticipate what the other is about to say and they respond before the speaker is finished.

Excerpt 7: Interview 3

> I: *How long did you do that job for?*
>
> T: *two years.*
>
> I: *and then after that job?*
>
> T: *After that I went to a production line, so I worked inside
> the factory as production--*

    I: *uh, working in the same company, in Dubai?*

    T: *yea, uh, no, different company--*

    I: *ok*

    T: *--yea. So* I became a production engineer

Again, the interviewer and the task structure play important roles in the resultant interaction. Because the interview is only semi-structured, the interviewer is free to interject where she deems it appropriate. In turn, the test taker senses the conversational nature of the interview and is comfortable enough to respond in kind. In a completely scripted interview, it is unlikely that this kind of cohesion and smoothness in transitions would occur because the types of responses an interviewer can produce are severely limited.

Another global feature of IC analysed was the number of turns per topic. A key difference between the nature of the interaction in interviews and role plays seems to be the number and length of turns. The proportion of turns per topic was higher in role plays - 6.2 turns per topic, than in interviews - 3.3 turns per topic. Not surprisingly, test-taker turns tended to be longer in interviews than in the role plays. The shorter, more frequent turns in the role plays gave the candidate the opportunity to display his or her ability to follow and contribute to an extended exchange. The longer, less frequent turns allowed test takers to display the ability to produce an extended response.

Another area of difference observed between the interviews and the role plays was the proportion of candidate talk produced. In the interviews, the proportion of talk that candidates produced ranged between 67% and 76%. This can be taken as an indication that the task "works" in the sense that it does what it was designed to do: elicit an extended response from the candidate. Long, ratable samples germane to the task were obtained. It should also be mentioned that the range of proficiency levels of the candidates in the interview tasks was between CLB levels 5 and 7. If we had had access to more interviews with a greater range of proficiency levels, we may have observed that the proportion of candidate talk was related to proficiency level.

The levels of proficiency in the role plays ranged from CLB level 4 to level 10. Test takers at higher proficiency levels produced proportionally more talk than did those at lower proficiency levels. However, there were some exceptions. In role plays in which there was an asymmetrical power relationship and the candidate was in the position of power, test takers produced substantially more talk than in role plays in which the same proficiency level test takers were in equal or lower power positions. Again, the sample size was too small to indicate a pattern and the quantity of talk could also be related to other factors such as personality and task topic. Nonetheless, the effect of power relationships in role-play tasks on the proportion of candidate talk produced, as well as other interactional features, warrants further exploration.

Go Back to Menu

Discussion

The analysis of the exchanges in the two CLB test tasks indicated that both tasks present different opportunities for candidates to display a variety of features of IC. The interactions in the interviews were largely characterized by question-answer exchanges, in which the interviewer was solely responsible for opening and closing the practice and initiating topics for discussion. Candidates produced proportionally more talk in these exchanges than did the interviewer, and candidate turns tended to be longer than in role plays. Little cohesion in terms of acknowledgement tokens, or lexical and syntactic cohesion between turns was exhibited in the interview exchanges. The exchanges in the role plays, on the other hand, showed a much greater variety of adjacency pairs, more multi-turn topics composed of shorter turns, higher cohesion, and smoother transition between turns. The different potential for these tasks to produce different features of IC therefore provides support for including a variety of tasks in speaking tests to allow for generalization to a wider range of contexts.

The results from this study may have implications for test-task design. A conceptualization of competence that focuses on the co-construction of meaning may provide an alternative and complementary way to analyse tasks and their potential to produce different features and types of interactions. We can also look at the interactional resources both test takers and examiners use to shape an interaction and how this informs our understanding of the construct of spoken competence. In addition to the language functions and grammatical structures that are commonly targeted in task design, the interactional features that different tasks produce can also be considered for their relevance and authenticity relative to language use outside the testing event. A consideration of interactional competence may help us design tasks which give candidates a chance to display a wider range of resources in a wider range of contexts serving a wider range of social actions.

The role of the examiner/interlocutor is central in the design of tasks. From an IC perspective, the contributions of the interlocutor are part of the construct. Any test task involves the negotiation of meaning and inter-subjective knowledge between or among all participants; competence, therefore, is always a joint achievement. In order to maintain a standard of reliability, some tests severely restrict the behaviour of the examiner, but this does not mean that the examiner does not influence the test taker's performance. Any contribution to an interaction (or lack thereof) affects the ensuing response and how the interaction is shaped. As previously mentioned, the flexibility the examiner has in shaping the interaction in both the CLB interviews and the role plays can produce highly cohesive interactions characterized by smooth transitions between turns. What remains problematic is the variability of examiner contributions when examiners are at liberty to interact more naturally. The resulting unpredictability, which characterizes many non-test interactions, threatens test fairness and reliability. There is, therefore, a tension between ensuring that all test takers receive equal treatment and providing opportunities for interaction that more closely reflect the construct of IC and the characteristics of real-life tasks.

Another issue is the scoring of a co-constructed performance. McNamara raised this concern as early as 1997, when he asked, "if communication is a joint responsibility, then who are we to blame if communication goes awry?" (p. 459). This question is most relevant in paired or group format tests, where, despite the format, inferences normally need to be made about individuals. There are, however, no definitive procedures for handling co-constructed performances. One suggestion, offered by May (2009), is to give all participants the same score for interactional effectiveness, and to award individual scores for other criteria such as grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. She notes that there would remain challenges in operationalizing interactional competence. Taylor and Wiggleworth (2009) discuss the use of multi-task tests, where the paired performances would be rated using one rubric, and the individual performances would be rated using a different rubric. The challenge with this idea as well as with May's suggestion is how these different scores could be reduced to a total or overall score, and how these scores would be meaningfully reported to score users.

Describing the construct of IC in meaningful terms in the scoring criteria is another challenge for test designers. Although gaining a wider acceptance in testing literature, IC is probably not a familiar concept to many testing practitioners. The features that comprise IC are not as easily identified as the features included in more traditional scoring rubrics, especially in real-time assessment. It may be much more difficult to judge a test taker's ability to manage a conversation than it is to judge grammatical accuracy, pronunciation or fluency.

According to Field (2011), different types of interaction tap different cognitive demands. An interview requires the test candidate to produce an extended response with little support from the examiner. The interaction in a role play, on the other hand, may be characterized by frequent short turns and unpredictability. One test format is not inherently better than another, then, but each must be evaluated for its fit for purpose. As Vidakovi□ and Galaczi (2013) contend, "test validity does not reside with formats per se, but rather with the fit between the test, its purpose, the external criterion measured and the evidential argument to support the decisions made" (p. 259). Analysing tasks from the perspective of IC may provide additional support in building the evidential argument in the on-going validation process.

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Go Back to Menu

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Appendix

DOES THE TASK PROVIDE THE CANDIDATE WITH OPPORTUNIES TO DRAW UPON THESE INTERACTIONAL RESOURCES?

Micro-level features of IC

- demonstrating comprehension
- back-channelling
- providing repair of other
- asking for help
- asking for clarification
- correction uptake
- establishing common ground (we, as we all know)
- appealing for agreement
- seeking confirmation
- demonstrating appropriate response in adjacency pairs/speech acts
- eliciting an opinion

Macro-level features of IC

- opening a practice
- closing a practice
- initiating topic change
- moving interaction towards desired goal
- extending/expanding a topic

Global Traits of the Interaction

- shared rights and responsibilities for shaping interaction
- variety of adjacency pairs/speech acts
- accomplishment of a variety of social actions
- smooth transition between turns
- high cohesion between turns
- multi-turn topics
- Appropriate balance of quantity of talk, topic initiation, expansion moves for the task

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COLLABORATIVE TASKS FOR BEGINNER-LEVEL LANGUAGE LEARNERS: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This study examines a collaborative effort of four beginner-level learners of Russian working towards completion of a jigsaw task with a decision-making component. While beginners may not have adequate linguistic resources for collaboration (Collentine, 2009; Kötter, 2001; Rosell-Aguilar, 2005), the data from this study suggest that when participating in certain types of tasks, students learn how to utilize limited linguistic resources. At the beginning of the jigsaw task, students used Russian for information exchange whereas English was used to initiate repair of problematic utterances in the form of clarification questions. After the instructor's explanation of how to utilize the L2 for repair initiation, students used mostly Russian throughout the task for this purpose. While students were able to collaborate on the jigsaw task, they required more scaffolding to collaborate on a decision making part of the task. Although this study focuses on learners of Russian as a foreign language, it is directly relevant to teaching ESL. Since foreign language learners were able to employ the skill of initiating repair in the language used only in the classroom, ESL learners have plentiful opportunities to immediately transfer the skill into the real-life context.

With the rapid development and use of synchronous multimodal web-conferencing environments (MWCEs), there is a growing demand for research on task-based language pedagogy in synchronous MWCEs. Although the literature provides recommendations on the task design for such environments (e.g. Hampel, 2006, 2010; Rosell-Aguilar, 2005), data-driven studies on how collaborative tasks facilitate language development and learning in synchronous MWCE remain scarce. Most of the existing studies concentrate on learners with at least intermediate-level proficiency who are able to use their target language to work on the task. This study extends the enquiry on task-based learning (TBL) for beginner-level learners and examines a collaborative effort of four beginner-level learners of Russian working towards completion of a jigsaw task with a decision-making component.

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Collaborative Task-based Language Learning: Theoretical Framework

Task Defined

Ellis (2003) defines task as a goal-oriented activity with a clear outcome. To achieve the task outcome, learners interpret the task in terms of what they are supposed to do and what propositional content they need to convey. Since a task requires learners to use language pragmatically, its primary focus is on meaning and requires leaners to use language in such a way that it resembles that used in real life. Although the primary focus is on meaning, tasks can be designed in a way that constrains learners' choice of linguistic form without explicit statements of what grammatical structures should be used in the task.

Tasks and SLA

Much attention has been paid to TBL in face-to-face contexts because tasks offer opportunities for mediated language development and learning in terms of (1) learning through interaction with the task and (2) learning through interaction with peers (Foley, 1991; Lantolf, 2000). Interaction is fundamental for language learning because to be able to communicate, leaners need to produce comprehensible utterances that allow others to understand them and to ask others to modify their language to render it comprehensible. Language production facilitates learners' syntactic processing of language because in order to produce meaningful and comprehensible utterances, leaners need to attend to grammatical form and sentence structure (Swain, 1985). When interpreting the task and producing L2 speech, learners actively engage in language processing to make their output comprehensible. When interacting with peers, leaners participate in negotiation of meaning and modifications of speakers' utterances to make linguistic input more comprehensible while allowing for unfamiliar linguistic elements that could be learned in the course of interaction (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). Because a task facilitates learners' cognitive processes by requiring learners to activate and organize their linguistic knowledge and abilities, it is viewed as "a catalyst for learning" (Foley, 1991, p. 69).

Sociocultural theory is compatible with the interactionist view of language learning in that it also maintains that learning is dialogical in nature. From a sociocultural perspective, learning takes place when learners interact in a very specific way with experts within learners' *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). The ZPD is an interactional space, or a distance between what learners can do individually without help from an expert and what they can do with an expert's assistance (Vygotsky, 1987). Tharp and Gallimore (1991) use the term "assisted performance" to define teaching, which "*occurs when performance is achieved with assistance*" (p. 4, italics in original). Teaching and learning are in a reciprocal relationship; therefore, learning can also be defined as assisted performance.

Similar to Tharp and Gallimore (1991) who view learning as a collaborative dialogue, Donato (2004) also maintains that learning is a collaborative effort. However, Donato (2004) views learning not as a learner's individual ability of problem-solving with expert assistance, but a collective effort of a group of leaners to share and re-structure their knowledge in such

Go Back to Menu

a way that the new knowledge generated by the group goes beyond a mere sum of the knowledge of individual participants. When learners work together towards achieving the task goal, in addition to being engaged in the learning process, they are engaged in the social process of building relations among group members by recognizing each participant and acknowledging each member's contributions for the sake of completion of a common cause.

Since language learning is mediated by the task and by the learners who collaboratively carry out the task, tasks should be designed to promote learners' participation in goal-oriented activities that foster collaborative learning. In their framework for distinguishing and developing such tasks, Pica, Kanagy, and Falodun (1993) link goal-oriented activities with opportunities for learners to participate in collaborative learning. Collaborative learning occurs through obtaining assistance with comprehension of language input, feedback on the comprehensibility of learners' language production and, as a result, making necessary modifications to their language performance. Five task types generated by the framework include jigsaw, information gap, problem solving, decision-making, and opinion-exchange tasks. These task types vary in their effectiveness for providing learners with opportunities for interaction and co-construction of new knowledge. The jigsaw tasks, for example, are the most effective in this respect because learners hold different pieces of information necessary for the task completion. Therefore, to complete the task, each participant is required to request and supply information. In addition, all participants in a jigsaw task work towards the completion of the same goal and one outcome. Although in problem-solving and decision-making tasks learners also work toward a common goal, information exchange is expected, but not required by the task design. Because information is shared in these types of task, learners can solve problems or make decisions without much collaboration. Thus, these task types are less effective in terms of offering opportunities for collaboration, as learners may not choose to use these opportunities.

Task-as-workplan vs. Task-in-process

Donato's (2004) definition of collaboration captures Vygotsky's assertion that "human behavior results from the integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity" (Lantolf, 2000, p. 8). From a sociocultural perspective, the trajectory of how the activity unfolds depends on the participants' motives for its completion. Thus, different groups of participants inspired by different motives can achieve the same outcome while being engaged in different types of behaviors (Lantolf, 2000). This has important implications for TBLT in that *task-as-workplan*, or intended pedagogy, does not always directly correspond to the *task-in-process*, or actual pedagogy, because learners' interpretation of the task can differ from the teacher's intentions for the learners (Seedhouse, 2004). Mori's (2002) study on the interaction between learners of Japanese with native speakers invited to their class is an example of the mismatch between the *task-as-workplan* and *task-in-process*. While the task was designed to engage Japanese learners and native speakers of Japanese in discussion about some aspect of Japanese culture, the

interaction between the learners and the invited native speakers had characteristics of a structured interview rather than discussion. Instead of commenting on the native speakers' answers and allowing them to also ask questions and exchange opinions, leaners adapted to the fixed roles of interviewers.

While the SLA literature promotes TBL for learning additional languages because it provides learners with opportunities to learn language through interaction with the task and with their peers, Seedhouse (2004) states that more evidence in the form of lesson transcripts is needed to evaluate the benefits of task-based instruction. He maintains that much evidence in support of TBL comes from quantitative studies which focus on clarification requests, comprehension and confirmation checks, or interactional modifications. Although quantitative studies show that these features are widely incorporated in task-based interaction, Seedhouse argues that in quantitative studies they are isolated from the context and do not provide enough evidence of their functions in learners' discourse. According to Seedhouse, clarification requests, comprehension and confirmation checks, and interactional modifications may have social functions, but not necessarily facilitate SLA. He argues that what is modified depends on the pedagogical focus of the task. In the form-and-accuracy context, even grammatically correct and sequentially appropriate utterances could be subject to modification if students do not produce a required string of linguistic forms, (e.g., a full sentence). In the meaning-and-fluency context, on the other hand, the focus is on meaning rather than accuracy; therefore, grammar errors that do not lead to communication breakdown are often ignored and the way modifications are conducted resembles clarification requests in ordinary conversation. Modifications in the task-oriented context, however, are related neither to form nor meaning. While the task-oriented context can foster numerous modifications (e.g., clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks), these modifications have a social rather than language-acquisition function.

Tasks in Synchronous MWCEs

An increased interest in using synchronous MWCEs for teaching languages online inspired research on online TBL pedagogy because synchronous MWCEs have great potential for goal-oriented collaborative learning. Synchronous MWCEs such as *Blackboard Collaborate*, are multimodal tools that integrate multiple communication channels. Blackboard Collaborate, for example, integrates audio- and text-based chat, live video, and an interactive whiteboard. Each of these communication channels can be employed one at a time or several channels can be used in conjunction (e.g., one person can use an audio channel and the other participants can contribute via text-based chat). Since synchronous MWCEs can engage multiple participants, they are suitable for multi-participant collaboration in the task through several modalities.

Although the literature provides recommendations for task design for synchronous MWCEs (e.g., Hampel, 2006; 2010; Wang, 2007), more data-driven studies on how collaborative tasks facilitate language development and learning in synchronous MWCEs are needed.

Go Back to Menu

Studies on the use of tasks in multimodal environments favour TBL. However, they suggest that a task-based approach is better for students with at least intermediate competence in a target language (Collentine, 2009; Kötter, 2001; Rosell-Aguilar, 2005) because synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) imposes a higher cognitive load on students than face-to-face communcation (Stockwell, 2004 as cited in Rosell-Aguilar, 2005). Rosell-Aguilar (2005) anticipates several challenges that beginner-level learners may encounter when participating in communicative tasks. One of the challenges is that beginner-level learners have limited linguistic resources to engage in more open-ended tasks and produce longer and more meaningful stretches of discourse. Therefore, they need more structured tasks with a larger number of prompts to be able to produce language in order to communicate with their peers. Another challenge for beginner-level learners is participation in sociocultural learning. Since they have limited linguistic resources for language production, they may not be able to collaborate on the task even if the task is designed to draw on related existing schema.

In spite of the fact that tasks are employed to invite learners' collaboration in order to co-construct new knowledge, even higher-proficiency learners do not always view the task as opportunity for collaboration with peers, but use an instructor "as an intermediary" (Hampel, 2010). Collaboration is also challenging for students because it requires students to use language that goes beyond traditional classroom activities of asking and answering questions. Collaborative language includes, but is not limited to, requesting information, clarification of meaning, giving suggestions, and using language in such a way that it facilitates building peer-relationships.

Some recent studies on task-based learning in synchronous MWCEs show that synchronous multimodal environments are beneficial for collaborative learning. Since these environments are multimodal, multiple students can collaborate in real time through audio and text-based channels (Hamper & Stickler, 2012; Kozlova, 2013; Kozlova & Zundel, 2013). To examine the strategies used by online instructors to support learner language development, Kozlova and Zundel (2013) analyzed a total of 25 archived live sessions conducted by five instructors teaching Arabic, German, Japanese, and Russian. The study demonstrates that the instructor's scaffolding of the individual learner's performance facilitates students' in-group collaboration. An example from the German classroom shows how the instructor's scaffolding of students' performance through an audio channel during the listening task facilitated their collaboration in the chat area. Students who followed the instructors' scaffolding of their peers and read their peers' responses in the chat area were able to incorporate the information to construct the meaning of new vocabulary collaboratively. An example from the Russian classroom illustrates how the problem-solving component built into the task prompted students' collaboration on reading and co-construction of the meaning of geographical names in the text-based chat while other participants used the audio channel. Although Kozlova's (2013) and Kozlova and Zundel's (2013) studies provide evidence of beginner-level students' collaboration on the task, they also show that a considerable amount of collaboration occurs in the students' first language. The present

Go Back to Menu

study also focuses on beginner-level learners and takes research on collaborative task-based learning one step further by answering the following questions:

1. Are beginner-level learners capable of mobilizing their linguistic resources to collaborate on a task using their L2?
2. What can beginner-level students do with and without an instructor's assistance when collaborating on a task?
3. What are the benefits of synchronous MWCEs for collaborative task-based learning?

The Study

Teaching Context and Participants

The study was conducted in the context of a second-semester university-level Russian language course taught completely online. The course was offered through www. blendedschools.net (BSN), a not-for-profit Pennsylvania-based educational corporation, and administered jointly by BSN and Seton Hill University also located in Pennsylvania, USA. The course met synchronously through *Blackboard Collaborate* for three 50-minute class sessions per week for 16 weeks. Each class session was archived and was available for viewing to the students taking the course. This study focuses on two class sessions during which four students taking the course collaborate on the completion of the task. Two of the four students were university students learning Russian for a university credit. The other two students were high school students taking Russian to receive both a high school and a university credit.

Task Design

A jigsaw task was chosen for this study because lower-proficiency students require well-structured tasks with a larger number of prompts (Rosell-Aguilar, 2005). Although jigsaw tasks require two-way interaction (Pica, Kanagy, & Falodun, 1993), they are more likely to engage students in question-answer sequences. To take students beyond the question-answer sequences, a decision-making component with two outcomes was added to the jigsaw task.

The jigsaw task employed in this project was designed to facilitate meaningful use of the vocabulary and grammar studied and practiced in class. The language in focus included vocabulary to talk about daily routines, the present-tense verb conjugation, the prepositional case of nouns to express locations of the activities, and time expressions. Students were sent a handout with the task scenario and charts with the information available to them. According to the task scenario, the four students participating in the task were a Russian family consisting of a husband and a wife, Alexander and Marina, and their two children, Denis and Yulia. The task scenario was also posted on the whiteboard:

Alexander has just received a call from his brother, Alexey whose family currently lives in Germany, that he and his wife Olga are travelling and making a one-day stop in their city and would like to visit their house. Your family is very busy and it is very difficult to find time for getting together. Look at your schedule on that day, talk to your family members and decide when you can meet with Alexander's brother and his wife. You might need to change your plans or cancel some of your activities. You cannot cancel work or classes. Then, as a group, decide what time would be the best for all of you to meet with your relatives.

Students' roles in the scenario were specified in the handouts. While the task scenario was written in English, the schedule of the activities was in Russian. Each student had four pieces of missing information. Based on the information provided in the task, all of the family members could meet at 7 pm; however, Yulia had dinner with her friend at that time. Therefore, the students were supposed to decide whether Yulia would join the family and cancel the dinner with her friend or would take her friend to the family dinner.

The slide posted on the whiteboard combined all missing information from the handouts (Figure 1). Students were instructed to type the information that they elicited from their peers on the slide in the empty cells.

Figure 1. Jigsaw Task Slide

	Александр (муж) Менеджер в банке	Марина (жена) Журналистка, работает в газете	Денис (сын) Студент. Он также работает	Юля (дочь) Студентка. Она так же работает
9:00	Работает в банке	У неё йога	Завтракает и смотрит новости	Встаёт и принимает душ
10:00			У него уроки в университете	Завтракает и слушает музыку
11:00			У него уроки в университете	На работе в магазине
Полдень	Обедает в ресторане			
1:00pm				
2:00				
3:00	На работе в банке	На работе в офисе	Играет в футбол	У неё уроки в институте
4:00	На работе в банке			
5:00	Принимает душ и отдыхает			
6:00	Ужинает дома	Ужинает дома		
7:00		Отдыхает, слушает музыку	Ужинает дома	

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Given the task design, students were expected to perform sequences of the following type:

A: Что ты делаешь в 2?/*What are you doing at 2?*

B: В 2 я работаю в библиотеке./*At 2, I am working in the library.*

The information in the table was in the third person, e.g., ужинает дома "has dinner at home", or a verb was omitted, e.g., на работе в офисе "at work in the office". In their questions, students had to address their family members using verbs in the second person singular whereas in their responses, the verbs were supposed to be used in the first person singular. Two words included for negotiation of meaning were *статья* "an article" and *бильярд* "billiard". Students had access to the task tool-kit (see Figure 2), which displayed the vocabulary, two verbs that students had recently learned, and examples of questions that they could ask.

Figure 2. **Task Tool-kit.**

Post-task error correction. Before students started working on the task, they were told that they would need to view the archives of the recorded sessions and complete a post-task error-correction. Since previous research findings (see Seedhouse, 2004) show that most of the time learners do not pay attention to accuracy in task-oriented and meaning-and-fluency contexts, the goal of the post-task error correction was to have students also focus on accuracy when working towards task completion. According to Skehan, Xiaoyue, Qian, Wang (2012), participants' expectation of an error-correction post-task leads them to focus on accuracy and control their use of target structures in order to achieve accuracy.

Methodology

The data from the archived class sessions were transcribed using transcription conventions adapted from Jefferson (1984). Conversation Analysis (CA) techniques were used to

analyze the task-in-process data. From a CA perspective, the way people interact exhibits their understanding of the social context, which is constructed through their verbal and non-verbal actions and becomes observable through the sequential organization of the talk. CA treats conversational context differently from other discourse analytic methods in that it starts analysis not from describing external factors that influence interaction, but from analyzing small details and observations of how these details steer the development of the talk. From this methodological perspective, participants' actions at every moment of ongoing talk project, produce, and transform conversational context (Drew & Heritage, 1992).

The basic unit of organization of talk in CA is a conversational turn, or a speaker's verbal or non-verbal contribution to the talk (see Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; ten Have, 2007). The rules that govern the turn taking system emerge from interaction and manifest how participants orient to their roles and to the activity in which they are engaged. The turn taking organization of casual conversation, for example, demonstrates participants' orientation to their equal rights to contribute to the talk by taking opportunities for self-selection to be the next speaker. Institutional contexts, on the other hand, may impose some constraints on the selection of the next speaker and, therefore, the sequential organization of turns in institutional interaction may differ from the turn-taking organization of ordinary conversation. For example, McHoul (1977) showed that turn-taking organization in a teacher-centered classroom lacks flexibility because participants' opportunities for self-selection are restricted to teacher selection of the next speaker. If students are to select the next speaker, the only option they have is to pass the speakership to the teacher. This results in minimum turn overlap and potential longer pauses between the turns. What is critical for the analysis of interaction is examining the sequential position of turns because turn allocation is one of the resources that participants employ to determine the meaning of utterances in conversation (Garcia, 2013). As Sacks (1992) suggests, participants' social actions should be explained from the point of view of why this action was performed at this particular place.

Collaboration From CA Perspective

To examine whether leaners can collaborate on a task in the L2, the analysis will focus on the sequential organization of question-answer and repair sequences, specifically, whether learners use Russian to supply all of the turns in these sequences and, if not, which of the turns are performed in their first language. Since collaboration includes an acknowledgement of individual participants' contributions to the task, the question-answer adjacency pairs should be followed by acknowledgement turns. An adjacency pair is a sequence consisting of two utterances in which the second utterance depends upon the existence of the first one, or, in other words, the occurrence of the second utterance is conditionally relevant to the occurrence of first one (Schegloff, 1968).

Examining repair sequences will show whether learners are able to use the L2 outside of the question-answer sequences. During interaction, parties often initiate clarification

requests, comprehension checks, and requests for modification of problematic input. The problematic utterances are referred to as repairable. Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) state that "nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class 'repairable'" (p. 363) because any item can be treated as a trouble source that hinders communication. Modification of a repairable utterance is referred to as a repair and modification request, as repair initiation. While question-answer sequences are common practice in the language classroom, repair-initiation may be problematic because it is less predictable and requires spontaneous use of linguistic resources which language learners may not have or may not know how to employ.

The sequential organization of repair and allocation of the repair turns in the sequence depends on who initiates and provides repair of the trouble source items. Repair initiated and conducted by the speaker is called self-repair (SR) whereas repair initiated and conducted by someone other than the speaker is referred to as other-repair (OR). Repair conducted by the speaker upon initiation of someone other than the speaker is called other-initiated self-repair (OISR). In SLA research, repair is an important concept because from an SLA perspective, repair is "the sociocultural engine that enables learners to get comprehended input" (Markee, 2000, p. 31). By analyzing the repair organization, CA methodology allows a closer look at what participants achieve through repair sequences and whether repair is conducive to SLA.

Donato (2004) claims that one of the characteristics of collaboration is establishing social relationships. Therefore, it is important to show how learners manifest their affiliation with others. Affiliation can be displayed through the organization of adjacency pairs and their turn design. Pomerants (1984) points out that for many adjacency pairs there are two alternative responses, preferred and dispreferred. The preferred response, which is provided without any hesitations or pauses in the turn following the first part of the adjacency pair, is the response that "follows the established norms, is socially affiliative, and promotes reciprocity of perspectives" (Seedhouse, 2004, p. 24). According to Heritage (1984), affiliative responses manifest participants' social solidarity. Preferred responses, however, do not always express acceptance of and agreement with the propositional content of the first pair of an adjacency pair. For example, a preferred response to an invitation is its acceptance, whereas a preferred response to self-deprecation is disagreement.

The next section will examine the sequential organization of the learners' interaction when they work on the jigsaw task with a problem-solving component. Although CA techniques are applied to analyze this interaction, the presentation of the findings may seem unconventional from the perspective of traditional CA analysis.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of the sequential organization of task-in-process data shows that learners were able to collaborate on the jigsaw task while they could not complete a decision-making component without the instructor's scaffolding. Although in the jigsaw task learners used Russian in question-answer sequences and in the repair sequences that carried a social

Go Back to Menu

function, they used English or both Russian and English to initiate and conduct repair with the purpose of negotiation of meaning. English was also used to affiliate with peers when working on meaning negotiation. There were no instances of student-initiated repair on grammatically incorrect items.

Learners' Use of the L2 in the Question-Answer Sequences

The analysis of the question-answer sequences demonstrates that throughout the entire jigsaw task, students consistently used the L2 to request and provide missing information from the handouts. Ten out of eleven sequences followed the pattern Question-Answer-Acknowledgement turn. All acknowledgement turns contained the word спасибо "thank you" to acknowledge learners' individual responses. Some of the acknowledgement turns contained an optional element, the name of the student who provided a response to the information request. This pattern is demonstrated in example 1 which shows two students, Alexander and Denis participating in the question-answer sequence (transcription conventions are included in Appendix A).

(1)	Q	108	Alexander:	Денис, что ты делаешь вечером в пять?
		108a		Denis, what are you doing in the evening at five?
		109		(7)
	A	110	Denis:	Я начи-начинаю работать в пять
		110a		I start working at five.
		111		(3)
	Ack	112	Alexander:	OK, спасибо.
		112a		OK, thank you.

The question-answer sequence presented in this example is part of a longer sequence featured in full in example 2. In the jigsaw task, it was only once at the beginning of the task that the turns from one sequence were not separated with the turns from another sequence occuring in parallel. Since in synchronous WMCEs participants do not see each other when the video is not turned on, they coordinate their actions relying on the visual information of the tools used by participants. For example, if the microphone icon appears next to a participant's name, it indicates that the participant clicked on the talk button and is going to use the audio tool. When several participants choose to use the audio when the audio channel is open, it results if not in an overlap, then in two turns from two different sequences following one another. Most turns are also separated with long pauses. These pauses are task-specific and technology-specific. One of the reasons for longer pauses is that students need to find the requested information in their handout and then form a sentence in Russian. In order to start speaking, they need to turn on the audio channel by clicking on the talk button. All this results in the longer pauses between the turns.

Example 2 shows how learners manage two parallel sequences in the L2. Alexander's question to Denis (line 100) is followed by Yulia's question to Marina (line 102). First,

Go Back to Menu

Marina provides an answer (line 104) to Yulia's question. After Yulia acknowledges Marina's response (line 106), Alexander repeats his question (line 108) and Denis supplies a response (line 110), which is followed by Alexander's acknowledgement turn (line 112).

(2)	Q1	100	Alexander:	Денис, что ты делаешь вечером в пять?
		100a		Denis, what are you doing in the evening at 5?
		101		(4)
	Q2	102	Yulia:	Марина, что ты делаешь в два?
		102a		Marina, what are you doing at two?
		103		(3)
	A2	104	Marina:	В два я интервью [sic].
		104a		At two I interview
		105		(3)
	Ack2	106	Yulia:	Спасибо.
		106a		Thank you.
		107		(6)
	Q1-r	108	Alexander:	Денис, что ты делаешь вечером в пять?
		108a		Denis, what are you doing in the evening at five?
		109		(7)
	A1	110	Denis:	Я начи-начинаю работать в пять.
		110a		I start working at five.
		111		(3)
	Ack1	112	Alexander:	Спасибо.
		112a		Thank you.

While example 2 demonstrates how learners managed two parallel voice-based conversations, the next example shows how students manage conversations occuring in two modalilities. In example 3, Alexander and Denis participate in the Q-A-Ack sequence in Russian using the audio (lines 46, 48, 50) and, at the same time, they follow the chat messages performed in English. In response to the insturctor's smiley in the chat, "You can go faster J" (line 53), Alexander responds with a smiley by using an emoticon tool on the participant panel, and then uses audio to acknowledge Denis's response (line 55).

(3)		46	Alexander:	Денис
		46a		Denis
		47		…
		48		что ты делаешь (.) в полдень?
		48a		what are you doing (.) at noon?
		49		(5)

50	Denis:	В полдень у меня уроки в институте.
50a		At noon I have classes at the institute.
51	Instructor:	you are all doing very well!!!
52	Denis:	Sorry, в университете.
52a		Sorry, at the university.
53	Instructor:	You can go faster! ☺
54	Alexander:	☺ (emoticon on the participants panel)
55		Спасибо, Денис.
55a		Thank you, Denis.

Examples 1–3 show that beginner-level learners were able to ask and answer questions in Russian as well as to acknowledge their peer's contributions. Moreover, they were able to manage conversations occuring in parallel in multiple modalities in two languages.

Using the L1 and L2 in the Repair Sequences

While learners used only Russian to ask and answer questions, they used both Russian and English to initiate and conduct repair. Repair-initiation (RI) turns were performed in Russian, in English, or both in Russian and in English. There were two instances in which students provided OIOR to potentially problematic turns. The most common RI was a formulaic expression Повтори, пожалуйста! "Repeat, please". There were five such RI turns performed in Russian and one that was performed in English, *Could you repeat, please?* Three RI turns included requests for specific information. One of them was in English, *What time?*; one was in Russian, Когда? "When?"; and one was performed in Russian, Кто? "Who", and was followed by its English version, *Who was the question for?* There was also one self-repair conducted in English.

Using the L2 for repair initiation. At the beginning of the task (ex. 4), students seemed to treat Russian as the language for asking and answering questions, whereas they treated English as the language for conducting repair. Alexander starts the task with a question to Marina in Russian (line 1). Although students knew how to ask in Russian Когда? "When?", Marina initiates repair of Alexander's question in English via the text-chat area (line 3). Alexander responds using the number 10 instead of the word ten for this numeral (line 4). The instructor reacts to Marina's use of English and explains how students can initiate repair in Russian (lines 5-8). In line 9, Marina responds to Alexander's question from line 1 in Russian and Alexander initiates repair in Russian by asking her to repeat the question (line 13).

(4)	1	Alexander:	Марина, что ты делаешь утром в (.) десять?
	1a		Marina, what are you doing in the morning at (.) ten?
	2		(3)

Go Back to Menu

3 →	*Marina:*	*What time?*
4 →	*Alexander:*	*10*
5	Instructor:	In Marina' case, she can ask Когда? We need to use as
6		much Russian as we can. Like What time? we can say
7		Когда? Right? Try to do as much negotiations as possible
8		and use as many Russian words as possible. […]
9	Marina:	Я работаю на дому [sic] (.) и-и (1) пишу статью.
9a		I am working at home (.) and-and (1) writing an article.
10	*Marina:*	*Should I write them on the slide?*
11	Instructor:	Alexander writes them on the slide. So the person who gets
12		the information writes it on the slide.
13 →	Alexander:	Марина, повторите пожалуйста!
13a		Marina, repeat please!

The RI turn повторите пожалуйста "repeat please" is a formulaic expression. This expression is rather general and does not specify the trouble source. Most of the time, in response to this type of RI, learners just repeated the previous utterance as shown in example 5. In line 61, Alexander asks Marina to repeat her responses from line 61, which she does in line 63.

(5)	55	Alexander:	Марина, что ты делаешь (.) в полдень?
	55a		Marina, what are you doing (.) at noon?
	56		(7)
	57 →	Marina:	В полдень я гуляю в парке.
	57a		At noon, I am taking a walk in the park.
	58–59		((chat message))
	60		(2)
	61 →	Alexander:	Повтори, пожалуйста.
	61a		Repeat, please.
	62		(3)
	63 →	Marina:	Я гуляю в парке.
	63a		I am taking a walk in the park.
	64		(1)
	65	Alexander:	Спасибо.
	65a		Thank you.

This type of repair is performed in order to complete the task because students need to write on the whiteboard the information they get from peers. Most of the time, it did not lead to negotiation of meaning or form and, therefore, had a merely social function.

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Using Russian and English for repair initiation. Example 6 is notable because Alexander initiates repair in Russian and supports it with an utterance in English. Although Marina specifies the addressee in her question (line 67), Alexander, apparently, did not hear the name of the addressee and asks in Russian, Кто? "Who?" (line 69) in the main chat area. In spite of the fact that Marina provided a repair, Юля "Yulia" (line 71), Alexander asks her again, but in English, "Who was the question for?" (line 74). Although his text message appears after Marina's response in line 71, it could be that Alexander started typing this message immediately after he sent his RI in Russian (line 69) and by the time he pressed the send button, Marina had already responded to his previous RI. Marina, however, responds to his English RI turn as well and does it in English, "Yulia" (line 78). It is not quite clear from this example why Alexander supports his Russian RI turn with its English equivalent. His question Кто? "Who?" in line 69 is easy to understand and students were familiar with this word. It is more likely that because the question in Russian Кто? "Who?" is not as specific as the question in the L1, *who was the question for?*, Alexander backs up his RI in Russian with its less ambiguous English version.

(6)	67	Marina:	Юля, что ты делаешь вечером в одном [sic]?
	67a		Yulia, what are you doing in the evening at one?
	68		(3)
	69	*Alexander:*	Кто?
	69a		*Who?*
	70		(5)
	71	*Marina:*	Юля
	71a		*Yulia*
	72		(2)
	73	*Yulia:*	Когда,
	73a		*When?*
	74	*Alexander to Marina:*	*who was the question for?*
	75	*Marina:*	в одном [sic]
	75a		*at one*
	76		(6)
	77	*Yulia:*	повтори пожалуйста?
	77a		*repeat please?*
	78	*Marina to Alexander:*	*Yulia*
	79	Marina:	Что ты делаешь вечером в одном [sic]?
	79a		What are you doing in the evening at one?
	79		(5)
	80	Yulia:	Я работае- я работаю в магазин [sic].
	80a		I am working at the store.

81		(4)
82	Marina:	Спасибо.
82a		Thank you.

Using the L1 in repair sequences. While students used Russian for asking and answering questions and for initiating and conducting repair that had a social function (e.g., asking to repeat utterances or specific information in the utterances), they used the L1 in repair sequences if the trouble source was an unfamiliar word. Example 7 shows how the question-answer sequence from example 4 developed after Alexander asked Marina to repeat her response to his question (line 23).

(7)	9	Marina:	Я работаю на дому [sic] (.) и-и (1) пишу статью
	9a		I am working at home and wring an article
	10–12		((Instructor explains who writes answers on the slides))
	13	Alexander:	Марина, повторите пожалуйста!
	13a		Marina, repeat please!
	14		(5)
	15	*Marina:*	*some of these words we didn didn't have*
	16		(5)
	17	*Alexander:*	Повтори, пожалуйста!
	17a		*Repeat, please!*
	18		(5)
	19	Марина:	Я работаю на дому [sic]
	19a		I am working at home
	20		(3)
	21	Alexander:	OK, спасибо.
	21a		OK, thank you.

Marina's response in line 9 contains an unfamiliar word статья "article" included in the task for negotiation of meaning. Marina seems to have trouble with this word, as in her response, she makes two pauses before pronouncing пишу статью "writing an article" and in line 15, she types in English that they did not learn some of these words. With this message, she explains her hesitation before pronouncing the word статья "article" and seems to seek affiliation with Alexander by using an affiliative *we*. Alexander, however, does not affiliate with Marina. He does not respond to the affiliative turn that she performs in English, (line 15), and, after a five-second pause, he repeats his RI turn in Russian (line 17). Although Marina repeats her response (line 19), she repeats only the first part of it, Я работаю на дому [sic] "I am working at home", but omits the second part и пишу статью "and writing an article", which contains the unknown word. Although Marina does not provide the second half of the utterance, Alexander does not treat it as problematic and accepts it by acknowledging Marina's contribution.

Although Alexander accepted Marina's answer and did not indicate that he had trouble understanding the word статья "article", in line 27 (ex. 8), Marina seems to orient to this possibility. Apparently, she notices that Alexander started typing the information provided by her on the whiteboard. First, Marina affiliates with Alexander by showing that she understands how difficult it is to write down new words (lines 27–28). Then, she types the information from her handout in the chat to help Alexander to write the information on the slide (line 29). By affiliating with Alexander, Marina creates a safe environment for providing the information, which was not requested.

(8)   ((After Alexander's acknowledgement turn in line 21, a text icon appears next to Alexander's name))

25	Yulia:	Денис, когда работаешь? Денис, когда работаешь
25a		Denis, when do you work? Denis, when do you work?
26		(8)
27	*Marina:*	*I know it's hard to put them on the slide*
28		*because it's hard to spell... it was:*
29		Работает дома, пишет статью
29a		*is working at home, is writing an article*
30		(4)
31		пишет статью - *we never had*
31a		*is writing an article*
32		(4)
33	Yulia:	Денис, когда работаешь?
33a		Denis, when do you work?
34	**Alexander:**	она работает в доме [sic]
34a		she is working at home
35	Denis:	Я работаешь [sic] вечером
35a		I work in the evening
36	*Alexander to Marina:*	*i think it means news article*
37	*Marina to Alexander:*	*yes writing an articl- article.*
38	*Alexander to Marina:*	да yes
39	*Marina to Alexander:*	*This seems kind of advanced, I don't know*
40		*how to write what I hear hahaha*
41	Alexander:	Денис
41a		Denis

When Alexander finishes typing the first part of Marina's reponses on the whiteboard (line 34), he conducts a repair by saying "I think it means a news article" (line 36). Although the students would have been able to say this in Russian by simplifying it to "I think it is

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

a news article" (line 36), Alexander uses English instead. Interestingly, Alexander moves negotiation of meaning that he conducts in English to the private chat area in spite of the fact that the instructor supervises it. Marina collaborates by accepting his proposition, "yes," and adds the verb, thus translating the entire phrase into English, "writing an article" (line 37). Alexander agrees in both languages, "да yes" (line 38). Marina makes another attempt to seek Alexander's affiliation by providing an assessment with the post-utterance laughter invitation, but Alexander leaves her comment unattended and pursues his work on the task (line 41).

Using the L1 for signaling self-repair. One excerpt from the data shows how Denis signals self-repair with the English word sorry (see ex. 3). When Denis answers Alexander's question (line 50), he uses the word институт "institute" instead of университет "university". Although he uses Russian for self-repair (line 47), he signals the self-repair with an English word *sorry* (line 52). The use of the English word *sorry* instead of the Russian one could be explained by the frequent use of this word in English. It seems to come naturally to use English *sorry* to signal self-repair.

The analysis of the sequential organization of the students' interaction when working on the jigsaw task shows that although students were able to use Russian to manage question-answer sequences, to acknowledge their peers' contributions, and repair sequences carrying a social function, they used the L1 for conducting repair on lexical items. In spite of the fact that learners had linguistic resources to ask in Russian "What is the English for …?", they used English because they were not able to use Russian to perform affiliative utterances in order to mitigate their initiative in providing help to peers.

Collaboration on the Decision Making Component

While students used mostly the L2 when collaborating on the jigsaw task, the decision-making component was challenging for them although there were only two possible outcomes: students had to make a decision about whether Yulia's friend would join her family for dinner with their relatives, or whether he would go home.

When the instructor tells the students that they need to finish the task, Yulia responds, семь 'seven'. Denis asks how to say "to meet" (ex. 9, line 5) in Russian in spite of the fact that this word was included in the task tool-kit. Instead of using Russian for his question, (e.g., Как по-русски *to meet*? "What is the Russian for 'to meet?'") Denis again uses English. While the instructor is looking for the slide with the Task tool-kit containing this verb, she provides the Russian version orally and also types it in the chat area (lines 9–11). Alexander collaborates and first he agrees with Yulia saying да, семь "yes, seven" and, then, he combines Yulia's response and the phrase принимать гостей "to have guests over" to construct a new, more elaborated utterance "Мы принимаем гостей в семь 'We have guests over at seven'" (line 19).

(9)	1	Instructor:	We need to finish this
	2		(5)
	3	*Yulia:*	*семь*
	3a		*seven*
	4		(10)
	5	*Denis:*	*How do you say "to meet"?*
	6–8		((Instructor is trying to find the slide with the Task Tool-kit))
	9	Instructor:	You can use принимать гостей (.)
	9a		to have guests over
	10		принимать- принимать гостей (.) гостей
	10a		to have- to have guests (.) over
	11		принимать гостейы [sic]
	11a		to have guests over
	12	Alexander:	да, семь
	12a		yes, seven
	13	Instructor:	let me
	14	Denis:	*ok*
			((Instructor is looking for the slide))
	19	Alexander:	мы принимаем гостей вечером в семь
	19a		*we are having guests over in the evening at seven*

Although the decision seems to be made, Yulia did not reveal that she was supposed to have dinner with her friend and in the next lines (23–47) the instructor scaffolds Yulia to elicit her decision on whether she invites her friend for the family dinner. While Yulia still did not provide her decision about her friend, Alexander offers a new solution, Мы принимаем два гостейы *[sic]* "We are having over two guests" (ex. 10, line 60). Yulia disagrees with Alexander in English (line 61) and in lines 63–79 the instructor re-formulates her response in Russian using the language students know, твой друг идёт в гости или идёт домой? "Is your friend going for a visit or he is going home?" Yulia, however, still does not express her decision. The instructor treats the verb идти "to go" as problematic for Yulia, but she does not provide a translation for this word. Instead, she reminds her of the context in which students used this verb.

(10)	60	*Alexander:*	*Мы принимаем два гостейы* [sic]
	60a		*we are having two guests over*
	61	*Yulia:*	*yes, but I can change my plans with my friend for family*
	62		(4)
	63	Instructor:	Александр- Александр говорит, что друг тоже идёт

63a		Alexander- Alexander says that her friend is also going to visit
64		в гости, идёт в гости, идёт в гости
64a		them, is going to visit them, is going to visit them
66		идёт в гости
66a		*is going to visit them*
67		goes to visit
68		(5)
69	Instructor:	Юля, что ты думаешь?
69a		Yulia, what do you think?
70		(3)
71		твой друг идёт домой или в гости?
71a		is your friend going home or to visit them?
72		твой друг идёт домой или в гости?
72a		*is your friend going home or to visit them?*
73		(4)
74		идти, remember this verb идти? (.) we had it with snow,
74a		to go… to go
75		идёт снег so, он идёт в гости или идёт домой?
75a		snow goes… is he going to visit them or he is going home?

After the instructor's scaffolding, Alexander makes a decision, в гости "goes on a visit" (ex. 11, line 80) whereas Marina suggests that Yulia's friend go home (line 81). Yulia's decision is similar to Marina's, but in her response she substitutes the personal pronoun он "he" with a more difficult noun phrase: моя *[sic]* друг идёт домой "my friend is going home" (line 87). Since students did not come up with one outcome, the instructor asks them what they decided and introduces the new word, решить "decide". In lines 94–112 she repeats the question and provides the meaning of the verb several times in two modalities, audio and text-based. Denis also manages to negotiate the meaning of this verb by typing this verb followed by a question mark (line 106, 108).

(11)	78		we need to decide what to do with him?
	79		(5)
	80	*Alexander:*	в гости
	80a		*goes on a visit*
	81	*Marina:*	он идёт домой
	81a		*he is going home*
	…		
	87	*Julia:*	моя [sic] друг идёт домой

87a		*my friend is going home*
…		
94	*Instructor:*	Что мы решили?
95		Что мы решили?
94/5a		What have decided?
96		(4)
97	Instructor:	решили decided
98	*Instructor:*	*decided*
99		Что мы решили?
99a		What have we decided?
100		(3)
101	*Yulia:*	*да*
101a		*yes*
102	*Instructor:*	*что мы решили?*
102a		*what have we decided?*
103		(4)
104	*Alexander:*	он идёт домой
104a		*he is going home*
105		(3)
106	*Denis:*	*решили?*
106a		*decided?*
107		(3)
108		*?*
109	Instructor:	решили decided
110	Yulia:	он идёт домой
110a		he is going home
111	Instructor:	decided
111a		*decided*
…		
115	Instructor	ok, друг идёт домой
115a		ok, her friend is going home
116		ok, (2)
117		☺
118	*Alexander:*	*Мы решилим* [sic] он идёт домой
118a		*We decided that he is going home*

Alexander accepts Yulia's proposition, он идёт домой "he is going home" (line 104) and Yulia confirms her decision (line 110). Then, Alexander incorporates the new word решили "decided" and constructs a new, more elaborated response, Мы решилм *[sic]* он идёт домой "We decided he goes home."

While students were able to cope independently with the jigsaw task, which was more structured and included many prompts, they could not complete the decision-making component without the instructor's scaffolding because, at this level of their language development, they could not quickly retrieve the linguistic resources they had to apply in a different context (e.g., the verb идти "to go"). Only with the instructor's assistance were students able to pull together their resources and collaboratively co-construct new, more difficult utterances:

(9)   19   *Alexander:*   *мы принимаем гостей вечером в семь*

        19a   *we are having guests over in the evening at seven*

(10)   60   *Alexander:*   *Мы принимаем два гостейы* [sic]

        60a   *we are having two guests over*

(11)   87   *Julia:*   *моя* [sic] *друг идёт домой*

        87a   *my friend is going home*

        118   Alexander: Мы решилм [sic] он идёт домой

        118a   *We decided that he is going home*

While Stockwell (2004 as cited in Rosell-Aguillar, 2005) maintains that task-based instruction is challenging for beginners because of the high cognitive load on learners in CMC, it seems that the task type is more critical in this respect. Although both jigsaw and decision-making tasks were employed in the same environment, students were able to complete the jigsaw independently whereas they could accomplish decision-making only with the instructor's assistance. Unlike jigsaw tasks, decision-making tasks are less structured and take learners from the familiar and safer context of language drills of asking and answering questions and require them to use language spontaneously in a more creative way. To retrieve language resources without any prompts and apply them in a new situation takes more effort and does put a cognitive load on students. Alexander's comment Я усталь [sic] "I am tired" (ex. 12) shows that the task did put some cognitive load on students.

(12)   *Alexander:*   *I liked how it challenged us*

        Denis: *same. it was hard at first but I think we all got the hang of it after a while*

        Alexander: Я усталь [sic] *"I am tired"*

However, with an expert who can prompt students' performance within their ZPD, learners are able to mobilize their linguistic resources to achieve their communicative goal of the task.

Dealing With Grammar Errors

Although the issue of students' dealing with grammar is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth mentioning that students made 12 grammar errors when working on the jigsaw task. However, they did not seem to treat grammar errors as a trouble source and did not initiate a single repair on the incorrect forms. Although students had to complete a post-task error-correction assignment, Alexander did not submit the assignment. While Denis, Marina, and Yulia submitted the error-correction, they failed to correct all of the errors. For example, Marina used the word интервью "interview" as a verb while it was supposed to be a noun and did not correct it. Yulia did not correct the feminine possessive pronoun моя "my" used with the masculine noun друг "friend". This finding supports previous research on TBLT in that the character of repair depends on students' interpretation of the pedagogical focus of the task (Seedhouse, 2004). In task-oriented and meaning-oriented contexts, grammatical errors are most of the time unattended to unless they interfere with comprehension and impede communication.

Are Collaborative Tasks Beneficial for Beginner Learners?

While some scholars believe that collaborative TBLT is not as beneficial for beginner-level learners as for intermediate and advanced learners because beginners' limited linguistic resources do not allow for much collaboration (Collentine, 2009; Kötter, 2001; Rosell-Aguilar, 2005), the results of this study speak in favor of this approach. The study shows that learners were able to manage the interaction common to the language classroom, specifically, question-answer sequences. While at first students used English to initiate repair, after the instructor's explanation of how to do so using simple language, students were able to conduct repair in Russian throughout the jigsaw task. Although students were able to use Russian in the repair sequences that had a social function, they used English to conduct repair that had an SLA function such as negotiation of meaning. Apparently, to initiate repair that deals with listening problems is not difficult because students may employ simple language or a formulaic expression such as Повтори, пожалуйста, "Repeat please." Although learners had linguistic resources to negotiate meaning, they failed to do so. From a pedagogical perspective, not knowing a word is not viewed as a face-threatening situation, but as a learning opportunity. Learners, however, seemed to treat such situations as face-threatening and performed affiliative utterances before assisting their peers with writing down unknown words. Performing affiliative utterances requires more advanced linguistic resources and socio-pragmatic knowledge which beginner learners did not have.

While students were not able to complete the decision-making component of the task independently, it does not mean that it was not beneficial for students. With the instructor's scaffolding, learners were able to collaboratively complete the decision-making component. As the task unfolded, learners were able to build on each other's contributions and co-construct more elaborated utterances using the linguistic resources that they have. Although decision-making tasks are more challenging for students in that they are less structured and do not provide as many prompts as the jigsaw tasks, they force learners to

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

Go Back to Menu

retrieve from their memory the vocabulary and grammar that they practiced a while ago and to apply them to a different context. Both jigsaw and decision-making tasks encourage students to learn how to use the target language to communicate in the L2. If students are not urged to use simple language, they will not be able to interact at the current level of their language development and will have to wait until more difficult forms are available to them.

The Benefits of Synchronous MWCEs

There are several benefits to using synchronous MWCEs for language learning tasks. One of the benefits of the synchronous multimodal environments is that they can engage multiple students at the same time. While some students can interact via an audio channel, the other ones can participate via text-based chat and take notes on the whiteboard. When communicating via multiple channels, students can practice both oral and written language and learn how to interact in both modalities. Using audio and text-based channels is also beneficial for co-constructing new knowledge. When students are urged to co-construct new knowledge, they opt for using text-based chat. As this study and earlier research on the use of text-based CMC (e.g., Chun, 1994; Kern, 1995) demonstrate, the written mode allows more time for students to process new language and also they can have other students' responses available to them, so they can incorporate already available information in the new utterances.

Concluding Remarks: Application to ESL Context

While this study was conducted in the context of Russian as a foreign language, the findings of the study are directly relevant to the ESL context. Although foreign language and second language contexts differ in that foreign language learners have restricted opportunities of using the target language outside of the classroom, the learning goal for both groups remains the same: to learn how to communicate in the target language. Since real world tasks involve collaboration with others, it is even more critical for the second language learners to develop communicative skills because they can transfer the skills learned in the classroom to the real-life context immediately.

As is evident from the findings of the study, one of the problematic areas in L2 language learning is the use of "real-life-like" language, or the language outside of the most practiced question-answer sequences. In everyday interaction, we often ask for clarifications and repetition of the utterances or their parts, conduct comprehension checks and even negotiate meaning. Therefore, learning how to use this type of language in the safe classroom context helps students to move faster beyond the question-answer interaction and gain more confidence in applying the skills learned in the classroom to real world interaction. Instructors can help students with developing this skill by engaging them in collaborative task-based learning and by explaining how linguistic resources of the second language can be used.

Go Back to Menu

Another problematic area was the collaboration on making decisions. Decision-making practices are often missing from classroom discourse; therefore, students need assistance in how to conduct decision-making exchanges. As the study demonstrates, instructors' scaffolding of students' responses advanced them from performing one-word responses to creating sentences incorporating grammar and vocabulary that they previously learned. Engaging students in this type of classroom activity more often will allow them to practice such skills and develop them further. Showing ESL students how to use limited language resources and encouraging them to use the target language at the early stages of their language development will facilitate the development of the students' fluency and faster integration into the target language community.

Although this study was conducted in a fully online language class, it does not mean that students enrolled in face-to-face classes cannot benefit from the use of technology. Since various tools supporting synchronous multimodal communication are available for language educators, language instructors can engage students in blended learning by moving task-based instruction online. Giving students opportunities to learn how to collaborate in written and spoken modalities is important not only from pedagogical perspective, but also because multimodal communication is becoming an essential part of our lives.

While encouraging for language educators, the study results are quite tentative. Since the number of participants is quite small, future research with larger cohorts of learners is needed to support these findings.

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Appendix A: Transcription Conventions

Yulia:	Денис	Audio-based utterances are typed in regular font
Marina:	*I know*	Text-based utterances sent to all participants are typed in italics
Denis to Yulia:	*i think*	Text-based utterances sent to private chat specify the message receiver are typed in italics
Yulia:	она	Utterances from the whiteboard are typed in bold
(3)		The pause length in seconds
(.)		A pause shorter than a second
((wrong case))		double parenthesis include transcriber's comments
[sic]		indicates a grammatical error or inappropriate form
Я усталь [sic]	*"I am tired"*	quotation marks include translation of an utterance1a lines with the letter a next to the number indicate that the line includes the translation of the previous line.
Q		Question turn
A		Answer turn
Ack		Acknowledgement turn

A CALL FOR THE HUMAN FEEL IN TODAY'S INCREASINGLY BLENDED WORLD

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Abstract

In this paper I discuss the role of social presence in ESL/EAL technology-mediated language learning (TMLL), instructional design and pedagogy, and the crucial role that social presence plays in deepening learner engagement and learning experiences. Notions of social presence in online environments, including Garrison, Anderson and Archer's (2000) Community of Inquiry, and strategies by Dörnyei (2007), are discussed to inform a motivating online learning environment. Key findings are summarized from an Ontario ESL e-learning feasibility study in which participants call for "the human feel" in TMLL environments. These findings include a strong preference for blended language program delivery. A range of TMLL program options that maximize social presence while leveraging individualized, flexible learning are summarized. Examples of effective ESL e-learning strategies conclude the paper.

Those who approach the future of technology-enhanced language learning know only too well that what we are witnessing today is a dramatic process of diversification and complexification... Overall the task [of facilitating technology-enhanced language learning] is getting more complex, more demanding and more rewarding. (Kohn, 2001, p. 252)

As (Kohn, 2001) predicted (see above), technology-mediated language learning (TMLL) has continued to develop exponentially. Language teaching technology is in a constant state of development as technology-mediated approaches to communication and interaction become increasingly normalized in today's societies (Stanley, 2013). TMLL approaches are increasingly diverse and complex, reflecting expanding technology-mediated modes of communication and enhanced understanding of second language learning and teaching. English language instructors, administrators and learners are able to choose from a dizzying range of language teaching-specific tools, software and online media that includes a continually evolving variety of generic web-based tools, communication and social networking media. This "rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed language pedagogy and language use, enabling new forms of discourse, new forms of authorship, and new ways to create and participate in communities" (Kern, 2006, p. 183).

English as an additional language (EAL) can be taught online completely at a distance, allowing learners to interact in a self-paced manner with online content and then meet with an e-facilitator for guidance and assessment, while following an individualized study plan. Virtual EAL programs can be introduced to a cohort of learners in diverse locations through a videoconferencing session in which course goals and schedules are reviewed and learning strategies developed (Lawrence, 2013a). Learners then work with classmates in small groups using asynchronous and synchronous tools, meeting with the instructor for scheduled group videoconferencing sessions and alone in virtual office hours for individual guidance. Where technology-mediated approaches are integrated into EAL face-to-face (F2F) classrooms, they result in blended learning programs (BL)[1] in which technology is used to enhance classroom teaching. Alternatively, mobile applications (apps) or mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) can be used to add flexible learning pathways, to enhance individual work on linguistic structures, to conduct projects with classmates and/or to build mobile communication skills in English (Ally & Palalas, 2011). Such TMLL options are promising but like other forms of education, their effectiveness depends on instructional design, teaching and support that strategically leverage the benefits of educational media tools and learner-centred pedagogy. Unless social interaction and social presence are methodically cultivated in distance and/or blended EAL programs, there are often reduced opportunities for interaction, learning, feedback, technical support that result in disengagement (Blake, 2009; Holmberg, Shelley & White, 2005; Lehman & Conceiçao, 2010; White, 2003). In her discussion of the need for "connectivity" to sustain technology-mediated language learning, Senior (2010, p. 137) argues, "language teachers have a vital role to play in building and maintaining [online] learning communities in which students are supported by their teacher and their peers".

Here, I will discuss the role of social presence and learner investment in TMLL instructional design and pedagogy and the crucial role this has in creating engaging learning communities and deepening the online teaching and learning experience. The next section concerns some key language learning benefits and limitations documented in the TMLL literature. Notions of social presence and motivational strategies to deepen online learning engagement and inform TMLL design and pedagogy will then be outlined. I will then share key findings, calling for a more interactive and personal approach in English TMLL programs, from an Ontario-wide study examining the feasibility of integrating e-learning into current Ontario adult, non-credit ESL programs. I will outline the findings of a preference for blended language learning solutions and provide examples of practice that showcase the need for strategic, interactive program design and pedagogy that build social presence.

The reported benefits of technology-mediated EAL or language teaching approaches are wide ranging but, as noted above, the realization of such benefits depends on learner-centred pedagogy and instructional design that effectively mediates technology use to meet learner-centred outcomes. In their review of empirical research examining the use

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[1]   Blended learning is sometimes referred to as hybrid learning.

of Web 2.0 technologies[2] and language learning, Wang and Vasquez (2012, p. 423) found that the main advantage reported by these empirical studies was that Web 2.0 technologies help to create learning communities that are comfortable, individualized, collaboration-oriented, and community based, enhancing engagement in the language learning process. Some of these TMLL approaches offer flexible, self-paced access to authentic, multimodal language input that has the ability to deepen motivation, interaction, and other aspects of second language acquisition (Brennan, 2009; Levy & Stockwell, 2006; Kern, Ware & Warschauer, 2008). A number of studies have revealed increases in writing production, confidence, writing strategies and overall writing abilities using the self-paced, interactional affordances of TMLL approaches (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008; Kessler, 2009; Kessler, Bikowski & Boggs, 2012; Lee, 2010). For instance, in a study examining the use of blogging in an intermediate college level Spanish course (Armstrong & Retterer, 2008, p. 243), students reported enjoying the blog-enhanced writing environments, expressed increasing confidence using the target language and produced an average of 3000 words/term in Spanish (or 12 pages of text), sometimes 10 times more than students at the equivalent level in non-blogging classes. Another study (Kessler, Bikowski & Boggs, 2012) analyzed writing processes with 38 university English language learners in a pre-academic orientation program where learners collaboratively used Google Docs in small groups over a three-week period to prepare research reports. In this study, researchers found that learners using these intensely collaborative online tools demonstrated a strong commitment to the writing process, seeking feedback, revising and pooling their linguistic knowledge over multiple versions of their collaborative research reports.

The multimodal, individualized nature of many TMLL tools has the potential to engage varied learning styles, to personalize learning and reinforce language intake by providing linguistic input in multiple formats. For example, a mixed methods study using pre and post-grammar tests and student surveys examining the use of mobile grammar apps integrated into a 16-week university English-for-Academic purpose (EAP) course (Zhi & Hegelheimer, 2013) found that the use of this app by learners throughout the semester resulted in increases in grammatical accuracy, the use of self-editing strategies and the reduction of writing errors in post writing tests. In a discussion citing a number of empirical studies that reinforce the benefits of multimodality, Brennan (2009) concludes that when vocabulary is annotated with pictures, text and video, participants outperformed their classroom counterparts in vocabulary learning, reading comprehension and reading speed. In a study examining target language caption use while watching online videos, researchers found that learners watching videos with captions performed better on vocabulary and comprehension tests than when watching videos without such textual support (Winke, Gass & Sydorenko, 2010). Learners reported using video captioning to increase attention, improve processing and to analyze language.

Another unique and powerful benefit of TMLL includes new forms of authorship afforded to learners *and instructors* through multimodal computer-mediated communication

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2   Web2.0 technology refers to the social use of technology to connect, inform and collaborate using online media.

Go Back to Menu

(Garrett, 2009). Networked technology environments have altered discourse norms and encourage learners to adopt more active roles in discourse management, curriculum design and direction, promoting more egalitarian participation and peer interaction within and beyond the classroom (Blake, 2009; Brennan, 2009; Lawrence, Young, Owen & Compton, 2009; Terrell, 2011). For example, in a qualitative study examining the impact of a transnational wiki-writing project between EAP learners in Dubai and Canada using pre and post student and instructor interviews, classroom observations and document analysis, researchers found students had a heightened sense of investment when producing language for their peers. This extended sense of audience promoted learner investment in linguistic form and vocabulary to impress and to communicate an idealized vision of the learner's self to this peer-audience (Lawrence, Young, Owen & Compton, 2009).

Another important learner-centred benefit with TMLL approaches is the development and/or refinement of transferable digital literacies combined with language learning (Lawrence, 2013a). In the Ontario ESL e-learning feasibility study that will be discussed in detail below, the vast majority of participants (100% of the administrators and 83% of instructors surveyed) in Ontario adult non-credit ESL programs indicated they felt building computer literacy skills along with language learning was relevant to their ESL learners. One administrator noted, "E-learning is very relevant because computer-based communication is needed for students' lives and they need to have computer skills to help them find jobs" (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 83).

Nevertheless, it is important to reinforce that these reported benefits are strongly influenced by how a specific technology is used and supported by the users, their attitudes and experiences (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). For example, a number of researchers examining writing proficiency development in TMLL contexts (Kessler, 2009; Kessler, Bikowski & Boggs, 2012) have observed that language learners using varied TMLL tools tended to focus on meaning at the expense of accuracy in the writing tasks analyzed. These researchers emphasized the important role of pedagogical design and instructor mediation in shaping the learning focus on both accuracy and meaning using TMLL tools and approaches. As Stockwell (2012) notes, the same technology used by different users may be experienced in very different ways and the *potential* of TMLL depends on a host of variables for benefits to be realized. As promising as these educational technologies are, there remain many barriers inhibiting TMLL in EAL contexts (Lawrence, 2013a; Stanley, 2013). Insufficient technology access, support, digital literacy, and the need to build autonomous learning strategies can all limit the use of TMLL approaches. Learners are often unprepared for the additional autonomy that online environments can offer and require explicit TMLL strategies to learn effectively with these new media (Wang & Vasquez, 2012). In addition, instructors often have little or no training, support, or guidance on how to integrate educational technologies into their EAL practices. TMLL pedagogy often remains an enigma and strategies to build social presence and engagement within these sometimes new and unfamiliar environments can be daunting.

Explaining Online Social Presence

Notions of community and engagement in online and F2F education have increasingly been recognized as key factors to ensure investment and learning. However, many educators are unaware of how to foster social presence in rapidly evolving online environments. Garrison, Anderson, and Archer's (2000) community of inquiry framework for understanding social presence in online learning communities focuses on three complementary aspects of presence: cognitive, social, and teaching presence. While all three areas embed degrees of social presence, the two most relevant areas to this discussion are social and teaching presence. Garrison, Anderson and Archer define social presence as the ability of participants to position their personal characteristics within a community of inquiry through emotional expression, open communication and other means to establish group cohesion. Teaching presence is defined as the design, facilitation and direction of cognitive and social processes to attain meaningful, participant-centred learning outcomes. Following this model, a key role of the instructor is to create a climate that facilitates social presence within the online learning environment.

In his discussion of motivation in language learning environments, Dörnyei (2007) argues that the most crucial feature of a motivating classroom environment is "the quality of the relationships between the class members" (Dörnyei, p. 720). He describes group cohesiveness as the "we" feeling of a group—the "gelling force that keeps the group together" (p. 721). He notes that this is built on intermember acceptance in addition to members' commitment to the task, purpose of the group, and group pride. To develop such cohesiveness, Dörnyei recommends activities through which group members learn about each other to foster intermember relationships. Proximity, contact and interaction through group work, and opportunities for spontaneous interaction are also crucial in group bonding. He stresses the need to negotiate group guidelines for interaction and accepted patterns of communication early in the group's life to build a community connection and to bridge individual differences. This negotiation of new norms and communication patterns is particularly relevant for TMLL approaches to language learning as online collaborative communication is bound within a culturally and contextually framed communicative purpose, the expectations of social relations, and the expression of individual identity (Kramsch and Thorne, 2002; Lawrence, 2013b; Lawrence et al., 2009; Thorne 2003).

In online language learning, actively working with learner identity and experience, along with intellectual and cultural capital can play a key role in building investment within a learning community (Dörnyei 2007; Potts, 2005). In a transnational wiki writing project (Lawrence et al., 2009), researchers found that learner "identity investment" was a key factor in facilitating engagement in the learning environment and the intercultural and language learning processes. In this research project, not enough time had been spent developing intermember relationships that could support the collaborative writing process. Participating instructors agreed that, in future telecollaborations, learners would need more time to learn about each other, to share identities and experiences, and to build a learning

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

community. In her analysis of online language community building within a graduate seminar in modern language education, Potts (2005) remarks how online interactions began with students' posting varied aspects of their identities and competence, positioning themselves within the community. Through survey and interview data, participants reported that this enhanced knowledge of each other encouraged a higher degree of respect and interdependence as students were no longer interacting with an unknown audience but with individuals they knew and valued.

Senior (2010) emphasizes the instructor's role as a key factor in building effective and sustainable online language learning communities. She notes that learners need to be aware of each other and that the teacher needs to be "with"' the students, attending explicitly to the social wellbeing of the class and the individuals within it. She discusses the changing roles of instructors in TMLL environments and the need to cultivate connections among learners by having them collaborate in small groups on class-based projects, to learn about each other and pool resources to build collegiality. In her own research and teaching practice, she confirms related classroom and TMLL research findings by Rovai and Cutler (as cited in Senior, 2010, p. 144) that have shown the more learners know about each other, the more likely they are to establish trust, seek support and find satisfaction. Senior emphasizes the need to adopt a 'class-centred' pedagogical approach where instructors "must demonstrate that they are not only effective teachers but also members of their class groups" (Senior, 2010, p. 145), alternating between the formal role of traditional pedagogue and group member, fostering a group feeling within the community.

A Call for the Human Feel

To examine the potential from TMLL options in adult, non-credit ESL programs in Ontario, the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration in cooperation with the Toronto Catholic District School Board launched an iterative, multi-phased ESL e-learning feasibility study in early 2013. Phase one of this study entailed an in-depth review of the literature on the benefits, limitations, and current theories informing e-learning practices in ESL and L2 teaching and learning. This phase also included interviews with key informants from across Canada at nine sites involved in the design and delivery of ESL e-learning in blended and distance formats to elicit potential benefits, limitations, and practices using TMLL approaches. Phases two and three involved a mixed methods approach, informed by this first phase, where data was gathered and analyzed from key stakeholders including instructors, learners and administrators. Twelve focus groups were conducted in four regions of Ontario to solicit perceived benefits, limitations, barriers, and visions of ESL e-learning in varied contexts. Phase 3 consisted of an electronic survey, informed by the focus groups and literature review, completed by 294 participants in Ontario-funded ESL programs. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed by the research team in all phases of the project to triangulate findings, inform research design and to generate a situated understanding of the interrelated factors that shape the use of ESL e-learning in Ontario.

Research findings reinforced that the vast majority of ESL instructors did not use technology in their teaching practices and continued to adopt a primarily F2F approach when teaching their classes. Many participants cited access and infrastructure issues; a lack of support, resources, and training for instructors, learners, and administrators; and an overall lack of comfort and familiarity with TMLL (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013). Only about one third of administrators surveyed reported having classrooms equipped with computers, often in a lab context. A number of administrators and instructors with access to computer labs noted the pedagogically fragmented nature of labs, one administrator noting, "it's not a normal part of learning…It's like an adjunct to what the class is doing." Administrators and instructors wanted more guidance on ESL e-learning pedagogy.

There was a range of ESL e-learning visions presented by participants who cannot attend regularly scheduled classes. These included distance programs to increase access to learners constrained by distance, scheduling, or parenting commitments. Some learners and instructors felt distance pre-arrival programs could develop newcomers' language and integration skills before arrival in Ontario. However a strong theme emerging in all e-learning visions was the crucial role of social interaction and the need for teacher-mediated learning in TMLL environments. A number of participants, particularly in the focus groups, expressed concerns that the social dimension of the learning experience, for both learners and instructors, would be lost in ESL e-learning. One young adult learner summarized this as the need to keep "the human feel" in the learning environment, noting "the teacher is very important in motivating me and helping me learn" (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 100). One instructor warned of the isolating atmosphere of e-learning environments.

> A lot of our students feel isolated to begin with, and if you start doing online learning entirely, you're isolating them more because they're not making friends, they're not meeting people and this just increases their isolation (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 101).

These comments reflect the social isolation that more self-directed TMLL environments can cause (Harker & Koutsantoni, 2005; Lawrence, 2013a; Wang & Woo, 2007). The lack of social interaction and weakened sense of community in some online environments can be demotivating and a big deterrent to language learners and instructors. The individualistic nature of some approaches to online learning can be problematic for ESL/EAL learners who feel uncomfortable in situations of forced individualism and may be more oriented to group participation and harmonization (Harrington, 2010). The interpersonal interactions in the *social* environments of the ESL classroom can have significant learning value in terms of language use, workplace, and social integration. As one learner noted, these classes are the first place to meet people outside of our families in this new country. "In class, we share rich cultures, experiences…making connections with other students may lead to jobs", he stressed (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 26).

The Blended Solution

These concerns about social isolation and the need for language teaching effectiveness were cited as some of the reasons why participants in this Ontario-wide research favoured a blended ESL e-learning delivery approach. In the survey data, 84% of administrators, 64% of instructors, and 60% of learners reported a preference for a blended approach (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 18). The oft-cited advantage of blended learning included the need to maintain F2F interaction time, which offers valuable psycho-social learning that can accompany classroom interactions with more self-paced, student-centred e-learning. One instructor noted the benefits of blended learning for multilevel classes, common in these ESL/EAL environments, observing that "learners in the same class could work on different content" (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 96). A learner commented on the complementary advantage of learning with both F2F and online approaches, saying, "e-learning can prepare us for the classroom learning, get us thinking about vocabulary and reading before class" (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 25). Administrators saw blended instruction as a way to expand programs by accessing non-traditional learners and enhancing program accessibility and efficiency.

> Instead of having one class full time, I can have a full-time class there half time, and then have two full-time classes running in one space. This would work well as we struggle for space all the time (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 47).

In addition, a great attraction to blended learning is that it can often leverage instructional and space resources more efficiently, better meeting learner needs and maximizing often scarce resources (Goertler, Bollen & Gaff Jr., 2012; Gruba & Hinkelman, 2012). Blended approaches can help instructors better use classroom time to focus on learner needs identified in online work. One instructor working in a blended teaching environment noted the increased time available to assess individual progress of learners in her class, allowing her to tailor instruction to better meet students' needs (Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013). Research examining blended language learning has emphasized this individualized approach combined with the flexibility of using complementary F2F and online approaches in EAL program delivery (Blake, 2009; Grgurovic, 2011; Goertler, Bollen & Gaff Jr., 2012). This thinking has lead researchers to proclaim blended learning to be "the best of both worlds" complementing technology-mediated self-paced learning with social and spontaneous classroom interaction (Stine, 2004 as cited in Harrington, 2010, p. 1).

Nevertheless, while blended EAL e-learning certainly seems to be a promising e-learning program delivery model, it does not guarantee social presence in the online environment or effective learning. This again depends in part on TMLL pedagogy and the work of the instructor. Research continues to support the L2 teacher's role in blended learning as a vital factor for achieving success in program implementation (Hong & Samimy, 2010). As Garrett (2009, p. 723) notes,

simply providing students with Web links to authentic materials does not of itself constitute [effective] CALL…the real challenge is developing activities that will integrate authentic materials and engage students.

The Need for Strategic, Interactive Program Design

The Ontario ESL e-learning research examining effective ESL e-learning programs revealed the crucial relationship between curriculum design, technologies, instructional strategies, social presence and learner engagement (Lawrence, 2013a). One curriculum design team had worked on creating three blended/online EAL adult training programs within a similar timeframe (Lawrence, 2013a). The first blended EAL program was to be redesigned as a blended program using an existing face-to-face (F2F) curriculum as the base for the redesign. The design team reviewed the existing curriculum and selected approximately 20% of the activities, which they felt would work well online where students would work largely alone in a homework-like, self-paced manner. The second EAL program was a program uniquely developed for blended delivery (33% online and 67% face-to-face) that had to be created by the design team. The third program was designed to enhance listening and speaking skills among intermediate and advanced EAL speakers, to be delivered primarily online at a distance. This final course was completely redesigned from an existing face-to-face, classroom curriculum.

In these latter two programs, the curriculum design team strategically developed the curricula to choose delivery options and technologies to match specific learning outcomes. The team worked at length to identify how specific outcomes could be supported by various e-learning tools, activities, and F2F interaction. Various interactive technologies were used including wikis, VoiceThread, an interactive presentation tool, and social networking tools like Google+ Hangouts, Twitter, and Diigo, a social bookmarking tool. The listening/speaking skills distance program used a mix of asynchronous and synchronous activities, videoconferencing, and chat to connect learners in real-time with each other and with the instructor throughout the program.

In the piloting of the first blended program, where "e-friendly" activities were adopted from the F2F curriculum, feedback from learners and instructors indicated learners were generally positive about the program but felt the technology-mediated work was not very engaging, involving too much self-paced, individual work (Lawrence, 2013a). The curriculum designer noted that if she had stopped the TMLL design after this initial project, she would have been somewhat disappointed with the seemingly lacklustre potential of ESL e-learning. However results from the two "e-designed", highly interactive programs revealed different perspectives. Learners from the blended EAL program (e-designed from scratch) felt the course maximized their learning in efficient ways and allowed them more individualized work and enhanced one-on-one feedback from the instructor compared to other ESL courses they had taken. Similarly, results from the e-designed distance listening and speaking program indicated that learners were extremely satisfied with this delivery model and again found the course individualized, flexible and interactive. In these two

Teachers of English as a Second Language Association of Ontario

The human feel in today's blended world   - 136 -   CONTACT Magazine | Research Symposium Issue | May, 2014   Go Back to Menu

latter programs, a number of learners thought that all ESL courses should be delivered like this, using a mix of self-paced and intensely collaborative, synchronous interaction (Lawrence, 2013a).

In this listening and speaking distance course, the first class began with a coordinated synchronous videoconferencing session where course goals and schedules were reviewed, technologies and learning strategies introduced and a series of icebreaker activities, where learners became acquainted with each other. The instructor reportedly made a strong effort early in the course to pay attention to learners, orienting them to activities, to autonomous learning strategies and checking in with them when necessary. Throughout the course, learners worked in small groups in a number of activities, allowing them to get to know a range of classmates as the course progressed. Email reminders were used by the instructor to check in with learners on assignments, strategies and absences. Weekly office hours were established using computer-based videoconferencing (i.e., Skype) where the instructor could chat synchronously with individual learners to provide feedback and guidance. These office hours were so popular, there was often a waiting list and the instructor often could not fit everyone in.

Learners *and* instructors in both these e-designed EAL programs reported feeling very connected with the learning community created in these learning environments. Such enhanced connectedness is a phenomenon being reported in a number of blended language learning communities (Lawrence, 2013a; Lehman & Conceiçao, 2010; Potts, 2005; Senior, 2010; Shih, 2011). This cohesive atmosphere appears to result from a combination of learner-centred content, a strong social and supportive teacher presence, forged by a mix of synchronous, F2F, and asynchronous interactions through which learners negotiate common goals and build mutual trust, sometimes sharing profound aspects of their identities with the group. As Dörnyei (2007) outlines, such heightened collaborative interaction invests learners deeply in the intermember relationships in the class. An instructor teaching in another blended non-credit ESL course in the Ontario ESL e-learning study reported how the classroom connection in her blended classes seemed consistently deeper than in the same F2F delivered classes (Lawrence, 2013a, p. 71). She was pleasantly surprised by this phenomenon and felt it may be due to the increased number of reflective writing assignments where learners revealed aspects of their identity and experience with one another. She admitted getting to know her learners more as people rather than students in these blended environments.

Strategies to Facilitate Social Presence

It is this personalized instructional approach that leverages pedagogy, technologies, delivery modes to foster social presence and investment in the language learning community (Dörnyei, 2007; Potts, 2005; Senior, 2010). Knowing how to strategically exploit the potential affordances of the online and F2F learning environments to target specific learning outcomes is crucial. For example, the online language learning environment can be used to provide learners with multimodal language input and activities that solicit their

experiences and identities to share with others; to offer self-paced approaches that motivate learners to collaboratively build a bank of learner-centred resources; to assess individual and group learning and offer individualized feedback. At the same time, the F2F learning environment can be used to reinforce and consolidate language learning introduced in the online environment; to celebrate successes and build spontaneous, interpersonal communication skills; to encourage connections and informal learning at break and lunch time; and to again offer personalized feedback and guidance with online and F2F work.

In the ESL e-learning feasibility research (Lawrence, 2013a; Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013) some of the approaches to ESL e-learning included personalizing the online environment with video welcomes, updates and summaries of work completed by the instructor. Instructor videos are a valuable way to personalize the online learning environment and build social presence. Encouraging learners to use video podcasts or image icons that represent the "me" in online discussions can help personalize online communication and show more dimensions of the individual in the interactions. In the literature-review portion of this research, a number of sites used peer mentors to help new learners navigate a new online language learning approach, to help troubleshoot specific issues and to develop more autonomous learning strategies. Synchronous tools like chat and videoconferencing via Skype or Google+ are highly interactive, learner-directed, and spontaneous and are reported to be conducive to developing peer-to-peer relationships in online environments (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002; Thorne 2003). Such tools help bridge the distance often felt in online environments and can help connect the group. On the other hand, asynchronous tools like discussion boards, blogs and wikis can be used to encourage the exploration of learner-centered topics and the sharing of detailed narratives, allowing learners to position and explore their identities and to negotiate deeper understanding in a self-paced manner (Lawrence et al., 2009). Asynchronous tools can also give educators and learners the time to respond, to assess and offer feedback to learners, which can in turn help shape teaching practices and learning outcomes.

As illustrated in the Potts' (2005) study, personal narratives encouraged self-reflection and allow students to locate themselves in a position of expertise. Students can write about topics with which they have intimate experience, combining experience with formal knowledge to help position themselves within the community. This can help build intermember relationships and group cohesiveness. Lehman and Conceiçao (2010) recommend offering learners an online networking space such as an e-café and synchronous communication tools, outside of the formal course, for informal sharing that can complement and deepen the informal sharing that can then occur in the F2F environment. Pedagogical approaches that provide learners with explicit expectations and online accountability can be valuable strategies to help facilitate online autonomy and to strengthen the "we" feeling of the learner group as everyone shares in these group processes and goals. As noted in the examples above, instructor-mediated interactions are crucial at the beginning of online and blended programs. Instructors need to intensely monitor learner interaction at the start of a program to gauge progress, to model online interaction and community development,

and to check in with learners. Structuring activities so learners work within small groups online can be helpful to increase individual participation and build deeper familiarity with group members.

Concluding Thoughts

"E-learning has the potential to change the texture of the classrooms by moving away from old stand-up-and-teach models to a more engaged model where learners become masters of their own destinies." ...ESL administrator (as cited in Lawrence, Haque & King, 2013, p. 8)

As this administrator noted in the Ontario ESL e-learning feasibility research, TMLL approaches have substantial potential to create transformative, learner-centred pathways in English language teaching. Knowing how to strategically exploit the potential affordances of online and F2F learning environments to target specific learning outcomes, promote interaction and to build community is crucial. In his theory of connectivism, a learning theory for the digital age, Siemens (2005) calls for a theory of learning that recognizes the tectonic shifts in a "society where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity" (p. 5). Siemens proposes that learning and knowledge emerge from networks, from making connections with others, and that learning is the process of continual connection. Siemens offers a metaphor to explain his theory, that "the pipe is more important than the content within the pipe [and that] our ability to learn what we need for tomorrow is more important than what we know today" (p. 5). In current ESL/EAL online and blended learning environments, where instructors often work with newcomers wanting to connect with others and to learn much more than English, one could argue that the EAL learning community is a crucial component to support learning inside and beyond the classroom. The instructor's role in creating engaging learning environments is a key factor in realizing the potential that TMLL approaches have to offer.

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