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EDITORIAL POLICY AND INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Acknowledgements

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Policy

Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching publishes work in a number of language-related areas including general linguistics, teaching methodology, curriculum development, testing and evaluation, educational technology, CALL, language planning, and bilingual education. Articles on the teaching of languages other than English are also welcome. We are interested in articles that specifically address language teaching in Hong Kong, deal with the surrounding region, or are of particular concern to this region (e.g. language learning in other Chinese contexts, or Chinese students learning languages overseas).

Submission Categories

The Editors welcome contributions of five broad types: articles, reports of 'work in progress', responses to articles published in previous issues, book reviews and conference reports. Other categories will be considered if and when they are submitted. Contributions should not have been previously published, nor should they be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Full length articles should include an abstract of not more than 200 words and biographical data in not more than 50 words.

All contributions should be addressed to:
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Guidelines for Authors

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All authors should submit a disc-copy of their article (preferably Word for Windows or Word Perfect) and one hard copy. Manuscripts should be double-spaced and all tables, figures and illustrations should be **camera-ready**. Authors will receive a complimentary copy of the issue and 10 off prints of their article.

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Editorial

The 18th issue of *Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching* continues the policy of external review adopted for the last issue. This has made the process of production somewhat more complex, but has borne fruit in attracting a number of articles which might otherwise have been lost to other journals. Colleagues in Hong Kong and elsewhere are encouraged to submit articles and reports as early as possible in the year so that the review process can be completed in time for publication in September. In particular, the number of book reviews submitted seems to have declined dramatically, and reviews of recent publications would be particularly welcome.

In this issue

Articles

The task-based approach to language teaching is now well established, and Nunan's work on task design and the learner-centred curriculum is at least partly responsible for this. The first article by **David Nunan and Ken Keobke** investigates the factors which students think makes a task difficult. It also deals with the relationship between task difficulty as perceived by learners and as measured by more objective criteria. Surprisingly, successful completion of tasks in this study of City University students did not correlate very highly with students' own perceptions of difficulty, which indicates the need for more and better use of learner strategy training in language pedagogy.

Desmond Allison, Vivien Berry and Jo Lewkowicz continue the theme of the task-based approach to learning, and their paper describes a continuation of their research into the role of mediating tasks on writing outcomes. The performance of three groups on a summary writing task was previously compared under differing conditions with respect to the intervening task: group discussion, reading comprehension or no activity. This paper investigates in more detail the students' performance during the group discussion or reading comprehension exercises and also students' own perceptions of the process in action. The implications for teaching will be of interest to all who use a task-based approach in the classroom.

Ken Hyland looks at the topic of hedging, the various means by which writers indicate degrees of uncertainty and insure against the impression of overstating a claim. Hedging is an area of genre analysis which has not been extensively researched, and the present study of a corpus of scientific research articles is a valuable addition to our knowledge of how professional writers temper their claims with a tentativeness that pre-empts possible criticism. Not surprisingly, ESP students are usually poorly equipped to deal with the subtleties of the language of hedging, and the article ends with a plea for greater attention to be paid to this aspect of writing which many non-native speaking scientists are forced to deal with.

Geoff Smith's strikingly titled "How high can a dead cat bounce?" illustrates some of the metaphors in use in economic texts and media reports in Hong Kong. The language of metaphor has long held a fascination for scholars, but it is only recently that the study of metaphor has come out of the stylistic closet and established itself as a central area of psycho-linguistic concern. This article shows how the subject of economics is riddled with metaphors, both living and dead, which prop up the very theoretical foundations of the subject (count them!). Media reports in addition use metaphor firstly to legitimise the vague, the uncertain and the abstract and give the illusion of unassailable fact, and secondly to add stylistic variety to what could otherwise become rather colourless prose. The paper appeals for greater attention to be given to metaphor both as a fundamental process in understanding the language of economics, and as a source of more motivating texts for students burdened with the "international" editions of the great North American economics tomes.

Desmond Allison investigates the use of certain modals in the writing of law students in ESL classes and its effect on the status of claims made. The use of modals is subtle and difficult to master by ESL students, but they nevertheless need precision in signifying various degrees of

possibility or assertions which could have important consequences if not adequately communicated. Allison warns against over-simplification of the problems, and also against the view that second language students can be expected to emulate the linguistic sophistication of first language speakers. However, the teacher can provide some useful input based on these findings, and some suggestions for "constructive linguistic advice" are offered.

Nigel Bruce's polemical tour-de-force challenges the restricted definition of "autonomy" in language learning and explores some of the broader social, educational and political implications of the concept. Bruce argues with passion for a greater critical awareness of some of the prevailing educational discourses and warns of the dangers of dualistic and adversarial approaches to curriculum. Some examples of current discourse practices in the field of language education are analyzed, which could be seen to indicate that critical linguistic awareness could fruitfully begin at home before spreading to the wider academic community.

Valerie Pickard brings us back to the real Monday Morning world of finding more and better means of improving our students' writing. One area where second language students commonly need improvement is in the language of citation. In particular, ESL students tend to overuse the word "say" when referring to the work of other authors, which can be seen in concordances of student writing. An analysis of a corpus of applied linguistics articles shows how and why authors use citations, and gives details of the lexical and grammatical choices commonly used by such "expert" writers. This article will be useful for anyone in the business of teaching citation and attribution of source material.

The final article by **Thomas Hawes and Sarah Thomas** deals with a comparison of the text of editorials of two British newspapers, *The Sun* and *The Times*. As British readers will know, these papers are owned by the same proprietor, and have a similar political orientation, but adopt very different styles to get their message across. The editorials are analysed for theme as defined by Halliday and its co-occurrence with lateral verbs as depicted by Kress and Hodge's model. The language is firmly rooted in the functional-systemic tradition, and the results demonstrate some distinct patterns of use in the two papers. Somewhat controversially, they equate some of these with sex role definition and ideological orientation as well as other characteristics.

Reports

A number of short reports give an account of some work in progress which will be of immediate practical interest to teachers. **Monica Hill and Dora Pao** describe a project for architecture students where students were required to produce designs for kitchens, an area where difficulty had been experienced in the past. The report shows how the material was developed and exploited for the benefit of both language and subject departments. **Linda Cooley and Jo Lewkowicz** give a progress report on a major project undertaken by the English Centre into the writing needs of postgraduate students. Sources of information and outcomes so far are described. The project promises to be an extremely valuable resource for designing materials to assist postgraduate students with their writing problems. Finally **David Gardner** reviews some computer software called SurveyPlus which focuses on learner training, especially in the learning of English.

Conference reports

There are two conference reports: **Monica Hill**'s personal impression of the giant TESOL 1995 and **Valerie Pickard**'s account of the 1994 ELT Conference and Book Fair in Malaysia.

Finally some short poems by **Roger Berry** and **Agnes Lam** complete the issue's contents. Are there any other poets out there? All contributions most welcome!

Vivien Berry
Geoff Smith, Editors

Task Difficulty from the Learners Perspective: Perceptions and Reality

David Nunan and Ken Keobke[1]

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Abstract

This paper explores the issue of task difficulty from the perspective of the learner. The aims of the investigation were twofold. In the first place, we wanted to investigate the relationship between student perception of task difficulty, and actual difficulty as measured by successful completion of a task. Secondly, we wanted to collect information on those factors identified by students themselves, as implicated in task difficulty. Subjects were 35 first year undergraduate students undertaking a Higher Diploma in Banking and Finance at City University of Hong Kong who estimated the difficulty of a series of tasks, completed the tasks in two classroom sessions, and then provided their views on the reasons for the difficulty of the tasks. Results of the investigation are presented, and their implications are discussed.

Background

Central tasks for the syllabus designer and materials writer include selecting and sequencing language content and learning tasks. Sequencing decisions must be made between units of work ('Do I teach simple present in Unit 1 and present continuous in Unit 2?'), and within units ('Do I introduce the role play before the selective listening?').

> Our interest in sequence arises because the student cannot learn everything at once. If he [sic] is to learn A and B, he must either learn A and then B, or B first and then A. Unless he can learn a little bit of A and then B (but how much and in what order?) ... But these might not be equally viable alternatives. For any given student, one of these sequences may be better - more 'learnable' than others. ... So, in inquiring about sequence, we are really asking whether one way of ordering the content of a course will be more helpful, educationally, than any other possible order. (Rowntree 1981: 106)

The development of task-based approaches to language teaching has made the tasks of between -- and within -- unit sequencing much more complex than it was when syllabuses were driven by graded sets of grammatical items, and when decisions about whether to teach A before B or B before A were made according to linguistic notions of simplicity and complexity. With the adoption of communicative orientations in which tasks are basic curricular building blocks, decisions about what to teach and when, become much more complex, and grading and sequencing tasks involve attempting to predict degrees of difficulty associated with language processing and production, grammar and lexis, and the background knowledge of the learner. In addition, levels of skill and task complexity consist of complex clusters of

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factors which are interactive rather than discrete. These sets of interrelated factors include the following (for a discussion of the role of these factors in determining task difficulty, see Clark (1985).

1. the degree to which the language event is embedded in a context which facilitates comprehension;
2   the degree to which the language event makes cognitive demands on the learner. (Presumably, identifying a named item by pointing to it is cognitively less demanding than describing it.);
3. the degree to which the background knowledge of the language user can be utilized to assist in comprehension;
4. the amount of assistance provided to the language learner. (It is reasonable to assume that conveying a message to a native speaker who is sympathetic towards, and used to dealing with, second language learners is easier than attempting to convey the same message to an unsympathetic interlocutor.);
5. the processing difficulty of the language (This is the only factor on which we have a reasonable amount of empirical evidence.) and;
6. the degree of stress experienced by the learner in taking part in a language event (Presumably, conveying a message to a friend is less stressful than making a speech in front of 500 people.)

<div align="right">(Nunan 1988: 67)</div>

Brindley (1987) suggests that task difficulty will be determined by three clusters of factors: those internal to the learner, those internal to the task, and those internal to the text. Factors associated with the learner will include confidence, motivation, prior learning experience, learning pace, aptitude and stage of proficiency, cultural knowledge/awareness, and linguistic knowledge. Task factors will include relevance, complexity, amount of context provided prior to the task, processibility of the language of the task, the amount of help available to the learner, the degree of grammatical accuracy and contextual appropriacy required, the time available. Text factors will include the size and density of the text, the presentation and format of the text, the number and type of contextual clues provided, and the content of the text. Others to have addressed the issue of task difficulty include Brown and Yule (1983); Nunan (1985, 1989); and Anderson and Lynch (1988). We have synthesized the factors identified in this research, and present these as continua in Table 1.

Table 1: Factors implicated in task difficulty

EASIER	MORE DIFFICULT
LEARNER	
is confident about the task	is not confident
is motivated to carry out the task	is not motivated
has necessary prior learning experiences	has no prior experience
can learn at pace required	cannot learn at pace required
has necessary language skills	does not have language skills
has relevant cultural knowledge	has no relevant cultural knowledge
interested / involved	is uninterested / uninvolved
acts as a participant	acts as an observer
TASK	
is of low cognitive complexity	is cognitively complex
has few steps	has many steps
has plenty of context provided	has no context
has plenty of help available	has no help available
does not require grammatical accuracy	does require grammatical accuracy
has as much time as necessary	has little time

TEXT

has few detailed facts	has many detailed facts
has clear presentation	has unclear presentation
has plenty of contextual clues	has few contextual clues
has familiar, everyday content	has unfamiliar content
presents information in sequence	presents information out of sequence
has familiar topic	has an unfamiliar topic
has graphic/non-verbal support	has no support
is narrative / instructional	is argumentative / explanatory / opinionated
has one speaker	has many speakers
has simple syntax	has complex syntax
has specific vocabulary	has general vocabulary
has temporal sequence	has non-temporal sequence

RESPONSE TYPE

Comprehension

none	non-verbal	verbal

Production

repeat/copy	drill	meaningful response

Interaction

rehearse	role play	problem solve / create

From this brief review of the literature, it can be seen that the issue of complexity is itself complex, involving the interaction of a range of factors including those associated with the learner, the input data or texts, and the procedural operations that the learner is expected to apply in completing the task. However, it seems to us, that out of all these factors, it is the learner who is the key. It therefore seemed reasonable to investigate the perceptions of the learners themselves on the issue of task difficulty. We were particularly interested in seeing whether learner predictions of task difficulty would correlate with the success they experienced in actually completing tasks, and also whether the factors that learners attribute to task difficulty reflect those identified by linguists as set out in Table 1.

Most of the work on task difficulty has been carried out without reference to learners themselves. However, with growing interest in the role of the learner in the learning process, and recent developments in learner-oriented approaches to instruction, it is reasonable to seek an interpretation of task difficulty from the perspective of the learner. The questions to be considered are, firstly, what aspects of a task do learners see as implicated in the difficulty of the task, and, secondly, what is the relationship between perceptions of difficulty and actual difficulty as measured by the ability to complete a task successfully?

The Study

In this section, we describe the research questions, the subjects, materials, data collection procedures and results. In the section which follows we provide an interpretation of the results. We shall also spell out the implications of these findings for future research as well as for pedagogical practice.

Research Questions

The two principal questions underlying this research are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between student perception of task difficulty, and actual difficulty as measured by the successful completion of a task?

2. What factors do students identify as underlying the difficulty of a task?

Subjects

Subjects were 35 first year undergraduate students undertaking a Higher Diploma in Banking and Finance at City University of Hong Kong. The students had all graduated from Middle School and spoke Cantonese as a first language. While these students are expected to be proficient in English, most would be expected to take additional / remedial classes in institutions catering to native speakers.

Materials

The materials used in the experiment are from an EFL text designed for post-beginning learners (Nunan, 1995). The unit of work contains six tasks, which form a task chain. In other words, the tasks are intended to be interrelated, with succeeding tasks growing out of the previous ones, and meant to be roughly graded in difficulty. The linguistic aims of the unit are to practice asking and answering questions about location involving wh- questions with 'be'. The sequence of tasks is set out in the following table. The task chain itself is reproduced in Appendix 1. A transcript of the audio tape used in the task chain is reproduced in Appendix 2.

Table 2: Task chain organization

TASK	TYPE	DATA	PROCEDURE
1	Scanning	Tourist Brochure	1. In pairs, students scan a description of Singapore and underline words that describe the good things about the city. 2. In groups, students discuss whether Singapore is a nice place to visit and say why / why not.
2	Selective listening	List of key words / phrases. Tape of a person asking about the facilities of a particular hotel	Individually, students listen again and check off those facilities which the hotel in question has, and circle those facilities the person does not ask about.
3	Selective listening	List of hotel facilities	Individually, students listen again and check off those facilities which the hotel has, and circle those facilities the person does not ask about.
4	Matching	Part of a letter of complaint	In pairs, students study diagrams and identify the hotel being described.
5	Reformulating	Part of a letter of complaint.	Individually, students write a letter of complaint to a hotel manager about the lack of facilities and services.
6	Personalizing	Hotel brochures. Thumbnail sketches of several leisure activities.	1. Individually, students decide which hotel is best for each person, based on brochures. 2. In groups, students report on their choices, giving reasons.

Procedure

The students were given three general assignments:

1. predict the difficulty of each task, rating 1 as the least difficult and 6 as the most difficult;
2. complete the tasks according to the instructions and;
3. explain why each task might be predicted as easy or difficult.

Results

1.   Predict the difficulty of each task, rating 1 as the least difficult and 6 as the most difficult.

Table 3 shows the occurrences of the easiest (1) and most difficult (6) scores for each task. From the data, it can be seen that most students identified tasks 1 and 2 as least likely to cause greatest difficulty. The largest single group identified task 5 as most difficult.

Table 3 : Perception of Difficulty: occurrence of scores for least and most difficult task

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Least Difficult	13	12	3	3	1	2	34
Most Difficult	4	0	2	6	15	8	35

2.   Complete the tasks according to the instructions

Students were then asked to complete the six tasks according to the instructions. The tasks were completed over two sessions with the audio taped portions (tasks 2,3,4) being given in the second session.

When complete, the tasks were marked on a correct/incorrect basis with no marks being given for partial answers. Table 4 shows the raw data. From these data, it can be seen that in terms of performance, tasks 2 and 3 were the easiest, and task 4 was the most difficult.

Table 4 : Task Scores

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6
Correct	20	33	31	13	21	20
Incorrect	15	2	4	22	14	15

The next question concerns the accuracy of the students' predictions of question difficulty. From their performance on the tasks, it would appear that students found tasks 2 and 3 to be easy, tasks 1, 5 and 6 to be more difficult, and task 4 to be the most difficult. In order to compare perception and reality, we converted the predictions to fractional equivalents through the formula: (35/210) raw score = equivalent. These data are set out in Table 5.

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Table 5 : Equivalent scores

Task	35/210	raw score/ prediction	equivalent
1.	0.16666666	90	14
2.	0.16666666	81	15
3.	0.16666666	110	18
4.	0.16666666	143	24
5.	0.16666666	172	29
6.	0.16666666	155	26

Superimposing these statistics in Table 6, we see the relationship between the correct answers and the perceived ease.

Table 6 : Perceptions vs. Reality

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6
Correct	20	33	31	13	21	20
Incorrect	14	15	18	24	29	26

Having made their predictions, and then carried out the tasks, students were asked to identify the sources of difficulty associated with each task. This was done through small group discussions which were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. The results of this analysis are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7 : Major sources of difficulty associated with each task

TASK	FACTOR	COMMENT
1	Cultural / schematic knowledge.	Students found it difficult to do this task because they do not see Singapore as a nice place to visit. Many Hong Kong people consider Singapore a dull and uninteresting place and a city definitely not to be considered as a prime tourist destination.
2/3	Temporal sequence	The items to be checked did not follow the order in which they were presented on the tape.
4	Discriminability	The four diagrams of the hotel differ only in minor details. This made students feel there
5	Amount of support	Students felt that they needed more grammatical support.
6	Open-endedness	This task required that students give their own opinion. While there was a 'best option' in each case, there was no single right answer.

In the following table, we summarize those factors emerging from the study under the categories identified in the literature review and set out in Table 1. This enables a direct comparison between factors identified by the subjects in this study and those identified by linguists. The data in Table 8 are synthesized from the transcribed small group discussions.

Table 8 : Learner, task and text factors

LEARNER
1. negative attitude to content
2. 'inappropriate' cultural knowledge
3. 'examination' rather than 'learning' orientation
4. lack of attention
5. lack of adequate grammatical knowledge

TEXT
1. lack of appropriate vocabulary
2. density of written text
3. continuous text as opposed to point form data
4. taped rather than live aural data
5. processing speed of aural input
6. information presented out of sequence
7. indiscriminability of visual support

TASK / PROCEDURE
1. unfamiliar task types
2. open-ended rather than closed tasks
3. requirement to do more than one task at a time

Discussion and Implications

The first question addressed by the study was: what is the relationship between student perception of task difficulty, and actual difficulty as measured by successful completion of a task? From the data, it is evident that student perceptions of task difficulty, and actual difficulty as measured by successful performance on the task is low. In general, students were not highly skilled at making predictions about which tasks were likely to case difficulty, and which were likely to be relatively unproblematic. The implications of students' inability to properly perceive task difficulty hinge on the question of what each student brings to a task in terms of effort, and whether this effort is tempered by perception. More simply put, if the question is harder, does the student try harder? The study did not include an experiment which might have elicited answers to this question, but one might reasonably expect one of several outcomes to the misperception of task difficulty. These are set out in summary form in Table 9.

Table 9 : Consequences of misperception of task difficulty

MISPERCEPTION OF TASK DIFFICULTY	CONSEQUENCES
Student believes a task is *harder* than it actually is:	1. Student is intimidated by the task and does not give it appropriate effort. 2. Student is intimidated and does not even attempt the task. 3. Student wastes time searching for supposedly hidden complexity.
Student believes the task is *easier* than it actually is:	1. Student is lulled into a sense of false security by the task and does not give it appropriate effort. 2. Student assumes that one aspect (possibly a superficial one) is the key aspect of the task.

In each of these cases, the student is less likely to engage in real learning. Furthermore, as the student experiences failure, in terms of the marked results the task, it is possible he or she will lose respect for the materials and, by extension, the teacher and the learning process. This is because even the youngest of students bring to the learning classroom a distinct sense of fairness; if the materials are perceived not just as learning tasks with graded levels of difficulty, but as a labyrinth of tricks to be negotiated, this sense of fairness is violated and the learner's trust diminishes.

The second question addressed by the study is: what factors do students identify as underlying the difficulty of a task?

From the data presented in the preceding section, it is clear that students have views on task difficulty and were able to advance reasons for their views, despite the fact that, in the case of this study, these views did not reflect actual difficulty. Many of the factors identified by the learners, as presented in Table 7, mirrored those which we discovered in the review of the literature (see Table 1).

1. Lack of familiarity with task types (e.g. selective listening): This was predicted by students (and in some cases transpired) to be difficult. The implication of this result is that we ought to provide learners systematic training in the types of tasks used in our curriculum, and that the strategies in completing such tasks ought to be made explicit.

2. Confusion on the part of students over the purpose of tasks: It was reported that tasks which looked easy (e.g. checking the box) must be "trick" questions, and must therefore be difficult. This may reflect the highly competitive, examination oriented cultural and educational context in which students have grown up and which might serve them well in some situations. However, as language learning is largely a cooperative and not a competitive task, it may be necessary to reorient such students into a classroom culture of cooperation where success is not always measured in marks alone.

3. Cultural knowledge: The literature *assumes* that cultural and schematic background knowledge facilitates the completion of tasks. However, in this case, this knowledge interfered with rather than assisted in completion of the task. Students had plenty of knowledge about Singapore. However, it was negatively loaded, and this prevented some students from completing the task successfully. Such problems are inevitable in an international textbook employing communicative real world materials. This one particular exercise may be even less successful when offered to an EFL class of Singaporeans living in Singapore. Dealing with this problem requires a sensitivity on the part of the teacher to the social and cultural contexts of both the learners and the text and a willingness to subtly alter and tailor the activities to make them appropriate.

The experimental procedure set out in this paper, is relatively easy to replicate in almost any classroom. It adds a reflective dimension to the language learning task, and focuses learners on important dimensions of the learning process. It also encourages them to articulate their own "theories" of language learning. As a pedagogical procedure, it therefore provides a dimension of learner training, a dimension which has been argued as being beneficial to the learning process. Through engaging in tasks such as this, learners become much more sensitive to what it is to be a learner.

Conclusion

This study provides support for those who call for the incorporation of learner strategy training in language pedagogy. This is particularly true of courses which attempt to introduce students to new ways of going about the learning process. Seeing things from the perspective of the learners has provided us with much richer insights into processes of learning within a task-based curriculum than would have been possible without involving learners themselves in the research process. Rather than carrying out research *on* learners, we believe that work of this sort should be carried out in collaboration *with* learners. In this way, teaching, learning and research can be mutually reinforcing, and the tension which often exists between teaching and research can be overcome.

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Appendices

Appendix 1
Atlas Learning Centered Communication Unit 11, *Where's the Health Club?*, Task Chain 1

Appendix 2
Atlas Learning Centered Communication Unit 11, *Where's the Health Club?*, Task Chain 1, Audio tape transcript
Clerk: Reception. Can I help you?
Azi: Yes. This is room 1607. I'd like some information about the hotel please.
Clerk: Certainly, sir.
Azi: Where's the pool?
Clerk: It's on the roof, next to the rooftop garden.
Azi: And the restaurants? Where are they?
Clerk: There's a coffee shop on the ground floor and a skyview restaurant on the 31st floor.
Azi: OK, fine. And what about the gym or health club.
Clerk: I'm sorry, but we don't have a gym or health club.
Azi: That's too bad. Where's the business center?
Clerk: We don't have a business center.
Azi: No business center?
Clerk: No, sir.
Azi: What about a newsstand? You must have a newsstand.
Clerk: Sorry, sir.
Azi: Well, let me have room service.
Clerk: There's no room service until 7:00, I'm afraid.
Azi: Well, that's too bad. Can you put me through to the manager? I want to complain.
Clerk: Certainly, sir.

Appendix 3
Student responses when asked to explain why each task might be predicted as easy or difficult:

Each class of approximately 20 students was arranged in six groups with each group assigned one of the Tasks. The groups were then asked to discuss why their assigned Task might be predicted as difficult or easy. After ten minutes, each group reported on their Task and suggested their reasons and handed in their responses. Additional reasons were solicited from the other students.

Clarification was sought where necessary and accompanies the following statements *in italics*. Note: the % sign is as recorded on the student sheets.

Task 1.
Confusion % picture + text. *The text does not exactly match the picture so the visual clues are not overly helpful.*
No relationship % pictures and question.
Don't know the meaning of the words.
Hard to discuss Singapore is a nice place. *The students are used to thinking of Singapore as a dull and uninteresting place and a city definitely not to be considered as a prime tourist destination.*
A lot of words. *It's difficult to read because there is so much text, relative to the other questions.*
No point form. Not easy to understand.
No choice for the answer. *It would be easier if there were choices available.*
No definite answer. *It's difficult to tell what the exact answer should be and exactly how many answers there should/might be.*

Task 2.

The speed is too fast.

The pronunciation is not clear.

If you don't familiar with the pronunciation of the words, you are unable to answer the question.

The words is difficult or too similar.

One comment from a student outside the group was that it was thought to be difficult because just ticking boxes looks easy; if it looks too easy, there must be a trick.

Task 3.

The student may be unfamiliar with the words.

Do not pay attention to the tape. *It is difficult if the student does not pay attention to the tape.*

Don't understand the conversation.

Unfamiliar with the format of the work.

Too much task need to do at the one time. *It's difficult to concentrate on ticking yes and no as well as circling those items which are not mentioned.*

Quite confusing about the room services part. *It's difficult to know what is expected as a correct answer as the question asks what services the hotel has; room service is not available at the time of the phone call, but is available after 7 p.m.*

Not in order. *The task would be easier if the answers followed the order of the tape.*

Task 4.

You have to use ears and eyes *and* pay more attention.

You have to make decision during the listening.

The four picture is too similar, make me too confusing.

Difficult to identify the pictures, they are too confuse.

All pictures look similar at the first sight.

Bad expression. *The quality of the audio tape is poor.*

No difference between picture 1 and 3.

From the picture, we can't exactly know what the facilities are.

Task 5.

The answer must be certain.

Must be understand all the message to find the answer.

Must know situation of the writer.

If you listened, the question is easy to do.

Not familiar with this kind of letter - format.

Difficult to use proper language, words, expression and tone.

Not easy to take care the letters' structure.

Can't use correct grammar. *The difficulty of the task is influenced by the fact that the grammar might be too difficult for the students; they need to know not just the word, but its correct form.*

Task 6.

Not enough information.

Photocopy not clear.

Some difficult words.

Not familiar with those hotel very well.

Different person has different demand, different financial condition, different time available.

Not sure there is any suitable hotel meeting their needs. *It's not clear whether or not there is in each case a correct answer; it may be that none of the hotels are suitable for the sample travellers.*

Time - consumed - because the question is too long.

Not detail on the cover page of brochures.

Need to give reasons and have more thinkings. *The task is difficult in that it is open ended without a straightforward answer.*

The War of Words

They called the employment agency
Where some words sat waiting for work
They said "We've got quite an emergency
Send us someone who's sure not to shirk"

"I'll go", said REBELLION, standing
"It's for someone who isn't afraid
Of the truth even if it's astounding –
Of calling each spade a spade"

"Hold on", said EVENTS, "I'm more suited
To cover the matter with tact
To avoid getting over-excited
In short not to over-react"

"How can there be over-reaction?"
MASSACRE sharply replied
"If we treat it with mere circumspection
We betray all those people who died"

Said UNREST: "You're in danger of muddling
Commitment with being objective
What gives you the right to start meddling
To judge from a Western perspective?"

Said REPRESSION: "If we only listen
To their vile propaganda campaign
We're ensuring that history's lesson
Is whitewashed away down the drain"

Said INCIDENT: "What really matters
Is whether trade contacts will stop
You can't just rush in seeking martyrs
Like a bull in a china shop"

So the argument carried on raging
And the blows are sin heard to resound
For the war of words that they're waging
Is as fierce as the war on the ground
Roger Berry 1995

Processes and Their Products: A Comparison of Task Sequences and Outcomes In EAP Writing Classes.

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Abstract

A recent study by the authors has proposed a rationale for investigating the effects of mediating tasks upon a summary writing activity for tertiary-level students using English as an educational medium. The tasks in the study involved a group discussion or a reading comprehension exercise, with a third condition providing for immediate access to the text and summary instructions with no mediating activity. A subsequent comparative analysis of the content of summaries written by students under these three conditions has revealed substantial differences in the selection and weighting of summary topics according to task conditions.

The authors now undertake comparative studies of students' performance during the group discussions or on the reading comprehension exercise (the two mediating activities) and on their final written summaries. These comparisons focus on topic selection and relative prominence, and on lexical density as a measure of the texture of the spoken and written discourses. Students' own perceptions of the cognitive or affective impact of mediating tasks are also explored through self-report questionnaires completed at the time. Implications drawn for teaching and research include the importance of evaluating performance outcomes in relation to a number of specified goals and sets of criteria before assessing them as evidence of possible success or failure in terms of classroom language learning.

Introduction

The research presented in this paper forms part of an applied linguistic investigation into the nature and effects of tasks that 'mediate' between written texts and student readers. An understanding of how mediating tasks can affect processing and subsequent written outcomes is needed if teachers are to select or design task sequences in principled ways that take account of how class activities are likely to contribute towards language activation and learning (see, e.g., Breen, 1987; Brindley, 1987; Crookes and Gass, 1993; Long, 1990; Nunan, 1989; Skehan, 1993; Stubbs, 1987). The present research is specifically concerned with the content of summaries written by students in advanced English language classes under three different task sequence conditions, involving oral discussions, a reading comprehension exercise, or no mediating task between initial reading of a source text and writing a summary of that text. A full rationale for this investigation, and for the choice of summary writing as a final task, appears in Allison, Berry and Lewkowicz (1994); a forthcoming paper by the same authors gives a detailed account of the selection and weighting of topics in students' written summaries.

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In the present paper, which for ease of reference includes a brief summary of the form and previous findings of the investigation, the authors concentrate on three issues:

- how far students' topic preferences during the oral group discussions or on the reading comprehension exercise (the two mediating activities) correspond to the topic selections and weightings observed in their final written summaries;
- whether differences in lexico-grammatical exponence across the three task conditions, the source text and the transcribed group discussions are of a form and magnitude that will affect overall estimates of lexical density;
- how students perceived the cognitive or affective impact of the mediating tasks, as inferred from their responses to self-report questionnaires completed at the time.

Implications for teaching and research include the importance of evaluating performance outcomes in relation to a number of specified goals and sets of criteria before assessing them as evidence of possible success or failure in terms of classroom language learning.

Outline of the investigation

Eighty first year economics students at the University of Hong Kong, all taking a range of subjects in the social sciences, were pseudo-randomly assigned for the purposes of this study to one of three treatments as follows:

Table 1: Mediating tasks undertaken by each group.

Groups (n = 80)	Input	Mediating task	Outcome
Grp.1 (n=28)	reading text	oral discussions	written summary
Grp.2 (n=26)	reading text	reading exercises	written summary
Grp.3 (n=26) (control group)	reading text	none	written summary

Groups did not differ significantly on an independent measure of language proficiency (for a full description of the original study, see Allison, Berry and Lewkowicz, 1994).

Each treatment group was given the same reading text, entitled "*Is there a gene for genius?*" (McCrone, 1993: see Appendix 1). Earlier trialling of the materials used in the study had confirmed that the text was of appropriate reading difficulty level, and the topic of the text was of interest to the target population. After reading the text, students in Group 1 discussed it in small groups before writing their summaries (the discussions were recorded); students assigned to Group 2 completed a series of tailor-made reading exercises, designed to assist comprehension, before writing (Appendix 2 has details of this task); students in Group 3, the control group, were simply asked to read the text and summarise it in writing. All three groups were given a continuous session of 80 minutes to complete the set activities. This was judged appropriate on the basis of a pilot study conducted with a comparable group of students. For groups 1 and 2 the time was divided into 20 minutes of reading time, 20 minutes on the mediating task and 40 minutes for writing the summary. Group 3 students were given the full 80 minutes to use as they considered most appropriate. This seemed fitting, as one effect of a mediating task is to take away time that learners might otherwise have been able to give to a final writing task, but the resulting difference in length of writing time should be remembered when comparisons involving this group are made.

The final task read as follows:

On the paper provided,

* *summarise the article*

      * *evaluate the two main viewpoints developed in the article*

      You may use the text and your notes (if any) to help you complete this task.

The last comment only was varied for Group 2 in light of their task, and read:

      You may use the text and the reading questions to help you complete this task.

Both the text and any other written materials were therefore retained while students wrote their summaries.

      Analysis of variance (Norušis, 1992) indicated that there were no statistically significant differences in the overall ratings of the summaries across the three groups, with the observed trend (p=.08) being control > reading > oral (ranking in order of superiority). There were, however, significant differences (p<.05) across the groups in the mean length of the summaries, the degree of text dependence/independence of the summaries and the number of relevant points included in the summaries. It was found that the control group with no mediating task wrote significantly longer summaries, but these were more dependent on the original text (text-dependence being determined by the number of t-units which were exact or near copies of the original text). In contrast, the oral group appeared better able to use their own words in their summaries, i.e. their summaries were less text-dependent, but the number of points they targeted for their summaries was significantly lower than for either of the other groups. These results indicated that there were differences which appeared to arise from the different treatment of the groups and which warranted further investigation. A content analysis in terms of topic selection, sequence and weighting was consequently undertaken for the source text itself and for the 80 text summaries.

      The topical and functional organisation of the source text can be presented in terms of four sections (A-D below), two of which can be further divided according to subtopics (B1-B3 and C1-C4). The researchers also identified idea units that they considered relevant and reasonably likely to occur in summaries of the text. The list of 44 "targeted points" for the content analysis of students' summaries appears in Appendix 3. It is not suggested that a "good" summary would need to include all these targeted points; nor does the list exhaust the information and ideas that might be drawn from the source text. The set of 44 points is nonetheless taken to constitute a sufficiently comprehensive content coverage for the purposes of the analysis.

The identified sections and subsections were:

      A: Introduction to the issue (175 words; targeted points 1-5);

      B: Genetic side of the debate (585 words; targeted points 6-23):
            B1: Report that a gene directly affecting intelligence had probably been identified in research by Plomin et al. (targeted points 6-13);
            B2: Evidence that outstanding mathematical ability in boys is linked to extreme lateralisation (which is hormonally rather than environmentally governed), from research by Benbow et al. (targeted points 14-22);
            B3: These findings (B1 and B2) tend to suggest that genius is largely innate (targeted point 23).

      C: Environmental side of the debate (800 words; targeted points 24-39):
            C1: But there are also environmental factors at work (targeted point 24);
            C2: Infant "prodigies" also prove to have had special parents/ guardians, whose role during early years is emphasised (targeted points 25-28);
            C3: Importance of parental styles (Csiko) for child's development (targeted points 29-35);
            C4: Importance of conversation with adults for child's development (targeted points 36-39).

      D: Summary of issues (176 words; targeted points 40-44).

Content analysis of the 80 written summaries in terms of topics and targeted points examined the selection, sequencing and weighting of information and ideas from the source text. The detailed findings presented in Allison, Berry and Lewkowicz (forthcoming) showed that text coverage was more comprehensive in the summaries of Groups 2 and 3 than in Group 1. The selection and elaboration of topics in Group 1 was more strongly weighted towards a consideration of environmental factors (section C in the source text outline above) and was particularly low on treatment of the reports that a gene affecting intelligence may have been discovered (section B1). This outcome in terms of weighting was not explicable in terms of time restrictions for the summary writing, as these were common to Groups 1 and 2 (although the greater overall length of Group 3 summaries can be accounted for in terms of time available for writing).

Aims and objectives of the current research.

Within the framework of this research project, this paper reports in detail on the author's investigation of the following features:

- the relationship between the points covered in the small-group discussions and those given prominence in the respective participants' written summaries;

- the relationship between the answers to the reading comprehension questions and the points given prominence in the respective students' written summaries;

- the lexical density of the summaries across the 3 groups.

- students' affective reactions to the tasks, as reported in a short questionnaire.

Small-group discussions and Group 1 written summaries.

For Group 1 (oral mediating task) the discussions by each sub-group were recorded. These were later transcribed and the points covered in them were analysed. Table 2a shows the results of t-tests computed to show whether there were any differences in the mean amounts of time spent discussing points in sections B (genetic side of the debate) and C (environmental side). Attention was paid both to overall length (mean number of words) and to topical content (targeted points identified in the content analysis).

Table 2a: Comparison of mean number of words used to discuss points in Sections B and C in sub-group discussions.

Section	Count	Mean	S.D.	df	t-value.	2-tail [a]
B	6	172.167	120.229	5	-3.08	.028
C	6	505.167	190.386			

Table 2b: Targeted points covered in discussions by each of the oral sub-groups.

Oral Sub-Groups	Section B (6-23) (genetic points)	Section C (24-39) (environmental points)
I	16, 17, 22	32, 33
II	-	27, 28, 32, 34
III	15, 16, 17	25, 30, 34
IV	15, 17	27, 30, 34, 36
V	15	27, 28, 30, 31
VI	15, 22	27, 28, 34, 36, 38

In Allison, Berry and Lewkowicz (forthcoming), evidence is presented which suggests that reporting research into the genetic basis of intelligence would probably be difficult as it might be beyond many students' prior knowledge of the topic. Examination of the targeted points covered in the oral discussions lends considerable support to this intuition (Table 2b). Of the Section B (genetic) points discussed, none of the six sub-groups (I to VI) made any mention at all of how genes affect intelligence or of the claim that genius is largely innate. However, with the exception of sub-group II (who concentrated solely on environmental issues), all groups discussed the evidence that boys have greater mathematical ability than girls. This is, of course, a topic which is very familiar to these students, given the cultural context within which they operate. That is not to say that there was unanimous agreement that boys are more gifted at mathematics than girls. In fact, in one group (sub-group III), there was an extremely heated discussion bordering on an argument between the male supporters of the suggestion and the female detractors. The point is simply that this is a familiar topic and therefore one which can be easily discussed, to the possible detriment of the other points made in the original reading text.

Contexts which are easily related to were also exploited by all sub-groups when discussing environmental points. With the exception of C1 (point 24), each of the other subsections of C were given approximately equal discussion time. This provides further evidence that discussion will more easily take place about familiar topics. It will be noted that point 24 mentions a conference. The fact that the whole text is about research reported at the conference seems to have been considered entirely irrelevant by the discussants who immediately latched onto items such as 27 which considers childhood stimulation by parents and item 28 which exemplifies this by mentioning prodigies such as Gauss, Einstein, Picasso and Mozart. The uptake on item 28 is particularly interesting since it reflects the type of early childhood stimulation by parents in the local environment. There was not a single mention in the discussions of any of the prodigies except Mozart; however in this context all groups (including sub-group III whose dominating topic was mathematics) expanded on the theme of parental stimulation and encouragement to play the piano!

Evidence of the degree of influence of topics discussed on points mentioned in the summary is particularly marked when looking at the summaries from sub-group III. Despite the disagreement within the group as to boys' superiority at mathematics, four of the five members of the group wrote about Benbow's findings in their summaries, mentioning in particular that there are more mathematically gifted boys than girls. The fifth summary mentions only two of the points which were actually targeted by the researchers (points 27 and 28). However the major uptake in this summary is not on other environmental features but on Gauss as being a great mathematician from the past. The student then demonstrates the lasting effect of discussion on writing by relating the parental influence on Gauss at an early age to an extraordinary analogy about fertiliser and barren soil, the suggestion being that fertiliser equals parental encouragement to exploit whatever potential is present. (Not surprisingly, this analogy is restricted to the one summary only.) What is extraordinary about it, however, is that in the lesson immediately preceding the experiment (held one week earlier), the same group had discussed a futuristic science text about using robot farmers to spray fertiliser on fields in Japan!

Less interesting, but noteworthy nevertheless, is another summary which does not include any points from Section B. There is also no discussion or even acknowledgement that the text is about a possible genetic basis of intelligence. The words *gene, genetic, innate*, etc. are not mentioned once, whereas *environment* or *environmental* occurs six times in the total of twelve sentences. This student was in the only discussion sub-group (sub-group II) which made no mention of any Section B points.

Otherwise, all students' summaries included the points mentioned in the discussions but also included many more which were derived from the original source text. The effect of this will be returned to in 3.3 when lexical density of summaries is discussed.

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Reading comprehension exercise and Group 2 summaries.

For Group 2 (written mediating task) the responses to the comprehension questions were checked, and points raised in the questions were matched with those targeted in the written summaries for the group. One question was whether scores on the reading comprehension exercise (calculated only for the purposes of this study, as these were not assessment grades) would correlate highly with scores for Group 2 subjects on the written summaries. A high correlation would not necessarily be expected, not least as many reading exercise items did not discriminate highly among subjects (the aim was to guide reading rather than to test it, and high facility values were found for many items); also, some of the "incorrect" responses on the reading exercise involved relevant material from the text that had not been correctly matched to an exercise item, but that would be appropriate for inclusion in a summary. A second, more interesting question was whether topic coverage in the reading exercise was discernibly related to topic prominence in Group 2 summaries by comparison with Group 1 in particular (same summary writing time but different mediating task) and with Group 3 (more writing time and no mediating task).

A summary of the responses to the reading comprehension exercise appears as Table 3. (Appendix 2 gives the complete item wording.) Notice the very high success rates for the questions about the names of new research techniques (2b and 3a), the provisional nature of Plomin's discovery of a gene that determines intelligence (2a), the inborn nature of lateralisation (3ciii), and the role of cultural factors in increasing or decreasing a disparity in mathematical abilities across the sexes (3civ).

Table 3: Summary of responses to reading exercises (n=26).

Exercise item #	Correct	Incorrect		Omit
		(Relevant)	(Other)	
1	24	1	1	0
2a	25	0	1	0
2b	25	1	0	0
3a	23	2	0	1
3b	12	12	0	2
3ci	18	7	1	0
3cii	16	8	1	0
3ciii	23	1	2	0
3civ	23	n.a.	3	0
3cv	20	3	1	2
4a	17	n.a.	8	1
4b	19	n.a.	4	3
4c	14	5	1	6
5	19	0	0	7
6a	20	n.a.	2	4
6b	9	11	0	6
7	17	2	2	5

(n.a. = *not applicable* since items were either right or wrong)

Most other results are quite high; exceptions have to do with precise focus on the question. For 3b, 12 "relevant" responses gave information that related to the topic but that was not drawn from the particular line numbers for this question - and that had thus already moved further on in terms of the argument. For 3cii, some answers were incomplete or imprecise; for this particular item, answers listed as "incorrect but relevant" actually counted as half-marks. Any difficulty with 4a is consistent with other work suggesting that a writer's disagreement with reported views can prove problematic for student readers (Allison and Ip, 1991). One other feature to note is that omitted items became more frequent towards the end. (Four students did not complete any question after 4b and a fifth responded intermittently in this final stage. Two of these five students had summary scores in the top quartile.)

Returning to our two questions for this stage of the analysis, we can first note that the correlation between scores on the reading exercise and ratings for the written summaries was .217 (n.s.). We must repeat that the reading exercise was designed to help students understand the text and was not intended to discriminate between them for purposes of assessment.

Our second question was if and when topic coverage in the reading exercise was matched by unusual prominence of topics in the summaries. A comparison of targeted items occurring in summaries across the three conditions revealed a number of differences between frequencies of occurrence in Group 1 (oral) and Group 2 (reading) summaries. From earlier findings, Group 1 was known to have included significantly fewer targeted points in all than had Group 2 (and also, less interestingly, Group 3 who had more time in which to write). It was decided to examine only the differences in the frequency with which targeted points were included by Groups 1 and 2, reflecting the two specified mediating task conditions rather than the effect of additional writing time, and to select (somewhat arbitrarily) those items on which the observed difference between Groups 1 and 2 was at least 6 targeted points. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of occurrences of targeted items in summaries (for items differing substantially between Groups 1 and 2).

Item	Item content	Grp.1	Grp.2	Chi^2 (1 df)	Sig.
3	nature versus nurture	10	17	4.659	.031
10	new gene-mapping techniques	2	15	17.618	.000
14	computerised brain-scanner	6	17	10.456	.001
16	process spatial information	13	19	3.892	.049
23	findings so far, largely innate	5	11	3.794	.051
24	role of environmental factors	19	13	1.748	.186
37	way in which a parent talks	2	9	6.157	.013
38	open and creative thinking style	11	17	3.610	.057

(See Appendix 3 for full item content).

It can be seen that seven of the eight instances listed involve greater frequency of occurrence of a targeted point in Group 2 than in Group 1 (despite the slightly lower number of scripts in Group 2). Six of these seven targeted points, excluding point 23, can be linked to reading comprehension exercise items (specifically, in sequence, to 1, 2b, 3a, 3c, and 6b, this last item corresponding to both targeted points 37 and 38). Targeted item 10, for example, was "Plomin used new gene mapping techniques"; reading comprehension item 2b was: "What new kind of research technique has Plomin's team used?" It appears that focusing, in the exercise, on this specific point of information has also induced more frequent inclusion of this point in summaries written by students who completed the reading exercise. The seventh point, item 23, was a generalisation in the original text that was not very widely taken up in students' summaries: the point may have become rather more salient for Group 2 students, as the work of these two groups of researchers is highlighted in the reading exercise (questions 2 and 3). Item 24, the only one in the list mentioned more frequently by Group 1 students, is interesting in light of other evidence of a greater focus on the importance of environmental factors in Group 1 discussions and writing.

Lexical and grammatical exponence: lexical density across the three conditions

Given the differences that had been detected in the selection and emphasis of points drawn from the source text in summaries written under the three different conditions, it seemed plausible that other differences might be found in the lexical and grammatical realisations of summaries across the three groups in our study. In particular, it seemed worth exploring the possibility that features of students' more text-independent writing might prove less typical of formal written English than was the source text itself, and this would lead to observable differences in texture when summaries were compared. From preliminary analysis (Allison, Berry and Lewkowicz, 1994) it had emerged that Group

1 (oral group) had included the highest proportion of text-independent t-units (68%), with Group 2 (reading group) slightly lower (63%) and Group 3 (control group) much lower still (38%). A measure of the grammaticality of students' written summaries, namely the relative proportions of correct to incorrect t-units had shown no significant differences across groups, although Group 3 t-units were observed to be rather longer than average and might thus tend to be more complex syntactically.

A practical problem for the researchers was to find a robust measure that could reveal differences in linguistic complexity (itself a complex notion) across the three conditions within the time frame available for this stage of the research. The tagging of each sentence in 80 summaries in terms of a syntactic analysis might have proved revealing, not least as our earlier analysis gives no further information as to the nature and extent of errors in the incorrect t-units that had been identified in the data. Such an analysis was beyond our immediate scope, yet we still sought something that could offer more than an occasional commentary on particular items. We also needed a measure that was more intrinsically linked to patterns of lexico-grammatical choice than is the case for crude predictor variables of mean word length and sentence length so often used to estimate "readability" (see Davison and Green, 1988 for critiques of readability formulae and their misuses).

Following Halliday (1989: 63-67), and also Stubbs (1986), we decided to investigate the parameter of *lexical density*, taking lexical density to be the relative proportion of lexical to grammatical words in a text or corpus (compare Halliday, 1989: 64). Although Halliday goes on to offer "a more revealing account of lexical density" (1989: 65) which also takes into consideration the number of clauses in a text or corpus, we decided to limit our study on this occasion to the number of lexical tokens as a proportion of the total number of running words in the text or the corpus of texts being examined (the source text and each of the three sets of summaries). Besides accepting constraints of time, we took this decision in the knowledge that the average number of t-units (and hence of main clauses) was not significantly different across the three conditions in our study. The number of lexical items as a proportion of all words in a text (spoken or written) is a measure which Halliday puts forward as "a first approximation to a measure of lexical density" (1989: 64). This measure has been conveniently operationalised by Stubbs (1986), who supplies a list of grammatical words and ambiguous words to be excluded for this purpose from the total number of word tokens in a text. This list is reproduced as Appendix 4.

This measure of lexical density is characteristically related to more specific differences in lexical and grammatical exponence. A relatively high lexical density is associated with frequent occurrence of complex nominal groups, and is characteristic of formal written texts, while a relatively low lexical density is more typical of spoken language (which might also be associated with greater clausal complexity). The researchers were uncertain what effect the process of summary writing, under any or all of the three different conditions, might have on lexical density. Two competing views were that (a) lack of mastery of formal writing might lower the lexical density of students' summary writing, making texts more like spoken English (perhaps especially in Group 1) and hence less lexically dense, or (b) the process of summarising a text, in all groups, would entail the extraction of content "chunks" that would then be recombined as concisely as possible, leading to summary texts that were more lexically dense. We have already noted that all groups drew quite extensively on the source text itself in the course of their summaries. While we made no formal hypotheses, we were interested to find out whether the summary corpora differed in lexical density (i) from the source text and (ii) from one another.

The easiest way to proceed was to search each set of summaries for the occurrence of all grammatical words in English and to subtract these tokens from the total number of word tokens in the respective texts. The remainder would thus be the total of lexical tokens in the texts. The lists of grammatical and ambiguous words (sometimes grammatical and sometimes lexical) as indicated above came from Stubbs (1986:36-37). The texts were concordanced using MicroConcord (Scott and Johns, 1993). Stubbs's work in the mid-1980s used a different computer program to obtain the same information.

As an initial estimate (a step that is not proposed by Stubbs), the researchers elected to subtract both the grammatical and the ambiguous sets of words from the total number of words. This procedure obviously leads to an underestimate of lexical density, because some of the ambiguous words will be

lexical rather than grammatical, and ought not to be subtracted from the total. Provided, however, that its limitations are understood, the procedure permits exploratory comparison. The results thus obtained are summarised in Table 5. (**N.B.** Lexical density = [remaining words / total words] x [100]. For word lists, please refer to Appendix 4.)

Table 5. Preliminary estimations of lexical density of three sets of summaries (3 corpora) written under different mediating task conditions plus source text.

Source	Grammatical words	Ambiguous words	Total words	Remaining words	Estimated lexical density
Text	801	118	1736	817	47%
Grp 1	4023	699	8662	3940	46%
Grp.2	3881	634	8465	3950	47%
Grp.3	4421	739	9991	4831	48%

As can be seen from Table 5, none of the summary corpora differed markedly in lexical density either from the source text or from each other. What is striking is that the values obtained for both the source text and the corpora are substantially lower than might be expected of written texts. In fact they correspond much more closely to the values reported by Stubbs (1986:41) for various spoken databases, i.e. 44% - 56%. Although this was not entirely unexpected for the students' summaries, it had not been anticipated for the source text. It should be remembered that the method chosen to estimate the lexical density of the source text, the 3 student corpora and the group discussions possibly presents an underestimate of actual lexical density since ambiguous words have in all instances been classed as grammatical when some of them may, in fact, have been lexical. However, as Halliday points out: "..... it does not matter exactly where we draw the line provided we do it consistently." (1989:63). A recalculation that counted all the ambiguous words as lexical (hence overestimating the lexical density) would still yield values below 55% and thus within the spoken range already noted. One possible explanation for the low values of lexical density obtained lies in the journalistic nature of the text, which aimed to present complex research findings to an extremely diverse audience, and was thus written in a style which is less condensed than would generally be found in specialist written texts on this subject. This does not in any way detract from our earlier contention that this text was appropriate both to the task and the students' ability levels and interests - a belief that is supported by student responses to the affective questionnaire (see Appendix 5) which will be discussed in the final section of this paper. Nevertheless, the values obtained in this study do not support the expectation that students' written summaries might be lower in lexical density than the original text; they do, however, lend some credence to the notion that they might be closer to spoken or informally written English.

An initially surprising finding is that the lexical density of the transcribed sub-group discussions, at 52%, is in fact higher than that of the source text and the written summaries. A possible explanation of this may be found in Halliday's (1989:81) account of the representation of phenomena in written language as *products* (therefore lexical nouns) and in spoken language as *processes* (therefore grammatical verbs). Halliday's explanation is, of course, provided to support his findings, which concur with those of Stubbs and also of Ure (1971), of greater lexical density in *written* text. However, in examining the examples he gives as illustration (p. 81 - *had ended up, had visited, had been, has improved,* etc.), it becomes immediately obvious that the degree of syntactic sophistication he is referring to is beyond the ability levels of the majority of students who took part in this study (see Newbrook, 1989 for a highly personalised but nevertheless perceptive explanation of the cause of many Hong Kong Chinese students' grammatical errors in written English). Thus the somewhat primitive degree of grammatical exponence present in the quite wide-ranging student discussions may account for the higher value observed for lexical density under these conditions. Clearly, interpretations of findings in the area of lexical density will require particular caution when evidence from second-language learners is being considered, and the informative potential of lexical density estimates should not be too readily generalised to such texts and contexts.

Students' affective reactions to the mediating tasks.

Students' reactions to both reading and discussion mediating tasks were generally very positive. At the end of the experiment students were given a short questionnaire to complete. This took the form of six statements requiring responses of *"agree"*, *"disagree"* or *"no opinion"*. The seventh and final statement consisted of an open invitation to comment on the task just completed. As is often the case with students from this cultural background there were very few comments, the only really substantial one relating to the oral mediating task and being to the effect that: "...if partners don't have any stands or opinions to offer on the issue under discussion, then the discussion becomes dull and meaningless." With regard to the rest of the statements, the responses across the task groups were virtually identical, the vast majority of students believing that whichever task they had completed, it had helped in both their understanding of the text and their subsequent summaries of it.

The notable exception to this was in the response to the third statement which was: *"The text was worth thinking about."* Here the distribution of students' responses differed dramatically (and statistically significantly: - χ^2 = 10.234: - p = <.01). Expressed as a percentage ratio of students in agreement in each task group, Group 1 (the oral group) were 89:11 in agreement, Group 2 (the reading group) were 73:27 and Group 3 (the control group) were 50:50 (*"disagree"* "and *"no opinion"* were taken together as not constituting actual agreement). There are, of course, a number of possible explanations for this, predominant among them being the observation that the degree of interest in the text was in inverse proportion to the amount of time exposed to it (on the assumption that the reading group spent more of their mediating task time than the oral group in actually referring to the source text). This is particularly disturbing in the light of the, admittedly not significant, trend for summaries from the three groups to be rated in direct proportion to the degree of time exposure available and inversely to the degree of interest expressed (i.e. control > reading > oral in terms of scores awarded, but the reverse direction on declared interest).

Implications for teaching

In a study such as this, it is clear that for the findings to have more than peripheral value, they should be of practical, rather than merely theoretical, interest. Dealing as we are with the relationship between specific learning tasks in the language learning classroom and observable written outcomes, it would be fairly pointless simply to present statistically significant results and expect them to be greeted with anything more than perhaps a polite acknowledgement. It seems unlikely that the classroom teacher will be more than marginally interested in the magnitude of the correlation coefficient between, for example, scores obtained on the reading questions and scores given for the summary writing. It does, however, seem likely that most teachers will be interested in discovering a) students' perceptions of the tasks as mediators between text and summary and b) the extent to which the tasks themselves could actually be deemed to be facilitating.

In earlier sections of the paper we presented evidence which showed that responses to some of the reading questions had a direct impact on points mentioned in the summary. This is not a purely mechanistic feature of the exercise since not all questions received the same amount of attention in the summaries. It is also possible that although the reading exercises were perceived by students as facilitating both their understanding of the text and their subsequent summaries of it, what in fact happened was that the reading questions slightly skewed the targeted points that were picked up and expanded on in the summaries, thus to some extent lowering the scores obtained by this group. If the suggestion of interdependence between reading input and written output can be confirmed with further empirical evidence, it certainly has implications not only for teaching but also for language test design. A similar point is also noteworthy when comparing Group 1 (oral mediating task) students' responses. It could be argued that their enthusiasm for the task adversely affected the written outcome in that their interests were not perceived by the independent markers as being particularly salient to the text and therefore to the summary task.

Perhaps at this stage it would be appropriate to summarise what, with hindsight, can clearly be seen as constraints (and limitations) of the study. First, it can be argued that the nature of the source

text, with its journalistic bias, did not conform linguistically to expectations of texts in this subject area thus creating artificial limitations on the syntactic sophistication of summaries which could be expected of it. Second, it has been shown that within an academic context, imagination, i.e. deviance from the text, is not especially rewarded and that longer summaries, which include more immediately observable points from the source text, are rewarded disproportionately. It may also be that oral mediating tasks are not especially suited to traditional expectations in "academia"! They could, however, be of immense value when more personalised, imaginative narrative accounts are required. A critically important implication is that an assessment of task outcomes, such as written summaries, in accordance with one set of criteria will not be sufficient to determine the success of a classroom activity in terms of the learning it is likely to have generated.

A final comment, but one of fundamental interest (and one that is directly related to the previous comments on the reception of ideas from the group who had the oral mediating task), is related to the notion of whether the exploration of one's own experience, "narrative knowledge", is possibly an undervalued form of knowledge (Hymes and Cazden, 1980; Hynds and Rubin, 1990). To extend this beyond the immediate context of English language learning, it may be appropriate to ask whether students' knowledge is, in fact, undervalued throughout the modern academic curriculum. The implications of any attempt to provide an answer to this question undoubtedly transcend the scope of this enquiry.

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Appendix 1   <u>Text used in the study</u>

<u>Is there a gene for genius?</u>

DR HOWARD GARDNER of Harvard University believes that geniuses are largely made. He has banned television from his home because he fears it might rot the minds of his family. He makes time everyday to listen to his seven-year-old, Benjamin, play the piano - even if it is no more than a few minutes during a transatlantic phone call while he is away at a conference.

Dr. Sandra Scarr of Virginia University, president of the Society for Research in Child Development, believes geniuses are largely born. She says parents should not worry too much about whether to take their kids to a ball game or to a museum. Talent will out.

It seems psychologists are as divided as ever over the issue of nature versus nurture. This may, however, be about to change. A conference organised earlier this year by the Ciba Foundation brought to London some of the biggest names from both sides of the debate. Startling results from unpublished work were revealed - and the beginning of a consensus could be discerned.

The most exciting results came from those working on the biology of individual differences. Dr Robert Plomin of Penn State University, working with a team from Cardiff University, hopes to announce within the next few months that he has tracked down one of the genes that plays a part in determining intelligence. An unnamed gene has been identified but the results have yet to be confirmed.

At present, it is believed that genes account for at least half of what researchers call "g" - the general cognitive ability that IQ tests are supposed to measure -while environmental influences account for the other half. But so far the evidence for a genetic component has been purely statistical, being inferred from comparisons of twins and other such hereditary studies. Plomin's method makes use of new gene mapping techniques and promises to provide direct evidence of the role that genes play.

Plomin stresses that the discovery of a first gene does not mean the riddle of intelligence has been solved. A single gene will code for only one of the many neurotransmitters and cell proteins that are the building blocks of the brain. This means that hundreds, if not thousands of genes must be involved in intelligence. The identification of even one gene does, however, have immense implications for the nature/nurture debate.

Another innovation, the computerised brain scanner, has led to a second discovery by those seeking the biological component of mental abilities. Professor Camilla Benbow of Iowa State University is head of a long-term study of the mathematically gifted. For many years she has been puzzled as to why so many of the children in her study should be boys - at the top level, boys outnumber girls by 13 to one. In a soon-to-be-published paper, Benbow reveals that the gifted boys' brains appear to process spatial information in a very different way from those of average boys and even of gifted girls.

The children in the study were scanned while being presented with a simple visual puzzle. The boys of average ability and the gifted girls showed strong activity on both sides of their brains as they thought about the puzzle. However, the gifted boys responded very differently. There was a sudden drop in activity in their left hemispheres - the side of the brain most involved in language - and an exaggerated reaction on the right, the side strongest at spatial thinking. It seems that the brains of boys with mathematical talent operate in a way that is physically distinctive.

Benbow says she was surprised that the gifted girls should lack this pattern of response. The only explanation she has is that male brains have a tendency to become more lateralised during development; when this lateralisation is taken to an extreme, unusual spatial abilities result.

Because females do not have this tendency (lateralisation is known to be hormonally governed), girls who perform well in mathematics are doing so because of a more general mental superiority. And because statistically such all-round ability is less common, this would be the reason for there being fewer mathematically gifted girls.

Benbow is quick to add, however, that cultural expectations probably exaggerate the imbalance. In China, where girls are more likely to get encouragement in mathematics, the number of gifted boys exceeds that of gifted girls by four to one rather than the 13 to one seen in the United States.

Both Plomin's and Benbow's findings would seem to give ammunition to the argument that exceptional mental abilities are largely innate. But the Ciba conference heard equally strong evidence for the role that environmental factors play in creating genius. A theme repeatedly heard from the speakers was that special children invariably have special parents.

It is a popular myth that great prodigies - the Einsteins, Picassos and Mozarts of this world - spring up out of nowhere as if touched by a divine finger. The archetype is Carl Friedrich Gauss, born into a supposedly illiterate family of labourers, who grew up to become the father of modern mathematics.

Professor William Fowler of the Massachusetts Centre for Early Learning has attacked this myth, saying that when he looked into Gauss's

childhood, he found that Gauss's mother had been teaching him numerals at the age of two. His father had been a foreman, not a labourer, and played calculation games with him. Furthermore, Gauss had an educated uncle who taught him sophisticated maths at an early age.

It is the same story with other prodigies. Einstein's father was an electrical engineer who fascinated his son with practical demonstrations of physics. Picasso's father was an art teacher who had young Pablo copying still lifes at the age of eight. Mozart's father was a court composer who was teaching his son to sing and play almost before he could walk. "In every case, when you look into the backgrounds of great people, there is this pattern of very early stimulation by a parent or mentor figure," Fowler says.

But what sort of parental stimulation should it be? The conference heard plenty of evidence that, too often, parental pressure and attempts at "hot-housing" children result in burn-out rather than giftedness. Professor Mihaly Csiko of the University of Chicago reported on a study which identified two kinds of parental style - the supportive and the stimulating.

Supportive parents were those who would go out of their way to help their children follow their pet interests and praised whatever level of achievement resulted. Generally, such parents created a harmonious home governed by clear rules. Stimulating parents were more actively involved in what their children did, steering them towards certain fields and pushing them to work hard, often acting as a tutor.

Csiko's study followed four groups of children: one with supportive parents, one with stimulating parents, one whose parents combined both qualities and a final group who offered neither. The children were given electronic pagers; when these buzzed at random intervals during the day, they had to make a note of what they were doing and assess how happy and alert they felt.

The not too surprising result was that the children whose parents were simply supportive were happier than average but were not particularly intense in their concentration when studying or working on an interest. The children who fared best were those whose parents were both supportive and stimulating. These children showed a reasonable level of happiness and a very high level of alertness during periods of study.

Children whose parents were stimulating without being supportive were candidates for burn-out. These children did work long hours, but their alertness and happiness during study time was far below that of children in more balanced family environments.

Another crucial factor stressed at the Ciba conference is the need for parents to have proper conversations with their children. Through having the chance to talk with adults, children pick up not only language skills but also adult habits and styles of thought. One reason why prodigies such as Picasso and Einstein had a head start in life was that they had parents who demonstrated how to think about subjects like art or physics at a very early age.

Professor Fowler said a survey in Holland showed that a typical father spent just 11 seconds a day in conversation with his children. A more recent study in America produced a somewhat better result, but the fathers in question were still talking to their children for less than a minute a day.

It is not just the time spent that counts, Fowler says, but also the way in which a parent talks. A parent who brushes off a child's questions or gives dull answers will be imparting a negative, narrow-minded style of thinking. On the other hand, parents happy to take a child step by step through an argument, encouraging it to explore ideas, will foster an open and creative thinking style.

Fowler is attempting to show this experimentally with a study in which groups of parents are taught how to have constructive conversations with their toddlers. Fowler says these children have shot ahead of their peer group in language ability, intellectual ability and even social leadership skills. While the study is not yet complete, the children appear to have been given a lasting advantage.

So what is the outlook for parents who do everything right, those who manage to be both supportive and stimulating, who are good at demonstrating thinking skills to their children and successful at fostering a self-motivated approach to learning? Would such parents be guaranteed to have a gifted child?

There was general agreement at the conference that there is no denying that genuine biological differences exist between individuals; geniuses need to be lucky in both their genetic make-up and their parents. The most significant implication would seem to be that while most people are in a position to fulfil their biological potential -that is, barring serious illnesses or dietary deficiencies, they can be certain their genetic capacities will be fully developed - there can be no such certainty that they will grow up in the environment necessary for that development.

So although knowing more about the biology of genius is all very interesting, it is research into better parenting and educational techniques that will have lasting significance.

By John McCrone
The Independent on Sunday, 2/5/93
(slightly adapted)

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Appendix 2

<u>Reading exercise used in the study</u>

Reading exercise: Is there a gene for genius?

<u>Introduction</u>

The aims of this exercise are to help you explore the text, check your understanding, look at how some of the ideas are connected, and ask some critical questions.

Different students have different needs and reactions. Please be patient if you personally find some items very easy or too difficult. We will ask for your comments later.

Your teacher will tell you how much time you have. Don't spend too long on any one item! Write your answers on the exercise sheet. (N.B. space for students' responses has been deleted from this appendix.)

<u>Exercise*</u>

1. Vocabulary and ideas

    a.   What is the "nature/nurture" question? (Hint: If you are not sure what "nurture" means, then make a guess based on the text; it is obviously something contrasted with "nature"!).

    b.   Place the seven words or phrases in the list under one of the two columns. The first two have been placed for you.

LIST:
1. largely born	2. largely made	3. genetic component of intelligence
4. hereditary influences	5. environmental influences	
6. innate abilities	7. cultural expectations.	

        "NATURE"   "NURTURE"

           1   2

(* line numbers were provided for the students on their copy of the reading text rease of reference)

2. Work by Plomin and his team

    a.   Note down words and phrases from the text that remind us that Plomin's results are not yet final.

    b.   What new kind of research technique has Plomin's team used?

3. Work by Benbow and her team

    a.   What new research technique was used?

    b.   Benbow was studying mathematically gifted children. What aspect of her study was unexpected? (Paragraph 7, lines 45-55)

    c.   Based on the work of Benbow and her team, answer the following questions about how gifted boys' brains work. (Hint: If the word "lateralisation" troubles you, remember that the adjective "lateral" has to do with "sides").

        (i)   What information do gifted boys' brains process differently from other people ? _

      (ii)   What is special about their brain activity?

      (iii)   Is this aspect of brain activity inborn or a result of environmental factors?

      (iv)   Is this aspect of brain activity the only reason that fewer mathematically gifted girls than boys are found in the United States?

              Answer YES or NO _____

              Briefly explain your answer :

4.   Critical reading: read lines 86-116

      a.   "It is a popular myth that..." (line 93). Does the writer go on to agree or disagree with the belief that he reports here? ANSWER :_____

      b.   Was Gauss's family illiterate?
              - Answer YES or NO_____
              - What one word (in lines 93-98) explains your answer?_____

      c.   Fowler's comments provide reasons to suppose that the environmental role of parents (or other figures) in early life is important. What is a common factor (other than just "having special parents") in the examples, he discusses (Gauss, Einstein, Picasso and Mozart)?

5.   What does the use of the term "hot-housing" (line 119) tell us about <u>the writer's</u> attitude towards attempts by parents to make children learn and develop more rapidly?

6.   a.   According to Csiko's findings, which parental style or combination of styles is most beneficial for children? Circle your chosen answer.

              SUPPORTIVE   STIMULATING   BOTH

      b.   What aspects of parent-child conversation are important, according to Fowler? (lines 152-181).

7.   Do you think the conclusion (see final paragraph) is that of the discussions at the scientific conference, or the journalist writing the article?

Appendix 3

"Idea Units" targeted in the study

1. X believe that geniuses are largely born (that heredity matters) (X = Scarr, some scientists, etc.)

2. Y believe that geniuses are largely made (Y = Gardner, etc.)

3. (1 and 2 can be paraphrased as) The issue is (Psychologists are divided over) nature versus nurture.

4. The issue (3) was discussed at a recent conference (in London; Ciba foundation).

5. The beginnings of a consensus (reduction of difference) could be discerned.

6. Plomin has (probably) discovered a gene that plays a part in determining intelligence.

7. Plomin's results have yet to be confirmed.

8. At present, scientists etc. believe genes account for at least half of "g" (general cognitive ability; and think environmental factors/influences account for the other half/part).

9. Evidence (re 8) has so far been statistical.

10. Plomin used new gene mapping techniques.

11. Plomin's work promises to provide direct evidence of the role that genes play.

12. Many genes must be involved in intelligence.

13. Discovery of even one gene (that contributes to intelligence) has immense implications for the nature/nurture debate.

14. Benbow (et al) used the computerised brain scanner.

15. Benbow was studying the math. gifted (wanted to explain why so many math. gifted children were boys).

16. Benbow's study showed that gifted boys process spatial information differently.

17. (Math.) gifted boys' brains operate in a way that is physically distinctive.

18. (Benbow's explanation is that) male brains tend to become more lateralised during development.

19. Lateralisation is hormonally governed.

20. Extreme lateralisation (B. explains) results in unusual spatial abilities.

21. Girls who perform well in math. do so because of general mental superiority.

22. Cultural expectations can exaggerate the imbalance (bet. numbers of gifted boys and girls: + example comparing ratio of gifted boys to gifted girls in China and in America).

23. Plomin's and Benbow's findings strengthen the argument that exceptional mental abilities are largely innate.

24. The conference heard (equally strong) evidence for the role of environmental factors.

25. (One theme was that) special children invariably have special parents.

26. A popular myth is that geniuses just happen (divine finger!)

27. (Fowler maintained that) backgrounds of all great people had pattern of early stimulation by parent or mentor figure.

28. Examples included (some or all of) Gauss, Einstein, Picasso and Mozart.

29. (A relevant question is:) What sort of parental stimulation should it be?

30. Csiko identified (studied) two kinds of parental style - supportive and stimulating.

31. Supportive parents helped children follow pet interests (and praised whatever achievements resulted).

32. Stimulating parents pushed children towards preferred fields (and/or) pushed children to work hard.

33. Csiko's study compared (4) groups (of children) with different (combinations of) parental styles.

34. Children who fared best had parents who were both supportive and stimulating.

35. These (34) children were reasonably happy and very alert when studying.

36. Another crucial factor was the need for parents to have proper conversations with their children.

37. (Fowler said that not only amount of time but especially) the way in which a parent talks is important.

38. Parents who take a child step by step through an argument and encourage it to explore ideas will foster an open and creative thinking style (will encourage learning).

39. (When) parents (are taught to) have constructive conversations with their toddlers, these children do better (shoot ahead of peer group in language ability, leadership ability and social leadership skills).

40. There was general consensus that (no denying that) genuine biological differences exist.

41. Geniuses need to be lucky in both genetic make-up and parents (both genes and environmental factors are important).

42. Most people are in a position to fulfil their biological potential.

43. The most significant implication is that there is no certainty that the environment will provide necessary support as people develop.

44. Therefore (43) (it is) research into better parenting and educational techniques (that) will have (more) lasting significance.

Appendix 4

Lists of grammatical and ambiguous words listed by Michael Stubbs.

From: *Lexical Density: A Technique and Some Findings. (pp. 36-37)*

Grammatical words:

a above across after against all along alongside although amid amidst among amongst an and any anybody anything anywhere apropos as at atop because before behind below beneath beside besides between beyond both but can can't cos could couldn't dare daren't despite doesn't don't during each either every everybody everyone everywhere except few for from he he's he'll he's her hers herself him himself his how however if in inside into it it'd it's its itself many may mayn't me might mine minus much must mustn't my myself needn't neither never nevertheless no no-one nobody none nonetheless noone nor not notwithstanding of off on or ought oughtn't our ours ourselves out outside over per plus shall shan't she she'd she'll she's should shouldn't since so some somebody someone than that that'd that'll that's the thee their theirs them themself themselves then there there'd there's there've these they they'd they'll they're they've thine this those thou though through throughout thy till to toward towards under underneath until up upon us via we we'd we'll we're we've what what'd what's what've whatever when whenever where wherever which whichever while whilst who whom whose why will with within without won't would wouldn't ye yeah yes yet you you'd you'll you're you've your yours yourself I I'd I'll I'm I've

Ambiguous words:

am are aren't be being did do does doing go going had hadn't has hasn't have haven't having is isn't one past was wasn't well were

Appendix 5

Questionnaire given to students.

Is there a gene for genius?

For each statement, please circle the appropriate word to indicate whether you agree, disagree or have no opinion.

All groups:

1.	The text was easy to understand.	agree	disagree	no opinion
2.	The topic of the text was interesting.	agree	disagree	no opinion
3.	The text was worth thinking about.	agree	disagree	no opinion

Oral discussion group:

4.	The discussion helped me to understand the text.	agree	disagree	no opinion
5.	The discussion helped me to write the summary.	agree	disagree	no opinion

Reading comprehension group:

4.	a) The questions helped me to understand the text.	agree	disagree	no opinion
	b) The 'hints' helped me to answer the questions.	agree	disagree	no opinion
5.	Answering the questions helped me to write the summary.	agree	disagree	no opinion

Note-taking group:

4. Please check (✓)whether you did any of the following while reading the text:
   ___ made notes on text
   ___ highlighted or underlined words or phrases
   ___ made notes on a separate piece of paper
   ___ looked up words in a dictionary

5.	I found the summary easy to write.	agree	disagree	no opinion

All groups:

6.	I had enough time to complete the activity.	agree	disagree	no opinion

7. If you have any comments on the task you have completed, please write them below.

The Author in the Text: Hedging Scientific Writing

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Abstract

Despite a widely held view that scientific writing is purely objective and impersonal, the means by which scientists convey an attitude to their statements is central to scientific argument. The need to present claims with precision and caution means that hedges are a significant resource for academics in anticipating the reader's possible rejection of their propositions. Despite its importance however, we know little about how hedging is expressed or the functions it serves in different disciplines or genres. As a result, ESP students are often advised to avoid hedges and to adopt a detached style in their writing. Based on a corpus of 26 research articles, this paper discusses the importance, frequency and realisation of hedges in science research articles. It also considers why students find hedging so difficult to master and raises a number of implications of this.

Introduction

Hedging is the expression of tentativeness and possibility in language use and it is crucial to scientific writing where statements are rarely made without subjective assessments of truth:

(1) This insertion, which we <u>suspect</u> is the membrane anchor, <u>could</u> associate peripherally with the membrane or <u>might</u> span half the bilayer ...

(2) <u>Possibly</u>, phosphorylation of ACC synthase <u>could</u> contribute ...

(3) It now <u>seems</u> <u>possible</u> that the oxygen carrier function <u>may</u> be feasible because <u>if</u> the hemoglobin in the root were mainly in the tip, it ...

Hedges (underlined) indicate interpretations and allow writers to convey their attitude to the truth of the statements they accompany, thereby presenting unproven claims with caution and softening categorical assertions. These are central functions in an environment where the need to evaluate evidence and state the certainty of judgements can contribute to gaining the acceptance of knowledge claims. Hedging is a substantial means by which the professional scientist confirms his or her membership of the scientific community. Its study can therefore make an important contribution to our understanding of the practices of practical reasoning and persuasion in science.

A better understanding of hedges can provide insights into the interactional and rhetorical nature of the scientific research article (RA). The RA is now widely seen as less a vehicle for directly transmitting facts about the natural world than a significant literary accomplishment; a social artefact which conceals the contingency of knowledge while seeking to persuade readers to accept claims (eg Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984;

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Bazerman, 1988). Scientific knowledge involves the consensus of the research community and hedges are an important rhetorical device in acknowledging the reader's role in ratifying claims.

An understanding of hedges also has important implications for ESP teaching where the notion that academic writing is purely objective, impersonal and informational dies hard. While most applied linguists would accept that all prose is an interaction between a writer and an audience (eg Perfetti and McCutchen, 1987), style guides, writing textbooks and ESP courses continue to inform students that scientific research articles represent a kind of faceless discourse which minimises author involvement (Hyland, 1994). The advice frequently given is to strictly avoid tentative expressions altogether (eg Winkler and McCuen, 1989), the idea being that the facts must be allowed to speak for themselves with no human intrusion. Here the study of hedges can assist non-native speakers (NNSs) to participate more fully and successfully in the world of academic research.

This paper examines the importance of hedging in cell and molecular biology research articles and characterises its extent and major forms of realisation in this genre. It is based on a corpus of 75,000 words taken from 26 RAs in the six leading journals in the field, identified by expert informants and the Journal Citation Reports. It is part of a larger study into hedging in academic writing and therefore reports work in progress. My goal is to provide an overview of hedging in this genre, what it is, why it is used and how it is signalled. I will then briefly discuss why second language students find hedging difficult and point to some general issues that this raises.

What is hedging?

Hedging has been a subject of interest to linguists since Lakoff (1972) first used the term to describe "words whose job it is to make things more or less fuzzy" and has since been used to refer to devices which qualify the writer's expression (eg Skelton, 1988; Prince et al, 1982). Essentially it represents an absence of certainty and is used here to describe any linguistic item or strategy employed to indicate either a) a lack of commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition or b) a desire not to express that commitment categorically. The term does not therefore include other attitudinal markers or devices which convey the writer's conviction; items are only hedges in their epistemic sense and only then when they mark uncertainty.

The concept has received most attention in its role in casual conversation where it is probably twice as frequent as in written discourse and helps speakers to create a convivial atmosphere, facilitate discussion, show politeness or hide a deficit of knowledge or vocabulary (eg Coates, 1987). Some writers have suggested that hedges are a means of signalling distance between a speaker and what is said (eg Prince, et al, 1982; Rounds, 1982) or to convey purposive vagueness in writing (eg Stubbs, 1986; Myers, 1989; Channell, 1994). Hedges have also been treated as a form of metadiscourse directing readers as to how they should evaluate propositions (eg Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990). Despite this interest however, there has been little work into how hedges work in academic genres based on analyses of adequate corpora and we know virtually nothing about the expression and function of hedges in scientific RAs.

The functions of hedging in scientific writing

Essentially hedges in academic writing signal a writer's anticipation of the possibility of opposition to his or her statements. While they exhibit indeterminacy of meaning, and there is inevitably some overlap between these categories, hedges serve three main functions in gaining reader acceptance of claims.

First hedges allow writers to express propositions with greater precision in areas often characterised by reformulation and reinterpretation. Hedging here is an important means of accurately stating uncertain scientific claims with appropriate caution. Scientific writing is a balance of fact and evaluation as the writer tries to present information as fully, accurately and objectively as possible. So writers often say "X *may cause Y*" rather than "X *causes Y*" to specify the actual state of knowledge on the subject. Hedges here distinguish the actual from the potential or inferential and imply that a proposition is based on the writer's

plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge. Readers are expected to understand that the proposition is true as far as can be determined.

The second reason concerns the writer's desire to anticipate possible negative consequences of being proved wrong. We gain our academic credibility by stating the strongest claims we can for our evidence, but we also need to cover ourselves against overstating our case. Hedges here help writers avoid personal responsibility for statements in order to protect their reputations and limit the damage which may result from categorical commitments. This usage follows Lakoff in associating hedges with "fuzziness", but I'm not using fuzziness to describe propositional connections; here hedges are used to blur the relationship between a writer and a proposition when referring to speculative possibilities. This is usually achieved through modal devices used in non-agentive environments - either by use of the passive, existential subjects (4) or of 'abstract rhetors' which attribute judgements to the text or the findings (5 and 6):

(4) It was assumed that the phosphorylation of EF-2 may play a ...

(5) These data indicate that phytochrome A possesses the intrinsic ...

(6) The model implies that the function of grana is to shield varying amounts of ...

In science writers may hedge in this way because of preliminary results, small samples, doubtful evidence, uncertain predictions, imperfect measuring techniques.

Finally hedges contribute to the development of the writer-reader relationship, addressing the need for deference and cooperation in gaining reader ratification of claims. Mitigating the illocutionary force of speech acts is common in conversation where it has been linked to the expression of deference or strategic politeness. In science however, writers must consider both the reader's role in ratifying knowledge, and the need to conform to community expectations on limits of self-assurance. Quite simply, categorical assertions leave no room for dialogue and are inherently face-threatening to others. They indicate that the arguments need no feedback and relegate the reader to a passive role. Explicit reference to the writer seems to mark the statement as an alternative view rather than a definitive statement of truth, indicating a personal opinion awaiting verification:

(7) Thus we propose that this insert is the major site of interaction with the membrane....

(8) I believe that the major organisational principle of thylakoids is that of continuous unstacking and restacking of sections of the membrane ....

Here hedges appeal to readers as intelligent colleagues, capable of deciding about the issues, and indicate that statements are provisional, pending acceptance by one's peers. This interpersonal role is backed up by institutionally reinforced obligations concerning the need to defer to and engage in debate with the scientific community. In sum, hedging looks 3 ways: towards the proposition, the writer and the reader.

Surface features of hedging

Academic writing is extensively hedged. My corpus shows that hedging represents more than one word in every 50 and this is supported by numerous studies looking at "authorial comment" which have all found one hedge every two or three sentences (eg Skelton, 1988; Adams Smith, 1984; Hanania and Akhtar, 1985). This indicates a level of frequency much higher than many features of scientific discourse which traditionally get much more attention in ESP courses.

Holmes (1988) has identified over 350 markers of mitigation in conversation and while the range of items is more restricted in scientific discourse, a large number of different devices occur. The formal and strategic categories are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Relative frequency of various categories used to express hedging in Journal corpus

Category	Items per 1,000 words	percent	Raw number
lexical verbs	4.9	23.3	366
adverbial constructions	4.4	21.0	329
adjectives	3.9	18.8	294
modal verbs	3.5	16.6	259
reference to limiting conditions	1.3	6.1	97
modal nouns	1.1	5.4	85
reference to a model, theory or methodology	1.1	5.3	83
admission to a lack of knowledge	0.7	3.5	55
Totals:	20.9	100	1568

Lexical markers

Hedging is principally a lexical phenomenon, but while linguists have generally been pre-occupied with modal verbs (eg Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1990) this data demonstrates the importance of other forms of hedging to native speakers. Overall frequencies show the particular importance of lexical verbs, modal verbs, epistemic adverbs and adjectives in expressing hedging in the RAs.

Lexical verbs constituted the greatest range of items with 38 different forms represented with *indicate, suggest, appear* and *propose* constituting 55.7% of all instances. All four verbs, and particularly *indicate* and *suggest*, appear to be more prominent in scientific writing than in the heterogenous academic texts in the Brown/LOB corpora. The most frequently occurring modal adjectives were *likely, possible, most* and *consistent with*. Over 36 adverbial forms were identified in the RA data which included 'downtoners' (Quirk et al, 1972: 542ff), such as *quite, almost* and *usually* which lower the effect of the force of the verb, and disjuncts that convey an attitude to the truth of a statement (eg *probably, generally, evidently*). Some 65% of the modal verbs in the corpus were used epistemically. *Would, may* and *could* were the most frequent epistemic forms and these accounted for 76.6% of the total, suggesting that a more restricted range is used in scientific writing than in conversation. Modal nouns, such as *possibility, assumption, estimate* and *tendency* are less significant in the RAs. Interestingly, hedges tend to reinforce one another in clusters with 43% of hedges occurring in the same sentence as at least one other device.

Particular devices appear to differ across domains however as Holmes' data for the academic sections of the Brown and LOB corpora and informal and semi-formal sections of the Lund corpus of English speech shows (Table 2).

Table 2: Relative frequency (%) of grammatical categories used to express epistemic modality

Class	Journal corpus	Holmes' Corpus Writing	Speech	Total
Lexical verbs	27.4	35.9	31.5	33.3
Adverbials	24.7	12.8	21.5	18.1
Adjectives	22.1	6.6	2.3	4.0
Modal verbs	19.4	36.8	42.4	40.2
Nouns	6.4	7.7	2.3	4.5

Scientific writers make less use of modal verbs to express degrees of confidence in their statements, for example, employing more adjectives and adverbial forms, which are particularly striking when compared with more general academic writing. Nouns are of relatively marginal importance in all corpora.

Strategic markers

In addition to lexical items, there are a number of strategies that provide a significant means of hedging scientific statements, accounting for 15% of all hedges in the corpus. The most numerous strategies are those which qualify commitment by referring to experimental weaknesses or to shortcomings in the model, theory or methodology. The frequencies of these strategies are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Most frequently occurring hedging strategies in corpus

Category	%	number	average per RA
reference to limiting experimental conditions	41.3	97	3.7
reference to a model, theory or methodology	35.3	83	3.2
admission to a lack of knowledge	23.4	55	2.1
Totals:	100	235	9.0

By commenting on the state of existing knowledge, writers can display how much confidence they invest in them, distinguishing between conclusions which are true under certain conditions and speculative possibilities. Some examples help 'frame' the proposition in a suitable environment of uncertainties and probabilities (6) while other cases simply signal possible alternative explanations (7):

(9) We do not know whether the increase in intensity of illumination from 250 to 1000 μ E/m^2 per s causes induction of one specific.....

(10) One cannot exclude a possibility that the activity of EF-2 Kinase in wheat germ is inhibited at a given stage of ontogenesis in some manner ...

Writers also refer to deficiencies in the research model (11), theory (12) or method (13) to hedge the certainty of their claims, allowing the prudent researcher to anticipate challenges to the premises or methods by which results were achieved:

(11) If this scheme is correct, then the orientation of the heme plane will almost be parallel to the...

(12) Viewed in this way, the concept of latral heterogeneity becomes obsolete because the distinction between gramal and stromal ...

(13) ... approx 70% according to our method and some β -turn ...

The most commonly employed strategy is to comment on the uncertainties of the experimental conditions, by either failing to guarantee results (14) or withholding endorsement of the decisiveness of claims (15):

(14) We did not succeed in obtaining the complete transcript.

(15) So it is difficult to conclude whether the 100 kDa protein mentioned above is actually the EF-2.

The variation of forms used to express these strategies and the fact they are not neatly quantifiable means their significance has been overlooked in the literature. They should, however, be considered among the hedging devices available to scientific writers.

Rhetorical distribution of hedges

The distribution of hedging in the conventional Introduction-Methods-Result-Discussion structure of RAs demonstrates their rhetorical use. The highest frequency occur in the Discussion sections where

authors' make their claims and explore implications not directly tied to experimental findings (Table 4). 82% of all items occur in the Results and Discussion sections with only 4% in methods. In RAs with an IMRD organisation, Discussions averaged 36 devices per thousand words with Introductions and Results yielding 20 each.

Table 4: Overall distribution of hedging in various sections

| | Totals | RA Section[1] | | | | |
		Intro	Methods	Results	Discussion	R and D[2]
Total words	71,635	8,989	17,904	16,791	15,770	12,181
Total Devices	1,474	180	61	336	574	323
Percentages	100	12.2	4.1	22.8	38.9	22.0
Devices per 1000 words	20.6	20.0	3.4	20.0	36.4	26.5

[1] Figures excluded for one RA which did not conform to the IMRD structure.

[2] Includes 10 RAs with combined Results and Discussion sections.

In the four part texts, 60% of epistemic modal verbs, 52% of modal nouns and 46% of adverbs are found in Discussions. While the density of items in Results sections is about a quarter of that found in Discussions, 42% of lexical verbs and 52% of references to limiting experimental conditions are found here. A breakdown is shown in Table 5.

This distribution is explained by the different rhetorical purposes served by these sections, with judgements and comments predominating in the more discursive sections. The distribution varies but is always highest in Discussions with modal verbs (7.8 per 1,000), adverbs (7.7), lexical verbs (7.1) and adjectives (6.6) particularly prominent here. It is in Discussions that authors gain their academic credibility by going beyond the data to offer more general interpretations. In Introductions hedging largely mitigates reviews of prior research, speculates about the importance of the study and tentatively announces findings. Result sections are where new knowledge is presented and here hedges anticipate reader challenges by limiting the claims made for methods and results. Methods is the least obviously rhetorical section and also the least modalised, with one tenth of the density of epistemic items found in Discussion sections.

Table 5. Distribution of various devices

| Epistemic Category | RA Section[1] (devices per 1,000 words) | | | | | Average per RA[2] | Raw totals |
	Intro	Methods	Results	Discussion	R and D		
lexical verbs	4.9	0.6	5.7	7.1	6.2	14.1	337
adverbs	4.0	0.6	4.0	7.7	6.1	12.7	313
adjectives	3.7	1.2	4.3	6.6	4.3	11.3	285
modal verbs	2.8	0.0	2.4	7.8	3.9	9.7	237
limiting conditions	0.6	0.3	1.4	2.1	2.1	3.7	91
modal nouns	1.7	0.2	0.6	2.2	1.5	3.3	82
model, method, etc	1.0	0.4	1.2	1.8	1.1	3.2	79
lack of knowledge	1.3	0.1	0.4	1.1	1.3	2.1	53
Totals	20.0	3.4	20.0	36.4	26.5	60.1	1477

[1] Figures have been excluded for one RA not conforming to the IMRD structure.

[2] Includes all 26 articles in corpus.

NNSs and hedging

The significance of these findings to ESP teachers should be clear. Foreign students find the expression of commitment and detachment to their propositions notoriously problematic and a failure to hedge statements adequately is a common feature of L^2 writers, even those who have a good control of English grammar and lexis. This can seriously hamper a student's participation in a research world dominated by the international lingua franca of English. The main reason for this failing is that the discourse features of academic writing are culture specific. The contrastive rhetoric literature suggests that ESL students at various proficiency levels transfer writing strategies from their L^1 to the L^2 and this occurs whether the strategies are effective or not. This results in what Thomas (1983) calls cross-cultural pragmatic failure, or the inability to say what one means. This is particularly well documented in spoken discourse where it may be due to either inadequate linguistic knowledge or to faulty perceptions of culturally appropriate behaviour.

What Thomas refers to as "Pragmalinguistic failure" is a problem of inadequate linguistic knowledge and essentially involves different interpretations of equivalent speech acts. So for example in presenting a knowledge claim, a writer may select a strategy which conveys the right illocution but has the wrong degree of politeness. In essence, students just don't have the language to say what they want to say. Arab students, for example, appear to have difficulties in this area:

> in addition to lacking a complete repertoire of hedges, the L^2 speakersin our study lacked
> a knowledge of their semantic function and distribution.
>
> (Scarcella and Brunak, 1981: 67-8)

"Sociopragmatic failure" on the other hand stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour. L^2 students may have false perceptions of appropriate formality, directness, deference and other pragmatic rules required simply because they learn to think and write differently in their own cultures. So NNSs may have:

> false expectations of the social relationships and concomitant social behaviour required
> within the discourse community because of the different rules which operate within
> parallel communities in their own culture   (Bloor and Bloor, 1991: 8)

Bloor and Bloor consider the degree of indirectness and concession permitted in academic writing a clear source of cultural difference and observe that Czech research articles display a more direct, unhedged style while Robberecht and Peteghem (1982) refer to the difficulties faced by Dutch and French students in mastering hedging in English. On the other hand, preferences for non-linear indirectness and tentativeness in argumentation have been confirmed for speakers of Japanese (Hinds, 1983), Korean (Eggington, 1987; Choi, 1988), Finnish (Ventola, 1992; Mauranen, 1993), Arabic (Ostler, 1987) and German (Clyne, 1987). Such differences may be related to the notion of reader involvement and whether responsibility for communication rests with the reader or writer (Hinds, 1983; Clyne, 1987).

Hedging thus represents a major "rhetorical gap" that L2 students have to cross before they can gain membership of a discourse community and pursue their chosen careers.

Issues and solutions

Clearly the ability to hedge statements appropriately is essential to effective communication and therefore to academic success but the acquisition of unfamiliar cultural and linguistic rules allows no instant solutions. Any response however must involve three major areas.

Firstly, science faculties need to acknowledge the significance that cultural differences have on the ability of students to communicate effectively. Until recently university departments largely ignored differences between students' and subject cultures, perhaps because of the traditional view which saw science as an independent culture expressed by a single discourse. Widdowson (1979: 61), for example, has been influential in ESP in promoting the notion that science is expressed by a "universal rhetoric".

However, scientific research does not exist outside of writing, therefore it cannot be realised without being influenced by the cultures which convey it. Science faculties have to recognise that students may possess an inadequate awareness of the variations in the sociopragmatic rules of language use. Students can only develop appropriate discourse strategies if they understand the needs of academic audiences, but studies show that classroom writing contexts are often artificial with little purpose other than to display knowledge. Most science undergraduates for example only write reviews, lab reports and project proposals and have no experience in argumentation. There is a clear need for subject lectures to provide written work which varies both purpose and audience.

Secondly, ESP teachers also need to move beyond a view that scientific writing is simply detached and factual and the idea that hedges are merely conventions of an academic culture. Unfortunately few published ESP courses discuss interpersonal aspects of writing and it is still rare for students to be taught explicitly about hedging. ESP materials are almost universally weak in this area and provide inadequate information and explanations which misrepresent the importance of both the concept and different devices. ESP teachers and materials writers have to acknowledge the importance of hedging and ensure students recognise this importance. Once again, we need to focus students on audience needs, particularly the degree of precision, caution and deference expected, by encouraging authentic writing tasks and the evaluation and manipulation of model texts.

Finally, we must look towards applied linguistics for analyses of hedges and their role in genre construction. A major reason why students do not get systematic training in the use of hedges is because we lack empirical information about the rules of various speech communities. Much of the attention given to hedging has been theoretical, refining conceptual distinctions by focusing on intuitive and decontextualised examples. Corpus studies, on the other hand, have either included a heterogeneous range of registers, or have centred on descriptions of spoken discourse or modal verbs. What are urgently needed are explanatory and descriptive accounts of the use of hedging in different registers based on analyses of authentic written sources.

Conclusions

The need to carry out research and publish results in English language journals presents NNSs with serious problems for they have to work within an unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environment. The RA is the key genre in academic disciplines and a NNS who wishes to function in the international research world must be familiar with its conventions and be able to recognise and use hedging devices appropriately. To achieve this however, our understanding of the concept needs to be sharpened and informed by granting hedges a higher priority in both our teaching and research agendas.

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How High Can a Dead Cat Bounce?: Metaphor and the Hong Kong Stock Market.

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Abstract

The perception of metaphor has changed in recent years from a rather obscure area of literary style to a central psycho-linguistic process intimately concerned with the way we construct reality through language. Language pedagogy, however, has continued to marginalize metaphor as an area of interest. This paper looks at metaphor in the language of economics, in particular the way the vicissitudes of the Hong Kong financial markets are reported in the press, and a number of subject domains are identified. It is seen that metaphor is central to the definition of basic economic constructs, and also has a role in making abstruse theoretical concepts accessible to readers or merely to interest or entertain. Understanding the significance of metaphor could lead to useful and motivating additions to the material of ESP courses in the area of economics and finance.

"The question every trader will be asking himself this week is: just how high can a dead cat bounce?"
Timothy Charlton, *South China Morning Post* 9/5/94 p.13.

Introduction

This paper looks at metaphorical language in the description of stock market trading and related economic activity in Hong Kong. The text samples from which the metaphors were drawn were collected from the local media over a period of approximately five months at the beginning of 1994. The significance of the use of metaphor in this genre is considered in the light of recent work in the field of the language of economics and pedagogical implications are explored.

The language of economics has received considerable attention in recent years. McCloskey (1985), analyses economic texts to show, for example, how rhetorical devices may be used to suppress uncertainty and give the impression that what is presented is unassailable fact. Collections of papers on economic language and discourse by Klamer et al. (1988), Dudley-Evans and Henderson (1990), Samuels (1990) and Henderson, Dudley-Evans and Backhouse (1993) have addressed issues of both theoretical and pedagogical significance. For economists such as Klamer and Samuels, an awareness of the rhetoric of economic models and description give fresh insights into the subject itself. Applied linguists, such as Dudley-Evans and Henderson, analyse texts to give more profound insights into the rhetoric and discourse structure of "authentic" texts in the context of English for Specific Purposes, and examine the pedagogical significance of their analysis where appropriate.

The literature on metaphor is enormous, and a recent bibliography restricted to post-1970 publications runs to nearly 500 pages (van Noppen, 1985). The work which has had the most far-reaching

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implications for the way metaphor is considered is probably Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, which will be discussed more fully below. The role of metaphor specifically in economics writing has also received some attention. Henderson's article "Metaphor in economics" (1982) classifies metaphors used in economic discourse into those which are also applicable more generally, those which have become conventional tools in economic description and more original metaphorical images dealing with specific situations. Mason (1990) includes metaphor in a more detailed analysis of a sample of text from an economic textbook (Samuelson and Nordhaus, 1985). She notes various metaphorical constructs, such as the containment of ideas in chapters, branches of the tree of knowledge and the personification of various market abstractions. Other work dealing with metaphor and economics includes Lindstromberg 1991.

The purpose of the current investigation is to extend this analysis of economic writing to a more specific genre. It looks at metaphor in contemporary financial journalism in Hong Kong from an ESP perspective and attempts to classify the various metaphors in use and probe their significance for the negotiation of meaning within this subject area. Metaphor is clearly an important consideration in the economics textbooks in current use, and an understanding of metaphor thus has relevance for pedagogy in English courses for economics students. Insights into metaphor in general will hopefully be of assistance to students whose mother tongue is not English in their struggle to comprehend economics texts. In addition, passages from contemporary media reports on financial activity in Hong Kong could provide reading texts for local students which are more relevant than the North American examples currently dominating the major "international" editions of standard textbooks. This could be an important motivating factor to take into consideration when devising reading-based ELT material for economics students.

Sources of Information

The sources used to locate the metaphorical language described below were press reports of business activity in Hong Kong and the region, especially the movement of stock (share) prices. Most of the examples quoted are from the *South China Morning Post's Business Post* supplement, (hereafter SCMPBP), with some from other sources such as the *Asian Wall Street Journal* (AWSJ) and the early morning television programme *Asia Business News* (ABN), broadcast on TVB Pearl. Reports were from a five month period from January to June 1994. The *South China Morning Post* reports, by far the most significant source of information, were mainly written by Timothy Charlton, Gareth Hewett and Carrie Lee. One or two examples from outside this period are used for illustration.

Literal Descriptions and "Dead" Metaphors

The Hong Kong Stock Market has a special place in Hong Kong society. News of movements in the Hang Seng Index has a prominent place in media reports, and the waxing and waning fortunes of the major constituent stocks greatly affect feeling about the state of Hong Kong itself. Many people across the whole socio-economic spectrum follow share price movements avidly, and it is not uncommon for small scale investors to spend a good deal of time and effort to seize an opportunity for short-term gains. The approach by many to the market is in fact often characterized as a form of gambling. The magnificent waterfront towers of Exchange Square, where the Stock Exchange is located, stand as a monument to capitalism for traders, dealers and dabblers from all walks of life.

In literal terms, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange deals in parcels or shares of the equity in listed companies. The shares increase or decrease in value according to demand. Factors affecting this demand include the companies' performance in terms of profit and loss; other factors such as price-to-book value, price to earnings ratio and net tangible assets (sometimes referred to as "fundamentals"); and outside influences such as international trade relations. Superimposed on these broad trends are the fluctuating patterns of everyday trading. When the price decreases, bargain hunters move in to buy, providing pressure for the price to rise again. As the price increases, profit takers sell, sending the price down once more. A number of the most heavily capitalized companies constitute the group on which the Hang Seng Index is based. Changes in the level of the index give a generalized picture of the movement in major stock prices.

As Henderson (1982) pointed out, a number of what were originally metaphors have become conventionalized in the language of economics, and can now be better considered as technical terms than "living" metaphors. Such terms as equilibrium, float, inflation, leakage, boom, liquidity and slump, are now so familiar in the jargon of the subject that their metaphorical etymology is not immediately obvious. More obscure terms too often have metaphorical origins but become fossilized as the technical jargon of the subject, e.g. straddle, strangle, call, put, cover, hedge, volatility, leverage, etc. Since these terms are part of the specialized lexicon of the field and not generally used in a metaphorical way, they will not be considered for the purposes of this paper. However, it should be pointed out that the boundary between what is a fossilized or dead metaphor, and what is living, is far from clear-cut.

Metaphorical Domains

Leaving aside these "dead" metaphors, the prose of financial media reports is a rich source of metaphorical terms. Many of these are fairly general, and could be applied to a variety of situations as well as financial matters:

> "Since India was an emerging market, there would always be hiccoughs and bottlenecks" (SCMPBP 30/1/94 p.11)

> ... market sentiment was now convinced that the corner has been turned and the trend is up.
> (Sunday Morning Post: Money 20/3/94 p.5)

> The worldwide downturn in the airline industry which gnawed away at Cathay's profits
> ... (Sunday Morning Post: Money 20/3/94 p.16)

In addition, there is a great deal of metaphorical language which is more specifically concerned with the language of economics, and a number of distinct domains can be identified.

Anthropomorphism

It is actually traders and stockbrokers who exert their energy buying and selling and who use their financial expertise to take risks in the pursuit of profit. However, as Mason (1990) has pointed out, human characteristics are frequently transferred from these people to the market in general, or specific aspects of it:

> Brokers said the market was having trouble focusing on issues which could give it direction. (SCMPBP 4/6/94 BP p.16)

> Stocks shrugged off weaker bond prices and a bearish futures market to close higher in choppy trade. (SCMPBP 11/3/94 p.11)

> The market is still trying to find a level to consolidate on its way down. (SCMPBP 18/3/94 p.13)

> The market was very nervous. It lacked direction. In the afternoon the index nose-dived with a vengeance ...(SCMPBP 31/3/94 p.15)

> Henderson land feels first shivers in property market - headline. (SCMPBP 21/4/94 P.1)

> The market was suffering vertigo following the dramatic 200-point leap in the futures market on Wednesday. (SCMPBP 10/6/94 p.11)

This personalization of inanimate or abstract nouns is a very common feature of descriptions of stock market activity. The stock markets themselves may be the object of an identity switch, where the place the stock market is located is substituted for the market itself. Strictly speaking these may be termed examples of metonymy:

> ... the announcement sent Wall St tumbling and the reverberations are expected to be felt around the globe. (SCMPBP 16/2/94 p.11)

> Sydney claws back despite gold fall - headline
> (SCMPBP 12/5/94 p.17)

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Falls in Wall St overnight added to Hong Kong's jitters.
(SCMPBP 13/5/94 p.11)

Gravity and Other Forces

Increase and decrease in value are closely associated with the conventional rising and falling lines on graphs and charts, and hence the analogy with rising and falling in physical space is very compelling. Shares go up or go down; commentators talk of new highs or lows, of up-sides and down-sides, of spectacular leaps or sickening falls. This upward and downward movement inevitably comes under the influence of the force of gravity. A careless slip can be a danger to unsure footing, leading to an unfortunate fall requiring a weary climb back up. Some examples illustrate the use of this very common metaphor:

Brokers said the market seemed to have come out of its free fall and had established a short term floor at the 10,800 mark.
(SCMPBP 16/2/94 p.11)

It held a relatively narrow range ... before losing its footing.
(SCMPBP 12/2/94 p.1)

The Hang Seng Index dropped like a brick through the 10,000 mark yesterday as the political impasse at home sparked a sell off. (SCMPBP 14/3/94 p.15)

Index tumbles through 10000 as nerves fray - headline
(SCMPBP 26/2/94 p7)

Brokers tried to maintain a brave front in the face of the free fall, ... (SCMPBP 26/2/94 p7)

Investors had been worried that if the market fell through the 9,700 mark, the next cushion would be at 9,200. (SCMPBP 15/3/94 p.13)

Often gravity is associated with other activities which involve gravitational force, such as mountain climbing, roller-coaster riding or parachuting:

Index winds up ahead following a volatile ride - headline.
(SCMPBP 16/2/94 p.11)

... the contract see-sawed, with traders having little idea where market sentiment was heading. (SCMPBP 16/2/94 p.11)

Stock prices took a roller coast ride and ended up in the subway. (CBS News 18/2/94)

Other sporting metaphors appear in section 4.6. Stocks or the market in general may not appear to be mere patients of the forces at work, but may be depicted as actively involved in the struggle to go higher:

The index hovered around the 10,400 mark for most of the day, seemingly unable to push higher. (SCMPBP 19/2/94 p10)

Stocks closed 1.8 per cent lower in sluggish, gloomy trade as persistent selling pressure continued to stifle weak attempts at a rebound. (SCMPBP 11/3/94 p.11)

...the volatility showed the market has not yet found a new direction. (SCMPBP 16/2/94 p.11)

...the market started to drift and lose direction.
(SCMPBP 17/2/94 p.13)

... it looked as though the index would stay above 10,000 as it precariously balanced on the 10,050 mark. (SCMPBP 16/3/94 p.11)

When prices fall, there will often be a "bounce" or "rebound", leading to a reversal of direction. Sharp rises, on the other hand, are usually followed by a "correction". Frequently, these are qualified by the word "technical" to show that the change is due to the rapidity of the movement rather than a change in the fundamental nature of the stocks.

... the bounce was more technical than substantial.
(SCMPBP 23/3/94 p.15).

Those hoping for a big rebound to catapult it out of this bear trap would probably be disappointed ...(SCMPBP 25/3/94 p.1)

Most rebounds are welcomed by investors, but the "dead cat bounce" referred to in the title is not quite what it appears. The term is used to indicate a small rebound after a lowering of share prices which quickly loses momentum and falls short of expectations.

Traders warned the overnight rally in London might just be a "dead cat bounce" and said the real test ... (SCMPBP 22/3/94 p.2)

... we are in the middle of a dead cat bounce. (SCMPBP 7/5/94 p.7)

The question every trader will be asking himself this week is: just how high can a dead cat bounce? (SCMPBP 9/5/94 p.13)

In other accounts of price movements, shares or their prices dipped, plummeted, sagged, plunged, dived, dropped, slumped and tumbled, or jumped, surged, sprinted, climbed, gained, leaped, rose and vaulted from their previous value. A few other examples continue the theme of Euclidean space:

Hang Seng Index futures plumbed the depths yesterday as increasing heat in domestic politics and fears of international interest rate rises combined to severely damage market sentiment.
(SCMPBP 26/2/94 p.10)

... appeared to fall off a cliff as trading opened in a vacuum of sentiment and bids.
(SCMPBP 3/3/94 p.18)

BP Prices are likely to trend sideways this week ...
(SCMPBP 14/3/94 p.15)

The sagging SET index continued its tailspin in another week of very thin trading...
(SCMPBP 21/3/94 p.22)

The index fell off the cliff in the afternoon opening
(SCMPBP 18/3/94 p.13)

Regional stocks sent into nosedive (headline) (SCMPBP 20/4/94 p.1)

Other forces apart from gravity may be involved. These may allude to the such forces as the momentum of a speeding vehicle or the pressure building up inside a bubble or balloon:

Yesterday's 4.29% rocket was propelled by heavy trading... (SCMPBP 12/5/94 p.17)

... with Japanese buying for fundamental reasons as their market looks as though it will be stuck in neutral for some time.

Strong institutional selling put the brakes on Hang Seng Index futures trading yesterday. (SCMPBP 16/3/94 p.14)

... raise interest rates, which would put a further prick in the property bubble.
(SCMPBP 20/4/94 p.15)

Resident Fauna

The Hong Kong stock market, as other stock markets of the world, is inhabited by two well-known metaphorical animals, the bull and the bear. These creatures have been in existence for a long time, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the word "bear" was in use in the early eighteenth century, and common around the time of the great speculative frenzy known as the South Sea Bubble. The origin of the term "bear" is probably connected to the proverb "to sell the bearskin before one has caught the bear". A bear is now understood as a person who predicts a fall in the price of stocks, but originally it appears to have referred to the stocks themselves, as in the phrase "to sell the bear". This would nowadays be referred to as "selling short", whereby brokers sell and obtain settlement for stocks they do not actually possess in the expectation that the price will fall and they will then make a profit on the transaction. Manipulating markets by heavy short selling to bring about falls in prices is sometimes referred to as a bear trap, which is usually illegal. The bull apparently appeared later than the bear, also during the eighteenth century, and probably as a metaphorical foil for the bear. Bulls are optimistic, predicting that stocks will rise in price.

Words derived from these basic terms include the adjectives bullish and bearish, and compounds such as bull run, bear trap and so on:

"Speculation on new listings was dampened by the recent bearish sentiment towards the market." (SCMPBP 19/2/94 p7)

Nomura is taking a more bullish tone. (SCMPBP 18/4/94 p.17)

When does a bull run take its revenge and become a bear market? (SCMPBP 20/3/94 p.5)

...fear of just about everything drove equity and derivative instruments on a major bear run yesterday. (SCMPBP 3/3/94 p.18)

The market can strengthen further, but I still think it's a bear trap (SCMPBP 12/5/94 p.17)

"I hate to call it a bear market, but it is a very contracting market," said one US broker..(SCMPBP 16/3/94 p.11)

Bulls and bears adopt opposite positions on trading strategies, and market forces are frequently described in terms of antagonism between the two:

Bears to rule in short term but bulls expected to return - headline (SCMPBP 22/2/94 p.9)

The market was choppy. There was a tug-of-war between bulls and bears (P.Au-Young, SCMPBP 31/3/94 p.15)

There may be extended metaphors relying on the behavioural characteristics of the animals. Bears are strong, cunning and tenacious and have sharp claws:

Local bargain hunters tried to stage a rally and pushed the market up 80 points to the 10,680 mark just after 10.30 a.m., but the bears had their claws firmly dug in and were not letting go.
(SCMPBP 22/2/94 P.9)

Stampeding bears send index diving - headline
(SCMPBP 20/3/94 p.16)

Yesterday's 200 point crash through the 9,600 mark delivered the market into the jaws of the bear. (SCMPBP 18/3/94 p.1)

After weeks of drifting aimlessly, strong bears came out of the woods determined to drag the market down. (SCMPBP 19/3/94 p.9)

The sleeping bear has been woken, and there is no sign that he is heading back to hibernate. (SCMPBP 9/5/94 p.13)

Bears rule with soggy sentiment - headline (SCMPBP 18/3/94 p.16)

Bulls, too, are formidable opponents, whose lack of subtlety is compensated by brute strength which, when provoked into an angry reaction, is difficult to contain.

10,000-mark red cape as bulls paw the ground - headline
(SCMPBP 23/5/94 p.15)

This time last year ... bull market sentiment took on armour-like qualities as no bad news, however horrendous, appeared to stick. Now the bears appear to be coated in armour. (SCMPBP 3/3/94 p.18)

The collocation "maximum bullish" or was a very common expression in the second half of 1993, following the announcement by Morgan Stanley's chief analyst Barton Biggs that he was "maximum bullish" on Hong Kong. This was considered to be a major factor in the 1993 "bull run" in Hong Kong stocks. When the bull run ended, vulgar variations on the "maximum bullish" theme were currently in vogue.

A more recently introduced species is the stag. This refers to an investor who purchases shares in new issues, hoping that they will show an immediate gain, which can be realised as quick profit. The term can be traced from the 1840's, and oroginally appears to have had connotations of an outsider rather than a *bona*

fide investor. An ingenious variation on the bull market theme is the idea of the "cow market" (ABN 19/4/94). "Cow" markets do not quite have the general upward momentum of bull markets, but can be "milked" by judicious investing in selected stocks. The ABN story referred to the situation in Malaysia in mid-April.

One or two other species occasionally make appearances. Cats normally appear in the collocation "dead cat bounce", but may occasionally be found alive:

> The market was extremely volatile as speculators played a cat and mouse game with stocks rallying one minute and falling the next. (SCMPBP 13/5/94 p.11)

> Traders said the market was like a cat-and-mouse game. Timid mice would come out to buy in the hopes of a rebound only to be pounced on by big cats all too keen to sell at these levels.
> (SCMPBP 22/3/94 p.15)

Others include the following:

> ... (yesterday) saw investors run like a herd of startled gazelles. (SCMPBP 17/3/94 p 15)

> In the period until the arrival of Khundkar Khalid Ahmed Hossain, the stock remained a dog in investment terms.(SCMPBP 4/6/94 p.16)

The rat makes an appearance in the term "rat trading":

> SFC homes in on rat trading and front running - headline. Rat trading is when a broker receives an order from his client to buy a share at a certain price. If the broker believes the price will drop, he waits and then buys the stock at the lowest price through his own account. The sting comes when he sells the same stock back to the client at the client's original (price) and pocketing the difference. (SCMPBP 18/2/95 p.1)

A whole menagerie seems to have been let loose in the following:

> With the rise from 7000 to 8600, optimists saw the makings of a baby bull, but naysayers warned it could be a bum steer ... after last year's grizzly bear market. (ABN 29/4/95)

Finally, a very old term "bell wether", meaning the leading sheep in a flock around whose neck a bell is hung, is sometimes applied to the market's most prominent stocks:

> Cheung Kong and Hutchison, both considered bellwether stocks for the market, ...(SCMPBP 22/2/94 p.9)

Call to Battle

The conflict metaphor exemplified by the struggle between bulls and bears may be extended to include battles between rival armies or gangs. The opposed forces may be profit-takers and bargain-hunters, or stocks themselves may adopt the role of combatants, attempting to struggle higher against the attempts of opposing forces dedicated to knocking them down.

> ... stocks beat a steady retreat (SCMPBP 18/3/94 p.13)

> The psychologically important 10,000 level in Hang Seng Index futures failed to be breached yesterday as profit-takers guarded the barrier. (SCMPBP 14/4/94 p.13)

> Big selling by overseas investors turned the first trading day of the Year of the Dog into the St. Valentine's Day Massacre on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange yesterday. ... early trading saw the bloodbath continue as professional dealers ran for cover.
> (SCMPBP 15/2/94 p.1)

> Sum Cheong retreats after all-out charge. (SCMPBP 21/4/94 p.16)

> ... Cheung Kong led the charge (SCMPBP 12/5/94 p.17)

Combat requires not only aggression, but a continuous supply of energy. As fortunes wax and wane, the battle-weary protagonists mount rallies or are forced to retreat as they continue their struggle:

> Japan's badly wounded economy (SCMPBP 9/294 p.11)

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Groggy dollar slips against major units - headline
(SCMPBP 15/2/94 p.1)

Sick dollar attempts to rally after selling fever - headline.
(SCMPBP 16/2/94 P.15)

... retreated after an early rally. (ABN 3/3/94)

After getting creamed in the morning session, there were not many investors willing to
come back for another go.
(SCMPBP 25/3/94 p.15)

In Shenzhen investors charged for the exits... (ABN 20/4/94)

Waging such conflicts requires not only a great deal of physical strength and energy, but psychological
fortitude as well. Some of the affective factors such as confidence and sentiment vital for success are
described in the next section.

Sentimental Brokers

While a good deal of the analysis of financial information is rational and scientific, some more
subjective factors are very prominent. It is a cliché that two major emotions rule the stock market: greed
and fear. However, it is the less specific, and often poorly-defined emotion "sentiment" which is more
commonly described as the motivating force behind investment decisions. What sentiment exactly consists
of is rather difficult to divine from its current usage. It is sometimes described as an active agent, sometimes
as an abstract emotion qualified by a variety of epithets. Consider the following uses:

... fragile stock market sentiment around the world will make progress in Hong Kong
equities difficult this week.
(SCMPBP 14/2/94 p.7)

Also undermining market sentiment was Governor Chris Patten's reform bill
...(SCMPBP 22/2/94 p.9)

... knocked the wind out of market sentiment yesterday.
(SCMPBP 26/2/94 p.10)

... fears of a local interest hike dampened sentiment. (ABN 15/2/94)

The market is expected to be sluggish this week .. on sustained bearish sentiment.
(SCMPBP 14/3/94 p.15)

Without some big development to shift sentiment up a gear, I don't see us going
through just yet (SCMPBP 14/4/94 p.13)

... sentiment towards the sector turned sour. (SCMPBP 21/4/94 p.13)

In lacklustre sentiment, the cash index fell 64 points.
(SCMPBP 16/4/94 p.8)

The wide range of descriptions applied to sentiment gives it a protean quality which is very difficult to pin
an exact definition on to. Other metaphorical accounts of psychological factors affecting economic
conditions generally concern "jitters" or "depression" or even "panic", and include the following:

Tokyo leads dirge on Asian markets - headline
(SCMPBP 18/3/94 p.13)

... after a few days of anaemic trading (SCMPBP 12/3/94 p.10)

.. markets got the wobbles ... (SCMPBP 14/3/94 p.15)

US dollar cringes - headline (SCMPBP 31/3/94 p.19)

Shrugging off last weeks jitters, the Hang Seng Index comfortably added 309.98
points. (SCMPBP 15/2/94 p.15)

... stock had plummeted 515.22 points by the time dealers trudged out of Exchange Square ... the fall cast a pall over the financial sector in Hong Kong (SCMPBP 15/2/94 p.1)

Tokyo meanders under political cloud - headline.
(SCMPBP 12/4/94 p.13)

Tokyo shines as political clouds clear - headline.
(SCMPBP 14/4/94 p.13)

"the traditional Chinese New Year rally will probably be lost in a malaise of concern and confused sentiment as equity markets globally stumble around trying to find an investment story to latch on to. (SCMPBP 14/2/94 p.7)

Sporting Life

Somewhat less bloody, but maintaining the antagonism theme, sporting metaphors are often used. Those actively involved partake in a variety of sports, while others wait on the sidelines for their turn.

Having cleared the 9,700 hurdle in the morning without tripping, the market took the view that the only way was up.
(SCMPBP 15/3/94 p.13)

Index dips as buyers hug sidelines - headline. (SCMPBP 16/3/94 p.11)

... the market might remain in a stalemate until tomorrow's futures settlements (SCMPBP 10/3/94 p.15)

Investors throw in towel after New Year hopes fade - headline. (SCMPBP 17/2/94 p.13)

We believe the index can break its early year high and ... we intend to be around to surf the upside when it comes.
(*Sunday Morning Post Money* 22/5/94 p.12)

One broker described the afternoon session as a "grab-a-thon" ... (SCMPBP 15/3/94 p.13)

One kind of game very closely related to stock market activity is gambling, such as blackjack or poker, which normally takes place in casinos. In fact, investors in Hong Kong, where the closest legal gaming tables are in Macau, are commonly described as having a "casino mentality". Shares are equated to the counters or chips used in gambling, and are often referred to as such. "Blue Chip" companies refer to the larger businesses which are considered reliable investments. Blue chips originally referred to blue counters used in poker, which had a higher value than other tokens. By analogy, Red Chips refer to comparatively reliable investments in Mainland Chinese ("red") companies.

Property counters take a beating (headline) (SCMPBP 31/3/94 p.1)

With trading dominated by Blue Chips yesterday, second- and third-liners appeared sluggish (SCMPBP 24/3/94 p.22)

Smaller companies beat blue chips to steal the show yesterday while the Shougang group of companies took centre stage. (SCMPBP 25/3/94 p.18)

Red chips and H- shares were yesterday's star performers.
(SCMPBP 19/2/94 p.10)

People who couldn't believe their luck in the rally headed for the cashier's window to cash in their chips (SCMPBP 13/5/94 p.11)

... property counters continued to suffer. (*Sunday Morning Post Money* 20/3/94 p.16)

Metaphor and Journalistic Style

Newspaper articles and television commentaries have different audiences from textbooks, and the journalist has to be entertaining as well as informative. Frequently journalists use metaphor in an attempt to make the prose more lively and interesting. As we have seen, the accurate but dull "fall" may be replaced by "tumble", "plummet" or other verbs in the interest of variety. A stimulating style is always the objective, as the following examples of some of the more imaginative prose encountered illustrate :

The funeral hush that has draped the Hong Kong futures and derivatives market of the last few days continued yesterday. (SCMPBP 11/3/94, p.11)

Investing in Japanese equities is a bit like entering into an arranged marriage - on the surface you know what you are getting into but the finer points are a mystery. (SCMPBP 11/3/94, p.11)

The mostly lullaby week on the futures market finished yesterday with a bit of noise as trading activity picked up.(SCMPBP 12/3/94 p.7)

"The market is like Madagascar - we all know where it is, but no-one wants to go there," said Barclay de Zoete Wedd assistant director Nial Goodings. (SCMPBP 16/3/94 p.11)

If US interest rates rise to 8% ... this will hit Hong Kong in the bloated paunch of its residential property market.
(SCMPBP 21/3/94 p.22)

Dividend "strip" teases oil investors (headline) (dividend stripping is selling a share when it has a high value due to an impending dividend, then buying it back cheaper after the dividend payment as a tax avoidance strategy) (SCMPBP 12/5/94 p.12)

The Fed's (interest rate rise) role is to take away the punch bowl as soon as the party starts warming up. They haven't taken away the punch bowl, but they have thrown a few ice cubes in.
(SCMPBP 19/4/94 p.11)

In the style of the sub-editor's "snappy headline", metaphorical allusions may be derived from somewhat self-consciously contrived puns on the name of companies or the business that they are involved in:

Under a Full Head of Steam (headline) It was a day of smooth sailing for Guangzhou Shipyard in a sea that has often been tempest-tossed for H shares. It steamed up 4.54 per cent ... All the frothing was in anticipation of its final results. (SCMPBP 31/3/94 p.15)

China Light and Power had the shine taken off its recent good run by dropping $1...
(SCMPBP 12/3/94 p7)

Airline manages to take off in wake of harbour dip (headline referring to China Airlines, which was picking up business again after loss of confidence caused by one of its planes running off the runway into the harbour in November 1993). (SCMPBP 12/2/94 p.1)

Star Paging continued its recent skyward path ... Kowloon Motor Bus accelerated 16 pc ...Maanshan Iron and Steel forged ahead 9.82%... Shanghai Petrochemical also fuelled the market.
(SCMPBP 24/3/94 p.22)

Guangzhou Shipyard sailed into the spotlight as a gaining stock in the recent doldrums which have becalmed H shares.
(SCMPBP 31/3/94 p.18)

Property income keeps Ferry afloat (headline) - Net profit for Hong Kong Ferry (holdings) sailed ahead 13% to $99.7M last year as rental income outweighed losses from ferry operations. (SCMPBP 20/4/94 p.2)

Mainlanders stitch up the jeans trade (headline)
(SCMPBP 20/4/94 p.4)

Star Entertainment continued to put on a stellar performance.. (SCMPBP 21/4/94 p.16)

Pizza Hut seeks a slice of the pie (headline) (SCMPBP 6/5/94 p.9)

Pick and Mix

Mixed metaphors are generally not considered stylistically sound, but the sheer number of "living" and "dead" metaphors in current use in financial reporting means that some uncomfortable juxtapositions are inevitable. Some rather interesting images are generated by the following:

We saw the market bloom on an explosion of liquidity last year. The bubble burst last month ... (SCMPBP 7/3/94 p.11)

Great Eagle expected to spark surge of spin-offs - headline
(SCMPBP 30/1/94 p.3)

White knuckle trading of HK stocks in London yesterday saw market makers taking a safety first approach to their Asian quarry.
(SCMPBP 12/2/94 p.1)

... up a blistering 256 points to finish the day on a strong note. (SCMPBP 15/3/94 p.13)

Brokers said the whole tone of market sentiment had been turned on its head.
(SCMPBP 3/3/94 p.18)

All the hot money flowing around the market has dried up ... (SCMPBP 10/3/94 p.15)

...companies rushed to dress up beleaguered balance sheets
(SCMPBP 11/3/94 p.11)

Meanwhile, the meltdown in the Hong Kong market sent tremors around Asia yesterday, sending regional stocks diving.
(SCMPBP 22/3/94 p.2)

Discussion

There is no doubt that financial reports are a rich source of metaphorical language. The sheer number of metaphors in use indicates their importance in this genre. Part of the explanation lies in the nature of media reports: subject matter must be accessible and interesting, even entertaining. Whereas the role of a textbook is to provide an accurate factual account of the subject matter, journalists have to consider reader reaction, circulation and competition from rival news reporters. Thus an attractive style is more likely to command the attention of readers or viewers. Colourful and dramatic language is a part of this style, as well as wittily appropriate plays on the names of companies or their trading activities. Some of the slick language described in section 4.7 above is in this category. But the role of metaphor is much more profound than these examples alone would suggest.

Traditionally metaphor has been placed squarely in the field of literary criticism and stylistics, and has generally been treated as an abnormal or marginal use of language. However, contemporary thinking took a radical change of direction with the publication of Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By* (1980), which showed how metaphor has a much deeper significance for the way people think and view the world. Its impact on the fundamental discourses of everyday life is at the heart of our way of perceiving the world and actions based on those perceptions. As they note:

"... metaphor pervades our normal conceptual system. Because so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc.), we need to get a grasp on them by means of other concepts that we understand in clearer terms ..." 1980:115

Examples of the common metaphors of everyday life include such correspondences as "ideas are people", "love is madness", "wealth is a hidden object", "emotional effect is physical contact", "life is a

gambling game" and many others. In combination they form a coherent network of analogies and equivalences which forms the very foundation of our conceptual system.

The theme of the centrality of metaphor has also been developed by other writers, for example Mühlhäusler (1983), who proposes a shift in the paradigm, with metaphor the primary or natural condition and a need to provide an explanation for literal language as the special case. In particular, he proposes a class of "natural" metaphors, which have primacy over "nurtural" ones. Using data from pidgins as well as other languages, he notes that natural metaphors tend to be culture-independent and universally understood in contrast to the culturally invented nurtural metaphors and may provide important insights into universal language development processes. It is suggested that "Developmentally very early clusters of meaning (archetypal metaphors) may reflect universals in the semantics of human languages" (p.18). An account of the role of metaphor in the expansion of a developing pidgin appears in Smith (1990), and further discussion of recent work in the field can be found in Aitchison (1994).

Lakoff further develops his ideas on metaphor in *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (1987) particularly the relevance of the way language is used in a polysemous or metaphorical way to considerations of conceptual organization. The idea that the use of different language leads to different ways of perceiving the world is, of course, not new, but the classic position as formulated by Whorf (1956) has often been rejected as untestable and unscientific. However, controlled studies of language and cognition, particularly the work of Paul Kay (e.g. Kay and Kempton, 1984; Kay and McDaniel 1978) have lent further support to the assertion that linguistic categories can affect non-linguistic behaviour. Lakoff extends this work to the development of a theory of "cognitive grammar", where language, cognition and communicative function are inextricably intertwined.

Such a position is of considerable relevance to the way the discourse of a discipline such as economics is inter-related with the perceptions of those engaged in it and the actions based on those perceptions. If metaphor forms such a large part of that discourse, then there are implications for the understanding of both academic texts and more popular journalistic accounts of economic and financial matters.

If economists really live by those metaphors, the world is seen as somehow more secure, less unpredictable. The writers of textbooks are by definition presenting a world of fact, of state-of-the-art knowledge, of relative certainty. However scrupulous the authors may be in maintaining a scientific perspective, there are certain assumptions which tend to reinforce the certainty and suppress the uncertainty. In a field of abstract concepts, the teacher welcomes metaphorical pegs to hang them on. As we have seen, much of the very substance of the subject - inflation, cycles, depression, expansion, - is basically metaphorical in nature and such fossilized concepts are left as the basic building blocks of the academic edifice.

Financial commentators, too, welcome the support of a framework of concrete analogies to clarify the confusing changes which characterize business activity. Explanations of events lean heavily on this metaphorical structure: the market falls on fragile sentiment caused by the sinking dollar, or by a flat property market, or an interest rate hike. The bulls are in the ascendant when resistance levels are breached or the market bounces back from oversold positions. Rarely do commentators say "These events are totally unpredictable; I haven't the slightest idea what caused them to occur." The explanations are, however, generally retrospective. Tentative predictions of what will happen in the future contrast sharply with the confident certainty of attributing explanations to events which have already happened. A plethora of economic indicators are invoked to maintain the solidity of the cause-effect relationship. But the degree to which events are, in fact, unpredictable was seen at then end of 1993 in the *South China Morning Post's* survey of market analysts, who were asked to predict the level of the Hang Seng Index at the end of 1994. Predictions ranged from 5,000 to 16,000. (The actual figure was about 7,500).

A group with a significant stake in the maintenance of an impression of certainty are the financial "gurus" whose words and actions can have profound effects on the way markets move. As noted above, Barton Biggs, the Morgan Stanley analyst set off a major bull run towards the end of 1993 by simply stating that he was "maximum bullish on China". The periodic pessimistic predictions of analyst Marc Faber, (known in the media as "Dr. Doom"), can depress market sentiment to the extent that the market falls in an atmosphere of bearish gloom. Mark Mobius attracts investors to his Templeton funds partly through the

maintenance of an aura of arcane financial knowledge about the world's exotic emerging markets. To a lesser extent, a host of commentators, analysts and advisers benefit from the illusion that market events are controlled and rational and can be explained and predicted.

The finding that metaphor is such a prominent part of these reports also has a number of possible pedagogical applications in Hong Kong. Students of business and economics who wish to understand the subject must be aware of the metaphorical nature of much of the description, and be able to interpret it when they come across it. Its importance is confirmed by even a cursory glance at the title of some recently assigned readings such as "'Doomsday Models' and the 'Chicken Little' Syndrome: or 'the computer that cried "wolf"'" (Solow 1973). This importance has been demonstrated for economics textbooks (Henderson 1982, Mason 1990), where the emphasis has mainly been on metaphor as a component of the theoretical underpinning of the subject's basic assumptions and theories. Even if the metaphor underlying a term has now become obscure, analysis of its origins could give insights into the meaning, and act as an *aide-memoire*. When considering living metaphors, an appreciation of the distinction between the literal and the figurative would be highly desirable to bring a critical mind to bear on readings. The fact that English metaphors may have direct Cantonese equivalents (Chan and Kwok 1974) may help in this respect. As McLennan (1993) has noted, the teaching of metaphor in ESL classes has generally been neglected in secondary schools in Hong Kong, which is unfortunate, as she demonstrates that it is a significant cause of comprehension failure among learners. The role of metaphor as a resource for improved vocabulary learning is further discussed in McLennan (1994).

There appear to be three main reasons why such work would also be useful for tertiary students in the area of business and economics: getting to grips with the subject matter, background knowledge of the subject area and stylistic awareness. As for grasp of subject matter, as noted above, understanding of terms may depend on appreciation of metaphorical links, or may be assisted by such an insight. A discussion of these associations would be a useful check for testing definitions of key terms. Co-operation with teaching staff in subject departments would be highly desirable here.

Secondly, a common complaint about undergraduates is the inadequate amount of background knowledge available for a critical interpretation of subject matter. This background knowledge is of significance not just as a repository of facts to draw on when required, but also intimately affects the process of reading itself. As Henzell-Thomas (1985) has shown, a critical reading strategy based on expectations from one's own background schemata is likely to be much more effective at tertiary level than treating a text as a dose of information to be ingested and assimilated. Wide reading on topics of interest could be stimulated by focusing on such sources as the *South China Morning Post Business Post*, where the reports are well written and informative.

Thirdly, awareness of style, genre and tone in writing is an area where many tertiary students are in need of improvement. The tone and style of journalistic reports are different from those of textbook chapters or economic essays in ways which may be obvious to native speakers but not so apparent to second language students. Reading exercises to identify different tone and stylistic elements would be a useful prelude to instruction on writing reports in an appropriate genre with the required degree of formality.

One pedagogical application which has been used with a fair degree of success is project work of the kind currently undertaken in ESP courses for economics and business students at the University of Hong Kong. For example, first year economics students are required to assemble a business portfolio as part of their first year English for Academic Purposes course. This portfolio is based on an investigation of some current activity or events, such as the stock market or property prices, and serves as the basis for written and oral reporting. Information is largely obtained from media reports, as current information cannot be found in textbooks. As media reports are normally presented in a "journalistic" style, there has to be some transposition into a more suitably formal style before it is acceptable in an academic context.

One of the main advantages of such project activities is the motivating factor of dealing with current and relevant topics. Many "international" editions of the main North American economics textbooks are somewhat culture-bound in their choice of examples, and can be a struggle for students from places such as Hong Kong. Similar activities could be devised at the secondary level also, for example assembling a notional equity portfolio and compiling charts to follow its vicissitudes over the year. This would give practice in various skills and provide a suitable focus for oral or written reporting. Given the popularity of

stock market investment among small investors in the general population in Hong Kong (normally referred to as "retail investors" by the media), this could also be a useful survival skill in later life!

Conclusion

Metaphor is a common and important feature of contemporary financial journalism in Hong Kong, and any understanding of the language of stocks and trading requires an appreciation of this. Metaphor functions not only as a stylistic device, but is fundamental to the perceptions of both academics and professionals in the field. Newspaper articles on financial dealings could be a source of relevant and motivating authentic texts for use in the ESP classroom for students on tertiary economics and business courses.

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A wicker basket

Eight degrees Centigrade,
cheeks pink and painful
from windburn, I could see
our breath vapourizing the air.

Almost an hour, we waited.
The van came with three men.
My brothers walked them to the hall.
There was conversation at the desk.

Papers were signed for the release.
Two men went into the back room.
Stainless steel cabinets shone.
A cabinet door opened.

Mother was on the upper deck.
A white cloth wrapped her.
They laid her stretcher on the floor.
One end of the cloth lifted.

I saw the top of Mother's grey hair.
Philip nodded.
Gregory wiped his forehead.
My sister cried.

I stood at the door,
remembering my mother smile
in pink pajamas, warm in bed,
last summer I came home.

'The face has shrunk to the bone,'
Gregory said as we walked outside.
The man from the funeral parlour
told us to wait ...

And I saw them move
through the back door
my white mother
in a wicker basket –

at eight degrees Centigrade,
my tears dropped.

Agnes Lam

Modifying Meanings: Modality and Argumentation in Students' Written Answers to a Legal Problem.

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Abstract

This article investigates certain modal choices made by law students writing in an ESL adjunct class, illustrating areas of concern and instances of successful development of ideas in extracts from students' essays on a problem in tort law. The study compares judgements of teachers regarding the status of claims made in the students' writing, and examines effects of the writers' epistemic modal choices upon the consistency and warrant of argumentation in their texts. While possibilities for teaching are noted, the discussion emphasises the value of understanding and appreciating students' academic legal writing as it develops in a second language context.

Introduction

Although the role of the English language teacher in commenting on students' written work is undoubtedly complex and demanding, it is sometimes excessively problematised in professional discourse on the teaching of writing in English, not least in the case of English as a second language (ESL). Diagnosing and discussing this tendency in the literature, Reid (1994) develops an insightful commentary on what she has come to see as the "myths of appropriation" of the content of students' written discourse by English language teachers. The potential dangers of appropriation of a student's content and message by a well-meaning teacher must be acknowledged, but these risks are easily exaggerated and ought not to inhibit ESL teachers from offering comment as part of what we do. A similar distinction between (helpful) intervention and (intrusive) interference is made by Widdowson (1987). Respect for the student, in short, does not entail an abdication of the writing teacher's role.

One context in which concerns about content appropriation by English language teachers seem peculiarly misplaced is that of the adjunct class in which students write on selected content subjects (Snow and Brinton 1988; Johns 1990). In contexts where our students will eventually receive feedback on the content of their writing from specialist subject lecturers, students may still respect ESL teachers, but are unlikely to be overawed by our authority. When commenting in such contexts on students' writing, ESL teachers can surely adopt a supportive stance that is neither subordinate nor subversive. (We should not cravenly avoid all content in our students' writing, while patiently picking up and reattaching the missing morphemes, in a misguided conception of a "service" role; nor, on the other hand, should we routinely adopt an oppositional posture towards whatever curriculum our students happen to be studying, in a comparably misconceived distortion of a "critical" role.) The ESL teacher in an adjunct class should be ready to speak, in an independent, friendly and informed voice, as one reasonably experienced participant in the complex educational environment and ambience in which ESL students are learning to think, talk and write as members of an evolving academic community. These sentiments, at least, form part of a philosophical and affective backdrop to the more narrowly targeted study of writing, in an adjunct class, by first-year undergraduate students of law that follows in this article.

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A prerequisite for well-informed comment on students' writing in an adjunct class is a willingness on the part of the teacher to become informed about selected areas of the students' subject curricula and so to appreciate the discourse challenges that their students are being asked or expected to take up. In a discussion of adjunct course design that focused on the initial planning phase of an English enhancement course for law students at the University of Hong Kong, Allison, Corcos and Lam (1994) presented a rationale for deriving materials and tasks for that course from a concurrent first-year course in tort law. Their discussion suggested the desirability (and difficulty) of reconciling a coherent course plan, needs for teacher preparation and task design, and a maintenance of enough room for genuine though limited negotiation of content and priorities with students as the course would take place. Arising from the same working context, the present study draws upon experience during the first year of teaching the English Enhancement course for Law (henceforth identified as "EEL").

One obvious change in emphasis as the first EEL course progressed was that, in the light of interests and concerns expressed by students and acknowledged by staff, a focus on the writing of legal problems assumed an unexpectedly overriding importance in the second semester. Even though students were already following a separate course in legal writing within the Law Faculty at HKU, the approaches and emphasis on the two courses were quite distinct. The legal writing course focussed on research techniques and the preparation of term papers, whereas the EEL course came to emphasise the writing of answers to legal problems, with tort law as the immediate domain, including the kind of limited-time writing that students would be required to produce in law examinations (Horowitz 1986).

The present study examines one area of students' academic legal writing, namely the epistemic modal choices available to and used by these writers as they produce answers to legal problems, and looks at some effects of these choices upon the consistency and warrant of the argumentation that appears in the text. The study offers a linguistic perspective upon the development of coherent argumentation in written answers to legal problems. It illustrates areas of concern and instances of successful development of ideas in extracts from students' essays on a problem in tort law. While possibilities for teaching are noted in a number of places, the main emphasis of the article, and its most important implication for teaching, will be on the value of understanding and appreciating students' academic legal writing as it develops in a second language context.

Modality and argumentation

As students explore alternative lines of argument in their written responses to a legal problem, they need to distinguish between possibilities that they want to discuss and points that they choose to put forward as part of their answer. This process calls for a sophisticated command both of the meanings of relevant grammatical and lexical forms and of implications that uses of these forms can carry in contexts of discourse.

"Relevant" linguistic forms, in formal written English, include simple declaratives, typically serving to advance assertions, and a wide range of signals of modality, including certain modal auxiliaries, sentence adverbials and other verbal, adjectival or nominal indicators of possibility or probability. Other pragmatic considerations in text interpretation relate to the different functions that can be served by the same linguistic form, and to roles of context and of previous knowledge, of both content and formal kinds, in understanding how a form has been used in a given instance. Declarative statements, for example, are not invariably used by speakers or writers in English to make assertions. ("You're joking!" is more plausibly used to express incredulity or astonishment than to tell people what they are doing.) Any attempts by student essay writers to use declarative statements without also marking a commitment to the corresponding linguistically encoded assertions are, however, extremely likely to be misunderstood. On the other hand, uses of what may appear formally as non-committal indications of possibility can indicate very effectively the position that a writer holds on an issue.

Modal choices are concerned (inter alia) with the signalling of positions on a scale of probability between the polar opposites of assertion (X is so) and negation (X is not so); see Halliday (1985). Linguistic signals of possibility and probability carry important implications for the consistency of arguments presented in students' essays on legal problems. I include here, as an instance of unmarked epistemic modal choice, the case in which declarative statements are advanced without qualification as categorical assertions (Palmer,

1986:86ff). Referring to the HKU context, Allison (1995) offers further discussion and references concerning assertions and alternatives in students' academic writing.

These brief remarks should not be taken to imply any particular commitment towards the unusually restrictive use in Halliday (1985) of the term "modality" exclusively to denote epistemic meanings of probability and "usuality". (More recent usage in the Hallidayan tradition terms epistemic meanings "modalisation" while giving a more inclusive sense to "modality": Butt et al., 1995.) Irrespective of metalinguistic preferences on the part of authorities in linguistics, we should clearly recognise the importance in legal discourse of the linguistic signalling of those dimensions of obligation and inclination which Halliday calls "modulation", but which Lyons (1977) and Palmer (1986), following von Wright (1951), treat as "deontic modality". These other areas of modal choice, however, are beyond our scope here.

The study

Aims. The aims of the study were:

- to analyse the extent to which first-year undergraduate students, in writing their conclusions on one part of an assigned legal problem, indicated these conclusions as categorical or as tentative;

- to illustrate the features of modal choice exhibited at these points in the students' essays;

- to validate or modify the application of the judgemental categories in the preliminary analysis, in light of attempts by other ESL teachers to apply the same categories to the dataset of conclusions on the legal point at issue; also to determine how far ESL teachers on the same adjunct course (for law students) might interpret the students' conclusions differently from other ESL teachers unfamiliar with the relevant subject area (tort law);

- to examine modal choices and consistency or argumentation across more extended extracts from students' writing, and to relate selected instances of perceived incoherence to linguistic features of the extracts and to possibly intended functions.

Method: - The writing task. The study examines one aspect of students' responses to the following assigned problem in tort law:

"Albert's wife Betty suddenly became very ill, and so Albert put her in his car and drove her to the hospital. Betty was not wearing a seatbelt. It was 3 a.m. and there was very little traffic around. Albert drove very fast. He came to a set of traffic lights which were red, but he went straight through, saying to himself "I'm sure there is no one coming and I really must get Betty to hospital."

Unfortunately there was a car coming toward the same junction, also being driven fast. This car was driven by Carl who was drunk, and he had a passenger, Doris, who was also very drunk. They were laughing and joking with each other about driving fast and frightening the other people in the road.

The two cars collided. Albert and Carl were not harmed. However, both Betty and Doris suffered personal injuries.

Advise Betty and Doris regarding their claims in tort."

(From Bachelor of Laws First Examination: Law of Tort. April 1994, Department of Law, University of Hong Kong).

- Focus of the study. Of the issues raised by this problem, we shall examine students' discussions of whether "Albert" has breached the duty of care he owed, as a driver, to "Betty" and "Doris". (Names of the potential

plaintiffs and defendants in the question will for the rest of the article be used without scare quotes.) We shall isolate this issue, as did most student writers, from consideration of other issues in the essays, including possible defences in terms of contributory negligence, volenti or ex turpi causa.

- *The writers*. The writers were first-year HKU law students in two classes on the 1994-95 EEL course (12 male and 18 female students).

- *The dataset*. Thirty student essays were obtained in the course of a timed writing assignment in two classes. A total of 45 minutes had been allocated to the writing of an answer to the legal problem. The problem had been assigned one week earlier, and "open-book" conditions obtained as the in-class responses were written.

The dataset consists of 30 conclusions, extracted by the researcher, concerning just one aspect of the legal problem, namely, whether Albert has breached a duty of care owed to Betty and Doris. Conclusions regarding duty to Betty were extracted in most essays, where this aspect of the case was discussed first; in some essays, conclusions were taken where duty to Doris was first discussed, or where both parties were considered together. (The point of law is the same, as a duty of care is owed to both Betty and Doris, and as we exclude questions of defences from consideration.) In most instances, a conclusion on the point at issue could readily be identified. In one case, where the student writer took Carl to be mainly if not solely to blame for the accident, any breach of duty by Albert to other road users can only be inferred (generously) from the student's comments on Albert's possible "contributory negligence". (That term should properly be used, not of a possible defendant in an action, but of a plaintiff who is alleged to be partly responsible for the damage he or she has sustained.) Although a response on the point at issue was identified in all essays, one or two conclusions were markedly non-committal in their choice of wording.

The dataset appears in the appendix. The number order of the scripts reflects the sequence in which they had been placed prior to the category analysis. The element of subjective choice by the researcher in extracting the students' written conclusions on the relevant point was considered unavoidable. This is because it would not be possible to include the full text of 30 essays when reporting the study, nor was it judged reasonable to request colleagues to read 30 full essays for the present research purpose. See, however, findings and discussion, section 2.

The categories for analysis. Preliminary analysis involved placing each extracted response to the issue of whether Albert had breached his duty of care into one of five judgemental categories: categorical "YES" or "NO", qualified "(YES)" or "(NO)", and indeterminate "FENCE". Subsequent mention of these categories will dispense with scare quotes. The FENCE category is potentially ambiguous, between carefully neutral and merely inconclusive responses (and could have been subdivided accordingly if required).

A later refinement, adding two more categories to the initial set, was to subdivide the qualified responses into "probably" (coded as (YES) or (NO) but with more restricted scope than before) and more tentative "possibly" (introducing codes "(YES?)" or "(NO?)" to mark greater uncertainty). This refinement had the advantage of distinguishing some quite markedly different modalities, but the disadvantage of adding two more potentially fuzzy category boundaries to the scheme. One motive for the second stage of the study, therefore, was to discover how effectively a revised set of seven categories might be applied by others.

The judges. The independent readers who applied the set of seven categories in the second stage of the study were all native speakers of English (one Australian, two British and one Canadian). Two were teachers (both males) on the adjunct course (EEL course) while two were other teachers (one male, one female) in the English Centre. Selection was thus evenly balanced across EEL and non-EEL teachers, but was not fully randomised in other respects.

Findings and discussion.

1. The preliminary analysis.

Preliminary analysis was carried out by the researcher. The lack of independent validation of the five judgemental categories used at this stage is not seen as a problem, as the original dataset is itself reported;

readers can thus form their own judgements independently of those of the researcher (and of those of the researcher's colleagues at a later stage). Recall that, at this stage, the categories (YES) and (NO) cover the full range of probable or possible qualified conclusions.

The question at issue was whether, in their conclusions, student writers had found that Albert was or was not in breach of duty to his passenger and the passenger in the other vehicle. A total of 12 responses were classified in the preliminary analysis as categorically YES (5) or NO (7), as in examples (1)-(6) below. (The numbering of examples in this section will follow expository convenience; alongside each example, the number of the essay script in the dataset is shown in square brackets.)

(1) Moreover, it was obvious that both Albert and Carl had breached their duty of care. YES [script 8]
(2) Unequivocally, a breach of duty by Albert could so be proved. YES [script 21]
(3) Albert has therefore breach his duty to both parties. YES [script 14]
(4) So he wasn't in breach of duty. NO [script 2]
(5) To conclude, due to in emergency situation and not likelihood of accident, Albert is not in breach. NO [script 10]
(6) However, Albert did not breach the duty as [REASONS] NO [script 28]

There appear to be dangers in offering a categorical response when an issue calls for careful interpretation in the light of circumstances: this is especially so when possible counter-arguments have been overlooked in a student's essay. Comments by the tort law lecturer, R. Glofcheski, indicated that driving through the traffic lights which were red would afford prima facie evidence that a reasonable standard of care was not maintained, but that a standard of care lower than normal might be accepted by the court as reasonable in view of the emergency described in the fact situation. Whichever way students develop their arguments, qualified conclusions appear preferable here.

The remaining 18 responses exhibited varying degrees of caution. Some of the responses sought to distinguish between (a) Albert's possible breach of the duty of care he owed to Betty and Doris and (b) Albert's demonstrable offence against the law in driving through traffic lights which were red. The latter offence was variously described by student writers as a breach of the traffic ordinance or even presented as a "breach of statutory duty", a speculation that was not reasonably warranted in terms of the question set (R. Glofcheski, spoken communication.)

Modal qualification of their conclusions does not mean that these writers simply sat on a fence. In all cases, the responses either specified or arguably implied the likelihood of one of the two possible outcomes. Later findings and discussion in section 2 will show that (pace Halliday, 1985) explicit markers of writer opinion or of probability do not always pragmatically weaken the assertive force of a writer's declared judgement, at least in the view of readers. For instances where implied likelihood is diagnosed, my arguments are along the lines that, when offered as a conclusion, "X may be so" is positively weighted, whereas "X may not be so" is negatively weighted in pragmatic terms (though not in formal logic). As already noted, however, a declaredly non-committal mention of a possible outcome will carry only a very weak and debatable implication in these terms (see discussion in section 2). Example (7) presents one such controversial instance, taken as a weak (NO) in the preliminary analysis, but certainly open to other readings:

(7) ... it may not be easy to prove he is in breach... The standard may be lower ... It all depends on the court's decision. (NO) [script 19]

Linguistic signals of probability, possibility or explicit writer opinion have been highlighted in examples (8)-(15):

(8) However, the breach of duty is **likely** to be found though the standard of care is lowered. (YES) [script 4]
(9) ....and this **may lay the ground** for Doris to **argue that** Albert was liable. (YES) [script 9]
(10) As we know, Albert was driving very fast and came to a set of traffic lights. It was **good evidence to show** that Albert was liable as he could not fulfil the duty of care owed to her because he couldn't meet the reasonable standard of care. (YES) [script 13]
(11) **But is it reasonable** to uphold that duty [= the duty to stop at a red light] in the present circumstances? Albert **may argue** that he was in a hurry or emergence and it is reasonable for him to believe there was no

car coming or no car would collide with him based on the observation and determination in that situation. (NO) [script 26]

(12) Therefore, it **may be argued** that he is not in breach of his duty. (NO) [script 12]

(13) So he **may** not have breach his duty. (NO) [script 17]

(14) Therefore, **I think** Albert had not breach the duty in terms of the standard of care of a reasonable driver acting in emergency. (NO) [script 29]

(15) Therefore, contributory negligence on Albert **may possible can't** established. (NO) [script 6]

Examples (8)-(10) are the only three cases recorded as (YES), "positive likelihood or possibility", in the preliminary analysis. Examples (11)-(15) (and (7) also) are among a total of 15 cases taken in the preliminary analysis to signal (NO), "negative likelihood or possibility".

The range of modal signalling extends beyond modal auxiliaries to include, singly or in combination, adjectives indicating probability (likely) or evaluation (good, reasonable), evaluative noun phrases (good evidence to show...), verb choices that are factive (show) or non-factive (argue), among other choices (also see full dataset). Whether an expression of opinion such as "I think" in (14) counts as a "modal" choice is debatable (Palmer, 1986 discusses modality and speaker opinion; Butt et al, 1995 take modality as the general term for all signs of speaker opinion). From a pedagogical viewpoint, there seems little reason to restrict our consideration of the signalling of speaker meaning to grammatical as opposed to lexical forms of modality (see also Stubbs, 1986). As noted earlier, the mention of "contributory negligence" in example (15) is misleading (Albert is not a potential plaintiff, in terms of the question set); this essay presented Carl as primarily responsible for the accident.

A number of the conclusions (1)-(15) display non-standard grammatical usage in English. This is obviously a matter for concern, and for appropriately judged teacher feedback to students. Extensive experience and research have shown, though, that negative feedback does not immediately bring learners' developing grammars into conformity with standard usage (see, e.g., Sharwood Smith, 1994). Even the markedly non-standard usage in (15) remains interpretable (roughly as "may not be possible to establish"). Co-occurrence of modals (*may can't) is unacceptable in English, but the usage is not "illogical" (and it is grammatically acceptable in some languages). Divergence from standard English usage in (15) is further complicated by questions of selection and formation of active or passive voice.

More important for a general appreciation of the writing, however, is to note the extent to which students are already able to convey conclusions with a selected degree of caution. Several of these conclusions exhibit growing linguistic and intellectual sophistication among these first-year undergraduate writers. The ability to convey a point of view on an issue, without either fudging matters or making unjustified assertions, takes time and experience to develop as a writer, and this capacity is already in evidence in students' answers to legal problems.

2. Other readers' judgements (applying categories used in preliminary analysis)

Table 1 presents the findings for this section.

Table 1 Categorisation of thirty conclusions (as definite, qualified or uncommitted) in preliminary analysis and in ratings of four independent judges.

Script number	Preliminary analysis	Ratings by four judges:				Agree %
		(DC)	(DN)	(CB)	(EM)	
1	(N)	(N?)	(N)	(N)	(N)	100
2	N	N	N	N	N	100
3	(N)	(N?)	(N)	(N?)	N	75
4	(Y)	(Y)	Y	(Y)	Y	50
5	(N)	(N?)	F	(N?)	(N)	75

6	(N)	(N?)	(N?)	(N)	N	75
7	(N)	(N?)	(N)	(N?)	(N)	100
8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100
9	(Y)	(Y?)	F	(Y?)	(Y?)	75
10	N	N	N	N	N	100
11	(N)	(N?)	N	(N)	(N)	75
12	(N)	(N?)	N	(N)	N	50
13	(Y)	Y	Y	(Y)	Y	25
14	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100
15	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	(N)	100
16	(N)	(N?)	(N)	(N?)	(N?)	100
17	(N)	(N?)	(N)	(N)	(N?)	100
18	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100
19	(N)	F	F	F	(Y?)	0
20	(N)	F	F	F	(Y?)	0
21	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	100
22	Y	Y	(Y)	Y	Y	75
23	N	N	N	N	N	100
24	N	N	N	(N)	N	75
25	N	N	N	N	F	75
26	(N)	(N?)	F	(N)	(N?)	75
27	(N)	(N?)	(N)	(N?)	(N)	100
28	N	N	N	N	N	100
29	(N)	N	N	N	N	0
30	N	N	N	N	N	100

Key: (DC), (DN) : independent judges (teachers on EEL adjunct course)
      (CB), (EM) : independent judges (other English Centre teachers)
      Agree %   : extent of independent judges' agreement with preliminary
                     analysis (5 categories)
      Y   : categorical YES
      (Y) and (Y?) : qualified YES (with "?" = tentative YES)
      (N) and (N?) : qualified NO (with "?" = tentative NO)
      N   : categorical NO
      F   : FENCE, i.e. no conclusion is offered

Of the 12 items that were identified as categorical YES (5) or NO (7) in the preliminary analysis, 9 were found to be identically categorical by all four independent judges (i.e. 100% agreement). In three cases (scripts 22, 24 and 25) there were three independent judges (75%) in agreement with the preliminary analysis and one dissenting judge (25%: a different individual in each instance).

Of the 18 items that were taken to indicate qualified support for (YES) (3) or (NO) (15) in the preliminary analysis, which did not attempt to subdivide such support in terms of "probable" versus "possible", only 6 items (scripts 1, 7, 15, 16, 17 and 27), all instances of (NO), were identically so categorised by all four independent judges. One of these items (script 17) was also technically invalid since the text given to teachers inadvertently included the symbol (NO) next to the item. Please recall that the preliminary analysis did not distinguish between probable support (YES)/(NO) and more tentative support (YES?)/(NO?). The present discussion does not consider this aspect further, but Table 1 also displays the occurrence of tentative or likely ratings by the four independent judges.

There was 75% agreement with the preliminary analysis on 6 items (scripts 3, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 26); 50% on 2 items (scripts 4 and 12); 25% on 1 item (script 13 was seen as categorical, not qualified, by three of four independent judges; the analysis may have taken insufficient account of the factive implications of "good evidence to show that" in this conclusion); 0% agreement with the analysis of 3 items (scripts 19, 20 and 29). Script 29 was judged by all four independent judges to be a categorical NO. The occurrence of "I think" in this case has been taken, by all four readers free of analytical preconceptions about the effects of explicitly marking speaker or writer opinion, as an affirmation of view, not as a hedge: compare comments on this script as example (14) above. Scripts 19 and 20 were judged to indicate "FENCE" positions by three of four independent judges, while the fourth judge (the same individual in each case) saw these cases as tentatively positive (YES?), in contrast to the qualified negative in the preliminary analysis.

Among teachers' comments on the task were that decisions on some extracts might have changed if fuller context had been given, and that teachers' knowledge of both students and subject matter was relevant to the interpretation of the data. Two teachers also independently commented that the activity had been fun to do.

The important comment on limited context is clearly a limitation on validity. This lack of context may have been more pronounced for those colleagues unfamiliar with the language of tort law. Conclusion 25, "Therefore, the breach cannot be established" had appeared as a straightforward NO to the researcher, but was noted as a difficult item by the colleague opting for FENCE. Alternative readings appear to have been (a) 'No, a breach of duty of care cannot be established in court in this case'; (b) 'I really don't know, I can't establish whether or not there was a breach of duty.' Certainly, more context would have resolved this problem for one colleague.

One could speculate further (perhaps about differences between British and other native varieties of English in the uses of modals) in seeking to account for some of the outcomes, but enough has been said to suggest the complexities of interpretation that were involved. Despite the artificially limited context for the judgement task, and the differences in knowledge of the first-year undergraduate course in tort law between the adjunct teachers and the other teachers, quite good or full agreement (75% or 100%) was achieved in the judgements of all four teachers, also coinciding with the researcher's judgements in the preliminary analysis, on most items.

3. Modal choice and consistency of extended argumentation

The importance of more extended context is again evident for the final stage of this study, which examines the appearance of inconsistency, or of outright contradiction, as some students' discussions develop in their texts. Interestingly, some of these instances were found in the course of essays that, in general, displayed a promising command both of written English and of the legal issues to be discussed.

As fairly lengthy extracts are needed to display such outcomes, only two scripts (2 and 3) are reproduced. Suspension marks show omitted text (considered not to be crucial for the current purpose). Each example is followed by a short commentary (which does not, of course, reflect the form in which spoken and written feedback was given to student writers at the time). Post hoc commentaries in such matters are, of course, highly speculative. This observation still applies when the writing has been discussed with the student writers, since retrospection and reinterpretation cannot always be neatly separated in such conferencing.

> Script 2 Concerning Doris, was Albert's negligence a cause of her injury? The answer is affirmative. Similar to the case of Carl, Albert's shooting the red light is a breach of statutory duty which may well support that he broke the reasonable standard to take care of his neighbours. Moreover, he should also know that there would be accidents if he shoot the red light. However, as mentioned that he was in was emergency in which the standard of care should be lower than that of the reasonable standard; what he was thinking was reasonably to take his wife to the hospital and that at 3.a.m. with light traffic, there would rarely be traffic accidents. So he wasn't in breach of duty.

The expression "breach of duty" has been used in two different senses in one affirmative and one negative statement in the same paragraph ("...Albert's shooting the red light is a breach of statutory duty" yet "...he wasn't in breach of duty (of care)..."). The potential for perceived incoherence is evidently considerable. Matters are also complicated by the observation (above) that "breach of statutory duty" is not an obvious or suitable way to denote the illegal act of driving through red traffic lights for the purposes of this question. The underlying distinction between breaking the law (established) and breaching a duty of care (under discussion) is, nonetheless, justified in terms of the question. The notion that Albert might "reasonably" meet a standard of care "lower than that of the reasonable standard" raises other problems for text coherence, that could be resolved by a reference to "normal" circumstances. A final problem for analysis of this text is whether "So he wasn't in breach of duty" concludes the writer's own discussion, as has been assumed in the preliminary analysis, or continues a hypothetical report of what Albert was thinking (if so, implausibly, unless perhaps Albert is also a lawyer?).

> Script 3 For Betty to sue Albert, Betty has to prove that Albert owed her a duty of care in the first place. A duty of care exists in this case since Albert, being a driver, owed a duty of care to his passenger, Betty, to drive reasonably safe in order to get her to the hospital (destination). Albert's negligent driving that caused injury to Betty is obviously a lack of duty of care.
> Betty then has to prove that there has been a breach of the duty of care owed to her by Albert. Superficially, it seems that Albert has breached his duty of care since his negligence and recklessness in driving (i.e. drive very fast and went through red lights). Nevertheless, whether Albert has breached his duty of care heavily depends upon whether he had met the standard of care justified by the notion of reasonableness after contemplating the circumstances concerned. It had been an emergency situation ... Thus the judge may be satisfied that it is reasonable for Albert to drive that fast ... and that Albert may not breach the duty of care.

Taken out of context, the sentence "Albert's negligent driving that caused injury to Betty is obviously a lack of duty of care" would read as a categorical conclusion that a duty of care not only exists but has also been breached. In context, however, the sentence precedes a discussion of breach which proves careful and circumspect, and which tentatively concludes in Albert's favour ("Superficially, it seems that"... "Nevertheless... heavily depends upon whether".... "Thus the judge may be satisfied... that Albert may not..."). The earlier comment ends a paragraph establishing the (fairly evident) point that "Albert, being a driver, owed a duty of care to his passenger, Betty". The writer's intention could therefore have been to suggest that any act of negligent driving by Albert that caused injury to Betty would obviously count as a lack (= breach) of a duty of care (i.e. not as an act of negligence in circumstances where no duty of care was owed). The effect of the text at this point, however, is to suggest actual rather than hypothetical breach. Various revisions might be suggested, but omission of the sentence is probably simplest and surest.

A more general point arising from these commentaries is to suggest that inconsistencies in the wording of arguments do not necessarily reflect any underlying intellectual confusion over content or writer's viewpoint (though of course they sometimes do so). A useful role for teacher feedback, ideally including opportunities for one-to-one conferencing to discuss a student's writing and the comments of teacher and peers, could be to convey to students how the wording of their texts at such points is likely to be understood by other (academic) readers, and to suggest how changes might be made to the text to help readers follow a line of argument

intended by the writer. Under time pressure, nonetheless, inconsistencies in the wording of complex argumentation are easily perpetrated in the course of student essays and in other discourses.

Implications

The main implication of this exploratory study is to suggest that the academic writing produced by our students is an object worthy of attention and respect. Although this is a self-evident truth in some ESL circles, long-established messages within the profession about the status of learner language face continuing scepticism outside our own ranks. Although teachers (myself included) also tend to be preoccupied with problems and perceived shortcomings, we need to reinforce the message to others that it is not reasonable to expect ESL students to write English as though they were English L1 students. Many English L1 users would in any case have a hard time deciding what weight to give to a conclusion on a point of law, and how to convey that conclusion clearly and effectively, under the acute time constraints of an examination-style written answer. Combining these two comments, we should invite all concerned to recognise that the writing produced by these ESL students under timed conditions in an adjunct class constitutes a considerable achievement. (For interesting comments on the status of second language performance, see Cook, 1991.) It is similarly apparent that first-year undergraduate writers will have some way to go before they master the specific register of legal English (see, e.g., Bhatia 1993); again, it is important to examine samples of students' writing on their own terms, and not solely by comparison with other writer populations.

In what ways might teachers provide constructive linguistic advice on areas for further development in students' writing? In the present case, students had earlier received explicit instruction on ways to introduce a legal issue into their writing (e.g. the issue here is whether...). Many students, however, still appear to avoid constructions of this kind in their own writing, perhaps especially under pressure of time. One reason may be that "indirect questions" are difficult to produce correctly, as attested by observed misuses such as "...is that whether..." Direct questions are easier ("Is Albert in breach of duty?") and are fairly widely used (as exemplified in Script 2, and at the start of the present paragraph), but some students and many teachers may find frequent use of these forms unsophisticated and try to avoid their repeated occurrence in formal writing. Besides encouraging students to persevere with the use of "indirect question" constructions, teachers can suggest a range of other wordings, such as "apparently" ("...is apparently breach of his duty..." occurs in the present dataset), "it may at first appear that", or judicious uses of the legal expression "prima facie", in order to help students introduce possibilities for consideration into their discourse.

Apart from overt comment by teacher or peers, students are likely to become more aware of the need for careful wording as they introduce possibilities into their texts through the subsequent experience of reading, and being asked to make written comments upon, the often very different answers that other students have given to the same legal problem. Knowing that their comments will be read, not only by the original writer, but by the ESL teacher, will encourage most students to take this task seriously. At best, the levels of careful statement and background knowledge that appear in students' written comments (e.g., on the EEL course, suggesting what other legal authorities might have been used in an answer) show conclusively that these students' written feedback to their peers has not been appropriated by the ESL teacher, and at times goes beyond what the ESL teacher would have been able to observe. This last claim, however, takes us beyond the confines of the present study.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Dataset for the study.

The dataset of thirty extracted "conclusions" to the legal point at issue is presented below, together with the text of the request to colleagues for assistance in the second stage of the research. (The text below omits the fact situation which appears in the article).

Request for assistance (research).

I would be very grateful if you could spend a little time (I hope not more than 30 minutes) to read quickly through the following extracts from a legal assignment and to place each extract into one of the seven categories that I outline below. The purpose is to help me validate the categories used in a preliminary analysis of the students' essays, as well as to see how transparent the content of the essays proves to be to other English teachers.

If you can help, please do not agonise over the process. The issue that concerns me is to determine what conclusions each student has drawn in the essay on just one single aspect of the question, namely:

- Did Albert (the driver of a car that was involved in an accident) breach a duty of care owed to his passenger (Betty) or to the passenger in another car (Doris)?

The full fact situation is set out in the assignment question.

The basic answers to the question are YES (he did breach duty of care) or NO (he didn't). The reason that I use seven categories, rather than three including "FENCE" for sitting on the fence, concerns degrees of definiteness or probability. The categories I would like you to use are therefore:

Category code	Interpretation of category code
Y	The student states that A. was in breach of (= breached) duty of care
(Y)	The student indicates (the view) that A. was probably in breach of duty
(Y?)	The student indicates that A. was possibly in breach of duty
FENCE	The conclusion remains unclear or indeterminate in weighting
(N?)	The student indicates that A. was possibly NOT in breach of duty
(N)	The student indicates (the view) that A. was probably NOT in breach of duty
N	The student states that A. was NOT in breach of duty

Please note clearly your choice of category alongside each of the 30 extracts. Any additional information you would like to give, e.g. about difficulty in reaching a decision on some items, will also be most welcome. Thank you for your help.

FACT situation: [Omitted in this appendix: please see text of article]

Conclusions reached in the essays:

(1)   In this case, probably any reasonable person would consider driving fast and breaking the traffic regulation not a serious offence if by doing so she or he could save somebody's life. Betty was very ill

and the chance for her to be cured on time was dependant upon how fast Albert could get her to the hospital. Furthermore, given the time at 3 a.m. and "there was very little traffic around", the circumstances in a way allowed Albert to drive fast.

(2)   So he wasn't in breach of duty.

(3)   Thus the judge may be satisfied that it is reasonable for Albert to drive that fast in order to get his wife (a person who has a love and affectionate relationship with the Defendant) to hospital and that Albert may not breach the duty of care.

(4)   However, the breach of duty is likely to be found though the standard of care is lowered. Because in this case, Albert has actually went straight through the red traffic lights and this is obviously a breach of duty of a standard driver to obey the rule. So, albert can also be sued on the ground of breaching of the traffic ordinance.

(5)   Thus Betty might not succeed if she sue her husband. Albert may pleaded not guilty in negligence. Actually the judge may incline on that judgement because of policy reason. Albert want to save Betty so he break the law. The judge may give sympathy to such intention and feel very furious to Betty's cruel charges. He also may not (way?) to open a precedent which may deter people from saving others.

(6)   Therefore, contributory negligence on Albert may possible can't established.
        [by Carl, the other driver]

(7)   Therefore, Albert may not be held liable ... As we are not certain whether Albert has breached his duty
        ...

(8)   Moreover, it was obvious that both Albert and Carl had breached their duty of care.

(9)   ... and this may lay the ground for Doris to argue that Albert was liable.

(10)   To conclude, due to in emergency situation and not likelihood of accident, Albert is not in breach.

(11)   By doing so, he did not act carelessly but has weight the possibility of a collision (Stone and Bolton showed that if the event is unlikely to happen, the person is not in breach). Therefore, Betty may not easy get a remedy from Albert under the circumstances.

(12)   Therefore, it may be argued that he is not in breach of his duty.

(13)   As we know, Albert was driving very fast and came to a set of traffic lights. It was good evidence to show that Albert was liable as he could not fulfil the duty of care owed to her because he couldn't meet the reasonable standard of care.

(14)   Albert has therefore breach his duty to both parties.

(15)   But did Albert reach the standard of care that he should maintain. Usually, the standard of care of a Reasonable Man should be followed (Glasgow v Muir), but in this case Albert should reach the standard of care of a reasonable driver to drive with great care. But his wife was very ill at that time, Albert was put into an emergency situation which lowers the standard of care. Also, the accident happened at 3 a.m., thus the likelihood of occurrence of the accident is low (Bolton v Stone). Thus it is justifiable for Albert to drive a bit faster.

(16)   Whether Albert has breached the duty, it depends on the actual circumstances. The time when the accident occurs is already 3 a.m. (midnight) and Albert is driving fast simply because he wanted to take his sick wife to the hospital as soon as possible. The standard of care required may be relaxed in this emergence.

(17)   So he may not have breach his duty ...... (No).

(18)   Then, Albert and Carl did not do what a reasonable man will do in driving, therefore, they are breach their duty.

(19)   In this case, however, it may not be easy to prove he is in breach ... The standard may be lower ... It all depends on the court's decision.

(20)   Therefore, if it is proved, he did asses the likelihood of occurrence of the accident, the court may take a less rigid approach in finding he "breaches his duty".

(21)   Unequivocally, a breach of duty by Albert could so be proved.

(22)   But he still breach the standard since he drove through the set of traffic light which indicated red at that time. Therefore he could not meet the standard required of a reasonable driver.

(23)   ..., therefore Albert is not in breach.

(24)   I don't think Albert has breached that duty since it is highly possible that a reasonable man under emergency would perform the same act ... As there is no breach by Albert of that duty, that means Albert won't be liable if sued.

(25)   Therefore, the breach cannot be established.

(26)   It is imposed a duty on drivers to stop in front of red light by driving regulations. It is obvious that Albert breach this duty. But is it reasonable to uphold that duty in the present circumstances? Albert may argue that he was in a hurry or emergence and it is reasonable for him to believe that there was no car coming or no car would collide with him based on the observation and determination in that situation. It was 3 a.m., there was very little traffic.
[END OF PARAGRAPH]

(27)   In case of emergency, such as case of Albert, the required standard of care is relatively low such as case of Parkinson v Liverpool Corporation [1950...] Besides, when the accident happened, it was at 3 a.m. and there was very little traffic, thus, the likelihood of accident is low. If Albert was not in breach, the causation factor can't be established since causation must be coincide with breach of duty.

(28)   However, Albert did not breach the duty as [REASONS].

(29)   Therefore, I think Albert had not breach the duty in terms of the standard of care of a reasonable driver acting in emergency.

(30)   Therefore, since the standard of care in emergency, according to Jones v Boyce, Albert was not in breach. Negligence cannot be proved.

[Author's note: the inclusion of (NO) in 17, resulting from a proof-reading error, technically invalidated the item.]

Practising What We Preach : Creating the Conditions for Student Autonomy

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Abstract

This paper explores the value, in ESL-medium tertiary education, of extending the notion of student autonomy beyond the context of language learning to the whole curriculum. I argue that autonomy needs to be seen in a broader, more socio-political perspective, that for students to enjoy autonomy requires a transformation in the roles not only of students, but of language teachers and subject teachers within the academic curriculum. Greater critical awareness is needed of the educational constraints imposed by prevailing concepts of 'skills' as the basis of a tertiary communication curriculum, and of knowledge as curricular 'capital'. I suggest that underlying these notions are discourses which are adversarial, dualistic and ultimately assimilationist. I look at how members of our own (language education) discourse community may preach a critical approach, but very often fall short of such critical standards in their own peer-directed public discourse. Finally, I look at implications of a more socialised discourse for our own EAP curricular practice, and offer suggestions on constructive ways to promote the conditions for greater student autonomy in the tertiary curriculum.

Introduction

In this paper, I attempt to address the issue of *autonomy* within what I see as interwoven contexts: the broad professional community of and the more situated context of my professional practice, teaching EAP to undergraduate students in the Social Sciences Faculty at the University of Hong Kong. In this context, I have come increasingly to see my work in terms of the development of language *awareness* and language *socialisation* rather than language *learning* and *teaching*, which I find oriented to narrow cognitive, linguistic or other measures of incremental behavioural change - English enhancement with 'go faster stripes'. I see tertiary EAP as tending to be overly concerned with yielding skills-related results in a curriculum of diminishing returns, with skills framed in psychological learning-related terms, rather than in terms of sociological awareness. In this paper I shall look at some of the work which is beginning to have an influence in changing that balance, in emphasising the social and political dimensions of language practice, and of educational practice in general.

The historical context in which EAP has evolved - particularly in colonial or ex-colonial ESL-medium systems - is, of course, an ever-present factor in any discussion of autonomy. I take the perspective that the relationship between power, knowledge and language can be found working not only *between* societies but equally *within* them. I have written elsewhere of the interesting parallels Said (1993) draws between nations, institutions and disciplines in their preoccupations with territory and borders (Bruce, 1993). It may also be interesting to consider the microcosmic implications of the parallels Ngugi draws

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between **education** and **assimilation**, and the crucial role in the colonising process he attributes to language (see also Pennycook, 1994a & b on this). Comparing the French and British colonising 'styles' in Africa, Ngugi writes:

> If it was the gun which made possible the mining of this gold and which effected the political captivity of their owners, it was language which held captive their cultures, their values, and hence their minds. ...The French, faithful to the philosophical and aesthetic traditions of their culture, had given the whole process a name: assimilation. The English, less aesthetically and philosophically inclined, simply called it education (1993: 31-2).

Looking to freedom from such domination, Ngugi writes, later: "A people are truly free when they control all the tools, all the instruments, all the means of their physical, economic, political, cultural and psychological survival" (1993: 78). This colonial metaphor is an appropriate one to keep in mind in considering both the theoretical critique and the curricular recommendations that follow: the level of participation in the negotiation of a curriculum, in the investigation of what constitute the current paradigms of knowledge, and in the ownership of the valued discourses and of the cultural knowledge that constitutes and is constituted by those discourses. How far, in short, is the education we are promoting simply a form of cultural assimilation, and how far is it a partnership in the creation and definition of new cultures and new knowledges? It is with these questions in mind that I suggest we turn to look at what might be useful notions of autonomy in higher education.

Defining autonomy

The whole notion of 'autonomy' is problematic. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (1970 edition) defines autonomy as

> Right of self-government; personal freedom; freedom of the will; a self-governing community.

- literally, derived from the Greek, *self-law* or *-rule*. Autonomy in the language learning context has tended to be defined in performative terms ('freedom *to*'), as the taking charge of all areas of one's learning (cf. Dickinson, 1987). If we explore the literal sense of 'nomos' (= *law*) as providing groups of individuals with protection and constraint (see Little, 1991: 4-5), we come closer to dealing with underlying social and political constraints on student autonomy. 'Freedom' dominates the dictionary definition, but I would like to argue that freedom in education - particularly higher education - requires consideration in the ablative - freedom *from* constraints, oppression, etc., and the conditions under which freedoms are given *by* those with institutional power - the power amongst others to name - to control the terms by which students are 'interpellated' as receivers of an education. This broader social perspective was taken early on by Holec (1981), who emphasised the need to simultaneously enhance learners' abilities and address the constraints on their freedom to exercise those abilities. Language teaching in the meantime seems to have continued to move towards more psychological explanations and approaches to language teaching and to enhancing learner independence. Terms like autonomy and independence send mixed messages, having been appropriated by divergent pedagogies.

I argue in this paper that any substantive autonomy for students requires a transformation of the roles of both student and language teacher within the academic curriculum, in the pursuit of freedom from the constraints of prevailing concepts of learning and knowledge, of academics as guardians and purveyors of that knowledge, and of students as its passive recipients. This kind of autonomy requires deeper changes to attitudes, philosophies and power relations than simply according to students on a particular course the freedom to determine their learning programme. I believe the fundamental conditions in which students are constructed within the academy (familiar constructions like 'passive recipients', 'inherently lazy', or 'wanting spoon-feeding') need changing - out of respect for students both as a community with distinct concerns and economic circumstances, and as members of a broader academic community with rights of full participation in the knowledge-making process. This, of course, is not a situation confined to ESL education; Lemke accuses mainstream education in the U.S. of 'infantilising' young adults by denying them

responsible social roles and according them only a 'trivial role' in the directions and forms of their education (1995: 138-9). Language educators, I suggest, are in a position of responsibility within the academy of using their language awareness and their pedagogical expertise to promote awareness in the rest of the academy of the key role of language not only in shaping our ideas but in prosecuting them socially, while respecting diversity of perspective, language and culture.

In the next part of this paper, I look more closely at what I see as key problem areas in language education. I discuss these under the following headings:

- Socialisation: re-thinking the social in language education
- The preoccupation with skills: issues of pragmatism and ideology
- Dangers of dualism: who guards the guardians ?

In the third part of the paper, I offer a discourse analysis case study to illustrate how members of our own (language education) discourse community may preach a critical approach, but very often fall short of such critical standards in their own peer-directed public discourse. I then conclude with some suggestions for how EAP teachers might create the kinds of sociocultural and educational conditions that would enable students to enjoy greater autonomy in pursuing their educations.

Some issues

Socialisation: re-thinking the social in language education

Learner autonomy has come to be a dominating motif in the discourse of progressive language education, part of a growing movement towards giving students a greater say in managing their own learning. Part Rogerian educational psychology, this idea is probably equally indebted to the old adage that you can lead a horse to water, but if you don't have empirical evidence as to what it actually likes to drink, how, when or how fast, then .... (Nunan, 1995, develops a similar theme on the discrepancy between what teachers teach and what they think learners learn). However, we need to question claims that pursuing greater individual choice and personal goal setting for learners actually promotes a more value-free education, ensuring that teachers' values get left outside the classroom and away from the students. A more critical pedagogical analysis will tend to look more deeply for the continuing influence of the values of the dominant (and dominating) culture, not least in the rather insulated world of academia. This debate has been prominent in composition and ESL journals (e.g. Benesch, 1993; Santos, 1992) and is the subject of the debate chosen as a 'case study' in the second part of this paper, featuring France and Stotsky (1993).

Auerbach (1993) is among those who argue that so-called *'learner-centred'* pedagogies are basically more humanistic forms of cultural assimilation, designed to allow greater student expression within a broader context of control. The focus may be on self-realization, emphasising learners' involvement with curriculum development processes (setting own goals, exploring own experiences, shaping the curriculum, evaluating it, etc.), but how far is curricular control genuinely relinquished to students ? The teachers' role may shift from transmitter of information to facilitator of classroom dynamics and negotiator of the curriculum, but how far can we say they relinquish control of *their* curriculum. Most curricula operate on the understanding that there are values, techniques and knowledge to be imparted by teachers to students: acculturation of whatever hue.

I should like at this point to query the frequent equation of 'acculturation' with *'socialisation'*, since I feel, like Elinor Ochs (1986), that the latter term needs freeing from its status as a fossilised sociological construct whose very use has come to imply reactionary educational values. Ochs rejects the universalist view of socialisation, of children being socialised into mental structures that are universal or culturally and linguistically circumscribed. She proposes a relativistic (Whorfian) version of socialisation, arguing that we acquire a world view as we acquire a particular language in a particular culture (see also Cameron, 1990, for a rejection of 'language reflects society' accounts). Ochs characterises socialisation as a dynamic process in which novices and experts jointly act and speak, and in so doing involve themselves in the 'interactional generation of social and cultural understandings'. She suggests that 'individuals and

society construct one another through social interaction', offering the contemporary example of children as 'socialisers of computer literacy within their respective households' (1986: 1-2). Surely, then, in the educational context, teachers could come to accept students as co-constructors of knowledge, and as contributors to an on-going process of socialisation - social change - that implicates teachers, too.

Auerbach uses the term 'participatory' to describe approaches to adult ESL which genuinely focus on social transformation, emphasising drawing curriculum content from the social context of learners' lives *as well as* involving them in curriculum development processes. However, students, at least in my experience of higher education, remain a long way from this kind of participatory role in the curriculum; they are distinct outsiders in terms of power relations within the academy, or of having 'title' to forms of authorised knowledge, or competency in the kinds of 'intellectual currency' accepted within that academy. It is important that teachers interested in a more inclusive curriculum adopt a more sceptical construction of the position of students in the curriculum, a status, effectively, of disenfranchised and disempowered outsider. This view is surely confirmed when contemplating our practices within the academy, and the processes we require students to engage in - 'learning' the curriculum, being assessed on scales of intellectual competence, coverage of copious syllabi, and the retention of myriad facts and authorised 'theories' - stories ? - about the world. This is what Freire (1990: 40) calls 'systematic education', designed in his view expressly to discourage students from questioning the social order - often called 'the existing' social order, to add to its aura of permanence. Freire identifies this kind of education with *banking*, students being treated as objects requiring filling up with tokens of our intellectual currency. Freire describes this imperative of cultures to regenerate themselves in this way - effectively casting our students in our own image - as 'necrophiliac'. This image of faculty as morticians and knowledge as formaldehyde evokes Riley's (1988) citation of Margaret Mead's observations of Balinese culture as a possible allegory for the way in which faculty might ultimately be seen as wishing to control the learning and communication of their students:

> children are regarded as incarnations of their ancestors and therefore fully competent members of society. To sustain this social fiction, adults continually put words into their mouths and speak on their behalfs. The children are allowed to do nothing for themselves. The adults even shape the children's gestures with their own hands.

Freire's ideas have been taken up by many of the more radical educationists in the U.S. and Canada (Auerbach, 1993, Aronowitz & Giroux 1991, Giroux, 1992; Simon, 1992) in support of policies and strategies for working with the disempowered to resist their cultural assimilation, and for creating the basis for transforming social and educational systems into more equitable ones. While aimed mostly at immigrant and minority educational contexts, these ideas of cultural assimilation can also, I suggest, be applied to the generation of young adults who make up the tertiary student population. The question arises at the practical curricular level, then: what do marginalised people have to do to transform their lives and resist cultural assimilation? Freire (1990) advocates 'critical reflection' and 'collective action', and there is a beguilingly familiar ring about such terms, raising another question: is it possible for two educationists to use these terms and mean completely different things? In the next section we look at some alternative constructions that have been placed on the ostensibly neutral notion of language 'skills'.

The preoccupation with skills: issues of pragmatism and ideology

Arguably, a major effect of the communicative revolution in language teaching was the privileging of practical language 'skills', increasingly augmented in the tertiary sector by 'study' skills. Pennycook (1994c) argues that such language skill-based curricula show the pervasive influence of what he calls the 'educo-psychological' paradigm of language learning, which emphasises individualism and independence rather than a more social dimension to study or language use. An indication of this psycholinguistic dominance is the importance accorded to the *assessment* of language learning, its scaling, ranking, quantification and measurement. Particularly interesting for an analysis of the trend towards quantifying learning progress is Fairclough's notion of *commodification*. This refers to

> the process whereby social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be

organised and conceptualised in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption (Fairclough, 1993: 133)

Fairclough suggests that educational practice has been gradually restructured on a market model, citing the frequent reference to the ELT 'industry', to courses as things to be marketed, and the naming of students as 'clients or consumers' (1992: 7). He points to an ambiguity about the identity being constructed for these 'clients', being cast both as 'active' discerning and financially autonomous paying clients, and passive trainees consigned by personnel, targeted for training in required *skills*. This term *'skills'*, according to Fairclough, is the persuasive key to selling education - it allows these 2 contradictory constructions of the learner to coexist without manifest inconsistency. It seems to fit into either an individualistic and subjectivist view of learning (the 'autonomous' learner), or with an objectivist, even behaviouristic view of training. Skills are prized attributes and tend to be seen as more democratic and less 'canonical' than knowledge, which is framed in terms of a 'high culture' of western literacy and experience; skills offer opportunity to everyone, if only they are given appropriate *training*. On the other hand, the concept of skill has normative implications: skills are assumed to be transferable across contexts, occasions and users, in a way which leaves little space for individuality. This can be seen in the more mimetic approaches, featuring explicit generic models for students to copy. Fairclough suggests that the placing of primary language skills like reading, writing, etc. at the heart of the ELT curriculum helps to *commodify* the content of language education, facilitating its division into discrete units, separately assessable, and exchangeable as distinct goods in the marketplace.

This line of argument would clearly cast the dominant ELT teaching approaches as driven by a pragmatist ideology, and there has recently been considerable debate on the issue of the role of ideology in ELT (L1 and L2), with 'pragmatism' being constructed very differently as, on the one hand, 'ideologically neutral', even resisting ideology in ELT, and on the other hand as being profoundly ideological and representing the dominant ideology within the field (Pennycook, 1994c). Pennycook argues that the psycho-educational discourses he identifies reflect an ideological stance of political quietism which he characterises as 'pragmatism', an ideology which denies 'the possibilities of dealing with broader social, cultural or political contexts of discourse' (1994c 129). If we tie this view in with Fairclough's commodification motif, we have an interesting perspective from which to view the aggressive way that academics - people in general - prosecute and defend their ideas in public forums. One area where I would argue we can see the commodification of our professional discourse is in some of the 'cost-benefit' rhetoric in the ESP literature.

In a recent issue of the *Journal of Second Language Writing* (*'Too Much On Our Plates'*, 1993), Ann Johns rises to the defence of alleged 'pragmatist' ESP practitioners in response to Terry Santos' criticisms (1993), accusing mainstream ESL educators of excluding ideology from their curriculum and failing to follow the L1 composition community who have increasingly, she argues, been foregrounding ideology in their curricula. Santos (1992) had argued for more of an ideological perspective in ESL, even an overt politicisation. Johns responded, as though personally challenged to respond to the call:

> We (in ESL) are expected to perform miracles with students in the shortest possible periods of time imaginable, teaching the most difficult of the skills while being allotted little time for research, preparation, study - or ideological discussion. Our plates are too full. (1993: 86).

Johns' response seems to me to put the EAP quandary in the context of a wider contemporary debate: how do you reconcile political neutrality or conformity with critical independence ? How does the analytical and interpretive process of 'cracking the codes' of academic communication and culture remain non-ideological ? Underlying these arguments might lie a tension between accepting and challenging the status quo. It is interesting to view the debate through the prism of a Marxist critique, through a materialist metaphor, casting the debate in terms of workers versus management on the issue of proposed ownership of the means of production and equal profit-sharing. Fairclough's work draws on Marxist social and economic analysis in very persuasive ways, sensitive to the need for reflexive awareness of the interests of all the parties to the analysis, not least the researcher. This is one of the features of critical ethnography which have influenced advocates of a more critical approach to language teaching and to discourse analysis.

A cornerstone of such an approach, though, must be the rejection of any doctrinaire intolerance for diversity of culture, perspective or   discourse.   Further, the language one group speaks must have its resonances in the language of other groups, recognising that language habits are part of a community's shared learning (Brice Heath 1983: 11).   If we apply this to our professional situation, with its combination of peer and teacher-student communication, we have to accept that there will be resonances between those two domains of discourse.   As Pennycook puts it, 'we need to be very aware both of the discourses into which we are asking our students to move and of the discourses in which we as teachers are engaged' (1994c: 132).

A great deal more could be said about critical language awareness and critical discourse analysis. There are understandably divergences among those sympathetic with the general thrust of a critical approach.   Pennycook, for example (1994c),   questions the supposition that texts can be read as revealing the workings of social structures, and is wary of the determinism of some sociological perspectives on language.   He cites the 'representational fallacy', whereby a real, fairly static world of social relations is thought to be directly represented in language and language behaviour.   This view echoes Ochs' relativistic view of people constructing their own reality socially and very much interactively (1986: 2).   The perspective which seems to gain most consensus is the Foucauldian view, that sees discourse - or discourses - as systems of power/knowledge within which we take up subject positions - or rather within which they take us up.   Fairclough (1992) devotes a chapter (2) to acknowledging the 'debt' (critical) discourse analysis owes to Foucault (esp. 1972), notably to his ideas on discourse as constitutive of knowledge, and 'discursive formations' as the rules for constituting areas of knowledge, and consequently for exercising social and political power (1992: 37-9).

Dangers of dualism: who guards the guardians ?

Pennycook (1994c) sees one strategy for exercising discursive power as the casting of discussions in dualist discourse, the construction of problems and alternative positions in monolithic dichotomisations, such as conservative vs radical, with all the generalisations that follow.   Underpinning dualistic thinking we can discern a particular 'objectivist' perspective: a realist ontology - a belief in an objective, real world - and a positivistic epistemology - a belief that people's perceptions and statements are either true or false, right or wrong, a belief based on a view of knowledge as hard, real and acquirable.   Said (1993) suggests that it is quite simply easier for people to define themselves in terms of what they are *not* - hence the articulacy in defining - and demonising - the *Other*.   Burrell & Morgan (1979), in their search for overarching paradigms that might yield underlying commonalties between some of the proliferating social science theories, became particularly concerned about:

> the academic sectarianism reflected at various times in open hostility, ostrich-like
> indifference and generally poor-quality dialogue and debate between essentially related
> (i.e. objectivist) schools of thought (1979: ix)

At a theoretical level, then, there may be increasing lip-service paid to subjective, social constructionist versions of the world we live and work in, and on how we go about constructing and transacting - communicating, prosecuting, 'marketing' - knowledge. However, in the ways that people prosecute those beliefs, whether repelling peer attacks in professional journals, or packaging watertight accounts for undergraduates in lectures and textbooks, the dominant discursive style seems still to be to cast ideas dualistically as either right or wrong, or true or false. A typical such strategy might be a 'logocentric' one of constructing an in-group around a particular perspective or philosophy - hardened over time into parties, societies or disciplines - and then reinforcing the definition of that creed, as Said suggests (1993), by constructing an adversarial *Other*. John Clifford offers an example from the field of composition of this 'dichotomous turn'. His rhetorical question offers, I believe, a fairly commonplace example of polarity of argument, of casting a discussion in an adversarial, dichotomous form: :

> Are we (tertiary teachers of composition) intent on developing in our students the literacy
> skills and attitudes necessary to succeed in college and beyond, or do we hope to
> empower them with the critical habits of mind, with a skeptical intelligence, with an
> awareness of themselves as potential actors in a sociopolitical context ? (1991; 38).

We need to ask why teachers *should* be articulating crude conservative vs radical choices in this way, where the 'right' answer would seem to be to deny students the skills to succeed in college. Why should these options be cast as mutually exclusive, or each as having a single unambiguous meaning ? This is the route to adversarial stalemate, where the winning of the argument is paramount: taking part, like coming second, is akin to finishing last, defeated (see Turkle & Papert, 1991, on the aggression and polarisation that the academic enterprise of addressing abstract problems can generate). Other examples abound; the *IATEFL Newsletter* recently asked its readers to choose between ESP and EGP (English for *General* Purposes): 'Which comes first ?' - most of the replies duly responded in kind (May, 1994). As curriculum 'designers' in a fairly loosely-defined discipline, EAP, we need to become more aware of the extent to which our own discourse is marked by this kind of dualistic framing of issues, whether in our roles as applied linguists talking and (especially) writing to each other, in the constructions we make of our students and often realise in our learning models, or in our advice to and counseling of our students.

We need, I believe, to at least reflect on whether we practise what we preach, and on the manner in which our discourses are framed and exercised. David Little (1991) interestingly foregrounds George Kelly's personal construct theory in suggesting that diversity of perspective or worldview - or the lack of it - can be seen as having its roots in the ways in which we organise our world in terms of constructs or schemata. Here are some of Kelly's key precepts;

- we make sense of the world by construing it via sets of dichotomous personal constructs (e.g. good-bad; gentle-aggressive) .
- dichotomous constructs can be abstracted into relativistic scales; e.g from black vs. white to the relativistic *more grey* vs *less grey*
- people arrange their constructs into hierarchies, abstracting and organising them hierarchically into systems;

Looking at Kelly and subsequent work in developmental psychology, and then at work in critical language awareness (UK) and critical pedagogy (US), it becomes apparent that reflection on how we construct our world - and what we call 'knowledge' - needs to take a more central position, in both our theoretical enterprises and our teaching practice. At another level, the differences in the ways in which we relate to each other and to our students need to be brought into focus more; can we honestly say that we relate to both communities equally in terms of making and challenging knowledge ? It would be interesting to ask a range of tertiary teachers how differently or similarly they see themselves operating along a cultural conservation-transformation spectrum as first teachers, and then as researchers. But to ask how far educationists *should* be aiming at social transformation and how far at conservation is not necessarily to set up dichotomies or exclusive categories, but to explore *tensions* - possibly complementary tensions - within the various discourses that inform any university curriculum.

In the next part of this paper, I use a case study to take a critical look at what I see as fundamental problems with the way language and knowledge are cast in the tertiary curriculum, and at our own discourse practices as tertiary language educators. There is a danger in our field of perceiving other communities' levels of language awareness - both students and faculty - in terms of shortcomings, measuring them against structural and stylistic (generic) norms. This can lead us even further toward dissociating our own discursive practices from those communities with whom we need to reach greater levels of understanding and shared purpose. We need to ask ourselves, as we move on the one hand towards a Whole Language curriculum [e.g. Writing across the curriculum (WAC), Integrated Language and Content (ILC)], if we are, knowingly or unwittingly, keeping separate spheres for the discourses of our different communities: one set of rules and principles for our students, one for our analysis of the quirks of other disciplines' discourses (e.g. Selzer. 1993), and another for our own professional practice, in the domain of published exchanges about our theories and practice. This would be to deny a plurality of discourses *within* these communities, and therefore to give a hollow ring to any espousal of autonomy in the educational context. As Little argues (1991), autonomy starts 'at home': to assure learner autonomy, we need to assure teacher autonomy. I argue below that this process needs to start with a more critical language awareness of our own practice, notably of our professional discourse practices.

'Disciplined' Discourse ? : a look at our own discourse practices

In this section, I discuss the discursive practices of the broad academic community I identify and engage in academic communication with - language teachers and researchers. My focus is on a sub-genre of journal writing where, so to speak, we tend to 'take the gloves off' - i.e. when we shed our pedagoguish, anonymous personae and engage in head-to-head encounters with specific, identified colleagues. I have looked at the response sections in a number of journals in the fields of composition and language teaching, featuring readers' letters airing reactions to articles in previous issues. It is here that we might look for discrepancies between the language practices we teach others to use, and the language we use ourselves, particularly in public forums, when we seem prone to suspending our self-critical faculty. These *'Forum'* or *'Comment and Response'* columns offer rich evidence of the tendency for some academics to adopt a dualistic approach to the issues they raise, to categorise and label to the point of creating a Straw Man argument, and to exhibit such an intolerance of alternative positions that their discourse slips into the area of *ad hominem* (against the person) argumentation - strategies and attitudes I would suggest that the same academics, in their teaching guise, would be loathe to promote.

I take as a case in point a recent debate in *College English* (1993); Sandra Stotsky's original article, *Writing as moral and civic thinking* (1992), drew responses from Ted Lardner and Alan France (1993), to which Stotsky replied in the same issue. Stotsky (1992) had recommended that theorists, teachers and students of composition ought to acknowledge the moral and ethical dimensions of academic writing, maintaining a distinction between their personal and professional values and being careful not to impress their personal values on their students.

Lardner responds to Stotsky by saying initially that this "could not have been more timely" but admits to a mixed reaction. He makes his concession sympathetically; Stotsky, he says, questions the stance taken by those who seem to make their own *"social and political values the focus of their teaching"*, citing Dale Bauer and Patricia Bizzell as teachers who "seek to alter our students' social and political values" (1992: 795). Lardner agrees with the argument that literacy and the skills of thinking critically are amongst the responsibilities central to the health and progress of democratic society, but disagrees on the role Stotsky casts for the teacher, separating the professional from the civic voice.

Alan France, in comparison, seems to have reacted more strongly against Stotsky's article (see extracts below). He takes issue with Stotsky's belief that a putative non-partisan code of academic principles should guide thinking and learning about any topic': "this argument for preserving the impartiality of academic discourse from social and political critique is a favourite political move of conservatives seeking to restrain criticism of existing power arrangements". Stotsky, he argues, recapitulates the conservative arguments for excluding from composition classes embarrassing social issues like racism, misogyny, rape, poverty and violence - and recalls a similar debate in *College Composition & Communication* stimulated by Maxine Hairston's critique of 'political zealots' in the writing class (1992). France then goes on to generalise to 'conservatives' in general: "Conservatives argue that since nobody's 'personal values' are better than anybody else's, leftists should drop their convictions at the classroom door - etc.,"

Alan France Writes (Extracts)

I would like to offer a reading of academic morality counter to that of Sandra Stotsky's *"Writing as Moral and Civil Thinking"*. It is suggested by Brecht's aphorism, "Erst kommt das Fressen und dan kommt die Moral". A consequence of this view is that an insistence on academic civility serves the interests of the status quo, especially against those like Dale Bauer and Patricia Bizzell, who "seek to alter our students' social and political values". Instead, Stotsky believes that a putatively nonpartisan code of "academic principles ... should guide thinking and learning about any topic" (795)

This argument for preserving the impartiality of academic discourse from social and political critique (making it doubly academic, some might say) is a favourite political move of conservatives seeking to restrain criticism of existing power arrangements. And Stotsky in fact recapitulates the conservative arguments for excluding from composition classes embarrassing social issues like racism, misogyny, rapine, poverty, and violence (compare Maxine Hairston's attack on "political zealots" in the writing class - among whom she also numbers Bauer and Bizzell - in *CCC* [May 1992]). Conservatives argue that since nobody's "personal values" are better than anyone else's, leftists should drop their convictions at the classroom door, that students should write only about what interests them, which precludes topics that they find politically disagreeable, ... etc.

Stotsky seems to believe that composing is not so much a matter of accomplishing material purposes by available rhetorical means (including Sleddian philippics under certain circumstances), but of obeying certain moral and civic "obligations embedded in academic writing [itself]" (798). It seems to me, however, that these "academic principles" are not isolable from and are indeed none other than the rhetorical garb of conservative "social and political values"

Sandra Stotsky Responds (Extracts)

The letters by Professor Lardner and Professor France both raise the kinds of questions that need immediate and extensive discussion if higher education is to survive with public support. ....

As we must all be aware, our educational institutions at all levels of education have lost much of the public trust they once enjoyed in full measure. If we make a clear distinction between our professional life and our civic life and carry out our responsibilities in each to the fullest degree in their appropriate context, we might help to restore the meaning of academic life and the dignity of our profession in our students' and the public's eye.

Professor France's letter clearly illustrates why academic writing must be based on academically principled thinking. France's claim that academically principled thinking and writing are characteristics of "conservative" political values is certainly no compliment to liberal political values. The implication that academically unprincipled thinking and writing are characteristic of liberal academic discourse (or at least engaged in when they serve the writer's purpose) not only discredits liberals, it also eliminates any reason to maintain the university as an educational institution. What state legislature, parent, or other adult would want to support courses taught by avowedly unprincipled professors ? I hope Professor France rethinks his effort to assign political labels to the use or non-use of academic principles.

He finishes by asserting that '*these 'academic principles' are not isolable from and indeed are none other than the rhetorical garb of conservative 'social and political values*' (1993: 806).

Unsurprisingly, Stotsky responds very differently to the 2 writers. Lardner's more measured and balanced response evinces a long (3.5 pages), considered and considerate response from Stotsky - the dialogue is constructive. France, on the other hand, gets short shrift - literally, and a very different rhetorical stance and style (see extracts below. Stotsky appears particularly aggrieved at France's implication of a lack of principle in her educational philosophy or conduct, concluding with the hope that '*Professor France rethinks his effort to assign political labels to the use or non-use of academic principles*' (1993; 810).

This clear divergence between the two writers' schemas for the term 'principles' recalls Pecheux's work on political discourse (e.g. 1982), where different political perspectives can signify divergent constructs of the same term [e.g. militant = activist or subversive, depending on your political affiliation or disposition]. Alan France is concerned about Stotsky's advocacy of '*conceptualising writing as moral and civic thinking*', not least because the antitheses of these concepts - 'immoral' and 'uncivil' - tend to command

the political and educational high ground. But his discourse style shows traces of *ad hominem* argumentation and an overt intolerance of Stotsky's viewpoint. France is clearly motivated by a desire to promote change within the profession, but adopts a style of discourse more likely to further polarise opinion. His strategy of associating Stotsky's position with that of 'conservatives', and then proceeding to further characterise conservatives' arguments and values is a classic strategy of labeling with a negative stereotype, and then addressing (thematising) that stereotype, rather than the person. This is damnation by association, and is a problem which seems to afflict a great deal of academic communication, where academics are encouraged to demonstrate the widest possible significance for the object of their study. This often involves categorisation at high levels of abstraction - notably 'isms' - aimed, we must suppose, at eliciting positive identification in the broadest possible audience.

France's style, I would argue, is monologic rather than dialogic, liable - and perhaps intended - to appeal only to the already converted - though this hypothesis would need to be put to the empirical test. The uncompromising tone suggests to me a lack of interest in any further constructive discussion, the kind of intransigent construction of alternative views as 'wrong' that is likely to drive both empiricists and relativists, possibly respectively, to the extremes of triumph and despair. Stotsky has the advantage of being able to direct her substantive responses to Lardner (though she acknowledges France also raises the same issues), while saving a token space in which to dismiss the manner of France's response - and suggesting the absence of certain values in his 'type' of position or attitude. The irony of Stotsky's position would not be lost on regular readers of *College English*, since the year before she herself was on the receiving end of an outraged response from Mike Rose, who accused her of going 'beyond criticism to broadside and personal denunciation' in her 1990 review of his 1988 anthology on literacy. He cites as evidence Stotsky's use of terms like 'incoherent', 'unforgivable', 'cynical' and 'intellectual incest' (1992: 81).

I am not arguing that these types of encounter are the norm in our journals; they constitute a sub-genre, but one which has grown to take up considerable space in each issue of a number of U.S.-published ESL and Composition journals[1]. As we have seen, this is a genre which features exchanges which tend to be adversarial and which often lapse into the *ad hominem*. We have seen how the 'temperature' can be raised in rhetorically identifiable ways: labeling to type, overgeneralising and damnation by association - all elements common to Straw Man argumentation. I suggest that analyses like these of the discourse of our own academic community can help us to reflect more on our own peer communicative practices. We can then ask how far educationists are well served by discourses which are intolerant of divergent voices, or by curricular approaches which sees education as peripheral to where the 'real' struggle for democracy should take place.

My aim in featuring this particular exchange was to offer for reflection what strikes me as the dissonance between theory and practice arising if teachers are to, for example, advocate whole curriculum approaches to EAP, whilst framing their own professional discourse in adversarial, exclusionary terms. The topic of the debate is clearly apt, for a similar debate could well have been held over the kinds of changes I am about to offer for consideration in the next section.

Promoting Autonomy in Curricular Practice: Some Proposals

I have argued for the relevance of critical language awareness, critical discourse analysis and, to some extent, personal construct theory to the way in which we look at the world, at our own discourse, and at how we shape our curricular priorities and approaches. Following Pennycook (1994c), I suggest the policy of pursuing an overly psycholinguistic approach to language learning and curriculum has hampered the development of curricula promoting a more critical form of language awareness - not only among our students, but also within our own profession - and hence in the rest of the academy. In this section, I shall look at a range of ways in which a more critical perspective of language socialisation can be promoted in curricular practice.

As I have suggested, we need to take a very broad perspective when attempting to promote learner autonomy in the tertiary curriculum. We should aspire to, and work to bring about, a curricular approach with the following features:

social construction of meaning - in practice: ensure that intellectual acceptance of the social construction of meaning is translated into academic practice; the implications for the curriculum may be, for example, that we focus less on striving to understand an external world [or indeed the internal world of the mind] - a set of truths about that world - and focus more on the social dynamics and purposes with which we interact to prosecute certain beliefs and resist others. We need to reflect on the relationship between our knowledge-making beliefs and our communicative practices;

language awareness and language socialisation: promote versions of language awareness which construct languages as expressions of culture and identity, drawing on the broadest linguistic resources of the community, and which encompass not only performance, cognitive and affective domains but also social and power domains. Hamilton (1993) points to the elasticity of the term 'language awareness': how it can range from signifying a view of language decontextualised in static purity from its actual use to one where language is embedded dynamically and inexorably in its social and political uses. Janks & Ivanic, for example, are careful to talk about promoting a *discourse which does not disempower others* & which *resists disempowerment* - an *emancipatory discourse* (1992). Teachers should be conscious of the disempowering force of paternalistic attitudes to, or constructions of, students.

language awareness throughout an integrated curriculum: see language awareness aims of EAP programmes can only realistically be realised in the context of the overall tertiary curriculum. This aim may best be pursued by EAP teachers exploiting opportunities to draw faculty colleagues into collaborative activities - whether in team teaching or in participating in a scheme for offering structured feedback on student writing, something we are experimenting with at HKU.

autonomy as education for social empowerment: address the full socio-political empowering conditions necessary for promoting student autonomy. We need to take on board how we construct knowledge, who 'owns' and has rights over that knowledge, who universities are *for*, & not simply work to maximise the decision-making prerogatives of the learner. Students are constructed as full participants in the academic community, with a licence to practice as knowledge makers. We need to incorporate a theoretical look at the sociology of knowledge (how we construct knowledge) and about how we seem to prosecute and defend our own professional positions almost as vehemently as people defending their physical property. In this connection, we need to accept the diverse ways in which students may engage with the curriculum, and with prevailing academic knowledge-sharing practices. Diverse 'genres' may emerge which are grounded in students' own ideas of making sense of - even challenging and questioning - the conventions of academic practice.

language as content: frame *discourse* about what we know - and 'how it is we come to think and talk as we do' - as part of the *content* of the EAP curriculum. Pursue a curriculum whose content as well as its approach works towards increasing student autonomy, defined in terms of:

- their critical and skeptical faculties,
- their level of language awareness

Students themselves need to become involved in discourse analysis, both generic and critical, and gain confidence and facility in talking *about* communication (and see Nunan, 1995, on students becoming *ethnographic researchers*). There is a great deal of more critical and politically-sensitive work on discourse analysis available now, which looks beyond conventional text to the media, in both text and image (Fairclough, 1995; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1990; Lee, 1992; Myers, 1994), and also to academic discourse itself (Dillon, 1991; Edmondson, 1984; Grimshaw, 1989; Myers, 1990; Selzer, 1993[2]). The conditions - and resources- are in place for the EAP curriculum to become more *metadiscursive* in orientation. I do not share Freedman's misgivings when she asks: *'can the complex web of social, cultural and rhetorical features to which genres respond be explicated at all, or in such a way that can be useful to learners ?'* (1993; 225)

an action- & discovery-based curriculum: risk 'error' and approximation through student-led investigation, rather than stick to a lockstep approach, trying to ensure adequate preparation before undertaking the 'authentic' academic task. This may be the least radical, or critical, recommendation but by emphasising the key role of primary research, it formally acknowledges students' right to full participation in the knowledge creation process. Such an approach, I argue, confirms that the investigative process, the review of other work and the reporting of one's research findings and conclusions, are all inextricably linked

in the same process of knowledge 'renewing', part of the investigative cycle comprising discourse/communication of various kinds. An investigative approach thus allows students to make the kinds of 'personalised' discoveries academics make during their research, rather than being over-coached with hindsight-driven advice and preparation. Nunan (e.g. 1991, 1995) has argued for language curriculum content to be related beyond the classroom to students' own language experiences and cultures. We need to leave curricular 'space' to students, accepting that student learning activities are best driven by their own enthusiasms, needs and initiative; the course philosophy need only frame the broad substantive issues and task requirements of the course. This 'balancing act' necessarily relies on:

- a lower-profile teacher role, more as an adviser and steerer of the project, pointing students to potential problems, issues, etc.
- a high degree of peer collaboration and interaction, a team effort, maintaining the momentum of the activities independently of the teacher, and (I suggest) reconciling the ideal of individualised learning with that of peer collaboration.
- an emphasis on academic processes rather than student products, placing the focus on the investigation - the practice - rather than the theory, on questioning rather than accepting what is presented as authoritative knowledge/theory.

Conclusion

The very ESL-medium nature of higher education for NNS of English gives English teachers the practical opportunity to combine two key roles, one conventional, the other less so. The conventional role is to provide students with the linguistic means to understand academic texts and express academic ideas; the less conventional role would be to use their sociolinguistic and pedagogical experience and sensitivity to change teaching and learning practice within their institution. It is the second of these roles which I feel is vital for creating the pre-conditions for learner autonomy within educational institutions, and which points to the need for a 'stronger' profile for the *language* teaching profession in tertiary institutions. Autonomy needs to be defined in terms of a set of conditions rather than an individual 'state of grace', accorded to students by enlightened, 'hands-off' curriculum designers. Our practice constitutes the example we set as 'preachers' of mutual respect, tolerance of diversity and an integrated, knowledge-making academic community. These 'conditions' are more likely to be achieved through the kinds of concerted 'strong' approaches to language in the curriculum taken by the *Whole Language* and *Critical Language Pedagogy* movements, which acknowledge

- the *whole curriculum* as the teaching and learning context within which language teaching professionals operate (in ESL-medium tertiary education this has clear implications for how one sees the relationship between language ('what we teach' ?) and content ('what they teach' ?), &

- *critical language awareness* and language teaching as being the next crucial frontier in any curriculum pretending to engage seriously with issues of student autonomy and empowerment (see Clark, 1992; Janks & Ivanic, 1992).

I have argued that what is at stake for an enhanced language awareness across the curriculum is not the circularity of arguing whose interpretation is the valid, correct or better one, but the very awareness that words are not simply what we want them to mean. I suggest teachers consider how far the following 'precepts' resonate with their experience:

- the power of words is decided socially, not in their denotations, or even in any universal connotations;
- the power of knowledge lies in whose interests it promotes and whose it subjugates
- substantive autonomy in the educational context lies not so much in being accorded freedom of action and choice within the curriculum as in a community-wide understanding of the full socio-political conditions and implications of the interpellations of 'teacher' and 'learner' - and 'academic' and 'researcher' - in the education and academic systems;

If we accept this kind of interrelationship of discourses in the academy, and if our teaching philosophy defines our practice in terms of social action, then there is a case for promoting language awareness among all the communities in the academy, right across the curriculum. As a more linguistically 'aware'

community, the language teaching profession should, I argue, play a seminal role in that enterprise. With such an interventionist philosophy, it may seem paradoxical, if not contradictory, to propose at the same time accepting the full diversity of philosophies in the debate, rejoicing in a matrix of diverse views. Demanding that an item be placed on the agenda does not necessarily entail that we want to rig the result of a vote on it - that presupposes a dualist perspective on action. The impetus should be towards greater individual and collective understanding, & in that regard, *our* struggle for understanding is our *students'* struggle. As teachers, with responsibility to our students intensified through our power/knowledge relation to them, we need to reflect on our *own* practice *critically*. This needs to involve sharing with them those discourses which academics use, both to construct each other and to construct the knowledge and perspectives that constitute the curriculum (see Hunston, 1993; Bowers & Iwi, 1993). I suggest that it is through this kind of critical introspection that we are likely to discover the discrepancies between our horizontal peer discourse - our research practice - and our vertical teacher-student discourse - our teaching practice and the curricular values we preach.

Notes

[1] Other examples of exchanges exhibiting a notably adversarial tenor are the already-cited *JSLW* exchange between Johns and Santos, and (also cited) between Trimbur and Hairston in *College Composition & Communication* (1993, 44,2), and two exchanges in *TESOL Quarterly*, issue 28, 4 (1994), between Braine and Canagarajah (609-617) and, in response to Benesch (1993), between Benesch and Allison (618-624).

[2] Selzer (1993) offers a fascinating multi-faceted analysis of a single academic paper, *The Spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian Paradigm*, written (jointly with Richard Lewontin) by the outspoken and best-selling biologist Stephen Jay Gould. These authors engage at times in a caricature of the adaptationist position, e.g. · *If one adaptive argument fails, try another ... (or) assume another must exist* (152). See particularly the papers by Couture (*'Provocative architecture'*: 276-309) and Myers (*'Making enemies'*: 256-275). Gould, in his final response to the collection of papers, makes an intriguing defence of adversarial argumentation:

> *the defence of pluralism by adversarial devices is honorable (dishonor lies only in the frequent misuse of adversarial style), potentially effective and practically necessary. How else could we proceed, given the opposition ? And how else is cultural pluralism defended in America today ? (330)*

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Citing Previous Writers: What Can We Say instead of 'Say'?

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Abstract

Most ESL teachers would intuitively agree that student ESL writers grossly overuse the word "say" when citing the work of other authors. Now concordance studies can produce quantifiable evidence showing this overuse by learners, and document authentic patterns of use by "expert" writers. This concordance study is of a corpus of applied linguistics articles. It explores how and why accomplished academic writers use quotations and citations, and analyses the lexical and grammatical choices they make. The results of this analysis are discussed with reference to a number of possible pedagogical applications.

Introduction

One spin off of the increasing use of computer concordancers and large corpora is that statistical evidence has become readily available to support and supplement teacher intuition. For example, Granger (1994) compared a corpus of over 1 million words of academic writing produced by non-native speakers of English (the International Corpus of Learner English) with over 83,000 words from native speakers, and was able to identify significantly overused and underused words in the learner corpus. The verb 'say', she reports, has a "very significant overuse". Likewise, Tribble (1991) investigated "'speech'-related words" in history articles, an engineering text and a student corpus, and though he discovered a very interesting difference in the use of the verb in the first two corpora, he also found that the high ratio of 'said' to other 'speech' words in the student corpus was "the most significant indication of the relative paucity of the 'speech' vocabulary in the Student corpus" (Tribble 1991:7).

These findings come as no surprise to teachers in tertiary institutions teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) who all too frequently see something like "as Smith says..." or "'Hall says that ...", or even more frequently, "Hall said ...", when marking student essays. Many students themselves also express an awareness of this, and feel their language lacks variety and sophistication.

The overuse of 'say' is not only symptomatic of a lack of vocabulary, but is part of a much larger problem related to understanding the requirements of academic writing especially when acknowledging sources. From her study of the incorporation of an original undergraduate anthropology textbook into the essays of 30 (20 ESL, 10 native speaker) undergraduate students at UCLA Campbell observed that:

> In fact, none of the students in this study, native or nonnative, seem to have a mastery of the appropriate acknowledgment of another author. (Campbell:1990:223)

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However, as she points out, this picture is very different from "the language use of experienced academic writers who acknowledge the author or text for every quotation and most paraphrases in their revised work" (ibid.:221). If students are seen as trainee academics then mastery of citation techniques (which include direct quotation and paraphrase) is necessary in order to gain admittance into the academic discourse community (see Swales, 1990, for a comprehensive discussion of the term 'discourse community'). Ivanic and Roach (1990) present a revealing account of a mature student's struggles to produce the sort of writing acceptable in a university and still maintain a strong sense of her own identity. Using an extended 'clothes' metaphor Roach explains how "different disciplines required you to use different disguises, thus my skeleton [the essay] had to be dressed in different clothing ... using their clothes (that is their language) seemed to gain me access to the privileges of academic life" (Ivanic & Roach, 1990:9). Thus, to continue Roach's metaphor, as teachers of EAP we need to put clearly on display the sort of clothes which gain admittance into the academic club, so that our students can then choose which ones suit them best after trying them on for size. The conventions and language of citations form part of this necessary academic garb.

This paper investigates certain features of citation and attempts to ascertain what expert writers are doing when they cite, why they cite, and most importantly *how* they cite, i.e. what (linguistic) devices do they employ and can these devices be categorised? In fact, do they fall into any patterns which can then be made more obvious and explicit for students trying to emulate them?

In order to attempt an answer to some of these questions, I examined citations in almost 50,000 words (graphemes) from a corpus of 11 applied linguistics articles[1] (see appendix 1 for the complete list). The writers of these articles can be considered 'expert' writers insofar as they have been admitted into an academic discourse community by successfully having their articles published in a journal read by other applied linguists.

A concordanced search for citations

As the 11 articles were all taken from three issues of the same journal there was a consistent use of the Harvard parenthetical documentation format. Thus, a search for "(19??)" produces lines such as those below:

Sample KWIC (Key Word in Context Printout)

Concordance for "(19??)"

scussed tension between reliability and validity (Davies 1978; cf. Morrow 1981: 13) in language testing is highly eviden
etween reliability and validity (Davies 1978; cf. Morrow 1981: 13) in language testing is highly evident in the assessme
ful discussion (not confined to tests of writing), Weir (1988: 21-25), following Anastasi (1982: 132), affirms that cont
sts of writing), Weir (1988: 21-25), following Anastasi (1982: 132), affirms that content validity depends upon the rele
d like immediately to draw attention to work by Cumming (1989) that offers a two-factor account of some second-language
ting subjectivity from the assessment procedure. Gannon (1985: 39) argues convincingly (in our view) that objective asse
et assign a single mark on the scale. For example, West (1989) presents scales used by two leading examining boards in

In this way, after dates with a non-citational function had been deleted, a total of 315 citations were identified in the corpus. An analysis of the example above illustrates how the 315 citations were identified, i.e. each line of the KWIC (key word in context) printout was counted as one citation. However this could be described as a 'quick and dirty' (Swales, 1990) analysis as results will account for all formal citations and most, but not absolutely all references to previous research. The most serious omission is that of renewed or extensive discussion of a previously mentioned writer without the repetition of the year in parenthesis (though I also conducted searches for 'ibid.' and 'op. cit.'). This is important when, as Jacoby contends longer discussions of a particular work are more likely to occur if a writer has to "devote some space to making a case for stronger denial or affirmation of predecessors" (Jacoby, 1987:45). An alternative strategy to overcome this problem would be to concordance all the names in the bibliographies. However, on a small corpus consisting of a number of articles this would not be cost-effective.

Furthermore, like Munby, in Swales' (1986) corpus, some researchers become so much a part of the discipline that their work is no longer explicitly referenced. For example, the phrase "a Whorfian reductionist view" was not located by means of the concordanced search.

Table 1 below presents the distribution of the citations found by the "(19??)" search throughout the eleven articles.

Table 1: The distribution of citations in 11 applied linguistics articles

Text	Number of Words in Text	Number of Citations
1	2543	19
2	6231	23
3	6973	53
4	3543	18
5	3004	36
6	4106	33
7	4958	20
8	5255	58
9	6384	36
10	3463	10
11	3543	9
Total	49913	315

<u>'Say'</u>

Analyzing the reporting verbs in the introductions of approximately 100 journal articles from such diverse fields as applied linguistics, geology, and veterinary science Thompson and Ye (1991) observe that 'say' "appeared less frequently than would have been predicted" (ibid.:367). They found 9 occurrences of 'say' though 12 of 'remark'. Their findings are consistent with those from my own corpus in which the lexeme 'say' was used only 4 times in relation to citation. All four occurrences are given below in a KWIC format:

```
1 980, and quoted in Rutherford) had this to say :      English speakers have, in effect, more wo
2 s of this kind, as Biggs and Telfer (1987) say, help "link the content being learned with existing k
3 ng comprehension. As Tierney (1983:9) has said, "It is easy to forget that the mastery of the strat
4 eptual schemata for the text. A schema is said to be "a collection of concepts and associative link
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Though all four occurrences of 'say' have direct quotation in common there nevertheless remains a variety of use that eludes our students:

a) the first introduces an 'extended' (and therefore, indented quotation) of over 50 words in two sentences whereas, the other three introduce 'shorter' quotations of one sentence or less which are incorporated into the writers' own sentences.

b) the second, closest to the pattern "x says ..." frequently overused by novice writers, is the only example of 'say' in the present simple (active voice). Numbers 1, 3, and 4 are past simple, present perfect and passive, respectively.

c) the fourth combines a definition of one term with short quotations from two separate sources within one sentence.

Given the above variety with the humble 'say' it is not surprising to find even more variety in other aspects of citation. Nevertheless, it is useful to look for some broad patterns of use.

The following sections investigate the citation habits of 'expert' writers in an attempt to answer the following questions:

- to what extent do they quote?
- do they use long or short quotations?
- to what extent do they incorporate quotations into their own language?
- do they refer to previous researchers within their own sentences or in brackets?
- which tense do they tend to use most?

Length of Citations

Using Swales' (1986) definition of 'short' or 'extensive' (i.e. the discussion of the previous research extends over more than one sentence) this corpus shows that expert writers favour 'short' rather than 'extensive' citations. Looking from each of the 315 formal citations to their wider context I found that 96 (i.e. less than one third) were referred to in a discussion spanning more than one sentence.

Number and Length of Quotations

Approximately one third of the citations involved direct quotation. Figures are very approximate here as they depend very much on the counting procedures and definition of 'quotation'. This is not difficult when extended quotations are involved, but problems arise particularly with one or two word quotations. For example, how many quotations from Swales are contained within the first sentence of the above paragraph? The answer depends on one's definition and could be 1, 2, or 4. In my own count from the corpus (using the function of looking from the citation as shown above, to the wider context on the computer screen and if necessary, the original articles) I would say that there are two quotations from Swales. The first two are separate words. However, the second two refer to the same thing and the source, Swales is not repeated. So, whenever short quotations are repeated and again attributed directly to a previous researcher, then I include them in the count. (This was especially problematic in one article containing a lengthy discussion of 'errors' and 'mistakes' and how various researchers had defined the terms). On the other hand, when a term such as 'discourse community' in either single or double inverted commas was attributed to more than one writer at the same time, it was not considered a quotation.

Interestingly, over 75% (ca. 84) of the direct quotations consisted of no more than 20 words (graphemes), and of these 50% (ca. 44) are one and two word quotations.

Thus, about a third of the citations in this corpus involve direct quotations and these are frequently short. How, and to what extent, do academics incorporate these into their own writing, and what do they do in the other two thirds of the citations?

Integral vs. Non-Integral Citations

Swales provides us with a very simple and easily counted means of analyzing attribution techniques:

> An integral citation is one in which the name of the researcher occurs in the actual citing sentence as some sentence element; in a non-integral citation, the researcher occurs either in parenthesis or is referred to elsewhere by a superscript number or via some other device. (Swales, 1990:148)

Though Swales makes no mentions of quotation, presumably seeing it as only one part of citation, I also investigated the relation between 'integration' of citations and 'integration' of quotations. As I had already discovered that over 75% of the quotations in my corpus consisted of 20 words or less, I expected to find writers incorporating the previous researchers' words into their own sentences. The results for the four categories are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Integral vs. non-integral citations

Integral	Non-integral	Total
- Quotation 143	- Quotation 102	245
+ Quotation 41	+ Quotation 29	70^2
Total (58%) 184	Total(42%) 131	315

Thus, as can be seen, the applied linguists most commonly (45%) referred to the previous researcher in their own words and as part of their own sentences. They also incorporated approximately 58% of the quotations from previous researchers into their own sentences (giving a ratio of roughly 60:40 for integral and non-integral quotations).

The Integral Citations

As these citations constitute the largest category (58%), it is worth investigating more closely how the integration of the previous researcher's name into the writer's sentence is realised. Again Swales (1990:149) provides some useful guide-lines for further categorisation. His examples, however, though witty and illuminating do not account for all the irregularities and variety found in authentic journal writing. I have, consequently, adapted his model and sorted the integral citations into the following four categories:

1   Name of researcher (NR) as subject of the writer's sentence:

        Stern (1984) includes evaluation as one of the 'curriculum processes'.

2   NR as agent:

        Studies involving Chinese writers have been conducted by Lay (1982), Arndt (1987) and Friedlander (1990).

3   NR as part of a possessive noun phrase:

        Odlin's (1989) enquiry ... .

4   NR in other positions eg. as a direct object or after prepositions other than 'by' (2) or 'of' (3):

        ..., citing Cziko (1983), ...
        ... are suggested in Zepp's quote from Lemon (1981):

The count for the above four categories is shown in Table 3 below as rounded percentages:

Table 3: NR position in integral citations

Name of Researcher	%
subject	49
passive agent	24
possessive noun phrase	19
other	7

Expert writers clearly tend to prefer integral citations with the name of the researcher as the subject of the sentence. The question, therefore, arises as to which tense they choose for these sentences. Though the question of tense and citation has been addressed at greater length by previous researchers (Een, 1982; Ard, 1982; Malcolm, 1987; Thompson & Ye, 1991; Swales, 1981, 1990; Adams Smith, 1984; Peritz, 1983) it is still valid to compare previous reading, and intuition with this particular applied linguistics corpus.

The table below shows the tenses for the integral citations with NR as the subject.

Table 4:Tense distribution in NR subject citations

Tense	%
present	71
past	17
present perfect	12

Thus, combining the above factors, a search for integral citations involving NR as subject in present tense sentences produces a total of 60 occurrences, almost 20%, of the formal citations within the corpus.

Verbs of Citation

Further analysis of the 60 occurrences of integral citations with NR as subject in present tense sentences yields 42 so-called 'reporting verbs'. There appears to be no clear consensus in the literature of discourse analysis as to the meaning of this term, e.g. Swales (1990:151) claims that a writer can select from about 50, whereas Thompson and Ye (1991:367) report that they have identified over 400, and have developed a classification system consisting of 22 categories and sub-categories. Hunston (1993), emphasising the potential conflict in academic writing between the previous researcher and present writer, reduces Thompson and Ye's categories to seven classes.

In this paper, I make no attempt to classify all the reporting verbs within my corpus though it is readily seen that some verbs are used more frequently than others. Table 5 lists the 14 verbs which occur more than once within the "(19??)" printout of integral citations (present tense and NR as subject). Using this list as an initial indicator of the frequency of the verbs, I conducted a further search for all occurrences of these 14 verbs in other sentences with the same features in order to find additional occurrences which do not appear close to the year in brackets. The combined results are given in the table below and the KWIC printout showing the actual verbs in their immediate context is provided in Appendix 2. I offer this list and the accompanying printout as the *beginning* of an answer to the question posed in the title of this paper. It must be remembered, however, that the verbs listed below are used under very specific conditions and no claims are made here regarding their overall frequency throughout the corpus.

Table 5: **The reporting verbs occurring most frequently in integral citations with NR as subject in present tense sentences**

Verb	Occurrence with (19??)	Occurrence without (19??)	Total
argue	4	1	5
suggest	3	1	4
propose	3	0	3
cite	3	1	4

claim	2	1	3
call	2	3	5
define	2	0	2
term	2	1	3
include	2	0	2
state	2	1	3
consider	2	0	2
report	2	2	4
point out	2	3	5
caution	2	0	2

Selection of any of the above verbs as an alternative to 'say' obviously depends on the meaning of the word and the writer's aim in using it. The printout in Appendix 2 provides a starting point for students, with their teacher's help, to analyse this and then increase their vocabulary range when making citations in their own writing. Later stages would involve looking at the other verbs occurring less frequently, the use of the verbs in sentences with other tenses and those in which the NR is the passive agent. Another fruitful alternative would be to investigate the various possessive noun phrases.

The functions of citations

This aspect of the subject has been addressed very competently by various other writers. Swales (1986), for example, gives a comprehensive over-view of work done by citation analysts and calls for an integration of their methods and findings into discourse analysis, while Jacoby (1987) applies an evaluation/originality cline to show how literary researchers manage to present their work as continuing in the scholarly tradition of their field while simultaneously claiming that they have an original point to make. In a previous paper (Pickard, 1993a) I used Swales's (1986) categories to analyze the amount of refutation in my applied linguistics corpus. The paper contains results showing that only 5% of the citations involved any negative assessment of the work of the previous researchers and speculation as to why this might occur can also be found in the paper.

Cynics may suggest that the majority of citations are used to show how widely the writer has read in the field. However, this could be a fairly important observation for students who, when they first come to university do not realise that they are actually expected to show where they have obtained their information. Thus, Roach (Ivanic & Roach, 1990) describes how friends, already initiated into university life, had to actually explain to her that she needed to include citations in the essay which she wanted to answer in only a few of her own words.

Campbell (1990) also observes how inexperienced writers are unable to acknowledge their sources when incorporating them into essays. Thus, the major reasons why students need to cite their sources are to avoid being accused of plagiarism through copying without acknowledging, and to show their width of reading.

Discussion

The above study of the citations in this corpus is by no means complete, e.g. the non-integral citations have not been analyzed, but the idea has been in each case to look for the most common patterns[3]. In this way we can begin to see how to grade materials for students and make explicit the basic techniques for gaining admission into the academic discourse community. The insights thus gained may be applied pedagogically as described below.

Pedagogical Applications

I concur with Campbell when she complains that handbooks on writing tend to "either avoid the issue of documentation altogether, or they present an anxiety-producing harangue about plagiarism, followed by confusing rules about the punctuation of footnotes and bibliographical citations" (Campbell, 1990:226). She also observes that though undergraduate students do a lot of reading, they take no notice of the style and techniques employed in the texts they are reading. Consequently, it becomes the composition instructor's duty:

> to direct students' attention to how academicians reference their sources, when
> they provide quotations rather than paraphrases or summaries of information,
> and probably most importantly, how these references support rather than govern
> the writer's content. (ibid.:227).

Though, obviously, taking complete journal articles into class is a useful first move, I suggest that an essential tool in this process, for both instructor and students, is a computerised text analyzer or concordancer. With the aid of a concordancer students can 'physically' search for patterns which are otherwise not apparent. This approach is especially useful if students can also analyze their course books since they may be already familiar with the content. The ideal learning situation is one in which students have access to a concordancer and a corpus with which they are to some degree familiar in order to make their own learning materials. (Pickard (1993b) provides an account of a course which culminated in student-led seminars based upon concordanced exercises they had prepared themselves.)

Intermediate or supplementary steps towards this ideal situation are outlined below:

a) The teacher develops concordanced exercises (cf. appendix 3) concentrating on citation patterns frequently used within the students' disciplines.

b) The teacher discusses concordanced examples of student writing which rely heavily on the verb 'say', and elicits suggestions for making the writing more interesting and varied (see Tribble, 1991:14).

c) The teacher, using lists compiled from a concordanced analysis of authentic academic texts, asks students to classify/analyze the nouns and verbs of citation.

d) The teacher presents students with a simplified chronological representation of the reporting process and asks them to find examples of each stage in their own textbooks. Thompson & Ye (1991:378) present a cline which would be helpful for both teachers and students to identify the various stages in the reporting process (writer writes; writer evaluates; writer reads; author writes; author thinks; author researches) and examples of the reporting verbs which may occur at the different stages.

e) As part of project work the students conduct research into the quantitative and qualitative aspects of citation (Swales, 1987). Thus for the former:

> each student takes an international journal from his or her field and
> analyzes an agreed number of recent articles in terms of the language(s) of
> the citations. The class-pooled expertise is used to identify individually
> unrecognized languages. A master table of all the findings is prepared,
> and then small groups discuss, draft, and redraft the emerging research
> paper. (Swales, 1987:53)

For the qualitative aspects, Swales's (ibid.:) suggestions include students interviewing first each other, and later members of staff who have successfully had journal articles published about their citation behaviour.

The above steps all have the one common purpose of encouraging student **awareness** of the citation behaviour of 'expert' writers. However, an alternative yet complementary approach is to encourage

greater student **involvement** with their sources. Work by Ivanic suggests that teachers "should set tasks that demand an interaction between received material and the student's own voice" (Ivanic, 1993). Such tasks, she suggests, might include having students 'write to the writer of this extract', or bringing to class quotations which they really like (Ivanic, 1993). Expanding her latter suggestion, I recently took a quotation I liked to my EAP class and explained what I liked about it and then showed the students two different ways that I might incorporate it into a piece of academic writing of my own. The students then discussed and compared quotations they had selected from their own fields. If they could see any relation such as contrast, comparison, expansion, etc. between them, they then tried to incorporate two short quotations into a paragraph of their own writing. Though I cannot ascertain whether the students carried the lesson of this activity over into their essays and project reports, it is certainly an activity I shall try again.

This paper has suggested that students lack knowledge of the citation behaviour of expert writers and proposes that we look at the choices most frequently made by expert writers when making citations. If, through concordanced research such as the above, we can inform ourselves and our teaching in order to make those choices more explicit for students, then we will be in a position to actively empower them to become members of their academic discourse community.

I would like to thank Dr. Desmond Allison for his helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

Notes

1   As far as possible, tables, bibliographies and examples of learner English were excluded from the corpus.

2   There are fewer quotations recorded here than referred to in the earlier section on quotations. This is accounted for by the fact that one citation may include more than one quotation from the same source.

3   I am aware that there are different types of research papers (Crookes, 1986:58) and that various disciplines have different conventions regarding citation, though Hunston (1993:133), investigating disagreement in academic discourse, warns that "assumptions about what is 'the same' genre and what is 'different' must be treated with the utmost caution".

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Appendices

Appendix 1.

Corpus

Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching Nos. 12 -14, 1989 -1991, The Language Centre, University of Hong Kong

Allison, D. 1989. Sentence Sequence and Coherence: In search of Readers' Problems in Academic Discourse

Allison, D. and Cheung, E. 1991. "Good and Poor" Writing and Writers: Studying Individual Performance as a Part of Test Validation

Bruce, N. 1990. EL2-Medium in a Largely Monolingual Society: The Case of Hong Kong

Budge, C. 1989. Plural Marking in Hong Kong English

Falvey, P. 1991. Curriculum Development in the 6th Form: the Potential for Changes in Approaches to Writing Skills at the Tertiary Level

Foo, R. 1989. A Reading Experiment with L2 Readers of English in Hong Kong -Effects of the Rhetorical Structure of Expository Texts on Reading Comprehension

Green, C. 1991. Typological Transfer, Discourse Accent and the Chinese Writer of English

Lee, N. 1990. Notions of "Error" and Appropriate Corrective Treatment

Leung, P. 1991. An Evaluation Study of a Programme to Teach Standard Report Writing

Lewkowicz, J. 1991. Testing Listening Comprehension: A New Approach?

Tong, K., Chan R. and Lewkowicz, J. 1991. To Test or Not To Test, That is the Question

Appendix 2

The most frequent reporting verbs found in the applied linguistics corpus in integral citations with NR as subject in present tense sentences

vity from the assessment procedure. Gannon (1985: 39) argues convincingly (in our view) that objective assessment of writing ca pecific goals and objectives" (Nunan, 1984:46). Brown argues that "evaluation should be the part of a curriculum that includes, urement and generality of theory. Paulston (1980) also argues that the quantitative paradigm, with its emphasis on objective, `h f threatening authority, etc.. In this way, Widdowson argues, language comes not only to convey a communal reality or culture b a target language (TL). However, as Rutherford (1983) argues, there is no reason to suppose that notions of a universal order o

1986). Chavez-Oller et al (1985), citing Cziko (1983), suggest that one reason for the Shanahan et al findings may have been t le, cautions against mistaking intervening variables and suggests ways to overcome the `problems' of contamination. Yet if we l culty following their EL2-medium curriculum. Kwo (1987) suggests that these students are often so poor in English that they swi be seen as an affectation of superiority. Cheung (1984) suggests that English has become more a symbol of power than a means of

the international commercial sectors. Johnson (1988) proposes teaching a form of "International English" (IE) designed for peo n student product" (Mackay,1981:110). McGinley (1983) proposes a package which bears certain similarities to Mackay's aradigm e the different stages of a curriculum. Mackay (1981) proposes one which involves thirteen categories. This is a process-orien

the Hong Kong one. Wagner et al. (1989), for example, cite the case of Berber monolingual children in Morocco catching up with e main communicative needs of its community. Pattison cites the example of English itself, which only in 1362 replaced French a ntegrated. In a personal communication (1986), Oller, citing Dewey, contrasts narrative and descriptive varieties of text, "the iko, 1978; Allison, 1986). Chavez-Oller et al (1985), citing Cziko (1983), suggest that one reason for the Shanahan et al findi

Syndicate Marking Scale and Oxford Delegacy Scale. West claims that the use of these scales helps examiners not only to ensure cal errors belong to the level of syntax. Hicks (1983) claims that some local errors such as word omissions and lexical errors peech simultaneously and temporarily. Laver (1970) even claims that spontaneous NS speech is far from `error'-free and is full

fluency, perhaps through what Lambert & Tucker (1972) call `incipient contrastive linguistics', has positive educational effect tion. At sentence level, what Burt and Kiparsky would call local `errors' may often reflect performance `mistakes' for which im re-create the author's message - what Widdowson (1984) calls the submissive reader'. 2) The `deep processer'. a reader who expla ing, cooperative imperative which accounts for what he calls man's "questing" instinct, and an inward-looking territorial impera 974) gives a condensed version of these steps which he calls the PSA cycle: Problem diagnosis - solution development - action im

nking as problem-solving" (Brown, 1973). Fisher (1987) defines problem- solving as `higher order' thinking, calling for skills s r's selective processing of the data. Rumelhart (1977) defines reading comprehension as the process of choosing and verifying co

e-L1 population1 have what Giles & Johnson (1987: 72) term a "positive" ethnolinguistic identity, in that they tend to: 1. main text, involving notions of what van Dijk (1977: 97-98) terms "normal ordering", that also call for attention2. One area that wi main conclusions from the text. He is what Widdowson terms a `dominant reader'. Many of my subjects fit into the description o

systematic and responsible way" (Allen, 1984:70). Nunan considers evaluation to be "a necessary component in any curriculum pl nise and develop a piece of writing - what Cumming (1989) considers as "writing expertise" - is not noticeably credited in the t

acknowledged. Candlin, Kirkwood and Moore (1978) already include `evaluation of students' and `evaluation of course' in their m of course' in their model of course design. Stern (1984) includes evaluation as one of the `curriculum processes'. Breen makes

would be a crucial activity..." (Breen, 1984:58). Allen states that curriculum decision-making "must be subject to some form o ng the L1 as principal medium of instruction. Herb Clark states the problem thus: Figure 3: The "hygiene rule": reducing existing error corrective procedures, Johnson (1988:91) states that "techniques (like, perhaps, explanation) for handling erro

to the question asked to the extreme. Biggs (1989: 434-5) does caution against labelling Hong Kong learners as having a purely ore than the skills of listening. Buck (1988: 33), for example, cautions against mistaking intervening variables and suggests w

s is associated with greater cognitive growth. However, Lambert points out that most of the findings of this type are drawn fro ting syllabi and/or needs analyses. However, as Alderson (1988) points out, both are subject to judgements being made by so-cal t quantitative and qualitative evaluation can co-exist. As Allen points out, it would be a mistake to think in terms of two clea academic langauge proficiency"(CALP) functions of language. So points out that the Cantonese used to perform CALP functions "i ontent cannot suffice to establish content validity.2 Weir also points out that, while statistical data can certainly contribut

e survey for the AERA's Handbook of Research on Teaching (1985), report largely positive effects of bilingual programmes at the (refer to textbook again)   Johnson et al and also Lin (1988) report on the positive humanistic role of this code-switching, and Low (1982) with respect to test results.   Lee and Low report a two-factor solution for their test results. They inte sion of subtest 2 from the account is worth noting. Lee and Low report that subtest 2 "had a high error variance (.24) and beha

Appendix 3.

Concordanced worksheet

Verbs of citation

Expert writers tend to use a wide variety of verbs when citing the work of others. The aim of this exercise is to focus your attention on some of the most common.

Task one (prediction)

Read quickly through the extracts below. How many of the gaps can you fill before you see the list of missing words? Write down only those verbs which you feel fairly certain about but also think about the various possibilities for the others. (Expert writers were able to guess two or three before seeing the words below). Also consider the verb tenses. Can you predict which tense expert writers will use most often for citations?

Task two

Fill in the gaps with the verbs on page 2. Use as many contextual clues (both before and after the gap) as you can. **Cover the key while you do this exercise.**

om the assessment procedure. Gannon (1985: 39) _____ convincingly (in our view)
ara et al, 1977; Chavez-Oller et al, 1985). These researchers have _____ that cl
Allison, 1986). Chavez-Oller et al (1985), _____ Cziko (1983), suggest that on
are Chinese medium). Johnson et al (1985) _____ that on average there was actu
's Handbook of Research on Teaching (1985), _____ largely positive effects of b
in the teaching of reading, Carrell (1985) _____ the following comments: "Su
tackled" (Fisher, 1987:11). Treece (1985) _____ various steps of problem solvin
verifiability or agreement. Taylor (1986) _____ a strong case for detailed stud
& Gulutsan, 1974). Cummins & Swain (1986) _____ Vygotsky's (1962: 110) suggesti
alls "inauthentic" labour. Phillips (1986) _____ this as "the non-productive w
studies (Pierson 1987, Pierson et al 1987) have _____ that students in Hong Kong
ng their EL2-medium curriculum. Kwo (1987) _____ that these students are ofte
h organisation of the text. Meyer (1987) _____ the relationships between u
f this type of learning. Urquhart (1987) also _____ two different types of
blem-solving" (Brown, 1973). Fisher (1987) _____ problem- solving as 'higher o

a) argues	g) observes
b) citing	h) quotes
c) defines (2)	i) report
d) discusses	j) showed
e) lists	k) shown (2)
f) makes (2)	l) suggests

Task three

Now check your answers with the key (these are the words from the **original** extracts though other possibilities may exist). The asterisks indicate which answers expert writers were able to guess correctly before seeing the list of possible words. Note also the phrases in **bold print** which may help in guessing the word.

Key

* om the assessment procedure. Gannon (1985: 39) _____ **convincingly** (in our view)
ara et al, 1977; Chavez-Oller et al, 1985). These researchers **have** _____ **that** cl
Allison, 1986). Chavez-Oller et al (1985), _____ Cziko (1983), suggest that on
are Chinese medium). Johnson et al (1985) _____ **that on average there was actu**
's Handbook of Research on Teaching (1985), _____ **largely positive effects** of b
in the teaching of reading, Carrell (1985) _____ the following **comments:** "Su
tackled" (Fisher, 1987:11). Treece (1985) _____ **various steps** of problem solvin
 * verifiability or agreement. Taylor (1986) _____ a strong **case for** detailed stud
& Gulutsan, 1974). Cummins & Swain (1986) _____ **Vygotsky's** (1962: 110) suggesti
alls "inauthentic" labour. Phillips (1986) _____ this as **"the non-productive w**
 * studies (Pierson 1987, Pierson et al 1987) **have** _____ that students in Hong Kong
ng their EL2-medium curriculum. Kwo (1987) _____ **that** these students are ofte
h organisation of the text. Meyer (1987) _____ the relationships between u
f this type of learning. Urquhart (1987) also _____ **two different types of**
blem-solving" (Brown, 1973). Fisher (1987) _____ problem- solving as `higher o

(Extracts taken from: Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, The Language Centre, HKU, 1989-1991)

NB: The present tense is used for the majority of the words above. Compare this with journal and textbook citations in your own field. You will probably find the same preference for the present tense.

Theme Choice and Lateral Verbs in Newspaper Editorials

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Abstract

This paper examines co-occurrences of the major theme types with the various lateral verbs, as outlined in Kress and Hodge, 1979. The data consist of 31 editorials from *The Sun* and 29 from *The Times*, two British newspapers from the same "stable" and, thus, presumably sharing the same ideology, but disseminating it through very different styles. Our starting hypothesis is that these distinctive styles owe something to the choices of theme and lateral verb type made by their writers. Therefore, we determine the ratios of actional to relational verbs and those of several other subcategories for each theme type. We attempt to discern patterns and interpret these tentatively in terms of rhetorical motivation. After a brief section on its theoretical background, the paper reviews various theme choices along with the verbs that co-occur with them, in three groups: unmarked/participant themes, other (non-participant) noun group themes, and marked themes.

Introduction

News in the tabloid press and in the so-called quality press seems to be organised in rather different ways (V. Dijk, 1985:181).

This is true not only of macro text organisation but also at the level of local grammatical choices involving theme and rheme. In this paper, we will analyse 60 editorials from the British newspapers *The Sun* (31) and *The Times* (29) for correlations of choice of theme (for which we use Halliday's (1985) model) with the various verb types outlined in Kress and Hodge's (1979) lateral model.

A study of newspaper discourse should require no justification because it is probably both the most read of all text types and that of which the greatest volume is printed. Moreover, the two papers in question, both from the same "stable", represent the two ends of the press spectrum: *The Sun* is Britain's top-selling tabloid daily, known for its sensationalism, while *The Times* is a well-established quality paper. A comparison of these two particular papers should be doubly interesting, holding out, as it does, the possibility of shedding light on the question of how their presumably shared ideology is disseminated through such different styles.

As a starting point, we hypothesise that this difference in style has to do with linguistic choices made by the writers. In this paper, we will look at the choice of main verb, the central element of the rheme, from the perspective of the major theme types; unmarked participants, other nominal groups, and marked themes. Especially where statistics for *The Sun* and *The Times* diverge, we will attempt to discern rhetorical motivation for this.

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Theoretical background

Kress and Hodge (1979) explain that perception is not purely psychological but dependent on language, which reconstitutes the world and provides the systematic organising assumptions through which we see "reality". As the practical consciousness of society, language is:

> inevitably a partial and false consciousness. We can call it ideology, defining ideology as a systematic body of ideas, organized from a particular point of view (Kress and Hodge, 1979:6).

More practically, for our purposes, language is:

> an instrument of control as well as of communication. Linguistic forms allow significance to be conveyed and to be distorted. In this way hearers can be both manipulated and informed, preferably manipulated while they suppose they are being informed (ibid:6).

Our instruments of inquiry are, on the one hand, Halliday 's (1985) thematic categories and, on the other, Kress and Hodge's (1979) lateral model. For Halliday, firstly, theme is the start of the clause, what the message will be about, up to and including the first ideational element. However, when this definition would have produced a theme that did not really show "where the passage was going", we extended it to include the grammatical subject, following Thomas (1991), who claims that: "in unmarked sentences, [aboutness] is generally conveyed through the grammatical subject" (p. 253). Thus, for example, with adjunct-only themes that Halliday accepts, such as:
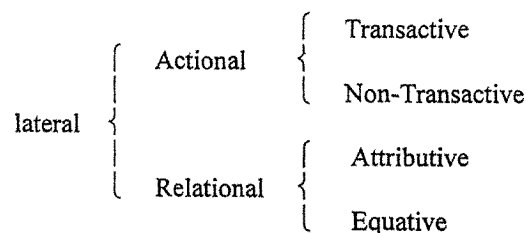
once I was a real turtle

very carefully she put him back on his feet (Halliday, 1985:39),

we would have included "I" in the first, "she" in the second.

As for the remainder of the clause, the rheme, we focus on the main verb, using Kress and Hodge's lateral model, which portrays "reality" in terms of two sub-models; the actional and the relational. The actional sub-model relates one entity - actor to another, affected by a process (transactive) or, alternatively, a single entity and a process (non-transactive). The relational sub-model involves writer comments on entities or actions and is broken down into attributives, which describe and are either possessive (eg. "Bill has courage") or qualitative (eg. "Paula is brilliant"), and equatives, which equate two concepts, usually entities, (eg. "John is president").

Kress and Hodge claim for their model, which they call essentially semantic, a higher degree of rigour and delicacy than was possible with the traditional distinction between transitive and intransitive. Unlike the latter, for instance, their lateral model would not confuse actions and non-actions (e.g. "the parcel *weighs* ten pounds"). Unfortunately, a semantic analysis is at least partially dependent on reader interpretation. This means that even their model fails to clarify, definitively, the philosophical question of what constitutes an action in a world subject to perpetual change (Halliday, 1993). So as not to become embroiled in the Kantian dilemma of subjective versus objective, therefore, we opted to analyse by form only, to ignore Kress and Hodge's mental versus physical process dichotomy, and to reduce their lateral model to:

```
                                    ┌  Transactive
                    ┌  Actional  ┤
                    │               └  Non-Transactive
        lateral  ┤
                    │               ┌  Attributive
                    └  Relational ┤
                                    └  Equative
```

Our procedure was, briefly, as follows:

1. Locate and number each independent clause.
2. Identify a theme (and, therefore, rheme) for each.
3. Determine the relative numerical importance of each category under consideration.
4. Analyse similarities and differences between *The Times* and *The Sun* and formulate hypotheses, if possible, as to their rhetorical motivation.

Findings

Participant themes

Participant themes are the norm in most text types. Not only are they statistically significant, but, together with their rhemes, they allow insights into a newspaper's ideology by revealing the sorts of people, groupings of people, things and concepts credited with acting on the world for good or ill. Participant choice indicates who or what is accorded actorial importance and the choice of lateral to co-occur with this participant is, in itself, a statement of opinion. As Kress and Hodge explain:

> Although the classification process is prescribed by convention, it is the speaker who performs it and who chooses which classification to apply (Kress and Hodge, 1979:9).

These choices many not register consciously in the mind of the reader, but their influence is such that we usually know which papers make which and choose a paper on this basis;

> In most cases the paper that challenges our own assumptions least of all (Ibid:15).

What, then, are the predominant participant choices in *The Sun* and *The Times*? What, if anything, are they shown as doing?

Table 1. Participant Themes v lateral Verbs (%)											
		Average		Named		Title		Pronoun		Institution		Discourse	
		S*	T*	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
Actional	T	46	44	32	51	40	40	45	44	57	54	64	100
	Non-T	29	19	46	34	20	60	31	22	24	27	27	0
	Passive	8	11	14	7	20	0	6	10	11	5	0	0
Relational	Attributive	11	18	4	7	20	0	10	18	5	10	9	0
	Equative	6	8	4	0	0	0	8	6	3	4	0	0

* S = Sun, T = Times

The figures for participant themes can be seen in Table 1, above. It is to be noted that all figures are percentages of the total occurrence of a given theme taking given verb types. It should be borne in mind that the table masks whether a category is sizeable or not. In particular, discourse participant in *The Times* has only one occurrence. Figures are rounded up or down to avoid decimal points. It should also be remembered that, while passives have been separated for the sake of clarity, they are also transactives.

Named participants

A major choice in both papers is named participant, which makes explicit an actor's identity, including her or his name, though it is relatively more used in *The Sun* (possibly due to that paper's emphasis on private individuals). First of all, we can say that an actor thus made explicit is almost sure to be portrayed as actionally potent: 92 % of named participants in *The Sun* and 92 % in *The Times* take actional verbs. These are well above the average overall ratios for actionals, of 83 % in *The Sun* and 74 % in *The Times*. Relationals are correspondingly low, with only 8 % and 7 % in *Sun* and *Times*, respectively; well below the average for these verb types.

In Sentence 2 of the example below, a named participant theme, (John Major) is coupled with an actional verb (is objecting to) in a way that is portrayed as positive and forceful by *The Sun*:

1. Germany and France are planning their own private army. 2. John Major is objecting to this force outside the control of NATO. 3. He is dead right. (The Sun, 19.10.91)

Analysis of the subcategories reveals that all *Times* relationals are attributives, likely to denote description rather than evaluation, but there are too few in *The Sun* to be conclusive. Of actionals in *The Sun*, 50% (13) were non- Ts (non-transactives); a third Ts (transactives) and a small number passive Ts, suggesting that individuals in *The Sun* are relatively unlikely to be doing anything. Often non-Ts denote speech. Given that, overall, 65 % of *Sun* actionals are Ts, this is a striking reversal indeed.

In *The Times*, contrarily, the ratio is more normal: 55 % of actionals are Ts; 37 % non-Ts and 8 % passives. Here too, non-Ts account for more than their average of 30 % ; but there is no reversal of the positions of Ts and non-Ts, as there is in *The Sun*. A majority of *Times* actors, presumably, do act.

Finally, there are some interesting differences with regard to subjects and objects. A majority (53 %) of *Times* objects, for instance, are abstract, suggesting *The Times'* named participants often affect concepts in an intellectual discussion, whereas the figure in *The Sun* is only 33 %. Indirect objects of named participants account for slightly more (22 %) in *The Sun* than *The Times* (18 %), again perhaps due to quotations from individuals on their reactions to topical issues. Then, subjects of passives are less likely to be explicit in *The Sun* (25%) than *The Times* (40%). Since, in most respects (see Bernstein, 1971), *The Sun* and *The Times* appear to employ elements of working class and middle class discourse, respectively, the figures for agentless passives - which Kress and Hodge claim are particularly common in middle class speech - are surprising. Possibly *The Sun*'s high incidence reflects a rhetorical strategy.

Title participants

A more minor choice in both papers is title participant, referring to a person by title or position. Virtually all occurrences take actional verbs, so they are portrayed as movers, which is not surprising, since they tend to be ministers or holders of high office, whom right wing papers such as ours would predictably show to be acting consequentially on the world.

What is surprising is that the position with regards to Ts and non-Ts is reversed vis-a-vis that for named participants. This time, it is *The Sun* in which Ts are the largest category within title participants; *The Times* that employs non-Ts with a majority (60%). Broadly, therefore, *The Sun* makes them act on the world; *The Times*, perhaps, makes them speak to it. This might concord with *The Times'* image as an organ of the establishment in so far as weight is given to ministers' pronouncements (which many non-Ts would be).

The following example features a title participant theme (referred to by position) with a transactive verb. The article it comes from relates how a company selling washing machines failed to honour guarantees regarding faulty merchandise:

An executive brushed the incident off as a rare and inexplicable fall from usual high standard (*The Sun*, 14. 10 91).

Pronoun participants

The largest group of theme types in *The Sun* and a large group in *The Times*, pronouns are slightly above average in actional potency, with 82 % and 76 % taking actionals in *Sun* and *Times*, respectively. As for relationals, those coupled with pronoun participants are relatively likely to be equatives in *The Sun*, where these account for 44 %, nearly half, of relationals (as opposed to 25 % in *The Times*). Pronouns, at least in *The Sun*, are therefore possibly more likely targets for evaluation than most theme types.

In both papers, a slight majority of pronouns take Ts, as against non-Ts and passives. This time it is *The Sun* which has more abstract objects and abstract subjects, while *The Times* employs more indirect objects. But it is *The Times*, after all, whose Ts again involve more abstract entities overall, thanks to 14 % of its pronoun Participants having both abstract subject and object (for the same verb), whereas *The Sun* has none of these. However, if either paper is to be accused of mystification through the use of agentless passives (Kress and Hodge, 1979), it is *The Sun*, of whose passives only 25% have explicit subjects, with 75% implicit.

Institution participants

Institution participants form an even larger category but, a reversal of the situation with pronouns, are particularly numerous in *The Times* (187); less so in *The Sun* (37). Their frequency of occurrence in *The Times* lends support to its image as paper of the establishment, which could be equated with the sum of its institutions. Both *Sun* and *Times* portray institution participants as actionally powerful, with well above average actional ratios of 91.9% and 86.1%, respectively.

The following example of an institution participant theme with an actional verb illustrates this:

Last November, the Tory kingmakers offered the nation a pig in a poke to succeed the overthrown Margaret Thatcher (*The Times*, 12.10.91)

Ratios for attributives vs. equatives and Ts vs. non-Ts are similar and normal in both papers, but there is a point of interest in that, within Ts, *The Sun* has an usually large group of indirect objects. They are employed with 29 % of Ts, possibly indicating a tendency for *Sun* institutions to be relatively likely to speak, rather than act. Lastly, if there is mystification through agentless passives, in this case it is *The Times*, of whose passives only 20% have explicit subjects, as against 50% in *The Sun*. This is the more suspect because institution participants constitute such a major category in *The Times*.

Discourse participants

Discourse participants thematise the writer or paper, as agent. An insignificant option in *The Times*, discourse participant themes are widely used in *The Sun* and actionally very powerful, 91% taking actional verbs. Moreover, a large majority are transactives, so are likely to be acting on the world. Not only does *The Sun* cast itself (or the editor) in the role of actor in the text, but this actor affects the world to a greater degree, proportionally, than any other significant thematic category in *The Sun*. Since there are no indirect objects or reflexives, and abstract objects are not particularly common, we can say that discourse participants are portrayed as exceptionally consequent actors.

In the example below, the paper overtly and politically intrudes into the discourse as theme of a transactive rheme:

We welcome Douglas Hurd's hostility to a federal Europe (*The Sun*, 10.10.91)

Politically/ gender-bound participants

Next we examined the occurrence of lateral verbs with themes that were bound, politically or gender-wise. Female participants, it transpired are disproportionately scarce in both papers. While they are actionally potent in *The Times*, those in *The Sun* frequently take relational verbs and two- thirds of the actionals are non-transactives. If this tendency were to hold with a larger data base, it would suggest that women in *The Sun* are really non-actors. Males, on the other hand, represent a major category. They are 6 times more numerous than females in *The Times*, 12 times more in *The Sun*. Despite their taking only 50% transactives among actionals as well as a relatively large number of abstract and indirect objects, males are portrayed as the prime actors on the world stage.

As for politically-bound themes, *The Times* employs relatively more government participants; *The Sun* more opposition participants. With both categories, *The Sun* uses more non-Ts, *The Times* more Ts. Moreover, *The Sun's* opposition participants take abstract objects in 63 % of all cases, an unusually high figure, suggesting that these actors are less likely to act on real-world entities. Possibly, this paper is presenting opposition statements only to demolish them, whereas *The Times'* government participants are actionally potent.

Other nominal group themes

The three theme types in this smaller group are neither marked nor main-line unmarked themes. Rather, they are noun groups that tend to be things, places and concepts, not usually thought of as capable of acting on the world, except figuratively. As such they are often uncontroversial on the face of it. However, there are points of interest: noun group themes, firstly, give some idea, inversely, of the extent to which the discourse is limited to its obvious players - high profile individuals or groups, usually closely linked to the game of politics. The presence of noun group themes indicates a broader culture. Secondly, abstract noun groups additionally indicate a more intellectual culture. negative noun groups, lastly, lie somewhere between the marked and the unmarked and have evaluative potential by virtue of focusing on what is not (and therefore perhaps, what could or should be), rather than recording what is.

Table 2. Other Noun Group Themes v Lateral Verbs (%)								
	Average		Noun Group		Abstract Noun		Negative Noun	
	S*	T*	S	T	S	T	S	T
Actional T	46	44	36	35	12	20	50	40
Non-T	29	19	36	20	24	12	50	47
Passive	8	11	9	18	12	19	0	7
Relational Attributive	11	18	18	21	41	32	0	7
Equative	6	8	0	6	12	16	0	0

* S = Sun, T = Times

Noun group themes

The vastly broader culture of *Times* discourse, as against *Sun* discourse, is apparent from the imbalance, in the former's favour, of 147 to 11 occurrences of noun group themes, implying that the *Sun* is more narrowly restricted to politics and/or "personalities".

Figures are average, suggesting that this is a fairly neutral category: *The Times* has, relatively, somewhat more relationals; *The Sun* more actionals. *The Times* has more Ts; *The Sun* more non-Ts. Incidences of abstract object, as well as abstract subject and object, are high and those of indirect object are low, in part, at least, because non- human / institution participants do not often speak.

Abstract noun group themes

A small category (17 instances) in *The Sun*, abstract noun group themes constitute the largest category of all in *The Times* (255 instances). Here, more than anywhere else, we see the huge cultural difference between the two papers. With little other than participant themes, *The Sun*'s texts generally only discuss people, whereas *The Times'* texts feature a wealth of more academic, abstract subjects. These differences correspond in some measure, to those between working class and middle class speech, as outlined by Bernstein (1971).

Compared to participants, abstract noun group themes are weak in terms of actional power. Only 52 % in *The Times* and 47.1% in *The Sun* take actionals. Even here, *The Times'* biggest subcategory within actionals is that of Ts; *The Sun*'s non-Ts. A predictably high percentage of Ts have abstract subject and object, while a big majority of passives are agentless, in both.

The example below, from an article covering a dispute between the government, on the one hand, and the doctors, nurses and ancillary workers , on the other, shows an abstract Noun Group theme with an actional verb. Both subject and object are abstract:

> Such economic illiteracy may do credit to their trade union single-mindedness, but does none to their status as responsible "carers". (*The Times*, 11.10.91)

Negative noun group themes

This small category in both papers thematises nominals like none, nothing, no one.   Actional ratings are nearly 100% and a large majority of Ts - which account for 50% of verbs with these themes in each paper - employ abstract objects. Negative noun group themes tend to be openly evaluative with far greater frequency than themes that are not negative and this is one category in which *The Times*, in particular, abandons its habitual image of impartiality to make forceful statements of opinion. The example below is taken from an article on the prospects of peace in the Middle East; an agentless passive T, reinforced by "must":

> no delegation must be allowed to use the americans, russians or other interested parties as proxy negotiators. (times, 17.10.91)

Another example, on the subject of television franchises, which can be assumed to be especially interesting to the owner, illustrates not only the coupling of a negative noun group theme with a highly evaluative rheme (viz fiasco), but acccumulates negatives in apposition to express it more strongly:

> nobody - neither minister nor television company, programme maker nor viewer - believes that the way the commercial television oligopoly was reordered yesterday was anything other than a fiasco. (times, 21.10.91).

This statement is reminiscent of *Sun* discourse in its presumption that the paper's opinions enjoy universal backing and authority. It suggests that negative noun group themes in *The Times* may have a role parallel to that of discourse participants in *The Sun*. The forceful statement, given added prominence by being the initial clause of its text, is portrayed as the opinion of ministers, television companies, programme-makers and viewers. Yet, not one of these groups is quoted, even indirectly, on the subject. Therefore, such statements are a radical departure from the paper's usual style of impartial and academic exposition.

Marked themes

The final group we examine in conjunction with their verbs is that of marked themes. Though the least dense in terms of occurrence, they possess potential for exploitation in evaluative rhetoric and, as such, are especially interesting. Unfortunately, there are so few instances of some subcategories that we can report little of   significance. Nevertheless, the data give an indication of possible trends that others could investigate further.

Table 3. Marked themes v Lateral Verbs (%)												
	Average		Named		Title		Pronoun		Institution		Discourse	
	S*	T*	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T	S	T
Actional T	46	44	25	36	17	14	33	20	0	31	20	0
Non-T	29	19	25	20	25	0	33	30	14	25	0	0
Passive	8	11	25	18	0	0	0	30	0	90	0	0
Relational Attributive	11	18	0	18	8	43	0	0	0	9	10	0
Equative	6	8	0	9	8	0	0	10	0	6	10	0

* S = Sun, T = Times

It should be noted that "missing percentages" in Table 3, above, represent clauses with the given theme, but no entities as subject capable of taking lateral verbs.

B-clause themes

Easily the largest marked category in *The Times* (49), though insignificant in *The Sun*, B-clause themes (the whole initial relative clause as theme) are one of only two categories in this section of which a majority employ actionals. Figures in both papers suggest no real departure from those of unmarked themes, so we can classify these as the least marked of the marked. *The Times* still has more Ts; *The Sun* more non-Ts, but ratios are evening out generally and numbers of abstract subject and object and agentless passives are growing. Thus, B-clause themes can be classed as transitional between unmarked and marked themes as regards their verb patterns.

WH-interrogatives

WH-Interrogative themes (what, where, how .....) are the reverse of B-clause themes in so far as they are the most frequently occurring marked type in *The Sun* and one of the least common in *The Times*. They are a lot more marked than B-clauses, as the change in ratings among subcategories shows, and the fact that *The Sun*'s most common marked type is so much more marked than that in *The Times* is significant in itself. now actionals are in a minority and about half of each paper's WH-Interrogatives are not even coupled with entities capable of action. This is very different to the patterns we saw with nominal or participant themes.

Polarity interrogatives

Unlike to WH-interrogatives, *The Sun*'s polarity interrogative themes (usually BE/DO + subject) are not numerous, though they still occur relatively more frequently than in *The Times*. This is to be expected from the emerging pattern of *The Sun* which more readily makes marked choices than *The Times*, because WH-interrogatives are far more marked than the polarity variety. This is clear, for example, from the fact that actionals are back in a majority (80% in The Times, 66 % in *The Sun*) and that clauses with no entities are rarer (10% in *The Times*; 33 % in *The Sun*) than for WH-interrogatives.

Despite the above unmarked-type characteristics and the central one that polarity interrogative themes include grammatical subject, for the first time in our survey non-Ts in *The Times* (37.5%) outnumber Ts (25%). A closer look reveals that *The Times* employs them with a marked evaluative function, as rhetorical questions.

40% of polarity interrogative themes in *The Times* occur at or near the start of their text and pose dummy questions to which the rest of the text gives the answer. Among the remainder there are two categories: those that take the form of real but "loaded" questions, implying a clear yes or no, and those that are self-answering. The example below illustrates the former:

> Is Germany <u>really</u> willing for decisions on Yugoslavia to be taken by majority vote? (Times, 17.10.91)

The word really, which we have underlined, makes it plain that *The Times'* answer is no. Another example, from an article on art and totalitarianism, illustrates the self- answering type:

> Was not Shostakovich compromised by his public self-inculpation at Stalin's behest, despite his private views? (Times, 17.10.91)

Verb group themes

Verb group themes are a small category in *The Sun*, but the second largest marked category in *The Times*. They take various forms, sometimes overlapping with polarity interrogatives, imperatives and other theme types. They are interesting by virtue of the spectacular difference in statistics for our two papers: in *The Sun*, 86 % have no entities and only 14 % take actionals. In *The Times*, only 19 % have no entities and 66 % take actionals. However, while less marked than *The Sun*'s verb group themes, those in *The Times* are frequently evaluative. This is already hinted at by the relatively large proportion - 40% - of relationals which are equatives, for instance the example below, from the text about broadcasting franchises, gives some idea. The theme is <u>nor is</u>:

> <u>nor is</u> the outlook all gloom (*The Times*, 17.10.91)

Agreement themes

Agreement themes are those whose sentences support or complete the previous clause and cannot stand independent of it. They are insignificantly rare in *The Times*, but an important option in *The Sun*, almost always involving evaluation. The example below takes an equative relational and involves ellipsis, as is typical of them:

> All Britain needs is a single law to allow business to open when they want. This is not revolution. <u>just freedom</u>". (*The Sun*, 16.10.91)

Conclusion

In editorials, language is used to change attitudes (Bolivar, 1985:100).

Choices in the kinds of theme and rheme employed are among the devices contributing to effecting the change.

In this paper, we analysed themes of different kinds in conjunction with their lateral verb types. The largest group was that of unmarked participant themes and it was revealing of the sorts of people credited with acting on the world and the ways in which they acted.

Of these, pronoun participants were most numerous in *The Sun*, where they were coupled relatively frequently with equative relational verbs, which are susceptible to evaluative manipulation. In *The Times*, on the other hand, institution participants were the most numerous, in line with its image as paper of the establishment. But *The Times* could be accused of mystification, here, in view of its many agentless passives.

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Discourse participants were hardly used in *The Times*, but made forceful comments in *The Sun* and were actionally more potent than any other participant category.

Huge differences were revealed between the treatment of female and of male participants. For instance, Females were a small category in *The Sun*, whereas males in the same paper were 12 times more numerous and held records for actional verbs. Thus women - a majority of the real world population - are less prominent even than the unreal discourse participants, in *The Sun*, and men are portrayed as society's prime Actors.

A parallel dichotomy between government and opposition participants highlights perhaps a double-edged tactic: the former are well represented in *The Times*, posing as paper of the establishment; the latter are far more numerous in *The Sun* - but since they are assigned a majority of non-Ts and abstract objects, among those Ts that there are, they are probably there to be evaluated, presumably negatively.

Analysis of non-participant nominal themes spotlighted a vast culture gap between *Times* and *Sun* the latter restricting itself largely to politics and personalities. Nominal group themes stood half way between the marked and the unmarked. The abstract variety was particularly numerous in *The Times*, illustrating its preference for the discussion of ideas, which was supported by record levels of relationals and a high equative ratio.

Possibly this means that *The Times* disseminates its ideology indirectly, through less overtly political topics. However, when it came to negative noun group themes, *The Times* showed its true colours, making forceful, even baseless, sweeping opinion statements and suggesting that this theme category does that for *The Times* which discourse participants do for *The Sun*.

Marked themes, finally, were scarcer than the others, but pointed to possible trends. B-clause themes were least marked followed by verb group themes next least. These were the two most common in *The Times*. The more marked choices, in which actionals became rare and many themes had no entities capable of being actors, were most common in *The Sun*, suggesting that its ideology is more foregrounded than that of *The Times*. Agreement themes and WH-interrogatives, for instance, were mainly the domain of *The Sun*.

However, we should remember that theme types can be used in different ways and are not inherently evaluative or otherwise. The balance of relational verbs to actionals, the proportion without entities, ratings for Ts and non-Ts, agentless versus explicit agent passives, and other variables, gave at least some insight into the relative evaluative potential of these choices.

> Whether (newspapers) state it or imply it, they provide us with an ideological framework
> which we share consciously or unconsciously. (Bolivar, 1985:96)

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Reports

Review of SurveyPlus : Individual learning needs assessment software
From: Temasek Plus, Temasek Polytechnic, 51 Grange Road, Singapore 1024
Hardware/software requirement: 386 PC and up. VGA display. Windows v3.1.
US$225 for a single user license.

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The focus of this program is learner training. It makes learners think about their relationship with English and about the ways in which they like to learn. It is a useful preparatory tool for self-access study and in particular would be useful in preparing learners for meetings with language learning consultants/counsellors. The program content remains uncomplicated by limiting itself to one job although it does cover a considerable amount of ground. The learner-program interface is extremely effective. It is simple to understand and easy to use, as it must be for a program which, in many cases, will only ever be used once by any learner.

Learners complete a survey which takes them through six areas relating to their needs, abilities and habits in the study of English. In each area they are presented with statements for which they must make choices which reflect their perceptions of themselves. The areas covered are the importance (to learners) of having good English, how much learners like to study English and how they perceive their strengths, weaknesses and needs. Also included are how much learners use English in daily life and how much difficulty learners think they have with English-related study and non-study activities. At the end of the survey, learners are asked to declare how much time they are willing to spend on self-access study. When the survey is completed the program defines a profile for the learner, grouping into relevant areas the answers the learner has given. This is provided as very readable on-screen or printed output.

The survey in this program covers a lot of areas. It does dwell rather heavily on areas related to English as a language of study which may not be appropriate for everyone. Although using the program will involve the learner in a considerable commitment of time, if undertaken seriously, it will be time well spent. The printed output from this program will be very useful. It can serve the learner as a record of goals and if repeated a number of times can contribute towards profiling learner development. It will also be very useful to take such a profile to a meeting with a consultant/counsellor. It will provide the counsellor with an immediate overview of the learner's perceptions of needs and will serve as a discussion point. However, much more important than the final output is the process that the learners go through while completing the survey This is truly an awareness raising exercise which cannot fail to make learners stop and think about all sorts of things related to their language learning needs and abilities.

Having praised the program it would not be fair to leave the criticism unsaid. This program tells the user that it will create a learner profile. It is difficult to see how this can be done when working only from learners' perceptions of themselves. If the program did some kind of analysis of the replies to the survey this would be truer but, in fact, it only reorganises the learner's input. This is itself a useful function but is perhaps only the raw data from which a learner profile could be constructed. As an example, I told the program that I would like to improve in everything, that is 7 skills and 19 activity types. I also said that I was only willing to spend half an hour per week on doing it. In my "learner profile" this information was repeated back to me. The program did not question whether I had the super-human ability to meet these

goals. On another occasion I told the program that understanding what lecturers say is difficult but taking notes in lectures is easy. The program did not question this apparent contradiction.

Another drawback is that in the profile a statement is made for each area of the program even if the learner has input nothing in that area. Thus the profile can be confusing in places, e.g. "You very often use English..." (note the three dots). This actually signifies that the learner has not selected "very often" for any of the statements, however, it looks like the program is making a congratulatory statement. There are a number of glitches like this which will, no doubt, be sorted out in a future version.

The demonstration copy of the program I used was customised for the Centre for Individual Language Learning (CILL) at Temasek Polytechnic in Singapore. This title appeared at the beginning and one or two questions in the survey were Singapore-related. The documentation with the demo states that customised questions are possible with the full version. Presumably, this means that the whole program can be customised to the needs of the purchasing institution. If this proves to be the case, it would also be possible to rewrite the sections focusing on English as a language of instruction for institutions where this is inappropriate.

A final critical comment relates to the collection by the program of the personal data of the user (name, ID, age, sex). Most of this information seems not to be used in the feedback given through the learner profile which makes me wonder if it is being used for some covert data collection exercise. If data is being collected on users they should be told. In fact, in many countries it would be illegal not to do so. A little investigation shows that some of this personal information is stored in a file which is not accessible through the program but which can be retrieved after its use. Perhaps this is designed for use by researchers or teachers.

This is an innovative program which fills a gap in both CALL software and self-access learner training materials. Like much new software it has a few minor glitches which will almost certainly be ironed out in future versions. Self-access learners will find it a useful tool because it will make them think a lot about what they want to learn, why they want to learn it and how they are going to learn it. Teachers and counsellors who have a strong commitment to learner training will find this a useful tool because it encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning and because it saves them a lot of time.

Kitchen Design Project for Architecture

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The English Centre, The University of Hong Kong

Last summer, applications were invited for Action Learning projects which might be funded by the Research Grants Committee. Together with the Architecture Department, ideas were discussed as to how a joint project might be developed and one suggestion made by their liaison officer was that some project might be developed to help local first year students improve their designs of kitchens. According to the department, students had difficulty in producing well designed kitchens (and bathrooms) probably due to their home experiences where the kitchens would typically be small, possibly even with shared facilities, or in cramped conditions. Broadening their horizons in whatever ways might be devised would be a practical exercise which might feasibly be introduced into an English course: the subject area is familiar to student and English teacher; no great amount of technical knowledge might be needed by first year students; an interesting range of vocabulary items might be included and all in all, it might be fun to try to incorporate some cross cultural and interdisciplinary ideas into the English communications course for Architecture students.

A fairly simple 'before' and 'after' exercise was developed in which the aim was to integrate oral presentation and descriptive writing skills, with a practical design element, in a way that would be helpful in their Architectural studies. While the application for a research grant was never actually submitted, the material was produced and considered worthy enough to be used as a class exercise. The following is a short report on the project and students' response to it.

Subjects

Three groups of Year 1 B. Arch students took part, but due to a series of last minute timetable changes, only one group of ten students was able to complete both 'before' and 'after' phases which could be video recorded for evaluation.

Materials

On a two page handout, each student was asked to consider the functions of a kitchen: who uses it? what do they do there? and what kind of appliances and utensils might be found in a kitchen? The intention here was to focus the students' minds on activities that might take place in their own kitchens at home.

A list of around 20 different items from a rubbish bin to a microwave oven and extractor fan was given to provide relevant vocabulary, some of which was familiar and some less well known. In order to stimulate their ideas and focus on any unfamiliar terms, they were asked to decide which of these items they might include in their 'ideal' kitchen and which additional items might be necessary.

Having focused on the functions and the lexical items, the students were then asked to write as detailed a description as possible of their 'ideal' kitchen and to justify the reasons for their design.

A space was provided for a rough sketch of the 'ideal' kitchen. While encouraging the students to be as imaginative and creative as possible, they were also reminded that this was an English communications class rather than the architecture studio, so as to discourage them from spending a disproportionate amount of time on the design to the detriment of the written description or organisation of

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their presentation. Overhead transparencies of the design were produced as visual aids for the final part of the exercise, the oral presentation.

Timing

The first part of the exercise took place in early January, about one third of the way through the course. A complete session, or just under two hours, was allocated to the exercise. Students were given an hour to collect their thoughts, draw a rough sketch, write the description in about 150 words, and produce a transparency. Ideally they would have liked double this amount of time, but as the individual oral presentations were to follow, the students were advised to use the time carefully.

At this stage in the Communications Course for Architecture, students had had little input in presentation skills: they were aware of the pitfalls, having identified what not to do, but had not yet presented any of their own designs or other materials - this was to be their first attempt.

The follow up session took place about six weeks later, towards the end of the course, by which time they had had several more lessons on presentation skills, worked on descriptions of space and texture and had received feedback on the original exercise.

Method

Once each student had written a short description of their 'ideal' kitchen and produced a design on transparency, their oral presentation was videotaped and other members of the group were encouraged to ask questions about the design and its presentation. The designer justified the reasons for the layout and suggestions were made for improvements.

After the session was over, the videotape was played back to an architect whose comments on the design were noted. A record was kept of his suggestions for improvements and positive design features were highlighted. The teacher's comments were made on the oral presentation skills and any points that required particular attention were noted. The written description was corrected where appropriate and grammatical and lexical errors were drawn to the student's attention.

Feedback

The next tutorial was used as a feedback session, during which the video of the oral presentations was reviewed with small groups of 3 or 4 students. The merits and basic design problems were discussed, e.g. would it be better to have the kitchen facing east or north, rather than south, as the heat of the sun together with the temperature increase with cooking might make the kitchen unbearably uncomfortable - or where will the air conditioner go? Is it really a good idea to have a washing line running across the dining area on the balcony, or can we put it somewhere else? Feedback was given on the written description with suggestions for improving the language and organisation of the text. The students generally seemed quite happy to comment on each other's oral presentation skills and suggestions were made for improving them. Particular attention was paid to the organisation: a good, clear introduction was generally lacking, together with cohesive markers and 'signposting' and a short conclusion. They were also encouraged to develop better eye contact and rapport with the audience and take care not to obliterate the design by standing in front of it or covering the transparency with hands and sleeves.

'Hands on experience'.....

The next tutorial became a field trip to explore the teacher's kitchen and try to identify some of its (many) design defects. The students came in groups of four for 30 minutes at a time to look around and ask questions. They were surprisingly forthcoming with their questions and a wide variety of cross cultural

differences emerged. Typical questions which highlighted the deficiencies of at least one western style kitchen were:

Where's the rice cooker? (Sorry, folks, we boil rice in a large saucepan!)
Where's the smoke extractor? (The exhaust fan is in the window pane and it seems to be sufficient for our needs)

How can you roast a chicken in here (the grill)? (We don't - the oven is underneath!)

Why is it so clean? Where's the grease?!! (Perhaps I need to do more Chinese cooking!)

What do you keep under the sink? (A rubbish bin and lots of cleaning materials)

Why don't you put dishes there instead - it would be more convenient? (If the sink leaks it won't be very hygienic).

Most commonly - What's this? (A kettle, toaster, food mixer etc.)

We also discussed some of the problems with the kitchen as it's far from ideal by most standards - the paucity of worktops and eye level cupboards, doors in awkward places, a corner cupboard with carousel shelves which needed stronger supports, and so on. Assuming, however, that this was still probably considerably bigger and better than the kitchens they were used to, it seemed insensitive to draw too much attention to its deficiencies. We discussed improvements that might be made and considerable time was spent looking into drawers and cupboards to see what Western kitchens contained: various utensils that looked like instruments of torture such as a potato masher, nut cracker, corkscrew and others.

Reading materials

Additional input to help them improve the design was to look through a collection of materials specially put together for the first year architecture and surveying students in the Language Resources Centre, adjacent to the Architecture Library. One folder contains a series of "Ideal Home" type articles from this and other magazines, full of glossy pictures, to encourage the students to browse through them, read the descriptions and think about the designs. Quite a few are kitchen designs and a separate magazine devoted solely to kitchens is also available.

Results and discussion

The evaluation will focus on three aspects of the exercise: design, written description and oral presentation. The design was assessed by an architect, while the description and presentation were marked by two course teachers.

Design

During the first part of the exercise, the designs varied enormously. As far as the 'ideal' kitchen was concerned, some of the students had great difficulty in producing anything much different from what they might have at home - a small rectangular area where mum cooks and doesn't like being disturbed. Other designs were really quite imaginative, detailed and well thought out.

The standard of the drawings was not evaluated as these were first year students who perhaps had not yet had much experience in scale drawings and perspectives.

The commonest flaws in the first design were the lack of worktops, problems in separating a utility area from the cooking area, positioning of the window - which direction it should ideally face - and general difficulties in location of sinks, fridge and cooker. The rubbish bin also seemed to be causing problems and

while one or two put it under the sink, some had it in the middle of the floor, by the door or in a corner. Sinks also seemed problematic - some wanted separate sinks for washing clothes and washing food, so there were sinks on opposite sides of the kitchen, with no sign of an adjacent worktop or draining board. Some chose to have a balcony where drinks could be served, but then the image was spoiled by a washing machine with a clothes line running across the table.

The functions of the kitchen varied considerably, from a hub of family activity with a TV and table for children to do their homework, to a retreat for their mother. Those who described themselves as keen cooks had quite definite ideas on the kitchen as a social centre where they would entertain their guests. These were, generally speaking, the more imaginative designs, with dining area, a bar, wine and spice racks and lots of appliances. One of the girls took a maternal perspective with a close circuit TV on which she could keep an eye on the baby in the bedroom, while ironing in the kitchen.

Marks (out of 10) ranged from 4.5 to 7 with a mean of 5.6.

The revised designs showed considerable improvement. The revised kitchens had greater focus: windows overlooking gardens or sea views, often with balconies and a small dining area for al fresco meals. Utility areas were kept separate. There were double sinks with draining boards, plenty of worktops were incorporated and awkward corners produced cupboards with carousel shelves. Eye level cupboards were introduced and more storage space and work space was introduced. Influences could be seen from both the kitchen field trip and another to the home of one of their lecturers on Lamma Island, who has an open plan kitchen with breakfast bar.

Marks of the revised drawings ranged from 5 to 7. 5 with a mean of 6.4.

Description

The writing element of the task was generally done in haste, as an afterthought. One or two ran out of time and ignored this section, concentrating on the design and presentation.

The descriptions were assessed on the basis of organisation, language and vocabulary. The first attempt at the description tended to be rather disorganised, as if the students were unsure where to start. Some lacked even simple vocabulary, referring to the cooker as the 'cook set' and one confused the vacuum cleaner with the exhaust fan, causing mild consternation in the presentation! On the other hand, one had an excellent command of English referring to the aesthetics of the design, culinary programmes on TV and items along the periphery of the kitchen.

The marks (out of 10) for the first version ranged from 2 to 6.5 with a mean of 5.7.

The language varied as much as the designs, and while there was an overall improvement in the second part of the written exercise, it was not so dramatic as the changes to some of the designs. The artistic element was more important to the students than the language. However, the later descriptions were better organised and there was a general improvement in the range of vocabulary items used.

The marks of the revised descriptions ranged from 3 to 7.5 with a mean of 6.4.

Presentation

The assessment of the oral presentations was based on the following:

organisation: introduction, body, conclusion, clear signposting
content: interesting, detailed, balanced, original
presentation: visuals, confidence, tone, liveliness, pace, audibility, rapport
language: grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary and fluency.

As this was the students' first chance to present a design in the English class, they were rather nervous at the beginning and uncertain of how their designs would be received by the others. Their main difficulty in the first presentation was that they had considerable problems in trying to organise their thoughts and present the design in a coherent and cohesive manner. Basic technical skills, such as using an overhead projector and positioning themselves between the screen and the audience were a challenge for them. In addition to these, their presentational and linguistic skills were also put to the test.

Most of the initial attempts were fairly short and unfocused: they really did not know where to start or where they were going. Almost all ended abruptly with "That's it" or "That's the end of my presentation".

Marks (out of 10) for the first presentations ranged from 4.5 to 6.5 with a mean of 5.8.

While the presence of the video camera seemed to be threatening at first, the students soon realised the benefits to be derived from reviewing the video themselves. They were soon confident enough to point out the defects of both the design and presentation and became quite adept at producing positive criticism. They asked to borrow the tape and also asked for all further presentations to be video taped so that they could review their performances and improve them.

By the time of the 'follow up' session, they had had several more lessons on presentation skills and attention had been paid in particular to organisational techniques: introductions, signposting and conclusions. As time was limited, they were unable to add as much detail to the visual aids as they might have liked. Most showed considerable improvement in their organisational skills; some tried hard to improve eye contact with the audience; others worked hard on the introductions and conclusions; and technical skills became obsolete when the projector failed to work! They all appeared to be quietly confident of their revised designs.

The marks for the revised presentations ranged from 5 to 7.5 with a mean of 6.5.

Conclusion and recommendation

The main objectives of the exercise were to help the students improve their oral presentation and descriptive writing skills while integrating a kitchen design, in a way that would be practical and helpful in their studies. The exercise appears to have fulfilled these objectives in an enjoyable and interesting way. The improvement may have been predictable even without the slightly unconventional field trip, but it heightened the students' awareness of their surroundings.

In retrospect, perhaps more attention could have been paid to improving the written task, as one or two tried to ignore it or considered it as an afterthought; but as the students perceive more immediate benefits from design and presentation skills, it is perhaps inevitable that they will pay less attention to written work until they have to produce written assignments for their studies.

In the end of course evaluation forms, most of the students who took part in this exercise commented on it favourably. The Architecture Department also felt that it was beneficial to the students, and as teachers on the course, it was an enjoyable and insightful experiment.

The Writing Needs of Postgraduate Students at the University of Hong Kong:
A Project Report

Linda Cooley and Jo Lewkowicz
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At the beginning of the academic year 1994-95, the English Centre undertook to investigate the writing difficulties of postgraduate students across all the nine faculties at HKU. The specific aims of the investigation were:

- to identify the writing needs of postgraduate students
- to develop a diagnostic instrument for finely grained analyses of student writing
- to devise remediation strategies.

The data was collected from the following four sources:

1.   *Supervisor interviews:* A total of 105 supervisors were interviewed between November 1994 and February 1995 to ascertain their perceptions of the problems, if any, that postgraduate students encounter with writing their thesis. The sample of supervisors was drawn from all 9 faculties of the University and was divided approximately equally among supervisors whose L1 is English and those for whom English is an L2 or FL. The interviews were structured, lasted approximately 30 minutes and, wherever practicable, were recorded. They were divided into four parts: personal data; perceptions of current students' writing difficulties in English; the linguistic demands of the particular field and the writing required of the students; and supervisors' views on the provisions the University should make to help students with their writing.

2.   *Student questionnaires:* All postgraduate students on the database were asked to complete a questionnaire at the beginning of December 1994. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine how the students rated their writing proficiency and to ascertain those areas of thesis writing, if any, which they found problematic. The questionnaire was divided into three sections: background information, information regarding English language use and proficiency and finally a section ascertaining whether students would be interested in attending writing workshops and, if so, what they thought these workshops should cover. A total of 362 questionnaires were returned and analysed representing a response rate of approximately 30%. Respondents came from all 9 faculties of the University and were equally divided among those registered for an MPhil and for a PhD.

3.   *Student writing samples:* A number of extended pieces of writing of 10 to 20 pages in length were taken from two sources: those submitted to the English Centre by students consulting the one-to-one Writing Support Service and those submitted as part of a pilot Core Competencies Project run by the University. It is important to note that although the writing samples obtained through the Writing Support Service were from students who perceived themselves as having difficulties with writing in English, those from the Core Competencies Project were from students who did not necessarily have, or perceive themselves to have, writing difficulties. All these writing samples were read independently by the project team and then discussed by the whole team. The focus of discussion was on deciding what contributed to the overall communicative success or failure of each writing sample.

4   *Student feedback:* As one of the outcomes of the project, two series of thesis writing workshops were conducted (see below for more details). At the end of each series student feedback was collected through a questionnaire. A total of 49 questionnaires were completed and analysed.

Selected Findings

Detailed findings are available from the project team on request. The findings below are selected as the most significant and those upon which the team has been able to act. While aware of supervisors' growing dissatisfaction with students' written English, the team remained open minded during the data-collection phase. What became apparent at an early stage, however, was that there was overwhelming evidence that a significant minority of postgraduate students at the University were experiencing difficulty with thesis writing. This needs to be put in the context that about 90% of postgraduate students at the University and 50% of their supervisors are working in an L2 or FL.

From Questionnaires

- 32% of students who responded had asked for help with their writing
- 76% said they had experienced some difficulty with language
- 104 students expressed interest in workshops for the first semester
- 40 students expressed interest in workshops for the second semester
- 50% of Putonghua speakers said they had serious difficulty with written English.

From Interviews

- 88% of supervisors thought students would benefit from help with language
- 50% thought language problems were not the responsibility of supervisors
- 76% thought students should be screened to show a minimum level of competence in English
- 97% saw language provision for postgraduate students as a University responsibility.

Project Outcomes

1. *Diagnostic Assessment Framework:* The need to provide students with detailed feedback on their writing led to the development of a Diagnostic Assessment Framework. This framework, which indicates the writer's strengths as well as the weaknesses, was developed empirically by the project team from analysing and discussing students' writing samples. An important feature of the framework is that it starts from an assessment of the overall impression of the writing in terms of its degree of communicative success, then moves towards more discrete items of linguistic choice, such as topic development within the paragraph, the choice of appropriate lexis and cohesion, and finally assesses the more mechanical aspects of the writing that need editing.

2. *Workshops:* Two series of 5 workshops have been run during the course of the 1994-95 academic year. The first was spread over a period of three months, to give students an opportunity to put into practice what they had learned during the workshops. The second was run in intensive mode on 5 consecutive mornings with an intervening long weekend. The workshops were designed around the Diagnostic Assessment Framework and they covered such areas as: *How to achieve overall communicative success*; *How to create a research space; Signposting;* and *Making appropriate lexical choices in writing.* In general, the second series of workshops run in intensive mode was more successful. However, all 49 students who completed the series gave positive feedback with approximately 75% saying they not only found the workshops relevant to their work, but also wanted follow-up sessions to be organised.

3. *Others:* There have been a number of other outcomes worth mentioning. There is both an interim and final report which provide detailed analysis of the findings. Though these were written in the first instance for the School of Research Studies at HKU who commissioned the project, the project team can be consulted on the results. Results are also reported in a number of presentations and papers including Cooley & Lewkowicz (forthcoming), Nunan, Lewkowicz & Cooley (June 1995), Allison, Cooley, Lewkowicz & Nunan (in preparation). Some of the findings have also been discussed with supervisors in a seminar on Supervising Research Students which was run at the University by Jan Whittle and Jo Lewkowicz in February 1995.

Where Next?

The School of Research Studies has agreed to continue to cater for postgraduate student language needs through the English Centre. Future provisions will include:

- A continued 1:1 Writing Support Service
- Regular workshops for thesis writing
- The possible introduction of workshops on oral presentation skills
- The development of a self-access support package
- The possible establishment of a University register of editors.

The project team aims to disseminate the information they have gathered to others who are working with postgraduate students. We hope to be able to compare the difficulties facing postgraduate students at the University of Hong Kong with those facing students at other tertiary institutions and also to compare our approaches to dealing with these difficulties with the approaches of others. For further details please contact:

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Acknowledgements

Conference Reports

TESOL 1995: Building Futures Together. March 28 – 1 April.

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As a first timer at TESOL I was prepared for the worst, based on the horror stories passed on both by old hands and by those who had never actually experienced this monolith. The 'real thing' was surprisingly well organised and while 8,000 participants had registered, there never seemed to be anything like that number of people around at any one time.

The opening plenary by Eugene Garcia, a Clinton appointee as Director of the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs, Department of Education, was succinct– to the extent that the opening reception began at 8.15 instead of 9pm as advertised. While well attended, it was not a crowded affair and the general ambience was friendly and welcoming.

Only a handful of presentations (out of several hundred listed) were of immediate relevance to my area of research, and two of these ran concurrently. Nevertheless, there was so much to do and so many choices available that the conference was at times overwhelming. Between attending an excellent plenary by Anna Uhl Chamot on "Creating Community of Thinkers in the ESL/EFL Classroom" and joining the audience for a World Net Satellite TV broadcast to Saudi Arabia and Latin America on "Action Research and Reflective Teacher Thinking", most of my time was spent in the Computer Section – CALL Lab and the Exhibitors (Book) Fair.

The CALL Lab featured around 25 workstations, both PC and Macintosh on which a selection of TESOL CALL Interest Section's shareware material was available for 'hands on' experience and for purchase. Commercial programmes were also available for browsing and it was interesting to see the variety of materials currently available and evaluate the quality and price. Authors' Showcase featured what's new in instructional technology with programmers presenting ideas still under development.

CALL discussion groups were held early each morning, during which participants were invited to share their ideas and queries on a variety of computer related topics from "Software Design" to "Multimedia Learning". The latter was particularly well attended and obviously the subject area attracted a great deal of interest. It was, however, a disappointing session during which the Chair went round the audience asking each person to introduce themselves and 'share' their interest in multimedia. By the time 60–odd people had said their piece – mainly stating that they were there to find out what multimedia actually is – the session was almost over and we really left none the wiser!

The Exhibit Hall featured a mind boggling area of books on EFL/ESL/Bilingualism, applied linguistics and every facet of teaching English to every kind of learner. Hundreds of new products, books and software were on display and authors were available to discuss their work and generally promote their latest titles. In addition to the publishers' displays, there were stalls selling produce from minority groups, as well as teacher "souvenir" stands selling T shirts, notepads, pens and jewellery embossed with "English teachers are terrific" – as if we didn't already know!

Considering the size and scope of the conference, it was extremely well organised and well worth the trip.

The British Council Language Centre
International ELT Conference and Book Fair '94 on English
Language Teaching Resources October 29th and 30th, 1994

Valerie Pickard
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This conference was held to celebrate 10 years of British Council English teaching in Malaysia. In his opening address the British High Commissioner to Malaysia, His Excellency Mr David Moss, ably set the conference within the wider framework of Malaysia's rapid economic expansion and the consequent need for training at all levels. Considering the world-wide status of English, and in particular its importance in Malaysia, he reported that a campaign to achieve "functional bilingualism" was launched by the President of Malaysia in 1991 and that Malaysians constitute the largest foreign student group studying in Britain with between 14 and 15 thousand there in 1994. With this sort of pressure to learn English, it is not surprising that the British Council initiative in organizing the conference was met with a great deal of enthusiasm.

A major aim of the conference was to provide a genuine forum for dialogue between EFL professionals, authors and publishers. This was reflected in a program which gave almost equal weighting to commercial and professional presentations. Apart from a brief but useful opening ceremony, the two days were organised along similar lines with two parallel keynote sessions and five further 45 minute time-slots with a choice of either 4 or 5 parallel sessions to attend. Five of the 10 time-slots (22 sessions in total) were filled with commercial presentations which covered the whole range of media and materials. Representatives of all the major publishing companies showed us their latest products: Nick Dawson of Longman Asia presented the Longman Interactive English Dictionary; Ron White held a workshop on his EAP texts published by Prentice Hall Regents Macmillan ELT; John Lowe promoted David Nunan's Atlas as *"The new exciting integrated skills course"* in another workshop session; Alan Maley presented *"practical ideas for resourceful teachers"* from The Oxford Resource Books for teachers, etc.

This conference, however, also provided a venue for the smaller companies. For example, David Forman and David Ellis (Falcon Press) describing themselves as "niche writers", explained the process of "integrating supplementary resources with national syllabuses"; their Picture Story Grammar is based upon a thorough analysis of the largely communicative Malaysian national syllabus. Another small company, which also tailors its products to the specific needs of South East Asian students and teachers, is Clarity Language Consultants who demonstrated their wares in a presentation entitled *"Effective ELT software"*.

The four keynote sessions, in keeping with the theme and aims of the conference, provided a good link between the professional and commercial themes. Ron White on *"Taking Responsibility"* suggested that "induction into the academic discourse community should involve the development of several kinds of responsibility on the part of the student" and he considered "ways this may be developed within and beyond the EAP classroom".

Meanwhile, in a parallel keynote session, Barry Jones and Denise Clenton of the University of Cambridge went some way to answering the question *"How can computer based resources support a child's early development?"* Presenting a multi-level, interactive computer program they suggested that such programs allow learners to learn at their own pace, select their own level, develop their own learning styles, etc. Furthermore, the technology provides learners with spoken models linked to

appropriate images and text, and provides teachers with a means of diagnosing problems and tracking progress. As the program was still under development Jones and Clenton called for comments and suggestions from teachers.

In a third keynote session Nick Dawson continued the theme of electronic wonders with an excellent presentation on corpora in general and The Longman Corpus in particular. He described the composition of the 30 million word Longman/Lancaster corpus of written English, the collection of the spontaneous language of the Spoken corpus (10 million words), and spoke briefly about the Learner's Corpus of 4 million words and the Longman Register of New Words. He finished with the exciting news that The British National Corpus of 90 million words developed as a joint venture with other publishers and tertiary institutions is now available to the public for approximately £200. This should prove an invaluable resource for both academics and materials writers.

The fourth keynote session given by Alan Maley perhaps held more attraction for the majority of conference participants working in Malaysian schools who could only dream of getting access to computers. Maley's presentation, entitled *"Materials as a course or resource"* was apparently well received by participants though I have no further information on this paper as no abstract was provided and his session clashed with that of Nick Dawson.

As my own presentation suggested that computers in our own self-access centre were being under-utilised, also a problem apparently encountered by participants from institutions in Malaysia, I focused mainly on presentations dealing with computers, multi-media and self-access. Though I saw many interesting computer programs, only those developed by Clarity Consultants appeared to suit the requirements of our own situation as their software is of the type that teachers would produce if given enough time to do so.

I personally was not convinced by Nick Dawson's claim that we shall soon see the demise of paper-based dictionaries and though The Longman Interactive English Dictionary may appeal to Lower Intermediate students, it is unlikely to be of much use to University level students. This, in fact, seemed to be a major drawback of most of the courses and software that I saw. It seems that lower levels and general English present publishers with easier targets and larger markets than upper intermediate levels and ESP/EAP. Courseware Publishing International, however, did present an interesting advanced level, interactive multimedia ESL/EFL program "for high school, college and adult use" called Accelerated English. However this, like their lower level package, Active English, suffers from an unacceptable level of cultural bias unless students are preparing for life in the USA.

All in all, this was a very successful conference in that it provided the right conditions for fruitful academic and professional exchanges between teachers from different institutions across South East Asia, those at the cutting edge of technology and the publishers attempting to keep pace with the ever changing face of EFL. The conference was mercifully free of the time-consuming pomp and ceremony often associated with the larger, well-established conferences. There was a good blend of professional and social exchange - the latter enhanced by an excellent buffet dinner held in the spacious garden of the British Council Manager. Perhaps communication could have been further encouraged by the provision of a daily noticeboard and a mailing list of all participants. Nevertheless, I do hope that the British Council utilises the experience gained through organising this conference and repeats the event well before they celebrate their 20th year of teaching in Malaysia.

Silk underwear

Silk underwear, embroidered shoes,
our last chance to spend on you.

Your favourite cheongsam, old fashioned mink,
the coral set to match the pink.

Three coverlets with a silver cross –
from sons, daughters and sons-in-law.

Someone suggested a mahjong set –
Catholics though we were.

A floor of flowers overgrew
from the largest hall for you.

Past other mourning rooms,
these wreaths of quiet blooms.

One night you were given more
flowers than sixty years before.

Some givers you would not know –
Friends of your children, so they were.

Love and mercy and rest bestow –
up the hill my mother would go.

Brothers and sister following,
I, the youngest, trailing.

How you yelled behind in schooldays past
for them to wait as I was last.

Mother, this hill we now climb –
you are not behind me.

Agnes Lam

Sixteen years

One night
    I had a dream
a large restaurant balcony
    overlooking the Hongkong harbour
all six of us
    took Mother out for dinner
Mother was lying down
    on a couch in the balcony
    I tried to lift her
but she would not rise
    I felt her heart
    it was beating
but she would not rise
    heavy beyond my strength
    on her lap I saw
that day's paper
    an article
    with Mother's photo
something about her
a letter to me
    in Chinese she wrote
my little princess
    my little princess
    you have at last
    come back
    after sixteen years.

On waking, I counted
sixteen years
from when I first left to going
home for her funeral.

Mother, you have forgiven
my leaving, my marriage,
my degrees, foreign jobs –
sixteen years.

Agnes Lam

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