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## CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

1

### PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

**Jade A. Sleeman**  
Using wikis and forums for writing practice in ELICOS courses  
3

**Peter Watkins & Mark Wyatt**  
Evaluating material designed to support trainee English language teachers  
22

**Thomas Amundrud**  
Individual feedback consultations in Japanese tertiary EFL: A systemic semiotic exploration  
40

### CLASSROOM TALK

**Richard Ingold**  
Dictation: Building Academic English competence the old-fashioned way  
67

**Luke Alexander**  
Questioning the text: Critical reading in the English language classroom  
72

**Interview: Mark Pegrum**  
Ten questions for Mark Pegrum  
76

**Damien Herlihy**  
Welcome to the jungle: Tech tools to make sense of the stream of speech  
83

### REVIEWS

**Inside Writing**  
Reviewed by Vanessa Todd  
88
Moving into Business Studies
**Anna Phillips & Terry Phillips**
*Reviewed by Sarah Williams*

PearsonELT
*Reviewed by Kylie Tyler*

Cambridge English Teacher
*Reviewed by Arizio Sweeting*

How to Speak English
*Reviewed by Edward Van Der Aar*

Learning to Go
**Shelly Sanchez**
*Reviewed by Richard Holland*

Open Mind
**Mickey Rogers, Joanne Taylore-Knowles & Steve Taylore-Knowles**
*Reviewed by Jakki Postlethwaite*

Experimental practice in ELT
**Jennie Wright & Christina Rebuffet-Broadus**
*Reviewed by Tim Dodd*

Grammar for Writing
**Anne Vicary**
*Reviewed by Connie De Silva*

Language Teaching Insights From Other Fields: Sports, Arts, Design and More
**Christopher Stillwell (Ed.)**
*Reviewed by Meredith MacAulay*

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

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The editorial team welcomes readers to another great issue of the *English Australia Journal*. We also welcome a new Editorial Board (see p. V), which advises on editorial policy and assists with reviewing articles. The *Journal* is going from strength to strength thanks to the tireless efforts of a dedicated team!

Our first issue for 2015 begins with three research articles from three different teaching and learning contexts. First, Jade Sleeman reports on her study: ‘Using wikis and forums for writing practice in ELICOS courses’ in Melbourne, Australia. Working with an advanced Academic English class, Sleeman finds that these Web 2.0 tools create greater inclusion and show signs of emerging communities of practice. Next, Peter Watkins and Mark Wyatt undertake an extensive study into the cognitions of trainees of pre-service certificate courses in the United Kingdom, with the aim of overcoming the ‘armchair evaluation’ of expert materials evaluators who tend to be disconnected from the actual use of the materials. Finally, Thomas Amundrud explores the nature of the individual teacher-student feedback consultations in university EFL classes in Japan. Amundrud deploys genre theory and systemic functional linguistics to make sense of these multimodal classroom events, finding there are identifiable patterns that emerge.

Our ‘Ten questions’ this time are for Mark Pegrum, from the University of Western Australia. Classroom Talk Editor, Sophia Khan delves into Mark’s thoughts across a range of learning technologies issues, cheekily naming him the ‘learning technologies go-to guy’. Based on Mark’s insightful responses, he has certainly earned this distinction! In this issue Classroom Talk also focuses on critical reading, dictation, and apps to help learners work with the ‘stream of speech’. Tamzen Armer, our Reviews Editor, has once more orchestrated a range of reviews of materials from our teaching community and again showcases the diversity of materials that are available commercially for English language teaching.

We hope that you enjoy the latest issue of the *Journal* and that you will consider contributing to one of the sections in the future. Research articles are reviewed by at
least two scholars in the relevant area, and I cannot thank these colleagues enough for their contributions to the quality of the final articles.

In closing, thanks to the tireless efforts of our graphic designer, Derek Trow, to the ongoing support of the English Australia Secretariat, and to the Editorial Board. I hope to see many of you in Brisbane in September this year for the English Australia Conference, which is themed ‘Looking ahead: Change, challenge and opportunity’.

Phil Chappell
*Executive Editor*

Sophia Khan
*Classroom Talk Editor*

Tamzen Armer
*Reviews Editor*
Using wikis and forums for writing practice in ELICOS courses

JADE A. SLEEMAN
La Trobe Melbourne International College

Utilising the collaborative affordances of Web 2.0 tools, this study examined how writing practice can be facilitated in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) with a view to improving learning outcomes. In this study, wikis were used to practise writing with a class studying Advanced Academic English, with discussion forums used as a follow-up online activity. Though student contributions were initially tentative, their participation exhibited elements of an emerging community of practice, where there was the opportunity for more competent students to provide models of participation and practice to those students that were less confident. Though the writing skills of stronger students were not seen to improve, results from the study suggested that many of the weaker students that engaged actively in the online activities may have improved their writing abilities.

Introduction

The introduction of Web 2.0 tools has increased the pedagogic capabilities of Learning Management Systems (LMS), with wikis, forums, and blogs among the most frequently used interactive online tools in higher education (Liu, Kalk, Kinney, & Orr, 2012). Due to the social nature and communicative capabilities of Web 2.0 tools, it has been recognised that their incorporation in teaching processes can facilitate productive learning through student collaboration. Collaborative learning, while not a new notion, has come to the fore of educational practice in recent decades with social constructivist theories of learning focused on learner-centered and socially mediated pedagogy (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012; Wood, 2009). With the advent of digital technologies, opportunities to engage learners in constructivist learning activities have multiplied exponentially, and Computer-Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) has been heralded as a transformative pedagogy (Stahl, Koschmann, & Suthers, 2006). However, further investigation is needed of how the use of digital tools actually improves learning. This study investigated some ways in which Web 2.0 tools created opportunities for collaborative writing beyond the classroom in an ELICOS course, and whether having these opportunities could improve students’ learning outcomes.
**Collaborative learning**

Collaboration as a fundamental learning process has been highlighted since the early psychological theorists. Developmental psychologists, such as Piaget and Vygotsky, focused on the learner’s interaction with others as important to the process of learning. Both theorists focused on the use of language as a tool for constructing knowledge through interaction with others. Piaget (1959) theorised that interaction with others assists the cognition of the individual, while Vygotsky (1978) highlighted that interaction moves the learner forward where support and scaffolding allow the possibility of mastery beyond individual ability.

Building on these theories, Lave and Wenger (1991) focused on situated learning, which promotes a cooperative social process. Focusing on apprenticeship as a model of learning, the authors describe the process of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’, where learners’ initial participation may be tentative as they gain knowledge and acceptance from others in a group before increasing their engagement as they move towards mastery of those concepts or skills relevant to the situation. Wenger (1998; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002) further built on this concept with communities of practice, or knowledge-based social structures. These groups are distinguished by a shared pursuit of knowledge in a particular field where members share information and collaboratively develop resources. As a model, rather than highlighting cognitive processes, Lave and Wenger (1991) focus on ‘learning as social participation’ (p. 4). It is therefore engagement with others to pursue a joint goal that provides group members with opportunities to learn from each other.

**Collaborative language learning with online tools**

Wikis are an increasingly used online tool with educational capabilities, gaining the most attention for their collaborative learning possibilities (‘wiki’ comes from the Hawaiian word for ‘quick’). A page on a wiki, whether as part of a stand-alone internet site or a tool built into a LMS, is basically a webpage which all users can add information to and edit. Another popular online tool is the discussion forum. Forums allow a discussion topic to be posted and multiple users to respond with comments that are visible to all participants. As these Web 2.0 technologies necessitate the use of language to facilitate learning, it is unsurprising that research into second language (L2) acquisition has focused on the use of these tools for the learning of language itself (Vasquez & Wang, 2012). Where past research investigated the process and effect of interaction as it occurs in face-to-face collaborative writing in an L2, the focus has now shifted to investigate the process through computer-mediated interaction (Lamy & Hampel, 2007; Ortega, 2009; Storch, 2013).
**Wikis for second language writing practice**

Since the medium of communication through wikis, blogs and forums is writing, various studies have investigated the opportunities that these collaborative tools offer for improving L2 writing skills (Arnold, Ducate, & Kost, 2009; Chao & Lo, 2009; Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Li & Zhu, 2011; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010). Many studies of Web 2.0 tools for collaborative language learning have focused on learner perceptions of the process and tools for learning. In addition to an analysis of editing processes, Chao and Lo (2009) surveyed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students who, after engaging in collaborative narrative writing, expressed the view that the use of wikis helped improve their writing skills. Miyazoe and Anderson’s (2010) study of the implementation of Web 2.0 tools in an EFL course to improve writing showed students enjoyed the technology element and preferred wikis to blogs and forums ‘in terms of liking, enjoyment, and usefulness’ (p. 191). Li and Zhu’s (2011) study of EFL learners’ interaction patterns when using wikis indicated that students who actively contributed to the collective process perceived benefits for learning. However, learning with collaborative technology does not necessarily result in a positive student experience. For instance, in Arnold, Ducate and Kost’s (2009) study of German language learners, while some students reported positive aspects of wiki writing, such as knowledge-sharing and equal division of labour, other students admitted poor communication and problems with members contributing equally. Many studies of learning with wikis also suggest that some students can be reluctant to edit the work of others as it is perceived to contravene established classroom conventions of authorship (Allwardt, 2011; Arnold, Ducate, & Kost, 2012; Grant, 2009; Judd, Kennedy, & Cropper, 2010; Kear, Woodthorpe, Robertson, & Hutchison, 2010).

In addition to studying learners’ reports on the use of Web tools to increase learning, some researchers have sought to show improvements in learning outcomes. Li and Zhu (2011) suggested that learners who either engaged in mutually collaborative activity or cooperative, leader-directed interaction were able to scaffold their performance to achieve the task objective as a group. Elola and Oskoz’s (2010) study of Spanish learners found greater accuracy in second-draft writing of students who had first completed a wiki draft collaboratively, compared with students who composed their first wiki draft individually. Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) found that with engagement in online writing tasks, EFL students’ writing seemed to increase in complexity over a semester. Furthermore, analysis of wiki history logs from Arnold, Ducate and Kost’s (2009) study revealed that, collectively, students were able to correctly revise their grammar 76% of the time.
Methodology

The focus of this study was on how wikis and discussion forums could be used in ELICOS academic preparation courses to create opportunities for students to practise their writing skills. The questions guiding this research were:

1. To what extent can Web 2.0 tools be used to create opportunities for collaborative writing beyond the classroom in an ELICOS course?

2. Can the use of Web 2.0 tools for extra writing practice improve learning outcomes?

The research setting

The college

This study was conducted at La Trobe Melbourne, a private college which administers ELICOS courses in association with La Trobe University. Complying with university research guidelines, ethics clearance for this project was sought and granted. I chose to conduct this case study with an advanced-level English for Further Studies (EFS) class as students at this level have a need to increase writing practice opportunities and develop learning skills that will aid them in their impending university study. The students in this final stage before university cover a range of academic writing features as they prepare their final research essay. Each week various classroom activities are based around a particular writing function, and students are then given an in-class writing assessment at the end of the week, where they are required to complete a piece of writing of 250 words. This can be a difficult task and many students struggle to adequately consolidate their learning within 10 weeks in order to produce effective academic writing. More practice is needed, although extra class time is unavailable in such an intensive course.

The technology

La Trobe Melbourne integrated Moodle 2.0 software as an LMS in late 2010. As Moodle is open source freeware with few technical requirements it is a popular choice among platforms used for learning management (Godwin-Jones, 2012). Moodle also differentiates itself from other LMS applications as its design philosophy is grounded in a social constructionist pedagogy (Moodle, 2012, para. 1), and collaborative online tools, such as wikis, forums, blogs and chat, feature as basic components. However, compared to the overall use of LMS applications in faculties at La Trobe University, at the time of this study the Moodle LMS at La Trobe Melbourne was still relatively under-utilised as a teaching resource.
The study
The study took place over a two-week period beginning in the second week of a five-week ELICOS term in May 2013. The participating class comprised of 15 students, although one female student chose not to participate in the study. The remaining participating students, providing informed consent, included ten males and four females. Student cultural backgrounds included three Colombian males, five Chinese (three male and two female), two Vietnamese males, one Indian male, one female from Greece, one male from Iraq and one female from Kuwait.

The basis of this study was to provide students with extra academic writing practice opportunities, before being tested in class on particular elements of academic writing. In this study students were assigned to a group with two or three others, and asked to complete a piece of writing each week related to a particular feature of academic writing. This activity was completed weekly outside of class time, between Monday and Tuesday, in a Moodle wiki page in the LMS. The examples of these group writings were then posted in a discussion forum in the LMS on the Wednesday so that students could give feedback as a review task before completing the in-class writing assessment on the Thursday. In the forum students were instructed to comment on the best example of the writing function for that week and to give reasons why. The wiki pages for each group were pre-prepared with a writing task, based on the academic writing feature that was to be studied for each week. The discussion forums were prepared with student example paragraphs after they had completed the wiki activities.

Data analysis
In this study, each page of edits from the wiki history logs was analysed for any changes made to the writing. From an initial analysis of each piece of writing, various categories of changes emerged. Coding was then used to designate the various types of changes that each student made and correct changes were highlighted in contrast to incorrect changes. The frequency of each code was counted for each participant and also tallied for each group. The proportion of correct changes and incorrect changes was also calculated by group.

In addition to examining how students participated in the wiki and forum activities, the in-class writing assessments that followed the practice activities were also examined each week to determine if there was any improvement in writing ability over the course of the study. For the purposes of data analysis, I chose to mark these assessments using the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic Writing Task 2 band descriptors (public version) as they provide comprehensive criteria for marking academic writing, including ratings for linguistic,
structural and mechanical aspects of an essay. There are acknowledged differences between the IELTS Academic Writing Tasks and university essay writing, in the areas of information gathering, the range of writing functions and topic focus (Moore & Morton, 2007). Nevertheless, the IELTS Academic Writing Task 2 is similar to the in-class writing assessments in this study in that it is a 250-word discussion essay based on a specific rhetorical function, for example defining, or discussing cause and effect, using prior knowledge.

Along with examining the two writing assessments during the study from the participating class and a control group, I also marked the first in-class writing assessment from each group, which took place in the week before the study, using the same IELTS writing criteria. To contribute to validity this provided a base measure of writing ability of the students in both classes before the implementation of the study. As the students in this study were studying at a pre-university level, their expected writing ability was between IELTS band 5 (Modest user) and 7 (Good user). However, one student from the control group consistently scored 4.5.

Results

Participation

Active student participation in the online activities was slow to start. In the first week of the study, three students from Group 1 participated/contributed in the wiki writing activity, two students from Group 2 (although one accidently contributed to Group 1’s wiki task) and only one student from each of Groups 3 and 4 contributed. In the second week of the study, participation increased in the wiki activities, perhaps as students felt more comfortable with the process, with three students from each of Groups 1 and 2 participating and two students from each of Groups 3 and 4. Though participation in the wiki activities increased to 70% in the second week, students did not embrace the use of the discussion forum with only two students commenting in the first and second weeks. It seems that though students may have become more comfortable with using the wiki technology during the study, they did not feel the same level of ease in making comments in the forums. Though the wikis were a group task, participation in the discussion forum was of an individual nature focused on giving personal opinions, which may have induced some unease regarding participation.

While there was a small percentage of students that did not make any contributions to either the wiki or the discussion forum during the study, other students participated actively and consistently. In Group 1, Student 101 contributed early to the first and second wiki task, and also to the second discussion forum. Student 103, also from Group 1, was a similarly active participant, contributing twice to the first wiki.
Almost all of the other students that contributed to the first wiki task, contributed again in the second, although Student 401, who was the only student from Group 4 that participated in the first wiki task, did not participate in the second. This may have been due to the student feeling that the other students in the group had not contributed equally, similarly noted in the study of Arnold et al. (2009).

Collaboration vs. cooperation

When focusing on the content of participation in the wiki activities, the types of contributions that students made to their group wiki activity differed between the two activities. Although initial instructions for the two wiki activities asked students to complete the task as a group, students did not approach the activities in the same manner. The first wiki activity on formality in academic writing presented students with a paragraph that needed to be rewritten according to formal conventions. In this activity, students in each group edited the same paragraph, which I had prepared, thereby contributing to one piece of writing. As the nature of the task involved changing an informal piece of writing to a formal one, most changes to the wiki consisted of lexical changes to accommodate more academic vocabulary. This was evident in all groups, where most students focused on improving the vocabulary, as seen in Figure 1. As can also be seen from Figure 1, the group with the largest number of participants in the formality wiki, Group 1, also displayed the widest variety of structural changes, including sentence structure, phrasing, punctuation and grammatical changes. Most of the students in this group participated in the wiki task twice, with an initial contribution of between 8 to 25 changes of various types.
When analysing the linguistic effectiveness of the edits made to the formality wiki tasks, the proportion of correct changes ranged from 70 to 91% for each group. Overall, the percentage of correct edits for the combined groups was 85%, correlating with the study of Arnold et al. (2009), which indicated that students working together in a wiki were able to make correct revisions for a large proportion of the time (76%).

In the first wiki activity on formality, students freely made changes to the paragraph, working collaboratively. The second wiki activity, however, contained information in note form on causes and effects of obesity, about which students in each group chose to each write a separate paragraph. Of these individual paragraphs in the second wiki task, students did not make any edits to other participants’ writing. This behaviour reflects that raised by previous studies, which suggests that some wiki users may experience discomfort editing the work of others (Allwardt, 2011; Arnold et al., 2012; Grant, 2009; Judd et al., 2010; Kear et al., 2010). This tendency is underscored in this study by the difference between how students participated in the two wiki tasks: as there was perceived to be no original author in the first wiki task, students had no hesitation in editing the work of others, whereas editing the contribution of paragraphs initiated by individuals was avoided in the second task.
While student contributions in the second wiki activity were of an individual nature, patterns of interaction still emerged. In Group 1, three students wrote individual paragraphs, the first of which was posted by Student 103, who was a consistently active participant in the first wiki task and discussion forum. In Student 103’s paragraph, the main causes and effects of obesity are explained, including the issue of hereditary factors, an element which Student 103 felt required a definition:

Other causes of obesity is the hereditary factors, that is in the genes of the person, it means that the person born with the problem.

The next student in Group 1 to post was Student 101, who followed the example set by Student 103, explaining:

Hereditary factors is a biology definition which means the next generations can be effected by parent’s gene.

Similarly, the last student in Group 1 to contribute, Student 102, also included within his paragraph:

Hereditary factors may be defined as next generation be affected by parents . . .

Despite all groups being given the same information about obesity in their wiki, this focus on including a definition of hereditary factors was only evident in Group 1.

In Group 2, all three contributors approached the cause and effect wiki activity in different ways. The first student to contribute, Student 204, provided extra information about statistics relating to obesity according to the World Health Organization. Student 201 began the paragraph with a definition. Student 202 then divided the causes of obesity into controllable and uncontrollable factors. This group’s wiki log also showed that the last student in the group, Student 203, made two attempts to contribute, as evidenced by the log recording, although the attempt did not result in any added information or changes.

In Groups 3 and 4, editing behavior was again evident, though only in relation to the individual’s initial contribution. In Group 3 two members participated in the cause and effect wiki activity; Student 301 made the first contribution with an individual paragraph, then Student 303 made two contributions to the wiki, the second of which was to add a topic sentence to his own paragraph. In Group 4, Student 403 wrote the beginnings of a paragraph, focusing on the first two factors of poor health and lack of exercise, perhaps as he expected that another member of the group would continue the paragraph to focus on the other factors. Student 402 then wrote another paragraph outlining the main issues, which he then edited again to correct punctuation.
**Legitimate peripheral participation**

Though some students contributed to the wiki more actively than others, having access to the wiki may still have provided less proficient group members with valuable learning opportunities in the manner of legitimate peripheral participation as described by Lave and Wenger (1991). In the context of situated learning, legitimate peripheral participation is a stage of tentative participation that newcomers engage in, in relation to the more proficient members of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In this study, students with higher-rated writing skills tended to participate earlier than other members of the group, and in this way may have provided guidance to those participants that were not as proficient. As evident in the Group 1 cause and effect wiki task, the first participant provided the focus on defining hereditary factors as a model for the others to follow. In contrast, the student in Group 2 who made attempts to edit the wiki without making a contribution may have wanted to participate, although did not feel confident enough to contribute. It is hoped that with more exposure to the practice of more confident peers, learners like the ones in this situation would also be able to increase their participation and improve their practice.

**Encouragement of practice**

While there were few contributors in the discussion forums, those that did contribute attempted to articulate which paragraphs were the best examples of the academic writing function for that week, and also offered constructive criticism within their opinions. In the formality practice forum, the wiki paragraphs from Groups 1, 2 and 3 were posted, as Group 4 had not contributed until after the examples were posted on Wednesday evening. Two students made comments on which of the three examples in the forum best represented the characteristics of formal academic writing. Student 103 commented:

> I think that the best example of formal writing is the number 2. There are some mistakes to correct but the structure in general is good.

Student 301 also commented:

> I think the three paragraphs are good, all three has some mistakes but have good formal writing in almost all sentences.

> May be the second one is better than the other ones in some sentences.

Here both students were in agreement that paragraph 2 displayed the best example of formal writing, though Student 301 was more conciliatory, praising the efforts
displayed in all the paragraphs. However, both students also pointed out that there were some areas that could be improved, highlighting the presence of ‘some mistakes’.

As students in the cause and effect wiki activity chose to write individual paragraphs, the discussion forum on that writing function contained ten example paragraphs, and students were asked to comment on which was the best example of cause and effect writing. Again, only two students commented. Student 101 commented first, explaining:

I think the 6th example is may be the best. It’s detailed and full of information. But may be the author should not use long sentences like this.

Student 301, who had also commented in the first forum, again commented:

Every paragraph shows the main idea of obesity with cause and effect sentences. I like the 7th example, therefore it has some writing mistakes.

Here both students, again, offer constructive criticism in their comments. Student 101 acknowledges the strengths of the sixth example, but also points out the use of long sentences as an area to be improved. Similar to the first forum, Student 301 leads into his comment with an encouraging remark about the strengths of all the paragraphs, then chooses paragraph 7, while also acknowledging it includes mistakes.

**Learning outcomes**

While the first area of investigation of this study focused on the process of using online tools for writing practice, in the second part of the study I explored whether the use of the tools could improve learning outcomes. A pre-test comparison of the writing scores of the class that participated with the class that did not participate, showed a difference in the range of writing abilities. The results of the pre-test writing assessment on definitions, marked according to IELTS criteria, showed the range of scores from the experimental class, Class 1, equalled 2 with a mean score of 5.95, whereas the control group, Class 2, had a score range of 2.5 with a mean score of 5.71. From the scores it can be assumed that the writing abilities of Class 1 were higher than Class 2 before the implementation of the use of online tools in this study. In the pre-test writing assessment on definitions, Class 1 had more students receiving scores in the 6–7 band (see Figure 2) than Class 2, whose distribution of scores mirrored that of a bell curve with most students in the range of Band 5–6 (see Figure 3). The scores of the pre-test assessment of both classes were then compared against the scores of the two assessments that took place during the study.
When comparing the assessment scores of the control class to the scores of the experimental class over the three assessments, after using the formality and cause and effect wiki writing practices, the students in Class 1 showed more improvement in their writing ability. On the formality writing assessment, Class 1 again had a range of 2 with a mean score of 6.08, while Class 2 had a smaller range of 1.5, though with the same mean as the pre-test assessment of 5.71. On the cause and effect writing assessment, Class 1 had a smaller range than the previous two assessments with 1.5, and a mean score of 6.25. Class 2, on the other hand, had a larger range of scores with 2.5 and a lower mean score than the previous two assessments with 5.54. As can be seen in Table 1, the range of scores for Class 1 decreased over the
three assessments with an increase in the mean score, while the range of scores in Class 2 fluctuated with a consistency of mean scores on the first two assessments and then a decrease in the mean score for the final assessment. A comparison of Class 1’s distribution of scores across the three assessments in Figure 4 shows that students gradually increased their scores. In contrast, an analysis of Class 2’s writing scores in Figure 6 shows less fluctuation of scores.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Formality</th>
<th>Cause and effect</th>
<th>Definition mean</th>
<th>Formality mean</th>
<th>Cause and effect mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1 (experimental)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>6.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2 (control)</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. All writing scores for experimental class (Class 1)
Despite not all students in Class 1 participating in the online writing activities, when focusing on those students that did take part the results are encouraging. On closer examination of the writing ability of individual students in the experimental class, most with weaker writing abilities that made consistent contributions to the online activities showed an increase in test scores over the three assessments (see Table 2). Student 101, noted as a consistent participant in the wiki activities, who also participated in the cause and effect forum, scored a Band 6 in the first two writing assessments and then a Band 6.5 on the final assessment. Student 102, though weaker with a beginning Band of 5, participated in both wiki tasks and obtained a score of 5.5 on the final assessment. Student 204, though absent for the first assessment, used the wikis in both weeks and improved from a Band 6 in the formality writing assessment to a Band 6.5 in the cause and effect assessment.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Definition score</th>
<th>Formality score</th>
<th>Formality Online participation</th>
<th>C&amp;E score</th>
<th>C&amp;E Online participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Wiki &amp; forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Wiki &amp; forum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wiki</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. All writing scores for control class (Class 2)
While the students with writing scores between an IELTS Band 5 and 6 seemed to show improvement after participation in the Moodle online activities, students with higher abilities that also participated consistently did not show the same improvement. Student 103 made contributions to both wiki activities and to the forum on formality, yet an initial writing score of 7 fluctuated to a 6.5 in the second assessment and then back to 7 on the final assessment. Student 202 who was also an active participant in both wikis, consistently scored 7 on all three assessments. Student 301, who contributed to both wiki tasks and forums in each week, also hovered at a Band 7 over the 3 assessments. There was also one student, Student 104, that refrained from active participation in the wiki tasks and forums, and though absent for the pre-test, scored 6.5 on the Formality assessment and then 7 on the cause and effect assessment.

**Discussion**

A major part of student participation in this study consisted of using wikis to practise academic writing skills. Although there was initial hesitation, many students embraced this technology and were able to contribute to the wiki pages. In the comments from the discussion forums, it is evident that students were keen to encourage their peers, but also felt that it was important to offer suggestions for improvement. In what could be considered a community of learners, the students’ comments seem to promote the practice engaged in by others in order to increase their confidence, but also look to increasing the skills of their peers by providing constructive criticism.

From the results of this investigation, it seems that students who began the study as modest or competent users of English (according to the IELTS band scale), and who participated actively by contributing to the wiki activities, were able to improve
their results in academic writing. However, those students who on the pre-test were considered good users on the IELTS scale were not seen to improve their writing scores. It is possible that these students, at an IELTS Band 7 (Good User), have reached a point where they have attained an acceptable level of ‘comprehensible output’ (Swain & Lapkin, 1995) and do not have the same motivation to modify their language. Lightbown and Spada (2006) state that ‘Learners often have bursts of progress, then seem to reach a plateau for a while before something stimulates further progress’ (p. 80). As the linguistically strongest participants of the learning group in this study, the students at Band 7 level did not have more competent members to emulate, who could stimulate improvements in their practice. In contrast, the students at a modest or competent level had access to the practice of more competent users of the language through their participation in the wiki activities.

Conclusion

As an English language learning classroom community, the ELICOS students in this study were engaged in the practice of academic writing. Where some students were more competent than others in their practice, they offered others the possibility of peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Though some students may not have contributed as actively as others, Wenger (1998) notes that ‘[p]eripherality provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to practice’ (p. 100). Having exposure to practice is in itself an act of participation, and using interactive online tools, such as wikis and forums, provides a space where this is possible beyond the limitations of face-to-face contact and time available in the classroom.

While the results of this study are encouraging, there are noted limitations, such as the sample size and the length of the study. Having a larger sample of students may produce different results and an extended implementation of the online activities may contribute to different learning outcomes. As this study was only a small investigation into the possibilities of using interactive online tools to create academic writing practice opportunities in an ELICOS course, it did not examine the implementation from the point of view of the users. Further research is necessary to examine language teachers and students’ perceptions of learning with online tools, and how this informs learning.

Acknowledgements

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References


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Evaluating material designed to support trainee
English language teachers

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Material used by pre-service English language teachers, such as those preparing for, or already on, courses such as the Cambridge English Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA), needs evaluating to accommodate our continually evolving understandings of learning teaching in a rapidly changing world. Materials evaluation exercises may rely too heavily, though, on the ‘armchair evaluation’ of experts who may never use the material themselves and indeed might have imperfect understandings of the needs of novice teachers. This article reports on an attempt to access CELTA-type trainees’ cognitions and practices through interviews, questionnaires, reading and reaction protocols, and the analysis of a lesson plan, with a view to this informing the materials evaluation and revision process. In our study, this combination of methods, with the research design evolving out of efforts to reduce the threat of researcher bias, generated useful insights, which then fed into the revision process. There are implications for how material used in other teacher education contexts is evaluated.

Introduction
In the early 2000s, my work (that of the first author, Peter Watkins, hereafter ‘I’) included assessing CELTA-type courses at various centres in the south of England. One of the pleasures of this work was the opportunities it provided to meet trainee teachers and to talk to them informally about what they enjoyed on their new career path, what they found a challenge and what their hopes were for the future. In conversations over a coffee at break time they might ask about career opportunities or my own experiences in ELT. I might ask them about the course and how they had prepared for it. I was struck by the fact that some trainees had worked hard in preparing, reading quite extensively, and yet found it hard to apply this reading to their own teaching; some of the concepts they had come across still seemed relatively unassimilated. The conversation below (not strictly verbatim but based on recalled experience) illustrates this point:
Me: So, what was on your reading list? Did you have time to read anything before you started?

[Pause]

Trainee 1: Well, there’s definitely a grammar book. A blue one – really good.
Me: Great – has that been useful? Anything else you remember?
Trainee 2: A methodology title.
Me: OK – was that useful? Do you remember much from it?

[A longer pause without much eye contact]

Trainee 2: Sometimes students don’t talk. They do actions instead.
Me: Oh, so have you been reading about TPR (Total Physical Response)? Have you used that technique on this course?
Trainee 2: Uh – not so much. [Sounding non-committal]

[Other trainees look slightly baffled and the conversation quickly moves on to the quality of the coffee.]

Unfortunately, anecdotal evidence gathered from conversations with colleagues (fellow CELTA trainers and assessors) suggests such conversations were far from atypical early in the 21st century. Perhaps, many CELTA trainees lacked time to read or found the recommended books inaccessible, meaning they had little chance to benefit from this source of input. Firsthand experience of working on and assessing CELTA and similar courses seemed to indicate that methodology books on reading lists were rarely used, even though trainees were expected to demonstrate an understanding of some of the very ideas explained in the books. Therefore a potential source of support was not being utilised.

Providers of CELTA-type courses at the time (i.e., including the Trinity College London Certificate in TESOL [Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages]) almost invariably provided reading lists to trainees; this was often for reading prior to the course. However, it is possible that the centres I was connected with chose to not always promote reading to a great extent, perhaps preferring to rely on their own course materials; such decisions may in turn have been influenced by the CELTA trainers noticing, as I had, a lack of uptake from reading. Various micro-contextual factors may have intervened. For example, in informal conversations, trainers pointed out that sometimes CELTA-type course participation was finalised quite late, with trainees who had applied to join only just prior to a course commencing being enrolled; this, they reported, made it difficult for them to take for granted significant levels of preparation from amongst their trainees. Indeed, in these circumstances, they felt it was perhaps wiser to assume little had been read. Nevertheless, it could
be argued that reading (either before or during a course) is a potential source of empowerment for trainees, allowing them to question and interpret other input, and providing alternative ideas that support ‘the constant processing of options’ that teaching involves (Scrivener, 1994, p. vi). However, clearly the reading material needs to be appropriate for the benefits to be felt, and, in my own context, it struck me as unfortunate that those who had invested in reading before a course started had appeared to gain little return on their efforts. Indeed, I became increasingly drawn to the idea that the books that were so frequently recommended (including on my own CELTA courses) were not necessarily written with this audience in mind – and that this partly explained the lack of uptake.

The reading lists that centres put together tended to include at their head an established classic teacher education text, such as Harmer (2001), which had grown considerably in length since its 1983 and 1991 editions, and was now aimed at a different audience (Hedge, 2003). No longer was its target group one of pre-service teachers as previously, but those studying on in-service courses, such as the Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (DELTA). However, this change in focus was only signalled at the end of Harmer’s (2001) preface (Hedge, 2003). In 2003, the book was usually still top of the CELTA reading list, even though it may have been too challenging for some trainees, which could have left them struggling to access support from reading.

How could this have happened? One possible explanation is that some CELTA-type course providers may not have spotted the change in target audience. Alternatively, the more appropriate books that were already available, e.g., Harmer (1998), were possibly unknown to some CELTA centres. Perhaps there was simply a time lag in centres adjusting their existing lists, or perhaps the undoubted quality and success of the title meant that it was hard to dispense with. In the meantime, however, there seemed a gap between trainee needs and what recommended reading material offered.

While the situation now seems to have changed, with books pitched at a lower level featuring more prominently on reading lists, it is worth considering how material on such courses is evaluated. Course providers, amongst others, have a responsibility to engage in this to support their CELTA trainees, but so do authors, particularly if the evaluation process is going to result in new and revised material. If new editions are not improved editions, then rather than addressing the challenges faced by pre-service teachers, unfortunately they might only exacerbate them. How this situation can be resolved by designers of published material is our focus here.
The CELTA and the needs of pre-service teachers

Current estimates suggest that thousands of teachers commence ELT careers each year after completing a pre-service course, such as the Cambridge English CELTA or Trinity College London Certificate in TESOL (Cambridge English, n.d.). Many then work overseas, filling gaps left by the ever-expanding worldwide demand for ELT teachers. It is crucial the pre-service course, including its recommended reading material, is focused on meeting trainees’ needs. This is firstly because opportunities for further professional development might vary enormously depending on context, and secondly because, due to limited time or access to resources, some newly qualified teachers (e.g., as a respondent quoted in Simon Borg [2011] reflects) may rarely read. Pre-service courses thus have a major role in equipping teachers for the challenges they face.

As to the support pre-service teachers need, our understandings of learning teaching are continually evolving, supported by emerging research, for example, in language teacher cognition (S. Borg, 2011). These developing understandings drive the need for constantly updated (and therefore evaluated) material. For example, it is now considered important to help teachers reflect on beliefs they bring with them to pre-service teacher education, as otherwise they may teach uncritically in the way they themselves had been taught (M. Borg, 2005), an insight which has clear pedagogical implications. Also, there is a move away from the traditional perception of teaching as application of theory to practice towards an appreciation of the theorisation of practice and the view that, to a large extent, we learn to teach by teaching and reflecting on this work (Burns & Richards, 2009, p. 4). This understanding immediately suggests that teacher education material needs to be practical and support classroom practice, giving teachers things to do and reflect on, rather than getting them to talk about teaching in an abstract sense.

The centrality of practice implies a constructivist view of learning teaching, which can be seen as a ‘long-term, complex developmental process’ (Freeman & Johnson, 1998, p. 402). Therefore, besides including a strong practical orientation that supports the development of basic teaching competencies, the CELTA and other initial teacher education programmes, and by extension the material they use, need to include elements that allow a pre-service teacher to develop after a course. So, material is required that allows for the possibility of essentially self-directed and bottom-up post-course development (Mann, 2005) to take place in-tune with local contexts. The material should ideally promote the collaborative and mutually supportive professional engagement between colleagues that can develop in such contexts.
Ideally, then, material used with CELTA-type trainees would need to:

- be accessible and comprehensible
- give practical classroom support
- support both teaching competence and long-term development
- invite teachers to reflect on beliefs and experience
- promote research-based views of learning and teaching
- be adapted to local contexts
- encourage collaborative learning amongst teachers

As noted above, material used to support pre-service teachers early in the 21st century did not appear to meet all these criteria, particularly the first, which unfortunately had a knock-on effect regarding others. We now consider why such a situation may have arisen, given that some materials evaluation would have occurred.

**Challenges in evaluating material used with CELTA-type trainees**

A central problem with the evaluation of material used in language teacher education is that the processes chosen may rely too heavily on the ‘armchair evaluation’ (McGrath, 2002) of experts, who may have very different perceptions from those of target users. This ‘armchair evaluation’ may be offered at different times, i.e. pre-publication in the form of confidential readers’ reports for publishers and/or post-publication in the form of review articles in professional journals. As well as shaping consumer behaviour, post-publication reviews might possibly influence revisions for future editions (if the book is successful), while the suggestions contained in pre-publication evaluations might be put to immediate effect.

A weakness of some ‘armchair evaluations’ is that they can be ‘impressionistic’ (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2010, p. 7), in contrast to more objectively written reviews that are characterised by the use of principled criteria, for example, Hedge (2003). However, while the criteria Hedge uses in her review of Harmer (2001) are clearly based on extensive knowledge and experience, she does illustrate the ‘armchair’ problem by reporting: ‘as I read, I found myself slipping into the shoes of one or other in-service teacher with whom I currently work, trying to view the content through their eyes’ (Hedge, 2003, p. 403). It may be far harder for such reviewers, however expert, to fit into the shoes of comparatively more inexperienced pre-service CELTA-type trainees. Nor is this likely to be easy for materials writers, whose own successful career paths may limit the opportunities they have to undertake regular teaching and teacher training.
Of course, the views of experts remain hugely important, but this highlights the need to combine such expert evaluations, focused on the material’s likely effectiveness, with evaluations of how the material actually works, and the effects it has on users (McGrath, 2002). In the context of pre-service language teacher education, this means collecting data from trainees who are about to do, are doing, or have very recently done a CELTA-type course.

**Involving CELTA-type trainees in evaluating material: An account of trying to make it work in practice**

We now recount an experience of involving such groups of trainee teachers in materials evaluation; this was conducted by the first author, Peter Watkins. The material in question (Watkins, 2005) had been produced in response to a perceived gap in the market noted in the early 2000s and described above. This material was not designed as a coursebook as such but as a standalone entity, offering support for new teachers either before, during, or immediately after their course, although the needs of pre-service trainees were a major consideration. Additionally, its design had been based on principles outlined above.

When I came to evaluate the material in 2010, I particularly wanted to assess how accessible and comprehensible it was and also whether it was practical, in the sense that users could apply ideas in their own lessons. These criteria became the primary focus of my materials evaluation project. This is not to say that the other criteria listed above are not as important, merely that they were not the primary focus.

Reviews of the first edition of the book, for example, Serrano-Boyer (2005), were positive; in fact, this critic commented that ‘unlike many others, Peter Watkins puts himself in the place of a novice English teacher’ (para. 4). The book sold well and was added to the reading lists of numerous CELTA-type courses.

An outcome of this success was that after several years the publishers felt there was demand for a second edition. This new edition should be based on the same principles outlined above; for example, it should remain accessible to pre-service teachers; it should not shift its focus to a different market. To achieve this objective, I wanted to draw on the voices of pre-service teachers. I wanted to know what users of the first edition felt about it. How did they benefit from it? Which sections were most useful? On the basis of their reactions and my interpretations of these, which sections should be expanded, revised or reduced?

**Practical issues in setting up the research**

To identify research participants, I used professional contacts (who were all very supportive) at four of the many different centres I had worked with in the UK; these
provided either CELTA or Trinity Certificate in TESOL courses. Through these contacts, I was able to access 33 users of the material, who contributed to a qualitative evaluation.

All participants, sampled as opportunity arose and not controlled for age, gender or first language background, gave their informed consent, of which one key element was anonymity and another, in the case of interviewees, was being able to opt out of being audio-recorded. It was important not to place the participants under greater pressure and this included taking too much of their time, particularly for those who were still in the process of completing a demanding and potentially stressful programme. Senior (2006, p. 40-41) comments on the emotional load of CELTA-type courses, highlighting this with a quote from one trainee: ‘I’ve been teaching for 25 years and I’ve never felt like this before. I’m a grown woman and I don’t understand why I’m so nervous.’ The need to avoid creating further stress meant that interviews were limited to no longer than 30 minutes.

**Stage 1: Interviews and questionnaires**

The research design unfolded over time in response to my developing understandings of the challenges of gaining data that was less influenced by possible researcher bias, with two distinct stages. In the first stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 users of the book, who varied considerably in different ways, for instance, regarding age and gender, and whether or not they had already completed the initial course, though they were all novices; some I had met before, though others were strangers (see Appendix A for a breakdown of their characteristics).

These interviews allowed me to move away from ‘armchair evaluation’ (McGrath, 2002) and to gauge the impact that the book had on its users, using follow-up questions to probe deeper into key issues. Questions included asking about the content (*which chapters have you read?*) and the structure (*what sequence did you read them in?*) (Appendix B includes an outline of the focusing questions). The book was used as a physical prompt to ask about sections that had been either particularly useful or unclear/unhelpful. Respondents were also asked to give examples from the book of activities they had used in lessons.

This provided numerous insights, such as which sections of the book had been used most heavily and why. It became clear, for example, that advice on basic competencies such as how to present and practise language was highly valued, with sections that addressed this read and reread, as were appendices on grammar terminology and verb forms; some of the respondents indicated they felt anxious about teaching grammar and that these sections really helped them.
Conversely, least-read sections included those with the word ‘learner’ in the title. The nature of learning and factors affecting learning were of course embedded within relevant chapters, but titles, by their very nature, draw attention. Might these chapters have been less prominent for users because they were positioned towards the end of the book, for example? Alternatively, could they have been less read because, like novices described by an experienced teacher in Senior (2006), these new teachers were primarily focused (perhaps because of the assessment criteria of their CELTA-type course) on putting what they had learnt into practice rather than on the quality of the learning taking place in their classrooms? Another little used section was one on professional development. Was this also because the interviewees were focused on the here and now?

It seemed that the teachers had created their own paths through the material, rather than necessarily reading the chapters in order, though none reported any problems with their reading patterns. Some activities had been used with their own students; this suggests they found them accessible as well as practical.

However, it was harder to elicit criticisms of the book, such as what was unclear, and I reflected on the potential disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews as a research method in this context. For example, there is a hierarchical imbalance inherent in ‘experts’ interviewing pre-service teachers and, furthermore, the participants knew I was the author of the book. Was I being fed information it was thought I might want to hear? I considered how else to elicit information with the aim of reducing the likelihood of participants providing socially desirable responses. One option was to use focus groups but the logistical burden of organising these meant that I decided instead to supplement the interview data with that elicited through questionnaires. The respondents’ anonymity (even from me!) was assured through a third party (a professional contact) distributing the questionnaires and collecting them from six pre-service teachers. The questionnaires used the same focusing questions as the interviews, allowing me to compare data collected through two different methods, and so achieve a form of triangulation. Of course, an inherent drawback of using questionnaires was that I was unable to ask follow-up questions. However, at least the respondents were not being asked to voice criticisms directly to the author.

**Stage 2: Reading and reaction protocols, and a lesson plan**

When I analysed responses to the questionnaires I found these tended to confirm the interview findings, and I wished to gain further insights. I decided to extend the study by moving away from participants’ recollections and perceptions to gauge the way in which they interacted with specific parts of the material. I decided a ‘reading
and reaction’ protocol (Thaine, 2012) might be appropriate. Four pre-service teachers (of 15 who were invited) volunteered to read two chapters and provide written review comments, summarising their reactions to each section in one column and raising questions, including any need for clarification, in a second. Two chapters of the book (1 and 8) were chosen, as they were very different. Chapter 1 was one of the less immediately practical chapters, outlining background issues in language and language teaching, while Chapter 8, in contrast, was an example of a very practical chapter, including a complete lesson plan.

The questions raised by respondents did provide the kind of detailed feedback needed. For example, one question was: “How does example 2 (a word recognition exercise) teach reading?”, thus highlighting the need for greater clarity in one place. There were also requests for fuller explanations, e.g.: “How do you choose authentic texts?”, in a section on authenticity. A clear advantage of the ‘reading and reaction’ protocol (Thaine, 2012), then, was that it provided a useful micro-evaluation of small sections of the text. It also provided insights into the cognitions of the teachers. For example, one question regarding the ‘Natural Approach’ was: ‘How can you learn a language without grammar?’ This seemed to indicate an assumption on the part of the participant that explicit grammar teaching was central to the learning/teaching process, an assumption I could address through providing feedback. Indeed, one benefit of this research instrument was that participants could gain tangible benefits from engaging in the research, as they received answers to their questions. However, a drawback with this process was that it was time-consuming, both for them, completing their CELTA-type course at the time, and also for me, the researcher.

I employed one further research method, rather opportunistically, to gain insights into how the material impacted planning behaviour. This involved analysing a lesson plan provided by a participant already known to me who had used the book, recently finished an initial teacher education course and was at the time preparing for her first job. I was interested in the extent to which she had been influenced by the material, which might provide insights into its accessibility and practicality. What evidence was there of its uptake?

Her plan suggested a good level of uptake, for example, in the way she planned to teach collocations, check understanding and include dialogue building, procedures which could all be mapped to the book. However, I am conscious that there are, of course, numerous limitations with a research method that involves analysing a lesson plan to identify influences, such as potential subjectivity. For, of course, there might be alternative explanations for planning behaviour, including input from other sources and chance. As ‘researcher’, I therefore needed to be cautious about ascribing any of her planning behaviour to the material. This is a limitation of
the method that would similarly apply to observations. We now reflect on how this materials evaluation helped in revising the first edition of the book (Watkins, 2005).

Reflections on the evaluation of this material

Though the research was subject to the various limitations described above (e.g., there was the danger of researcher bias that was continually guarded against), it nevertheless provided valuable insights that supported the revision of the material in question (Watkins, 2005). Firstly, it provided confirmation that the relatively small sample of CELTA-type trainees who participated found much of the material easily accessible and comprehensible, which were amongst the goals motivating the original design. Nevertheless, the ‘reading and reaction’ protocol (Thaine, 2012) did highlight places in two chapters where greater clarity or fuller explanations would have been welcomed, an insight which fed into the critically reflective revision of the material as a whole.

Interview and questionnaire responses, as well as the analysed lesson plan, also indicated that the material gave practical classroom support. In addition, the heavily used sections of the book that were designed to support teaching competence, such as the advice on presentation and practice activities and the grammar-focused appendices, seemed particularly popular. Of course, though, this does not imply in any way that these were necessarily the ‘best’ or ‘most important’ parts of the book. One of the issues in revising the material was to think how to make the less used parts of the book seem more relevant to trainees in the process of learning to teach.

The materials evaluation process provided insights into the teachers’ cognitions. There was a clear preference for more ‘traditional’ PPP (Presentation-Practice-Production) lesson paradigms, with participants preferring to provide explicit grammar instruction rather than adopt alternative and less predictable lesson structures, e.g., in task-based learning, when language instruction might be fed in according to learners’ needs at the end of a communicative task. Adopting a PPP structure may have reduced the participants’ anxiety regarding their knowledge of grammar. Nevertheless, one outcome of this materials evaluation was to include more examples of other ways of structuring lessons in the new edition of the book, as support for teacher development in this area.

One of the disappointing findings of the materials evaluation was that the professional development section had been little used by interviewees and questionnaire respondents. This may have been because the CELTA-type trainees had more immediate concerns, but nevertheless a goal of the revision was to make this focus more integral to the book, for instance, by incorporating reflective activities in each section that stimulated longer-term professional development. This is in line with
current thinking about the role of materials for continuing teacher education (e.g., Mann, 2005).

Generally, then, the materials evaluation reported on here was helpful in supporting the revision process. Though there were challenges, such as addressing the need to reduce the threat of researcher bias through the evolving research design, the insights generated from the study made the efforts to access the voices of novice teachers seem worthwhile. The combination of methods used appeared to work well, although, with hindsight, other research methods could additionally be put to future use in materials evaluation projects. These could include blogs completed by CELTA-type trainees while studying, and teacher education activities that involved CELTA-type trainees in collaboratively evaluating the material used with them. An important consideration, too, though, is also to protect the participants on such courses from taking on too much additional work, at a time when they are under considerable pressure.

**Conclusion**

Very little research on materials evaluation for language teaching has been published, as Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010) remind us, let alone that for language teacher education. An unfortunate consequence of the first of these situations is that around the world ‘many teachers are asked to work with books which are inappropriate or inadequate in work environments which mitigate against . . . critical creative teaching’ (McGrath, 2013, p. 188). This puts an extra onus on the material for language teacher education being fit for purpose, which requires recognising the needs of novice teachers and how they learn to teach, for example, through the ‘theorization of practice’ (Burns & Richards, 2009). Accessing these voices, though, is not without challenges, as discussed above. It is necessary to find contextually sensitive ways in which to do this, while negating issues of researcher bias as much as possible. This article, and the original research it was based on (Watkins, 2011), does represent a step in this direction, in describing a materials evaluation process in language teacher education.

In addition, the principles underlying this process could, and arguably should, be extended to other material types and need not be confined to published material. Many course providers may justifiably prefer to produce ‘in-house’ resources, recognising local contextual needs. However, there is no reason why that material should not be evaluated using similar processes as those described here. Indeed, more such studies, produced in a variety of contexts, would help raise awareness of what we can learn when we access the voices, and, through these, the cognitions, of actual users of teacher education material.
References


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### Appendix A

**Profile of respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>respondent</th>
<th>known to me previously: yes/no</th>
<th>completed initial course: yes/no</th>
<th>female/male</th>
<th>age range</th>
<th>interview (recorded or notes made)</th>
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<td>male</td>
<td>21–25</td>
<td>notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>21–25</td>
<td>audio recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>female</td>
<td>21–25</td>
<td>notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Outline interview structure for users of Learning to teach English

1. Why do the learners you have experience of want to learn English?
2. And/or — what do you think are the motives of people who follow English language courses?
3. Look at the list of contents. (Show table below.) Please tick the appropriate column.
4. Did you read the chapters in sequence?
5. If not, what determined your choice of sequence?
6. Did you read any chapters more than once? If so, how would you characterise your second reading?
7. How far apart (in terms of time) were the readings?
8. What motivated you to reread the sections?
9. If you have taught, have you used any of the activities described in your book in your lessons? (Show book where necessary.)
10. Did you adapt the activities? (Show book where necessary.)
11. In what ways?
12. Generally, did you find the chapters you read easy to follow? Can you think of any sections that were unclear? (Show book where necessary.)
13. Did you usually read the commentaries that accompany the chapters?
14. How long, on average, did you think about tasks before reading the commentary?
15. What types of lesson (grammar, skills and so on) are you familiar with?
16. What sort of stages would you include in each?
17. How might you sequence those stages?
18. Do you feel that all lessons should have a clearly defined linguistic aim?
19. Do you ever base lessons around what learners say/write in class, rather than plan beforehand?
20. What influences you when deciding on how much to plan?
21. What aspects of being a language teacher are you confident with? What do you need to work on?
22. How can you make improvements in this/these area(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have read this in a manner which I would describe as:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>careful and engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1 Language, learning and teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2 Roles of teachers and learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3 Managing a class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4 Teaching vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5 Teaching vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6 Teaching grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7 Teaching pronunciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 8 Developing reading skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9 Developing listening skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10 Developing writing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11 Developing speaking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12 Fluency and accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13 Correcting learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 14 Developing learner independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 15 Learner variation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16 Planning and example lesson plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 17 ESOL and other teaching contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 18 Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1 Basic grammar terminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2 Verb forms and their common uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 3 Phonemes of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 4 Material and needs analysis form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Individual feedback consultations in Japanese tertiary EFL:
A systemic semiotic exploration

THOMAS AMUNDRUD
Nara University of Education
Macquarie University

Teachers often advise students on their classwork, but the discourse features of this activity have not been widely studied. Moreover, while corrective feedback (e.g., Bitchener, 2008) has been subject to extensive study in SLA, the classroom discourse in which it occurs has received little attention. This paper examines one phenomenon, called the individual student feedback consultation, that was found in data collected from two Japanese tertiary EFL courses and appears to fit the characteristics of a genre, or ‘a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity’ where speakers interact (Martin, 2010, p. 19). This study is situated within systemic functional linguistics and multimodal discourse analysis, and specifically the study of curriculum genres. Five samples from a larger audio-video corpus were analysed for lexicogrammatical, discourse semantic, and multimodal features. Following this analysis, four obligatory stages – Opening, Conferring, Advice, and Closing – were found in all consultations. After presenting the analyses of each stage, this paper closes by discussing possible implications of researching individual student feedback consultations for EFL/ESL teaching and teacher training, as well as for corrective feedback research.

Introduction

One part of the job for many teachers is to advise students. While this is a common activity both within and outside classrooms, its discourse features in terms of language and other modalities have until now not been widely explored. This paper examines a phenomenon, dubbed the ‘individual student feedback consultation’, whereby teachers provide evaluation and advice to individual students to help them understand and complete classroom tasks and homework, and revise compositions. This phenomenon appears to have a stable, identifiable pattern within the Japanese tertiary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom data examined, and so fits
the characteristics of a genre, or ‘a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity’ where
speakers interact (Martin, 2010, p. 19).

Extensive research in second language acquisition (SLA) has been conducted on the
structure of corrective feedback itself since Chaudron (1977), as well as on its efficacy
(e.g., Bitchener, 2008), but there is little on the classroom discourse within which
feedback occurs. In-class student consultations have been similarly overlooked; Tudor
(1993), for instance, suggests ways to consult with students about their language
learning needs, but without specifying particular discursive actions. Since this study’s
corpus indicates that teacher-student consultations are a common pedagogical
feature, and as learner preference for feedback is widely reported (Lyster, Saito, &
Sato, 2013), how teachers give feedback will also be addressed below.

After profiling this study’s basis in systemic functional linguistics (SFL), present
research into tertiary Japanese EFL classes is described, along with the means used
to investigate spoken and multimodal discourse in this study. The four obligatory
stages of the individual feedback consultation genre that were found in the five corpus
excerpts are subsequently examined. Lastly, the relevance of individual feedback
consultations to the analysis of EFL pedagogy is discussed.

Overview of ‘Sydney School’ SFL

At its core, SFL focuses not on the syntax of sentences, as in formal theories of
language, but on the function of texts in oral and written contexts (Burns & Knox,
2005, p. 235; Byrnes, 2009, p. 3); for this reason, the text itself is the primary unit
of analysis. SFL is both social and semiotic, meaning that it is concerned with the
part that language and other systems of meaning-making – like gesture, space, and
gaze – play in our lived experience of society (Halliday & Hasnain, 1985).

In the SFL model, language is seen as comprised of levels, or ‘strata’, where higher-
level meanings are realised in lower-level meanings. In the ‘Sydney School’ of SFL
that the present study is situated within, the two uppermost levels (Genre and
Register) realise context, while the lower three levels realise language (Discourse
Semantics, Lexicogrammar and Expression) (e.g., Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose,
2007). The highest level of meaning is that of Genre, or ‘how things get done, when
language is used to accomplish them’ (Martin, 1985, p. 250) in particular cultures
(Burns & Knox, 2005, p. 238). In examining classroom pedagogy, curriculum genres
(e.g., Busch, 2007; Christie, 1989 & 2002; O’Halloran, 1996) have been analysed to
account for ‘the staged, patterned ways in which the goals and processes of school
learning are achieved’ (Christie, 1989, p. i). The model of stratified context employed
in the present study is shown in Figure 1.
Genre operates at the level of the context of culture. Below Genre is Register, which consists of three variables – Field, Tenor, and Mode – and which describes the context of situation. Field describes the discourse patterns of realising social activities (Martin & Rose, 2007); Tenor ‘refers to the negotiation of social relationships among participants’ (Martin, 1992, p. 523), and their statuses and roles; and Mode is ‘what part language is playing’ and how participants use it in a given situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1985, p. 12).

Within the lower three strata, the two of interest to this analysis of EFL classrooms are Discourse Semantics, which is discussed in the following section on Spoken Language, and Lexicogrammar. While space does not permit a detailed discussion of this latter stratum, of particular importance within Lexicogrammar for this analysis is the system of Transitivity, which is the major way in which grammar creates representation (Eggins, 2004, p. 213) from the ‘flow of events’ we experience (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 170). Within Transitivity, ‘processes’ (usually represented
by verbal groups), are classified according to the different sorts of experience they construe. In this paper, the three main categories of processes analysed in English as well as Japanese (Teruya, 2007; Thomson, 2005) are Material, Relational, and Mental. Material processes ‘construe . . . a series of concrete changes’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 179), which may occur either literally or figuratively. Relational processes, however, concern states of being and how they are construed as unfolding in time (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 211). On the other hand, Mental processes are concerned with representing ‘our experience of the world of our own consciousness’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 197) and our perceptions of phenomena. Through analysing Transitivity, we can see how the events represented have different participants doing and being in certain ways, but not in others. As will be seen in the subsequent analysis, the different stages of the individual feedback consultation genre are characterised by the presence of different processes due to the different social purposes of each stage.

Methodology

Research Setting
The data utilised for this study comes from a larger project examining the linguistic and multimodal characteristics of EFL classroom curriculum genres (see Amundrud, 2012). This data was collected from two separate EFL courses for first-year students in the same faculty at a large private university in Western Japan in the 2011 academic year. Class levels were streamed using the TOEFL-ITP test (TOEFL ITP Assessment Series, n.d.). The Spring 2011 course for lower-intermediate students focused on oral communication, while the Autumn 2011 course, for upper-intermediate students, focused on academic writing. Both teachers were non-Japanese, and spoke Japanese as a second language; the spring 2011 teacher, Duke, spoke English as a first language, and the autumn 2011 teacher, Miriam, spoke English and Tagalog as first languages. Both names are pseudonyms. At the time of the recording, each had had over a decade’s worth of language teaching experience in Japanese educational institutions.

Data treatment
These five classroom consultations were taken from a larger audio-video corpus comprising 10 classroom lessons that the researcher observed. All students consented to participate in the study. There were four cameras and four voice recorders present in every class observed except the first. While almost all classes observed were both audio- and video-recorded, the recording for one segment of one class which was used in this paper, was audio-only.

Individual feedback consultations are part of a larger genre family (Martin & Rose, 2008) of classroom consultations found in this corpus. Differences between the
individual feedback consultation and other genre family members are still provisional, but appear to be distinguished in terms of their particular social purpose and resulting genre stage composition. Once examples of individual feedback consultations had been identified, five examples were selected for use in this study. These examples of the individual feedback consultation contain a number of similarities, yet also significant differences, both of which are necessary to critically apply the theory of classroom curriculum genres that the present study employs.

Each of the consultations was first transcribed and analysed ‘top-down’ for the social purpose of each stage, initially presented in Amundrud (2013), and then analysed ‘bottom-up’ for lexicogrammatical and discourse semantic selections. This shift in perspective allows the analysis to view both specific instantiations characteristic to each genre stage while also seeing how they realise the social purpose of the genre enacted.

**Spoken discourse**

The present analysis of spoken discourse comes from the model of Negotiation proposed by Martin (1992) and developed in Eggins and Slade (1997) and Martin and Rose (2007). In the Martin (1992) model, the most fundamental discursive unit is a move, or where ‘speaker change could occur without turn transfer being seen as an interruption’ (Eggins & Slade, 1997, p. 186). A pair or more of connected moves makes an Exchange. The system of SPEECH FUNCTION concerns the relationship of moves to their grammatical realisation and the role the speaker is playing in the interaction, while moves are sequenced in Exchanges through the system of NEGOTIATION (Martin & Rose, 2007), which enables the tracking of information and action across moves in dynamic talk (Martin, 2001). Moves in the present paper that were not realised to grammatical completion were coded as false starts and so are not coded, though they are included in the transcript (Transcription Key provided in Appendix A).

In the SPEECH FUNCTION system described above, the model of dialog (following Halliday, 1984; see also Eggins & Slade, 1997; Martin, 1992; Martin & Rose, 2007) holds that there are four basic speech functions in English: Questions, Statements, Commands, and Offers. Giving and demanding information are congruently, or typically, handled by Statements and Questions respectively, while giving and demanding goods-and-services are congruently handled by Offers and Commands respectively. The system of SPEECH FUNCTION also has Calls for getting an interlocutor’s attention, and Greetings for starting and ending interactions. In this study, however, Greetings that end interactions will be called ‘Leave-takings’ in order to disambiguate from those that open interactions.
Eggins and Slade (1997) developed the four basic speech functions into options of greater delicacy, or more detailed sub-classification, to handle casual conversation data. This framework has since been deployed in numerous studies, including that of English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum genres (Busch, 2007). In this speech function network, the four basic speech functions put forward by Halliday (1984) become Opening speech functions that begin a specific sequence of moves. The present study modifies the network to include Calls, Greetings, and Leave-takings. In the speech function network, Halliday’s (1984) original speech functions develop more delicate options, including Responding speech functions that continue the interaction, and Rejoinder speech functions that interrupt or suspend attempts to close the exchange sequence. See Appendix B for further description of the speech functions used.

In the above-mentioned system of NEGOTIATION, moves are divided into four categories of exchange structure – Action (A), Knowledge (K), delayed Action (dA), or delayed Knowledge (dK) – with the participant demanding denoted as 2 and the one demanded of denoted as 1. So, following the system of Exchange, a Question is commonly realised by a K2 move (secondary knower, or someone requesting knowledge) and a Command by an A2 move (secondary actor, or someone requesting action), while a Statement providing information is commonly a K1 (primary knower, or someone providing knowledge). However, NEGOTIATION is not tied to the Mood of a clause, and so there can also be non-congruent realisations, like A2 moves realised by statements with declarative Mood.

A final feature of the NEGOTIATION system that is of particular importance to studying classroom interactions is delayed moves, particularly delayed Knower (dK1) moves in which teachers ask questions of students to which they already know the answer, and to which they subsequently respond with a feedback (f) move (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). Such instances of ‘triadic dialogue’ (Nassaji & Wells, 2000) have long been noted in classroom discourse as a means by which teachers commonly can accept, reject, evaluate, or comment upon students’ elicited utterances (e.g., Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), as will be seen in the analysis below.

**Multimodality**

Multimodal research accounts for the importance of other meaning-making modalities (e.g., image, embodied meanings such as gesture and gaze, and spatiality) that occur with, and sometimes even displace, language-in-use (Iedema, 2003). Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) ‘highlight[s] that the meaning work we do at all times exploits various semiotics’ (Iedema, 2003, p. 39); as classrooms are ‘complex pedagogic sites’ requiring simultaneous engagement with multiple
modalities (Hood, 2011, p. 31), accounting for their discourse therefore also requires multimodal consideration. To this end, SFL has provided numerous theoretical tools for multimodal analysis thanks to its social semiotic basis, which roots meaning in context (O’Halloran, 2008).

The three non-linguistic modalities most salient to this study are how classroom space is used (following Lim, 2011, and Lim, O’Halloran, & Podlasov, 2012), the direction of teacher and student gaze, and their use of pointing, ‘deictic’ (Kendon, 2004) gestures. These three modalities have been found to co-occur with the stages of this consultation genre, and, as will be seen for classroom space and participant gaze but not for deictic gesture, appear to be an integral part of the genre. These modalities are analysed in the four video-recorded excerpts when possible; while gesture and gaze cannot be recovered for the audio-only data, observation notes confirm the spatial position of the participants.

Classroom space in this study is divided into Authoritative, Classwork, and Interactional Spaces, based on the classroom position of teachers relative to students, and the different kinds of teaching and meaning-making teachers can do in those spaces (Lim et al., 2012, pp. 236–239). However, the meaning of a space can and does change depending on its use, as will be seen in the subsequent analysis. Authoritative Space, which is usually furthest from students, is generally at the front of the classroom, and is from where teachers issue instructions and so where the teacher’s power in terms of the Tenor is most salient; Classwork Space, which is a development of Lim’s (2011) system, is where students do their work, but it can be intruded on by the teacher; lastly, Interactional Space, which is much closer than Authoritative or Classroom Space, generally occurs when standing or sitting in close proximity. This facilitates interaction and reduces interpersonal distance while also downplaying – but not eliminating – the saliency of teacher power. Beyond this typology, the present study also notes the relative position of participants, because prior research in psychology (Zweigenhaft, 1976) found this significant to the conduct of teacher-student interactions.

Gaze is also crucial to consultations because it enables participants to visibly demonstrate to another the direction of their attention (Kendon, 2009, p. 359). Transactional gaze, whose ‘directed’ selection gives importance to objects and people (Jewitt, 2006, p. 50), was found to occur in the following vectors: from the student at the teacher, from teacher at the student, from the teacher at the entire class, from the teacher or student at separate documents, or from the teacher and student at shared documents. Moves with indeterminate gaze vectors were also found. Each move is coded for the transactional gaze discerned (see Appendix C: Coding Key for Gaze).
Lastly, the analysis also focuses on deictic gestures as they are emblematic and understandable without reference to context (Kendon, 2004), and because prior research has noted that their use in classrooms co-occurs with speech in order to indicate specific written text (Hood, 2011). Due to this significant co-occurrence with speech, deictic gestures are indicated by underlined text in the transcript.

**Analysis**

Analysis of the five consultations found the four obligatory stages and one optional stage shown in Figure 2:

![Diagram](Figure 2: Individual feedback consultation genre structure)

Each consultation begins with an Opening, whereby either the teacher or the student initiates the consultation and the student proffers work to be consulted about. This is followed by Conferring, in which problems with student work or in understanding teacher comments are discussed. The next stage is Advice, where teachers provide guidance for successful assignment completion, and is optionally followed in Duke’s classes by a Scoring stage, where a score is assigned. All consultations end with a
Closing, where the proffered work is returned. The individual feedback consultation is a serial genre (Martin & Rose, 2008), meaning that once one consultation finishes, a new one can recur unless and until the teacher stops it.

In addition to the above stages, the Teacher Disciplinary Interruption (TDI) micro-genre (O’Halloran, 1996), where the teacher ‘interrupts the genre in progress for disciplinary purposes’ (p. 561), also recurred in some consultations. To see an example of all five of the above stages along with a TDI directed at the class as a whole for their off-task behaviour, see Appendix D: Complete Individual Feedback Consultation (Duke and S1).

Below, each obligatory stage is exemplified, described, and analysed, first by the purpose of the stage, and then by its lexicogrammatical, discursive, and multimodal features. Since the focus of this paper is on the characteristics of the individual feedback consultation genre generally, the optional Scoring stage, which only occurred in Duke’s classes, will not be discussed.

**Opening (OPN)**

The purpose of the Opening stage is for teachers or students to catch each other’s attention and initiate the consultation. The Opening in Appendix D (lines 1–2 and 5–8) illustrates the more teacher-centred consultation, in which the teacher summoned individual students. Excerpt 1, however, shows the Opening for a more learner-centred consultation, where students approached the teacher after class:

*Excerpt 1: Instance of Opening stage (Miriam, S2 and S3)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech Function/Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
<th>Gaze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>((Turning from previous student, M adjusts glasses and faces S1 on her left.)) Mm-hm?</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;S2; S2&gt;T; S3&gt;T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>((With outstretched right arm, S1, who had previously consulted with M, indicates S3, who is to M’s right.))</td>
<td>Classwork</td>
<td>T&gt;S2; S2&gt;T; S3&gt;T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Uh-huh?</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;S2; S3&gt;T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Yes. ((Moves closer to M.))</td>
<td>Classwork to Interactional</td>
<td>T&gt;S3; S3&gt;T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Offer/A2</td>
<td>((Starts to hand paper to M.))</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S3; S3&gt;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Accept/A1</td>
<td>((Reaches out to take paper.))</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As exemplified in Appendix D and Excerpt 1, all consultation Openings display pairs of nonverbal Offers, whereby the student proffers her or his paper to the teacher, and nonverbal Accepts, whereby the proffered paper is taken. All Opening stages are also marked by minor clauses, or clauses that do not select a Subject or a Finite (Eggins, 2004), such as Greetings (as in line 3 of Excerpt 1 above), or Calls (as in line 1 of Appendix D).

Multimodally, all instances of this stage featured movement by students from an initial Classwork position to an Interactional position next to the teacher. This Interactional position was, in all instances, alongside the teacher, and was maintained until the Closing stage. This spatial position not only facilitates interaction, but also appears to signify the collaborative framing of the feedback consultation. Nevertheless, classroom tenor remains expressed in the positioning of participants in that both teachers remained seated and all students stood throughout each consultation.

Conferring (CNF)
The Conferring stage consists of exchanges through which teachers and students discern problems in student work or in understanding written teacher comments upon prior assignments. In Duke’s conferences, where he consulted with students on homework that they were to use in that class period for a class discussion activity, he provided feedback in this stage on problematic lexis, grammar, and ideational content that the students might clarify, as shown in lines 9–22 in Appendix D, and in Excerpt 2 below, in which Duke attempts to elicit a student to reformulate her own error (Nassaji, 2009) via a dK1 exchange:

Excerpt 2: Instance of Conferring stage in teacher-centred consultation (Duke and S4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech Function/ Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Question/K2</td>
<td>Did you hide, “would you hide?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>[LAUGHTER]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Question/dK1</td>
<td>Would you [Ø:be angry]==</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Agree/K1</td>
<td>うん. (“Yeah.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Clarify/K2</td>
<td>[Ø:Would you] be? Be angry?==</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Resolve/dK1</td>
<td>==Yeah “would you be angry” yeah sorry “would you be”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Extend/K1</td>
<td>And did you ha:::ve じゃないて (“no”) “have you had”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Miriam’s class, however, when she had returned drafts of student compositions with comments that students in their consultations queried about, the Conferring
stages consisted of them asking Miriam about written comments and marks that they did not understand prior to later student correction and resubmission, as in Excerpt 3:

Excerpt 3: Instance of Conferring stage in student-centred consultation (Miriam and S3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech Function/Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
<th>Gaze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Statement/K1</td>
<td>I uh I didn’t do in-text citation.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>Uh-huh.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Extend/K1</td>
<td>((Looking at assignment paper on teacher’s desk.) What I did==</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Disagree/K2</td>
<td>==Is this an in-text citation.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Rebound/K2</td>
<td>Is this APA style?</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Resolve/K1</td>
<td>I think [Ø:this is] MLA because==</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Confirm/K2</td>
<td>[Ø:This is] MLA style?</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>Okay mm-hm?</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All instances of this consultation stage are marked by K1 knower moves, with full and elliptical declarative clauses whose experiential content is expanded across multiple moves via Appending and Prolonging speech functions. In lexicogrammatical terms, the Conferring stage (Appendix D, lines 9–12, and Excerpt 3) in all consultations feature Mental processes projecting Relational processes since each involved students and teachers discussing what they thought about the work at hand, as shown in Lines 10 and 12 from Appendix D below:

10 Duke I think this is “wrong” ((D marks under student’s writing on his paper)).

11 S1 ((Leans over D’s desk to look at writing that D is referring to.))

12 Duke And this is “terrible” ((D marks under student’s writing on his paper)).

Multimodally speaking, gaze was almost uniformly fixed on the shared documentation,
rather than the interlocutor. This would appear to be in line with the focus in discourse upon the experiential content of student work under discussion. As for spatiality, the students’ position in the Interactional Space remained alongside the teacher. As shown in line 11 from above, though, students did sometimes modulate their positioning in conjunction with reference to documentation by themselves or the teacher.

Advice (ADV)

In Advice, the teacher provides content-oriented feedback to assist in completing coursework successfully. This can be seen in both lines 23 to 30 in Appendix D, as well as in Excerpt 4 below of Miriam with S2:

**Excerpt 4: Instance of Advice stage (Miriam and S2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech Function/ Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Contradict/K1</td>
<td>But you cannot just bring, just</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Prolong: Extend/ K1</td>
<td>This is an academic essay, you must have an argument.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Prolong: Enhance/K1</td>
<td>So your (two) statements are important.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Register/--</td>
<td>Okay?</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Prolong: Elaborate/ K1</td>
<td>For example you can say that, this uh NGO focuses on these activities because...the philosophy of the NGO is, an example.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While teachers in both classes have the most moves in the Advice stage, students may still counter their guidance, as shown in Excerpt 5:

**Excerpt 5: Instance of Advice stage with student confronting moves (Duke and S4 )**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech function/ Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>Okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Statement/K1</td>
<td>I - I think some easier questions like==</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Confirm/K2</td>
<td>==Ee-zee-ah?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Answer/K1f</td>
<td>あの ( ) [LAUGHTER] 前後 [Ø:です]. (“Uh, from beginning to end.”) [LAUGHTER]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Elaborate/ K1</td>
<td>“Did you like the story”, とか (“for instance”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move #</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Speech function/ Exchange</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Elaborate/K2</td>
<td>“Who was”==</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Rebound/K1</td>
<td>ああ [Ø:それは]違うじゃん! (“Ah that’s not right!” in Kansai dialect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Refute/dK1</td>
<td>Ah [Ø:あなたは]Discussion Leaderでしょう? (“You are Discussion Leader, right?”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Agree/K1</td>
<td>[Ø:I am] discussion leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Agree/K2f</td>
<td>Right ( )==</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Question/K2</td>
<td>==やってる違います? (“Am I doing it wrong?”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Resolve/K1f</td>
<td>No THIS is okay but, um, but=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>=Ah.=</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Excerpt 5 is marked by the presence of a Rebound (Move 7) by S4 that questions the propositional content of Duke’s prior moves. However, he maintains dominant status through the deployment of a delayed knower (dK1) move (Move 8), in which he gets the student to acknowledge awareness of a fact in Move 9 that, in Move 7, the student had attempted to rebound.

There were two significant linguistic differences between the Conferring and Advice stages. Every Advice stage features full and ellipsed declarative clauses containing Material processes, since the teacher in all instances advises students on particular actions to take. This Material focus contrasts with the Conferring stage, which utilises Mental and Relational processes exclusively. Additionally, in all Advice stages, teachers evaluate student work and suggest what the students need to do with either full or elliptical imperatives, or modalisations of inclination or obligation (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Although distinct, these two choices cover similar semantic terrain interpersonally; while a modalised proposal is more ‘ambiguous’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 147) than a congruent interrogative Command, within the classroom context of situation in which the teacher is the more powerful participant, students can hardly ignore it without potentially negative consequences.

Multimodally, however, there were no consistent differences found between the Advice and Conferring stages. Teacher and student gaze remained focused primarily on the shared documentation, and students maintained their position in the Interactional space next to the teacher. One characteristic found in both the Advice and Conferring stages, and not in Opening or Closing stages, was the use of deictic gestures co-extensive with exophoric reference, as shown in Excerpts 6:
Excerpt 6: Instance of deictic gesture in Advice stage (Duke and S5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech function/ Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
<th>Gaze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Statement/ K1</td>
<td>Okay those are okay.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Agree/K1</td>
<td>Oh</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Append: Extend/A2</td>
<td>But, [Ø: ask] some easy questions ==like== “How was the story’ or...um ((taps on desk))...“who is your favorite character”.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>==Um-hm??==</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Comply/A1</td>
<td>うん (“Okay”).</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Append: Extend/K1f</td>
<td>Ah you got it okay ((Circles item on paper with pen.)).</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Extend/A2</td>
<td>But be careful with this, because ==Conne-Connector== also has questions ==like this==, kind of about you.</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Comply/A1</td>
<td>==うん (“Okay”).==</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Comply/A1</td>
<td>==うん (“Okay”).==</td>
<td>Interactional</td>
<td>T,S=D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the presence of deictic gestures was not consistent enough to be considered characteristic of either the Conferring or Advice stages, their use would appear to confirm that tertiary lecturers do not use finger pointing gestures to refer to adult students, but to actual written meanings present in shared documentation (Hood, 2011, pp. 36–37). As such, their presence is unmarked in either the Conferring or Advice stages with shared documentation and exophoric meaning.

Closing (CL)

The final obligatory stage found in all five consultations was the Closing, in which the teacher returns the work to the student and the Consultation is closed following the student’s Accept move, as demonstrated in lines 34 and 35 of Appendix D, and in Excerpt 7 (next page).
Excerpt 7: Instance of Closing stage (Miriam and S3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech function/ Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
<th>Gaze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Okay.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S3=D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Confirm</td>
<td>Ah okay?</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S3; S3&gt;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Offer/A2</td>
<td>((Returns paper to S3.))</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S3; S3&gt;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Accept, Leave-taking/ A1</td>
<td>((Stands upright from leaning over teacher’s desk)) Okay thank you ((takes paper from Miriam))=.</td>
<td>Interactional to Supervisory</td>
<td>T&gt;S3; S3&gt;D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>Leave-taking</td>
<td>== Mm okay. ((Turns towards S2.))</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;S3 to S2; S3&gt;D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in the Opening stage, Offers and Accepts can occur both verbally and nonverbally. Leave-takings were found to be optional in Closings and, as in this case, can be co-extensive with Offers and Accepts, and so are double-coded. Multimodally, no pattern could be discerned for gaze or gesture, but the spatial positioning is a clear reversal of that for the Opening stage shown above, with students shifting from an Interactional to a Classwork space, co-extensive with Accepts.

Discussion

As demonstrated above, individual feedback consultations, which are common in many classrooms, appear to have an identifiable linguistic pattern. This pattern is shared by the roles of gaze, which is mutual in the Opening and Closing stages, but directed at the shared documentation in Conferring and Advice, and spatial positioning, in which teacher and student remain alongside each other for the majority of each consultation. Thus, these two modes appear to be an integral part of this multimodal classroom genre. The present study cannot, however, confirm a generic role for deictic gesture.

The picture that emerges of this genre is one where teachers control the pacing of each consultation – though as shown in Excerpt 5 above this is by no means uniform – and where the focus of discursive work, as indicated by teacher and student gaze, is on the shared documentation. Both teacher and student maintain interactive positions for the bulk of the consultation, but this collaboration does not level interpersonal classroom relations as shown by teacher use of imperatives and modalisations during the Advice stage, as well as by the teacher remaining seated while students stand.
It is important to again note that this pilot study cannot assert that these stages indeed belong to a genre that can be found in Japanese university EFL classes generally, much less EFL/ESL classes as a whole. However, their consistency indicates that further study is necessary, both of the present corpus and of EFL/ESL classes generally. The benefits of further study of individual feedback consultations are threefold. First, advancing a better understanding of individual feedback consultations in the EFL classroom can help improve foreign language pedagogy. For instance, if the contours of this genre are more concretely defined, teachers and students may be able to develop a meta-awareness of it. This may help avoid possible misunderstandings concerning the discursive purpose of consultations, a problem that has been found in prior studies on feedback in SLA (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Similarly, teacher-training materials can include discussion and examples of common genres in classroom teaching to help beginning teachers use classroom language more effectively. In all, such changes will help reduce the ‘invisible pedagogy’ (Christie, 2002) of schooling, which, by leaving assumptions as to how teaching and learning ought to be done implicitly understood by only those who have had prior educational access, effectively deprives students without such access or experience from learning. Lastly, a final and possibly more profound benefit of further study will be to ascertain the pedagogic purpose of consultation genres like the individual feedback consultation, as well as how such genres fit into larger EFL/ESL classroom pedagogies, and how these genres and their attendant ways of teaching can be improved or supplanted through teacher education and development. For instance, can the meaning-making ability of students be seen to advance through teaching that incorporates consultations? While this study is not enough to conclusively answer these questions alone, it does indicate the need for their address.

References


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## APPENDIX A

### TRANSCRIPTION KEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S#</td>
<td>Students, numbered by order of appearance in paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>Signals completion of a move, whether or not grammatically complete. By implication, the lack of a full stop indicates incompletion, either due to a ‘falling off’ or an interruption (Eggins &amp; Slade, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>Indicates ‘speaker parcelings of non-final talk’ (Eggins &amp; Slade, 1997, p. 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Indicates pauses or breaks in non-final talk (Eggins &amp; Slade, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Denotes questions indicated by presence of Japanese or English interrogative mood elements or intonation (Halliday &amp; Matthiessen, 2004; Teruya, 2007), or of phonologically indicated uncertainty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>!</td>
<td>‘Marks the expression of counter-expectation’ (Eggins &amp; Slade, 1997, p.2) and emphatic speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ ”</td>
<td>Marks directly reported speech (Halliday &amp; Matthiessen, 2004), whether from other participants or from orthographic texts (e.g., textbooks, homework assignments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>==</td>
<td>Indicates latched talk or overlapped talk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[LAUGHTER]</td>
<td>Denotes laughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THIS</td>
<td>Words in capital letters denote emphatic speech (Eggins &amp; Slade, 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( ( ))</td>
<td>Indicates non-verbal activity or transcriber comments, such as paralinguistic descriptions (Hutchby &amp; Wooffitt, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nn:::</td>
<td>Indicates the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter. The more colons, the longer the stretching (Hutchby &amp; Wooffitt, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Ø: I’m] almost finished</td>
<td>Words enclosed in square brackets and preceded by a slashed o and a colon are text that has been ellipsed (Halliday &amp; Matthiessen, 2004) and recovered anaphorically or cataphorically from the surrounding text as transcribed, exophorically from the classroom context in which the talk occurred, or grammatically in the case of Japanese (Thomson, 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>Indicates an unclear fragment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(guess)</td>
<td>Indicates the transcriber’s best guess at an unclear utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(“Connector.”)</td>
<td>Following Teruya (2007), English words in parentheses and quotation marks after Japanese text are English translations in English syntax.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX B

#### SPEECH FUNCTIONS USED

Table 1

*Opening Speech Functions Used (Eggins & Slade, 1997; Halliday, 1984; Martin & Rose, 2007)*

NB: Manifestations in italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech function</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Giving information; <em>full or elliptical declarative</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Demanding information: <em>full or elliptical interrogative</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>Giving goods-and-services; <em>minor clause, nonverbal action</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Demanding goods-and-services; <em>full or elliptical imperative</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call</td>
<td>Seeking attention; <em>vocative</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Opening interaction; <em>minor clause</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave-taking</td>
<td>Closing interaction; <em>minor clause, non-verbal action</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

*Continuing and Responding Speech Functions Used, From Eggins & Slade (1997)*

NB: Manifestations in italics.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speech function</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continuing: prolong:</td>
<td><em>elaborate</em> Clarify, exemplify or restate; <em>full declarative clause linked or linkable by</em>; for example, I mean, like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extend Offer additional or contrasting info; <em>full declarative linked or linkable by</em>; and, but, except, on the other hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enhance Qualify previous move by giving details of time, cause, condition, place, etc.; <em>full declarative linked or linkable by</em>; then, so, because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing: append:</td>
<td><em>elaborate</em> Clarify, exemplify or restate after intervention by another speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech function</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extend</td>
<td>Clarify, exemplify or restate after intervention by another speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enhance</td>
<td>Qualify previous move by giving details of time, cause, condition, place, etc. after intervention by another speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing: support:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engage</td>
<td>Show willingness to interact by responding to salutation; minor clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>register</td>
<td>Display attention to the speaker; repetition of speaker’s words, paralinguistic expressions like ‘uh-huh’, exclamations, minor clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agree</td>
<td>Indicates support for information given; Yes; positive polarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acknowledge</td>
<td>Indicates knowledge of info given; expressions of knowing via minor clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer</td>
<td>To provide information demanded: Completes missing structural elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding: confront:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disagree</td>
<td>Provides negative response to question; negation of proposition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX C**

**CODING KEY FOR GAZE**

NB: Gaze is coded for the teacher and then the student in moves where the participants’ focus is not mutual (e.g., T>S; S>D), except for moves addressed to the entire class, which are only coded for the teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S&gt;T</td>
<td>From the student at the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&gt;S</td>
<td>From the teacher at the student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&gt;C</td>
<td>From the teacher at the entire class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T&gt;D</td>
<td>From the teacher at a document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&gt;D</td>
<td>From the student at a document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T=S</td>
<td>Mutual gaze between teacher and student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T, S=D</td>
<td>Gaze from both teacher and student at the same document</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Indiscernable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX D

**COMPLETE INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK CONSULTATION (DUKE & S1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Move #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Speech Function/Exchange</th>
<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Spatial position</th>
<th>Gaze</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Call/A2</td>
<td>(Student’s name)! (S1 gathers materials, gets up, and comes to front.)</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;S; S&gt;D</td>
<td>OPN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Comply/A1</td>
<td>[Ø:I’m] Almost finished.</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;C</td>
<td>TDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Command/A2</td>
<td>Hold on just a sec::d.</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;C</td>
<td>TDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Hello.</td>
<td>Classwork to Interactional</td>
<td>T=D; S=D to T=S</td>
<td>OPN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Offer</td>
<td>((Pages through book, then puts it on D’s desk.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S; S&gt;D</td>
<td>OPN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>Hurry hurry hurry hurry!</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S; S&gt;D</td>
<td>OPN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>I think this is “wrong” (D marks under student’s writing on his paper).</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>((Leans over D’s desk to look at writing that D is referring to.))</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Acknowledge</td>
<td>And this is “terrible” (D marks under student’s writing on his paper).</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Extend/K1</td>
<td>(Leans over D’s desk to look at writing that D is referring to.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Prolong: Extend/K1</td>
<td>And this is “terrible” (D marks under student’s writing on his paper).</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Acknowledge</td>
<td>Ah! (Raises head slightly on beat of this utterance.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Append: Elaborate/K1</td>
<td>But THIS (Pointing pen at same position on student’s paper as was referred to in Line 12.) is okay</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Elaborate/K1</td>
<td>But, it doesn’t, (Returns pen to same position as in Line 10.) “terrible” doesn’t work I think. (Continues leaning over D, looking at desk, but gradually returns to straight-back standing position.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>(Pages through book and places it on desk.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>[Ø:これは] コネクター。 (&quot;[Ø:This is Connector&quot;]==</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Statement/K1</td>
<td>==Connector!</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move #</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
<td>Speech Function/Exchange</td>
<td>Transcript</td>
<td>Spatial position</td>
<td>Gaze</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Statement/K1</td>
<td>ああ違うこれ。（“Ah there’s something wrong here.”）</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>()</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Append: Elaborate/K1</td>
<td>[0:私は自分の（こと）として [0:書いた]. (“I wrote this using my own ideas.”) (Student is leaning over the desk and continues to do so until Move 23.)]</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CNF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Acknowledge</td>
<td>Okay okay ( (Marks paper.).)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Statement/A2</td>
<td>Well- my-I would-I would make some questions anyway</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>Um, about ( (DUKE shakes head))</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Extend/K1</td>
<td>I dunno.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S;S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Extend/K1</td>
<td>[Ø:I would make some questions about] boyfriends girlfriends kissing. (Student returns to straight-back standing position, smiles, laughs, and covers mouth when DUKE utters prior move.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Append: Extend/K1</td>
<td>[Ø:I would make some questions about] restaurants.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S; S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Append: Extend/K1</td>
<td>[Ø:I would make some questions about] that kinda thing.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>ADV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Statement/K1</td>
<td>You’ll get full points.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>SCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Enhance/K1</td>
<td>But ( (DUKE writes score and starts closing book)) uh you need to write some mo:re.</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>SCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Prolong: Enhance/K1</td>
<td>Or your five minutes will go slowly ( (Hands S1 the book.)).</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside</td>
<td>T&gt;S; S&gt;D</td>
<td>SCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Accept, Leavetaking/A2</td>
<td>( (Receives book from DUKE, bows head slightly, and starts to return to seat.)</td>
<td>Interactional, alongside to Classwork</td>
<td>T,S&gt;D</td>
<td>CL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>Offer/A1</td>
<td>There ya go.</td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>T&gt;D; X</td>
<td>CL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Dictation: Building Academic English competence
the old-fashioned way

Richard Ingold

Dictation has been used by language teachers for many hundreds of years, but its status has always been contingent on methodological trends (Stansfield, 1985). At present, with the favoured combination of the Communicative Approach and online learning, dictation is relatively unpopular. But as I’ve found in my Academic English classes, when used judiciously, dictation is an effective way to engage students and to provide intensive listening and grammar practice. It is also an excellent point of departure for the exploration of academic genres. In this article I will explore these ideas further and share some effective techniques for integrating dictation into Academic English classes.

Developing listening and grammar

Most universities in Australia ask international students to demonstrate English skills around an IELTS 6.5 level. These students will probably have to listen to lectures, often for well over an hour at a time, while taking accurate notes (often a difficult task even for very fluent users of English). Dictation activities can help Academic English students develop the skills needed to cope with these demands by training them to use both top-down and bottom-up strategies to structure meaning from aural input. In other words, students must decode a stream of sound and simultaneously
reconcile this with their internalised understanding of spelling and grammar rules, using both to construct meaningful, accurate text (Morris, 1983; Oller & Streiff, 1975). Through analysis of their renditions of the dictated text, students’ and their teachers’ awareness of areas which need further study and practice can be increased.

In a recent class, for example, I dictated the title of a practice essay: ‘Joining a gym is the best way to become healthy.’ After some discussion, one group settled on the following: ‘Join in a gym is a best way to become health’. This highlighted 4 areas for revision: 1) -ing verb forms in noun groups; 2) use of the in superlatives; 3) use of adjectives after become; 4) the lexical forms health, healthy and healthily. It also led to discussion of syllable stress, with some accompanying drilling. Since my students had written down what they had heard in a way which for them had both meaning and grammatical accuracy, this dictation helped reveal aspects of their understanding of English which needed fine-tuning.

Activities
This section introduces some of the dictation activities I’ve been integrating into my Academic English classes. Inherent in each of them is the interaction of students’ listening skills and their internalised spelling and grammar rules, but each has an additional purpose that will be discussed further.

Vocabulary lead-in
In preparation for a reading or listening activity, dictate 8–10 key words to the class. You should be reasonably confident that at least half the class have come across the words before. Say each word naturally twice and then repeat the whole list from beginning to end. Ask students to compare their lists and get a couple of students to write their words on the board. Following correction, feedback and drilling, the class could guess the topic of the upcoming activity and add to the list of words. This activity gets students intently focused on the activity and is especially effective for multi-syllable words with opaque spelling-pronunciation correspondence and/or weak syllables.

Group jumble
To spotlight the grammar of long noun groups, look through the model essays students have recently studied and identify 3–4 examples. Dictate the words from one example out of order (twice should be enough) and have the students compare their answers. Then ask them to make a grammatically correct noun group from the dictated words. For example:

- sports / in / Australians’ / team / young / participation

→ Young Australians’ participation in team sports
Ask a volunteer to write their answer on the board then move on to the next example. After correction, use the noun groups for analysis and further teaching. You could also ask your class to write their own noun groups, jumble them up and repeat the activity in pairs.

**Sentence jumble**

I do this in a similar way to that described above, but use it to emphasise the fact that sentences can be thought of as being composed not just of words, but also of groups and phrases. The activity also highlights the fixed nature of noun and verb groups but relatively freer positioning of adverbials. For example:

```
has been studied / in recent years / Young Australians’ participation in team sports / by a number of health professionals

→ (In recent years,) Young Australians’ participation in team sports has (,in recent years,) been studied by a number of health professionals (in recent years).
```

**Sentence dictation**

For a short burst of listening and grammar practice and to focus the class on a task, dictate one or two discussion questions, an essay title for a practice writing, or some comprehension questions for a reading activity. Correct and analyse as necessary. As long as you don’t do it too often, students respond well to the focus this quick dictation brings to the beginning of an activity.

**Paragraph/text dictation**

For longer texts (110–140 words is probably the maximum size), I tend to use the following basic procedure. After a lead in, give the first dictation at natural speed, i.e., spoken as if it was directed towards another fluent speaker, and ask the students to make notes. The second dictation is slowed down a little, with pauses between grammatical constituents lengthened, but weak forms pronounced as they would be in natural speech. At this stage, students should be able to write down most of the text. Then dictate for the final time, again at natural speed, with students completing their texts. They are encouraged to compare what they have written with their classmates although I ask them not to change what they have written at this time. Finally, ask individual students to write a sentence from their version of the dictated text onto the whiteboard or to type one into a Word document, shown on the whiteboard via a data projector. Once the text is complete, show the students the original version and then facilitate correction and analysis. The direction which the activity takes from this point will vary depending upon the lesson aims.
I have been using this type of longer-text dictation in two main ways. The first is to lead students into a practice writing task. I dictate the introduction to an essay and following correction, ask students to identify, for example, the genre, the topic, definitions and the outline of the essay’s key points. Students then complete the essay using the introduction as a guide.

The second and my personal favourite use of longer-text dictation is to provide an introductory genre model (Hoare & Tanner, 2009). First prepare a short text modelling the genre which students are going to be studying (see Appendix for an example). Following dictation, correction and analysis of grammatical mistakes, students identify the text’s stages and salient, genre-specific grammar points. I then use these short genre models as a reference point for follow-up practice activities and analysis of longer texts.

**Conclusion**

I have found that my students always respond positively to the activities discussed above and that their listening and grammatical reasoning skills have shown noticeable improvement. Although there is continuing need for research into dictation, I would encourage all my colleagues to use it as a tool to help improve Academic English students’ listening and grammar, and prepare them for their future studies.

**References**


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Appendix

Example of discussion genre for dictation

Eating ice cream every day
The daily consumption of ice cream may have some health benefits for children. This is because ice cream is usually made from milk, which is a good source of calcium. As children grow, calcium helps them to develop strong bones. Thus, it is argued that ice cream is a healthy food. However, most health experts agree that children should not eat ice cream every day due to its high sugar and fat content. Since eating large quantities of these substances is likely to lead to obesity, it is almost a certainty that consuming ice cream each day of the week is bad for children’s health. Therefore, ice cream’s negative health effects always outweigh its positive ones and so it is not necessary for children to eat ice cream every day.

Stages: Counter-argument → Argument → Conclusion

Grammar focus: Modality (in bold); Distancing (underlined)
To begin with, let’s consider a typical ESL reading lesson: a couple of pre-reading discussion questions, maybe a bit of vocab work before the students read, a reading-for-gist question, a reading-for-detail question, and you’re done. Right?

Not quite.

Such a lesson doesn’t really encompass all the skills needed by students to read a text. In order to effectively read a text, Luke and Freebody (1992) outline four main reading roles. The first is ‘code breaker’ – understanding the orthography of a text and its links to the phonology of a language. The next role is ‘meaning maker’ – understanding the meaning of the words and the text as a whole. The third is ‘text user’ – using a text properly, for example: reading fiction for enjoyment of the plot, or reading a factual text to extract information. It is perhaps at this point that many English language teachers stop, considering that their work is done, but there is still one more role according to Luke and Freebody. That role is as ‘text analyst’ – understanding the author’s purpose in writing a text, what the writer has included or excluded, and any bias involved in the text. This final set of reading skills is commonly bundled together as ‘critical reading’.

These were the critical reading skills that my research partner and I noticed were sorely lacking in our EAP students at Macquarie University English Language Centre. Whether it was a failure to transfer critical reading skills from their L1, or whether it was because our students had never been taught critical reading skills in their home countries, we knew that some kind of intervention was required to teach these skills to our students. Critical reading skills are vital in an Australian academic context, with many courses requiring students to critique texts and arguments either in class or in written assignments. We were curious to know how we might encourage students to read critically, and how we might design tasks that motivated students to do so.

This idea formed the basis of our application to the English Australia Action Research in ELICOS programme, supported by Cambridge Language Assessment. We were lucky to be accepted and to have the opportunity to work with Professor Anne Burns and
alongside so many other participants with exciting action research projects examining reading. As part of our project we developed critical reading tasks in response to students’ needs analyses and trialled them in class. We then collected data on the tasks using a variety of methods including observations, survey data, audio and video recordings of students doing tasks, analysis of materials that students produced during the tasks, and focus groups.

Between us we made a few discoveries on how to design tasks that motivate students to read critically. We found that the use of texts with carefully graded language was more motivating for students than the use of authentic texts. We demonstrated this in our action research project by taking a number of low-rated tasks with authentic texts, re-writing those texts in carefully graded language and trialling them with a different class. The results showed that the modified tasks were rated as more motivating for students. This might be because asking students to critically read authentic texts leads to a kind of cognitive overload, especially if they are already struggling with more basic reading skills, such as understanding the text.

Another finding from our research was the importance of integrating critical reading tasks into the syllabus in order to achieve critical reading success in the classroom. We also found that student assessments of their own wants and needs for critical reading were not a good guide to designing motivating tasks: tasks based on surveys conducted with students at the outset of the course rated less well than tasks where the teacher made an assessment of student needs.

Finally, while there were discrepancies between classes in their ratings of tasks, we felt this could be attributed to different levels of student buy-in. This underscores the importance of demonstrating the relevance of critical reading skills both to students’ future university education and (more broadly) to their place as members of the community.

Below I outline two of the more successful lessons that were designed for the project.

Lesson A

This lesson begins with showing a topical picture (we used a picture from the 2013 Gezi Park protests in Istanbul). After eliciting some vocabulary, students are asked to write about the picture with a strict word limit of 30 words, which forces students to make choices about what to include and exclude. Students then compare any differences in vocabulary and grammar in each other’s texts. In feedback the teacher points out that every writer faces similar decisions about what to include and exclude, and what vocabulary and grammar to use, and that these decisions reflect the writer’s opinion.
Following this, students are given two texts written from opposite perspectives but relating to the same picture, and they assess the vocabulary and grammar used before deciding on the opinion of each writer. Students then feedback their findings to the class, with some input from the teacher on the role that vocabulary and grammar choices (such as agentless passive verb forms and nominalisations) can have on meaning. This is followed by a similar activity with different pictures stuck around the room, each with two different texts expressing different points of view. Students again assess the texts and how the point of view of each text is established through the vocabulary and grammar choices of the writer.

**Lesson B**

This lesson was designed for a Business and Accounting direct entry class, but could be used for a more general Business English class or adapted for other class types.

Before class, we had written a short article on an industrial dispute biased in favour of management, with references to the company placed in the subject of each sentence, and any references to workers or unions buried in subordinate clauses or preposition phrases. In class students were first asked to list some reasons why workers and bosses have disputes. A list of items was then put on the board and students were asked to read the article and say which were included and which were not. Once this was done students were asked if they felt the article was biased and if so in whose favour. The references to the company and company representatives as the subject/theme of each sentence was then elicited, as was the less grammatically prominent position of unions or workers. Students were asked to rewrite the article from the perspective of the workers for homework, with many demonstrating an understanding of the principle by placing references to the unions or workers as the subject.

**Conclusion**

It is our hope that tasks such as these, and some of the ideas taken up in this article, will hopefully broaden the scope of the narrow and instrumental view of reading prevalent in pedagogical models at the moment. The skills involved in critical reading are not simply important for university students or just in academic settings; they are a necessary component of complete literacy for any student wishing to fully take part in an English-speaking discourse community, whether as a student, professional, consumer of news media, or citizen.

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Mark Pegrum has built up a reputation as the ‘go-to guy’ for the use of technology in language learning, and deservedly so. He teaches and researches on e- and m-learning at The University of Western Australia and regularly speaks on these topics at conferences around the world (including the 2014 English Australia Conference). Amongst the many books and articles he has to his name, the recently published *Digital Literacies* (Pearson, 2013) — co-authored with Gavin Dudeney and Nicky Hockly — and *Mobile Learning* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) have really put him on the map for teachers working or researching in this field. In this must-read interview he talks about his career journey, issues at the intersection of teachers and tech in the classroom, and the future of teaching — all while sharing a lot of useful advice (and apps) along the way.
1. **Tell us a bit about your teaching journey – how did you evolve into the learning technologies go-to guy?**

Back in the nineties, a new multimedia lab was installed in the university faculty where I was a postgrad student of modern languages. As is still often the case nowadays, the technology arrived before the pedagogy! No-one really knew where to start. As it happened, one of the lecturers said to me: ‘You’re young – you can teach our computer lab sessions!’ I remember that on the first day I had trouble finding the ‘on’ switches on the computers . . . so that’s where it all began. From there, I gradually immersed myself in web design and online teaching, which grew into a real passion. Nowadays I’m very lucky to be invited to give talks and run seminars in many different countries and cities every year, and I learn just as much from my audiences as they do from me. In a field where trends develop rapidly and have often shifted direction by the time publications come out, the only way to keep up with the latest developments is to go and talk to teachers and teacher educators, whether at conferences and courses or in their own institutional settings. In so doing, I can build up a picture of what’s working, what’s not, and where we might be heading. If I’m the go-to guy, as you suggest, it’s only because I regularly go to lots of other people to find out what they’re up to.

2. **I’m sure we all agree that pedagogy comes first, and we should not shoehorn tech into our classes just for the sake of it. But to what extent do you believe teachers have an obligation to use technology in the classroom, and why?**

To be honest, sometimes the most appropriate technologies to use are a pen and paper – but at other times, the most suitable technologies might be blogs, or podcasts, or augmented reality apps. It’s important that teachers see ICTs (information and communication technologies) as part of their repertoire of resources, giving them a wide range of options when designing lessons, and allowing them to choose the best tools to suit their content and pedagogy. But more than this, as teachers we have a responsibility to prepare our students for their lives as individuals, employees and citizens outside the classroom – not to mention preparing them to be lifelong learners – and that requires us to introduce them to common social media tools and the digital literacies necessary to use them effectively. If we don’t do this, we’re short-changing our students.

3. **Teachers are often put off by the fact that after taking the time to learn about a particular tool or app, and even integrate it into their teaching, it then disappears or changes significantly (the acquisition and essential disappearance of Posterous is a recent example of this). What is your take on this? Is anything safe?**

The Web 2.0 and app landscape is quite anarchic at the moment, with many different services vying for survival and some going under. What’s more, we’re seeing those that...
become successful shifting away from their initial free offerings towards freemium models (where a basic version of the service is free but you pay for additional functionality). Until this landscape stabilises, what’s important is to become familiar with tool types – that is, wikis rather than a particular wiki service, or QR codes rather than a particular QR generator – and, more broadly, with the social media practices of sharing, collaborating, annotating, remixing and disseminating, which can be implemented on many different platforms.

4. Another problem frequently mentioned by teachers is how to manage the flow of information coming at them these days. How do you manage to keep up without getting bogged down?

In his 2012 book Net Smart (The MIT Press), the networking scholar Howard Rheingold suggests that to make the best use of Twitter you need to ‘tune the network of people you follow’ and ‘feed the network of people who follow you.’ I’d suggest that this applies to all social media. It takes time to fine-tune your PLN (personal learning network) but it’s worth it in the long run. Make sure the information flowing to you through services like Twitter, Facebook or Scoop.it is on-topic and high-quality, having been filtered by experts you know you can rely on and colleagues whose work you have come to trust. A good place to start is by finding one or two experts and/or colleagues on Twitter and checking out who they follow – and then following some of the same people.

5. The past 10 or 20 years have seen radical technological changes with an accompanying explosion of sometimes indiscriminate interest in edtech. When the dust has settled, 10 or 20 years from now, what do you think our English language teaching institutions will look like? What technologies will be taken for granted and implemented daily? What will have disappeared?

I suspect English language teaching institutions in 20 years will have many similarities with today’s institutions. That’s not entirely a bad thing. Many of today’s teachers are doing a great job as content experts, pedagogical facilitators, mentors, counsellors, coaches and more; if anything, they’re going to find themselves in an even more central role as designers of technology-enhanced learning. There may be fewer students travelling abroad to learn English, and they may come from different countries, as increasing numbers of education systems globally integrate English lessons from earlier ages, and as students with more limited learning goals find their needs met online. But for the students who do attend our classes, there will continue to be lots of advantages in face-to-face interactions with teachers and peers. At the same time, I would hope to see several shifts. With app-based self-study options rapidly expanding, I’d like to see a greater slice of traditional behaviourist learning taking place outside the classroom so that in-class time is freed up for real communication, as in the flipped approach we’re
now hearing so much about. I’d like to see better integration of ICTs inside and outside the classroom to support progressive pedagogical approaches like task-based learning and inquiry-based learning, where social media and multimodal apps have a great deal to offer. And I’d also like to see better integration of mobile technologies and the kinds of situated, immersive, embodied learning in real-world contexts that they can support so effectively.

6. As English language teachers, we are often also literacy teachers. How do you define digital literacies and to what extent should these be part of the English language teacher’s remit?

I see digital literacies as the set of skills that we and our students need to function successfully in a digitally mediated world. These include well-established literacies, like information and multimodal literacy, and newer literacies, like network and code literacy. Together with Gavin Dudeney and Nicky Hockly, I have co-written a book entitled *Digital Literacies* (Pearson, 2013), in which we argue that it is no longer enough for language teachers to just teach language. We have to teach students how to decode the language that reaches them through digital channels, and how to encode their own language production digitally so they can use those same channels to reach their target audiences in the most effective ways possible.

7. Teachers have been known to lose their jobs over inappropriate pictures or comments on social media. At the same time, we are in a climate that strongly encourages teachers to involve both themselves and their students in online collaboration and sharing via social media. How can we manage this? Is it worth the risk? Do we need to have multiple online personalities?

It comes down to what the social networking researcher danah boyd (who writes her name in lower case) has called ‘collapsed contexts’. Essentially, audiences that we would normally address separately in face-to-face contexts become mixed together in online spaces. Google+ and Facebook have introduced ways to manage the audiences you’re addressing, but most people find the controls complex and make little use of them, especially on Facebook. But I think it’s essential that we, as teachers, have some experience of how to handle the surveillance, privacy and reputation issues that our students will face online, since otherwise we can’t act as credible role models. Some educators do maintain separate public and private personas online. Personally I haven’t found this to be necessary so far. My rule of thumb is this: if I wouldn’t say something in a conversation in a public corridor with people walking past, I don’t say it in a public forum online. That’s exactly how I put it to my students.
8. What ethical issues should we be aware of when blithely asking students to sign up for this or that site/app etc? Do we even have the right to do that?

It’s important to remember that we are asking students to, quite literally, buy into a commercial, consumer-oriented ecosystem of hardware, connectivity and software – but on the other hand we have always asked them to purchase textbooks from a commercial, consumer-oriented publishing industry. There is a place, in education as in life generally, for commerce and consumption. For me, a more important concern is the cluster of surveillance and privacy issues that arise through service providers, digital publishers and software manufacturers harvesting students’ personal data (which may be used for profiling and marketing purposes) and/or their learning data (which is increasingly subjected to learning analytics designed to extract trends from their performance, not only for their own personal benefit but for the benefit of publishers and manufacturers). Yet it would be even more remiss of us to try to keep students outside the digital ecosystem: firstly, they would miss out on the considerable learning opportunities found there, including the chance to discover lifelong learning possibilities; secondly, they would miss out on the chance to acquire and hone the digital literacies that are becoming integral to our social and working lives; and thirdly, they would miss out on the guidance and mentoring that we as teachers should be offering them as they learn to navigate this territory. It’s up to us to help students adopt a critical stance on the technologies we all use, and to take control of their privacy options and protect their data as far as possible. We can do that best while they’re actually using those technologies.

9. As you are surely aware, Sugata Mitra caused quite a storm at last year’s IATEFL Conference in Harrogate with his vision of SOLE (Self Organized Learning Environments) and teaching taking place freely via ‘the Granny Cloud’. What relevance and possible impact do his ideas have for language teaching in Australia?

I’m aware of the controversy around Sugata Mitra’s IATEFL plenary, but as I wasn’t there myself, let me just comment in a general way on the issues involved. Firstly, it’s important...
that there are controversial figures – from Marc Prensky through to Sugata Mitra – who stir up debate around educational technologies. Secondly, though, I’m concerned that so many promoters of educational technologies seem to share a common perspective which involves devaluing the skills of professional teachers, whether they want them to cede floor space to digital natives or to clouds of grannies. I’m even more concerned at how this perspective is oddly congruent with that of some neoliberal reformers, who would prefer teachers to be little more than automatons who implement pre-established curricula as students prepare for standardised testing. I accept that there are not enough teachers, especially in the developing world, a point regularly made by UNESCO; but it seems to me that the answer is to invest in more teacher training (before investing in more technology, though investing in both would be better still). I also accept that poor teachers may do more harm than good; but it seems to me that the answer is to invest in better teacher development programmes (again, before investing in more technology). Good teaching involves a complex and responsive skillset: designing and structuring tailored programmes and lessons; revisiting and reinforcing what students have already understood while challenging them to move outside their comfort zones and develop new knowledge and skills; contextualising the learning of whole cohorts and differentiating the learning of individuals; evaluating students’ progress via their responses and adjusting teaching on the fly; orchestrating students’ interactions in pairs, in groups and across whole classes to create what Rose Senior has called ‘class-centred teaching’; and connecting learning with life in such a way as to transform students’ worldviews. There’s a reason, after all, that we all remember those teachers who really touched us during our own education. Can the digital natives do this for themselves? Can the grannies do this for their students? While there are no doubt exceptions, I’d be surprised to find that this is widely possible. Attempting to write teachers out of the learning equation is a dangerous move.

10. Our Executive Editor describes Evernote as his ‘bestest friend’. What tech resources/apps/websites/tools are your ‘bestest friends’ at the moment?

I use some of the usual PLN platforms – mainly Facebook, Twitter and Scoop.it – to keep up to date. Because I’m learning Mandarin at the moment, I’m making extensive use of spaced repetition vocabulary apps like Pleco and character tracing apps like Word Tracer, which for me reinforce the value of technology, and particularly its ability to provide automated feedback, in making traditional behaviourist self-study approaches much more effective. At the same time, I’m exploring some of the innovative Chinese study apps involving voice recognition and tone visualisation, which hold a great deal of promise. Of course, one of the great things about using apps like these is that they free up time in my Chinese tutorials to focus more on communication, which is essentially a flipped approach. Beyond language learning, I’m finding wearable technologies that track
fitness and sleep patterns to be transformative; just having an informed awareness of how much you do, or don’t, exercise or rest can help you take better control of your life. I’m currently using the Jawbone UP activity tracker, which syncs by Bluetooth to an app on my iPhone. We all live crazy busy lives but this kind of information can be invaluable in helping us live them better.

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http://e-language.wikispaces.com
Welcome to the jungle: Tech tools to make sense of the stream of speech

Damien Herlihy

There is an inconvenient truth out there, which is that prefabricated listenings in coursebooks don’t reflect the reality of spontaneous speech and nor do the activities built around them. My eyes (or should I say my mouth and ears) were first fully opened to this phenomenon – and the inadequacies in my own teaching – through the double punch of Adrian Underhill’s classic *Sound Foundations* and Richard Cauldwell’s soon-to-be classic, *Phonology for Listening*. The former gives you the ability to ‘navigate’ your mouth then the latter helps you apply that knowledge to listening and what’s happening in ‘the stream of speech.’ They are essential reading: if you haven’t read them, you should, and if you have, then read them again.

Cauldwell has long been beating the drum that students are desperate for guidance in decoding authentic listening but often in EFL/ESL ‘compensatory strategies dominate time in the listening classroom at the expense of teaching decoding’ (2013, p. 520). He believes students are thoroughly unprepared for the reality of listening and encounter ‘Ying’s Dilemma’ which is where they know a word in its citation form but when it occurs in the stream of speech it becomes unrecognisable to them. Cauldwell tries to shed light on this issue for students (and teachers) by using three metaphors for listening situations: the greenhouse, the garden and the jungle. The greenhouse (citation form) and the garden (nicely scripted textbook dialogues), often feature in the classroom, while the jungle is the reality of spontaneous speech: unruly, messy and often neglected.

Which brings us to celebrated 80s rock band Guns N’ Roses, and their aptly named song, for our purposes: ‘Welcome to the Jungle’ – because if you haven’t yet welcomed your students to ‘messy’ listening then now is the time to get started (and Guns N’Roses have certainly been exposing students to the messiness of spontaneous speech for decades). In this article, I will demonstrate some easy-to-use tools to help you better grapple with the jungle in the classroom and come out of it relatively unscathed. Once again I am taking the approach of looking at this challenge through the lens of demand-high teaching and low-demand technology (see Herlihy, 2014 for details).
The tools

Macmillan Dictionary (www.macmillandictionary.com)
Before doing a listening on ‘Welcome to the Jungle’, for example, you could expose your students to some weak forms that will occur in the song, such as the weak and in the line We’ve got fun and games. Students might be familiar with the sound shape of and as /ænd/ (‘greenhouse’ or citation form) but not as /and/, /ən/ or even as /a/. You can model these different sound shapes and then get them to spell it out on a phonemic chart. The Macmillan Dictionary can then be used to highlight the weak forms, as it usually includes them for grammatical words such as pronouns, prepositions, connectives and auxiliary verbs.

VideoNotes (www.videonot.es)
This tool was designed as a note-taking tool for lectures but fits in well in helping to process spontaneous speech. So let’s say you did some regular listening activities with your students using ‘Welcome to the Jungle’ such as an information gap or pre-teaching vocabulary. To demand more, try doing short, dictation bursts from the song. You can prepare this by using VideoNotes. First, find a link to the song from YouTube and copy and paste it into VideoNotes. Once inside you can then take notes at different points in the video and mark out audio segments which illustrate the ‘stream of speech’. When students click on these notes it will take them to that exact point in the video so they can play the segments over and over again. They can also slow down and speed up the video as they wish. This could be set in class or as a home activity through the sharing feature, with students listening to short bursts from the video and writing down what they hear.

Figure 1: A screenshot from VideoNotes
After that, demand more by getting students to decode the stream of speech using the phonemic chart. For example at the point in the video shown in Figure 1 students would need to note down *Welcome to the Jungle, we’ve got fun and games* and then try to transcribe it, which could look like this: /welkəm tə ˈdʒʌŋgl wiː ɡɒt fʌnən ɡeɪms/. A useful tool for transcribing on a computer, by the way, is the IPA Character Picker (www.rishida.net/scripts/pickers/ipa/).

**Come Again?** [http://sebpearce.com/come-again/](http://sebpearce.com/come-again/)

Another tool which is useful for playing around with small samples of spontaneous speech is Come Again. This web-based app allows you to listen to audio files (though not video files) and then repeat small sections of it. This tool differs from VideoNotes in that it can more effectively slice and dice small samples of spontaneous speech: you can navigate forward and backwards in increments of 1 second going up to 4 seconds. Once again you have the ability to slow it down but additionally you can place loops in the audio on speech you would like to analyse in class. Also there is a notes box at the bottom to assist with transcription. This could be useful for students doing listenings at home and trying to break down the different parts that are difficult to hear. For instance, if they are having issues with the second line from ‘Welcome to the Jungle’, *We got everything you want, we know the names*, students could put that section on loop until they are able to decipher it.

**Figure 2: A screenshot of Come Again?**


Textbooks still have their place in the classroom but once we have exposed students to the garden (that is, a clear pronunciation model in a scripted recording), it’s
important to then hit them with the jungle. A good source for non-Guns N’Roses authentic speech is the Easy English series of web videos (a subsection of the Easy Languages video project). These videos even include themes which are similar to coursebook content such as dating, climate change, and talking about plans. The beauty of this content is that within in one video students get exposed to a variety of accents saying the same or similar words which can really help sensitise their ears to different sounds shapes.

**Cool Speech (www.speechinaction.org)**

Finally, this app is worth a mention as it was designed by Richard Cauldwell and applies a lot of the ideas from his book, *Phonology for Listening*. It can be used in the classroom if you have a class set of iPads or an iPad which you can mirror onto a data projector. Alternatively it can be suggested as a homework activity. For a detailed review of the app, see *English Australia Journal* 30.1 (Cobley & Steven, 2014).

**Conclusion**

I have now set up a little altar in my classroom to the concepts I discussed in this article to remind me and my students of their importance. With these tech tools in your teaching arsenal you can now demand more from your students and welcome students to the authentic listening jungle next time you do a listening activity in class.

**References**


Damien Herlihy has opened his own language school in Thailand and runs a ‘teaching with technology’ website which offers e-learning solutions, advice and tips (www.tecsquared.com). He was co-winner of the English Australia Action Research Award in 2012 and has a strong desire to obliterate the silos of teaching through collaboration and technology.

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If you would like to write an article in Classroom Talk for the English Australia Journal, please contact:
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Inside Writing
The academic wordlist in context

NIGEL A. CAPLAN & JENNIFER BIXBY

Oxford University Press, 2014

Reviewed by Vanessa Todd

If you arrived at work tomorrow to find your centre needed a new pathway or foundation curriculum NOW, the series Inside Writing: The academic wordlist in context, would give your EAP classes a well-rounded, if fairly prescribed, course to follow. Just don’t be misled by the subtitle; Inside Writing offers far more than just vocabulary development.

Inside Writing is a course of five textbooks developing students’ Academic English. Level 4, equivalent to C1 on the CEFR scale, is reviewed here. Each level is accompanied by a teacher’s resource, Inside Writing iTools, which was not reviewed. This resource is a DVD-ROM containing all student book activities (to project on a screen for class use), answer keys (which are notably absent from the student books), and suggested assessments. Each book contains 10 units, each of which would probably take a week to complete, allowing some time for other classroom activities.

The course structure, while not new, is very well executed. However, the series title is slightly misleading, as the course integrates skills rather than focusing exclusively on writing and vocabulary. Each unit in the course examines a topic and a genre, using a well-designed sequence of reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar activities. Level 4 chapter topics address everyday subjects familiar to young adults from middle-class backgrounds around the world, such as energy drinks and mobile phones, as well
as more abstract topics like economic principles or Mesoamerica, which may need more explanation. Target vocabulary for each unit is selected from the Academic Word List (AWL) and the Oxford 3000, a wordlist selected by language experts for ‘their importance and usefulness’ (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, 2014).

For those teaching in an Australian context, a surprising aspect of the series is the variety of text types presented as ‘academic’. In Level 4, these range from fundraising letters and proposals for films, to the more familiar research paper. While this approach is more usual in North America (the professional context of the authors, and where the series is published), this by no means makes the materials irrelevant in Australia, where universities are using an ever-growing range of assignment types. And, obviously preempting criticism, the Oxford University Press website includes a convincing article by one of the authors justifying a writing focus on purpose and audience, rather than ‘generic and decontextualised’ test-style essays (Caplan, n.d., p. 1).

Despite the current interest in blended learning, Inside Writing has a deliberate focus on face-to-face interaction. While online resources are advertised, the student online resources are limited, being ‘more of the same’ (activities on chapter readings and genres), rather than activities which complement the textbooks. Similarly, the teacher’s site (accessed by signing up to the OUP Teacher’s Club) mostly contains sample materials from the Inside Writing iTools resources. Such criticisms may be countered, however, by pointing out that students and teachers in some contexts worldwide may have little access to either computers or the Internet, limiting the value of such resources.

Another design point to consider is the strong focus on the teacher; for example, there are no answer keys in the Student Books, so students are dependent on the teacher to provide them. In addition, activities, while well designed and carefully scaffolded, may also feel too interlinked or tightly focused for students with top-down
learning styles, or teachers who use any course only as a springboard to address their students’ specific needs.

If your students get a sense of achievement from working through a comprehensive textbook, and for one reason or another will not access online/digital resources, then the Inside Writing series will work very well for your class. It would likewise suit inexperienced teachers, who could be confident that important skills are covered in the course. However, if a structured, sequential approach to learning does not work for your students (or you), you may find that dipping in and out of the series would better suit your needs. In either case, the course provides quality materials across a range of levels, which would be of great use preparing students for academic studies in English.

References


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Moving into Business Studies

Anna Phillips & Terry Phillips

Garnet, 2014

Reviewed by Sarah Williams

With the growing popularity of business degrees and diplomas amongst international students, there is an increasing demand for English courses which support the specific language needs of future business students. However, English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) courses are generally targeted towards intermediate to advanced learners and there is a lack of resources for lower level students on a pathway to business studies. To fill this gap, Phillips and Phillips have created Moving into Business Studies, which is a part of the Moving into ESAP series. Moving into Business Studies is a unique course which aims to meet the needs of pre-intermediate level students (A2-B1), and consists of a Course Book, Workbook and Teacher’s Book, each of which will be discussed in this review.

The Course Book is divided into 10 chapters, based on different business-related themes, including the ‘Industrial Revolution’ and ‘Going Green’. Each unit begins with general vocabulary and discussion related to the topic, which helps to set the scene and gauge prior knowledge. It then progresses onto a range of activities which utilise the four main language skills, as well as focus on vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. Each unit has an ‘English in Action’ section which introduces a range of business skills, such as arranging a meeting and using polite language. While each unit is similar in terms of tasks, the sequencing differs so as to provide variety and avoid repetition. The units finish with a project, some of which are academic in nature and similar to the tasks that students may encounter in their tertiary studies, for example, conducting a small study. There are also review sections at the end of Units 5 and 10.

Moving into Business Studies is a skills-based course, with reading, writing, listening and speaking taught both in isolation as well as integrated with one another. The
reading tasks are mainly based on case studies or short articles, which are graded and not authentic texts, while the listening tasks are mostly conversations or short talks. The course is also highly centered on developing communication skills. Language for verbal and written communication is taught and there are ample opportunities for discussion and working in teams. In this respect, it is better suited to classroom teaching than self-study.

Grammar is interwoven throughout the units and there is also a Grammar Reference section at the back of the Course Book which links to what has been introduced in the units. A lot of consideration has gone into the way in which grammar is presented. As explained in the Teacher’s Book, the target grammar centres on syntax and language patterns, as opposed to tenses, and connects to the skills presented in the units, such as ‘Grammar for listening’ and ‘Grammar for reading’. The authors claim the reason for this is that academic studies predominately require the use of the present and past tense, rather than the large range of tenses commonly found in General English courses. Whether this is correct or not, I feel that students of this level would still benefit from learning a broader range of structures.

As expected, the Workbook provides students with more in-depth practice of the skills they have been exposed to in the Course Book. It serves as a useful supplementary resource which could be assigned for homework or used for independent study. It includes an audio CD and transcripts of the recordings. The answers can be found in the Teacher’s Book, which is the final element of this series. In addition to including the standard features of teacher’s books, such as answers, audioscripts and teaching guides, in the preliminaries of the book there is a thoughtful rationale for the course, as well as useful teaching tips.

Visually this series is appealing. The colours, fonts and pictures used in the Course Book are eye-catching and used well to highlight key points, yet are not overly distracting or obtrusive. The Workbook, on the other hand, is entirely in black and
white. Both the Workbook and Course Book come with a CD. The recordings are clear and the speed is appropriate to the level. While mostly British voices are used, there are a few examples of use of other varieties of English, including Canadian and New Zealand.

At first glance, one may question the suitability of ESAP for pre-intermediate level students and the extent to which such a course can prepare learners for the academic demands of their tertiary studies. It seems that most of the tasks in this course focus on developing the skills necessary for the working world, rather than the academic skills needed for university. For a university preparation course I would expect to see more lectures and essay writing tasks. However, due to the low level of the target audience, this is clearly not feasible. Students at this stage still require a great amount of language development and scaffolding, and are not yet linguistically capable of carrying out high level academic tasks. Therefore, this course should be seen as more of a stepping stone in a learner’s journey to university studies.

While *Moving into Business Studies* does not fully prepare students for tertiary business studies, it is an excellent starting point. It helps to develop skills which are transferable to both university and business contexts, and provides an introduction to academic studies which is level appropriate. From the student’s perspective, this series is intrinsically motivating as it focuses on topics that are of interest and benefit to them – which is rare for such a low-level academic course. The authors have taken on the complex task of designing a course which teaches Business English and academic skills, while still providing students with the basic language skills that you would expect to see in any pre-intermediate course, and in many respects they have been successful. I have no doubt that this unique course will be highly appealing to many future business students.

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There is so much for EFL/ESL teachers on the Internet these days that sometimes it feels like you need days or weeks just to trawl through it all and find that one blog, tweet or website to inspire the perfect lesson. However, PearsonELT (www.pearsonelt.com), a product of Pearson Education Limited, is a website which pulls together information for teachers of English in a variety of different contexts, including primary and teenage students, and tertiary and exam English. It has a combination of lesson ideas and inspiration, community discussion boards and blog posts, and easy access to a range of professional development resources.

As with many other well-known ELT sites, PearsonELT has different levels of user access. You can decide to browse a limited range of free resources as a guest, register your details for more access, or subscribe for an annual fee and get unlimited access to everything the site has to offer. However, one thing I like about this site is that for most of the resources – which include professional development articles, podcasts and videocasts, and ready-to-go classroom resources – you don’t need to be a subscriber. All of the resources are specially coded so that teachers know exactly what they can view depending on how much they’ve signed up for, and can be sorted by cost and other key criteria such as relevance, title, author and date added.

Another plus to this site is the direct link to ‘ELT Community’, which is a lively forum with user-based discussions, groups and blogs from teachers around the globe. I think this is a very useful part of the site, especially in a time when everyone’s talking about growing your PLN (personal learning network), because it connects you to potentially a whole world of EFL/ESL teachers with interesting ideas to help challenge your teaching beliefs and improve your practice.

Be aware though, that Pearson ELT is obviously a publisher’s website. Even if you didn’t know the name, the catalogue tab on the homepage, the shopping cart symbol
in the top right corner of every page and the advertisements for products such as MyEnglishLab would give you more than a hint. I found this a bit off-putting at first glance, but blatant product placement aside, the site has a fresh look to it and is easy to get around.

The main part of the homepage is divided into Classroom Resources, ELT Community, Catalogue, and Professional Development. The Catalogue is useful if you need a description of a book but note that the prices are in British pounds and you would need to contact your regional sales representative for local prices.

There are lots of interesting and thought-provoking articles (both free and for registered users) in the Professional Development area, ranging in topic from teaching grammar and academic reading to conflict management and critical thinking in the classroom. There are also podcasts and videocasts, although these are fewer in number than the articles.

However, the area on PearsonELT.com with by far the most potential for teaching treasure is Classroom Resources, which has, among other things, hundreds of lesson ideas and plans covering every area of English language teaching possible. The resources are listed in categories such as skill, level, age group, resource type (lesson plans, worksheets, games, warmers, etc.), exams, variety of English (US or UK), and even lesson time and preparation time. Lessons come with photocopiable worksheets and handouts prepared, as well as easy-to-follow lesson plans, which are great for the teacher on the go. Most of the resources have been developed by Pearson but there is a section of resources that have been submitted by teachers, which I thought added a nice collaborative touch to the site.

The website’s homepage also includes links to four specific teaching contexts: Primary Place, Teen Space, Tertiary Place and Exams Place. These provide teachers with resources tailored to their areas of teaching. For example, the Exams Place has exam overviews, webinars with advice and information on different exams and practical teaching ideas for each exam. Access to most of these is limited to registered users.

Like any website there are a few minor navigation frustrations, such as needing to log in to different areas whenever you enter them or requiring certain programs on your computer to run webinar playbacks. These are easy fixes if you know how, but annoying nonetheless. Another downside is that there doesn’t appear to be much activity in so far as new postings are concerned and featured blogs and articles can remain ‘featured’ for several months without changing. For this site to be better, it would need to be updated regularly with new articles, resources and professional development posts.
Overall, PearsonELT is a great online forum for teachers to access information and hundreds of resources, and to talk to or get ideas from other teachers around the world. I would recommend it as a site for all teachers to have as a favourite saved on their web browser.

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Many would agree when I say that practising English language teachers lead a very busy life. This means that they often find it difficult to invest time and money into professional development, especially face-to-face training. As a result, many teachers are now becoming more interested in professional development online. It is with this context in mind that Cambridge University Press and Cambridge English Language Assessment (formerly known as Cambridge ESOL) have joined forces to provide continuing online professional development to time-poor teachers worldwide through their Cambridge English Teacher website.

The website has a simple yet effective layout with an appealing colour theme. The main navigation tabs, which are found at the top of the each page, lead to various forms of content, for example, courses, resources, webinars, discussions, communities, and careers. Users can sign in for a trial membership with Cambridge English Teacher, and this will give them access to a range of free samples, which may include advice from consultants, webinars or recruitment opportunities. If the users, however, choose to buy into the website, the annual membership will cost them €34.20, US$45 or GB£28.50 (the subscription is not available in Australian dollars). With this yearly registration, users will have full access to the benefits of the website, including one free online course of their choice and a 20% discount on additional ones, which normally cost an additional US$39.50. All courses come with a printable certificate of completion, and at present, the membership also comes with a free five-hour ‘Grammar for Teachers: Language Awareness’ course. As for the choice of courses, at the time of the review, there were 23 courses available on the site and these covered a variety of topics from language awareness to teaching methodology, as well as more specialised options such as teaching young learners, preparation for Cambridge English exams and an introduction to CLIL.
One of the courses I had the opportunity to review was ‘How to Teach Speaking’. Like other courses on the website, this is a 10-hour self-study programme. The aim of this course is to give teachers, both novice and otherwise, the opportunity to gain or brush up their knowledge of speaking skills. The course input is organised to deal with different areas related to this methodology in a logical and user-friendly way. For instance, it discusses the difference between accuracy and fluency, provides ideas for teaching conversation and discussion, familiarises teachers with different features of spoken English, differentiates formal and informal testing of the skill and much more.

As a pronunciation enthusiast, and for the purpose of this review, I chose to take a closer look at the units on the teaching of pronunciation. This language system is dealt with by focusing on both segmental (i.e., individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (i.e., stress, rhythm and intonation). While looking at this unit, I came across the sub-unit, ‘From Theory to Practice’, and found it particularly interesting, as it adds a practical element to the course. While completing it, teachers are encouraged to plan a pronunciation activity, using a coursebook or not, which they could then integrate into a grammar, vocabulary or functions lesson. Another positive feature of this course is the space provided for self-reflection. To do this, teachers are encouraged to record their own experiences during the course by making entries in their website journal. It is also worth mentioning that the course provides teachers with a link to the Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT) glossary, where teachers can look up definitions for relevant terms and concepts related to the skills in question. The course also provides a discussion forum in which teachers can network and exchange ideas about the topic with other members, although at a glance, it seemed to me that while many users post questions and comments, these are infrequently viewed or replied to, which reduces the potential benefits of the forum. However, all in all, this course offers a good balance between input and practice. One possible weak point to mention, however, may be the lack of challenge in the content of some of the units for the more experienced teacher – ‘Classroom Games’, for instance, would probably benefit from a more extensive list of activities than the traditional games of Hangman, Snakes and Ladders and Pelmanism.

Another course I reviewed was ‘How to Teach IELTS’. Similar to the course described above, this course is divided into 10 units, with content ranging from an introductory chapter about the IELTS exam to skills-based units of input and strategies for the
IELTS Preparation classroom. To keep with the previous theme of speaking skills, I chose to review and comment on a course unit on the IELTS Speaking Test: ‘Analysing the Assessment Criteria’. It is no surprise that teachers who become more familiar with the IELTS Speaking band descriptors tend to feel better equipped to help their learners to prepare for the test; for this reason, it seems like a great idea that this course offers teachers the opportunity to focus on the assessment criteria for this test, something which can be particularly beneficial for those who are not IELTS examiners. I particularly liked the tasks provided for training teachers to learn more about the assessment criteria. For instance, the video of two learners and their band scores (7.0 and 5.5, respectively) provides teachers with a useful benchmark which they can refer to when thinking about their learners in their own IELTS Preparation classes. Furthermore, the comments and tasks accompanying the video are helpful in raising teachers’ awareness of the key aspects of the criteria. The link to the public version of the criteria on the Cambridge English Language Assessment Support website is also a real bonus. On the other hand, one small criticism to make about this course is that it seems rather tedious to complete at a first glance. Perhaps, more variation in the tasks and activities could help improve the issue.

In summary, I would certainly recommend the Cambridge English Teacher website to teachers from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking backgrounds who are looking for self-study opportunities to further develop their knowledge of and skills in the field of English language teaching. As a teacher educator, I also believe that this website is a good investment for anyone new to the language classroom or about to embark upon a pre-service programme such as CELTA. So, echoing the ‘catchy’ phrases from the website, I would encourage you, fellow language teacher, to ‘start your membership’, ‘unlock everything’ and ‘stay inspired’.

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How to Speak English
Kaplan International English, 2013

Reviewed by Edward Van Der Aar

Learners looking for an app to improve their foreign or second language pronunciation will be met with an avalanche of choices. One of these is Kaplan International English’s How to Speak English, a freely downloadable stand-alone app currently available for iPad, iPhone and Android devices. The app, which aims to improve the pronunciation of EFL/ESL students, has a number of attractive features and is a good choice for self-directed language learners who appreciate the flexibility and convenience that Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) offers.

The app is separated into three areas. The first, ‘Challenge’, focuses on distinguishing between similar sounds. The content here is delivered in a quiz format with six stages, each of which has 100 questions separated into groups of ten. Once the user starts a quiz, a single set of minimal pairs is displayed. Students hear one of the words spoken and select the word they think they hear. Of course, each student’s difficulties in hearing the differences will depend on their native language, which also means there will likely be a fair proportion of easier quiz items mixed in. This mix of easier and harder items was a definite positive: my university-aged students got a confidence boost from being able to easily identify some correct words, motivating them to try harder on the more difficult test items.

After completing the ten questions, the score for the quiz is given. Users can, at this stage, view all pairs that were on the quiz. Time can be spent listening again to any particularly challenging pairs or those words they may have failed to identify correctly. To graduate to the next stage, students must successfully answer seven of the ten test items correctly. This allows for some errors but keeps the pace high and consequently keeps motivation up. Some users may also find motivation in using the option to share scores on Facebook or Twitter. One drawback, however, is that students may not take time to review the phonemes which they have difficulty discerning.
The second area of the app, ‘Your Sounds’, focuses on delivering content tailored to the user’s native language. On entering this area, the app prompts the user to select their native language from a list of 15 options. The languages available correspond with most common languages found in Australian ELICOS settings. Selecting a language provides a carefully selected group of English phonemes which speakers of a specific native language find difficult (I have experience with Japanese and Brazilian language learners, and the selection for those language learners is appropriate). Students then have two choices in the ‘Your Sounds’ area. They can again practise distinguishing between minimal pairs, this time based on the group of phonemes which is problematic for their native language. This practice, however, has only ten test items delivered in a single quiz. The real strength of the app lies in the second option in this area: the brief instructional lessons that coach the user in articulating the phonemes of English.

For this feature, students can select either a video or audio lesson from the list of phonemes given for their language. Choosing the audio lesson displays four buttons on the screen. One is the audio of the phoneme itself and the others are three single word examples which contain that sound. Students can see a sound wave of the word and hear it as it is spoken. They can also record themselves saying the same word and see it as a sound wave. My students especially enjoyed doing this. As we used some class time to explore the app, they compared recordings and competitively shared their results. Though this activity was probably not what the authors of the app intended, it was interesting to see how having the sound wave data motivated the students to improve.

The video coaching for each of the sounds is another excellent feature. The videos are professionally produced, and explain and demonstrate clearly how the phonemes of English are articulated. Firstly the presenter explains the sound, and how the mouth and tongue move to produce it (the video is shot from both the front and the side, providing a thorough guide). Particular care is given to the points of articulation and correct mouth and jaw position. The sound itself and a few words which contain the phoneme are spoken. There is a listen-and-repeat activity in the video where the presenter pauses and gives time for the user to repeat the spoken words. Students can then record a video of themselves and see how they compare with the presenter. This is especially useful, for example, in distinguishing between /b/ and /v/ sounds, where Japanese students have real difficulty feeling where their teeth are placed. As a tool for self-assessment, the fact that students are able to make their own video and audio recordings is excellent, and many of my class thought it was an appealing and surprising feature for a free app. However, if side-by-side playback were an option, where the user’s input could be judged against the program’s, this feature
would be even more useful – it is hard to maintain an image of the correct sound wave in your head while looking at your own.

The last area of the app is ‘Sounds’, which consists of an interactive phonemic chart. This chart shows the 44 phonemes of Received Pronunciation (RP), on which all the activities in the app are based. By tapping any symbol the student is able to access the video and audio lesson of any sound.

Overall, the How to Speak English app is a useful tool for improving pronunciation. However, there are some minor drawbacks. Firstly, all instructions are in English; if they were available in different languages it could be of more benefit to learners who can’t navigate confidently in English. At least a lower intermediate level of English proficiency is needed to fully understand the video lessons, and even then navigation would prove a little difficult. I spent some class time walking students through the different features of the app, and I doubt my students would have used the app to its fullest had I not done so. In addition to the navigation concerns, the content of this app is based on Received Pronunciation of individual phonemes. If this differs markedly from what the student is used to hearing, or wants to sound like, it may lack appeal. Having Standard American as an option alongside RP would be beneficial. These are minor issues, though; the content itself and tasks in the app were excellent and highlight the increasingly important position of MALL in language learning contexts.

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In this age of smartphones, tablets and laptops, and given our students’ personal attachment to these devices, it’s a shame that more educational use is not made of these gadgets. Educators may often feel bewildered or intimidated by the array of hardware, software and other technological wizardry that their charges front up with in class each day, and acutely aware that people a half (or even a third) of their age are completely comfortable with these smaller and smaller electronic gizmos. Older teachers may even view such devices with suspicion, deeming them of little educational value. However, as the technology becomes cheaper and more ubiquitous, it’s time to face the fact that it is here to stay, and that learners are just as likely to respond positively to content and teaching delivered via the devices in their pocket as to a live person standing in front of them.

Thanks to Shelly Sanchez, then, for *Learning to Go*, a timely and engaging collection of lesson plans, activities and resources based around the Internet, mobile devices, cell phones, and BYOT (Bring your Own Technology). This publication, illustrated by John T. Spencer, is firmly directed at younger-age General English classes, and encourages students to learn by ‘creating, playing, translating, editing, curating, researching, and brainstorming’, to quote the publishers, the Round. While the book exists in hard-copy form, it is (as the author recommends) much more exploitable via its digital form as users can take full advantage of the lesson plans, resources and handouts, as well as the numerous links, references and user guides dotted throughout. Navigation through the resource is facilitated by the inclusion of a fully hyperlinked content map, navigation bars, internal and external links, an apps guide, a resources section, and a materials folder.
Twelve very diverse lesson plans form the core of the book. These can be utilised in any order, and include ‘Image stories’, ‘App mingle’, ‘In the news’, and ‘Observation journals’. Whilst the activities, target language and outcomes vary widely, each lesson plan comprises a lesson description, target age group, duration and objectives. The task itself is divided into before, during and follow-up activities. The lesson plans also contain links to other sites on the Web, such as Tumblr, as well as applications to further enhance the learning experience. Sanchez directs readers towards apps which can be used for audio recording, image enhancing, video recording, drawing, bookmarking, comic making, brainstorming and QR codes, as well as letting users know the platform required for each app and the most salient features of each one. These lessons require a great deal of group work, and, at the end of the book, Sanchez offers tips on how to arrange collaborative learning, such as giving students designated roles and fostering team loyalty by the use of team names, colours and mascots.

If I have any reservations about this book, firstly, it is that it strikes me as an attractive fumble into the world of technology, without any sound grammatical basis or target language beyond having learners do high-tech stuff in groups. Sure, learners write about their findings on worksheets, and generally revel in the world of cyberspace, but the specific language aims or outcomes are not immediately obvious. The writer seems to assume that learners will develop their language skills as a result of interacting with technology, rather than by overt language teaching. Secondly, in the lesson entitled ‘In the news’, teachers are instructed to ‘show students how to record and edit audio with their devices’ – will teachers know how to do this, given the wide range of devices on the market? Teachers using this resource will need to a) plan each lesson very carefully, check out each link and online resource, and anticipate language/grammatical needs, and b) clarify how the activity is to be presented to the class, and how it is to be assessed or graded (if it fits in the assessment schedule at all). In some ways, then, this book appears to represent a non-essential, time-filling resource. Thirdly, there are no page numbers,
and whilst this is justified as encouraging teachers to choose their learning path and lesson plans, to me it seems just plain confusing.

Nevertheless, it is impossible here to list all the various permutations, groupings, activities and other outcomes that learners will be involved in or benefit from; suffice to say that there is enough material in this book to keep even the most disengaged learners happy. I look forward to further publications by Shelly Sanchez.

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If you would like to write a review for the *English Australia Journal*, please contact the Reviews Editor: reviews@englishaustralia.com.au
Open Mind (Elementary) forms part of a six-level adult General English course with a focus on developing the linguistic skills needed to be a successful communicator in the modern world. The series centres on six main aspects: life skills, language skills, a step-by-step grammar approach, a focus on functional language, and independent learning. These are supported by a library of video material available online via the Student’s Resource Centre (SRC) and on the accompanying DVD. It is refreshing to see a coursebook with an emphasis on such areas as learner independence and functional language and their role and significance in second language acquisition.

The Student’s Book is divided into 12 units each centred on a different topic. These topics, such as jobs, daily routines, habits and free-time activities, are commonly found in Elementary books as a way to introduce the grammar appropriate for this level. However, unlike many other books, Open Mind presents the topics in a way in which students can see their real-life applications. In line with its aims, every unit has a reading, listening, speaking, and writing component which provides ample practice opportunities. These macro-skills are enhanced by the additional elements of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Images are contemporary and texts, both written and aural, are realistic. All units end with a ‘language wrap-up’, which is essentially a one-page vocabulary and grammar review of the unit (a standard with most coursebooks), and either a speaking or writing workshop. Consistent with its step-by-step grammar approach, the grammar evolves from basic to more difficult as the units progress. The coursebook also has a grammar reference section and answer key at the back of the book, along with the audio scripts. At times, though, there is a sense of trying to pack too much language into one unit. For example,
one unit alone covers jobs, articles, family members, punctuation, possessive apostrophe with s, have got to denote possession, whose, and possessive pronouns – all in conjunction with the regular life skills, language wrap-up and skills workshop sections. Consequently, it can be difficult for the book to thoroughly and effectively deal with each component.

Open Mind’s objective of autonomous learning is fostered through such features as the ‘Notice!’, ‘Reflect’ and ‘How are you doing?’ boxes, where students are asked to evaluate their own progress. The ‘Notice!’ boxes use graded language and achievable tasks to draw students’ attention to certain grammatical forms and encourage them to look at grammar analytically. I believe this is an important aspect of language learning which should be encouraged early on. In contrast, however, the language used in the ‘Reflect’ and ‘How are you doing?’ boxes is at times too complicated and would need to be facilitated by the teacher, which detracts a little from the autonomous learning objective.

In addition to autonomous learning, the book has a goal of developing students’ language skills for professional, personal and academic use, which is nurtured through a final ‘Lifeskills’ section in each unit. My students found this section particularly beneficial, as it provides them with the practical skills to deal with situations they are likely to encounter outside the classroom and in life in general. Topics such as understanding forms, time management, and forming priorities are covered.

The Student’s Book comes with its own code for students to register online in order to access the SRC. The code is valid for 18 months from activation, and once registered, students can download the audio tracks for both the Student’s Book and Workbook, and word lists for each unit. The word lists are comprehensive and for each individual lexical item, the part of speech, phonetic transcription, definition and a sample
sentence are supplied. They also include ‘useful expressions’ highlighting the topic/category (asking for help or polite language, for example) and again providing a sample sentence. The word lists are also available in French, Spanish, Russian, Italian and German with an extra column provided for the translated word/phrase, and they are undoubtedly a useful student resource – however, at times the definitions seemed too complex for an elementary student.

The online SRC also has a Common European Framework checklist for each unit whereby students can assess their own abilities and progress on a scale of 1–5, with suggested pages in the Student’s Book and Workbook for revision, if needed. Initially, some teacher involvement would be needed for explanation and demonstration, but once students have done this a couple of times, they could easily continue on their own. This is a different take on the usual end of unit checklists in students’ books; furthermore, it is another method for scaffolding independent learning as students are urged to become involved in their own advancement.

The video material is current and thematically linked to the course book units. I would say the linguistic content of the videos has longevity; however, perhaps the visual content will date more quickly. Despite the fact that it is largely British-sourced, most extracts have general applicability and could certainly be adapted to Australian life and personalised to students’ own lives. The voiceover is level-appropriate and, if so desired, tailored worksheets could easily be created by a teacher for classroom use. The online SRC has accompanying self-study video worksheets with answer keys to download, which could be used in the classroom as well. These worksheets have been thoughtfully designed with before, while and after you watch tasks. Video scripts are also available. Note, however, that the SRC video extracts are the same as those on the DVD that comes with the Student’s Book.

Overall, Open Mind uniquely combines language learning with personal development, encouraging students to become immersed in their own improvement both linguistically and personally. With Open Mind, it seems it really is possible to open doors.

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Comprising a collection of experimental practice opportunities that are likely to push teachers beyond their classroom routines, the *Experimental Practice in ELT* e-book embraces traditional and cutting edge teaching methods and techniques for practice. While it might not surprise to see a chapter devoted to lexical chunking, other chapters are more edgy (Dogme) and controversial (translation). These disparate choices are best understood in light of the authors’ view of experimental practice: ‘[it] is both relative and highly personal for every teacher. If it’s new to you, then it’s worthy of being labelled as experimental practice.’ (p. 271). Yet putting theory into practice is not always a walk in the park. The strength of *Experimental practice in ELT* is that it instills in teachers a desire to resolve this tension; to take a chance on a theory or technique and explore it, and thereby improve their own potential.

The book has five chapters – Dogme, lexical chunking, corpora in the classroom, translation, and CLIL (content and language integrated learning) – which were chosen after surveying the teaching preferences of European DELTA trainers and candidates (‘experimental practice’ being an important component of the Cambridge DELTA qualification). Each chapter starts with ‘History & Background’, addressing key historical and contextual influences on the approach/method, followed by a section which explains why it is considered to be important. A detailed sample lesson plan is included for each topic, and this is followed by a ‘Lesson Principles’ section where the authors comment on the lesson plan and the potential for adapting or extending it. The ‘Opportunities’ and ‘Risks’ sections summarise the benefits of the method and also what can go wrong. A final ‘Do’s and Don’ts’ section in each chapter provides us with pearls of wisdom from the authors’ many years of experience in ELT, reminding
us that each idea has both open space and exclusion zones! A useful Toolbox section, inspiring Conclusion and brief bibliography round out this 296-page e-resource.

This digital publication has an inherent advantage over traditional hard copy: it hyperlinks to and exploits ELT on the Internet particularly well. In the Toolbox section, you’ll find links to definitive and original guides to each teaching approach or technique, further references, key proponents, and informative articles both by those in favour and those against. Included here, among many others, are Michael Lewis and Leo Selivan on the Lexical Approach, Luke Meddings and Anthony Gaughan’s scaled down but well-explored topics on Dogme, and Chia Suan Chong’s inspirational behavioural and cultural musings on all things ELT, not to mention links to comprehensive corpora at The Sketch Engine and www.corpora4learning.net for those interested in how words themselves behave. Another advantage is that the lesson plans are downloadable in PDF format, so teachers who prefer hard copies can easily print them out without losing the layout, whereas teachers who want real portability can simply load them onto their smartphone or tablet and head to class.

Wright and Rebuffet-Broadus’ lesson plans provide teachers with experimental practice objectives and a range of choices during the lesson, allowing teachers to react to learning dynamics whilst maintaining their planned objectives. For instance, the Dogme lesson plan begins with a topic which emerges from teacher-student interaction, but the direction of the lesson will then depend upon a series of teacher choices in response to classroom variables which are all accounted for in the lesson plan. In fact, there are at least ten different ‘journeys’ in the Dogme lesson alone, so I was able to use the same lesson plan over consecutive days without the students retorting, ‘Didn’t we do this yesterday?’

Not only is there impressive scope in the lesson plans but also there are also impressive learning rewards. After using corpora to research language, my students steadily began to notice patterns of lexis and induce some rules, surprising themselves (and their teacher!) Similarly, after translating a text from English into their first
language, my students had a better appreciation of how similar and dissimilar their classmates’ written first languages can be, and I realised the great variation there can be to express a single English phrase in another language.

There’s a lot to like in this e-resource. The balance of theory and practice in an effective e-book format is great. The currency, brevity and repeatable structure of each chapter has busy teachers fully in mind; it’s direct, refreshing and accessible. The lesson plans are principled but malleable: choose an approach, add language content and throw caution to the wind as you depart for class! The authors could improve the resource by compiling the advice in the ‘Do’s and Don’t’s’ and ‘Opportunities’ sections into a list to help teachers structure lesson reflection around the e-book’s excellent planning suggestions. Yet this is only a minor hiccup. 

*Experimental practice in ELT: A walk on the wild side* reminds us that teaching experience is not just accumulating classroom hours, but also taking action to modulate the quality of that experience. While this resource will provide immediate traction for trainers and trainees, other beneficiaries will be busy teachers in a rut, others in cruise control or those simply looking for a challenge. Teachers will take different things from their walk on the wild side, but for me, the wild side was liberating!

**Note:** This resource is available for Kindle at www.amazon.com, or in e-book and ePUB formats for PC, Mac, Android and Apple iOS devices at www.the-round.com or www.smashwords.com.

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Grammar for Writing
Study Book

ANNE VICARY

Garnet Education, 2014

REVIEWED BY CONNIE DE SILVA

Grammar for Writing is yet another attractive volume to join Garnet’s English for Academic Study series. The aim of this glossy 240-page self-study book is to assist learners to improve their knowledge of grammar for the purpose of producing good academic writing; as such, its A4 format is designed to be highly readable, with spacious layout to enable written responses. The target audience is students with an IELTS score of 4.0–6.5 (or equivalent); however, given that the content is print-based and text-heavy, and that the focus is on grammar analysis and practice, it is more appropriate for the higher intermediate, self-motivated and diligent learner.

Designed for self-study, the methodological approach of this book is to progress through the aspects of English grammar from simple to complex within nine units of reading matter, teaching points and exercises; however, the organisational structure allows the user to select particular aspects for study and, in this respect, both the table of contents and the index are user-friendly as tools to locate an area of interest.

Individual units follow the same organisational pattern, providing the student with a three-stage study process. Stage A explores the principles of grammar for academic writing; Stage B offers practical application of the theory encountered in Stage A; and Stage C is the review and consolidation section. Each stage contains texts and associated tasks to engage the student and help them become familiar with the grammatical points. Text topics are contemporary, such as animal cloning, mobile phone technology, the nature/nurture controversy, CO₂ emissions, the Free Trade Agreement, and social media. It should be noted, however, that the vocabulary in these texts is pitched at a lower-level competency, and as such the texts are not designed to improve academic vocabulary for writing.
Employing a graded learning approach, the units adequately address introduction, analysis and review of the target grammatical features (from parts of speech and basics of subject-verb agreement, to the complexity of relative clauses). Units 4 and 5, which are particularly useful, cover the functions of linking words, and offer good examples of topic sentences. The review section at the end of each unit comprises a grammar checklist, error-correction exercises and multiple choice questions. One further learning tactic underpinning the resource is the opportunity to observe error correction (using samples of student writing).

The resource book ends with a four-part appendix on use of articles (no explanation is given as to why this is not covered in the main text); describing data represented in graphs; referencing; and error correction of a sample student essay. Unfortunately, the latter is essentially just an opportunity for learners to see the errors corrected, with no associated explanation why. That said, there are cross references to the relevant part of the study book for further exploration. Incidentally, the complete answer key to the exercises in this book is available as a downloadable PDF at www.englishforacademicstudy.com. It is remarkably comprehensive and is one of the strengths of this book.

Writing a grammar book of any kind is a challenging undertaking, and, overall, Vicary’s effort is worthy. However, while the nine units do provide useful and instructive exercises for the learner, there are a few sticking points. One issue is that there is an emphasis on traditional aspects of grammar, and a tendency to prescriptiveness which sometimes produces ambiguity. For example, in explaining how to use both . . . and, Vicary (p. 90) advises: ‘If the verb construction is auxiliary verb (AV) + main verb (MV), you place the word both between the auxiliary verb and the main verb’. Vicary’s illustrative example (p. 90), ‘The company’s employees are both paid a good basic salary and generously rewarded with bonuses’, which could equally mean that
there are only two employees. There is sprinkling of doubtful examples and blanket rules of this kind that somewhat diminishes the value of this book as an independent study resource.

Another issue is that the Glossary of Grammatical Terms, which appears in the preliminary matter of the volume, serves inadequately as a grammatical reference. For example, adverb is defined simply as ‘describes the verb’, but in fact the adverb may function to describe circumstances of action, or other adverbs and adjectives. Certainly, sentence adverbs like fortunately and maybe should not be explained as ‘describes the verb’. Further, the author uses some terminology that is not common in the Australian English teaching community, and that is not clearly explained. For example, she introduces the term 'half-subject' and advises that ‘in sentences with there is or there are it may be helpful to think of the subject as being divided into two’. By way of illustration, she offers this example: ‘In the UK, there is a small town called Windsor, which has a famous castle’ (p. 18) and claims ‘there is a half-subject and the noun that follows it is a half-subject.’ This is linguistically confusing.

Finally, the idea of noticing collocation, inarguably a crucial part of improving grammatical expression, is absent as a teaching and learning point. In fact, the design feature employed to colour-highlight grammatical category (and errors) has the unfortunate effect of sometimes cleaving phrasal units such as the phrase to break down (p. 36) where break is highlighted to point out an error.

No doubt some Australian-based learners and teachers will find parts of this book useful in grammatical problem-solving. The best way to discover how useful it might be is perhaps to explore the registration-based online preview (available for a period of 10 days), along with the downloadable answer key. Teachers should also note that the book content is culturally Anglocentric, with substantial reference to English towns and history, which sets this book apart from the contemporary resources of our classrooms.

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As co-author and editor Christopher Stillwell points out, we language teachers are a multi-talented bunch. Not only do we have varied teaching experience but many of us also have training and expertise in other fields. The premise behind this unusual publication is that the knowledge, wisdom and skills gained from such experience can give teachers unique insights: insights that can be shared with colleagues and exploited to improve our classroom practice.

*Language Teaching Insights From Other Fields* is a compilation of tips written by 15 different language teachers, who also happen to have significant experience in other areas. These individuals include a former restaurant critic, a Zen master, an architect, a researcher and a basketball coach. In each account, the teacher draws parallels between the two fields, giving us intriguing chapters such as ‘How would a bartender create a safe, social, and supportive classroom environment?’ ‘How would a social activist promote critical literacy in the language classroom?’ and Stillwell’s own chapter, ‘How would an actor teach language learners to improvise and fluently speak the speech?’

The concept of the book is explained in the introduction by evoking the image of a dinner party, with the 15 teachers being our esteemed guests. As in all good lessons, Stillwell gives us a task to do before we continue reading. We are given the list of professions represented in the chapters and asked to brainstorm what insights they might offer us for our teaching – I recommend doing this useful reflective activity. The rest of the book is divided into four sections: ‘Recontextualising the language classroom’, ‘Dealing with challenges’, ‘Teaching the four skills’ and ‘Developing as a professional’. In addition to the chapters, there is a table of contents and an index at the back, making navigation easy.
Each chapter in *Language Teaching Insights From Other Fields* follows the same structure, albeit delivered in each teacher’s distinctive voice. First, the writer gives an introduction to their skill or ‘other’ profession, often with an interesting anecdote. Next come the tips, which give illustrative examples and often draw upon research in one or both fields. Reference lists are included at the end of the chapter and some chapters include an additional list called ‘Resources for further exploration’. For example, John Schmidt directs us to the Toastmasters organisation for those interested in becoming involved in public speaking, while Sylvia Whitman, the basketball coach, recommends reading Ming Yao’s life story. Each chapter concludes with a biography of the author. I am really impressed by the collection of talented and diverse individuals Stillwell gathered to contribute to the book. I was also surprised to find out, via a piece of trivia in one of the acknowledgements, that Dr. Stephen Krashen has a black belt in Tae Kwon Do!

This book is a unique addition to current teacher resource offerings, but it is important to understand what it is not. Firstly, this is not a book of suggested activities for the classroom, even though some teachers have included them (e.g., Dupuy, the role-playing game master, provides an ‘avatar’ worksheet for an activity called ‘My Hero’, while Stillwell includes some very interesting ideas to foster fluency using the story of *Alice in Wonderland*). Secondly, as Stillwell acknowledges in the introduction, the tips in this title are not meant to replace content-specific knowledge. Some might say that the tips are common sense, especially for those who have taught for many years. However, what these chapters provide are a new lens through which to view concepts like student motivation and engagement, or building rapport. There are reminders to us that, like the martial arts master, we need to ‘disguise repetition’, and make progress visible by urging students to ‘break’ the proverbial board.

I would recommend *Language Teaching Insights From Other Fields* without reservation. It can be dipped into at your leisure, but don’t be surprised if you continue reading, as the authors’ enthusiasm for teaching and dedication to the profession are contagious. The book would also be a nice source of inspiration for a staffroom bookshelf, or could serve as a springboard for a professional development session with in-service or even trainee teachers. Enjoy!

**Meredith MacAulay** has taught languages for over 15 years in a variety of contexts. She currently teaches Academic English at the Institute of Languages as well as working in teacher training.

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