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Foreword

For the Spring 2007 edition of Asian ESP Journal we are happy to publish six articles diverse in theme and cultural context and a paper replying to an article published in our last edition. We are also pleased to announce the appointment of Theron Muller and Yong Chen as Associate Editors, as well as a significantly expanded editorial team. A warm welcome is extended to all those appointed. This strengthening of the editorial board reflects the growing interest in the journal from ESP researchers world-wide.

The first paper comes from Farzaneh Khodabandeh, working at Mobarakhe Payame Noor University in Iran. Her paper investigates student errors in translating Persian and English newspaper headlines. In analyses of possible cross-linguistic problems in the translations, it was revealed that, in the first case of translated Persian headlines, most errors were grammatical and lexical in nature. A second analysis showed that there was a lack of knowledge of English headlines rules. Analysis of translated English headlines also highlighted grammatical, then discoursal and lexical difficulties among participants.

The second paper by Renata Suzuki from Sophia University, Japan, considers the design of consciousness-raising (C-R) tasks in an Economics English course. Suzuki describes the application to teaching English to Economics majors in a case study of two C-R activities: for collocation, and for modal patterns of agreement. In an analysis of student feedback, a four-point fundamental framework (ownership, responsibility, autonomy, and empowerment) is illustrated as a means of evaluating how beneficial C-R activities can be for students in meeting learning goals.

The next article by Theron Muller looks at the use of Discourse Analysis in the adaptation of a TOEIC text, the Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course. Specifically, Muller illustrates how written discourse analysis can be applied to the text to create a more communicative classroom still focused on test preparation. The model presented in this paper is seen as one which other materials writers and developers can employ in textbook adaptation.

Katayo Afzali and Mohammad Hassan Tahirian from Sheikhibahaee University, Iran look at the strategic needs of ESL Students in developing their literary competence. Afzali and Tahirian use a questionnaire-based approach by Miall & Kuiken (1995) to elicit the literary strategic needs of students. The results indicate that ESL students have only a hypothetical awareness of the significance of insight, empathy, imagery vividness and concern with the author in dealing with literary texts.
The fifth article by Mohammad Nodoushan asks whether task type and text familiarity are predictors of performance on ESP tests. In this study, 541 senior and junior university students of electronics in an Iranian university undertook the Task-Based Reading Test (TBRT). Variance and regression analyses were conducted, revealing a diversity of inter-relatedness between the variables on test performance.

The sixth paper comes from Gao Jiajing in Beijing Normal University (Zhuhai campus) who looks at the design of an ESP course for university-level students of business. In this study, the focus of ESP course design is drawn to the future workplace needs of learners. Gao puts forward a proposal for this design which considers specific learner needs, realistic aims, the place of grammar and study skills, and how assessment and evaluation are to be conducted.

Finally, we are pleased to be able to publish our first ‘reply to’ contribution by Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini from the Board of Education, Tehran, Iran. Mirhosseini replies to the November, 2006 article “Teaching English to Students of Medicine: A Student-Centered Approach” by Kashani, Soheili, and Hatmi by outlining various questions and concerns about the paper’s representations of educational practices, both praising and criticizing the authors’ stance.

I hope you will enjoy reading these seven contributions to the Spring edition of Asian ESP Journal. We look forward to your own contributions in this coming year.

John Adamson
Senior Editor
Asian ESP Journal
Analysis of students’ errors: the case of headlines

Farzaneh Khodabandeh,
Mobarakeh Payame Noor University,
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Abstract
This study intended to shed light on some problems which students face in translating headlines. For this purpose, 58 male and female graduate students of English were asked to take part in the present research. They were given a test which included thirty Persian and thirty English headlines and were asked to translate them. All the students’ translations were analyzed in order to investigate possible cross linguistic problems in translating headlines. From the first analysis of the translated Persian headlines, it was concluded that the participants had grammatical and lexical errors in their translations. The second analysis of the translated Persian headlines showed that the participants had inadequate knowledge of the English headlines rules. The analysis of the translated English headlines revealed that the participants' chief difficulties were grammatical followed by discoursal and lexical types. This study has significance to teachers and syllabus designers.

Keywords: error analysis, headline, translation, syntactic and lexical levels.

1. Introduction

Many EFL students find that newspaper headlines are especially difficult to understand. This is because, as Fairclough (1995) says, "headlines have distinctive syntactic properties, which make them a grammatical oddity" (p. 21).

The headline is a unique type of text. It has a range of functions that specifically dictate its shape, content and structure, and it operates within a range of restrictions that limit the freedom of the writer. It encapsulates the story in a minimum number of words, attracts the reader to the story and, if it appears on the front page, attracts the reader to the paper (Reah, 1998). The
style of writing headlines is largely geared to saving space and presenting information in striking ways.

English newspaper headlines have their own special rules and regulations. Since they are the gist of the news, the language is compressed and condensed which challenges not only the English language learners but also some native speakers. As such, this study intended to find out the problems which students face in translating headlines.

2. Background

As this study analyzes students' errors in translating headlines, it is essential to discuss the theory of error analysis.

Error analysis was conceptualized and applied based on the behaviorist theory of language learning which implied that errors were signs that a language learner had simply not learnt the rules of the target language effectively (Brown, 1987). In the early 1950's, the notion of language as a system, and more importantly, the notion of second language acquisition as the meeting of two language systems gained more acceptance and linguists began to regard errors as evidence of language transfer, or what Weinreich (as cited in Richards, 1974) referred to as intersystemic interference. With this conceptualization, errors were regarded as the manifestation of ineffective language learning and were focused upon by linguists and teachers intent on their elimination (Brown, 1987; Ellis, 1985).

It wasn't until the late 1960's that researchers like Slamecka and Ceraso (1960) used evidence gained through error analysis to discredit the existence of negative transfer as the dominant factor in acquiring a second language, since many errors could not be attributed to intersystemic interference. What they and other researchers were demonstrating was that learners didn't just memorize target language rules and use them to form their own utterances: they were constructing their own rules based on the input they had received. Hence, there was a rebirth of error analysis and a movement from an undifferentiated world to a world organized by mind, from a world of instances to a world related by generalities and abstractions ("Error Analysis", 2004) requiring the whole concept to be redefined and approached from a more cognitive or mentalist perspective.

Psychology became a much more influential field for linguists interested in using error analysis as a diagnostic tool, to help identify the causes of errors. The term error itself was redefined in recognition that many mistakes in spontaneous speaking or writing could be attributed to a simple pause, metanalysis, or a "slip of the brain." (Crystal, 1992, p. 135). Errors began to help describe and explain the way in which learners learned a language rather than their progress towards conforming to a set of real or imagined standards of expression (Crystal, 1980, p. 134) and thus, had a more positive role.

Today, error analysis is used with a variety of techniques for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the mistakes made by language learners and has helped support hypotheses such as the natural route of development, as well as identify the weaknesses and/or disprove theories of language learning like contrastive analysis, throughout the last few decades.
2.1. Error analysis

Error analysis (EA) emphasizes “the significance of errors in learners’ interlanguage system” (Brown, 1994, p. 204). The term interlanguage, introduced by Selinker (1972), refers to the systematic knowledge of an L2 which is independent of both the learner’s L1 and the target language. Nemser (1971) referred to it as the Approximate System, and Corder (1967) as the Idiosyncratic Dialect or Transitional Competence.

Error analysis is a type of linguistic analysis that focuses on the errors learners make. It consists of a comparison between the errors made in the Target Language (TL) and that TL itself.

Researchers are interested in errors because they are believed to contain valuable information on the strategies that people use to acquire a language (Taylor, 1975; Dulay & Burt, 1974). Moreover, according to Richards (1974), “At the level of pragmatic classroom experience, error analysis will continue to provide one means by which the teacher assesses learning and teaching and determines priorities for future effort” (p. 15).

2.2.1. Sources of errors

A lot of sources of errors have been introduced by some innovative theorists. In the following section the primary causes of errors will be reviewed:

Interlingual/Transfer errors: those attributed to the native language (NL). There are interlingual errors when the learner’s L1 habits (patterns, systems or rules) interfere or prevent him/her, to some extent, from acquiring the patterns and rules of the second language (Corder, 1971).

Interference (negative transfer) is the negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the performance of the target language learner (L2) (Lado, 1964).

Intralingual/Developmental errors: those due to the language being learned (TL), independent of the native language. According to Richards (1970) they are items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner, in this case, tries to “derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language” (Richards, 1974, p. 6).

2.2.3. Significance of errors

Many scholars in the field of error analysis have stressed the significance of second language learners' errors. Corder, for instance, in his influential article (1967), remarks that they are significant in three different ways. First to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learnt or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Thirdly, they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. In other words,
it is a way the learner has for testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning (Corder, 1967).

Taking these notions in mind, this study attempted to identify the errors which students make in translating newspaper headlines in order to help teachers identify the problematic areas of headline language at different levels of instruction.

3. Method

In the following part, the information regarding the research method, materials and procedures is presented.

3.1. Participants

Fifty-eight male and female graduate students of English from the universities of Isfahan, Khorasgan and Najaf-Abad (16, 20 and 22 students respectively) took part in the present research. The reason for selecting M.A. students stemmed from the fact that at the time of conducting this research, i.e., the first semester of the (2003-2004) academic year, B.A. students who had passed the course "Reading Journalistic English", in which discourse features of different components of an English newspaper are taught were not available; therefore, with the presupposition that all M.A. students of English had had this course in their B.A. studies and had acquired general knowledge about media language, it was decided to use all of the available graduate students of English for this research.

In order to test the participants' understanding of headlines at the syntactic and lexical levels, they were given a test which included thirty Persian and thirty English headlines and were asked to translate them in one hour. They were not allowed to use any dictionaries because their vocabulary knowledge was one of the exam criteria. All the students' translations were analyzed in order to investigate possible cross linguistic problems in translating headlines.

3.2. Materials

Thirty English and thirty Persian headlines were chosen randomly from a one-week corpus (issued during a seven-day period from November 29 to December 05, 2003) of the headlines of the two languages. They were given to the participants to translate.

3.3. Procedures

For the analysis of the students' translations, three procedures were followed. For the analysis of the errors extracted from the translated Persian headlines, the linguistic taxonomy of errors provided by Keshavarz (1993) was taken into consideration and for the analysis of students' errors drawn from the translated English and Persian headlines, the lexical and syntactic features of headlines were applied.

3.3.1. Syntactico-morphological errors

Following Keshavarz’ (1993) model, this researcher used two major categories of errors for analyzing Persian headlines into English, namely, lexico-semantic and syntactico-morphological categories.
The analysis of errors in syntactico-morphological category was done according to the following subcategories (The examples are drawn from the participants’ translations. It should be noted that the majority of the sentences may include types of errors other than those in question.):

3.3.1.1. Errors in the use of prepositions
   3.3.1.1.1. Omission of preposition
      *Five children were killed ø fire.
      *Snowing ø northern Iran
   3.3.1.1.2. Redundant use of preposition
      *Wrights' plane reached to Mashhad.
      *Iran fears from expansion of drugs in Afghanistan.
   3.3.1.1.3. Wrong use of prepositions
      *Mr. Rafsanjani’s visit from Shahid Shahcheraghi dam
      *Iran worries of the extra production of drugs in Afghanistan.

3.3.1.2. Errors in the use of articles
   3.3.1.2.1. Redundant use of the definite article
      *The Rights brothers' plane arrived in Mashhad.
      *The women's social participations are great in Iran.

3.3.1.3. Errors due to lack of concord
   *Leader of revolution call people for vaccination.
   *Killing of Muslims do not have any justification in Samara.

3.3.1.4. Wrong use of the plural morpheme
   *7 millions farmers dead: Aids kills
   *34 Chineses were lost in Zagroub.

3.3.1.5. Wrong use of quantifiers and intensifiers
   *Women's participation in Iran is a lot.
   *China will be largest shipmakers' worldwide.

3.3.1.6. Wrong use of parts of speech
   *Electric train explodes in south Russia.
   *Iranian ambassador was appointed in Greek.

3.3.1.7. Use of typical Persian constructions in English
   *Announcing Iran's 2006's world cup football match ticket sell
   *Last previous head was killed.

3.3.2. Lexico-semantic errors

   The analysis of lexico-semantic errors was done according to Keshavarz’ model (1993) as follows:

   3.3.2.1. Cross-association: Cross-association refers to cases where there are two words in the target language for which there is only one word in the learner's mother tongue. As a result, the learner may use that single word in two senses in the target language. For example:

   *Value of Euro raised up again.
*The price of Euro grew again.

3.3.2.2. Language switch: Language switch refers to cases where the learner uses the native language term instead of the target language word. For example:

*The former chief of police was terrified
*Toofan crossed Boshsher province

3.3.3. Headlines' features analysis

The lexical and syntactic features of English headlines were taken into consideration for the analysis of both translated English and Persian headlines.

3.3.3.1. Translated English headlines

The analysis of the translated English headlines gave the following categories:

3.3.3.1.1. Wrong translation of the Vocabularies
Gov't Scraps Foreigner Registration Rule
Govet qanon sæbt xareji ra xædshehdar mikonæd.

3.3.3.1.2. Errors due to translations of the proper nouns
Howard Dean for President
Riyasæt howard be reis jomhor vagozar shod.

3.3.3.1.3. Wrong translations of the abbreviations and acronyms
U.N. Says Great Apes in Danger World Wide
Iyalæt motæhedeh amrica elam kærd gorilhayeh bozorg dær xætær jæhani hastænd.

3.3.3.1.4. Wrong translation of the whole sentence
Man Burns Life Savings, Fails Suicide Bid
Mærdi ke movæfæq be xodkoshi næshod pæsændazæsh ra sozand.

3.3.3.1.5. Errors due to the omission of pronouns
Elderly Man Kills ø Wife, ø Man and Himself
Piremærdi xodæsh væ zæn væ mærdi ra kosht.

3.3.3.1.6. Errors due to the omission of conjunctions
Report: Paltrow, Boy friend May Soon Marry
Gozaresh: dost pesær paltro be zodi ezdevaj xahæd kærd.

3.3.3.1.7. Using declarative sentences instead of interrogative ones
Is that Microsoft Calling?
Sherkæt Microsoft dær hal færaxani æst.

3.3.3.1.8. Using plural nouns instead of singular ones
Soldier's Parents See Son on TV with Bush
Valedeyn særbæha pesæraneshan ra dær televizion ba Bosh didænd.

3.3.3.1.9. Errors in the translation of tenses
Canada Finance Minister to Leave Cabinet
Væzir mali kanada kabileh ra tærk kærd.
3.3.3.2. Translated Persian headlines

Besides analyzing the lexical and grammatical errors of the translated Persian headlines, the participants' knowledge of the elliptical nature of headlines was examined in the following areas:

3.3.2.1. Omission of the articles
1. ø European Union threatened America.
2. ø big explosion in ø sought of Afghanistan

3.3.2.2. Omission of copula
1. India ø ready for cooperation with Iran.
2. Jerusalem ø not Israel’s capital.

3.3.2.3. Omission of noun possessive 's
1. Beitolmoghadas is not Israel ø capital.
2. Women ø participation is wonderful.

3.3.2.4. Use of tenses as used in English headlines
3.3.2.4.1. Use of present tense as past time
1. Ali Vahid Khorasani Dies.
2. European Union threatens U.S.

3.3.2.4.2. Use of past participle as passive voice
1. 7 millions farmers ø killed for HIV.
2. 34 Chinese tourists ø vanished in Zagroub.

4. Findings

The results of the translations analysis along with a report on their frequencies are introduced in the following sections.

4.1. The analysis of the translated Persian headlines

Two different procedures were used for the analysis of the translated Persian headlines. First, they were analyzed according to the rules of the English common core grammar and secondly according to the headlines language.

4.1.1. Syntactico-morphological errors

From the analysis of the translated Persian headlines, nine different categories of errors were identified whose results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Observed frequency of the errors extracted from the translated Persian headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>Syntactico-Morphological Errors</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Omission of preposition</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Redundant use of preposition</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.2. Lexico-semantic errors

The participants' translations were analyzed based on the errors of the lexico-semantic subcategories. What follows is the outcome of this analysis.

Table 2. Observed frequency of lexico-semantic errors from the translated Persian headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lexico Semantic Errors</th>
<th>Number of errors</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-association</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>89.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language switch</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants' knowledge of the elliptical nature of headlines was examined through the analysis of the translated Persian headlines. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3. Translated Persian headlines analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translated Persian headlines</th>
<th>Number of correct responses</th>
<th>Number of wrong responses</th>
<th>Frequency of correct responses</th>
<th>Frequency of wrong responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Omission of articles</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>30.13</td>
<td>69.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of copula</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>25.21</td>
<td>74.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omission of noun possessive 's</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>91.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of present tense as past time</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>14.11</td>
<td>85.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of past participle as passive voice</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>39.41</td>
<td>60.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3. The analysis of the translated English headlines

The participants' translations of the English headlines into Persian were examined linguistically and syntactically. Table 4 displays the results.
Table 4. Observed frequency of the errors from the translated English headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>The errors from the translated English headlines</th>
<th>Number of Errors</th>
<th>Number of correct answers</th>
<th>Frequency of wrong answers</th>
<th>Frequency of correct answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wrong translation of vocabularies</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>4074</td>
<td>15.37</td>
<td>84.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wrong translations of the acronyms and abbreviations</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wrong translation of the whole sentence</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>8.14</td>
<td>91.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Errors in the translation of tenses</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>52.34</td>
<td>47.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Errors due to translations of the proper nouns</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>20.69</td>
<td>79.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Errors due to the omission of conjunctions</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>13.19</td>
<td>86.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Errors due to the omission of pronouns</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>45.18</td>
<td>54.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Using declarative sentences instead of interrogative ones</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41.38</td>
<td>58.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Using plural nouns instead of singular ones</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>20.68</td>
<td>79.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1361</td>
<td>7295</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Conclusion and discussion

The analysis of the participants' translations of headlines gave the following conclusions:

1. The results of the research indicate that the graduate students had grammatical and lexical errors in their translations from Persian into English. Their errors which led to misinterpretation of ideas conveyed in headlines divided into two parts, namely global (those which inhibit understanding) and local (those which do not interfere with communication) errors. The participants' global errors resulted from inadequate lexical knowledge, and use of typical Persian constructions. Most local errors, on the other hand, were caused by misuse and omission of prepositions, articles, auxiliaries, lack of subject-verb agreement, and faulty lexical choice. As a whole, the finding from the participants' translations analysis is in line with the idea that native language interference is surely the most immediately noticeable source of error (Brown, 1994) from the translation of native language to the target one.

2. The second analysis of the translated Persian headlines shows that the participants had inadequate knowledge of the English headlines rules. They translated the Persian headlines into simple sentences by using the articles, copula and noun possessive's, instead of omitting them. The analysis also reveals that the use of the tense forms in the translated Persian headlines was not in accordance to the English headline tense rules.
3. The research results show that the participants' chief difficulties in translating English headlines into Persian sentences were grammatical followed by discoursal and lexical types. Their grammatical errors resulted from the translation of tense forms and use of declarative sentences instead of interrogative ones. From the discoursal point of view, the participants had difficulties in interpreting headlines with the omitted conjunctions and pronouns. The participants' lexical errors resulted from the wrong translation of vocabularies, proper nouns, acronyms and abbreviations. The findings are in line with Newmark's (1988) study in that learners have difficulties in handling words or word associations either because they do not comprehend them or because they do not find proper equivalents, which makes translation a difficult task.

5.1. Pedagogical implications of errors

Students' errors of headlines have significance to teachers and syllabus designers as follows.

5.1.1. Implications for EFL teachers

The study of the participants' errors helps teachers identify the problematic areas of headline language at different levels of instruction. They will be able to infer the nature of the learner's knowledge of the headlines at a given stage in his learning career and discover what he still has to learn. In Fallahi's (1991) terms, “error analysis (EA) is a clue for the teacher to pinpoint the learning problems which can hardly be predicted by CA” (p. 25).

A course based on the frequency of errors will enable the teacher to teach the point of error and to emphasize more those areas where the error frequency is higher.

Furthermore, errors provide feedback; they tell the teacher something about the effectiveness of his teaching materials and his teaching techniques and show him what parts of the syllabus he has been following have been inadequately learned or taught and need further attention.

5.1.2. Implications for syllabus designers

Errors are significant to syllabus designers to see what items are important to be included in the syllabus and what items are redundant and should be excluded. The analysis of the participants' errors can help identify learners' linguistic difficulties and need at a particular stage of language learning.

References


**Appendix I: Translation test**

*In the name of God*

Translation test

Time: 1 hour

**A. Please translate the following English headlines into Persian.**
1. U.S., China Gap Could Delay N. Korea Talks

2. 116 Die As Jet Crashes After Take-off

3. Next Flu Pandemic Could Wreak Global Havoc, Scientists Warn

4. Fire Destroys Home; 3 Die In Flames

5. Actress Geena Davis Expecting Twins

6. Palestinian Baby Born In Bethlehem Draws Crowds

7. Elderly Man Kills Wife, Man and Himself

8. Santa Monica Mountains' Last Male Lion Hunted

9. U.N. Says Great Apes In Danger Worldwide

10. Report: Pakistan To Allow Indian Flights

11. Fred Durst Says Seven Stitches Were No Big Deal

12. Canada Finance Minister To Leave Cabinet

13. 8 Killed In Suicide Bombing On A Bus In Israel

14. Mexican Idol Faces The Music

15. More Info On Adrenalin Injections Needed: Study

16. Gov't Scraps Foreigner Registration Rule

17. 2002: A year of Terror- More To Come

18. Report: Paltrow, Boy friend May Soon Marry

19. Howard Dean For President

20. Tattoo Removal More Common, Doctors Say

21. Soldier's Parents See Son On TV With Bush

22. Englishman Discovers He's A Canadian Native Chief

23. Is That Microsoft Calling?

24. Man Burns Life Savings, Fails Suicide Bid

25. Employees Not Scared Of Quitting
26. It's A Dog's Life For Animals In Southern China

27. Baghdad Bomb Attack Kills U.S. Soldier, 4 Iraqis

28. Charity Theft Suspect Hit By Car In Ariz.

29. UK Manufacturing Strongest In Four Years

30. Tiger Woods Engaged To Swedish Girlfriend

B. Translate the following Persian headlines into English.

1. حد اقل 18 زخمی در انفجار یک درقه‌دهار

2. رئیس پلیس سابق بغداد ترور شد

3. سفیر جدید ایران در یونان، منصوب شد

4. آمادگی هند برای همسایگی با ایران

5. اعلام قیمت بلوط جام جهانی فوتبال 2006

6. انفجار شدید در جنوب افغانستان

7. یورو باز هم بالا رفت
(8) ایران نگران افزایش مواد حادثه‌برای افغانستان

(9) هواپیما برادران را در دادگاه به محاکمه رساند

(10) توفان استان بوشهر را در نوردید

(11) گفتگوی تلفنی روسای جمهور ایران و روسیه

(12) سوریه، دارایی‌های عراق پایانی گرفته است

(13) اکادمی اروپا، آمریکا را به تهدید گردید

(14) علی وحید خراسانی در گزارش

(15) چین پژوهش‌کرده، کشور ساز دنیا می‌شود

(16) حضور زنان در ایران زیاد است

(17) انفجار قطار برقی در جنوب روسیه
(18) بازدید رفسنجانی از سد شهید شاهجراغی

(19) صادرات انار از ایران به کشورهای خارجی

(20) 34 گردشگر چینی در زاکرب نایید شنداد

(21) دعوت رهبر انقلاب از مردم پراي واکسناسیون

(22) بارش برف در شمال ایران

(23) سازمان بهداشت جهانی ایران را ستود

(24) مازندران رتبه اول سرطان معدة در کشور

(25) بیتالمقدس پایتخت اسراییل نیست

(26) کشتی شدن 5 کودک در آتش سوزی

(27) کشتار مسلمانان در سامرا توجیهی ندارد
Good luck.
Designing Consciousness-Raising Tasks for an Economics English Course
Renata Suzuki
Department of Economics,
Sophia University, Japan

Bioprofile: Renata Suzuki currently works at Sophia University teaching Economics English. She has extensive experience working with all levels and ages during her twenty-one years in Japan as an EFL teacher/lecturer. She has designed courses combining environmental awareness with English education, and published a free book of ecosongs for kids available at http://www.onegreenleaf.net. She is interested in peace education, learner autonomy, environmental EFL curriculum design, and internet tools in the classroom (CALL), including particularly blogs for classroom observation and professional development. Visit and comment at her blog http://grankageva.blogspot.com/. She can be contacted at renate@zaa.att.ne.jp

Abstract
A confusing trend in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) is the importing and applying of fashionable scientific jargon, which, in the course of being cited, seems to lose any definite meaning it may once have had. Rutherford (1987) mentions one such term, “consciousness-raising” (C-R): “The history of consciousness-raising in language pedagogy is…as long as the history of the field itself. Moreover, … C-R does not necessarily mean the same thing for different researchers and practitioners.” (p.100)

This paper retraces the steps of this teacher researcher applying C-R theory to teaching English to Economics Majors in Japan. It sketches the literature for links between theoretical C-R and teacher beliefs on four fundamentals in learning: ownership, responsibility, autonomy and empowerment. Having established a conceptual framework of C-R, a case study is presented of two C-R activities designed to: a) motivate fluent English learners to approach an Economics field in the language by sensitizing them to collocation, and b) help students voice an opinion on Economics topics in a business-like discussion by sensitizing them to modal patterns of agreement. Finally, analyzing student feedback, the four-point fundamental framework (ownership, responsibility, autonomy, and empowerment) serves to evaluate how far C-R activities were profitable to students in meeting learning goals.

Issue
As a British teacher in Japan who has recently begun postgraduate professional development in TEFL/TESL, researching into my university level English for Economics course is an endeavor to relate directly to student needs and challenges they face. Shulman (2002) in a recent interview has referred to this issue: “What is it about what I'm teaching now that will be of value, of use, a source of understanding, or of pleasure to my students at some point in
the future, when they're in a situation that is not identical to the one they're in now?”. My query was to explore how consciousness-raising (C-R) could be applied to scaffold learning in my Japanese class, with two diverse student profiles: Group A are relatively fluent in colloquial English owing to their previous study abroad, and group B are interested in Economics rather than language learning. First, I consulted the literature to investigate if C-R offers students the four fundamentals in the learning process: ownership, responsibility, autonomy and empowerment. What then, were the distinctive features of C-R, and what can it offer the learner?

Relevant Literature

Like Rutherford (1987), Sharwood Smith (1981) explicitly uses the word C-R for grammar teaching: He defines C-R as “the conveying of a rule….to draw the learner’s attention to structural regularities….revealing some pattern or system in the target language….the learner is being made conscious of some aspect of the language itself, but the manner varies.” (p.160-162). His definition suggests that by providing form-focused activities, teachers guide learners in creating personal knowledge of patterns and rules in language. C-R is learner exploration of grammar as a tool in the service of meaning.

Sharwood Smith’s (1981) definition of grammar teaching places learners very firmly at the centre of the grammar learning process. What does such a shift in grammar teaching effectively mean for the learner? In order to be of potential value for my students, C-R should offer the learner ownership of the language, responsibility for the learning process, autonomy of learning, and empowerment. These four criteria constitute a framework to judge the applicability of C-R to the teaching context in Japan.

Does C-R promote ownership of language? Willis and Willis (1996) explain that under grammar-translation there was “generally a very restricted range of C-R techniques” (p.63). Using a broader range of deductive, inductive, communicative, task-based and data-driven learning (DDL) techniques, grammar becomes accessible to a wider spectrum of learner intelligences and learning styles.

Learners do not produce language immediately, but make connections, notice, hypothesize and digest. Ellis (1994) writes: “...in consciousness-raising activities the learners are not expected to produce the target sentence...” (p.643). Giving time validates interlanguage development as a personal process. Indeed, Johns (1994) suggests that a DDL approach “give(s) direct access to the data so that the learner can take part in building up his or her own profiles of meaning and uses” (p.297).

Rutherford (1987) expands the concept of grammar as the “on-line processing component of discourse” (p.104) and insists on grammar as a process in the service of coherent textual meaning: “It is C-R in the service of a concept of language in which the notion of relationship is held to be paramount” (p.100). In doing so, Rutherford places grammar back in the cognitive domain of adult learners, who seek effective communication and who, according to Skehan (1998), prioritize meaning. Studying grammar and making sense of language, the learner attains meaning.
Does C-R promote learner responsibility for the learning process? If grammar is a tool in service of contextualized meanings, learners can no longer rely on teacher or grammar book as a final authority. The responsibility to discover, hypothesize and extrapolate meanings from authentic contexts rests with the learner. In other words the teacher must design C-R activities which build experiences to facilitate this realization. According to Rutherford (1987), the teacher is merely a guide, C-R a tool to facilitate “nothing less than the illumination of the learner’s path from the known to the unknown” (p.21).

Secondly, Skehan (1998) suggests that being explicitly conscious of focusing on grammar, “awareness of the learning itself, and of what is to be learned” (p.56), may be beneficial for learning. This being C-R, or a direct effect of C-R on a macro-level, such a meta-cognitive, conscious awareness of striving to focus on language form may create a sense of learner responsibility and involvement in learning. Moreover, this increased sense of responsibility means the learner is aware of effort and progress, which can have a powerful motivating influence.

Does C-R promote learner autonomy? The learner’s native language offers a foundation from which to engage in learning a new language. Ellis (1994) mentions that “(e)vidence for transfer in all aspects of language - phonology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics - is now abundant” (p.29). In other words, students bring to the learning situation all the strengths of their first language. Sharwood Smith and Rutherford (1985) argue that what they call “differential” C-R may be effectively applied as students compare differences in languages (p.279). That is, C-R techniques build on prior strengths relating to learner knowledge of their first language and how it functions, and use these as a springboard for autonomous learning.

Some grammar rules are so specialized they may not facilitate student comprehension but add another learning hurdle, or have only limited application. In discussing how students defer in judging correct usage to teachers, and teachers to grammarians, Odlin (1994) notes, “…there are limitations on the ability of teachers and linguists to provide reliable judgments” (p.271). Thus, C-R shifts power structures in the classroom away from teacher or grammar-book. With data-driven authentic C-R tasks, students can apply their own labels/terms to explain rules/phenomena. Johns (1991) suggests a discovery sequence of C-R, “Identify-Classify-Generalize” (p.4) so that students, using analytic and comparative skills, can become “researchers” creating language rules autonomously. Ellis (2002) points out that discovery C-R “can lead to powerful insights about the grammar of a language that cannot be found in any published descriptions” (p.165). By offering students C-R tasks which support observation, querying and hypothesizing, students gain an autonomous voice in creating the language of grammar.

Does C-R empower the learner? While some learners have natural aptitudes for language learning, Skehan (1998) argues that supporting the analytic pattern finding process - in other words, C-R - may actually reduce the importance of such aptitude-related learning strengths and offer equal opportunities to all learners. “In fact, classroom learning, because it helps make structure salient and organize memory, auditory input actually means a natural aptitude to perceive patterns becomes less important in the classroom” (p.206) (my italics).
Both Hawkins (1999) and Willis and Willis (1996) acknowledge the “generalizable” nature of language learning. Hawkins (1999) writes that the reason for learning a foreign language at school is “a language apprenticeship on which later study of a different foreign language can build” (p.138). Willis and Willis (1996) refer to “learning habits which will pay valuable dividends whenever and wherever the learner encounters language” (p.64). C-R activities train skills of pattern analysis and hypothesis formation conducive to learning any language which a learner in our multicultural global society may choose to learn.

In summary, C-R activities can be designed as the exploration of grammar as a tool in the service of meaning while facilitating cognitive processes in learning. C-R is a continuum ranging from explicit teaching to discovery learning which places the learner at the centre of the language-learning process. C-R offers the learner ownership, responsibility, autonomy and empowerment in creating personal knowledge of patterns and rules in the language, guided by the teacher.

How could C-R theory be sensibly integrated to meet learner needs in this researcher’s teaching situation? Who were the learners? How could C-R be designed according to the learning framework to provide Japanese Economics Majors a sense of ownership, responsibility, autonomy and empowerment? Two original C-R sequences focusing on two areas of the conceptual framework, responsibility and empowerment, will be described as follows.

**Procedures**

This case study describes a procedure implemented in two sequences carried out in two Economics English courses offered to Economics Majors at a private four-year university in Japan. In order to design a C-R procedure by which students can be sensitized to and discover meanings, I focused on two particular aspects of the learning framework: responsibility and empowerment. In the first sequence, to support students in taking responsibility for their own learning, a three-step activity was implemented: 1) activating prior knowledge of collocation; 2) grammatical contextualizing of lexis with authentic examples; and 3) discussing hypotheses with peers. In the second sequence, which emphasized empowering students to gain a voice, a modal ranking C-R activity used authentic text to sensitize students to expressing levels of agreement and disagreement politely in Economics-related discussions.

Most Japanese university students have studied English for six years upon entering university. They have knowledge of two languages, a mother tongue and English. This means they possess great resources on which to draw for autonomous hypothesizing about language.

Japanese students are used to teacher-fronted, deductive, rule-driven grammar-translation instruction methods. However Willis and Willis (1996) suggest a wider range of C-R activities such as identifying patterns, semantic or structural classifying, hypothesis building, cross-language exploration, reconstruction, recall and reference (p. 69). Implementing more varied techniques offers students ownership: a new learning experience, helping them to reorganize data and making previously experienced grammar salient or noticeable.
Would more varied C-R be as effective as traditional Japanese grammar teaching methods? Fotos (1993) has suggested C-R cloze exercises and dictation tasks for Japanese university students to highlight target structures of indirect object, adverb and relative clause placement. Her research using grammatical noticing frequency counts indicates that for Japanese students C-R techniques were as effective as traditional formal instruction in promotion of subsequent noticing of structures.

Some of the Economics Majors students considered here are relatively fluent in colloquial English towing to their previous study abroad. They no longer feel the need to be in an English classroom, lacking awareness of the need to study Economics-related terminology and concepts as a discipline. The first C-R sequence of searching for and identifying patterns of collocation aimed to help students notice differences in vocabulary and register compared with everyday spoken language, providing incentive for them to refine their already good command of English. C-R can thus enhance students’ responsibility for their own learning.

A second type of high-intermediate learner is not interested in the English language per se. They wish to focus on the field of Economics, discussing and applying concepts. In class, Economics Majors discuss Economics-related issues and articles in groups. Often when their opinion is the same as that of another peer, Japanese students feel they have nothing new to say and can therefore not contribute. An empowering C-R sequence raises awareness of how to manipulate modals and phrases, agreeing and disagreeing in response to a prior opinion. This second C-R sequence, ranking modals, has an empowering, career-related purpose beyond the immediate acquisition of English grammar, leading to enhanced discussion and negotiating skills.

These two learner parameters guided choice of C-R sequences, which focused on: a) noticing how to differentiate between colloquial use of words and Economics-related use of those same words, and b) exploring how use of modals creates a polite (and therefore socially more acceptable) way of agreeing/disagreeing when discussing Economic ideas.

Authentic texts taken from “The Economist” magazine and “The Economist” sub-corpora of the Bank of English were collated in two teacher-prepared worksheets. Also student cell-phones and electronic dictionaries were used to implement two C-R sequences. A follow-up questionnaire is attached in Appendix A.

I developed the first C-R sequence (accessing prior knowledge of collocation, grammatical contextualizing of lexis and hypothesis exchange) to encourage learner responsibility for hypothesizing and pattern analysis, and sensitizing students to how collocation and differing grammatical use color lexical meaning.

Originally I had approached noticing differences in meaning and use of the same lexical item by asking one student to look up the meaning of the word “bond” and tell the class what its meanings are. In Japanese this word is frequently used to mean “glue”, the first meaning, along with “tie”, which appears in student electronic dictionaries. This student was then asked to scroll down the screen and report the Economics-linked meaning, for instance in the Kenkyusha’s English-Japanese Dictionary for the General Reader, the meaning listed under “3b” - in other words not immediately available on the initial screen. Realizing they have to scroll for different meanings sensitized
students to checking for specific Economics-related meanings of vocabulary. However, this only offered students passive awareness in differentiating usage, judging from general situation (the Economics classroom) or text genre (an Economics textbook). The first C-R sequence was therefore designed to emphasize student responsibility for the learning process.

The first step of the C-R sequence accesses learners’ prior knowledge of collocations (Table 1). Most young Japanese people use cell-phones for text-messaging. Japanese cell-phones employ collocation and frequency principles to suggest a selection of possible Japanese characters (meanings of words) and subsequent phrases to the user. Responding to first input, the cell-phone offers ten to twenty of the most frequent possible characters, but once an initial choice is then made, it is possible for the phone to suggest a complete message. Consequently, instead of pushing buttons twenty odd times, you push twice or three times to complete. This speeds up an otherwise laborious input process, since there is no keyboard. In other words, students benefit from using collocations daily without noticing.

Table 1: Accessing Prior Knowledge of Collocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type a short Japanese text message on your cell phone to a friend.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Choose one input item: List the possible Japanese character and phrasal choices the phone offers you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many times altogether did you choose to complete your message?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does your cell phone know what you intend to write?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Grammatical Contextualizing of the Lexis

Below are some examples of the word “trough” taken from “The Economist”.

1. Find “trough” and highlight it. What does it mean in Japanese?
2. Please classify: Is it a noun/ adjective/ verb/ adverb? How can you tell? Does this help you understand the meaning? (Hint: Look at the endings, -s, -ed, -ing, -ly, or determiners: “a”, “the”. Is “trough” at the beginning, middle or end of the sentence?)
3. Circle or highlight other words always close to/ before/ after “trough” in the sentence. Do these words help you understand the meaning?

Next, the teacher assigned equal numbers of participants into groups A and B. These small groups applied the activated knowledge, highlighting, classifying and examining two different sets of authentic sentences chosen from the Bank of English “The Economist” sub-corpora (Table 2). Group A researched colloquial or core meanings of “trough”, and Group B the technical, or Economics-related meaning. (Table 3). The selection of authentic items (Table 3) was based on Bank of English t-score and MI scores. MI scores provide information on ‘fixed’ co-occurrences of lexical behavior and t-
scores confirm the reliability of the collocation. According to Hunston (2002), MI scores of 3 or higher and t-scores of 2 or higher can be taken to be significant (p.71). Potter (1999) maintains “There is no absolute guide to how high a collocational score needs to be in order to be considered significant…” (p.38). Even though some were below t-scores of 2, they were the highest t-scores for collocations of “trough” in “The Economist” sub-corpora and were therefore chosen as frequent collocations in Economic contexts.

Finally, learners were responsible for exchanging ideas and hypotheses (see Table 4) with groups who had researched different data. Willis and Willis (1996) propose that after a series of C-R activities, learners should make a “personal record of points they have covered” (p.76). This is successfully integrated with the sharing pair-work information-gap suggested in Table 4, and may be helpful for auditory and kinesthetic learners.

**Table 3: Sample Sentences of Authentic Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Colloquial Usage of Trough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the end of the decade, more than 1,200 had their snouts in the trough. Britain is not keen to lose its rebate, or even to allow other snouts into its trough. Eurobuzz: Snouts to the trough/ Who will be in the new European Commission? A feeding trough for big government, cried the conservatives. …they became a feeding trough for companies and lobby groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Technical/Economic Usage of Trough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The peak-to-trough decline in the Tokyo stock-market last year was 48%. The total peak-to-trough fall in GNP in America may be as little as 1.2%. Japan’s industrial production plunged 13.5% from peak to trough. Economists reckon that America’s recession has now reached its trough. GDP actually reached its trough in the second quarter of 1992</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Hypothesis Exchange**

| Group A | Circle any of the following words you think may be found with “trough”. Can you suggest more yourself? Pigs / cattle/ animal/ feet/ noses/ slurping Explain your findings to a B group member and take notes on their results. |

| Group B | Circle any of the following words you think may be found with “trough”. Can you suggest more yourself? Approaching/ entered/ falls/ deep/ predict/ 1990 Explain your findings to an A group member and take notes on their work. |

In summary, presented C-R activities were specifically designed to raise learner awareness of differences between colloquial and Economics English and particularly to motivate fluent English learners to approach a specialized field in the language. The task sequence features concordance lines from “The Economist” sub-corpora of the Bank of English. Students take
responsibility for discovering grammatical patterns and features of lexis in authentic data. They can extrapolate this technique as they realize how grammatical situation and cohesive context influence meanings.

The second C-R sequence in the procedure of sensitizing students to meanings within an empowering framework explores manipulating modals and phrases to indicate polite agreement/disagreement. The aim of this C-R activity is to empower students to voice an opinion on Economic topics in a discussion and to offer career-oriented students facility in discussing their field in a business-like manner.

In both Economics courses, ten teacher-designated groups of three or four were given a Modal Ranking task-sheet (Table 5) to explore discourse patterns and become sensitized to use of modals in agreeing. All examples were lifted by the teacher from authentic phrasing in *The final piece* (in “The Economist”, April 24th 2004), part of the homework reading material for that day. Economics students are both familiar with the state of Japan’s economy and interested in the information because it relates to their lives and future career prospects. A three-step pattern can be observed in the modal ranking task-sheet (Table 5). Students are sensitized to indicating their degree of agreement in beginning phrases, second, reconfirming what they agree or disagree with by paraphrasing and repeating including modals, and finally adding further supporting comments or information.

**Table 5: Modal Ranking Task-sheet**

1. When people agree, they may repeat the same thing in different words and possibly add. Find and highlight the five ways they repeat below:

*Japan's economy is looking up: According to the Economist, household spending in Japan is up by 5.2%, year on year, in February this year.*

A) That’s a good point. I agree things are looking up. The Bank of Japan’s governor declared spending was ‘edging higher’.
B) I suppose so. The economy may be improving. More people seem eager to travel abroad for Golden Week.
C) Exactly. Japan’s economy is on the move. Ito Yokado is boasting bumper profits.
D) Absolutely. Things are definitely looking up. Japan’s big manufacturers have boosted profits by combining deep cost cuts with rapidly growing exports to China.
E) You may be right, there, the economy does look more positive. According to the most recent Tankan survey, small and mid-sized firms were feeling cheerier.

2. Which agree strongly, which agree mildly? Please rank from 1-5. What is the difference in the words and verbs used? Please fill in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>A-E</th>
<th>Beginning phrase</th>
<th>Following sentences: Key verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Strongest agreement=1, Mild agreement=5**
3. Do you agree? Is the economy looking up? Can your group add another agreeing/disagreeing statement?

Results

First, I address noticing meaning-related collocation and grammatical differences in use of the same lexical item. Initially students were surprised to type text messages in class. They also found the English task sheet (Tables 1-4) confusing. However, with mother-tongue scaffolding and individual group coaching both classes were able to finish the task sequence. Including a whole class pooling of results, this C-R sequence took approximately forty minutes: longer than expected. About twenty students per section (21 students and 22 students respectively) handed in post-task questionnaires (Appendix A). Three students were interested “To use cell phone to teach something”. (Note: student quotes are given in italics with original spelling and punctuation). Four mentioned making principle collocation links between Japanese and English, “Both English and Japanese are same”. Twenty-three percent replied they had learned “Trough has two meanings”. Fourteen of the forty-three respondents (33%) cited learning an understanding of collocation principles. Written comments such as; “Same word has completery deferent meaning depends on the words come up with”, suggest the C-R aim, sensitizing how to differentiate between colloquial and Economics related use of same items, was successful. Six students per section (28%) noted they learned how to study vocabulary effectively. These results indicate that the activity meets C-R framework criterion of promoting learner responsibility for the learning process as was intended.

Next, let us consider C-R focusing on modals as polite agreement/disagreement. During the Modal Ranking activity (Table 5), 100% of groups ranked sentences correctly and found beginning phrases. However, many learners were not sure what a verb was, even after checking the Japanese meaning. They did not become aware of the change of modals or list significant information in the third column. The groups’ agreeing statements (Item 3, Table 5) used adverbials, not modals, suggesting that more time is necessary for them to be noticed, digested and processed.

In a teacher-fronted whole group follow-up to this C-R, I explicitly highlighted at the blackboard changes in the use of “is” to “seems” and “may be” as agreement weakens. This was an effective way of promoting ownership of the material for a wider range of learning styles. Two weeks later, students followed up the C-R by preparing agreeing or disagreeing statements on eight theories of the business cycle, using the tripartite pattern:
1) beginning phrase, 2) repeating with modality and 3) adding supporting information. Students worked in round-robin groups, one reading a theory statement and three others responding in turns. During this follow-up task students were empowered to speak, realizing that similar opinions are acceptable in group discussion.

**Reflection**

Having considered C-R theory in light of a framework of teacher beliefs in the nature of learning, and specifically designed two original C-R activities to meet criteria of responsibility and empowerment, the effectiveness of the procedure must be reviewed. Did Japanese Economics Majors appreciate group work C-R as a new way of learning? Although results showed students were sensitized to meaning-related lexico-grammatical context and discourse patterns, how could C-R sequences be improved? Were students given enough support in new techniques of exploring collocations in corpora examples?

The young adults in this course welcomed the chance to explore grammar in a novel way. In a final course questionnaire 74% of students answered whether assignments supported their learning and they learned to work more independently, “Absolutely” or “Well”, compared to 21% who responded, “Fairly” and only 2%, “Not at all”. Responding to “I consider what I learned valuable for my future”, 28% ticked “Absolutely”, 51% checked “Well”. Only 2% checked “Not at all”. One student writes, “I got many information in this course that no professor told us in their classes.” Another commented, “I learned how to make decision or think of things.”

At times, teacher-led C-R may be preferable, particularly when class time is limited. Moreover, some students prefer it: 33% polled on group-work after C-R activities (Appendix A) expressed dislike, citing reasons such as “I had better do the both myself, I think”, and “otagai kichinto rikai shitenai to muzukashii” [It is difficult if both parties do not understand clearly]. However, 7% thought either group or teacher-led work was good, and 56% clearly answered “yes” to liking group-work. Particular group-work advantages mentioned were “Because I learned new dimensions of one thing in many ways” and “Because we can teach each other”, suggesting that students both gain ownership via a wider spectrum of processing, and appreciate the autonomy and responsibility afforded by group-work C-R activities.

In order to ameliorate the second C-R sequence (Table 5), explore modal differentiation, and develop autonomy and responsibility aspects of the C-R heuristic, a listening task activating prior knowledge, building confidence and processing elements of language in advance could be supplemented. Students simply mark if dialogue partners agree or disagree, listening to patterns such as “Me, too.”, “I don’t”, and more complex versions. Building on prior schemata supports student autonomy in the C-R process. Furthermore, responsibility for discovery and processing might be scaffolded by C-R pair-work discussing teacher-crafted minimal pairs (Table 6). Equally, repeated exposure to short C-R differentiating exercises may be successful in encouraging learner autonomy during the hypothesizing process. Table 7 is an example small group activity discussing choice of appropriate verbs for different meanings.
Table 6: Differentiating Minimal Pairs

Look at the example below. Which way of disagreeing is more polite during group discussion? Why? What is different about verbs in B and B*?

A: Japan’s economy is looking up: According to ‘The Economist’, household spending is up by 5.2%, year on year, in February this year.
B: You have a point. The economy may be looking up, but the jobless rate is still rising.
B*: You’re wrong! The economy is really bad, and the jobless rate is rising.

Table 7: Verb Selection

Choose the appropriate verbs in the following dialogue. How does the meaning change?

A: “Oil prices won’t go higher than fifty dollars a barrel.”
B: “I suppose so. You are/may be right. The price of oil has/may have/seems to have reached its peak. But the terrorist premium is/may be/might still be an important factor.”

In short, features such as the teacher-made listening activities, ranking tasks, minimal pairs and modal discrimination exercises suggested above further encourage ownership, responsibility and autonomous student-led discovery, and are worth utilizing with Economics students in the new academic year.

Nevertheless, the C-R framework of ownership, responsibility, autonomy, and empowerment expects much of the learner. Were my students given enough support in working with the new techniques? Ellis (2003) reports learners may not be used to problem-solving, analytical skills and linguistic comparisons, and may feel overwhelmed (p. 166). With regard to corpus data, for instance, the added requirement of extrapolating meanings from snippets may overload the attention capacities of students and detract from their ability to focus attention on form. Stevens (1991), however, who has successfully worked with corpus data for university students, argues that the skill of extrapolating “holistically” from fragmentary evidence should be promoted.

In the light of these arguments, C-R tasks presented here were designed to contain a limited number of corpus examples, to gradually initiate students into autonomous pattern-finding techniques. Sentence versions of original corpus examples or teacher-crafted examples based on authentic data were chosen to provide coherent context in a familiar sentence format. Nevertheless, the activity caused some confusion in students and took forty minutes, double the expected time.

Skehan (1998) states: “At the input stage, noticing cedes priority to strategic processing” (p.62). In other words, according to Skehan, task demands on processing resources have strong implications for C-R: “The assumption is that more demanding tasks consume more attentional resources simply for task transaction, with the result that less attention is available for focus on form. As a result, the scope for “residual benefit” from the task is
reduced (p.97). Put simply, as learners become accustomed to discovering patterns in the language and group-work, C-R becomes more effective.

It follows that repeating further collocation C-R activities in the same information-gap pattern as an extended problem-solving cycle throughout the course may be worthwhile. A majority (77%) of follow-up questionnaire responses (see Appendix A) indicated positive interest in further activities. These may require less time, and the number of examples can gradually be expanded. Appendix B suggests how C-R activities may also be used in a testing situation later in the term.

Nevertheless, the amount of teacher time required to find authentic articles and make C-R materials is a problem, even though the burden of producing material is spread out over a course. While lexis from the financial field, “hedge”, “stake”, “bond”, “drop”, “return”, “trust” and “spread”, all lend themselves to this type of interactive C-R activity, there was insufficient teacher time available to make follow-up worksheets in one academic year.

Conclusions

To sum up, this article offered a case study of two C-R sequences designed to encourage student responsibility and empower the learner by expanding learning options according to a heuristic framework of ownership, responsibility, autonomy and empowerment in the Japanese University English for Economics context. Naturally, a traditional analytic method is still effective in teaching functions and lexis in this case. As can be noted, students are used to it, and it may be less time-consuming. Nevertheless, this paper has argued that C-R techniques may be equally effective as traditional formal instruction (Fotos, 1993) and widen the spectrum of available teaching techniques (Willis and Willis, 1996). Particularly in the modern business world which these Economics students are aiming for, interpersonal skills, such as an ability to work in teams, negotiate with, respect and learn from peers, are vital. Interpersonal skills are rarely polished in a traditional lecture environment. Moreover, in most executive and further education courses advertised in ‘The Economist’, for example, building on personal experience and developing critical analytical skills together with enhancing personal flexibility are also stressed. It follows that the challenges offered by a task-based discussion C-R approach may be more conducive to building not only linguistic fluency, but also the leadership parameters of a skilled individual required in today’s challenging world. In other words, since the C-R sequence scaffold students’ learning processes, accesses prior knowledge, builds student confidence, offers hands on experience with authentic texts, and provides students with interactive modes of learning, it specifically meets Japanese university-level ESP learner needs. Moreover, it is thus transferable to other fields not only in terms of content, but also method. It can be argued that C-R is valuable for teachers and a pleasure for students when approached in this way.

Ellis (2003:167) notes that C-R activities must always remain a “supplement” to communication activities. However, this teacher/researcher gained a deeper understanding of C-R as a grammar-exploration framework in which learners own the process, are responsible for own learning, have autonomy of discovery and are empowered by acquired knowledge. In
conclusion, C-R is no mere “supplement” to communication activities, but an integral part of a holistic learning experience.

Acknowledgement:
The author would like to acknowledge the editorial assistance of Dr. Karen Garcia, Massachusetts, USA.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: C-R activity “trough” and “trough”

1: What did you learn?

2: What did you find interesting?

3: Would you like to do it again?

4: Did you like the A/B Group-work? Why?

5. Do you know the meaning of “verb”, “noun” etc?

Appendix B

Review Test Day 10:

Appendix B provides a two-item sample of an eight-item C-R gap-fill concordance test reinforcing vocabulary which students had studied for meaning and manipulated in group discussion over three previous classes. The twenty-minute test was open book. Examples were taken from the Bank of English “Economist” subcorpora. To counter the domino effect, a large group of possible answers was provided. Results of research by Stevens (1991) comparing traditional and concordance gap-fill show that concordance gap-fill can be more easily solved. Stevens writes, “If the purpose of the exercise is to reinforce vocabulary, as opposed to testing, and if the proclivity of the teacher is to engender a sense of confidence and well-being in the students with regard to the language under study, then concordance-based exercises are a viable alternative to gap-filler ones.” (p.55)

Students expressed the need for more time to take the test, but enjoyed the novel way of testing. The average grades were at 53.3% and
62.8% respectively, suggesting the need for further practice. In a test follow-up activity, students therefore highlighted relevant key patterns under teacher explicit guidance as answers were discussed.

Choose one word/phrase which will fit all three examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>duration of the loan</th>
<th>estimated cost</th>
<th>criteria</th>
<th>political stability</th>
<th>guarantees</th>
<th>viability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>return on investment</td>
<td>exchange rate</td>
<td>partners</td>
<td>subsidies</td>
<td>negotiations</td>
<td>project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) ___________________________________________________________________

- Although the project’s economic _____ was rated as marginal, it was on the basis of this rushed appraisal that a formal offer was made.
- The CAA regulates the safety of airlines, the financial _____ of charter tour operators, which airlines can fly which routes and how much they can charge.
- With more than four out of five low-rent tenants receiving housing benefits, the _____ of the new housing companies will depend on the continuance of fast-rising state subsidies.

2) ___________________________________________________________________

- Pepsi reckons each bottling plant in China should produce a _____ of about 20% a year.
- Ernst and Young crunched the numbers on the same hypothetical oil-field in America, Russia and Kazakhstan. It yielded an annual post-tax _____ of 25% in America, 32% in Kazakhstan, but only 10% in Russia.
- The main criterion is the expected _____: the target is five percentage points over the host country’s inflation rate.
Innovating the *Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course with Discourse Analysis*

Theron Muller

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**Abstract**

This paper concerns itself with adaptation of the *Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course* for use in a communicative classroom by applying principles of written discourse analysis to the contents of the text in order to create communicative materials.

**Key words**

TOEIC preparation course, curriculum innovation, adapting textbooks

**Introduction**

In this paper I will consider an innovation of the *Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course* (Lougheed 1996a) using discourse analysis (DA). When I began teaching using the text at a private language school in July of 2003, I immediately encountered problems, evidenced through student feedback that described the book as “difficult” and “boring”. Having already purchased the text and studied with it for several months with another teacher, the students were reluctant to try another book, so I innovated the text to increase student motivation and interest. In innovating the course, I adapted the text for DA.

There are two dimensions to modern DA, spoken and written. Spoken DA analyzes natural, spoken conversations. An example of a spoken DA is Cunningham’s (2001) analysis of movie dialogues, where she examines patterns imbedded in the interactions between different characters. Written DA concerns the patterns apparent in written samples of natural language, which is also interactive (Moon and Caldas-Coulthard 2000: 9).

The entire Longman book is a written discourse, as even the listening materials are scripted, so spoken DA applications are not relevant. However, written DA may be appropriate, because even though the Longman course consists of contrived texts and contexts, the artificial contexts must be communicated for a given problem to make sense, so those contrived contexts
may exhibit patterns of organization similar to communicatively generated texts.

Before applying written DA, a definition and explanation of DA is necessary. Section 1 will present the findings of written DA. Section 2 will offer a justification for analyzing the Longman course using DA. Section 3 will offer an evaluation of the Longman course and how it incorporates DA, and Section 4 will offer suggestions for possible innovations of the textbook.

1 The Findings of Written Discourse Analysis

Johns (2001:102) noted that successful ESL and EFL readers have a tendency to keep the overall picture of the text in mind and not get lost in details, while unsuccessful readers concentrate on each unknown lexical item, often reaching for their dictionary when they are unsure of a word’s meaning. The make-up of the overall text is dependent on the words used in its construction, meaning that a successful discourse in English both transmits the author’s message and signposts itself as to what has already come, and what will be said later in the text (Winter 2001:47). Such signposting reveals patterns of consistencies within texts, although the traditional grammatical unit, the sentence, helps little to indicate how one sentence may relate to adjoining sentences (Winter, 2001).

In attempting to define the workings of English beyond the sentence, DA has offered four major insights into the structure of discourse: patterning, clause relations, cohesion, and genre. These elements are further discussed below.

1.1 Patterning

Text patterning attempts to describe written discourse at a level beyond the grammatical sentence. Prominent patterns in English discourse include problem/solution, general/specific, claim/counterclaim, and question/answer (McCarthy 1991: 157; Holland and Johnson 2000).

1.1.1 Problem/Solution

The problem/solution pattern is evident in Extract 1.

Extract 1: Example of Problem/Solution Pattern (Winter 1976 in Hoey 2001:28)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I was on sentry duty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Situation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I saw the enemy approaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I opened fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Solution</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I beat off the enemy attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The problem/solution pattern involves presentation of a *situation*, “I was on sentry duty”, a *problem*, “I saw the enemy approaching”, and a *solution* to the problem, “I opened fire” (Hoey 2001: 28). There is also an optional *result* or *evaluation*, “The enemy retreated” (Hoey 2001: 31). Hoey (2001: 30) shows how the problem/solution pattern can be developed into a dialogue
representative of questions and answers, constituting the sub-elements of the problem/solution structure.

**Extract 2: Projection of Extract 1 into Dialog (Hoey 2001:30)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: What was the situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B: I was on sentry duty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: What was the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: I saw the enemy approaching.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: What was the solution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: I opened fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: What was the result?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How successful was this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: I beat off the enemy attack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hoey (2001: 37) further explains how the problem-solution sequence is signaled through verb tense, lexical signaling, and position. In Extract 1 the primary signaling device is position, as changing the clause order and maintaining coherency requires contextualization of the contents (Hoey 2001: 28).

**1.1.2 General/Specific**
The general/specific pattern refers to the evolution of a text from general statements to more specific ones that help to further clarify or elucidate the original general statements, then concludes with another general statement (McCarthy 1991: 158). An example of this pattern is included in Extract 3.


(1) THOUSANDS of acres of our countryside are buried forever under ribbons of concrete and tarmac every year.
(2) Every few months a statement from an authoritative body claims that our motorway network is inadequate and must be extended.
(3) Week by week the amount of car traffic on our roads grows, 13 percent in the last year alone.
(4) Each day as I walk to work, I see the ludicrous spectacle of hundreds of commuters sitting alone in four or five-seater cars and barely moving as fast as I can walk.

In Extract 3 (1) is a general statement, followed by specific statements in (2), (3), and (4) that serve to support and prove (1).

**1.1.3 Claim/Counterclaim**
The claim/counterclaim pattern is a means of projecting argumentation into text, and involves assertion of a claim or hypothetical observation, followed by a counterclaim, or real observation, and is evidenced in Extract 4 (McCarthy 1991: 80).

Historians are generally agreed that British society is founded on a possessive individualism, but they have disputed the origins of that philosophy. Some trace it back to the middle ages, others link it to the rise of capitalism. But the consensus is that the cornerstone of this society has been the nuclear family.

The question/answer pattern asks questions and then answers them, as evident in Extract 5.

**Extract 5: Example of Question/Answer Pattern** *(Moneycare October 1985, p. 4 in McCarthy 1991:80)*

**London-too expensive?**
It’s no surprise that London is the most expensive city to stay in, in Britain: we’ve all heard the horror stories. But just how expensive is it? According to International hotel consultants Horwath & Horwath’s recent report, there are now five London hotels charging over £90 a night for a single room…

While the structure of the question/answer pattern above may be obvious, it is also worth noting that it follows a general/specific pattern at the same time, stating that London is expensive then giving an example of how expensive. The objective of finding patterns in texts is not to create restrictive rules, but to apply descriptive patterns to texts in an effort to better understand and explain their organization and structure.

**1.2 Clause Relations**
While patterning concerns the organization of texts into patterns, clause relations consider how different clauses within a text and across texts compare and contrast with each other. Thus patterning may consider the text as a whole, while clause relations concentrate on individual clauses and their interactions with other clauses. According to McCarthy (1991:29) clause relations include logical sequencing and matching relations.

**1.2.1 Logical Sequencing**
Aspects of logical sequencing include instrument/achievement, condition/consequence, denial/correction, basis connection, concession and cause, phenomenon/reason, and phenomenon/example (Coulthard and Johnson 2000:31). Examples follow.

1. instrument/achievement: “Once on this page I announced ‘I am no warped spinster waving the feminist flag’, and thereby gravely offended some spinster readers” (Winter 2001: 53).
2. condition/consequence: “If the Russians were not to blame, then the Americans must be” (Winter 2001: 54).
3. denial/correction: “The Russians were not to blame; the Americans were [to blame]” (Winter 2001: 54).
4. basis connection: “Perspiration offends others. It should offend you, too” (Winter 2001: 54).
5. concession: “I’m not rich and yet I am happy” (Winter 2001: 55).
8. phenomenon/example: “Naturally, the more people pay for their houses, the more they want to rename their neighborhoods. Suppose you’ve just coughed up 250,000 for an unspectacular house on the fringe of Highgate—an area with loads of cachet. The estate agent tells you its Highgate. You’ve paid a Highgate price. There’s no way you’re going to admit that it’s in Crouch End” (Hoggart 1990: 5 in McCarthy 1991: 28).

1.2.2 Matching Relations
Matching relations are concerned with how a reader should interpret the relationships between clauses. Coutlhard and Johnson (2000: 38) note how clauses in a text can be matched ‘for compatibility’ and ‘for contrast’. They note the pervasiveness of matching both within texts and across texts. Two of their examples are included below.

**Extract 6: Examples of Intratextual and Extratextual Matching Relations**
(Coulthard and Johnson 2000: 39)
1. a newspaper advert
   Beautiful by design
   Paris by lunchtime
   Car by Rover

2. Sun front page headline August 23rd 2000 “Sex, pies and videotape” (matched with the film *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*)

In Extract 6, number 1, the linguistic repetition of *by* is indicative of a pair of 3, with the third element in contrast to the first two elements. Such a pairing of 3 elements is a matching skill taught through children’s fairy tales and stories like “The Three Little Pigs”, “The Three Billy Goats Gruff”, etc (Coulthard and Johnson 2000: 38). Number 2 associates the newspaper headline with a popular movie, through use of the same linguistic items, *sex* and *videotape*, and the rhyming of *pies* and *lies*. As Coulthard and Johnson (2000:38) point out, in certain cultures such matching skills are taught from young ages, thus the skill of recognizing matching patterns may be learned, and ESL learners might need to be explicitly taught the common English matching patterns.
1.3 Cohesion
While patterning concerns the structure of a whole text and clause relations consider the relationships between different clauses within a text and between texts, cohesion focuses on words and how they interrelate within a text and between texts. Cohesion includes grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion, though Moon (2000:55) warns that the categories aren’t exclusive and there is considerable overlap between them.

1.3.1 Grammatical Cohesion
‘Grammatical cohesion is created through grammatical words and structures’ (Moon 2000:56), and can be divided into four types, cohesion through reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, as summarized in Table 1 (Moon 2000: 56-59).

Table 1: Organization of Grammatical Cohesion and its Sub-Elements
(based on Moon 2000:56-59)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Grammatical Cohesion Type</th>
<th>Sub-Elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Lexical Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Pronouns and related</td>
<td>I, me, my, mine, it, its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
<td>concerns location</td>
<td>the, this, these, that, those, here, there, now, then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td>concerns identity, similarity, comparison</td>
<td>some, other, different, more, less, further</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td></td>
<td>grammatical 'dummy items' or proforms</td>
<td>one, ones, same, do, so, not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellipses</td>
<td></td>
<td>similar to substitution, but words or word groups are replaced by nothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunction</td>
<td>Additive</td>
<td>indicates addition of extra information</td>
<td>and, also, or, furthermore, besides, incidentally, in other words, for example, likewise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adversative</td>
<td>indicates new information that contrasts with previous information</td>
<td>but, yet, though, however, in fact, instead, in any case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.3.2 Lexical Cohesion
Lexical cohesion concerns the linking of content, or lexical words within a text, and has two subcategories: reiteration and collocation, though collocation is often considered a problematic category (Moon 2000: 62).

“Reiteration is simply the repetition of lexical items” (Moon 2000: 62) and includes “synonyms or near-synonyms and superordinates” (Moon 2000: 63). Often, reiteration is evident in newspaper headlines and story text, as in Extract 7, where pirates and bootleg publishers are examples of reiteration (Moon 2000: 63).

**Extract 7: Example of Reiteration** (Moon 2000: 63)

*Pirates* target Harry Potter

China has brought forward the launch of the first three Harry Potter books by a week to combat bootleg publishers.

Reiteration and synonymy can exist between words within a text even if in an outside context the words may be unrelated. Thus, pirates may not be associated with publishers in the general lexicon, yet within Extract 7 they are reiterations of each other.

Collocation, as has been mentioned earlier, has a problematic definition, and is defined as “the regular co-occurrence of particular words” (Moon 2000: 65). In Extract 8 the words light, illuminations, and fire create a chain of collocation (Moon 2000: 65)

**Extract 8: Example of Collocation**

*Light* fantastic

Some of the best light entertainment can be found at the Walsall Arboretum as its huge illuminations build up to a grand Fire Show Finale on October 29. The biggest inland light show in the country has been underway for a month already around 35 acres of lakes, trees, and gardens.

1.3.3 Other Cohesion
Moon (2000: 67) further indicates a kind of cohesion referred to by Winter (1977 in Moon 2000: 67), and entitled “Vocabulary 3”, which encompasses
words that are neither entirely functional nor grammatical, like “reason, conclusion, consequence, result” (Moon 2000: 67).

Moon (2000: 68) also introduces cohesion through the use of “anaphoric nouns, advance and retrospective labels”, noting that “examples include accusation, acknowledgement, approach, example, idea, implication” (Moon 2000: 68).

The final type of cohesion referred to by Moon (2000: 69) is prediction, “which commits the writer at one point in the text to a future discourse act” (Tadros 2001: 70). Tadros provides an example of predictive cohesion, “(1) Two problems arise in this case. (2) First, there is the universal alibi… (3) Second, the possibility is admitted in theory…” (Lipsey 1963: 154 in Tadros 2001:70). (1) predicts the existence of (2) and (3) to follow later in the text.

1.4 Genre
Genre is concerned with the analysis of texts that occur with “a regularity of form or regularity of purpose” (Johnson 2000: 74). Examples offered by Johnson include haiku poems, because of their rigid syllable order requirements, and holiday postcards, because of their holiday communication purpose and their limited space allowance (Johnson 2000: 74). Genres in general education include narrative stories, recount stories, factual reports, factual discussions, and factual expositions (Johnson 2000: 78). There is also the concept of genre in spoken discourse, though Bakhtin notes, “the wealth and diversity of speech genres are boundless because the various possibilities of human activity are inexhaustible” (2001: 121). A spoken genre would be defined by its communicative purpose and medium, and examples might include a university lecture, radio broadcast, etc.

2. Justification for Analysis of Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course
The Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course describes itself as “ideal for a TOEIC test preparation course or self-study” (Lougheed 1996a: back cover), yet it seems to be designed for independent study and not as part of a course. Thus the textbook, while presented as a ‘course book’, doesn’t fill the role properly within the classroom. Yet, since the text was chosen well before I began teaching the course, and the students had purchased and become accustomed to it, my best choice appeared to be innovating the book by making it more classroom compatible.

In the introduction to the Longman course a passage suggests DA might offer a workable solution to the challenge of innovation:

To prepare for the TOEIC test, you must recognize the familiar, routine ways thoughts are organized into words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. Learning to recognize these organizational patterns will help you understand the meaning of the words and phrases more readily and more completely. This will help you score well on the TOEIC test. (Lougheed 1996a: 3)
While a noble theme, the text fails to implement it. Instead, explanations follow grammatical frameworks. For example, 2 of the 3 sections in the Reading Review portion of the test are titled “Grammar Patterns” (Lougheed 1996a), and have subheadings, “adverbs of frequency”, “conjunctions”, “prepositions”, “verbs: causative”, “verbs: conditional”, “verbs: tense”, etc (Lougheed 1996).

The book is structured much like the TOEIC test, with each section offering problems intended to reflect the kinds of problems students will see on the TOEIC test. Thus the Table of Contents from the Longman book reflects the make-up of the TOEIC test itself, with the course divided into two sections, “Listening Comprehension” (Lougheed 1996a: v) and “Reading” (Lougheed 1996a: vi). Subsections of the text follow the subsections of the test, as evident in Extract 9: Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course Table of Contents.

**Extract 9: Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course Table of Contents** (Lougheed 1996a: v-vi)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preview</th>
<th>Analysis of the TOEIC Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Studying the Patterns of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening Comprehension Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part I: Picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part II: Question-Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part III: Question-Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part IV: Short Talks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening Comprehension Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part V: Grammar Patterns: Incomplete Sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part VI: Grammar Patterns: Error Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part VII: Reading Passages: Thematic Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice Tests</td>
<td>Answer Sheets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Part VII: Reading Passages: Thematic Patterns, the short readings are organized into the categories “Advertisements” (Longman 1996a: 126), “Bulletins” (Longman 1996a: 129), “Forms and Tables” (Longman 1996a: 132), “Labels” (Longman 1996a: 135), “Letters and Memos” (Longman 1996a: 138) and “Miscellaneous Reading Passages” (Longman 1996a: 142). In this section there are 20 different short reading passages organized into the above categories, but there is no explanation as to why they were organized that way. Instead, each passage is followed by three questions, mirroring the format of the TOEIC test itself, but there is no attempt to compare or contrast the different readings within or between the assigned categories. Thus it is left
to the teacher to find a way to show students the ‘routine ways thoughts are organized’ (Lougheed 1996a: 3).

Is DA applicable to the passages in the Longman course? Since DA concerns the analysis of natural English, or English created for communicative purposes, the social context of any given text is important (Moon and Caldas-Coulthard 2000). By contrast, the sample test problems in the Longman book are created for an evaluative purpose, so the ‘social contexts’ of sample problems in the Longman book are artificially contrived. Section 3 will address this concern by evaluating whether or not DA can be applied to the texts in the Longman book.

3. Evaluation of Course: To what extent does it account for Discourse Analysis?

The Longman course does not explicitly take into account the findings of DA, yet the patterns identified within DA are evident within the Longman text. Thus the different elements of DA, discussed in section 1, can be identified within the Longman text itself. Examples are offered below.

3.1 Inclusion of Patterning

See Extract 10 for an example of the problem/solution pattern from the Longman text.

Extract 10: Example of Problem/Solution Pattern from Longman TOEIC

(Lougheed 1996a:141)

Binell
Interoffice Memo

To: Managers
From: J. Wilcox
Subject: Parking Spaces

It has come to our attention that unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved for senior corporate officers, visitors to Binell, and medical personnel. We can only assume that these violators are not employees of the company, but are people with business in the other surrounding offices.

As of next Monday, January 8, we will have all illegally parked cars towed at the owner’s expense.

We encourage you to make our intentions known to your staff.

The text in Extract 10 lends itself well to projection into dialog, following Hoey’s model (Hoey 2001:30), as demonstrated below.

A: What is the situation?
B: This is an internal office memo at Binell, addressed to managers.
A: And the problem?
B: Cars are illegally parked and block access to authorized vehicles.
A: What is the solution?
B: We will tow the cars. Please inform your staff of this measure.

<No evaluation component is included in the passage>

The problem-solution sequence can be signaled through verb tense, lexical signaling, and position (Hoey 2001: 37). Thus ‘It has come to our attention…’ could be a lexical signaler of the upcoming problem and the position of ‘unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved…’ could be labeled as the problem because of its location near the beginning of the text. Also, in the solution, there is a switch of tense from the present progressive ‘are parking’ to the future ‘will have…cars towed’. The switch of verb tense may signal a change from the problem to the solution part of the problem-solution pattern.

3.2 Inclusion of General/Specific

An example of the general/specific pattern is included in Extract 11.

Extract 11: Example of General/Specific Pattern from Longman TOEIC

(Lougeed 1996a:144)

Crestview City’s efforts to develop its tourist trade have been enormously successful. The number of tourists in the city has shown a steady increase from two thousand visitors five years ago to ten thousand visitors this year. Some of this success is of course attributed to the natural beauty of the area, with its breathtaking mountain vistas, thriving local artists’ community, and excellent fishing in the pristine local lakes. But without the publicity effort undertaken by the newly elected City Council, these attributes would remain largely unknown. The citizens of Crestview have shown their commitment to the tourist industry by voting for tax incentives which enabled the building of the new, 100-room mountain lodge, which provides luxury accommodations for visitors as well as employment for local residents. There is every sign that Crestview has established itself and will continue to be a popular tourist destination.

Extract 11 has a series of general statements. For example, the general statement “Crestview City’s efforts …have been successful” is followed by specific information “…from two thousand visitors…to ten thousand visitors this year.” Also, the general statement “citizens are committed…” is supported by specific information “approved tax incentives…enabled building the mountain lodge…provided accommodations and jobs.”

3.3 Inclusion of Clause Relations

Clause relations are evident in the problems section of the Longman course, as indicated in List 1.

List 1: Examples of Clause Relations as they occur in Longman TOEIC Questions (all of the following are taken from problem sections of the Longman course)

1. instrument/achievement: ‘The course is individualized and self-contained; consequently, you may take the course at any time’ (Lougheed 1996a: 140).
2. condition/consequence: ‘If a problem arises regarding property or services purchased under your credit card, you may have the right not to pay the balance due’ (Lougheed 1996:130).
3. denial/correction: ‘...these violators are not employees of the company, but are people with business in the other surrounding offices’ (Lougheed 1996a: 141)
4. basis connection: “Our challenge is to provide cost-effective services, without sacrificing assistance to people in need. We must encourage economic development without sacrificing our neighborhoods.” (Lougheed 1996a: 131).
5. concession: ‘Our department did not reach its monthly quota even though we worked a lot of overtime’ (Lougheed 1996a: 94).
6. cause: ‘But without the publicity effort undertaken by the newly elected City Council, these attributes would remain largely unknown’ (Lougheed 1996a: 144).
7. phenomenon/reason: ‘Enclosed is a duplicate copy of the report on Logan’s media and policy, which you requested in your letter of May 16’ (Lougheed 1996a: 153).
8. phenomenon/example: “There are two limitations on this right: The purchase has to have been made in your home state or within 130 miles of your current mailing address. The price of the purchase has to exceed fifty dollars” (Lougheed 1996a: 130).

3.4 Inclusion of Grammatical Cohesion through Reference

Extract 12 highlights grammatically cohesive words through reference as they appear in a short reading from the Longman course.

Extract 12: Examples of Grammatical Cohesion through Reference from Longman TOEIC (Lougheed 1996a:141)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference Type</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td><em>italicized</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrative</td>
<td><em>underlined</em></td>
<td>the two occurrences of ‘that’ are grammatical and not referential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative</td>
<td><em>italicized and underlined</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substitution</td>
<td><em>italicized and bold</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adversative Conjunction</td>
<td><em>underlined and bold</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporal Conjunction</td>
<td>ALL CAPS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Cohesion</td>
<td><em>bold</em></td>
<td>these items may not be synonymous in a different context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend

- *italicized*
- *underlined*
- *italicized and bold*
- ALL CAPS
- *bold*
To: Managers
From: J. Wilcox
Subject: Parking Spaces

It has come to our attention that unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved for senior corporate officers, visitors to Binell, and medical personnel. We can only assume that these violators are not employees of the company, but are people with business in the other surrounding offices.

As of next Monday, January 8, we will have all illegally parked cars towed at the owner’s expense.

We encourage you to make our intentions known to your staff.

Extract 12 also offers an example of ellipsis, We can only assume that these violators are not employees of the company, but are people with business in the other surrounding offices where the subject after but is elided. Replacing the elided subject would yield, We can only assume that these violators are not employees of the company, but these violators are people with business in the other surrounding offices.

With manipulation, Extract 12 exhibits causal conjunction, Because unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved for senior corporate officers, visitors to Binell, and medical personnel, as of next Monday, January 8, we will have all illegally parked cars towed at the owner’s expense.

3.5 Inclusion of Genre
Genre can be found in the short readings section of the Longman course, from which Extracts 10 (p. 13), 11 (p. 14), and 12 (p. 15-16) were taken. Extract 11 could be classified as an example of the newspaper editorial genre, and Extracts 10 and 12 could be classified as an example of the office memo genre.

4. Innovating the Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course
As stated in the introduction, the objective of innovating the Longman course was to find a way to better utilize the book in the classroom. While the book asserts itself as “ideal for a TOEIC test preparation course or self study…” (Lougheed 1996a: back cover), it has no suggestions for how to develop exercises from the book into classroom lessons. Additionally, the book is designed to reflect the actual TOEIC test, and thus is understandably not designed for group work or discussion.

Below each of the different components of DA are considered for their compatibility with teaching the Longman course. There is no attempt made to systematize the suggestions into a class syllabus or plan.
4.1 Innovating Patterning
As patterning is generally concerned with complete texts, it is most applicable to the “Short Readings” section of the TOEIC test. In two practice tests in the Longman course there are 13 and 15 short readings, which cover a total of 40 questions. There is also a “Reading Review” which offers additional short readings, as well as a section where short readings are divided into Genres (see below). As demonstrated in 3.1 and 3.2, some short readings in the Longman course contain instances of the problem/solution pattern and the general/specific pattern. A class activity applicable to those patterns could be asking students to attempt the dialog expansion Hoey (2001: 30) demonstrates and which is included in Extract 2. An interactive activity using dialog expansion could involve the following:

1. Groups A and B expand two different texts into a series of questions and answer dialogues, Dialog A and Dialog B
2. The groups exchange their dialogues
3. Group A attempts to reconstruct the original text from Dialog B, and Group B reconstructs the text of Dialog A.
4. Differences between the original passages and the reconstructed passages are discussed. Students are asked to determine whether differences between the originals and the reconstructions are in meaning or form.

An application of the above is included in Appendix A. Comparisons between the groups’ reconstitution attempts and the original passages might help to highlight important information in the original text and how it is placed and signaled. It could also reveal how the texts were interpreted or misinterpreted by the students.

Innovating the claim/counterclaim pattern or the question/answer pattern is more problematic, as the Longman course offers no obvious examples of either form. Sources from outside the book, such as newspaper clippings, could be used to demonstrate the nature of the two patterns, then students could be asked to modify a text from the course so that it reflects a claim/counterclaim or question/answer pattern. This could help students become aware of how the different patterns are composed, and how to move between them.

4.2 Innovating Clause Relations
Several clause relations are evident in the Longman course, as demonstrated in 3.3. One way to exploit clause relations in class would be to present students with a text whose clauses have been separated, as in Example 1, based on Extract 10.

Example 1: A Worksheet with which to Exploit Clause Relations

(1) It has come to our attention that
(2) unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved for senior corporate officers, visitors to Binell, and medical personnel.
(3) We can only assume that
(4) these violators are not employees of the company, but
(5) are people with business in the other surrounding offices.
(6) As of next Monday, January 8,
(7) we will have all illegally parked cars towed at the owner’s expense.
(8) We encourage you to make our intentions known to your staff.

Sample Answer Key
(2) condition (4) condition (7) consequence
(4) denial (5) correction
(7) phenomenon (2) reason

Students could be asked to explain the purpose or function of each of the different clauses, and why they go together in the order presented.

Another activity would involve putting the clauses or sentences on separate pieces of paper, or printing them in a scrambled order, then asking students to reconstruct the original order of the text, an activity from Holland and Johnson (2000: 12).

4.3 Innovating Cohesion
The innovation of cohesion could involve asking students to perform operations similar to those in Extracts 6 and 7. Using the text from Extract 10 a group of students could be asked to underline every reference to people who illegally park their cars, circle every reference to the managers, box all instances where cars are referred to, etc. In such an activity, shown in Example 2, students’ papers would end up looking like Extract 11.

Example 2: A Passage Innovating Cohesion
Underline the words which refer to “unauthorized persons” in the text.
Box the words which refer to “J. Wilcox”

Binell
Interoffice Memo

To: Managers
From: J. Wilcox
Subject: Parking Spaces

It has come to our attention that unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved for senior corporate officers, visitors to Binell, and medical personnel. We can only assume that these violators are not employees of the company, but are people with business in the other surrounding offices.

As of next Monday, January 8, we will have all illegally parked cars towed at the owner’s expense.

We encourage you to make our intentions known to your staff.
Discussion regarding Example 3 could concern whether words which are synonymous in the passage could be considered synonymous outside the above context. Also, the use of the plural form, “our attention”, “we” instead of the singular “my attention”, “I” could be considered.

4.4 Innovating Genre

In the short reading passages section of the Longman course, the different readings are divided into the different genre categories of “advertisements”, “bulletins”, “forms and tables”, “labels”, “letters and memos”, and “miscellaneous reading passages” (Lougheed 1996: 126-142). In this part of the course there are a total of 20 short reading passages, of which Extracts 10 and 11 are examples. A class activity could involve copying the different passages onto separate cards then presenting them to the students without the labels assigned by Lougheed and asking them to order the different passages into categories, or genres. For example, Extract 9 could be considered an ‘office memo’, and Extract 10 an ‘editorial’. The student generated categories could be compared and contrasted with the categories created by Lougheed. A next step could involve asking students to identify the major characteristics representative of each of the different categories. For example, an office memo may generally contain a Title, To field, From field, Subject field, Introduction, and Body. A further refinement would be to discuss any exceptions to the major characteristics identified. For example, Example 11 doesn’t have a closing, such as “Sincerely”.

Another task using Genre could involve changing a text from one category to another; for example, changing an advertisement into a letter, as in Example 3.

Example 3: Moving Across Genres

In this exercise you will change the following newspaper editorial into a letter.

Crestview City’s efforts to develop its tourist trade have been enormously successful. The number of tourists in the city has shown a steady increase from two thousand visitors five years ago to ten thousand visitors this year. Some of this success is of course attributed to the natural beauty of the area, with its breathtaking mountain vistas, thriving local artists’ community, and excellent fishing in the pristine local lakes. But without the publicity effort undertaken by the newly elected City Council, these attributes would remain largely unknown. The citizens of Crestview have shown their commitment to the tourist industry by voting for tax incentives which enabled the building of the new, 100-room mountain lodge, which provides luxury accommodations for visitors as well as employment for local residents. There is every sign that Crestview has established itself and will continue to be a popular tourist destination.

A standard letter format is as follows:
5. Conclusion

Teaching requires a balance between the needs and expectations of the teacher, the students, and the textbook. Jennings and Doyle (1996: 177) note how, even in an innovating environment in which the school curriculum was recreated using student and teacher suggestions and feedback, students still insisted on using textbooks even though the textbooks were not easily compatible with the new in-class curriculum. Hutchinson and Torres (1994) show how useful the textbook is in an ESL teaching context, and conclude that the textbook offers “a degree of order within potential chaos” (1994: 327). They further argue that “rather than denigrating and trying to do away with textbooks, we should recognize their importance in making the lives of teachers and learners easier, more secure and fruitful…” (1994: 327).

Thus, in innovating the Longman course, the question asked was not, “What is wrong with the textbook?” but “What can be done to more effectively use the textbook as a resource in class and to help better meet student needs and desires?” One possible innovation of the textbook is to incorporate the findings of discourse analysis, which the Longman course introduction alludes to but doesn’t expand upon. As has been demonstrated, discourse analysis offers a variety of activities that can be performed in class to help demonstrate to students how texts are structured and how readers can effectively decode texts.

Since innovating the Longman course my students seem more involved during class and discussion has increased. Instead of working independently on problems or listening to me explain a particularly obscure grammatical construction, they are asking one another about the class assignments and discussing the different strategies necessary to decode them. Perhaps this
success is due to concentrating on texts, rather than the test questions asked regarding the texts. With my students, understanding the components of a reading passage and the category or genre it fits into is not automatic. Instead, the tools necessary to understand and decode a text require explicit teaching. After students understand the context and components of a passage, answering the test questions about it may be simpler because they understand where they should look for the correct answer, be it at the beginning, middle, or end of the passage.

Future innovations could include transferring more power to the students by allowing them to select the focus for the day’s lesson, developing the above suggestions into a class plan for the Longman course, and asking students to generate exercises to be used with the next generation of Longman Preparation Series for the TOEIC Test: Advanced Course students.

References


**Appendix A: Dialog Expansion using the Problem/Solution pattern**

This memo is from page 141 of your book.

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**Binell Interoffice Memo**

To: Managers  
From: J. Wilcox  
Subject: Parking Spaces

It has come to our attention that unauthorized persons are parking their cars in spaces reserved for senior corporate officers, visitors to Binell, and medical personnel. We can only assume that these violators are not employees of the company, but are people with business in the other surrounding offices.

As of next Monday, January 8, we will have all illegally parked cars towed at the owner’s expense.

We encourage you to make our intentions known to your staff.

You and your partner are managers, and you need to explain this memo to your employees. Unfortunately, your printer is broken, and your office is too small for all employees to look at your computer screen. So you must explain the memo to everyone. Please plan what you want to say and what questions your employees will ask. The first two lines of the conversation are done for you.
You: We have a problem.

Employee: What's the problem?

You:
Strategic Needs of ESL Students in Developing their Literary Competence

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Abstract
Considering the inefficiency of Iranian ESL students in coping with literary texts, the researchers have designed this research in order to spot their likely strategic deficiencies. For this purpose, the questionnaire designed by Miall & Kuiken (1995) to elicit literary strategic needs of students was employed and adapted to the goals of the research. The results indicated that ESL students are aware of the significance of the role of insight, empathy, imagery vividness and concern with the author in dealing with literary texts only hypothetically. Nevertheless, they are significant shortcomings in the application of their tacit knowledge practically while reading literary texts.

1. Introduction
Since literary texts are extensively susceptible to misunderstanding and misinterpretation, the majority of students face frustration and disappointment while encountering them. These inadequacies may be ascribed to the significant local and global deviations of literary texts from non-literary ones since as Coleridge (1983:11) asserts the goal of literature is to cope with the “automatic nature of normal, every day perception” (Miall & Kuiken, 1994, p.8).

Due to the local and global discrepancies between reading literary and non-literary texts, hosts of models proposed for reading non-literary texts have proved inadequate vis-à-vis reading literature (Miall & Kuiken, 1994; Norris, 1994). For instance, Kintch (1988) proposes a bottom-up model, i.e., a construction-integration
model in reaction to top-down approaches to reading. According to this model, throughout the construction system a number of 'potentially relevant elements' are generated; however, the integration system verifies appropriate elements and rejects inappropriate ones. Nevertheless, literary texts due to some specific stylistic features often trigger less 'immediate' and rampant meanings. Consequently, this process of defamiliarization requires personal engagement and emotions in a way that is not a feature of non-literary texts (Miall & Kuiken, 1994).

Contrary to Kintch (1988), Eskey (1988) traces the drawbacks of reading literature in paying too much attention to culture-specific assumptions or subject-matter schema. Instead, he contends that much of the second language reading literature is mainly oriented towards top-down bias. Eskey and Grabe (1988) adopt a reading model which involves both top-down and bottom-up strategies.

Culler's (1981) notion of literary competence also attests to the difference between reading literary and non-literary texts. He recommends that in reading literature the focus should be shifted from the text to the reader. Culler (1981) argues that similar to linguistic competence literary, competence incorporates the organized implicit knowledge of readers as well as rules governing the kind of interpretation one might make of a literary text.

Viewing all these facts, it is implied that comprehending bellettristic texts involves something more than mere linguistic competence and in case there is no cooperation on the part of reader, no meaning can be made out of such texts (Widdowson; 1984). Short and Candlin's (1991) needs analysis in this realm reveals that students should be made sensitive to the processes involved in reading literary texts.

Miall and Kuiken's (1994) assert that the majority of readers, despite being aware that they are reading literary texts, struggle to comprehend the text using prototypic concepts, thus causing the text to remain within the existing domain of their comprehension. This study intends to analyse the likely strategic deficiencies of some students. To serve this purpose, the questionnaire designed by Miall and Kuiken (1995) which aspires to elicit some of the processes involved in reading literary texts was employed.

2. Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted to pinpoint the various needs of different students on different courses. Short and Candlin (1981) investigated the needs of literature teachers. They concluded that, first of all, the teachers should concentrate on texts and link literature and language together. The teachers should be made sensitive to the processes involved in reading and ultimately the course should relate the development of an integrated language and literature curriculum at the school level with that of the post school tertiary institutions.

Bosher and Smalkoski (2002) conducted a needs analysis on the Minneapolis campus of the College of St. Catherine to discover academic failure of many of the ESL students enrolled in the associate science degree of a nursing program. The results indicated that communicating with clients and colleagues in the clinical setting is the major linguistic deficiency of these students. Accordingly, the content of the course was divided into four sections: assertiveness skills, therapeutic communication, information-
gathering techniques and the role of culture in health–care communication. The course has proved very successful in helping students learn how to communicate more effectively in clinical settings.

Crosling and Ward (2002) assessed oral communication skills in an undergraduate business and commerce curriculum. The results revealed that undergraduate experience in exclusive formal presentation is inadequate preparation for oral communication in the workplace since most workplace oral communication is informal in nature.

The main problems of 80 freshman tourism students were investigated by Garcia Laborda (2002). To mention only a few aspects of this research, the students acknowledged their limited communicative and academic skills in language. The same study also looked to see whether the teaching procedures and methodology known by the students are optimal for teaching English to students of tourism, and what elements should be emphasized in the instruction. Most of the participants believed that private schools offer far better language instruction than their public counterparts. To them, their high school books deal more with the urgency to pass the university entrance examination than with their language needs. Generally speaking, their attitude toward textbooks for tourism was rather positive, but they criticized the contents (Welcome, Cambridge University Press) as being very challenging.

Evidently, the analysis of the surface forms of language needs has been placed in the spotlight to the exclusion of analyzing the underlying processes of learning. However, a genuinely substantial approach to ESP must be based on an understanding of the processes of language learning, and cognitive skills should be an explicit part of the syllabus (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Robinson, 1991). Additionally, since as Cook (1991) asserts the study of literary English is rarely adjusted to the foreign students’ needs, the current study intends to identify some of the students’ strategic needs while reading belletristic texts.

3. The Study
3.1. Method & Materials

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) lend credence to employing questionnaires by stating that a need does not exist separate from a person. It is the people who make images of their needs on the basis of information related to themselves and their environment. Adopting this stance, the researchers in this current study have focused on the questionnaire designed by Miall and Kuiken (1995) to evaluate aspects of literary response. This questionnaire was originally divided into seven sections: insight, empathy, imagery vividness, leisure escape, concern with author, story-driven reading and rejection of literary values. The total number of statements developed under these headings was 68. The subjects were supposed to write their opinions about each statement.

However, due to Miall and Kuiken's (1995) detailed analysis of literary aspects and the closed-format of the questionnaire, the researchers decided to tailor the questions so that they could serve the purpose of the research. This stemmed from the fact that open format questions are appropriate for eliciting subjective data or when the range of responses is not restricted. The major advantage of an open format questionnaire is that the responses have more variety and more genuinely reveal the opinions of the subjects. This enhances
the probability of receiving unexpected and insightful suggestions. Therefore, ten open-format questions were devised so that they could elicit information concerning the students' awareness of the importance of insight, empathy, imagery vividness and concern with the author (the five items mentioned in Miall and Kuiken's (1995) questionnaire) while dealing with literary texts. Four open-format questions were formulated under the rubric of insight, one under empathy, three for assessing imagery vividness and two for concern with the author.

Before starting the research, this questionnaire was piloted among five students. The possibility existed that the students attest to the truth of the questions theoretically, while the major goal of this research was to locate their likely drawbacks in practice. To diminish the risk of the occurrence of such an event, the researcher reminded the students that they should answer the questions honestly since their responses would have no effect on their final exam grade. It was also explained that this research planned to clarify their shortcomings and drawbacks in reading literary texts.

3. 2. Participants

The respondents to the questionnaire were 55 male and female sophomores studying at Sheikhbahaiee University in Iran who had enrolled in the course "reading simple prose texts" in the spring semester of 2003-2004. This course is mainly concerned with reading literary texts.

4. Findings

As mentioned above, each of the terms - insight, empathy, imagery vividness and concern with the author - were subdivided into a number of questions. Each will be subsequently addressed separately.

4. 1. Insight

In the beginning section under the umbrella term 'insight’ the first question asked was: “When you read literature, what kind of relationship do you notice between reading literature and your real life?”

The subjects can be divided into three groups in answering this question: One group frankly claimed that they are unable to perceive any relationship between literature and life. The second category alleged that their understanding of the text is proportionate to the topic of the text, culture, and their experience and background knowledge. Finally, the remaining subjects asserted that they deal with modern texts better than archaic ones.

“How can literature help you to understand the lives of people that differ from you? Cite an example.” This was the second question asked under the heading ‘insight’. The analysis of the data revealed that the students attest to the fact that literature can help them in understanding the lives of different people; however, the majority avoided citing examples. Some of them contended that the characters in short stories differ from characters in real life.

The third question was posed to assess the insight of the respondents: “In what way literature enables you to understand people whom you would probably disregard in normal life? Elaborate by citing an example.” A number of respondents mentioned that they had not paid any attention to this point. Conversely, another group vouched for the impact of literature on life by explaining that literature can create the opportunity of becoming familiar with
different people with whom they may not find any chance to encounter in real life. Several others maintain that the characters in the stories do not seem tangible to them. One of the students related "I can gain experience by reading literature. If I meet a person similar to the character in the story, I can understand him/her."

Another area investigated for estimating the insight gained by students incorporated the question: “When (under what circumstances) do you understand a literary text better? Give examples.” In this respect a number of contradictory findings was observed. Participants ascribed their understanding to factors like the consistency of their cultural, religious and personal experience with the intended text. Others specified their understanding to when they encountered a similar character in real life. Familiarity with the author's style and the topic element were other determining components stated by participants. The participants elaborated that when the topic is social and related to real life situation, the text is more comprehensible. Contrary to the first group, another group stated that the texts which expose them to new aspects of life are more understandable, since it arouses their curiosity and presents them with more incentive to read. To some subjects, interest in the topic can also impinge on the intelligibility of literary texts.

A great number of students attributed their deficiency in understanding literary texts to their insufficient vocabulary repertoire. Another group of respondents declared that they understand literature provided that the teacher explains and discusses it. One of the respondents stated: “I don't understand literature, even Persian literature. I only memorize the teacher's illustration to pass the course.” It is necessary to mention that almost all the respondents had avoided citing examples.

4. 2. Empathy

The second section of the questionnaire was intended to extract the extent the subjects have developed the ability to empathize with the characters of literary texts. The question asked was: “How do you treat the persons and places described in a novel, short story or drama? To what extent can you visualize the people and places described?”

The analysis of responses indicated diverse features which, according to subjects, can contribute to their visualization of the people and places depicted in literary texts. These factors incorporated the explicitness of the author's description of those characters and places, consistency of the character's culture with the subjects' culture and familiarity with the type of character in real life. In contrast to the last group, some linked their powers of imagination to the novelty and strangeness of people and places and commented that these two features motivate them to continue reading.

Another category of participants frankly pointed out that they are unable to visualize the characters and places in literary texts. One of the subjects noted: “I always believe that all the characters in the stories are only fictitious and are nonexistent in the real world and all of their actions are exclusively for the sake of concocting fiction.” Ultimately one of the respondents asserted that he is able to imagine the characters in short stories and novels but not the characters in dramas.
4. 3. Imagery vividness

Three questions were posed to evaluate the participants’ ability to ascertain the vividness of imagery, the first of which was: “How important are dialogues in a novel, short story or drama?” In answer to this question, many students explained that a story consists of relationships and dialogues make that relationship possible. They verified the significance of dialogues theoretically, but as they themselves stated, they lacked the ability to recognize the significance of dialogues in practice. One of the students pointed out: “I think dialogues are very important, but it is usually difficult for me to find out the purpose of a dialogue.”

Another group claimed that they understand narratives better than dialogues. The third category declared that they are totally ignorant of the importance of dialogues. One of them wrote down: “I don't understand the importance of dialogues. I think in many dialogues nothing is transmitted.” Another respondent complained: “Sometimes the dialogues in stories seem very strange and I usually don't understand them. I think it may be because of difference in foreign culture and our way of thinking.” For another group, dialogues seem more tangible than when the author explains about the characters and scenes.

The second question on the same topic of imagery vividness was: “How can the tone of speech in a dialogue in a short story, novel or drama be inferred? Cite examples.” Many students acknowledged that they face problems in recognizing the tone of the literary texts. The second type of students were aware of the way that tone can be inferred and stated this can be achieved by concentrating on word choice; however, they pointed out that they are unable to pinpoint the tone of a text themselves. The following comments show some contradictory points noted by some of the subjects: “I can understand tone in drama but not in poems and stories.” Another student’s idea stood in contrast with the previous one: “I can't understand tone in a text, but in poems it is easier.”

The last question under the rubric imagery vividness was: “To what extent are you able to perceive the relationship of the colors and smells to the feelings?” The majority responded: “When the author describes bright color and nice smells, I discover that the person and the place are happy and by describing black colors and bad smells I discover that places and persons are unhappy.” Some of the participants explained their understanding of this relationship to when they know the symbol and associations of that color; however, in the majority of cases, they lack such information. Another group of respondents claimed they were aware of the importance of the relationship of the colors and smells to the feelings in literary texts; nevertheless, they also admitted that they are unable to detect this relationship.

4. 4. Concern with the author

The last segment of questionnaire was planned to elicit information regarding the students’ awareness of the importance of the author's role in understanding literary texts. This section was titled ‘Concern with the author.’ The first question posed under this heading was: “Explain the importance of the author's style in understanding literary texts by giving examples.”
The analysis of the responses revealed that the majority of the students are aware of the importance of the style, yet they are ignorant how style can be deduced. A number of subjects restricted their understanding to when the style of the text is simple. In brief, nearly all the students admitted their inadequacy in distinguishing the style of the texts.

The second question under the same heading was: “What is the contribution of an author's distinctive theme to understanding a literary text?” Nearly all the participants deemed the role of the author's distinctive theme in understanding literary texts as significant; nevertheless, they had also declared that because of their modicum knowledge in this respect, they are unable to disclose the contribution of an author's distinctive theme to understanding literary texts.

5. Discussion

Clearly, the majority of the answers illuminated the fact that although the subjects may be able to express the significance of each of the elements theoretically, they acknowledge their inadequacy in applying their tacit knowledge in encountering literary texts. These inadequacies may be traced back to literature classes and the way that literature teachers manage such classes. Since as Zafeiriadou (2001) notes that the capacity that literary texts possess for the students' analytical capability development seem to be downgraded or totally overlooked.

As was observed, for each of the questions in the questionnaire sundry answers were proposed by the subjects. Factors like topic, culture, background knowledge and experience were considered substantial in comprehending literary texts by the subjects each of which will be taken up consecutively.

Regarding the relationship between reading literary texts and external reality, it is noteworthy that despite subjects’ awareness of this fact, they commented that they usually ignore this point while reading literature. Literary texts are contingent on real life situations for their interpretation and this contingency is quite complicated. The readers of such texts should recreate the reality existing in literary texts using evidence from the language of the text and from their own knowledge of the world. This point makes reading literary texts distinctive from reading informational texts (Littlewood, 1976). Ipso facto, it seems absolutely necessary for the teachers to raise the students’ consciousness about this fact in teaching literature. What teachers can perform in this respect is to urge learners to associate the passage to their own life experiences (Norris, 1994; Wei, 1999). Additionally, they should conduct sufficient pre-reading activities (Byrne, 2004).

Culture was another element which the subjects saw as crucial in reading literature. This gap can again be filled by the literature teacher who should be aware that different cultures value different things; consequently, attention needs to be paid to the selection of material which on the one hand is representative of different traditions, discourse types, and authors, and on the other hand is also valued by the readers (Brumfit & Carter, 1991; Icóz, 1999). Unless the teacher provides the students with everyday cultural background, it is unlikely that they can fully appreciate literature (O'Sullivan, 1991).

The majority of subjects confirmed the perception that literature can provide them with insights into the lives of other people; however, almost all of them had avoided citing examples, indicating that they themselves may
have problems in understanding the characters. Actually, they did display some awareness of this impact, yet they are probably negligent to the fact that this potentiality should be activated pending reading literature.

The answers proposed for the third and the fourth questions were quite diverse. For one group of respondents, characters do not seem to be tangible; to another, only characters that they have encountered in real life are understandable. This may stem from the fact that the meaning of a literary work lies in each individual’s reading of it. A literary text normally elicits various responses and each reader has the freedom to assess the coherence of the writer’s work and interpret it according to their own experiences and attitude to the world (Mürdöch, 1992).

Many subjects commented that only when the teacher gives an explanation could the meaning of the literary text become clear to them. This shortcoming once again may be traced back to teachers who rely entirely on a lecture-style lesson which fails to provide opportunities for students to interact with the teacher, with the text and with one another. In order to foster students’ response and interaction, teachers must have a deep knowledge of the students’ reading processes and comprehension of texts (Norris, 1994). Teachers can also address this problem by using group work and extracting the students’ knowledge and experience. This enables the students to acquire confidence and provide their own responses, consequently becoming less dependent on their teachers’ explanation (Collie & Slater, 1987; Norris, 1994).

The subjects’ assertion that insufficient vocabulary makes their reading of literature problematic probably has its origins in the literature class. In such classes, the students are usually asked to work diligently on vocabulary learning, translation and endless written exercises without feeling any advancement in dominating language and with almost no opportunity to express themselves (Norris, 1994).

The subjects’ lack of awareness of the fact that imagination can be advantageous in improving their comprehension of literature may also have its roots in the lecture-based method of teaching literature. In these classes, students as passive readers play no important role in imaginative recreation of texts. Overcoming this hurdle involves teaching strategies that stimulate students to develop a feeling for language and respond to it (O’Sullivan, 1991; Norris, 1994). As Long (1986: 42) acknowledges, “the teaching of literature is an arid business unless there is a response and even negative response can create an interesting classroom situation.”

Considering the importance of understanding dialogues, many respondents complained that dialogues are usually vague in literary texts. This vagueness of literary texts is viewed by Widdowson (1983) as an asset. In this respect, literature can provide the learners with an opportunity to use knowledge of language for the interpretation of discourse. In order to do so, students have to vacillate in, across and outside the text hunting for hints which help them to make sense of the text. This shortcoming among students in recognizing the tone can again be removed in the literature class. Teaching reading strategies in literature classes plays a crucial part in the development of literary competence (Brumfit & Carter, 1991). Moreover, it should be noted that despite the fact that readers construct the meaning of any text, their interpretation is restricted within the boundaries laid down by the authors (Paran, 1998).
The modicum knowledge of subjects concerning the relationship between the colors and smells to the feeling may be attributable to their lack of cultural information since the use of figurative language in literary texts is culture-bound. They have their roots in fundamental presuppositions and the cultural heritage of the indigenous community. Colors and their associations are one representative of cultural elements. Consequently, in teaching literature it is the task of teachers to sensitize the learners to these cultural features (Byrne, 2004).

The insufficiency of the participants in paying attention to the style of texts is also likely to indicate another drawback of literature classes. It is the literature teachers’ responsibility to assist the students in developing their literary competence by bringing their attention to the types of styles, forms, conventions and symbolization (Brumfit & Carter, 1991).

In the long run, it is implied that to comprehend literary texts students need to understand how authors employ literary conventions to communicate their intentions. Therefore, it is the business of literature teachers to formulate these communicative conventions and teach students the strategies employed by proficient readers (Wilhelm, 1992). Literature teachers should be aware that in the same way that there are rules and principles in spoken discourse, literature also, as a communicative medium, is framed by the expectations and standards which constitute an important element in the communication between writer and reader. In this sense, the literature teacher can play a pivotal role in assisting the students to acquire requisite literary competence (Brumfit & Carter, 1991). Teaching strategies that improve the readers’ awareness of how they should approach the reading of a literary text have usually proved to be useful (Isenberg, 1990).

References


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Are Task Type And Text Familiarity Predicators of Performance on Tests of Language For Specific Purposes?

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Abstract

In a study of the effects of text familiarity, task type, and language proficiency on university students’ Language for Specific Purposes Ability (LSPA) test and task performances, 541 senior and junior university students majoring in electronics took the Task-Based Reading Test (TBRT). Variance analyses indicated that text familiarity, task type, and language proficiency, as well as the interaction between any given pair of these and also among all of them resulted in significant differences in participants’ overall and differential test and task performances. In addition, regression analyses revealed that the greatest influence on subjects’ overall and differential test and task performances was due to language proficiency. Text familiarity had the smallest effect on students' test and task scores. Compared to text familiarity, task type was a stronger predictor of variance in test and task performance.

1. Introduction

This study investigates the probable effects of background knowledge (or text familiarity) in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) tests. The assumption is that test-takers’ prior familiarity with the propositional content of texts that appear in ESP reading comprehension tests will facilitate their performance on those tests.

2. Background of the Study

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was a phenomenon that grew out of a number of converging trends after the Second World War. In spite of the fact that these trends have operated in a variety of ways around the world, we can identify three main reasons common to the emergence of what we know as ESP today: (a) worldwide demands, (b) revolutions in linguistics, and (c) focus on the learner.
The rapid growth of scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale after World War II created a world which was unified and dominated by technology and commerce. This unification was accelerated by the Oil Crises of the early 1970s, which resulted in a massive flow of funds and Western expertise into the oil-rich countries. All of these generated a demand for an international language, and English was the best choice. As English became the accepted international language, it created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning it; time and money constraints created a need for cost effective courses with clearly defined goals. At the same time, linguistic studies began to shift attention away from traditional structural treatments of language to discovering the ways in which language was actually used in real communication (Widdowson, 1978). Some linguists began to support the view that the English needed by a particular group of learners could be identified by analyzing the linguistic characteristics of their specialist area of work or study (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). This view was further supported by new developments in educational psychology which assigned a central role to learners and their attitudes to learning (Rodgers, 1969). Learners were seen to have different needs and interests, which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and, therefore, on the effectiveness of their learning. This lent support to the development of courses in which relevance to the learners’ needs and interests was paramount. As a result, ESP was born.

One of the earliest challenges that ESP had to face was the distinction between ESP and English for General Purposes (EGP). ESP differs from EGP in the sense that the content of ESP courses (i.e., words, sentences, and subject matter) relates to a particular field or discipline; English for General Purposes (EGP) is, however, essentially the English language education in junior and senior high schools. In EGP courses, students are introduced to the sounds and symbols of English, as well as to the lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical elements that compose spoken and written discourse. In addition, EGP focuses on applications of English in general situations. Supplementary information about appropriate gestures, cultural conventions, and cultural taboos can also be included in EGP curricula. EGP conducted in English-speaking countries is typically called English as a Second Language (ESL), and EGP conducted in non-English-speaking countries is normally called English as a Foreign Language (EFL). English for Specific Purposes (ESP), however, is research and instruction that builds on EGP; ESP is designed to prepare students or working adults for the English used in specific disciplines, vocations, or professions to accomplish specific purposes. Pedagogically, a solid understanding of basic EGP should precede higher-level instruction in ESP if ESP programs are to yield satisfactory results (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987, p. 19), “ESP is an approach to language teaching in which all decisions as to content and method are based on the learner’s reason for learning.” Dudley-Evans (1998), however, claims that ESP may not always focus on the language of one specific discipline or occupation. He argues that university instruction that introduces students to common features of academic discourse in the sciences or humanities, frequently called English for Academic Purposes (EAP), is equally ESP.
From its early beginnings in the 1960s, ESP has undergone five main phases of development: (a) Register Analysis, (b) Rhetorical Discourse Analysis, and (c) Target Language Use (TLU) Situation Analysis, (d) Skills-Centered Approach, and (e) Learning-Centered Approach.

Register analysis took place mainly in the 1960s and early 1970s, and was associated in particular with the work of Strevens (Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens, 1964), Ewer (Ewer and Latorre, 1969) and Swales (1971). It operated on the basic principle that the English needed in one scientific field constituted a specific register different from those of other fields of science, or General English. Register analysis sought to identify the grammatical and lexical features of different scientific registers. ESP, in this phase, focused on language at the sentence level.

With the development of Discourse Analysis, however, ESP entered a second phase of development typically known as Rhetorical Discourse Analysis. The basic hypothesis of this stage was succinctly expressed by Allen and Widdowson (1974) who took the view that the difficulties which the students encountered arose from an unfamiliarity with English use rather than from a defective knowledge of the system of English. Allen and Widdowson (1974) argued that ESP students' needs could best be met by an ESP course which developed a knowledge of how sentences were used in the performance of different communicative acts. The tacit assumption of Rhetorical Discourse Analysis is that the rhetorical patterns of text organization differs significantly between specialist areas of use; however, this point was never very clearly examined (Swales, 1985), and indeed paradoxically, the results of the research into the discourse of subject-specific academic texts were also used to make observations about discourse in general (Widdowson, 1978).

The upsurge of interest in communicative language teaching as well as the development communicative syllabi resulted in the emergence of the third phase of ESP (i.e., the stage of Target Language Use (TLU) Situation Analysis). TLU Situation Analysis aimed at establishing procedures for relating language analysis more closely to learners’ reasons for learning. ESP courses designed in this phase proceeded first by an identification of the target situation and then by a rigorous analysis of that situation. The identified features then formed the syllabus of the ESP course. Such a process was usually known as Needs Analysis. However, Chambers (1980) preferred to use the term target situation analysis, since it was a more accurate description of the process concerned. Perhaps the most thorough explanation of TLU Analysis was the system set out in Communicative Syllabus Design by Munby (1978).

The fourth stage of ESP development (i.e., Skills-Centered Approach) was an attempt to look below the surface and to consider not the language itself but the thinking processes that underlie language use (See Chitavelu (1980), Grellet (1981), Nuttall (1982), and Alderson and Urquhart (1984)). The principal idea behind the Skills-Centered Approach was that common reasoning and interpretation processes underlay all language use which enabled the students to extract meaning from discourse regardless of the surface linguistic forms. The tacit assumption in this approach was that students did not need to focus closely on the surface forms of the language;
they rather needed to focus on the underlying interpretive strategies, which enabled them to cope with the surface forms. As such, a focus on specific subject registers was unnecessary in this approach, because the underlying processes were not specific to any subject register.

The fifth phase of ESP (i.e., Learning-Centered Approach) emerged out of the shortcomings of its preceding phases. Proponents of the Learning-Centered Approach argue that the four preceding phases of ESP were all flawed in that they were all based on descriptions of language use whereas a truly valid approach to ESP must be based on an understanding of the processes of language learning. In fact, the fifth phase of ESP is concerned with the question of what it really means to know a language.

One of the first scholars to ask this question was Spolsky (1973). Since then, many people have tried to answer this question. Alderson (1991), for instance, has pointed out that the answer to the question of what it means to know a language “depends upon why one is asking the question, how one seeks to answer it, and what level of proficiency one might be concerned with” (p. 12). In the case of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) testing, Douglas (2000, p. 26) adds the expression, “and in what specific situational context one is interested,” to the quotation from Alderson.

As a result of scholars’ attempts at answering Spolsky’s question, different models of language ability have been proposed since then. A few of the most influential of these models are (a) Hymes’s (1972) model of Communicative Competence, (b) Bachman’s (1990) model of Communicative Language Ability (CLA), (c) Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) reformulation of Communicative Language Ability (CLA), and Douglas’s (2000) model of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) Ability.

The term communicative competence encompasses the notion that language competence involves more than Chomsky’s (1965) rather narrowly-defined linguistic competence. According to Hymes (1971, 1972), communicative competence involves judgements about what is systemically possible (i.e., what the grammar will allow), psycholinguistically feasible (i.e., what the mind will allow), and socioculturally appropriate (i.e., what society will allow). Moreover, communicative competence affords information about the probability of occurrence of a linguistic event and what is entailed in the actual accomplishment of it. In fact, for Hymes, competence was more than knowledge: “Competence is dependent upon both [tacit] knowledge and [ability for] use” (Hymes 1972, p. 282).

Since the time Hymes proposed the notion of communicative competence, other scholars have reformulated his notion to propose their own models. The current most well-known framework is Bachman’s (1990) Communicative Language Ability (CLA), elaborated by Bachman and Palmer (1996). Bachman and Palmer (1996) postulate two components of communicative language ability: (a) language knowledge and (b) strategic competence. Strategic competence serves as a mediator between the internal traits of background knowledge and language knowledge and the external context, controlling the interaction between them.

Douglas (2000) tried to modify Bachman and Palmer’s model in such a way as
to make it suitable for accounting for ESP competence. He took the position that what was required in Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) testing was an understanding of how Specific-Purpose (SP) background knowledge could interact with language knowledge to produce a communicative performance in SP contexts. As such, Douglas’s framework for LSP ability (a) includes Specific Purpose (SP) background knowledge as a component of communicative language ability, and (b) gives a central role to the cognitive construct of discourse domain. According to Douglas (2000), Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) model requires four considerations: (a) the level of detail necessary in the definition of LSP construct, (b) the treatment of the four skills, (c) whether to include strategic competence or not, and (d) whether to distinguish between language knowledge and SP background knowledge.

In connection to Douglas’s last point, it is noteworthy that the distinction between language knowledge (or language proficiency) and background knowledge (or content-area knowledge) has long been a problem for language testers in the interpretation of test results. There are a few studies which suggest that, under some conditions, background knowledge does not influence language test performance. Several other studies have, however, found significant interactions between background knowledge and language test performance. Over the past two decades or so, there have been several studies into the effect of background knowledge on LSP test performance, most of which focused on reading comprehension (See Erickson and Molloy, 1983; Osman, 1984; Alderson and Urquhart, 1985a; 1985b; Koh, 1985; Shoham, Peretz, and Vorhaus, 1987; Alderson, 1988; Alvermann and Hynd, 1989; Hock, 1990; Peretz and Shoham, 1990; Read, 1990; Tan, 1990; Tedick, 1990; Douglas and Selinker, 1993; Chen and Graves, 1995; Jensen and Hansen, 1995; Ridgway, 1997; Papajohn, 1999).

Three articles by Alderson and Urquhart (1983, 1985a, and 1985b) aroused considerable interest in the effect of background knowledge and led to several follow-up studies. In each article, Alderson and Urquhart compared students’ scores on reading texts related to their own field of study with those on texts in other subject areas. The students’ scores on the modules were somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, for example, science and engineering students taking the technology module of ELTS did better than the business and economics students who took the same test, and as well as the liberal arts students, although their language proficiency was lower. On the other hand, the business and economics students did not do better than the science and engineering groups on the social studies module. Alderson and Urquhart concluded that background knowledge had some effect on test scores, but that this was not consistent, and that future studies should take account of linguistic proficiency and other factors as well.

Along the same lines, Shoham, Peretz, and Vorhaus (1987) concluded that, while students in the biological and physical sciences did better at the scientific texts, the humanities and social science students did not do better on the test in their own subject area. In a similar study, Peretz and Shoham (1990) had similar results. Their explanation for this was that the texts were only indirectly related to the students’ specialized fields of study; they suggested that this might support Lipson’s (1984) contention that a totally unfamiliar text is often easier to comprehend than a text with a partially familiar content.
Clapham (1996) believes that this contention of Lipson was indeed radical:

If supported by further research, it would be an almost unassailable reason for dropping ESP testing. If Lipson’s idea were taken to its logical conclusion, of course, proficiency tests would have to contain materials outside any candidates experience. The JMB (Joint Matriculation Board) University Test in English for Speakers of Other Languages followed just such an approach, with passages in esoteric subjects such as silver markings and heraldic devices. As a result, item writers had difficulty finding suitable texts and the ensuing materials were often excessively dull. (Clapham, 1996, p. 8)

Ridgway (1997) set out to prove that the background knowledge effect only occurred between two linguistic thresholds. The 69 students from two different disciplines who took part in Ridgway’s study were divided into top and bottom samples according to their levels of L2 proficiency. Ten students with medium L2 proficiency were excluded from the study. Students were asked to read texts from inside and outside their own subject area. According to the two thresholds hypothesis, the effect of background knowledge should have been insignificant for students in the top and bottom groups. For students with low L2 proficiency (‘bottom group’), there were no significant differences between mean scores for the text from their own field of study and the text from an unfamiliar subject area. For groups with high L2 proficiency, however, there were significant differences between mean scores. Ridgway (1997) concludes that the different degrees of text specificity may have contributed to results being as inconclusive as they were.

In another study, Clapham (2000) found that background knowledge had its greatest effect on the performance of subjects who belonged to the medium-proficiency group. In an attempt to explain the findings of her study, Clapham (2000, pp. 515–516) argued:

while lower level students could not take advantage of their background knowledge because they were too concerned with bottom-up skills such as decoding the text, and while high proficiency students were able to make maximum use of their linguistic skills so that, like native speakers, they did not have to rely so heavily on their background knowledge, the scores of medium proficiency students were affected by their background knowledge.

Alderson (2000, p. 104) recognized the potential of Clapham’s findings but also called for clarification:

Needless to say, Clapham’s results need replication and extension. Nevertheless, they suggest that language testers might some day be able to define text difficulty in terms of what level of language abilities a reader must have in order to understand that particular text, and vice versa, what sort of text a learner of a given level of language ability might be expected to be able to read.

3. Statement of the Problem

The present study is an attempt at exploring the probable effects of prior familiarity with the content of a text on readers’ performance on tests based on that text. The main aims of this study are four-fold: (a) to determine if LSP
reading test and task performance is related to language proficiency, (b) to explore if task type is related to LSP reading test performance, (c) to determine if text-familiarity (defined in this study to refer to prior knowledge of the propositional content of texts) affects LSP reading test and task performance, and (d) to determine which factor (text familiarity, task type, language proficiency) is responsible for a greater portion of students’ score variance. As such, the study addresses the following questions:

1. Is LSP students’ overall and differential test and task performance a function of text familiarity, task type, language proficiency, or the interaction of these variables?

2. Which variable (i.e., task type, text familiarity, or language proficiency) accounts for a greater share of LSP students’ test and task score variance?

3. Does LSP students’ level of language proficiency significantly affect their overall test and task performance as well as their test and task performance across different levels of the text familiarity cline?

4. Does LSP students’ degree of familiarity with the propositional content of LSP tests significantly affect their overall test and task performance and their test and task performance across different levels of language proficiency?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

The total number of the participants in this study is 541 people. The population from which the participants of the present study were drawn included junior and senior university students majoring in electronics at different Iranian universities. These students took the sample version of the IELTS (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate [UCLES], 2000). They were then classified into four proficiency groups: proficient (93 people), fairly proficient (186 people), semi-proficient (164 people), and non-proficient (98 people). The mean and the standard deviation of the subjects’ IELTS scores were used as the criterion for their classification (i.e., standard deviations from the mean). Students who had scored higher than ‘mean-plus-one’ standard deviation were assigned to the proficient group; those who stood within the ‘mean-plus-one’ standard deviation range were assigned to the fairly proficient group. The semi-proficient group included participants whose scores on the IELTS fell within the mean-minus-one standard deviation range. Finally, the participants who had scored below the mean-minus-one standard deviation range were assigned to the non-proficient group.

4.2. Instruments

Three different instruments were used in the present study: (1) The sample version of the IELTS General Training Reading Module (UCLES, 2000), (2) a Self-report Questionnaire, and (3) the Task-Based Reading Test (TBRT)—which consisted of three modules: Accounting (TBRT-AM), Electronics (TBRT-EM), and General (TBRT-GM).
Determining the participants’ level of language proficiency in general, and their ‘reading comprehension ability’ in particular, were vital to this study. The sample version of the IELTS General Training Reading Module was, therefore, administered to the participants since it is considered to be the most suitable instrument due to its ‘modularity’ claims; according to the claims made by UCLES (2000), the assumption behind the IELTS is that the ‘link between the reading and writing modules has been lifted’ since 1995, and that each module is a standard gauge for the language skill it measures. Participants’ scores on this test were used as an indicator of their level of language proficiency and reading comprehension ability.

Another variable under study was participants’ prior familiarity with the propositional content of texts that appeared in the different modules of the TBRT (i.e., their text familiarity). In this study, text familiarity was taken to refer to the participants’ prior familiarity with content knowledge in general (that is, the knowledge they had acquired from their interests, and hobbies), and with subject or domain specific content knowledge in particular (that is, the knowledge they had acquired from formal schooling). Text familiarity was controlled in two ways. First of all, the participants of the study were drawn from among university students majoring in electronics to make sure that they were familiar with the content of TBRT-EM and unfamiliar with that of TBRT-AM. In addition, a self-report questionnaire was also used since some of the participants might have been familiar with the content of TBRT-AM as a result of personal interest. The self-report questionnaire aimed at showing the subjects’ degree of familiarity with each text that appeared in each of the TBRT modules. This questionnaire was a Likert Scale composed of 20 items (4 similar items for each text in each module) through which the subjects indicated their degree of text familiarity with the five passages that appeared in each of the TBRT modules.

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<td>1 Have you ever read this text before?</td>
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<td>2 Have you had prior familiarity with the ideas discussed in this text?</td>
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<td>3 Did you know the meanings of the technical terms of this text?</td>
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To ensure maximum understanding of the questions, the questionnaire was written in the subjects’ native language—Farsi.

The main instrument used in the present study was the Task-Based Reading Test (TBRT) which had three modules with texts from different disciplines: Accounting (TBRT-AM), Electronics (TBRT-EM), and General Digest (TBRT-GM). Each module consisted of five sets of test items: (a) True-False items [N=12], (b) Open-Ended Sentence Completion items [N=8], (c) Paragraph Labeling items [N=6], (d) Fill-in-the-Blank Skimming items [N=9], and (e) Multiple-Choice Elicitation items [N=5]. As such, each module included a total of 40 items that measured subjects’ performance of five reading tasks: (a) true-false task, (b) sentence-completion task, (c) outlining task, (d) elicitation of writer’s views task, and (e) skimming task. Each module
consisted of five passages of varying lengths, textual complexity, and readability indexes. However, the texts that appeared in the different module where chosen in such a way as to ensure maximum correspondence to the IELTS General Training Reading Module (UCLES, 2000) in terms of such textual features as readability, structural complexity, etc.

Table 1: Comparison of Readability Statistics for IELTS and TBRT

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</tbody>
</table>

In addition to readability analysis, nine university instructors who were experienced teachers of ESP courses at various Iranian universities were asked to judge whether the texts were of the suitable level of difficulty for the prospective subjects.

The texts that appeared in the TBRT-EM were all taken from the content areas that junior and senior university students majoring in electronics had already studied as part of their academic courses. They included five topics: (a) magnetic flux, (b) vacuum tube diodes, (c) bridge circuits, (d) incandescent lamps, and (e) digital and analog computers. Since the participants of the present study were all majoring in electronics, the assumption was that they were totally familiar with the passages within this module. In the same vein, the TBRT-AM module included five texts. This time, the texts were selected from the materials that were part of the academic courses of university students majoring in accounting. They included the following five topics: (a) chain stores, (b) interest, (c) clearinghouses, (d) assets and liabilities, and (e) corporate finance. It is noteworthy that, since the participants of the present study were all majoring in electronics, the texts within the TBRT-AM module were totally unfamiliar to them. The same procedures were used in the selection of the passages that appeared in the TBRT-GM module. Unlike the two other modules, the texts within this module were expected to contain propositional content with which the participants of the study reported partially familiar. Five passages were selected from the "Microsoft Encyclopaedia Encarta" computer package. These texts included such general-digest topics as (a) natural hazards, (b) national parks and sanctuaries, (c) the sensory system of sharks, (d) classification of airplanes, and (e) mission to moon.

Each module within the TBRT included 40 items (i.e., the same number of items as appeared in the IELTS General Training Reading Module). The items measured participants' performance on five different reading tasks. The first group that measured participants' performance of a true-false task included twelve items. Each item was followed by three answers: true, false, and not given. The participants were expected to read the corresponding passages and
to decide whether the propositions expressed in the true-false items were given in the passages or not, and if yes, to make their own choice whether the items were true or false. The second set of items in each module aimed at measuring the participants’ performance of a sentence-completion task. The items in this set were eight open-ended sentences which could be completed in two ways. Following this set of items was a list of possible endings. The participants’ job was to read the corresponding passage and, on the basis of the information presented in the passage, to choose two possible endings from the list to complete each item. A third group of items measured the participants’ performance of an outlining task. This category included six items. The test takers were expected to read a passage. Each paragraph within the passage was labeled with a letter from the English alphabet. The participants were expected to choose from among a list of summaries the one that best represented the main idea of each paragraph. They would then match the summary for each paragraph with the label that signified that paragraph. Participants’ performance of the task of ‘eliciting the writer’s views’ was also measured. Five multiple-choice items followed a passage in each module; each item had three choices: yes, no, and not given. The test takers were expected to read the passage and to decide whether the propositions expressed in these five items were given in the passage or not, and if yes, whether they represented the views of the writer of the passage or not. The last set of items measured test takers’ performance of a skimming task. The nine items of this category asked the participants to skim the reading passage for two types of information: dates and proper nouns. The former included five items while the latter included four items. The test takers’ job was to skim the reading passage and to identify the date or the proper noun that was questioned in the item.

4.3. Procedures

In order to determine whether the items in the different modules of the TBRT were effective, malfunctioning or non-functioning, a pilot administration was of the TBRT carried out. Since the purpose of this process was to screen the items so that the most suitable ones would be included in the final versions of the TBRT, 80 items were included in the pilot version of each module (i.e., twice as many items as were necessary for the final version of the TBRT). The pilot version was then administered to a group of 36 university students majoring in electronics. All of these students took the TBRT-GM pilot module first. Then, these students were randomly assigned into two equal half-groups. One half-group took the TBRT-EM pilot module followed by the TBRT-AM pilot module while the second group took the TBRT-AM pilot module followed by the TBRT-EM pilot module. This procedure was necessary to control for probable practice effect. The results of the administration of the TBRT pilot version were then used for item analysis. After item analysis, from among the 80 items that appeared in each pilot module, the 40 items that had the best item facility and item discrimination indexes were chosen for inclusion in the final version of each corresponding TBRT module.

After the development of the final version of the TBRT, in order to determine whether the TBRT reading modules were suitable for data collection, it was vital that the modules be evaluated through a trial administration. The modules, along with the IELTS General Training Reading module (UCLES,
2000) were, therefore, administered to a group of 20 senior university students majoring in electronics. All these students took the IELTS General Training Reading and the TBRT-GM modules in one administration session, and the TBRT-EM and TBRT-AM modules in another session. To control for any probable practice effect, a counter-balanced design was used in each administration. That is, ten students were randomly assigned to the first-half group and the ten remaining students to the second-half group. In the first session, the first-half group first took the IELTS General Training Reading module and then the TBRT-GM module whereas the second-half group first took the TBRT-GM module and then the IELTS General Training Reading module. In the second administration session, the first-half group first took the TBRT-AM module and then the TBRT-EM module while the second-half group first took the TBRT-EM module and then the TBRT-AM module.

The final versions of TBRT modules and the IELTS were administered to a total of 578 junior and senior university students majoring in electronics. The procedure for the final administration of the tests was similar to that of the trial administration. Here again, for purposes of minimizing any probable practice effect, a counter-balanced design was used for test administration. In addition to these tests, the participants also took the Self-report Questionnaire. On the basis of their responses to the Self-report Questionnaire, and due to the text-familiarity assumptions of the study, 37 subjects who had reported a high-enough prior familiarity with the texts that appeared in the TBRT-AM module were discarded from the data.

A Principle Component Factor Analysis was also performed to examine the construct validity of the TBRT modules. The Varimax rotation method (with Kaiser Normalization) was used for this analysis. The scores of participants on each group of items were included in the analysis. Since five types of items were employed in each module, a five-factor solution factor analysis was performed. The result of factor analysis showed that the item type in each module loaded under each factor indicating the construct of these items. The results of factor analysis are presented in table 2 below.

As table 2 shows, two different types of items, i.e. skimming and True/False item type loaded under factor one. This may imply that the participants used a skimming strategy to answer True/False items, or vice versa. Factors 2, 3, and 4 show the construct of sentence-completion items, outlining items, and writer’s view items, respectively. The outlining items of the accounting module loaded under factor five. It is not known why this happened; this requires further investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBRT-GM Skimming</td>
<td>.808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS Skimming</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBRT-EM Skimming</td>
<td>.728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBRT-AM Skimming</td>
<td>.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBRT-EM True-False</td>
<td>.559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBRT-GM True-False</td>
<td>.554</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The reliability analyses revealed that the TBRT modules and the IELTS had satisfactory Spearman-Brown reliability coefficients. The Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient for TBRT-EM was 0.8527, for TBRT-AM 0.8527, and for TBRT-GM 0.8628. The IELTS had a Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.8617.

5. Analysis and Results
The data of the present study were submitted to a number of statistical analyses including (a) one-way analyses of variance, (b) univariate analyses of variance, (c) multi-variate analyses of variance, and (d) multiple regression analyses. The results of these analyses are presented under appropriate headings in the following sub-sections. All of the analyses reported below are based on the 95% confidence interval.

5.1. The Effect of Proficiency
The first aim of the study was to determine if participants’ level of language proficiency affected their LSP test performance at a given level of text familiarity. To this end, test takers’ performances across all proficiency levels (i.e., proficient, fairly proficient, semi-proficient, and non-proficient) were compared for significant differences. The results indicated that participants from different proficiency levels performed differently on tests with totally familiar, partially familiar, and totally unfamiliar propositional contents. In other words, no matter whether the propositional content of the test was familiar, unfamiliar, or partially familiar, the participants of the study at a given proficiency level performed significantly different from those at any other proficiency levels. Table 3 reports the results of the post hoc Scheffé test for the participants’ performances on tests with varying degrees of familiar propositional content.

Table 3: Scheffé Test Results for Participants’ Performance on Tests with Varying Degrees of Familiar Propositional Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Subjects’ Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>10.5242*</td>
<td>.8332</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fairly proficient</td>
<td>37.2087*</td>
<td>.8516</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>semi-proficient</td>
<td>44.7594*</td>
<td>.9497</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-proficient</td>
<td>26.6845*</td>
<td>.7027</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fairly proficient</td>
<td>37.2087*</td>
<td>.8516</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>semi-proficient</td>
<td>44.7594*</td>
<td>.9497</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>non-proficient</td>
<td>26.6845*</td>
<td>.7027</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The overall performances of the participants on the TBRT were also studied. The sum of their scores on the three TBRT modules (TBRT-EM, TBRT-GM, and TBRT-AM) indicated their total TBRT score. In order to determine if participants’ proficiency levels had an effect on their overall test performances, the main effect analysis of variance was conducted. The results indicated that their overall performances on the TBRT at each of the proficiency levels differed significantly from their performances at any of the other proficiency levels. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4: Scheffé Test Results for Participants’ Overall Performance on the TBRT across Different Levels of Language Proficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Proficiency</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>4.6165*</td>
<td>.2132</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>15.4778*</td>
<td>.2179</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>17.9092*</td>
<td>.2430</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>10.8613*</td>
<td>.1798</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>13.2927*</td>
<td>.2096</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>2.4314*</td>
<td>.2144</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second aim of the study was to determine if participants’ level of language proficiency affected their performances of a given reading task at different degrees of text familiarity. As it was delineated earlier (section 4.2. above), the present study set out to measure participants’ performances of five reading tasks: (a) true-false task, (b) sentence-completion task, (c) outlining task, (d) elicitation of writer’s views task, and (e) skimming task. Participants’ performances on each of these tasks were compared across different levels of proficiency and text familiarity.

The first task studied in this series was the true-false task. An analysis of variance was conducted to determine if the performances of participants on the true-false task at each level of text familiarity varied as a result of their proficiency levels. The results indicated that, in the context of a test with totally familiar propositional content, participants’ performances at each proficiency level differed significantly from those of the participants at other levels of language proficiency. In the context of tests with partially familiar propositional content, the performance differences between participants at each proficiency level with those at any of the other levels were significant.
except for that of semi-proficient versus non-proficient subjects. A similar finding was observed in the context of tests with totally unfamiliar propositional content. Here again, except for the performance difference between semi- and non-proficient students, the performances of students at any other proficiency level were significantly different in comparison to those of the subjects at other proficiency levels. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Scheffé Test Results for Participants’ True/False Task Performance on Tests with Varying Degrees of Familiar Propositional Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Subjects’ Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>6.5860*</td>
<td>1.5691</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>37.8912*</td>
<td>1.6038</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>50.3228*</td>
<td>1.7886</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>31.3052*</td>
<td>1.3234</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>43.7367*</td>
<td>1.5422</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>12.4316</td>
<td>1.5775</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>11.3799*</td>
<td>1.6618</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>46.9621*</td>
<td>1.6986</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>43.9687</td>
<td>1.6333</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>35.5822*</td>
<td>1.4016</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>39.9687</td>
<td>1.6707</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>4.3865</td>
<td>1.7222</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>11.9624*</td>
<td>1.7130</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>43.3582*</td>
<td>1.7509</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>47.8879</td>
<td>1.9526</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>31.3959*</td>
<td>1.4448</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>35.9255*</td>
<td>1.6836</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>4.5296</td>
<td>1.7222</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>20.3629*</td>
<td>2.2645</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>43.1246*</td>
<td>2.5812</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>16.9674*</td>
<td>1.9099</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>22.7617*</td>
<td>2.2256</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>5.7942</td>
<td>2.2765</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>15.7258*</td>
<td>2.1756</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>34.0685</td>
<td>2.2237</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>36.9788*</td>
<td>2.4800</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>18.3427*</td>
<td>1.8350</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>21.2530*</td>
<td>2.1383</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>2.9103</td>
<td>2.1872</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>18.4140*</td>
<td>1.8898</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>34.6110*</td>
<td>1.9316</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>37.2943*</td>
<td>2.1542</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second task studied in this series was a sentence-completion task. Students’ performances on this task across different proficiency levels at each point on the text familiarity cline were analyzed for significant differences. The results indicated that the performances of students at each proficiency level were significantly different from those of students at any of the other levels except for that of semi-proficient versus non-proficient subjects at each and every level of the text familiarity (See Table 6).

Table 6: Scheffé test for subjects’ sentence-completion task performance on tests with varying degrees of familiar propositional content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Subjects’ Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>20.9362*</td>
<td>2.2645</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>43.3044</td>
<td>2.3145</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>16.9674*</td>
<td>2.5812</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>43.1246*</td>
<td>1.9099</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>15.7258*</td>
<td>2.1756</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>34.0685</td>
<td>2.2237</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>36.9788*</td>
<td>2.4800</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>18.3427*</td>
<td>1.8350</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>21.2530*</td>
<td>2.1383</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>2.9103</td>
<td>2.1872</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>18.4140*</td>
<td>1.8898</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>34.6110*</td>
<td>1.9316</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>37.2943*</td>
<td>2.1542</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>16.1971*</td>
<td>1.5939</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variance analysis was also performed to determine if students’ level of proficiency affected their performances on outlining tasks at a given point on the text familiarity cline. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Scheffé Test Results for Participants’ Outlining Task Performance on Tests with Varying Degrees of Familiar Propositional Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Subjects’ Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>9.4982</td>
<td>2.4543</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>34.5321</td>
<td>2.5086</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>40.5073</td>
<td>2.7976</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>25.0339</td>
<td>2.0701</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>31.0091</td>
<td>2.4122</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>5.9752</td>
<td>2.4674</td>
<td>.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>8.4229</td>
<td>2.4093</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>37.3765</td>
<td>2.4626</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>44.2415</td>
<td>2.7463</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>28.9536</td>
<td>2.0321</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>35.8185</td>
<td>2.3680</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>6.8649</td>
<td>2.4222</td>
<td>.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>9.6774</td>
<td>2.4147</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>31.7390</td>
<td>2.4681</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>34.2257</td>
<td>2.7525</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>22.0616</td>
<td>2.0367</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>24.5483</td>
<td>2.3733</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>2.4867</td>
<td>2.4276</td>
<td>.769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen from Table 7, students in the non-proficient and semi-proficient groups did not show any significant difference in performance on the outlining task in tests with totally unfamiliar and totally familiar propositional contents. In the context of tests with partially familiar contents, the same students showed a significant difference in performance; however, this difference was so small that it could be neglected (sig=0.046).

Variance analysis was also performed to determine if students’ from different proficiency levels performed differently on the ‘elicitation of writer’s views’ task at any given point on the text familiarity cline (See table 8 for the results).

Table 8: Scheffé Test Results for Participants’ Writer’s View Task Performance on Tests with Varying Degrees of Familiar Propositional Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Subjects’ Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>7.8495</td>
<td>2.5531</td>
<td>.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>36.8594</td>
<td>2.6096</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>35.3039</td>
<td>2.9102</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>29.0100</td>
<td>2.1534</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>27.4545</td>
<td>2.5093</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>-1.5555</td>
<td>2.5667</td>
<td>.947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>8.2796</td>
<td>2.5505</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>38.6874</td>
<td>2.6069</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>38.3564</td>
<td>2.9072</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>30.4078</td>
<td>2.1512</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>30.0768</td>
<td>2.5067</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>-3.310</td>
<td>2.5641</td>
<td>.999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>12.7957</td>
<td>2.6451</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>36.1697</td>
<td>2.7036</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>42.1154</td>
<td>3.0151</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of this analysis revealed that students at each proficiency level performed significantly different from students at any of the other proficiency levels. However, there were two exceptions. First, the difference between the performance of non-proficient and semi-proficient students was not significant in the context of tests with varying degrees of familiar propositional content. Second, although proficient and fairly proficient students showed significant performance differences on tests with partially and totally familiar propositional contents at the 0.05 level, these differences were not significant at the 0.015 level in the context of partial text familiarity, and at the 0.025 level in the context of total text familiarity.

Analysis of variance was also conducted to determine if students’ proficiency level significantly affected their skimming task performances at any given level of text familiarity. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 9. The results indicated that students at each proficiency level performed differently from students at any of the other proficiency levels at all of the three levels of text familiarity. However, the mean difference between semi-proficient and non-proficient students in the context of tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents was not significant at the 0.002 level.

Table 9: Scheffé Test Results for Participants’ Skimming Task Performance on Tests with Varying Degrees of Familiar Propositional Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Subjects’ Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>23.3740*</td>
<td>2.2309</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>29.3197*</td>
<td>2.5997</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>5.9457</td>
<td>2.6592</td>
<td>.173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Familiar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>9.1995*</td>
<td>1.9527</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>38.1691*</td>
<td>1.9959</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>46.8827*</td>
<td>2.2259</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Unfamiliar</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly proficient</td>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>9.4982*</td>
<td>1.9151</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>38.7381*</td>
<td>1.9575</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi proficient</td>
<td>Non proficient</td>
<td>41.9967*</td>
<td>2.1830</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another set of analyses performed on the data concerned the effect of students’ proficiency level on their overall task performance. The sum of each students’ scores on a given task across the three TBRT modules (EM, GM, and AM) was taken as an indicator of his total score for that task. A main effect analysis of variance was then performed on the scores calculated in this way to see if students’ proficiency levels influenced their task performance. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 10 below.

The results indicated that, in the case of the true-false task, students’ performances at each proficiency level differed significantly from those at any
and all the other proficiency levels. In the case of the sentence-completion task, the results indicated that the performances of students at each proficiency level significantly differed from those at any of the other levels; in this case, the mean difference for non-proficient and semi-proficient students was not significant at the 0.023 level.

Students’ performances on the outlining task also resembled their performances on the sentence-completion task. Students’ performances at each proficiency level differed significantly from those at any of the other levels. As for semi-proficient versus non-proficient subjects, the mean difference was significant at the 0.05 level but not at the 0.004 level. In the case of the ‘writer’s view’ task, students’ overall performances at each proficiency level were significantly different from those at any of the other proficiency levels; however, the mean differences for semi-proficient and non-proficient students were not significant. Finally, the results of the analysis of variance for participants’ overall performances of the skimming task indicated that students’ overall skimming task performances at each proficiency level were significantly different from those at any of the other proficiency levels (See table 10 above).

5.2. The Effect of Text Familiarity
Another assumption of the study was that test takers’ degree of text familiarity could affect their test and task performances. Analyses of variance were performed to validate this assumption. The results indicated that text familiarity affected participants’ overall test performance, and that the performance differences among students at the three levels of text familiarity were statistically significant. In other words, participants’ test performances at each level on the text-familiarity cline differed significantly from their test performances at any of the other text-familiarity levels. Table 11 presents the results of the post hoc Scheffé test for students’ overall test performances as they relate to the different degrees of text familiarity.

Table 11: Scheffé Test for Students’ Test Performance Across Different Levels of Text Familiarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>3.8096*</td>
<td>.1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>9.0351*</td>
<td>.1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>5.2255*</td>
<td>.1768</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students’ task performances at each text-familiarity level were also evaluated. The results of the analysis of variance for all of the five reading tasks under study revealed a significant difference in students’ performances on these tasks across different text-familiarity levels. Table 12 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 12: Scheffé Test for Students’ Task Performance Across Different Levels of Text Familiarity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True-False</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>7.8096*</td>
<td>.7895</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>24.1220*</td>
<td>.7895</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>16.3124*</td>
<td>.7895</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence Completion</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>11.7606*</td>
<td>1.0131</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>19.2237*</td>
<td>1.0131</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>7.4630*</td>
<td>1.0131</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>7.9791*</td>
<td>1.1616</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>21.1953*</td>
<td>1.1616</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>13.2163*</td>
<td>1.1616</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s View</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>9.4270*</td>
<td>1.2367</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>21.2200*</td>
<td>1.2367</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
<td>11.7930*</td>
<td>1.2367</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>10.9057*</td>
<td>.9642</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>25.2208*</td>
<td>.9642</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. The Effect of Task Type

Analyses of variance were also performed to determine if task type influenced students’ performances in the context of text familiarity. The aim of these analyses was to determine if students’ performances on different reading tasks were influenced differently when the tasks appeared in tests with (a) totally familiar contents (i.e., TBRT-EM), (b) partially familiar contents (i.e., TBRT-GM), and (c) totally unfamiliar contents (i.e., TBRT-AM).

In the first place, students’ performances on different tasks in the context of tests with totally familiar propositional contents were compared for significant differences. The results indicated that only students’ performances on the
sentence-completion task differed significantly from their performances on the other tasks (i.e., true-false, outlining, writer’s-view, and skimming). Students’ performances on different tasks in the context of tests with partially familiar propositional contents were also compared. Here again, only the performances of students on the sentence-completion task differed significantly from their performances on each of the other tasks. Along the same lines, students’ performances on different tasks in the context of tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents were also compared. Once more, the results indicated that students’ performances on the sentence-completion task differed significantly from their performances on each of the other tasks. Moreover, the difference between students’ performances on true-false versus writer’s-view tasks, though significant at the 0.05 level, were not significant at the 0.007 level in the context of tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents (See table 13 below).

Table 13: Scheffé Test for Students’ Differential Task Performance at a Given Text Familiarity Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Familiarity</th>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totally Familiar</td>
<td>True-false</td>
<td>Sentence-completion 23.5136*</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outlining -1.0783</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view -2.5632</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -3.8817</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence-completion</td>
<td>Outlining -24.5918*</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view -26.0767*</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -27.3953*</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>Writer’s-view -1.4849</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -2.8035</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view</td>
<td>Skimming -1.3185</td>
<td>1.4662</td>
<td>.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially Familiar</td>
<td>True-false</td>
<td>Sentence-completion 27.4646*</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outlining -.9088</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view -.9458</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -.7856</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence-completion</td>
<td>Outlining -28.3734*</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view -28.4104*</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -28.2502*</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>Writer’s-view -3.699E-02</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming .1232</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view</td>
<td>Skimming .1602</td>
<td>1.4970</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totally Unfamiliar</td>
<td>True-false</td>
<td>Sentence-completion 18.6152*</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outlining -4.0049</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view -5.4652*</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -2.7829</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence-completion</td>
<td>Outlining -22.6201*</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view -24.0804*</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming -21.3981*</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>Writer’s-view -1.4603</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skimming 1.2220</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writer’s-view</td>
<td>Skimming 2.6823</td>
<td>1.4463</td>
<td>.487</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of variance was also performed to compare students’ performances on different tasks over the whole text familiarity. The results of this analysis are presented in table 14 below. As table 14 shows, students’ performances on the sentence-completion task differed significantly from their performances on each of the other tasks. The differences between students’ performances of the true-false task and those of the skimming task, though significant at the 0.05 level, were not significant at the 0.002 level. Moreover, the differences
between students’ performances on the true-false task and the outlining task, though significant at the 0.05 level, were not significant at the 0.027 level. The differences among students’ performances on the remaining tasks were not significant (See table 14).

Table 14: Scheffé Test fo Students’ Overall TBRT Task Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Type</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True-false</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence-completion</td>
<td>23.1978*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>-1.9973*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s-view</td>
<td>-2.9914*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>-2.4834*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence- completion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>-25.1951*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s-view</td>
<td>-26.1892*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>-25.6812*</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>-0.9940</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>-0.4861</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s-view</td>
<td>5.080</td>
<td>.6032</td>
<td>.950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4. Interaction Analyses

Another assumption of this study was that the interaction between any given pair and also all of the independent variables under study would be a source of variance in test results. Therefore, analyses of variance were performed to determine if the interactions between the independent variables of the study (i.e., language proficiency, text-familiarity, and task type) were responsible for variation in students’ performances of individual tasks on the one hand, and their overall TBRT test performances on the other. The results of interaction analyses are presented in tables 15 and 16.

Table 15: Interaction Analysis for Students’ Task Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corrected Model</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total TBRT</td>
<td>99289.918*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9026.356</td>
<td>1067.506</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True-False</td>
<td>805143.769*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73194.888</td>
<td>434.122</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence completion</td>
<td>413358.555*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37578.050</td>
<td>135.364</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>522514.228*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47501.293</td>
<td>130.155</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s view</td>
<td>541105.077*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49191.371</td>
<td>118.894</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>758802.310*</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>68982.028</td>
<td>274.307</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>619126.861*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>619126.861</td>
<td>73221.342</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True-False</td>
<td>4357068.122*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4357068.122</td>
<td>25841.980</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence completion</td>
<td>1531972.403*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1531972.403</td>
<td>5518.487</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>4716119.822*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4716119.822</td>
<td>12922.276</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s view</td>
<td>4927619.755*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4927619.755</td>
<td>11909.900</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>4745318.464*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4745318.464</td>
<td>18869.756</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>Total TBRT 19586.237*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9793.119</td>
<td>1158.188</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True-False</td>
<td>139364.085*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>69682.042</td>
<td>431.288</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence completion</td>
<td>92307.952*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46153.976</td>
<td>166.256</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>109376.768*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>54688.384</td>
<td>149.847</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s view</td>
<td>111934.149*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>55967.075</td>
<td>135.271</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>154528.727*</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>77264.363</td>
<td>307.242</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency Level</td>
<td>Total TBRT 76857.626*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25619.209</td>
<td>3029.868</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True-False</td>
<td>636428.556*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>212142.852</td>
<td>1258.229</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence completion</td>
<td>310237.813*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>103412.604</td>
<td>372.514</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>393359.785*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>131119.928</td>
<td>359.272</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s view</td>
<td>415181.452*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>138393.817</td>
<td>334.493</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>584204.278*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>194734.759</td>
<td>774.363</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>Total TBRT 169.696*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28.283</td>
<td>3.345</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>True-False 4800.395*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>800.066</td>
<td>4.745</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of interaction analyses led to the following conclusions:

- The interaction between text familiarity and proficiency level led to significant differences in students’ performances on the true-false task.
- The interaction between text familiarity and proficiency level led to significant differences in students’ performances on the outlining task at the 0.05 level but not at the 0.029 level.
- The interaction between text familiarity and proficiency level did not lead to any significant difference in students’ performances on the sentence-completion, writer’s-view, and skimming tasks.
- The interaction between task type and text familiarity led to significant differences in students’ overall test performances.
- The interaction between task type and proficiency level led to significant differences in students’ overall test performances.
- The interaction between proficiency level and text familiarity led to significant differences in students’ overall test performances at the 0.05 level, but not at the 0.009 level.
- The interaction between text familiarity, task type, and proficiency level led to significant differences in students’ overall test performances at the 0.05 level, but not at the 0.027 level.

5.5. Regression Analyses

A more important aim of this study was to determine the relative impact of each of the independent variables on students overall and differential test and task performances. The assumption of the study was that text familiarity was responsible for the greatest share of variance. The results of data analysis, however, rejected this assumption and revealed that language proficiency had by far the greatest share of variance. The second greatest share of variance belonged to task type. The smallest portion of variance was accounted for by text familiarity.

These conclusions resulted from a set of multiple regression analyses. The first regression analysis compared the relative impact of text familiarity and language proficiency on students’ overall test performances. It was found that language proficiency accounted for 79.5% of the variance whereas text familiarity only accounted for 18.6% of the variance. Moreover, the exclusion
of text-familiarity did not affect the relative importance of language proficiency. In addition, the tolerances for proficiency and text familiarity were 0.01 and 0.01 respectively, suggesting that multi-collinearity was unlikely. In other words, the findings were not sample-dependent (See Bryman and Cramer, 1999, p. 263). Table 17 presents the results of this regression analysis.

Table 17: Regression Analysis for Overall Test Performance as the Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>6.778</td>
<td>.129</td>
<td>.795</td>
<td>52.691*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>6.778</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.795</td>
<td>55.349*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>1.905</td>
<td>.147</td>
<td>.186</td>
<td>12.989*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second regression analysis took students’ performances on tests with different degrees of familiar propositional content as its dependent variable. In this case, too, language proficiency had the strongest relationship with the results. In the context of tests with totally familiar propositional contents, language proficiency accounted for 61.2% of the variance in comparison to task type (another independent variable of the study) which accounted for only 18.3% of the variance. Here again, the exclusion of ‘task type’ did not affect the impact of proficiency. Moreover, no evidence of multi-collinearity was observed. In the context of tests with partially familiar propositional contents, language proficiency and task type were found to take care of 61.2% and 15.7% of the variance, respectively. No fluctuation in the impact of language proficiency was observed due to the exclusion of task type from the analysis. Here again, the tolerances for language proficiency and task type were 0.01 and 0.01, respectively, indicating the lack of multi-collinearity. In the context of tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents, too, the greatest share of variance belonged to language proficiency. While task type accounted for only 16.5% of the variance, language proficiency accounted for 61.2% of the variance. In addition, the impact of language proficiency did not fluctuate after the exclusion of task type from the analysis. No evidence of multi-collinearity was observed either. Table 18 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 18: Regression Analysis for Text Familiarity as the Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Text Familiarity</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>16.375</td>
<td>.407</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>40.191*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>16.375</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>41.301*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task Type</td>
<td>3.384</td>
<td>.274</td>
<td>.183</td>
<td>12.345*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial text Familiarity</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>17.094</td>
<td>.418</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>40.857*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>17.094</td>
<td>.410</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td>41.686*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task Type</td>
<td>2.998</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>10.575*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Text Unfamiliarity</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>15.885</td>
<td>.394</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>40.277*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>15.885</td>
<td>.386</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td>41.180*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task Type</td>
<td>2.965</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>11.116*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative impacts of text familiarity, task type, and language proficiency on students’ task performances were also studied. Once more, the greatest share of variance belonged to language proficiency. It accounted for 58% of the
variance. Task type and text familiarity accounted for 15.9% and 14.1% of the variance respectively. The exclusion of either or both of the other variable(s) (i.e., task type text familiarity) from the analysis did not affect the importance of language proficiency. A more interesting finding was that task type had a greater share of variance than text familiarity. The results also indicated no evidence of multi-collinearity; the tolerances for language proficiency, task type, and text familiarity were 01.00, 01.00, and 01.00, respectively. Table 19 reports the results of regression analysis for task performance as the dependent variable.

Table 19: Regression Analysis for Task Performance as the Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>16.451</td>
<td>.257</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>64.118*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>16.451</td>
<td>.252</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>65.369*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Type</td>
<td>3.116</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>17.905*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>16.451</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>66.406*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Type</td>
<td>3.116</td>
<td>.171</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>18.190*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>4.788</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>16.140*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another regression analysis was conducted to study the relative impacts of text familiarity and language proficiency on students’ performance of each reading task. It was found that language proficiency had the strongest effect on task performance. In relation to the true-false task, language proficiency accounted for 73.4% of the variance while text familiarity accounted for 12.4% of the variance. In relation to the sentence-completion task, language proficiency was responsible for 57.8% of the variance while text familiarity accounted for only 20.9% of the variance. In connection to the outlining task, language proficiency was found to be in charge of 57% of the variance while text familiarity had a share of only 12.5% of the total variance. As for the writer’s-view task, language proficiency accounted for 54.8% of the variance and text familiarity for 14.1% of it. Finally, language proficiency accounted for 68.6% of the variance in relation to the skimming task whereas text familiarity accounted for only 16.6% of the variance. Table 20 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 20: Regression Analysis for Task Type as the Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True-False</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>19.322</td>
<td>.445</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>43.449*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>19.322</td>
<td>.437</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td>44.174*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>3.905</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>7.455*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence-Completion</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>13.620</td>
<td>.477</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>28.543*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>13.620</td>
<td>.461</td>
<td>.578</td>
<td>29.514*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>5.880</td>
<td>.553</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>10.641*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlining</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>15.235</td>
<td>.546</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>27.895*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>15.235</td>
<td>.540</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>28.212*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>3.990</td>
<td>.647</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>6.169*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer’s View</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>15.284</td>
<td>.580</td>
<td>.548</td>
<td>26.368*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>15.284</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>.548</td>
<td>26.743*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Text Familiarity</td>
<td>4.713</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>6.887*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skimming</td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>18.794</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.686</td>
<td>37.983*</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language proficiency had the greatest share of variance in connection to the true-false task and the smallest share in relation to the writer’s-view task. Text familiarity, on the other hand, had its maximum influence on the sentence-completion task and its minimum influence on the true-false task. The results of regression analysis for individual reading tasks did not indicate the existence of multi-collinearity. The tolerances for text familiarity and language proficiency in the context of each reading task were 01.00 and 01.00, respectively.

6. Conclusion

One of the major aims of this study was to determine if students’ level of proficiency resulted in any significant differences in their task performances at each specific point along the text-familiarity cline. The findings of the study indicated that students’ performances of the true-false and skimming tasks when the tasks appeared in a test with totally familiar propositional contents were a function of their level of proficiency. In the same context, the performances of only the semi-proficient students compared to the non-proficient participants did not show any meaningful difference on sentence-completion, outlining, and writer’s-view tasks. In the context of a reading test with partially familiar propositional contents, only the performance differences observed between semi-proficient and non-proficient students when performing true-false, sentence-completion, writer’s-view, and outlining tasks were not significant. Moreover, in the context of a reading test with totally unfamiliar propositional contents, only the performance differences observed between semi-proficient and non-proficient students when performing true-false, sentence-completion, outlining, and writer’s-view tasks were statistically significant.

A second aim of the study was to determine whether there was any meaningful relationship between students’ level of proficiency and their test performance in the context of a text-familiarity cline. The results of the present study indicated that students’ test performances were a function of their level of proficiency, no matter whether the propositional contents of the tests were totally familiar, partially familiar, or totally unfamiliar. In other words, at all points on the text-familiarity cline, proficiency affected students' test performances.

Moreover, the study aimed at finding out whether students’ level of proficiency affected their test performances regardless of the probable effects of text familiarity; the results of the study also supported this contention. Students' proficiency levels affected their test performances when the tests consisted of a combination of totally familiar, partially familiar, and totally unfamiliar types of propositional contents.

The study also aimed at determining the probable impacts of students’ degrees of text-familiarity on their test performances. The results of the study supported the existence of such an influence; prior knowledge of the propositional contents of reading tests affected students' performances on
these tests positively. Test takers performed significantly better on tests with totally-familiar propositional contents. This finding lends credence to the existence of a text-familiarity cline. Moreover, the results indicated that the performances of students at each point on the text familiarity cline differed from their performances at each of the other points on the same cline. The results also revealed that complete and partial text-familiarity served as an advantage for students taking a reading test. This finding further supported the claims of Alderson and Urquhart (1985a, 1985b), and Clapham (1996).

Another aim of the study was to find out if text familiarity affected students' reading task performances. The results of the study indicated that students' performances on a given task at a given point on the text-familiarity cline differed significantly from their performance on the same task at any other point on the text-familiarity cline. This finding also supported Clapham's (1996) claims.

Another aim of the study was to explain how students’ level of language proficiency affected their performances on a given task across different text-familiarity levels. The results indicated that students’ performances on the true-false, outlining, and skimming tasks varied in accordance to their level of proficiency when these tasks appeared in tests with totally familiar, partially familiar, or totally unfamiliar propositional contents. However, the differences observed between the performances of the semi-proficient and non-proficient subjects on sentence-completion and writer’s-view tasks on tests of varying degrees of familiar propositional contents were not significant. This finding supported the reading threshold hypothesis (Clarke, 1980; Bernhardt and Kamil, 1995) that, in other words, in order to be able to draw on prior knowledge (that is, to activate schemata), readers need to have already reached a specific level of language proficiency (a threshold level) to be able to disentangle themselves from the web of formal and structural features of the text.

The impact of task type on students' test performances was also studied in the context of text familiarity. The aim was to determine if students’ performances on a given task was comparable to their performances on other tasks at the same text-familiarity level. The findings indicated that differences between the sentence-completion task and all the other tasks (true-false, outlining, writer’s-view, and skimming) were significant when these tasks appeared in tests with varying degrees of familiar propositional contents. In addition, in tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents, the differences between the true-false task and the writer’s-view task were also meaningful.

The impact of task type on students' test performance was also studied in the context of students’ overall test performance (i.e., regardless of the text-familiarity cline). The differences between the sentence-completion and true-false tasks, on the one hand, and all the other tasks, on the other, were significant. The one-to-one comparisons of the remaining tasks also afforded significant results, but, there were three exceptions: (a) outlining versus writer’s-view, (b) outlining versus skimming, and (c) writer’s-view versus skimming. These comparisons afforded no significant results.

Steps were also taken to determine if the interaction between two or more of the independent variables of the study resulted in any significant difference in students’ test and task performances. Task performance was studied in the
The context of the interaction between students’ degree of text-familiarity and level of proficiency. The results indicated that this interaction only affected students’ performances of the true-false and outlining tasks. The writer’s-view, sentence-completion, and skimming tasks were not influenced by this interaction. As for students’ overall test performance, the interaction between text familiarity and task type was significant. Students’ overall test performances were also affected by the interaction between text familiarity and language proficiency. Moreover, the interaction between task type and language proficiency caused a meaningful difference in students’ overall test performance. Finally, the interaction among text familiarity, task type, and language proficiency was an important source of variance in students’ overall test performance.

A comparison of the results of regression analyses reported in this study with the findings of Clapham’s (1996) study is intriguing indeed. While Clapham attaches greater importance to text familiarity (accounting for 38% of the variance) in comparison to language proficiency (accounting for 26% of the variance), the present investigation came up with somewhat different results; language proficiency did not appear to account for less than 50% of the variance in any of the comparisons made between any given pair of the independent variables under study in relation to students’ overall as well as differential test and task performances. Moreover, the very high tolerance indexes reported in this study reject any chance for multi-collinearity to occur. This indicates that the findings of the present study are far from being sample-dependent (See Bryman and Cramer, 1999, p. 254). Moreover, the effect of text familiarity on task performance was found to be smaller than the effect of task type. On these grounds, it can safely be argued that perhaps the development and use of LSP tests is out of consideration. As such, the results of this study are somewhat close to Lipson’s (1984) contention that LSP testing is not really justified. The greater impact of task type, in comparison to text familiarity, on students’ performances, however, stands against Lipson’s claims. The findings of the study indicated that, instead of giving students passages with esoteric propositional contents, it might be better to give them a rich variety of reading tasks, and to measure their performances on them.

The findings of the present study were all based on the 95% confidence interval. In other words, all of the significant findings reported above were significant at the 0.05 level (i.e., Alpha=0.05). Some of these findings are not significant if we modulate the confidence interval. The reader’s attention is specifically drawn to the following considerations:

- The interaction between text familiarity and language proficiency did not cause meaningful variation in students’ overall test performances at the 0.009 level.

- The interaction among text familiarity, language performance, and task type did not cause significant variation in students’ overall test performances at the 0.027 level.

- The interaction between text familiarity and students’ proficiency level was not a source of significant variation in students’ overall performances on the outlining task at the 0.029 level.
• The differences observed in the true-false task performances of proficient versus fairly proficient students on tests with totally familiar propositional content were not significant at the 0.001 level.

• The differences observed in the outlining task performances of proficient versus fairly proficient students on tests with partially familiar propositional contents were not significant at the 0.007 level.

• The differences observed in the outlining task performances of proficient versus fairly proficient students on tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents were not significant at the 0.001 level.

• The differences observed in the outlining task performances of proficient versus fairly proficient students on tests with totally familiar propositional contents were not significant at the 0.002 level.

• The differences observed in the writer’s-view task performances of proficient versus fairly proficient students on tests with partially familiar propositional contents were not significant at the 0.015 level.

• The differences observed in the writer’s-view task performances of proficient versus fairly proficient students on tests with totally familiar propositional contents were not significant at the 0.025 level.

• The differences observed in the skimming task performances of non-proficient versus semi-proficient students on tests with totally unfamiliar propositional contents were not significant at the 0.002 level.

• The differences observed in the overall sentence-completion task performances of non-proficient versus semi-proficient students were not significant at the 0.023 level.

• The differences observed in the overall outlining task performances of non-proficient versus semi-proficient students were not significant at the 0.004 level.

• The differences observed in the students’ overall performances of the writer’s-view and true-false tasks were not significant at the 0.007 level.

Any interpretation of the findings of the present study should consider these points. In addition, the findings of this investigation were based on the performances of the students who took part in the study and should not be overgeneralized to the whole population of Iranian university students majoring in electronics.

References


Designing an ESP course for Chinese University Students of Business
Gao Jiajing

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Abstract

Despite the growing demand for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction in China, ESP courses are still limited to learning specific lexicon and translating texts. With the continued expansion and participation in the international business arena, much attention should be drawn to the design of ESP courses which can help to prepare learners for future professional communication. In response to these needs, this article is an attempt to provide a guided approach to ESP course design for Chinese senior business students at tertiary level. It first reviews current literature and case studies related to ESP course design. When designing an ESP course, the primary issue is the analysis of learners’ specific needs. Other issues addressed include: determination of realistic goals and objectives; integration of grammatical functions and acquisition skills; and assessment and evaluation. Although ESP contexts view these issues from their own perspectives, the proposed framework for ESP course development is argued as being of benefit to teachers who may encounter problems in ESP course design.

Key words: ESP, course design, needs analysis.

Introduction

With the globalization of trade and economy and the continuing increase of international communication in various fields, the demand for English for Specific Purposes is expanding, especially in countries where English is taught as a Foreign Language. Even though ESP courses have become popular recently in China and many institutions and universities offer ESP courses for senior students, for years the instruction has been limited to specialized lexicon and sentence structures, an approach which fundamentally ignores the learners’ personal interests. This often leads to low motivation in their English studies and, in turn, poor performance later when they use English in their future profession.

In response to these problems, it is important to help students adapt to today’s competitive society, meaning that university English faculties need to design ESP courses that can best prepare learners for future professional communication. Designing a new ESP course involves issues such as what to teach, how to teach or where to start. Based on an integrated approach, this
paper puts forward a sample ESP course framework and critically analyzes the core elements of ESP course design: needs analysis; course goals and objectives; course details; materials design; and finally, assessment and evaluation.

**Literature review**

The growth of the ESP movement is a result of the fast development of the world economy and has been greatly influenced by ELT methodology and the development of Applied Linguistics. The first dominating approach to ESP course design focused on the grammatical and lexical items of a particular field of English. With the popularity of Communicative Language Teaching, language use became the key emphasis in the ESP world, known as the functional-notional approach. In the early 80s, it was found that there was a certain need underlying a particular language use and in addition, the process of learning and learning skills needed to be taken into account (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Analyzing the specific needs of a particular learner group serves as the prelude to an ESP course design, because it determines the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of an ESP course. Chen (2006) also reached the conclusion that ESP course designers should explore and identify the learners’ potential needs in the first place. The current concept of needs analysis in ESP, according to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998, p.125), includes consideration of the following aspects:

A. Professional information about the learners: the tasks and activities learners are/will be using English for- *target situation analysis* and *objective needs*.

B. Personal information about the learners: factors which may affect the way they learn such as previous learning experiences, cultural information, reasons for attending the course and expectations of it, attitude to English- *wants, means, subjective needs*.

C. English language information about the learners: what their current skills and language use are- *present situation analysis* – which allows us to assess (D).

D. The learners’ lacks: the gap between (C) and (A)- lacks.

E. Language learning information: effective ways of learning the skills and language in (D)- learning needs.

F. Professional communication information about (A): knowledge of how language and skills are used in the target situation- linguistic analysis, discourse analysis, genre analysis.

G. What is wanted from the course.

H. Information about the environment in which the course will be run – *means analysis*.

In the ESP curriculum design for Greek EFL students of computing, Xenodohidis (2002) states that, in addition to needs assessment, the course development process should also include determination of goals and objectives. In order to avoid de-motivation, the goals should be realistic and the objectives should be appropriate to the goals (Nunan, 1988, as cited in Xenodohidis 2002).

When designing an ESP course, another issue to take into consideration is that grammatical functions, acquisition skills, terminology, specific functions
of discipline content are crucial parts of the ESP course. In the meantime, general English language content should also be integrated into the course since content-related language cannot function without general English language content (Chen, 2006).

Based on the professional experience developing the curriculum for Language Preparation for Employment in the Health Science, Gatehouse (2001) pointed out that when developing an ESP curriculum, three abilities need to be integrated into it for the purpose of successful communication in occupational settings. The three abilities encompass the ability to use particular jargon in specific context; to use generalized set of academic skills; and finally the ability to use everyday informal language to communicate effectively. Therefore, ESP course designers should take into account how to integrate the three abilities into the components of an ESP course.

Assessment and evaluation are also two important issues that should be included in the course design process. Assessment is a process of measuring what learners know and what they can do, whereas evaluation reveals how well the ESP course works with emphasis not only on successful factors but also on modifying less successful aspects (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Background to the Business English course

Chinese is the national language in China and English is taught as a foreign language. All subjects are taught in Chinese at the majority of colleges and universities, while English is included in the school curriculum as a compulsory subject. With the adoption of English as the international language for communication and its wide use all over the world, more and more colleges and universities place an emphasis on running different kinds of English courses for their students to enable them to become competitive and competent enough in their future career.

At the Guilin Institute of Technology in China, there is a compulsory undergraduate course in Business English for senior students at the Department of International Business. The purpose is to raise their English proficiency in business settings as well as to prepare them for successful communication in their future profession. After three years’ study in International Business and general English, students have a professional understanding of International Business and their English level is sufficient to start the Business English course. Following this pathway of study, it is an appropriate time in their university studies for them to embark upon English studies which meet their future business needs.

Overview of an university English for Business Purposes course

The Business English course is conducted extensively and is oriented towards pre-experience learners because they usually have no experience in international business upon course entry. Since the Business English course runs parallel to those subject courses, students can relate their subject knowledge to the Business English context. The target learners’ performance is assessed at the end of the semester because the course is compulsory along with other subjects. It focuses broadly on the four basic language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking because it is unrealistic for the students to predict which specific skill their future jobs will require.
It is the school regulation to use textbooks in class, however, there does exist the freedom to choose a suitable one for the target group. The resources that are used in class mainly focus on one textbook with some extra in-house materials selected as supplements. For example, the latest business newspaper articles and some visuals are often used for listening practice.

Most of the materials are authentic because students’ language proficiency is sufficiently advanced (all students passed College English Band 4 and most of them even passed Band 6). All the dialogues in the textbook are recorded from real business contexts. Meanwhile, the reading texts are samples from international company brochures and newspapers, not written for language teaching purposes, yet nevertheless very interesting for the learners due to their relevance to the content-based instruction they study at university. It is possible to conduct a pre-course needs analysis directly with the participants through questionnaires and informal discussions and interviews. Course evaluation can be done by means of tests, student feedback, teacher self-reports and documents.

Before the course starts, students have acquired specific content-based knowledge. From the first year to the third year they take a compulsory general English course and most of them have passed the College English Test (Band 6). This Business English course serves as the bridge between their professional knowledge and their English proficiency to further develop their English competency in the real business context.

Goals and objectives

The overall aim of the course is to fully prepare the senior students for their future career because after the graduation they are likely to seek employment in international companies. Before recruitment, resumes are sent out to companies and interviews are conducted, therefore, job application constitutes a vital part of the course. In their future business career, they may find themselves working in a company where English is widely spoken, or using English as a medium of communication with other business people from all over the world.

Goals

By the end of the course, learners should be able to familiarize themselves with business terminology and write competently in English. For example, they should be capable of writing appropriate business letters, e-mails as well as a good resume. They must have the ability of understanding intermediate business articles and newspapers, understanding and conducting general business conversation as well as maintaining relationships with the target community.

Objectives

The objectives for each skill are as follows:

Listening:
To understand telephone messages and conversations in business settings
To understand relevant business news reports.

Speaking:
To communicate effectively with native speakers in job interviews as well as business settings.
To respond effectively to telephone messages and job interviews

Reading:
To understand a variety of texts, such as business reports, documents and newspaper articles.

Writing:
To write resumes and business-related letters or e-mails.

Course details

The course takes place over two academic semesters, a duration of 30 weeks and the total length is 120 hours (2 hours/day; 2 days/week). Group sizes are usually between thirty and forty students. The ‘target learners’ are senior undergraduates at the Department of International Business and the content of the course is made up of textbook and in-house materials and visuals.

Outline for the whole course

The course covers four language areas - listening, writing, speaking and reading in which the following are taught:
Speaking: Introductions; job interview; using the telephone; conversations.
Writing: Resume; job application letters; business letters; e-mails; notes; memos.
Listening: Telephone messages; conversations with business contacts; business news.
Reading: Business documents; newspaper articles.
Considering the target learners’ overall language proficiency, the authentic materials are considered to be appropriate although they may find the vocabulary unfamiliar. The career content is not a problem because they possess sufficient background knowledge of international business taught in Chinese.

Needs Analysis

In order to conduct a thorough needs analysis, a triangulation of questionnaires, informal discussions with learners and other lecturers, interviews with ex-students and lecturers, and observation of former students’ actual workplace experiences is conducted before the course. During the course, learner performance and assignments are assessed, whilst tests results are analyzed after the course. This combination of pre-course, mid-course and post-course analyses is conducted in order to see what students need to learn and improve upon through this course. The amalgamated feedback is then used as a basis for consideration of how the following year’s course should be designed.

Rationale

The use of questionnaires is one of the most common research methods because it can produce a large amount of information about many different issues such as communication difficulties, preferred learning styles, preferred classroom activities, attitudes and beliefs (Richards, 2001). In this particular research context, questionnaires are initially used to elicit information about
learners’ attitudes towards this course, and what they want to learn in this Business English course before the semester commences. The content of the questionnaire is crucial for the course designer because it has direct influence on whether the real needs can be identified.

Interviewing the teachers who taught the general English course in the previous year, the course designer can gain insights into the learners’ current English proficiency, their specific weaknesses and strengths in the four skills. Moreover, informal discussions and interviewing can be adopted as follow-up sources of information to be conducted individually or in groups. Informal discussion allows students to convey their ideas and thoughts spontaneously and does not take much time to plan or prepare. More in-depth exploration of information can then be obtained by interviews before the design of the questionnaire, which may help designers to get a sense of what the focus and topics should be in the questionnaire (Richards, 2001). Therefore, interviews can be conducted throughout the semester when the learners encounter new problems. Last, but not the least, with carefully prepared questions, interviewing the ex-students is another effective way of gathering data and it could be very valuable to observe those ex-students in operation because they have a profound understanding of the effectiveness of the course. Assessing learners’ performances and assignments during the course can be very effective to know their real problems during this course. After analysing the feedback, readjustment to the following course could be valuable for both teachers and learners. Furthermore, a mid-term test and end of semester examination are also important to check their progress, to ascertain what they already know as well as what they do not know.

**Needs Analysis**

A combination of pre-course, mid-course and post-course analysis is conducted in order to see what students need to learn and improve upon through this course. The following (Table 1) shows the structure of the needs analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-course Needs Analysis</th>
<th>Questionnaires</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Informal Discussions</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mid-course Needs Analysis</th>
<th>Feedback from learners’ performance and assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mid-term Test Results</td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Post-course Needs Analysis</th>
<th>Final Test Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Table 1. The Structure of the Needs Analysis**
Pre-course Needs Analysis

The use of questionnaires can produce a large amount of information about many different issues such as communication difficulties, preferred learning styles, preferred classroom activities, attitudes and beliefs (Richards, 2001). In this particular research context, questionnaires are initially used to elicit information about learners’ attitudes towards this course, and what they want to learn in this Business English course before the semester commences. Moreover, informal discussion allows students to convey their ideas and thoughts spontaneously and does not take much time to plan or prepare.

Interviewing the teachers who taught the general English course in the previous year enables the course designer to gain insights into the learners’ current English proficiency, their specific weaknesses and strengths in the four skills.

Finally, with carefully prepared questions, interviewing former students is another effective way of gathering data. It is very worthwhile observing their actual performance in the workplace because they have a profound understanding of the effectiveness of the course.

Mid-course Needs Analysis & Post-course Needs Analysis

Assessing learners’ performances and assignments during the course can be an effective means in ascertaining their real problems during this course. After analysing the feedback, readjustment in the subsequent course is useful for both teachers and learners. Furthermore, a mid-term test and end of semester examination are also important to check their progress, since this shows what they already know as well as what they do not know.

Course framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Events</th>
<th>Rhetorical Awareness and Skill Areas</th>
<th>Language—usage</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing personal CVs, Business letters, E-mails</td>
<td>Layout; Structuring paragraphs; using proper rhetorical style</td>
<td>tense</td>
<td>positive action verbs; model verbs; useful phrases</td>
<td>Enquiring; Apologizing; Questioning</td>
<td>Letters &amp; CVs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction, Telephoning, Social conversation</td>
<td>Taking and leaving message; Making offers and requests; Agreeing and disagreeing; Giving reasons</td>
<td>tense</td>
<td>Phone numbers; Spelling names; Prepositions</td>
<td>Persuading; Negotiating; Turn-taking</td>
<td>Meetings, job interviews, making appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Skimming for</td>
<td>tense</td>
<td>business</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The starting point for this Business English course framework are the target events in the four language skills in which the senior Business students need to perform in their future professions. These target events are broken down into rhetorical awareness and related skill areas, along with associated functions. The framework also considers linguistic aspects-grammar and vocabulary involved in each target event. However, the course does not simply concern linguistic items and micro skills, but also materials and career content topics for each individual class.

**Assessment**

Self-assessment and peer assessment result in increased motivation, autonomy, direct involvement through the implementation of the following: oral production (student self-checklist; peer checklist; listening to tape-recorded oral production to detect pronunciation or grammar mistakes); self-revision or peer editing; and listening comprehension (Brown, 2001). Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) also state that peer assessment is greatly effective as a learning aid which is beneficial in large classes because teachers are frequently burdened with grading assignments. A range of class activities focusing on achievement, involvement and progress can be provided for assessment such as asking them to grade their efforts made in class and attitude to learning. Students can also be requested to reflect upon how well they use the target language to fulfill tasks, and identify what they are not able to do (Graves, 2001). Achievement assessment can be used to examine the extent to which learners have learned what has been taught. Furthermore, the result of the assessment can inform teachers about individual learner’s achievement of the learning objectives as well as provide the feedback on the effectiveness and quality of this course (Brown, 1996).

**Course evaluation**

**Observation**

Robinson (1991) points out that observing past students who are working may be an effective means in seeing to what extent the ESP course has fully prepared them for workplace needs. After such observation, the course designer is then able to reorganize the course materials for the following year students.
Mid-course and end-of-course evaluation

Since this course lasts two academic semesters, a mid-course evaluation questionnaire can be given to learners in order to fine-tune the course before it finishes (Feez, 1998). End-of–course evaluation can be achieved through analyzing learners’ outcomes, particularly, their final examination results and performance. They can also be asked to review their work and keep diaries of what they think easy/hard, interesting/uninteresting. The findings from such diary input can be analyzed periodically (Hedge, 2000).

Student feedback and teacher self-evaluation

After each class, it is helpful to ask the learners to evaluate the class to provide feedback to the teacher (Hedge, 2000). However, informal discussion with individual students could be a more appropriate and spontaneous means for students to express what they really think about the course because in a more formal situation such as interviewing a group of students may feel inhibited. It could also be valuable for teachers to evaluate themselves by filling in a self-assessment sheet or keeping a log book (Hedge, 2000).

Conclusions

This paper has investigated the origins of ESP development and then discussed some key issues relevant to ESP course design on the basis of the empirical studies by ESP professionals. ESP course design should start from analyzing learners’ particular needs and wants. Based on learners’ needs and their future language use, goals and objectives of the course can be determined, a process which involves consideration of specific grammatical functions, terminology comprehension, and the abilities required for future workplace communication. Last but not least, assessment and evaluation should also be integrated into the design process to ensure that these goals and objectives are achieved. This article finally puts forward a proposal for an ESP course framework targeted to senior students of International Business in Guilin Institute of Technology. It is hoped that this study may bring benefits to other ESP course designers involved in developing similar courses in Chinese universities or similar contexts.

References


Real Flowers or Plastic Flowers in Learning Medical English: A Reply to Kashani, Soheili, and Hatmi

Seyyed-Abdolhamid Mirhosseini
Board of Education, Tehran, Iran

I am one of the “young tutors” (p. 88) Kashani, Soheili, and Hatmi refer to in their article “Teaching English to Students of Medicine: A Student-Centered Approach” in the November 2006 issue of The Asian ESP Journal. I appreciate the contribution by their paper to medical ESP education in Iran, that is, their announcement of the fact that beside the mainstream practices of ESP teaching, alternative approaches are also being practiced in Iranian educational contexts. However, having been involved in what Kashani et al call a ‘student-centered approach’ for the past four years, in this brief note I would like to raise a number of questions and concerns about the article on behalf of the community who are pursuing an honest challenge to bring about transformations in the institutionally ossified practices of English language education at Tehran University of Medical Sciences.

I present my concerns in four sections dealing with different aspects of my questions and comments on the paper: the way the paper has misrepresented the educational practices it dealt with; questions on the mismatching criteria and comparing the non-comparable as the basis of the authors' arguments; questions about technical considerations and apparent inconsistencies in the research reported in the paper; and finally some general concerns about the education of English as a foreign language to students of medicine.

Misrepresenting the educational practice

I do not suppose I can provide elaborate descriptions of the context about which the authors wrote (and in which I was involved as well) but I should raise the issue that both the so called ‘established syllabus’ and what the authors call 'a student-centered approach' appear to be too thinly described for the readers of the paper to imagine what went on during the 'five semesters'. The lack of illustration of the research context would leave the readers with no choice but to take for granted that the educational practice being discussed was in fact called ‘a student-centered approach’ that was based on published literature on 'student-centeredness'.

My perception of the authors’ easygoing label of ‘student-centered approach’ and misunderstandings it might create for the readers would be that, to say the least, the authors were possibly not aware of what was included in the educational practices they wrote about. A brief illustration of the approach under scrutiny, beyond simplistically stating that “materials consisted of clippings and extracts from different books or internet” (p. 89) and that “games and computer instructions… were two significant activities throughout a period of two and half years” (p. 89), could have helped the readers gain a
better picture of what they read about. The authors' discussion of the context of the study and their review of the theoretical bases of the teaching approach they investigate could have involved at least sketches of teaching for understanding (Wiske, 1998) and critical language education (Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pennycook, 1999) as very broad theoretical foundations of the transformative practices pursued at the Language Center of Tehran University of Medical Sciences. Even a very brief paragraph about the literally hundreds of pages of reading materials, tens of hours of multimedia sessions, tens of hours of challenging class discussions, hundreds of pages of student writings, etc. would have provided the readers with a minimum of information about the context being considered. The least this could do was to tell the readers that, although with a rudimentary look at classroom practices one might be reminded of what has been vaguely referred to as 'student-centeredness', the actual approach went far beyond. Therefore, the fairly extensive literature review, rendered almost irrelevant as it is, could have focused on actual theoretical foundations of the approach and this could have probably led to more meaningful discussions.

The questions that invite a response by the authors, then, are: Who called the approach student-centered? What evidence and description does the paper provide (beyond outright labeling) to help readers decide if they are reading about 'student-centeredness' or something else under the label? On what ground did the literature review focus on the so called 'student-centered approach'? Did the authors review the literature to conclude that the approach was student centered or did they do it because the implementers of the approach called it so?

Talking about real flowers in terms of plastic flowers

The authors’ core arguments are based on the calculation of correlations between the so called ‘achievement levels’ of two groups of students (Group I following the so called ‘student-centered approach’ and Group II following the ‘established syllabus’) on the English subtest of the National Comprehensive Examination of Basic Sciences for medical students, administered by the Iranian Ministry of Health and students’ scores on a placement test. I would not focus on the significant-enough questions about the nature of the screening test; about what the authors mean by asserting that the so called ‘screening test’ “has been successfully administered” (p. 88); about what it means “to read English texts as short as 10 words” (p. 88) as part of the ‘screening test’; and about the nature of the National Comprehensive Examination. However, the question that does need to be addressed is: Why did people with two radically different types of learning experiences have to take the same test?!

What the authors label as 'student-centered approach' (that in fact goes far beyond labels) is what I would name real flower, that views language as ‘meaning creation’ and education as “investigating seriously and sincerely what it means to be human...[which] involves learning through practice, reflection, conversation, collaboration, courage, and commitment” (Leggo, 2004, p. 30). I do not find it meaningful to compare it with the plastic flower of the ‘established syllabus’ which stifles language to mere ‘communication’ – at best – and confines education to “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor” (Freire, 1972, p. 45) of academic knowledge. (I borrow the terms real flower and plastic flower form
Muinr Fasheh, 2001). What was the nature of the learning experiences of the two groups of students whose scores were compared? What about the nature of and the criteria for the two types of scores? What could the results turn to be if the second group was evaluated in terms of the criteria fitting the practices and experiences of the first group?

An obvious point in the paper where this problem of comparing the non-comparable is awkwardly manifested is where the authors report their calculation of correlations between final grades on students’ English courses during three terms and their scores on standardized tests:

In order to get some idea about the subjective evaluation system practiced by the tutors in Group I in comparison with the standardized objective tests for the established course, correlations were calculated between final scores on the three English courses which the students at this level had passed, namely, general English, Medical English I and Medical English II with the students’ performance on the standardized screening test of September 2002 on the one hand, and the English test presented to them by the Ministry of Health in March 2005 on the other. …we found significant correlations [for Group II]... The absence of significant correlations [for Group I] …may manifest the unreasonable subjectivity of evaluation on this project. (p. 93) (emphasis added)

What would it mean to correlate interval-scale type scores based on ‘standardized objective tests’ with nominal/ordinal type grades based on a ‘subjective evaluation system’? Would it be reasonable to expect any kind of go-togetherness? Perhaps the unreasonable comparison is the reason of the ‘absence of significant correlations’ rather than ‘unreasonable subjectivity’. After all, it would hardly make sense to compare (correlate) real flowers with plastic flowers.

Questionable procedures and discussions

Even if the approach under discussion were well represented as ‘student-centered approach’ and even if robust research procedures were followed, I would still find a number of concerns that remain to be explained by the authors:

The illustration provided in the paper about the approach under scrutiny is confined to the description that “the students did not follow a particular textbook, they ignored the established criteria for English courses at the School of Medicine, they did not take any objective tests, and they negotiated their final grades on the final essay-type tests with their young tutors” (p. 88) and to the contention that “teaching-learning materials consisted of clippings and extracts from different books or internet...Games and computer instructions on preparing PowerPoint slides for English lectures were two significant activities throughout a period of two and half years” (p. 89). With this description in hand, would it be possible for the readers of a research article to shape even the vaguest imagination of what the approach and the practices included?
The claim that “younger students rarely know what is good for their language development” (p. 85), and the subsequent suggestion for limiting ‘student-centeredness’ to older students is a major cornerstone of the authors’ discussions and conclusion. However, this claim and suggestion appears to be avoiding a crucial question: What does ‘old’ mean? Could we view people who are selected as the national top students based on otherwise trusted ‘established’ criteria, as ‘old’ enough or should they be treated the ‘established’ way, that is, as people not mature enough for an approach which “requires some maturity on the side of the students” (p. 92).

A related question is about the authors’ reference to Stevenson and Sander (2002). They report that Stevenson and Sander “found that first year medical students somehow rejected the value of student-centered learning methods” (p. 92). However, with a more careful view, Stevenson and Sander’s (2002, p. 27) paper reads “first year medical students can be suspicious of the value of student centred learning methods. Teachers hoping to use these methods should acknowledge student suspicion and work to help students see the value of these techniques to encourage their full participation”. I suppose ‘requiring help for appreciating the value and full participation’ could hardly mean ‘rejection’.

Finally, the authors interestingly refer to the students whose scores were analyzed as “participants” (p. 88). However, I failed in my search through the paper for evidence of any type of ‘participation’. I doubt that any of the students of either group or any of the people involved in the so called ‘student-centered approach’ were even basically aware of this research.

Some general concerns about medical ESP

In this final section I should like to raise some broad issues about common trends in the context of Iranian medical ESP education. The authors rightfully state that “it is when the students are not considered or included in the process, and not informed about why they are doing what they are doing that curricular decision-making becomes administrative fiat” (p. 85). Is it not the case about ‘the established syllabus’ (which of course suffers thin illustration in the paper)?

Among educational approaches and procedures the authors reviewed, compared and simply rejected under the label of ‘student-centeredness’, I found a number of interesting points: “change in the role of the teacher as a facilitator of students’ learning and no more as a resourceful authority” (p. 85); “individualized learning which provides the conditions that allow much individual freedom of choice in the learning process” (p. 86); “respectful and caring relations” (p. 86); “knowledge is constructed by students” (p. 87); “students take responsibility for their own learning” (p. 87); “the importance of sociability and human connections…[that] will remove fears of failure” (p. 87); and “there is no standard student” (p. 88). Regardless of labels, why would any of these ideas fail in any educational context? How would it make sense to confine ‘respectful and caring relations’ to particular groups of people? People may hardly appear “failed to make much” (p. 92) out of these values unless their achievements are ‘measured’ with lifeless academic criteria.

It seems to be more meaningful, instead of mainstream trends of terminology-oriented practices in ESP education, to concentrate on creating learning experiences through which students can critically construct their own
subjective meanings. It would also be more constructive, instead of pushing people into narrowly defined ‘standard objective tests’, to spend resources on creating learning environments which could help people experience language learning as constructing the real flower of their 'own language' rather than forcing them into a futile struggle for demonstrating their 'achievements' through the plastic flower of test scores.

Finally, I express my agreement with Kashani et al about their conclusion that “supervision should not be rejected” (p. 94) but I should add that supervision criteria should not be taken for granted. Neither should supervisors be left unquestioned for years without allowing for alternative views. I would also agree with a modified version of their concluding sentence: Administrators would serve education more meaningfully if they critically face mainstream views and apply meaningful and honest research findings for the betterment of learning.

References


Stevenson, K & Sander, P. (2002). Medical students are from Mars – business and psychology students are from Venus – University teachers are from Pluto? Medical Teacher, 24(1), 27–31.
