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# The ORTESOL Journal

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## In this issue

This issue of the *ORTESOL Journal* contains articles that reflect the diverse interests of TESOL professionals. Contributors represent the range of settings where TESOL education occurs, including K-12, university, and adult education programs.

- In the lead article Mary Lee Field examines recent research in teaching reading strategies to ESL students. Based on this research she extrapolates five principles that teachers can use in the classroom and gives example activities for each.
- Sarah Rilling describes a study in which computer tools are used to identify lexical phrases marking organization in actual university lectures. She advocates using such computer tools to develop ESL materials and proposes related student tasks. She concludes with an annotated bibliography of recent articles and books on corpus-based research and teaching.
- Koichi Sawasaki explores a typological difference between Japanese and English related to the relative prominence of topic versus subject. He describes four characteristics of Japanese that are related to its relative topic-prominence and the influence of those characteristics on the interlanguage development of Japanese learners of English.

## Also in this issue:

- Teaching Notes: Mary Lee Johnson Lasswell is interested in ways of teaching creative writing in the ESL classroom. In this *teaching notes* she describes how she uses experience, written materials, and questions to help children write poetry and see themselves as poets.
- Teaching Notes: Mary Ann Lakin describes how video can be used to teach writing to students at various levels. She presents pre- and post-viewing writing activities such as semantic mapping and writing a sequel to a specific video. She concludes with a set of general topics for effectively using video in the classroom.
- Review: Craig Machado reviews *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading In an Electronic Age*. In this thought-provoking review Machado recommends the book and challenges readers to discuss the impact of the electronic age on their biases and assumptions about reading and on what they do as thinkers, readers, and teachers.

- Review: Janet Swinyard reviews *Adult ESL/Literacy From the Community to the Community: A Guidebook for Participatory Literacy Training*. She describes the book as useful for those working in adult ESL and literacy training and specifically those interested in programs that draw on and enhance the strengths of immigrants, refugees, and their communities.
- Review: Mona Esposito reviews the book *Critical Explorations*, part of the *Tapestry* series. In the review she describes the strength of the book as its ability to contextualize writing instruction with other skill areas in various topics, such as business, social justice, as well as science and technology.
- Review: Sonja Towne reviews *Language Test Construction and Evaluation*. She describes how the book leads the reader through the step-by-step process of test construction. Towne recommends the book as a useful resource for those interested in designing tests for the language classroom.

--The Editors

**But How Do I Use It in  
the Classroom?**  
Using current research on metacognitive issues  
to enhance the teaching of reading

Mary Lee Field  
*Wayne State University*

*Research conducted in the past six or seven years has both clarified our understanding of how readers use cognitive strategies in the reading process and also emphasized the need for conscious teaching of strategies. Research, however, is often difficult to translate into classroom practice. This paper extrapolates five pedagogical principles from the research on metacognitive strategies. Each principle is referenced and discussed, then placed in a teaching context with specific techniques, tools, and classroom activities.*

*The five principles include: (a) Make students aware of, teach directly, and make explicit the reading strategies which they are using, (b) Accompany the teaching of reading strategies with metacognitive instruction that gives students ways to evaluate and monitor their use of those strategies, (c) Use metacognitive training to enhance students' transfer of reading strategies from L1 to L2, (d) Encourage students to know their own learning styles and reading processes, and (e) Teach students that good readers have control over the variety of processes and strategies which they use. The article concludes with reflections on teachers' needs to become more aware of their own use of metacognitive strategies.*

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Mary Lee Field, an associate professor in the Interdisciplinary Studies Program at Wayne State University, has taught EFL in Greece, Japan, China and Yugoslavia.

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A few years ago, as I began a detailed reading of a paragraph with a small group of adult learners, I pointed to the second sentence where three major points were introduced. Asking the students to number the points in their text, I turned to write them on the board.

"How did you know to do that?" one student abruptly called out.

"Do what?" I replied.

"Put numbers by them; list them," he answered.

Although I began my response by describing analysis as the process of dividing something into parts and looking at each part, a more honest voice inside me was saying, "How could I *not* know to do that?" I could not imagine someone doing a detailed reading without looking for steps, parts, or lists of important points. The student's question made me realize that I needed to make my techniques explicit. Thanks to him, I stopped to name and describe specific strategies, and that led to a discussion of building a conscious awareness of how they could use various reading tactics. The lesson became, in fact, a lesson in metacognitive control of reading strategies.

When we teach reading strategies--like previewing, skimming, scanning--we are often naming or making more conscious the reading habits which students may already use. But when we teach students *where* and *when* and *why* to use a skimming or scanning technique, we are transforming skills into more conscious strategies, giving students the ability to select, adjust, apply, manipulate and control their own learning strategies and techniques. Concurring with Carrell (1989), I am using the word "strategies" to refer to more conscious actions which readers choose or select; "skills" refers to less conscious abilities which may or may not be called into use. "Metacognitive," despite the rather abstract and theoretical associations it may carry, is roughly equal to "knowing how we know," a way of thinking about our own knowledge and understanding its sources and its limits. Far from being abstract, theoretical, and removed from the classroom, metacognitive issues figure as frequent parts of our work as teachers.

Research on metacognitive issues has appeared in the fields of psychology, cognitive psychology, linguistics, first language reading, and second language acquisition and reading. However, what we do when we read is not clearly understood. How much we process text by using bottom-up strategies like decoding, or how much is top-down processing such as inferencing **and** using background knowledge, is the grounds for lengthy debate (Coady, 1979; Eskey, 1988; Grabe, 1991; Samuels & Kamil, 1984). Given that these processes are not all that well delineated, several views of reading and teaching reading coexist: the holistic (Krashen, 1988; Smith, 1986), the psycholinguistic (Goodman, 1967), and the interactive (Carrell, 1988; Grabe, 1988).

However, the research on these views often elicits from classroom teachers the legitimate query, "But how do I use the results of that research in my classroom?" My purpose here is to illustrate how to use that research. Articles about reading in the **best** known journals (*TESOL Quarterly*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Journal of Reading*), along with papers given at TESOL conferences and two recent books, constitute a sample of the research since 1989 that emphasizes metacognitive training in the L2 reading classroom; each work is referenced and discussed below. From them I have distilled five pedagogical principles that may usefully shape our ESL lesson plans, and I have found specific techniques and tools for teaching them. These five principles, each highlighted, are accompanied by sample classroom activities.

— ONE: *Make students aware of, teach directly, and make explicit the reading strategies which they are using.* Most studies argue, directly or implicitly, for more discussion of and more specific teaching of the reading strategies that are available to the students. In the ESL classroom, these discussions need to **be** explicit by the intermediate level (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura, & Wilson, 1981) and may become more frequent as the students' language proficiency improves.

One technique for making those strategies more conscious is to survey students about their practice. Figure I presents an adaptation of Barnett's (1989) "Perceived Strategy Use" questionnaire as adapted for ESL students (for other surveys, see Carrell, 1989; Hosenfeld et

al., 1981). To use Barnett's list, students at the intermediate or advanced levels of reading first answer the question individually; a subsequent discussion with others encourages them to make conscious numerous issues that readers need to consider. For example, pairs or small groups (3 or 4 students) who focus on question #4 are exploring the need to use their background knowledge (also called content schema) when reading. This exploration can lead them to discover how to build upon what they know and how to monitor their comprehension by asking questions (internally or publicly) about the information which eludes them. Many of our reading class textbooks include exercises for skimming, scanning, and predicting. Some include exercises to help activate background knowledge or monitor comprehension. But to assign activities without explanations of the strategies they target and the value of those strategies does too little to develop the students' conscious awareness of what they are doing. It is the *consciousness* of strategy use that gives students control over those strategies and enhances their reading ability. Students may have considerable background information on a topic, and teachers may provide additional information, vocabulary, and explanations, but the process of applying that information to the text is not automatic for all students. When it is not automatic, explicit metacognitive instruction may provide the bridge to comprehension.

Another way to make students more aware of their reading strategies is to focus on how they tackle vocabulary problems. Group discussion of question #10 in Figure I allows students to compare the various strategies they use and to consider using other strategies which their peers find successful. These discussions, rather than merely helping students understand the day's reading assignment, build a set of strategic skills.

Developing a metacognitive level of understanding strategies--especially when taught *in addition to* instruction in specific strategies such as we find in ESL textbooks like *Reader's Choice* (Baudoin, Bober, Clarke, Dobson, & Silberstein, 1988) is one of the central messages of current research (Carrell, 1989; Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989; Shih, 1992).



• TWO: *Accompany the teaching of reading strategies with metacognitive instruction that gives students ways to be conscious of and to evaluate their use of those strategies.* For students to begin to develop metacognitive awareness they need not only to identify the strategies they use, but also to think about which ones are most appropriate, to select them consciously, and to be able to shift, adjust, change gears, and evaluate how they use each strategy. Researchers, while conducting studies on the value of being able to adjust and evaluate strategy use, have used teaching devices that the classroom teacher can easily adapt. One study of metacognitive strategy training for ESL students (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989) includes two exercises for the reading classes: a pre- and post-reading semantic map exercise and a partial semantic map (cloze) exercise for developing background knowledge, vocabulary and metacognitive awareness. The study presents a general format to follow in setting up semantic mapping exercises, beginning with a brainstorming session, then discussion, and finally writing out the results in the form of a map somewhat like the example for a reading about sharks given in Figure 2. As a post-reading exercise, students revise the pre-reading map according to the information that they gathered—rather than predicted—from the reading passage. Teachers will probably want to take some time to make up sample maps of a reading before introducing this activity into a classroom. It is always best to have one to fall back upon if students find it difficult to generate enough information to construct one like that in Figure 2. Transparencies with overlays are particularly effective, since the teacher can prepare a partial map that may get students started and a complete overlay which will provide a check of the maps that students prepare.

The "CLOZE version" of a semantic mapping exercise given in that study (see Figure 3) provides some, but not all, of the main ideas in the article. Students may fill in the blanks either before or after reading the text. As a pre-reading exercise they must predict the content, an activity which usually increases their motivation to read the selection. As a partial map used after students have read the passage, the answers they supply serve to evaluate comprehension. Whether used before or after, these cloze mapping procedures reinforce an awareness of the text's organization and content.

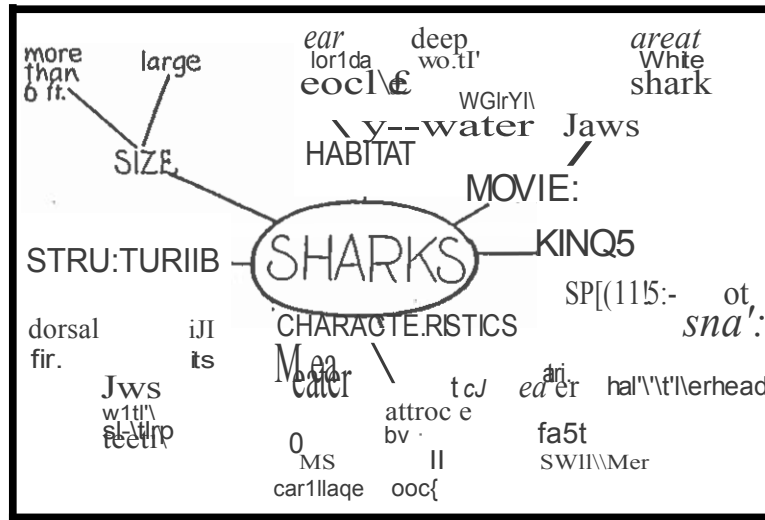


figure 2. Prereading semantic map. (Source: Carrell, Pharis, and Liberto [1989, p. 652].)

A study of the use of •advance organizers,• charts that look rather like semantic maps (Grolier, Kender, & Honeyman, 1990), explored the long-range effects of providing metacognitive instruction. The students who were given instruction in how, when, and where to use pre-reading strategies performed better and went on to improve both their performance levels and their ability to use these strategies. One way to make the how, when, and where explicit is with the experience-text relationship (ETR) method, (Carrell, Pharis, & Liberto, 1989) which begins with a teacher-directed discussion of the background information and experience which students have, then moves to a reading of the text, and concludes with making explicit connections between the material in the text and the experiences and/or knowledge of the students. Those connections can be made by showing the class some pictures which illustrate the topic of the reading and asking them to describe the pictures (lower intermediate and higher beginning levels), giving students two or three questions to discuss in small groups (intermediate levels), or having them write a few sentences or a paragraph connecting the reading to their own experience (higher

5. Fill in the following blanks with information from the preceding passage.

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levels). These exercises provide students with techniques for activating their background knowledge that they can use in future reading tasks.

c. death

Risk Factors for Heart Disease

a. cholesterol

b.

c.

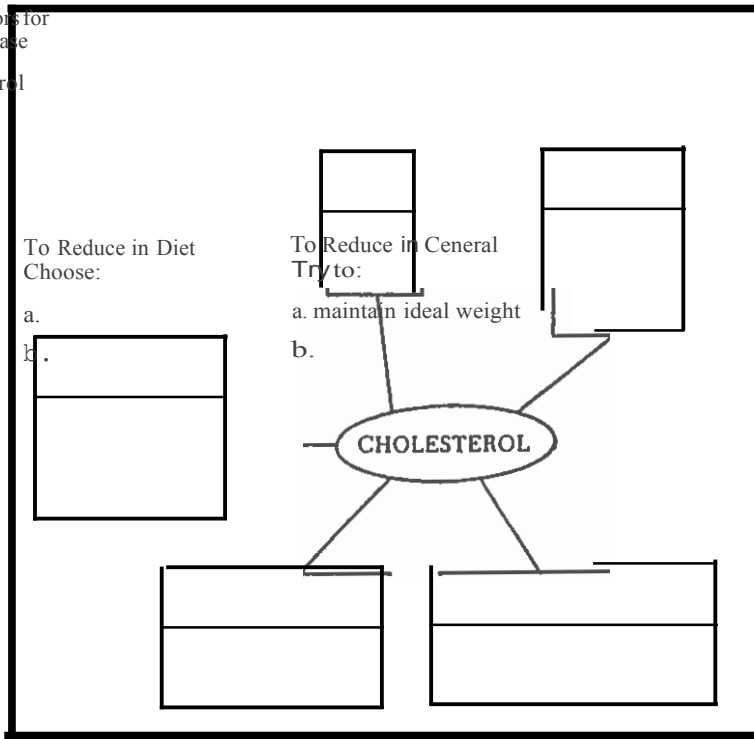


Figure 3. Sample cloze map. (Source: Carrell, Pharis, and Liberto (1989, p. 661).)

• THREE: Use metacognitive training to enhance students' transfer of reading strategies from L1 to L2. Whenever possible, ESL teachers need to help students reflect on their understanding of L1 practice and processes. Even the most informal class discussion in which students talk about what and how much they read in L1 will make their reading habits conscious. A simple questionnaire (see Figure 4) provides more detailed information and gives students a

1. What materials do you most often read in your native language? Mark with 1 most frequent, 2 frequent, 3 often, 4 sometimes, 5 rarely.
- school textbooks
  - novels and short stories
  - science fiction
  - children's literature
  - comic books
  - newspapers and magazines
  - biographies
  - travel guides
  - reference books
  - dictionaries
  - encyclopedias
  - atlases
  - maps
  - globes
  - video
  - audio
  - CD-ROMs
  - DVDs
  - e-books
  - e-audiobooks
  - e-magazines
  - e-newspapers
  - e-referenc
  - e-dictionaries
  - e-encyclopedias
  - e-atlases
  - e-maps
  - e-globes
  - e-video
  - e-audio
  - e-CD-ROMs
  - e-DVDs
2. On the average, how many hours per day do you spend reading?
- 1 or less
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - 5
  - more than 5



Figure 4. A reading preferences survey.

•FOUR: Encourgt studtns to know their own /taming stylts and to be aware of which stylts art best suited to ttrlain typts of reading tasks. Recent studies show that individual and cultural



differences have an impact on reading behavior (Carrell & Anderson, 1994; Ebnnan & Oxford, 1990; Reid, 1987). Those differences influence learning style preferences. In other words, field dependent students prefer strategies different from those preferred by field independent students. Likewise, students who receive similar descriptions on the four scales of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI) will prefer similar reading strategies. Different cultures value different reading behaviors and implicitly promote different learning styles; thus, it behooves the reading teacher to watch for and to try to identify both the individual and the culturally shaped preferences which have an impact on a student's reading performance. Moreover, preference for strategies that may interfere with good reading will transfer as readily as those which enhance good reading. The EFL student whose culture emphasized reading sacred texts (i.e., memorizing passages to recite) will approach a text differently, and less holistically, than the EFL student who reads stories and novels for pleasure.

Hewett (1990) explored several ways that reading behavior may be influenced by culture. When we teach strategies, are we aware of our students' cultural beliefs, learning styles, and assumptions about reading? What may seem perfectly normal reading behavior for us may be quite rare in the native language reading practice of our students. Learning styles which we value may be less valued in the students' cultures. The points on Hewett's list (see Figure S) should make every teacher stop and think about what we do in the reading class. We need to ask our students if a specific strategy seems awkward or difficult; we need to discuss their learning styles and directly address the cultural factors which shape their reading habits. Hewett (1990) listed selecting as one strategy to examine when a teacher suspects that cultural elements may be interfering with students' reading. When a student selects a minor point as the main one, what led to that selection? A cultural assumption about how a text is organized? A student's learning style (reinforced by cultural values) which emphasizes personal feelings as the basis for judgements? Getting students to talk about the process they went through to make that selection will highlight their selection processes and get them thinking at the metacognitive level. Small group discussion where students compare their processes are useful, but the teacher must circulate and

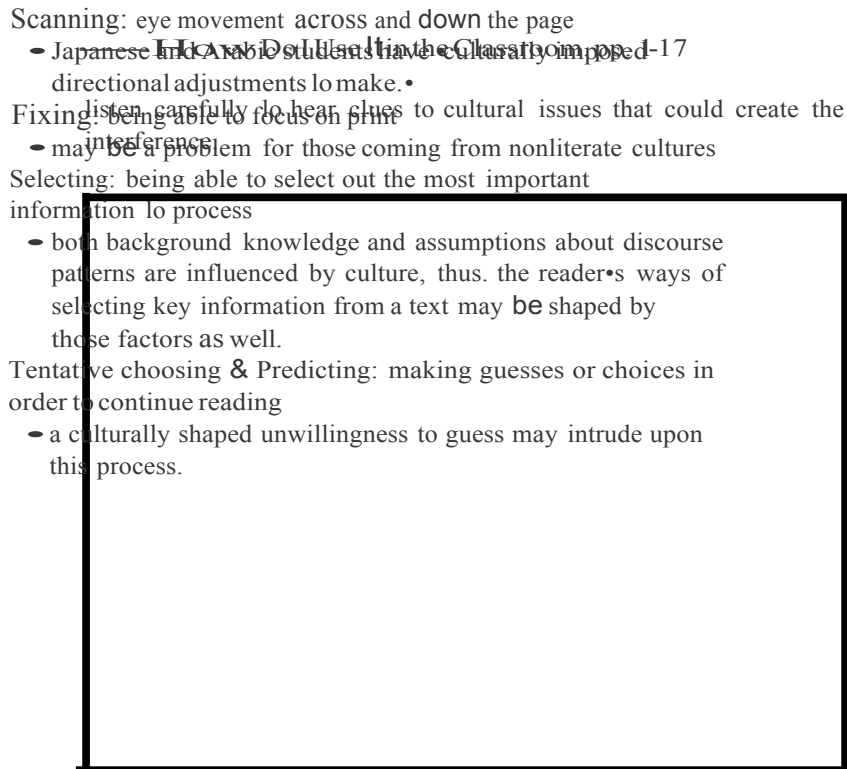


Figure S. Summary of •The role of culture.• (Source: Hewett [1990, pp. 67-71].)

•FIVE: Teach students that good readers are conscious of and have control over the variety of processes and strategies which they use. This is the student's final or highest level of metacognitive awareness. Students need to know what the various strategies are (e.g., what is guessing from context, what is skimming), when to use various strategies (depending on text type and purpose for reading), and how to adjust strategies (e.g., what to do when your background knowledge is very weak). Finally, they need to know why they are doing all of these things. Teachers can make this level of awareness explicit by emphasizing to students that readers fall along a continuum which Devine and Eskey (1992) described as moving from tactical to strategic. Their distinctions tease apart the reading behaviors of those who have various reading skills which they use (e.g., looking words up

You can see it in the empty factory buildings, decaying infrastructure and polluted waste. Economic upheaval plagued the 1980's. Over 36 million Americans now live in poverty, according to a September 1992 Census Bureau Report. People are working longer hours for less pay, fewer benefits and with less job security than their parents.

in a dictionary, using background knowledge) and those who not only have skills but know when to use, adapt and adjust them. Both tactical and strategic readers seem to monitor their comprehension while reading; however, the strategic reader is more likely to try several strategies to solve a reading problem while the tactical reader tends to give up after one try.

Class activities which illustrate both the variety of strategies available and the flexibility of switching or using multiple strategies will build the students' strategic reading habits. Illustrating the variety of strategies available to tackle a difficult passage reinforces the need for flexibility. The underlined parts of the passage in Figure 6, for example, would be difficult for readers at the intermediate level. Still, an intermediate reader could use all of the following strategies to get meaning from the passage:



Figure 6. Everyone's business. (Source: McGonson and O'Toole (1993, p. 18])

- activate background knowledge (what do they know about economic conditions in America? In their own countries?)
- skip some words and go on to guess others (e.g., ignore decaying infrastructure but try to guess polluted)
- use context to guess the underlined words (what often results when waste materials are disposed of? what kind of office would put out a report about people and poverty?)

- tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty enough to skip the first sentence and look for the general meaning in the last two
- mark the whole passage, return to it later and judge its importance in understanding the whole reading
- look up words in the dictionary.

A reader with a good metacognitive awareness of the reading process will recognize not only these possible strategies but also the need to use them wisely and read strategically.

#### Conclusion

In the course of training to become teachers, we have gained experience and reached levels of reading ability that are automatic for us. Many of us were not explicitly taught reading strategies, although school children in the last decade may have teachers who are more aware of the value of such explicit teaching (Gamer, 1987; Grolier et al., 1990; Pressley, Borkowski, & Schneider, 1987; Pressley & Woloshyn, 1995). Only in facing the challenge of teaching second language reading do we discover the need to understand our own reading processes better and to make conscious these reading behaviors which are automatic for us. To do that we must reexamine our own practice, our own metacognitive processes.

Shih's (1992) summary in Figure 7 illustrates that our responsibilities go beyond the simple teaching of reading strategies and include building the students' metacognitive awareness of when, where, how, how often, and why to use those strategies. Classes which provide not only the techniques but also the reasons for strategic reading improve students' immediate performance and prepare them for the future. We teach them how to approach all texts with the confidence of finding answers and with a good idea of when to use which strategies.

### Strategy Instruction

- explain *what* the strategy is
- give reasons *why* they should use the strategy
- explore *when* the strategy is useful
- give ways to evaluate *how well* they used the strategy
- students need plenty of *practice*—first structured and then for independent use

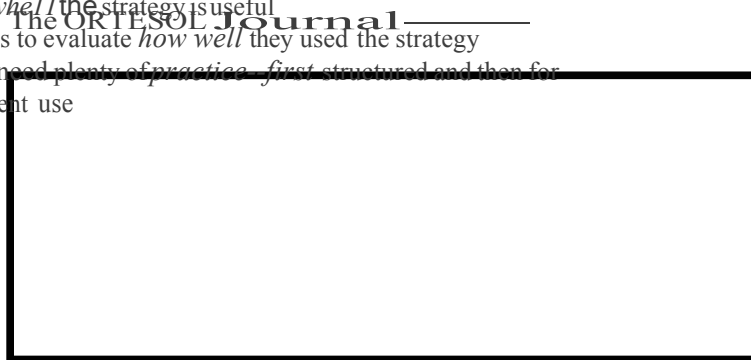


Figure 7. Summary of "strategy instructions." (Source: Shih [1992, p. 300].)

[Special thanks to S.Eggy, J.Murphy. and the anonymous readers whose comments greatly helped me reshape this article.]

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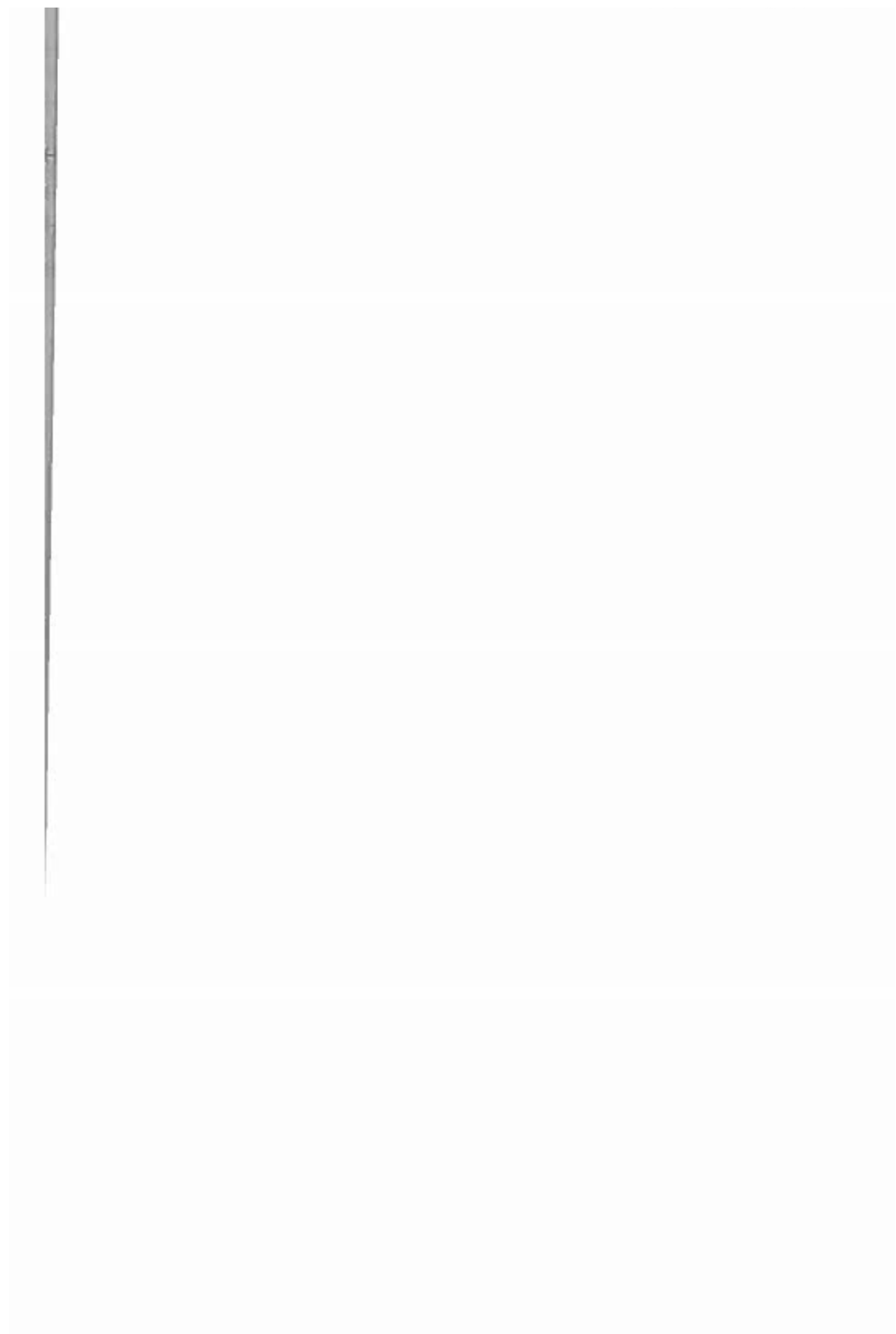
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## **Lexical Phrases as Organizational Markers in Academic Lectures: A Corpus- and Computer-Based Approach to Research and Teaching**

**Sarah Rilling**  
*Northern Arizona University*

*Lexical phrases have been taught in a variety of teaching contexts to assist in developing ESL students' fluency. As linguistic research has not provided materials writers with adequate authentic language data, materials are mainly produced through the use of the teacher/materials writers' language intuition. As computerized corpora and analytic tools become more available to the classroom teacher, finding authentic language data for class-based activities becomes a possibility.*

*This paper presents the results and teaching applications of empirical computer-based corpus research on lexical phrases that are used as organizational markers in university lectures. The analysis is accomplished through corpus research with computer-assisted tools designed to identify frequently recurring lexical phrases. The purpose is to identify lexical phrases which lecturers use to mark the organizational structure of their lectures. Manual computer searches that make use of concordancing software to locate the lexical phrases identified automatically by the computer program, provided a means to categorize the recurrent lexical phrases into an organizational discourse framework developed by Nattinger and DeCaño (1992). Student learning materials and a series of tasks (one of which focuses on student use of a computer and a concordancer) developed from this corpus-based research are presented. An annotated bibliography of pertinent articles and books in the area of corpus-based research and teaching is included, which will enable the interested teacher/researcher*

*to conduct similar research on authentic corpora or create materials from concordance output.*

This article is dedicated to the memory of an inspiring professor and researcher, James R. Nattinger.

I would like to thank Jan DeCarrico for her encouragement and support. I also thank Susan Conrad, Doug Biber, and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments which have aided in the revision process. Remaining errors are naturally my own.

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Linguistic markers for organizing lectures have been taught to ESL learners in listening courses for over a decade. It is hoped that by recognizing the organization of a lecture, the learners will be able to focus more effectively on the content of the lecture that is being presented. Previously, most authors of ESL materials have relied on intuition alone in identifying the markers that lecturers use, so many ESL listening textbooks present markers which may seem stilted. Also, most organizational markers discussed in teacher textbooks are single words, or at most two to three word phrases, which may not actually represent the types of markers lecturers use. Examples of these organizational markers used in student textbooks are "first," "second," etc. that delineate topic structures and "to sum it up" that is used as a content summarizer. While these organizers may in fact be used by lecturers, only by investigating a corpus of authentic lectures can we determine what organizational phrases are actually used. By examining a corpus of lectures, materials writers can be provided with authentic examples of markers lecturers actually use. Materials prepared with these authentic organizational markers may then be used to assist students in better understanding lectures.

Lexical phrases, or lexical units which co-occur frequently, are used commonly to achieve a number of language functions. For example, lexical phrases can be used to introduce a question (e.g., "what do you want to") or to make a suggestion ("why don't we"). Lexical phrases are also used by lecturers to mark organizational structures within a lecture. Some examples of lexical phrases which are used in this way are "what I wanted to talk about" and "so let's turn to [X topic]" (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992).

The use of lexical phrases as markers of organizational boundaries in lectures has been investigated by several researchers interested in whether these units assist second language learners in understanding lectures. Chaudron and Richards (1986) describe lexical phrases which function as macro-organizers, or markers of organizational structures in a lecture, for example, "to begin with" and "one of the problems was" (Chaudron & Richards, 1986, p. 127). These authors claim that macro-organizers can help focus the hearer on the rhetorical organization of the lecture, enable the hearer to predict what is coming next, and confirm for the listener what he/she has already heard. In an empirical study, Chaudron and Richards found that second language

learners performed better on content recall after hearing lectures which included lexical phrases functioning as macro-organizers. Dunkel and Davis (1995), using a more complex research design, arrived at different conclusions. These researchers compared information recall protocols from native and nonnative listeners. Some of the lectures used in the study contained overt organizational markers and some of the lectures contained no organizational markers. Dunkel and Davis found that the nonnative listeners' comprehension of the lectures was not improved by the inclusion of organizational markers in the lectures. Both the Cbaudron and Richards' and Dunkel and Davis' studies, however, appear to have made use of carefully prepared lecture texts (i.e., texts written for "lecture") rather than naturally occurring oral lectures. It is unclear which results would be replicated by using naturally occurring lectures as the listening texts for such research.

Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) present an extensive study of the pragmatic and rhetorical uses of lexical phrases. In addition, they include an analysis of the syntactic patterns and pattern variability of lexical phrases. They apply their analysis of lexical phrases to teaching second language skills, such as reading, conversation, or especially interesting to the present study, understanding lectures. Global macro-organizational markers in three styles of lectures are the focus of their linguistic and pedagogical analysis for developing listening skills. The authors categorized macro-organizers in lectures into three types, which reflect their functional use in marking lecture organization: topic markers, topic shifters, and summarizers. Examples from their analysis include "what I wanted to talk about" and "let's look at X" as topic markers; "OK, now ••." and "this is off the subject, but X" as topic shifters; and "so then" and "what I'm trying to say is X" as summarizers (Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992, p. 95). This categorization system provided the organizational framework for the present study.

Nattinger and DeCarrico's (1992) study of organizational markers used in academic lectures represents one chapter of the text, and it can be seen as an example of early, small-scale corpus-based research. Their corpus consisted of 20 academic lectures on a range of topics; however, specific details of the size and a more complete description of the texts which built the corpus were lacking (for issues related to

corpus design and description see Biber, 1993; Renouf, 1987; Sinclair, 1993). Although Nattinger and DeCarrico used authentic examples of lexical phrases actually used in the lectures to explicate organizational features of these phrases, there was no frequency information given regarding how recurrent these phrases are across topic or individual lecturer style. Computational techniques, such as those used in the present study, begin to address issues such as relative frequency which were unavailable to researchers such as Nattinger and DeCarrico just a few years ago.

In this paper, lexical phrases functioning as macro-organizers in lectures were identified by using a large corpus of lectures and computer analysis tools. Through this type of analysis, authentic examples of language occurring across a wide range of subjects and lecture styles can be identified. These authentic examples can then be used in the development of second language teaching materials, providing learners with organizational markers which they may actually hear used by lecturers. This knowledge of lexical phrases that function as organizational markers in lectures could also be used in further second language acquisition research to determine whether these markers actually assist second language learners in the processing of authentic lectures. The paper highlights computer applications to corpus research and demonstrates the limitations of using concordancing alone as a computer research tool. Teaching materials developed as a result of this research are presented and directions for related research and pedagogy are outlined. Finally, an annotated bibliography of useful references to corpus-based research and teaching is included, which should provide the interested reader with further examples of corpus-based applications in second language materials development and teaching.

### Methodology

The corpus for this study comprised 18 British university lectures extracted from the Longman Grammar Corpus and 36 science lectures collected by Flowerdew (1989). The Longman lectures, which constitute 61% of the corpus, were given to a native-speaking university audience. The topics of these lectures ranged from contemporary Chinese history to mathematics. The Flowerdew

lectures, 39 of the corpus, also cover a broad range of topics within the sciences, such as chemistry and botany. The Flowerdew lectures were intended for listeners studying English as a foreign language. The total word count of the corpus is 422,253.

The corpus was analyzed by a computer program, designed at Northern Arizona University that identifies all lexical phrases of a given length. For example, the programmer can extract all three-, four-, five-, or ten-word sequences. The program acts as a sliding window on text, identifying all sequences of words of the desired length. Output from a different corpus yielded interesting results in tens of functional lexical phrases with both three- and four-word lengths; however, as three-word lexical phrases seemed overly abundant in this corpus, I limited my search to four-word lexical phrases, yielding a limited list of productive lexical phrases. Longer windows on text would undoubtedly also produce interesting output.

In addition to identifying the lexical phrases in the corpus, the computer program also computed frequency counts on the lexical phrases, both raw and normed. Normed counts normalize the number of occurrences of a lexical unit to a given length of text. For example, with a text length of 3,000 words containing twelve occurrences of a given phrase, we could normalize the text length at 1,000 words thus bringing the normed count of the phrase to four occurrences per 1,000 words. If the text length is 2,000 words and twelve occurrences of the phrase are also located, the count normed to 1,000 words would be six occurrences. Normed counts enable researchers to compare results of findings from corpora of different sizes. The computer program used in this study normalizes counts at 1,000,000 words. Table 1 presents a brief sample of the computer output for my search of lexical phrases that occur at least 20 times per million words (normed counts).

The computer program provided all four-word lexical phrases with their counts, and I next classified these phrases into Nattinger and DeCarrico's (1992) categories based on how the phrases might function as organizational markers. For example, from the phrases in Table 1, the phrase "au that kind or" seemed to be functioning as something other than a topic marker, topic shifter, or summarizer, so it was eliminated from further consideration. On the other hand, it appeared

that the phrase "as a result of" may function to sum up a topic by explaining causal results, so it was classified as a summarizer. By searching the corpus with a commercial concordancing program which provides a KWIC (Key Word in Context) output, the larger context of these classified phrases were examined. By reading several instances of the surrounding context for each lexical phrase, I could determine whether my categorization of these phrases was accurate or not. While the computer program could locate all four-word phrases which recurred with a high frequency, functional categorization had to be made based on the researcher's knowledge and examination of these phrases in context.

**Table I**

Sample of Computer Output from a Four-Word  
 Lexical Phrase Search

	Raw Count	Normed Count
all+over+ the+ place	11	26.1
all+ sorts+of + things	14	33.2
all+that+kind+of	17	40.3
all+the+rest+of	9	21.3
all+this+sort +of	11	26.1
are+you+going +to	11	26.1
as+a +kind +of	10	23.7
as+a+result +of	15	35.5
as+far+as+i	9	21.3
as+long+as+you	9	21.3

Register ..lectures

Cutoff is normed count  $\geq$  20

Word count is 422,253

COUNTS OF FOUR WORD LEXICAL PHRASES

Normed to 1,000,000



Second language materials, based on textual examples from both the computer program output and the concordance output, were prepared. In developing these materials, many of the same processes I used in identifying and classifying lexical phrases as organizational markers in lectures were replicated. For example, the learners are asked to examine organizational markers presented in student listening texts, use a concordance program to locate phrases actually used in lectures, and draw functional conclusions based on their findings in the corpus. The series of student activities, which appear as Appendices A and 8, were developed with the dual purpose of introducing lexical phrases as organizational markers and introducing simple computer- and corpus based language research techniques to second language students.

### Results

The computer program identified 163 lexical phrases with normed counts of over 20 words per million words of running text. Of these 163 phrases, approximately half did not fit into the Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) discourse framework, so they were eliminated from further investigation. By searching the corpus for the larger context in which the lexical phrases occurred with a concordancing program, I found that of these BO phrases, only 21 lexical phrases could be categorized as functioning, at least at times, as an organizational discourse marker. Table 2 contains these categorized phrases with their raw and normed frequencies.

It should be noted that some of these lexical phrases seem to be much more productive than others in terms of their sheer frequencies. For example, the topic marker •have a look at• is more than twice as frequent as the topic marker let us have a.• The two most frequent phrases identified occur as topic shifters: •I would like to• and •if you look at• both with normed frequencies over 100 per million words of text.

Lexical Phrases Functioning as Global Macro-Organizers  
 in Lectures Categorized into Nattinger and  
 DeCarrico's Discourse Framework

	Raw Count	Normed Count
<b>Topic Markers</b>		
have+a +look +at	36	88.3
let+us+ have+a	16	37.9
to+look +at +the	12	28.4
us+have+a+ look	14	33.2
want+to+look+at	9	21.3
we're+goMa+look+at	9	21.3
what+i'll+do+is	10	23.7
what+i+want+to	16	37.9
what+i+would+like	22	52.1
would+lilce+to+do	10	23.7
<b>Topic Shifters</b>		
go+back+to+the	20	47.4
i+was+going+to	22	52.1
i+would+like+to	45	106.6
if+you+go+back	10	23.7
if+you +go+to	9	21.3
if+you +look +at	58	137.4
if+you +think +about	31	73.4
to+go+back+to	14	33.2
to+go+to+the	10	23.7
<b>Summarians</b>		
as+you+can+see	9	21.3
the+point+i'm+making	11	26.1

A few of the lexical phrases identified in the above analysis are similar to lexical phrases presented by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992). The topic marker "to look at the" and "us have a look" correspond to the Nattinger and DeCarrico phrases "let's look at X" (p. 95) and "we'll be looking at X" (p. 145). Nattinger and DeCarrico also identify the topic markers "what I'd like to do is X" and "what I'd like to do (today) is X" (p. 145), which are both similar to the corpus findings of "what I want to" and "what I would like." Other four-word lexical phrases used as topic markers in the corpus have no similarities with the other sixteen topic markers suggested by Nattinger and DeCarrico. In terms of topic shifters, only one of Nattinger and DeCarrico's 24 topic shifters corresponds to a four-word lexical phrase identified in the corpus: "back to" (p. 145). This corresponds to the corpus phrases "if you go back" and "to go back to." Only one of Nattinger and DeCarrico's summarizers ("my point is that X." p. 145) corresponds with a phrase identified in the corpus ("the point I'm making"). The lack of agreement between the Nattinger and DeCarrico phrases and the corpus findings may be due to the fact that the current analysis only accounts for fixed four-word phrases while many of Nattinger and DeCarrico's phrases are shorter, longer, or variable syntactically. However, the fact that many of the corpus phrases did not have equivalents in the Nattinger and DeCarrico listings of lexical phrases used as organizational markers may also indicate that corpus findings are more reliable in determining the range of what lecturers actually say.

Two textual examples taken from different lectures in the corpus demonstrate how the phrases identified in the corpus are being used by lecturers to serve a discourse function. The first text sample, taken from a geology lecture, shows how the phrase "have a look at" acts to introduce a new instructional move or pedagogical topic marker. Notice that the lecturer is first describing a physical event: how much surface runoff there would be from sand. Then the lecturer marks a new instructional move, having students switch from straight lecture-mode to information processing with textual support. The lexical phrase marks this instructional move. Notice that Nattinger and DeCarrico's (1992) topic marker of "let's look at X" (p. 95), with only a slight variation, was basically confirmed with this analysis.

so an example of Ibis is one centimetre per minute / a centimetre a minute well that equals six hundred millimetres in an hour /so before we have surface runoff with a sand we need six hundred millimetres to fall in an hour /now let's just have a look at the rainfall at the back of this handout on page / what is it / page seven I think it is / page seven / can you see Ibis rainfall graph / ye' / can you see it all / how many times / I mean the only rainfall we've got here for a long period for since nineteen-fifty-six is in fact

The second text sample demonstrates the use of the lexical phrase "if you think about" as a topic shifter. This lexical phrase was not identified by Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) in their listings of possible topic shifters. The lecture sample, taken from a university lecture on societal psychoanalysis, demonstrates a shift in topic from deviant group members not obeying societal norms for reproductive and other behaviors to a specific support of this point in terms of how this might affect societal norms. Notice the topic of sex is introduced immediately preceding the lexical phrase. The lexical phrase further helps identify this shift in topic focus.

By definition, the selfish mutant would have more offspring than the other members of the, of the population, and if they had more offspring, before long the mutants would begin to become an increasing, an increasing number in the population. There's no way in which you can stop or free-riders like that invading systems where individuals are striving for the benefit of the group. It simply won't work. One area where it or absolutely does not work is sex. I mean, if you think about it, supposing sex were for the benefit of the species. Well, imagine how different our life would be for us for a start. I mean, the first thing you'd notice is that erm sex would be something that was, you know, a public duty and an open <unclear>. You know, everybody would, would applaud any sexual activity because it was you know, adding new members to the human race.

Pedagogical Application

Lexical Phrase Materials and Activities for Second Language

Teachers

Authentic lexical phrases and textual examples gleaned from this corpus-based research were used in developing a series of tasks for advanced, college-bound ESL students in a listening course. These tasks familiarize students both with lexical phrases used as organizational markers in lectures and with computer-based corpus research techniques. The activity series and student worksheet appear as Appendix A and B. These tasks highlight several types of student research aimed at answering the question, "what phrases or other linguistic markers are used to mark the organization of an academic lecture?"

Students begin by reading a printout of one of the corpus lectures, outlining major points, noting changes in topic focus, and trying to observe what language features mark these topic organizational structures. They also peruse listening textbooks which present organizational markers. Students then use their intuition to predict what linguistic markers might signal the organization of topics. Finally, the lexical phrases identified in this study are introduced and discussed.

After these preliminary steps, students load the corpus, or parts of the corpus, into a computerized concordancing program and search for the items they have marked on their worksheets. With the corpus, they attempt to see if their predictions, the samples from learner textbooks, and/or the phrases provided through this study actually occur and whether the phrases function in the way students expected. By comparing the phrases the students identified through these activities with what they actually find in the corpus, the students will make discoveries about how these phrases are used in naturally-occurring language. Wrap-up and extension ideas are presented in Appendix A.

Pedagogical Caveat

Computer analysis can tell us much about the frequency patterns occurring in natural language; however, the researcher/learner must still look to the language texts themselves for functional interpretation. A third textual example, taken from a lecture on elections given to university students, demonstrates that not all phrases identified through the computer program are functioning as they were predicted to function. Notice that the lexical phrase •if you think about• is the same phrase identified above as being a topic shifter. In this particular context, however, it is functioning as something else. Here it is being used to get the audience to focus more carefully on the topic already presented: voter turnout. Only by looking at the broader context of the lexical phrase can one determine whether it is being used as an organizational discourse marker, which in this case, it is not.

The other factor as well was the high tum out in the election. The tum out in the recent, in the, in the April election was very high. It was what, seventy-eight percent over all, and in, and in a large, very large individual constituencies you were seeing tum out in the eighties. Eighty-six percent in a couple, eighty-four percent. And if you think about it you can't get a much bigger tum out than that. Cause if, if about eight percent of the <unclear> people don't have <unclear> to vote anyway . . . some people aren't goMa vote. . . . You can't really get much higher tum out than about eighty-four percent, eighty-five percent • • • in practical terms. Lot of people aren't there and they haven't bothered to get a postal vote 'cause they're on holiday or whatever you know

In other words, not all lexical phrases occurring in the corpus and predicted by the researcher turned out to function in the corpus as organizational discourse markers. This may be a caveat in terms of teaching as the students may become discouraged or confused when they don't locate the phrases on the worksheet as functioning according to the organizational marker indicated by the materials writer.

## Discussion

### Utilizing Corpora and Computer Analytic Techniques as Teaching Tools

The application of large text corpora and computerized analysis tools has provided linguists and materials writers with lexical and grammatical frequency information and authentic language samples on which to base teacher materials. While many corpora can be expensive, online access and a bit of ingenuity can provide the novice researcher with corpus materials. Additionally, a collection of student texts can also be used to build a corpus. Concordancing software is available fairly inexpensively or as freeware and can be used to answer many lexical and basic grammatical research questions. If the researcher has a specific lexical item or simple collocational sequence to search for, he/she will be able to locate it with a concordancer, for example. While concordancing programs generally can manage some simple grammatical searches, more complex grammatical and/or discursal research questions will require the use of different software.

Concordancers, utilized mainly in lexicographic research, can only answer questions on an *apriori* basis. For example, if the researcher wants to search for a specific lexical item, a concordancer can provide useful data, including the surrounding context of the word or phrase (KWIC) and frequency data. Concordancers cannot answer research questions in which the researcher is probing for what occurs in the corpus without having clear lexical or morphological markers to search for. A concordancer cannot be used to locate all lexical phrases of a given length in a corpus, for example. While computer programs, such as the program which identified lexical phrases for this program, are the domain of the specialist programmer, even the novice researcher may be able to learn enough programming in a semester-long course to become proficient in creating programs to answer linguistic research questions.

### Implications for Further Research

The present research raises several questions and issues related to lexical phrases used as discourse markers in lectures. Could Dunkel

and Davis' (1994) research design be replicated with similar findings by using authentic lectures, the understanding gained from lexical phrase research, and modern video editing technology to produce more naturalistic lectures for research purposes? Do some lexical phrases used as organizational markers occur with far greater frequency than others, and if so, what phrases are they and why do they occur more frequently? Further research will provide a better understanding of how second language learners process language, and it will produce natural language examples which can be used in materials development.

In written text analysis, lexical phrase research with a corpus of academic written texts could also prove interesting in terms of discovering what phrases correlate with specific rhetorical moves, much in the same way that lexical phrases can mark organizational structures in lectures. If such a research question produces concrete examples of lexical phrases marking discursive functions in writing, learners could use a similar learning task to the one outlined for researching organizational structures in lectures. Through this process, students would learn lexical phrases which may help them be more autonomous in reading difficult textbooks and articles, and in producing their own academic texts. Both a native-speaker academic written corpus as well as a learner corpus (comprised of academic texts written by second language learners themselves) could be investigated and contrasted in a similar process of initial teacher research and development of learner activities.

Similar questions regarding lexical phrases as discourse markers could be investigated using systematically designed corpora. For example, the corpus for the present study was comprised of lectures intended for either native-speaking or nonnative-speaking audiences. A further question which could be asked in contrasting the two text types in this particular corpus might be whether the lecturers compensated for nonnative-speaking audiences by using more or fewer lexical phrases to mark organizational patterns. Naturally, more lecture texts of the two types (native speaking audience vs. nonnative audience) would need to be collected proportionately and analyzed. Finally, investigations comparing American lectures with lectures from other English speaking countries, or upper- with lower-division undergraduate courses, may also provide interesting language data. Findings from this type of research into language use can then be used to devise



materials to assist our students in gaining fluency in a variety of contexts.

### Endnote

The cutoff for the nooned occurrences was initially set at 10 occurrences per million; however, since this corpus is rather small, the raw counts were quite low, increasing the chance that these phrases were idiosyncratic. With the higher cutoff of 20 instances per million, that risk was reduced.

### Annotated Bibliography

Biber, D. (1988). *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber reports on his own research and design of the first large scale corpus-based register study utilizing computer and statistical tools for analysis. Biber's primary goal is to describe systematic register variation among spoken and written texts, what he calls "genre" in this text. Especially relevant to the researcher interested in corpus-based research and programming for linguistic research is Appendix II, a description of how Biber composed the corpus, and his extensive description of the computer algorithms used in designina software needed for syntactic and lexical analysis.

Flowerdew, J. (1993). Concordancing as a tool in course design. *System*, 21, 231-244.

Flowerdew presents an English for science and technology (EST) curriculum developed in a university in Oman which made extensive use of corpus-based research in materials development. The corpus of approximately 100,000 words was composed of the readings and lectures in an EST course (lecture to written text 10:1). Frequency data from the corpus was used in selecting and grading the vocabulary presented in course materials developed for future EST programmatic needs. Flowerdew argued that this was an effective approach for an EST course since word frequencies are different than in "general" English.

Johns, T. (1991). Should you be persuaded : Two samples of data-driven learning materials. *English Language Research Journal*, 4, 1-13.

Johns' premise is that language learners can be active in the learning process when they design their own research questions and investigate natural language through concordance output. Examples of two student activities which teachers developed using concordance outputs as texts for students to explore are given. Unfortunately, neither the worksheets nor the data are included in the article. This article gives the reader a clearer understanding of some possible tasks which may be employed using a corpus and concordance output.

Johns, T. (1994). From printout to handout: Grammar and vocabulary teaching in the context of data-driven learning. In T. Odlin (Ed.), *Perspectives on pedagogical grammar* (pp. 293-313). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Johns discusses the relationship of form and function to language understanding. By showing a learner actual occurrences of language in use through KWIC (Key Word in Context) output, the form can aid in the understanding of its grammatical and rhetorical function. He advocates an inductive approach to language learning in which students get hands-on experience doing language research with a corpus and a concordancing program.

Ma, B. (1994). Learning strategies in ESP classroom concordancing: an initial investigation into data-driven learning. In L. Flowerdew & A. Tong (Eds.), *Emerging issues* (pp. 197-214). Hong Kong: Language Centre, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

Ma advocates having students work hands-on with concordancing programs to make their own discoveries about language. Ma's students prepare research questions based on their own technical writing (computer software manuals) and then investigate these questions using a corpus of technical manuals. Ma notes that these corpus-based research projects are valuable language learning experiences for students.

Murison-Bowie, S. (1996). Linguistic corpora and language teaching. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 16, 182-199.

This article overviews the use of corpora for linguistic and pedagogical purposes. Murison-Bowie questions the development of materials based on intuition alone. Instead he advocates for the use of corpus based frequency findings in materials development. Concordancing is considered, both for the teacher in developing materials and for direct student use. While this article examines the use of concordancing as a computerized research tool, other computerized techniques for the analysis of corpora and development of teaching materials and activities are not addressed.

Nattinger, J., & DeCarrico, J. (1992). *Lexical phrases and language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This award winning text analyzes form and function of lexical phrases and applies this analysis to the teaching of English language skills. A range of forms of lexical phrases, from fixed to slot-and-filler type phrases, are categorized in the first half of the text, and pragmatic and discursal functions of these recurrent phrases are discussed. The second half of the text applies this analysis to teaching specific English skills, such as reading and writing, or listening to academic lectures.

Sinclair, J. (1991). *Corpus, concordance, collocation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This text presents Sinclair's views on lexical and syntactic analyses in corpus based research. Especially interesting are Sinclair's perspectives on corpus building and the use of computers to analyze language. Appendices contain interesting word frequency information and textual examples from different types of computer based searches.

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## APPENDIX A

### Teaching Application of Lexical Phrases as Organizational Markers in Lectures

Purpose: To investigate lexical phrases used as global organizers in lectures.

Target Audience: Advanced ESL learners in a lecture preparation course.

Goals: To identify and internalize lexical phrases used as global organizers in order to improve ability to comprehend lectures; to gain familiarity with corpus-based computerized research.

Materials: Worksheet (Appendix B), transcript of one lecture which contains lexical phrases identified as organizational markers; listening textbooks which present global organizers; online corpus; concordancing program.

Steps in the Learning Activity:

1. Students read a transcript of an online lecture and try to identify the major points made by the lecturer. Students mark the lecture according to when a new topic is introduced, when the lecturer changes topics, and when the lecturer summarizes the content of a major point. Students also make some notes of the language the lecturer uses to mark these discourse functions on the worksheet.

2. Students break into groups of three. Each group is assigned to work on a specific type of organizational marker (topic markers, topic shifters, or summarizers). Group members write several specific examples of their organizational marker from the transcript onto the worksheet.

3. Students identify several organizational markers specific to their group presented in standard listening textbooks and mark these on the lexical phrase worksheet.

4. Students add several organizational markers from their own intuition.

5. Students use a concordancing program to investigate how the phrases identified by the instructor and the ones they marked on their worksheets are actually used in several of the online lectures.

6. Students discuss in their group what they have discovered from this process.

7. The three groups are jigsawed into new groups so that one representative from each type of organizational marker is present in the new group. Each individual explains to the new group the information learned about their marker in the former group. Students fill in information on the worksheet for the other two organizational markers.

8. The whole class discusses the activity, drawing attention to interesting discoveries.

#### Possible Follow-up Activities

1. Students attend a university lecture and write down sample words and phrases the lecturer uses when marking the organization of the lecture. This could be reported back to the class. Discussion about different speakers' styles (perhaps from the different disciplines) could be encouraged.

2. Students view a video-taped lecture together, identifying lexical phrases used as organizational markers. Students critique how clearly the lecturer used organizational markers to help his/her audience follow the main points of the lecture.

3. Students listen to natural English in their environment, and try to discover the form and function of various lexical phrases.

APPENDIX B

Student Worksheet

Lexical Phrases as Global Organizers:  
Corpus-Based Project Worksheet

	TKMuk..	TKhIR"9	811m1111r11m
0111111• Tnnealpl			
L111tnl111 Tn11leob			
fnlulllon			
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## Topic-Prominence as an Obstacle for Japanese EFL Learners

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*This paper illustrates some of the differences between Japanese and English and identifies obstacles to Japanese EFL learners' acquisition of English. Japanese and English are examined in terms of Li and Thompson's (1976) typology of languages, in particular the notion of topic-prominence versus subject-prominence. Japanese and English are compared and categorized using this framework. Four topic-prominence characteristics of Japanese are considered (preposing of topic, absence of dummy subjects, zeroNP anaphora, and double subject constructions) as well as the influence of these constructions on the interlanguage of Japanese learners of English.*

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Introduction

Li and Thompson (1976) propose a typology of world languages which is based on the grammatical relation of subject-predicate and topic-comment rather than on the word order of subject, verb, and object. They explain that while a subject is determined and grounded by a verb, a topic is determined by the center of attention and not grounded by a verb. Li and Thompson call the former "a subject-prominent language" and the latter "a topic-prominent language." According to their taxonomy, English falls in the subject-prominent category, and Japanese falls in both subject-prominent and topic-prominent categories. In spite of sharing characteristics of both a topic- and subject-prominent language, Japanese can be regarded as a highly topic-prominent language in comparison to English (Fuller & Gundel, 1987; Sasaki, 1990; Schachter & Rutherford, 1979).

This paper first examines how Japanese differs from English based on Li and Thompson's (1976) typology with respect to preposing of topic, absence of dummy subjects, double subject constructions, and zero-NP anaphora. It then discusses how these differences influence Japanese EFL learners' interlanguage.

English and Japanese

According to Li and Thompson's (1976) taxonomy, world languages can be divided into four types: subject-prominent such as Indo-European languages including English, topic-prominent such as Chinese, both subject-prominent and topic-prominent such as Japanese and Korean, and neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent such as Tagalog. They also claim that every language has a subject and topic, but some languages are more oriented to the concept of topic as basic, while others are more oriented to the notion of subject as basic.

Although Japanese is categorized as both a subject-prominent and topic-prominent language by Li and Thompson (1976), Japanese, when compared with English, still holds several characteristic properties of topic-prominent languages (Fuller & Gundel, 1987; Sasaki, 1990; Schachter & Rutherford, 1979). Moreover, Sasaki (1990), Schachter

and Rutherford (1979), and Yip and Matthews (1995) argue that some of the properties of topic-prominence often become obstacles for Japanese EFL learners. These previous studies suggest that there are four important aspects of topic-prominence in Japanese that differ from English. These aspects also tend to elicit interlanguage interference in learners' acquisition of English. The four aspects are: (a) preposing of topic, (b) absence of dummy subjects, (c) double subject constructions, and (d) zero-NP anaphora.

#### Four Aspects of Japanese as a Topic-Prominent Language

Preposing of topic. While a sentence topic in topic-prominent languages is surface coded either by a morphological marker, the sentence initial position, or both (Li & Thompson, 1976), the topic in subject-prominent languages is usually placed either at the sentence initial or final position (Fuller & Gundel, 1987).

In Japanese, a topic is not only marked by the particle *wa* (Kuno, 1971), but is also basically surface coded by being placed at the sentence initial position (Jorden, 1987).

- (1) Suzuki-sen wa, kore o kaimasu ne?  
Mr. Suzuki TOPIC this one OBJECT buy CONFIRMATION  
Speaking of Mr. Suzuki, he is going to buy this one, right?
  
- (2) Kore wa Suzuki-san ga kaimasu ne?  
this one TOPIC Mr. Suzuki SUBJECT buy CONFIRMATION  
Speaking of this one, Mr. Suzuki is going to buy, right?  
(Jorden, 1987, p. 119)

As sentences (1) and (2) show, topics followed by the particle *wa* are preposed to the sentence initial position. Li and Thompson (1976) suggest that this preposing is due to discourse strategies. They argue, since speech involves serialization of the information to be communicated, it makes sense that the topic, which represents the discourse theme, should be introduced first (Li & Thompson, 1976, p. 465), and the subject should receive less priority.

In English, on the other hand, these implications are often expressed with a change in intonation (Jordan, 1987), unless one needs to explicitly verbalize them. Moreover, since the subject receives the priority, **the** topic is sometimes introduced in the sentence final position, as shown in example (3).

- (3) Mike brought cake and orange juice to the party yesterday. He said his mother baked the cake.

In this example, •the cake• is the topic because the addressor or writer has chosen to talk about the cake rather than the orange juice. If (3) is translated into Japanese, however, *the cake* must be placed in the sentence initial position with the particle *wa*; otherwise, the sentence sounds awkward.

Absence of dummy subjects. Li and Thompson (1976) argue that dummy subjects are only observed in subject-prominent languages. Li and Thompson (1976), Sasaki (1990), and Schachter and Rutherford (1979) point out that dummy subjects such as *it* and *there*, which are common in English and in other subject-prominent languages, do not occur in Japanese. As previously mentioned, Japanese does not require subjects if the situation implies them and thus does not call for any dummy subjects. Moreover, Kuno (1971) explains that canonical word order of existential sentences in Japanese is Locative + Subject + Exist, or less frequently Subject + Locative + Exist. For example,

- (4) Varna oi Kiga aru.  
mountain at tree SUBJECT exist  
There are trees on the mountain (Kuno, 1971, p. 336).

While they do not exist in Japanese, empty subject sentences are very common in English. Lightbown (1987) found in her experiment, for example, that 73% of existential sentences started with *There's* when native speakers of English were asked to describe a picture.

Double subject constructions. Li and Thompson (1976) claim that topic prominent languages are peculiar in their double subject constructions, which allow both topic and subject to occur sequentially

at the sentence initial position and to behave like two separate subjects. Sentence (5) illustrates this.

- (5) *Sakana wa tai ga oisii.*  
fish TOPIC **red** snapper SUBJECT delicious  
Among fish, **red** snapper is delicious (Li & Thompson, 1976, p. 468).

Although the canonical word order of Japanese is SOV (Kuno, 1971), a topic constituent can even precede a SOV constituent if they occur at the same time as illustrated in (6).

- (6) *Ano kyoodai wa oniisan ga yakyuu o suru.*  
that brothers TOPIC older brother SUBJECT baseball OBJECT  
do  
Of the two brothers, the older brother plays baseball.

Zero-NP *agaohora*. Fuller and Gundel (1987) argue that topic-prominent languages require no noun phrase if the missing noun phrase is coreferential with the topic of the sentence. They also claim, "In non-topic-prominent languages, on the other hand, *i.ero-NP* anaphora are syntactically controlled: They can occur only under certain structural conditions, with *ro-NP* anaphora being most restricted in highly subject-prominent, non-topic-prominent languages like English" (Fuller & Fundel, 1987, p. 7).

This difference is also observed between English and Japanese as illustrated in (7) and (8). The two sentences are identical except for the SUBJECT *ga* in (7) and TOPIC *wa* in (8), but the meanings are completely different.

- (7) *Tomodati ga osoku kita kara, O denwa simasita.*  
friend SUBJECT late came because, O telephone did  
Since my friend came late, I telephoned.
- (8) *Tomodati wa osokukita kara, O denwa simasita.*  
friend TOPIC late came because, O telephone did  
Since my friend came late, my friend telephoned (O added)  
(Jorden, 1987, p. 298).

In Japanese, subjects are often omitted because, as Jordan explains, Japanese has no grammatical requirement to express the subject as long as it is apparent from the context. Omission of the subjects in (7) and (8) is not misleading because the addressee knows who it is from the context. The omitted empty subject in (7) implies that the addresser, *I*, is the person who *telephoned* independent of the subject of the preceding clause, because the preceding clause does not have a topic to constrain the subject of the following clause. In (8), however, the TOPIC *wa* in the first clause also controls the subject of the following clause.

### Topic-Prominence as an Obstacle for Japanese EFL Learners

#### Overview

Much research has examined the relationship between topic-prominence and subject-prominence in language acquisition. Fuller and Gundel (1978) argue that topic-prominent errors are universally observable in the early stage of L2 acquisition regardless of the learners' native language. Sasaki (1990) and Schachter and Rutherford (1979), in contrast, claim that topic-prominence in Japanese elicits interlanguage errors when Japanese native speakers learn English, due to typological negative transfer from their native language. The claim by Sasaki (1990) and Schachter and Rutherford (1979) was further supported by Jin (1994), who showed that English native speakers learning Chinese displayed negative transfer of subject-prominence from their L1 but exhibited no topic-prominent stage. Chinese is a highly topic-prominent language. Jin's findings suggest that typological differences between L1 and L2 do become obstacles in second language acquisition, contrary to Fuller and Gundel's hypothesis of a universal topic-prominent stage regardless of L1 and L2 difference.

#### Evidence of the Obstacles for Japanese EFL Learners

Sasaki (1990), Schachter and Rutherford (1979), and Yip and Matthews (1995) note that Japanese EFL learners are influenced by topic-prominent characteristics of Japanese especially in preposing of

topic, double subject constructions, zero-NP anaphora, and the absence of dummy subjects.

Processing of topic and absence of dummy subjects. Sasaki (1990) reports that the less proficient Japanese learners are in English, the more they tend to produce existential sentences in topic prominent ways by not using a dummy subject, *there*. In Sasaki's experiment, the subjects, who were high school graduates in Japan, were asked to write about Taro's (a typical first name of a Japanese male) school based on a given picture and chart. The information concerned such things as the number of classes, teachers, and students. She found that 53% of the total of 616 sentences started with "Taro's school is," or "Taro's school has," as illustrated in (9) and (10), and another 12% could be regarded as variant forms such as in (11). The percentage of the sentences starting with *There are*, which native speakers of English are most likely to produce in cases like these (Lightbown, 1987), was 33%.

(9) "Taro's school students are twenty seven.

(10) Taro's school has 27 students.

(11) The number of the students in Taro's school is eight (Sasaki, 1990, pp. 350-351).

Although (9) is ungrammatical in terms of a subject-predicate structure of English, it is acceptable in terms of a topic-comment structure if it is translated into Japanese. Because the students were asked to write about "Taro's school" in Sasaki's (1990) experiment, "Taro's school" must have been perceived as a topic by the students. It is then more natural for them to start the sentence by preposing the topic than by placing a non-topical *there*.

Moreover, Japanese as a topic-prominent language does not have dummy subjects and the canonical order of the corresponding Japanese is Locative + Subject + Exist (Kuno, 1971). Because *Taro's school* is the only candidate as a locative in the information given, it is also reasonable that the students began their sentences with *Taro's school*.

Preposing of topic and overgeneralization of dummy subjects. Although Sasaki (1990) found that the tendency to employ *There are* sentence patterns increased as proficiency increased, there is evidence that Japanese EFL learners start to overuse the dummy subject *It*, once they have become familiar with dummy subjects. It seems that the excessive use of the dummy subject *it* is not the result of proper acquisition of L2, but rather the result of overgeneralization of the functions of dummy subjects at an interlanguage stage influenced by the topic-prominent feature of topic preposing in their L1.

Schachter and Rutherford's (1979) research shows that Japanese EFL learners created many sentences using extrapositions in English compositions compared to speakers of Spanish, Arabic, Persian, and Mandarin. Based on the results of 525 compositions, the Japanese employed extrapositions in three of every four sentences, while the other groups used only two extrapositions in every five sentences. Sentences (12) to (14) are examples from Japanese EFL learners.

- (12) It is believed that sweet flag leaves contain the power to expel sickness and evil.
- (13) It is very unfortunate . . . that prosperity of our country only results from a sacrifice of workers.
- (14) ?The computer is called *the brain* because it is the very important thing that the computer can remember (Schachter & Rutherford, 1979, p. 4).

Although these extraposed sentences are not ungrammatical. Schachter and Rutherford (1979) suggest that the tendency for Japanese EFL learners to employ more extrapositions compared to other speakers is derived from avoidance of preposing a non-topical constituent. Schachter and Rutherford point out that **all** the extraposed clauses created by the Japanese share a discourse function: they are generic statements which serve as new information but develop into a topic at a later point of the discourse. However, this new information is not yet ready to become a topic at this point; thus, the Japanese EFL learners may have felt that such pre-topical information should be introduced or raised to consciousness naturally by not placing it at the

sentence initial position, which is often reserved for definite and familiar information (i.e., topic).

An alternative to Schachter and Rutherford's (1979) proposition that Japanese EFL learners avoid preposing a non-topical constituent, is the possibility that Japanese EFL learners overgeneralize and misapply the functions of the dummy subject *It*, using it to prepose a topic as well as to avoid preposing a non-topical constituent. In other words, the learners might be inclined to use dummy subjects for the purpose of coding a topic at the sentence initial position in an explicit way beyond its original grammatical functions in English. Because the extraposed constituents in sentences (12), (13), and (14) above contain generic pre-topical information (as Schachter and Rutherford note), the learners might have felt they needed a clearly marked topic constituent sentence initially which could elicit this extraposed information as a comment.

For example, sentence (13) can be thought of as a variant form of (15), which shows a topic-comment structure. In the same manner, the learner might have created (15) as a means of expressing a topic-comment structure as revealed in (16).

(15) What is very unfortunate is . . . / that prosperity of our country  
only results  
(Topic) (Comment)  
from a sacrifice of workers.

(16) It is very unfortunate . . . / that prosperity of our country only  
results from a  
(Topic) (Comment)  
sacrifice of workers.

Although Schachter and Rutherford (1979) do not discuss sentence patterns like the one in (15), this example may offer insight into why Japanese EFL learners employ excessive extrapositions. The grammatical structure of an extraposed sentence makes it convenient for Japanese EFL learners to prepose and express a topic clearly by using the dummy subject *it*, as if *it* were a topic marker such as *wa* in Japanese.



Interestingly, similar findings have been observed among Chinese EFL learners. Rutherford (as cited in Jordens, 1995) suggests that the overuse of sentence patterns starting with the dummy subject *there*, as in (17), is prominently observed among native Mandarin speakers at a certain stage in their interlanguage development.

- (17) There are many elements / to maintain a successful marriage.  
(Topic marker) + (Topic) (Comment)

He claims that the Chinese learners employ "there are" to mark "many elements" as a topic of the following comment rather than as a complement of the dummy subject as native speakers of English do. Although Chinese marks a topic only by preposing it without using any morphological marker (Fuller & Gundel, 1987), the learners might still need to distinguish a topic in a more explicit way when they learn English.

Additional research is necessary regarding the excessive use of dummy subjects by Japanese and Chinese learners of English. It is possible the source of utterances such as in sentence (17) are caused by the same characteristic properties of the two languages, that is, preposing of topic. If this is the case, excessive extraposed sentences by Japanese EFL learners may be the result of their inclination to surface-code a topic at the initial position of English sentences as they do in their L1. Because Japanese does not have dummy subjects, the learners have little knowledge of them and their functions; thus, Japanese learners may overgeneralize and misapply the usage of dummy subjects in marking a topic and overuse them.

Zero-NP anaphora and double subject constructions. Zero-NP anaphora is also a type of error often made by Japanese such as in sentence (18), which was narrated by a Japanese English learner.

- (18) •• . then be bite that fish and put O in the fish bowl  
(Fuller & Gundel, 1978, p. 11).

In this case, the pronoun "it" was omitted because it is coreferential to the words "that fish." In Japanese, one does not have to mention "it" because it is already clear from the context.

Although (18) is a rather simple case, sentences like (19) and (20) are really pseudo-passive sentences which are more complicated and are not easy to detect at first glance because both :zero-NP anaphora and double subject construction are hidden in the sentences.

(19) ?Most of food which is served in such restaurant/ have cooked already.

(20) ?Irrational emotions are bad but rational emotions/ must use for judging (Schachter & Rutherford, 1979, p. 7).

In both (19) and (20), the underlined constituents represent the relation of the topic and comment. Moreover, subjects of •have cooked• in (19) and •must use• in (20) can be interpreted as •they" and "one," respectively. Schachter and Rutherford thus claim that these errors probably should not just be regarded as malformed passives. They argue that these sentences should be seen rather as the result of carryover of topic-prominent surface syntax from Japanese into the target language. Supporting Schachter and Rutherford's interpretation, Yip and Matthews (1995) further explain that the pseudo-passive forms appear in sentences which describe a generic statement, and that its deleted subject refers to a non-specific person or people.<sup>1</sup>

Sentences (19) and (20) thus should be seen as the equivalent of (21) and (22), respectively.

(21) Most of the food which is served in such restaurants (they) have cooked (it) already.

(22) Irrational emotions are bad, but rational emotions, (one) must use (them) for judging (Schachter & Rutherford, 1979, p. 8).

A fuller reading such as presented in (21) and (22) reveals the problems the learners have with topic-prominence features. For one thing, both sentences form double subject constructions; •most of the food• and "they" in (21) and •rational emotions" and •one" in (22) all stand in the subject position although •most of the food" and "rational emotions" actually function as topics. Moreover, they contain zero-NP anaphora; "it" in (21) is coreferential with "most of the food" and "them" in (22)

is also coreferential with "rational emotions" and thus "it" and "them" were deleted.

### Conclusion

In summary, this paper has explored some differences between English and Japanese. Based on the examples reviewed here, Japanese appears to be a more topic-prominent language, while English is a more subject-prominent language. The differences between the two languages present four principal obstacles to native Japanese speakers acquiring English: (a) the tendency to prepose topics, (b) to not use dummy subjects, and later to overuse them, (c) to employ double subject constructions, and (d) to use zero-NP anaphora. Japanese EFL learners (in the earliest stage of English language acquisition) are hindered by the tendency to produce existential sentences that do not contain dummy subjects, and, at a later stage, are likely to overuse extraposed sentences to prepose topics (possibly because they overgeneralize the function of the dummy subject *it*.) Pseudo-passive sentences appear to be another prominent interlanguage feature of Japanese EFL learners, due to the use of both double subject constructions and zero-NP anaphora.

Although it may be argued that typological differences between Japanese and English are the source of some Japanese learners' interlanguage constructions, the question remains what to do about it. Are classroom teachers able to help learners overcome the difficulties posed by typological differences? Most teachers would like to think so. However, additional research is needed before teachers can be confident particular pedagogical practices will assist learners in overcoming the problems noted in this paper. It is possible that explicit instruction in typological differences may affect learners' target language competence, and this represents one possible direction for future classroom-based research.

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Notes

Yip and Matthews (1995) also syntactically show how the pseudo-passive construction works in terms of movement. According to Yip and Matthews, a topic constituent in the pseudo-passive sentence was originally moved from the object position, and the subject should be a null subject as "*pro<sub>t</sub>*" with arbitrary reference. For example, the S-structure of "rational emotions must use for judging" is (1) below.

(1) (Rational emotions]<sub>i</sub>*pro<sub>t</sub>*<sub>i</sub> must use *t<sub>i</sub>* for judging.

"Rational emotions" in (1) was originally at the position of *t<sub>i</sub>* but was moved to the present situation for topicalization. The real subject of the verb "use" is "one" but is not pronounced because an arbitrary "one" is represented as *prom*. This interpretation will explain not only how double subject constructions and zero-NP anaphora correlate but also why the subject is not visible in the surface structure.

TEACHING NOTES

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Enfranchising ESL Students with Language  
Using Zoo Poetry as a Model:  
ESL Creative Writing Ideas

Mary Lee Johnson Lasswell  
(*retired*)

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Mary Lee Johnson Lasswell is currently retired. For 40 years she taught a wide range of classes ranging from preschool to college classes and from special education classes to talented and gifted classes. She taught K-12 ESL in Portland, Oregon for 14 years, concluding with one year of teaching 17- and 18-year-old students at Donald E. Long Detention Center in Portland, Oregon.

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Teaching creative writing is like teaching someone how to kiss. You can show them how to pucker up, but to do it right, it helps to be in love, and to be comfortable with the object of your affection.

It is important that we loosen up our thinking. We need to totally wipe clean our former concepts of writing and poetry. Too many rules limit our scope and enthusiasm. If you rigidly feel that all poetry must rhyme, *stop*, refocus your attention to words that *describe* or make a *commentary*. We want to enable language to unlock ideas and paint pictures with words. Our aim should be *creating a picture* and *being playful with that image*.

Teach more poetry to motivate students to:

1. express their ideas orally and in writing,
2. expand their vocabulary,
3. learn how to develop a theme, and
4. think of themselves as creators.

Why the more? What is it that makes animals a freeing experience? Sometimes we use experiences that relate to students' lives and sometimes we create experiences, like the zoo, to *provoke* meaning and insight. For many students the animals are new, untried, unthreatening, and somewhat exotic territory.

I want you to meet *Raul, the Poet*. While we were on an ESL trip to the zoo, we passed the tiger's enclosure just as he was waking up. We saw his elaborate stretching ritual and heard his morning holler, the rest is poetry.

### "Too Loud"

By Raul Sanchez

Sleepy tiger wakes up,  
Stretches his legs,  
Bends his back in a curve,  
Spreads his long sharp claws  
And ROARS  
OOOO MORNING  
SO LOUD  
That the birds fall out of the trees.

Maria Dolores, a first grader, was looking at a book on vultures. We discussed the appearance of vultures, and the job of vultures. She thought a bit and began to dictate this poem:

"Vultures"

By Maria Dolores Ruiz Calderon

Vultures  
Clean up  
The countryside.  
They fly up high  
Circling, circling  
On big triangular wings,  
Looking for work.

What was the groundwork, the prerequisite, for this writing? The students were surrounded by materials in three stages: factual information, descriptive workup, and the realm of imagination.

First came the factual articles, books, magazines, videos, and stories in which they learned information. They learned where the animals originated and the ecological factors which shaped the animals' lives. They watched how they looked, walked, talked, and related to others. They discovered their animal's special skills and their deficiencies. The students made and illustrated their own true and false test about the subject. They decorated the room with their drawings and paintings of the animals. They discussed and labeled the attributes of their pictures. -Juan has the skinniest bear. Pedro has the fattest bear and Rosa has the shortest bear.- For beginning students, we made a lotto game with colors and attributes of bears.

Second, a word bank was built. On a poster of a selected animal, we labeled the body parts. On a clear overlay, we added descriptive adjectives to those body parts such as *scaly* feet, *bleabitten*, *ma11gy*, *buggy*, *smelly* fur. On a companion poster, we added other attributes including verb phrases and adverbs: stumbles slowly, gobbled greedily, a dotting parent fondly gazing at his chick, a cunning hunter tirelessly tracking her prey. Each addition was usually prompted by a



memory of something we had studied or seen, discussed, and shaped into a phrase.

Third, the imagination is stimulated through fiction, talking to the animals, comparison, similes, contrast, building images, and taking an idea to its ridiculous extreme. It is helpful to gather a collection of inspiring, imaginative fiction about animals. For our study of penguins, we read aloud, *Tacky, the Penguin* (Hester, 1988) and *Cinderella Penguin* (Perlman, 1993). These off-the-wall books are a freeing experience even for my older students. An 18-year-old detention student asked, "what does it all mean?" after we read *Tacky, the Penguin*. "It means," I replied, "that you may be a weird bird, but you are nice to have around." The student nodded and gave a shy smile. An added bonus is the sense of validation, of self worth, the creative process gives a student.

Talking to the animals is the invitation for students to ask the animal questions, compare experiences, and imagine replies.

### "Coyote"

Coyote, with your mournful call,  
Do you grieve for friends far away?  
Me too.

This is a time for questions which elicit discussion. Which animal would they invite to be a friend, a quiet one, a threatening creature, an athletic star, or an affectionate animal? Which animal has a problem or a deficit that you could improve?

### "I Want to be a Rhinoceros Optometrist"

By Luis Chavez

Rhino,  
Why are you so grumpy?  
You're charging the rocks again,  
And people,  
Trees,

And other rhinos, too.  
That's really bad manners!  
Is it that you just don't see?  
I'll fit you with fine glasses,  
Spectacles to be proud of,  
Stylish.

What questions would you ask your animal? How do you think it would feel to be that animal? Try mentally walking around in its paws, hooves, or flippers. How do things look different? Are you hungry? What looks good to you and how are you going to get that food? What could we learn from their social structure or manners? What do you worry about? What are you proud of? What can you do really well? What are you bad at? What challenges you? What is just impossible for you? Could your animal be dangerous to humans? What if your animal and people formed an alliance? What could we do together? What would be some problems? What if you went to that animal's school and you were the only human kid? What person that you know is most like this animal? What if you went home and your parents had turned into this animal? How would you explain this to your grandmother? Would the neighbors understand? What does your animal do that is really strange?

Similes are helpful image builders. We described penguins: rolling down the hill like marbles, bouncing like a basketball, a voice as raucous as children at recess, as solemn as statues in a gale, speeding through the water like a torpedo.

Another diversion is an old Monty Python routine. "How poor was he?" He was so poor that he didn't have a feather to share. He was so poor, that he lived in a paper cup, in a sewer. Expressions like "how hungry, how sad, how rich, strong, silly, cute, loud, quiet," are followed by extravagant exaggerations.

### How to Begin?

How do you begin to write poetry with a group of students? Surround the students with visuals. Modeling teacher-prompts, teaches students to make their own questions and answers.

Teacher: Who are we talking about?  
Students: SLEEK LITTLE PENGUIN.  
Teacher: What does he look like?  
Students: COMICAL, LIKE A BOWLING BALL.  
Teacher: What can he do? How? Where?  
Student: HE FISHES WITH GRACE AND SPEED IN A  
TURBULENT SEA.  
Teacher: How **does he** feel?  
Student: HAPPY, BUT CAUTIOUS.  
Teacher: How is he cautious?  
Student: LEAVING AN AIR BUBBLE TRAIL TO CONFUSE HIS  
ENEMIES.  
Teacher: Can you comment on this? Tell something important about  
this penguin.  
Student: A CLOWN ON LAND BECOMES A CHAMPION IN  
THE WATER.

I enjoy the beauty of children's speech in its originality and playful use of the language. However, the final poem, when added to a class book, may be learned by many children. Therefore, it should be in *good* English. Editing is essential.

A class poetry book can be simple or elaborate. Original animal drawings and photographs of the authors add much to the book. Photocopies of these books have become family treasures.

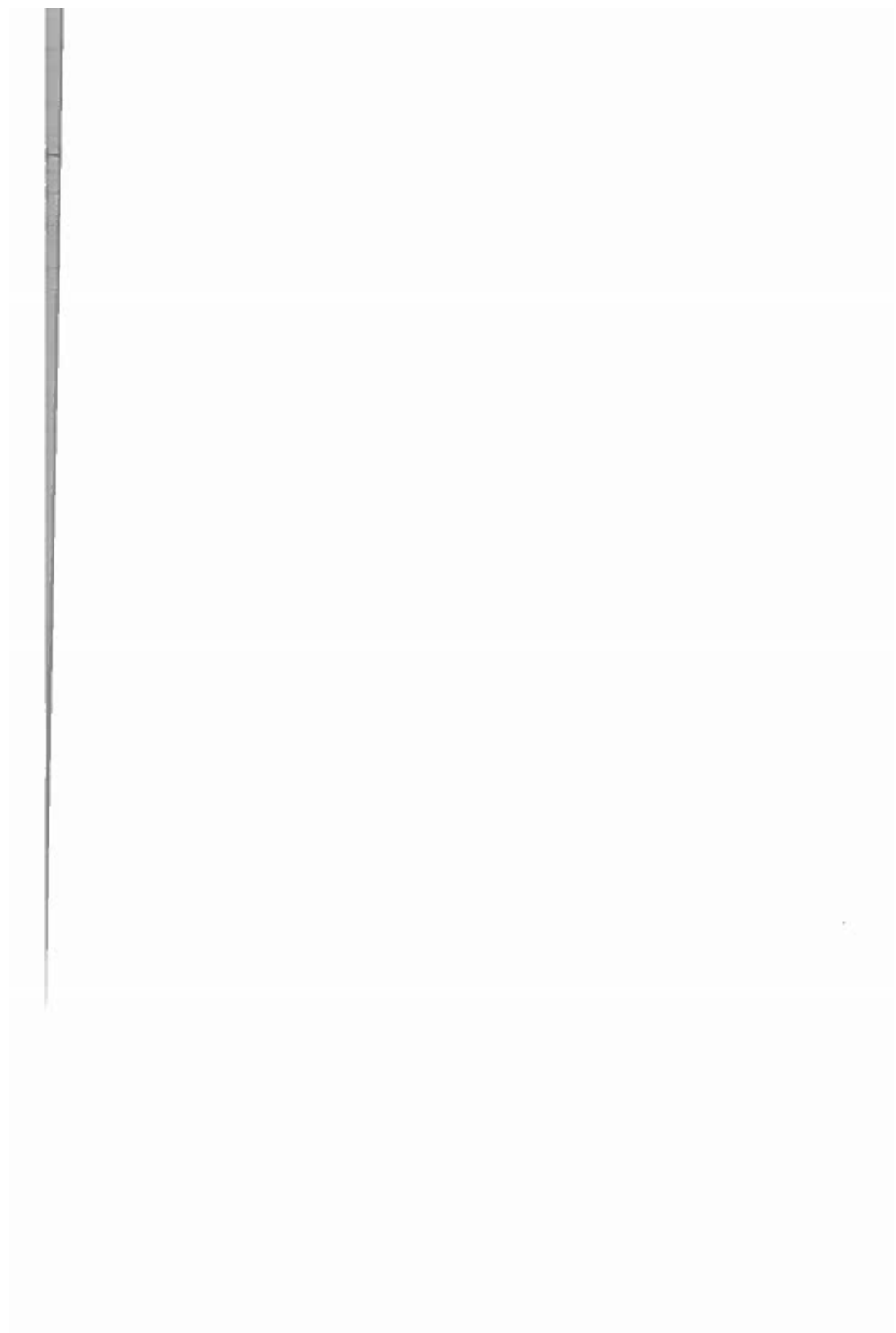
For some children, the first words in English that they read are their poems. Some classes learn to read each other's poems and many read all of the classes' poetry. We have presented the poems as a puppet show. The poems belong to the children and they are more powerful than I ever dreamed. They give the students status and power. I have often noticed a bloom of language growth following this project. The student has the laurel wreath. They feel that they can do it. They can use the language in a beautiful, meaningful way. Their strength is celebrated.

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<sup>1</sup> The magazine series *Zoobooks* can be found in the children's magazine section in most libraries. For more information, the publisher is Wildlife Education, Ltd., 3590 Kettner Blvd, San Diego, CA 92101.



## The Video Class: A Vehicle for Multiple Writing Activities

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### Introduction/Rationale

The inclusion of writing assignments among the follow-up activities to ESL video classes expands comprehension and retention of video material and improves integration of skills. Such an approach is multisensory-information is received through auditory and visual channels and is recycled through productive written or verbal channels. A multisensory approach creates greater retention and development of integrated literacy skills (Jones, 1996). Videos also provide information and stimuli for writing, reading, listening and speaking activities (Stoller, 1991). In my Intensive English video class, the writing activities stimulate retention and comprehension by (a) reinforcing instruction received in writing tutorials while (b) simultaneously giving students the opportunity to practice their newly acquired skills in *real-life* assignments which recycle the audiovisual content of the videos.

### What Skills Can be Improved Through Use of Videos?

The most common purposes for using videos in an ESL class are to build listening and viewing skills in the target language and to develop nonverbal awareness and listening strategies. But, videos may be used for additional reasons, such as (a) to illustrate particular points of grammar, (b) to teach idioms, (c) to teach sociolinguistic aspects of language-for instance, how to phrase polite requests, or (d) to demonstrate correct behavior for job-seekers during an interview. In a content- or theme-based ESL video class, each lesson teaches integrated language skills while focusing on the video content. In any setting, writing activities may be used before, during, or after the video to activate the students' global knowledge, augment comprehension, and to expand on the video material. In-class video writing assignments are best for ESL beginners because the teacher is available for consultation during the early stages of writing (Oshima & Hogue, 1991); however, there are many different kinds of writing activities that can be used with students of all levels.

## Ideas for Video-Related Writing Activities

Many types of writing activities can be incorporated into video class lesson plans and homework assignments.

1. Students can begin to learn *documentation* by citing their sources for brief homework assignments. Following a video class about southwestern flora and fauna, my students answered homework questions about a chosen animal's habitat, food, etc. They used books, encyclopedias and periodicals in the university library. They were required to cite author, date, publication name, article name (if pertinent) and publisher according to the format illustrated on the homework handout and demonstrated in class.

2. *Writing short answers* to questions about main ideas, concepts, characters and details can be more provocative than multiple-choice comprehension checks, and also provides practice in using complete sentences, English grammar, and expression.

3. *Outlining* the plot not only checks comprehension, but is especially useful as a means of reviewing the first half of a video that is presented over two class sessions. Outlining skills are necessary for successful notetaking and as a prewriting tool.

4. *Descriptive writing* also is suitable for the video class. For example, students who have just seen a video about various American dialects can be asked to draw freehand maps of their own countries showing the areas in which different dialects or languages are spoken and accompany the maps with a written description of the people and their dialects.

5. Before or after an appropriate video, ESL students might be asked to *compare and contrast* American culture or education with their own. Or students could be asked to write about their perceptions of Native Americans, and after seeing a video on the subject, to compare and contrast *before* and *after* perceptions.

6. Thought-provoking videos can launch writing exercises in *argument*. After a video about American women ranchers and ranch



wives, my lesson plan included writing two essays: (a) pointing out the advantages for family women who prefer to be full-time homemakers and (b) arguing the case for family women who choose full-time work outside the home. The homework assignment was to suggest, in an essay, ways of combining both careers.

7. Videos are excellent vehicles for teaching students about writing *summaries*. Summarizing is a necessary academic skill that reinforces reading comprehension and facilitates note-taking.

8. *Note-taking* can be addressed in EAP, survival English, or workplace classes by having the students take notes during any video, prior to summarizing or answering postviewing questions. Good postviewing activities for a note-taking lesson are (a) to (semantically) map elicited responses about what should be included in notes, and/or (b) to have students compare their notes with those of other students, using a prepared model, or both.

9. Opportunities exist for teaching *creative writing*, also. After viewing the video *Dal Ices With Wolves*, my students wrote wonderfully imaginative and well-expressed sequels.

10. Stimulated by a video, students *will freewrite* uninhibitedly, especially if they know their freewrites are to be used as prompts for a follow-up activity and will not be examined by the teacher.

In addition, video can be used to introduce the subject of plagiarism, to teach students standards of clarity and to introduce the format of a report.

#### General Tips for Using Video to Teach ESL Writing

Teachers can use videos to improve ESL students' writing skills by following these guidelines.

I. Provide students specific movie report guidelines covering content, format, and suggested length. Help them find appropriate videos by suggesting the names of specific videos and the location of

video stores and theaters. Assigning out-of-class video/movie viewing and written movie reports is an ideal auxiliary activity for building listening and writing skills and encouraging student responsibility.

2. In EAP courses, explain the concept of plagiarism to the students, teach source documentation, and let them know that Americans value independent thinking and original expression. In their birth countries, the students may have learned that their ideas are insignificant compared to traditional wisdom, and that reproduction of experts' ideas surpasses individual expression.

3. In EAP classes, introduce standards of neatness and clarity early. By the third week of the semester, require students to type out-of-class writing assignments and to use margins and paragraph indentation.

Although there are many different writing activities that can be used in video classes, there are also some basic guidelines for the general use of videos in ESL classes.

### General Video Cliv Tips

The following suggestions are worth keeping in mind.

1. Include an introduction, previewing, during-viewing and postviewing activities, and a conclusion in any video-centered lesson.

2. Carefully consider video length. For a 100-minute class, the ideal length of time spent viewing a video is between 20 and 45 minutes.

3. Preview all videos.

4. Divide full-length movies into two or more segments. Choose logical stopping places during previewing.

5. Consider the students' ages, English proficiency levels, interests, the instructional objectives of the class, and also the availability of videos when selecting videos (Stoller, 1991).

6. Remember that each video will be conducive to different types of activities (Stoller, 1990).

### Conclusion

Although some activities, such as notetaking, outlining and argument, may be more appropriate for EAP students, it is nonetheless important that all ESL students learn integrated skills. Sometimes survival English classes concentrate solely on English conversation. However, since the students need to function in a society in which literacy is expected, reading and writing should not be neglected. Videos are excellent tools for teaching English listening skills to learners of every proficiency level. In addition, videos are very effective catalysts for language production (Stoller, 1990). Thus, a carefully selected video can be a stimulus for writing for students from different ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Using videos to teach writing is a versatile activity which is stimulating and rewarding for both students and teachers.

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BOOK REVIEWS

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*The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age.* Sven Birkerts. New York: Fawcett Columbine Books, 1994. Pp. 231. \$12.50. ISBN 0-449-91009-1.

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*We seem to believe that our instruments can get us there, but they call it. Their great power is all in the service of division and acceleration. They work in and create--an unreal time that has nothing to do with the deep time we thrive in: the time of history, tradition, ritual, art, and true communion.*

*Sven Birkerts*

*The Oregonian* newspaper columnist Robert Landauer recently wrote an article entitled "Technology Rules the Classrooms," exhorting Oregon educators to get on the technology bandwagon or else. If the commanding verb of the title wasn't convincing enough, Landauer went on to quote several education experts who warned that teachers not fully committed to "multimedia interactivity" in their classrooms would be doing their students a grave disservice. Technologically deprived students would never get a ride on the "Information Superhighway," but rather, limp hopelessly toward a 21st century that might have little use for them.

Elsewhere, in businesses, corporations, and various arms of government, workers are incessantly reminded that they've got to be technologically prepared (despite recent record layoffs and downsizing due, in many instances, to changes in technology itself) to meet an increasingly competitive, information-driven world.

Concerned over the speed with which technology seems to be engulfing people (especially those who inhabit the developed world), and its possibly damaging effects on reading and writing, Sven Birkerts decided to take a closer look at the electronic age. Early on in *The Gutenberg Elegies*, it becomes clear that Birkerts is convinced the world is experiencing a massive paradigm shift (as potent in some ways as the invention of the printing press), in which reading and writing and printed text are being metamorphosed by computer and video technology. The shift, occurring blatantly and seductively at all levels of society, is, according to Birkerts, not for the better.

Reading and writing-complex mental processes which reflect not only *literacy*, the ability to read and write in a given language, but perhaps more important, the desire to embrace the *literature* of that language as the best distillation of human experience-are under assault

from TV, computers, VCRs, fax machines, e-mail, etc. People may be reading more *quantitatively* as they are exposed to an ever-increasing stream of information, but the *quality* and depth of that reading, in Birkerts' estimation, are seriously declining.

Divided into three sections ("The Reading Self," "The Electronic Millennium," and "Critical Mass: Three Meditations"), *17ie Gutenberg Elegies* is a well-argued and absorbing book, even if the reader is not as fervently negative as Birkerts toward electronic media. In "The Reading Self," Birkerts explores his passion for books and the psychologically complex act of reading which develops in childhood and grows into an adult "reading identity." This identity sustains, nurtures, and renews itself over a person's lifetime of interaction with books. Birkerts is emphatic in focusing on the novel (not necessarily as the only kind of writing worth reading) which he believes is the most durable legacy a culture can record and pass on to future generations.

Reading a novel, as opposed to a newspaper column, a set of instructions, an article in a magazine, or an e-mail entry, exemplifies best what Birkerts calls the "duration experience." A novel worth its salt (Birkerts has his favorites such as Hemingway, Forster, Woolfe, James, Dickens, Kerouac, Pynchon) is something which takes time to read. It can't be digested in one sitting; rather, the reader must cultivate a special disposition, attentiveness, and concentration to enter into and be caught up in a novel's wholly imagined world.

Novel reading is almost private and personal act, conducive to self-reflection, and as Birkerts feels, increasingly violated by the intrusions of technology which seem to be speeding up human activity as well as demanding people to do more tasks simultaneously. The great age of novel reading began to wane, explains Birkerts, as television grew in importance, taking away time for reading. Computers and the dazzling array of media have further accelerated this decline as an ever-growing quantity of information is thrust onto people. Echoing Neil Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*, Birkerts says that we have grown so distracted and fragmented by technology and the media, so overwhelmed by the choices it offers that we literally can't hear ourselves think, let alone read.

Furthermore, the "extensivity" of the reading of information available throughout cyberspace, for example, reflects sheer quantity and the idea that the information extends horizontally spreading out through millions of electronic circuits. One can, by clicking a mouse, move swiftly through streams of words, but the computer doesn't encourage one to linger and relish: quite the contrary, it urges the user on to new sites, denying her Birkerts' "deep and sustained pleasure of reading for its own sake."

In the book's second section, Birkerts hits his stride. Having made a strong case for the pleasure and wisdom which a lifetime of reading can bring, he goes on to criticize "hypertexting," the manipulation and/or enhancement of text by computer. Examples might include an interactive CD which helps students in reading Raymond Chandler mysteries, a group novel writing project done "on line," a traditional novel whose ending is deleted so participants can add their own. The multiple possibilities for playing with a text in cyberspace are only limited by the software and graphics available.

Why is this a bad thing? one might ask. Isn't "hypertexting" a creative endeavor? Can't students benefit from CD enhanced novels? Why should it matter if text is chopped up, moved around, spliced, deleted then added back in a new version? For Birkerts, the text as it appears traditionally in books is sacred (like a piece of fine art), so computer machinations performed on it violate its sacredness, its intactness. Reading is no longer reading, but becomes a kind of momentary gazing as the ever-changing text writhes and contorts on the screen. Birkerts suggests calling this manipulation "texting" or "word-piloting" (as words are literally pushed around on the screen) as it isn't traditional reading.

In the last part of *Elegies*, Birkerts muses on the predictions of futurists such as Marshall McLuhan and E. Buckminster Fuller as well as literary critics Lionel Trilling and Roland Barthes, the latter envisioning a time when novels would no longer be written or read. Birkerts concludes that the nature of the technology we are now experiencing is fundamentally changing the ways we perceive the world and how we react to it. Things keep accelerating, fragmenting, video replaces the printed page, novel reading declines, there is "real time" versus "virtual time," text becomes malleable as dough but its content

*The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of*  
—*Reading in an Electronic Age*, pp.71-75

doesn't stick long with the web surfer who is, after all, just looking for the next new byte or •hit.• Birkerts ends the book defiantly: •From deep in the heart, I hear a voice that says, 'Refuse it.••

Birkerts book, if nothing else, should challenge us to examine our own biases **and** assumptions. Perhaps we are **not** willing to go as far as Birkerts in condemning the computer age; nonetheless, we shouldn't hesitate to ask ourselves now **and** then how technology affects what we do. Is technology just a tool or is it changing how we act and think as humans, and what we value? Are we letting video and computers entertain us more as our imaginations atrophy? Or, do they just spark us on to new creative and artistic undertakings? How does the role of teacher change? Can it **be** neatly summed up by •ouide on the side, not sage on the stage?• What does it mean to be a student in the cyberage? Let the discussion begin!



*Adult ESL/Literacy From the Community to the Community: A Guidebook for Participatory Literacy Training.* Elsa Auerbach, Byron Barahona, Julio Midy, Felipe Vaquerano, Ana Zambrano, & Joanne Arnaud. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 1996. Pp. 217. \$14.95.

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Janet Swinyard is a recent graduate of the Adult Education/ESOL program at Oregon State University. Her research interests include the effects of acculturation on second language acquisition and ways to improve the communication skills of international graduate teaching assistants.

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This is a guidebook with a fresh approach to ESL/literacy: grow your own teachers. Based on the idea of meeting community needs through the use of community resources, this practical book should appeal to those searching for new ways to meet literacy **needs** by empowering immigrants and/or refugees to teach others. The authors tell how they adapted and implemented this model (common in other parts of the world) on a small scale in North America, hoping that this will serve as a guide to others interested in similar programs.

The book documents a collaboration between the University of Massachusetts at Boston, the Boston Adult Literacy Fund, and three adult education programs. The partnership developed, implemented, and evaluated a project to train immigrants and refugees as adult ESL and native language literacy instructors in their own communities. While there were similarities between the three sites, such as a history of over 10 years of adult education programs and a wide range of services in addition to ESL classes, there were also important differences, **and** the instruction at each site was designed to meet the specific needs of the surrounding communities. At one center initial instruction was in Haitian Creole. A second center in East Boston started with Spanish, in response to the rapidly growing number of Hispanics (many of whom were illiterate) in that area, and the third center offered begiMing ESL to serve the needs of the 2S to 30 different neighboring ethnic groups. outstanding language minority teachers were trained as mentors; they, in tum, helped train immigrant and refugee interns to teach others. A participatory approach to literacy instruction and instructor training was used throughout, drawing on the knowledge and experience of the trainees.

The book is divided into six chapters, moving from the theoretical foundations of participatory education to efforts to answer the question •so What?• Chapter 1 presents the *mtionaltfor tht project design*; shows how the ideas are supported by theory, research and practice; and defines the objectives and key features of the project. Chapter 2 provides a summary of the *project slructutt* and gives *guidelinesfor choosing mentors and Interns*. The authors consider the selection of mentors as perhaps the most critical aspect of the project, and list the criteria and process they used in choosing the mentors and interns. Chapters 3 and 4 are the heart of the book. Chapter 3 details the

*training*, a combination of university-led workshops and site-based training guided by mentors. The training emphasizes the notions of transformina teacher-learner relations, a student-centered emergent curriculum, and student inquiry **and** experience-based learning. The authors describe what happens in the mentoring component and the teacher-sharing meetings, and give detailed information about the workshops. **The** appendix presents **4** sample trainina workshops on such topics as finding learners' issues, working with transitional/beginning ESL students, and assessing student progress. Chapter 4 links the training to what actually occurred in the *ESL and literacy classes*. The authors discuss how **the** students' lives shape teaching and describe a variety of teaching tools used to draw out dialogue. Instruction at each site was responsive to the students' particular economic and social needs. Examples of student-generated themes and teaching issues, such as combining traditional and innovative approaches, and problem-posing are included. Chapter *S* focuses on project *evaluation*, outlining the process and the results, which include the impact of the project on mentors, interns, and learners in different areas. The conclusion summarizes the *findings* regarding training, participatory literacy instruction, and literacy. The chapter also **makes** *ncommendadons* for the field of adult and family literacy. The authors found participatory literacy instruction to be a powerful model for newly literate adults because as they use literacy to address their concerns, literacy becomes socially significant in family and community life. The biggest challenge to continued success, however, is inadequate funding.

The approach to participatory literacy training outlined in this guidebook is strongly grounded in the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, whose primary concern is to liberate individuals from forces that deny their humanity. To accomplish this, Freire believes it is important to guide people toward thinking critically about their own reality and reflecting on it in order to later transform it. Freirean ideas of dialogue **and** problem posioa are **used** to accomplish these **aoats**. The appendices include an explanation of the Freirean approach and illustrations of its application in the Spanish and Haitian Creole programs.

The book is easy to read, and the authors add real-life examples and testimonials from mentors and interns to illustrate their points throughout. They discuss why some approaches didn't work on occasion and what they tried instead. Due to the short time frame of the project, it was not possible to fully assess individual learner progress. However, by focusing on the evaluation of classes and groups, the participants were able to make some generalizations about the impact of the model on the learners in different areas: in-class (reading, writing, and ESL proficiency), affective (self-confidence, willingness to take risks and make mistakes), and out-of-class (functional uses of ESL or literacy, family relationships, community roles).

The authors effectively present their •rrom the community to the community• model as a viable approach for addressing ESL/literacy needs. While this guidebook is not strictly a blueprint for setting up such a program, recognizing that each situation is unique, it does show how three programs work, and provides very useful information for those interested in drawing on and enhancing the strengths of immigrants and refugees to respond to the ever-growing needs of those individuals around them. A list of additional training resources is included for those wishing more material.

*Critical Explorations.* Adrienne Sklar & Mary  
Lee Wholey. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1996.  
Pp. vii-237. \$26.75.

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In this book, the authors attempt to help *bridge* students from traditional writing skills courses to the type of writing that would be required in college-level courses. That is, students are guided toward a more process-oriented approach to writing which integrates the skills and is content-based. The book, one of a series targeting different levels and skill areas, is intended as a writing text for high advanced learners and is designed for ESL students at the postsecondary level. Although the main focus is on writing, for those content-based teachers who are looking for a textbook that integrates language and content as well as the skill areas, this book will prove to be a valuable resource.

The book is divided into six chapters, with topics covering a wide range of subjects from the fields of science and technology, business, social justice, immigration, and the media. Although these topics may seem disparate, the authors attempt to link each chapter by weaving the thread of cultural awareness in a world of increasingly multi-cultural societies linked through global communications and international business transactions throughout the chapters.

The text has a clear focus on writing as a process and includes direct strategy instruction toward that end. The first several chapters introduce students to the writing process, focusing on generating ideas, planning, revising, editing drafts, and peer and self review. The development of critical thinking skills is encouraged throughout the text as students gather and synthesize information from various sources. In the chapters that follow, various writing genres are introduced and students are required to apply skills and strategies that they have learned previously in these new situations. An awareness of audience, purpose, and organization when planning their writing is raised. The final chapter culminates in a research writing task in which library research is introduced and students are required to draw upon the skills from the previous chapters. Advanced writers need to be able to interact critically with text, critically interpret and synthesize information from various sources, create information, argue alternative perspectives and present and promote research (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). To this end, this book from the *Tapestries* series addresses the complexity of the writing process.

The real strength of this text is its ability to contextualize writing. Although the major focus is on developing the skills necessary to become effective writers, the text incorporates and integrates the other skill areas (reading, speaking, and listening) to achieve this goal. Therefore, there is a strong emphasis on reading, and the text includes extensive reading passages at an advanced level. The readings are used as a forum for discussion and provide an opportunity to develop ideas for writing. Students gather information from listening to lectures or interviews and are given strategy instruction in note-taking. Finally, emphasis is placed on the evaluation and integration of information from various texts, thereby fostering a sense of critical thinking. Writing is therefore placed within a context and, in essence, the structure of this book mirrors much of what is expected in postsecondary content classes.

The book is, however, very dense. Although I have not used the book in class, there is a great deal of information and instruction in each of the chapters which might make a rigid sequencing of the chapters difficult. Therefore, one might choose to use part of the material or all of it depending upon time constraints and the goals of the particular course being taught. As a writing text, it is an excellent resource for teachers. The combination of integrated-skills, strategy instruction, and content-based instruction is at the forefront of current methodology (Grabe & Stoller, in press). Strategy instruction in both reading and writing, as well as the rationale for certain techniques is clear to both the students and the teacher. This text would also prove valuable for use in content-based classes, although additional activities which focus on listening, speaking and vocabulary building would need to be incorporated to balance the heavy focus on writing. In a content-based setting, the topics in the text could be developed in more depth through the introduction of additional content resources (e.g., additional readings, videos, lectures, etc.).

This book truly lives up to its title, *Critical Explorations*, in that it engages students in critical thinking and it succeeds in weaving language, content, skills, and strategy instruction throughout.

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*Language Test Construction and Evaluation.* J. Charles Alderson, Caroline Clapham, & Dianne Wall. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. 310. \$17.95.

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As the title indicates, *Language Test Construct/011 and Evaluation* is a book designed for use by teachers and administrators who are responsible for or interested in designing tests for language programs. Even though many of the examples in this book center around the ESL classroom, it is a valid and usable reference book for designing tests on language ability for students learning languages. This book takes the interested reader step-by-step through the test-designing process, from reasons for test specifications through training of examiners and setting pass marks, to developing and then improving tests.

It is the goal of the writers of this book to give clear directions for designing tests. Testing techniques, however, aren't being addressed in depth in this book, since, according to the authors, such subject matter would exceed the scope of the book. Also, most of the examples used in the book to illustrate the points discussed, are taken from the EFL examination boards of the United Kingdom. Since such boards are comparable to meetings of competent professionals trying to incorporate reasonable standards of language testing anywhere, these examples aren't only illuminating, but also useful for the reader in the USA.

The book is divided into 11 chapters, each chapter dealing with a different stage of the construction of a test. The chapters are laid out clearly, and start with the rationale for the aspect of testing discussed in that chapter. The writers do not presuppose any knowledge of testing on the part of the reader, and start out slowly, explaining and describing each step. The checklist of the main issues at the end of each chapter is also useful, and again reviews the material covered in the body of the chapter. The checklist can be made part of the test-developer's tools for designing tests. There is also a useful bibliography at the end of each chapter.

After a general overview and introduction in the first chapter, the writers introduce the reader to the need for and development of test specifications in the second chapter. The explanations are accompanied by clear examples, and the writers are careful to mention procedures for all possible kinds of language tests. A logical extension of the chapter on test specifications is the next chapter--the writing of test items. All possible test item types, their advantages and disadvantages

are explained and many of them are shown in context. This chapter also contains a short section on subjectivity and objectivity in grading or marking tests.

The fourth chapter addresses pre-testing, pilot testing, and test analysis. The need for pre-testing, how to proceed with it as well as its advantages are explained. There is a section on analysis in this chapter, but the writers don't go into great detail, even though correlation, factor analysis, and discrimination index are mentioned. Also, a short explanation of other ways to analyze responses and student characteristics, such as Item Response Theory and some descriptive statistics are mentioned. There is also a short paragraph on making the grading on subjective tests more reliable. However, a teacher or professional interested in a more in-depth discussion of statistical analysis may have to consult a book which is more concerned with statistical analysis than this book is. In chapter seven, "Reporting Scores and Setting Pass Marks," a few more ways to use statistics to determine results are explained. Chapter five is mainly concerned with training the examiners, and giving guidelines for subjective test evaluations. This also is a very useful chapter, with the underlying philosophy carefully explained and giving some interesting suggestions to help examiners. Chapter six is a continuation of chapter five; it explains the importance of and reasons for monitoring examiner reliability, including interrater reliability.

Chapter seven puts forth the various methods of reporting and interpreting test scores, setting pass marks, deciding on the weight of scores, and using sub-tests in interpreting scores. Chapter eight explains the importance of validity in testing, and ways to ensure such validity, for what is a test worth, if it doesn't test what it is supposed to test? Chapter nine is on post-test reports, which are of importance to administrators, and can help in decision making for the way future courses are taught. Chapter ten is concerned with developing and then improving the tests, incorporating changes to adjust tests to new developments in the field. Chapter eleven is concerned with standards in language testing, including ETS standards for fair testing, and others. The testers can adjust their tests and grading methods according to the standards that fit their situation best, and can learn more about these different standards.

The book has clearly defined subjects; the writers are aware of the newest findings in testing, and the rationale behind them, and are able to put these subjects forth in clear language, and in-depth. The book will make it possible for the inexperienced interested reader to devise a working, valid test on the first try. Even though the book is written for the testing novice, it is interesting enough for a seasoned test-writer to remain interested, and to get new insights into the process of testing and evaluating.

The only weakness here is a rather cursory overview of the statistical processes of test evaluations. However, as the writers mention in the first chapter, a detailed look at the statistical analyses involved in test evaluation would so widen the scope of the book that it would become impractical. Also, there are several very good books on statistical processes of test evaluation on the market. Since each of the chapters in this book has a bibliography at the end, the interested readers can refer to these books if they wish to know more.

This book can be of great value for any teacher or researcher responsible for evaluating language progress in an educational institution. There are at this time not many books on the market which can explain the process in an interesting way while at the same time, leading the reader step-by-step through the test-designing processes. It is a valuable and up-to-date handbook, and I, for one, will have it as part of my professional library.

## INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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*The ORTESOL Journal*, a professional, refereed publication, encourages submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language, especially in elementary and secondary schools, and in higher education, adult education, and bilingual education. As a publication which represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the *Journal* invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics, especially in the following areas:

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