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IDENTIFYING SOCIOCULTURAL INFLUENCES ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO LEARN ENGLISH IN RURAL AREAS IN VIETNAM

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Abstract

Sociocultural elements contributing to shaping L2 motivation of students learning English in rural areas have remained relatively underexplored in the field of second language learning and acquisition. Research on L2 motivation has, for example, given insufficient attention to the role of families, peers and near peers, and local factors. Framed within the context of high school students learning English in rural Vietnam, this article aims to identify sociocultural elements impacting on students' L2 motivation in the face of constraints in their learning conditions and limited social support. Retrospective data regarding language learning at high school were collected from a questionnaire survey with students in their first semester at university (N = 92) and follow-up interviews were conducted with three of the respondents. Findings reveal that although most students did not regard English as their main study focus at high school, they maintained differing degrees of L2 motivation attributable to parental encouragement and financial investment, peer and near peer effects, and the perceived values of language learning for their personal and interpersonal commitments. The article concludes by highlighting the need to interpret L2 motivation from a situated perspective, using qualitative tools.

Keywords: L2 motivation, sociocultural elements, EFL, rural, high school

Introduction

Given the global popularity of English, the number of English language learners has surpassed that of any other language. Students learn English for multiple and complex reasons, including personal, interpersonal and pragmatic factors. Different studies drawing on theoretical perspectives in education, psychology, and sociology have attempted to explicate the complex issues of L2 motivation (see Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011 for a detailed overview). L2 motivation has been reconceptualised not as a unitary internal psychological construct affected by individual differences, personality and other affects, but rather a system of internal and external factors pertaining to individual learners' contexts (Dörnyei, 2005; Nakata, 2006; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2009). Sociocultural elements have been found to significantly impact on the ways in which learners construct their L2 motivation. However, contemporary research on L2 motivation has tended to primarily focus on language learners from

urban areas and to overlook challenges and constraints on language learning in rural contexts (Dobinson, 2014; Hayes, 2010; Lamb, 2013; Pham, 2015).

The social turn in L2 motivation research

Contemporary research on L2 motivation has become attuned to the “social turn” in second language acquisition (Ortega, 2011). Block (2003) subscribes to a “broader, socially informed” view that “takes on board the complexity of context” (p. 4) in research on second language acquisition generally and on motivation specifically. L2 motivation has been reformulated in response to the rapid process of globalisation and the values of learning languages, especially English, highlighting the role of context (Ryan, 2006). Some theoretical revisions of L2 motivation include the L2 motivational self system (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), international posture (Yashima, 2009), willingness to communicate (Clément, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003; MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, & Conrod, 2001; Yashima, 2002), and other aspects of L2 motivation adopting sociocultural approaches (Gao, 2008; Kim, 2006; Lamb, 2007, 2012; MacCallum & Pressick-Kilborn, 2011). This context-contingent trend is laudable because “nothing is ‘decontextualised’ despite efforts to make it so” (Turner, 2001, p. 85). For instance, Lamb (2013) examines contextual constraints and affordances that impact on the motivation to learn English among adolescent learners from rural Indonesia. His study shows a plethora of personal and societal elements that hold sway on the learners’ L2 efforts and resilience, and the complexity of language learning in rural settings. Exploring L2 motivation from a sociocultural perspective could therefore provide further insights into the ways in which learners’ motivational constructions are shaped and reshaped by local learning contexts and social and cultural systems.

The role of significant others in language learning

L2 research has documented differing roles and contributions of significant others, especially teachers, peers, and near peers – “peers who are close to our social, professional and/or age level” (Murphey, 1998, p. 201), in igniting, sustaining and enhancing L2 motivation (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Guilloteaux, 2007; Kaboody, 2013; Kozaki & Ross, 2011). The impacts of parents, siblings, members of the extended family, and other individuals within learners’ social milieus on their language development, school performance, and L2 motivation have been widely acknowledged (Gao, 2012; Lamb, 2013; Palfreyman, 2006, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997). While Gao (2006, 2012) investigates strategies adopted by Chinese parents and their proactive involvement in helping their children to develop language competence, Lamb (2012, 2013) focuses more on the motivational values of parental aspirations, beliefs and financial investment in language learning in Indonesian contexts. All these studies reveal that significant others contribute to mediating the learning process through providing language affordances and creating learning opportunities for learners, and attending to other affective dimensions of language learning (Butler, 2015b; Lamb, 2012; Palfreyman, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997).

Consideration of the role of significant others is indeed important for sociocultural framing of L2 motivation.

The context

Vietnam is a member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose goal is to strengthen socio-economic, cultural, educational and political relations among participating states, using English as a working language. It has also been a member of the World Trade Organisation since 2007. Vietnam views foreign language development, especially improving English language proficiency among Vietnamese citizens, as one of the key strategic tasks for successful integration into the global economy. The Vietnam Ministry of Education (MoET, 2008) launched a national foreign languages project spanning 2008-2020 with a view to consolidating the role of English in the national education system, streamlining the national language programme, and enhancing language teaching and learning quality across the country. However, there remain significant discrepancies in terms of facilities and social resources for language learning, teaching staff qualifications, and teaching quality between rural and urban areas (Hall, 2008; Kam, 2002; Vang, 2003; World Bank, 2005). Limitations in learning conditions have meant that there has been a tendency to overlook language learning among students from rural backgrounds and that these students tend to have lower levels of L2 interest.

Given the fact that language teachers and their classroom strategies have been widely identified as key motivators (Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Chambers, 1999; Coyle, 2014; Dörnyei, 2001), this article aims to explore the interplay between family members, peers and near peers, and other sociocultural elements within the local context and the L2 motivation and attitudes of high school students learning English in rural Vietnam. Drawing on retrospective data from a questionnaire survey conducted at two state universities in Vietnam and follow-up interviews with three of the respondents, it addresses the following research question:

RQ: What sociocultural elements can be identified as impacting on high school students' motivation to learn English in rural areas in Vietnam?

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this study were 92 freshmen, aged between 18 and 20, taking English for Specific Purposes courses in their first semester at two state universities in Vietnam which specialise in technology and business respectively. To be eligible for their present majors, the students had to take a university entrance examination which either included or excluded English depending on their exam groups, thus resulting in differing perspectives on the value of language learning and their levels of L2 interest

(there are five exam groups for entry into these two universities: A, A1, B, C and D in which only groups A1 and D require English as one of the three mandatory subjects). All students in the study came from different rural and/or remote areas from North, Central and South Vietnam but shared the same national high school curriculum, and testing and assessment system. The rationale for this choice of participants was that these students had completed their high school English programmes within the last six months, thus potentially having recent reflections on their recent language studies. Table 1 details the participants' background information.

Table 1: Participants' English language learning duration and proficiency levels

Participants' backgrounds (N = 92)		Percentages
English language learning duration	6 - 8 years	75%
	≥ 9 years	25%
Levels of English language proficiency	elementary	25%
	pre-intermediate	30%
	intermediate	30%
	upper-intermediate to advanced	15%

Procedures for data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was developed based on the author's language teaching and learning experience, and assumptions about social and cultural factors relating to L2 motivation of students from rural areas derived from email exchanges with ten of his colleagues, who were English language lecturers at different universities in Vietnam. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) comprised three sections covering the major points of students' retrospective views of the impetus behind their English language learning at high school and sociocultural elements impacting on their language studies. These points were presented in different item types, aiming to elicit different levels of respondents' reflections. The questionnaire survey was administered with the assistance of two of the author's colleagues, who held Masters in TESOL and had been teaching English at the two universities for several years. 100 questionnaires were distributed to the students in different English classes who volunteered to participate in the study and identified themselves as coming from rural areas based on the location of their hometowns. The languages used in the questionnaires and responses were either English or Vietnamese at the participants' discretion, aiming to encourage their use of English. The students worked on the questionnaires in their own time and returned them to the teachers in later class meetings. There were 92 responses, with 61 in Vietnamese and 31 in English - indicated as *English in the original responses* (EOR). The respondents were requested to leave their contact details should they be willing to participate in further follow-up discussions with the author.

Semi-formal interviews were conducted with three of the respondents, Hoa (female), Hoang (male) and Khoa (male) who, unlike the other 11 volunteers, were able to work with me on Skype (all names are pseudonyms). An interview guide (see Appendix B), drawing on the result of the survey and not disclosed to the interviewees, was used for gaining in-depth insights into the issues of L2 motivation within rural contexts. Skype interviews were arranged with individual students at their convenience. The interviews began with some introductory information which was then steered to the points listed in the interview guide.

In terms of data analysis, quantitative data from the survey were entered into Microsoft Excel worksheets to calculate the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) for each questionnaire item that was based on the five-point Likert scale; the number of respondents (N) to each item was also indicated. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each and all interview data were transcribed and where necessary translated into English by the author. Qualitative data from both the survey and interviews were utilised to provide in-depth explanations for the numeric data. Extracts from the survey were abbreviated as Q and a number assigned to each respondent (e.g. Q30), and those from interviews as I and the name of the interviewee (e.g. IHoa).

Results

The findings presented here highlight the role of significant others, including peers (meaning classmates within the context of this study), near peers and family members, together with prevailing sociocultural elements, as key motivational factors. Table 2 presents the statistics related to the items in Part I of the questionnaire.

Table 2: Statistical analysis of the items in Part I of the questionnaire

Questionnaire items	N	Mean	SD
1.1. Personal interest	92	3.33	1.25
1.2. Examination pressure	92	3.85	1.12
1.3. Future prospects	89	4.43	0.82
1.4. International communication	92	3.88	1.11
1.5. Peer pressure	90	2.12	1.18
1.6. Peer role models	90	2.5	1.29
1.7. Family pressure	89	2.52	1.21
1.8. Parental expectations	91	3.35	1.22
1.9. Family honour	90	2.81	1.39
1.10. Family members as role models	90	2.54	1.38

(N = number of respondents, SD= standard deviation)

Peer impacts in terms of classroom-based influences

Whereas peers have been found to drastically influence L2 motivation in other Asian contexts (Butler, 2015a; Gao, 2008; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Kyriacou & Zhu, 2008; Lamb, 2007), the students in the present study did not perceive much *peer pressure* in terms of learning English (N = 90, M = 2.12, SD = 1.18), a primary explanation for which is the fact that English tended not to be the main focus of their studies. While students reported stronger peer competition in natural science subjects, such as mathematics and physics, for their immediate academic goals such as their ranking in class or school academic excellence titles (IKhoa and IHoang), they appeared to overlook English as a school subject because “my classmates do not learn English well and I am neither better nor worse than them, so I do not have to put in more effort to keep up with them” (Q64). In a context in which the majority of peers were at similar proficiency levels, students did not feel the immediate need to improve their language skills. However, for some, the sense of inferiority arising out of their poorer performance in English energised them to expend more L2 effort (Q01, Q39, Q56, Q81 and Q85). In relation to this, Gao (2008) asserts that peer relationships, especially peer competition, may be a threat to their motivation, causing “feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, anxiety, and frustration” (p. 180). Hoang, who lived in a remote village but studied at a high school in the centre of his province, noticed a marked difference in his language abilities from those of his classmates in his first year. Believing that “my friends could do it, so could I,” he spent more time working on English exercises and practising English with foreign tourists – his hometown is a popular tourist destination in Vietnam (IHoang).

Given the constraints in learning conditions in rural areas, students who performed well in English often received high esteem from their peers. *Peer role models* was slightly better rated than *peer competition* (N = 90, M = 2.5, SD = 1.21), indicating that successful peers had significant motivational effects on a number of students (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2004; Murphey, 1998). One of the respondents, Q29, stated that “one of my friends was given a scholarship to study abroad” because of her excellent English competence. This was a significant motivator for Q29 to strive to learn English to be able to study overseas like his/her friend. More capable peers also acted as learning resources; as Q46 said, “I can ask them about their learning strategies.” A policy within Khoa’s school was that students who got high scores in provincial and national examinations not only received cash awards but were also presented as role models during whole-school assemblies. In his words, “Such awards and popularity among peers are the incentives that energise me to study as well as them” (IKhoa).

It was clear that the students in the present study derived differing degrees of L2 motivation from peers. One point to emphasise is that the numerical ratings seemed slightly inconsistent with their follow-up explanations: a larger number of

respondents tended to agree that more able peers functioned as role models for them to expend more effort in learning English. This will be discussed further in the limitations of the study.

The role of family

In Vietnamese culture, parents are often closely involved in the decision-making process with regard to their high school children's studies and career choices. Also, educational attainments have an important place in Vietnamese family tradition (An, 2002; Binh, 2012; Hang, 2009). The findings revealed that parental expectations, family values and role models of successful family members are among the salient motivators for the students in their language learning.

Parental involvement and expectations. The majority of Vietnamese parents in rural areas have rather low literacy levels which affect their job statuses and incomes (World Bank, 2005, 2013). The challenges in their lives, many of which may be the result of having left school early, are among the drivers for them to make financial investments in their children's education in the hope that they can have better economic and academic futures (Butler, 2015b; Hayes, 2010; Lamb, 2013). Through ready access to the mass media such as local newspapers, television and the radio, Vietnamese parents in rural areas demonstrate increasing awareness of the value of learning English. More than 80 percent of the respondents stated that their parents paid attention to their language studies, despite varying degrees of enthusiasm, by providing encouragement, giving them money for buying books, or sending them to private English classes. In Q29's words:

My parents didn't have much money to study English. Both of them were born in poor families and they had to skip studying to earn money. I almost study English myself. Sometimes, if there is an English programme on TV, they let me watch.
(Q29, EOR)

Some parents who had a working knowledge of English might be more actively involved in language learning, as was the case for parents in China, Taiwan and Korea (Gao, 2012; Lee, 2010; You & Nguyen, 2011). For example, Q31's father was an English teacher at his/her high school, so "he is my first English teacher teaching me the first English vocabulary, the first grammar structure. He is very strict when guiding me" (EOR). Parents' endeavours arose from their expectations of the rewards from good language competence, such as working for international companies or having high salaries. *Parental expectations* was rated as the third most important motivational element ($N = 91$, $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.22$), showing that parents had significant influences on students' language learning attitudes and perseverance. Also, fear of disappointing their parents fuelled some students to do their best. Roughly half of the respondents reported that they always strove to get at least a

passing grade in English, even if it was not their main study focus, in order to live up to parental expectations.

Family values. As mentioned earlier, academic achievement is of great significance within Vietnamese family traditions. Successful learners are often cited as role models for other students within the local community and as a source of honour for their own family. However, over 80 percent of the respondents did not regard *family honour* as an important motivator for language learning (N = 90, M = 2.81, SD = 1.39). One student argued that “it simply doesn’t exist” (Q25, EOR). Students reasoned they could have a higher chance of passing the university entrance examination by focusing on natural science subjects rather than English; as a result, English did not contribute much to the possibility of academic success at high school. Although only a minority of the students attributed family pride to their English language studies, they did take this element seriously. Q31 stated that family honour as a motivator for language learning “is such a common notion. My father is an English teacher, so I have to be good at it” (EOR). Another student argued that “my family has a tradition of academic studiousness, so I have to do my best in all subjects, including English” (Q56, EOR).

Role models from successful family members and social others. Within the context of the present study, family members were referred to as not only people from the immediate family but also those from the extended one. The respondents did not consider *family member as role models* an important source of motivation (N = 90, Mean = 2.54, SD = 1.38) mainly because not many of them learned English well within rural contexts. As Q20 stated, “no one [in my family] can speak English fluently, except me” (EOR). However, there was an important generational perspective. For example, in response to the hypothesis in question 3.5 (*If your sibling learned English well, would you try to be as good as him/her? Why?*), over 75 percent of the students expressed a desire to be able to develop as good language skills as their siblings did. Q31 said: “Absolutely yes, because it is a motivation to make me try my best to improve English. They will be excellent teachers helping me learning English effectively” (EOR). Also, some students believed that if their siblings could learn English well, they could do the same. Those respondents whose family members had actually succeeded in their careers through good profiles in language proficiency showed stronger determination to follow these examples. Some of them stated: “I learn English to be a boss like my family member” (Q19, EOR), or “my aunt can speak three different languages and had a decent job as a translator. I must follow her example” (Q51).

Moreover, a few students reported that they knew of examples of successful learners in the news or were told about them by their parents. In this regard, Q34 stated: “At meal times, my parents usually mention a neighbour who had learned English very well and is now working overseas. Each year she provides scholarships for poor students at my high school.” Such near peer role models who came from similar

language learning backgrounds convinced these students of the possibility of success despite the limited resources in rural areas.

To sum up, most of the parents and other family members reported in this study not only encouraged their children to learn English but also provided them with financial support. Some parents or siblings who had a working command of English were more proactive in creating activities for language practice with the students. Further, although mentioned by a minority of the respondents, successful family members as role models and other family cultural values such as family honour or academic studiousness contributed to maintaining students' resilience in learning English.

Key sociocultural elements: Future prospects and pragmatic uses of English

Nearly all the respondents displayed a certain degree of commitment to learning English because of its importance for their future studies, job applications and personal plans. These are also the most common reasons stated for learning English among ASEAN learners, given its role in global communication and international business (Kirkpatrick, 2011, 2012; Schneider, 2014). The survey revealed that *future prospects* was the strongest motivator overall in the study ($N = 89$, $M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.82$). Most students were aware that English was one of the prerequisites for job applications in Vietnam: "Most companies only recruit someone with good English" (Q13, EOR), and that they would be more likely to get a desirable job with high language proficiency. Hoa, for example, wanted to work in the field of foreign trade, so she had to do her best in English: "I have always hoped to be able to work in an import-export company or the like, so I have to learn English to communicate with clients" (IHoa). The primary impetus behind finding a good job was, as approximately half of the respondents claimed, to earn money to support their parents in return for their financial investment and upbringing. In response to scenario 2.3 (*Trang tries to learn English well to be able to support her parents in the future*), Q12 stated "[I am] almost someone like her. I want to repay them for raising me" (EOR). In Vietnamese culture, this is a mark of filial piety based on either the moral obligation or personal willingness of children to take care of their elderly parents.

In addition to learning English for job-related purposes, over 70 percent of the respondents stated that language skills were essential for various personal and interpersonal activities ($N = 92$, $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.25$). For instance, Q71 strove to learn English well because he wanted to move abroad to reunite with other family members. Often-cited reasons for practical use of English included watching movies, reading books and listening to songs in English, finding out more about Western culture, and keeping themselves up-to-date with technical and social news. Further, during the time of globalisation, all students felt a strong need to develop language skills for *international communication*, which was ranked as the second most important motivational element ($N = 92$, $M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.11$). Having a passion for travelling overseas, Khoa said: "I have always wanted to go to Europe but, of course,

I must be good at English to go that far” (IKhoa). From his/her own experiences in social interactions, Q44 believed that “I must at least know how to give directions to foreign tourists.”

Discussion and conclusion

It was evident that students’ English language studies were impacted by diverse sociocultural elements arising from interactions and relationships within their own milieus. The result tends to contradict the initial assumptions of the author and his colleagues with regard to the motivational value of significant others: peers, parents and extended family members were not as strongly motivating to the students in the present study as career-oriented factors. Figure 1 illustrates major sociocultural elements that were salient to the participants’ motivational constructions.

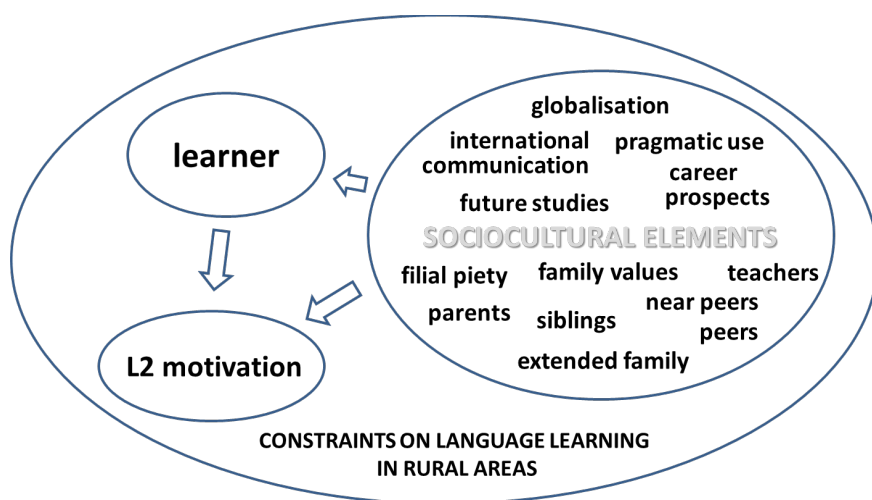


Figure 1: Sociocultural influences on the motivational constructions of high school students learning English in rural areas in Vietnam

While nearly 65 percent of the students in this study appeared not to be significantly impacted by peer competition in terms of language learning due to their main focus on other school subjects, they still see successful peers and near peers as good L2 role models. In view of the numerous challenges in learning English in rural Vietnam, it stands to reason that successful learners presented them with “powerful ‘identificatory moments’ of possibility” (Murphey & Arao, 2001, p. 9). Khoa stated “I have a classmate who comes from a really financially challenged family but she learns English very well thanks to personal effort. She deserves all my admiration” (IKhoa). This aligns with reports on the motivational effects of peer and near peer role modelling on language learners from countries such as Japan and Taiwan (Murphey, 1998; Murphey, Jin, & Li-Chi, 2004).

Regarding the role of family, this study has shown that parental expectations and financial investment, family values and role models within the home setting contributed to shaping learners' L2 motivation to differing degrees. Parental involvement has been found to help students develop more positive attitudes towards language learning in East Asian settings (Bartram, 2006; Butler, 2015b; Chow, 2007; Fan & Williams, 2010; Gao, 2006, 2012). While parents in these studies seemed more actively engaged in children's language learning, the students in the present study reported receiving more financial (>40% of the respondents) and emotional (>45%) support from their parents. The inherent Vietnamese sociocultural values of family honour (>20%), family tradition of academic diligence (>15%) and role models from siblings or extended family (50%) were also reported as partial sources of motivation.

With English functioning as a *lingua franca* (Crystal, 2003), all the students in the present study seemed to be aware of its values for their occupational goals and personal commitments (future prospects: $M = 4.43$; international communication: $M = 3.88$). Most insisted that having basic language skills was a must in today's world as "many children and adolescents now grow up with a global consciousness" (Arnett, 2002, p. 777). Learning English for job-related purposes has also been reported as one of the strongest extrinsic motivators in East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea and Indonesia (Kim & Yang, 2011; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Lamb, 2004, 2013). In the present study, this element had not only personal but also interpersonal and cultural significance. Some students expended time and effort to learn English in the hope of having a well-paid job which would enable them to take better care of their elderly parents and thus fulfil their duties of filial piety. Other pragmatic reasons for learning English reported by the students included travelling, making friends with people from other countries, reuniting with overseas family members, keeping themselves up-to-date, and using English for recreational activities.

This study has provided retrospective glimpses into sociocultural elements impacting on L2 motivation of students learning English at high schools in rural Vietnam. Rural students' language learning is hampered by challenges in their learning conditions and lack of social support and language affordances. However, within the context of globalisation and Vietnam's integration into the world economy, most students from rural Vietnam seem to be aware of the increasing values of language learning for their socioeconomic futures.

The present study has a number of evident limitations with regard to students' limited experience in responding to questionnaires, the small population, and the lack of gender-based data. Most of them were not familiar with questionnaire surveys as they had only recently entered university. This affected students' responses to Likert scale items, resulting in a few minor inconsistencies between numeric and verbal data as mentioned earlier. Also, the participants might not be fully representative of all high school students in rural Vietnam as they were high achievers who were able to pass

the university entrance examination. They and their family might have been more motivated than other students in rural Vietnam who did not advance to tertiary education. The findings show that L2 motivation is highly situated, depending on individual learners' language learning contexts and social relationships. Sociocultural elements tend to function as motivational synergies rather than the sum of individual factors. Therefore, this study highlights the need to utilise qualitative tools in order to gain more in-depth insights into L2 motivation within and across settings and relationships, and to identify further the synergistic effects of sociocultural elements on individual learners' motivational constructions.

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7. Family tradition and values regarding children's academic success (especially language learning)
8. (Near) peer role models of successful language learner at school, in his/her immediate and extended family, in the local community, or in the mass media
9. His or her language learning plans (if any)

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: STUDENT TEACHERS' CONCEPTUALIZATIONS IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

There are some theoretical convergences as to what facilitation constitutes, but it is less widely understood what teachers - whether practising or those preparing to teach - understand by the term. Also, there have been relatively few studies focusing on facilitation in Malaysian educational contexts. Given this paucity of local empirical studies, insights as to how facilitation might be operationalized can be drawn from studies elsewhere. A number of these studies introduce the principles and practice of facilitation with curricular innovations such as communicative language teaching, problem-based learning and virtual learning sites.

This paper presents data from written reflections of 130 student teachers of English as a second language (ESL) in Malaysia regarding how they conceptualized the role of a facilitator in their specific practicum contexts. There was convergence in their views that facilitation was operationalized in terms of group work and associated with self-directed and independent learning, and the participants showed understanding of a range of methodological approaches underpinning their reported practices, which were also illustrated by their choice of metaphors to describe them. There is evidence to suggest, therefore, that these student teachers appropriated the construct into their own cognitive schemata and classroom practices.

Key words: ESL, student teacher, facilitation, beliefs, classroom practice

Introduction

Conventionally, teacher education programmes in Malaysia and elsewhere have tended to prescribe pedagogical theories and teaching methods as pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Park & Oliver, 2008), which student teachers were expected to internalize and practise. Such programmes offered little flexibility in cognitive development among the student teachers because they were expected to follow the models that they were taught. However, Hargreaves (2003, p. xi) postulates “we require a qualitatively different approach to teaching in the 21st century... not only in what we teach, but especially how we teach.” Thus the professionalism needed today requires teachers to understand and apply a wide range

of teaching methods that can explore and exploit learners' potential to become problem-solvers and risk-takers in the process of second language acquisition. To achieve this professionalism, teachers need to become facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of pedagogical content. Hence an appropriate approach to teacher professionalism is to focus on student teachers developing their own knowledge about teaching methodologies based on both explicitly taught pedagogical theories and also their own personal theories of teaching formed from reflection on their own practical experiences. In this way, even novice teachers can be recognized as educational knowledge-makers and not merely consumers of other people's ideas (Allwright, 2006). Importantly, the knowledge thus created experientially can be incorporated heuristically into future offerings of the teacher education programme.

Literature review

Student teachers are exposed to a variety of theories about teaching in the programmes they pursue. These theories are meant to guide them in the course of their teaching. However, the extent to which these explicit theories facilitate their teaching is uncertain. What is certain is the experience they undergo, in implementing lessons for the practicum component of the programme, is formative in developing their personal understanding of PCK. If they are given the opportunity to reflect on the practicum experience, they should be able to identify, reflect and then theorize the roles they play in the classroom.

Recent changes in the education system and curriculum in Malaysia have promoted a shift in the student learning approach that requires learners to be more independent. According to Yang (1997), autonomous learning "has brought new perspectives to the teaching profession and changed traditional ideas about language teachers' roles" (p. 128). Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) define the notion of role as the "shared expectation of how an individual should behave. In other words, roles describe what people are supposed to do" (p. 109). Littlewood (1981) defines a key role of the language teacher in the context of communicative language teaching as a "facilitator of learning" (p. 92), who should empower the students to become more autonomous learners. Canagarajah (2002) supports the notion of student autonomy as it allows the students to "take more control of their learning experience. This lets them take responsibility for what they learn" (p. 147). Chong (2014) also contends that a teacher's main objective is to facilitate learning, and thus s/he should be able to create a positive and non-threatening (Krashen, 1985) learning environment so that students feel comfortable to participate in activities in the classroom. Underhill (1999) acknowledges that the shift from a conventional teacher's role to that of facilitator is not easy. The move can be:

characterised by a progressive reduction in the psychological distance between teacher and student, and by an attempt to take more account of the learner's own agenda, even to be guided by it. Control becomes more decentralised, democratic, even autonomous, and what the Facilitator saves on controlling is

spent on fostering communication, curiosity, insights and relationship in the group (p.140).

For such innovatory role shifts to be integrated into a curriculum, there is a need to explore and understand the extent to which teachers understand what is required of them. Borg (2006) has emphasized the importance of research into teacher cognition, and that of student teachers in particular. There have been relatively few studies in Malaysian educational contexts focusing on the beliefs and practices of student teachers in general, and even fewer about their understanding of facilitation. A rare example was a study investigating the role of English teachers in a Malaysian university context (Shafie & Nayan, 2010). A questionnaire adapted from Harden & Crosby (2000) was completed by 23 teachers of English, who were asked to choose the most frequent roles of a language teacher from a list of six: facilitator, role model, information provider, curriculum evaluator, and course organizer. Interestingly, only the language teachers with fewer than 5 or more than 20 years of teaching experience ranked the role of facilitator as more important than the others. Teachers with between 5 and 15 years of experience selected information provider, and those between 16 and 20 identified the most important role as curriculum planner. In these latter categories, the role of facilitator was ranked second or third.

Very little can be reliably inferred from such a small-scale study, but two points may be indicated. Firstly, the role of facilitator is known by all these teachers (the majority of whom possessed master's degrees) and reportedly incorporated in their practices. Secondly, that it was the most senior and junior teachers who ranked this role highest; the former possibly because they were more self-confident and able to relax control in the classroom, which is implicit in the nature of facilitation; the latter possibly because they were recently introduced to current theoretical trends in language teaching pedagogy in their professional development programmes.

Given this paucity of local empirical studies, insights as to how facilitation might be operationalized can be drawn from comparable studies elsewhere. Some of these studies integrate the principles and practice of facilitation with other curricular innovations such as problem-based learning and virtual learning sites. For example, in Singapore, Ling and Loy (2007) investigated the final-year Temasek Polytechnic students' perceptions of good facilitation in the context of problem-based learning. The study examined how the Singaporean students' interaction with their teachers affected their learning. Data were collected through the students' written self-reflection and focus group interviews. The study revealed that they considered good facilitation occurred when the facilitators demonstrated and modelled thinking strategies, helped the students ask the kinds of questions they should be asking themselves, scaffolded them to develop higher thinking skills, assisted them in their reflection, and guided them through the group processes, intervening only when necessary.

In an ethnographic case study conducted in China, Zheng and Zhizhong (2011) focused on a teacher's perception of her role as a facilitator in a game-based virtual learning environment. Her own definition of facilitation was that of allowing students to have more control of the situation and the freedom to choose what they wanted to learn. However, their freedom was not absolute as they sometimes needed the teacher's assistance. Hence, the teacher was also a coach, providing scaffolding (van Lier, 1997) to the students rather than merely transmitting information or issuing directives.

The concept of facilitator is also understood more meaningfully through experiential learning (Kolb, 2014; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). With particular reference to experiential learning among student teachers of science in South Africa, James (2009) conducted a study on how they incorporated their "perceptions as facilitators of learning, as well as their knowledge, cognitions, beliefs and actions within the context of facilitating learning in practice" (p. 288). Each student teacher had to use his or her experience of teaching and learning and to integrate these with a specific educational theory. It was essential for them to construct their own practical theory by designing and implementing learning tasks during their practical teaching sessions. It was through the use of experiential learning tasks that the student teachers "developed further understanding about the requirements for facilitating learning and the facilitation in learning practice" (p. 297). This experience was compared to, and integrated with, explicit theories of learning science during post-practicum reflective sessions to give them greater meaning. James opined that the student teachers' role as facilitators of learning was defined by what they did, which was underpinned by what they thought and believed.

Such studies as the above can provide suggestions for similar empirical research to be conducted in Malaysian schools, and it is hoped that the methodological procedures and the resultant findings of the present study will provide insights, and an impetus, for similar research to be conducted in local schools, as well as similar contexts elsewhere.

The present study

Participants

A total of 130 trainee teachers, who were majoring in the teaching of English as a second language (TESL), participated in this study. These trainee teachers were from two different universities in Malaysia, following programmes taught entirely through the medium of English. All of them completed their three-month practicum at local government secondary schools, during which they each wrote an ongoing journal to capture their reflections in action. Ethical approval for the project was sought and

obtained from relevant committees at the two universities, the participants were provided with information about the nature of the study and their role in it, and they gave their informed consent to participate in the study.

Research questions

The study aimed to identify the pre-service teachers' perceived roles as ESL teachers during their teaching practice by addressing the following research questions:

1. In what ways did the participants conceptualize the teacher's role as facilitator?
2. In what ways did they operationalize their understanding?
3. To what extent did they relate their conceptualizations to language teaching theories?
4. What implications for teacher education programmes can be drawn from the findings?

Data collection and analysis procedures

Given that the participants constituted a group of student teachers with common educational and training backgrounds, recent practical experience, and longer-term and local professional goals, a case study paradigm (Duff, 2010) was adopted to investigate their perceptions of their roles as language teachers. In order to have evidence of their perceptions and reported practices, data were collected from the participants' reflective journal entries written in English during the practicum, as recommended by, for example, Ling and Loy, (2007), Richards and Ho (1998), and Richards and Lockhart (1994).

The qualitative nature of the data strongly suggested that a process of grounded analysis (Burns, 1999; Charmaz, 2006; Holliday, 2012; Ryan & Bernard, 2003) would be appropriate. Thus, each reflective journal was initially coded for word families based on *facili-* and then linked with cognitive lexical chunks (e.g., *believe*, *perceive*, *know*, etc.) and with 'assistance' word bundles (e.g., phrases containing *provide*, *help*, *encourage*, etc.) These were then connected with practical examples suggested by the participants, from which emerged core categories of group work, self-directed learning, and autonomy. Finally, any references in the journals to theories of language learning or teaching were noted, as were the metaphors selected by the student teachers.

The data were triangulated to address the first three research questions above.

Findings

The following extracts from their journals and accounts are presented verbatim, and no attempt has been made to ‘tidy up’ infelicities in their English syntax, spelling, punctuation and lexical choice.

Facilitation operationalized through group work

Many of the participants specifically regarded facilitation as essentially requiring the students to work in groups; for example:

a teacher who facilitates his or her students’ learning will guide his or her students to construct their understanding of the lesson. As for me, during my practicum session, I use more group works during my lesson (M21)

During the activity, I tried to make the pupils to work in groups (M31)

From my own experiences, what I did was I focused more on group works. Most of the activities I conducted were involving games, debates, forums, conferences, role plays and any activities that needed them to work and discuss with their group members (T13)

I also conducted a lot of group work where students need to cooperate and use their own creativity to complete the tasks (T51).

This operationalization was in many cases explained in terms of theoretical underpinnings to which the student teachers had been introduced during their previous methodological programme. These included concepts such as student-centred learning, learner autonomy, and social constructivism. Other ideas were derived, explicitly or implicitly, from their understanding of different approaches to teaching English, such as the communicative approach, cooperative learning and Total Physical Response. They also thought of metaphors to describe the role of the language teacher. Illustrative examples of students’ explanations of each of these concepts will now be presented showing how the ideas were put into practice during their practicum.

Student-centred learning

A number of participants explicitly reported that they based their understanding of facilitation on the construct of student-centred learning, for example:

a facilitator helps students to discover their writing skills hence making effort to develop the skills. Using materials covered, a facilitator leads the classroom discussion instead of purely “teach” and it is a fully student-centred approach (T17).

One participant considered that student-centred learning required students to be active learners:

I had implemented more student-centered teaching approach. I want my students to play active role in my lesson (M21).

She clarified what she meant by this was “to observe and give guidance for them to complete the tasks given.” Another teacher arrived at a student-centred approach after trying more didactic methods:

In the early stages I went practical in school, I found my role as a teacher was more focused on the role of knowledge provider and it still continues until now, But after a few weeks at school, I turned to the role of facilitator... I am more in leads to provide guidance and advice to students to maintain a positive attitude towards all subjects (T1).

Another student teacher reported a similar experience:

I used many teaching approach but I finally stick students centered learning where I as a teacher only play the role of being a facilitator and pose as many question as possible to encourage my students (M58).

Another participant also focused on the importance of the facilitator asking questions, and explained how she actually put this into practice.

I as the teacher facilitates, but the students learn, as they are the centre of learning. I have provided them with current situations and pose questions for them to think of, give them some waiting time and then ask them and elicit their responses towards the situations to enhance and stimulate their thinking skills such as critical and creative thinking skill ... (T6).

Interestingly, she added that she provided the students with “opportunities to express and voice out their ideas, and speak out their minds.” Thus, for her, an important element of student-centred learning was for pupils to feel free to critique a topic and the materials that were used in class.

Learner autonomy

Several participants expressed the view that their learners should be independent. For example:

I am encouraging them to ask questions to acquire information. I do not want to spoon fed them. wanted them to be more independent in constructing understanding of the topic taught (M21).

Another student teacher made the same point when she said:

I have been using the sorts of teaching and learning activities which required the students to do self-directed learning and my role in that particular time would be the facilitator (T23).

She explained how she encouraged such independence as follows:

So throughout the lesson, I was there to guide them by giving clues if they seemed lost but the rest of the work I leave for them to discuss, think and apply any knowledge that they know in order to complete the task given (T23).

Another participant said that:

I will facilitate the lesson but my students will do the rest of the work. I may ask few questions to trigger them and let them do the talking. I always believe that students should talk more than the teacher (T40).

This student teacher explained that helping her learners did not mean that she would give them solutions but would rather guide them to find solutions for themselves. She gave the following example: when they did not understand the meaning of a word, she would ask the class if there was anyone who knew the meaning. If not, she asked them to search in the dictionary. If they still did not understand, she would discuss with them. Another teacher went even further in terms of learner autonomy when she said, “I didn’t give them much clues or answers. I would just wait and give them time to answer some questions” (T40). Thus, these and other participants felt that their students needed to be guided towards autonomy, rather than assuming that independent learning would occur spontaneously.

Facilitation related to theories of learning and teaching

Several participants indicated their understanding of constructivism both by explicit use of the word itself, and with reference to its application to cooperative and collaborative learning. Thus, for example:

I always perceive my students as someone who have potential to develop their own understanding as I believe with the theory of constructivism where humans are able to construct understanding as the process are naturally systemized in their mind (M32).

This view was shared by M21, cited above, when she said that, rather than spoon-feeding her learners, she wanted them to be more independent in “constructing understanding” of the topic. These two statements seem to suggest an intramental form of constructivism, whereas other participants indicated that they viewed cognition as co-constructed; for example, M7 said that she had “incorporated constructivist learning,” and explained that she divided pupils into groups so that

each one would be involved in the learning. From there, she got pupils to engage in their own learning through cooperation by guiding them in discussion and encouraging them to take ownership over their own learning. "After every activity, I would indulge pupils in sharing their works while others would be participating in giving feedback to the group presenting" (M7). This point about cooperative learning was echoed by T20, who said, "the best role that fits me is a facilitator. This is because, most of the lessons, I prefer to use collaborative learning (group work activities) to my students." She saw her role as essentially one of demonstrating and guiding her students through task and game procedures "to make sure that they will be able to avoid or minimize mistakes." These extracts illustrate the extent to which a number of the student teachers internalized and put into practice theoretical notions of constructionism.

A number of the student teachers explained how they applied the role of facilitator to specific approaches to language teaching. One participant said:

I used the communicative language teaching approach during my practical teaching. I provided a lot of activities for different lessons where learners communicate and where tasks were completed by means of interaction with other learners (T30).

She added that there was extensive use of pair, group and mingling activities when she would:

monitor, usually without interruption and then provide feedback on the communication... For all the activities, I facilitated the students whereby I just let them express their ideas and opinions as well as question then with positive reinforcement (T30).

This participant implied a wholehearted adoption of a single approach to language teaching; others combined different, sometimes contrasting, methods while still keeping an eye on facilitation. For example, when one participant focused on grammar teaching she "used the grammar translation method that actually used a lot of first language in order to teach second language" (T34) but she also:

used lots of communicative approach in encouraging students to speak in class, and thus the role of facilitator would be useful in that sort of situation. As a facilitator, I would guide the students to participate in class activities such as role play, work group and presentation (T34).

Other participants also deliberately switched between approaches and methods:

When I used Cooperative Learning approach, I became as a facilitator to the kids. I let them explored the activities and be cooperative to solve the problems

given and I would facilitate them from one group to another group. The kids were encouraged to have more cooperation among them while learning English language in the classroom and I would facilitate them by sharing ideas or tips and to tell them whether they were on the right track (M38).

This participant contrasted this approach with another role she adopted when applying Total Physical Response techniques, where she felt that a more directive role was needed: “If I did not demonstrate the movements to them, they would feel that the lesson was not interesting and dull” (M38).

Such flexibility was reported by others, for example, one participant said, “I was always experimenting with variety of techniques and materials to suit my students’ level and interest” (T19), and went on to make an implicit allusion to Krashen’s (1985) Affective Filter Hypothesis: “Being a facilitator helps my learning process to be student centred learning which creates a non-threatening environment for students” (T19). Another participant also made a similar allusion: “I created a non-threatening classroom situation whereby students are not afraid in participating in classroom activity and are comfortable in using the language in class” (T11). She went on to say that she would always find ways to encourage her pupils to talk and express their opinions in their own words: “I facilitate them in delivering their ideas and thoughts, rather than forcing them to give the exact answers that I would want... I give feedbacks and they seemed to appreciate it.”

Whether or not specific theoretical and methodological frameworks were referred or alluded to, there is clear evidence that most of the participants had internalized various, and different, aspects of facilitation. Some referred to the building of rapport:

As a teacher I feel the need to become a facilitator of learning because, apart from monitoring the progress of learning, it also creates some kind of bonding between a teacher and students somehow (T32).

Such rapport extended beyond the classroom. One participant said:

Students can also consult me outside the class. Which mean, they can see me any time if they are having problems regarding language learning. As their facilitator or mentor, I will help them as much as I can (T31).

Others also associated facilitation with mentoring, especially as regards enhancing motivation; as one participant put it: “I also believe my role as mentor is not merely teaching in the classroom, but somehow educate, guide, motivate and help them in every aspects” (T3). Another expanded on this aspect of facilitation by stressing the importance of listening to the students:

Mentoring is a way a teacher encourages pupils to strive to be the best they can. I am always encouraging the pupils to enjoy their learning. Part of mentoring consists of listening to their problems, By taking time to listen to what they say, this helps to build their confidence and helps them in becoming good learners (M62).

Several emphasized the role of guidance in facilitation; the following is one example among many:

There are some instances of what I did as the facilitator. During the group activities, I helped the students when they faced difficulties in finding for points. I will guide them by giving them a clear explanation of what points they should write down. Besides that, I guided the students by giving notes (T22).

One student teacher made an important point by adding a tourism metaphor: “I am more like a tour guide as I guide my students to be more active in learning especially in engaging their creativity in making meaningful connections between prior knowledge and new knowledge. I also facilitate my students’ writing” (T17).

Metaphors

This paper has focused on the student teachers’ understanding and practice of the concept of facilitation. However, some participants also perceived their role in metaphors such as entertainer, magician, storyteller and artist. Particularly popular were kinship terms; for example:

Mostly during the teaching course the approaches that were used are through fun and games. The role that I took on mostly is the facilitator and elder brother. The time when I turn into a facilitator is during the fun and game time... On the other hand when I took on the elder brother persona, I would be really lenient and flexible. ... They are free to come to me or call me from their table should they not understand the task (M22).

Another participant said that “the most important thing which becomes my priority is the safety of the pupils either in the classroom or outside the classroom” (M27). Therefore, she felt that the metaphor of parenthood was appropriate because she wanted to instil good moral values in them, so that “if teacher owned the feeling of becoming the pupil’s father and mother, they will mole the children in the right shape, otherwise it will spoil”.

Some of the metaphors they used did not seem to be particularly conducive to facilitation. For example, one student teacher saw herself as a lawgiver, “I set up several rules with the aims of ensuring my pupils to improve their English. For

example, one of the rules was to ask the pupils to read any piece of English text at least once for every week” (M66). Another used a military metaphor:

as a captain, I had set rules and regulations in class. Apart from that, as a captain, I gave simple yet precise instruction especially when post stage was carried out... Repetition of instruction was also necessary to avoid misunderstanding (M6).

Some participants used other metaphors to report that their attempts at facilitation were unsuccessful, for example:

Well for the first week, I tried my best to be a facilitator. I tried to give the pupils tasks and guided them in exploring and completing the tasks. However, this was not successful because of three reasons: 1) my pupils were too dependent to teacher, 2) my pupils were hyperactive and 3) my pupils English proficiency level were very low. I had difficulties in managing, controlling and teaching them. Thus I decided to change my role to a dictator. Yes a bossy-cruel-cold heart-ed dictator (M13).

There is a fuller discussion of the metaphors used by these student teachers in Hasim, Motahar, Barnard & Zakaria (2014).

Discussion

All in all, the participants in this study provided clear evidence that they had appropriated (Bakhtin, 1981) key features of the role of the teacher as facilitator. They often did so with specific reference to theoretical and methodological constructs to which they had been previously introduced. Importantly, however, they demonstrated the extent to which they had internalized their prior learning by expressing these notions in their own words and, crucially, explaining how they put the ideas into practice.

The findings reveal that these student teachers were able to recall and apply the theories and approaches that they had learned from their training. One area of teaching dealt with the communicative approach. This is in line with the proposals by Littlewood (1981), Yang (1997), and Underhill (1999) that the role of the teacher is a facilitator in the context of communicative language teaching. In such a context the student teachers in this study realized the need to make their learners use the language by interacting among themselves. Hence, organisation of classroom activities centred on pair work and group work which, according to some of the participants, encouraged cooperative learning. Many of the student teachers expressed the view that their learners should be independent, which did not mean

they were left on their own to solve problems; rather, they were guided to find solutions and then encouraged to work on their own.

The student teachers generally exhibited sensitivity to their contexts of teaching. They were aware of their own students' levels of proficiency and were able to take appropriate measures to overcome the problems. They gave valid reasons for taking certain actions to solve a particular problem. Hence, indirectly they were able to solve problems in their own classrooms. This indicates the degree of independence they practised, and the spontaneity they developed in handling problematic situations.

The findings of this study concur with those conducted elsewhere. For these student teachers, every language teaching approach, whether communicative language teaching or Total Physical Response, was a novelty – an innovation – for this was the first time they had put these ideas into practice as teachers in actual classrooms. As in the study by Zheng and Zhizhong (2011), there was clear evidence of allowing students a measure of control of the learning situation, and like the study by James (2009), they themselves had been involved in experiential learning; as a result, they were more able to fully comprehend the notion of facilitation. Also, like James's participants, they designed and implemented their own tasks for their learners. In short, the findings are closely in line with Chong's (2014) idea that the teacher's main objective is to facilitate learning and encourage the students to become autonomous learners.

In these ways, the findings of this study indicate that these young student teachers readily assumed the role of facilitator, as described by Underhill (1999), perhaps for several reasons: they were willing to take pedagogic risks; the fact that they were close in age to their students may have made facilitation psychologically easier; they were unburdened by long-established didactic habits; and they may have been wisely taught in their professional preparation programme.

Conclusion

This report has addressed the research questions. It has revealed how the participants conceptualized the teacher's role as facilitator, and the ways by which they operationalized their understanding. It has also shown that they related their conceptualizations to language teaching theories, and to self-chosen metaphors. Furthermore, there are a number of implications for teacher education programmes that can be drawn from the findings.

It is generally believed that our own experiences form the basis of our knowledge (Korthagen, 2005). In this study, the student teachers were able to construct new understanding about teaching from reflecting on their experience to formulate their

own beliefs about how to facilitate learning, which in turn enabled them to integrate the knowledge thus obtained with educational theories to which they had previously been introduced.

Following the practicum, these student teachers returned to their respective universities for a semester-long course based on their reflections on their recent experience in their schools. In one case, they wrote reflective accounts, and in the other they completed questionnaires; in both contexts, these post hoc reflections – and the in-action reflective journals they kept during the practicum – were discussed with their tutors. The primary purpose of this was to enable the tutors to consider specific adjustments to the teacher development curriculum in the light of the experiential feedback from their students. In other words, there was a clear intention to base pedagogy on relevant local research. It is suggested that such a cyclical approach could be profitably adapted by teacher educators in comparable contexts to investigate how their student teachers construct their own theories based on experiential learning and relate them to theories they have been taught in the academic programme. Thus, an agenda is open for teacher educators to undertake research in their own contexts, with their own students, to more fully appreciate the connection between what they teach, and what the student learns and between what their students believe and what they do. By doing so, they can adjust the professional development curriculum and thus more easily themselves facilitate the learning of their students.

This study also makes a modest contribution to the body of literature regarding methodological procedures relating to the elicitation of (student) teachers' cognition and practices. As was the case in the study by Ling and Loy (2007), the participants' perceptions and reported practices were obtained through the collection and analysis of written reflective journals. Such data, much more than questionnaires (e.g., Shafie & Nayan, 2010) can provide thicker descriptions of experiential learning, allowing for a richer interpretation to be made. Most importantly, as has been illustrated above, such data collection tools allow the voices of the participants to be clearly and fully represented. It is hoped that the report of the present study will provide insights into how such research may be usefully conducted, not only in English language teaching contexts, but perhaps in any other areas of the school curriculum.

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ADOLESCENTS IN SECOND LANGUAGE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: MANAGING THE INTERVIEW INTERFACE

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Abstract:

This article discusses face-to-face interview data collection methods used by the researcher during qualitative research with second language (SL) refugee migrant background (RMB) adolescent participants in a New Zealand school. It advocates that as long as particular adolescent partialities can be accommodated, the combination of semi-structured focus group and individual interviews can generate rich data for later analysis. In particular, adolescent interviewing is enhanced if the researcher has previously developed a close relationship with the participants and their first language community. During data collection, the researcher needs to be mindful of adolescent ethical and cultural issues, as well as differences in age and language proficiency, peer and gender roles, emotional issues and levels of personal confidence. Through a discussion of interview management strategies, the article highlights the key roles of an empathetic choice of interview site and times, the use of visual and technological methods appreciated by adolescents, and researcher flexibility in questioning and responses. The article concludes with an emphasis on the benefits of complementary interview methods, to obtain insights into adolescent RMB student research, for the future well-being of the community.

Key Words: adolescent interviews, focus groups, individual interviews, second language qualitative data, culture, adolescent second language learning

Introduction

This article discusses the value of qualitative, face-to-face interview methods used with second language (SL) refugee-migrant background (RMB) adolescent participants. It contends that this cohort, like other vulnerable participants, needs to be approached sensitively (Lewis & Nicholls, 2014; Morgan, 2008). Interview engagement demands a particular awareness of ethical issues, participant choice and peer concerns, but once these factors are addressed, rich data can result.

Ethical concerns emerge with the requirement for participants under fifteen years of age to have ethics approval from parents (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), and parents of older adolescents can also need comprehensive assurance of secure compliance (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Possible risk of undue participant anxiety needs to be assuaged by the support of accessible counsellors. Ethical endorsement can be obtained more easily if the researcher has previously developed a real-life, well-

established and trusted relationship with the participant community (Garton & Copland, 2010). This also lessens the possibility of temporary ‘false’ friendships (Rylance, 2012; Talmy, 2010) from either parties during the interview. Other ethical concerns raised with this study are that ex-teacher researchers need to be wary of exerting undue influence from inherited power roles with ex-student participants (Heigham & Sakui, 2009), and to refrain from viewing participants as representatives of their culture rather than individuals, even for altruistic motives (Webster, Lewis, & Brown, 2014).

A further complication for the interviewer is to be aware of the process of identity changes which, though life-long, is more typically intense during adolescence. At this time, associations and loyalties can rapidly alter “information exchange” (Ryan, 2000, p. 107). Besides the roles that family members play in the process, adolescents are often influenced by their friends and peer community (Krueger & Casey, 2015). SL adolescent identities are further complicated by the presence of first and second culture values, where conflicting expectations of age, gender and family roles can create multifaceted dynamics (Roberts, 2005).

In the light of the above perspectives, this article will illustrate the context and findings from one adolescent interviewing process, preceded by a brief reflection on relevant theory.

Interview Theory

The current article supports the use of face-to-face semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews as complementary research methods for RMB adolescent participants (Dörnyei, 2007).

Typically consisting of six to eight participants (Finch, Lewis, & Turley, 2014), semi-structured focus groups can support adolescents because their less rigid protocol encourages participant freedom to speak openly. This is enhanced if the adolescents are relaxed with a known, trusted interviewer so the perception of adult authority is lessened (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015), even more so as the interview sequence progresses, and the interview site is “non-threatening and comfortable” (Ho, 2006, p. 5.03). RMB adolescents can be reticent in SL contexts (Rodriguez, Schwartz, Lahman, & Geist, 2011), but with focus groups, they can relax in a supportive group environment, without fear of their second language use and cultural background being judged negatively. They can interact without individualised pressure or a requirement to agree (Morgan, 2008; Rodriguez et al., 2011). Consequently, adolescents can construct their own temporary social cocoon where they feel safe enough to express shared behaviours, and express high levels of interest and enthusiasm. To encourage further involvement, Krueger and Casey (2015) advocate the offering of “magic” enticements of adolescent-chosen food and drink during focus groups (p. 191). Krueger and Casey (2009) also advise that “focus groups with teens are fun because the unexpected regularly happens” (p. 160). The likelihood of

the interviewer becoming peripheral can be assuaged by steering with age-appropriate questions that take account of SL literacy levels (Finch et al., 2014; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). “Gentle nudging without bias” (Rapley, 2006, p. 20) can be achieved with open questions, probes (for greater depth) and prompts (for idea extensions) and non-verbal cues, to include all participants (Finch et al., 2014). Ultimately, the interviewer should “stay loose, stay flexible” (Turkel 1995, as cited in Plummer, 2001, p. 140).

Semi-structured individual interviews can also operate successfully with adolescent participants, as long as personal issues of trust are minimised (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). One-on-one questions promote adolescents to the empowering role of youthful experts (Richards, 2009). They can enjoy the sensation of having the researchers’ full and undivided attention, be inspired to explore underlying feelings and thoughts, and express deeper individual perceptions which are taken seriously, unfettered by other adolescents vying for position (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Dörnyei, 2007). The optimal interviewer role is one of active listening, while attempting “neutrality, rapport ... complementary reciprocity,” (Rapley, 2006, p. 19) to elicit adolescent perceptions. In this way, generalised views from previous focus groups can be followed up with particular data.

The use of either methodology can be enhanced by the use of strategies and devices favourable to SL adolescents. In focus groups, Krueger and Casey (2015) observe that they “are able to communicate in many ways such as through art, drama, pictures, music and fantasies” (p. 189). Stewart and Shamdasani (2015) note that “younger children have less verbal facility than older children and adults” but their youth allows for greater flexibility, and “making questions into a game adds a sense of fun and holds attention better” (p. 109). Researchers can augment with supporting questions with “enabling techniques” (Arthur, Mitchell, Lewis, & Nicholls, 2014, p. 160) of timelines, maps, mood boxes and scenarios, or what Prosser (2011) calls “visual elicitation” (p. 484) like pictures and photos. These can successfully link the interviewer to the participants’ emic worlds (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2010) for their perspectives, and set the tone for more relaxed interviews.

Interviews and Identity

The dynamics of adolescent RMB interviews are a complex amalgam, as participants juggle multiple real or imagined audiences for self-representation. To account for varying SL adolescent identity positioning in interviews, this article has found Norton’s (2000) theory of investment to be very influential. In the process of learning English, participants can demonstrate an “ambivalent desire” to associate with the SL culture (Norton, 2012, p. 6). Although investment in a SL can increase the resources available to learners, learners face a difficult struggle to re-form their identities within a new sociocultural context. The process is fraught with complexity and ambivalence (Flowerdew & Miller, 2008) for SL adolescents (Hemmi, 2014). In

interviews, SL adolescent positioning may reflect their transitioning experiences incorporating weakened parental influence, conflicting first and second culture gender expectations (Pavlenko, 2001; Skapoulli, 2004) or challenging classroom environments (Norton, 2012) where their absent imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Norton, 2001) may help their SL learning more than tribalising socio-cultural restrictions by local school communities. The following section shows these multiple, sometimes contradictory aspects of SL interview identity positioning, in action.

The Study

This study aims to explore the collaborative use of individual and focus group interviews with RMB adolescent participants in a second-language setting within a New Zealand regional school. It draws on selected qualitative data collected from a wider research project, including the participants, setting and interview procedures.

Participants and setting

The adolescent participants consisted of twelve RMB Bhutanese students, to include all Bhutanese who attended the same co-educational, composite intermediate and secondary school, of approximately 600 students. Participants consisted of seven females and five males aged between 12 and 20 years old, who had settled in New Zealand from 2008 (see Appendix One). They all lived with their families, with nine of the participants coming from two extended families. I had previously taught some of the participants. My supervisor, who interviewed one initial focus group, did not know the students.

The school's Board of Trustees and the researcher's university granted ethics approval.

Interview procedures

Keeping in mind the challenges highlighted in the research literature for interviewing this group, I took various measures to mitigate potential power imbalance and to free participants' voices. The research process began with a shared Bhutanese meal to develop trust and share information between participants, their families, myself, my supervisor, and staff who provided English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support in the school. Each student participant agreed to participate, with the understanding that interviews could be concluded at any stage.

The choice of location was also important. I chose the participants' home-room, the ESOL room, for all student interviews, where they were accustomed to having their SL needs met, and where the supportive influence of other RMB participants and an ESOL staff member were present. I scheduled the interviews for during and after RMB homework hours on Wednesdays, where the participants were obtaining homework support and were more relaxed after the school day.

For both kinds of interview, I used fewer than ten semi-structured questions, accompanied by timelines and drawing spaces, to cater for interview time estimates of approximately an hour each. The language level of questions used reflected my previous teaching knowledge of their SL English. To reduce student anxiety, I planned to begin interviews by eliciting reflections on how to help other Bhutanese newcomers. As well, ice-breakers in the form of scenarios (see Appendix Three), pictures of multicultural student groups, and participant use of their own cell phone photos, were primed in case of communication blocks (Baker & Lee, 2011). In all, fifteen adolescent interviews were scheduled: three focus groups and twelve individual interviews, as part of a wider interview programme over three terms (see Appendix Two). After a theatre sports activity to encourage concentration, my supervisor and I began the interviewing process with two simultaneous focus groups of six and four respectively in different classrooms. The 16-20 year old seniors available (SFG1) were separated from 13-14 year old juniors (SFG2) in keeping with common co-educational school delineation. The one exception was junior Narayam, who stayed with his protective elder sibling. Subsequently, I conducted individual interviews with each student, starting with the oldest student for role-modelling purposes, moving sequentially to the youngest. A retrospective focus group concluded the interview sequence (see Appendix Two), where I asked students to “retrieve their relevant thoughts” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 148). With attrition, nine participants were included in this more unwieldy group (SFG3). All interviews were of approximately 40 to 90 minutes duration and included questions common to all participants, which differed slightly according to responses.

I personally taped all data, transcribed manually in sequence, and analysed material using emergent, inductive grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Data analysis began with topic coding, such as “Positioning as Outsider”. Coding indicators such as lining, boxing, capitals and font colour indicated adolescent mood changes and volume emphasis. I used side notes and footnotes extensively to highlight adolescent positioning and attitudes such as the effect of SL accents. Repeated significant phrases from participants were numbered. I used reflective journals for each method and participant. All interviews extended and deepened the amount of data, and gradually revealed new aspects of inquiry, ultimately producing a cross-textual range of individual perceptions within standard interview guides ready for further analysis.

Findings

The following sections present the interview responses of the Bhutanese adolescent participants, showing the effect of first culture age-related responsibilities, gender rivalry and ego power-play, creating an interactive cross-fire amongst participants themselves, and the interviewers.

Focus group behaviours

Throughout focus group interviews, all participants used Bhutanese family patterns of hierarchy of status at various stages, from the oldest to the youngest, with each family member having reciprocal responsibilities towards each other. Where parents were not present, older adolescent siblings had first speaking rights (L1), but they also had responsibility to help younger family members (L10). Younger members had responsibility to accept the elder's help, whether requested or not. There was also the expectation that group elders would speak *for* the younger students, and younger group members would chorus assent (L5, 6), repeat words or add short supportive comments, as in the following:

1. **Khusi:** I will start - firstly I learn how to make friends and after that I learn so
2. many things
3. **I:** Mm yes just all - can you just talk when you want to
4. **Narayan:** I learn how to speak English properly I guess though I -
5. **Sunu:** Same
6. **Kali:** Yeah same (laugh)
7. **Narayan:** I still struggle with some words and my teachers helping me very hard
8. to make me useful - at speaking English
9. **I:** Are there any parts of it that you want to talk about?
10. **Khusi:** I think he can't say some of the words clearly (SFG1)

Khusi, the oldest member, protectively engineered her brother Narayam, aged 13, to sit in the senior group next to her, gave her answers first and spoke for him (L10). Pressure to keep this pattern was sustained by participants being a witness to each other, with possibility of parental consequence if exposed later.

Adolescent gender jostling complicated Bhutanese family hierarchy patterns, as male Karicha displayed. Sex roles in the Bhutanese community are more clearly delineated than with European New Zealanders as the Bhutanese community leader, in the parent interview, indicated: "The boys have got interaction with other wider communities." In the retrospective focus group interview, female Kali was the oldest group member, and her brother Karicha was the oldest male. Karicha made an early bid for leadership with "Good girls don't talk", challenging his two older sisters to give him lead rights in his family. He spoke with authority for his sisters about lower school expectations for females in refugee camps, and declared himself "the boss" when he was the only one in the group that knew how to read and write Nepali. Karicha also criticised other group members, like next-in-age male Narayan for judging people who did not know where Bhutan was: "You shouldn't call people dumb," and later mocked Narayam's career dreams by saying, "You change every time." Karicha admonished young, quiet Kamba for liking her domestic role: "Kamba wants to be good at housework," thus procuring her silence. Karicha's older female siblings attempted to modify his behaviour. Khusi goaded him to read the

interviewer's notes aloud: "Read it, read it, big boy," while Kali smoothly trumped him with a retort using correct use of a word he found difficult to pronounce: "But they do like *communicate*, help each other, if we need something." Karicha's leadership taunts created continual undercurrents of discomfort within the group which needed to be smoothly placated by the interviewer.

Adolescent responses also depended on the personal confidence of participants, closely linked to their English speaking ability, and afforded opportunities for power-play. Though only in Year Nine, a second child and female, Nilu's fluency and confident self-image allowed her to engineer a dominant vocal role in the initial junior focus group. She willingly led with answers and modelled answers for others, as with discussion about parental support, and the interviewer relied on her to respond: "What was the resource that you were thinking about Nilu?" (SFG: 2). Nilu adroitly aligned with the interviewer, but also maintained duplicitous bonds with other participants through ambiguous jokes about inappropriate use of Google, "EVERYTHING's in Google!" (group laughter) (SFG: 2).

Year Eight male and spirited raconteur Narayam, displayed charm-offensive humour to gain acceptance in his first focus group, making jokes about their accents: "When we come here we say, 'Polisse may I come in,'" and comments about his youth by affirming, "You feel like you want to be older you know so you can be the boss of the house." In the retrospective focus group, (as indicated above) Narayam resisted attacks from Karicha to diminish him by making a self-deprecating joke, "Well before I go anywhere, I usually ask my parents. I get lost very easily, like I got lost in the Warehouse one day (general loud laugh) but that's another story." Nevertheless, Karicha's constant verbal insistence as oldest male eventually quietened him.

Interviewer challenges in focus groups

One of the most difficult aspects of adolescent interviewing is topic maintenance. When interviewing the junior focus group, my supervisor was able to ask questions without the 'baggage,' of being linked with the school system. However, in spite of her high-status academic position, adolescents sometimes united against her with game-playing distractions. Krueger and Casey (2009) note that "if the second interviewer is a person with local prominence or in a respected position, the participants may be reluctant to provide candid feedback" (p. 193). The participants whispered in Nepali and giggled amongst themselves, and sometimes emphasised that they were not listening by replying with, "Pardon?" They united to present a view that their classes were free of discipline problems, in spite of recent observations by the researcher that this was not the case (L3, 4, 5):

- 1. Interviewer:** Are there students in your classes that behave - that are maybe
2. badly behaved?
- 3. Karicha:** Not in my class (Kare and Nilu laugh)

4. **Kare:** Not in my class

5. **Kamba:** Not in my class (Nilu laughs) (SFG2)

During the session, the supervisor's role highlighted the value of having background participant knowledge before and during the interviewing process, and being able to triangulate later to verify comments.

As primary interviewer, my role was supported by historical ties to the participants' parents, ESOL staff and school system. I was able to use previous shared experiences (as with recalling previous SL Speech Board exams and watching Kali practise a 'Macbeth' character (SI: 1)), or offer my own, as about sickness affecting study (SI: 6) to help generate their responses (Arksey & Knight, 1999). However, enthusiasm for these moments clouded awareness that when refocusing the students, I sometimes used my previous role as educator rather than interviewer (Ruane, 2005). Further, at times, adolescents remained silent, or intentionally distracted. In the senior focus group, Sunu provided non-committal answers like, "No that's all" to questions about L1 female modelling, and later she spilt her drink twice and sang, "Still learning, wanna learn more." Nilu and Kaudani indulged in rolling jokes about who was the quietest in class, a tactic which threatened order (SFG3). I managed these games through attempting judicious use of joining in the humour, restating questions, steering with eye contact and body language, and quiet careful patience, so the interview could proceed. I was well aware that without my prior knowledge of participants, their families and links to the school, the focus group interviews would be much less successful.

Individual interview behaviours

Creswell (2007) describes the inherent structure of individual interviews as hierarchical, so the interviewer role, though less taxing than in focus groups, required concentrated management to maintain good relations. All participants agreed to the time, place and sequencing of individual interviews. Apart from attitude, the age and language level of the students coloured their responses. Overall, responses were more interactive from students I had taught previously. Interviews tended to provide the best insights towards the end, when they were most relaxed and involved. As the year progressed, my interviewer strategies, such as encouraging prompts and thoughtful silences, improved in skill (Ruane, 2005).

Initially, I was troubled with the level of authenticity in the responses. Two female senior students, reluctant to express criticism, gave evasive lip-service answers about their academic success and their relationships with staff, though they knew I was aware of their chequered progress, and I had recently observed them in four classes. Kali dismissively repeated three times that, "Teachers are really helpful," before I reminded her of full confidentiality, and shared some select observations of her classes (SI: 1). At this point she responded more genuinely, for example explaining the contrast between silent refugee camp classes, and her present ones: "they always

talks...and (long pause) it's really annoying...it's hard to concentrate." The use of scenarios (see Appendix Three), deflecting attention from participants personally, led to more relaxed and successful disclosure in following interviews. An invitation to junior participants to begin their interviews by sharing their favourite cell phone photos, also contributed significantly towards enthusiastic recounts.

Another complication was my initial concern about contaminating research with false memories. Some students praised their camp experiences in spite of significant deprivation discussed by Kaudani and Karicha. Khusi, for example, recalled spending lunchbreak walking from her school to collect her brother in his school, leading him home, cooking and feeding him, cleaning him and returning him to school before returning to her classroom. She concluded by saying, "Anyway that was fun." Nilu reinforced that in the camps "we were so lucky" and "was just so much fun." I needed to filter student memories of camp life through the realisation that as children, the participants may have been naïve and partly ignorant of the tensions experienced by adults, or saving face, but that their memories were not less valid because subjective; they owned them. As I later understood, the close-knit refugee camp life provided a childhood harmony not found in their present highly-charged, adolescent SL environment. Plummer (2001) states that memory "is shaped through and through by setting, society, culture" (p. 236). Individual and group interview collaboration, common interview questions for triangulation, and retrospective member-checking (SF: 3) helped mitigate this memory issue.

Adolescent self-presentation within the individual interviews was subject to fluctuation, affected by my ex-teacher role and students positioning for favourable personas. Nilu displayed herself as a popular socialite: "I just happen to talk to the popular kids." She chose to invest in high social ranking with locals, and when her grades declined, she positioned herself as "a good communicator" with her friends, rather than having academic difficulty. Parveesh, who had developed strong bonds with local male peers, positioned himself as typical of Bhutanese students when he described his grade decline and exit from school, stating that most Bhutanese were "dropping out of school," even though senior female participants were achieving well. Both Nilu's and Parveesh's positioning needed to be filtered by the interviewer in the light of their juggling of invested identity roles, the desire to be popular amongst their peers while placating teachers' and parents' requirements for SL academic success, within a backdrop of developing self-responsibility.

With one participant, Kare, the interviewer experienced ongoing reluctance to share material, and faced the risks of the interview being stopped, complaints of unfair treatment, or subsequent interviews being cancelled. Kare expressed suspicion when sharing information about classmates or family roles, by stating, "I'm not interested in that stuff." She blocked four times with, "I have no idea." I strategized by repeatedly changing questions, but eventually made a stand by positioning myself as

needing to be responsible to my supervisor (L1-3), by redefining the purpose of some questions (L3-4), and assuring confidentiality (L6) as with:

1. **Int:** I'm not referring to you personally but my supervisor has given me
2. questions and I have to look at the differences in the culture and how that affects
3. your learning. Sometimes if you don't talk to other boys or girls, you don't learn
4. to improve your voice, so that's why I'm asking them...
5. **Kare:** Ok
6. **Int:** It's not just for fun, or being nosy or anything.

Once the research boundaries were redefined, Kare felt secure enough to continue with more equanimity. Her responses, with other participant material, ultimately combined to provide reliable, triangulated data.

Discussion and Conclusion

The examples highlighted in the previous sections reinforce the complementary nature of adolescent focus group and individual interviews in qualitative research. The focus group samples support the study by Ho (2006) which asserts that "while the data may appear to be overwhelming and messy initially" (p. 5.12), it can increasingly provide rich material. Seemingly random, inconsequential remarks or "sensitive moments" (Kitzinger & Farquhar, 1999, p. 156) provided nuggets of information that were later analysed to divulge adolescent, cultural imperatives which deepened understanding of their SL learning conditions.

Two supplementary instances highlight this process. One idea, arranged marriage, was found to be relevant to first culture and language maintenance (Roberts, 2005). The topic was treated hesitantly by participants in the first focus groups, but was freely discussed later in individual interviews, with all but one adolescent firmly supporting this first culture value. Another idea was with relationship boundaries. Khusi wondered aloud about friendships with local students, stating, "Sometimes they become quite nice, and sometimes they don't. I still can't work out why" (SF: 1), a comment which began the exploration of SL as investment (Norton, 2000) in later individual interviews.

With this investigation, three other previously researched aspects of adolescent interviews emerged as more multifaceted. In focus groups, Krueger and Casey (2015) and Stewart and Shamdassani (2015) both recommend separating girls from boys. Krueger and Casey (2015) suggest limiting the age span to approximately two years to avoid intolerances rising from rapid changes in adolescence, and common adolescent deferral of younger to older members. Finch et al. (2014) discuss age and sex differences as ways of introducing diversity "for richer discussion and insight" (p. 231) but which need to be managed carefully to avoid difficulties. In this examination of twelve 12-20 year-olds, age and sex differences were manifest, but through the framework of first culture family structures and common co-educational

school divisions. The outcome of focus group material may have been quite different if the groups had been changed to male/female.

First culture dynamics were reinforced by the overall proportion of females (seven) to males (five) and the absence of the two oldest males in the senior focus group. As a consequence, the oldest female became the dominant figure in each focus group, occasionally speaking for the others (Ho, 2006). Close family and first culture bonds avoided loss of voice amongst younger participants, particularly in the junior focus group. There they showed uneven but uncoerced support of lead participants with short comments, laughter and body language. Their focus group presence became a valuable reference later for triangulation, such as with the youngest participant, Asis. In his individual interview, reference to earlier focus group comments ‘gave permission’ for him to expand his discussion on how his classroom status had increased through his sporting agility rather than schoolwork achievements, and his first child family responsibilities.

The Bhutanese RMB adolescents did not follow the Krueger and Casey (2015) comment that in focus groups “few teens want to admit in front of their peers that their parents influence the decision” (p. 190). In both interview methods, they openly showed deep gratitude for their parents’ sustained exertions to resettle them, and pride in following parental tenets. Khusi stated, “Cos what I am here is all about my family . . . they make me like this” (SI: 5), Karicha identified parents as his “best friends” (SI: 2) and Sunu emphasised the need for parental support with academic achievement (SI: 3). Overall, adolescent first culture obligations created an atmosphere of emic self-regulation (Swain et al., 2010).

The declared loyalty here shown towards parents showed the strength of participant first culture identities, but also the ambivalent, complex juggling required to assess the extent of participant investment in SL school identities (Norton, 2012). This was evidenced elsewhere with eldest family member leadership, the gradual emergence of discussion about first culture marriage, variable explanations of camp life, and Nilu’s and Parveesh’s imbalanced personas. It was clear that there was a constant balancing act between first and second culture investments throughout the interviews.

In both types of interview, the requirement for interviewer “neutrality” (Rapley, 2006, p. 19) proved to be as fraught as Ho (2006) has recorded. During interactions, “the tension between ethical principles and quality” (Webster et al., 2014, p. 92) was evident in the need to restrain my ex-teacher background. Neutrality was also an issue with my presumptions about individual adolescent RMB attitudes and behaviours (Yeo, Legard, & Keegan, 2014). In response to questions about using other students to find answers to schoolwork, I originally assumed that Kali’s defensive comments such as, “I have never used that” (SI:1), came from personal hauteur. When aligned with further interviews, it showed that she was likely to be speaking as a family leader, intent on maintaining public honour. I also

underestimated Nilu's capacity for contributions after her initial focus group game-playing, but she later showed maturity in discussing her academic progress and attitudes to arranged marriage. Overall, qualitative practices such as active listening, common questions for triangulation and the retrospective interview helped keep my mind open to other interpretations.

This study firmly supports the deployment of a comfortable, regular environment for adolescent interviewing, as advocated by Ho (2006), Krueger and Casey (2015) and Rodriguez et al. (2011). It endorses the need for very careful preparation of materials empathetic to adolescents, to prevent disruption or "goofing off" (Krueger & Casey, 2015, p. 190). By using the students' habitual school site with known SL student and staff support, transparent consistent interview times, age and literacy-appropriate questions and alternative ice-breakers, supplemented with dietary embellishments, participant trust increased.

Finally, consideration for flexibility between planned interview materials and the interviews themselves is a crucial feature for implementing successful interviews. By being open to adolescent responses, optimal interaction can be safeguarded, so participants can increase their sense of interview ownership, and deepen agency towards their own SL learning processes and identity formation.

This single study of interview collaboration from one regional co-educational New Zealand school is inherently limited. The student participants were gathered mainly from two extended families from one minority culture, which affected selection, groupings and responses. My ex-teacher role created an "age, power and status differential" (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 116) which was sometimes unevenly manifested. However, this study has provided a glimpse into dynamic RMB adolescent interview contexts that would otherwise not have been easily accessed (Ho, 2006). It supports the collaboration of both interview methods, and proposes the value of knowing participants beforehand, using adolescent-friendly interview material and sites, and flexible researcher responses.

By addressing these particular features, interviewers can work towards gaining optimal insights in adolescent RMB interview practice, to afford greater understanding of the lived world of RMB adolescent students, for the well-being of our New Zealand communities.

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Appendix One

Student Participant Details

PSEUDONYM	GENDER	AGE	MONTHS IN NZ	CLASS	CODE
Kali	F	18	17	Yr. 12	1
Karicha	M	14	17	Yr. 10	2
Sunu	F	16	17	Yr. 11	3
Kamba	F	13	21	Yr. 7	4
Khusi	F	20	47	-	5
Narayan	M	13	47	Yr. 8	6
Unia	F	16	31	R 11	7
Kare	F	12	31	Yr. 9	8
Kaudani	M	19	31	Yr. 13	9
Nilu	F	13	45	Yr. 9	10
Parveesh	M	17	45	Yr. 12	11
Asis	M	13	47	Yr. 7	12

*The months in NZ and age for each child are at the time of commencement of the research.

Appendix Two

Data Collection Schedule

TIME 2013	PLANNED ACTION	CODING
TERM TWO: 6 th May - 12 th July	May 19 th : invitations given out May 29 th : shared meal June 12 th : student questionnaire July 3 rd : Bhutanese pair interview July 1 st -11 th : Observations	Q BA OB
TERM THREE July-27th - 29th September	August 14th: Student focus group meeting August 28th: ESOL teacher focus meeting Each Wednesday: one student individual interview	SFG1,SFG2 TG1 SI 1-12
TERM FOUR 14th October - 11th December	Each Wednesday: one student individual interview (contd) September 25th: Parent focus group November 6th: Retrospective student meeting November 20th: Mainstream teacher interviews	SI 1-12 PFG2 SFG3 TG2

Appendix Three

Imagined Bhutanese Student Scenarios

1. Raju is in Year 7, and has just arrived in New Zealand. He has very little English, so is silent in front of local students. At home he speaks Nepali. However, he is very good at maths. Some local students have asked him to sit with them in class, but he is afraid he will be teased or his Maths work copied, because he has realised these local students are not good at Maths.
2. Ashmi is in Yr 10, and she has been in New Zealand for six months. She has repeatedly caught the flu since arrival in New Zealand, and also has had painful stomach pains. She is concerned about losing out at school because of her absences.
3. Amita is a Yr 11 Nepali girl who has been in New Zealand for two years. She is outgoing and talkative, and has made friends with other Nepali as well as local students. Recently a New Zealand boy has been talking to her, and asked her to go to MacDonald's with him.
4. Manu is a shy Nepali Yr 8 student who has been in New Zealand for 6 months. He is afraid of looking at New Zealand teachers or asking them for help. Recently he has asked other Nepali students to ask for him. When his teacher asks about his work, he always says he is fine.
5. Tarana is a Yr 8 Nepali student in a New Zealand school. She was good at running and soccer in the camps, and has joined the girls' soccer team at her New Zealand school. However, she is spending a lot of time with her soccer friends and her school work is not as good as her family expects.

REVIEWS

Barkhuizen, G., Benson P., & Chik, A. (2014). *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-50934-3 (pbk). 132pp.

This introduction to narrative inquiry methods in the field of language teaching and learning aims to present possibilities for those interested in carrying out narrative studies, or in finding out more about narrative research. More than simply providing guidelines, the authors draw on published research to illustrate how stories can be used as data, and also as a way of reporting findings. The book arrives at a time when interest in narrative research in applied linguistics is increasing, as can be seen from special-topic journal issues such as the one in *TESOL Quarterly* (2011), and the recent addition of a book on *Narrative research in applied linguistics* (Barkhuizen Ed., 2013) to the Cambridge Applied Linguistics series.

Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research is divided into six chapters which examine the following topics: narrative inquiry in applied linguistics (chapter 1); approaches for data collection in narrative studies (chapters 2, 3 and 4); data analysis (chapter 5); and reporting narrative research (chapter 6). Chapter 1 provides an excellent introduction to narrative inquiry and its prominence in language teaching and learning research. In chapter 2, the authors focus on oral narratives as data and cover key aspects of the interviewing process, i.e. the format of interviews, frequency and length of data collection, data transcription, and problems and ethical issues. Chapter 3 addresses the use of written data in narrative research, and discusses the different contexts in which written narratives of language teaching and learning are usually constructed, with particular attention to learner diaries, language learning histories, teacher narratives, and narrative frames. The focus in chapter 4 is also on the contexts in which multimodal narrative texts are commonly used. Visual elicitation, multimedia language learning histories, online language learning histories and group discussion are explored, as well as problems associated with adopting multimodal texts.

The following chapter discusses data analysis in narrative inquiry. It begins by pointing out that narrative studies often follow the same approaches to data analysis as other types of qualitative research, and proceeds to the key issue of whether the data collected is narrative or non-narrative in form. This distinction is important because it directs researchers to different methods for analysis. Data that are already “storied” may be analysed thematically, or their structure and discourse may be investigated. Non-narrative data, on the other hand, may be transformed into narratives through the activity of narrative writing, which in turn can also be used as a data analysis strategy. The subjectivity of qualitative research is also emphasised in this section, together with key issues in the quality and ethics of the data analysis process in narrative research. The book concludes with a chapter on reporting narrative studies that emphasises the fact that the interrelationship of different aspects of the research will form the final research report. The authors cite the following

significant variables in planning and preparing a research report: “the participant(s), the topic of the research, the researcher(s), the audience, the purpose of the research, and the form of the report” (p. 96).

If reading this review has put you off further exploration of this little volume, the blame is entirely mine as reviewer. *Narrative inquiry in language teaching and learning research* is a refreshing addition to the literature on research methods, since it provides guidance on specific approaches. In all sections of the book, the authors make use of published studies to exemplify the topics they are exploring, and demonstrate how researchers have used narrative inquiry to address specific issues of language teaching and learning. This makes the book interesting and engaging, while thoroughly examining practical aspects of conducting narrative research. In chapter 5, for instance, not only are issues of data analysis in narrative research explored, but also how the process is managed in sample narrative research reports. Other helpful features are the inclusion of boxes containing checklists for conducting semi-structured interviews and adopting multimodal narratives - particularly useful for novice researchers - and summaries of some of the studies used as examples. The use of figures helps to make a number of points more accessible. One minor criticism, however, is that a list of figures and tables (with titles) could have been included in the table of contents.

In their introduction, the authors make it clear that their book is not intended to explain how narratives should be used in language teaching and learning research, but rather how they have been used so far. The book is an invitation to narrative research, and an entry door to its multitude of possibilities. By presenting approaches and methods that have been used to date, the authors aim to guide readers through different “narrative journeys”, and to encourage us to contribute to the variety of approaches narrative inquiry can bring to language teaching and learning research.

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Galloway, N. & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing global Englishes*. London: Routledge. ISBN 978-414-83532-9 (pbk). 292pp.

While English is not the first language to have power and influence, Galloway and Rose (2014) argue in *Introducing global Englishes* that it is the first truly global language, since previous languages were spread through colonization, trade and slaver, while the recent expansion in the use of English is attributed to globalization.

Broadcasting, telecommunications, digital media and faster and cheaper travel have contributed to a more complex evolution of the language as well as the notion of Englishes within specific contexts such as multinational organisations, and the internationalization of education, in place of the regional variations or dialects as previously. English has official language status in 88 countries, and is used in multinational organisations as the official working language. It dominates pop culture, entertainment, and the world's electronically stored data. English is the lingua franca for aviation systems, shipping, hotels and tourism, and the disciplines of science, technology and medicine. Academic publications and conferences are predominately in English. As a foreign language it is currently more widely learned than any other, data supplied suggesting that the learning of other foreign languages is in decline.

Galloway and Rose begin by describing how previous attempts to standardize English were based on notions of prestige. The earliest recorded attempt was in the reign of King Alfred (849-901) where Western Saxon English was written into court policies, and the language went on to permeate other regions because of its association with scholarship. Grammar and spelling books were later published which attempted to standardize written forms. In the 15th century, "Chancery English", the Midlands variety of English, was chosen as a standard, since this part of England was close to Cambridge and Oxford University, had strong ties with the church, and was rich in agricultural resources. With the founding of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in 1921, Received Pronunciation (RP) began to be regarded as the most prestigious variety of English.

Galloway and Rose go on to critique models that attempt categorization of the varieties of English currently in use. While adopting Kachru's three circle model of World Englishes, the authors believe all models to be of limited validity in the era of globalization. In this model, the Inner Circle comprises Britain, North America and Australasia, where the dominant and official language is English. The Outer Circle represents countries such as Malaysia and the Philippines in which English is an official language, although other national languages are spoken. Countries such as China and Saudi Arabia have no significant history of English, and do not have it as an official language. They are described as Expanding Circle. Examples of groups who are likely to use English as a lingua franca are business people and multi-player online gamers. Language is no longer defined by boundary or birthright, and English is now used in all three Circles for both intra-national and international purposes, with interlocutors in many interactions all non-native speakers of English. Galloway and Rose also consider the labels "native" and "non-native" inadequate to encompass the range of speakers of English, as well as conveying the false impression that these are discrete groups. In view of the ever-increasing size and importance of the "non-native" speaker group and the use of English as a lingua franca, rules that define the language can no longer be prescribed and policed by those of the Inner Circle countries (UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand). Galloway and Rose present a number of arguments in support of their claim that "...ownership of the

English language no longer rests with native English speakers” (2014, p. 47), and they maintain that the term “English as a Foreign Language” is also no longer useful, and should be replaced by “English as a Lingua Franca” (ELF), in acknowledgement that users of ELF operate in a wider variety of contexts than just that of non-native speakers in an English-speaking world.

However, the one chapter of this very readable book that I found slightly disappointing was the one on attitudes to varieties of English. Studies from New Zealand are cited in support of the claim that that American English has superseded British English as the prestige accent (Bayard, Weatherall, Gallois, & Pittman, 2001; Huygens & Vaughan, 1983 cited in Galloway & Rose, 2015), New Zealand English is not considered as prestigious as British or American English, and Maori English is accorded low prestige. Some of these studies are over 30 years old, and if repeated today might reveal some quite different attitudes.

Soon after reading this book I was asked to moderate a test in which students were required to identify whether the cloze should have a, an, the or zero article. This particular issue is raised in the book, as part of a more general discussion about whether teachers are prioritizing prescriptive grammar rules at the expense of meaningful communication skills? In what way can our tests and teachings prepare for the range of Englishes (and cultures), which our students encounter? Does what we teach address this paradigm in which perceptions of Standard English are decentralized? More debate is required around whose English is being taught, and the value of some prescriptive rules (e.g. around punctuation and grammar) needs to be challenged by teachers and curriculum writers.

This book will be useful for anybody who is interested in the evolution of language, and particularly students and scholars of socio-linguistics. It lends itself well for use as a textbook, since it provides useful activities at the beginning and end of each chapter. These include summaries; links to further reading; and discussion, debate, presentation and writing prompts. These activities could also, with minimal preparation, be used as a stimulus in reflective professional development sessions. I strongly recommend it to English teachers as a guide to recent theories and paradigms in their profession.

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Read, J. (2015). *Assessing English proficiency for university study*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9781137495891. (272 pp.).

The central topic of this book is the assessment of English language proficiency and academic literacy needs of students to enable them to cope with the demands of study at university. In contrast with other texts in the field, the book focuses on post-admission language assessments (PELAs), and it reflects an emerging and increasingly important area within a field where to date the literature has examined English language assessments used as part of university entrance for international students, e.g. IELTS and TOEFL. Changing demographics and other factors have led to increased diversity in terms of academic language and literacy needs for students and universities. While the number of international students has grown, an increasing number of domestic students, including permanent residents who have migrated to the country, also face language challenges. The view put forward in this book is that a university's responsibility does not end with entry. Students need to be able to participate effectively, and therefore they need to be provided with opportunities for diagnostic assessment of their language and literacy, and for any arising needs to be addressed.

The book commences with four chapters which provide an overview of the context (one chapter) and case studies of PELAs in use (three chapters). More emphasis is placed on case studies of the implementation of PELAs in Australia (with a strong focus on the University of Melbourne) and the University of Auckland, New Zealand, although case studies of PELAs in other contexts are also provided, e.g. South Africa, Canada, Hong Kong and USA. Each case study is very detailed, outlining the legal, institutional, historical, linguistic and cultural context in which the PELA operates together with details of each PELA's purpose, construct, design features, and implementation. These chapters are accessible to a wide audience (university administrators, teaching and learning support staff and academic staff within a university, language assessment experts), and form an important and unique resource for all readers seeking detailed information on how and why PELAs have been introduced in different contexts. Readers considering introducing a PELA in their institutions will be able to relate aspects of their own needs and context to the specific details in the examples provided.

The remaining five chapters cover the development cycle for a language assessment, from the case for introducing a PELA (one chapter) to defining the construct (three chapters) to design and validation aspects (one chapter each). These chapters are also very detailed, and provide an excellent summary of key developments and issues in the field. The three chapters on defining the construct highlight the variation in the way constructs are used and examine the constructs underlying current English language assessments against their purpose. The argument put forward is that a diagnostic perspective of language assessment is a more appropriate fit for PELAs. This idea of 'fit for purpose' is central. The book does not provide a 'blueprint' of

how to develop the perfect PELA, and Read clearly states that it is not his intention to do so. Rather, the complexities and challenges are methodically and meticulously discussed with reference to the research literature and applied to examples from a range of English language assessments. Readers are then left to assess the information and to make their own decisions. This does not mean that all options are presented neutrally. For example, a central issue returned to throughout is whether a PELA should be voluntary or mandatory. Preference is given to PELAs that are voluntary but strongly promoted and marketed to all new students, allowing students the autonomy to manage their own learning.

Throughout, the author emphasises that assessments are not simple to design, implement and evaluate, that extensive resourcing is needed, that design decisions are interrelated, and that iterative development processes are needed. Some of the detail within these chapters will be more accessible to academics in the field, and indeed Read argues that test development is technical and requires appropriate expertise. Other intended audiences of the book, e.g. university administrators, teaching and learning support staff and academic staff are assisted by the applied examples, repetition of key issues and succinct summaries throughout. While these chapters will be very informative in raising awareness and will be a key resource, if members of this readership group are interested in developing their own PELA, they are advised to seek support from those with the appropriate language assessment expertise. This book is highly recommended. It will be an essential go-to resource not only for those with an interest in PELAs, but also for those with a broader interest in English language assessment issues.

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Wingate, U. (2015). *Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters. ISBN-13: 978-1-78309-347-2. (194 pp.).

Since assessment for academic credit usually involves some kind of written output, the ability to write effectively is essential for both mother-tongue (L1) and multi-lingual (L2) students. However, written academic discourses are complex, a high level of accuracy and skill is required, and shortcomings in students' written texts are all too clearly visible to readers. Add these realities to the ever-increasing diversity of the student population, and it is clear that there is a compelling need for both academic literacy and disciplinary teachers and also policy-makers to have a better understanding of the benefits and limitations of various types of instruction and support. Ursula Wingate's lucid and informative book is based on these four main premises: (1) that as a result of internationalisation and the admittance of "non-traditional" students, the student population of the university is increasingly diverse; (2) that current provision is limited in range, since it focuses only on remediation and English proficiency; (3) that there is little awareness of the fact that university work requires both L1 and L2 students to learn a new use of language; and (4) that while

academic literacy support is usually adjunct and generic, research clearly shows that discipline-specific (Hyland, 2000; Nesi & Gardner, 2012) and integrated (Tribble & Wingate, 2013) provision is more effective.

The seven chapters of this book encompass a number of issues and options in academic literacy instruction, including generic and discipline-specific approaches (Chs.3&4), reading-to-write (Ch.5), the academic literacy development of domestic (“home”) students (Ch.6), a proposed model of academic literacy instruction (Ch.7), and a review of a successful postgraduate intervention from the author’s own Kings College, London (Ch.8). Chapter 2 reviews past and existing approaches (skills, process, genre and critical) to academic literacy instruction, before providing further detail about genre approaches. The next chapter reviews current practice, with particular reference to a survey of provision offered at 31 universities in England which revealed that the vast majority offered only generic provision through adjunct courses with minimal or no input from disciplinary staff, and with a strong emphasis on remediation and English proficiency issues. This grim reality would, I imagine, be replicated in any New Zealand-based survey: there is clearly a wide gulf between current provision and the awareness of institutions about academic literacy issues on the one hand, and on the other, the kind of support that is most likely to meet the needs of incoming students. However, chapter 4 makes for more cheerful reading, since it reviews discipline-specific initiatives (e.g. Australia and South Africa) that have been successfully established with some degree of linking or integration with disciplinary instruction and collaboration between academic literacy developers and subject lecturers.

The fifth chapter of this volume reviews research and scholarship in the somewhat neglected area of reading-to-write, or integrated reading and writing instruction, and Wingate makes the point that many studies; for example, those on writing using sources, focus exclusively on written products without considering the reading component that is intrinsic to authentic, text-responsible writing. In Chapter 6, the author’s attention shifts to the topic of the student experience, which encompasses the academic literacy development of L1 and L2 students learning the new literacy of academic discourse. In this chapter, Wingate reiterates that academic literacy needs to be opened up for students through explicit instruction and practice opportunities i.e., that discourse practices are not “common-sense and transparent” (Lillis & Turner, 2001:58), and that not all students will become proficient through exposure alone. Chapter 7 introduces an inclusive model of academic literacy instruction based on these four principles: focused on genres in their social context (genre awareness), available to all students, subject-integrated, and developed in collaboration with disciplinary staff. The final chapter evaluates an intervention (at postgraduate level) that attempts to implement this model to the fullest extent possible.

Despite its strong emphasis on aspects of provision in the United Kingdom, this is a book that all teachers of academic literacy at tertiary level, including in New Zealand,

should read, and I strongly recommend it. It provides clear summaries of research and scholarship to date, as well as laying out a pathway for development of the field. However, Wingate's viewpoint is a realistic one that acknowledges the size of the gulf between current provision and what would be best for students, and the reality that for various reasons (e.g. financial limitations, lack of awareness of academic literacy issues, resistance by disciplinary staff, and curriculum restrictions) very few institutions are likely to, or able to commit to implementing best practice. It may therefore be more realistic (and less depressing) to view the final two chapters as aspirational goals rather than a blueprint for full implementation.

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GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

NZSAL is a national refereed journal that is published once or twice a year. It welcomes manuscripts from those actively involved in Applied Linguistics/Applied Language Studies including second and foreign language educators, researchers, teacher educators, language planners, policy makers and other language practitioners. The journal is a forum for reporting and critical discussion of language research and practice across a wide range of languages and international contexts, but submissions are expected to have a connection to New Zealand. A broad range of research types is represented (qualitative and quantitative, established and innovative), including cross-disciplinary approaches.

1. Submission of Manuscripts (All types)

1.1 Articles should be double-spaced in A4 format with generous margins at head, foot and both sides. Pages should be numbered consecutively. Do not use templates, styles, and hyperlinks (including programmes such as Endnote) that will affect editorial changes and print formatting. Submission of a manuscript of any type implies that it has not been published previously and that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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- full postal address and telephone, e-mail and fax numbers of all authors
- a brief autobiographical sketch of the authors(s) (50-80 words)
- any references removed for the review process

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anne.feryok@otago.ac.nz

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tables should be numbered consecutively in the order to which they are referred. They should not be included within the text, but submitted each on a separate page. All figures and tables should have a number and a caption, above for tables and below for figures. Use APA (American Psychological Association) style conventions.

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It is stated by McCloud and Henry (1993, p. 238) that “students never ...” This, however, has not been the case (Baker & Thomas, 2001; Frank, 1996; Smithers, 1985).

Where the work of the authors of the article is cited, to avoid identification during the review process the reference within the text should be ‘(Author, [date])’, but there should be no entry in the list of references. Provide these references on the title page.

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References

Books

Lillis, T. M. (2001). *Student writing: Access, regulation, desire*. London: Routledge.

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Retrieved from

<http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=232>

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