NIDA
National Institute of Development Administration

GSLC
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

NIDA Journal of Language and Communication

VOLUME 25 ● ISSUE 38 ● July - December 2020

http://lcjournal.nida.ac.th

ISSN: 2651-1983 (Online) ISSN: 1513-41645 (Print)

Editorial Board

Administrative Committee

Address: Graduate School of Language and Communication National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA)
118 Serithai Road, Klongchan,
Bangkapi, Bangkok 10240, Thailand
Tel. 02-727-3152 http://lc.nida.ac.th

Copyright

NIDA Language and Communication Journal is the official journal of the Graduate School of Language and Communication, National Institute of Development Administration. The journal, ranked in the second tier of Thai Journal Citation Index (TCI), is currently published as a periodical, with two issues annually (June and December). The purpose of this journal is to disseminate information of interest to language and communication scholars, and others interested in related social sciences. The journal presents information on theories, researches, methods, and ideas related to language and communication as well as related interdisciplinary social sciences. The editors welcome a wide range of academic papers, including research articles, review articles, and book reviews.

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

This issue of NIDA Journal of Language and Communication features two empirical research studies, one academic article, and one book review. The issue covers a variety of topics, including the use of extensive reading in university English courses, English for tourism, English language assessment, and pragmatics.

The first article by Nipaporn Tangtorrith reports results from her classroom research investigating the effect of literature circles, a type of classroom activities, on out-of-class novel reading motivation and comprehension of Thai students at a large university in Bangkok. English teachers who would like to use extensive reading to enhance students' reading skills could gain new teaching ideas from the author's detailed descriptions of the interactive activities she used. Moreover, the author's suggestions for future research directions should be useful to readers interested in conducting classroom-based second language reading research.

In the second research article, Suchada Tevinpibanphant presents results from her investigation of English communication challenges faced by Thai hotel receptionists at a five-star resort in Phuket, one of Thailand's most popular tourist destinations, when these receptionists communicate in English with foreign guests who are non-native English speakers. Unlike previous survey research which broadly identified Thai hotel staff's English communication challenges, this study employed semi-structured interviews to gather additional insight and provide specific examples. Based on the findings, the author also discusses implications for developers of English courses for university students majoring in hotel management and for hotel human resource departments.

This issue features an academic article by Pariwat Imsa-ard, who argues for the implementation of performance-based assessment (PBA) in English classrooms in Thailand. In this article, the author discusses the characteristics and potential benefits of PBA and contrast PBA tasks with more traditional language assessment tasks. The author also provides general guidelines on the implementation of PBA, which should be useful to English language teachers.

The final part of the issue is a review of the book *Introduction to Pragmatics*. This book was written by Betty J. Birner, an expert in pragmatics and discourse analysis. The author of the review, Pattrawut Charoenroop, provides a clear summary of the book content and identifies how the book can be useful to graduate students and researchers interested in pragmatics or conducting pragmatics research.

The editorial team of NIDA Journal of Language and Communication would like to thank all the authors for their contribution to this issue. We hope that readers will find the papers in this issue interesting and useful. We would also like to thank our manuscript reviewers and encourage readers who conduct research within the scope of our journal to submit manuscripts to publish in our future issues.

Sarut Supasiraprapa
Editor-in-Chief

Contents

Ethical Guidelines on Journal Publication

- Authors must ensure that their submission is original, fully referenced and that all authors are represented accurately.
- Authors must openly disclose the source of all data and third party material, including previously unpublished work by the authors themselves. Anything that could compromise the originality of the submission should be expressly avoided.
- Authors must identify any third party material that they intend to include in their article, and obtain written permission for re-use in each instance from the relevant copyright holders.
- Authors failing to comply with the above suggestions risk accusations of plagiarism and can result in retraction of published articles.

Investigating the Effects of Literature Circles on Reading Motivation and Reading Comprehension in the EFL University Classroom

Received : January 29, 2020
Revised : August 5, 2020
Accepted : October 21, 2020

Nipaporn Tangtorrith
Chulalongkorn University

Abstract

This classroom research aimed to investigate the impacts of the use of literature circles (LCs) on reading motivation and reading comprehension in an EFL classroom in Thailand. The participants were 16 university students who were required to submit discussion questions based on part of the external reading book *Feed* they were assigned to read each week, collaboratively work with their peers in small groups to answer selected questions about the novel, and share their thoughts with the whole class. The research tool used to collect data was a post-LCs questionnaire. The results revealed that the implementation of LCs gave participants a clear purpose for reading, motivating them to be disciplined and engaged readers, as they felt a strong sense of responsibility toward their learning community. Additionally, LCs turned reading into a social and dynamic activity in which students were able to share and revise their understanding of the book through collaborative dialogue.

Keywords: literature circles, English language teaching, reading comprehension, reading motivation, attitude towards reading

Introduction

One major challenge facing English language education in the EFL context is the limited availability of language input, which is crucial for acquisition of language (Krashen, 1988; Long, 1985). To cope with this, it is fairly common for EFL teachers in Thailand to assign learners to read English books outside class time (Chaimanee, 2004). With more exposure to the language through reading, students can substantially expand their lexical knowledge, develop their reading fluency, and achieve a higher level of language competence (Day & Bamford, 1998).

At the university where the current study was conducted, the external reading book component (usually a young adult English novel of 300-350 pages) has been included as part of fundamental English courses compulsory for first-year students, mainly to increase language exposure and improve students' reading fluency. However, further problems concerning the use of external reading were observed. Firstly, as the component was treated as an out-of-class activity in which students were to finish the book and somehow prepare for the test on their own, it occasionally led to students' misunderstanding the story and failure to see reasons

behind characters' behaviors and actions. Worse still, without immediate reading goals set, some students were not motivated to read and failed to finish the whole book before the test given in mid semester to check their comprehension of the story. The researcher was made aware of these problems from conversations with students in past years, particularly those who received a very low external reading test score or left many questions un-attempted.

Hoping to solve the aforementioned problems, the researcher read through several learning activities that could be implemented and encountered the concept of literature circles (LCs) – a learning activity in which students regularly participate in a student-led small group discussion to exchange their thoughts and pose questions on chapters of the book they have read (Daniels, 1994; Daniels, 2002). Embracing the social aspect of reading, where the process of meaning construction is done collectively through social interaction (Ivey, 2014), LCs have been investigated in several empirical studies and found to successfully maximize the learning process by motivating students to engage in in-depth reading and making sense of the text with peers, resulting in an increase in comprehension, confidence, and interest in reading (Chase & Pheifer, 2002; Daniels, 2002; Furr, 2004; Morales & Carroll, 2015; Widodo, 2015). In addition, integrating LCs into class tasks was considered appropriate for the classroom context of the researcher as the activity could encourage learners to use the target language to express ideas and opinions in discussions on social and cultural issues presented in the book, thus promoting language acquisition (Maher, 2015; Morales & Carroll, 2015) and preparing first-year students for future classes. Because of the success of LCs in several studies and how the activity could potentially help students achieve some learning outcomes of fundamental English courses, the researcher decided to integrate LCs into class tasks and further investigate their potential benefits in promoting the effectiveness of the use of external reading in the EFL context, focusing on the effects of LCs on reading motivation and reading comprehension.

Literature Review

Concepts of LCs

A literature circle is an active learning activity in which learners are divided into small groups and encouraged to share their thoughts and questions on parts of a book or a story they have read. Its core concept revolves around cooperative learning. Moving away from the traditional teacher-centered education to a more open and student-centered one, LCs promote democracy, shared responsibility, and active participation among learners (Chase & Pheifer, 2002), as students are in charge of their learning and responsible for reading a book and engaging in small group discussion. Moreover, LCs embrace another additional educational concept: Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes learners' development made possible under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. Discussing and exchanging their opinions about the book in LCs, students can observe and learn from a more competent peer while also participating in the process of constructing and negotiating meaning, enabling them to successfully merge the knowledge gap and gain more confidence (Sportsman et al., 2011; Zaborowski, 2014).

Inspired by the popularity of traditional adult book clubs, Daniels (2002) and his colleagues decided to introduce experimental LCs to traditional classrooms in Chicago in order to increase student engagement in literature study. Daniels' LCs primarily involved students

forming small groups based on book choice and assigned different roles, such as Connector (making connections within the text and real-life experiences), Questioner (raising meaningful questions for discussion), and Literary Luminary (identifying interesting parts of the book worth sharing), so that learners only had to focus on one specific task while reading and discussing chapters. Moreover, learners found it less intimidating to share and examine ideas in a peer-led group of four to five, enabling more participation and cooperation among them. Students' higher achievement scores in reading and writing after the treatment convinced teachers that LCs played an important role in improving learner's academic skills.

Previous Studies

Several studies confirm that the implementation of LCs in a classroom not only deepens students' understanding of the book they choose to read but also increases their reading motivation (Coccia, 2015; Covert, 2009; Jacobs, 2015), which is defined by Conradi et al. (2014) as "the drive to read resulting from a comprehensive set of an individual's beliefs about, attitudes towards, and goals for reading" (p. 156). In addition to the fact that the activity gives learners a clear purpose of reading, students usually feel that they have a responsibility to their group members to "prepare for and contribute to the discussion" (Whittingham, 2014, p. 72).

Previous research on LCs revealed how the activity itself could be adapted in different educational contexts to maximize learning outcomes. Furr (2004) adapted the traditional model of LCs for his classes in a Japanese university. As EFL students at the university usually have relatively low English proficiency, Furr emphasized the need for teachers, not learners, to select reading materials of appropriate length and level. While maintaining the method of giving each student a specific role in a reading discussion, Furr found it important to manage the group dynamics by putting together students with different personalities to ensure the success of LCs. Furthermore, according to Furr, English instructors may need to give more guidance, such as providing more background information, for students' thorough understanding of materials and issues presented. Furr stated that the implementation of LCs turned his quiet reading classes into lively and cooperative ones in which the target language was used significantly more to discuss the stories and ask insightful questions among group members.

Morales and Carroll (2015) incorporated LCs in their English as a second language college classroom at the University of Puerto Rico and found success in stimulating relevant dialogs and developing students' language competency. The authors attributed the success in increasing students' participation to a few major key points. First, the book selected by the teacher had relatable contents and themes, revolving around social and cultural issues related to the students' real lives. As a result, the book lent itself to discussion, enabling learners to express themselves more and go beyond the book, using the lives of the characters as a springboard. Another feature of Morales and Carroll's adapted LCs was the fact that students were allowed to use their first language in combination with English to bridge the linguistic and cognitive gap in their small group discussions as well as reflective writings.

In the Thai context, Monyanont (2016, 2019) conducted two classroom-based research projects and found that participation in LCs led to an increase in reflective elements, particularly descriptive and analytical reflections, in Thai university students' reading responses to and discussion of short stories. She emphasized a few key elements that resulted

in the LCs being effective, which included students' preparation for discussion and freedom to choose discussion topics.

Despite the relatively consistent positive results LCs delivered in several classroom contexts elsewhere, it should be noted that little research has been conducted to explore the effects of LCs in Thai EFL classrooms, particularly on the combination of reading motivation and reading comprehension. Hence, this research was conducted to address this knowledge gap, aiming to:

(1) study how the implementation of LCs has an impact on EFL students' reading motivation and;
(2) investigate the effects of LCs on EFL students' reading comprehension.

Methods

Participants

This study employed convenience sampling. Participants were 16 first-year students from the Faculty of Arts at a large state university in Bangkok. All of them were enrolled in the same section of a fundamental English course taught by the researcher in the first semester of Academic Year 2017. The average percentage of their English admission scores (i.e., 9 subjects, GAT, and O-NET tests) was 75.89 (SD = 10.18, N = 16). Half of the participants reported that they were assigned to read at least one external reading book in high school English courses, while the rest indicated that the external reading book component was not included in the English courses they undertook during high school.

Materials

Feed. Feed, a young-adult dystopian novel written by M.T. Anderson, presents a future world where people have microchips implanted in their brains, which constantly feed them with news, advertisements, and even government propaganda. Appropriate in terms of length (300 pages) and level of difficulty, the book was selected as the external reading book for first-year students enrolled in *English I* in the first semester of Academic Year 2017. Moreover, although it was published in 2002, the book is still highly relevant to the present world, serving as a cautionary tale about how excessive use of technology impacts people's literacy and cognitive abilities, as well as human relationships.

Post-LCs Questionnaire. After participating in the LCs activity for six weeks and taking the external reading test[1], the students were given a questionnaire with the purpose of investigating whether the reading activity had an effect on their motivation to read the book as well as their comprehension of the story, and for the students to provide feedback on the activity. The questionnaire was composed by the researcher and approved by an expert in educational research. It should also be noted that (1) students could choose to elaborate on their experience either in Thai or English to ensure that their answers accurately reflect their

[1] All students enrolled in *English I* were required to complete the external reading test as part of the course assessment. However, it should be noted that the external reading test was not used as an instrument to obtain data in an attempt to answer the two research questions, as the format of the test, which was written by other teachers in the course, was not in line with the type of treatment implemented in this research.

experience, and (2) the participants were required to submit the questionnaire before test scores were announced to ensure that their reflection would not be influenced by their test performance (see Appendix A for complete post-LC questionnaire).

Procedure

To incorporate LCs into class time to successfully enrich EFL university students' reading and learning experiences, the researcher found it crucial to carefully design details of the activity that would suit the course and students. In this classroom research, some of Daniels' (2002) original key ingredients of LCs were incorporated. That is, small temporary reading groups were formed; discussion questions mainly came from students who met on a regular, predictable schedule for discussion; and the teacher serves as a facilitator, focusing on organizing LCs and observing meetings rather than lecturing (see Appendix B for Harvey Daniels' complete list of LCs key ingredients). However, similar to other research on LCs conducted elsewhere (e.g., Allan & Pearson, 2005; Furr, 2004; Graham-Marr & Pellowe, 2016; Morales & Carroll, 2015), certain elements proposed by Daniels were not included due to practical reasons (e.g., participants did not choose books they wanted to read, as every first-year student was assigned the same external reading book) or were modified to suit the context of EFL education at the tertiary level (e.g., no specific roles were assigned to each group member, as most university students are used to participating in peer-led discussion groups, and LCs without assignment of roles would be more "natural and spontaneous" (Daniels, 2002, p. 99), and to familiarize students with how the LCs would be conducted in this classroom research (e.g., discussions questions came from the teacher, not students, during the first two weeks).

The current classroom research on LCs was conducted in three phases: (1) introduction to LCs, (2) guided LCs, and (3) more independent LCs.

Phase 1: Introduction to LCs (Week 1)

In the first week of class, the participants were informed of the external reading book component, in which they were assigned to read *Feed* and would be given a test to measure their story comprehension as part of the midterm assessment. They were also notified that LCs would be held for the first 30 minutes on Tuesday for the next six weeks. After that, a reading schedule was set and the class agreed to finish reading chapters assigned (approximately 50 pages per week) before meeting in class on each Tuesday.

Phase 2: Guided LCs (Weeks 2 and 3)

In weeks 2 and 3, the students were randomly assigned into groups with 4-5 members, and each group was given approximately 20 minutes to collectively work on answering a set of questions generated by the researcher. The questions given required the participants to recall facts and details (e.g., *What is "feed" and what do people in the story use it for?; How do Titus and his friends react when they don't have the feed?*) as well as forming opinions and making judgements based on the novel (e.g., *Would you like to have your own feed? Why or why not?; How does Violet seem to differ from Titus and his friends?)* (see Appendix C for the complete list of questions). The researcher would mainly observe how each group member interacted with their classmates and contribute some questions only when a group was too quiet or

appeared to have a difficult time initiating a conversation. After that, the class returned together and the researcher selected a few questions from the list and allowed every group to share what they had discussed with the whole class so as to allow a further exchange of ideas and interpretations among groups. The researcher also asked follow-up questions that would allow learners to make text-to-text and text-to-life connections (e.g., *How is this incident similar to other incidents you have read?; What does this remind you of in the real world?).* Participants were encouraged to use English as much as possible in both small-group and whole-class discussions. In these two weeks, the participants were prepared for a more independent LC activity as they had learned, through demonstration and participation, what kinds of questions could be asked and achieved a sense of the depth of the discussion expected from them in the subsequent weeks.

Phase 3: More Independent LCs (Weeks 4-7)

For the remaining four weeks, LCs continued but with minimal teacher interference. After reading pages assigned, each student was required to submit two questions along with their answers in a Google Form created weekly by the researcher before Tuesday. The learners were strongly encouraged to pose questions that required specific examples to support their answers and evaluation of situations (e.g., *Would you be interested in joining the Coke campaign mentioned in the book? Why or why not?; Do you agree with Violet that "Because of Feed, we're raising a nation of idiots." Give specific examples to illustrate your point.)* as these types of questions encouraged students to make a logical decision based on available evidence, think beyond the text, and draw real-world connections from the story. In addition, these kinds of questions, unlike recall questions, would help facilitate collaborative conversations among learners and increase engagement. The researcher then selected four to seven questions that would encourage rich discussion about major incidents contributing to the main themes for the LC activity on Tuesday.

During the discussion sessions in this phase, the researcher acted as a moderator and allowed the class members to conduct their discussion and meaning negotiation with their peers. The main responsibilities of the teacher were randomly assigning the students to small groups and observing how each group member worked together to answer the given questions during small group discussion. Moreover, when learners were asked to exchange their views with the other groups, the teacher needed to ensure that each group was given approximately the same amount of time to share their opinions and raise further questions.

Table 1. Research timeline

Week 1	Weeks 2&3	Weeks 4-7	Week 8	Week 9
Phase 1 Introduction to LCs	Phase 2 Guided LCs	Phase 3 More Independent LCs	External Reading Test (every section)	Post-LCs Questionnaire

Results

This section is divided into two parts based on the two research questions that guided this classroom research: (1) results concerning reading motivation and (2) results concerning reading comprehension.

Results Concerning Reading Motivation

All 16 participants completed the post-LCs questionnaire after the external reading test and before the announcement of their test scores. Table 2 shows the overall results of the questionnaire. Note that in questions 3.3 onwards, in addition to answering the closed-end questions, participants were also allowed to add additional comments in spaces provided.

Table 2. Summary of students' responses to the post-LCs questionnaire

	Questions/Statements	Responses						
1	Did you finish *Feed* before the midterm test?	Yes 100 %			No 0%			
2	How many times out of six did you finish the chapters assigned weekly?	6 times 37.50 %	4-5 times 62.50 %	3 times 0 %	1-2 times 0 %	0 times 0 %		
3	*Choose the number from 1 to 5 that best describe your feelings and experience in LCs.*	Rating Scale					Mean	*SD*
		Very strongly disagree 1	Strongly disagree 2	Agree 3	Strongly agree 4	Very strongly agree 5		
3.1	Participating in LCs, I felt that I had to finish the chapters assigned each week.	0%	0%	0%	18.75 %	81.25%	4.81	0.40
3.2	Participating in LCs, I felt that I wanted to finish the chapters assigned each week.	0%	0%	37.50%	50.00%	12.50%	3.75	0.68
3.3	Participating in LCs enhanced my comprehension of the story.	0%	0%	0 %	56.25%	43.75%	4.44	0.51
3.4	Having a weekly small-group discussion helped me see new aspects of certain incidents and characters.	0%	0%	6.25 %	37.50%	56.25%	4.50	0.63
3.5	After having had a group discussion each week, I felt that I wanted to continue reading *Feed*.	0%	12.50%	43.75%	43.75%	0%	3.31	0.70
4	Did your way of reading *Feed* change in weeks 4-7?	Yes 93.75 %			No 6.25 %			
5	Do you want to have an LCs activity organized weekly next semester?	Yes 100 %			No 0 %			

Although only 62.50% of the participants completed the weekly-assigned chapters for all the six LCs sessions, all the participants (100%) finished the entire book before the midterm exam. According to the responses collected, the implementation of the LCs activity seemed to be a largely successful extrinsic motivator to encourage the students to read assigned chapters each week, as reflected in their answers to the statements 3.1 (*Participating in LCs, I felt that*

I had to finish the chapters assigned each week.) and 3.2 (*Participating in LCs, I felt that I wanted to finish the chapters assigned each week.)*, both of which the majority of participants expressed strong agreement with. It was also revealed that participants felt more obliged, rather than wanted, to complete the weekly reading assignment as the average score of statement 3.1 is higher than that of 3.2.

When asked if the LCs activity motivated them to continue reading the book (statement 3.5), their answers were mixed. While the majority (87.50%) were on the agree side of the scale, the remainder (12.50%) did not think so. According to their detailed responses to item 3.5, many students felt motivated to continue with reading because they wanted to see how the story unfolds and whether their predictions and preliminary analysis of characters and incidents they made with their peers were accurate (e.g., *I wanted to find out what would happen next and see whether what I got from those chapters would match what my friends got. Also, I was curious to find out whether the remaining chapters would provide answers to questions my group had.; I wanted to continue reading the following chapters, focusing on the points my classmates had raised. For example, I paid more attention to how characters like Violet and Smell Factor are different when it comes to the language they use.*). Some also wrote that they even revisited the earlier chapters to confirm certain aspects of a character raised in their groups, but they had missed when reading on their own (e.g., *I didn't think characters having 'lesion' on their skin was significant to the story. But after a group discussion, I went back to re-read those scenes.*). On the other hand, a few students commented that they did not feel so motivated to read the book further despite having had a discussion session, since the story was, to them, rather boring or the vocabulary used in the novel was too difficult for them. They continued reading simply because they did not want to feel left out of the group, not knowing what their friends were talking about, and not being able to participate in the discussion. (e.g., *I found the story rather predictable and not very exciting, but I kept reading the book because I was afraid I wouldn't have anything to discuss with friends and would miss important points.*).

Results concerning reading comprehension

When asked whether the LCs activity helped them understand the story better in the questionnaire, all the participants were on the agree side, with the majority (56.25%) strongly agreeing with both the statements 3.3 (*Participating in LCs enhanced my comprehension of the story*.) and 3.4 (*Having a weekly small-group discussion helped me see new aspects of certain incidents and characters*.). According to their detailed responses, the students gave positive reflections on the discussion activity, stating that it allowed them to improve their comprehension of the story, draw connections between major incidents, and become aware of small details contributing to the themes of the novel. Notable benefits of the activity, based on their comments, can be divided into three aspects.

First of all, the LCs activity helped students become aware of invented vocabulary used by the characters. According to the data collected, several students wrote that it was from having discussion session with peers that they determined the meaning of made-up terminology used by the author to reflect how language has dramatically changed in the fictional world of *Feed*, such as "meg" (= very, extremely), "brag" (= awesome, cool), and "unit" (= dude), (e.g., *There were words I didn't know their meanings and needed to guess what they meant from the context. Sometimes my guesses were different from my friends'. Listening to my friends'*

different opinions allowed me to understand what each word really means.). Knowing the meaning of those futuristic words, which appear throughout the novel, helped students better understand conversation and relationships between characters in the novel.

In addition to the vocabulary aspect, the activity helped students become aware of the writing pattern used by the author. The world of *Feed* is a world of highly advanced communication where people communicate verbally and telepathically, and they constantly receive news feeds and advertisements from *Feed* installed in their brains. To distinguish telepathic communication from the spoken one, the author italicizes telepathic speech, while putting regular speech between traditional quotation marks. Moreover, he includes a series of advertisements and flash news, which pour into the feed-wired brains, at the end of several chapters, in an attempt to highlight what it is like to have massive information constantly flooding into the mind and emphasize how oblivious people in the future are to the degrading world around them. In this aspect, a few students indicated that small-group discussions helped them realize the function of a certain stylistic forms of the text and patterns of narration used early on (e.g., *Before having a group discussion, I didn't know [what is put at the end of some chapters] is ads; At first, I had no idea what italicized texts stand for*.).

Lastly, the students felt that the reading activity helped improve their understanding of the novel, enabling them to revisit once-thought of as minor details and make connections between incidents that communicate the themes. In this regard, many students stated that the LCs activity was very helpful in pointing out important details that contribute to the central themes they missed from reading the book on their own. For instance, some students indicated that group discussion helped them see and understand the horrifying effects of the implantation of microchips in the brains, notably the overly simple language used by the characters (e.g., *Having a group discussion helped me realize a serious impact of* Feed *on people's literacy. I learned that, with* Feed *supplying most input, people use their brain less and the language they use in daily life is no different from that used by people who receive little education.*) and people's obsession with obtaining merchandise (e.g., *My friend pointed out to me that the scene where Titus keeps ordering pants till he runs out of credits to cheer himself up is similar to another scene where his parents comfort him by buying him an upcar after the hacking incident. This helped me see the connection of the two incidents in which characters resort to purchasing items to console themselves, which builds up on the main theme of materialism.).*

Discussion

According to the results, the implementation of LCs had some notable effects on students' reading motivation as well as their comprehension of the story. Firstly, the LCs activity served as a powerful reading motivator for students as it resulted in reading being more purposeful and meaningful, as noted by Anderson (2014). To illustrate, the participants felt committed to finishing the assigned chapters and finding some interesting aspects of the plot, characters or themes so that they could later fulfil the task of conceiving discussion questions to be submitted before each meeting. Each participant was also motivated to read more attentively as they felt it was their responsibility to know and understand the story as much as possible so that they would be able to meaningfully contribute to the group or, at least, would not feel too lost when with their peers. Moreover, after each weekly discussion, many students

were left with suspense and anticipation about the upcoming chapters or confusion caused by discrepancy in terms of comprehension between themselves and their group members, and thus were motivated to continue reading to find out how each character solved their problem(s) or even revisited previous chapters to find what they may have missed. In short, with the implementation of LCs, in which students understood that their preparation for and contribution to discussion were expected and appreciated (Whittingham, 2014), learners found themselves constantly motivated to read actively and carefully until the last chapter, resulting in every participant finishing the book before the test.

The LCs activity was well-received by students not only for being a reading motivator, but also for helping them make sense of the text and develop better understanding of the novel. The LCs activity implementation transformed reading a novel into a more social and dynamic activity, in which meaning construction was collaboratively done through dialogic engagement (Daniels, 1994) and learners took initiative and ownership of their learning (Olsen & Kagan, 1992; Panitz, 1996). The weekly discussion sessions served as an opportunity for learners to share and compare their preliminary understanding of the story, characters, and themes with peers, which could lead to confirmation of what they already understood, re-examination of incomplete analyses of the characters and major incidents, and possibly more questions raised. In other words, participating in the LCs activity allowed students to receive peer feedback on their reading comprehension and interpretation, become aware of discrepancies of understanding, and challenge their own interpretation of the story in order to merge such gaps. Furthermore, it was through participating in social interaction where students were able to observe and learn from group members who demonstrated higher levels of thinking that made it possible for them to reach another level of understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Not only did many students become more aware of made-up words and the pattern of narration after listening to their friends' text analyses, they were able to piece together significant incidents that contribute to the main themes of the book, thanks to the cooperative and interactive aspect of the activity.

All in all, the results of the LCs implementation in the current classroom research largely corresponds with those of previous studies (Furr, 2004; Monyanont, 2016, 2019; Morales & Carroll, 2015), confirming the benefits of this cooperative reading activity when used in English education at the tertiary level.

The design of the current classroom research is subject to one major limitation: the data obtained to assess the effects of LCs was limited to the participants' responses collected from the post-LCs questionnaire only. Although the responses revealed the positive effects of LCs concerning reading motivation and reading comprehension as perceived by the participants, the post-LCs questionnaire could not be used to determine the extent to which the reading activity increased students' reading motivation and the extent to which it improved their reading comprehension. In order to concretely measure the effectiveness of LCs, collection of data before and after the treatment is necessary. For example, a comprehension test should be included before and after each discussion session, or an interview with participants should be conducted before the first week of LCs and after the final week of LCs. Another possibility is to include a control group who would read the same book with no LCs implemented, so that the data comparison between the experimental group and the control group data would be made possible.

Conclusion

The implementation of LCs successfully optimized the external reading book assignment in a fundamental English course and provided several benefits to EFL university students. Firstly, the activity provided students a clear purpose of reading, motivating them to be more disciplined and engaged readers as they felt a strong sense of responsibility toward their learning community. Moreover, LCs turned reading into a social and dynamic activity in which students had an opportunity to share and revise their understanding of the characters, plot, and main themes in a collaborative dialogue of opinions with their peers. In addition, according to several participant's responses, it increased comprehension after each discussion session, further motivating them to continue reading the book.

For future research, a larger number of participants should be recruited to thoroughly investigate and confirm the effects of LCs. In addition, tools used to assess the effects of LCs on reading comprehension should include both a pre-test and a post-test, while a questionnaire or an interview completed by both an experimental group and a control group before and after LCs sessions held would also be extremely valuable to better determine how the reading activity impacts reading motivation. Finally, it would be very interesting to see whether the benefits of LCs would extend to the reading of non-fiction materials such as journalistic opinion pieces, at the university level, since this kind of text also proves to be very challenging for university students who take English reading courses.

Acknowledgements

This classroom research was supported and funded by The Learning Innovation Center, Chulalongkorn University. The author would like to express her sincere appreciation to Assistant Professor Dr. Nattaporn Lawthong and Associate Professor Dr. Nattama Pongpairoj for their guidance and suggestions. Finally, the author would like to thank anonymous reviewers and the editor-in-chief of NIDA Journal of Language and Communication for critically reading the manuscript and providing valuable comments.

The Author

Nipaporn Tangtorrith is a lecturer in the Department of English, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. She holds a master's degree in education from Simon Fraser University, Canada. Her research interests include second language acquisition, pronunciation, and linguistics.

References

Allan, J., Ellis, S., & Pearson, C. (2005). *Literature circles, gender and reading for enjoyment.* https://strathprints.strath.ac.uk/3385/1/strathprints003385.pdf

Anderson, S. (2014). *The book of reading and writing: Ideas, tips, and lists for the elementary classroom.* New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing.

Chaimanee, S. (2004). A study of development of Mattayomsuksa 1 students' reading ability through extensive reading program [Master's thesis, Srinakarinwirot University].

Chase, P., & Pheifer, D. (2002). *Summary of literature circles*. https://kcguidedreading.pbworks.com/f/LitCrcResearch.pdf

Coccia, L. (2015). *Literature circles and their improvement of comprehension* [Master's thesis, St.John Fisher College] https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/316/

Conradi, K., Jang, B. G., & McKenna, M. C. (2014). Motivation terminology in reading research: A conceptual review. *Educational Psychologist*, *26*, 127–164.

Covert, K. (2009). *Literature circles and their effects on student motivation and reading comprehension* [Master's thesis, The College at Brockport] https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/450/

Daniels, H. (1994). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in the student-centered classroom*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Daniels, H. (2002). *Literature circles: Voice and choice in book clubs & reading groups* (2nd ed.). Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Furr, M. (2004). Literature circles for the EFL classroom. *Proceedings of the 2003 TESOL Arabia Conference*. Dubai: TESOL Arabia.

Graham-Marr, A., & Pellowe, W. (2016). Taking a literature circles approach to teach Academic English. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, *4*, 192–201.

Ivey, G. (2014). The social side of engaged reading for young adolescents. *The Reading Teacher*, *68*, 165–171.

Jacobs, M. (2015). *Using literature circles to increase reading comprehension and student motivation* [Master's thesis, Rowan University]. https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/568/

Krashen, S. D. (1988). *Second language acquisition and second language learning.* Oxford, UK: Prentice-Hall International.

Long, M. (1985). Input and second language acquisition theory. In S. M. Gass & C. G. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 377-393). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Maher, K. (2015). EFL literature circles: Collaboratively acquiring language and meaning. *The Language Teacher*, *39*, 9–12.

Monyanont, P. (2016). Using literature circles to promote reflective writing ability: A perspective on the co-operative learning approach. *Humanity and Social Science Journal*, *7*, 128–146.

Monyanont, P. (2019). Effects of integrating literature circles and guided reciprocal peer questioning on students' reflective writing and intellectual content in the discussion. *Journal of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University*, *19*, 140–159.

Morales, A. S., & Carroll, K. (2015). Using literature circles in the ESL college classroom: A lesson from Puerto Rico. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal, 17*, 193–206.

Olsen, R., & Kagan, S. (1992). About cooperative learning. In Kessler, C. (Ed.), *Cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book* (pp. 1–30). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Panitz, T. (1996). *A definition of collaborative vs cooperative learning*. http://colccti.colfinder.org/sites/default/files/a_definition_of_collaborative_vs_cooperative_learning.pdf

Sportsman, E. L., Certo, J. L., Bolt, S. E., & Miller, J. A. (2011). Literature circles: Social and leadership development among at-risk students. *School Psychology Forum: Research in Practice*, *5*, 13–28.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Whittingham, J. (2014). Reading motivation: A study of literature circles. *Academic Exchange Quarterly* Summer 2014, *18*, 72–76.

Widodo, H. P. (2015). Engaging students in literature circles: Vocational English reading programs. Asia-Pacific. *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 25*, 347–359.

Zaborowski, A. R. (2014). *The role of talk in literature circles* [Master's thesis, The College at Brockport]. http://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/ehd_theses/498

Appendix A: Post-LC Questionnaire

1. Did you finish *Feed* before the midterm test? ___ Yes ___ No

2. How many times out of six did you finish the chapters assigned weekly?
   ___ 6 times ___ 4-5 times ___ 3 times ___ 1-2 times ___ 0 times

3. Read the following statements and circle the number that best describes your feelings and experience regarding your participation in literature circles. You may give specific examples to illustrate your experience. (1 = disagree very strongly / 2 = disagree strongly / 3 = agree / 4 = agree strongly / 5 = agree very strongly)

	Statement	Rating Scale				
3.1	Participating in the literature circles activity, I felt that I had to finish the chapters assigned each week.	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Participating in the literature circles activity, I felt that I wanted to finish the chapters assigned each week.	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	Participating in a weekly small-group discussion enhanced my comprehension of the story. Examples (if any): _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	Having a weekly small-group discussion helped me see new aspects of certain incidents and characters. Examples (if any): _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5
3.5	After having had a group discussion each week, I felt that I wanted to continue reading *Feed*. Examples (if any): _____ _____	1	2	3	4	5

4. Did your way of reading *Feed* change when you had to submit questions and answers, compared with when the teacher came up with questions for you in the first two weeks (e.g. in terms of reading speed and information processing)?
   ___ Yes. Please elaborate: _____
   ___ No.
5. Next semester you will be assigned another external reading book. Do you want to have a 20-minute literature circles activity organized weekly?
   ___ Yes. Please elaborate: _____
   ___ No. Please elaborate: _____
6. Do you have any suggestions on how the activity should be carried out so that it will benefit learners even more (e.g. reading schedule, activity duration, grouping, Q&A submission)?
   _____

Appendix B: Harvey Daniels' list of LC Key Ingredients (Daniels, 2002, p. 18)

Eleven Key Ingredients

1. Students *choose* own reading materials.
2. Small *temporary groups* are formed, based on book choice.
3. Different groups read *different books*.
4. Groups meet on a *regular, predictable schedule* to discuss reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn *notes* to guide reading and discussion.
6. Discussion *topics come from the students*.
7. Group meetings aim to be *open, natural conversations about books*; personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are welcome.
8. Teacher serves as a *facilitato*r, not a group member or instructor.
9. Evaluation is by *teacher observation and student self-evaluation*.
10. A spirit of *playfulness and fun* pervades the room.
11. When books are finished, *readers share with their classmates*, and then *new groups form* around new reading choices.

Appendix C: Discussion Questions

Questions for Week 2 (pp. 1-40)

1. What is the "feed"? What do people in the story use it for?
2. Would you like to have your own feed? Why or why not?
3. What do you think "lesions" are?
4. Who is Violet? How does this character seem to differ from Titus and his friends?
5. You might find reading the book slightly difficult at first since the characters use plenty of **futuristic slangs** invented by the author. Give examples of those words and their definitions.

Questions for Week 3 (pp. 41-104)

1. According to Titus, the Feed is the good or the bad?
2. How do Titus and his friends react when they don't have the feed?
3. What do you know about people's literacy in the story? What do you think is the reason behind this?
4. Why are the words "school" and "cloud" written with the superscript TM (™)?
5. What do you learn more about lesions in this week's chapters?
6. According to the chapter "nudging", what do you think happens when Titus is sleeping?
7. What is Violet's "brand-new project"? What does she hope to accomplish?

Questions for Week 4 (pp. 105-157)

1. Do you agree with Titus that it is better to have schools run by the corporations instead of by the government? Explain.
2. Do you agree with Violet that "*Because of the Feed, we're raising a nation of idiots. Ignorant, self-centered idiots."* Give specific examples from the novel to illustrate your point.
3. How do people reproduce in the future?
4. If you lived in the age of Feed, would you agree with Violet's opinion that we should keep the real forests rather than building an air factory?
5. How do Titus's dad and Violet's dad differ?
6. Who is Nina? What does she try to talk Violet into?

Questions for Week 5 (pp. 158-203)

1. Would you be interested in joining the Coke campaign like the characters in the book? Why or why not?
2. What causes Violet's feed to malfunction? How does it affect her daily life?
3. As the story goes, what kind of impression do you get from the relationship between the gang? Give specific examples to illustrate your answer.
4. *"Look at us! You don't have the feed! You are feed! … You're being eaten! You're raised for food! Look at what you've made yourselves!" She pointed at Quendy, and went, "She's a monster! Covered with cuts! …"*

5. Violet screams out these words before losing consciousness. Do you agree with what she says?

Questions for Week 6 (pp. 205-263)

1. What is the reason FeedTech turns down Violet's petition for free repairs? How does it reflect the future world?
2. After Titus has learned of Violet's condition, he seems to put some distance between her and himself. Give specific examples of what he does. And what do you think motivates him to do so?
3. Who is Smell Factor? Why do you think the author puts him in the book?
4. Identify the speaker of each quote and explain what each means.
    a. *Everything I think of when I think of really living, living to the full — all my ideas are just the opening credits of sitcoms … My god. What am I, without the feed?* (p. 217)
    b. *They're really close to winning. I'm trying to resist, but they're close to winning.* (p. 262)

Questions for Week 7 (pp. 264-300)

1. If you were Violet's dad, would you get Feed installed for her like he did?
2. In your opinion, who should be responsible for Violet's critical condition?
3. What happens in the last chapter? How does it make you feel? Why do you think the writer chose to end the novel this way?
4. The last thing you get to hear (or read) from Feed is "Everything must go!" (p. 299) What does it mean?

Thai Hotel Receptionists' Challenges when Communicating with Non-Native English-Speaking Guests: A Case Study of a Hotel in Phuket

Received : August 6, 2020
Revised : September 1, 2020
Accepted : September 25, 2020

Suchada Tevinpibanphant
National Institute of Development Administration

Abstract

This study aimed to examine hotel receptionists' English communication challenges especially with non-native English-speaking guests, together with the adequacy of English training and courses at the Thai universities during their undergraduate level. The participants were four receptionists, one learning and development supervisor at a hotel in Phuket province, and two lecturers in a hospitality management program at a local university. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews by employing open-ended questions and were triangulated from different sources to increase the reliability of the findings. The results showed that, among all English skills, listening to a variety of English accents spoken by non-native speaking guests—especially those from China, India, and Russia—was most challenging to the receptionists because these guests tended to speak English with a heavy mother-tongue accent and with great speed. Speaking is the second most challenging skill, especially because non-native speaking guests may not understand English vocabulary typically used in the hotel business, although such vocabulary is familiar to native English speakers. This present study offers some suggestions regarding additional foreign language training that hotels should provide to receptionists and how undergraduate English courses for hospitality management students can be improved to better prepare them for their future careers.

Keywords: needs, front office staff, non-native English-speaking guests, undergraduate level, English course

Introduction

According to the World Tourism Organization (2019), Thailand ranks as one of the top 10 destinations for international tourists. Owing to the beautiful white sandy beaches and range of activities, Phuket has attracted international tourists from around the globe, especially those from non-native English-speaking countries who constitute approximately 47% of the total number of tourists in Phuket (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2020). The increasing number of tourists has led to the expansion of the hospitality industry. Hotels consist of several departments, for instance, front office, food and beverage, housekeeping, and sales and marketing. Each department plays a significant role in operating services for the guests; however, the front office is considered to be a center of hotel operations as the department has contact with guests throughout the day (Paige & Paige, 1997).

With the increasing number of non-native English-speaking guests in Phuket, English has been used as a standard language for communication between hotel receptionists and guests. These receptionists are required to proficiently communicate in English to provide high quality services. Using English for communication, however, might be challenging for those whom English is not their native language. Kachru (1992) categorized countries where English is considered to be only for educational purposes as belonging in the expanding circle, and Thailand is one of these countries. Some hotel receptionists still encounter difficulties in using English for communication. For example, Kawinthon (2013) pointed out that speaking was the most challenging skill which hotel receptionists wanted to develop followed by listening. In addition, Namamuti (1999) added that most hotel receptionists tend to misunderstand requests from guests and have speaking problems as they have a limited vocabulary.

Although there are many related studies regarding the needs of and problems with English communication among Thai receptionists, no studies are focused on the needs and problems in using English for communication between front office staff and non-native English-speaking guests in Phuket. Such problems may result from the insufficiency of their English educational background. Moreover, these studies were conducted using questionnaires or surveys, and the results only indicated the types of general communication problems that hotel receptionists encountered (e.g., speaking, listening) without providing useful details. The current study aims to address these research gaps. Its findings may be useful as a guideline for human resources (HR) departments in the design of training courses to improve the communicative competence of hotel receptionists. Moreover, the findings might also be useful in the future for universities or institutes to understand and design suitable English courses to prepare similar students for this profession or career.

Literature Review

The term needs analysis first appeared in the 1920s and became popular during the 70s and 80s (West, 1997). Needs analysis generally means the process to discover the skills and knowledge that learners should have in order to be expert in foreign language learning. Various definitions of needs were held by scholars from different perspectives. For example, Berwick (1989) referred to needs as the gap between existing knowledge and target proficiency. According to this, Berwick (1989) identified existing knowledge as the learners' background knowledge, whereas target proficiency referred to the goal that learners wanted to achieve after completing an English course. Hence, the gap between these two can be referred to as the challenges or problems that learners encountered in using English.

This view is supported by Hutchison and Walters (1987) who defined needs as necessities and lacks. They pointed out that necessities referred to the language which learners have to know in order to perform their duties in the target situation. Hotel receptionists, for example, should be skillful in writing formal business emails and writing reports, listening to different English accents, and speaking skills such as telephoning and daily English communication. Meanwhile, lack can be explained as the gap between existing knowledge of the learners and the required knowledge of the target situation. In other words, lack is the difference between what the learners already know and what they need to know to perform their duties successfully.

The needs and problems analysis of English communication has been extensively used in various industries, especially in tourism and hospitality. Many studies have been conducted in the full range of departments found in the hospitality industry, especially the front office department. The findings indicated that listening and speaking were the most challenging skills for hotel receptionists (e.g., Chaiyapantoh, 2008; Chantanont, 2012; Charunsri, 2011). Additionally, these studies suggested the approaches these hotel receptionists employed to attempt to solve these communication problems. For example, Chaiyapantoh (2008) undertook a study of the needs and problems in using English with foreigners of hotel receptionists in Mueang District, Ubon Ratchathani province and the result indicated that most of the time when these hotel receptionists encountered problems in conversation, they typically asked for help from coworkers who have better English skills. Likewise, in the study of problems and needs for English communication improvement of hotel receptionists at hotels in Bangkok conducted by Chantanont (2012), the result revealed that inability to understand guests who speak rapidly is the most problematic activity. The study also added that hotel receptionists solve this problem of misunderstanding by asking the guest to provide more clues in conjunction with reducing their speaking speed.

These communication challenges may result from insufficient English training. Thus, the adequacy of the English courses at undergraduate level that the staff took while attending university should be taken into consideration in terms of whether they were sufficient to prepare them for working in hospitality. To design an appropriate English for tourism course, Edwards (2000, as cited in Zahedpisheh et al., 2017, p. 89) described that "learning tasks and activities should have a high surrender value." In other words, learners must be able to adapt what they learned to execute their job proficiently. Therefore, target situation analysis (TSA) should be conducted before designing a course to obtain the learners' rationale for taking this course. Furthermore, Hutchinson and Walters (1992) asserted that the materials selected for the course should be suitable in terms of both course goal and learners and teachers because they function as a link between what the learners already have learned or have as existing knowledge and new information. Moreover, for ESP courses, it is essential to conduct evaluation as it can reveal the effectiveness of lessons. Moreover, it also reveals the topics which were not successfully covered during the learning. As Hutchinson and Walters (1992) concluded, learners' assessment and course evaluation are the two levels of evaluation; a test is the best instrument to evaluate learners' assessment.

To the best of author's knowledge, no studies have been conducted into the communication between receptionists and non-native English-speaking guests who constitute a large percentage of tourists in Phuket and the design of an appropriate English for tourism course in Thai universities. This leads to the following research questions:

1. What are the communication challenges encountered by hotel receptionists when communicating in English with non-native English-speaking guests?
2. Do Thai universities provide sufficient English training to prepare these front office staff for their employment?

Methods

Context and Participants

To accurately provide the detail regarding the challenges faced by hotel receptionists in their English communication and to formulate proposals for the hotel training course, the participants selected for this study were four hotel receptionists and one learning and development supervisor to provide more information concerning hotel's training courses. In addition, two faculty members from the Tourism and Management program at a university in Phuket were recruited to provide detailed explanation regarding the English course at the Thai university. These participants were selected by purposive sampling as they were potential sources of in-depth information to answer the research questions. The names furnished in this study are pseudonyms.

The four hotel receptionists and the learning and development supervisor work in the same resort in Phuket. The five-star beachfront resort is located in the northern part of Phuket and consists of approximately 600 rooms and private pool villas as well as having its own water park. The main nationalities of their guests vary depending on the season; however, Russian and Chinese are the main tourist markets of the resort. Receptionists at this hotel are required to graduate with at least a bachelor's degree in any field. Moreover, during the hotel's recruitment process, the hotel generally accepts job applications who can communicate in English.

The first participant, "Non," and the second participant, "Dao," both graduated with a Bachelor in Humanities majoring in English from the same university. This program is mainly focused on every aspect of English communication and students are able to choose between English for hospitality and tourism or other English courses as an elective subject. Dao has been working as a front office staff for seven years; whereas Non has been working for one year.

The third participant named "New" has been working in hospitality for approximately eight years; six years as a kids-club attendant and two years as a front office staff. She graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration major in Tourism Management. This program mainly focuses on tourism management and some English communication.

The fourth participant named "Amy" has been working in the front office for five years after graduating with a Bachelor of Humanities majoring in German. Most of the subjects she studied were related to the German language along with some English for academic purposes, but no subjects related to hospitality and tourism. However, she has used less German in the workplace in comparison to English.

The fifth participant named "Natalie" has been working in the Human Resources Department as a Learning and Development Supervisor for four years. Her responsibilities include introducing the company together with its policies during new staff orientation, assisting human resources in the recruitment of new staff and trainees, and arranging in-house training for all staff.

The two faculty members work in the same university. This university is well-known among local Thai students as the program is aimed at preparing students for working in tourism and hospitality. This program is mainly focused on hospitality services and foreign languages. The first faculty member named "Kiwi" mainly teaches hospitality services covering the full range of hotel departments as well as psychology. She also assists in designing the course and

subjects according to the needs of the workforce in the tourism and hospitality industry. The second faculty member named "Cherry" teaches German language and also assists in handling other foreign language teaching including English. She has to ensure that the foreign languages selected to teach in the program have been requested by students and are useful in Phuket's tourism market.

Data Collection

The instrument used was the semi-structured interview consisting of open-ended questions to allow the participants to disclose their perspectives. The interview questions were created to answer the two research questions and divided into three sets as follows:

1. For hotel front office staff: consisted of eight questions to elicit information regarding their educational background, internship and working experience, communication challenges with non-native English-speaking guests at the hotel, and English training course at the hotel.

2. For learning and development supervisor: consisted of seven questions mainly focused on the detail of the English training course which was organized for the hotel front office staff.

3. For faculty members: consisted of nine questions to collect information concerning the adequacy of English courses at undergraduate level provided for tourism and hospitality management students.

The interview questions are listed in the appendix. During the interview, the researcher asked participants the prepared questions and allowed each participant to present their perspectives. However, the additional questions were asked to probe for more information if the participants raised important issues. The interviews of the hotel receptionists, learning and development supervisor, and two faculty members were conducted twice. The first interview for front office staff and learning and development supervisor was conducted individually at their hotel in Phuket and each session lasted for an average of 30 minutes; whereas a group interview was conducted for the two faculty members outside of their office in Phuket owing to their convenience and lasted for approximately two hours. The second interview was conducted individually via telephone call for obtaining further information.

Data Analysis

After the data was transcribed, the researcher started the coding process according to the thematic framework and grouped the data by theme. To ensure the accuracy of the information, the researcher applied a data triangulation process by comparing and contrasting all the responses from all participants. The results were itemized and are briefly described in the next chapter.

Findings

During the interview, the front office staff were asked whether they encountered any communication challenges during their duties. The results indicated that listening to a variety of English accents was challenging due to the unfamiliarity with the accents and speed of speaking. For example, Non, who majored in English, mentioned that listening to a variety of English accents was most challenging, especially the accents of Chinese guests. They stated

that: *"From my educational background, I know that Chinese language has approximately four intonation marks. Therefore, Chinese guests seem to speak English by applying these intonation marks and that always makes me confused."* They further explained that Chinese language pronunciation is considered to be the major cause of English sound variation. Additionally, they mentioned that English spoken by Russian guests was another challenge. They stated, *"Most Russian guests are unable to speak English, but they do try to speak by mixing with their mother-tongued accent which I am completely unable to understand."* This is similar to responses in the interview with Amy who described that hotel receptionists use listening and speaking skills more than reading and writing during their duties. She mentioned that listening to guests who use English with their mother-tongued accent is complicated, especially Indians, even with five years' experience working in the front office department. They stated, *"I could not differentiate between R and L when communicating with Indian guests."*

In addition to the heavy mother-tongue accent, the inability to understand guests who speak rapidly is another listening challenge. During the interview, Dao explained that they used all her communicative skill in their routine work. However, listening to guests who speak quickly was the most challenging. They stated that, *"Because of the variety of accents, I found listening quite hard. I am familiar with both British and American accents but not English spoken by Indians. This is the hardest thing for me. They speak with rapid and no pause between the word at all."* In addition to listening challenges, the interviews revealed that speaking is another problem encountered. The results indicated that speaking to the guests using hospitality vocabulary in conversation is considered the major issue. For instance, New explained that most of the time Russian guests could not understand when technical terms, abbreviations, or other vocabulary related to hospitality were used. *"Most of the guests are not able to understand when I use words such as best available rate, flexible rate, or BB which stands for bed and breakfast. That makes me lose confidence."* Furthermore, Non added that speaking English with non-native English-speaking guests is considered complicated in terms of vocabulary. *"One of our room categories is deluxe balcony, but Russian guests are definitely unable to understand the word 'balcony.' I later found out that the Russian pronoun for 'balcony' is 'balcon'."*

Apart from challenges in using hospitality vocabulary in speaking, the results also pointed out that using full grammatical function is another speaking challenge. Dao explained that most Russian and Chinese guests are unable to understand when she uses a full sentence to explain something. She stated that, *"Whenever I use standard English to communicate, they won't understand me. So I have to use only a single word. Instead of saying 'This is you room key," I just say 'Room key'."* Non also added that the use of grammatical functions in speaking to Russian and Chinese guests seems too problematic. They stated that, *"The guests do not understand why I need to add helping verbs into a sentence so I just use a simple sentence which contains only subject, verb, and object."*

The results also indicated that these receptionists typically seek help from their colleagues who are better in English speaking. For example, Non who has less working experience in front office department, stated that *"I always look for senior or duty manager who seem to have better English to talk to the guest when I couldn't understand."* Furthermore, Dao added that they would ask guests to slow down and provide more context clues. They

explained that this is the most effective means of addressing issues when encountering communication challenges. They stated: *"It's easy to ask guests to slow down or provide context clues rather than ask them to repeat what they just said."*

As these receptionists encountered listening and speaking challenges, Natalie, a learning and development supervisor, was asked during the interview whether the hotel was aware of these challenges. Natalie explained that the hotel conducted annual questionnaires and surveys to assess staff training needs with the purpose of utilizing the results to design an appropriate and effective training courses for these staff. They stated that, *"One of the skills that these receptionists need to be trained is listening, especially listening to English spoken by those non-native English-speaking guests as well as other foreign languages such as Chinese or Russian."* However, Natalie noted that the hotel had not organized any training for hotel receptionists on how to communicate in English with those non-native English-speaking guests as well as communicating in other foreign languages. In regard to the receptionist positions, Natalie also added that the hotel is unable to hire native Chinese or Russian speakers or Thais who are able to speak Chinese and Russian because these individuals typically require salaries which exceed the hotel's budget. Therefore, these training courses were listed in the training year plan and were awaiting approval from Skill Development Center of Thailand.

Another purpose of this study was to examine the adequacy of the undergraduate-level English course at Thai universities and whether the learners can apply what they have learned there in their career. The interview result indicated that the English courses were useful, but not sufficient for preparing students for a front office career.

The interviews results indicated that the four receptionists can adapt the skills they had learned to use in daily communication with guests. They believe that English is important in workplace, especially in the hospitality industry. Therefore, mastering English communication is essential. For instance, Non stated, *"I can use all of my English ability here to communicate to the guests. Language is the skill that everyone should have before applying for a job as a front office staff because when you come to work, they will only teach you how to do the document or how to check in and check out."*

Similarly, Amy, who has a different educational background than the others as she graduated with a German major, pointed out that she participated in some English courses as an undergraduate. Even though she studied less English, she can still use her writing, listening, and speaking skills in English at work. She explained, *"No matter which language you study, you can definitely use English in the workplace depending on the main nationality of the hotel guests."*

The above results were supported by the views of the two faculty members. For example, Kiwi stated that they had previously talked with hotel receptionists who graduated from this undergraduate program in regard to English. She explained, *"The students are able to use English in the workplace quite well. They do not have to spend much time practicing English during working hour. They only need to learn and adapt themselves to the organization."*

Even though the English courses at undergraduate level taken by the four receptionists were useful, it was insufficient to prepare them for their front office career, especially in Phuket. During the interviews, receptionists were asked to provide in-depth detail regarding their undergraduate English course, especially the learning materials. The results showed that

the materials – both textbooks and other online channels – focused on either British or American English. As Non stated, *"I am more familiar with either English or American accents because of my textbooks. The focus will be on these two accents only."* However, the main tourism market in Phuket is those from non-native English-speaking countries, thus most of front office staff are unfamiliar with other English accents.

Moreover, the two faculty members were asked to provide in-depth detail concerning the undergraduate course design for English language. The results showed that although the main nationality of tourists in Phuket are those from non-native English-speaking countries, the English course during undergraduate level was designed based on the university instruction or requirement and unable to be modified according to the local tourism market. Kiwi explained even though the university provides English for tourism courses, these courses do not seem to focus on English communication with non-native English speakers. She stated, *"The focuses of the English for tourism courses are how to make the students become familiar with English language and hospitality vocabulary."* Additionally, the university does not conduct a survey of learners' needs in order to understand the purpose of taking this course, as shown by Kiwi's comments as follows, *"We did not do any survey of the learners' needs before creating the course as everyone knows that all students must learn English in Thailand and English is important for them for their future career."* Without conducting a survey to investigate English communication skills graduates need, undergraduate programs in tourism may not provide students with adequate training for their careers.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicated that front office staff encountered listening and speaking problems with non-native English-speaking guests, especially those from China, India, and Russia. They are unfamiliar with these accents. Their undergraduate English course was useful; however, it was insufficient to prepare them for their profession as front office staff because the course design is based on an outline handed down from the university and not based on learner needs. Furthermore, in undergraduate tourism programs, there may be no teaching materials focusing on varieties of English spoken by non-native English-speaking guests who account for a large percentage of foreign guests at hotels in Phuket.

Discussion

The receptionists at the hotels in Phuket province need to use English to communicate with their hotel guests. The study found that listening to the variety of English accents was considered to be the most challenging for these receptionists owing to the heavy mother-tongue accents of the Indian, Chinese, and Russian guests. As Kachru (1992) categorized these countries in either outer or expanding circle where English is not the first language; therefore, their first or mother-tongue language results in a wide range of accents when speaking in English. It seems possible that some of these receptionists have less opportunity for exposure to English accents of guests from these countries; therefore, they were unfamiliar with listening to a variety of English accents. This study suggests that to avoid misunderstandings, this skill should be practiced by having conversations with people who have different English accents, a finding which supports the research of Brownell (1994), who mentioned that the way to improve communication was to interact regularly in conversation.

Another point to be raised is the speaking challenge. The finding of this study showed that these receptionists had difficulties in speaking English to non-native English-speaking guests. This is in line with Kawinthon (2013), who pointed out that speaking was the most challenging skill for receptionists. Although they were able to convey their message, guests from India, China, and Russia were not able to understand what was said when they used hospitality vocabularies during check-in and check-out to explain the hotel facilities and room amenities. Dann (2001) observed that hospitality and tourism vocabulary is specialized and occurred in a particular context. Regarding solutions for these speaking problems, the results of this study indicate that most front office staff would ask guests to slow down, provide more context clues, or seek help from colleagues. This is similar to Chayapantoh (2008) who found that when most hotel front office staff encountered a speaking problem during conversation, they requested help from their colleagues who seemed to have a higher level of English competence. According to this result, it is recommended that HR or the training department of hotels in Phuket should provide regular English training focused on non-native English-speaking accents to foster familiarity with them in these receptionists. Hotels may also organize knowledge sharing sessions in which more senior receptionists proffer suggestions to younger receptionists as to how to overcome challenges that may arise during communication with non-native English-speaking guests from China, Russia, and India. In addition, hotels in Phuket may consider providing receptionists with training on foreign languages, particularly Chinese and Russian, to receptionists.

The finding of this study also indicated that staff training was significant and should be conducted because lack of staff training can damage the hotel's reputation. This result is similar to Yang (2010) who investigated the importance of staff training in the hotel industry and stated that the hotel could enter into a crisis situation if there is no regular staff training. Accordingly, the hotel should arrange a training course such as a listening course, especially listening to English spoken by non-native English speakers, as they are the primary market of the hotel. This course would help front office staff to become familiar with the variety of English accents; therefore, they will be able to better understand and serve the guests. Second, the hotel should consider providing foreign language training, especially in Russian and Chinese. These front office staff believed that being able to communicate with these guests using their first language would better facilitate communication more so than English.

In addition, the results of this study suggest that the English training in Thai universities was useful; however, it was insufficient for these participants to perform their duties as hotel receptionists in Phuket. The focus of the English course should not only be on English for academic purposes, but should also be on English for tourism purposes. There were various activities during the English courses for learners to participate in, such as topic discussion, reading, listening, group activity, as well as homework and exercises. The primary purpose of these activities was to allow learners to demonstrate the knowledge that they had learned during the course. All of these activities, as mentioned in Zahedpisheh et al. (2017), are recommended to be used in any English courses and must be based on the course purpose. The evaluation was completed by the learners before completion of each course. As a result, all participants can fully apply their English knowledge and skills in their work.

The result of this study, however, revealed that the English courses that these participants took were insufficient as they still encountered listening and speaking problems,

especially with non-native English-speaking guests. This finding suggests that the English courses in the Thai universities were designed based on the requirements of the Ministry of Education. In other words, the English courses might not have been created to meet learners' needs in terms of their future profession. As suggested by Edward (2000, as cited in Zahedpisheh et al., 2017), the target situation analysis (TSA) should be completed to understand the learners' reason for attending a course. It can be inferred that, without conducting a TSA, lecturers will not have an opportunity to assess the learners' needs, and this will affect the course design. Moreover, the materials are essential in English courses because these materials can function as a link between existing knowledge and target proficiency (Hutchinson & Waters, 1992); therefore, teachers must be aware of this link when selecting appropriate materials for each course. This study suggests that all the materials used in English course at Thai universities – especially textbooks and other online channels – focused on either British or American English, resulting in Thai students being familiar with only these two varieties of English accents; however, the primary tourism market in Phuket are from non-native English-speaking countries such as China, India, and Russia, resulting in these front office staff having struggled with understanding the wide variety of English accents.

Since Phuket is famous as a tourist destination in Thailand, it is believed that these findings could be used as a guideline for the hotel to design additional training, especially foreign-language training. The finding could also be used to improve English courses in the hospitality management programs of Thai universities by focusing on a wide variety of English accents together with pragmatic strategies. Therefore, future cohorts of students who wish to pursue careers as a hotel receptionist will be better prepared to perform their jobs.

Limitations

As this paper adopted the qualitative research approach with only a small number of participants, future studies may adopt the quantitative research approach to investigate the needs and problems of English communication between Thai receptionists and non-native English-speaking guests so that the results can be generalized to Thai receptionists in general. Moreover, future studies could incorporate perspectives from non-native English-speaking hotel guests to add reliability to the findings regarding communication problems between these guests and Thai hotel receptionists. Additionally, the two lectures interviewed in this study did not teach the four participants of this study who were hotel receptionists. Thus, to increase the reliability of the findings of future studies, it is recommended that the data should be collected from English lecturers who taught the hotel receptionists who are the participants of the study.

The Author

Suchada Tevinpibanphant is a student in the MA Program in English for Professional Development at National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand. She previously obtained her bachelor's degree in multimedia journalism from the Institute of International Studies, Ramkhamhaeng University. She can be contacted via email at katie2534@gmail.com.

References

Berwick, R. (1989). Needs assessment in language programming: From theory to practice. In R. K. Johnson (Ed.), *The second language curriculum* (pp. 48-62). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Brownell, J. (1994). Creating strong listening environments: A key hospitality management task. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *6*, 3–10.

Chaiyapantoh, P. (2008). *The needs and problems in using English with foreigners of hotel front desk staff in Mueang district, Ubon Ratchathani province, Thailand*. [Master's thesis, Ubon Ratchathani Rajabhat University].

Chantanont, R. (2012). *A study of problems and needs for English communication improvement of hotel front office staff at hotels in Bangkok*. [Master's thesis, Thammasat University].

Charunsri, K. (2011). *The needs and problems of English language skills for the front office staff in Chinatown, Bangkok*. [Master's thesis, Thammasat University].

Dann, G. (2001). *The language of tourism: A sociolinguistic perspective* (2nd ed.). Oxon, UK: CAB International.

Edwards, N. (2000). Language for business: Effective needs assessment, syllabus design and materials preparation in a practical ESP case study. *English for Specific Purposes*, *19*, 291–296.

Hutchinson, T., & Waters, A. (1987). *English for specific purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Kachru, B. B. (Ed.). (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Kawinthon, C. (2014). *The training needs analysis of Thai receptionists at a hotel in Bangkok*. [Master's thesis, Thammasat University].

Leslie, D., & Russell, H. (2006). The importance of foreign language skills in the tourism sector: A comparative study of student perceptions in the UK and continental Europe. *Tourism Management*, *27*, 1397–1407.

Ministry of Tourism and Sports. (2020). *International tourist arrival to Thailand*. https://www.mots.go.th/mots_en/Index.php

Namamuti, A. (1999). *A study of English communication between hotel front desk staff and ASEAN guests*. [Master's thesis, Ramkhamhaeng University].

Paige, G., & Paige, J. (1997). *The hotel receptionist*. Southampton, UK: The Camelot Press.

West, R. (1997). Needs analysis: State of the art. In R. Howard & G. Brown (Eds.), *Teacher Education for LSP*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

World Tourism Organization. (2019). *International tourism highlights*. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421152

Yang, X. (2010). The importance of staff training in the hotel industry: Case study: Renaissance Shanghai Yuyuan Hotel. https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle

Zahedpisheh, N., Bakar, A., Zulqarnain, B., & Saffari, N. (2017). English for tourism and hospitality purposes (ETP). *English Language Teaching*, *10*, 86–94.

Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Front Office Staff

1. Could you tell me about your background information, such as your age, position, and work experience?
2. What are the main nationalities of the hotel guests?
3. Which faculty do you graduate from? How many English courses did you take during your undergraduate level? What was the focus of the English courses?
4. Are there any requirements when you first apply as a front office staff? Does the hotel use any English test?
5. Do you think English is important in working as a front office staff? What skills do you use the most? Can you apply what you learned in university to your daily work?
6. Do you encounter any communication challenges? If yes, how can you deal with these challenges?
7. Does hotel provide any English training? Do you think the training is useful?
8. Do you think the hotel provide enough English language training?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Learning and Development Supervisor

1. Could you tell me about your background information, such as your age, position, working experience?
2. What is the most important skill that you think front office staff should master?
3. Does the hotel use any English test when you applied for the job?
4. Could you provide more information in regard to the English test?
5. Does the hotel provide any training? If yes, which course? How do you know that the training you arranged is needed?
6. Do you ask the staff to do any test after they complete training?
7. Do you think the English language training is useful?
8. Besides English language training, are there any other training courses?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Faculty Members

1. Could you tell me about your background information, such as your age, position, working experience?
2. Could you give me more information in regard to the courses that you teach?
3. In what way do English language courses offered at university where you teach important to students?
4. Do you think the courses can prepare students for their future employment?
5. Besides English and tourism courses, does the program provide any other courses?
6. Do you use any test to evaluate the students' English skills?
7. Do the students have any strength and weakness during learning? How can you help them?
8. Does the program require student internships? What types of feedback did you get from employers?

Potential Guidelines for Implementing Performance-Based Assessment for Thai EFL Secondary School Teachers

Received : December 17, 2020
Revised : January 7, 2021
Accepted : January 29, 2021

Pariwat Imsa-ard
Ramkhamhaeng University

Abstract

In education settings, it is widely accepted that teachers play a significant role in improving the students' performance. Despite the fact that teachers, especially in terms of their qualities, are so important in developing students' proficiency, previous literature demonstrated that a number of poorly trained teachers in classrooms have adverse effects on students' learning development. In addition, many teachers still concentrate on pencil-and-paper tests ascribed to the high-stakes tests such as the national examination, which leads to negative washback on teaching and learning. To yield positive washback, the performance-based assessment (PBA), which gathers students' performance over a period of time, has potential as an approach. In fact, teachers can elevate and support students' English language performance through the use of PBA which is designed to measure students' language skills in a real-life context. However, teachers' lack of practical assessment knowledge and insufficient support with effective training development programs can lead to avoidance of implementing PBA effectively. Thus, this paper aims to provide the potential guideline for Thai EFL secondary school teachers to implement PBA in classrooms.

Keywords: performance-based assessment, professional development, secondary school teachers

Introduction

Over the decades, English education policy in Thailand has focused on English language skills for communication and encouraged teachers to promote communicative competence which emphasizes the ability to use the language effectively in authentic contexts (Richards, 2006) with students. However, despite considerable effort and incentives devoted to English education development, the students' English-language proficiency still remains low and is far from satisfactory (Kaur, Young, & Kirkpatrick, 2016). In spite of the fact that Thai EFL students have spent at least nine years studying English in their basic education, the results from the national examination and some other high-stakes tests, for instance TOEIC (Educational Testing Service, 2019), are still in doubt and the students' ability to communicate and use English in their real-life context is still trailing far behind other countries in Asia where English is a foreign language (English First, 2020; Waluyo, 2019).

A possible explanation to such a phenomenon is that Thai EFL students have little exposure to English language and, worse still, there are a number of poorly trained teachers in classrooms who eventually start to fossilize their teaching practices into rote-learning, spoon-

feeding, and teacher-centered approaches (Dhanasobhon, 2006; Imsa-ard, 2020; Noom-ura, 2013). In fact, it is widely accepted that one of the most crucial factors to support student learning progress is unquestionably teachers, especially in the aspects of teacher quality and teachers' beliefs (Geringer, 2003). To support this claim, Borg (2011) demonstrated that teaches' beliefs and knowledge offer a basis for action that leads to teachers' decision-making in the classroom, that is to say, teachers' beliefs can direct teachers' choices of practices such as implementing lessons, selecting learning activities, and assessing students (Rios, 1996).

The aforementioned practices such as focusing on the rote-learning and teacher-centered approaches, which are likely the result of the importance placed on standardized tests such as the national examination (Imsa-ard, 2020), result in a wide gap between the current position and the expected English-language performance. Moreover, despite the fact that the emphasis in the Basic Education Core Curriculum has been placed on "building the communicative competence" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 252), teachers' assessment methods do not correspond to this emphasis. To elaborate, Thai EFL teachers have been encouraged to adopt communicative methods and make their teaching interactive and relevant to the students' real-world situations, but they still focus on traditional paper-and-pencil tests. By focusing on the traditional paper-and-pencil tests, it has often been noted that, in spite the fact that students may perform well on the test, they may have no actual ability to use the target language in real-life situations. However, students should be placed into a situation where they produce the target language to complete an authentic task (Lim & Griffith, 2011).

In the light of the discrepancy between the actual and expected performances, there has been a growing interest in performance-based assessment in language teaching and assessment to encourage students to improve their English-language performance (Koné, 2015). Some previous studies (e.g., Inprasit, 2016; Imsa-ard, 2020) indicated that Thai EFL teachers lack a clear concept of how to promote English communicative skills and have insufficient support with effective training development programs. Moreover, some teachers even expressed their concerns about their confidence in implementing performance-based assessments in their own classrooms due to the unpalatable fact that they did not know how to do it. Such reports are in line with Stoynoff and Coombe (2012) who claimed that teacher's lack of preparation and professional development can underrepresent appropriate language assessment. For these reasons, this paper aims to provide a potential guideline for Thai EFL secondary school teachers to implement performance-based assessment.

Performance-Based Assessment (PBA)

With the advent of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, there have been some shifts that raise strong objections to using merely standardized test scores by de-emphasizing large-scale standardized tests (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019) and language teaching has been encouraged to emphasize students' performance rather than merely discrete-point test items in the traditional assessment. Concerning such standardized tests as the national examination and TOEIC, they comprise only multiple-choice questions without performance tests focusing on productive skills. This test format has had a considerable impact on stakeholders such as students, teachers, and even school principals. To illustrate, drilling and test-wiseness strategies are more concentrated on than practicing communicative language

(Prapphal, 2008). In addition, Brown and Abeywickrama (2019, p. 18) demonstrated the standardized tests cannot "elicit actual performance" of the students through discrete-point items, while performance can be systematically evaluated through direct observation.

While the traditional assessment concentrates on "the rank ordering of students, […] individual test performance', scholars have recently proposed alternative assessment which focuses on 'an investigation of developmental sequences in student learning, […] and the provision of an opportunity for further learning" (Lynch, 2001, pp. 228-229). To elaborate, the alternative assessment involves students' active participation as part of their learning development process. Alderson and Banerjee (2001) further illustrated that the alternative assessment is an on-going process which gathers students' performance over a period of time and is claimed to yield positive washback. Concerning positive washback, when the assessment practice focuses on authentic and direct ways of performing language skills rather than the activities involved in preparing for the test, the assessment is likely to yield optimal positive washback by allowing teachers to enhance students' learning process and motivate students to learn and apply their language skills and knowledge to real-world situations (Messick, 1996; Phongsirikul, 2018). To involve students in actually performing the tasks, performance-based assessment is designed to pose tasks "that are based directly on the learners' intended (or hypothesized) use of the target language" (Bailey, 1998, p. 215).

Having discussed the alternative assessment, it is necessary to discuss PBA, which falls under the blanket term of alternative assessments (Herman et al., 1992). The term "performance-based assessment," is not a novelty, as it has been in use for a few decades (McNamara, 1996; Norris et al., 1998). McNamara (1996) defines PBA as "the assessment of the actual performances of relevant tasks are required of candidates, rather than the more abstract demonstration of knowledge" such as paper-and-pencil tests (p. 6). To illustrate, PBA requires test-takers to perform particular tasks designed to measure their language skills presumably required in a real-life context (Wigglesworth & Foster, 2008). Wiggins (1990) indicated four key elements of the PBA: 1) having collaborative elements, 2) being contextualized and complex, 3) measuring real-world tasks, and 4) having standards that are authentic and clear to students. Later, O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996, p. 5) and Norris et al. (1998, pp. 9-10) provided some characteristics of PBA as follows:

1. Constructed Responses: students need to produce a response, engage in a performance, or create a product, which is aligned with the daily actions in the language classroom.
2. Higher-order Thinking: students engage higher levels of thinking in constructing responses to open-ended questions given based on needs analysis including student input in terms of rating criteria, content, and contexts.
3. Authenticity: tasks are meaningful and engaging that reflect real-world contexts. In this matter, the performance-based tasks should be as authentic as possible with the goal of measuring real-world activities.
4. Integrative: tasks should call for integration of language skills and knowledge and skills across other content areas and include collaborative elements that stimulate communicative interactions.

5. Process and Product: procedures and strategies used to achieve the tasks are assessed. This should be appropriate in terms of timing and frequency of assessment.
6. Depth VS. Breath: performance-based assessments provide information in depth about students' performance. Unlike standardized testing which cannot elicit actual performance of the students, the information from performance-based assessment can yield more detailed interpretation and higher content validity.

As PBA focuses on authenticity and the tasks should be "authentic," it is crucial to understand the criteria and the characteristics of authentic activities. The National Capital Language Resource Center (n.d., as cited in Griffith & Lim, 2012, pp. 2-3) noted the criteria of authentic assessment as follows:

- Be relevant to students' interests;
- Reflect real-world contexts;
- Involve creative use of language rather than memorization and repetition;
- Require students to produce a quality performance;
- Students know the evaluation criteria and standards prior to the tasks;
- Involve interactions;
- Allow self-evaluation as students proceed.

Moving on now to consider the several washback effects of PBA, there are some potential advantages of PBA. First, compared to traditional assessments, PBA provides more valid measures of students' abilities responding to real-life situations. To elaborate, it offers more effective estimates and more reliable predictions of students' performances in real-life contexts (Quyên, 2019). Furthermore, by using PBA in classrooms, teachers can directly observe how well students apply desired skills and knowledge and diagnose the students' strengths and weaknesses in support of their learning (Espinosa, 2015; McTighe & Ferrara, 2011; Pierce, 2002).

Bailey (1998) and Hamp-Lyons (1997) further contrast PBA and standardized tests, as shown in Table 1, while specific examples of these two types of tests are shown in Table 2. PBAs have demonstrated some positive practices in comparison to standardized tests. For example, as PBA is continuous, a teacher can monitor students' progress so as to promote their learning and enhance their learning motivation. Moreover, with its characteristics of authenticity and contextualization, the performance-based tasks are relevant to students' life so students can relate themselves to contexts given. In addition, the focus of standardized testing rests on developed uniform exams, meaning that the standardized test is administered and marked according to a uniform standard. Unlike standardized tests, PBA allows teachers to plan and modify their practices according to the students' needs in order to boost and encourage students' learning progress (Espinosa, 2015). In addition, PBA is criterion-referenced assessment; a student's performance is assessed against a fixed set of predetermined criteria or learning standards. PBA is therefore less discouraging or stressful for students when compared norm-referenced assessment, in which a student's performance is compared against the performance of his or her peers.

Table 1. Characteristics of standardized tests and performance-based assessment
(adapted from Bailey, 1998, p. 207; Hamp-Lyons, 1997, p. 300)

Standardized tests	Performance-based assessment
Norm referenced	Criterion referenced
Decontextualized objectives	Contextual objective
Uniform	Modifiable
Restricted dimensions	Multi-dimensional
Pre/post "snapshots"	Continuous assessment
Inauthentic tests	Authentic and more real-world assessment
Static view of achievement	Monitors progress
Restricted behavior sampling	Extensive behaviors sampling
Reflects speed and accuracy	Reflects quality of work
Promotes skill in test-taking	Promotes student learning
Promotes student anxiety	Enhances student motivation
Negative washback	Positive washback

Table 2. Example of standardized tests and performance-based assessment

Standardized Test (National Examination)	Performance-Based Test Tasks
Listening and Speaking Part Directions: Choose the best answer. #1: A foreign tourist wants to take a bus to Kanchanaburi, so he asks a man for directions to the bus terminal. The man says: _____ a) Let's take a taxi to Kanchanaburi. b) There are many buses going to the bus terminal. c) You need to go by train because it's faster. d) It's on your left, just after you pass the next intersection. e) Kanchanaburi's about 120 kilometers from Bangkok.	**Oral Performance and Listening Tasks** Direction: You want to visit a tourist attraction in Bangkok, but you do not know how to get there. In pairs, you have five minutes to prepare a brief conversation about asking the directions. In one or two minutes, state in complete sentences: a) Where do you want to go? b) How to ask for help (directions)? c) How to get there?
Writing Part Directions: Read each sentence and choose the alternative that best completes it. #1: Montri, along with his friends, _____ from Chiang Mai to Bangkok at the end of the year. a) is planning to cycle b) are planning to cycle c) have been planning for cycling d) plans for cycling e) plan to cycle	**Writing task** Directions: In a paragraph, prepare a brief plan for your upcoming trip on the weekend.

Despite the aforementioned beneficial aspects, PBA has some limitations that should be taken into consideration. One obvious limitation is that PBA takes time and is energy-consuming to administer (Brown & Hudson, 1998). Another restriction is that it requires the teacher's previous experiences and knowledge to implement it as they lack sufficient knowledge to implement PBA and assess students (Kirmizi & Komec, 2016). To outweigh the advantages and transcend the limitations, proper and adequate professional development training in PBA practices should be provided.

To sum up, PBA refers to testing where test-takers are tested on what they can do in a target language in real-life situations. Moreover, it represents a set of strategies for assessing students' knowledge and skills through the performance of tasks that are meaningful and engaging. This PBA provides teachers with useful information about how well a student can apply knowledge in real-world situations, which goes beyond rote memorization of language rules. Simply put, students are required to perform the tasks that correspond to their real-world contexts and PBA allows a teacher to assess students as they perform actual or simulated real-world tasks.

A Call for the Implementation of PBA in a Thai Context

Previous research (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006) strongly demonstrated that the quality of teachers is one of the key factors that determine students' achievement as the teachers are positioned at the heart of the teaching and learning process that intends to bring about improved learning. Previous literature on assessment practices, however, indicated that assessment practices were problematic because of badly-prepared and inadequate training (Stiggins, 2002; Thong-Iam, 2017). Worse still, some teachers failed to align their practices with their learning objectives and had some misconceptions regarding assessment practices (Black & Wiliam, 1998). For instance, some teachers indirectly assessed students' speaking and listening skills through a paper-and-pencil test because it is simple to administer and tested on the national examination. From such practices, they can reaffirm that effective professional development on PBAs is necessary.

Richards and Farrell (2005) indicated that teacher professional development refers to training activities that focus directly on teachers' current duties and aim at improving teachers' understanding of particular knowledge, skills, and concepts in the hope that teachers can apply what they have learned to their practices in actual classrooms. To promote assessment practices among EFL teachers, some studies (e.g., Chinda, 2009; Koh, 2011; Thong-Iam, 2017) also examined the link between teacher assessment practices and teacher professional development and found that there is a positive link between them indicating that effective teacher professional development can result in effective teacher assessment practices.

Looking at a Thai context, despite the fact that PBAs have emerged over the past few decades aiming to support and increase students' performance, Thai EFL teachers' assessment practices remain limited to traditional methods focused on a paper-and-pencil testing due to the O-NET according to recent studies (Imsa-ard, 2020; Narathakoon et al., 2020). In addition, Imsa-ard (2020) asserted that teachers believe that teaching in accordance with the test format could help raise students' test scores, meaning that they were highly driven by the test. Worse still, Sinwongsuwat (2012, p. 76) affirms that "students' communicative abilities are still assessed by means of paper-and-pencil multiple-choice tests, particularly in large-scale school and university admission exams." Moreover, this finding also suggests that teachers' lack of sufficient and practical assessment knowledge is one of the major problems. Furthermore, Noom-Ura (2013) indicated that teachers needed professional development, particularly in instructional/pedagogical strategies for teaching and assessing English-language skills.

However, to date, there is scant research on the implementation of PBA for Thai EFL secondary school teachers despite some studies (e.g., Chinda, 2013, 2014) focusing on

university lecturers. Since teaching and learning English in secondary schools and teaching and learning English at tertiary level are not the same in terms of students' maturity, learning goals, and learning contexts, developing some potential guidelines for implementing PDA in secondary school levels is worthwhile.

General Guidelines to Implement PBA in Secondary School Classrooms

After teachers understand the characteristics of PBA, it is important for them to understand potential ways to create PBA for their students in classrooms. Generally speaking, there are five main steps of planning PBA for classroom units, which are adapted from Airasian (2000), Brualdi (1998), and Hilliard (2015).

1. Define the purposes of performance-based assessment.

It is necessary to establish a clearly defined purpose of the assessment. Teachers may need to ask themselves some key questions: (1) What skill or knowledge am I trying to assess? (2) What type of knowledge is assessed? (3) What should the students know? After having answered these questions, teachers can better select the scenario that best suits their assessment.

2. Design the scenario/theme.

To make the assessment authentic, teachers should select the scenario that is relevant to the defined purposes as well as students' life-life contexts. For instance, the teacher wants to assess speaking skills on how to give directions. In this case, the teacher should expect students to know particular language functions on how to give directions. To establish the scenario, the teacher might establish the theme of the "Amusement Park Navigation" where students are posited in the amusement park and they have to produce language to find the various places in the amusement park.

- ***Choose an activity***. In this stage, there are three major factors that teachers should take into account.
- ***Time constraints.*** Teachers should ask themselves how long this activity can last in the classroom session. This may help the teacher plan and select the appropriate activity within the time constraints.
- ***Availability of resources***. Teachers should ask themselves whether students have access to required resources or not. This aspect can cause the failure of the activity if the activity requires some resources (e.g., speakers, or certain learning materials) that are not available.
- ***Amount of data.*** How much information collected from the assessment practice is sufficient to make an informed decision about the student's performance. This aspect leads to the next stage which refers to setting up the criteria, meaning that what aspects or elements determine the success of students' performance. Also, this aspect refers to the purpose of the assessment in what teachers are looking for in judging students' performance.

Another important point to keep in mind is that not all hands-on activities can be considered as PBA (Wiggins, 1993). PBA requires students to demonstrate and apply their

knowledge and skills in the specified context to complete the task, and the teacher has to ensure that the students do not merely complete a task given by passively completing the task without any attempts to apply their knowledge and skills to do so.

There are a number of PBAs which allow students to perform meaningful and engaging tasks and demonstrate authentic learning. For example, teachers can have students conduct a presentation. This activity requires students to practice their teaching and reporting skills, and to learn how to persuade an audience using the target language. In addition to a presentation, teachers can have students create student portfolios which allow them to collect tasks or assignments over the semester. Self-reflection in the target language may be included which requires them to reflect and make notes of their learning growth. At the end of semester, teachers and students can see the students' progress. Furthermore, doing a project is another activity that is commonly used by many teachers. In this activity, students are required to apply what they have learned and skills by undertaking a project.

3. Establish the criteria and scoring rubric.

When the activity has been selected and designed, teachers need to define which aspects or elements determine the success of students' performance. These criteria may be drawn from the Basic Education Core Curriculum and pre-defined purposes or based on their own decisions. For instance, the indicator in the Basic Education Core Curriculum indicating "Use requests and give instructions and clarifications according to the situation" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 265) may be drawn on and partly adapted to be such a criterion for the activity as "Students will be able to give instructions in the given situation." Importantly, the number of criteria should be bounded and finite, as teachers may have some trouble observing every criteria if there are too many.

Since PBA does not have clear-cut right or wrong answers as is the case in such traditional assessments as standardized tests, PBA focuses on how successful the students are at completing the tasks. Importantly, the observable behaviors produced by the students are integral to PBA, and the student are required to demonstrate good performance which masters the underlying competence to perform the task (Fastré et al., 2010). To evaluate the success, moreover, scoring rubrics are crucial. According to Moskal (2000), scoring rubrics refer to descriptive scoring schemes or rating systems that aim at guiding the analysis and determining the processes or products of students' performance. Having scoring rubrics, teachers can define and differentiate each level of proficiency in each criterion. For instance, if the teacher wants to evaluate the aspect of "content delivery," the teacher may adopt such scales as "excellent," "proficient," "apprentice," and "needs for improvement."

It should be noted that there are two main types of scoring rubrics: (1) holistic rubrics and (2) analytic rubrics (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). First, holistic rubrics, or overall evaluation, are used to judge the overall quality and performance of the students. This type of the scoring rubric is useful when it is not practical to break down students' performance. Second, analytic rubrics are used to judge specific features of the ability. The decision on the types of scoring rubrics depends on the purpose of the assessment. To create and develop a scoring rubric, based on Brookhart (2013) and Brown and Abeywickrama (2019), there are four potential steps of developing scoring rubrics as follows:

- **Step 1: Define the construct or ability measured in the task.** In this step, teachers may consider the purpose of the assessment to help them establish the ability to be measured. For example, the teachers want to measure the speaking ability of students.
- **Step 2: Indicate observable behavior that demonstrates students' performance.** In this step, teachers specify the skills or behavior that they want to measure. For instance, in the speaking ability, teachers may specify such behavior as (1) pronunciation, (2) delivery, and (3) content.
- **Step 3: Specify levels of performance in each scale.** In this step, teachers describe each criterion at different levels of ability. For example, there are three levels: excellent, proficient, and apprentice.
- **Step 4: Write narrative descriptions for each criterion.** In this step, teachers have to describe what each criterion means using the descriptors. To illustrate, what does it mean by "excellent" and to what degree do students need to perform to reach this level.

Once teachers have finished developing the scoring rubric, the scoring rubric may look similar to the example shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Example of a scoring rubric

	Excellent	Proficient	Apprentice
Pronunciation	Description of pronunciation at excellent level	Description of pronunciation at proficient level	Description of pronunciation at apprentice level
Delivery	Description of delivery at excellent level	Description of delivery at proficient level	Description of delivery at apprentice level
Content	Description of content at excellent level	Description of content at proficient level	Description of content at apprentice level

Significantly, teachers should share those assessed criteria and scoring rubrics with the students before they complete the task or project, so that they know how they can improve themselves to meet the expected goal.

4. Assess students' performance

In this stage, teachers can assess students' performance based on the criteria and scoring rubrics so as to give feedback in the form of narrative report or numerical data. Moreover, teachers can have students assess themselves (self-assessment) or assess their peers (peer-assessment), which allows students to have the opportunity to reflect on their own work so that they can monitor their own learning progress as well.

Conclusion

It is undeniable that, in improving the students' English language proficiency, teachers play a pivotal role in raising students' performance. Despite a large number of efforts and incentives implemented through English language education policy, student English language

proficiency remains questionable. Although teachers, especially in terms of their qualities, are crucial in developing students' proficiency, previous literature reveals that there are a number of poorly trained teachers in classrooms. Moreover, a number of previous studies indicate that many teachers still focus on pencil-and-paper tests due to continuation of national high-stakes testing. Such practices can yield negative washback which has a negative impact on teaching and learning.

To avoid negative washback, PBA, which gathers students' performance over a period of time, is claimed to yield positive washback. When the PBA requires test-takers to perform particular tasks which are designed to measure their language skills presumably required in a real-life context, teachers can elevate and support students' English-language performance. However, previous pertinent literature indicates some problems in implementing PBA can occur when teachers lack the practical assessment knowledge and have insufficient support with effective training development programs. In light of this, this paper aims to provide a potential guideline for Thai EFL secondary school teachers to implement PBA in classrooms. Taken together, this guideline is hoped to provide some practical guidance for educators and teacher trainers to design effective training on PBA for secondary school teachers, and can be used to develop targeted interventions aimed at developing teachers' assessment knowledge on PBA.

The Author

Pariwat Imsa-ard is a lecturer of ELT at Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in ELT at Thammasat University. He holds M.A. in TESOL with merit from the University of York, UK. His research interests include language assessment, ELT Methodology, and teacher education. He can be reached at pariwat.i@ru.ac.th.

References

Airasian, P. W. (2000). *Assessment in the classroom: A concise approach*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Alderson, J. C., & Banerjee, J. (2001). Language testing and assessment (Part I). *Language teaching*, *34*, 213–236.

Bailey, K. M. (1998). *Learning about language assessment: Dilemmas, decisions, and directions*. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *5*, 7–74.

Borg, S. (2011). The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System*, *39*, 370–380.

Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2019). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices* (3rd ed.). Hoboken NJ: Pearson Education.

Brown, J. D., & Hudson, T. (1998). The alternatives in language assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*, *32*, 653–675.

Brualdi, A. (1998). *Implementing performance assessment in the classroom*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation.

Chinda, B. (2009). *Professional development in language testing and assessment: a case study of supporting change in assessment practice in in-service EFL teachers in Thailand* [Dissertation, University of Nottingham].

Chinda, B. (2013). Consideration in performance-based language assessment: Rating scales and rater training. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, *46*, 141–159.

Chinda, B. (2014). Teachers' reactions towards performance-based language assessment. *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, *48*, 57–88.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement. *Education policy analysis archives*, *8*, 1–44.

Dhanasobhon, S. (2006). *English language teaching dilemma in Thailand*. http://www.curriculumandinstruction.org/index.php?lay=show&ac=article&Id=539134523&Ntype=7.

Education First. (2020). *EF English proficiency index: A ranking of 100 countries and regions by English skills*. https://www.ef.com/wwen/epi/downloads/

Educational Testing Service. (2019). *TOEIC L&R 2018 report on test takers worldwide.* https://www.ets.org/s/toeic/pdf/2018-report-on-test-takers-worldwide.pdf.

Espinosa, L. F. (2015). Effective use of performance-based assessments to identify English knowledge and skills of EFL students in Ecuador. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *5*, 2441–2447.

Fastré, G. M. J., Van der Klink, M. R., & Van Merriënboer, J. J. (2010). The effects of performance-based assessment criteria on student performance and self-assessment skills. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*, *15*, 517–532.

Geringer, J. (2003). Reflections on professional development: Toward high-quality teaching and learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *84*, 373–380.

Griffith, W. I., & Lim, H. Y. (2012). Performance-based assessment: Rubrics, web 2.0 tools and language competencies. *MEXTESOL Journal*, *36*, 1–12.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1997). Washback, impact and validity: Ethical concerns. *Language Testing, 14*, 295–303.

Hanushek, E. A., & Rivkin, S. G. (2006). Teacher quality. *Handbook of the economics of education, 2*, 1051–1078.

Herman, J. L., Aschbacher, P. R., & Winters, L. (1992). *A practical guide to alternative assessment.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Hilliard, P. (2015). *Performance-based assessment: Reviewing the basics.* https://www.edutopia.org/.

Imsa-ard, P. (2020). Voices from Thai EFL teachers: Perceptions and beliefs towards the English test in the national examination in Thailand. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network, 13*, 269–287.

Inprasit, C. (2016). *Thai native teachers' experiences of using communicative language teaching in extended education schools* [Master's Thesis, Thammasat University].

Kaur, A., Young, D., & Kirkpatrick, R. (2016). English education policy in Thailand: Why the poor results? In R. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *English language education policy in Asia* (pp. 345–361). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Kirmizi, O., & Komec, F. (2016). An investigation of performance-based assessment at high schools. *Üniversitepark Bülten, 5*, 53–65.

Koh, K. H. (2011). Improving teachers' assessment literacy through professional development. *Teaching Education, 22*, 255–276.

Koné, K. (2015). *The impact of performance-based assessment on university ESL learners' motivation* [Master's thesis, Minnesota State University].

Lim, H-Y., & Griffith, W. I. (2011). Practice doesn't make perfect. *MEXTESOL Journal, 35*, 1–9.

Lynch, B. (2001). The ethical potential of alternative language assessment. In C. Elder, A. Brown, E. Grove, K. Hill, N. Iwashita, T. Lumley, T. McNamara, & K. O'Loughlin (Eds.), *Experimenting with uncertainty: Essays in honour of Alan Davies* (pp. 228–239). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

McNamara, T. F. (1996). *Measuring second language performance*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

McTighe, J., & Ferrara, S. (2011). *Performance-based assessment in the classroom*. https://www.jaymctighe.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/Performance-Based-Assessment-in-the-Classroom.pdf

Messick, S. (1996). Validity and washback in language testing. *Language Testing, 13*, 241–256.

Ministry of Education. (2009). *The Basic Education Core Curriculum B.E. 2551 (A.D. 2008)*. http://academic.obec.go.th/images/document/1525235513_d_1.pdf

Moskal, B. M. (2000). *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1086&context=pare

Narathakoon, A., Sapsirin, S., & Subphadoongchone, P. (2020). Beliefs and classroom assessment practices of English teachers in primary schools in Thailand. *International Journal of Instruction, 13*, 137–156.

Noom-Ura, S. (2013). English-teaching problems in Thailand and Thai teachers' professional development needs. *English Language Teaching*, *6*, 139–147.

Norris, J. M., Norris, J. M., Brown, J. D., Hudson, T., & Yoshioka, J. (1998). *Designing second language performance assessments* (No. 18). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.

O'Malley J. M., & Valdez Pierce, L. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: Practical approaches for teachers*. London, UK: Longman.

Phongsirikul, M. (2018). Traditional and alternative assessments in ELT: Students' and teachers' perceptions. *REFLections*, *25*, 61–84.

Pierce, L. V. (2002). Performance-based assessment: Promoting achievement for English language learners. *Clearing House on Languages and Linguistics*, *26*, 1–3.

Prapphal, K. (2008). Issues and trends in language testing and assessment in Thailand. *Language Testing*, *25*, 127–143.

Quyên, V. P. (2019). Performance-based assessment: Implications to English language classrooms. In P. H. Yen & T. V. S. Nguyen (Eds.), *Using alternative assessment to improve EFL learners' learning achievement: From theory to practice* (pp. 63–79). Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers.

Richards, J. C. (2006). *Communicative language teaching today*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Richards, J., & Farrell, T. (2005). *Professional development for language teachers: Strategies for teacher learning*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Rios, F. A. (Ed.). (1996). *Teacher thinking in cultural contexts*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Sinwongsuwat, K. (2012). Rethinking assessment of Thai EFL learners' speaking skills. *Language Testing in Asia*, *2*, 75–85.

Stiggins, R. J. (2002). Assessment crisis: The absence of assessment for learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *83*, 758–765.

Stoynoff, S., & Coombe, C. (2012). Professional development in language assessment. In C. Coombe, P. Davidson, B. O'Sullivan, & S. Stoynoff (Eds.), *The Cambridge guide to second language assessment* (pp. 122–129). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Thong-Iam, N. (2017). *The impact of language assessment literacy training on EFL university lecturers' language assessment literacy, efficacy and practice of student self-assessment* [Dissertation, Chulalongkorn University].

Waluyo, B. (2019). Examining Thai first-year university students' English proficiency on CEFR levels. *The New English Teacher*, *13*, 51–71.

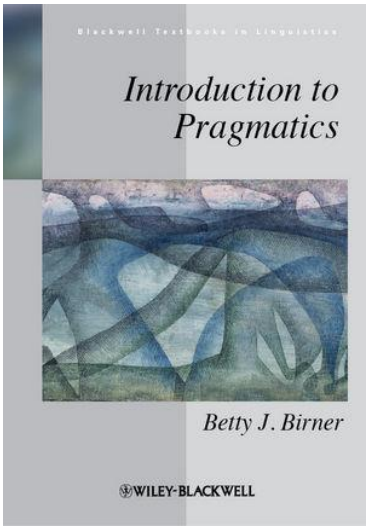
Wiggins, G. (1990). The case for authentic assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, *2*, 1-3.

Wiggins, G. (1993). Assessment, authenticity, context, and validity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *75*, 200214.

Wigglesworth, G., & Foster, P. (2008, April). *Measuring accuracy in second language performance*. Paper presented at the TESOL Convention. New York City, New York.

Book Review

Birner, B. J. (2013). *Introduction to Pragmatics.* Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.



Pattrawut Charoenroop
National Institute of Development Administration

Betty J. Birner is an American linguist whose expertise is in pragmatics and discourse analysis. Her early publications, which appeared in the 90s, explore sentence interpretations with different word orders in English utterances with constituent inversion. Her later publications include some influential works, particularly *Introduction to Pragmatics* (2013).

This text is especially recommended for graduate students in linguistics as well as for lecturers who teach pragmatics. The content is appropriate for people with different levels of backgrounds in this field. The first three chapters provide theoretical foundations in pragmatics. Readers are taught fundamental concepts in preparation for more in-depth study. Chapters three through six discuss central topics in pragmatics, including deixis, implicature, presupposition, and speech act. Chapters seven to nine show how information is packaged into utterances. These areas of study were the focus of Birner's research during the 90s, and this content distinguishes her book from others in the field. The final chapter does not only contain the conclusion of the nine chapters, but also provides recommendations for some future applications of pragmatics. The book explains difficult concepts carefully and gives almost 400 example utterances. Readers unfamiliar with the concepts in the work will benefit from its many examples. At the end of each chapter a summary is given, as well as exercises and discussion questions for self-study. The author's expertise in the areas of information structure and inferential relations is evident in her clear, coherent style. Following are content summaries of the ten chapters.

Chapter 1 (Defining Pragmatics) distinguishes two types of meaning: (i) the literal meaning, and (ii) the intended meaning. Having made this distinction, the author is then able to clearly define pragmatics. Pragmatic meaning, as opposed to semantic meaning, is non-literal, context-dependent, inferential and/or not truth-conditional. In other words, pragmatic meaning is not found in dictionaries, and varies with context. Later, the author presents the domains of semantics and pragmatics to briefly introduce key concepts of these linguistic subfields.

Chapter 2 (Gricean Implicature) presents an overview of Grice's theory of implicature. The chapter begins with the Cooperative Principles (Grice, 1975, p. 45). The author discusses four ways the speaker can behave regarding these principles: (i) observing, (ii) violating, (iii) flouting, and (iv) opting out. As a result of the first three behaviors, the

conversational implicature arises, which is context-dependent and non-truth-conditional. The overview of Gricean Implicature is orderly and comprehensive.

Chapter 3 (Later Approaches to Implicature) discusses two predominant approaches: Neo-Gricean Theory and Relevance Theory. These theories aim at reducing the number of Gricean Maxims to fewer principles. Regarding Neo-Gricean Theory, the author presents two simplified frameworks: (i) Horn's (1984) Q- and R-principles and (ii) Levison's (2000) Q-, I-, and M-implicatures, in an effort to minimize and reorganize Grice's four maxims. The Relevance Theory specifically focuses on the maxim of relation. There are three levels of meaning pertaining to the Relevance Theory: (i) semantic meaning, (ii) explicature, and (iii) implicature. The end of the chapter includes discussion of four differences between the two approaches.

Chapter 4 (Reference) focuses on various phenomena in relation to referring expressions. The author defines such expressions as "a linguistic form that the speaker uses with intention that corresponds to some discourse entity and brings that discourse entity to mind for the addressee" (p. 111). In the following section, **deixis**—another aspect of linguistic expression—is explained in detail. Four types of deixis are illustrated: personal, spatial, temporal, and discourse. Three dichotomies of references are discussed: definiteness versus indefiniteness, anaphoric versus cataphoric, and referential versus attributive.

Chapter 5 (Presupposition) presents an overall view of presupposition, which is still inconclusive. It is unclear whether presupposition is a semantic or pragmatic phenomenon. The author discusses the negation, a property of presupposition. This property distinguishes the presupposition from the entailment. Included among many expressions and constructions discussed in the book that trigger the presupposition are (i) definite descriptions, (ii) factive verbs, (iii) change-of-state verbs, (iv) iteratives, and (v) clefts. Readers may find the discussion of these expressions and constructions quite technical, but many examples and detailed explanations help the reader follow the discussion. Finally, the author contends that the presuppositional phenomenon requires not only semantic but also pragmatic analysis.

Chapter 6 (Speech Act) explains the holistic view of the speech act theory. Firstly, the author defines performative utterances, which differ from constative utterances in that they are not truth-evaluation utterances. There are rules governing speech acts (i.e., propositional-content, preparatory, sincerity, and essential) which determine whether they are felicitous or infelicitous. The author elaborates three types of acts: (i) locutionary (the act of saying something), (ii) illocutionary (the act in saying something; speaker-based), and (iii) perlocutionary (hearer-based). The mismatch between linguistic forms (i.e., declarative, affirmative, and exclamative) and illocutionary acts produces indirect speech acts. Toward the end of the chapter, concepts of "face" and "politeness" are introduced.

Chapter 7 (Information Structure) begins with an assumption that propositional content can be expressed by different syntactic structures. This assumption leads to further discussion including topic and focus, open propositions, discourse- and hearer-status, information structure and constituent order (i.e., preposing, postposing, argument reversal), and functional compositionality. The content of this chapter was the result of her own research studies in 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996 on information status, word orders, and English inversion. It is particularly in-depth.

Chapter 8 (Inferential Relations) continues the discussion begun in chapter 7 by affirming that pragmatics involves inference, which can be treated as intuitive and obvious. Most inferences are not simple and can easily be falsifiable. The author explains inferential relations at two levels: (i) constituent and (ii) propositional. The former includes inference and information structure, and a taxonomy of inferential relations, whereas the latter comprises inference and coherence and coherence and syntax. The explanation of inferential relations in smaller units prepares readers to understand inferential relations in larger units.

Chapter 9 (Dynamic Semantics and the Representation of Discourse) expands the content in chapter 8 by focusing on problems related to reference assignment. The author contends that semantic analysis without pragmatic analysis, or vice versa, can be insufficient. In fact, there is the boundary that semantics and pragmatics share. After elaborating on the theoretical background, the author compares static and dynamic approaches to meaning. One dynamic theory called Discourse Representation Theory (DRT) is discussed in depth with numerous examples of utterances and sets of discourse references and conditions. The author sets the scope of DRT and determines the domain of pragmatics before closing the chapter.

Chapter 10 (Conclusion) revisits pragmatic theories, pragmatic phenomena, and information structures discussed in the previous chapters. In this tenth chapter, the author admits that the domains of semantics and pragmatics overlap and interact. In addition, pragmatics is relatively new compared to other subfields, so more research in pragmatics is needed. The author describes concrete applications of pragmatics to the real world, such as pragmatics and artificial intelligence, pragmatics in advertising, and pragmatics in machine translation. The author also describes the relationship of pragmatics to other subfields of linguistics such as phonology, syntax, and semantics, and elaborates the future of pragmatics within linguistic theory.

As well as a recommended textbook for learning and teaching, *Introduction to Pragmatics* also familiarizes readers with theories and phenomena in pragmatics, as well as information structures. With this book, readers can choose a pragmatics-related topic and explore it extensively. Therefore, *Introduction to Pragmatics* is an excellent resource for students, lecturers, and researchers alike.

Reference

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics, 3: Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). New York, NY: Academic Press.

The Author

Pattrawut Charoenroop received a PhD in English as an International Language from Chulalongkorn University after earning an MA in TESOL from the University of New South Wales. In 2015, he was awarded a Fulbright Junior Research Scholarship to conduct his doctoral research in interlanguage pragmatics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At present, he is a lecturer at the Graduate School of Language and Communication, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA). His research interests include pragmatics in language teaching, intercultural pragmatics, cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, and professional development for English language teachers.

NIDA Journal of Language and Communication Volume 25 - Issue 38 - July - December 2020

NIDA

WISDOM *for* Change

GSLC

Graduate School of Language and Communication

http://lc.nida.ac.th