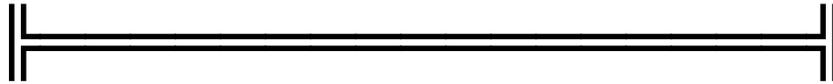


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“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ... ”

Hosea 4:6

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DEDICATION



"It is the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."

- *Charles Darwin*



TexTESOL IV Journal of Assessment and Teaching of English Language Learners dedicates this first volume to those teachers and researchers who have ventured out, tried new things, and were willing to return and write about it.

TexTESOL IV
Journal of Assessment & Teaching of English Language Learners

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By Frits Ahlefeldt

TEXTESOL IV PUBLICATIONS – BUILDING GLOBAL BRIDGES BETWEEN EDUCATORS, RESEARCHERS, AND CLASSROOMS

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“I” POEMS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LEARNERS: VOICES OF POETS AND STORIES TO TELL

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Abstract

Poetry writing as a teaching method provides a meaningful way of teaching English to English Language Learners, because student voices can be presented in the poems (see Hanauer, 2012). Writing and sharing poems, especially “I” poems, can be a good way to engage students in a follow-up conversation, exchanging reflective and critical thoughts on identities and cultures. “I” poems are poems that use first point of views, which allows students to express their own voices, and other students to relate well to such voices (Kucan, 2007). Additionally, through writing and sharing poems of personal memories with others, students often open up to one another and to form a mutually supportive group in the class, which is important in teaching ELL students (see Purdy, 2008; Roessingh, 2011; and Xuemei, 2004).

This paper will describe a poetry workshop for teachers enrolled in a graduate course in which a model “I” poem was used for the participants to imitate in creating their own “I” poems. Imitation of a poem is an accepted teaching method in both K-12 schools (e.g., Dunning & Stafford, 1992; Koch, 1980, 1990) and in higher education (e.g., Ruzich, 1999; VonBergen, 2001), because using a model poem will familiarize students with the structure and theme of poetry and help to lower the anxiety to the genre (Tompkins, 2008). With the combination of cultural heritage research, a poetry workshop can facilitate students to reflect on their own cultures and become more aware of others’. Additionally, this paper will share the excerpts from the poems and reflections that teachers wrote in a poetry workshop as part of a graduate teaching method class. The teachers participated in the workshop to understand what their K-12 students experience as they write a poem and therefore to be able to help them in planning their writing instruction (Morgan, 2010 Watts & Thompson, 2008). Excerpts from the teacher poems and teacher comments are shared as part of the discussions, to show how participation in this workshop will benefit

teachers in teaching poetry-writing to ELLs.

Keywords: model poem, poetry workshop, ELL, student voice, multicultural awareness

Introduction

In U.S. classrooms, teachers face increasingly more linguistic and cultural diversity as the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) increases in schools. Research calls for the needs of recognizing the culture and identity of ELLs in the classrooms (Purdy, 2008; Roessingh, 2011, 2012). Xuemei and Girvan (2004) suggest that formation of intercultural community in ESL settings will enrich students' learning experiences, and new identity and new cultural space should be created in the community.

Creating an intercultural community in the classrooms is important to support ELLs learning. One of the key psychological factors hindering second language acquisition in a classroom is ELL students' anxiety toward the language learning, or second language anxiety (Pappamihiel, 2002; Strand, et al., 2011; Woodrow, 2006). According to Woodrow (2006), ELL students often choose to be shy away from class activities for reasons including a lack of teacher engagement or an affective classroom environment. Evidence indicates that language learning anxiety may lead students to selective mutism, a type of anxiety disorder that stops student from being engaged in classroom discourses (see Mayworm, et al., 2015).

There are attempts to support ELL students by acknowledging their cultures, with creative endeavors, from creating "graphic stories or comics" on students' accounts of their families' journey of immigration (Danzak, 2011) to making a "dual-language book" using objects of cultural and personal relevance ELLs brought from home to generate stories of families (Roessingh, 2011). Scullin and Baron (2013) suggest using "freewriting notebooks" to lower the writing anxiety of ELL students.

Aligned with such efforts, we will describe a poetry workshop that uses a model "I" poem as a way of acknowledging cultural diversity and creating an affective, supportive environment for ELL students. We intend to share this workshop model, believing that both teachers and ELL students can benefit from this model. Additionally, excerpts from the poems and reflections that the teachers wrote in the poetry workshop will be shared and discussed. The teachers participated in the poetry workshop on the premise that by writing poems, they would go through the same experience as their own students would and therefore would be better equipped to teach their students poetry writing (Watts & Thompson, 2008). Morgan (2010) found that pre-service teachers in a writing method course identified having similar experience to that of their future students as one of the best specific knowledge they gained

from the course. In conclusion, we suggest that teachers can choose to use the same approach with their students to encourage them to express their voices in poetry writing by forming an affective, supportive classroom.

Literature Review

Using model poems, imitating the style of a poet while creating one’s own original work, has been encouraged, both in K-12 schools (e.g., Dunning & Stafford, 1992; Koch, 1980, 1990) and in higher education (e.g., Ruzich, 1999; VonBergen, 2001), to teach students how to write poetry and help them lower their anxiety about the genre. Tompkins (2008) supports using a model poem to familiarize students with the structure and theme of poetry (Tompkins, 2008).

Writing and sharing poems, especially “I” poems, can be a good way to engage in conversation. “I” poems have been used as an icebreaker to introduce oneself or as a book response to deepen literary understanding in classrooms (Kucan, 2007). “I” poems are referred to the poems that are written in the first-person point of view, with a relatively easy format or rhymes for students to follow.

“I” poems can be powerful because the students may express their own voices from the first-person point of view and other students can relate well to such voices (Kucan, 2007). It is well-accepted approach of using first person narratives as tools to express individual voices in both education and research because the authors can tell stories based on their lived experiences (e.g. Barkhuizen, 2016; Mazzoli Smith, 2014; Pomerantz & Kearney, 2012).

Poetry writing, using “I” poems as a model poem, is a way of encouraging English Language Learners with diverse backgrounds to reflect on cultural practices including their own, and to express their thoughts. Nieto (2002) proposed for multicultural education in schools: to use students’ diverse experiences as a basis and resource for their learning; to reflect on and assess their own cultures and those of others; and ultimately, to help students develop their own perspective and to construct the knowledge of multiculturalism. Poetry writing as a classroom methodology may provide a meaningful way of teaching English to ELLs as student voices can be presented (See Hanauer, 2012). Therefore, through this kind of exercise, learner autonomy can be promoted as students reflect on their developing identities and their sense of who they are and how they relate to the world (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

Procedure

Setting and Participants

A workshop using a model “I” poem was placed in a teacher education course that emphasizes the role of culture in English language learning, aligned to the standards of TESOL International Association (2010). The

participants of the workshop were novice teachers with 1 to 5 years of teaching experience, who were enrolled in a language and literacy teaching method class, in which the teachers were encouraged to write poetry using a model poem and to understand what their students experience in the writing process.

Prior to beginning writing a poem, the participants conduct research on their own ethnicity, culture, and family history. Methods of conducting such research include, but are not limited to, using the Internet, or books, and formal or informal interviews with family or community members. Based on what they learned from the research, the participants were then told to write a poem parallel to the model poem provided to them.

The poems and reflections shared in this paper are from the workshops in different sections of the course taught in different semesters. We as the professors of the sections reviewed the poems and reflections in an effort to find feedback on our own teaching. We chose the poems in this paper based on the themes emerged as we examined the poems.

Model "I" Poem

The following poem by George Ella Lyon (1999) was used in the poetry workshop as a model "I" poem. The participants imitated the style of the poem as they wrote their own personal poems. A poetry workshop may use a different model poem.

Where I'm From
By George Ella Lyon (1999)

I am from clothespins,
from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
I am from the dirt under the back porch.
(Black, glistening,
it tasted like beets.)
I am from the forsythia bush
the Dutch elm
whose long-gone limbs I remember
as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
from Imogene and Alafair.
I'm from the know-it-alls
and the pass-it-ons,
from Perk up! and Pipe down!
I'm from He restoreth my soul
with a cotton ball lamb

and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
fried corn and strong coffee.
From the finger my grandfather lost
to the auger,
the eye my father shut to keep his sight.
Under my bed was a dress box
spilling old pictures,
a sift of lost faces
to drift beneath my dreams.
I am from those moments--
snapped before I budded --
leaf-fall from the family tree.

Poetry Workshop

In the poetry workshop, the instructor first read aloud the poem written by George Ella Lyon to the participants, handed out a copy of it to each of them, and simply asked them to write a poem following the model poem. The participants were also informed of what the poet did when she first created the poem, e.g., "I decided to see what would happen if I made my own where-I'm-from lists, which I did, in a black and white speckled composition book. I edited them into a poem" (Lyon, 2009).

The participants shared their poems orally with the whole group. In addition, they were asked to respond to other people's poems in writing. This procedure can occur in pairs, a small group, or a large group, depending on the class size or more importantly, the level of comfort the participants feel in sharing their personal or emotional piece with others. As the conclusion to the writing process, the instructor selected one part from each participant's poem and combines them into one class poem that contributed to creating a sense of community in the class. This process was done in the hope that the participants learn that, despite the differences students bring to the classroom, they could contribute to the learning community. After the workshop, the participants wrote their reflections.

Findings

Sense of Supportive Community

As we examined the poems, we found that there were recurring themes in their poems, including childhood memories, gender, identity, family, history, and religion. Some topics, such as religion or political events, are often considered subjects too sensitive for class discussions. However, the participants in the workshop felt safe enough to share their poems on those topics.

In the following poems, the teachers in the workshop wrote their childhood memories and family values and dynamics in which they grew up. The poems illustrate different family lives and traditions, but they share the common theme of family to which readers can relate.

...

I am from hand-me downs, cut it in half, buy one get one free

I am from organized chaos, a house of commotion

...

I am from home cooked meals, cross country camping trips, visit to museums, singing in the car

I am from traditions, laughter, sorrow, joy, love and family bonds

I am from a creative mother, a gentle father, five sisters and two brothers

Another teacher wrote,

I am from roast chicken dinners

From divorced parents, but lots of hugs and kisses.

I am from Chanukah hunts and homemade latkes

Warm and topped with applesauce

I am from Christmas trees and aromatic candles,

Glowing in the winter quiet

I am from plane trips across the pond,

From “to-may-to,” not “to-mah-to”

...

The following poem is also about the author’s childhood memories, especially about how she was brought up by the women in her family and how these memories influenced who she is as a woman.

I am from the staircase

That cradled me as I cried when my mom left every morning.

I am from the housecoat

Blue cotton and soft slippers my grandmother wore

I am scented with the smell of bacon

Greasy from the fried chicken

Sticky from the dripping ice pops

Cleaned off by the swipe of my pink washcloth ...

I am as strong as a woman

As the baritone of my grandmother’s voice...

As she shared this poem with the rest of the class, the others were able to understand her voice as a woman. Most of the participants were women and many were working mothers. Even the male teachers had memories of their mothers and grandmothers who had influenced them a great deal in becoming who they were.

As one teacher commented to another, “I connected to your poem because some of your memories and dreams are similar to mine.... I think that poetry has the ability to help us call up memories to become more prolific”, sharing poems helped the class connect to one another in a deeper way. We believe that by writing and sharing poems of personal memories and family history with others, the participants in the workshop were able to open up to one another and feel a sense of community in the class.

Building a supportive classroom community has been argued to be effective to teach students with linguistic and cultural diversity (e.g. Iddings, 2005; Williamson, 2012). Teacher should be reminded that learning language is a social practice that involves both student-to-student and teacher-to-student interactions (Ortactepe, 2014; Toth, & Davin, 2016). Christian and Bloome (2004) explain how the social dynamics impact learning and why ELL students are often marginalized in literacy practices. ELL students are often positioned lower within the classroom community, partially because of the cultural and linguistic differences from their non-ELL peers. Klingner and Vaughn (2000) pointed out the cooperative learning increases meaningful communication and lower the anxiety in the culturally and linguistically diverse classroom.

By first handedly experiencing the sense of belonging or understanding of others, teachers can be aware of the importance of forming the supportive community in their own classrooms.

Aesthetic Experience of Poetry Writing

The next poem describes childhood memories, but in connection with a historic moment.

I am from marches and posters
“Impeach Nixon Now” and
“Veterans Against the War.”
(When Daddy wore his ugly green jacket and hat)
I am from my stuffed gray elephant named Watergate.

In this poem, the author was able to capture historical moments using the personal voice, sometimes looking at events as if through an innocent child’s eyes, so that readers do not necessarily feel any gap between their political positions and those of the poet.

Religion is another common theme to be found in the teachers’ poems. The author of the next poem powerfully describes the religion on which her

culture is based and how her people survived throughout the history and managed to pass the tradition on through the generations.

I am from ancient scrolls
Of parchment yellowed by age
Black inked letters
Dance across the pages
Alive today as
They were then
...
I come from every land you are from
I have been there
I have endured the tortures of the evil
The vile curses of villains
Who sought to destroy
All that I have stood for
...
A torch of pride
A large and growing nation
To pass on
For the future

In this poem, the teacher links what her ancestors had to go through to the future of the country. Her poem shows a sense of connecting the past to the future. The same is true of other poems shared in the workshop, which included hopes and visions for the future based on what they have experienced. Other participants were able to empathize with the collective hardship the author's ancestors had to go through, because American history has been made by people who came seeking religious freedom. As one teacher who responded to the following poem remarked, "It expresses the pain and pride of our heritage."

Writing and sharing this kind of poems supports the notion of art as an open space where students can exercise real freedom of speech (Greene, 1991, 1995). Dewey (2005) regarded artistic experience as an important part of a holistic learning experience that no other type of experience could replace; art has its own form and procedures, which makes students use creativity and imagination and enables them to tolerate uncertainty. Subscribing to Dewey's ideas, Greene (1991) notes, aesthetic experience allows people to express their beliefs without the fear of critiques or negative reactions that would occur under normal circumstances. Through the arts, people can share their thoughts free from restraints, because the creative process of art tolerates uncertainty and welcomes diversity. Kucan (2007) agrees that poetry writing is aesthetic experience, which allows students

experience things from a different perspective. Kucan continues to argue that asking students to write from a different perspective helps them to transform their way of looking or thinking (Tompkins & McGee, 1993 in Kucan 2007). As the teachers in this poetry workshop wrote the poems and shared them with one another, they felt safe enough to speak out because the class was willing to accept other people's perspectives or experiences. We believe that teachers can use this kind of writing and sharing experience as a way of encouraging students to open to other people's perspectives, accepting poems as part of artistic experience.

Multicultural Awareness

We have found that the poems that the teachers wrote present culture as much more than costumes or festivals. As Bennet (2007) points out, culture is broad enough to include concepts of time, past and future, beauty, and good and bad. The topics in such poems seem to be inspired by the language and the themes of Lyon's poem, but to be also affected by the students' cultural heritage research. The following poem shows how the author's past is integral part of who she is.

I am not from here, but I am from there
I still think and I hope I cannot forget
...
I am from flavors and different tastes
I am from coffee, the unique, it is the best
I am from salsa and cumbia dance
I am from vallenato and tropical trends
...
I am from my dreams, and I dream everyday
I am from this world, and that is okay !!!

The next poem recounts how the author was brought up with a scarcity of goods but with an abundance of everything else, even religions.

I'm from rice and curry,
From hot summer walks with no shoes
So that my feet burned.
I'm from mangos, guavas and papayas
And hating apples because I ate too many.
I'm from being impatience and procrastination.
I'm from a melting pot of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

In this poem, contradictions co-exist: different types of personality in one person as well as four different religions in the same neighborhood. Where she came from, it was natural to see people from different religions living

together, and she never witnessed any conflicts between them. She was adopted by a Caucasian family but was able to develop an identity as an Indian American. Hence, she strongly believes that embracing differences could happen in this country, once we understand where others came from and how they have contributed to this country. "I'm an Indian. I'm not white, Anglo-American. I think the white people's culture is dominating [in this country] but if you actually look around, there are so many influences but within a classroom setting, those influences aren't acknowledged....I think that it could be stopped if people knew something about their [other people's] culture. I think multicultural, or diversity education is very important in this sense."

The following poem deals with many of the themes in other poems: family, religion, personality, gender, food, and clothes. It also encompasses most of what the teachers learned through the writing process.

I am from espresso and shamrocks.
I have dark olive skin but long golden locks.
I am Sunday mass and soda bread, dry,
But I am also Independency Day and hot apple pie.

I am roasted peppers and tomatoes jarred for the year.
I am the St. Patrick's Day Parade that brings lots of cheer.
Dad's side is from Italy, Mom from Ireland.
I am a little of both and plenty American.

I am strong and bold, yet timid and shy.
I am a person where many contradictions apply.
I am feisty, impatient, nurturing, and sweet.
I am a teacher, a wife, a friend, another face on the street.

A woman of thirty; not quite old,
Yet plenty of adventures and many stories told.
Proud of who I am and where I have been.

Overall, what the teachers learned from writing and sharing where-I'm-from poems is that a person cannot be defined by one identity or one culture; we all have contradicting personalities and attributes within ourselves, and each of us is an amalgamation of the different people and cultures which we have encountered in our lifetime. As Nieto (2002) and Bennet (2007) argued, by reflecting on their own cultures and those of others, we can develop one's own perspective and construct the knowledge of multiculturalism.

Understanding other cultures begin from reflecting one's own. We believe after experiencing such reflection process, teachers will be able to

acknowledge student identities and cultures in their classrooms.

Reflections of Teachers

Teacher reflections on their poems, their peers’ poems, and writing and sharing experiences support the themes we have discussed in the previous sections. They discussed self-identities (who I am), connecting with peers, and acceptance of different cultures.

One teacher reflects, “Doing this activity myself was a great personal experience because it reminded me of all the interesting and unique qualities that make me ME. Some of it won’t make sense to others, but I think that’s what makes it special.” Another wrote, “As I was writing mine, I really was able to reflect on myself and where I come from... the words I chose were what came from my heart. They are the things I find most important about myself. They are the things I am the most proud of.” Another teacher participant agreed, “In my opinion it is a great way to share some background information about yourself and also a great way to find out about others by sharing out loud.”

We believe that the experiences that the teachers had in the workshop are close to what Nieto (2002) proposed for multicultural education in schools: to use students’ diverse experiences as a basis and resource for their learning; to reflect on and assess their own cultures and those of others; and ultimately, to help students develop their own perspective and to construct the knowledge of multiculturalism. By sharing their cultural heritages reflected in the poems, the teachers can become more open to multiculturalism (see Ruzich, 1999) and obtain some level of multicultural awareness. Their first hand experiences will eventually help them in teaching their ELLL students. A number of teacher reflections echoed in this idea:

This activity is something I would even consider doing with students in an ESL classroom. Specifically I would have students write about their culture and where they came from. This would be a great way to incorporate each and every student’s culture into the class that way they all feel welcomed.

I could see how ELL students like to do this. They are able to write about themselves in a way that comes from within. It is almost like a reflection of yourself. In order to assign this, you should write one of your own so you are familiar with the thought process and emotion that comes with it.

This month I will be beginning a unit on poetry along with the 3rd grade bilingual teacher....It will be fun and thanks to this course, I am able to feel more comfortable instead of feeling it [teaching poetry] being a chore!

Conclusion

Imitating poems is an accepted writing practice in schools (Tompkins,

2008). As Dewey (2005) explained, writing poetry is an aesthetic experience, providing an opportunity for self-expression and appreciation by others (also see Jackson, 1998). We believe that using this less-intimidating type of writing in a safe, supportive learning place, participants can overcome the anxiety of writing a poem, or the dislike of the poetry genre itself, and realize that they could be poets.

Augsburg (1998) argued that by writing, teachers become better able to understand their students' experience. Teachers are expected to write in the hope that they would model for their students. It is well argued that it is important for teachers to write regularly. Teachers who write can help students in writing because they understand the hardships and the rewards of writing and, hence, can guide their student through the process of writing by sharing their experiences, teaching the value of writing, offering useful feedback, and providing a supportive community for writers (Augsburger, 1998).

We shared a poetry workshop using a model "I" poem in this paper, believing that what the teachers experienced in the poetry workshop can be a model to adopt to teach ELL students. As previously discussed, writing and sharing "I" poems is a good way to promote self-reflections and engage students in a meaningful conversation. Active meaning-making happens as students write a poem as voices can be expressed and heard in the poem (see Hanauer, 2012). Integrating opportunities for personal narratives such as "I" poems into second language learning facilitates student participation (Matthews-DeNatale, 2008). This workshop model can promote real world applicability by making connections between the students' lives and poetry writing. The model can be adapted to address different needs and English proficiency levels of students.

Similar to what teachers wrote in the poetry workshop shared in this paper, students can write and share poems of personal memories and family or cultural history with others, and through this process they can open up to one another and form a safe, mutually supportive community in the classroom. Forming such a community is important for ELL students' success in schools (see Purdy, 2008; Roessingh, 2011, 2012; Xuemei, 2004) and lower language learning anxiety (Pappamihel, 2002; Woodrow, 2006).

We also want to add that creating and telling personal stories in poems can be a powerful way to address the complex issues in multicultural education that has been emphasized in teaching English to ELLs (TESOL, 2010). After all, questions of "Whose story is worth telling?" "What kind of story will be told?" and "How will the story be told?" have been at the core of multicultural education (Tiedt & Tiedt, 2005), because its goal is to ensure that individual voices and different perspectives are heard. Poetry writing can be a powerful tool to express one's voice and to allow others to make connections.

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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE CLASSROOM? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

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Abstract

Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms is a free app that compares ten common behaviors in university classrooms around the globe. These include day-to-day situations such as coming to class late, working in groups, using electronics, and showing respect to the professor. The behaviors in 24 countries around the world are compared with those in the USA. The app provides an overview of both the similarities between the two countries as well as the culture bumps. This paper will discuss some informal teacher observations about using the app to encourage students to assume responsibility for classroom management, to create a supportive classroom ethos and to generate a meaningful connection between classroom behaviors and cultures. This connection ultimately allows students to understand the concept of cultural relativism at a conscious, personal level. In addition, the app offers a new level of understanding to teachers who are from another culture or whose students are from other cultures. This paper also discusses culture bump theory and protocols that underpin the app.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, ESL/EFL classroom management, cultural adjustment, implicit cultural bias, global communication

Introduction

Just come on in Eduardo. You don't need to knock! (Doesn't he realize he's interrupting the class by knocking?)
Speak up Chibomi. We can't hear you! (How many times do I have to tell her?)

Rationale

Most ESL/EFL teachers have encountered these and thousands of other small differences in expected classroom behavior. These differences can be irritating, quaint, amusing or interesting - depending on the individual teacher. These small irregularities in behaviors or culture bumps are ubiquitous in the classroom, but receive scant attention in teacher training. McGroarty (1993) explained that their presence is understandable given the fact that the different expectations that international students bring to the USA and other host countries can cause serious communication problems between host and student. Block (2007) reiterated that individuals moving across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in a new socio-cultural environment, find that their sense of identity is destabilized and struggle to find a balance. In recognition of these differences, teachers frequently provide a general idea of their expectations at the beginning of the semester, but rarely create an opportunity for students to express their expectations. In fact, few students are aware of the pervasiveness of their expectations. And it is only when the differing expectations conflict that some awareness – usually tinged with bias – emerges on the part of students and many teachers. Robinson (1991) uses the term academic culture shock to describe the phenomenon of teachers and students having such vast differences in expectations. He points out that it results from students being conscious that they are learning a target language while unconsciously continuing to operate as though they were in their native academic culture. Furthermore, teachers need to have a “visceral as well as rational knowledge” of both their own and their students’ academic cultures. He notes that many cross cultural activities such as Bafa Bafa and area studies can be helpful, but they fall short of the “visceral” knowledge needed. Indeed, Hismaoglu (2011) found that the majority of ESL/EFL classes concentrate on promoting linguistic abilities to the detriment of intercultural, communicative competence. This is true in spite of his study confirming that intercultural, interactive formal instruction is the “key to successful and powerful communicators in the target language” (p. 816). This need for second culture learning is further underscored by Kramersch (1993) who says:

Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill, tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It is

always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them. (p. 1)

Many ESL teachers agree wholeheartedly with Kramsch, but the reality remains that teachers must focus on the linguistic skills – which are conveniently presented in innumerable textbooks and auxiliary materials. While the ESL grammar, writing, reading, or speaking/listening texts may have cultural information interspersed in their contents, the fact remains that there are comparatively few intercultural communication series, textbooks or auxiliary materials available to support the teacher in intercultural, interactive formal instruction. Mizne (1997) suggests that precisely because culture is frequently taught as an “add-on” in ESL classes, there has been little interest in developing high-quality teaching materials. An exception to the rule can be found in the Culture Bump Approach.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The Culture Bump Approach

The Culture Bump Approach is based on using a structured process to deconstruct one’s own culture bump to better understand both oneself and an individual from another culture. A culture bump is simply a cultural difference. The difference can be a behavior, communication style, clothing, or even architecture. This simple definition has evolved into a complex theory that explains the relationship between stereotypes and a bump as well as an eight- step protocol by which an individual may deconstruct a culture bump. The Culture Bump Approach consists of the culture bump theory and the culture bump protocol being applied as the organizing principle for development of intercultural competence in six areas: (1) cross-cultural communication, (2) cultural adjustment, and in understanding (3) cultural perceptions, (4) cultural values, (5) human commonalities and in developing (6) emotional intelligence. This focus on a personal experience as the entry into understanding these six aspects of cultural differences literally represents a paradigm shift from understanding cultural characteristics as a means of dealing with differences to dealing with the difference itself. From this perspective, people are in process with culture rather than being a product of culture. This shift from a macro-cultural perspective to a micro-cultural perspective that focuses on understanding the cultural and individual nuances of a personal unexpected behavior (culture bump) also shifts the definition of culture itself. Archer (1996) defined culture in the Culture Bump Approach as follows:

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Culture is viewed as a collection of interpretative frames shared by groups of individuals to varying degrees along a continuum. In this concept, the interpretative frames are never identical for any two people, and it is only when a group of individuals share a majority of similar interpretative frames that a culture can be said to exist. This definition allows for the phenomenon of individuals sharing interpretative frames with more than one group as well as for the phenomenon of individuals sharing very few interpretative frames about a particular theme. When individuals share a minimum number of interpretative frames about a particular theme, a cross-cultural relationship can be said to exist. (p. 173).

A different macro-cultural perspective can be found in Porter and Samovar's (1976) classic anthropological definition of culture:

...culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, meanings, beliefs, values, attitudes, religions, concepts of self, the universe, and self-universe relationships, hierarchies of status, role expectations, spatial relations, and time concepts acquired by a large group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. (p. 7)

This shift from "understanding them" to identifying a personal "stumbling block" and using that culture bump to examine one's own implicit bias speaks directly to Hall's (1959) seminal insight:

...Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. Years of study have convinced me that the real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. (p. 30)

Culture Bump's Underpinning Theory

The theory underpinning the Culture Bump Approach originated in the field of ESL over 30 years ago. Archer (1986) first introduced it in Valdez's seminal text, *Culture bound: Bridging the culture gap in language teaching* in a chapter entitled "Culture Bumps and beyond." In it, she defined a culture bump as:

...occurring when an individual from one culture finds himself or herself in a different, strange, or uncomfortable situation when interacting with persons of a different culture. (p. 170-171)

Archer (1986) not only provided the definition for the phenomenon of a culture bump, she also introduced several other concepts associated with it.

These included mirroring which she defined as checking out one's intercultural experience with members of one's own culture. She noted that mirroring can be the breeding ground for stereotype formation when individuals from the same culture reinforce one another's interpretation of a cultural difference. However, in the Culture Bump Approach, mirroring becomes a structured group self-reflection process about the nuances of one's own cultural expectations and evaluations. This group self-reflection allows shared cultural bias to become explicit. The complete Culture Bump Approach can be encapsulated in the culture bump protocol for responding to a culture bump.

The structured self-reflective steps are:

1. Pinpointing the culture bump
- 2 & 3. Listing one's own and the Other's behavior
4. Identifying one's emotions regarding the culture bump incident
5. Extrapolating the universal situation implicit in the incident
6. Describing in behavioral terms one's expectations for that situation
7. Reflecting upon and extrapolating the meaning of having one's expectations met
8. Having a conversation with the other about how one experiences that meaning in one's life.

All the steps require self-reflection both on a personal and a cultural level. Step one begins the process of becoming conscious of the hidden cultural bias that Hall (1959) identified – one incident at a time. Steps two, three and four provide a way of detaching from the incident so as to better analyze it. Step five specifically requires viewing the incident from a culturally relevant perspective by presenting the possibility that every cultural difference has a universal (as well as an individual and cultural) component. Steps six and seven shift our focus from the other person or culture to becoming aware of the nuances of meaning and assumptions embedded in our own implicit bias in the situation. Finally, step eight leads into a conversation for human connection. Archer and Nickson's (2012b) study suggests that these steps lead to meaningful attitude changes and behavioral changes such as:

- o Feeling connected to the Other
- o Self-Awareness
- o Conscious awareness of the Other's point of view
- o Self-confidence, not feeling alone
- o Noticing differences
- o Knowing how to respond to the Other in new ways

Jiang (2001) found both the term culture bump and the structured self-reflective steps very useful for native-English speaking EFL teachers in China. Robinson (1991) pointed out that cognitive understanding of how classroom behaviors reflect cultural values is necessary to overcome academic culture shock. He recommended the "cultural bump" pedagogy as

an interesting way to transform academic culture shock in the ESL classroom into second culture learning for both teachers and students. Minze (1997) contrasted the culture bump approach with six other models for teaching culture in ESL classrooms and found it “useful in that it develops open discussion on cultural differences in the classroom.” (p. 30) In Archer’s (1990) ESL reading textbook, *Living with Strangers in the USA: Communicating beyond Culture*, culture bumps provided an explanation for understanding differing cultural perceptions, value systems, communication styles and the cultural adjustment cycle. The Culture Bump Approach has been applied in other fields related to ESL also. Leppihalme (1994) found the term culture bump and its definition very helpful in dealing with allusions in translating written texts. Archer & Nickson (2012a) applied the Culture Bump Approach as an organizing principle in cross-cultural curriculum development. Later Archer and Nickson’s (2012b) study of the impact of the Culture Bump Approach training for ESL students, American students and corporate employees found that this micro-cultural approach for dealing with cultural differences helps students to become more aware of their own cultural bias, to become more confident in their intercultural interactions, and to consciously modify their behavior in intercultural interactions. This study suggested that the effectiveness of the approach emerged from the structured self-reflective analysis of an individual’s culture bump, which results in a feeling of relief while simultaneously uncovering his/her own cultural expectation and assumptions. The study also noted that the Culture Bump Approach requires a significant investment in time and preparation on the part of the instructor and the students. Therefore, the development of the Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms App emerged from the realization that however beneficial the Culture Bump Approach is to ESL and American students, it is impractical for many teachers and students. The app represents an attempt to replicate at least some of the benefits of the Culture Bump Approach in a medium that is very familiar to today’s students and requires little class time and preparation on the part of the instructor.

This simplified way to use the Culture Bump Approach is particularly important given that international study in the USA is at its highest level in 35 years having increased by ten percent to an all-time record of 974,926 students in 2014 and 2015. Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange (2015) also reports that students from the USA who went abroad to study have more than tripled in the past two decades with a total of 304,467. Therefore, the Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms App is predicated on the possibility that it can transform student culture bumps into opportunities for student empowerment, teacher enlightenment and a rich classroom community – for both ESL students in the USA as well as American students abroad.

Culture Bumps App, Approach, and Theory

The intent in making the app available was that it would offer some of the deliverables that the Culture Bump Approach has achieved through time-intensive, face-to-face teaching in a classroom. This approach has traditionally required approximately thirty classroom instructional hours because much of the structured process to deconstruct one's own culture bump is counter-intuitive in nature. For example, it seems to be more intuitive to minimize or ignore cultural differences rather than "pinpointing" and describing them in behavioral terms. And while theorizing about the motivation for a particular "odd" behavior seems to be innate, framing the answer as a universal situation is not. Depending on the students involved and the teacher, this deconstruction can be a rather lengthy counter-intuitive learning process. Therefore, the app was predicated on the idea that providing the more difficult to access elements of the culture bump process - universal situations and culture specific behavior - would prompt users to intuitively ask one another about the reasons for their "different" behaviors on the app. Despite the fact that this "shortcut" is not as personally rewarding as individually going through the eight culture bump steps, its strength lies in its dependence on this intuitive response.

In addition to providing these two elements, the app uses the teacher tutorial to replicate another important aspect of the Culture Bump Approach for its user. The tutorial guides students to self-select which country represents their own experience or which country's educational culture is similar to the students' own. They then reference the listed behavior against their own experience in a self-reflection process that mimics culture bump steps six and seven – describing their expected behavior. This discussion replicates the mirroring process in which the app users become aware of their own cultural nuances. The tutorial continues by directing the students to meet in multi-cultural groups and share the information. This conversation leads to understanding the reasons for different behaviors and possibly finding common ground.

Culture-Specific Content

The culture specific content on the app consists of brief descriptions of ten classroom behaviors in 24 countries around the world. The ten situations listed for each country on the app are examples of what the Culture Bump Approach calls universals or situations that exist in academic cultures around the globe including coming late to class, age, and gender of classmates, or showing respect to the professor. The different behaviors listed for each of the situations represent potential culture bumps with other groups. The countries chosen represent the countries of origin of most international students in the USA and the destination countries of most American study abroad students according to the Open Doors Report on International

Education Exchange (2015). The culture-specific content used was collected over the period of two semesters from six classes of ESL students at the Language & Culture Center (LCC) of the University of Houston. The LCC is an intensive English Program with six language proficiency levels ranging from Beginning to Advanced, with the sixth level being an ESL academic English university preparatory class. The students who participated in generating the culture specific behaviors used on the app had intermediate (Michigan score 59-71) to advanced level language abilities (Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency score 72-81) and came from all but two of the countries listed on the app. Professors from Canada and students from Great Britain provided the information for those countries. The LCC students used steps 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the culture bump steps in order to generate the data, based on their experience while studying in the USA. It should be noted that the specific behaviors listed serve as a stimulus for classroom discussions and as a prompt for constructive mirroring rather than as definitive descriptions. The tutorials for instructors ensure that these discussions move beyond simply viewing the behaviors as cultural fixities into the process of mirroring about cultural nuances.

Teacher Tutorials

There are two tutorials for instructors on the app itself. One is for teaching classes in which the students all come from the same cultural background and the other is for teaching classes in which the students come from different cultural backgrounds. The tutorial lists nine suggested steps for using the app. The tutorials begin with defining a culture bump, then direct students from the same country or geographical region to look at the behaviors listed for their country. Students whose countries are not listed self-select which group they feel might more closely represent their own experience or simply use this time to look at the universal situations and describe what they would do in their own country in the ten situations listed. This step serves as a chance for students to mirror. They are instructed to note any differences in their opinion from the behavior as listed on the app. As Archer (1986) noted this structured process allows them to self-reflect about the nuances of their own cultural expectations – including regional, socio-economic, or other differences. This type of conversation includes cultural information but allows for individuality. The tutorial then instructs students to share their answers in culturally diverse groups and share their answers. For classes in which the students all come from the same background, they can compare what they have discovered from their mirroring process with behaviors listed for any other country on the app.

Using the app leads both teachers and students to a conscious awareness of behavioral differences. Self-reflection is built in as individuals look at the cultural behaviors listed for their own country and intuitively reference them

against their own experience – to either agree or disagree with them. This enhances their ability to view their own cultural bias (both students and teachers) and in the case of teachers, enhances their ability to articulate their own classroom expectations in behavioral terms to their students. Most importantly, it reminds teachers – at a deep level - that their ESL students arrived fully respectful and well intentioned. Students feel both acknowledged and “known” culturally and are better able to transfer their own life experience to an American context.

Use Logistics

There are several caveats in using the Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms App. Since the app is – at this time -available only at the Google Play Store, students who have iPhones are unable to access it. However, this is easily remedied by having students with iPhones take screen shots of the applicable pages including their own countries’ page as well as the pages of all of the other students in the class. It is suggested that the students take screen shots of their own country first in order to evaluate the accuracy of the ten behaviors as presented for their country or region. Once the app is available for iPhones, this step will become unnecessary.

Follow-Up Activities

Once the students have completed the stages as outlined above, there are many follow-up activities that lend themselves to the information. Comparative writing with the behaviors is an obvious follow-up activity. Students can make group or individual reports on their conversations with American students about the Americans’ perceptions of the behaviors listed for the USA. This will likely lead to additional information such as American students reporting that while some professors do not mind students eating in class, the food should not be noisy or smelly! Even more significant, by providing a structured template for ESL students to approach and have conversations with American students on campus, the app opens the door to even those students with little English skill to connect with native speakers about a common interest – how to behave appropriately in university classrooms!

Five Observations

Introduction

The app was a joint project between the Center for Educational Outreach and Engagement at Auburn University and Carol Archer & Associates. Their intention was to create a medium for the Culture Bump Approach to be implemented in a time-efficient, cost-efficient way to a broad audience of English as second language learners and American study abroad students. The app was launched in April 2015 and was voluntarily used during the 2015

Summer and Fall semesters by a number of ESL instructors at the LCC at the University of Houston as well as by ESL instructors in a three-week special program at the University of Houston Continuing Studies. In that program, high school students from Japan were introduced to the app as part of a language and culture program. Their English language proficiency ranged from Lower- Intermediate to Advanced as determined by individual interviews and a writing sample. Korean-born teachers in the Republic of Korea also used the app in an after-school program for young people who were receiving tutoring in English as a foreign language. In this case, the impact of the app on the teachers themselves was examined. Their English language proficiency was unknown.

The authors were interested in several questions regarding the use of the app in these classes. First, they were interested in knowing if the app impacted the students in these classes. If the app impacted students, they were interested in knowing how the app impacted the classes. If the app impacted students, they were interested in knowing if there was a similarity between the impact of the app and of the results achieved in face-to-face Culture Bump Approach training as reported by Archer et al, (2012b).

Sampling

Purposive sampling was employed both in the selection of the instructors and in the selection of the classes that were observed. Both instructors and classes were chosen to represent as broad a spectrum as possible in a limited study to discover if the app could replicate any of the results that had been found in studies of the Culture Bump Approach in face-to-face training. The instructors were chosen based on their experience in teaching ESL, which ranged from six years to forty-three years - both in the USA and abroad. Their interest in cross-cultural communication was assumed as a result of their having used the app on a volunteer basis. The classes observed had different levels of language proficiency and different levels of education. Three classes were composed of individuals from seven or more countries and two classes were composed of individuals from the same country. Four classes were in the United States and one was in the Republic of Korea.

Four instructors were invited to reflect on the impact that using the app had had on their classes and to write their observations for this article. One of the instructors also worked with a faith community in the Republic of Korea and reported on their use of the app in their after-school tutoring program. The instructors were purposely not given guidelines on what to write, as the authors wanted their observations to be authentic to their experience. The instructors' informal observations and student feedback that they received are presented below.

Five Observations

Observation A. *The observer in observation A has more than forty-three years' experience teaching ESL/EFL in the USA and abroad and the class is an advanced ESL class in an Intensive English Program at a university.*

This instructor observed the influence on some pertinent class dynamics as a result of the students' participation in the app's activities. The activities included discussions about expected behavior in classrooms, in the students' home countries, in homogeneous groups, and then discussions about the same classroom situations in heterogeneous groups. The students quickly adapted from the small group of students from their own country or region (homogeneous) to the large group of students from different countries or regions (heterogeneous) discussions. After comparing and contrasting the different cultural groups' views/expectations with those of their American teachers, the students essentially created "behavioral policies" which they felt should be followed in the classroom. There was full participation and focus from all the students. Essentially, they took ownership of the responsibility for everything from cell phones in class to showing respect for teachers and each other. By the conclusion of the apps' activities, "policies" had been agreed upon, "class chemistry" was actively working, and all the students were excited about working with each other. This app allows the student to share their cross-cultural views with each other, and at the same time develop group building in one dynamic activity.

Observation B. *The observer in Observation B has more than six years' experience teaching ESL/EFL in the USA and the class is an advanced level academic ESL class in an Intensive English Program at a university.*

The combination of the teacher tutorial and the content on "the Culture Bump app" is an outstanding tool for facilitating intercultural communication in multicultural classrooms which leads to a more harmonious and effective learning environment. This comment came from the instructor of this class with students from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Vietnam, China, Iraq, Portugal, Brazil, Venezuela, and Angola. Some of them had been in the states for several semesters and were familiar with the Culture Bump Approach having been introduced to the concept in earlier classes in the intensive program. However, the Culture Bump app provided a new perspective of "putting yourself in the shoes of others." The best part of this practice was enabling learners to understand differences between cultures, but most importantly enabling them to see that there are more commonalities between cultures than differences, which resulted in making learners less judgmental against each other.

Following the steps of the tutorial, students spent almost 20 minutes

discussing the situations and possible explanations as to why certain behaviors were acceptable or not in their own culture. Again, following the next step on the tutorial, students were regrouped, making sure each member of the group came from a different country. For approximately 30 minutes, learners discussed the ten situations and reflected on acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in their cultural contexts.

Following the next step on the tutorial, students were regrouped making sure each member of the group came from a different country. For approximately 30 minutes, learners discussed the ten situations and reflected on acceptable and unacceptable behaviors in their cultural contexts. Facilitation of their conversations elicited several surprises. Students reported that they became aware of similarities as well as differences among cultures but were surprised to find out how they were similar rather than different. More importantly, they had more understanding of some of the reasons why some situations might be interpreted differently in different cultures. The final step of the tutorial sends students out of the classroom to interview American students on the campus. This step took around 30 minutes. After interviewing 2 to 3 American students on the campus, students reported on their findings and compared their findings with the information on the app.

Feedback about using the app in class demonstrated that these students became culturally more literate and knowledgeable after having exposure to the theory and utilizing the app in the classroom. One student reported, “Now I know why Venezuelan students are talkative and why Chinese students are more reserved. I have been friends with them for six semesters but I had not understood it until now.” Other learners reported that they were more tolerant and understanding about others. It was as though an invisible barrier was removed and learners became more connected and close. There were several benefits of this training in the classroom. First, it created a more friendly and harmonious learning environment as students became more aware of different cultures and how certain behaviors might be interpreted differently in different cultures. Also, it enabled learners to think from different perspectives when analyzing or judging certain behaviors of others. In addition, learners had a chance to learn, accept, and embrace different views. Most importantly, it helped learners to introduce their own culture to others and learn to be less judgmental against other cultures. The Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms App was fun and enjoyable, leading to inter-cultural competence and gave learners opportunities to practice their oral proficiency.

Observation C. *The observer in Observation C has more than thirty years' experience teaching ESL/EFL in the USA and the class is an intermediate level ESL class in an Intensive English Program at a University.*

An alternative to using the tutorial is described by the following ESL

instructor.

After attending a demonstration of this app, my co-teacher and I grouped students in a lower-intermediate level class into multi-cultural groups during our first week of class for the term at the LCC. We asked them some of the same questions presented on the app (e.g. how do you show respect to the teacher, what should you do with your cell phones in class, what do you do when you are late to class, etc.) and asked them to discuss with their small group what they would do at home in their country. Then we discussed as a large group what each country that was represented in the room preferred and contrasted that with what American teachers expect. We asked questions based on information gathered on the app: (According to this app, many students in your country say they do this. Do you agree?) This prompted even more discussion about regional differences and personal preferences. Every student got actively involved and felt respected for their opinion. At the same time, it was a great context to review our expectations for the class (what to do with cell phones, how to respectfully come into class late, etc.) It was evident that the students paid more attention to our instructions for these things e.g. cell phone, coming to class in the context of this discussion than they would have otherwise. In short, the use of the app jumpstarted meaningful and interesting conversations in our classroom.

Observation D. *The observer in Observation D has more than 23 years' experience teaching ESL/EFL in the USA and abroad. The class is a thirty-hour language and cross-cultural class in a summer program at a University.*

This ESL and cross-cultural instructor used the app with a group of 20 Japanese high school students whose language proficiencies varied from lower intermediate to advanced. The intent of using the app was to deepen the students' knowledge of universal classroom situations such as arriving late, asking questions in class, or getting hungry in class and the various behavioral responses based on culture. It was insightful to listen to the students' comments as they read the similarities between the US and Japan, and then read what American and Japanese students do in different situations. In this classroom, the Japanese students had American cultural guides who attended the university, so with the help of the app the Japanese students were able to ask descriptive questions without sounding like they were judging the American students or putting down their own culture. After they went through the Japanese behaviors, they were able to understand that all countries have the same situations as in Japan. However, the response in those situations was based on the individual culture. Students were able to grasp that universal situations exist in all cultures while responses differ. They could then see more vividly how cultural expectations created these various patterns.

Observation E. *The observer in Observation E has more than 23 years' experience teaching ESL/EFL in the USA and abroad. The teachers discussed are English tutors in an after-school program located in the Republic of Korea.*

An ESL and cross-cultural instructor associated with a faith-based program in the USA, which sponsors a tutoring program in Korean, and English languages reported that the app was also used by a faith-based program in Korea, which offers intense after school tutoring in Korean and English languages. The teachers assist the students with various educational skills, but often English as a second language is the focus of their work. The app was used to work with the Korean teachers in this program, so they were able to see how Korean and American students react in different situations. Comparing American and Korean behaviors on the app deepened these teachers' understanding of the English speaking culture while never leaving Korea. This understanding helps the teachers to better prepare any of their students who plan to study in the USA in the future.

Conclusion

Observation Summary

In examining the five observations, certain specific behaviors can be identified. All three observers of the ESL multi-cultural classes at the LCC noted that there was full participation by all students in the process. Observers A and C both noted that the students rather than the instructors created policies and expectations for classroom behavior. Observer B and D both noticed less judgementalness, and Observer D specifically noted that the Japanese students were able to ask non-judgmental questions. Observer B noted that the classroom activity allowed students to practice their oral proficiency. Observers A, B, C and D all noted different aspects of cultural awareness and connection. Observer A remarked on the students' excitement about working together and Observer B's students self-reported being more understanding of their classmates, of being surprised at discovering their similarities and of feeling more connected. Observer B noticed the students' ability to think from different perspectives and of a new awareness of "walking in one another's shoes." Observer C opined that the students felt respected. Observer D noticed that the Japanese student saw "cultural and universal patterns" while observer E noted that the app allowed Korean teachers to understand more deeply English speaking culture.

While these informal observations and the student feedback provide only the initial step in a causal study of the effect of the app in ESL/EFL classes, they seem to fit a pattern previously found in studies by Archer & Nickson (2012b) of:

- Feeling Connected to the Other
- Consciousness awareness of the Other's point of view
- Self-confidence, not feeling alone.

These observations seem to suggest, at the least, that in these particular classes, using the app encouraged students to assume responsibility for classroom management, generated a supportive classroom ethos, created a meaningful connection between classroom behavior and culture, and ultimately allowed, at least some students to understand at a conscious, personal level the concept of cultural relativism.

Classroom Use Implications

From these instructors perspectives, the use of the app allowed them to provide a meaningful experience for their students that enhanced their language learning while developing cross cultural awareness and skills. And for educators who have chosen to practice their craft in ESL and EFL classrooms, the field of ESL is much more than grammar and writing; it is a profession that speaks to and from the practitioner's heart and soul. ESL professionals, almost without exception, have felt a tug to go to faraway places, to learn about faraway places and to find a connection there. And the ESL teacher provides a way station for all those individuals from other cultures who also feel a tug to go to faraway places, to learn about them and to find a connection there. And yet the teaching of intercultural communication and developing the skills needed to find the connections is difficult in the ESL classroom where language skills take precedence. Fewer available cross-cultural materials compound the problem. However, the reality of the ESL classroom is that the cultural issues are present from the moment that the students arrive, so the ability to take advantage of the cultural presence itself in the classroom with the app becomes at least a partial solution to the ESL practitioner's conundrum. The Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms App becomes the means by which students and teachers together can use their own educational life experience to transform their classroom into a laboratory for calling forth the cultural knowledge of one another and developing a consciousness of basic intercultural competencies. For both teacher and student, it provides the opportunity to learn new ways to live life – possibly new ways to be a friend or a student or a teacher – new and different ways to solve problems – new ways to experience their lives. The Culture Bumps in Global Classrooms App is an efficient tool that helps each and everyone in the classroom to move in a hermeneutical cycle between understanding themselves as cultural beings, as human beings and as individuals to ultimately discover the common ground upon which we all stand.

Study Limitations

This study is limited to four teachers' experiences in using the app and is not meant to be read as a critical and exhaustive analysis of the app. The fifth author, Carol M. Archer, is the developer of the app in collaboration with her

role as cross-cultural communication consultant with the Center for Educational Outreach and Engagement at Auburn University. Her contribution to the article was limited to theory underpinning the app and to explication of the app development process.

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AN ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF RELATIVE CLAUSES

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Abstract

None

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While much of how we experience the world and the meaning we derive from it is afforded us through language, we are not merely recipients of language and all that it communicates, we are also active participants in the creation of our world through our use of language. Though L2 learners may strive for accordance between their intention and expression, often limitations in proficiency and L1 interference errors in grammar betray their goals for effective communication, which may result in misunderstanding and potentially injurious consequences. Grammar alone does not encompass the totality of communication. However, helping learners develop a solid understanding of the structure of language may enable them to more effectively express their intentions and more fully harness the power of language. In an effort to improve the quality of grammar instruction for my learners, the current paper seeks to evaluate the presentation of relative clauses – a particularly important and widely used, yet challenging grammatical feature for my adult Arabic L1 learners – in two English language textbooks and propose a corpus-based approach that may meet their specific communicative needs.

Rationale for Proposed Instructional Approach

Grammar provides the structure of language and expresses relationships among lexical items, which is important for conveying and grasping meaning; nonetheless, the instruction of grammar in the second language classroom has been a controversial issue (Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). For example, in their review outlining the various positions taken on grammar instruction, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) note that detractors of grammar instruction cite earlier SLA research, which suggested that second language learning mirrored first language acquisition and that explicit instruction of grammar rules was unnecessary for development. While acknowledging that the stages of acquisition of certain forms in second language learning may

resemble those of L1 acquisition, Nassaji and Fotos (2004) maintain that raising learners' awareness through explicit instruction may be beneficial for L2 development. In fact, Skehan and Thomasello (as cited in Nassaji & Fotos, 2004) suggest that attending to language form apart from meaning is necessary for its mastery.

Learners may benefit from instruction in a wide range of forms; however, a number of factors may constrain the scope of grammar instruction to a purposefully chosen few. Ellis (2006) pinpoints several considerations that may inform teachers' selection of grammar points to teach, including markedness, or variance from a more typical form or construction within a language, and differences in form between English and learners' L1. The focus on relative clauses in the current paper reflects the prominence of this form in English (Folse, 2009) and the pattern of interference errors in its usage among adult L1 Arabic learners of English. Relative clauses draw on learners' knowledge of grammatical constituents and punctuation and serve as a litmus test for learners' advanced proficiency and ability to use a variety of sentence types in standard language assessments, including IELTS and TOEFL. Moreover, the transference of features from my learners' L1 of Arabic often results in inappropriate inclusion and usage of adjective pronouns. For example, in the inclusion of subject and object pronouns are frequent interference errors observed as illustrated in the following sentences: I know the instructor who she taught the class and He is the student that I know him. Such errors may likely result from differences in the treatment of pronouns (particularly, markedness of antecedent animacy), word order, and restrictive and nonrestrictive information between English and Arabic (Al-Washali & Husnain, 2013; Folse, 2009; Smith, 2001). Having such insight into the significance of relative clauses in English, as well as patterns of interference, allows for more targeted and awareness-raising instruction that may lead to more effective learning. Given the importance of this language form, it is worth exploring its current treatment in instructional texts. A review of two English language course books below provides an opportunity for the exploration of how grammar may be more effectively integrated into language instruction, followed by a proposal for the inclusion of corpus-informed grammar instructional material specifically for relative clauses.

Evaluation of English Language Course Books

Although the appropriateness of grammar teaching has garnered considerable debate, grammar-focused instructional materials comprise a significant portion of published English language teaching texts (Byrd, 1995) possibly reflecting a shift in conversation toward best practices in grammar instruction rather than its inclusion in curricula. Expanding the discourse on grammar teaching, Byrd (1994, 1995) outlined a number of important

considerations in developing effective instructional materials, including “the three Es” of explanations, examples, and exercises (p. 48). These three factors provide a useful heuristic for evaluating the presentation of grammar in instructional materials and are used to review the treatment of relative clauses in two English language textbooks often used in English language courses at UAE-based engineering and applied sciences polytechnic where I teach. In addition, these factors serve as a guide for the development of materials tailored to the needs of my learners proposed in the current paper.

Use of Explanations in Sample Textbooks

Among the elements materials developers consider in producing grammar texts is the inclusion of “accurate, appropriate, and useful” explanations (Byrd, 1995, p. 50). Byrd stresses the importance of providing explanations that are intended for both teachers and students. While learners may be the most apparent audience of course books, requiring clear and accessible explanations, teachers also look to course book explanations as resources in clarifying particularly complex grammar points (Byrd, 1995). The course books used for English classes at my institution vary in the quality of explanations provided on relative clauses. For example, Hill’s (2012) English for Information Technology textbook takes a more direct approach and describes the use of relative clauses in the statement,

“We can use relative clauses as part of a definition, to give important information about something or someone (e.g. to explain the function of something or to say who does something). We use the relative pronouns which/that for things and who/that for people,” (p. 22).

The explanation includes basic elements of usage of the form, relative pronouns, and the distinction between human and nonhuman referents. The inclusion of linguistic terms is minimal; however, the explanation is lengthy and unduly convoluted, which may detract from learner accessibility. Further, no additional information is provided for instructors to elaborate on more detailed aspects of the form for further elucidation. An alternative approach may include addressing the use of relative pronouns for objects and persons individually followed by an example for each. Examples substituting the use of that for both objects and persons in the same sentences may be presented afterwards along with commentary encouraging learners to notice the interchangeable use of that for which and who. As an expansion exercise, instructors may be prompted to provide additional examples for which learners have the opportunity for hypothesis testing by practicing adjective pronoun substitution.

Cotton, Falvey, and Kent’s (2008) Language Leader is, in contrast, more expansive and takes a slightly indirect approach in its explanation of relative clauses. For example, consciousness-raising activities involving the identification of adjective pronouns in a short reading passage is used to

introduce the form. A caption at the bottom of the page references a more detailed explanation of the grammar in an appendix at the end of the text, which provides sentence-length explanations of significant aspects of the form followed by an example of that feature. The language reference appendix distinguishes defining from non-defining relative clauses and relative pronouns from relative adverbs – each providing at least one example of its usage. For instance, the following explanation and example of a defining relative clause is given: “Using defining relative clauses to identify or define things, ideas, places, time and possessions. Children like subjects which interest them [emphasis in original]” (p. 148). In separate column, non-defining relative clauses are contrastively defined along with an example:

“Non-defining relative clauses give information about something in the main clause, but do not help to identify or define it. The President, who is currently on a trip to the USA [emphasis in original], said he disagreed with the decision. (We know who the President is without the information in the relative clause.)” (p. 128)

Although linguistic terms are used in the explanations, the use of simple and basic compound sentences facilitates learner comprehension.

Use of Examples in Sample Textbooks

Closely related to explanations, examples serve several functions for learners, including clarification, confirmation of accuracy, and practice of the form (Byrd, 1995). Examples may appear in the form of individually presented words, in sentences, or in larger discourse samples beyond the sentence, such as paragraphs and longer passages. Byrd (1995) also outlines a number of features to consider in creating examples for instructional materials, including sufficiency of information for learning and contextualization of examples. While both *English for Information Technology* (Hill, 2012) and *Language Leader* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008) provide examples at the sentential and discourse level as reading passages, the texts differ in the quantity of exemplars and their contextual relevance.

In *English for Information Technology* (Hill, 2012), relative clauses are presented in the unit on data communication and introduced in the reading passage focusing on networks. The passage of three paragraphs contains five instances of relative clauses. However, only two examples of sentences containing relative clauses are paired with the explicit explanation of the grammatical feature, and, in both instances, the examples are of subject clauses: “She’s the person who/that [emphasis in original] looks after networks” and “The internet is a network which/that covers the world” (p.23). Although relative clauses are addressed in the text, insufficient information about the usage of other aspects of the form, including object pronouns and adjective adverbs, may lead to overgeneralization errors and prove counterproductive to mastery of this form.

In *Language Leader* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008), the topic of education provides the thematic context for the presentation of relative clauses. As with *English for Information Technology* (Hill, 2012), relative clauses are introduced in a thematic reading passage. The excerpt on Maria Montessori in *Language Leader* is seven paragraphs in length and contains six instances of relative clauses. Although the frequency of this form relative to the length of the passage means less exposure overall, the examples of relative clauses are more representative of the various features of the form than those in the *English for Information Technology* (Hill, 2012). For example, the text includes possessive relative clauses, as well as constructions using relative adverbs of time and location. In addition, the language reference appendix provides a greater inventory of examples along with explanations of the form. The variety of examples presented in the reading passage along with a number of “noticing” activities at the end of passage help to provide a more complete picture of the variations in usage and form of relative clauses needed to more effectively master the grammatical feature. As the topic of the unit is education, the examples provided at the end of the reading passage include thematically-relevant lexical items and engage the content of the passage in addition to providing form exemplars. However, examples of relative clauses in the language appendix do not maintain thematic coherence and appear to be primarily illustrations of form. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the appendix at the end of the *Language Leader* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008) does provide instructors with additional resources for elaboration on the form.

Use of Exercises in Sample Textbooks

Although Byrd (1994, 1995) cautions against the application of false dichotomies – including those juxtaposing fluency and accuracy, process and product, authenticity and inauthenticity, as well as least and most communicative – she does, however, recommend establishing a “checklist” or set of guidelines that inform the creation of appropriate exercises in grammar textbooks. Included among the suggested guidelines are considerations for learning style, pairing and grouping, language modalities addressed, and time and energy requirements for activities. Byrd (1995) also highlights other factors such as constraints on available space that influence the materials developers’ decision-making. Both *Language Leader* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008) and *English for Information Technology* (Hill, 2012) are compact course books efficient in the presentation and formatting of grammar items. However, the quantity and quality of exercises included in both serve as additional points of divergence.

English for Information Technology (Hill, 2012) provides opportunities for the practice of relative clauses in exercises that target receptive and expressive language skills. For example, in one exercise, learners underline

each relative pronoun presented in the reading passage on networks and draw arrows to their antecedents. In the second exercise, learners work in pairs explaining a number of items used in computer networking with the use of relative clause constructions. Both activities vary in the degree to which they elicit meaningful language use, with the pair exercise as the more communicative of the two. As the textbook is designed for ESP courses in information technology, the relative clause pronoun identification and paired speaking activities are contextualized and address a relevant topic in this field. However, the inclusion of only two activities provides insufficient opportunity for practicing, which is essential for ultimate communicative use of the form (Savage, 2010). Furthermore, limiting practice to two tasks misses other opportunities for language instruction. As Byrd (1995) mentions various activities may be used to accomplish different objectives. Although the relative pronoun identification task directs learners' attention to the use of relative clauses in meaningful discourse beyond the sentence, the exercise does not engage the content of the passage.

Language Leader (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008) offers a more diverse and in-depth array of language practice exercises ranging from activities focusing on individual relative pronouns and adverbs to activities targeting the process of subordination with embedded relative clauses and punctuation – a feature of language usage rarely taught directly (Byrd, 1995). The textbook includes multimodal activities developing written and oral language skills in individual, pair, and group configurations. The exercises also provide deeper engagement with the grammatical form and concepts presented in the unit through task-based problem-solving activities and discussion questions. The larger size and broader scope as a general English integrated skills course book likely provided the materials writers' a level of flexibility in the variety of exercises and breadth of content included in the textbook.

Proposal for the Development of Relative Clause Instructional Material

Hill (2012) and Cotton, Falvey, and Kent (2008) exemplify varied approaches to the instruction of relative clauses to L2 learners of English. Both are multimodal, integrated texts; however, each differs in scope, with English for Information Technology serving as an ESP course book for the development of communication skills in the context of the information technology field whereas Language Leader targets learners of general English. Moreover, each text differs in its presentation of grammar explanation, examples, and exercises – Byrd's (1995) three E's of grammar instruction. As the variations in approach to the instruction of relative clauses in each text illustrates, no one text is exhaustive in its treatment of grammar, its representation of authentic, contextualized usage, or opportunities for practice, and, consequently, does not necessarily meet the spectrum of learner

needs in a given context. Considering the specific communicative needs of the adult Arabic L1 learners in my courses, I attempt to outline an approach to the development of instructional materials for relative clauses that incorporates elements of both the Hill (2012) and Cotton, Falvey, and Kent (2008) texts, as well as supplementing corpus-informed features I believe would most effectively address the needs of my learners.

Discussing the historical development of corpus linguistics, Conrad (2000) points out that innovations in information technology have yielded insights into grammar usage from corpus-based studies that were previously impossible to obtain – namely, the importance of context in the distribution of grammatical forms in discourse. Conrad (2000) further points out that while developments in grammar instruction have not significantly capitalized on findings from corpus linguistic data, it does, however, have a role to play in shifting the focus from accuracy in form to contextual and register appropriateness. A key objective of the courses I teach is to help learners develop communicative competency in vocational registers in the technical fields of their chosen diploma programs. This is particularly the case for my ESP courses including English for Oil & Gas and English for IT Specialists. Therefore, instructional materials for such courses will include the presentation of relative clauses embedded in corpus-informed discourse from these industries.

The proposed lesson features a short reading passage that describes several types of external USB storage devices (Appendix B). The text is an extract from an authentic online information technology magazine and includes high frequency technical vocabulary from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (Gardner & Davies, 2014). The focus on data storage in the reading passage establishes the thematic context for the unit, which is also reflected in the subsequent activities. The topical continuity reflects an effort to create cohesion in the lesson while providing examples of relative clause usage in a familiar context and discourse genre, which may facilitate the mastery of this grammar point. The text also includes high frequency technical vocabulary, which reflects Conrad's (2000) recommendation for greater integration of vocabulary in grammar instruction. While the reading passage offers an example of relative clause usage in written discourse, the lesson may also include an audio component, as well as its transcription, featuring a conversation between colleagues highlighting the use of relative clauses in oral communication in contrast to more formal, written discourse (Bennett, 2011; Carter & McCarthy, 2006; Hinkel, 2013).

Savage (2010) outlines several approaches to the presentation of grammar in instructional materials. While the advantages and disadvantages of explicit grammar instruction has been the focal point of much discussion in second language research and English language teaching, a growing body

of research evidences the benefits of and signals a move toward more explicit approaches (Cowan, 2008; Ellis, 2006; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). The proposed instructional materials adopt a hybrid approach to grammar presentation by initially withholding explicit explanation of relative clause usage in order to encourage learners' awareness and hypothesis building through the analysis of a short corpus of authentic examples selected from various thematically-related sources. This more implicit presentation of relative clauses is later followed up by in depth treatment of relative clause usage with examples and practice exercises in the appendix, as presented in *Language Leader* (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008).

As illustrated in Appendix A, learners are first presented with a small corpus of statements containing relative clauses followed by a set of questions to guide and encourage hypothesis formulation of their usage. The hypothesis formulation activity is then succeeded by a reading passage containing examples of relative clauses in context (Appendix B). While the aim of both the reading passage and corpus is learner consciousness-raising, the corpus offers breadth of exposure of the grammar feature to highlight its usage across a wide range of contexts. The reading passage, on the other hand, provides a more contextualized presentation of relative clauses that seeks to illustrate how this form contributes to the creation of meaning in discourse.

Gibbs (as cited in Jordan, 1997) outlines a "student-centered approach" (p. 14) to explore learners' experiences of studying in which learners are presented with exploratory questions which they work through individually, then in pairs, followed small group interaction. This approach has been adapted for the noticing exercises at the beginning of the unit, as well as in the reflection exercises at the end of the lesson, as it fosters both learner independence and exchange of ideas and problem-solving with other students (Jordan, 1997).

Folse (2009) and Savage (2010) highlight the importance of presentation and consciousness-raising as a precursor to expectations of learner production of grammar forms. The proposed lesson introduces learners to relative clauses through noticing activities followed by a reading passage containing the form, as well as practice drill exercises in manipulation of the form. Despite having lost favor as an acceptable method in language instruction, drill exercises may, nonetheless, prove beneficial in facilitating fluency in form usage through repetition and memorization (AzarGrammar, 2012; Savage, 2010). Such exercises, however, lead to activities that encourage learner production of the form. For example, learners engage in partner speaking activities for authentic and contextualized communication (Appendix C). In the exercise, learners must use relative clauses to explain various types of storage. The speaking exercise is followed by a written activity in which learners gain practice in using the form in discourse beyond

the sentence (Appendix D).

Developments in corpus-based research have advanced the body of knowledge on grammar considerably and hold promise for second language instruction - and grammar instruction, particularly (Conrad, 2000; Bennett, 2010). While training in corpus linguistic methods may help teachers more effectively integrate corpus data into their instruction, possibly lead to better learner outcomes, their usage is not restricted to teachers. As Bennett (2010) illustrates, learner-generated corpora may be an invaluable self-directed language learning resource. In order to help learners generalize their awareness of relative clause usage in discourse outside the classroom, the proposed approach includes a corpus collection extension task. For example, learners must collect at least 10 authentic examples of relative clause use from written and oral discourse (Appendix E). Similar to the consciousness-raising activities presented at the beginning of the unit, learners are also encouraged in this task to analyze the data they have collected and theorize about the patterns of usage they have observed. As a final reflection exercise, learners are also asked to review their initial hypotheses about relative clauses in light of what they have learned throughout the lesson and to discuss ways the activities and collected data have either confirmed or rejected their initial views.

Conclusion

Discussions surrounding grammar in English language teaching have often centered on the appropriateness of its instruction (Cowan, 2008 ; Ellis, 2002; Folse, 2009; Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Although arguments against grammar teaching express concerns over the development of learners' declarative knowledge of forms at the expense of competency in their usage; however, current second language research have yielded findings highlighting the benefits of direct grammar instruction (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Such emergent supporting research appears to have redirected the conversation surrounding grammar toward best practices and materials development (Byrd, 1995; Savage, 2010).

Using Byrd's (1995) criteria of explanation, examples, and exercises in the development of grammar instructional material, the current paper evaluated the presentation of relative clause instruction in two English language textbooks commonly used in courses taught at my institution. Variations in the treatment of Byrd's "three E's" highlighted the need for the purposeful development of supplemental instructional materials that meet the communicative needs of the adult Arabic L1 learners enrolled primarily in the ESP courses I teach. The proposal sought to capitalize on the insights into the distribution of patterns of relative usage afforded by the use of corpus-based data. While no text is completely comprehensive in coverage or perfectly meets the needs of its intended audience, the proposed

instructional approach integrated elements of English for Information Technology (Hill, 2012) and Language Leader (Cotton, Falvey, & Kent, 2008), toward helping my learners develop competency in English form in order to more fully harness the transcendent and actualizing power of language.

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Appendix A

External Storage



Directions: Review the sample sentences below and answer the questions that follow.



The USB 3.0 port is there for external storage,	which	can be used for everything the internal storage can be used for.
I have a usb storage	that	is connected to mynet750 to send data.
We employ A+ certified technicians	who	specialize in installing computer parts.
Just ask any cloud administrator	that	learned the hard way there's no undo feature.

1. What are the words in **bold** used for?
2. What similarities and differences do you notice about the how the words in **bold** are used in each sentence?
3. Based on the sentences above, can you think of any rules for using the words in **bold**?

Directions: After answering the questions above, work with a partner to generate more ideas about the sentences in the table. In the space below, write down any additional ideas you have.

Appendix B

Directions: Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

4 Types of flash storage: Which is right for you? (Kattau, 2013)



(1) But there is no one-size-fits-all approach to flash, according to NetApp. (2) They say enterprises need to adopt an approach **that** offers support on all levels of the stack—with the right mix of performance, capacity and economics to accelerate business. (3) The company also states how “flash storage changes the way **in which** data performance is delivered” and “how implementing the right type of flash can deliver true business impact.”

(4) Let’s take a brief look at the four types of flash storage **that** are mentioned in the infographic below. According to NetApp, the first kind is server flash, **which** is cache storage. (5) They say this provides the fastest access with the lowest capacity.

(6) The second type of flash storage is called all-flash array, **which** they describe as persistent storage **that** provides submillisecond access with larger capacity. (7) Use of all-flash array is expected to grow to \$1.6 billion by 2016, according to the aforementioned [IDC study](#).

(8) The third type is traditional storage with flash. (9) This is also persistent storage, with scalable, cost-effective capacity, according to NetApp.

(10) Hybrid array is the fourth type of flash storage, **which** NetApp describes as an intelligent caching solution **that** provides submillisecond access for cached data and leverages HDD for capacity.

1. What kind of approach do enterprises need to adopt? Underline the section in the passage that contains this information.

2. What does “that” in sentence 4 refer to?

3. There is a comma (,) before “which” in sentences 4, 6, and 10, but there is no comma before “which” in line 3. Why do you think this is the case?

Appendix C

Student A

Directions: Work with a partner and take turns describing and explaining the function of the storage device shown the picture below. Be sure to use adjective pronoun (**who, which, that**) in your description.



Student B

Directions: Work with a partner and take turns describing and explaining the function of the storage device shown the picture below. Be sure to use adjective pronoun (**who, which, that**) in your description.



Appendix D



Directions: Conduct an internet search on an external storage device (or service) that you often use but was not discussed in this lesson. Write a short review of the device and include the following information:

- A description of how the device looks (you may also include a picture of it)
- A graphic illustrating how it works (if you choose to write about a service rather than a device)
- An explanation of how the device or service works
- Your reasons for using the device or service (this may include special features)

Your review should be at least one paragraph long and include at least 5 uses of relative clauses.

Appendix E

Directions: At the beginning of this lesson, you analyzed a small sample of sentences containing relative clauses and generated ideas about how relative clauses work and what they are used for. For this assignment, you will collect your own sample of relative clause usage.

Here are the details of your collection:

- At least 10 instances of relative clause usage (review the appendix for explanations and examples of different types of relative clauses)
- Examples may come from reading materials, such as:
 - Books,
 - Magazines
 - News articles
- Your examples may also come from spoken sources, including:
 - Class lectures
 - TV and radio news reports
 - Conversations

After collecting your sample, write a short 1-2 paragraph analysis of your data. In your analysis, consider the following questions:

- How were relative clauses used in the examples?
- What patterns did you observe? For example, was there a preference for a particular type?
- Were there differences in usage between spoken and written forms? Between topics discussed? Between situations or contexts in which they were used?
- For written examples, were clauses punctuated?
- What conclusions could you draw about relative clauses based on your sample?
- Did your finding surprise you? Why or why not?

STUDENT-GENERATED RUBRIC ASSESSMENT: A MEANINGFUL LITERACY PRACTICE

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Abstract

The function of assessment is considered as a gatekeeper (Shohamy, 2001b; Spolsky, 1997). This is especially true for second language (L2) writers because writing is a challenging task. In this pedagogical paper, the author argues that teachers should consider applying democratic assessment in their classes. Democratic assessment is aimed at “shared power, collaboration and representation” (Shohamy, 2001a, p. 137). The author argues that it is not only the power has been shared, but meaningful to students as they have involvement in seeing how grading will be done. Many studies have promoted the benefits of rubrics; however, less has been discussed the benefits of constructing rubrics with students. The aim of this paper is to discuss benefits of applying democratic assessment in class and provide a pedagogical implication on how to create rubrics with students.

Keywords: second language writing, democratic, authentic, composition, empowerment

In academic writing classrooms, composition teachers use different types of writing assessments to determine level of writing proficiency of our students. For writing teachers, responding to and grading student writing can feel like a never ending journey. Furthermore, teachers also have to be prepared to answer questions from students who received lower grades than they have expected. Teachers attempt to use an alternative assessment that will help them save more time and energy; writing teachers turn to performance-based assessment because it promotes student engagement to work on a real world application (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Performance-based assessment focuses on the engagement of students through authentic tasks such as presentations, written tasks, video-recording tasks (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 5) in which the student learning outcomes would meet or exceed the classroom into the real-world settings (Ghosh, Bowles, Ranmuthugala, & Brooks, 2016). Furthermore, it promotes and allows

students to take ownership in their learning processes. Ghose et al. (2016) argue that rubrics can be one of the appropriate assessment tools because the expectations are stated to students prior to being assessed. Students and teachers can collaboratively create grading criteria, which can be seen as a democratic assessment because it is aimed at “shared power, collaboration and representation” (Shohamy, 2001b, p. 137). In this pedagogical paper, the author argues that student generated rubrics can be a powerful tool in engaging students to look at and demystify assessment process as a learning opportunity. Shohamy (2001b) asserted that teachers need to change the way they look at assessment; “assessment of students’ achievement ought to be seen as an art, rather than a science, in that it is interpretive, idiosyncratic, interpersonal and relative” (p. 137).

Composition scholarship has all agreed that writing instructors should incorporate multiple assessment approaches in our classrooms. One of writing assessment instruments is a rubric. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) define rubrics as one of the assessment devices “used to evaluate open-ended oral and written responses of learners...composed of a set of criteria or competencies” (p. 129). Another definition is by Ghose et al. (2016) who stated that “rubrics are assessment tools that comprise of individual and essential dimensions of performance know as criteria alone with standards for levels of performance against those criteria” (p. 320). A lot of studies have promoted the benefits of rubrics (Crusan, 2010b; Spandel, 2006) and some discussed the disadvantages of using rubrics in grading student writing works (Kohn, 2006b; Wilson, 2006); however, less has been discussed the benefits of constructing rubrics with students (Crusan, 2010b; Huffman, 1998). The aim of this paper is to discuss benefits of applying democratic assessment in class. The author will share his pedagogical implications on how to create rubrics with students in academic writing classrooms.

The Bias of Assessment

Bachman and Palmer (2010) define assessment as “the process of collecting information about something that we’re interested in, according to procedures that are systematic and substantively grounded (p. 20). Assessment can also be used to provide information for further evaluation to “make decisions to improve or facilitate [students’] learning or to use as a placement” of students to be in certain grade levels in language classes (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 21).

Scholars argue that assessment has been used as a gatekeeping tool in granting or denying access to students (Crusan, 2010a; Shohamy, 2001a, 2001b; Spolsky, 1997; Wilson, 2006). One problem of assessment is that people use assessment without critical examination of the consequences. Shohamy (2001a, 2001b) points out that no one in public would object the power of assessment because of its objective and scientific discourse. The

role of assessment tools then has become “instrumental in reaffirming societal power and in maintaining social order, which...not only are they unchallenged, unmonitored and uncontrolled, but in fact enjoy enormous trust and support on the part of the public and of institutions” (Shohamy, 2001a, p. 375). In other word, assessment should be questioned and examined prior to implementing or accepting of results.

In writing classrooms, teachers have also used variety of instruments in evaluating and assessing writing proficiency of our students. Assessing student writing is a time consuming and a never-ending endeavor. However, these teachers have no choice in avoiding such task because students would be asking the teachers constantly of feedback and grades on their written assignments. The anxieties of writing teachers can be understood because they may have adopted the writing assessment tools without clear explanation of what each criterion means; others may feel unsure of how to explain each point to students because they may not fully understand the tool themselves (Crusan, 2010b; Crusan, Plakans, & Gebril, 2016).

Pennycook (1994) states that “no knowledge, no language, and no pedagogy is ever neutral or apolitical. To teach critically, therefore, is to acknowledge the political nature to all education; it is not to take up some ‘political’ stance that stands in contradistinction to a ‘neutral’ position” (p. 301). People may not realize the subjectivity in their pedagogical and/or assessment practices they use in classes. If this is the position educators are taking in education, then assessment is no exception. Teachers have to understand that assessment tools are not neutral. In other word, the assessment tools also hold power of granting access to information or serving as selection tools in the society (Shohamy, 2001b; Spolsky, 1997). Huot (2002) points out, “it is no secret that most standardized assessments as well as local judgments about academic achievement or aptitude are biased” (p. 8).

Writing Assessment

Writing assessment is one of important activities in writing classrooms. That said, some writing teachers may not adequate trainings and backgrounds in writing assessment (Crusan, 2010b; Crusan et al., 2016; Hamp-Lyons, 2003; Huot, 2002). Huot (2002) has asked writing teachers to align the writing assessment with the writing instructions in classrooms:

We need to articulate a much more conscious, theoretical and practical link between the way we think about assessment and the way we think about the teaching, research and theorizing of writing, recognizing that assessment is a vital component in the act of writing, in the teaching of writing. (p. 11)

Crusan (2010b) points out, “without the ability to assess writing, to notice good writing, to understand what we are saying and what we are meaning to say, we, as teachers and as writers, sacrifice a valuable avenue of

communication” (p. 9). To further complicate the matter, writing scholars have been questioning what “good writing” looks like (Belanoff, 1991; Leki, 1995). Especially for second language (L2) writers, they come to our composition classrooms with different cultural and linguistic background, learning styles and strategies, personalities when compared to students who speak English as their first language (Hamp-Lyons, 2002). These L2 writers would have different perceptions of ‘good writing’ in our classes. Leki (1995) reminds us that good writing is context dependent and situated within appropriate academic discourse. Since our L2 writers bring in rich background, “[teachers] need to encourage them to take advantage whenever possible in their writing of their own unique, diverse experiences” (Leki, 1995, p. 44). The same argument is made by Hamp-Lyons (2003) that writing instructors have to value the individuality that students bring into our composition classrooms. In other word, students need to be taught how to compose within the appropriate genres and discourses of certain assignments.

After the instructors teach L2 students how to write their papers, writing teachers can also educate students how to evaluate their own writing. In fact, compositionists and writing assessment researchers ask writing instructors to teach students to evaluate their own writing (Crusan, 2010b; Crusan et al., 2016; Hamp-Lyons, 2003; Huot, 2002; Weigle, 2007). Crusan (2010b) argues that the use of rubrics in assessing student’s written assignments “can be powerful tools when they are created specifically for each assignment” regardless of languages used in written assignments (p. 44, emphasis original). Not only students learn what is important in this assignment; they will also be more invested in working on the assignments. Furthermore, the practice is not only empowering and meaningful to students as they have a chance to see how grading will be done. Prior to discussion on rubric creation, the democratic writing assessment is discussed.

Toward a Democratic Writing Assessment

Writing teachers start to incorporate critical pedagogy in their teaching philosophy (Hanauer, 2009; Shohamy, 2001a). Instead of feeding knowledge to students, teachers are facilitators in their learning processes through problem posing practice. Students will gain knowledge through discussions with their colleagues and in turn self-reflect on their personal beliefs. However, when it comes to assessing student writing, some writing teachers are at loss in incorporating critical pedagogy in assessment. Shohamy (2001a, 2001b) proposes that educators use the critical language testing (CLT) to promote democratic assessment in large scale and local assessment tools. CLT asks assessment designers and stakeholders to critically reexamine the hidden agenda of the tests. As Shohamy (2001) states,

CLT examines the intentions of tests...whether they are meant to assess

and negotiate knowledge or define and dictate it...CLT engages in a wider sphere of social dialogue and debate and confronts the roles that tests play and have been assigned to play in society by competing ideologies and the discourse that is thereby constructed. It draws testers towards areas of social processes and the power struggles embedded in democracies. (p. 337)

With CLT, the design of assessment instruments will be a mutual effort among involved parties through different assessment methods rubrics, self-assessment, and portfolios (Shohamy, 2001a). Fetterman (1996) attempts to promote “empowerment evaluation [which] is the use of evaluation concepts, techniques, and findings to foster improvement and self-determination [and] it is designed to help people help themselves and improve their programs using a form of self-evaluation and reflection” (pp. 4-5). Further he explains that the empowerment evaluation invites everyone to participate in the creation of evaluative tools in an open arena. This means that everyone has a chance to participate and voice their concerns and contributions to make an inclusive evaluation tools. That being said, people need to be taught by evaluators because it helps “desensitize and demystify” (Fetterman, 1996, p. 9) evaluation processes. Writing teachers may wonder whether the democratic approach in writing assessment can be implemented in their classes. In composition, Huot (2002) makes the similar call for writing teachers that “If we are to teach students to write successfully, then we have to teach them to assess their own writing” (p. 11). Shohamy (2001), Fetterman (1996), and Huot (2002) argue that writing teachers have to teach our students reflect on their writing process and reveal the assessment process by asking them participate in the creation of assessment tools to use in assessing their written papers.

Especially with second language (L2) writers, writing in English is a challenging task. These L2 writers bring with them rich resources and backgrounds that can be useful in composition classes. However, a few L2 writers are afraid of writing classes because of their negative experiences in feedback they received based on their grammatical errors and mistakes. Writing teachers can help change such attitudes in L2 writers; the section on assessment in the CCC Statement on Second language Writing and Writers (2014) states the following:

Writing instructors should look for evidence of a text’s rhetorically effective features, rather than focus only on one or two of these features that stand out as problematic. To reduce the risk of evaluating students on the basis of their cultural knowledge rather than their writing proficiency, students should be given several writing prompts to choose from when appropriate.... When possible, instructors should provide students with a rubric which articulates assessment criteria. (para. 8)

As the statement has suggested, writing teachers should focus on the additive model in second language acquisition (SLA) instead of deficit model

in language learning. In order to facilitate the learning process, assessment criteria should be provided to L2 writers in advance to ensure that students compose their written assignments to meet the goal of the composition courses. However, others may have argued that by providing rubrics to students, teachers are doing a disservice as this may compromise student learning process (Kohn, 2006a, p. xiv). That being said, L2 writers should be taught how to assess their own writing because “writers need to become critical assessors of their own writing; as they shuffle back and forth through the various phases of writing, they are assessing what they have written” (Crusan, 2010b, p. 9).

Rubrics

Among different assessment tools used in writing classrooms, rubrics seem to be one of the most popular tools because rubrics provide students guidelines and focus to complete assignments and help reduce students’ anxieties (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). However, rubrics can be perceived as “a tool to promote standardization” (Kohn, 2006b, p. 12). This may be the case if and when the rubric is created by writing program administrators and is delivered to writing instructors and teaching assistants in the program (Broad, 2003).

As discussed above, writing assessment researchers have a favorable approach in promoting fair and democratic tools for evaluating our student writing by asking students to participate in the process of rubric creation. Weigle (2007) has provided some examples of how to concretize the development of classroom assessment tools. Not only assessment tools need to have validity and reliability, the tools also need to be practical; “that is, it can be developed, administered, and scored within the constraints of available resources, particularly time...writing teachers in particular know how time-consuming it is to grade papers” (Weigle, 2007, p. 196).

In an attempt to humanize composition classrooms, the author invites both L1 and L2 students in composition classrooms to create rubrics to be used in grading their written assignments. Some writing instructors may ask questions regarding the validity or the reliability of the rubrics created by students. Weigle (2002) has warned teachers that “rubrics developed for large-scale [assessment] are not necessarily the most appropriate for classroom use and should not be adopted wholesale, without a serious consideration of the goals of the class and the specifics of the assessment context” (p. 184). That being said, writing instructors have forgotten that different assignments require different rubrics and that one rubric cannot be used in assessing every piece of writing (Crusan, 2010b).

Furthermore, publications promote and encourage students to participate in the rubric creation; the practicality and implementation are limiting. In art education, Huffman (1998) has asked her art students to create

their own rubrics to use in grading their own art work; she reports that her students take ownership and change their attitude in their learning. In a reading classroom, Skillings and Ferrell (2000) collaboratively conduct a study based on the student-generated rubrics in the school settings; they argue that “involving students in this process of self-evaluation empowers them in the development of critical think skills” (p. 455). Not only the students are empowered, they also develop metacognition, which can be transferred to the new learning environments. Crusan (2010b) posits that students will not question their grades if the teachers use student generated rubrics. Another argument is that assessment should not be a mystery to our students; students should have active participation in creating writing assessment tools (Spandel, 2006). If writing teachers value student voices in our pedagogy, they should also provide spaces for our students to participate in creating (writing) assessment instruments (Wilson, 2006).

Some writing instructors may feel ambivalent in giving power to students, especially in assessing their own writing. Others may have questions of how they can invite students to see the importance of using rubrics they have created in assessing their own writing. If teachers truly embrace and value student voices in their classes, they also have to demystify the gatekeeping tool the teachers use in their classrooms

Especially with L2 writers, they would feel appreciative of knowing what to be assessed in their written assignments. The democratic writing assessment approach is helpful to L2 writers because they can see what teachers really value in writing (Broad, 2003; Spandel, 2006). By using student-generated rubrics, L2 students will see the authenticity of the writing assignments. This helps build confidence in their language learning, especially in writing proficiency, their clarity in what is to be expected in the writing assignments, and the ownership they gain in their work (Huffman, 1998).

In this L2 writing classrooms, the focus of this writing course was on research writing, which was usually taken after students passed the first-year composition course. The class meets for 16 weeks. For this particular class, the students are self-identified as students who use English as a second/foreign language. Some students are bilingual students.

The following steps are taken to help facilitate the rubric creation in the author’s composition classrooms.

- Genre analysis

Instead of analyzing written samples in textbooks, students analyze authentic written texts from published journals because textbook samples do not represent the authenticity of genres students are expected to write beyond our classrooms. Textbooks also promote composition traditions or “replication of standardization [and] the absence of cultural creativity” (Hurlbert, 2012, p. 165).

After the analysis, the students and the instructors would discuss

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what is expected in that genre of writing. The whole class also explores cultural differences in the context of academic writing. By doing comparative rhetorical analysis, L2 students will gain metacognitive awareness of the genre and what they need to include in their writing.

After the discussion on genre analysis, students are group together to brainstorm criteria in response to the sample written texts. They have to come up approximately five criteria from each group. The instructor will record each criterion and what it entails on the board or on the projector screen in which everyone in class can see. When every group has shared their criteria, students will participate in the whole class discussion.

- Collaborative discussion

Group discussion provides a space for students to voice their opinions and concerns in generating rubrics. Students will also learn what is important in assessing a piece of writing from other students' perspectives. For L2 writers, the group discussion is a space where they can practice not only making arguments in their speech, they also have an opportunity to think beyond the grammatical issues in their writing (Canagarajah, 2006; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Reid, 2008).

- Rubric generation

After each group has shared their criteria, the whole class will look at the whole list of criteria on the board. Everyone will have a chance to make objections to any criterion they feel it should not be included. When students make an objection, they have to provide their reasons of excluding the criterion. After the objection has been provided, the other students will be asked if there is any rebuttal. Once the discussion is over, the whole class will be asked to vote whether they would like to have the discussed criterion removed.

The discussion helps clarify ambiguous terms for other students. It also provides writing instructors and students a space to make meaning of each criterion. Since assessment terms are not discussed in class, many students sometimes feel left out or are not fully understood since "language [of the assessment instruments] is not self meaningful and self explanatory" (Hanauer, 2009, p. 57). The discussion of assessment terms helps students gain learning autonomy and make writing assignments more meaningful.

- Implementation of rubric

After the rubric has been created, students will be given a copy of the rubric they created. Students will be asked to bring their drafts of the paper to class. They will be asked to switch their papers to their peers. After that, students will use the rubric they have created to provide feedback to their peer's draft. This process is crucial because students will have an opportunity to critically examine their

understandings of the rubric and reflect on their written drafts. If students have questions understanding or applying rubrics to their peers' drafts, they have a chance to ask questions and revise. Every suggestion will be taken up to a whole class discussion. After the revision of the rubric, the writing instructor will use the student-generated rubric to evaluate students' final papers. Andrade (2005) points out that students need to be trained on how to use and understand rubrics; without training, students can be lost even the rubrics are created by them.

The reactions from L2 students were positive. Students found that this particular activity helped them understand how important an assessment tool is. The students also felt that they were empowered because they had an opportunity to voice their opinions of what is important in written assignments.

Conclusion

Rubrics can be used a reflective tool for students to revise their papers. The rubrics provide concrete revision plans for students to pay attention to in order to receive higher grades. Students not only learn how to revise their papers, they also learn to set higher expectations in their learning experiences. As the author has demonstrated throughout this paper, writing teachers can promote and value student voices in the most crucial aspect in their classes: assessment. Among many assessment tools writing teachers use, rubrics can be an appropriate evaluation tool in writing classrooms if students have input in creating them. Instead of treating assessment as a gatekeeper, teachers can open the gate for students to see the complexity of grading their written papers. When the assessment process is demystified, students will develop the metacognitive skills in navigating academia. The students may never look at the rubrics the same way as they walk out of our classrooms.

Author's Biography

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Our common mission is to advance professional expertise in English language teaching and learning for speakers of other languages. Our membership consists of educators from all levels: elementary, secondary, higher-education, and adult education. All of our board members share the same commitment to provide an equitable, quality education for all students. To that end, TexTESOL IV hosts an annual regional conference, participates in state and national conferences, and offers two publications, the Fourth Estate, TexTESOL IV's quarterly newsletter and the Journal of Assessment and Teaching English Language Learners (JATELL) .

We also strive to maintain a board which represents the needs and concerns of all of the educational levels we serve. The board meets monthly and welcomes the input of members. You may contact members of the TexTESOL IV Board with your questions and concerns.