Student Views on the Use of L1 in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

The use of first languages (L1) in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Japanese Universities is often a source of robust debate. In recent years, there has been an increase in counterarguments against the L2 monolingual EFL classroom and a strengthening of support for L1 usage. This study examines the views of students receiving tertiary English language education on the use of the L1 in English classes. The analysis suggests that students studying English as a second language (L2) in Japanese universities overwhelmingly preferred the use of L1 to aid in the facilitation of learning in EFL classes. Moreover, there were notable trends in attitudes between differing levels of student L2 proficiencies. The results reveal a negative correlation between desired L1 application in EFL classes and the L2 proficiencies of the students, and a discrepancy in the desired objective for L1 application for different student levels of L2 proficiency. These findings suggest the approach adopted for EFL courses in Japanese universities should implement judicious use of L1 and recognize that different levels of L2 proficiency will affect preferences for L1 usage in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: L1 usage, L2, student views, EFL, teacher L1 fluency, purpose of L1

A Longitudinal Analysis of Ability Grouping with College EFL Learners

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Abstract

Ability grouping, organizing classes homogenously by L2 proficiency, has been commonly used in Taiwanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. This quasi-experimental (within-subjects design) study examined proficiency gains of 785 Taiwanese university students over three years enrolled in a general English (GE) program that employed ability grouping. The standardized test used for this study was the *College Students English Proficiency Test* (CSEPT). The results indicated students gained in English proficiency over time, from entry into the program to their last year of English instruction. Further post hoc analysis of the long-term proficiency changes showed that students with an observed A2 (CEFR) proficiency, upon entry, had more pronounced gains, over the three years, than their A1 and B1 counterparts. The study concluded that a leveled English curriculum maximized the learning experience for A2 level students and allowed them continuous proficiency gains. However, the fact that B1 level students did not show consistent progress is perhaps due to plateau effect when their test scores hit the graduation benchmark. As for the A1 students, their lack of achievement may be due to their low self-esteem. The pedagogical implication suggests the need to revisit the leveled (ability grouping) English curriculum for A1 and B1 level learners.

Keywords: ability grouping, general English curriculum, graduation benchmark, college English, language program design

Language Input Effects on L2 Composition Peer review Feedback

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Abstract

To date, very little research on L2 peer review of L2 essay composition has focused on the issue of whether the choice of L1 or L2 use in the peer review process facilitates or hinders students' transmission and reception of productive commentary on their essay drafts. This study was designed to ascertain the

impact of language choice in written peer review sessions on both the types of commentary made and essay authors' propensity to incorporate peer commentary into subsequent drafts. Data was collected from essay assignments in an English writing course at an English-medium university in Japan using written peer reviews conducted in both Japanese and English in a cross-balanced design. The data were analyzed to measure the impact of the language used on the number and types of comments made, as well as to ascertain the relative impact of peer commentary on the subsequent revisions. The study found sizeable differences according to the language a peer review was conducted in, suggesting that L2 written peer reviews may be more beneficial at identifying/rectifying paragraph-level and structural issues, whereas L1 peer review was slightly better for correcting rhetorical and logical issues.

Keywords: L2 writing; peer review; essay writing pedagogy; L1/L2 effects

Learning to Spell in English by Chinese Students: A Cross-sectional Study

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Abstract
This study investigates the English spelling of students in grades 2 through 8 in Mainland China. A review of spelling and cross-linguistic research in spelling is presented. The orthographic development of 273 students was assessed *with validated spelling inventories* (Sterbinsky, 2007) to sample developmental features across three layers of English orthography. The sample size and the detailed analyses make this study unique. The 13 features in the analyses spanned development from beginning consonants to roots. Feature analyses predicted grade level, and there were significant differences across grades. Students made predictable spelling errors that reflected a similar developmental sequence to native English speakers. The error analyses across grades adds to the body of cross-linguistic literature illustrating how English language learners develop basic literacy skills in a similar manner to English-L1 children (Chiappe, Siegel, & Gottardo, 2002; Ford, Invernizzi, & Huang, 2014). This study indicates that as some English learners advanced in grades, their L1 has less of an impact on their spelling in English. When orthographic knowledge is examined across the alphabet, pattern, and meaning layers and cross-linguistically, researchers and educators can identify features students have mastered and what they are learning as a guide for a sequence of instruction and monitoring growth.

Keywords: grades 2-8, spelling development, orthographic knowledge in second language, Chinese-speaking English learners, EFL, cross-language transfers

Exploring Young English Learners' Perceptions of the Picture Word Inductive Model in China

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Abstract
The Picture-Word Inductive Model (PWIM) is one of the new teaching methods introduced in English Language Education (ELT) in China, in order to develop English learners' communicative competence. However, studies conducted on PWIM from the perspectives of English learners are underrepresented and no research has been done about using PWIM with English learners in China. Considering this gap, I attempted to answer the question: What are young English learners' perceptions of PWIM? I deployed observations, questionnaires, and interviews to explore what fourth and seventh graders perceived to be the strengths and drawbacks of PWIM. My findings suggest that many students listed and exemplified

numerous strengths of PWIM, and a few mentioned its weaknesses. The students expressed that PWIM had a positive effect on their English learning.

Critical Pedagogy in EFL Teacher Education in the United Arab Emirates: Possibilities and Challenges

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Abstract
This study examines the possibilities and obstacles present in adopting a critical approach to English language education in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Three main elements of critical pedagogy in language teaching were suggested: cultural representation in the curriculum, perceptions of global English(es), and local and global issues. Within a research design informed by an adapted action research methodology, six secondary public schools from three emirates were selected for inclusion in the study. The pre-action stage included questionnaires, interviews, and class observations. An action plan and intervention followed this first phase of data collection. The intervention was informed by Freire's (1996) "Conscientization" approach, Shor's (1992) generative themes, and Heaney's (1995) codification and problem-posing methods of teaching. The action phase consisted of a hands-on workshop for 20 volunteers from the 42 pre-phase participants. The results indicate that while teachers showed interest and even enthusiasm about critical pedagogy, they were aware of a number of obstacles and challenges in applying it in their classrooms.

Teachers' Needs in the Advancement of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Taiwan

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Abstract
English language education in Taiwan has experienced a number of modifications over the past decade. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has initiated several reforms since 1994 to change the historical grammar-translation pedagogy into one emphasizing more communication. The purpose of these alterations was to increase learners' communication proficiency, so they could meet the new demands resulting from increased internationalization and globalization. Previous studies regarding Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in many other EFL (English as a foreign language) settings and Taiwan have shown promising results, yet the process of implementing CLT has often been challenging. Many factors, such as large class sizes and parents' negative attitudes toward CLT, have been found to negatively influence teachers' willingness to implement CLT. Using a multi-methodological approach of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this study aims to examine teachers' needs for better communication-oriented practices in the classrooms of Taiwan. In total, 75 teachers were surveyed. Based on their degree of willingness to participate, 15 of them were further contacted for more in-depth interviews. The findings of the study revealed that to make CLT more applicable, teachers demanded in-service training and assistance from native English-speaking teachers (NESTs). In addition, students' and parents' re-education to value the development of communication proficiency, and to gain more knowledge about CLT, and the support from school authorities, were considered crucial.