edited by

Rita Elaine Silver
Christine C. M. Goh
Lubna Alsagoff

Language Learning in
New English Contexts

Studies of Acquisition and Development

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Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

English Acquisition and Development in Multilingual Singapore

Rita E. Silver, Lubna Alsagoff and Christine C. M. Goh

Overview

English acquisition has been studied extensively in environments where English is the dominant language (e.g. the United States and the United Kingdom). However, studies of English language acquisition in other environments are less plentiful despite the fact that much English language learning is undertaken outside of traditionally English-dominant environments. In addition, few collections of empirical studies consider later development as well as initial acquisition in home and school contexts. This volume brings together studies of English language learning in Singapore – an example of a multilingual, multi-ethnic context which encourages English language acquisition and development. Each study in this collection investigates a specific area of learning (e.g. grammatical development, literacy skills, pedagogical options for Asian classrooms) while taking into account the bi- and multilingual nature of the Singapore context. School-based learning is featured heavily as it plays a crucial part in English learning in Singapore and in other contexts of English learning internationally.

In order to establish the context for English learning in Singapore, some of the ways in which is it unique and some of the ways in which it is similar to other contexts of learning internationally, this chapter overviews key features of the policy background, historical development of study of English in Singapore (including issues of English as an International Language and World Englishes) and use of English within the educational system. First, it is important that we define the terms 'acquisition' and 'development' as used in this volume and explain why we look at both, especially when considering international contexts of learning.

The term *language acquisition* refers to the initial cognitive and social processes in language learning. In first language acquisition, this normally takes place between birth and the age of four or five. A child who has acquired his or her first language is one who has achieved sufficient command of its form, vocabulary and 'rules' of use to engage in meaningful interactions with others. Bilingual acquisition might be simultaneous or successive to first language acquisition. Importantly for multilingual contexts, children acquiring two or more languages simultaneously from early in life might learn both (or all) as 'first languages' (Meisel, 1989, 1990). In these cases, the languages involved are considered to be acquired following the natural path of acquisition for each language, in the same way that a monolingual child acquires a single language. In contrast, second language acquisition and successive bilingual acquisition refer to the learning of a language by an individual who already has some degree of control over another language system. In all of these cases – first, second and bilingual – 'acquisition' is used to refer to the initial stages of learning.

The term *language development* is used to refer to an individual's progressive mastery of specific linguistic features, such as pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, and any sequences that occur throughout the process of acquisition. Discussions of language development take into account learner language, with features that may be part of the normal path of development but not part of the stable, adult variety as well as development of linguistic skills for specific areas of use (e.g. academic English). We use *language learning* as a term which covers the trajectory from early acquisition through later development and ultimate proficiency.[1] Broadly speaking, language learning is seen as a cognitive skill that is developed and honed through interaction with other users in a specific learning environment. Thus, the chapters in this collection address both cognitive and interactionist aspects of language learning.

Because the purpose of the book is to examine language learning in one socio-political, geographic context – that of Singapore – there is an emphasis on the role of the environment, both social and linguistic. We use *social environment* to refer to the circumstances in which the learner is brought up and develops conceptual knowledge. This includes environmental factors which influence the way language is used in broader social contexts (e.g. outside the home). *Linguistic environment* refers to the learner's opportunities to receive input; to produce meaningful, appropriate output; and to get explicit and implicit feedback on language use via linguistic interaction (cf. Long, 1996).

Global perspectives on English acquisition and development

Singapore is of linguistic interest for many reasons, not least of which is the seemingly overwhelming success of a national language policy linking economic development, education and multilingualism (Silver, 2005). A crucial piece of these interlocking policies has been the adoption of English as one of four official languages (Chinese [Mandarin], Malay and Tamil are the others) and an emphasis on English language learning in schools from preschool onward. In this, Singapore is but one of the countries influenced by and participating in the global spread of English. Because of the emphasis on English in educational, social and economic settings, Singapore also exemplifies language shift and the development of localized variations. Thus, to understand English acquisition and development in Singapore, we must consider the language learning environment not in comparison with traditional English-dominant environments but in the context of English as an International Language (EIL) and the development of World Englishes.[2]

English is used for specific purposes in many international, intercultural contexts. In these contexts, users might include so-called 'native English speakers' from Western, Anglo-Saxon nations (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States) in communication with 'second language learners' from other nations; however, users are just as likely to be bilinguals with varying degrees of proficiency and different standards of use, none of whom fit the stereotypical view of a 'native English speaker'. In these cases, English is used as a *lingua franca*.[3] Different, localized varieties of English – World Englishes – are also used in many international, intercultural contexts.

Kachru (1982, 1992) considered Singapore to be within the Outer Circle of his model of English language expansion internationally. Within this model, Outer Circle are 'countries where English has a long history of institutionalized functions and standing as a language of wide and important roles . . .' (Kachru & Nelson, 1996: 78). This situates Singapore as a context for examination of EIL and issues of language acquisition and development related to EIL.

Historically, English learning was encouraged in Singapore following an EIL rationale – the pragmatic use of English for international business and trading. This continues today as current education policy states, 'At the end of their primary and secondary education, pupils will be able to

communicate effectively in English . . . [to] speak, write and make presentations in *internationally acceptable English . . .*' (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001: 3, emphasis added). In addition, historically as well as currently, English is promoted as an inter-ethnic language within Singapore, to foster communication across Chinese, Malay, Indian and other ethnic groups with individuals who might not share a common home language. Thus, Singapore is an example of adoption of English for both international and local use (e.g. de Souza, 1980; Ho & Alsagoff, 1998; Platt & Weber, 1980; Silver, 2005), and English in Singapore exemplifies both language spread and language change.

Education has been central to English acquisition and development in Singapore and elsewhere. Some of the policy rationales for adopting English as one of the official languages of Singapore are similar to justifications voiced globally. Nunan (2003), for example, reports that language education policies in seven countries in Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam) emphasize the importance of English as a global language, connecting English knowledge to international relations and international trade. Likewise, English-knowing bi- and multilingualism has spread throughout Europe, again largely justified by arguments related to economic opportunity (Hoffman, 2000). In Switzerland, for example, already known for a long-standing policy of multiple national languages, English is gaining importance as a foreign language. In some cases English acquisition is considered to be more important than learning a second national language[4] for increased opportunities in the labour market (local and international) (Grin & Korth, 2005).

In Singapore, as English has become more important economically and politically, it has also become more important socially. With the increased importance of English for 'getting ahead' (in terms of educational advancement, higher education and employment opportunities), English has also gained ground as a home language (or one of the home languages) among the upwardly mobile (Pakir, 1997). In Singapore and internationally, use of English at home by those who are not native speakers increases the opportunity for growth of new varieties of English. Since discussion of the localized variety, its development and study, is central to an understanding of England acquisition and development in Singapore, an overview is given below.

An historical overview of English in Singapore

The first articulated framework proposed for the study of Singapore English in its own right, known as the 'Lectal Continuum', was developed by Platt

and his associates (Ho & Platt, 1993; Platt & Weber, 1980). Theoretically grounded in creole studies, the Lectal Continuum framework characterizes Singapore English as a post-creole continuum, in which there is movement from a creoloid form towards a more prestigious and exonormatively defined Standard English. Prior to this, English in Singapore was viewed more as a poorly learnt version of Standard English (Tay, 1982; Tongue, 1974). The older view was in keeping with monolingual, colonialist, behaviourist views of language acquisition. The Lectal Continuum definitively changed the older, predominantly prescriptive approach to the study of English in Singapore. Through the newer, descriptive framework, Platt and Weber set out to study variation in Singapore English. This newer view was in line with emerging sociolinguistic approaches to language use and language learning. Within this framework variation is described along a cline defined by proficiency, education and socio-economic status (Platt & Weber, 1980: 108–135). At one end, the acrolectal variety – identified as the Standard Variety of English – is associated with social groups having higher levels of (English) education, as well as higher socio-economic status, as determined primarily by occupation. At the other end of this cline, the basilectal variety – identified as Singapore English – is associated with low education, and low socio-economic status, and possibly lower English proficiency. This variety is most commonly referred to as 'Singlish'.

Platt's model, developed in the 1970s, accurately portrayed a linguistic community where English was a newly emerging inter-ethnic *lingua franca*, but where education in English was not widespread and English proficiency often guaranteed a good job. Despite its obviously descriptive stance, as well as its historical appropriateness, the Lectal Continuum has nonetheless been criticized as inadvertently promoting inequality between speakers of local varieties and of Western-oriented varieties of English. It labels Singlish as 'undesirable', since it implies that the use of Singlish is borne out of lack of education, not choice, and because it is associated with low socio-economic status. In contrast, Standard English is held up as the desired variety, associated with a good education and high socio-economic status (Alsagoff, 2007)

Gupta (1992, 1994) proposed that diglossia (following Ferguson, 1959) might be more appropriate than Platt and Weber's Lectal Continuum to serve as the framework for describing and understanding the variation and use of English in Singapore. The Diglossic Model has been subsequently adopted by a significant number of local and international researchers and is incontrovertibly the dominant model in any literature citing Singapore English (Alsagoff & Ho, 1998). The diglossic model sees Singlish as an L-form, existing side-by-side with Standard Singapore English, its H-form

counterpart. Each of these varieties has a specific set of functions – the colloquial variety or L-form functions in social contexts that orientate towards friendliness, rapport and solidarity (Gupta, 1994, 1998). The H-form, on the other hand, is used in formal and literary domains. The change of perspective comes about primarily from a consideration of the historical development of English use in Singapore: from one where most of its citizens clearly acquired English through education as a second language to one where many acquire English as a home language. In addition, as Pakir points out, 'Platt and Weber's (1980) static depiction of the acrolect, mesolect and basilect speakers of Singapore English obscures the fact that speakers switch back and forth all the time' (1991: 174).

The Diglossic Model addresses this switching between varieties and recasts Singlish as a colloquial form of Singapore English spoken by educated Singapore English speakers to indicate informality or solidarity. Singlish thus becomes a variety with a sociolinguistic purpose and design, rather than one borne out of a lack of competence to command the Standard variety. Thus, while Standard English still remains the target variety in education and formal domains, it is increasingly clear in Singapore that a range of more informal varieties exist in other domains.

An interesting issue that arises in a discussion of the nativeness of Singapore English comes from a closer reading of Gupta (1994), who distinguishes two groups of speakers – one where only Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) is the acquired variety of English, and the other where both SCE and the Standard Variety are acquired. This means that the linguistic landscape in Singapore is far from homogenous, and that a consideration of English as L1 or L2 must be accompanied by questions as to which variety of English is being acquired. Pakir has sought to develop an approach which is partially meant to address this variation: the 'Expanding Triangles of English Expression' (1991). The 'Expanding Triangles' model attempts to combine the descriptions offered by the Lectal Continuum as well as the Diglossic model. This model places the variation of English in Singapore along two clines: a proficiency cline and a formality cline. The model is presented through a series of expanding triangles which represent the differing ranges of repertoires of English speaking Singaporeans, with education and corresponding proficiency in English offering speakers an increasing range of choice. Thus, in her model, educated advanced speakers are able to command a range of styles from Standard Singapore English (SSE) to the colloquial variety (SCE). They are capable of using English in a broad range of functional contexts as well as having command of the formal style. A speaker with only rudimentary proficiency, on the other

hand, will have only a limited range of styles and may not be able to participate successfully in a context that requires a high degree of linguistic formality. In all of these models, education has an important part to play.

Current situation of English in Singapore

Education was initially the primary means of promoting English acquisition in Singapore. However, a trend towards increasing home language use has been continuing for several decades. In the latest census, done in 2000, 23% of the population claimed English as one of the home languages (up from 18.8% in 1990) (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000). The Ministry of Education has found that as much as 50% of the ethnically Chinese, first grade cohort reports using English as a home language (Goh, 2004).

As of 1990, English has been referred to as the 'first language' of school by the Ministry of Education, regardless of home language use (Curriculum Planning Division, 1991). For students who do not use English at home, learning all subjects in English (apart from Mother Tongue[5]) acts as a sort of immersion programme – although content courses are usually not designed as language learning environments in Singapore. Throughout the school system, there is an emphasis on textbook-based learning and preparation for high-stakes examinations at primary, secondary and pre-university levels. In this, Singapore is similar to other countries with examination-based pedagogies (e.g. Korea, Japan).

One difference in the Singaporean educational system is the implementation of bilingual education along ethnic lines with all four official languages. All schools offer all four languages but each student usually studies only two of these: English plus a 'Mother Tongue'. Ultimately, this system promotes English-knowing bilingualism (Kachru, 1992; Pakir, 1991). Mother Tongue is determined by the child's ethnicity (Chinese study Mandarin, etc.). The policy goal is for all children to be effectively bilingual; however, English seems to be the first among equals since all subjects other than Mother Tongue are taught in English.

The social context of schooling in Singapore supports a system of examination-based pedagogy as parents pre-teach materials from the textbooks, send their children for extra 'tuition', and worry whether teachers are adequately preparing children for examinations. Pakir (1997) refers to the 'invisible language planning' that goes on at the individual and family level as individuals emphasize English learning and switch to English as the

home language in order to give their children a head start in school. Despite concerns by scholars that English spread leads to language loss and cultural dislocation (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992), families and individuals in Singapore often emphasize the practical aspects of English learning (educational and economic advancement) and the potential advantages of entrance into the broader English-speaking community worldwide (Chew 1995, 2007).

English, for the most part, is viewed positively with strong parental concern about children learning English and some resultant language shift, as noted above. Since English is considered to be necessary for economic advancement and the government persistently claims that only 'Standard English' can fulfil this role, parents are often worried about the learning and use of 'Singlish'. The perception that the localized, colloquial variety of English is somehow 'substandard' is in conflict with the view of trained linguists and the models of Singapore English they advocate (see discussion above).

Bearing all of this in mind, we can see that there are several key factors that language learning in Singapore shares with other international contexts for English acquisition and development. First, language learning in Singapore takes place within a bi- or multilingual context rather than a largely monolingual, English-dominant one. Learners may be exposed to multiple languages in a variety of contexts. Second, teaching and learning of English is by and large intentional with policies establishing teaching and use of English in schools, parents often making choices about schools based on language learning goals, and families sometimes making explicit decisions about home language use based on perceptions about which language will be most useful for the child outside the home. Third, school-based learning is central to English acquisition and development, sometimes as the starting point for acquisition but also as both purpose and place for development. In Singapore, 'school-based' does not indicate only primary or secondary education; it also includes nursery school, kindergarten and private lessons of all sorts for extensive and intensive learning. Finally, learning English in these contexts often entails English-knowing bilingualism as objective and outcome rather than English monolingualism, though the range and depth of proficiency varies greatly across users.

Outline of the chapters

The empirical studies in this volume investigate learners of different ages (pre-school through secondary grades), in different settings (at home, in

school and 'lab like'), and with different methodological and theoretical orientations. They also cover a broad range of topics. Taken together, the chapters showcase the variety of issues and interests for studies of language acquisition and development in 'New English' contexts such as Singapore and indicate why investigation of English learning in these contexts is important for a better understanding of language acquisition and development. In the first chapter, Cruz-Ferreira directly addresses the issue of *standards* and *targets* for New Englishes using examples of phonological variation in child language learning. She provides examples of phonotactic processes as well as phonemic and prosodic systems in Singapore English that differ from 'Old English' models and points out (following Foley, 1998) that idealized norms, based on models which do not take the local variety into account, promote a deficit model which disadvantages Singaporean children.

Subsequent chapters are loosely grouped around the age of the learners in each study. Goh and Ho look at use of decontextualized oral language skills of three Singaporean pre-school (age 6) children. Using two oral language elicitation tasks (picture description and narrative production) they compare the children's ability to make information linguistically explicit, to establish cohesion and coherence in their production, and to use appropriate vocabulary. They report that while all three children had developed a 'fairly large vocabulary' which they could use in their oral tasks, their language overall was 'limited to the literal level' and there many examples of 'non-standard features' of the type commonly considered to be Singapore Colloquial English (pp. 48–49). The researchers go beyond merely describing the children's output by also investigating mother–child interactions during story reading. Their results show that differences in the production of the three children did not necessarily align with differences found in the mother–child interactions, unlike in prior research on decontextualized oral language (e.g. De Temple, 2001; De Temple & Beals, 1991). Here the role of the socio-cultural environment comes into play. As Goh and Ho note, 'In Singapore, children's main caregivers and conversational partners during the day are often not mothers, but grandparents, siblings, foreign domestic helpers or child minders in day care centres' (p. 47). Thus, the relative importance of 'home language use' must be reconsidered not as a locale or even as caregiver–child interactions, but in terms of the variety of interlocutors who might be caregivers and the types of languages they might use with the child on a daily basis.

In Gu, Hu and Zhang's study on listening strategies, children in Primary 4–Primary 6 (ages 10–12) met with researchers outside of their regular class

in the school setting. Using pre-recorded narrative passages (rated as 'easy' and 'difficult') and think-aloud protocols, the researchers compare the listening strategies of students at different grade levels and of high and low proficiency learners. There were few differences due to grade level, although the Primary 6 students were significantly more likely to try to link the information in the listening passage to their own experience and to ask for help as compared with students in Primary 4 and Primary 5. In terms of proficiency, Gu et al. found that high and low proficiency learners used inferencing, prediction and reconstruction of the stories to facilitate comprehension. Learners in both groups asked for help and attempted to monitor their own progress. However, there were also differences between the groups. Notably, the high proficiency group used more strategies to go beyond literal comprehension and to integrate the new information into existing knowledge, while the low proficiency learners were less able to orchestrate strategy use effectively and were more likely to pretend to comprehend even if they did not. Although differences between the two groups are not statistically different, the researchers are able to report a number of qualitative differences in learners' use of top-down and bottom-up listening strategies. When considering these findings in light of prior research, they conclude, first, that the specific socio-political-education context of Singapore was not a crucial factor in the strategy use of individual learners. Further, they state that 'research on L2 learner strategies has come of age and has discovered enough compelling patterns to deserve more classroom attention' (p. 70).

Vaish and Shegar investigate teacher–student interaction in the English language classroom. They do an in-depth analysis of pupil–teacher classroom exchanges in a Primary 5 English language unit. Using cluster analysis to select the unit from a large corpus of classroom data (Luke et al., 2005) and comparing the features of the unit with findings from other Primary 5 English language lessons (Luke & Abdul Rahim, 2006; Sam, Shegar & Teng, 2005), they conclude that the transcribed unit is typical of Primary 5 English lessons. They then consider the types of scaffolding that are and are not provided to children during teacher–pupil interactions of the IRE (Initiation – Reply – Evaluation) type, and compare the types of scaffolding found with research reported from 'centre-based' classroom contexts (Gibbons, 1998, 2002, 2003). Their analysis shows how teacher prompts are restricted to elaboration and procedural prompt types (following Ge & Land, 2004) with almost no room for children to deviate from the teacher's planned script. They also suggest that though this type of sequence is somewhat limiting, it can assist in comprehension for children of mixed abilities and varied home-language backgrounds.

While Vaish and Shegar suggest that there are specific discourses attributable to the Singaporean context, Doyle investigates this more directly. Doyle draws from a large corpus of annotated classroom data – the Singapore Corpus of Research in Education (SCoRE) – to try to understand what a 'school variety' is in the Singaporean context. By using a corpus-based approach, Doyle is able to examine a large body of data to look for patterns in the language at school, specifically in Primary 5 and Secondary 3 classes. He compares the classroom data with data from the International Corpus of English (ICE), including the ICE-Singapore (Pakir, 2000). The detailed findings indicate frequent use of SCE in pedagogical contexts, by teachers as well as students. They also suggest that SCE is not only used for affective purposes (e.g. building solidarity) (cf. Kwek, 2005), but also for instructional, content-oriented talk. The analysis also shows that teachers maintain control over their lessons through use of frequent IREs, supporting the findings on classroom discourse in Primary 5 English lessons (Vaish & Shegar, this volume), and crucially that 'pupils and teachers share the same variety of English, but differ in terms of how much of this variety they get to contribute in the construction of the typical classroom discourse' (p. 107).

In a second study using SCoRE data, Guo and Hong provide a cross-sectional analysis of the development of metamorphization in writing. They also examine the linguistic realizations of grammatical metaphor in compositions (or 'essays') written during English Language (EL) lessons by students in Primary 5 and Secondary 3. Specifically, they look at two stages of ideational metaphor development: protometaphor and metaphor (cf. Derewianka, 2003; Halliday, 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999). They first present an in-depth analysis of two sample essays (one at Primary 5, one at Secondary 3) and show how both writers focus on events and actions in their compositions and both use similar organizational features appropriate to the recount text type; however, the Secondary 3 learner shows a greater ability to make use of grammatical metaphor. Subsequently, the researchers refer to the findings of an analysis of 33 essays (21 for Primary 5 and 12 for Secondary 3) to determine whether there are patterned differences in use of grammatical metaphor between the two groups. They find a number of differences between the groups, all of which indicate that secondary school 'is the time when metaphorical and protometaphorical modes of meaning making begin to take hold' (p. 125). This supports findings from contexts in which English is the dominant language.

Alsagoff, Yap and Yip also use data from compositions done by students in both Primary and Secondary, in this case to test the Aspect Hypothesis (e.g. Anderson & Shirai, 1996; Salaberry & Shirai, 2002). They note that

variation in use of past tense markers is well-known feature of Singapore English and this cannot be attributed solely to phonological contexts (cf. Platt & Weber, 1980) or syllable structure (cf. Randall, 2003). The Aspect Hypothesis suggests a developmental pattern for past-tense use related to telicity. As the researchers explain, telic verbs are related to achievements and accomplishments while atelic verbs are related to states and activities. The Aspect Hypothesis predicts that past tense morphology will be used appropriately in the former before the latter. Their analysis focuses on learner errors in the production of past tense in compositions. While noting the potential problems with an analysis of development based on learner errors (see Ellis, 1994), the authors also demonstrate that verb telicity is a reliable predictor of learner errors. The findings suggest further that the impact of telicity is stronger for the secondary students than for primary students.

Turning from written skills and grammatical development to oral development, Stinson and Freebody report on a study of pedagogical intervention in Singapore secondary schools. In their study, trained drama teachers worked with students in the 'lower proficiency' EL classes to teach the dramatic art form using Process Drama, which focuses on engaging in an extended collaborative experience in role. Since drama is generally thought to contribute to oral language skills, gains in oral language proficiency were assessed in a pre-test, post-test design. In brief, the researchers found that use of Process Drama with these students was highly engaging, kept students focused during the lessons and encouraged collaboration. In addition, it led to significant gains in oral competence as measured by a simulation of the oral proficiency test used in Singapore secondary schools. The authors note that the students gained not only in oral proficiency but also in self-confidence. In addition, the use of this type of drama learning can shift the type of teacher-dominant interactional patterns that are evident in the studies reported by Vaish and Shegar, Doyle, and Bokhorst-Heng and Wolf (all this volume).

Finally, Bokhorst-Heng and Wolf present a case study of one bilingual girl. They turn our attention to language–literacy links and looking across both school and home settings. Based on classroom observations, interviews and a self-report diary kept by the student, the researchers describe the different types of literacy events and literacy practices that the girl engages in at school and at home as well as the different languages used to participate in those literacy events and practices. Three points are of particular interest for consideration of language and literacy learning in New English contexts. First is the way that school literacy practices are intended to

support students keeping a reading log, while the student in this case study perceives them to interfere with her individual reading purposes. Second are the student's comments on exams as well as her exam results which indicate that she is only 'average' in her reading comprehension at school, in contrast to the rich data showing that she is an avid, active, independent reader at home. Third is the way her bilinguality and biliteracy intersect in myriad ways with Chinese as the language most spoken at home, English the dominant language at school, and frequent code-switching in conversation, and differing linguistic preferences for various media (Chinese for TV and pop music but English for reading and writing – except magazines on Chinese pop idols in Chinese). As Bokhorst-Heng and Wolf point out, the notion of 'third space' (Moje et al., 2004) helps us better understand this adolescent girl's bilingualism and bilinguality. The chapter also returns us to discussion of crucial issues around language learning in New English contexts: issues of home-school language learning links and perceptions of what it means to 'know' a language at home and at school.

In the final chapter, Courtney B. Cazden provides an afterword which traces links across the different chapters and helps to place this research in a broader, global perspective.

Although the chapters in this volume address a variety of topics and employ many different methodologies for their investigations, the centrality of language learning in and for school is a focus in each. Most of the studies use data collected in classrooms (Alsagoff et al.; Doyle; Guo & Hong; Stinson & Freebody; Vaish & Shegar), in schools and related to classroom learning (Gu et al.), linking home and school learning (Bokhorst-Heng & Wolf; Goh & Ho) or by considering what school expectations of norms and standards means for assessment of learner development (Cruz-Ferreira). Each chapter also addresses some implications for language learning and education, implications that will no doubt be worth considering for language learning both New English and 'Old' English contexts.

Notes

1 We do not follow Krashen's (1985) acquisition/learning distinction.

2 The lack of clarity and problematic usage of terms such as World Englishes (WE), English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Global Language, and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) is discussed in detail by, among others, Bolton (2004), Jenkins (2006) and Seidlhofer (2004).

3 We note here that Jenkins (2006) and others specifically exclude native speakers from their discussions of ELF. We do not refer to 'English as a Lingua Franca' in that sense for this chapter.

[4] The four national languages in Switzerland are: German, French, Italian and Romansch.

[5] Mother Tongue is a required subject for all students in the national schools. Choice is only for the official languages and each pupil is assigned a Mother Tongue based on the ethnicity of the father. Therefore, in all but exceptional cases, Chinese take Mandarin (called simply 'Chinese'), Malays take Malay and Indians take Tamil.

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Chapter 2

Learning English in Singapore: Pronunciation Targets and Norms

Madalena Cruz-Ferreira

Introduction

Children learning a language (e.g. English) inevitably end up using that language like someone else does. This is what language learning is all about, in the sense that the learning process is deemed successful when children start using language like everybody else around them does, whether at home or in school. If children fail to conform to the linguistic models that are, typically, provided by elders in a home setting, or by academic syllabuses in a school setting, they will not be able to function linguistically among their family or to access the social circles that are established through accreditation in schooling models.

In Singapore, children are schooled in English in the two senses of this phrase, that is, they are schooled about the English language by means of the English language. In the process of learning language, children aim for the linguistic targets that are available to them from uses of language around them. Typically, these targets are found at home and in school and, ideally, the two targets coincide. In this chapter, I start by briefly pointing out that within the Singaporean context there is more than one target for English and that the multiple targets do not necessarily coincide. This leads to questions about what target the children are taught, what target they aim for, and what these targets mean in the larger social/political/educational context. The status of English in Singapore is compounded by several factors that relate to the multilingual nature of the country as well as to local uses of English, as detailed in the introductory chapter to this volume. Local varieties of any language come complete with characteristic pronunciation, vocabulary and, less commonly, morpho-syntax. Given evidence that different accents account for major barriers to intelligibility among speakers of

the same language (Deterding et al., 2005), the bulk of the chapter focuses on issues related to pronunciation. In the last section, I argue for a model of English that is based on local standards of pronunciation, drawing on recent and ongoing research about Singapore English, to conclude that such a model is required for our understanding of (a) typical child language acquisition and development, as well as for added insight into the nature of English as an international language.

Throughout, I explore the ambiguity of 'targets' as the *goals* implicit or explicit in language policies versus the *actual forms* that children are exposed to, and the ambiguity of 'norms' as the *prescription* of linguistic uses versus the *repository* of actual uses observed in a linguistic community.

English and Singapore Englishes

Although a multilingual country does not necessarily have multilingual speakers, Singapore is a multilingual country with multilingual speakers. English is one of four official languages, and it is also the first language of schooling (Gupta, 1998b; Silver et al., this volume). Singaporean children are schooled in two languages, English and their mother tongue, the latter defined not according to the language that is actually used at home, but according to ethnicity. English is therefore used in a multilingual context, with attendant circumstances like the allocation and management of linguistic space among the languages available to speakers (Silver, 2005). Concerning English itself, two issues are of relevance here.

First, there is no single use of English in Singapore. The formal variety, Singapore English (henceforth SgE), is sometimes called Educated Singapore English, or Standard Singapore English. The colloquial variety goes by the familiar label *Singlish*, sometimes also called Singapore Colloquial English (SCE). The use of these two varieties is considered to be diglossic by some researchers (Gupta, 1989). I will not go into the characterization of Singlish as a pidgin, a creole, a creoloid or a language (Bao, 1998; Gupta, 1994, 1998a) or, as often portrayed in the local media, as simply 'bad English' (Koh, 2005). Given the label by which it is known, I will assume that Singlish is a variety of English. This label blends the name of a country with the name of the English language, in contrast to labels like Spanglish or Swenglish, which blend the names of two languages (Spanish and Swedish, respectively). This is appropriate, since Singlish is predominantly English but it also includes features of several other languages spoken locally.

Diglossic situations of the kind found in Singapore are common. One well-studied example concerns the use of Swiss German (*Schweizerdeutsch/ Schwyzerdütsch*) and Standard German in Switzerland. McWhorter (2001: 88) describes Swiss German as 'the language of the home, the language learned first, the language of the casual, the familiar, the intimate', whereas 'Standard German' is 'the language of writing, official announcements, and all scholastic endeavor'. All mature German-speaking Swiss are therefore diglossic in these two Germans, just like mature English-speaking Singaporeans are diglossic in Singlish and SgE, for the same reasons. McWhorter adds that 'Swiss German is not a class issue', a claim that Gupta (1998a) similarly makes of SCE.

Second, research shows that, just as is the case for Swiss German, Singlish is the English variety learned first, among most Singaporean children who learn English from birth (Doyle et al., 2004; Foley, 1988a; Gupta, 1994). These children are therefore native speakers of Singlish. A recent update to the population census (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2005) shows that the use of English in Singaporean households continues to increase. Parents choose to speak English to their children (Pakir, 1997), in order to give them the edge that is promised in the Speak Good English Movement (2000). English, however, is not necessarily the language that comes naturally to all caregivers, especially for family interaction. In addition, many parents apparently use their own understanding of what 'English' is, on the assumption that any English is better than no English.

English-speaking Singaporean children thus come to school equipped with a variety of English that does not necessarily match the variety targeted in school. Home-bound uses of language cannot be eradicated, because they are part of one's heritage, and cannot be ignored, because home is the foundation of first language learning. The question is whether speakers are aware that Singlish and SgE are different things. Adequate information is the key to raising this kind of awareness. Swiss German, for example, has plentiful scholarly literature dedicated to it (e.g. Lötscher, 1983; Penner, 1995). Like Singlish, it is an essentially oral means of communication – although there are translations into Swiss German of the popular Uderzo and Goscinny's cartoon series *Astérix*. The current academic interest in uses of Singlish reflects the need for relevant information about it. Examples are Gupta (1994) and Lim (2004), and abundant data can be found in Foley (1988b) and Foley et al. (1998). A clear understanding of the differential allocation of linguistic space to Singlish and SgE makes good sense: the public condemnation of Singlish (cf. Goh, 1999; Speak Good English Movement, 2000) does not target its status as a marker of Singaporean identity

but the risk of its uses percolating through to linguistic areas beyond its territory. The presumably more reassuring opposite effect, acrolectal pressure on basilectal uses, figures less prominently among local predictions about language use, although it has been documented in the literature. In a very recent study, Ngefac and Sala (2006) show that pronunciation features of educated Cameroon Pidgin speakers have drifted towards acrolectal canons over the past 40 years. A survey of the evolution of Singlish pronunciation might show equally interesting results.

I will take for granted the distinction between the two varieties in the remainder of this chapter. Singaporean children proceed to be schooled in 'curricular English', which provides yet a different model of the language, neither SgE nor SCE. Given the historical roots of English in Singapore, school syllabuses still enforce, among learners as well as teachers, features of English that are based on an imported, largely British model, thus missing the trend in the changing status of English from non-native to native language. Syllabuses besides require emulation of a so-called 'English' whose rationale is often misguided, as the discussion in Brown (2003) makes clear for grammatical features of the language. The question of which 'standard' thus arises, to which I now turn.

'Standard English' and English standards

The issue of what constitutes 'standard' uses of (any) language has a long history of controversy, to which I will not add here (see Cruz-Ferreira, 2003, for some discussion in the Singaporean context). In this section, I will attempt to answer two interrelated questions, drawing on data from different accents of English. First, what is meant by 'Standard English' in the literature about uses of English in Singapore? Second, why is SgE consistently disregarded as a viable local 'standard'?

The answer to the first question is that there seems to be no answer. The ubiquitous term 'Standard English' is standard only in vagueness. Standard varieties of English seem to be in the throes of identity crises, judging by the number of labels used by scholars. A sample includes SSB(E) 'Standard Southern British (English)', BrE 'British English', RP 'Received Pronunciation', GA 'General American' and AmE 'American English'. All of these come complete with formal and less formal varieties, all cut across conversational and other styles, and all are introduced in the literature with the discomfort of verbose, woolly definitions of what each label actually means. Adding to the confusion, 'Standard English' has also

come to be used interchangeably with 'Good English' (see, for example, Koh, 2005).

The answer to the second question varies, depending on views about the nature of 'Standard Singapore English', a label often used to refer to SgE. Although this label appears to sanction recognition of SgE as a local norm, this acknowledgement is often simply a matter of lip service: SgE may be a standard, but it is not the standard to which Singaporeans should aspire, according to the local English campaigns. Campaigns for English in Singapore are meant to foster the use of 'English', 'Standard English' or 'Good English' (e.g. PROSE, 1999; Speak Good English Movement, 2000), not 'Standard Singapore English'. This 'double standard' finds support in research that continues to take SgE as modelled on RP, or its current euphemism, SSBE. Many such studies use a comparative methodology that has judgemental purposes, often describing at length features of English that are 'absent' in SgE (see, for example, Low & Brown, 2005).

Alternatively, such literature describes as 'non-standard' specific features of SgE that are not found in the authors' chosen 'standard' (or their own personal use of the language), giving rise to what Gupta (1998a), calls 'pseudo-deviances'. The rationale for this stance is historical, in that British English (another vague concept) was the first model for Singapore English. However, 'British English' is not exhausted in RP/SSBE, which is one variety of English among many, and currently largely defunct (Collins & Mees, 2003; Tench, 1998; Wells, 1997b). Nor are RP users the bulk of English speakers that had, and continue to have, business of any kind in Singapore. The RP-bound linguistic scenario is as unlikely in today's Singapore as it was in a nineteenth-century trading post. We must therefore be careful about how we want to define standards, including pronunciation standards encapsulated in labels like 'RP/SSBE', and the so-called 'deviations' which they entail. Empirical findings on pronunciation preferences across speakers of English are sobering, from two complementary perspectives.

One perspective concerns Singaporeans' own attitudes towards different accents, including the SgE accent (Gupta, 1995). Against a background which upholds the prestige of an exoglossic standard, it may come as a surprise that the local accent emerges as the preferred one. Despite rating a British accent as, among other features, more intelligent-sounding than a Singaporean accent, Singaporean listeners agreed that a British accent should be avoided in the local context. Lee and Lim (2000) found that the adoption of features of a British accent by Singaporeans was judged pretentious and insincere, and rated overall low on solidarity. The listeners rejected the British accent as a pronunciation model, and strongly identified with

features of SgE pronunciation instead. On the other hand, American listeners rated as friendly a Singaporean intonation pattern described as rude and aggressive by Singaporeans themselves (Chang & Lim, 2000). Imported standards therefore leave one wondering which features of one's speech should be preserved, which should be adopted and which should be discarded in order to sound how to whom. In other words, one is left wondering which master to please.

The second perspective concerns features of actual accents of English, including the SgE accent. I now turn to a discussion of a selection of these features, gleaned from several data-driven studies.

Phonotactic processes

Several phonotactic processes found in languages across the world also distinguish different varieties of English, including SgE. Examples are:

- Vocalization of syllable-final /l/ ('dark /l/'). Pronunciations like [mɪwk] (*milk*) or [bɔːw] (*ball*) are attested in varieties of English like Estuary English (Wells, 1997a) and SgE (Tan, 2005). These forms are also found in varieties of Portuguese, where vocalization is the standard pronunciation of /l/ in syllable codas in Brazilian accents (Barbosa & Albano, 2004).
- Glottal stopping. The use of a glottal closure [ʔ] is common for plosives with other places of articulation in different contexts. This is found for /t/ in all but syllable-onset contexts in London accents (Wells, 1997a), for syllable-final /p, t, k/ in RP accents (Cruttenden, 1994) and for syllable-final plosives in general in SgE (Gut, 2005). Examples of this process are [fʊʔ] (*foot*) and [pɑːʔ] (*park*).
- Unreleased final plosives. This process concerns word-final single plosives, voiced or voiceless, in RP (Cruttenden, 1994) and in SgE (Gut, 2005), resulting in pronunciations like [fʊt˺] (*foot*) and [pɑːk˺] (*park*).
- Devoicing of word-final obstruents. This is noted in Cruttenden (1994) for plosives in RP, and in Ladefoged (2001) for all English obstruents. SgE conforms to this pattern. German is one example of a language with no word-final voiced obstruents. Homophones resulting from this process in English are, for example, *bag-back, peas-peace* or *serve-surf* (my thanks to my colleague Glenda Singh for pointing out to me the welcome note on the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore web portal: 'You surf, we serve!').

- Reduction of word-final consonant clusters. Pronunciations like [fæks] for /fækts/ (*facts*), [ˈkɒnteks] for /ˈkɒntekst/ (*context* or *contexts*), [wɜːl] for /wɜːld/ (*world*), are the rule in everyday English speech. They are commonly heard from native BBC newsreaders (Deterding, 2006), as are pronunciations like [dɪˈskraɪb] for /dɪˈskraɪbd/ (*described*) or [wɜːk] for /wɜːkt/ (*worked*). Similarly, this kind of reduction applies in SgE regardless of whether /t, d/ serve a morphological function as an –*ed* suffix or are part of the stem of the word, revealing the phonotactic nature of this process as argued in Cruz-Ferreira (2005). Simon and Garfunkel's rhymes *around/brown/ground* and *pretend/again* in 'Hazy shade of winter' (1966), for example, provide further tokens of the same process, in another variety of English.

Realignment of phonemic systems

Phonological realignment can affect both consonants and vowels. One example of each are the use of /f/ in some accents of English (London, Estuary English), where other accents have /θ/, for example, /fɪŋk, bɑːf/ in *think, bath* (Wells, 1997a; ongoing, entries for Monday 4 September and Wednesday 1 November 2006). A similar use of /f/ is also found in SgE (personal observation). And the conflation, in American English accents, of the vowels /ɑː/ and /ɒ/ found in other accents, resulting in homophony of words like *balm-bomb* or *passable-possible*. Deterding (2005) found a realignment in progress in the vowel system of SgE, concerning mid front vowels, open central vowels and certain diphthongs, which is unrelated to the vowel systems of other varieties of English.

Realignment of prosodic systems

Varieties of the same language can have different rhythms, that is, different ways of distinguishing between prominent and non-prominent syllables in accommodating into an overall intonation pattern in speech. Several New Englishes, among them SgE, keep to full vowel qualities in all syllables of lexical words, for example, [kɒmˈbaɪn] (*combine*). Other varieties of English prefer to signal non-prominence by means of vowel reduction, for example, [kəmˈbaɪn], or through other prosodic means (like the correlates of pitch or amplitude) while also keeping full vowels throughout. Examples of the latter are the words /ˈmɜːmeɪd/ (*mermaid*) or *context*, as above, with two full vowels each. Swedish and Brazilian Portuguese likewise keep full vowel

qualities, signalling rhythmical prominence by prosodic means. There is, in other words, no simple correlation between the linguistic means of signalling syllable prominence (vowel quality and/or prosodic means) and overall utterance rhythm.

Another related feature observed in SgE is the tensing of unstressed, word-final [ɪ]-like vowels to the quality of [iː] in words like *happy, sorry*. This feature, sometimes called '*happY-tensing*' is also documented in Estuary English (Wells 1997a). In SgE, it is also observed in *-ly* adverbs, for example, *mainly, really, actually*.

Intonation patterns themselves can vary strikingly within the same language, one case in point being the use of a falling tone vs. a rising tone to signal yes/no questions in Brazilian vs. European Portuguese, respectively (Cruz-Ferreira, 1998; Moraes, 1998). Both varieties distinguish statements from yes/no questions by means of intonation alone, but through the use of different intonational means (low-fall vs. high-fall in Brazilian varieties, low-fall vs. low-rise in European varieties). Characteristic intonation patterns of SgE are described in Deterding (1994). For example, the use of rising and falling tones to signal given and new information is different in SgE and in British English.

All of these processes are found, together, in different varieties of English including SgE. Variation is obviously not a feature of so-called New Englishes, a label which may sometimes be interpreted as a euphemism for 'non-native' Englishes. Estuary English is a case in point: this emergent variety would be called a 'New English' if it were not for the fact that it is spoken in 'Old' Britain.

The examples in this section show that language varieties make strikingly differential use of their linguistic resources. Insisting on a fictional model where actual models already exist refuses ownership of a language to its users and their intuitions about it. Foley has repeatedly alerted us to the fact that 'the model presented to the child' is systematically ignored (1998: 227). He insists that drilling/teaching of 'standard' English grammar features have 'little or no pragmatic validity' if they are not used in SgE (1988a: 57), and stresses that the 'idealized accuracy' of a school-imposed model 'is by definition a deficit syllabus for children, because it does not start from where the child is' (pp. 63–64).

I should point out that the use of fictional norms such as the ones discussed here is not exclusive to matters of language research and teaching in Singapore. Idealized norms (or wholesale lack of explicit norms) are rife in research that purports to tackle topics that are traditionally as 'intractable' as standardization, for example, multilingualism. Virtually all studies on

multilingual speech continue to assume monolingual speech as a legitimate norm, with similar judgemental purposes to the ones discussed above: multilingualism is also a deviation from 'normal' monolingualism (see Cruz-Ferreira, 2006a, for a review). The intractability of topics like linguistic standardization or multilingualism lies of course in unreasonable assumptions. It makes as much sense to take idealized monolingual speech as a norm for multilingualism as it does to take the behaviour of an ideal single child as a norm for siblinghood, and likewise for idealized uses of English as a norm for any English. In both cases, actual child/learner productions are inevitably found to deviate from the assumed norm. The same is true, incidentally, of assuming idealized norms for Mandarin, Malay or Tamil as used in Singapore.

What empirical surveys of the kind described above do highlight, beyond the judgemental chaff, is the uniqueness of SgE as a variety of English. I next address its viability as a fully-fledged standard variety.

A Singapore English model

The rationale for an SgE model can be argued from two complementary perspectives, one that is Singaporean and another that is international.

Languages adapt to different users, in the same way that shoes adapt to different feet. This is precisely how a local standard of English emerged in Singapore, as other standards emerged and are emerging in other English-speaking communities around the world (see Kamwendo, 2003; Kouega, 2003; McArthur, 1998, 2003; Modiano, 2003; Pang, 2003; Prodromou, 2003; Qiang & Wolff, 2003; Yajun, 2003). This is also why there are as many standard variants of Mandarin, German or Portuguese as there are stable communities of users of these languages. It is variation that keeps languages usable. No one uses a language in order to be its curator, let alone to preserve features of other people's linguistic uses. People use language in order to get things done, not to do things to it.

Embracing a local standard is not simply a matter of commonsense. The assumption of fictional norms of use can have consequences, for example, for the crucial issue of assessing child language development. Reasonable accounts of language learning must incorporate the actual target forms to which children are exposed, if we are to gain insight about the nature of linguistic developmental processes. One example will suffice to clarify what I mean. Consonant-cluster reduction is a well-known process identified in child speech, whereby children may produce, for example, [mɑːk] for the target /mɑːsk/ (*mask*). Singaporean children are likely to produce [mɑːt]

for the same target word, and stump researchers searching for a reason, among typical child phonological processes, for the apparent additional substitution of [t] for final /k/. However, for those familiar with Singaporean child speech, this form is recognizable as a rendition of the SgE target /mɑːs/, with no consonant-cluster reduction, and with typical stopping of homorganic /s/ instead. Ignorance of actual target forms can obscure the difference between speech impairment and the features of normal adult or child speech that characterize the uses of specific linguistic communities, particularly multilingual communities. Too often, multilinguals find themselves diagnosed as deficient speakers, usually by monolingual speech pathologists who assume fictional targets for observed speech productions. For the same reasons, impaired speakers may go undiagnosed because their idiosyncrasies are wrongly attributed to their multilingualism (see Gupta & Chandler, 1993).

From an international perspective, agreeing on internationally acceptable standards of English of the kind advocated by governmental campaigns in Singapore need not mean agreeing on a monolithic use of language. This entails that the necessarily prescriptive nature of school language syllabuses need not prescribe a model of language that is artificial, and thereby meaningless to prospective users, a point that McArthur (2004) also argues for in the teaching of grammar. Variation across uses of the same language is proof of the flexibility that keeps a language usable, and therefore alive. International norms of usage can be, and in fact should be, flexible, if they are to be of any use across countries and across speakers. There is as much *normal* variation, that is, variation pertaining to *actual norms* of usage, within local standards as across different regional standards (see, for example, Irvine, 2004, for the Jamaican English acrolect, and Poedjosoedarmo, 2000, for SgE). Wells' (2000) authoritative dictionary, for example, offers a range of pronunciation models of English based on comprehensive surveys of actual use.

The key phrase here is 'actual use'. My point is that in order to devise *adequately prescriptive norms* of English that suit Singaporean as well as international users, we need first to find out which are the *descriptive norms* that suit these users. Data-driven research has already produced insightful guidelines into the issue of norming SgE. A significant body of research, including ongoing research, continues to shed light on specific features of adult uses of SgE (Brown, 2005). A recent bibliographical collection of studies on child language in Singapore (Cruz-Ferreira, 2006b) shows the wide scope of interest that this topic arouses, in Singapore as elsewhere, not least from undergraduate as well as graduate students and their supervisors. SgE norms can also contribute to shaping internationally usable standards of

English (i.e. uses of English that are intelligible across countries). Jenkins (2000) proposes a Lingua Franca Core (LFC) comprising phonological features of English that are found in successful communication across multilingual users of English from different linguistic backgrounds, and makes a strong case for the teaching of English to be based on these core features of English pronunciation. Complementing Jenkins's work, Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2005) recently addressed the phonological standard of intelligibility in the English lingua franca that is currently defining itself in the ASEAN region. Features of SgE pronunciation figure prominently in this emerging phonological standard, vouching for its international viability and marketability.

The conclusion is that the pursuit of a necessary standard of English in Singapore need not strive to emulate the standards of other varieties of English. In time, it will make as much sense to describe and prescribe SgE uses in terms of other varieties of English as it would today a description/prescription of, say, British English in terms of American English, or vice-versa. It is up to us to set the clock to the right time.

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Chapter 3

Talking Beyond the Here-and-Now: Singaporean Preschoolers' Use of Decontextualized Language

Christine C. M. Goh and Grace Ho Li Jun

Introduction

Where English is the medium of instruction, it is evident that children's spoken English ability will have an effect on their academic performance. To be specific, however, it is the ability to use decontextualized language in English that may have a more significant effect on school achievements. Decontextualized language is language that makes reference to people, events and experiences that are not part of the immediate context of interaction (Gleason, 2001). In an early discussion of decontextualized language, Bernstein (1974) made a distinction between the elaborated code and the restricted code. Children who use the elaborated code produce a wide range of syntactical structures and they use vocabulary items that are accurate and appropriate. The result is that even listeners who do not share similar background or contextual knowledge will be able to understand what they are communicating. On the other hand, the restricted code is context-dependent. Children using the restricted code assume that their listener knows what they are talking about and the context they are referring to even though it may not be so. As a result their language is less precise and their meaning may be unclear to their listener.

Gleason (2001) argues that as children develop cognitively and socially, they will increasingly need to communicate information to people, such as peers and teachers, who do not share similar background knowledge and experience about the topic. Most school tasks also require children to demonstrate these abilities, for example, describing what they do while on vacation or explaining why birds migrate. To be effective in their

narrations and explanations, children have to use decontextualized language. Preschoolers' decontextualized language use is a precursor to the type of rich and precise code that children need in academic learning. Decontextualized oral language skills are therefore highly relevant for school performance. Snow and colleagues have found that preschool children who possessed good decontextualized language skills were the ones most likely to have good reading comprehension ability when they reached middle grades (Snow et al., 1989; 1995). They found moderate correlations between decontextualized oral language skills and reading scores in first and second grade, and argued that the correlations would become stronger as children proceeded to a higher grade when reading tasks focused more on higher levels of comprehension. They further argued that such skills would have a significant impact on children's academic performance in general.

Children's decontextualized language abilities clearly form an important part of their language development. Few studies, however, have been conducted in environments such as Singapore where the dominant school language may not be the home language and where, if the home and school languages are the same, there may be substantial differences in the variety (see Silver et al., this volume). In view of this, we examined three Singaporean preschoolers in order to gain some preliminary insights into their abilities to communicate meaning clearly and explicitly when performing two oral tasks in English. The study also explored whether the type of oral interaction initiated by parents during shared storybook reading had any influence on the children's abilities to use decontextualized oral language skills. Before going into details about our study, further explanations about the development of decontextualized oral language skills are in order.

Decontextualized oral language skills

There are two main types of oral language skills that children develop before going to school. The first is contextualized oral language where what is being talked about is anchored in the here-and-now or the immediate context. Because listeners and speakers share a common understanding of what is being talked about, speakers can get by with using language that is less explicit. *Contextualized* oral language skills develop very early in a child's life – from the time they make one- or two-word utterances. The second set of skills is *decontextualized* oral language, which is necessary for talking about

people, events and experiences beyond the here-and-now, and where the speaker and the listener may share only limited background knowledge (Snow, 1991). According to Snow et al. (1995: 38) decontextualized spoken ability is characterized by three features of language use:

- procedures for making information explicit
- procedures for establishing cohesion in extended discourse
- sophisticated vocabulary.

Contextualized and decontextualized oral language skills are used for different purposes and the development of these skills may be uneven in the same speaker. According to Snow (1991), correlations between these two skills within a single language (e.g. English) may be low for some speakers while cross-language correlations (e.g. English to French) are high. In other words, children who are competent users of contextualized oral language are not necessarily competent users of decontextualized oral language within a single language. On the other hand, if they demonstrate good decontextualized oral language abilities in one language, they will also show the same kinds of ability when using another language.

Children's oral language abilities are heavily influenced by the type of language environments they experience at home. Beals and De Temple (1992) examined the language experiences of three-year-olds to identify the types of interactions and talk between them and their mothers. They found that young children's decontextualized oral language developed when they were regularly engaged in producing and comprehending extended discourse (e.g. explanations and personal narratives) and using language to create fantasy worlds. Dickson and Tabors (1991) found that certain kinds of conversational language experiences could support literacy-related language skills development for school. They argued that explanatory and narrative talks during mealtimes and book reading resembled the nature of classroom talk in many ways. Repeated reading of a storybook, in particular, 'incorporates speculation and interpretation, requiring lengthier and more complex interjections, which are characteristics of non-immediate talk' (p. 42). These experiences can enhance children's vocabulary use and narrative skills. Kunalan (2000) found that children acquired new vocabulary from listening to stories. Their acquisition was facilitated by adults explaining unfamiliar words during the reading. The study, however, did not examine the development of decontextualized oral language.

Narratives have an internal structure known commonly as story grammar. Trabasso (1989) claims that the structure of children's narratives

is affected by their social knowledge. This is developed when children are provided sufficient input from which to draw inferences about various story components. The effects of repeated readings were examined in Bungar's (2002) study involving children with intellectual disabilities in Singapore. The purpose of the study was to determine whether repeated readings of the same stories would increase the children's expressive skills (measured by Mean Length of Utterance) and understanding of the story structure (assessed by oral retelling). Results showed children were able to retell stories with story grammar elements, consisting of setting, problem and resolution. There was however only a low correlation between their abilities to structure narratives and expressive skills. Hayes et al. (1998) found that narratives of underachieving gifted students were shorter, had less internal organization and cohesion, and contained fewer story grammar components and less sentence complexity as compared with their high-achieving gifted counterparts.

In a major study on children's decontextualized language, Snow et al. (1995) made use of several oral language tasks to assess the children's language production. These included narrative production, picture description and word definition. The children's abilities in the narrative task were assessed for the presence of story grammar and its syntactic complexity, while the description task was assessed on the length of the description, the presence of specificity markers (e.g. adjectives, verbs and prepositional phrases) and the inclusion of key theme words related to the picture. Definitions were graded as either formal or informal, indicated by the presence or absence of a superordinate for the word being defined. The researchers found that children's decontextualized oral language abilities developed over time (from kindergarten to Grade 1), and that decontextualized language skills, particularly giving formal definitions, correlated strongly with reading comprehension, vocabulary and emergent literacy scores, suggesting that oral language is a good predictor of schooling and literacy achievement.

The study

The study we are reporting here is a descriptive study of three six-year-old Chinese preschoolers' decontextualized oral language. The children's abilities were examined through two oral tasks – a picture description task and a story narration task which we have adapted from Snow et al. (1995). The study further explored whether the children's abilities were influenced

by their mothers' language use during shared book reading. The following questions were addressed:

1. What are the similarities and differences in the children's abilities to use decontextualized oral language?
2. Are the children's abilities influenced by their mothers' language use during shared book reading?

Participants

To control for possible effects of language and social experiences, all three children were selected based on some common characteristics:

- Socio-economic status: They were from families with middle socio-economic status. One or both parents have an educational level that falls within one of the following: polytechnic, technical institute, 'A' level or pre-university.
- Age: The children were approximately six years three months old.
- Ethnic group: Chinese
- Dominant home language: English

One of the children (Child A) was a girl who was cared for by her grandmother. The other two were boys (B and C). They were each looked after by a foreign domestic helper. All of the mothers worked in jobs providing administrative and clerical support, and none of them were the child's main caregivers. The mothers reported reading to their children at home but the frequency for each varied.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected separately for each child in their respective homes at a time convenient to the family. Three data collection methods were used: two oral elicitation tasks, observations of story reading sessions in the home, and parent interviews.

Elicitation tasks (picture description and narrative production)

In the picture description task, each child chose one picture from three options. The pictures depicted different but familiar topics (the beach,

the zoo and pets) and had interesting details to ensure opportunities for specificity and explicitness in oral production. For the narrative production task, each child was given three picture sets to choose from. Each set consisted of a sequence of four pictures depicting different plots (a boy is rescued after he falls into a river, a little girl's hat is retrieved by a monkey, a boy who eats too many sweets ends up at the dentist's surgery). Each child chose one set and looked at it for as long as he/she wanted. Before beginning the story, the child was asked to put the picture down. This was to prevent the child from merely describing the pictures instead of narrating the story. If a child paused for more than five seconds, simple prompts such as 'What happens next?' or 'Is that all?' were used. In both tasks, the children were told not to reveal their selected pictures to the interviewer. This resulted in two oral tasks per child, six oral tasks in all for analysis.

The children's oral productions were recorded, transcribed and coded for the features of decontextualized oral language. Table 1 shows the features for analysis. There are some overlaps in the linguistic criteria set out. For example, the use of appropriate and precise vocabulary can contribute to the overall explicitness of the information. We have decided, however, to follow Snow et al. (1995) to focus on grammar and vocabulary separately. Transcripts are given in Appendix A.

The children's decontextualized language abilities are described and compared based on the three broad features shown in Table 1. Both transcripts from one child (Child A) were coded by the second author and

Table 1 Features of decontextualized oral language use in the children's oral production

Characteristics of decontextualized language	Specific linguistic features
(1) Ability to make information linguistically explicit	Length (number of words) Simple sentence structure (SVO/SVC) Evidence of coordination, subordination and embedding
(2) Procedures for establishing cohesion and coherence	Use of conjunctions Use of references: pronouns and determiners Evidence of story grammar
(3) Use of appropriate vocabulary	Words that denote spatial, physical and temporal relationships Words that indicate concrete or abstract concepts Thematic/topical words Figurative language (e.g. similes)

an independent coder to establish inter-rater agreement. The second author coded the other four transcripts independently while selected excerpts of the transcripts were then coded by the first author.

Observation (shared book reading)

The children and their mothers were asked to carry out a shared book reading session. *Princess Smartypants* by Cole (2000) was selected because of its interesting plot. More importantly, none of the children was familiar with the story and this would minimize the effects of shared prior knowledge on the oral interaction. The mothers read the story twice and interacted with the children as they normally would when reading to them. Our purpose was to find out whether the mother used the type of discourse that researchers argued would encourage the development of decontextualized oral language in children (De Temple & Beals, 1991). The recordings of each shared book reading activity were transcribed and coded for interactional strategies and features of decontextualized oral language use (see Table 2). All the transcripts were coded by the second author and an independent coder to establish inter-rater reliability. The coded transcripts were further checked by the first author.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews involving one or both parents were conducted to gather information on their children's home and language environments. More specifically, the interviews focused on (a) family members, (b) hobbies and reading habits, (c) the frequency and nature of the activities

Table 2 Interaction strategies and decontextualized language use during shared book reading

Interactional strategies	Decontextualized language use
Repetition	Explanatory talk
Recast	Non-immediate utterances
Comprehension check	New and appropriate ('rare') words
Confirmation check	Metaphorical language (e.g. idioms, similes, figurative
Clarification request	language)
Correcting	Language in fantasy or pretend play
Prompting	
Drawing attention to illustrations	
Making information explicit	

parents and children engaged in together, (d) the kinds of activities the children were involved in with others living in the same household, (e) family activities such as games and play activities during weekdays and weekends, and (f) parental support and expectations of the children. Each interview lasted about one hour.

Results

Making information linguistically explicit

The children's oral language was first observed for the length of their output. The longest output was not necessarily the most explicit because it might have contained repetitions which would affect the clarity of the discourse. On the other hand, short output might suggest that some important details have been left out. The output was then analysed for syntactic features, such as basic sentence structures as well as grammatical complexity as evidenced by coordination, subordination and clausal embeddings. See Table 3. This part of the analysis proved to be a challenge because the children produced structures that did not conform to the syntactic patterns of Standard English and yet served similar functions in the colloquial variety of English in Singapore. For the purpose of the analysis the following decisions were taken: As the use of coordinating conjunctions allows for the ellipsis of subjects, an utterance with only the verb and an object was counted as a token of SV(O). The use of 'got' in non-standard Singapore English has similar functions to sentences that include 'has/have' or structures beginning with 'There is/are'. Such utterances were also coded as SV(O). Morphological inaccuracies (e.g. the absence of inflections) are ignored.

Child A's use of coordinators were confined to 'and' and 'then'. Child B also used these two coordinators frequently, but at the same time included a few subordinators such as 'after' mainly to indicate time sequence. Child C had the lowest word count for his oral tasks and the fewest SV(O) constructions. There was only one instance of coordination in which the conjunction 'and' was used. As shown in Table 3, all three children constructed a substantial number of SV(O) sentences. This is perhaps not surprising, as the children focused a great deal on talking about action in the pictures and narratives. What were lacking were SV(C) constructions, which are necessary for explaining the states of objects and people. No clausal embeddings were found. In all, Child B was the one with the longest productions in both tasks and the highest number of sentences with coordination. His utterances, however, did not conform to Standard English

Table 3 Key syntactic features and frequency of occurrence

	A	B	C
Length (total word count, excluding hesitation marker 'er')	93	209	75
No. of SV(O) utterances	16	31	11
Coordination	5	20	2
Subordination	0	0	0
Embedding	0	0	0

syntax most of the time. He also had problems with the inflections of verbs, indicating inadequate morphological development or the acquisition of non-standard English grammar from his environment.

Examples of SV(O) structures

1. I see somebody reading a book. (Child A)
2. Then some people also make some sandcastle. (Child B)
3. One man saved him. (Child C)

Examples of coordination

4. I saw a people with a sunglass . . . *and* there are umbrellas. (Child A)
5. Then got people er . . . sit . . . sit on er . . . the chair there *and* read book. (Child B)
6. The boy kicked a ball . . . *and* he fell down in the water. (Child C)

Establishing coherence and cohesion

Children who are competent users of decontextualized oral language are not only able to express units of information clearly, but to express all of them in a coherent manner. Coherence refers to a consistency of topic and completeness of information. This is realized by a variety of linguistic means including the use of cohesive devices that utilize both the lexis and grammar of the language. When using decontextualized oral language effectively, children make use of these devices to establish clear relationships among their utterances so that the spoken texts 'hang together'. In examining the oral productions of these three children, we found only three types of cohesive devices: linking adverbials (after that, then, so), pronoun references, and use of determiners (articles). The use of each is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Features and frequency of occurrence of cohesion and coherence

		A		B		C	
Linking adverbials		4		13		0	
References	Pronouns	3		10		3	
	Determiners (articles)	18	(21)	16	(26)	18	(21)

Table 5 Story grammar structure in the children's narratives

	A	B	C
Orientation	✓	✓	✓
Complication	✓	✓	✓
Resolution	✓	✓	✓
Direct consequence	–	✓	✓

Examples of linking adverbials

7. I saw a boy taking a sweet. *Then* he take the sweet and eat. *After that,* he had a toothache. (Child A)
8. People also got er. . . chairs . . . *so* that they all put over there and they read book or put the what spectacles . . . very dark. (Child B)

Examples of references

9. I see *a* mat. . . . I saw people lying on *the* mat. (Child A)
10. One day hor . . . got one . . . a girl hor . . . she got wear one purple hat. (Child B)
11. A hippopotamus is opening his mouth. (Child C)

The children also used elements of story grammar, although Child A's story grammar was less complete than the other two (Table 5).

   Child A used several linking adverbials and references appropriately in her oral productions even though they were short. Pronouns and determiners were used appropriately on the whole to refer to the character and event anaphorically. Nevertheless, she organized her narrative using a typical story grammar structure which consists of an orientation, a complication, followed by a resolution. Child B used the greatest number of

linking adverbials and references. He also used the definite article 'the' more frequently and was able to use it appropriately most of the time. This demonstrates that he was establishing links to actions and characters already mentioned. In terms of story grammar, Child B's narrative had all four key components. He also established the context of the story, the orientation, by saying 'Here is a beach.' Neither of the other two children did this. Child C's discourse had the fewest cohesive devices and he did not use them in places where they were mandatory, such as when referring to the tiger and the giraffe in the pictures (e.g. 'I see a tiger . . . A tiger have a long tail'). His narrative was also the shortest, consisting of four short clauses. For Child C, each clause could be said to represent one component of the story grammar; however, there was no attempt to include further details of the narrative. None of the children used any hyponyms, synonyms or antonyms to establish lexical cohesion.

Using appropriate vocabulary

For this feature of decontextualized language, we examined the children's use of words or phrases to denote spatial, temporal and physical relationships as markers of specificity. In addition, for picture descriptions, we identified appropriate vocabulary items that were related to the topic and theme in the pictures. These words signified both tangible objects as well as intangible concepts shown. We also looked for uses of figurative language and other sophisticated vocabulary items but none was found. The results are summarized in Table 6.

Examples of words expressing spatial relations

12. I saw a float *on* the sand. (Child A)
13. Then some people make a castle *inside*. (Child B)
14. . . . and he fell *down into* the water. (Child C)

Table 6 Vocabulary features and frequency of occurrence

	A	B	C
Spatial relations (deictic terms and prepositions)	3	9	4
Temporal relations (words for sequencing, showing duration and simultaneous actions)	2	1	0
Physical relations (words for pre- or post-modifying noun groups)	0	2	3
Thematic/topical words	11	11	11

Examples of words expressing temporal relations

15. *After* that, he has a toothache. (Child A)
16. *After* that, hor, got one elephant. (Child B)

Examples of words expressing physical relations

17. It was a windy day. (Child A)
18. . . . but the elephant's trunk not *long* enough. . . . (Child B)
19. The elephant have a *big* butt. (Child C)

Examples of thematic/topical words

20. It's a *windy* day. (Child A)
21. Here is a *beach*. (Child B)
22. I can see a *tiger*. (Child C)

At first glance, Child B appeared to use more words to show the widest range of semantic relationships, especially in the picture description task. In fact, he repeated some of the information and he also used the phrase 'over there' quite frequently as a strategy to talk about objects and people in relation to one another on the picture. So even though he used markers to indicate spatial relationships, these did not increase the preciseness of his description. To show temporal relations between the events, Child A and Child B used mainly 'after that'. Child C, however, did not use any temporal terms even when he was narrating the story. Words for showing physical relationships such as size and length were used by Child B and Child C, but not Child A. All three children, nevertheless, used an equal number of thematic/topical words, suggesting that they had acquired a fairly large vocabulary which they were able to use to talk about the pictures. All three children's use of language was, however, limited to the literal level. None of them used figurative language such as similes for purposes of comparisons and descriptions.

Discussion

In order to convey information and meaning of a topic explicitly, children need to have at least acquired the relevant vocabulary, an awareness of the listeners' perspectives, and control over relevant structure and forms of the

English language. In other words, decontextualized language use is contingent upon satisfactory language development. With respect to story narration and picture description, children need to use words for connecting ideas and referring to concrete and abstract concepts. They also need to use accurate grammar to express precise meaning and have linguistic devices for structuring a narrative. Bennett-Kaster (1986) and Scott (1988) noted that 'and' is the dominant connector of clauses found in the narratives of five-year-olds and school-age children; it can be used five to twenty times as frequently as the next most common conjunction in a child's repertoire. This was true of all the three children in the study, and most notable in Child B's productions. Compared to the other two children, he conveyed more information by connecting meaning units with 'and'. The relations between the clauses, expressed in the forms of *clause + coordinator (and) + clause* have additive, causal or contrastive functions in children's speech (Owens, 2001). A child is normally able to express a contrasting relationship with the use of 'but' only after he/she has acquired the use of 'and'. Apart from Child B who used 'but' in his speech, the other two children used only 'and' to show additive, causal and contrastive functions. As a result, their meaning was less precise.

In storytelling, narrators first need to create a common context with the listeners. They also have to adhere to accepted conventions of story grammar so that the relationships between events are presented in a predictable manner. Child B used the formulaic phrase 'One day' to mark the beginning of his story before introducing the main character and ended with the word 'Finished'. He also attempted to show how one event is influenced by another through the use of 'so'. In contrast, both Child A and Child C were less explicit in orientating their listeners to the stories. Child A, nevertheless, made a good attempt at sequencing her events in a chronological manner while Child C's narrative was on the whole inadequate. Kemper and Edwards (1986) noted that children at the age of six were generally able to produce narratives that were causally coherent. Child A and Child C in the study, however, did not demonstrate that ability. They also left out internal responses or reactions of the characters in their stories, suggesting that they constructed and understood the stories at a literal level with regard to character, action and events. There were no speculations about causes, motives, thoughts and actions. Research has shown that children's ability to do this may be influenced by their language experiences during shared book reading with adults (Beals, 2001). Of particular significance is adults' use of non-immediate utterances to explore ideas beyond the literal contents in the story, including character's motive, feelings, values and reactions. This type of talk helps children enjoy the

story as well as develop deeper and more abstract ways of thinking about the stories and the world around them. It also helps children acquire language for talking about ideas that are beyond the here-and-now. We will now turn to this issue by presenting and discussing our observations from the mother-child shared book reading sessions conducted.

Influences on decontextualized oral language development

Many studies in child language acquisition have shown that mothers and caregivers play an important role in influencing their children's use of language. In particular, there is a strong relationship between mothers' use of non-immediate talk and children's increased linguistic capabilities in producing such utterances (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). To explore whether such a relationship existed in the language capabilities of our child participants, observations of mother–child interactions during shared book reading were conducted. We first summarize some key features of the interactions (e.g. mothers' use of comments and questions, children's responses, amount of talk). We then analyse non-immediate talk within the story reading sessions in more detail.

Summary of story reading interactions

1. The mothers of Child A and Child B began by reading the title of the book, while Child C's mother began to read without referring to the title. None of the mothers paid any attention to details such as the author and the illustrator.
2. All three mothers directed the activity by providing both comments and questions. The children responded to their mothers' questions but offered few comments and questions unprompted.
3. Most of the mothers' comments and questions focused on the immediate context. The focus was often on the illustrations or words that the mothers felt their children might not have understood.
4. The children were actively involved in the activity through dramatization, word recognition and even counting.
5. In reading 1 and reading 2, the mothers' talk strategies were mainly communication-oriented, for example, using comprehension checks, prompting and repetition. While the mothers attempted to explain unfamiliar words, there were few instances of non-immediate talk which required the use of decontextualized language and encouraged more

abstract thinking. (The use of non-immediate utterances is illustrated below.)

Non-immediate utterances

During story reading all three mothers were mainly concerned with whether or not their children had understood the story (and particularly unfamiliar words). Non-immediate talk was, on the whole, rare in all three mothers' speech. See Table 7.

Nevertheless, in the case of Child A's mother there were a few attempts at non-immediate talk where she invited A to explain and evaluate some parts of the story.

Example 23

Mother	*'None of the princes could accomplish the task . . . he set . . . he was set. They all left in dis . . . disgrace. "That's that then," said Smartypants, thinking she was safe.'* See, nobody passed the test. Then what happen?
Child	[giggled] *Hmm . . . then nobody . . . then nobody married her.*

Example 24

Mother	*'So, she give him a magic kiss . . .'* See, she give him a magic kiss.
Child	*– Why?*
Mother	*Because he can do . . . everything other people cannot do.*

Mother A also made a further attempt at the end of the story by inviting her child to evaluate the rather untypical ending of the story. When Child A did not respond in the way she had hoped, she checked her understanding. She did not, however, take that further to highlight the fact that in most fairy tales, it was the norm for a princess to marry a prince and live happily

Table 7 Frequency of non-immediate utterances during shared book reading

	A		B		C	
Readings	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
Non-immediate utterances	2	2	0	1	0	0
Total	4		1		0	

ever after. This would have been a useful opportunity for extended talk on an abstract topic.

Example 25

Mother	*How she lived happily ever after? She didn't marry anybody.*
Child	*Yeah.*
Mother	*She lives with all – her?*
Child	*Pets.*
Mother	*Yeah . . .*

It was not possible to establish a direct relationship between a mother's use of non-immediate talk and the child's decontextualized language abilities. Child A's mother used the most non-immediate talk, but Child A's narratives and descriptions were shorter and less detailed than Child B's. Child B's mother engaged him only once in non-immediate talk but his narratives were more detailed. The mother–child oral interaction which most strongly suggested a link was between Child C and his mother. During the first reading, C's mother read the story continuously without stopping to check his understanding. Nevertheless, during the second reading she did pause to check C's comprehension. She also explained some parts of the story to him. While she was reading, C followed the words that his mother was reading, and at times glanced at the illustrations drawn. His mother, however, did not draw C's attention to any of the colourful illustrations at all, and C probably had no time to relate the illustrations to the text by himself.

In sum, the children's decontextualized oral language use did not appear to be related to the mothers' use or lack of use of such type during shared book reading. An explanation for this is that the linguistic environment that many Singaporean children are in differs somewhat from other contexts in which the children's abilities are correlated with their mothers' language use. In Singapore, children's main caregivers and conversational partners during the day are often not mothers, but grandparents, siblings, foreign domestic helpers or childminders in day care centres. Thus, the language use of these caregivers may have a greater influence on young children than that of the mothers'. The parental interviews indicated that the parents were not the primary caregivers in most parts of the week.

Although the parents initially reported that they read to their children, the interview subsequently revealed that this was not done frequently.

The parents all felt that the children were old enough to read independently, as they were already attending kindergarten where teachers placed an emphasis on teaching children early reading skills. Child B, however, had an older sister who enjoyed reading aloud, and whenever she did, B would sit beside her and listen to the story. He also spent a great deal of time with his family on the weekends when they went on frequent outings. In the evenings, B often had conversations with his parents about the events of the day in school and at home. These frequent conversations about non-immediate topics could have had an influence on B's ability to explain, elaborate and speculate. Moreover, B also had many people he could talk to since age two where he was enrolled in a nursery programme. He also spent a lot of time playing with his siblings and talking with grandparents. The broadening of a child's schemata through wide-ranging activities and exposure can provide opportunities for the development of decontextualized talk, as these events require explanation, description and narration (Beals & De Temple, 1992).

Child A did not see her working parents much in the day. She was cared for by her grandmother who spoke little English, but she also had a brother to converse with. Her parents did take her to the library frequently and this has cultivated an interest in reading. Child C's parents rarely took him to the library; instead they bought him many storybooks. Although he had many books, C expressed that he had no interest in reading and would prefer to watch television programmes. He was mostly left in the care of a foreign domestic helper who did not speak very much English. As he was the only child, he did not have other conversation partners except on weekends where he could interact with his cousins and grandparents. There was no evidence that he had experienced rich language use during shared reading with adults or in other situations, such as mealtimes. It was also clear from the observation sessions that his mother was not familiar with reading with him. The lack of a rich linguistic environment could partially account for his inability to communicate clearly in English in the two oral tasks.

One final but important observation concerns the use of non-standard colloquial English by all the mothers during the story reading sessions. For example:

Example 26

Mother A: *Mrs! Wanted her to be their Mrs. That means what? To be their . . . what?*

Example 27

Mother B: *Wah . . . This one hor . . . eat and eat and eat . . . until the whole garden . . . gone! Hor?*

Example 28

Mother C: *Tell mummy which prince? Tell mummy . . . Swan what?*

Through out the interviews and story reading sessions, it was clear that the parents did not speak Standard English consistently. This to a large extent might account for the many non-standard features in the children's oral productions. This was particularly true for Child B. He had the most extended oral productions, as well as the greatest linguistic complexity and the most complete story grammar. His speech, however, displayed many features of his non-standard English:

  i. the use of 'got' in place of 'there is/are' or 'have/have' depending on the context of use ('*got some radio over there*', '*we got been before*');
  ii. the use of pragmatic particles ('*hor*');
 iii. copular verb deletion ('*the elephant's trunk not long enough*');
 iv. object deletion ('*the wind blow away to one tall tree*') where the object 'the hat' was omitted; and
  v. problems with subject-verb agreement ('*the monkey go and take*').

The language of Child A and Child B also demonstrated non-standard grammatical features. Although there were fewer instances in their speech, these features could have been less conspicuous because both children produced much shorter narratives and descriptions as compared to Child B.

Summary and implications

The aim of our study was to examine the decontextualized oral language abilities of three preschool children in Singapore. The results showed all three children to have differing abilities, On the whole, two of the children demonstrated some decontextualized abilities that could help them to succeed in school. One of the children, however, clearly lacked the ability to elaborate and communicate information clearly to his listeners who did not share the same background knowledge as him. We also concluded that

while two of these children are able to communicate novel information to listeners 'at a distance', one of them did this mainly by speaking the non-standard colloquial variety of English. This was most obvious in the child who produced the longest texts in each task. In other words, this child's ability to talk beyond the here-and-now was acceptable only in the local sociolinguistic context in which his interlocutors understand the non-standard variety he speaks. A crucial question therefore is whether or not he would be intelligible to a non-Singaporean listener who does not speak that variety. While the children's use of the localized variety seemed to be influenced by parental language use, their ability to use decontextualized oral language was not always directly influenced by shared book reading with their mothers. Given the situation of multiple caregivers in many Singaporean families, this will not come as a surprise but rather confirms informal observations about the influence of this diverse linguistic environment on a child's language development in Singapore. It is recommended that future studies focus on the language use of caregivers other than the parents. Our study examined mother–child interaction based on previous research practices, but clearly given the complex care-giving situation Singapore, data collected from diverse sources will be able to shed more light on the interplay of different environmental and linguistic factors on a child's English language development. Furthermore, there is a need to gather more data on caregiver–child interaction so that stronger claims can be made about its relationship to language development. A limitation of our present study is the limited amount of data collected from the shared-book reading between mother and child.

The results of this study have directed our attention to two issues about decontextualized oral language abilities in preschool children in Singapore. If Singapore preschoolers enter primary school with minimal decontextualized oral ability, as was the case with Child C, will they be disadvantaged in their academic learning? Research on preschoolers' decontextualized oral language use in the United States suggests that it is a predictor of academic success. There are good reasons to believe this is also the case in Singapore, especially when we consider the types of tasks that school pupils are expected to carry out. In primary schools in Singapore, children are expected to be clear and explicit regardless of whether they are doing a show-and-tell, giving a presentation or writing a picture composition. Furthermore, if we accept the arguments that support oral skills as a basis for literacy, we may begin to understand why some primary pupils in Singapore produce written pieces that are short and inadequate both in terms of content and language. Wee (2003) who examined Singaporean

children's grammar and writing reported that many of them had problems with elaboration. As a result, they produced 'minimal' writing. Since oral language development is closely associated with literacy (Grainger, 2004), children who cannot elaborate and make their meaning explicit in speech (such as Child A and Child C) might also produce writing that is short and inexplicit. They might experience educational setbacks if they do receive support in developing decontextualized oral language in lower primary.

The second issue concerns the acceptability of a non-standard English variety in school communication. Children in Singapore live in diverse linguistic backgrounds. They are typically bilingual, if not trilingual. The three children in this study were from English-speaking families, but the English spoken at home is not the standard variety which is expected at school. There may also be some influence of other languages spoken within the same domains. As suggested by Gupta (1994: 5), the kind of English, which the English-speaking parents of Singapore have supplied to their children, is a variety known as Singapore Colloquial English [SCE] or Singlish. This variety is different from Standard English (Lim, 2004). If children have basic decontextualized language ability but can function only in a non-standard English variety, as was the case with Child B, will they be disadvantaged in their academic learning? Research on children in other countries seem to suggest that children who speak a non-standard variety are often perceived as less intelligent by their teachers who speak only the standard variety (Haig & Oliver, 2003) and this may be an obstacle to many children receiving equal opportunities in education (Corson, 2001). If Child B continued to speak this variety when performing academic tasks in his primary school, would his teachers accept it? Gupta (1994), for example, has also argued that teachers should focus on the content of children's responses rather than the form. This argument is based on the assumption that all teachers in Singapore speak a variety of Standard English when they teach and interact with their pupils. However, as Doyle (this volume) observes from a large corpus of classroom talk, some teachers in fact use the colloquial variety themselves when interacting with pupils in the classroom. (See also, Foley, 1998.)

What will be the impact of such language practices on Singapore children's academic learning and English language development? It is our view that while some teachers may be prepared to accept a non-standard variety of English when pupils are talking or when they talk to pupils, they would be less accepting of it when written work is involved. Given the close link between oracy and literacy, it is not surprising that many teachers complain that their pupils use non-standard English when writing their compositions,

and the common refrain that many pupils 'write like the way they talk'. What this means is that there should be a strong emphasis on the teaching of standard spoken English in Singapore schools from Primary 1. Pupils who are 'fluent' in English may only be fluent in a non-standard English variety. Only a concerted effort in helping them develop Standard English usage in speech can prepare them to function fully and effectively in all aspects of academic learning.

Appendix: Transcripts

(1) Picture description

Child A

People playing a ball. Three children playing sandcastle . . . (Where is that place?) *A beach . . . I see somebody reading a book. I see a mat. A cloud. It's a windy day. I saw a float on the sand. I saw people lying on the mat. I saw a people with a sunglass . . . and there are umbrellas. No more.* (Total: 54 words)

Child B

Here is a beach. Then some people make a castle inside and got umbrella, Then hor, got some starfish on the sand. People see then they still make the sandcastle. Got some radio over there and people sit down and they all got some er . . . chair over there. Then got people er . . . sit . . . sit on er . . . the chair there and read book. Some people went to the swimming pool there swimming, some people also got play some ball. Then some people also make some sandcastle. People also got er . . . chairs . . . so that they all put over there and they read book or put the what spectacles? Very dark. Then also got trees over there. Got wind. Then some wind blow on the trees but the trees never fall down. (Total: 125 words)

Child C

I can see a tiger, giraffe, a snake, a monkey . . . [Giggled] *The elephant have a big butt. A giraffe have a long neck. A tiger have a long tail.* (What is this place?) *In the forest. Got one people. One sign. A seal playing a ball. A hippopotamus is opening his mouth . . . yawning* (Is this a forest) *A zoo? Er . . . no no . . . a forest.* (Total: 53words)

(2) Narrative Production

Child A

I saw a boy taking a sweet. Then he take the sweet and eat. After that, he has a toothache. After that, he went to the dentist. And the doctor take out one teeth. Then the boy went home. (Total: 39 words)

Child B

One day hor . . . one day hor . . . got one . . . a girl hor she got wear one purple hat . . . then suddenly the wind blow away to one tall tree . . . so the elephant . . . After that, hor, got one elephant . . . but the elephant's trunk not long enough, then she asked the monkey. Then the monkey go and take. Then hor she asked the monkey take her hat so the monkey climbed on the tree to take her hat for her. Then after that she said, 'Thank you'. Finished. (Total: 84 words)

Child C

The boy kicked a ball and he fell down into the water er . . . Into the water . . . erm. . . . one man saved him. . . . and people clapped . . . (Total: 22 words)

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Chapter 4

Listening Strategies of Singaporean Primary Pupils[1]

Peter Y. Gu, Guangwei Hu and Lawrence J. Zhang

Introduction

For a long time and up until the early 1990s, second language (L2) listening was the Cinderella of the four language skills, namely, speaking, reading, writing and listening (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). This was reflected in the paucity of research on L2 listening (Vandergrift, 1997) as well as the modest attention given to the teaching and assessment of L2 listening (Brown, 2004; Buck, 2001; Rost, 2002). The dismal situation has improved considerably in the last 15 years or so. Encouraging progress has been made in researching and assessing L2 listening (see Buck, 2001; Vandergrift, 2004). As a result, a more sophisticated understanding has developed of the nature and processes of L2 listening and the role of listening in L2 learning. Listening has also become a standard component of both L2 general proficiency tests and assessments of course-specific achievements at various levels of education (Buck, 2001). Nowadays, it is generally recognized that listening plays a critical role in language learning (Brown, 2004; Morley, 1999; Vandergrift, 2003) and that 'students need to "learn to listen" so that they can better "listen to learn"' (Vandergrift, 2004: 3).

Given the advances in research on and assessment of L2 listening, one would expect the teaching of listening to be an integral and important part of L2 instruction in the classroom. By and large, however, this is not the case. As Rost (2002: 203) observes,

Because listening is so prevalent in language use and because listening is the primary means of L2 acquisition for most people, the development of listening as a skill and as a channel for language input should assume critical importance in instruction. Ironically, instruction in listening has not received much attention until recently.

Typically, L2 listening instruction is given only sporadic and peripheral attention. This practice can be found in the teaching of English in many primary and secondary classrooms in Singapore, where English is the primary medium of instruction in all educational establishments, though it is an L2 to the majority of the citizenry. Although the current English language syllabus (MOE, 2001), unlike its predecessor (MOE, 1991), emphasizes the explicit teaching of listening, there is a gap between what Adamson and Davison (2003) aptly refer to as the 'intended' and 'enacted' curricula. In a recent survey-based study of language syllabus implementation, Goh et al. (2005) found that listening received insufficient attention from classroom teachers and was not taught in a systematic and coherent way. Such a pedagogical stance, as pointed out by Morley (1999), 'gives short shrift to this critical basic skill [i.e. listening] which underlies all of language learning' (para. 3).

Encouragingly, the significance of developing strong English listening skills in young Singaporeans in an era of unrelenting globalization and exponential growth in international communication (Mendelsohn, 1998) is not lost on educational policymakers in Singapore (see Lim, 2002). There are indications that listening and speaking skills will be given much greater emphasis in the revised *English Language Syllabus and Curriculum* to be implemented in 2009 (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2007). Furthermore, changes to assessment of listening competence in secondary schools have been proposed for the new syllabus with a view of bringing about positive washback effects on the teaching of listening. One effective instructional approach that teachers may adopt is process-oriented, strategy-based listening instruction (Goh, 2002b; Mendelsohn, 1998; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 2003, 2004). Successful implementation of this type of instruction, however, presupposes an understanding of how Singaporean students approach listening tasks, what listening strategies they are able or unable to use, and how their strategy use relates to their listening abilities (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; McDonough, 1999; Mendelsohn, 1998). The present study aims to contribute to this understanding.

Background

Efforts to research L2 listening strategies have focused on several strands: strategy use for different target languages; strategy use at different proficiency levels; strategy use for audio or video texts; strategy use for

interactive or transactional listening; cognitive and metacognitive strategies; and the interaction among strategy use, text, task and setting (Rubin, 1994: 211). The present study is focused on finding out whether different listening strategies are employed by Singaporean primary school pupils at different levels of proficiency in a familiar one-way listening task.[2]

Recent research on L2 listening strategies has categorized strategies into metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies, following related work on general L2 learner strategies (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990). Metacognitive strategies refer to strategies deployed to manage the listening process, such as planning, monitoring and evaluating. Cognitive strategies are those used for the cognitive processing of listening, such as inferencing and predicting. Strategies that aim to achieve comprehension by involving others or by maximizing the affective conditions are called social and affective strategies. Empirical findings (e.g. Goh, 1997; Thompson & Rubin, 1996; Vandergrift, 2002, 2003) show that successful and unsuccessful listeners can be clearly distinguished by the listening strategies, especially metacognitive ones, that they employ or fail to employ. In a classic study that paved the way for most listening strategy research in second language acquisition (SLA), O'Malley et al. (1989) studied five effective and three ineffective high school listeners and discovered that the effective listeners were able to monitor and direct their attention to the task, whereas the ineffective listeners were easily distracted by unknown words or phrases and were unaware of their inattention. Vandergrift (2003) studied 36 junior high school learners' listening strategies in learning French as an L2 in Canada. Results from his study suggested that the skilled listeners were 'in control of the listening process, actively engaged in planning for the task and monitoring incoming input for congruence with expectations to construct a mental representation of the text in memory, that is, to comprehend' (p. 485).

An interesting, though less conclusive, research question is whether the manner of processing is related to the listener's proficiency level. Bottom-up processing refers to input-based decoding of small incoming units (e.g. sounds, words and phrases) to form larger units of meaning (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Vandergrift, 2004). Top-down processing, on the other hand, refers to the use of larger units such as world knowledge, subject matter knowledge, genre knowledge, contextual knowledge and the schema that has been formed to influence how the smaller units are perceived (e.g. in prediction). Although the optimum processing of listening messages involves both (Buck, 2001; Rost, 2002; Vandergrift, 2004), some listeners do more bottom-up or top-down processing than

others. This preference for one type of processing may be related to how much comprehension is achieved (Field, 2004; Rubin, 1994); it may also be related to the language proficiency of the listener (Gu et al., 2005). Several studies (e.g. Chien & Li, 1998) show that higher language proficiency is more related to top-down processing and that lower proficiency is more related to bottom-up processing. O'Malley et al. (1989) reported that their effective listeners listened to larger chunks and mainly used top-down processing, resorting to bottom-up processing only when necessary. The ineffective listeners used word-for-word, bottom-up decoding exclusively. In addition, the effective listeners tended to relate new information to their existing world knowledge and/or personal knowledge and critically evaluate the usefulness of the information, while the ineffective listeners had fewer elaborations and did not make any connections between the new information and their own lives. In another study comparing skilled vs. unskilled listeners, Vandergrift (2003) found that the less skilled listeners did a great deal of online translation and bottom-up processing, rarely engaged in comprehension monitoring, and therefore developed a shaky conceptual framework against which further input could be monitored.

Other research (e.g. Long, 1989; Lynch, 2002), however, reveals that the picture is more complicated. Wu (1998) categorized top-down processing into two types: compensatory and facilitating, the former being associated with less successful comprehension or less successful learners, and the latter with more successful comprehension and more successful learners. She found that partial success in decoding often resulted in the activation of general knowledge which could serve to override incoming linguistic information. In other words, facilitating top-down processing could lead to successful comprehension, but compensatory top-down processing may not necessarily do so. Similarly, Tsui and Fullilove (1998) discovered that less skilled L2 listeners were weak in automatic decoding and therefore had to rely on top-down contextual support for compensation. Based on their findings, they suggested that these weak listeners should 'learn to become less reliant on guessing from contextual or prior knowledge and more reliant on rapid and accurate decoding of the linguistic input' (p. 449). On a similar note, Field (2004) concluded that there might be 'a strategy which is neither bottom-up nor top-down but is lexical – a rough attempt at a one-to-one match with a known item which potentially overrules contextual information and modifies perceptual' (p. 373). Consequently, Field (2003) argued for the importance of a 'signal-based approach' (p. 332) to learner training in perception and word recognition skills, so that weak learners can be sensitized to phonological features such as reduced forms, assimilation and elision.

In the present study, we address the following questions:

- Do high-proficiency Singaporean learners of English at the primary school level differ from low-proficiency learners in terms of listening strategies?
- Do pupils of different primary school levels differ from each other in terms of listening strategies?

Method

Participants

The present study involves participants from three 'neighbourhood' schools that are representative of government-run primary schools in Singapore. Participants were chosen by the Head of the English Department of each school in consultation with English language teachers in the school. They were asked to select one pupil each from the top and the bottom group of pupils at Primary levels 4–6 according to their latest examination results (English language) if there were any. Where no examination results were available, teacher evaluation was the only criterion. The department heads were also asked to make selections according to each pupil's representativeness of their proficiency level and screen out obvious anomalies such as new immigrants and pupils with known learning difficulties such as dyslexia. In all, 18 pupils (3 schools × 3 grade levels × 2 English proficiency levels) participated in the study.

Materials

Two narrative passages for each primary level, one relatively easy and the other more difficult, were used in data elicitation. Initial passages were selected from published texts that were supplementary teaching or testing materials for each primary level. The difficulty level and appropriateness of each passage for each level were rated independently by four teachers. Based on the mean ratings of these four raters, a text that was rated high on appropriateness and high/low on text difficulty was selected as the difficult/easy text for each primary level. All selected texts were pre-recorded by a female Singaporean research assistant who was an experienced school teacher.

The pre-recorded passages were played individually to the participants and were stopped after meaningful chunks in order for the participants to verbalize aloud what was going on in their minds. The think-aloud

transcriptions constitute the major part of our data. In addition, our data comprise transcriptions of general interviews conducted to elicit relevant background information about the participants, such as family language use patterns and private tuition, and general strategy use that could not be tied to the specific listening tasks involved in this study.

Procedures

The general interviews were conducted as a warm-up to the data collection session. Next, think-aloud training was conducted through a 'Guess what's inside' game, prior to the administration of the think-aloud tasks. In this game, pupils were asked to close their eyes and say what they thought was inside a bag by touching the objects only. They were told to voice their thinking out aloud as they tried to guess what was inside the bag. When the training session was over, pupils were instructed to think aloud as they listened to a story played to them. All procedures were audio- and video-taped, with the explicit consent from the teachers, parents and participants. The data were then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Analysis

All transcriptions were turned into text files and coded using *NVivo*, a software package for qualitative analysis. A preliminary listening strategy coding scheme was developed by reviewing and combining the coding schemes from three studies on listening strategies: Goh (2002a), O'Malley et al. (1989) and Vandergrift (2003). The scheme was then modified and refined iteratively as coding went on. Coding was done in two stages. In stage one, all authors independently coded the same set of transcripts from one subject. Two formal calibration meetings were held at this stage to discuss the coding scheme and to resolve inconsistencies and disagreements. We then divided the data into three sets and coded each set independently. Each author then double-coded another set of transcripts that had already been coded. During this stage, the authors engaged in numerous informal discussions regarding the coding details during working lunches. The two stages of coding saw the improvement of intercoder reliability from .60 to over .80. We then resolved all remaining inconsistencies through discussion. After the coding was completed, we tallied the coded strategies by the subjects' English language proficiency (high vs. low) and grade level (Primary 4, 5 and 6) in order to map out possible patterns

across the data. Finally, we scrutinized the coding and took a close-up look at strategy use.

Findings and discussion

English proficiency and the use of listening strategies

Patterns of strategy use

Table 1 compares the listening strategies used by the high-proficiency participants (i.e. the pupils from the top groups) and the low-proficiency ones (i.e. pupils from the bottom groups), in order to obtain a preliminary pattern of strategy use. Results of independent-samples *t*-tests indicate that there were both similarities and differences in strategy use between the high- and low-proficiency groups. Both groups tried to maintain on-task behaviour (monitoring) by asking the interviewer to continue with the listening task when they thought they had already spent enough time on a particular problem. Both groups used real world knowledge and linguistic knowledge to guess at word meanings or make inferences about what they had heard (inferencing); both anticipated details of what they thought was going to happen (prediction); both tried to reconstruct their own version of the stories (reconstruction); and both asked for help when they had a problem in listening (asking for help). However, in comparison with the low-proficiency group, the high-proficiency group did considerably more self-initiating, more planning (e.g. paying attention to specific aspects of language input or situational details; understanding better the conditions for successful completion of the task), made more guesses (inferencing) and more predictions, more often related the content to personal experiences and more often tried to appreciate the texts. The low-proficiency group, on the other hand, were more likely to have difficulties identifying a problem (evaluating); to ignore, postpone or give up on a point that they failed to understand; to re-listen to a chunk that they did not quite understand; to repeat a word, phrase or chunk verbatim; to use a great deal of bottom-up decoding; to engage in wild guessing; to fail to predict when they should; and to avoid embarrassment, often by lying.

Overall, the high-proficiency pupils tried not just to understand the text literally; they were also reconstructing, interpreting, summarizing and making inferences and predictions based on linguistic as well as real world knowledge to understand the passage. As a result, even though they might have failed to understand a particular part, their overall reconstruction was

Table 1   Frequency of listening strategies by proficiency

	Strategies		Mean Frequency (Standard Deviation)				*t*-test	
			High-proficiency (*n* = 9)		Low-proficiency (*n* = 9)		*t*	Sig. (2-tailed)
Metacognitive	Self-initiating		3.00	(1.32)	0.89	(1.05)	3.744	.002
	Planning		2.56	(2.46)	0.33	(0.50)	2.661	.017
	Monitoring		12.00	(4.77)	11.11	(4.62)	0.402	.693
	Evaluating		5.56	(7.33)	4.33	(6.96)	0.363	.772
	Follow-up	Re-listening	2.00	(2.87)	4.44	(4.39)	−1.396	.181
	decision-making	Ignoring	0.11	(0.33)	4.44	(2.65)	−4.866	.000
Cognitive	Perceptual processing	Fixation	0.11	(0.33)	0.00	(0.00)	-	-
		Repetition	2.22	(4.02)	6.44	(6.69)	−1.622	.124
		Decoding	1.00	(1.41)	9.78	(5.87)	−4.362	.000
	Parsing/Organization	Inferencing	20.89	(13.70)	10.00	(7.33)	2.103	.052
		Prediction	22.44	(11.87)	12.33	(14.20)	1.639	.121
		Contextualization	0.22	(0.44)	0.00	(0.00)	−	−
		Translation	0.00	(0.00)	0.22	(0.67)	−	−
		Imagery	0.33	(0.50)	0.00	(0.00)	−	−
	Utilization/Elaboration	Reconstruction	18.11	(12.80)	9.67	(11.79)	1.456	.165
		Summarization	1.22	(1.64)	0.89	(1.97)	0.391	.701
		Personal experiences	1.56	(1.33)	0.67	(0.71)	1.767	.096
		Appreciation of given text	1.67	(1.87)	0.56	(0.88)	1.612	.127
		Evaluate using genre	0.67	(1.32)	0.22	(0.44)	−	−
		Finding problems	0.11	(0.33)	0.00	(0.00)	−	−
	Using resources		1.33	(0.87)	1.22	(1.30)	0.213	.834
Social-affective	Social	Cooperative learning	0.33	(0.50)	0.00	(0.00)	−	−
		Asking for help	2.22	(1.30)	3.56	(2.51)	−1.417	.176
	Affective	Trying to enjoy	0.33	(0.50)	0.00	(0.00)	−	−
		Avoiding embarrassment	0.11	(0.33)	1.22	(1.09)	−2.917	.010

a coherent whole that made sense. The low-proficiency group, on the other hand, spent most of their time decoding and re-listening. Although they did make guesses on the basis of their real world knowledge and/or linguistic knowledge, their guesses were often totally unrelated to the context. More importantly, the low-proficiency pupils tended not to actively control their comprehension. Although the numbers for monitoring in Table 1 do not reflect a significant difference, the low-proficiency pupils recorded many more instances of 'not monitoring' than their high-proficiency counterparts (13 vs. 1) when the situation clearly called for the use of monitoring as a strategy. Instead of orchestrating their strategy use to arrive at a reasonable comprehension that made sense, many of the low-proficiency pupils simply pretended that they had understood the passage.

A note of caution is in order here in interpreting the statistical patterns presented here and below. We are fully aware of the small number of subjects involved in these calculations. We also made an arbitrary rule that statistical comparisons would be made only on variables that contain a mean score of 1 in at least one cell (i.e. an average of 1 strategy per participant in the group). The purpose of these calculations was to chart the data and find preliminary patterns before we zoomed in on areas of interest for detailed analysis.

In the following section, we will focus on three aspects of listening strategy use – that is, going beyond basic comprehension, strategy orchestration and bottom-up decoding – in order to show a number of key qualitative differences in listening processes among the pupils. To protect pupil's anonymity, pseudonyms were given to the pupils whose examples we report below.

A closer look at listening strategies

The listening tasks obviously engaged students at different levels of processing. The low-proficiency group spent a large portion of their time decoding and stringing the decoded bits and pieces together to arrive at an understanding of what they heard. The high-proficiency group, on the other hand, displayed constant interaction between bottom-up decoding and top-down meaning-making processes. Moreover, some pupils of the high-proficiency group went beyond mere comprehension of the listening passage, approached the text in an appreciative or critical manner and reacted to the content of the text.

In the following example, the listening passage was an account of the narrator jogging in the morning and appreciating the beauty of nature. The pupil, Johnny, (Primary 5, high-proficiency group) went well beyond simply

understanding the listening passage. He was constantly trying to predict a more dramatic twist to the storyline, for example,

- 'I think the bridge will break', and
- 'I think he will . . . spot something surprising . . . Mmm, maybe a snake . . . I think he will go and alert the people'.

This was probably because of his familiarity with the prototypical narrative characterized by a twist or climax. When he reached the end and realized that there was not a twist after all, he started to appreciate how the narrator described the scenery and what he could learn from the narrator.

Johnny did not merely predict individual parts of the listening text in an isolated or random manner; neither did he predict to compensate for a problem in his comprehension of earlier parts of the text. He was in obvious control of the material because low-level inferencing processes for 'decoding' of words and chunks were largely automatized. What he was doing was actively constructing his own version of the narrative through prediction at each phase of his listening based on his prior knowledge about story grammar as well as his knowledge about how the theme normally develops in stories. This level of active listening is probably something that only high-proficiency learners can do because they have transcended the lower levels of processing to engage with what they hear in a meaningful way.

Unlike the high achieving listeners such as Johnny, the poor listeners made use of a substantial number of strategies such as inferencing and predicting, but they seldom monitored and evaluated their understanding and thereby modified their predictions, inferences, reconstructions and comprehension. Often they came up with inconsistent or even contradictory interpretations of different parts of a listening text but did not make any effort to resolve the inconsistencies or contradictions.

In the next example the story is told from the point of view of a veterinarian. It describes a school boy's inner struggle to come to terms with the sad fact that his much loved pet has a malignant tumour. An analysis of the transcripts of a Primary 6 low-proficiency pupil, Sue, provided clear evidence of a lack of monitoring and evaluation in the listening process. At the outset of the task, Sue misinterpreted the narrator of the story as a school girl despite clear clues that she was a veterinarian. Because of this misinterpretation, Sue anticipated a story about a naughty school boy and a good school girl. To support her interpretation, Sue made a number of inferences unsupported by the listening text and tried to elaborate on her interpretation, drawing on her background knowledge about school

and pupils. As the listening text unfolded, there was more and more explicit information clearly identifying the narrator as a veterinarian. Sue, however, stuck to her mistaken interpretation by changing some of the details of the listening text to suit her misinterpretation and ignoring other incongruous details all together. Throughout the task, she made no attempt to monitor or evaluate the initial understanding against new information. This was a significant contributing factor to her total incomprehension of the listening text. Sue represented a substantial proportion of poor listeners in our study and resembled the type of poor listeners reported in Tsui and Fullilove (1998) and those learners in Wu (1998) who depended heavily on compensatory top-down processing.

At the beginning of the task, Sue misinterpreted the setting of the story as a school. This misinterpretation continued until the middle of the listening text, where she picked up a few explicit clues and suggested that the setting could be a hospital. This seemed to suggest that the pupil did try to evaluate her initial interpretation against new information. However, what was revealing was that she then alternated between the two interpretations throughout the rest of the listening task. No attempt was made to resolve the inconsistencies between the two interpretations by verifying them against the many clues provided by the listening text. A similar lack of monitoring and evaluation strategies also characterized other weak students' performance.

It can be argued that the various problems exemplified above can be attributed to a lack of strategy orchestration. A number of researchers (e.g. Anderson, 2002; Gu, 2003a; Pressley et al., 1987; Vandergrift, 2003; Zhang, 2001) have noted the importance of strategy orchestration and described in detail how successful learners orchestrate their strategy use to accomplish language tasks effectively. We see strategy orchestration as a dynamic process of metacognitive regulation. It is characterized by the overall executive role that a learner plays in making strategic choices based on analyses of task, self and context, monitoring and evaluating, and modifying strategies to solve the problem in question. Without skilful orchestration, individual strategies may well fail to yield a satisfactory result.

In our scrutiny of the think-aloud protocols, it became clear that there were two types of weak listeners, those who over-relied on bottom-up processing and those who over-relied on premature top-down information. The weak listener we described above, Sue, represented a substantial proportion of weak listeners in our data who arrived at quick conclusions about what the passage was about and made up their own versions of the story. On the other hand, we discovered another type of weak listeners who were trying to do bottom-up decoding almost exclusively and were very

cautious about adding new information to make sense of what they had already decoded.

The following extract is from a Primary 4 weak listener, Henry, who was listening to a story about a five-year-old boy sneaking out from home and getting lost in downtown Singapore. Like a number of other weak listeners, Henry used a fixation strategy predominantly and was sound-driven. He tried to echo the sounds of every word that he heard, and often ended up remembering only the last few words.

Text heard: *Mrs Haslina was very worried. Where had Hilzi, her five-year-old son, gone?*

P: (tries to repeat last chunk '5-year-old son gone' but only manages to get last word correct) [???] *gone.*

Weak listeners like Henry did not venture much beyond what they thought they had heard, not even stringing the individual sounds together to make some sense out of the text. One common affective strategy that they used at the end of the listening task was to tell themselves and the research assistant that they had understood everything but they did not like the story.

It is worth noting that both types of weak listeners had perceptual processing problems that could not be easily remedied through strategy use (cf. Field, 2004). In other words, these weak pupils were often unable to understand a listening text not because of their failure to use comprehension strategies but because of something more basic, that is, the perceptual difficulties that they encountered in decoding language input automatically. The two types of weak listeners differed after they had encountered initial problems; the Sues started wild guessing and used their initial evidence to overrule upcoming bottom-up information, while the Henrys went on with their unsuccessful bottom-up decoding effort. Both types of weak listeners would benefit from some basic training in word recognition (see Ridgway, 2000).

Grade level and the use of listening strategies

There is some reason to believe that young learners may not report as strong an awareness of their listening processes as their older schoolmates. Flavell (1992), for example, reported that children's monitoring ability grew with their developmental maturity. Bialystok (2001) posited that learners' metalinguistic awareness grew with their physical and cognitive development. One of our own previous studies (Gu et al., 2005) also found

that Primary 3 pupils in Singapore were more mature than their Primary 1 counterparts in their deployment of language learner strategies. It seems that older learners' greater developmental maturity might have equipped them with a better understanding not only of the learning tasks and the variables related to learning but also of the conditions in which learning takes place.

The expected age-related differences in strategy use, however, did not show clearly in this study. Table 2 reveals that differences in strategy use between younger and older learners were not as conspicuous as those between high- and low-proficiency pupils. One-way ANOVA and post hoc analysis (LSD) revealed only two significant differences between Primary 6 and the other two primary levels: Primary 6 pupils related the listening contents to their own experiences more than the other levels did; and Primary 6 pupils tended to ask for help more than pupils in the other two primary levels.

Most of our findings in this study on Singaporean primary school pupils' use of listening strategies corroborate findings from other studies on adult 'English as second language' (ESL) learners and in other learning environments (e.g. Goh, 2002a; O'Malley et al., 1989; Vandergrift, 2003). Good listeners at the primary school level in Singapore appeared to be stronger in metacognitive awareness and metacognitive regulation than their less successful counterparts. Their cognitive strategies tended to be meaning-oriented (e.g. inferencing, predicting and elaborating). By contrast, poor listeners tended to dwell on perceptual processing and bottom-up decoding. Good listeners were able to quickly form a conceptual framework and monitor their understanding against this framework (Kintsch, 1998), orchestrating their strategy use along the way. Poor listeners, on the other hand, either had difficulties forming a coherent framework of understanding or were unable to monitor and evaluate their own comprehension (see O'Malley et al., 1989; Vandergrift, 2003). We also discovered two types of weak listeners, those who were sound-driven and rarely went beyond bottom-up decoding, and those who arrived at premature schemas based on wrongly decoded information but used the top-down strategy to overrule incoming bottom-up evidence.

Conclusion

High- and low-proficiency pupils learning English in Singapore primary schools differed from each other in their choice and deployment of listening strategies. High-proficiency learners orchestrated their own strategy use

Table 2 Frequency of listening strategy use by grade level

	Strategies		Mean Frequency (Standard Deviation)					One-way ANOVA	
			Grade 4 (n = 6)		Grade 5 (n = 6)		Grade 6 (n = 6)		Sig.	Post hoc (LSD)
Metacognitive	Self-initiating		1.50	(1.23)	1.83	(1.94)	2.50	(1.64)	.569	–
	Planning		1.67	(2.42)	1.67	(2.42)	1.00	(1.55)	.830	–
	Monitoring		9.00	(2.10)	12.83	(3.76)	12.83	(6.40)	.259	–
	Evaluating		2.00	(1.79)	5.67	(8.31)	7.17	(8.70)	.443	–
	Follow-up decision-making	Re-listening	2.17	(2.14)	3.33	(5.75)	4.17	(3.06)	.686	–
		Ignoring	1.50	(1.64)	3.00	(3.52)	2.33	(3.45)	.692	–
Cognitive	Perceptual processing	Fixation	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.17	(0.41)	–	–
		Repetition	5.33	(7.94)	3.33	(5.16)	4.33	(4.63)	.852	–
		Decoding	4.67	(7.03)	4.00	(4.15)	7.50	(7.26)	.604	–
	Parsing/Organization	Inferencing	9.67	(5.20)	16.17	(11.75)	20.50	(16.01)	.309	–
		Prediction	15.17	(16.58)	17.83	(12.66)	19.17	(13.72)	.889	–
		Contextualization	0.00	(0.00)	0.17	(0.41)	0.17	(0.41)	–	–
		Translation	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	0.33	(0.816)	–	–
		Imagery	0.33	(0.52)	0.00	(0.00)	0.17	(0.41)	–	–

	Utilization/Elaboration	Reconstruction	12.67	(10.05)	16.83	(16.14)	12.17	(13.09)	.804	–
		Summarization	0.67	(1.63)	1.50	(2.26)	1.00	(1.55)	.737	–
		Personal experiences	0.83	(0.98)	0.50	(0.55)	2.00	(1.27)	.043	6>5/4
		Appreciation of given text	0.67	(1.21)	2.00	(2.10)	0.67	(0.82)	.228	–
		Evaluate using genre	0.17	(0.41)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	–	–
		Finding problems	0.17	(0.41)	0.00	(0.00)	0.00	(0.00)	–	–
	Using resources		1.50	(1.52)	1.00	(0.63)	1.33	(1.03)	.738	–
Social-affective	Social	Cooperative learning	0.00	(0.00)	0.50	(0.84)	0.17	(0.41)	–	–
		Asking for help	1.50	(0.84)	2.33	(1.51)	4.83	(2.04)	.005	6>5/4
	Affective	Trying to enjoy	0.00	(0.00)	0.33	(0.52)	0.17	(0.41)	–	–
		Avoiding embarrassment	0.67	(0.82)	0.67	(1.03)	0.67	(1.21)	1.000	–

during listening and used both bottom-up and top-down processing to rapidly form a conceptual framework of what they heard. This framework was immediately used for hypothesis testing against upcoming input. Some of the top-group pupils went beyond text comprehension to appreciate the content or to find problems with the text that they heard. On the other hand, the low-proficiency group had serious problems with bottom-up decoding. Many pupils in this group had problems at the stage of perceptual processing; most could not link one piece of information with another and were not able to monitor their own interpretation and understanding. One subgroup of low-proficiency pupils did not go beyond bottom-up decoding of sounds and words, another subgroup formed premature conceptual frameworks that were then used to overrule upcoming information. Answers to our second research question were less clear. Primary 6 pupils were found to relate to their personal experiences more than the lower grades; they were also more likely to ask for help than their younger counterparts. Overall, however, there were very few convincing patterns about grade level and strategy use. This does not mean to us that grade level is not a factor in strategy use. Further research with a larger grade range may produce different results.

Despite the fact that learner strategies differ from task to task, from person to person and from learning context to learning context (Cohen, 2003; Gu, 2003b), we believe that research on L2 learner strategies has come of age and has discovered enough compelling patterns to deserve more classroom attention. Before we started this project, we assumed that Singapore's unique linguistic context could determine to a considerable extent how Singaporean students learn English. We also noticed that very few extensive learner strategy studies could be found on primary school children's learning of ESL, and suspected that children might well differ from adults in learner strategies. Our major findings as reported in this paper, however, are surprisingly similar to those of other studies on listener strategies (and to a certain extent, reading strategies). These findings have led us to believe that the major strategy differences between successful and unsuccessful learners may transcend age and contextual differences. We regret, however, that despite accumulating research insights into L2 learning and use strategies, many teachers remain uninformed as to how their students learn. If learner strategy research is to make any difference to student learning, the time has come for us to integrate research findings and their pedagogical implications more fully.

To our knowledge, with the exceptions of Chamot and her colleagues (Chamot et al., 1999), Cohen and his associates (Cohen & Weaver, 1997)

and a few other efforts (e.g. Anderson, 2002; Goh & Taib, 2006; Vandergrift, 2002; Zhang, 2008), not much work has been done to integrate L2 learner strategy research and classroom language teaching/learning. Since Rubin (1975) and Stern (1975), research on L2 learner strategies has gone through three decades of exploration. Armed with the knowledge that has been amassed, we should be directing our attention to strategy instruction in the classroom. Although, as our predecessors and researchers in educational psychology (Brown et al., 1996; Pressley & El-Dinary, 1997) have found, it is no easy job establishing effective means of strategy instruction, it is a worthwhile enterprise. Furthermore, the extensive body of experience gained in L1 reading strategy instruction should give us a jump-start.

Notes

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[2] Listening occurs in either one-way or two-way listening tasks. The former refers to tasks that require receptive listening only, for example, listening to a speech, and the latter refers to interactive listening in which the listener is an interlocutor.

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Chapter 5

Asian Pedagogy: Scaffolding in a Singaporean English Classroom[1]

Viniti Vaish and Chitra Shegar

Introduction

Canagarajah (1999) points out that pedagogic conventions have tradition-ally been imported from largely Euro-American 'centre'-based countries to 'periphery' countries in, for instance, Asia. There is a perception that, in comparison with these Euro-American models, Asian pedagogies stress rote learning, with students passively receiving input from a teacher-centred pedagogy, which they regurgitate in a high stakes exam-based system. No doubt this stereotype can be justified. However, the success of school sys-tems in many East Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea in international tests like TIMMS (Third International Mathematics and Science Test) and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) has made the international academic community curious about the strengths of this 'Asian Pedagogy' which have not only contributed to high scores in international testing but also, indirectly, to the success of these countries economically.

This chapter is about the nature of scaffolding for language learning in an Asian Pedagogy. We show that while scaffolding might be quite different from that which might be successfully practised in the West, it is ecologi-cally balanced with the culture of Singaporean education. In the instruc-tional unit analysed, the teacher consistently uses questions within an IRE (Initiation-Reply-Evaluation) format for 'discourse as scaffolding' in class-room learning. In addition, she integrates the tool of the internet to create technologically rich learning. It is important to note that most Singaporean classrooms are equipped with a computer for the teacher and internet connections along with overhead projectors. Teachers have had training in the use of information technology (IT) in the classroom, especially in the

use of internet, projecting images and Microsoft PowerPoint. According to the World Bank (2008) Singapore has one of the highest levels of connectivity in the world: in 2006 for every 100 persons there were 68.2 personal computers and 38.3 internet users. Most children have access to a computer in school as well as at home or in community libraries.

Singapore is an ethnically diverse and multilingual country with four official languages: Mandarin, Malay, Tamil and English. According to the latest census report, there is a rising trend in the use of English at home among all ethnic groups (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2005). In the national school system English is the main medium of instruction and the Mother Tongue is taught as a school subject. The home language of many Singaporean children is the Mother Tongue or a combination of English and the Mother Tongue. English is used in code switched forms at varying levels of fluency both in and out of school. Though we are aware that the sociolinguistic situation characterizing Singapore is not exactly commensurable with that of 'English as second language' (ESL) children in English-speaking countries, most Singaporean children are learning the English language and content through this language at the same time in ways that are similar to what ESL children elsewhere experience (Silver et al., this volume).

Scaffolding and classroom teaching

The origins of the term 'scaffolding' can be found in the key ideas of 'vicarious consciousness' (Bruner, 1978) and zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Bruner sees scaffolding as the support that teachers give learners to help them through tasks that they are not able to deal with on their own. He calls this 'vicarious consciousness' because the learner is coming out of his/her own consciousness into the consciousness of the teacher. This is similar to Vygotsky's definition of the zone of proximal development:

> The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential problem solving as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more able peers. (1978: 86)

In both these definitions there is the idea of taking the learner to a higher level through adult scaffolding. Though originally the concept of

scaffolding was used to discuss the language input that parents give to young children, it is also used in analysing the nature of teacher talk. This chapter follows the lead of Cazden (2001) who situates this term in the theory of learning known as 'constructivism'. 'Constructivism' refers to the mental effort required in the construction of new knowledge after an event such as listening to a lecture (p. 77). Cazden suggests that for effective scaffolding to take place the curriculum must contain a series of increasingly difficult tasks. She also indicates that the term scaffolding is appropriate only in those instances where there is evidence that the learner's competence grows (p. 63).

Taken from this point of view, scaffolding is not simply giving the child prompts to the right answer but building a structure that will assist the child in learning. In order for scaffolding to be effective in bringing about independent learners, three essential features are necessary. First, the teacher has to build a temporary and supportive structure around a learning task. Second, the task must be designed and scaffolded in a manner that places the learner in the zone of proximal development. Third, the teacher must design a parallel task that carefully dismantles the scaffold and transfers the responsibility of accomplishing the task to the learner.

Scaffolding that meets these conditions for language learning has been well documented by Gibbons (1998, 2002) and Donato (1994). Gibbons (2003), for example, presents transcripts of teacher and student talk from a science classroom where the students are learning both content and English language. The class is discussing an experiment which they have done with magnets. Through the kind of scaffolding described in the previous paragraph, Gibbons shows how the teacher leads the students to use a more scientific register (for instance, through the use of terms like 'attract', 'repel' and 'generalize') and move beyond an informal non-academic register. Gibbons also shows how a student recasts her own language and the teacher's language; in other words, how the student rephrases what she has said to fit the decontextualized scientific register required by the teacher.

Most studies of this sort are looking at classrooms in centre-based countries where the relationship between the teacher and student is different from what we find in many Asian countries (Vaish, 2008). The terms 'centre' and 'periphery' are drawn from Canagarajah (1999) where 'Centre' refers to countries like the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada which are largely English-speaking monolingual countries. On the other hand 'Periphery' refers to large parts of South and East Asia where children learn English as a second language, usually in school.

In Singapore classrooms, extended student responses are rare. Lessons are teacher-fronted and heavy on teacher talk (Sam et al., 2007). Our discussion and findings thus showcase the kind of classroom interaction which is typical of this learning context. We wish to highlight the types of scaffolding used within the type of classroom interaction that is common in Singapore and to discuss how the types of scaffolds might aid or impede language acquisition and development.

Types of scaffolds

In an in-depth look at types of scaffolds, Saye and Brush (2002) identify 'hard' and 'soft' scaffolds. The former can be planned in advance on the basis of the teacher anticipating what difficulties students of a certain level are likely to face in a given tasks. On the other hand, soft scaffolds are dynamic and situational; they are spontaneously invented by the teacher depending on the point of need. Saye and Brush (2002) emphasize the importance of soft scaffolds in promoting reflection and critical thinking.

Questioning by the teacher can function as one type of soft scaffold. According to Ge and Land (2004), questions can be subdivided into procedural, elaboration and reflection prompts, all of which serve different cognitive purposes. Procedural prompts assist students in completing specific tasks such as writing or problem solving. 'An example of this . . .', is one type of procedural prompt. Elaboration prompts get students to further explain or build their knowledge by articulating and extending their thoughts. 'How does . . . affect . . .?' is one type of elaboration prompt. Reflection prompts encourage students to reflect on an issue so that it brings them to a higher cognitive level, for instance, 'What is our plan?' or 'Have our goals changed?' Though question prompts are useful as scaffolding tools, there are limitations. For example, they might not be sufficient as scaffolds since students might omit or ignore questions (Ge & Land, 2004). They are also ineffective if students address them superficially.

Scaffolding can also be influenced by the different types of 'problems' that teachers set for students. According to Ge and Land (2004) 'well-structured problems' have single agreed-upon solutions and the pathway to the solution involves a logical and structured inquiry process. On the other hand, 'ill-structured problems' rarely have specific agreed-upon solutions and the information required to solve the problem often falls outside the domain of the problem.

We hypothesize that in classrooms that are teacher-centred with limited participation from the students there is intensive use of static, hard

scaffolds and extensive use of well-structured problems. Use of soft scaffolds and ill-structured problems is more limited. Further, we suggest that these scaffolding strategies are examples of an Asian pedagogy which encourages hierarchical classroom structures but nevertheless can support children's language learning needs.

Our analysis also considers scaffolding with the use of multimedia. This topic is crucial for Singaporean education because of the Ministry of Education's IT Masterplan (MOE, 1997) which encourages the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom to help children to think creatively, learn independently and communicate effectively (MOE, 1997). These goals would tend to suggest a pedagogy more oriented towards ill-structured problems and a need for scaffolding to support extended discourse and new ways of thinking. Hannafin et al. (1999) point towards four types of scaffolds that can be used in a multimedia rich classroom: *conceptual* (guidance about what knowledge to consider), *metacognitive* (guidance about how to think during learning), *procedural* (guidance about how to utilize available resources and tools) and finally *strategic* (guidance about alternative approaches to decision making). Since the unit discussed in this paper includes use of IT, these scaffolds – specific to multimedia – will be discussed in addition to the more general types of scaffolding described above.

Methodology

With all of this in mind, we analyse one transcribed teaching unit from a Primary 5 English language (EL) class, using the categories of scaffolds described above. A *unit* is defined as a group of three or more lessons which have a common theme. The unit discussed was selected using cluster analysis (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984) from among 25 primary teaching units collected as part of a larger project on pedagogy in Singapore (Luke et al., 2005b). Under cluster analysis, data are grouped based on common criteria. In this case, instructional units are groups based on similar results in a classroom coding scheme (Luke et al., 2005a). The similar units are considered to be a cluster. The largest cluster is considered to be comprised of the 'most typical' lessons. The transcript we discuss was randomly selected from the largest cluster of Primary 5 English units and thus can be considered as typical. It is made up of six EL lessons on the theme of Antarctica.

The teacher begins the unit by explaining the chapter on Antarctica in the text book using websites shown on the class computer and projector as additional resources. She leads the class through pre-writing activities

(e.g. making a diagram of what they have learned about Antarctica) and ends with a K-W-L (What I know, what I want to know, what I have learned) worksheet (Ogle, 1986). Our analysis is based on the verbal scaffolding provided during the unit, using a discourse analytic approach which considers broad patterns of teacher talk (Johnstone, 2000). In this case, we do not consider microscopic aspects such as wait time. Instead, we analyse a transcription painted with broad brush strokes, or what Johnstone calls the 'play-script version' (p. 115), in which information about conversational overlaps, latching or the timing of pauses has been omitted. The play-script version is ideally suited to our purposes since the focus of this paper is on the content of the talk with some analysis of the sequential structure (Markee, 2000). Another consideration in choosing the play-script version is the large quantity of data: Johnstone points out that for 'discourse analysts who rely on . . . close-reading analytical methods . . ., it is impossible to deal with large quantities of textual data' (2001: 122). The unit on Antarctica is made up of six lessons and the transcript for each lesson is, on an average, 50 pages.

Findings

In this section we analyse the teacher's assistance to her students in terms of how she builds up their knowledge on Antarctica through the classroom discourse and especially through teacher questioning. Our main findings, which we will substantiate in this section, are that the IRE format of classroom interaction is based mainly on elaboration prompts and secondarily on procedural prompts with no reflection prompts. Teacher talk dominates and there is not much extended oral response, narrative or story telling on the part of the students. Where the instruction of the use of ICT is concerned, the use of procedural and conceptual scaffolds is evident but metacognitive and strategic scaffolds are not. In addition, though the teacher uses both hard and soft scaffolds, she stays within the domain of well-structured problems which have only one right answer.

IRE: Elaboration and procedural prompts

In order to assist students to complete the task at hand namely, to obtain information about Antarctica, the teacher first, asks each student to share his/her knowledge and records the contributions on the white board. Following this, she asks students to explore the questions that they have about Antarctica. These questions are also noted on the white board. Finally,

she explores the textbook and internet as resources for gaining additional information about Antarctica. The analysis of the unit, illustrated via excerpts below, shows that the teacher has utilized two kinds of questioning prompts: procedural and elaboration. There is no evidence of use of reflection prompts anywhere in the unit.

In Excerpt 1, the teacher prompts the students to ask questions on Antarctica (Turn 1) and chooses Nathaneal to answer the question. When she gets no response from Nathaneal she uses a procedural prompt in Turn 3: 'Erm questions – what you want to know will be why, how, what.' She gives an illustration of how to start a question and asks Nathaneal to try again. In Turn 4, Nathaneal does offer a question on Antarctica, but it does not have a 'wh' word and is grammatically non-standard. In Turn 5 the teacher recasts Nathaneal's question into a standard grammatical format and writes it on the board for the class to copy, thus modelling the question form she wants the students to use. In this way, the teacher uses questioning prompts to scaffold student comprehension and integrates recasting which can aid language acquisition (e.g. Mackey & Oliver, 2002).

Excerpt 1

1	Teacher	Okay, so I'm sure you have more questions about Antarctica. Okay now we move on to what you want to know about Antarctica. Come on I'm sure you want to find out more. What are your questions? Come. Yes Nathaneal?
2	Student	(no response)
3	Teacher	Erm questions, what you want to know will be why, how, what. You know, that kind of questions. Where, When. Okay, yes? Nathaneal?
4	Student	Ah, is there any igloo?
5	Teacher	Are there any igloos in Antarctica? Okay.

The teacher also uses procedural prompts which are not in question form to get students to follow her instructions at home as shown in Excerpt 2. In this case, the teacher uses procedural scaffolds in the instruction of the use of ICT where she informs the students about the resources available on the internet that can be explored for information on Antarctica. In addition there is use of conceptual scaffolds related to ICT as illustrated in Excerpt 3 where the teacher takes the students through various websites and prompts them on the information that they have to note to answer the question, 'What I learned?' She does not, however, give guidance about what kinds of information are reliable or valid. Nor does she give information on how to integrate the facts from the various sources or when to use which type of information.

Excerpt 2

Teacher	Okay, now, I'm going to show you before we look into the textbook. *I'm going to show you some interesting, erm, websites, okay useful website` on Antarctica. And you can write down, erm URL.* Okay and you can always surf the information through the library computers or your internet at home.

Excerpt 3

Teacher	Okay, now, I'm going to go through this, erm, website. I just want to tell you that for your project work, this website is very interesting. *Okay very useful for those who are doing on whales.* Okay because whales are found in the, along the coastline in the ocean surrounding Antarctica. Okay, so conservation efforts and everything they write a lot about it here okay.

Elaboration prompts help students build their knowledge further by encouraging them to articulate and extend their thoughts. This is evident in Excerpt 4 in Turns 7, 9 and 11 where the teacher asks a series of questions to extend students' knowledge about other aspects of Antarctica. For instance in Turn 7, the teacher asks the students to elaborate on the word 'civilization' and how it relates to Antarctica. Another invitation for elaboration takes place in Turn 9 and 11, where the teacher tries to elicit any other facts about Antarctica from the students.

Excerpt 4

1	Teacher	How many of you here have read about Antarctica before? Okay, newspaper articles, books, nonfiction books, very good. Excellent. Okay so how many of you can tell me what you remember . . .
2	Student	Antarctica is very cold.
3	Teacher	Okay
4	Student	Nobody has rule Antarctica before.
5	Teacher:	That means there's no government, no, government is set up there, is it? Ok Why don't you stay there are, Can anyone put it in a better way? Yes, Ernest?
6	Student	No civilization.
7	Teacher:	Okay very good! *Okay there is little civilization there, meaning what?* Very few people are to stay there. Very good. There are few inhabitations. Very good.
8	Class	#

9	Teacher:	And I'm sure most of you will know partly the reason because it is very cold like what Eugene said. *Okay, any other facts you know about Antarctica as a class?*
10	Class:	#
11	Teacher:	*. . . Any specific details, temperature? What is it like? Things that lived ah, animals lived there. Anything you know about it? Yes?*

\# – Class pause or no response

Asian pedagogy: The teacher-centred classroom

In this section, we situate the unit discussed above within the broader context of classroom pedagogy in Singapore. A large scale quantitative analysis of 1,189 primary and secondary lessons from 70 schools, collected over a period of two years in core subject areas of English, Mother Tongue, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies (Luke et al., 2005b) showed that Singaporean classes in Primary 5 and Secondary 3 are teacher-fronted with minimal student participation across all subject areas (Luke & Abdul Rahim, 2006). Looking specifically at Primary 5 English pedagogy, Sam et al. (2005) found that out of nine possible types of student work (i.e. responses) 'short oral responses' predominate with 'written short answers' as the second most common type. Together short oral and short written responses make up 64% of all student responses across 514 different lesson stages of the 120 lessons examined (Table 1). In contrast, 'sustained oral text' was produced by students only 3.3% of the time indicating that there is minimal student participation in the English classes.

Table 1 Types of student produced work in Primary 5 English classes

Type of student work	Percentage of phases
Nil	9.5
Short oral response	43.6
Written short answers	20.4
Sustained written text	7.0
Multimodal text	0.6
Worksheet	2.5
Sustained oral text	3.3
Written multiple choice/fill in the blanks	6.0
Others	5.6
Total	100

Source: Adapted from Sam et al. (2005: 56). 'English language pedagogical practice: Preliminary Description of Singaporean English language classrooms'. Reproduced with author permission.

Similarly in the transcribed unit which we analysed, short oral responses far outweigh sustained oral texts and 'nil' responses are common as shown in Excerpt 4, Turns 7–10. In general, when there are student responses, they are only a phrase or a very short sentence, as in Excerpt 4, Turn 6, 'no civilization', despite the teacher's use of open-ended question to elicit student responses (Excerpt 5). Though there is an opportunity here for students to present a sustained oral response, the reply is simply 'Antarctica is very cold.' The teacher accepts this reply with, 'Okay.' It is evident that the teacher produces many more words than the students similar to other Singaporean classes (Luke & Abdul Rahim, 2006; Sam et al., 2005).

Excerpt 5

1	Teacher	Okay, what I know about Antarctica? Okay can anyone contribute? I'm sure many of you quite a number of you here know or have read about Antarctica. How many of you here have read about Antarctica before? Okay, newspaper articles, books, non-fiction books, very good. Excellent. Okay, so how many of you can tell me what you remember what you know. Yes, Eugene?
2	Student	Antarctica is very cold.
3	Teacher	Okay.

It is also important to note that though English is called the 'first language' for schooling in Singapore, it is actually the second language for many Singaporeans who speak another language at home (usually Mandarin, Tamil or Malay), sometimes along with English (Vaish et al., 2005). Thus, some children in Singaporean classrooms are learning the language and the content as the same time. In our data, the teacher demonstrates understanding of this socio-cultural situation; she recognizes that the children need to develop greater vocabulary and more accurate grammatical forms, and she tries to lead the students towards a more decontextualized academic register. In Excerpt 4, Turn 5, she asks, 'Can anyone put it in a better way?' She seems to be trying to help the class understand that 'Nobody has rule Antarctica before' is not acceptable. In Turn 7, she accepts the reply 'no civilization' which is not a complete sentence but does add a useful lexical item, 'civilization', to the vocabulary of her students. Thus through questions she elicits a more formal vocabulary which is appropriate for the classroom. She also uses the lexical item in a grammatically correct sentence, thereby modelling and reinforcing its use. It is likely that this sort of communicative interaction is important for language acquisition (Long, 1996) though we see that there are limited examples in the data overall.

This situation, where the teacher in our Excerpt 4 leads the students towards a more academic register, is similar to that in Gibbons (1998) where in a science classroom on magnets the teacher scaffolds the children into using a more scientific register. For instance the teacher in Gibbons (1998) asks the students to use words like 'repel' instead of 'push away' through questioning prompts leading to what Gibbons calls a 'mode shift' or shift in register.

Finally it is important for the reader to notice the linguistic and ethnic diversity of the Singaporean classroom. Many of the children not only speak a language other than English at home, but there are a variety of different home languages among the students. In this unit of lessons the teacher calls on Abhiyana, Aizad and Chun Meng which is indicative of the fact that there are Indian, Malay and Chinese children in her class. This diversity is a challenge for the Singaporean teacher as she is faced with varying competencies in English. Her method of scaffolding, through questioning, recasting, encouraging Standard English and highlighting key vocabulary is in keeping with the linguistic background of the children in her class. In fact the teacher-centred unit of lessons offers the aural input that is crucial for some of these children who might not hear much standard English in their communities. This is not to say that teacher-fronted lessons meet all the language-learning needs of the pupils, but it does meet some of their language-learning needs as we have shown. If we consider the teacher-fronted lessons more closely however, we see that the teacher also limits some of the more open-ended exchanges in class through her use of well/ill-structured problems.

Well-structured and ill-structured problems

Ge and Land (2004) describe a well-structured problem as one which the teacher can prepare in advance and which has only one answer. In contrast, ill-structured problems are those from real life where there is neither one best way to solve the problem nor is there one best answer: students have to negotiate through myriad possible paths and solutions and choose one that fits best. Ge and Land proposed that ill-structured problems can be scaffolded using questioning prompts and peer interaction.

Saye and Brush (2002) show how ill-structured problems can be used as a trigger in the classroom to enhance critical thinking and encourage reflection. They point out that the teacher can use two types of scaffolds to deal with ill-structured problems: hard and soft scaffolds. 'Hard scaffolds are static supports that can be anticipated and planned in advance based on

typical student difficulties with a task' (p. 81). On the other hand soft scaffolds are dynamic and situational. 'Soft scaffolding requires teachers to continuously diagnose the understandings of learners and provide timely support based on student responses' (p. 82).

In the unit on Antarctica, the teacher is focused on well-structured problems throughout. Though the children do present some ill-structured problems, the teacher does not exploit them as shown in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6

1	Teacher	Second last question, maybe. Yes, Sharif.
2	Student	If there is earthquake in Antartica (inaudible talk)?
3	Teacher	If there's an earthquake? Do you think an earthquake will happen in Antartica, Sharif?
4	Class	#
5	Teacher	Dunno? Ok Let's have a more sensible question. Amiratul?
6	Student	Ah, is there any water under the ice?
7	Teacher	Okay. Some of your friends can answer that already. Is there water under the ice?

– Class pause or no response

In Excerpt 6, the teacher selects Sharif to ask a question on Antarctica in Turn 1. However, it appears that Sharif asked an unexpected question in Turn 2, 'If there is an earthquake in Antartica (inaudible talk)?' The teacher poses a new question to Sharif and asks him if it is possible for an earthquake to occur in Antarctica. Sharif does not manage an answer and neither does the class. Instead of eliciting student responses to the question through guided prompts, the teacher dismisses the question and asks students to come up with a more sensible question. In this case the teacher does not follow up on the ill-structured problem posed by Sharif. To do so might require the use of on-the-spot soft scaffolds. Soft scaffolds could, in turn, encourage student responses and discussion.

In addition, some ill-structured problems posed by students could be an opportunity for the teacher to use reflection prompts to make links between various parts of the unit and to take the understanding of the class to a higher level. However the teacher pursues a pre-planned script where most of the questions are well-structured problems that she helps the class solve through procedural and elaboration prompts as already shown.

Removing the scaffold

The literature on scaffolding is emphatic about the fact that scaffolding is only relevant when the teacher/parent ultimately removes the scaffold, and

the child can then perform the activity on his/her own (e.g. Cazden, 2001; Gibbons, 2002). Hammond (2001) in fact points out that effective scaffolding happens not only when the teacher is able to remove the help that she has been giving the students but also when there is evidence that the child can do the task without the help of the scaffolding. In the Singaporean classroom we have discussed, it is difficult to find evidence in the teacher and student talk that scaffolds are dismantled.

For example, in the last lesson of the unit on Antarctica the students start filling out their K-W-L worksheets. They need to record what they have learned about Antarctica in the column 'what I have learned'. The teacher is projecting various websites on the screen and reminds the children to copy down the URL so that they can surf these websites at home.

Excerpt 7 shows that at the end of the unit on Antarctica the emphasis is still on factual content which the teacher has been disseminating through the textbook and some websites. The authoritative source of knowledge remains the teacher and text until the very end. The dominant student response remains either no response, as is seen in Turns 2, 4 and 6, or a short oral response as we have shown in other excerpts. This way of filling out a K-W-L worksheet shows that the scaffolding has not been removed at the end of the unit. Although the teacher provides some scaffolding for language learning in these tightly sequenced exchanges, she does not exercise all of her scaffolding options.

Excerpt 7

1	Teacher	Okay what's interesting to note is the . . .
2	Class	Murmurs/#
3	Teacher	Total land area
4	Class	#
5	Teacher	Fourteen million square kilometers
6	Class	#
7	Teacher	Okay

Conclusions and pedagogical implications

This essay has discussed an Asian pedagogy with special reference to the concept of scaffolding. We have tried to show that the kind of scaffold used here consists mainly of procedural and elaboration prompts, and where the use of ICT is concerned, only procedural and conceptual scaffolds are evident. Information is disseminated through well-structured problems involving hard scaffolding leading to scripted classroom interaction. This is part

and parcel of the Asian classroom architecture dominated by a teacher-centred pedagogy, with the teacher and text book as authoritative sources of knowledge. Till the very end the scaffolds are not fully removed and the class remains teacher-centred with minimal student participation.

We have also shown that the teacher uses practically no reflection prompts in information dissemination and where the ICT is concerned there is no evidence of use of metacognitive or strategic scaffolds. The lack of reflection, metacognitive and strategic scaffolds is indicative of a type of classroom where knowledge is not co-constructed but rather a unique enunciative space where knowledge is traditionally transmitted through the conduit of language. An exam-intensive school system, along with ethnic and linguistic diversity in the student population as well as some ESL learners, forms the basis for such a pedagogy. There is an emphasis on confirming one common understanding of the material with limited opportunity for extended student talk or the use of 'negotiated interaction' which can be beneficial for language acquisition (e.g. Pica, 1994). Our findings show that language learning, especially of vocabulary and grammatical form, is addressed, but only as it fits into the well-structured problems presented by the teachers.

Greater use of ill-structured problems, opportunities for extended student talk (Hammond, 2001) and soft scaffolds might allow more conversational interaction and open up classroom learning to students' interests and deeper thinking. This would require modification to the traditional Asian pedagogy seen in this unit. We suggest that teachers in these classrooms need to welcome more ill-structured problems which can serve as a platform for generating greater student talk. In addition, teachers should make use of reflection prompts which are likely to generate longer student utterances. However, it is important to recognize that the process of encouraging ill-structured problems and the use of reflection prompts require spontaneous scaffolding. This is not a straightforward pedagogical task. It requires 'tremendous concentration, energy and mental agility' (Saye & Brush, 2002: 93) on the part of the teachers and the development of teachers in this direction takes time.

Information technology might provide some assistance both for teacher development and for more student-centred strategies. For example, students could engage in collaborative problem-solving using high-level discourse available via online technology (Ge & Land, 2004: 18–19). To assist teachers in the use of different types of scaffolds and the process of scaffolding effectively, teachers need to envision the desired practices and acquire the necessary expertise. For this, teachers could be provided with models of

such practice and technology might provide the appropriate support where teachers are able to view and reflect on model teachers implementing elements of problem-based practice (Saye & Brush, 2002).

Note

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Chapter 6

Language Development in Singapore Classrooms: A Corpus-based Description of the 'School Variety'[1]

Paul Doyle

Introduction

Discussing language development in Singapore secondary schools, Goh and Silver (2006) state that

> [S]ome students who are native speakers of English may bring with them a variety of English that is different from the standard variety required in the school curriculum.

> In Singapore, for example, this variety is usually referred to as Singapore Colloquial English (SCE) and differs from the school variety in structural aspects of syntax and morphology [. . .]. (226)

From this, we might assume that the 'school variety' is not identical to SCE. Foley (2001), however, suggests that the situation is not as clear cut as this.

> In principle, the variety of English taught in schools is that of the standard form. Whether it is Standard Singapore English or a standard form of English based on British English is very much open to debate. (17)

Thus, according to Foley, the 'school variety' in Singapore is one of the following:

1. Standard Singapore English (SSE),
2. Standard English (SE – here assumed to be British English), or
3. a 'standard form based on British English' (which is neither SE nor SSE).

But what exactly is the 'school variety' of English language found in Singapore schools? The problem with accounts such as those cited above is that they tend to be either anecdotal, or based on limited evidence from the classroom. Researchers such as Gupta (1986) and Pakir (1991), taking an ethnographic approach to the study of English in the Singapore context, have suggested that SCE is used in classrooms to establish solidarity with the students. While being entirely plausible, accounts of principled 'code switching' need to be supported by more evidence in terms of the amount of classroom data examined.

What is required is an empirical, quantitative investigation of the construct of 'the school variety' of English in the Singapore educational system, in order to determine more precisely the language environment within which Singapore pupils learn and the discourses in which they participate. The findings of such an investigation, of which this paper is a small part, can then inform discussions of language development. Clearly, if the variety of English used in the classroom is not homogeneous, there are implications for pupils' language development. With a mixture of varieties, pupils may encounter conflicting patterns of language use, and may not be aware that they are doing so, thus making the development of a standard spoken language problematic.

In this chapter, therefore, I present the preliminary results of an empirical study of the linguistic environment in Singapore primary and secondary classrooms, using a corpus-based approach to analysing classroom talk. The study is a first step towards a comprehensive description of the language variety found within the Singapore education system, informed by audio recordings of lessons from the Primary 5 and Secondary 3 levels collected between 2003 and 2005 by the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice (CRPP) at the National Institute of Education, Singapore. The English as medium of instruction component of this large data set comprises 455 transcripts tagged and annotated with several layers of sentence and discourse level linguistic features, constituting one of the largest corpora of spoken discourse within an educational context – the Singapore Corpus of Research in Education (SCoRE).[2]

Specifically, this paper aims to describe selected linguistic features of the variety of English used by Singapore teachers by employing a corpus-based methodology. These features are investigated by means of quantitative analyses of the SCoRE corpus and through comparisons with two reference corpora: the spoken British English component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB) (Nelson et al., 2002) and, when relevant, to the spoken Singapore English component of ICE (Pakir, 2000).[3] The comparison with British English is adopted since writers on SSE argue that historically it has

evolved through contact with British English and it is typically described using British English norms (e.g. Alsagoff & Ho, 1998; Foley, 1998; Platt & Weber, 1980). Pakir (2004), for example, observes:

> Paradoxically, for a country that invests heavily in bilingualism and language management, Singapore seems linguistically insecure, perhaps in part because the standards for its languages are derived from elsewhere: Malay standards follow those set by Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei; *English standards implicitly come from Britain*; and Mandarin follows Beijing's standards. (p. 124 – my emphasis)

This position is not uncontroversial (see Cruz-Ferreira, this volume), and the influence of American English via the medium of film, music and television programmes would certainly seem to have equal potential to influence actual usage. It also reflects a common perception among some school teachers and employers in Singapore, that British English represents the standard *aimed at.*

Background

The context for understanding the debate about teachers using SSE (or not) in the classroom can be found in Foley (1998, 2001), and also Silver et al. (this volume), thus I will not dwell on reasons for and against the use of a standard form of English in the classroom. Instead, I acknowledge that this is government policy and therefore practice should be measured against it. For the purposes of this chapter, then, the 'target' of English Language medium teaching in Singapore is taken to be 'internationally acceptable English which is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture' which the English language (EL) syllabus (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001) further defines as 'the formal register of English used in different parts of the world, that is, standard English' (p. 3). My focus will be on syntax and lexical choices; I will not be discussing pronunciation or accent.

The current study of Singapore classroom discourse is situated within a wider context of academic studies of the varieties of English spoken in Singapore. Lim and Foley (2004) review the history of English language in Singapore and the history of Singapore English scholarship; they also identify the trend towards data collection and codification of the variety. Their own use of a corpus, *The Grammar of Spoken Singapore English Corpus* (GSSEC), allowed them to give an extensive and empirically

grounded description of the spoken language of Singaporean under-graduate students who

> are from a generation where being a native speaker of (Singapore) English is the norm, where a speaker of English is not from an elite stratum of society and is one who uses Singapore English in different situations, ranging from the most formal to the most informal. (Lim & Foley, 2004: 10)

The GSSEC comprises 32 recorded extracts featuring the interactions of 13 students with their peers and families, some 60,000 words in 8 hours of conversation.

In comparison, SCoRE is a great deal larger, with 455 lesson transcripts representing four core subjects taught in English: Mathematics, English Language, Science and Social Studies. These transcripts record 122 teachers (and their pupils) in around 565 hours of teaching, and amount to over 2.3 million words. SCoRE was designed from the outset to be a balanced and representative sample of classroom discourse in Singapore (the desirability of these qualities for a corpus is discussed by Biber, 1993). The data represent the full range of school types and locations in Singapore, as well as the full range of years of teacher experience. Essentially, SCoRE has a much sounder empirical basis for making claims about the typicality of linguistic features in teacher's talk.

Numerous accounts of classroom discourse, the language of teaching and teacher talk have been published since the pioneering work of Douglas Barnes some forty years ago. The focus has been either on pedagogic issues such as the relationship between the type of talk occurring and the kind of learning taking place (Barnes et al., 1971; Edwards & Furlong, 1978; Edwards & Westgate, 1994) or else on more centrally linguistic concerns such as identifying structures in this type of discourse, for example, the well-attested Initiation-Response-Follow-up (IRF) pattern, otherwise known as the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) pattern (Cazden, 1988; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), and relating linguistic features to meaning making and educational genres (Christie, 2002; Schleppegrell, 2004) within a systemic functional linguistics framework. However, most of this work has focused on interactions in first language (L1) learning contexts. Studies focusing on non-native speaker teachers teaching in English are a recent phenomenon (Braine, 2005, gives a brief history) and studies that deal empirically with their use of language are still comparatively rare, although Pennington (2002) and Cots and Diaz (2005) make extensive use of transcripts in their studies.

In the case of Singapore, there have been a handful of empirically based studies of classroom language that focus on linguistic features. Foley (1998, 2001) used several transcripts to explore the issue of which variety was being used by teachers. A more detailed study, in that it explored both pupil language and teacher language in a classroom context, was reported by Saravanan and Gupta (1997) who looked at eight non-standard constructions in their study (Table 1). They focused on recurrent constructions identified by trainee teachers as incorrect in pupils writing, yet also found in the trainees' own written journals of their teaching experience (items 1–4 in Table 1), as well as non-standard constructions found only in the trainees' journals (items 5–8 in Table 1). The authors concluded that

> [T]here is potential for certain indigenized syntactic patterns to spread and become established through repeated usage. This may happen because teachers show acceptance of such features. Second, in the classroom, teachers were observed to be teaching such syntactic patterns as the acceptable form (Saravanan & Gupta, 1997: 158).

Although these items were determined from an analysis of written language, it seems highly likely that some of the features are also present in the spoken language of Singaporean teachers.

More recently, Kwek (2005) has explored the use of SCE in four lesson transcripts taken from SCoRE and found evidence of teachers mixing non-standard features, such as non-inflected verb forms and omission of articles, with their use of SE. While her study is limited to two English Language secondary teachers, and therefore cannot be taken as representative of the classroom context as a whole, it does provide further evidence

Table 1 Non-standard forms in pupils' and trainee teachers' written language (Saravanan & Gupta, 1997: 148–156)

Pupils' and Teacher's language	Example
1. Infinitive form	to rid*ed*
2. Subject-verb agreement	we *doesn't*
3. Control over tenses	I *kill* and smashed
4. Form of the participle	understand*ed*

Teacher's language	Example
5. Number agreement in complex NPs	one of the *story* involved
6. Wh- questions with past tense	What did those actual tree trunks turn*ed* out to be?
7. Modal + inflected verb	It may firstly *caused* them to . . .
8. Passive with modals	some may Ø confused at when . . .

of a mixing of English varieties as a feature of the classroom language environment.

The study

To explore the linguistic features of the school variety of English that subject teachers in Singapore use in their day-to-day teaching and be able to generalize about the resultant linguistic environment, it is essential to look at a representative sample of classroom discourse such as SCoRE. A corpus-based approach to analysing teacher–pupil interaction allows researchers to quantify the extent to which linguistic features occur across levels, streams, subjects and differing levels of teacher experience. It also allows researchers to begin making empirically grounded statements about how representative these features are of the variety.

Table 2 gives a breakdown of the size of SCoRE in terms of the number of lessons, teaching units and words in tokens and types.[4] (Tokens refer to the total number of running words in each subject's transcripts, while types refer to the number of different words.)

Using Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 2007), a software tool for corpus analysis, word frequency lists, concordances of selected lexical items and lists of their most frequent collocations were retrieved from the SCoRE corpus, enabling exploration of hypotheses about the patterning in this language variety. A word frequency list provides a list of all word forms in the corpus in order of frequency, while a concordance shows the context for all occurrences of a word, phrase or language pattern in the corpus and can be used to produce lists of frequent collocates for these occurrences. After careful examination of the statistics of word frequencies, and of concordances for collocational patterns, hypotheses about language norms and variation can be generated.

The initial analytical procedure used in the study is now described. After creating a word frequency list for the entire SCoRE corpus, this list was

Table 2 Singapore Corpus of Research in Education (ScoRE): Basic statistics

Subjects	Lessons	Units	Total words		Teachers' words	
			Tokens	Types	Tokens	Types
English	162	33	846,406	14,669	682,774	12,251
Maths	116	31	596,649	7,816	496,806	6,320
Science	91	28	455,207	9,509	387,621	8,094
Social Studies	86	30	420,205	10,193	349,833	8,802
Total	455	122	2,318,466	24,465	1,917,034	20,012

compared with a similar word frequency list derived from the ICE-GB corpus to generate a list of 'key' words. Scott (1997) states that a key word is

> a word which occurs with unusual frequency in a given text (or collection of texts). This does not mean high frequency but unusual frequency, by comparison with a reference corpus of some kind. (p. 236).

Key words occur statistically more significantly[5] than expected in the target text or set of texts when compared to a reference corpus. Thus, the key word analysis adopted here reveals those words which are 'key' in SCoRE (the target corpus) in comparison with standard spoken English as represented in the spoken British English component of the ICE-GB spoken – the reference corpus. To minimize the effect of differences caused by colloquial British English, 100 texts categorized as 'Private Dialogues' (unplanned speech comprising face-to-face and telephone conversations) were excluded from this key word analysis.

Table 3 shows part of the output from the analysis described above: a list of key words, their frequency (f) in the SCoRE and ICE-GB corpora, and a keyness score as calculated by the log likelihood statistic.

Table 3 Top 20 key words in SCoRE compared with ICE-GB spoken component

Key word	f in SCoRE	f in ICE-GB	Keyness
Okay	57,296	1	18,107.4
You	94,211	4,992	9,456.1
Ah	26,648	34	7,988.1
Your	19,623	560	3,199.0
Yah	8,447	3	2,604.0
Alright	8,189	0	2,565.2
One	28,080	1,758	2,230.5
What	27,948	1,817	2,100.5
Can	20,796	1,074	2,100.4
Cher	6,496	0	2,034.1
Do	18,809	1,113	1,609.7
Lah	4,924	0	1,541.4
So	25,586	1,902	1,537.5
Write	5,650	55	1,361.2
How	10,771	526	1,151.7
Want	8,600	329	1,146.2
This	29,957	2,781	1,096.7
Yes	12,904	780	1,071.3
Right	14,036	909	1,056.3
Two	14,256	957	1,015.4

Items which have the similar relative frequency (per million words) in both spoken varieties do not appear in a key word list, and this should be borne in mind in the analysis and discussion that follows. Selected key words were used as a basis for further investigation using the concordance and collocation features of *WordSmith Tools*.

Unusually frequent in Table 3 are 'okay' and 'alright', but this can be partly explained by differences in the transcription conventions used for each corpus. There is only one example of 'okay' in ICE-GB, but there are 558 instances of 'OK'. Likewise, only one instance of 'alright' is given in ICE-GB but there are 253 instances of 'all right'. Taking this into account, it is clear that 'okay' and 'alright' are significantly more frequent in SCoRE. This can be explained by their function as discourse markers which repeatedly punctuate every lesson. One unusual key word that needs some explanation is 'cher': this is an abbreviation for 'teacher' widely used by Singapore pupils.

It should be noted at this point that the comparison is relative. If the reference corpus were to be changed, a different set of key words would be generated. For example, if all the Maths lessons in the SCoRE corpus (the 'target' corpus) are compared with all the other lessons in SCoRE (the reference corpus), the key words revealed are mostly nouns relating to the subject domain of Maths: for example, digits 'zero', 'two', 'three', and subject-specific terms such as 'triangle', 'shape', 'minus', 'multiplied' and so on.

In comparing SCoRE with ICE-GB's spoken component, I have identified as key words lexical items that can be related to classroom discourse in general (such as 'write', 'question' and 'answer') as well as lexical items relating to the four subject domains (such as 'angle' and 'minus'). In addition, another set of key words has been identified that represent differences in the variety of spoken English being used. I argue that this latter group of key words are those features of the spoken language of the classroom in Singapore which can be considered significant and worthy of further study. Appendix A lists the top 50 key words which were identified by the analysis.

For the purpose of this study, only the following items were selected for investigation:

1. Discourse or pragmatic particles, such as 'ah', 'yah' and 'lah',
2. The modal auxiliary verb, 'can',
3. The question forms, 'what' and 'how'.

These were selected on the basis of two criteria: first, they had high keyness scores, and second, they had resonance in terms of previous descriptions of

SSE. Clearly, most of these items are not in themselves 'non-standard'. However, what the key word analysis suggests is that they are characteristic of this spoken English variety, with the implication that these words and forms are being used in ways that are different to standard spoken English, and therefore worthy of further investigation.

Results

Discourse particles

Discourse (or pragmatic) particles, which have been identified as characteristic of SCE (Gupta, 1994), were the first of the linguistic features to be examined. Using *WordSmith Tools* (Scott, 2007), the frequencies of the various particles were found in both SCoRE and ICE-SIN. The comparison with Singapore English as represented in ICE-SIN was used to establish whether the linguistic features selected for analysis are also found within a broader mix of spoken genres in Singapore or are characteristic of the instructional register of the Singapore school context. As is conventional in corpus-based work when comparing frequencies of occurrence across two or more corpora, the frequencies were normalized to give the frequency per million words, so that comparisons could be made. Table 4 shows the normalized frequencies for ten discourse particles in ICE-SIN and for SCoRE.

The comparison between ICE-SIN and SCoRE shows that, while some of these particles – 'ah', 'yah', 'orh', 'wah' and 'meh' – are much more frequent in the classroom discourse than they are in the spoken component

Table 4   Frequency per million words of discourse particles in ICE-SIN and SCoRE

Particle	Frequency in SCoRE, (per million words)	Frequency in ICE-SIN (per million words)
Ah	11,658.2	1,869.4
Yah	3,695.5	645.6
Lah	2,154.2	2,614.1
Orh	477.7	69.1
Lor	209.6	214.7
Wah	348.7	112.6
Leh	477.3	64.6
Hor	150.1	106.6
Mah	39.4	30.0
Meh	83.1	28.5

of ICE-SIN (which contains a mix of formal and informal speech), there are exceptions: principally 'lah' and less clearly, 'lor'. Thus, this is a first indication of a difference between the school variety of English and the contexts for SCE as found in the spoken component of ICE-SIN.

Further analysis, looking separately at the teachers' and pupils' contributions to the classroom discourse by splitting the main corpus into two subcorpora, reveals the extent to which teachers alone are using this feature of SCE in their talk. Table 5 compares teacher and pupil use of the discourse particles listed in Table 4, by looking at the normalized frequencies of use (per million words) in the SCoRE Teacher and Pupil subcorpora respectively.

It is clear from Table 5 that pupils' use of discourse particles is much more frequent in their utterances compared to their teachers, and considerably more frequent than that of the ICE-SIN speakers represented in Table 4. Nevertheless, this characteristic feature of SCE is not unique to the pupils' spoken language – pupils will constantly hear their teachers use these forms too.

More interesting, perhaps, is the recognition that teachers appear to use 'ah' and 'yah' significantly more than speakers in ICE-SIN, but use 'lah' and 'lor' significantly less. One explanation for these differences might lie in the instructional nature of the discourse in the classroom and the differing social status of teachers and pupils in the interaction.

Table 5 Comparison of use of discourse particles by teachers and pupils in SCoRE subcorpora

Particle	Teacher subcorpus Size: 1,919,862 words		Pupil subcorpus Size: 366,283 words	
	Occurrences	Normalized frequency (per million words)	Occurrences	Normalized frequency (per million words)
Ah	18,559	9,666.8	7,934	21,659.8
Yah	4,612	2,402.3	3,509	9,579.6
Lah	1,623	845.4	3,286	8,970.8
Leh	136	70.8	955	2,590.8
Orh	276	143.8	796	2,173.1
Wah	181	94.3	612	1,670.8
Lor	189	98.4	289	789.0
Hor	114	59.4	228	622.4
Meh	25	13.0	165	450.5
Neh	39	20.3	100	273.0
Mah	26	13.5	64	174.7

Modal auxiliary 'can'

The large difference between the frequency of 'can' in the ICE-GB and SCoRE needs to be accounted for. One way of exploring this is by looking at question forms using 'can'. In the score Teachers subcorpus, there are a total of 4,726 occurrences of 'can' in sentence initial position (compared to totals of just 244 in ICE-SIN and 128 in ICE-GB), which would normally be associated with a question form.

A collocation analysis reveals significant differences between what can follow 'can' in sentence initial position in ICE-GB and in SCoRE. Looking at the collocates in the first right position, for ICE-GB we find just three: 'you', 51 occurrences; 'I', 37 occurrences; 'we', 22 occurrences. As Table 6

Table 6 Collocates of sentence initial 'can' in first right position in SCoRE – 'unexpected' items marked in bold

Rank	Collocate	Occurrences
1	you	2,711
2	I	546
3	we	191
4	**or**	**62**
5	**see**	**58**
6	anyone	48
7	**ah**	**46**
8	**be**	**42**
9	it	34
10	all	25
11	**do**	**25**
12	someone	25
13	anybody	23
14	somebody	19
15	**use**	**16**
16	the	15
17	**also**	**14**
18	**write**	**11**
19	**go**	**9**
20	lah	9
21	**understand**	**9**
22	**hear**	**8**
23	they	7
24	everybody	7
25	**put**	**7**
26	that	7
27	this	7
28	everyone	5

shows, however, there is a far greater range of collocates in first right position for sentence initial 'can' in the SCoRE corpus.

There is a greater range of immediate right collocates in the SCoRE data partly because there are more occurrences than in ICE-GB. However, while many of these collocates are acceptable in SE ('someone', 'anyone', etc.), there are also many unexpected items, such as verbs – pointing to omission of the subject – adverbs such as 'also', 'just' and 'already', and discourse particles: 'ah', 'lah'. A concordance search in SCoRE for sentence initial 'can' reveals, not just standard question forms, but a large number of utterances where the teacher is not asking a question. There are 3,747 standard occurrences of 'can' in question forms, and 979 occurrences where there is some form of non-standard use, mainly sentences with the subject omitted (e.g. 'Can be subtend at the centre') or short utterances such as 'Can.' or 'Can?' Table 7 shows the most common patterns occurring with 'can' in sentence initial position.

The pattern 'can' + verb where the subject has been omitted, as exemplified by 'can be'/'can do'/'can go' is even more frequent than these instances suggest. Other examples of this pattern are shown by the concordance in Figure 1.

Question forms

Two other key words selected for further investigation were the question words, 'what' and 'how'. As these forms are extremely frequent in the

Table 7 Patterns with 'can' in sentence initial position in SCoRE – non-standard usage in bold

Pattern	Occurrences
Can . . . ?	4,726
Can you . . . ?	2,711
Can I . . . ?	546
Can?/Can.	**450**
Can we . . . ?	191
Can + indefinite pronoun (anyone, somebody, etc.)	115
Can, ah?	**46**
Can be . . .	**42**
Can, can . . .	**40**
Can it . . .?	34
Can do . . .	**25**
Can all of you . . .?	24
Can go . . .	**9**
Can, lah.	**9**

Can see the behaviour of the candle ?
Can see the small sample down here ?
Can see where ?
Can see your graph ?
Can share this picture .
Can show me your family photo .
Can speak louder or not .
Can spell or not ?
Can squeeze down there .
Can start with any article that you want .
Can still do lah .
Can still see , yah .
Can stop already ?
Can swap ah , I guess so lah .
Can switch on the lights .
Can take out the male part . .
Can take out your notes ?
Can tell me is it possible or not ?

FIGURE 1   Partial concordance of the pattern 'Can' + verb with subject omitted

SCoRE data compared to ICE-GB, the analysis that follows focuses on significant patterns in the use of these forms as found in concordances for each word.

(a) 'What'

There are 25,766 occurrences of 'what' in the SCoRE corpus, making it the most frequent question word. A sorted concordance of such a high number of occurrences is a major challenge to human analysis and, unfortunately, a fully POS-tagged and annotated SCoRE is not yet available for more fine-grained analysis. However, by limiting the investigation to instances of 'What' in sentence-initial position and by looking at the collocation patterns of 'What' in detail, it is possible to reveal evidence of patterns of non-standard use by teachers.

Wordsmith Tools (Scott, 2007) can produce tables of collocating words up to 25 positions to the right and left of a key word in a concordance. In practice, however, most analyses use four or five words to the right and left. In a

direct question form, when the collocate occupying the first right position (i.e. the word following 'what') is a verb, we normally expect to find an auxiliary verb or a main verb in the present or past tense, as for example, 'What *is* the sum of a and b?' and 'What *did* Henry do next?'

The SCoRE data reveal that the top lexical verb collocate of 'what' in first right position is 'happen', with 'happen' (543 occurrences), 'happens' (249), 'happened' (137). Examining the concordances reveals that there is a substantial number of questions forms beginning 'What happen . . .' – a non-standard form due to the lack of inflection on the verb. In fact, these exceed the number of standard forms ('What happens . . .' or 'What happened . . .'). The frequencies for different forms of 'happen' collocating with 'what' are given in Table 8.

Within this set of non-standard forms, there are further patterns in the data:

'What happen?'	(50 examples)
'What happen if . . .?'	(10 examples)
'What happen to . . .?'	(85 examples)

Some examples from individual transcripts are given below:

'What happen? Was there starch in the leaf?' (Science: score_sci_042
'What happen last week?' (English language: score_eng_052)
'What happen if I resize?' (Mathematics: score_math_099)
'What happen to the lens?' (Science: score_sci_011)
'What happen if you don't keep in fridge?' (Social Studies: score_soc_005)
'What happen to your tenses?' (English Language: score_eng_010)
'What happen to the economy?' (Social Studies: score_soc_022)

Table 8 Frequency of forms of 'happen' collocating in first right position with 'What'

Form	Frequency	
	Standard	Non-standard
What + happen		376
What + happens	186	
What + happened	85	
What + is + happening	67	
What + happening		3
What + has + happen		7
What + has + happened	9	
Total	347	386

Other occurrences reveal even more non-standardness in the question structure:

'What happen to the two whole that we counted just now?' (Mathematics: score_math_015)
'What happen further on the history of Ireland?' (Social Studies: score_soc_061)

Thus, in this case, for the most frequently occurring verb used with 'what', the number of non-standard question forms far exceeds the number of standard ones.

(b) 'How'

There are 8,927 occurrences of 'how' in the data making it the second most frequent question word. Among the collocates in the first right position, we find expected collocates, such as 'many' (2,092), 'to' (1,150), 'do' (1,119), 'you' (442) and 'about' (316). However, these apparently normal collocates mask patterns of non-standardness in the data. The non-standard question form 'how to + verb ?' occurs 230 times in these data. Some examples of this pattern are given in the concordance in Figure 2.

Another pattern that occurs frequently (100 occurrences) in the data is a question form beginning with 'how' and followed immediately by

```
How to mention, what ?
How to move backwards, ah ?
How to on ?
How to place it ?
How to present the final answer ?
How to pronounce ?
How to proof that the two triangle are congruent that I have just mentioned.
How to prove ?
How to put your lens , right ?
How to read that , I got so many words there .
How to read this angle ?
How to recognize which formula to use ?
How to reduce it to simplest form ?
```

FIGURE 2   Partial concordance of 'How' + to + verb in SCoRE

> How you arrived at this angle ?
> How you could help ?
> How you define a tangent ?
> How you divide ?
> How you felt at that point of time ?
> How you find the remaining fraction huh .
> How you get volt ?
> How you going to proof that these two triangle are congruent ?
> How you know is reservoir ?
> How you know they eat bread ?
> How you pronounce that ?
> How you put the electron ?
> How you read , is it ?
> How you spell champagne ?
> How you went about doing it ?
> How you will travel ?
> How you write the symbol ?

FIGURE 3   Partial concordance for how + you + verb in SCoRE

'you' – that is, the auxiliary has been omitted or else the auxiliary verb follows 'you' and precedes the main verb, for example, 'How you could help?'. Figure 3 gives examples of this pattern from a concordance of 'how' in sentence-initial position.

Discussion

The choice of sentence initial 'can', 'what' and 'how' has led to a focus on question forms, prompted in part by my awareness that in classroom discourse questions are a dominant form of utterance, especially when the instruction is teacher-led and characterized by the IRF discourse pattern. The reason these lexical items are unusually frequent, or 'key' (Scott, 2007) when compared to mixed genre corpora such as ICE-GB, is that they occur in question forms, and the frequent use of questions by teachers typifies the classroom interaction genre. By focusing on sentence-initial occurrences of these lexical items, it has been possible to uncover patterns of non-standard use within the data. It should be noted, however, that there are as many if

not more examples of standard uses of sentence initial 'can', 'what' and 'how'. Nevertheless, as a procedure for identifying non-standard usage within the corpus, starting with a key word analysis and then proceeding to explore the patterns of collocation in the concordances for those key words has proved fruitful.

While clearly not a comprehensive description of SCoRE and the extent to which SCE is found in teacher talk, the three key words and patterns associated with them have provided strong evidence for widespread use of non-standard English in the classroom across all subjects and both Primary 5 and Secondary 3 levels. In other words, the 'school variety' is not solely SE. It is a mixture of SE and SCE. In addition, as the evidence presented above for patterns associated with 'can', 'what' and 'how' in sentence-initial position shows, teachers do not seem to select SCE only when the talk is 'audience centred' to use Kwek's (2005: 87) term, that is, focused on organizing pupils and disciplining them. They are also using SCE when the talk is 'topic or content-centred' (Kwek, 2005: 87). In other words, these data tend to undermine the hypothesis that SCE is used by teachers as a means of expressing solidarity and building rapport and familiarity with pupils.

Data from SCoRE have shown that it is often difficult to discern a difference between pupils' speech and that of their teachers. Close analysis of the teachers' discourse in SCoRE reveals speech characterized by persistent use of SCE. When on rare occasions pupils do get to speak at some length (i.e. more than one or two word utterances), it is often impossible to detect differences in kind between the syntactic and morphological structures used by both pupils and teachers. In other words, teachers do not always seem to be speaking a 'standard English' that the pupils do not share; rather, pupils and teachers share the same variety of English, but differ in terms of how much of this variety they get to contribute in the construction of the typical classroom discourse.

There are some caveats to bear in mind here. Comparisons with the ICE-GB and ICE-SIN are not fully satisfactory, partly because the spoken components of these corpora represent a far wider range of text types, and partly because SCoRE is about five times larger in terms of word count than either of them. Ideally, the comparisons being made should be with a similar corpus of classroom discourse from another context, such as Britain, America or Australia. Unfortunately, comparable corpora of spoken discourse from primary and secondary classrooms in these countries have yet to become available.

Conclusion, implications, further research directions

In terms of language development, it is evident from these data that the classroom language environment at Primary 5 and Secondary 3 is one characterized by frequent, consistent and persistent use of SCE as well as SE. By consistent, I mean that the corpus provides evidence for use of the same SCE linguistic patterns across all subjects and levels among a significant number of teachers. Pupils are not dealing with a homogeneous model of spoken language, as called for by educational authorities, but a heterogeneous one.

There still remains the question of what impact this has on pupils' language development. If the mixing of varieties shown here is as frequent and consistent as claimed, then clearly pupils are regularly being confronted by conflicting grammars and patterns of language use, and regularly hear their own SCE echoed by teachers. It is as likely, then, that the classroom is where pupils develop SCE as much as it is where they develop SE as they expand their knowledge of curriculum content.

The analysis of teacher–pupil interactions in English in Singapore classrooms discussed in this paper has shown the potential of corpus-based approaches to provide insight into language development issues. More importantly, the analysis has indicated the need to reconsider the notion of teachers 'modelling' a standard language in the classroom in the light of empirical evidence of their actual language use. The question of what constitutes the 'school variety' merits further research of this nature.

Appendix: Top 50 key words in SCoRE*

N	Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness
1	Okay	57,296	2.49	1		18,107.4
2	You	94,211	4.09	4,992	1.28	9,456.1
3	Ah	26,648	1.16	34		7,988.1
4	Your	19,623	0.85	560	0.14	3,199.0
5	Yah	8,447	0.37	3		2,604.0
6	Alright	8,189	0.36	0		2,565.2
7	One	28,080	1.22	1,758	0.45	2,230.5
8	What	27,948	1.21	1,817	0.47	2,100.5
9	Can	20,796	0.90	1,074	0.28	2,100.4
10	Cher	6,496	0.28	0		2,034.1
11	Do	18,809	0.82	1,113	0.29	1,609.7

12	Lah	4,924	0.21	0		1,541.4
13	So	25,586	1.11	1,902	0.49	1,537.5
14	Write	5,650	0.25	55	0.01	1,361.2
15	How	10,771	0.47	26	0.13	1,151.7
16	Want	8,600	0.37	329	0.08	1,146.2
17	This	29,957	1.30	2,781	0.71	1,096.7
18	Yes	12,904	0.56	780	0.20	1,071.3
19	Right	14,036	0.61	909	0.23	1,056.3
20	Two	14,256	0.62	957	0.25	1,015.4
21	No	13,943	0.60	931	0.24	1,001.3
22	Why	6,986	0.30	245	0.06	993.5
23	Don't	10,607	0.46	595	0.15	969.4
24	Teacher	3,477	0.15	16		945.6
25	Three	9,371	0.41	518	0.13	871.6
26	Please	3,625	0.16	50	0.01	798.6
27	Four	6,813	0.30	327	0.08	740.7
28	Now	14,326	0.62	1,153	0.30	733.7
29	Is	43,612	1.89	5,102	1.31	698.3
30	Correct	3,118	0.14	43	0.01	686.8
31	Answer	3,398	0.15	62	0.02	681.3
32	Five	7,089	0.31	383	0.10	677.2
33	Look	6,122	0.27	290	0.07	674.3
34	Already	4,132	0.18	124	0.03	651.0
35	Go	7,549	0.33	444	0.11	649.0
36	Here	9,065	0.39	609	0.16	643.8
37	Group	3,999	0.17	120	0.03	630.1
38	Zero	2,543	0.11	22		627.5
39	Wait	2,484	0.11	20		621.4
40	Are	19,698	0.85	1,938	0.50	607.1
41	Give	4,671	0.20	186	0.05	602.1
42	Cannot	2,824	0.12	45	0.01	594.3
43	Need	5,008	0.22	228	0.06	573.3
44	Then	11,401	0.49	935	0.24	560.4
45	Me	8,147	0.35	561	0.14	555.9
46	Angle	2,143	0.09	14		555.6
47	Question	4,152	0.18	167	0.04	530.7
48	Minus	2,432	0.11	35		528.8
49	Will	10,722	0.47	903	0.23	496.8
50	Singapore	1,595	0.07	1		486.1

Note: *Non-verbal elements, such as 'Hmm' and 'Shh' have been omitted from this list.

Notes

[1] This chapter makes use of data from the research projects 'Compiling a multimodal corpus database of education discourse in Singapore' (CRP 7/05 AL) and 'Linguistic Annotation of SCoRE Corpus Data (A Supplementary to the Corpus Project' (CRP 13/05 AL), funded by the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, National Institute of Education, Singapore (http://www.crpp.nie.edu.sg). The views expressed in this paper are the authors' and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centre or the Institute.

[2] There are also Mandarin Chinese, Malay and Tamil as medium of instruction components in the corpus but these are not discussed in this chapter.

[3] A full description of the ICE-GB can be found in Nelson et al. (2002).

[4] In the Singapore education system, a Unit of Work is a set of lessons (typically 4–6) on a single theme or unit of the syllabus. SCoRE data was collected on the basis of complete units of work from each teacher selected for the sample.

[5] The statistic used in this study to measure significance is Dunning's Log Likelihood function (Dunning, 1993; Oakes, 1998: 172).

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Chapter 7

Metaphorization in Singaporean Student Writing: A Corpus-based Study[1]

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Introduction

Research into the grammatical features of children's writing in English in multilingual, multicultural Singapore has been growing steadily in the past twenty years or so. Foley (1991), for instance, studies various grammatical features of selected primary school children's writing such as nominal groups, verb phrases, clause complexes and lexical cohesion. Leong and Wee (2005) focus on clause complexes in expository essays written by secondary school students and compare clause complexes of good and poor writers. Informative and significant as these studies are, they have not yet paid adequate attention to how children develop the grammar of written language as opposed to the grammar of oral language, for example, how grammatical metaphor (Halliday, 1994) is developed in children's writing from primary schools to secondary schools. Foley and Lee (2004: 117) recommend that '[i]n any further study, the important linguistic element of nominalization [one type of grammatical metaphor] would have to be included in the framework, as this is particularly relevant in the factually oriented text-types'. More recently, Martin (2007: 55) observes that '[f]ailure to access [. . . grammatical metaphor] entails exclusion from hierarchical and horizontal knowledge structures'.

Responding to Foley and Lee's (2004) call (see also Butt, 2004), this study examines and compares the development of grammatical metaphor in Primary 5 (ages 11–12) and Secondary 3 (ages 15–16) student writing in English, collected from 2004 to 2005 by researchers at the National Institute of Education in Singapore as part of a large-scale study of pedagogic practices in Singapore schools (Luke et al., 2005). In this chapter, we analyse the development of grammatical metaphor in the writings of 21 Primary 5 pupils

and 12 Secondary 3 students in the context of their respective classroom interactions. Specific questions addressed include:

1. In what way do grammatical metaphors produced by Primary 5 pupils differ from those produced by Secondary 3 students?
2. What role does metaphorization play in the codification and transmission of educational knowledge in the development of student writing?

It will be shown that in meeting the demands of discipline-based, specialized curricula, Secondary 3 students exhibit a firmer grasp of the grammar of written language than Primary 5 pupils, and that this has paved the way for a new foundation for learning.

Grammatical metaphor

The general definition that Halliday (1994: 342) gives for grammatical metaphor is: 'for any given semantic configuration there will be some realization in the lexicogrammar – some wording – that can be considered CONGRUENT; there may also be various others that are in some respect "transferred", or METAPHORICAL'. In other words, once a construal of experience and an enacting of social relations are completed in the form of lexicogrammatical wording, such semantic relations can be *Re*-construed and *Re*-enacted in the form of a range of other lexicogrammatical alternatives; grammatical metaphor expands the language's resources to make meaning. It follows that grammatical metaphor falls into two broad types: ideational and interpersonal. By ideational meaning is meant what a text or part of it is about, its content, or subject matter. Interpersonal meaning of a text refers to the manner in which it relates to the intended reader or listener and the subject matter. An example of an ideational metaphor may be seen in the phrase 'engine failure', where the noun 'failure' serves to represent a blend of process (i.e. 'failing') and thing (i.e. an act of 'failing'), as distinct from the congruent version of 'an engine fails', where the verb 'fails' serves to represent a process.

In tracing the language development of children from early childhood to adolescence, Halliday (1993: 111) has proposed a three-step model of human semiotic development: (1) grammatical generalization as 'the key for entering into language, and to systematic commonsense knowledge'; (2) grammatical abstractness as 'the key for entering into literacy, and to primary educational knowledge'; and (3) grammatical metaphor as

'the key for entering into the next level, that of secondary education, and of knowledge that is discipline-based and technical'. Further work (e.g. Derewianka, 2003; Painter et al., 2007) has found that before children grasp the metaphorical mode of meaning, they may have to grapple with some protometaphorical forms, which include rankshifted embeddings and faded metaphors. Rankshifted embeddings refer to 'a mechanism whereby a unit may come to serve to realize an element of a unit of the same rank or of a lower rank' (Derewianka, 2003: 190). For example, in 'I likede the letter *that you gave me*', 'that you gave me' would be a clause on its own but serves now only as part of a clause (i.e. at a lower rank than before) (Derewianka, 2003: 191). Faded metaphors are those instances 'which were in origin metaphorical but which have since become established as the norm' (Derewianka, 2003: 192). Examples include: 'do *a dance*' (versus the process 'to dance'), 'make *a mistake*' (versus the process 'to err'), 'take *a bath*' (versus the process 'to bathe'). These protometaphors are believed to model 'the nature of grammatical metaphor for the child' (Derewianka, 2003: 192) and hence are developmentally significant, although in themselves they are not yet deliberate use of grammatical metaphor.

Method

Selection of linguistic features

Halliday (1998: 208–211) and Halliday and Matthiessen (1999: 244–249) categorize grammatical metaphor into 13 types of elemental transference. Among them, Type 1 is the transference from quality (for instance, 'unstable') to thing ('instability') and Type 2 is that from process (for instance, 'absorb') to thing ('absorption'). Ravelli (1988: 139) incorporates process types into the categorization of grammatical metaphor to give 19 types. In analysing nominalization in scientific writing, Banks (2003) follows Ravelli (1988) in distinguishing different process types and so does Derewianka (2003) in analysing the development of grammatical metaphor from early childhood to adolescence.

In the present study, Halliday and Matthiessen's (1999) categorization was followed as it was our purpose to identify the broad developmental pattern in students' writing as they progress through the educational system. Specifically, drawing on Derewianka (2003), Halliday and Matthiessen (1999: 246–248) and Halliday (1994), an annotation scheme for ideational metaphor was devised (see Table 1).

In terms of the coding procedure, given the clause from the data 'The black Toyota turned turtle after collision', for instance, 'collision' is tagged as metaphorical. The type of shift involved is coded as noun from main verb, that is, 'collision' is a noun and is derived from the main verb 'collide'. 'After' is similarly coded as involving a shift as preposition from conjunction, that is, in a congruent form, such as 'after they collided', the 'after' is a conjunction, but in the metaphorical form 'after collision', the 'after' functions as a preposition. It should be noted that the focus here is on semantic shift rather than mere shift in grammatical classes.

Table 1   Annotation scheme for ideational metaphor (adapted from Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999: 246–248)

Types	Sub-categories	Examples
Protometaphor	Embedding	'(accident) involving two cars'
	Noun from main verb	'collision' from 'collide'
	Noun from auxiliary	'possibility' from 'may'
	Noun from catenative	'attempt' from 'try to'
	Noun from adjective	'speed' from 'fast'
	Noun from preposition or prepositional phrase	'road (accident)' from '(accident) on the road'
	Noun from conjunction	'cause' from 'so'
	Adjective from main verb	'oncoming (car)' from 'come on'
Ideational metaphor	Adjective from auxiliary verb	'previous' from 'used to'
	Adjective from catenative verb	'apparent' from 'appear'
	Adjective from preposition or prepositional phrase	'accompanying' from 'with'
	Adjective from conjunction	'previous' from 'before'
	Verb from preposition or prepositional phrase	'traverse' from 'across'
	Verb from conjunction	'cause' from 'so'
	Preposition or prepositional phrase from conjunction	'after (collision)' from 'after (the cars collided)'
	Plus verb *	'(the accident) took place'
	Other	
	1. noun as Qualifier	'(account of) accident'
	2. noun as Possessive	'family's (wishes)'
	3. noun as Classifier	'outpatient (treatment)' from 'as an outpatient'
	4. adjective from adverb	'hasty (dash)' from '(dash) hastily'

Note: *The sub-category 'Plus verb' refers to the phenomenon whereby the 'content' of an action (or state) is expressed as a noun and a verb is inserted ('added') to express the idea that this action (or state) exists or happens. Examples of this sub-category include the 'took place' in 'A serious accident took place' and the 'take' in 'take a bath'.

Selection of students' essays

In line with the design of the SCoRE (Singapore Corpus of Research in Education) project *(*Hong, 2005*)*, from 2004 to 2005, researchers at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, observed and audio-recorded more than 1,200 Primary 5 and Secondary 3 lessons, and collected over 6,500 pieces of students' writings (homework, class work, tests, major assignments and projects) from these lessons. These provide us with a large database of evidence of contemporary classroom practices and students' performances in Singapore schools. For the purpose of this chapter, 33 student essays from two Primary 5 English classrooms and one Secondary 3 English classroom were selected (Table 2).

The selected 33 sample essays are all event- or action-oriented writings. The selection of this subset of essays was driven by the focal questions mentioned above. The first primary school teacher instructed her pupils how to write an email telling their relatives how to make pancakes; from this classroom 12 student essays were selected. The other primary school teacher asked the pupils to write a personal recount about a skateboarding experience; from this classroom we collected nine essays. The secondary school teacher spent three lessons (lasting respectively 86 minutes, 85 minutes and 91 minutes) on the writing of an eyewitness report of a road accident; from this classroom 12 student essays were selected (for a more detailed description of the classroom interaction that was associated with the Secondary 3 essays, see Appendix A; for the task sheet distributed to the class, see Appendix B.)

As far as the writing tasks are concerned, the essays produced by the primary and secondary students differ in the audiences addressed and social purposes served. The primary pupils were asked to write to someone they know, their relatives or classmates, about some events in order to strengthen their familial or communal bond, whereas the secondary students were asked to write to police to serve as hypothetical participants in some legal or political process. This difference, we believe, will not significantly skew the comparison as these three sets of essays all concern events or actions.

Table 2   Overview of analysed student essays

Level	No. of students	No. of essays	Total running words
Primary 5	21	21	3,828
Secondary 3	12	12	3,805
Total	33	33	7,633

Analytical procedures

First, the classroom interaction was examined in order to obtain an overview of the lessons and how the writing tasks were set. Second, the associated student writing was analysed for the occurrence of metaphorical modes of meaning. Finally, similarities and differences were established between Primary 5 and Secondary 3 student writing.

Three annotators were involved in annotating the 33 essays. Before the actual annotation of the student work, extensive training in grammatical metaphor and annotation tools was provided and pilot annotation carried out to ensure a high rate of agreement among the annotators. The selected linguistic features (Table 1) were annotated with MMAX2 tool (Müller & Strube, 2006). Finally, the annotated output was uploaded to the SCoRE online query package (Hong, 2007) to extract the results, which were further tabulated for statistical analysis in the next section.

Results

The findings of the study are presented in three subsections. First, we present a comparison between one Primary 5 essay and one Secondary 3 essay in terms of the use of grammatical metaphor and protometaphor. This serves to illustrate the annotation scheme presented above, the annotation process and the interpretation of the analysis. Second, we present the pattern emerging from the corpus-based analysis of the 33 sample essays. Finally, a summary of the findings is provided.

Sample analysis of two essays

Figures 1 and 2 present two sample essays annotated with the features discussed above. Sample Text 1, by a primary school pupil, contains 239 running words, and Sample Text 2, by a secondary school student, contains 300 running words. Both essays describe actions and events. Specifically, both belong to recount text type in that they re-tell what the authors supposedly experienced. Both include an Orientation – Record of Events – Reorientation structure. In Text 1, for instance, the two characters 'knocked into each other' and were injured while skateboarding (Lines 20–24). They were in the end scolded by their parents and would not skateboard on the main road again (Lines 26–29). In Text 2, two cars collided into each other and caused massive damage and injuries (Lines 16–41). Finally, the police and ambulance arrived and took the injured drivers and passengers to hospital (Lines 43–48).

Line number	The original text	Annotated linguistic features**
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29	One day, my friend, Brian, and I went skateboarding as it was the school holidays. We went to the void deck to skate board. I decided to Skate board with Brian because I had not Skated with Brian for a long time. We met at the Voideck and started playing. We showed off our skills at [1] doing stunts. We [2] had [3] fun but [4] our [5] fun ended when we spotted the no skate boarding sign. We stopped playing and [6] took a [7] break thinking of [8] what we should do with our skate board. 　　Suddenly, Brian thought of a idea. Brian challanged me to a [9] race on the main road. I accepted [10] his [11] challenge. We went and walked along the kerb. We went to a road [12] where there were hardly any cars. We started racing when we saw an [13] oncoming car. The driver slamed on the brakes as the car screeched to a [14] halt. We thought we were going to crash into the car so we tried to stop. [15] As a result, Brian and I knocked into each other. 　　We fell on to the ground hard. When we landed on the ground, we were in [16] great [17] pain. A teenager saw what had happened and came running towards us. He helped us up and asked if we were okay. On that day when we went home, Our parents noticed our bruises and scolded us. We learnt that we should not play on the roads. 　　end	[1]. 'doing stunts': 　　embedding; 　　　'doing': plus verb; 　　　'stunts': noun from main verb. [2]. 'had': plus verb. [3]. 'fun': noun from adj. [4]. 'our': possessive. [5]. 'fun': noun from adj. [6]. 'took': plus verb. [7]. 'break': noun from main verb. [8]. 'what we should do with our skate board': embedding. [9]. 'race': noun from main verb. [10]. 'his': possessive. [11]. 'challenge': noun from main verb. [12]. 'where there were hardly any cars': embedding. [13]. 'oncoming': adj. from main verb. [14]. 'halt': noun from main verb. [15]. 'as a result': pp from conj. [16]. 'great': adj. from adv. [17]. 'pain': noun from main verb. Total instances: 19.

FIGURE 1　Sample text 1 by a primary school pupil*

*The student's essay is reproduced verbatim, and the errors (if any) in the essay are retained. To protect the student's identity, the name has been changed. For ease of reference, line numbers are inserted on the left and serial numbers in square brackets (e.g. [1]) are inserted in front of those segments whose linguistic features are commented upon in the 'Annotated linguistic features' column.
**The list of abbreviations used is explained as follows. pp: preposition or prepositional phrase; adj: adjective; adv: adverb; conj: conjunction.

Line number	The original text	Annotated linguistic features **
1	To: Mr Abu Bakar	
2	From: Eric Lee	[1]. 'account': noun from
3	Date: 20 March 2005.	main verb.
4	Subject: [1] Account [2] of accident	[2]. 'of accident': qualifier;
5	between two cars.	'accident': noun from main verb.
6	On Friday, 18 March 2005, at 2 pm, I	[3]. 'accident': noun from
7	witnessed the following [3] accident [4]	main verb.
8	involving two cars. At the time I was	[4]. 'involving two cars':
9	waiting for a bus to take me back to office	embedding.
10	[5] after [6] lunch at the Town Hall on	[5]. 'after': pp from conj.
11	Birch Road. There was a heavy traffic,	[6]. 'lunch': noun from
12	most of people was rushing back to work	main verb.
13	[7] after [8] lunch [9] break.	[7]. 'after': pp from conj.
14	Suddenly, it was starting to rain heavily.	[8]. 'lunch': noun from
15	A white Mercedes was driving very fast	main verb; classifier.
16	on the road and it skidded on the wet road.	[9]. 'break': noun from
17	The car spun out of [10] control before	main verb.
18	coming to a [11] stop and rammed into the	[10]. 'control': noun from
19	rear of a black Toyota. The black Toyota	main verb.
20	turned turtle [12] after [13] collison and	[11]. 'stop': noun from
21	hit the iron barriers. The [14] impact [15]	main verb.
22	caused part of a row of [16] protective	[12]. 'after': pp from conj.
23	barriers [17] fronting a demolition site to	[13]. 'collison': noun from
24	be ripped off. The front of the white	main verb.
25	Mercedes was crunched up quite badly	[14]. 'impact': noun from
26	and the headlights shattered [18] upon	main verb.
27	[19] impact. However, the black Toyata	[15]. 'caused': verb from
28	was worse than the Mercedes. The side of	conj.
29	the car was badly dented and the	[16]. 'protective': adj. from
30	windscreen was completely smashed. The	main verb.
31	doors of the car was hollow. The	[17]. 'fronting a demolition
32	passengers in both cars were trapped. The	site': embedding;
33	passengers of the while Mercedes [20]	'demolition': noun from
34	who just a little bruises. Two passers-by	main verb.
35	lifted the passengers out of the black	[18]. 'upon': pp from conj.
36	Toyato through the window. They [21]	[19]. 'impact': noun from

FIGURE 2   Sample text 2 by a secondary school student*

*The student's essay is reproduced verbatim, and the errors (if any) in the essay are retained. To protect the student's identity, the name has been changed. For ease of reference, line numbers are inserted on the left and serial numbers in square brackets (e.g. [1]) are inserted in front of those segments whose linguistic features are commented upon in the 'Annotated linguistic features' column.

**The list of abbreviations used is explained as follows. pp: preposition or prepositional phrase; adj: adjective; adv: adverb; conj: conjunction.

Line number	The original text	Annotated linguistic features **
37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48	had [22] serious [23] internal [24] injuries and glass shards embedded in their arms and legs. The [25] accident [26] caused a [27] minor [28] traffic [29] jam and a crowd had gathered to watch the [30] commotion. I called the police from my handphone. The police arrived soon after with an ambulance and a tow trucks. The tow truck took away the [31] damaged cars and the ambulance sent the [32] injuried passengers to hospital. report written by: Eric Lee 277 words.	main verb. [20]. 'who just a little bruises': embedding. [21]. 'had': plus verb. [22]. 'serious': adj. from adv. [23]. 'internal': adj. from pp. [24]. 'injuries': noun from main verb. [25]. 'accident': noun from main verb. [26]. 'caused': verb from conj. [27]. 'minor': adj. from adv. [28]. 'traffic': noun as classifier. [29]. 'jam': noun from main verb. [30]. 'commotion': noun from adj. [31]. 'damaged': adj. from main verb. [32]. 'injuried': adj. from main verb. Total instances: 35.

FIGURE 2   (*Cont'd*)

Despite a common focus on events and actions and a similar generic structure, the two texts differ in their use of protometaphors and grammatical metaphors and appear to construct two different orders of experience. First, Text 2 exploits grammatical metaphor and protometaphor almost twice as much as Text 1; 35 instances in the former and 19 in the latter. In the 'noun from main verb' category, there are 6 instances in Text 1 ([1] 'stunts', [7] 'break', [9] 'race', [11] 'challenge', [14] 'halt' and [17] 'pain') and 15 in Text 2 (e.g. [1] 'account', [2] 'accident', [10] 'control', [13] 'collision' and [14] 'impact').

Second, Text 1 is largely congruent, constructing everyday, commonsense discourse in that actions are expressed largely by verbs, things by nouns and the relationship between actions by conjunctions. An example from the

text is: 'I decided to Skate board with Brian because I had not Skated with Brian for a long time' (Lines 3–5, Text 1). Text 2, on the other hand, is both congruent and metaphorical and presents a more sophisticated point of view. The clause complex from the text 'The black Toyota turned turtle after collison and hit the iron barriers' (Lines 19–21, Text 2) illustrates the hybridity in the semantic style in Text 2. While 'and hit the iron barriers' is congruent and presents a dynamic picture of the event, the 'collison' in 'after collison' turns an event ('colliding') into a virtual thing embodying both a process and a thing, and the relationship between events is here expressed not by a conjunction but by a preposition 'after'. The clause 'The accident caused a minor traffic jam' (Lines 40–41, Text 2) is a further example of the highly metaphorical nature of Text 2. A more congruent version of this clause might read: 'the two cars crashed into each other and so other cars and buses could not move on'. Whereas the Primary 5 pupil largely represents events in verbs (i.e. with the exception of faded metaphors; see below), the Secondary 3 student manages also to 'objectify' (Halliday, 1993) events and properties via nouns and the relationship between events is presented as a verb ('caused'). In this manner the secondary student has been able to express more condensed, sophisticated and adult-like meanings.

In addition, both texts contain 'faded metaphors' – those that were once metaphorical but have now lost much of their metaphorical flavour – for example, [1] 'stunts', [3] 'fun', [7] 'break' (from Text 1); [2] 'accident', [8] 'lunch', [29] 'jam' (from Text 2). However, there is evidence to show that Text 2 contains more deliberate use of grammatical metaphors, that is, to both express the content and organize the text, in Systemic Functional terms, to serve both experiential and textual metafunctions. For instance, [1] 'account' (Line 4, Text 2) serves to prefigure the content of the subsequent text and [13] 'collison' (Line 20, Text 2) paraphrases and condenses the event previously described (i.e. 'rammed into the rear of a black Toyota', Lines 18–19, Text 2). Also [14] 'impact' (Line 21, Text 2) refers back to, and draws upon, the previous event (i.e. 'hit the iron barriers', Line 21, Text 2) and at the same time introduces new information (i.e. 'caused part of a row of protective barriers . . .', Lines 22–23, Text 2).

Thus the use of these 'live' metaphors can be said to enhance the progression of the text as well as conveying the content. This sophisticated use of the 'live' grammatical metaphors for text organization and content expression in Text 2 (e.g. through the use of semantically related words such as 'ram into', 'collision', 'impact') can be contrasted with the elementary attempt by the author of Text 1 to make reference through either exact repetition, as in the two instances of 'fun' in 'We had fun but our fun ended'

(Lines 7–8, Text 1) or a mere change of word class, e.g. 'challenge' in 'I accepted his challenge' (Line 14, Text 1) to refer back to the verb 'challange' ['challenge'] in 'Brian challanged me to a race . . .' (Lines 12–13, Text 1). That is to say, Text 1 employs mostly 'faded metaphors' of everyday spoken language (Derewianka, 2003: 193), of an experiential nature, but Text 2 contains more deliberate use of metaphors proper, to both construct experience and move the text along.

Corpus-based analysis

In order to determine the extent of progression of student writing from primary school to secondary school, we took a corpus-based quantitative approach to analysing the 33 essays by dividing them into two groups (see Table 2) and calculating the normalized frequency and text coverage of protometaphor and metaphor across the two levels. Raw frequency (i.e. the actual occurrences of a certain type of metaphor and protometaphor in the texts) can be informative. But, given that not all texts are of the same length, following Biber et al. (1998) and McEnery et al. (2006: 52–53), a norm of 300 words was decided upon as the typical text length. That is, we sought to compare the normalized frequencies of metaphors and protometaphors in the two groups of student essays.

At the same time, neither raw frequency nor normalized frequency gives an indication of what proportion of a text is affected by one instance of metaphor or protometaphor (i.e. its scope at the level of discourse, or how 'powerful' or extensive each instance is). The extent to which metaphors and protometaphors affect or spread across the texts can be captured through the notion of text coverage, which can be measured by the number of words affected by metaphors and protometaphors (i.e. tokens) divided by the running words of the texts and can be expressed in percentages. For instance, in a constructed clause 'This is not what John said at the meeting', 'what John said at the meeting' is an instance of protometaphor (i.e. embedding). The extent to which this clause is affected by this embedding can be obtained by the number of words of the embedding (6 words) divided by the total number of words (9 words), to give 6/9 or 67%. Tables 3, 4 and 5 present the results extracted from the corpus using SCoRE online query package (Hong, 2007).

Table 3 shows the actual instances and normalized frequencies (per 300 words) of grammatical metaphors and protometaphors in the Primary 5 and Secondary 3 student essays. As can be seen, for every 300 words of

Table 3 Frequencies of metaphor and protometaphor in the students' essays

Categories		Primary 5	Secondary 3	Total
Metaphor	Actual instances	114	256	370
	Normalized frequency (Average per 300w)	8.9	20.2	14.5
Protometaphor	Actual instances	28	53	81
	Normalized frequency (Average per 300w)	2.2	4.2	3.2
Total	Actual instances	142	309	451
	Normalized frequency (Average per 300w)	11.1	24.4	17.7

Table 4 Text coverage of metaphor and protometaphor in the students' essays

Categories		Primary 5	Secondary 3	Total
Metaphor	Tokens	125	288	413
	Text coverage (%)	3.3	7.6	5.4
Protometaphor	Tokens	132	290	422
	Text coverage (%)	3.5	7.6	5.5
Total	Tokens	257	578	835
	Text coverage (%)	6.8	15.2	10.9

action- or event-oriented text, Secondary 3 students are likely to use around 2.3 times (20.2/8.9) as many metaphors and 1.9 times (4.2/2.2) as many protometaphors as their Primary 5 counterparts. Overall, these figures would suggest that the older students tend to use twice as many metaphors and protometaphors as the younger ones, even if they are both asked to write about actions or events.

Table 4 shows that as far as text coverage is concerned, metaphors in Secondary 3 texts spread across or infiltrate the texts 2.3 times (7.6%÷3.3%) as much as do the metaphors in Primary 5 texts and that protometaphors in Secondary 3 texts cover the texts 2.2 times (7.6%÷3.5%) as much as do those in Primary 5 texts. In other words, over twice as many words are metaphors and protometaphors in the essays produced by the Secondary 3 students as in those produced by the Primary 5 students.

Table 5 lists and compares the frequencies per 300 words of various types of metaphors across Secondary 3 and Primary 5 essays. Three patterns can be observed from this table. First, metaphors involving the shifts to nouns account for about 50% of all metaphors in both Primary 5 and Secondary 3

Table 5 Frequencies of different types of metaphor in the students' essays

Type of metaphor		Primary 5	Secondary 3	Total
Noun from various	Actual instances	55	133	188
forms	Normalized frequency*	4.3	10.5	7.4
Preposition from	Actual instances	1	27	28
conjunction	Normalized frequency	0.1	2.1	1.1
Verb from various	Actual instances	0.0	29	29
forms	Normalized frequency	0.0	2.3	1.1
Adjective from	Actual instances	21	20	41
various forms	Normalized frequency	1.7	1.6	1.6
Plus Verb	Actual instances	13	23	36
	Normalized frequency	1.0	1.8	1.4
Interpersonal	Actual instances	3	0	3
	Normalized frequency	0.2	0.0	0.1
Other	Actual instances	21	24	45
	Normalized frequency	1.7	1.9	1.8
Total	Actual instances	114	256	370
	Normalized frequency	8.9	20.2	14.5

Note: * Normalized frequency: the norm taken of a typical essay is 300 words.

writings, making them the single most frequent metaphor type in the corpus. This result roughly agrees with that of Derewianka's (2003) longitudinal study of the development of her own child's writing, where the earliest type to emerge and most common type of grammatical metaphor was the blend of process/thing, as in the example 'engine failure' cited earlier (see also, Painter et al., 2007: 578–579). Second, Secondary 3 students are 2.4 times (10.5÷4.3) as likely to nominalize as their Primary 5 counterparts. Third, while all uses of ideational metaphor (with the exception of the type 'Adj from various forms') have increased from Primary 5 to Secondary 3, the use of interpersonal metaphor has decreased.

Summary of the analyses

Combining the results from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented above, we can see that, overall, Secondary 3 students have developed greater facility with protometaphor and metaphor than Primary 5 students. First, the former use around twice as many metaphors and protometaphors as the latter. Second, the former produce texts that are covered in terms of metaphor and protometaphor about twice as much as the latter. Third, shifts to things (e.g. from 'an engine fails' to 'engine failure') have been most prominent. Fourth, the Secondary 3 students are able to

produce texts that juggle between congruent (verbal, clausal) and metaphorical (nominal) meaning making. For example, one student is able to produce 'The black Toyota turned turtle after collison' (Lines 19–20, Text 2). Fifth, the Secondary 3 students are thus able to construe new, more sophisticated, experiences for themselves and their communities, for example, the use of 'The impact' (Line 21, Text 2). Finally, the older students are more capable of organizing their text through the use of grammatical metaphor. For example, the author of Text 2 employs nominalized processes 'The impact' (Line 21, Text 2) and 'collison' (Line 20, Text 2) to refer back to the event described earlier, hence enhancing the flow of the text.

Discussion and conclusion

In this study we have sought to examine the development of grammatical metaphor and protometaphor in primary and secondary school students' writing in pedagogic contexts. In the main, our findings in the study of student writing in multilingual, multicultural Singapore provide further support of the view that secondary school years is the time when metaphorical modes of meaning making begin to take hold (Butt, 2004; Christie, 2002; Derewianka, 2003; Halliday, 1993; Halliday, 2004). One possible explanation for this increase in grammatical metaphors and protometaphors is that, in meeting the demands of more discipline-based and technical secondary curricula, the older students are adapting to new modes of meaning and are in the process of developing new foundations of learning (Halliday, 1993: 93) and acquiring new psychological tools (Kozulin, 2003: 15–16).

This suggests that researchers and classroom teachers can examine the students' mastery of metaphorical modes of meaning as an indication of the maturity of students' language development, particularly after the basic grasp of the English language (e.g. its spelling, handwriting and punctuation systems) is attained. Both secondary and primary school teachers may benefit from knowledge about the developmental trajectory in the students' mastery of grammatical metaphors. With some of the information from studies such as the present one, classroom teachers can go some way in answering crucial questions such as 'What is it that I expect the students to achieve in their writing?', 'What specific comments can I make on the students' assignments?' and 'Why does this wording sound better than that one?' Clearly, more empirical research is needed on the development of students' writing in different subject areas and across the years of schooling.

In conclusion, this chapter has complemented current research in the grammatical features of student writing in Singapore and illustrated a contextualized and corpus-based approach to the enquiry into the development of grammatical metaphor in official pedagogic sites. It is obvious that the data analysed so far have been small in size and the findings not yet conclusive. However, we believe that continued contextualized interrogation of the dataset will identify how students develop more mature writing over the years and what pedagogic practices serve as the optimal condition(s) for such progression and achievement.

Appendix A: Classroom instruction for the Secondary 3 essays

The teacher allocates three lessons totalling 4 hours 22 minutes to teach the students how to write an eyewitness account of a road accident. In Lesson 1, she distributes a model eyewitness report and analyses with the class its linguistic and generic features (e.g. use of personal pronoun 'I', past tense, and inclusion of information on what happened, when and where). She then contrasts this text type with a narrative story covered before and reminds the students not to get confused. To reinforce what she has taught, she then asks the students to correct the mistakes of another eyewitness report. At the end of Lesson 1 she asks the students to write an eyewitness report on a story that is carried in a local newspaper:

Turn 930 Teacher:	okay this is a newspaper report on a road accident. What I want you to do is – okay I don't want to shock you, I don't want you [to] write everything. Write an eyewitness account of the road accident based on the newspaper article. I don't want you to write the whole thing. What I want you to do is you read the article, write the first paragraph.

In Lesson 2, the class read the newspaper report, are provided with a task sheet detailing the requirements for this exercise (reproduced in Appendix B), and set out to convert the newspaper report into an eyewitness report. While the students are doing this, the teacher circulates and offers advice to those who seem to have trouble. Throughout the first two lessons, she emphasizes that the students write as she has taught them and

imitate the model report as far as they can. The following excerpted transcript of Lesson 2 gives us an indication of her style of teaching:

Turn 442	Teacher:	okay these are some points that you may want to include in your last two or last paragraph. Any damage to the car? Was the car damaged? If there is, remember the useful expression that I've given you. You could use those phrases to describe what happened to the taxi. Any injury?
Turn 725	Teacher:	'cross the road', 'across the road'. Know what's the difference? When you say 'cross the road' meaning to say you are crossing the road. You say 'across' means I'm looking across. Is at the other side of the road. It's different. You're referring to the action right? Is 'crossing', not 'across'.
Turn 729	Teacher:	'cross' is a verb. You are crossing the road now.

In Lesson 3 the teacher comments on the essays that her students have produced. In general, then, the teacher adopts a combination of direct instruction and models (Cazden, 1992) in the teaching of writing in that she provides model essays, highlights their conventional features and requires the students to imitate the models.

Appendix B: Task sheet (Secondary 3 students)

Writing task

You are waiting for a bus to take you back to office after lunch. You witness an accident between two cars. You are asked to write a report of the accident for the police. Using the points listed below and adding material of your own, write the report. You should write between 250 and 350 words.

- Date and time
- Place of accident
- Description of cars
- How the cars collided
- Damage to the cars

- Injury to drivers and others
- Who caused the accident?

(i) Planning and writing the composition

STEP 1: TENSE – The past tense
STEP 2: PLANNING:
        a. Paragraphing
        b. Elaboration of notes

> The accident is over. Therefore, you should write in the past tense

Paragraph 1

Date: Monday, 26 JUNE, 1991
Time: 1.30 p.m.
Place: opposite the Town Hall on
    Birch Road
Heavy traffic – people rushing back
  to work after lunch break.

> Decide on the para-graphing. Add material of your own, i.e. details and extra relevant in-formation to the given points

Paragraph 2

Description of cars:
        Blue Mercedes, green Groton, white Mitshi van
        How the cars collided: Mercedes overtook Groton,
        crashed into van.

Paragraph 3

Damage to the cars:
        Windscreen of van smashed, front bumper caved in.
        Mercedes – headlights broken, bumper dented.

Paragraph 4

Injury to drivers and others:
        No one hurt.
        Drivers – in a daze and suffering from
        shock – pulled out of cars by some men.
        5-yr-old boy – crying, calling for father – lady
        carried and comforted him.

Paragraph 5

Who caused the accident?
Mercedes driver – pilot with Golden Airlines speeding – should not have overtaken.

Paragraph 6

Conclusion:

Police came to direct traffic. Ambulance took victims to hospital for check-ups.

STEP 3: WRITING (i.e. expand the notes)

Note

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Chapter 8

The Development of the Past Tense in Singapore English

Lubna Alsagoff, Dennis Yap and Violet Yip

Introduction

This study is an investigation of tense and aspect errors in compositions of Singapore students. In particular, it seeks to provide a systematic under-standing of the differences in the marking of past tense in Singapore English student writing through a quantitative investigation that examines data from the perspective of the Aspect Hypothesis. A central claim of the Aspect Hypothesis salient to this study is that the selection and use of past tense is initially restricted to the marking of telic predicates (Anderson & Shirai, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Salaberry & Shirai, 2002). In other words, a learner is expected to acquire and appropriately use the past tense with telic verbs (i.e. those that describe processes with an inherent end point) before atelic verbs (i.e. States and Activities with no inherent end points). The Aspect Hypothesis therefore suggests that the distribution of tense errors can be predicted on the basis of the temporal properties of verb meaning. In this study, we formulate and test the hypothesis that the aspectual classes of verbs can explain patterns of errors in past tense mark-ing in our corpus.

Background

Before continuing with details of the study, it might be useful at this point to begin with an explanation of lexical aspect. Aspect is different from tense. Tense is a grammatical device used to show the relation between the action or state described by the verb and time. It is reflected in the form of

the verb. English distinguishes and marks the present tense *faints* (1a) and past tense *fainted* (1b).

1. Tense

  (1a). The sailor faints at the sight of blood.
  (1b). The sailor fainted at the sight of blood.

Aspect, on the other hand, refers to 'ways of viewing the temporal constituency of a situation' (Comrie, 1976: 3). There are two types of aspect: grammatical aspect and lexical aspect. Grammatical aspect refers to the way in which morphological endings of verbs are used to indicate the progress of an event. English has three aspectual distinctions: simple, progressive or perfective. Grammatical aspect can be combined with either the present or past tense:

2. Aspect

  (2a). The girl enjoys her lunch. [present simple]
  (2b). The girl enjoyed her lunch. [past simple]
  (2c). The girl is enjoying her lunch. [present progressive]
  (2d). The girl was enjoying her lunch. [present progressive]
  (2e). The girl has enjoyed her lunch. [present perfective]
  (2f). The girl had enjoyed her lunch. [past perfective]

    In English, the simple is unmarked in form, while progressive or continuous aspect is marked by the *–ing* morpheme, and the completive or perfective aspect is marked by the *–ed/en* morpheme. Lexical aspect differs from grammatical aspect in that it is part of the verb meaning rather than something that is morphologically marked. Consequently, although the verb in (2a), (2b), (2c), (2d), (2e) and (2f) has different grammatical aspects and different tenses, it is the same lexical verb, and therefore has the same lexical aspect. Thus, a verb can change its tense, as well as its grammatical aspect, but its lexical aspect remains constant. This is because lexical aspect is part of the inherent temporal meaning of the verb.

    The different temporal meanings of verbs are captured by Vendler's (1967) classification of lexical aspect. Vendler distinguished among four different aspectual classes of verbs: States, Activities, Accomplishments and Achievements.

According to Vendler (1967), States happen over a period of time, in which no change or action is needed for the situation to continue; they are non-punctual stative verbs. Typical examples of States are verbs such as *know, love, hate* as shown below.

(3a). Samuel *knows* my sister.
(3b). Jordan *hates* vegetables.

In contrast to States, Activities denote situations which happen over a period of time, but where change occurs during the period of time (i.e. they are dynamic verbs). Activities, like States, do not have an inherent endpoint.

(4a). William ran for many miles before he found help.
(4b). William ran the New York Marathon in under three hours.

However, whether or not a verb is classified as an Activity can depend on the way the verb is used. In (4b) the same verb *walk* has an object *the New York Marathon.* This addition makes the transitive form of the verb *run* telic, and thus not an Activity but an Accomplishment.

Accomplishments (e.g. *build, paint, destroy*) describe situations with intrinsic natural end points, that is, they are telic. They are also non-punctual since they occur over a period of time and dynamic because change occurs over the period of time.

(5a). The Lims are building a new patio in their back garden.
(5b). Sally constructed the model aeroplane with little help.

Achievements (e.g. *explode, kill, die*) denote situations where the inherent end is instantaneously achieved: the beginning and end point to the event occur simultaneously and the event does not have any duration. Achievements are thus non-stative, telic and punctual. Examples include,

(6a). He died of a heart attack.
(6b). The bomb exploded.
(6c). Mary killed the cockroach.

The Aspect Hypothesis (e.g. Anderson & Shirai, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Salaberry & Shirai, 2002) is the application of this classification to second language acquisition research. In particular, it postulates that the (lexical) aspectual meaning of verbs – the ways in which verbs describe the

completion and duration of events – affects the degree to which they are accurately marked for tense and grammatical aspect. The Aspect Hypothesis predicts that the past tense, for example, would not be acquired uniformly across all verbs, but would be more developed for telic verbs – verbs with a natural endpoint or culmination such as *paint (a picture), bake (a cake)* – than non-telic verbs – verbs such as States and Activities – which have no natural endpoint (e.g. *love, stand, enjoy*). If the Aspect Hypothesis is correct, then we would expect to see telic verbs or predicates having fewer non-standard forms or errors[1] in our corpora of student writing than non-telic ones.

Although almost no research has been done in relation to the acquisition of the tense marking of verb forms in Singapore English apart from Randall (2003), the variable use of the past tense has received much attention in the sociolinguistic literature (e.g. Alsagoff, 2001; Alsagoff & Ho, 1998; Ho, 2003; Ho & Platt, 1993; Platt & Weber, 1980; Saravanan, 1989). In many of these studies (e.g. Deterding, 2000; Platt & Weber, 1980; Poedjosoedarmo, 2000; Tay, 1979; Yeo & Deterding, 2003), the absence of overt tense markings – 'She walk to the market yesterday' – is attributed to the influence of the endogenous languages such as Mandarin, Hokkien, Malay and Tamil languages which are spoken as L1s in Singapore.

While much of the literature leans towards attributing the variation found in Singapore English speech and writing to substratal influence or the L1 languages, we note Alsagoff and Ho's (1998: 138) argument that even where languages display similar structures, that it is not sufficient evidence to draw a conclusion that the observed structures are a consequence of interference or transference from the L1. In their argument, they cite Thomas's (1996) observations of East Anglian English being similar to Singapore English in not having consistent subject-verb agreement even though the two varieties of English certainly could not have the same L1 substratum.

Apart from substratal influence, the research on the use of the past tense in Singapore English literature has two other areas of focus. The first is the relationship between the use of the past tense and syllable structure. In trying to understand the patterns of past tense marking in Singapore English, Platt and Weber (1980: pp. 59–61.) offer some observations relating the statistical correlation of the non-marking of the past tense with certain phonological contexts. Verbs which end in a consonant (e.g. *jumped, passed, looked*) are less likely to be marked for the past tense than verbs which end in a vowel (e.g. *tried, played, cared*). However, Platt and Weber (1980) note that phonological constraints alone cannot account for the patterns of use of

the past tense. Such constraints cannot explain why strong or irregular verbs such as *come* and *see* whose past tense forms are not phonologically derived from the present tense forms also exhibit a lack of past tense marking (p. 61).

Randall (1997, 2003), in his investigations on the acquisition of the past tense by Singaporean and Malaysian children, likewise found syllable structure to be an important factor in determining the accurate use of past tense. Randall found that up to 88% of spelling errors made by students involved the omission of the final consonant in words whose final cluster consisted of a suffix. His explanation is that the source of such errors can be found in the difference between the syllable structure of English and Chinese or Malay (Randall, 2003: 3) since neither Malay nor Chinese has word-final consonant cluster (i.e. they have single consonant codas). Yip's (2004) findings were similar, pointing to syllable structure and spelling as the only statistically significant factor in determining the distribution of the past tense marking in the writing of primary school students.[2] Randall's and Yip's conclusions seem to support the thesis that syllabic weight or prominence of some formal nature tends to correlate with accurate usage of morphological markings.

Another salient facet of the research on variation of Singapore English verb use is the observed influence of verb meaning on the use of the past tense. Saravanan (1989), in her study of Tamil speakers of Singapore English, reported that the past tense was used more often with punctual verbs than non-punctual ones. Her study pointed as well to such speakers omitting the morphological marking of the past tense for stative verbs. Ho and Platt's (1993) study of past tense patterns of use in an oral corpus demonstrated that past tense marking in Singapore English, earlier referred to in Platt and Weber (1980) as 'variable' in distribution and use, in fact shows strong correlations with the lexical aspect of the verb. Ho's (2003) investigations on the marking of the past tense in a written corpus produced similar generalizations: among Singaporean Chinese adults, punctual verbs are more likely to be marked for past tense (56.2% of the time) compared with non-punctual verbs (14.7%) and stative verbs (36.9%) (Ho, 2003: 40). In addition, Ho's analysis showed that verbs describing habitual activities were unlikely to be marked with a past tense suffix, and that they correlated with the use of adverbials such as *normally, sometimes, always, when* (2003: 42–43).[3]

Interestingly, Ho (2003: 46) cites research on morpheme acquisition studies and the Aspect Hypothesis (e.g. Anderson, 1991; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Bardovi-Harlig & Reynolds, 1995; Robison, 1990) in support of

her argument that lexical aspect influences the accuracy of tense and grammatical aspect. Although the findings Ho presents are congruent with the predictions of the Aspect Hypothesis, the latter is theoretically quite different from Ho's position. The Aspect Hypothesis essentially takes a universalist perspective on language acquisition; while Ho's research, as with similar sociolinguistic work, tends to attribute variation to L1 influence and the differences between the L1 and the target language. While more needs to be done to uncover the interplay between L1 transference and universality of acquisition patterns, the present study focuses specifically on whether lexical aspect, as postulated by the Aspect Hypothesis, has any bearing on the patterns of acquisition of the past tense, by investigating the patterns of errors made by Singapore school students. In addition, while we are mindful of Ellis' cautionary note about drawing conclusions about acquisition through a study of errors (1994: 74), we will use the distribution of such errors as a window to the patterns of acquisition of the past tense form.

The current study is a consolidation of two previous studies by the authors. Yip (2004) investigated the rate of verb errors and looked at possible causes of such errors by examining grammatical and structural correlates. Yip's study noted morpho-phonological constraints to be the only significant factor in predicting the rate of errors in her corpus of 20 student essays. She found that lexical aspect did not provide a significant correlation with the verb form; instead, syllable structure was the stronger influence. In contrast to Yip's finding, Yap (2006) argued that the Aspect Hypothesis offered an accurate insight into the development of tense in the writing of secondary school students. The present study seeks to determine if lexical aspect plays a different role in determining the acquisition of the past tense in primary school students than secondary school students. To test Yip's findings, as well as to facilitate a more balanced comparison with the secondary school corpus which consisted of 55 essays, the authors expanded the original set of data for the primary corpus from 20 essays to 60 for the present study. The data were then re-analysed and compared with the secondary school data to determine whether lexical aspect influences the way past tense verbs are patterned.

Method

Data for this study come from written corpora from two separate studies carried out by Yip (2004) and Yap (2006). Yip's data comprised student

compositions from two neighbourhood primary schools, while Yap's comprised student compositions from a neighbourhood secondary school. Neighbourhood schools, so called because of their locations in the middle-class 'heartland' areas of Singapore where public housing[4] is the primary form of housing, were selected as a context for the study because the authors felt that such student writing would better represent the general student population in Singapore. In addition, in order to ensure that the writing represented student work, we selected essays written as part of the schools' second semester assessments (i.e. only those that were done in class).

The primary school data consisted of a total of 58 composition scripts from two Primary 5 classes and one Primary 6 class, sampled from two neighbourhood primary schools. Yip's original data of 20 essays were expanded to 60 for the present study to make the sample more comparable to the secondary school data. The average length of each composition script in the primary school corpus was about 200 words, with an average of 30 verbs and verb phrases per composition. The primary corpus totalled 21,000 words with each of the scripts exhibiting past tense marking errors in more than 60% of the verbs (and verb phrases).

The secondary school data, on the other hand, comprised a total of 55 composition scripts, whose average length was approximately 430 words, and with each script, on average, containing about 75 verbs and verb phrases. The total size of the secondary school corpus was about 24,000 words, with more than 20% of the verbs (and verb phrases) exhibiting past tense marking errors. The student essays came from Normal (Academic) and the Express Stream classes. The syllabi for both these streams are identical with students in both these streams expected to show mastery in the same grammatical features in their writings at Secondary 2.[5] The only difference between students from the two streams is that students from the Express stream are required to write longer compositions of about 100 words.

Lexical verbs in each of the essays were categorized according to their lexical class and tagged with this information. To classify the verbs in the corpora into one of the four aspectual classes, we used a set of tests, common in the literature on telicity, to differentiate among the aspectual classes. These involved collocating the verbs with a variety of adverbials phrases which tease out the componental semantic features of their aspectual meanings: telicity or delimitedness, punctuality and stativity (i.e. whether a verb is stative or dynamic) (Bardovi-Harlig & Reynold, 1995). (See Table 1.)

To test for telicity, we use time adverbials to check if the predicates have natural end points or goals (Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Tenny, 1994). Telic verbs

Table 1 Componential features of Vendler's
(1967) aspectual classes

	Telicity	Stativity	Punctuality
a. State	–	+	–
b. Activity	–	–	–
c. Accomplishment	+	–	–
d. Achievement	+	–	+

collocate with prepositional phrases beginning with *in*, while non-telic verbs collocate with adverbials beginning with *for*. Telicity distinguishes States and Activities from Accomplishments and Achievements.

States

(7a). My mother has known the principal for a very long time.
(7b). *My mother has known the principal in a very long time. [–telic]

Activities

(8a). William ran for a very long time before he found help.
(8b). *William ran in a very long time before he found help. [–telic]

Accomplishments

(9a). *Min constructed the model aeroplane for just ten minutes. [+telic]
(9b). Min constructed the model aeroplane in just ten minutes.

Achievements

(10a). *The bomb exploded for just ten minutes. [+telic]
(10b). The bomb exploded in just ten minutes.

The semantic category, stativity, refers to the durativity of an event: according to Comrie, stative verbs refer to those where 'unless something happens to change that state, then the state will continue' (1976: 49). Only States are stative. Structurally, they are not able to assume a progressive grammatical aspect, unlike Activities.

States

(11a). My mother knows the principal.

(11b). *My mother is knowing the principal. [+stative]

Activities

(12a). William runs around the track every day.
(12b). William was running around the track every day. [−stative]

Punctuality is where the start and end of an event occur at the same point in time (i.e. the event has no duration). The test used to determine punctuality serves to differentiate between the two telic aspectual classes of Accomplishment and Achievement.

Accomplishments

(13a). Min constructed the model aeroplane.
(13b). *Min *suddenly* constructed the model aeroplane. [−punctual]

Achievements

(14a). The bomb exploded.
(14b). The bomb *suddenly* exploded. [+punctual]

In addition to tagging the verbs for aspectual class, we also marked as errors those verbs for which the marking of past tense varied from Standard British English use.[6] For example:

I quickly ask (V) (X) (Acc) the foodholder to packed (V) (X Structural) (Act) my food into a foamed box, so I could finish (V) (Acc) it at home. I paid (V) (Ach) for my rice and started (V) (Ach) to go (V) (Acc) home quickly. Out of purpose, I walked (V) (Act) to a corner to check (V) (Act) whether are (V) (X) (S) those morons still following (V) (Act) me. I was (V) (S) furious as I did (V) (Act) nothing wrong, and why am (V) (X) (S) I so afraid of them, leading (V) (Act) such a sneakly life.

The corpora were then sorted using a freeware concordance program (ConcApp) to determine the frequency of errors in each aspectual class. To check if the rate of errors of telic and atelic verbs are significantly different, a chi-square test was performed to compare the actual observed frequencies with the frequencies one would expect if there were no relationship at

all between the two variables in the data. The chi-square assesses whether the differences are significant enough to rule out sampling error. In this study, a probability error threshold of p<0.05 was set.

Analysis and discussion

The data from the primary school corpus are first presented followed by data from the secondary school corpus. Table 2 presents an overview of the frequency of errors in the primary school corpus. Note that the largest percentage of verbs in the sample texts from primary school comes from the aspectual class of state verbs, with a total of 552 verbs (29% of the corpus). This is followed by activity verbs which totalled 508 (27%), 363 achievement verbs (19%), and 480 accomplishment verbs (25). The rate of errors for atelic verbs stood at 28% compared to the 21.1% for telic verbs.

We next determine if the observed difference in the percentages of errors between the telic and atelic aspectual classes is statistically significant. A chi-square test was performed to test the significance of the difference between the observed frequencies of errors and the expected frequencies. The results indicate that the difference in the rate of errors between telic and atelic verbs is statistically significant: x^2 (1, N = 1903) = 11.95, p < 0.05.

To see if the patterns of past tense errors patterned along the Vendler (1967) classification, the data were re-analysed using a four-way distinction of aspectual classes into States, Activities, Achievements and Accomplishments. Here again, the results indicate that the difference in the rate of errors between the different aspectual classes of verbs is statistically significant: x^2 (3, N = 1903) = 29.84, p < 0.05. The analysis confirms that there

Table 2 Distribution of errors in primary school corpus

No. of verbs = 1,903	TELIC						ATELIC					
	Achievement			Accomplishment			Activity			State		
Distribution	19%			25%			27%			29%		
Number	**T**	C	I	**T**	C	I	**T**	C	I	**T**	C	I
	363	268	95	**480**	397	83	**508**	387	121	**552**	376	176
%	**100**	73.8	26.2	**100**	82.7	17.3	**100**	76.2	23.8	**100**	68.1	31.9
% Incorrect (Telicity)	Telic verbs incorrectly marked for past tense = 21.1%						Atelic verbs incorrectly marked for past tense = 28%					

Note: T = Total, C = Correctly marked, I = Incorrectly marked

Table 3   Summary of distribution of verbs in secondary school corpus

No. of verbs = 4,193	TELIC						ATELIC					
	Achievement			Accomplishment			Activity			State		
Distribution	13%			30%			20%			37%		
Number	**T**	C	I	**T**	C	I	**T**	C	I	**T**	C	I
	537	475	62	**1,276**	1,136	140	**832**	669	163	**1,548**	1,076	472
%	**100**	88.5	11.5	**100**	89	11	**100**	80	20	**100**	69.5	30.5
% Incorrect (Telicity)	Telic verbs incorrectly marked for past tense = 11.1%						Atelic verbs incorrectly marked for past tense = 26.7%					

Note: T = Total, C = Correctly marked, I = Incorrectly marked

is a significant correlation between the telicity of a verb and the accuracy of the past tense marking, suggesting that telicity is a reliable predictor of the distribution and frequency of errors in past tense marking.

We will now examine data from the Secondary school corpus. As can be seen from Table 3, the largest percentage of verbs in the sample texts comes from the aspectual class of state verbs, with a total of 1,548 verbs (37% of the corpus). This is followed by 832 activity verbs (20%), 537 achievement verbs (13%) and 1276 accomplishment verbs (30%). The high number of state verbs is expected because of the frequency of use of primary verbs such as the copular *be* and *have*.

The frequencies in Table 3 show that state verbs have the largest percentage of errors (30.5% of all state verbs) followed by activity verbs (20% of all activity verbs), achievement verbs (11.5% of all achievement verbs) and finally accomplishment verbs (11% of all accomplishment verbs). Initial study of the frequencies also reveals that atelic verbs, namely States and Activities, exhibit more errors in past tense marking (27.7%) than telic verbs (11.1%), namely Achievement and Accomplishment verbs. As with the primary school corpus, a chi-square test was used to check if the differences in frequency in the errors in the various aspectual classes were statistically significant. The results indicate that the difference in the rate of errors between telic and atelic verbs is statistically significant: x^2 (1, N = 4193) = 155.52, p < 0.05.

We can conclude that the observed number of errors in tense and aspect marking for atelic verbs is significantly higher than the expected number, while the observed number of errors in tense and aspect marking for telic verbs is significantly lower than the expected number. The telicity of the verb is thus a reliable predictor of the distribution and frequency of errors in past tense marking.

Table 4   Comparing the primary and secondary corpus rates of error

		Percentage of errors			
		Primary level corpus		Secondary level corpus	
Telic	Achievement	26.2%	21.1%	11.5%	11.1%
	Accomplishment	17.3%		11%	
Atelic	Activity	23.8%	28%	20%	26.7%
	State	31.9%		30.5%	

If we compare the primary school corpus with the secondary school corpus, we see a clear difference in the chi-square values, which appear to show that there is a stronger correlation between lexical aspect and the past tense marking in the secondary school corpus than the primary school corpus. The strength of the correlation in the secondary school data is again evident when the data are analysed in terms of Vendler's (1967) four-way classification of aspectual classes. The results indicate that the difference in the rate of errors between the different aspectual classes of verbs is statistically significant: x^2 (3, N = 4193) = 195.84, p < 0.05, indicating that the distribution of the verb errors can be reliably predicted by looking at the aspectual features of the verb.

Finally, in attempting to compare the errors of telic and atelic verbs across the two corpora, we look at the percentages of errors across both as shown in Table 4.[7]

What is notable in Table 4 is that the rate of errors for telic verbs is much lower in the secondary grade level corpus than the primary grade level corpus, while the difference between the rates of error for atelic verbs does not differ much. If we compare the aspectual classes, we see that errors made with Achievement verbs are much more frequent in the primary grade level corpus than the secondary grade level corpus; this contributes to the higher percentage of errors in the primary grade level corpus for telic verbs. The data tentatively suggest that past tense acquisition is more easily developed for telic verbs than for atelic verbs.

Conclusion

This study has indicated that aspectual meanings of verbs influences the development of tense and aspect. In particular, the findings are that atelic verbs show a greater rate of error for past tense marking than telic verbs.

These findings are consistent with the Aspect Hypothesis (Anderson & Shirai, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Salaberry & Shirai, 2002; Shirai, 2002). The student writings in our corpora show a lower percentage of past tense marking errors among telic verbs, which are mastered earlier, while students recorded a higher percentage of past tense marking errors among atelic verbs, which are mastered later. Thus, while current sociolinguistic literature on nativized or new Englishes tends to favour an approach of interference from the substratal languages as in Ho (2003) and Ho and Platt (1993), we have demonstrated that there is evidence that supports an argument for considering the patterns of acquisition of the past tense as universal.

Notes

[1] We use the term 'errors' to denote that the standard variety targeted at in the school context is Standard British English. Consequently usages which do not conform to this standard form are referred to as 'errors' for ease of use. Of course, in a different setting, such non-standard use could as easily be defined as variations. There is, however, an issue as to whether such forms are simply Singapore Colloquial English or in fact a learner variety. We do not take up this point in this article.

[2] The only other studies marginally relevant to this investigation are Sobrielo (1968) and Thong (1996). Sobrielo's study revealed verb errors to be the most frequent in Singapore secondary student writing, while Thong's investigations showed that Primary 2 pupils displayed an inconsistent use of the past tense.

[3] Interestingly, apart from making observations of correlation in relation to the lexical aspect of the verbs, Ho's observations include a suggestion that syllabic structure can also predict the past tense ending: 'verbs whose past form ends in a consonant or consonant cluster are frequently not marked for past' (Ho, 2003: 47). However, it is unclear from her study how lexical aspect and phonological constraints are interrelated.

[4] Public housing in Singapore indicates complexes of well-built flats for home ownership. Unlike in some countries, these are largely middle-class dwellings rather than housing for those in financial straits.

[5] Details on the Normal (Academic) and Express streams in the Singapore education system can be found at http://www.moe.edu.sg/education/secondary

[6] We treated overgeneralizations such as 'He goed to market yesterday' as non-errors since what we were interested in was not so much whether the students were able to use the correct form of the past tense, but rather whether they recognized the context as needing a past tense marking. We also omitted structural errors such as 'to packed' which we saw as errors not of tense, but of finiteness.

[7] An important consideration to note when interpreting the figures in Table 4 is that our data set was selected out of a larger corpus for the purposes of comparing across aspectual classes. Therefore, it would not be correct to assume that the total rate of error in the corpora (49% for the primary corpus and 37.7% for the secondary corpus) reflects the norm in Singapore English student writing.

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Chapter 9

The Contribution of Process Drama to Improved Results in English Oral Communication[1]

Madonna Stinson and Kelly Freebody

Introduction

Language is one of the elements of the dramatic art form, and the use of drama strategies for language learning has been shown to have a significant impact on quality of student outcomes. In a noteworthy critical review of a range of research into the impact of Arts education practices on student learning (Winner & Hetland, 2000), which covered seven meta-analyses of 80 studies focusing on drama and language learning, Podlozny concluded, 'Drama instruction has a positive, robust effect on a range of outcomes' (2000: 264). Based on the analyses, she reported a significant causal link between drama and oral language acquisition. Interestingly, she went on to suggest that those studies using 'unstructured enactment', where students create text while in what Robinson (1990: 25) calls the enactive mode (i.e. working in imagined roles) rather than reproducing a script, and oral language studies with *older*[2] participants both tended to have larger effect sizes (p. 259). The emphasis on 'older' participants is of particular interest to this study. Language activities with young children tend to incorporate more playful activities such as language games and participation in imaginative play to encourage enjoyment and experimentation. As students age, the emphasis becomes more instrumental, focusing on purposeful language usage and language structures. These aspects suggest that the use of Process Drama (or similar models of practice which enlist the 'playful' and 'playfulness' of operating within a dramatic fiction) to improve the oral communication skills of teenagers is worthy of further investigation.

In the case of Process Drama, though the drama experiences themselves are carefully structured, script reproduction is rarely used as part of the

drama itself. Instead the students generate dialogue while in role and, hence, Process Drama could be classified as a form that uses 'unstructured enactment'. The experimental study which is the focus of this chapter involved groups of 16-year-old Singaporean students as the participants and the use of Process Drama to expand and improve students' oral communication in English.

The context

The speaking of 'good English' is important in Singapore. Signs on buses, free postcards in coffee shops, and banner-posters elsewhere proclaim the importance of the Speak Good English Movement, launched by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 2000. Goh Chok Tong, in the Prime Minister's address to the nation (17 August 2003), reinforced the importance of English communication skills to Singapore's future economic growth and significance in the region.

In multicultural Singapore, English is becoming more frequently used at home (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2000). It is the language of instruction at all stages of schooling, and all classes are taught in English except Mother Tongue lessons. For a majority of students, particularly those in the upper grades who entered school at a time when English was less common, English is likely to be their second or even third language. The strong emphasis on English language proficiency is further indicated by the fact that all aspiring teacher-education students at the National Institute of Education (NIE), the only teacher-preparation institution in Singapore, must sit for the English Language Proficiency Test (which includes an oral component) to secure a place in the programme. It is clear that Singapore offers an exceptional opportunity for researchers to investigate the learning and use of English, especially in second-language contexts.

Drama and language

It is generally accepted that drama contributes to the development of oral communication (Catterall, 2002; Hui, 1997; Wagner, 1998). Meta-analyses such as that undertaken by Podlozny (2000) support such assumptions. However the intersection of second-language acquisition, oral language and Process Drama is under-researched with the notable exception of a study conducted by Kao and O'Neill (1998) exploring the effects of Process Drama on a range of learning activities and outcomes in a second-language classroom. They report that studies of student participation in the

second-language classroom have shown that *teachers* account for more than 70% of the total classroom talk and perform twice as many interactional acts as their students. Coyle and Bisgner (1984, cited in Kao & O'Neill, 1998) found that, in general, students

- seldom address questions to the teacher,
- almost never address questions to other students,
- almost never initiate new topics,
- seldom react.

The issue of students' limited participation is amplified in bilingual contexts and countries with English-medium schooling such as Singapore, because not only are students expected to learn the grammatical structure and correct usage of the English language, but they are expected to use English to learn in other areas of the curriculum as well (Gibbons, 1998). With this in mind, an issue that becomes worth considering in relation to the teaching of language in a formal classroom setting is how to address the need for students to experience 'real-life' language. For example, it is inevitable that students with a first language other than the language that is the medium of instruction will encounter unfamiliar vocabulary during interactions both in and out of the classroom. Students need to be aware of how to deal with this while also maintaining the flow of conversation and comprehension (Newton, 2001).

One of the obstacles in conducting real-life language in a formal classroom setting is the asymmetrical and contrived relationship between the teacher and students (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). If the teacher controls the new vocabulary and flow of talk too overtly and comprehensively in the classroom, students will rarely have opportunities to initiate such interactions. As a result they will be ill-equipped to deal with unstructured and unexpected encounters. This 'over-protective' classroom-world, whereby the teacher initiates and supervises all language use and relies heavily on drill exercises, often fails to prepare students for the 'coughs and hesitations' of the outside world (Holden, 1981: 2). The focus on 'correctness' for classroom work is not directly matched by the 'appropriateness' and 'comprehensibility' that operate outside the classroom. Communication involves more that just getting the words right, it is about whether or not the receiver has understood what is being said. It is dependent on language variables such as speed, volume and pitch as well as paralinguistic features such as proxemics, stance, gesture and facial expression. Consider how we note and measure passionate delivery as opposed to mechanistic, or how we read the nuance of the flickered glance; these are inherent in face-to-face human interactions.

As long as the teacher and students are confined to talk only within contexts available in the conventional classroom, their talk will remain narrow and restricted (Kao & O'Neill, 1998; Neelands, 1992). Students' involvement in the negotiation and construction of meaning during participation in a drama allows them insights into the relationship between context and language, and lets them link the language they are learning to the world around them (Maley & Duff, 1978).

In addition, participation in spoken interactions may facilitate language learning because of the focus on output (Shehadeh, 1999, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 1985, 2002). Process Drama allows students to use their language knowledge to create and respond to dialogue in varying contexts and for varying purposes. The fact that Process Drama is a collaborative experience under the control of the entire group, not just the teacher, allows for the possibility of student ownership of the learning situation and assists students in becoming intrinsically involved in developing dialogue so that the social interaction of the drama may continue (Kao & O'Neill, 1998).

Neelands (1992) posits a model of language learning that emphasizes the significance of working in role in the development of dialogue and language skills. By working in role and in the fictional 'as if' context of drama, students have opportunities to create new contexts, to create fictional roles and viewpoints, to develop relationships, to respond to the language demands of the dramatic situation while in role, and to practice 'real-life' language in the safe space of dramatic fiction. Haseman and O'Toole (1990) suggest that there are five language functions which are foregrounded while working in role: the languages of negotiating, feeling, imagining, informing and controlling. All of these are intrinsic to the process of working in role and collaboratively creating drama. Clipson-Boyles (1998: 56) outlined the benefits of role-based drama in the following terms:

Working in role

- protects the student's self-esteem by de-personalizing a process which is,
- in reality, an extremely personal and sensitive part of a student's self-perception;
- provides enjoyable reasons for speaking 'differently';
- offers the disguise or mask of someone different in which to experiment;
- enables the teacher to correct the 'character' rather than the student;
- helps students to understand diversity as opposed to one 'wrong' way of
- speaking and one 'correct' way of speaking;
- provides a context for repetition, practice and preparation.

Indeed, one of the main purposes of having students work in role is to provide them with new and different language possibilities in a safe environment. If the roles and contexts are chosen well, the structured drama process can lead students 'to ask and answer questions, to solve problems, to offer both information and opinions, to argue and persuade, and generally to fulfil the widest range of language functions' (Kao & O'Neill, 1998: 25). Taking on roles also provides students with the opportunity to experiment with vocabulary, register and speech patterns (Wagner, 1998). The use of drama in the classroom can provide various types of interaction and opportunities for many of the heuristic, imaginative and formative functions of natural language use (Halliday, 1978). Drama allows participants to use language *purposefully* in a variety of situations and to accomplish a variety of tasks. As O'Neill and Lambert state, 'language is the cornerstone of the drama process' (1982: 18).

Process Drama: What and why?

Process Drama, a relatively new term in drama education (Haseman, 1991, O'Neill, 1995, O'Toole, 1992), has developed from the extended roleplay work of Heathcote (Wagner, 1976) and Bolton (1998). Process Dramas involve all the students all of the time, rather than being a learning experience where some students demonstrate, model or perform to others. They are collaboratively co-created texts, which draw on the lived experiences of the participants in the drama to add veracity to the dramatic text. In Process Dramas the participants are text-creators and not merely text-consumers.

Described as a negotiated and improvised form where an *external* audience is absent but an *internal* audience is essential (Bowell & Heap, 2001), the starting point for all Process Dramas is a 'pre-text', that is, a text that *precedes* the collaboratively developed dramatic text which comprises the drama. A pre-text may be a story, a newspaper article, a picture or image, an advertisement, the lyrics of a song, a piece of music, an object or artefact or combinations of any of the above. In short, a pre-text may be anything at all, but it must establish possibilities for the dramatic world to be encountered, developed and explored. A pre-text should contain a puzzlement or an enticement that challenges the participants to investigate the possibilities it offers. It provides a potential framing of the drama that will emerge as the participants work within the fictional context and suggest possibilities for

'who' the students will be, 'where' they might be, 'what' is happening and 'what is at stake' for the characters in the drama (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002).

Process Dramas are designed to offer opportunities for individual and groups to contribute to the dramatic action, to solve problems and to employ higher-order thinking processes. They do not lead to performances or presentations of the devised material to audiences who have remained outside the drama.

The Process Drama, itself, is a structured problem-solving experience where the students and the teacher operate in a state of metaxis (Boal, 1979; O'Toole, 1992), of 'knowing' in both the fictional and the real world. By agreeing to employ the conventions of drama (Neelands & Goode, 2000) students contract with the teacher/facilitator to explore the pre-text and the imaginary-world possibilities it offers by operating in role and through dramatic enactment. The drama contract offers both constraints and support to the students and teacher. It means that they must agree to take the 'pretending' seriously, but it also allows emotional distance for the participants ('this is happening to my character, not me'). While each Process Drama structure is carefully pre-planned, the co-created text offers many opportunities for negotiation and input by the participants. In essence, each drama is an ephemeral and unrepeatable event, the product of a collaborative meaning-making process through the medium of role.

Methodology

The project reported here took the form of a case study which investigated whether the use of drama as a learning process produces better, or different, results for students at the secondary level as compared with secondary students who did not engage in Process Drama. The project included the planning of dramas, the training of facilitators and the implementation of ten 1-hour lessons. Data were collected via pre-tests and post-tests for randomly selected students from the intervention and comparison groups (the same students were tested on both occasions); facilitators' journals; and interviews with facilitators, the students' regular English teachers, and additional randomly selected students.

Our research question considered whether working in role within a Process Drama framework would develop the participants' communicative skills. While we constructed dramas that allowed diverse opportunities for talk, we emphasized the heuristic, imaginative and informative functions (Halliday, 1978). Our major question, therefore, was: What is the impact, if

any, of a short series of drama lessons on the communication skills of participating students?

Participants

Four schools expressed interest in participating in the research, and each nominated one class of students. These became the intervention classes. Two of the schools also allowed us access to classes of students at the same level of schooling, which we used as a comparison group for pre- and post-testing. Each class had 40 students. The total number of participating students was 240, with 160 in the intervention classes and 80 in the comparison classes.

The research process was explained to all students and they were given the option of participating in the research. Teachers of the comparison classes agreed to continue their regular teaching programme throughout the ten weeks, including the oral communication component. They were adamant that drama was not part of their teaching repertoire. Comparison classes were not observed. Our facilitators worked with the intervention groups during their regular English classes. No additional time, beyond the regular school timetable, was allocated for the Process Drama lessons; they took place during the regular English class allocation. None of the students participating in the trial had prior experience in drama classes.

The lessons

Students in the experimental classes engaged in four Process Dramas. These were implemented through a series of ten pre-planned lessons. Some Process Dramas required two or more hours but each lesson was designed to last for one hour; therefore, some dramas extended over two or three lessons. This provided flexibility in the scheduling. There was some variety in the format of lessons dependent upon each school's particular timetabling constraints: some students had two lessons per week for five weeks, while others had one lesson per week for ten weeks. The four Process Dramas were:

- *The Missing Girl Drama* – The pre-text for this was a newspaper article reporting on the disappearance of a young girl who turned up safe and unharmed a few days later but refused, or was unable, to recount the

story of her disappearance. The students were enrolled as journalists who were set with the task of investigating the circumstances surrounding the girl's disappearance. During this drama they made lists of facts and inferences that could be drawn from the story, interviewed individuals who were familiar with the girl and her family, reported to the editor of the newspaper and re-enacted events prior to her disappearance.

- *The Journey to the Centre of the Earth Drama* – The inspiration for this came from computer games. In this case, as the pre-text, the students heard a garbled distress message left behind by a scientist who was gathering rock samples. On the tape, she asked to be rescued and the students entered into the contracted drama by agreeing to enrol as her colleagues, retrace her steps and discover what happened to her. In the process they discover a 'lost' society, the members of which are distrustful of 'outlanders', and must negotiate their colleague's release.

- *The Spy Drama* – Each student received a slip of paper which said, 'Sleeping Spy made active. Report for duty at _ hrs (the time of their drama lesson) to _ (the location of the lesson)'. When they arrived in class they were met by 'M' the head of the agency who told them they were called in to help their country. This drama drew on the canon of spy fiction. The students were asked to go undercover to a secret location and uncover the series of events that lead to the assassination of the chief minister of a remote country. They were charged with the task of discovering whether the politics of the country were stable or there was danger of a coup. The oral language demands included: collaboratively creating a 'back' story for their group, being 'interviewed' by immigration officials, interviewing the people who had been close to the assassinated minister, and reporting back to 'M' whenever called to do so.

- *The Legend of Bukit Merah Drama* – Based on a local myth familiar to the students, this drama attempted to shed new light on the human issues of trust, betrayal and power. The students operated in the 'blanket' role of villagers of Bukit Merah and created roles and relationships within that context. They participated in rituals which demonstrated their respect for the Sultan. The final lesson required them to create 'living displays' for a contemporary museum which was curating an exhibition of local legends.

While participating in these dramas the students worked in and out of role, in small and large groups, and collaborated to solve the tasks that were set. There was an insistence on the speaking of English at all times and groups were constructed and re-constructed regularly so that the participants were constantly working with new group members.

Facilitators

It is worth pointing out that the emphasis of this research was on the teaching of drama as an art form, and not solely for the purpose of developing the skills of oral communication. While activities which encouraged the students to initiate talk and construct a variety of verbal texts were included in the lessons, the focus was on the learning in drama and not the employment of drama strategies as 'tools' for language learning. Consequently facilitators were experienced teachers of drama (graduates of the NIE Advanced Post-graduate Diploma in Drama and Drama Education).

In mid-March 2004, the facilitators attended a week-long training programme to experience, critique and modify the planned lessons. From the week following the training programme onwards, each facilitator worked independently with an allocated experimental group throughout the data collection phase.

Language focus in the process dramas

One of the main aims of this project was to give students something to talk about and a safe physical, cognitive and emotional space to figure out the best way to express their ideas. As outlined above, the dramas were each different in content and purpose. Each drama was planned to be progressively longer than the last, and each was more challenging, in that they became more loosely structured and more reliant on student input, as the participants progressed through the lessons. However, all four dramas had a similar oral language focus. In all four dramas, students had to communicate orally in order for the drama to proceed.

In *The Missing Girl*, the first and shortest drama, students, in role as reporters, participated in interviewing (or 'hotseating') key characters to discover where 'Lucy Weng' had gone and why. Students in role as the key characters responded to questions from their peers in-role and on-the-spot. Further discussion and questioning attempted to fill out the mystery that surrounded the missing girl. This activity could not have succeeded if the students did not take the initiative to ask questions and provide answers, thus allowing the story to move forward. Owing to the fact that this was students' first contact with Process Drama, the structure of this lesson was carefully thought out to scaffold student input, in order to feed the mystery and flesh out the story. Even so, decisions about the actual reason for Lucy's disappearance and the events that she experienced were left in the hands of the students. In order to ease students into the often new experience of

talking in front of the class without prior preparation, the tasks started off simply and with little challenge, such as by the students, in role as reporters, being required to state their name (a character name) and the publication they worked for before they commenced asking questions. Other strategies and conventions selected were not overly challenging for beginning drama students.

In *The Journey to the Centre of the Earth* students had the opportunity to invent an entire race of people and provide details of the circumstances under which they lived. Instant, on-the-spot answers were sought from the students, making them think and respond quickly. These answers were then accepted and expanded on by the rest of the group. Students (in role again) collaboratively planned persuasive arguments which would entice the hidden community to release their colleague. They were required to describe life in the 'outland' in ways that showed neither they, nor the alternative world, were threatening.

The Spy Drama offered students increased language challenges. First, the students needed to collaboratively create back stories for their roles as undercover agents, and to talk their way through immigration in a remote country at a time of political unrest (the immigration officers – also students-in-role – did not make this an easy task). Throughout this drama, the 'agents' also were required to regularly report back to the teacher-in-role, as 'M', explaining their progress. For this task each 'agent' was required to provide one piece of information, making sure each student had the opportunity to talk.

In *The Legend of Bukit Merah* students were provided with the opportunity to talk and discuss in a much more unstructured way. Once again, students were not given time to prepare their discussions or answers to questions but needed to respond to, and with, other participants as the action was unfolding. As this was the last drama, participants were encouraged to take greater control of the dramatic action, and led much of their own whole-class-in-role discussions without facilitator input.

During the planning and implementation of the dramas the researchers and facilitators made sure certain elements were incorporated so that students got the most out of the experiences. These were

- Every student had to have at least one significant dialogue in every lesson. This allowed them to become accustomed to speaking in front of others, and encouraged them to be comfortable participating fully in the Process Dramas.

- Students were required to react and respond to questions or situations without any prior preparation (similar to the circumstances of the spoken English examination used in schools at the secondary level).
- Every drama incorporated group work, and students worked in diverse groups. This ensured they were not always collaborating with members of the same race or their usual friendship group and gave them opportunities to work with classmates with whom they would not normally work. The strategy of deliberate and regular shifting and moving of groups to enhance intercultural sensitivity is supported by Goldstein's (2003) findings.
- An 'English only' rule was imposed. This was quickly taken up by the students and those who slipped into Mother Tongue or slang, were brought back on task by a chorus of 'speak proper English' by their peers and grins all round.
- A range of different language registers and purposes were required by the communication contexts within the dramas. Students had the opportunity to be persuasive and evasive; to create their own narratives; to build on the narratives of others; to be angry, happy, sad and scared; to create and solve mysteries; and, hopefully, to have the opportunity to have fun and enjoy speaking in English.
- Reflection time was allocated at the end of each of the dramas. During this time the facilitators encouraged the students to vocalize how they felt about the work and what they had learned. A particular focus was on the different types of oral communication which they had had the opportunity to practice.

These elements ensured the focus of the lessons stayed on oral communication, but also worked towards building confidence and feelings of security within the group and to increase their skill and confidence in working within the art form of drama. These descriptions of the language demands can give only a hint of the dynamism and deep engagement of the students during the dramas. The first drama lasted only an hour but the final one lasted for more than three hours. Observation of these classes showed that students were committed, engaged and communicative throughout.

The oral tests

The majority of Secondary 4 students in Singapore sit for the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education examinations at either the

Ordinary or Normal level – the GCE 'O'/'N' levels. The English language and Mother Tongue examinations include an oral component. The standardized testing procedure used in the GCE 'N' level examination was used for the pre- and post-tests. This provided an opportunity to gather comparative data from a range of schools, using a familiar testing procedure. Although further investigation into the usefulness and validity of the examination as a measure of effective oral communication is warranted, this was not the project focus.

Pre- and post-speaking examinations were administered to 140 students who were chosen randomly, 70 each from both the intervention and comparison groups. The pre- and post-tests were held under conditions that modelled the GCE examination process closely: the same criteria were used and examiners were unfamiliar to students. Owing to the nature and focus of this research, the speaking assessment incorporated only the conversational component of the 'N' level exam. Students were assessed according to the criteria and rubrics set for the 'N' level oral examination marking scheme devised by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Students were able to achieve up to 3 marks each (a possible total of 15) for

- speaking clearly,
- using appropriate vocabulary and structures,
- offering ideas and opinions relevant to the topic,
- interacting effectively, and
- needing no, or little, prompting by the examiner.

Within the speaking assessment for this project, the conversational questions were drawn from a picture stimulus, with the examiner asking preliminary, non-assessed, descriptive and interpretative questions to orientate the student to the themes in the picture. The questions were based on audio examples of similar student examinations provided by the MOE. They were open-ended in nature, addressing issues of citizenship, morality, personal opinion and personal experience. Examiners were allowed to prompt students to develop their answers, using statements (e.g. 'Tell me about . . .') or 'wh' questions (who, what, when, where, why). Each oral assessment took approximately five minutes per student. While we have concerns about the criteria and implementation of this examination, we felt it necessary to apply the established MOE guidelines and processes since lessons were conducted as part of regular English language classes.

The English language syllabus in place at that time states that by the end of their secondary education, students will be able to 'speak, write and make

presentations in internationally acceptable English that is grammatical, fluent and appropriate for purpose, audience, context and culture' (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001: 3). Despite this statement, interviews with a number of teachers indicated that oral forms of communication are rarely explicitly taught, and emphasis in the classroom context is placed almost completely on written and visual texts. The expectation that students should communicate effectively in English, despite the apparent lack of direct teaching of oral communication skills or support materials in this area, is intriguing.

Results

The outcomes of the study produced quantitative data that concentrated on achievement in oral communication, as well as qualitative data that commented on improved teamwork, enjoyment and confidence.

Statistical analyses of students' results showed a reliable improvement in spoken English for students who participated in the drama intervention, while the students in the comparison groups – those who were taught as usual in their English classes – showed no change. (Details on the test scores can be found in Stinson & Freebody, 2006a).

A principal component analysis (PCA), used to reduce multidimensional data sets to lower dimensions for analysis, showed that the use of a composite score of all the tests was appropriate. The PCA solution indicates strong and consistent contributions from all variables (i.e. test scores) to the component. In other words, the individual measures are highly correlated. Thus, use of a composite score, based on the sum of unit values is clearly justified. Such composite scores were created and labelled pre-total and post-total.

Final single-component loadings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Component matrix

Variable	Component
Clarity	0.90
Vocabulary	0.86
Relevance	0.82
Interaction	0.87
Need for prompting	0.91

Table 2   Means and standard deviations for each individual measure

	Pre-test						Post-test					
	Comparison		Intervention		Total		Comparison		Intervention		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Clarity	0.97	0.67	1.21	0.91	1.09	0.81	1.00	0.59	1.56	0.75	1.30	0.73
Vocabulary	1.07	0.69	1.03	0.76	1.05	0.72	0.87	0.68	1.24	0.78	1.06	0.75
Relevance to topic	1.70	0.79	1.59	0.82	1.64	0.80	1.40	0.62	1.85	0.70	1.64	0.70
Interaction with examiner	1.33	0.80	1.50	0.93	1.42	0.87	1.30	0.65	1.71	0.72	1.52	0.71
Need for prompting	1.07	0.74	1.29	1.03	1.19	0.91	1.07	0.69	1.62	0.78	1.36	0.78
Total score	6.13	3.24	6.62	3.90	6.39	3.58	5.63	2.65	7.97	3.30	6.88	3.21

Table 3   ANOVA results for group on residualized post-test total scores

	Sums of squares	df	Mean squares	F	p
Between groups (effect)	64.992	1	64.992	17.11	<0.001
Within groups (error)	235.415	62	3.797	7	
Total	300.407	63			

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for all measures, including the composite score, on the pre- and post-tests for both the comparison and intervention groups. The data indicate that for the pre-test, the comparison and intervention groups had similar scores while for the post-test, the intervention group performed consistently better. In each of the tests the students were measured against the criteria of clarity, vocabulary, relevance to the topic, interaction with the examiner and the need for prompting.

There are two other important observations that can be made from the values in Table 2. First, the means for the comparison group show little difference from pre-test to post-test (i.e. very little change at all). Second, in contrast, the intervention group showed improvement on *all* oral assessment measures, not just in one particular area.

However, the critical test for the study is the test for differences on the post-test measures residualized on pre-test levels, as shown in Table 3.

There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.001$ level in the total composite score of the intervention group between pre-test and post-test ($F[1, 62] = 17.11$, $p < 0.001$). The effect of the Process Drama intervention on the total scores, controlled for different pre-test levels, was large with an eta-squared value of 0.216. The effect of the intervention on single measures was significant in all cases, while no group differences, or any

near-significant trends, were observed on the individual pre-test measures. That is, the groups were effectively comparable in performance on all measures including the composite total measure at the commencement of the program, and the intervention produced a substantial and highly reliable positive effect across the board.[3]

Drama and self-confidence

The notion of drama as a way to boost self-esteem, instil confidence, enthusiasm and motivation in students is shared by much of the literature in the field. Kao and O'Neill propose that confidence levels increase when students have something to talk about and, most importantly, when they know how to express their ideas (1998: 94). Improvement in the confidence to participate and communicate is supported during Process Dramas because the students are working in the 'safe space' of drama. Students, when working in role, become more comfortable with the taking of risks to participate and express ideas. The drama contract reinforces that they are working as an 'other' and not themselves. The role protects them and supports language decisions as they access their mental dictionaries, drawing on vocabulary that they do not use in general conversation. The incentive to uncover reasons and make decisions within the Process Drama further prompts examples of risk-taking in language situations. Additionally the participants are not put 'on show' via the task of performing to an audience. Instead their audience is themselves, and each other, as they collaborate to create the dramatic text from within the group. The teacher/facilitator too, is in role and operates as a collaborator and co-creator alongside the students. Such teacher-in-role activities allow the facilitator to model language usage and, in low-status roles, may even require language assistance from the students. This shifts the traditional position of teacher-as-authority within the class.

The use of Process Drama to enhance English skills, build confidence in students or address social issues is not something that is confined to Singapore. In Iran, there is evidence of the use of roleplay and Process Drama as a way of bringing girls 'out of their shell' (Al-Saadat & Afifi, 1997) the assumption being that if students enjoy the learning experience, they will become motivated, willing to participate, and will learn better. In Australia, Process Drama is being used to combat bullying in schools (O'Toole et al., 2005), and in New Zealand, to address issues of domestic violence, giving students opportunities to be pro-active, powerful and thoughtful while learning about social issues (O'Connor, 2000). These are only a few of the

many important projects alive in the world that address educational issues using Process Drama pedagogy. However there have been few studies that address the issue of language acquisition and improved oral communication. This study has directly addressed that question with students at the secondary level in Singapore. Other positive outcomes identified by facilitators, the regular English teachers of the intervention classes, and the students themselves in interviews and their journals were: increased confidence in English-speaking contexts and improved relations within the class. As one teacher said,

> I would recommend this programme to any school in Singapore. I could see how deeply the students were engaged in the activities and they were more talkative in my classes too. They got on better with each other, and came up with their own ideas.

Limitations

We are conscious of the limitations of such short-term interventions and hope to see opportunities for more in-depth, long-term, capacity-building research which would confirm or disconfirm these findings, and provide further information on ways in which Process Drama can enhance language learning, student confidence and relations among participants. In addition, questions about the extent to which the positive results demonstrated in this research rely on having teachers who are trained to teach using Process Drama, and how much training preparation is required for general English teachers to feel confident in this pedagogy must be addressed.

Liu (2002: 63–77) has identified a number of challenges for teachers who wish to use Process Drama in second language classrooms including teacher training, enjoyment and time. Few English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers are trained to teach using Process Drama and some may be challenged by the overturning of the traditional authority role of the teacher that is evident in the improvisatory drama classroom. More research is required into the amount and type of training which will be of most assistance to teachers in developing the pedagogical skills that teaching Process Drama requires. Process Drama is based in play and, while learning in drama can be serious, and seriously hard work, the playfulness of the drama event does not always give prominence to identification of the learning that is taking place. Some students may not value this way of working. It would be useful to undertake studies that assist students in identifying the learning that they are experiencing as part of the Process Drama event.

Finally, Process Drama can be time-consuming, both in planning and execution. Students, unfamiliar with working in this way, may need additional time to become familiar with the strategies used. In the Drama and Oral Language project an intriguing observation on time arose in several of the facilitators' journals and in one of the interviews with the observing teachers: after the sixth lesson (i.e. after six hours of Process Drama work), the students seemed to 'get the hang of' what they were being asked to do, and then became much more involved and efficient in their work. This too, is worthy of investigation.

Notes

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[2] Emphasis in original.

[3] The authors wish to thank Dr Liem Arief Darmanegara (CRPP) for assistance with explanation of the statistics.

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Chapter 10

A Profile of an Adolescent Reader in Singapore: The Literacy Repertoire in Third Space[1]

Wendy Bokhorst-Heng and Jeanne Wolf

Introduction

'Start!' It is 7:35 a.m., and a 20-minute period of Extensive Reading (ER) has begun on the outdoor concrete courtyard at a Singapore secondary school. Over 300 students in tidy blue and white school uniforms are sitting in neat rows, by class, with girls followed by boys. It is mostly quiet with everyone bent over their English books – although some are distracted by insects crawling across the pavement, and others flush as they wipe the sweat off their brows. 'Stop!' The commanding voice of the discipline master ends the reading period, and he makes his daily announcements.

Thirteen-year-old Wei Ling,[2] a Secondary 1 student, does not take part in the school's morning ER programme. As class marshal, she is instead stationed at the school gates as she does every morning to document latecomers. When the morning reading period and assembly are finished, she joins her classmates in their classroom.

Many days, Wei Ling takes the opportunity to catch some reading winks while waiting for her teacher to arrive; today, she is reading J. K. Rowley's latest Harry Potter book (which, incidentally, is not allowed in the ER programme's repertoire). When the teacher arrives, she calls upon different groups in the class to present their research projects on disability. Wei Ling appears attentive throughout, although the occasional distant gaze suggests some daydreaming.

At the end of the day, while waiting for her co-curricular activity to begin, Wei Ling continues reading her book in the school library. After Chinese Band practice, she joins some of her friends at a nearby McDonalds for a meal in air-conditioned comfort and to finish any homework they did not

complete at school. While chatting, she sends a text message, in abbreviated codes that only adolescents could understand, on her phone. Her friend has an English tabloid newspaper spread in front of them and they all laugh at one of the stories. When Wei Ling reaches home, her parents are still working, but her grandmother is home. She greets her grandmother in Hokkien as she heads to the shower. The TV is on – a Chinese drama – and there is a teen magazine, Lime, on the floor. After a shower and a two-hour nap, Wei Ling watches some TV while she eats her dinner. Today she is watching Channel 5, one of Singapore's popular English channels. Other days she watches Chinese language Channel 8. She then turns on her computer and begins to play Neopets, a web-based computer game. Quickly bored, she interrupts her game to engage in some lively Singlish (colloquial Singapore English) exchanges with her friends on MSN. She finishes her homework, and then reads for awhile before she falls asleep.

In this chapter, we flesh out this profile of one multilingual, adolescent reader. We position Wei Ling within her home–school nexus, in order to create a holistic sense of her reading practices and events both in and out of school, as well as to focus on her movement in and out of these domains. Following the work of Street (2000), we make a distinction between her reading *events* and reading *practices* – looking at the physical activity of reading and what she does with her reading, but also going further and asking questions about what reading *means* to her. Considering the ideological and socially situated meanings of literacy help make sense of the diverse but often conflicting reading experiences and beliefs of the various players involved in this adolescent's multiliterate life. We capture this in the distinction between the restrictive compartmentalized and linear literacy of the classroom and the more fluid interactive multiliteracies characteristic of our adolescent reader's out-of-school life.

Our exploration of *literacy* in a book about language acquisition emerges from the important link between literacy and language learning in the Singapore curriculum. This is evident in the following excerpts from the English Language Syllabus:

- Literacy development is the heart of an English Language instructional programme in school.
- An integrated approach to literacy development integrates reading, viewing and writing with oral communication.
- A balanced and integrated approach to language and literacy development is advocated. From the primary to the secondary levels, there will be many opportunities for listening, reading, viewing, speaking and

writing to help pupils become competent and critical listeners and readers, and confident and expressive speakers and writers of English. (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001: 7)

To understand Singaporean adolescent literacy and language learners, attention needs to be given to their multilingual language and literacy practices, which includes ER as well as multimodal and multiliterate spaces. At a minimum, there is an underlying assumption that broad exposure to comprehensible input through ER will help improve readers' English literacy and language skills (Jacobs et al., 1997). Important links also exist between the theoretical and empirical development of literacy and language, as reflected in research on multilingual multiliteracies (e.g. Martin-Jones & Bhatt, 1998), in work on the complementary processes of language and literacy acquisition (e.g. Snow (2001)), in the 'Continua of biliteracy' (Hornberger, 1989), and in notions of language through time and space that are shared by and lived out in a variety of ways by social groups (e.g. Gee (1996)). Thus, despite our micro focus, an important underlying assumption is that literacy development cannot be divorced from ongoing language development. In particular, we see parallels between the notions of multilingualism (and the need to resist diglossic notions of language use in multilingual settings such as Singapore) and multiliteracies, particularly in discussions of linguistic and literacy repertoires and Bakhtin's (1981) and Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity, which we locate within what Moje et al. (2004) and Leander and Sheehy (2004) call 'third space'. We conclude our chapter with a discussion of how these various concepts of literacy repertoires and third space raise new possibilities for understanding the development of lifelong reading habits in adolescents and how all this relates to their continued (bi)language development throughout adolescence.

Literacy events and literacy practices

Following the distinction established by Scribner and Cole (1981) and developed by Street (2000) and the New Literacy Studies (Barton et al., 2000), we employ the notions of 'literacy events' and 'literacy practices' in our study. The term *literacy events* is succinctly defined by Heath (1982a) (and adopted by Street) as 'any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes' (p. 93). They are the empirical, observable patterns of behaviour across events. *Literacy practices* position these events within a

larger social, cultural and ideological frame, and incorporate the relations of social power within which they are enacted. Literacy practices are thus about what literacy *means* in a particular social context, and the ideological underpinnings of such meanings. Moje (2000) puts it this way: literacy practices are the 'socially situated beliefs, values, and purposes that shape how and why people use literacy' (p. 655). These are socially constructed, placing individual behaviour within the broader social and cultural processes.

In this view (highlighted by Hornberger, 2000), bedtime story reading in the US middle class homes (Heath, 1982b) is a literacy event (a parent/caregiver and child at home reading a book together at bedtime), undergirded by/embedded in a set of literacy practices (story reading conventions, attitudes toward books and literacy, expectations about parent–child relationships, etc.). Thus, as we develop the profile of our adolescent reader, we are interested in not just what Wei Ling *does* with literacy – her SMSs, bloggings, reading, gaming and so forth – but also in what this means to her (and to many of her peers) as well as to her parents and teachers, and wider society. Such a view allows us to consider how the deeply held beliefs of various stakeholders impact the development of Wei Ling's literacy and language practices. It allows us to examine the areas of contradiction and tension that emerge, and to see how Wei Ling responds to these as she negotiates the multiple layers of literacy practices in her everyday life.

Methodology

Our profile of this adolescent reader emerged from a formative evaluation of an ER programme in a secondary school in Singapore (Wolf et al., 2007). ER programmes are characterized by students reading a large amount of material silently without interruption, mostly outside of the classroom and at their own pace and level, and for pleasure. Krashen (2004) makes the point that 'In-school free reading programs are effective for vocabulary development, grammar test performance, writing, and oral/aural language ability' (p. 3). Our case studies in the evaluation process were instrumental in helping us understand the broader socio-cultural contexts within which literacy and extensive reading occurs. We wanted to know the answers to the following questions:

● What is the nature and extent of Wei Ling's literacy events and practices? That is, how does she engage in literacy in her every day life – in school, at home, and out-of-school (organized out-of-school activities)? What

texts are involved? What languages are involved? What does literacy mean to her – how is it defined, articulated and practised?

- What are the 'conditions of learning' (Cambourne, 1991) within which Wei Ling's literacy practices and meanings are made?
- How does Wei Ling navigate between different literacy practices that emerge in different contexts and spaces?
- How do the attitudes, beliefs and habits that she, her parents and the school hold impede or promote her literacy habits and practices, and thus expand or narrow her opportunities for language development?

To answer these questions, we observed Wei Ling in her classroom, held both formal and informal interviews with her, asked her and her parents to complete a survey, interviewed her mother, gathered samples of her classroom work and extensive reading logs, interviewed her teacher and took photographs of school spaces (see Appendix A). We also asked Wei Ling to take photographs of what she read at home, and to complete a weekly journal over three distinct periods. These data, analysed through qualitative and quantitative techniques, and triangulated with additional programme evaluation data, provide a rich story of Wei Ling's literacy events and practices and signal important things about adolescent literacy and language development, and language and literacy pedagogy.

Because the case study was conducted as one part of a larger programme evaluation (Wolf et al., 2007), it is not as extensive as other seminal adolescent literacy case studies (see for example Heath, 1983; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Knobel, 1999). We were not able to follow our participant as she moved from home to peer group to school to other public spaces and to home again to observe the different ways that literacy shapes her life. Thus, our diverse data from multiple data sources – including direct observation, self reports, interviews and discussions – comes with unequal emphasis. In contrast, time spent in her classroom provided richer opportunities to explore secondary discourses and demonstrations of English language and literacy practices. Taking all of the data together, we are able to consider how these discourses operate, to what degree space was created for her out-of-school literacies in the classroom, and how this might relate to her use of language and her (bi)lingual language development. In the Singapore English language classroom there is a heavy emphasis on English literacy, reflected in the dominant discourse both in and out of school that reading and literacy development is to improve one's language/vocabulary skills. To see how this plays out in Wei Ling's world, we begin with a detailed profile of her literacy events and practices.

Wei Ling and her extra-scholastic reading habit:
An extended profile

Wei Ling is a Chinese girl with wired glasses, a tidy uniform, neatly tied back hair and a quick smile. She describes herself as a 'sunshine girl', although also admits (and her mother agrees) she has a 'fierce' temper and can be very loud. She says she is 'underweight, but no matter how much I eat, I just cannot seem to grow any fatter', and talks about how her six aunties and her parents keep 'stuffing' her with lots of food. As described by her mother, 'she is helpful. If in a good mood, will do anything. If bad mood then don't disturb' (Interview, 6 October 2005). Her manner is friendly, although somewhat reserved. She lives with her parents, grandmother and older sister in a five-room Housing Development Board (HDB)[3] flat. Her father is a life insurance agent and her mother a secretary in the same company, both working until about ten o'clock every night. The family rarely eats together, and Wei Ling usually eats her dinner alone while watching TV. The family does not seem to be particularly close. On describing her family's relationship, she said: 'Though there may be some quarrels [which we know from her mother, involves mostly Wei Ling and her father], we are and will always be a happy family' (School Journal, 17 February 2005). Her parents are generally supportive of her education, but have a very peripheral role in Wei Ling's life: 'I don't interfere . . . Just let her be . . . I don't pressure them. Other parents pressure them a lot' (Interview, 6 October 2005). She only wishes for her daughter to 'finish her study' and then after that, she can do 'what she likes' with her future. Wei Ling's parents both have GCE 'O' Level (Secondary 4) education; they speak mostly Mandarin and Hokkien at home.

In many ways, Wei Ling is a paradox. She comes across as shy, quiet and serious, and is very focused on her school work. She appears compliant in the classroom context and adept at 'doing school' (Freebody, 1992). Her co-curricular activities suggest traditional interests in Chinese orchestra and Chinese calligraphy. Yet her role in the orchestra is less common, drums. She is very relaxed and chatty in her SMS correspondence. She is flexible in her faith: in her school journal, she thanks 'God for letting [her] come into this school'. She continues, 'Although I am a Buddhist, I see no harm in believing in God too!' She is popular with her classmates and says that everyone is her friend. Her classmates see her as a leader, allowing her to take the lead in class presentations and group work. She is the class marshal (classroom discipline head) – a role for which she says her loud voice 'comes in handy when I need to ask the class to lower down their volume in

the absence of a teacher.' She herself notes the paradox: 'Some of my friends say I am very serious. As if! It is just that I am engrossed in doing something' (School journal, 2 March 2005).

Wei Ling loves reading. 'From small, she likes to read,' her mother says (Interview, 6 October 2005). 'In primary school, she always reads, like to borrow books. Read, read. Before sleep read books, then she sleep. That is her habit.' Wei Ling is wistful about her primary school days when she was 'more free' and could read more (Interview, 19 August 2005). It is inconse-quential to her that her marshal duties have taken her away from her ER reading, as 'I read at home anyway.' She rushes through her work in class so that she can read. When asked what her perfect day would entail, she said it would be spent reading. And if she had three wishes, one would be 'more books'. There are books in her home, in addition to English and Chinese magazines, comics and newspapers. Her mother purchased 'a lot of books' for her when she was young, frequently took her to the library, and enrolled her in a Montessori enrichment programme to encourage her reading habit. Wei Ling's mother reports that her parents were completely unin-volved in her literacy development; for her, teachers had the greatest impact. However, she chose to be very involved in Wei Ling's literacy devel-opment, as she strongly believes parents can have a very strong influence in fostering a reading habit. If a child cannot read, she says, it is because 'the parents, they don't read. They don't encourage the child to read. If they encourage, they will surely read . . . depends on the individual too, the chil-dren if they have the talent they like to read' (Interview, 6 October 2005). Her involvement has paid off in the sense that Wei Ling's earliest memory of reading is her mom reading with her: 'I was reading the book and she was helping me' (Interview, 21 April 2005). She regards her parents as hav-ing the greatest impact on the development of her reading: 'They read to me before going to bed. They encourage me to read.'

While Chinese is the language most frequently spoken at home, and while she enjoys watching Chinese serials on television and listening to Chinese pop music, literacy and reading is a predominantly English activity for Wei Ling. Apart from magazines related to her Chinese pop idols, she quite passionately 'hates reading Chinese books. I get really bored just look-ing at them. They are really boring and it is difficult to read. I think English books are more interesting' (Interview, 19 July 2005).

Preliminary data from an ongoing sociolinguistic survey (e.g. Aman & Bokhorst-Heng, 2006) of Singaporean children are beginning to show that Wei Ling is not alone: students' oral and aural skills in Chinese are much

higher than are their literacy skills, and they are much more involved in the oral/aural use of Chinese than they are in Chinese literacy. Data from the 2000 Singapore Census similarly shows that the literacy rate in English is increasingly higher than it is in Chinese, with the 2000 figures standing at 71% for English and 62% for Chinese among Secondary school students.[4]

Wei Ling uses the community library (she finds nothing appealing in her school library) regularly to borrow books, and often she purchases books. She also enjoys reading across text types, reading stories on the internet, blogs, chat room postings, SMS, reading newspapers, magazines and comics (the 'thick kind') (Interview, 21 April 2005). Information gleaned over the year indicates she reads across genres about famous people, adventure, autobiography, literary classics, food, humour, romance and teen issues. She captures this scope of reading in a series of photographs of her everyday reading events: 13 pictures of the computer screen; two of Archie comics, one of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and one of Katherine Roberts' *The Mausoleum Murder*; one of the English language *The Straits Times* newspaper; one Chinese assessment book and two Chinese books related to a popular Chinese show. Note that computers, comics, Harry Potter and Chinese books are all not allowed as part of ER, but nonetheless formed a significant part of her reading repertoire.

Her self-report data entered in her online reading log shows she read a total of 14 books and 29 newspaper articles over the course of four terms. Given her resistance to comply with the reading log requirements (see discussion below) we can assume that number might well be higher. She also noted that she keeps a lot of books at home and does most of this reading in her flat. By her own estimate, she spent a little over 27 hours over the four terms reading books that she enjoyed and that she ranked as predominantly 'good or great' books. In contrast, the only book that she ranked as difficult was *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

Yet, in spite of her avid reading, Wei Ling considers herself an 'average reader', which she measures by the number of books read and the words she knows. Her self-perception is confirmed by her score on a reading assessment test, in which she ranked in her school's fifty-eighth percentile. On a reading attitude survey administered at the beginning and end of the school year (see Appendix B), she consistently expressed very positive opinions about reading, including a 'strongly agree' response to the statement: 'In comparison to other activities, reading is more fun' and a 'strongly disagree' response to: 'I read because I have to.' In a parent attitude survey, her parents describe her as a 'good reader', and as one who enjoys reading.

And they also agree that reading will improve her reading proficiency and language ability. However, reading is a solitary activity for her – while her life is quite wrapped up with her friends, she is neutral to the statement 'I like to talk to my friends about what I read' and she 'disagrees' with the statement that 'I like to share with my family what I have read.'

In the section that follows, we discuss Wei Ling's literacy practices at school.

Wei Ling's class: Compartmentalized and linear literacy

Wei Ling attends a government-aided, Christian-oriented school, populated by students for whom English is not the predominant home language, and who mostly come from lower-middle to lower class homes. More than half of the parents report Secondary or Technical (Vocational) education as being their highest education level attained. Wei Ling is in the school's highest stream, the Express Stream.[5]

Wei Ling's English class is compliant and orderly. Upon the teacher's arrival, the students stand and greet their teacher, then independently take their books from their bags and classroom supply cupboard. The teacher assigns a task; the students work. When the teacher calls upon a student to give an answer, the student stands and responds. Whether they are presenting, working in groups, reading and writing independently, and whether the teacher uses class discussion, PowerPoint presentations, or 'lecture', students are mostly on task and compliant.

There is a notice board decorated by students with the name of their class and student names and birthdays. Beside the notice board were lists related to ER management, a book exchange schedule and a student recommendations book list. And on the white board is a permanent space for task management reminders. The classroom is arranged along traditional lines: the teacher's desk at the front in one of the corners by the white board, and students' desks arranged in four parallel rows of desk pairs. Other than textbooks in the cupboard, there are no books in the room.

There are a number of themes which emerge in subsequent discussions. These include, among others, 'doing school' and more, a passion for reading, developing a literacy repertoire and the cross pollination, or lack of any of these, across her home–school and school–home literacy practices. An important broad theme that emerges is that of restrictive compartmentalized and linear literacy – a literacy that gestures towards growth/ developmental and even social/critical approaches (see discussion of

Lo Bianco & Freebody below) but yet struggles against the ordered literacy of a Singapore outcome-oriented school practice, and against everyday classroom values. In the following sequence, we consider this struggle and how pedagogy relates to our adolescent's literacy practices.

As a way to frame our discussion about Wei Ling's classroom literacy practices, it is useful to think of Peter Freebody's (Lo Bianco & Freebody, 2001; Freebody, 1992) four key categories of language and literacy education: (1) skills; (2) growth/developmental; (3) cultural heritage; and (4) social-critical approaches to language education. A *skills* approach emphasizes the perceptual and technical procedures of decoding and encoding in reading and writing. Krashen (2004) notes the benefits of ER for the development of reading skills, which has been especially taken on board by Wei Ling's school's literacy discourses in ER:

> When children read for pleasure, when they get 'hooked on books,' they acquire, involuntarily and without conscious effort, nearly all of the so-called language skills that many people are so concerned about: They will become adequate readers, acquire a large vocabulary, develop the ability to understand and use complex grammatical constructions, develop a good writing style, and become good (but not necessarily perfect) spellers. (p. 149)

Growth and *heritage* approaches emphasize the private, personal and individual ways in which people use reading and writing, as well as the ways they grow in that process, and the access that reading and writing gives to the valued literary heritage of a culture. *Critical* cultural approaches emphasize the ways in which texts and literacy events are cultural products; they emphasize the variability of everyday literacy practices across cultures and situations, and the importance of a critical approach to literacy in terms of the belief systems, ideologies and cultural consequences within which literacy events and practices are embedded.

All of these four categories are evident in Singapore's English Language Syllabus (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001), within which literacy education is embedded. The syllabus makes curricular and pedagogical space for expanded notions of literacy. There is a strong focus on critical thinking, multiliteracies, learner-centred pedagogy and learning, integrated and contextualized learning, and the notion of lifelong learners (which we would interpret also to include lifelong readers). However, in the following snapshots of Wei Ling's classroom literacy events and

practices, 'doing school' is more often prioritized. This is characterized by a focus on time management over process, test taking skills, the completion of pro-forma worksheets, and it ultimately contributes to a view of restrictive compartmentalized and linear literacy. Our focus here is not so much on the teacher's pedagogical practices per se, but on what this pedagogy does for the social construction of the discourses of literacy in Wei Ling's classroom.

During the second half of the school year (25 August 2005), a worksheet based on the novel, *Friedrich*, was passed out. Each question was presented in differently designed bubbles and graphics, with a specific time allotment to complete the worksheet. No source was given. The worksheet required comprehension, invited interpretation, asked students to consider their emotions and opinions, and drew upon different genres and text types. Madam Hasna reminded students throughout the period that this was meant to be an interactive exercise, involving all members of the group:

> Madam Hasna: *This being group work, there is no such thing as, you do this question I do that question. I don't want you to speed up the work that way. Everyone has a say. Come up with the best answer and then fill in. You discuss as a group and then come up with a common answer, then fill it in. Okay begin now.*

Teacher comes to Wei Ling's group and reminds them that everyone should have a chance to speak; 'you need to take turns.'

Throughout the period, students in groups of four to five were actively discussing, laughing and interaction with the texts as they moved between worksheet and text. They often spoke in and out of Chinese and Singlish as they discussed, and then used Standard English as they documented their answers – although the teacher has been heard on other occasions during English lessons to reprimand them for their use of Chinese.

However, often the constraints of 'doing school' impinge on the full potential of such engaged learning, with an ultimate effect of disengaged and restricted literacy. Consider, for example, the heavy emphasis on time in the lesson.

Classroom observation

25 August 2005

> Madam Hasna: *Today we do an activity that covers the whole text. There is a worksheet with several tasks for you to complete as a group. There will be time given to you to complete the particular activities. You need to stick to the time given. If you*

can do faster than the time given, then you move on to the next. If you find an activity too difficult, then you leave it and you go on to the next . . .

Don't start until everyone has been given their worksheets.

In the segment cited above, the teacher places clear emphasis on the time parameters of each question, and insists everyone start together. In about five-minute intervals, the teacher reminds the class how much time they have left to complete the worksheet. The time allotted for each question on the worksheet prioritizes test taking skills over opportunities for every voice to be heard and over processes of meaning making. Over time, in Wei Ling's group, discussion diminished, students became progressively more silent and more focused on individually completing their worksheets. Wei Ling's group got the message – completing the answers in the required time period, a vital test taking skill, was a priority.

In other lessons observed, we found considerable attention given to detailed procedural information. In a surprise in-class open book exam (1 April 2005) Madam Hasna flags the schema components of the essay, indicating expected length and the correct use of paragraphs: 'I don't want to see whole chunks. I must see paragraphs . . . A paragraph represents a new point.' Worksheets were a common feature in her classes, usually decontextualized, unreferenced, poorly photocopied and pro-forma based, involving tasks such as cloze exercises for verb conjugation, correction-of-errors worksheets, synonym fill-in-the-blank exercises, and so forth, with lists of unrelated and context-free sentences or meaningless paragraphs. When context was given, it often was meaningless to an adolescent reader, such as one in Wei Ling's English Language Portfolio on the care and maintenance of air conditioners as a way to demonstrate the use of the passive voice. Knobel sees the rafts of such pro-forma and grammar worksheets as a shortcut to ensure exam success and a licence for 'transmission or banking approaches to education' (1999: 190). In such a context, literacy learning is defined by 'doing school', or mere code-breaking. Madam Hasna certainly exercised pedagogical practices associated with a wider range of literacy practices in her classes; however, the school's worksheet quota[6] placed clear constraints on any possibilities for engaging critical and socially embedded literacy practices, and often kept literacy practices at the level of 'doing school' in Wei Ling's literate school world.

For Madam Hasna, there was also a tension around what constituted legitimate reading, and how it related to learning. In one of the classes observed (12 August 2005), she had made a schedule change, switching the

English Language and English Literature periods. Although informed of this, many students forgot to bring their English Literature textbooks, forcing her to make an uncertain decision.

12 August 2005

Madam Hasna: *I am going to write the question on the board. You are going to hand it in to me on Monday.*

. . .

If you did not bring your book, it is impossible for you to do here. If you want to do homework, that is up to you . . . If you don't have the book, you cannot do. So what I want you to do, just continue with your [ER] *reading today and to record in your reading activities book.*

. . .

If you have your book with you, you can start the assignment. There are only two things you can do: the essay if you have the book; number 2, you can read. I don't want to see anything else.

This unusual permission to 'just read' during curriculum time clearly made Madam Hasna uncomfortable, as free reading was not considered work and thus not considered learning. This was hinted at when, once the students were settled, she came up to the researcher and said, 'I don't know if I should give them any work or not.' While Madam Hasna may have been uncertain, incidents like this were interpreted by Wei Ling as indicative of Madam Hasna's support for reading. When asked if her teacher ever encourages her or the class to read, she replied: 'Yes. She, when she has, when we have nothing to do or finish our work early, she asks us to read a story book' (Interview, 4 November 2005).

'Doing school' and institutional expectations of legitimate learning within the context of ER also played a power role in shaping school literacy discourses. This was particularly evident in discussions with Madam Hasna about the school ER programme, and her views of its purposes and perceived success (Interview, 18 March 2005). On the one hand, she expressed a strong commitment to developing the 'reading habit' in her students and saw ER as one way to achieve that goal; on the other, her discourse was often dominated by a strong outcome-based orientation and a niggling need to monitor and quantify reading. She was quite positive about the effects of the ER programme: compared to previous years, students appeared to enjoy reading when they could choose their own books, and students could be seen to read in various places in the school during recess.

Madam Hasna: *I find that as long as they read I am happy. It has to start somewhere. If we have to force it down their throat, they won't like it. I'm not particular with what they read. They will get tired of a particular type of book. Right now they read Sweet Valley; and they read book after book after book. They will get sick of it. But they will have inculcated the habit and that is what we want to see.*

However, at other points in our discussions with her, she was clear that 'as long as they read' and what constituted legitimate reading had specific boundaries. *Sweet Valley*, was not desired, but tolerable. Unmonitored reading was suspect (Interview, 18 March 2005):

the monitoring part sort of bothers me. If they are all reading the same book [as had been the school's previous practice], *it is easier to track and we can discuss the book with them.* [Now they are] *all reading different books. So a bit hard. I may not have read the book, so I don't know if it is the truth or not. They could bluff . . .*

I would be happier if they had the end-of-book tests that we had last year. Then we would know if they are reading or not.

And school-sanctioned books were preferred over student-selected purchased books:

We have a lot of books in the library. Not being utilized at all. I would rather students borrow books from our library instead of buying. We have so many books I am sure we have at least one that would appeal to them.

Comics, like the thick ones that Wei Ling and many of her peers enjoy reading, are seen as just for the lowest-streamed students:

We are told they are not to read comics. But last year we bought Archie comics for the normal tech. and I still have them. But only for the normal tech because they don't like to read lots of words.

And, as we will discuss in greater detail below, computer-mediated literacy is also outside of and in competition with extensive reading:

It is crowded right now [in the library] *because they are using the computer. You don't see them taking out books and reading.*

On the face of it, Wei Ling's literacy practices and the language learning opportunities often seem supported by the school; but in reality, they

diverge from school-sanctioned practices. Notably, Wei Ling is not compliant in logging her reading activity in the required online ER monitoring system. She is adamant that the process of logging one's reading undermines what to her is the value and purpose of reading: 'They shouldn't ask us to log in – it is a pain. You should be reading because it is on your own will, not because the school wants you to. Then I don't see the purposes of reading' (Interview, 19 August 2005). In fact, her main focus in the logs appeared to be just recording quantity, which would be needed for her ER assessment grade. She sources her books primarily from the community library, friends and purchases, not the school library. She (like most students in the school) avidly reads comics. Computer-mediated literacies play a key role in her life. While this lack of engagement in the ER monitoring process (along with many classmates) and such divergences from school practices is open to interpretation, it is clear that Wei Ling pushes boundaries and makes spaces for voices from different discourse communities in her everyday world. She expands the possibilities of literacy and language learning in these very diverse and interactive spaces.

Purposes of reading and literacy: 'Doing school' and more

Wei Ling, like all students in Singapore, is expected to operate within ubiquitous presence of 'the exam' and its life-path consequences, or as Cheah and Ng (1998) put it, within a high-stakes 'examination culture'. The dominant classroom literacy practices were often linked with a limited means-ends rationalization for the content of the lessons we observed. More specifically, it was 'the exam' that framed the learning objectives. A daily reminder of the exam is in the title of Wei Ling's English Language textbook: *English Expressions. Secondary One (S/E and N/A). Leading up to GCE 'N' and 'O' level exams* (Davis & Tup, 2002). And as one enters the school foyer, the reminder is unambiguous: a large sign counts down the number of days remaining until the exam.

Wei Ling was reminded of how 'the exam' also structures life pathways by her teacher's response to her youthful whimsical dreams. 'Honestly', she writes in her school journal (term 2, week 1), 'I change my ambition almost once every year. So I end up having a number of ambitions.' Her list included doctor ('so I can save lives and help others'), social worker ('help others and meet people from all walks of life'), teacher (to share knowledge, and 'help my pupils to grow up and also perhaps prevent them from learning bad habits and behaviour'), renowned lawyer (but only help 'those who are innocent'). And if she can't be a lawyer, then a judge ('fair and with

integrity'), historian ('to find out how people in the past work, live and survive . . . to find out other unknown secrets of this world'), and inventor (invent a 'machine that allows time travel'). She concludes by writing: 'As you can see, my ambition is undecided here . . . I hope that by the end of my secondary school years, I would be able to decide on the career I really want to be . . . .' To this, her teacher responds: 'It's quite common to change your ambition, but you should not wait till the end of sec school to decide. By next year, you should have a better idea *because of streaming*' (Emphasis added).

Wei Ling's response to the ubiquitous exam culture is powerfully articulated in two very different genres, directed at two different audiences: the first, an entry in her English class journal where the intended audience is her teacher; and the second, her blog in which she writes to vent with her friends.

School journal

29 June 2005

Honestly, my results were not satisfactory (is this how you spell it?) to me. I scored very low marks for almost every exam! ☹ But I blame nobody as I know that I have not done my best in preparing for the examination. It was mostly last-minute revision. Well, of course I was disappointed. But there is no point crying over spilt milk. What I can do is to work harder and get better results for the next examination.

From this examination, I realised something. I realised that Secondary school life is very different from Primary School life. (obviously) I could no longer slack like what I used to do when I was in Primary School. (Well I am pretty sure I won't slack now!) There is also another huge difference. I USED to have tuition starting from K1 all the way to Primary 6. So when I was in Primary School, I did not pay much attention to my teachers. I could afford to do so as I knew that if I did not understand some things, my tuition teachers were there to help me. But now, I regret depending on tuition so much.

Maybe it's due to my habits when I was in primary school that I hardly paid attention in some of my classes like Maths. History. Well this you can't really blame me as I don't really think that these classes are interesting in any way. (I don't mean any offence to the teachers. Anw [sic] I only pay attention to teachers who make the lesson interesting.) So obviously, I lost my interest in these subjects and thus did not study well for them.

I am not blaming the teachers. To improve my results, I think that I should (would) pay MORE attention in class. And also copy down notes for easy revision. I would consider buying assesstment [sic] books to do anyway.

Teacher response: *Yes. Work hard. Plan a study schedule.*

In this excerpt, her discourse is the language of 'doing school'. She identifies her 'Primary School habits' as the problem: (a) her tendency to 'slack off' (b) her former reliance on extra-curricular tuition; and (c) her lack of commitment to classes that didn't interest her. Her solution is to 'work harder', to 'pay more attention', to 'copy notes for revision', and to 'buy assesstment [sic] books' – to which the teacher responds: 'Yes. Work hard. Plan a study schedule.' Effective learning does not require engagement; rather, it is defined narrowly in terms of 'doing school', hard work, and assessment preparations.

In her blog, Wei Ling vents about the 'the exam' as well. As in her school journal, she expresses disappointment with her results, berating herself for 'slacking off'. In her school journal she attributes this to her 'primary school habits'. However, while she notes in her blog that she should be 'working harder', her focus is on how 'the exam' and the structured demands of doing school are affecting her relationship with her friends (30 September 2005) and how they are changing who she is (6 September 2005).

Blog, 30 September 2005

never felt this way before . . . never felt so stressed up before . . . not even when it was PSLE . . . i don't know why i am taking this exam so seriously . . . i really do not know . . . spending more and more time in the library on studying than with my friends . . . i am really goin very crazee . . .

Blog, 6 September 2005

Honestly, i have been rather disappointed with my results since term 1 . . . but did i do anything to improve it?? no . . . is my answer . . . instead of working harder, i slacked . . . something is very wrong with me . . . but i can't help it . . . i don't know what's wrong with me . . . i don't seem to know myself at all now . . . 'i don't even know why i do the things i do' it's not right . . . everything seems wrong . . . everything IS wrong . . .

. . . i want te once again me back . . . i want my primary school self back . . . but is it possible?? i really don't like the kind of life i am living now . . .

life in secondary school is all fixed . . . i go through the same things every week . . . going the same places and even sometimes say the same thing . . . . what's my spastic problem?? . . . i don't know . . . and i will never know . . .

This everyday stressful life is the context within which her school literacy practices are enacted. It is seen in the worksheet, in the rigidity of time, in the emphasis on pro-forma, on the compliance of students to 'doing school' and in the overall effect of restricted and compartmentalized literacy within an imposed monolingual environment. And, as we already have seen hints of and will see more of, it stands in contrast to how Wei Ling defines the purposes of reading in her life, the worlds reading opens up for her, her multilingual linguistic repertoire, her life goals and the fluidity of multiliteracies in her out-of-school world. And, as we will discuss next, it is precisely in expanding the notion of reading, and removing herself from this dominant discourse, that Wei Ling creates extra-scholastic space within which to enact her own literacy practices. There is still the aura of compliance, of 'doing school'. Like her peers, she often associates language and literacy learning with instrumental goals or teacher purposes and ventriloquizes the dominant discourse that one reads to 'improve their vocabulary'. But at the same time, she goes beyond the discourse to suggest a much more multifarious understanding of reading and literacy.

For instance, while Wei Ling cannot participate in the school's morning ER assembly by reading, she can create her own literacy spaces during school time. The frequent moments of 'empty time' in the classroom are particularly taken as reading opportunities by Wei Ling. Empty time was generated by the frequent interruptions from non-curricular duties (like collecting fund-raising money from students, collecting consent forms for upcoming activities), by the teacher being called away to speak with the discipline master, and so on. In one class observed, Madam Hasna took about ten minutes to introduce the lesson; the rest of the period she spent collecting money from students while they independently completed their assigned task. Many students finished before the period was over, and began chatting with each other, passing notes, daydreaming and tidying up their desks. For Wei Ling, this was an opportunity to read. Another example is in the class mentioned earlier, where students who did not bring their textbooks were given the opportunity to read, Wei Ling chose to read in class and to do the assigned essay later as homework, even though she did have her textbook with her and could have completed the assignment during class time.

For Wei Ling, the purposes of reading are reading for pleasure, 'doing school' and beyond.

Interview, at McDonalds

21 April 2005, 15:00

Interviewer: *What do you see is the main purpose of reading?*

Wei Ling: *To get more vocabulary, it is nice reading books. You're in another world. Read for fun* (she smiles)

Interviewer: *What else? Why else do you read? Some say you need to read and write for communication. Do you?*

Wei Ling: *No*

As signalled in this exchange, she dutifully reads to 'get more vocabulary'. She is unsure, but thinks the purpose of ER relates to language development, or in her words, 'to improve our English maybe' (Interview, 19 August 2005). And, she says, if 'you don't read well, you wouldn't be able to get a really good job . . . You have to read in order to get somewhere.' Yet, she extends the purposes of reading to a broader sense of enjoyment and leisure. As we have already seen, the reading habit is a cornerstone of her life. A perfect day to her would include reading; if she had only three wishes, one of them would be 'more books'; she would never quit a book, even if it were boring or too difficult; she relies on reading to help shape her opinions about things (Interview, 19 August 2005). She interprets 'book worm' as a positive identity; because life would be 'boring' if she could not read (Interview, 21 April 2005). As noted in the interview above, and again in her school journal (17 February 2005), there is also a sense of escapism because 'you're in another world.' When she reads, she says, 'I learn more about other things, and then I forget all my worries' (Interview, 21 April 2005). Her passionate discussion in her school journal about Harry Potter portrays this sheer enjoyment.

School journal

Term 3, Week 7, 5 August 2005

For many years, I have been an avid fan of Harry Potter. I have read all the books and watched all the movies of Harry Potter . . .

Most of my friends do not know or understand what is so nice about Harry Potter. It is simply amazing! J. K. Rowling has the ability to write so well that I could even imagine the scenes without seeing the movie! It's just so fantastic! Sometimes, I even fantasise myself as one of the main characters, Harry, Ron or Hermoine. It just seems so realistic!

Ever since I started reading the books, I have been wondering what it would be like if I was living in the wizarding world. Everything would be so easy. Imagine having a pen that would write all the correct answers. Imagine having an eraser that would erase anything and everything!

Though I know that it would be great, It will also be dangerous. And it also will not come true. Honestly, I do not really like watching the movie as it is very different from the book.

To sum it all up, Harry Potter books are the best books ever!

She has read all six books in the series, and is re-reading them, working her way backwards. She describes *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* as 'thrilling, worth reading and rereading' in her online log. She was upset by what she regarded as the movie's misrepresentation of the book: 'they cut out important things and they changed the story' (Interview, 4 November 2005), and described herself as 'angry' and being 'cheated'.

While complying with the dominant discourse, Wei Ling also expands the meanings and practices of literacy in her life. There is no hesitancy, no ventriloquizing, in her discourse; she owns it and lives it. Outside of the curriculum vision, we could find nothing about school that facilitated the expanded meanings and practices of Wei Ling's literacy, apart from Madam Hasna's suggestion to read during 'in-class empty time'. Rather, using her mother's words cited earlier, the development and practice of Wei Ling's reading habit is her own doing: 'It is herself.'

Computers, internet and all that . . .

Because of the dominance of information technology (IT) in Wei Ling's life, special discussion of this topic is warranted – particularly with respect to Wei Ling's diverse and multiliterate practices. Madam Hasna was very cognisant of the fact that magazines, comics, television and computer gaming and MSN chatting dominate today's adolescent literate world. However, she saw such literacy practices as *competing* with students' home and schools' classroom literacy practices: 'My impression is that they don't read a lot;

they are more into computer games. That sort of thing . . . There are lots more distractions. The computer is one' (Interview, 18 March 2005). In this 'displacement hypothesis' (Luke, 2002) – a common theme also in other countries (e.g. Millard, 1997) – TV, computer games and other media preoccupations are seen to take time away from study.[7] The result of this view is that the complex multiliterate lives of students typically do not appear in the classroom, school and even more, are restricted and invalidated.

A glimpse at Wei Ling's multiliterate life demonstrates an *expanded* notion of literacy, and one that *facilitates* reading and literacy rather than displaces it. She introduces herself in a school assignment (3 February 2005) as 'Wei Ling, the computer nut' in the journal entry discussed in the following section.

Journal entry: My Computer

Term 1, Week 5

I would like to introduce my computer. It is a Pentium 4 Compaq computer. It may be unimportant to you but it definetly makes a difference in my life.

Firstly, when I need to do some research, I just click the internet and type in a few words and I would be able to find all the information I want and require. It makes work easier for me.

Secondly, when I need to type out things, having a computer at home really makes it more convenient. It is much easier to type it out than to copy it down. It is also much neater and faster.

And not forgetting the games that we can play on the net (I seldom play now). It serves as a form of entertainment for us.

I normally use the computer of another reason. To go online at MSN. At the same time when my computer was spoilt, my phone bills became so high. So, being on the MSN helps to communicate with others in a very fast manner.

Now the computer has become part of my life. I wonder if I can live without it.

The computer makes information readily accessible: 'I am too lazy to go to the library,' she notes in an interview (19 August 2005); 'The internet is

more convenient.' She perceives the computer as efficient, entertaining and 'neat'. Some of her comments suggest a high level of proficiency of her computer skills and her expectations. She has an email address which she only uses for MSN – email is 'too much of a hassle' and 'too slow'. And gaming bores her: 'I hardly play. Nothing to play, and boring. When you play a lot of times, then boring' (Interview, 19 August 2005). Wei Ling also frequently accesses websites where people submit their stories and then invite readers to send in their comments (e.g. http://www.winglin.net/fanfic).

Overwhelmingly, Wei Ling's time spent on the computer involves communicating with friends. She easily spends an average of two hours a day chatting on MSN, and often in the later part of the evening. Sometimes she will get back on after 2:00 a.m. and write some more. Her parents know, she says, 'but they don't care. They ask me to sleep, but I don't do it too late.' She also spends much of her online time going into her friends' blog sites – she herself has one as well which she uses to 'let others know how I feel about something. Sometimes I am a bit angry and then I vent my anger' (Interview, 4 November 2005). Her blog is a site for her to write about the stresses of school, disparage herself for quarrelling with her friends, despair at how she is becoming a changed person, worry about her crush on a boy, and vent about her aunts, her teacher and her temper. Curiously, when asked what her everyday reading are and writing practices, Wei Ling does not mention any form of computer-mediated literacy. Perhaps it is because she has bought into the dominant Bound-Ordered-Organized-Knowledge (BOOK)[8] form of literacy legitimized in the school. Perhaps it is because of the dominance of oral speech characteristics of much online literacy practices, which she hesitates to deem as literacy.

In contrast, in many of the English language and literature classes that we observed, IT was typically used in ways that mimic the skills used in more 'traditional' literacy practices. An example is when Madam Hasna tells students to type only their final drafts of their composition and project work; earlier drafts are to be submitted in handwritten form – including the composition of a web-page (English Language Portfolio, 1 April 2005). And web-based research assignments typically included a list of websites from which information was to be derived. For example, in one lesson observed (14 April 2005), the teacher encouraged web research in an assignment on heroes, yet contained students' independent research by mandating acceptable websites. Such prescription also mimics the 'search and find' skills required in textbook-based comprehension exercises, and lends itself to

unquestioned acceptance of information. This is evident in Wei Ling's approach to internet research (Interview, 26 August 2005):

Wei Ling: *I read it, and then if I find it easy to understand then, then I use the info . . .*

Interviewer: *Do you cross check the information or check their sources?*

Wei Ling: *No. Usually I just use the first one I read.*

Clearly, she has not been challenged to use skills envisioned in the English language curriculum guide such as independent lifelong learning, creative thinking, and learning how to evaluate language and the media (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001).

In the next section, we further discuss the implications of what we have learned for the nurturing of the adolescent reading habit, an important literacy development or 'the heart of an English language instructional programme in school' (Curriculum Planning and Development Division, 2001: 7).

Discussion: Literacy repertoires and hybridity in third space

What we see in Wei Ling's literate world concurs with what has been well-documented by others. Numerous leaders in the field of literacy (O'Brien et al., 2001; Payne-Bourcy & Chandler-Olcott, 2003) argue that adolescents use multiple literacy practices, events and texts – and languages (Martin-Jones & Bhatt, 1998) – in their lives beyond those traditionally valued in school. While we are persuaded by Bhabha's (1994) and Moje et al.'s (2004) work on 'third space' to resist binary representations of in and out of school literacies, we found that Wei Ling's 'reading habit' operates very much outside of the school discourses, even while she reads at school, and that the school's principle reading programme has had little impact on her literacy practices. This was evident in Wei Ling's response to our question about the relevance of school learning for her everyday life 'I think so. Supposed to.' Furthermore, we found that there was a very strong distinction between what we call the *compartmentalized and linear literacy* of the classroom, and the more fluid *interactive multiliteracies* of her everyday language and literacy practices and the vision of the English language syllabus. In the former, the sequential ordering of BOOK frames

literacy pedagogy and thus informs 'legitimate' literacy. It is also linguistically compartmentalized, with only English to be used in the English classroom, and only English texts allowed as part of ER. In the latter, multiple literacy strategies are simultaneously interacting with each other in any given literacy event, where languages merge, and where the convergence of literacy and speech often dominates her multilingual, multiliterate worlds.

But what is of particular interest is how Wei Ling transcends these two seemingly disparate worlds, and what that process can tell us more broadly about the development of a lifelong reader and language learner. While we do not have sufficient data to fully tease out all the nuances of movement in and out of her multiliteracies, the data do suggest ways to think about adolescent literacy practices, the development of a lifelong reading habit, and the related impact of reading in continued language development. To explore these issues, we draw loosely from the sociolinguistic notions of *linguistic repertoire* and *hybridity* and apply them to a discussion of literacy – particularly the notion of *third space.*

Literacy repertoires

Broadly speaking, a person's linguistic repertoire is the set of linguistic codes that he or she uses. Two important considerations emerge. One involves the issue of competence, or proficiency, in the event of use languages within one's repertoire. As noted by Schiffman (1996), an individual's repertoire will be often gradient, scaled from low to high proficiency, and one's ability to code-switch will be contingent both on their linguistic and communicative competence. The second consideration, and consistent with notions of literacy practices, is the socio-cultural meanings associated with languages and language choice (Gal, 1978; Heller, 1992; Woolard, 1992). It is in this sense that Gal (1978) defines 'linguistic repertoires' as 'co-varying linguistic variables which have their own appropriate uses and connotations' (p. 3), and their own ideologies/discourses of which the speaker may or may not be consciously aware. Thus, she argues, a 'speaker's choice of code in a particular situation is part of that speaker's linguistic presentation of self' (pp. 2–3). Speakers' code-switching between the different codes and languages in their repertoire is thus not just an act of proficiency and contextual appropriateness; but an 'act of identity' (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

When we apply the notion of linguistic repertoires to Wei Ling, her multilingual multiliteracies are captured within her repertoire – with varying degrees of proficiency, and embedded in different socio-culturally

embedded meanings. Which particular form of literacy she chooses to engage in thus has significance: when she chooses to read a non-school sanctioned Harry Potter novel in her ER classroom, when she opts to read instead of do homework during class time, or when she positions herself differently on her blog than she does in her school journal and reading log. Applying Gal's view of repertoire, Wei Ling's boredom with and dismissal of Chinese literature presents a view of herself as a sophisticated (i.e. English) reader, one who has mastered, in her view, the more complex forms of literature found in English.

Hybridity and third space

But what takes us even further in thinking about Wei Ling's multiliteracies and the ways in which she negotiates these literacies is the notion of *third space*, defined by Moje et al. (2004: 45–46) as follows: as *bridge building* between marginalized and conventional knowledges and discourses; as '*navigational*' spaces enabling students to bring 'funds of knowledge' (Moll et al., 1992) from home to bear on school learning; and as a place where the integration *of knowledge and discourses* from home and school will produce new forms of learning. As noted by Pahl and Kelly (2005), the concept of third space takes us away from a view of 'situated literacies' whereby literacy is linked to a particular domain. It offers a way to 'open out these domains to see what movement can be discerned across these material sites, thus dissolving the notion of literacies as "situated"' (Pahl & Kelly, 2005: 92). This is not to say literacy practices are not located within the social circumstances within which they emerge; rather, it is to highlight that they are not domain specific, nor determined solely by their domain locality. We can think, therefore, of the notion of 'third space' inhabiting the literacy repertoire of all readers.

The notion of 'third space' thus adds a malleable component to Wei Ling's literate world, one that transcends unnatural boundaries. As she code-switches within her literacy repertoire, for example, she creates a new and third space within which meaning is created. While participating in the discourses of 'doing school' in an outcome-driven and assessment prioritized culture, and where literacy is primarily a means towards improved language skills, she uses her own literacy practices to develop an expanded set of meanings around effective reading that have to do with expanding horizons, developing identity, and as strategies for learning and navigating life. Because of her daily monitor role, Wei Ling was not able to read during the morning ER reading programme; however she created space both

within and outside of curricular time to not only read, but to read books not sanctioned within the ER programme. She perceives the school library as being irrelevant to her learning needs and interests and sources for her own literacy sources through bookstores, community libraries and the internet. Her own passionate sense of what it means to be a reader is not given space in the English language and literature classrooms, and yet she independently nurtures it. She reads to improve her vocabulary, but she goes beyond the discourse to cite passion, fantasy, continued learning and forms of identity as more relevant motives. Her world at school is largely monolingual (though is challenged when doing group work with her friends); her out-of-school world is multilingual. And finally, her rich interactive multiliterate world is restricted to assigned websites, occasional sanctioned word processing and PowerPoint presentations in her English classes.

Bakhtin's definition of 'hybridization' is relevant here:

> It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. Such mixing of two languages within the boundaries of a single utterance is, in the novel, an artistic device (or more accurately, a system of devices) that is deliberate. But unintentional, unconscious hybridization is one of the most important modes in the historical life of all languages. (1981: 358)

Such hybridity in language is evident in multilingual situations such as Singapore (Vaish, 2007), and is also a feature of the IT linguistic practices that dominate adolescents' literate worlds. As described by Lo Bianco and Freebody, in the 'un-ordered' world of the internet, 'Visual, audial, gestural and spatial patterns are available to interacting humans as potential "meaning-making" tools and information and communications technologies draw on these in combinations which generate original literacies for their utilisation' (2001: 4). Through hybridity, then, there is 'something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation' (Bhabha, 1990: 211). We suggest these processes of hybridity also have application to understanding multiliterate practices. It is not so much the merging of two identifiable entities – home and school literacies - as it is the emergence of a 'third space' in which Wei Ling develops new meanings. In this interactive third space, various literacy events, practices, texts, discourses and languages all come together to provide adolescents with tools to navigate their literate worlds. And, potentially,

the specific literacy choices a person makes at a particular situational moment – or the choices that are made for that person – have ideological significance.

In this third space, then, Wei Ling has developed a broadened literacy repertoire from which she is able to choose, many times, her literacy code in particular literacy events in and out of school. Rather than one form of literacy distracting her from another, they all orchestrate together in the living the 'reading habit'. It is reading, it is writing, it is the blurring of reading and writing, and of speaker and listener. The notion of third space allows us to explore the physical/situational location ('doing school', for example, and SMS and blogging) as well as metaphorical/social aspects (e.g. reading Harry Potter in school) of literacy events and practices. Popular culture is part of her lived space as is news in English and in Chinese. Her language and literacy repertoires are integrative and diverse, but dependent upon exchanges in homes, schools, streets and the internet. How she connects these spaces is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this study.

Implications

Better understandings of how these discourses, spaces and literacy events relate to students everyday lives is of great importance to secondary school teachers in schools with students such as Wei Ling. Working with and observing her provides examples of how to nurture lifelong readers, expand opportunities for language development within adolescents' multi-modal and multi-literate worlds, and perhaps, even more importantly, some ways to bridge the gap between students everyday lives in and out of school rather than to reify their boundaries.

Given the importance of lifelong literate graduates, how can the multiple layers of language, of literacy, and of extensive reading be together linked in ways to enhance adolescent literacy? Perhaps, at a minimum, we need to ponder further the consequences of not allowing for spaces that include non-school defined literacies or explicit valuing of adolescent hybridity. We need to take the ideological and dialogic location of language and literacy, and make their fluidity a focus of classroom pedagogy – rather than the BOOK mode of literacy and compartmentalized dialogic notions of language use that in no way mirror the everyday lived experiences of adolescents or the vision portrayed in the English language syllabus.

And while the link between literacy and language skills is an important one, there need to be clearer notions of what this relationship means. For example, Snow (2001) notes that by fourth grade, many school literacy activities are highly decontextualized. She argues that a key reason why some children have difficulty with reading is because they have not mastered the skills of decontextualized language use (in contrast to more contextualized language use in the home). Perhaps this is where one of the gaps between in-and out-of-school literacies lay, particularly in the increasing use of text-based oral communication which is highly contextualized. In his discussion of the 'principles of a sociocognitive view of literacy', Kern (2000) makes the argument this way: 'Literacy involves *language use*. Literacy is not just about writing systems, nor just about lexical and grammatical knowledge; it requires knowledge of how language is used in spoken and written contexts to create discourse' (p. 17). And how it is 'spoken and written' in the multiliterate world of adolescents is hypertextual, simultaneously multimodal, and multitextual, used in fluid hybridity.

In the same vein, we need to seriously consider the advantages of embedding student real life experiences into secondary school classrooms and changing some teaching practices to make connections, further legitimizing real life experiences and discourses in the enacted curriculum. This is not a call to prioritize out-of-school literacies over that of school literacies – the notion of 'third space' seeks to go beyond such binaries (Soja, 1996). Indeed, our research has shown (Wolf et al., 2007), that 'doing school' discourses are intricately woven into the meanings of meaningful reading and literacy in Singaporean society. Rather, this is a call to allow for a non-reductive relationship between home and school relationships. It is a call to allow for the development of an interactive repertoire of literacies that can inform each other, for a student exploration of multiple meanings, which can become problemetized in the classroom in terms of their discursive and ideological constructs. For example, what does it mean to students when someone like Wei Ling reads Harry Potter in class, comments on a peer-written story posted on the internet, or converses with others in Chinese during group work in an English language class where English-only is the expectation?

Hybridity in third space also has implications for language pedagogy and learning. The English language curriculum and classroom pedagogical practices are generally modelled on English-only discourse, and favour an English-only classroom environment. However, as research in the area of English as an international language shows (e.g. McKay and Bokhorst-Heng,

2008), bilingual speakers of English have a rich linguistic repertoire which they often use to negotiate and create meaning in their various social contexts. Code-switching and hybridity are the norm, rather than the strict separation of languages in different domains and contexts. Allowing the realities of such language use to inform classroom pedagogy would expand the possibilities of language learning, strengthen the development of language proficiencies, and include a critical understanding of language use.

Constructing a third space in classroom settings creates 'a place where the various knowledges, discourses, and literacies [and languages] that adolescents bring to and experience in school' (Moje et al., 2004: 41). Quoting from Nespor (1997), to understand schooling 'requires a theoretical approach of questioning 'conventionally defined boundaries, looking for flows rather than states, focusing on networks and the layered connections that know them together rather than simply linear histories of circumscribed events or settings' (p. xiv). We argue that the power of a 'third space' is that it also includes 'a place where the various knowledges, discourses, and literacies' that schools bring to and experience in the adolescent. For, it is impossible to prioritize one over the other – rather, it tries to grasp the interaction between the many domains of the adolescent reader in her world and how they affect each other.

Moving in this direction suggests future research that involves ways that teachers and students understand the discursive/ideological bases of literacy and language, and the relationship this has to 'spaces'. Within third space, there is also the potential for conflicting discourses (Gee, 1996). Clearer definitions of third spaces in future research involving adolescent readers, literacies and discourses, along with methodologies that help to explore them, can help to destabilize what Soja (1996) and Alvermann (1998) label the binary divide. As early research is showing (Leander & Sheehy, 2004; Moje et al., 2004; Pahl & Kelly, 2005), once these meanings are expanded, they can focus much needed attention on ways to create third spaces and to transform classrooms, integrate contexts and challenge everyday dogmatic assumptions and the struggles in changing classroom practices (Gee, 2001; Moje et al., 2004). For the emergence of lifelong readers and the ongoing development of language, it may be useful to further research dominant literacy practices and the roles of literacies in adolescent lives, schooling and the community – and to go beyond a reductive notion of home-school literacy relationships to a dynamic view of literacy repertoires and code-switching in third space.

Appendix A: Wei Ling's data collection schedule (2005)

Data collection activity	Frequency of data collection	No. of times collected
Classroom observation	Approximately twice a month	7
Post ER reading activity observation	Once	1
Informal meetings	Multiple	Multiple
Teacher interview	Beginning and end of school year	2
Student interview	Approximately bi-monthly	4
Parent interview	Once	1
Student artefacts – English language portfolio, English language journal, Report Card, blog	End of Term 2; End of year (Term 4)	2
ER reading log (part of ER formative evaluation)	End of each term	4
Reading assessment (part of ER formative evaluation)	Beginning and end of school year	2
Surveys as part of ER formative evaluation: – parent survey – attitude toward reading survey	Parents: once Student: beginning & end of school year	Parents: 1 Student: 2
Student and reading profile survey	Once	1
Student, classroom and artefact photographs	As relevant	3
Activity log	During school break, reading week, and regular school weeks	4

Appendix B: Student 'Attitudes Towards Reading' survey

Please respond to the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5:

1 Strongly disagree
2 Disagree
3 Do not agree or disagree
4 Agree
5 Strongly agree

1	I think I am a good reader.
2	I like to read at home when I have free time.
3	I get really fascinated by things that I read.
4	I feel that I have better things to do than read.
5	I feel that I escape my problems when I read books.
6	I feel that books aren't usually good enough to finish.
7	I read to improve my grades.
8	I enjoy visiting book shops.
9	I keep a lot of reading materials in my room at home.
10	I don't like to read about new things.
11	I like to check out books from the library.
12	I like to read on the Internet when I have free time.
13	I feel that reading helps me shape my opinions.
14	I take a long time to read a newspaper article.
15	I improve my vocabulary when I read a lot.
16	When I start a new book, I feel that I can finish it.
17	I think that my classmates think that I am a good reader.
18	I like people to give me books or magazines as gifts.
19	I like to share with my family what I have read.
20	I prefer others telling me information so I don't have to read it.
21	I like to talk to my friends about what I read.
22	I like reading books about people who I admire.
23	I learn more from reading than most students in my class.
24	I feel that sharing books in class is a waste of time.
25	I feel that reading things assigned by the teacher is boring.
26	I feel that free reading doesn't teach me anything.
27	I read because I have to.
28	I try to finish my reading on time.
29	If a project is interesting, I am willing to read difficult materials about it.
30	If the teacher discusses something interesting, I might read more about it.
31	In comparison to other activities I do, it is very important to be a good reader.
32	I don't like reading something when the words are difficult.
33	Complex stories are no fun to read.

Notes

[1] This chapter makes use of data from the research project 'An in-depth study of independent variables within and outside school that impact literacy and reading habits – stage two: An expanded formative evaluation and a home-school literacy training initiative' (CRP 15/04 JW & 10/05 JW), funded by the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, National Institute of Education, Singapore (http://www.crpp.nie.edu.sg). The views expressed in this chapter are the authors' and do not necessarily represent the views of the Centre or the Institute.

[2] All identifying information has been changed to protect participants' privacy.

[3] HDB is a statutory board under the Ministry of National Development and is responsible for Singapore's public housing development. About 80–90% of Singaporeans live in HDB flats. Rather than being a mark of poverty as public housing is in some other countries, HDB flats are a means by which Singaporeans

can own their own homes, as well as a solution to potential over-crowding in a small island-state. Flats are either 3-room, 4-room, 5-room, or 'executive'.

[4] This distinction between oral/aural proficiency and literacy (see Snow, 2001: 162) complicates the argument posed by Durgunoğlu and Verhoeven (1998) concerning the political, economic and socio-cultural factors that affect language and literacy development in multilingual contexts. Their argument holds true: there does need to be historical, economic and social support for language maintenance and literacy to occur (Durgunoğlu & Verhoeven, 1998: 297). This is evident, for example, in the Chinese orchestra and Chinese calligraphy that Wei Ling participates in, all of which include some Chinese medium instruction. However, for Wei Ling, and many Singapore children, such support for home language maintenance is primarily for oral/aural skills. And a different set of historical, economic and socio-cultural factors (including the historical colonial legacy of English, English as the medium of instruction, the official status of English as the working language, English as the language of the internet, English as the language of socio-economic mobility and so forth) affect the acquisition and development of *literacy* – which tends to be in English.

[5] Students in Singapore are streamed into three courses: Special, Express and Normal, based on the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) results. After four years of Secondary education, they sit for their GCE 'O' level examination (for Special and Express streams) or GCE 'N' level examination for Normal streams, which will further determine their academic futures into university-bound junior colleges, or polytechnic vocational education. Streaming has been blamed for inducing excessive and unnecessary stress in students. The Special stream is only offered in ten select schools.

[6] Teachers told us that the Principal and Head of Department expected a large number of worksheets to be assigned. Parents too judged school work on the basis of the number of worksheets in their adolescent's portfolios.

[7] However, Kramer-Dahl (2005: 231) talks about a *reversal* of this 'displacement hypothesis' in the Singapore context, with 'school and its textual demands heavily infringing on the youngsters leisure time', particularly in middle-class homes.

[8] We thank Brian Cambourne for drawing our attention to this descriptive acronym.

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Afterword

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This Afterword is a response to an unusual set of research reports on English language development from a country unusual in three ways. First, it is unusual economically, having changed itself from third-world to first-world status in the 40 years since independence in 1965. Second, it is unusually educationally, being now one of the so-called 'Asian dragons' at the top of the international school achievement competitions in mathematics and science. Third, it is unusual 'multi-racially' (Singapore's own term of self-identification) in requiring students in each of its ethnic groups (Chinese, Malay, Indian – in descending order of population size) to take, and pass examinations in, their 'mother tongue' (their heritage language: Mandarin, Malay, Tamil or other Indian language) throughout their otherwise English-medium schooling.

From this context, as the Introduction outlines, the chapters report on a wide range of aspects of English language development by means of a range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Because so much current classroom research consists of small-scale qualitative studies of isolated *classrooms* (including my own work), I will use this Afterword to suggest the power added that comes from integrating evidence across more diverse methodologies.

Cruz-Ferreira (Chapter 2) explores one of the most contentious issues in English language research internationally: what should be the norms for pronunciation and grammar. From a review of empirical studies in Singapore and elsewhere, she argues for the establishment of *local* 'internationally acceptable' norms. Echoes of this issue re-appear in several of the later chapters.

In their research on preschool children's development of 'decontextualized language' that predicts later school achievement in US studies, Goh and Ho (Chapter 3) elicit three young children's oral language on special tasks and observe interaction between them and their parents during shared-book reading. They find that parents' language has little effect on this aspect of the children's language, and that parents' English differs from

the standard expected in school. From parental interviews, they also discover that because all the mothers work outside the home, the daily caregivers are either a grandmother or, for the other two children, foreign domestic workers. Although we don't know how typical such domestics are, Singapore's construct of 'mother tongue' needs qualification. Besides the fact that surveys show that English is becoming the dominant home language in growing number of homes across all ethnic groups, that English may not be 'standard' variety.

Doyle's large-scale quantitative corpus analysis of language use in Singapore schools (Chapter 6) provides a definitive picture of the English language usage that teachers contribute to students' English language development. His data come from the transcriptions of 455 primary and secondary lessons, a sample carefully designed to be representative of Singapore neighbourhoods and of four major school subjects (English, mathematics, science and Social Studies) collected as part of the multi-purpose and multi-methodological research conducted by the Centre for Research on Pedagogy and Practice (CRPP) established in 2003 by the Singapore Ministry of Education. These transcriptions have been tagged for features of interest, and analyses are ongoing. According to the author, this is the first such large corpus analysis of *school* English, none being available in Britain, the United States or Australia.

So far, Doyle finds further evidence of differences from 'standard spoken English' in this large corpus of teacher talk. In addition, his analysis of the high frequency of initial question words *what* and *how* support other research showing the high frequency of Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequences of teacher-student interaction in Singapore classrooms.

A small sub-sample of such sequences is the focus of Vaish and Shegar's chapter (Chapter 5). They analyse qualitatively the scaffolds for student learning provided by one teacher of subject English in one primary curriculum unit of 6 lessons in a careful selection from the corpus used by Doyle. Integrating the qualitative and quantitative chapters in these two chapters yields a richer picture of quantitative and qualitative aspects of IRE sequences than either analysis could provide alone.

Three chapters turn from a focus on teacher language to students' ways of language comprehension and expression. Gu, Hu and Zhang (Chapter 4) study the listening strategies of 18 upper-primary students from more and less proficient groups by eliciting student talk-alouds as they listen to adult oral readings of two textbook excerpts. Such elicitation tasks, like those in Chapter 2 for decontextualized language, have been called

'corpus-extension' instruments, extending the language available from observations in more naturally occurring situations.

During each of the 455 lessons in Doyle's corpus analysis, samples of student work were also collected. In a subsample of essays written by 33 primary and secondary students, Guo and Hong (Chapter 7) analyse their use of grammatical metaphors. 'Grammatical metaphor' is a term from Hallidayan linguistics widely used in Australia, Britain and Singapore. It includes what others term 'nominalizations'. Grammatical metaphors are a feature of academic English like younger children's oral use of decontextualized language reported in Chapter 2.

In a separately-collected set of more than 100 essays from three primary schools and one secondary school, Alsagoff, Yap and Yip (Chapter 8) analyse the development of correctly provided English past tense in order to test the hypothesis of a developmental sequence. The 'aspect hypothesis' states that development will reliably be used on verbs expressing completed 'telic' actions (whether achieved or accomplished) before verbs expressing continuing 'atelic' activities or states. Confirmation of this hypothesis leads the authors to suggest that universal developmental influences are more important than the influence of previously learned languages emphasized in some of the international literature.

Stinson and Freebody introduced a Process Drama curriculum in four secondary classes designated by the four respective schools as 'low proficiency' (Chapter 9). This is a small-scale intervention study that can suggest how Singapore education can be made even more effective for current national goals. Experienced drama teachers facilitated a sequence of four increasingly complex dramas in each classroom over a period of ten weeks. Such a sequence is an example of a *curriculum* scaffold, a more macro unit of teacher support than the *interactional* scaffolds in Chapter 5.

To test the effects of the drama experience on the students' oral English proficiency, a random selection of 70 of these students and another 70 students from control classes in two of the same schools were tested on the oral language section of the Singapore-Cambridge General Certificate of Education, Normal level. The quantitative results showed a significant positive benefit on features of the drama students' oral language proficiency included as objectives in the national English syllabus. Such experience can mitigate the effects of impoverished opportunity for oral language use in classrooms otherwise characterized as predominantly IRE sequences in which students supply short answers to teacher questions, as described in Chapters 4 and 5.

In the final chapter, Bokhorst-Heng and Wolf detail an extensive case study of one secondary school girls' home and school language and literacy use. In observations, interviews, work samples, reading logs and photos, collected from both home and school, the authors provide contextualized examples of many aspects of language use referred to in previous chapters A vivid portrait emerges from these integrated analyses that distinguish 'between the restrictive compartmentalized and linear literacy of the classroom and the more fluid interactive multiliteracies characteristic of our adolescent reader's out-of-school life' (p. 167).

Over the last several years, Singapore's leaders have made it clear in programmatic speeches and syllabus revisions that the country cannot afford to coast on its educational achievements to-date. Twenty-first century competencies, widely acknowledged internationally to be needed for economic competitiveness, include oral and written language fluency, team collaboration skills and creative thinking.

By providing a wide-ranging picture of the enacted curriculum in one (albeit small) first-world country, these studies show how hard it will be to effect widespread changes in these desired directions. The last two chapters – the process drama intervention and one teen-ager's home-school language life – help us to imagine concretely how the futuristic vision might be accomplished, in Singapore and beyond.

Note

[1] I write as an American who has spent two months annually between 2003 through 2008 in Singapore as a Visiting Fellow at CRPP.

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