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helpful information regarding language
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endeavor to create fluent, multilingual
students.**

The Expanded Output Hypothesis

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In her most recent statement on the Output Hypothesis, Swain (2005) distinguishes three possible functions output can have. All three, it is hypothesized, can contribute to language development.

1. The noticing /triggering function
2. The hypothesis testing function
3. The metalinguistic (reflective) function

The claim of the noticing /triggering function is present when producing output learners “may notice that they do not know how to say (or write) precisely the meaning they wish to convey ... the act of producing ... may prompt second language learners to recognize consciously some of their linguistic problems” (p. 474). Because “they cannot say what they want to say” (p. 474), learners make guesses based on their previous knowledge, pay more attention to input, or get help. The claim of the hypothesis testing function is that “output may sometimes be ... ‘a trial run’ reflecting their hypothesis of how to say (or write) their intent (p. 476).

Swain makes it clear that this function includes error correction, a process that encourages learners to modify their consciously learned rules. It also includes the function of output originally described in Swain (1985): modifying one’s output when the listener does not understand, the idea being that if a conversational partner fails to understand the transmitted message, then learners assume they made a mistake and form what they think is a grammatically correct sentence in order to help the interlocutor understand the message. The metalinguistic function claims that reflecting on the language produced either by one or by others is helpful for language development. It is, Swain notes, a means of “building knowledge about language” (p 478). In her earlier statements, Swain made it clear that output contributed to language development but was a supplement, not a replacement for input. This is not clear in the 2005 paper. In fact, language production is now “in a star role” (p. 480).

Two points need to be made about this expansion of the Output Hypothesis.

Related to conscious learning, not acquisition

The first point is that each function in the expanded output hypothesis is clearly related to conscious learning, not subconscious language acquisition. Noticing, in this case, is conscious not subliminal, (Swain, 2005, p. 474) and will help learners “consciously recognize” their problems. Hypothesis testing, according to Swain, is the testing of consciously held hypotheses about language, grammar rules and specific vocabulary items, and the metalinguistic function is by definition involved with conscious knowledge. In fact, consciously learned knowledge is sometimes referred to as metalinguistic knowledge.

Throughout, Swain assumes that conscious learning is a necessary (or at least helpful) step in developing second language linguistic competence.

Important lacunae

Important arguments against this version and previous versions of the output hypothesis are not considered or even mentioned:

1. Studies (Truscott, 1998; Krashen, 2003; Ponniah, 2008) show the limits of consciously learned language competence, specifically the findings that this kind of knowledge only shows up on measures in which performers

- (a) are thinking about correctness, or focused on form, a state of mind that is unnatural to most people,

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- (b) have time to access learned rules, which typically is not the case during real conversation,
- (c) know the rule, a formidable constraint because rules are very complex and are often misstated in grammar books (Murphy and Hastings, 2006).

Moreover, consciously learned knowledge appears to be fragile, typically available only for a short time after it is studied (Krashen, 2003).

2. The instances of modified and improved output because of communication failure, and lack of evidence that it contributes to language acquisition (Krashen, 2003) are scarce.
3. Studies (Truscott, 1996, 2005) show the inefficacy of error correction.
4. Language acquisition is possible without output, as in research from studies of free reading (Krashen, 2001, 2007).
5. Studies show that adding output does not increase language competence (Krashen, 1994, Mason, 2004). This newer version of the output hypothesis must face this counterevidence.

Post-script: The Role of Output

Output can contribute indirectly to language acquisition by inviting input. It also can make a powerful contribution to cognitive development. Numerous studies and case histories confirm that “writing makes you smarter,” that writing helps us reexamine our old ideas and is the source of new ideas (Elbow, 1973; Boice, 1994; Krashen, 2003).

Speaking and discussion can also perform this function. As Elbow (1973) has pointed out, speaking can help us clarify our thinking, just as writing does:

If you are stuck writing, or trying to figure something out, there is nothing better than finding one person, or more, to talk to. If they don't agree or have trouble understanding, so much the better – so long as their minds are not closed. This explains what happens to me and many others countless times: I write a paper, it's not very good; I discuss it with someone; after fifteen minutes of back-and-forth I say something in response to a question or argument of his and he says, “But why didn't you say that? That's good. That's clear (p. 49).

The research, however, does not show that the positive cognitive benefits of output affect language acquisition.

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Bridging the Cultural Divide: Korean Americans Visit Their Heritage Homeland

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Immigrants bring along their heritage languages and cultures to a new country. Research shows the positive effects of maintaining or developing one's heritage language (HL) on academic achievement, cognitive development, and social and psychological growth (e.g., Boals, 2001; Cummins, 1981; Dolson, 1985; Fernandez & Nielsen, 1986; Rumbaut, 1994). Specifically, developing the HL of ethnic minorities, in addition to English, has been shown to have cognitive, social, and cultural benefits (Garcia, 1985; Hakuta & Diaz, 1985; Krashen, 1998). It has also been shown that developing one's HL can be an important part of identity formation and can help one retain a strong ethnic identity and sense of group membership with one's own ethnic group (Cho, Cho, & Tse, 1997).

It can also play a significant part in the formation of ethnic identities, even among third-generation immigrants (Mills, 2001). Moreover, being proficient in immigrants' HL helps them to have greater understanding and knowledge of cultural values, ethics, and manners which further enhances their interactions with HL speakers, as well as on relationships with their family and extended family members by (Cho, 2000; Cho, 2005).

Despite these benefits, research shows that developing or maintaining one's HL is not an easy task. In the United States, non-English languages are disappearing rapidly across generations (Fishman 1991; Krashen, 1996). Heritage languages are typically not maintained or are rarely developed among ethnic minority group members. Regardless of one's language background, the language shift to the dominant language is a common phenomenon among language minority members (Wong-Fillmore, 1991; Fishman, 1991; Krashen, 1996; Veltman, 1983).

Immigrant children eventually prefer to speak English over their HL (Rumbaut, 1997). The use of HL and HL competence show a decline among the second-generation-and-beyond immigrants in the U.S. The use of HL declines as second generation students move through school (Garcia & Diaz, 1992; Nguyen, Shin, & Krashen, 2001). Spanish is used less in daily life for second and third generation contrasted to first generation Hispanic woman in Los Angeles (Lopez, 1997).

A similar pattern is seen in Asian-American communities. A clear decline in the use of HL was even found among older Vietnamese-speaking elementary school children who said they were very interested in developing HL and were eager to study HL in school (Nguyen, Shin, & Krashen, 2001). A clear decline in HL competence was accompanied by an increase in reported English competence as noted by Espiritu and Wolf (2001) among Filipino background students and also among Vietnamese background teenagers noted by Zhou (2001). Research reveals that despite parents' effort in maintaining the heritage culture and HL, many Korean-Americans, who are either born in the U.S. or came at an early age, are losing or failing to learn the HL (Kim, Lee & Kim, 1981; Yoon & Nussenbaum, 1987).

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On a positive note, despite all the sign of HL loss, studies show that attitudes toward HL are positive among ethnic minority children, except for those who experience “ethnic ambivalence” during adolescence (Tse, 2001). A few studies have looked at traveling to one’s heritage homeland as a way of promoting a positive attitude toward one’s ethnicity and at the same time develop one’s HL competence. Moskos (1980) observed that the frequency of “trips back to the old country” ostensibly promoted not only identification with Greek ethnicity but also fluency in the Greek language. Demos (1988) conducted a study to examine language retention among 548 Greek Americans, one group in Minnesota and another group in Maryland. The study showed that the frequency of visits to Greece correlated with better ability in speaking Greek. Cho & Krashen (2000) found four independent predictors of HL competence among second-generation Korean HL speakers, all related to comprehensible input: parental use of the HL, trips to Korea, television watching and reading.

This study explored the role of “visiting one’s heritage homeland” (i.e., Korea) on the perceptions of U.S.-

born Koreans of their heritage homeland, culture, and HL development. The following research questions were explored: What are the perceptions of Korean Americans toward their heritage homeland and what are the effects of visiting Korea in terms of cultural awareness and HL development? Specifically,

- What are some perceptions of Korean Americans toward their heritage homeland?
- Does that perception change as their visits progress or as they visit Korea more than once?
- Does visiting Korea increase their cultural awareness?
- Does visiting Korea promote cultural understanding and appreciation?
- Does visiting Korea and interacting with heritage native speakers help or hinder their HL development?

Methodology

Participants

The study took place in California as well as in Seoul, Korea. Thirteen U.S.-born Korean Americans who

Subject Profiles: U.S.-born Korean Americans

Name	Sex	Age	Dominant Language	Level of HL oral (Self reported)	Level of HL Literacy (self-reported)	Culture identify more with	Self- Identification
Albert	M	15	English	2	2	U.S.	Korean-American
May	F	42	English	2	2	U.S.	Korean-American
Janet	F	15	English	2	2	U.S.	American
Julie	F	17	English	2	2	U.S.	American
Sam	M	14	English	4	3	U.S.	Korean American
Albert	M	27	English	4	3	U.S.	Korean American
Bill	M	25	English	3	3	Both	Korean American
Cathy	F	24	English	3	3	U.S.	Korean American
Eric	M	26	English	3	3	U.S.	Korean American
Mia	F	24	English	4	4	Both	Korean American
Jisu	F	25	English	4	3	Both	Korean American
Seth	M	26	English	3	2	U.S.	Korean American
Sean	M	25	English	3	3	U.S.	Korean American

* 1= None 2 = Little 3 = Average 4 = Well 5 = Very Well

have visited or were visiting Korea were interviewed to help the investigator develop a broader perspective and gather more in-depth perceptions of their heritage homeland and culture, as well as heritage language (HL) development. Participants were four teenagers (mean = 15 years-old) and nine adults, age ranging from 24-42 (mean = 21.7 years-old). Pseudonyms were used to protect their privacy; American or Korean names have been chosen depending on the names subjects were using to keep closely with their identities. For an example, if they were using a Korean name, a Korean pseudonym was chosen to name the participant. Assessments were made by asking participants to rate their own levels of HL ability in speaking, listening, reading, writing, and overall skills on a Likert-type scale (1 = none, 2 = little, 3 = average, 4 = well, and 5 = very well). Participants were classified as *low proficient*, *intermediate* or *proficient* Korean speakers according to the average of their self-identified HL proficiency levels. As such, three of the subjects were grouped as low proficient Korean speakers (average of 1 to 2), six were classified as intermediates (average score of 2.5 to 3), and four as fluent or proficient Korean speakers (4 or greater). The biographical and language profiles of the participants are summarized in the following table.

Data Collection and Analysis

Personal contacts and resources were used to recruit participants for my research. All the interviews were conducted in English, tape recorded, and transcribed. Each interview took approximately 15-40 minutes per person. Five participants were interviewed in the U.S. and the rest of the participants were interviewed in Korea. To maximize time, each interviewee filled out a comprehensive questionnaire prior to the interview, of which all the open-ended questions were used as a guide for each interview. Extensive notes were taken at each recorded session. Follow-up questions were sent via e-mail for clarification and elaboration of some of the responses. Based upon a thorough review of the data including notes, questionnaires, transcripts, the follow up responses, the interviews were coded and analyzed according to steps outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The data were transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes.

Findings

I. Perceptions about the Heritage Homeland

Upon arriving in Korea, all participants, except one, had a similar perception of the country. They all said that, upon first encountering Korea, they had a bad impression and stated that it was: “dirty,” “crowded,” “small,” “fast-paced,” “polluted,” “different from the US,” and “not a comfortable place to live.”

However, after their initial encounter (i.e., culture shock), as their visits progressed or as they visited Korea again, their perceptions changed. They tended to be more open to seeing the country and acknowledged the positive differences between American and Korean cultures. May, a university professor, shared how her perceptions changed when she visited Korea for the second time:

When I was young [in 1972], my impression was very negative because America was what I was used to and it had many luxuries not available in Korea. In the 1980s [when I visited Korea again], I experienced overcrowding and cultural differences in Korea that I still didn't like. I thought the people were rude. However, my perceptions changed when I visited Korea recently because I was older and more open to appreciating the differences.

Similar to the findings of Xidis' study (1993) of Greek American students, visiting Korea helped most of the participants to become more understanding of the culture (have a greater appreciation of their cultural background) and sympathetic toward native Koreans. In particular, attitudes toward and perceptions of Korean culture changed positively for those who were able to communicate with native Koreans in Korea. Those who were proficient or intermediate Korean speakers (based on self-assessment) experienced the culture beyond its superficial characteristics. Cathy, who works in a software company in Korea, stated,

There are many aspects of the [Korean] culture that I don't agree with, but I slowly see how Korea is becoming more Westernized . . . although I identify myself as being Korean American, I believe that the people are rude and lack manners. But I remind myself that what

is considered polite in the US is not valued or important in Korea.

Alex, a teenager, explained,

Well, the weather was horrible; it was very rainy. It was also humid . . . but after a while you get used to it . . . [Korea] is a very different place. There are a lot of interesting people. It's hard to explain. The people are Asians, but not in the American sense. They are Asians living in Asia, and they give a whole different kind of feeling than the ones in America. They aren't Americanized, nor are they affected by other cultures . . . In a way, it is good because they are true to their own identity, but it is also bad because [they] cannot experience other cultures and understand them.

The participants who were fluent in Korean indicated that they gained something valuable while visiting Korea, which they would not have experienced in the U.S. Alex noted,

I learned some stuff that I couldn't learn in the U.S. You become one with your own Korean identity. You can't really throw it away after you've found it. If I didn't speak Korean at all, I would not have experienced the same thing . . . I would have been treated differently [by native Koreans]. They would have treated me as a foreigner and be sort of uneasy around me.

Sam, a 15-year-old proficient Korean speaker, shared how visiting Korea and the experience of walking around by himself at night gave him a sense of "freedom" -- "Korea is very crowded and polluted, but it is safe to walk the streets, even at night. It was fun to shop at many convenience stores . . . freedom to buy things . . ."

He added that his visit to Korea made him more "independent." Even after he returned to the US, he continued to ride on public transportation to Santa Monica beach with his friends. He also continued to walk to the store, which he did not do prior to the trip. He added that the visit helped him realize the importance of knowing his ethnic identity.

Eric, a 26-year-old financial analyst for IBM, stated, "Visiting Korea increased the opportunity to practice and use Korean. The experience showed me how much more improvement I need to become more fluent in Korean."

II. Attitudes and Motivation toward learning Heritage Language and Culture

Visiting the homeland appears to be more beneficial for those who are proficient in Korean (i.e., intermediate and beyond language learners). For those who were proficient in Korean, the visit helped them to develop a positive attitude toward the language and the motivation to further develop their HL. Visiting Korea increased their intention to practice and use the Korean language. Additionally, it made them eager to engage more regularly in certain aspects of Korean culture. Some wanted to continue residing in Korea to pursue a career, and one wanted to continue studying Korean in a graduate school.

For Seth, a Korean company employee, visiting the heritage homeland gave him the motivation to learn more about the language and culture:

Visiting Korea made me want to improve my knowledge of Korean language and culture. Korea is the 'motherland'; this is where my history exists, and I'd like to at least learn the language so that I can impart that part of the culture to my children.

Mark, an unmarried entrepreneur, stated, "Definitely, visiting made me want to come back to Korea. I want to marry a Korean woman and have my children speak Korean."

According to Sam, a US-born Korean teenager, visiting Korea promoted his cultural awareness and understanding of his roots and ethnicity.

I got used to the rapid-paced society. . . I realized the importance of knowing one's ethnic identity. Visiting Korea increased my cultural awareness. I visited historical sites and the tour guide explained many interesting topics and it [the experience] helped me realize who I am and how they [my ancestors] lived in the past and how life was back then.

Bill, who teaches English in Korea, wanted to continue studying Korean in graduate school.

Back at home [U.S.], I didn't have to speak Korean, but once I got here, communicating in Korean became a necessity. I just realized that I wanted either to go to graduate school or work and that now is the time to do something about it while I have the opportunity to learn. I majored in English. Teaching [English] is in high demand [in Korea], and I am enjoying it.

Many of the interviewees who had a positive experience in Korea stated that they will continue improving their knowledge of the Korean language and culture when they return to the US. There was, however, one interesting response from Jisu, a perfect bilingual, who confessed that she was more motivated to improve her Korean by seeing Korean-Americans speaking in two languages in the U.S. than by her visit to Korea.

I don't think visiting Korea made me want to improve as much as seeing Korean-Americans in the States who spoke good Korean and were more in touch with the Korean culture. They knew about all the recent music, popular movies, and big news in Korea. Out of my greed and competitiveness, I wanted to be as cultured, if not better.

I. Effect of the Reactions/Responses received from Native Speakers of Korean

In contrast, those who were not proficient in Korean had a negative experience in Korea because they were not able to communicate in Korean. They continued to focus on their initial bad impressions, and their perceptions about Korea did not change as their visit progressed. Julie, a 17-year-old Korean American, shared her frustration over being mistreated by native Koreans:

I thought Korea was really crowded, dirty, noisy, and underdeveloped. People focused on the 'outer appearance' too much . . . My perceptions of Korea got worse. The weather was always so humid, and the bugs would keep me up at night. Also, people were so rude and had no decency.

May shared an experience similar to that of Julie:

Oh, Koreans were nasty. They were mean, and they even said things to my mom because I didn't speak Korean. It made me really feel like . . . [they were] strangers. You know, like when I was talking, they would just scoff at me because I couldn't speak Korean. So my mom got kind of tired of it too. She has been quiet about it, but people have the nerve to say stuff like, 'Shame on you.' They were really rude. Koreans were terrible. People were rude, they put the blame on you, and you feel like you don't need any of this. My whole thing was, 'I don't need this, and what is the big deal?'

II. Seeking Ethnic Group Membership

They also explained how, at one time, they had sought to "join the club" of Korean speakers in the U.S. However, after being shut out by native Korean speakers, they avoided socializing with Koreans, which negatively affected the development of their Korean language skills. Julie noted that she avoids socializing with Koreans and pretends to be from another ethnic group:

For me, my biggest problem is the fact that I don't want to associate with Korean culture. I avoid Koreans as much as I can, so I can never improve. Korean people, even those who live in the US, are very cruel to me for not knowing Korean. I am nice to foreigners, but they [Korean native speakers] are mean to me. That's the reason that I don't want to associate with them. Many times, I pretend that I am Chinese, because people think I look Chinese, and I don't want to bother to correct their perception.

She added that she would not visit Korea again based on her experiences while visiting Korea (i.e., being ridiculed by native Korean speakers for not being able to speak the language).

May had a similar experience, as she explained,

I joined many Korean groups, but all the time, they would speak Korean, and I would feel excluded. Not that they meant to be exclusive,

but it was just too much trouble. I was so much more comfortable with the Chinese and Japanese Americans because they were like me. They didn't speak Chinese or Japanese very well. So I grew up with the Asian community. I didn't feel comfortable with the Whites, the Koreans, but my group was the Asian Americans since they were like me, so that was fine . . . Koreans were the least accepting. They make us feel more like, "you should be ashamed." So our reaction is basically . . . you know what? I had a perfect time without the Koreans.

She added,

Because of their attitudes it made me, you know, look down on Korea. I had a very negative reaction. I couldn't stand the fact that they were so close-minded. I remember thinking how sad Koreans are because, if anything, they need the Korean Americans to speak out and participate and do more for Koreans in Korea . . . they [Korean native speakers] shouldn't do such things when we are trying to get more involved. I guess they don't realize like they are shooting themselves in the butt. The ones that look down on you . . . that is just not the right way to get someone to want to appreciate it.

III. *Misunderstanding of Korean Culture*

Some cultural aspects, such as "yielding for elders out of respect" or "being straightforward when addressing a younger person" were not comprehensible to Julie. "People were so rude and had no decency. I was in line to go to a bathroom, an older lady came and went first because she was 'older' and has seniority over me."

During her first and second visits to Korea, May had an experience similar to that of Julie. However, she noted that she received different treatment during her third and fourth visits, when she went there as a professor. According to May, native Koreans were more understanding and kind, and her limited Korean proficiency was not a barrier in socializing in Korea

when she visited with her status as professor.

When I visited when I was young, [my experience] was negative because I didn't speak the language and the attitude from the Koreans was not nice. They were very vocal about the fact I didn't speak the language and they were really rude. But later on, when I went back as a professor, then I had a better experience. I had a more enjoyable time.

IV. *Obstacles to Learning or Using the Korean language*

When a question was asked about some of the difficulties in learning or using the Korean language, those who did not speak the language well responded that native speakers' negative attitudes toward them was the number-one obstacle. They all shared similar experiences of being ridiculed by native Koreans for not being able to speak Korean well. Janet, another teenager, stated that one of the biggest problems in learning Korean was the combination of language and people [attitudes]:

I should learn Korean because Korean people expect me to speak Korean . . . The Korean language is too difficult to learn because of the formal/informal way of saying things, such as honorifics and vague words. It only makes sense if you are part of the culture. For an example, the traffic signal in Korea was a blue light, but they call it a green light. Many times, direct translation doesn't work. Words and phrases have more than one meaning. The biggest obstacle is that Koreans don't accept me, even in the U.S., for example, at church and in high school. They would accept me [however] if I spoke Korean or if I knew the Korean culture. [Fluent Korean speakers] are very disrespectful and mean to me for not speaking Korean well."

Discussion and Conclusion

In terms of cultural awareness and HL development, visiting Korea seems to have been more beneficial to Korean-Americans who were at the level of

“intermediate and beyond,” as compared to weak HL speakers. Visiting their heritage homeland helped them to become more understanding of the culture through the acknowledgment, in a positive way, of the differences between their own culture (i.e., American) and their heritage culture (i.e., Korean). In particular for the more proficient group, visiting Korea helped them see the culture beyond its superficial characteristics (i.e., understanding their roots and ethnicity), which motivated them to engage in Korean culture.

In terms of language acquisition, visiting their heritage homeland helped them develop their HL. The visit helped them receive more comprehensible language input through socializing with Korean native speakers. As Krashen (1981) stated, we acquire language when we understand what people tell us, thus receiving “comprehensible input.” Most importantly, the experience motivated US-born Korean Americans to want to improve their Korean language skills and to stay in Korea longer for their career or other personal reasons. They appear to have gained a greater appreciation of their cultural background, giving them a positive experience.

Those who were not proficient in Korean, however, had a negative experience. In addition to the differences in culture and environment/atmosphere, their lack of Korean skills created cultural misunderstandings. In addition, as one of the interviewees stated, native Koreans’ negative attitudes toward weak HL speakers was a major stumbling block in acquiring or improving one’s HL. Reactions/responses received from native speakers of Korean affected the interviewees’ perceptions of and attitudes toward the Korean culture and language (i.e., group membership/ethnic identity). Native speakers ridiculed them and blamed them for their lack of Korean language proficiency, in a way, “blaming the victim.”

We have to realize that many heritage language speakers are in a difficult situation. It is often difficult for them to get comprehensible input in their HL in the US because of factors that are beyond their control. To make matters worse, these weaker HL speakers are criticized and even ridiculed by native speakers for their lack of proficiency in Korean, which adds to the

problem; weaker HL speakers, to avoid these negative reactions, avoid socializing with proficient speakers, and thus receive even less comprehensible input and develop even less proficiency.

What is the cure? Two steps can be taken.

One is provide those interested in improving their HL competence with excellent instruction, sources of comprehensible and interesting input that will allow them to improve with the fear of humiliation. The second is to change native speakers’ attitudes toward HL learners so that they will help and encourage them, rather than criticize or ostracize them. The second step is difficult; HL speakers in general have very high expectations for HL performance by members of their group (Krashen, 1998). But if these steps can be taken, visiting their heritage homeland will have a positive impact on acquiring their heritage language and culture, leading to the maintenance and development of their HL in the U.S.

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Personal theories of language acquisition among heritage language speakers

by Grace Cho, Cal State Fullerton

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Part of the problem may lie with heritage language speakers' views about language acquisition: They might be going about heritage language development in the wrong way. In this paper we explore heritage language speakers' personal views about language acquisition to determine to what extent their views are in agreement with what is known about language acquisition.

Method

Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to 290 Korean American students attending a Korean language school at a well-known university in Korea. The questions covered a variety of topics, used in other investigations. For the purposes of this paper, we include only information about the subjects and their views on improving their heritage language competence.

Subjects were young adults (table 1), and nearly all grew up outside Korea (table 2). Most described themselves as intermediates in Korean (table 3).

Table 1: Age of subjects: questionnaire

age	
14-18	33% (96/290)
19-24	63% (183/290)
25-30	3% (9/290)

Table 2: Background of subjects: questionnaire

Generation	
born, raised in Korea	3% (10/290)
born in Korea, raised elsewhere	18% (53/290)
born, raised outside Korea	74% (214/290)
Other	4% (10/290)

It is well-established that high levels of bilingualism have benefits, including better communication with elders (Fillmore, 1991; G. Cho, 2000), superior cognitive development (Cummins, 1976; Bialystok, Craik, Klein, and Viswanathan, 2004), and job-related advantages (Fradd, and Boswell, 1999). It is also well-established that heritage language speakers do not universally reach high levels of competence in their heritage language, a fact that fluent speakers of the heritage language are sometimes quick to point out (Krashen, 1998).

Table 3: Self-described proficiency in Korean: questionnaire

level	
beginning	42% (123/290)
intermediate	50% (146/290)
advanced	7% (19/290)

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 14 Heritage Language acquirers of Korean who have visited or were visiting Korea. Thirteen were born in the US, and one was born in Argentina. Participants included four teenagers (mean age = 15) and nine adults (ages 24 to 42). Pseudonyms were used to protect subjects' privacy.

Participants were asked to rate their level of proficiency in Korean on a scale of one to five, where 1 = none and 5 = very well. Three subjects were classified as non-fluent or low proficient Korean speakers (average of 1 to 2), six as intermediates (average score of 2.1 to 3.9), and four as fluent or proficient Korean speakers (4 or greater).

Personal contacts and resources were used to recruit participants. All interviews were conducted in English, tape recorded, and transcribed. Each interview took approximately 15-40 minutes per person. Five participants were interviewed in the U.S. and the rest of

the participants were interviewed in Korea.

For the purpose of this paper, only responses relevant to the question of improving the heritage language were considered. Other aspects of subjects' responses are discussed in G. Cho (in press).

Supplementary interviews were carried out with four additional subjects after the results were analyzed. Details of the supplementary interviews are presented in the Discussion section.

Results

Tables 4 and 5 present results from the questionnaire (table 4) and the interview (table 5).

Table 4: Questionnaire results

best way to improve	Results
visit, live in Korea	88% (254/290)
conversation	84% (243/290)
class	52% (152/290)
TV	47% (137/290)
movies	47% (137/290)
radio/music	16% (46/290)
FVR (Free Voluntary Reading)	29% (84/290)

Table 5: Interview results

- = specifically mentioned by the interviewee
- All names are pseudonyms.

	visit, live in K	conversation	• "forced"	class	TV	movies	radio/music	fvr
May	*	*			*	*	*	*
Julie	*		*					
Janet			*					
Alex	*	*						
Sam		*						
Jisu		*						
Eric		*			*	*	*	
Mark	*	*				*	*	
Bill		*		*	*	*		*
Mia	*	*			*		*	
Sean		*						
Cathy	*		*					*
Seth		*	*					
Albert		*	*					

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Tables 4 and 5 both indicate that heritage language users think that "using the language" and conversation are the best ways of improving. Input, in the form of books and movies, is a distant second, and the classroom ("taking a Korean language class") is less popular, with only one subject from the interviews mentioning the classroom as a means of improving their Korean competence.

Some students said that the main benefit of attending Korean language classes given by universities in Korea was the social aspect:

"It was a good opportunity to meet new people from all different areas of the U.S.,..."
(Cathy)

"The program was good, but I didn't learn much from the program, but I still liked attending the program. I liked everything that happened outside the program. Good exposure to Korean culture and language. I like the social aspects of it. I made a lot of friend and went many new places." (Bill)

"I attended a summer program at a popular university. ... My memory from that summer I will never forget...met so many great people through the program. We keep in touch. I liked the social aspect, but not the learning aspect of the program." (Jisu)

A few of those interviewed who suggested conversation and immersion had a definite non-academic orientation:

"The best way is to visit Korea, have friends that are Koreans, especially friends straight from Korea, and involve yourself in Korean social activities. This will make it easier to learn the Korean language. Going to places like Korean restaurants, dance clubs, beer drinking hangouts, karaoke, pool halls, shopping

areas that cater to Koreans, and coffee houses are a few suggestions" (Mia).

"One method would be to date a native Korean. I find that, in learning any language, you must practice with native speakers." (Jisu).

Of great interest is the finding that several of the subjects interviewed who indicated that conversation is important also mentioned that it is crucial to be forced to use the language. Several, in fact, used the word "forced":

Part of the problem may lie with heritage language speakers' views about language acquisition: They might be going about heritage language development in the wrong way.

"I have improved my Korean language skills by engaging in conversations with natives of Korea. Making friends has forced me into

situations where I have to utilize the Korean language" (Seth).

"The best way would be to live in Korea, for like a semester or two, where people would only talk to you in Korean, so you'd be forced to learn or use Korean" (Julie).

"Being immersed in the Korean language is the best way to improve Korean language skills. One way to do this is to visit or live in Korea or work in a company in Korea, where you are surrounded by people who only speak in Korean; therefore, you are forced to learn and speak in Korean" (Andy).

For this reason, the category "forced" was added to table 2.

The few who mentioned reading told us that they read lighter material:

I also learned a lot by reading comic books

such as ‘Slamdunk,’ ‘Dragonfly,’ and ‘Sam Guk Gi’ [a famous historical novel]. I kept Korean due to these activities” (Martin).

Discussion

As noted above, conversation was the big winner, with reading, movies and the classroom running well behind. One reason for the modest showing for reading could be the difficulty of finding texts in Korean that are both interesting and comprehensible for heritage language acquirers. One reason for the lack of enthusiasm for the classroom is the fact that most subjects described themselves as being beyond the beginning stage, and were able to understand at least some authentic input and therefore improve without the classroom. Nevertheless, nearly all subjects felt that talking to people in Korean was a good way to improve.

What is it about conversation that heritage language acquirers think makes it helpful? Several interviewees, as noted above, believed that it is important that language acquirers be forced to speak. In order to get additional information, supplementary interviews were conducted with four heritage language speakers of Korean, all English-dominant, all born in the US and all between the ages of 15 and 17. Two rated their oral and written Korean as a “2” on a scale of one to five, where 1 = none and 5 = very well. Two others rated themselves as a “3” in oral Korean and a “2” in written Korean.

Their remarks show little emphasis on the function of conversation as a source of comprehensible input. Rather, they believe that conversation helps because it allows speakers to get more correction and feedback and as a means of “practicing.”

“Talking with native Koreans also helps me with my pronunciation. Native Koreans can hear when I pronounce things a little off and they can fix it, unlike a video or computer program. In a class, the teacher

won’t give me as much individual attention since there are other students.” (Claudia)

“Native speakers know all the subtle differences between synonyms so they can help me pick the best-fitting words for different situations” (Claudia).

“Conversations allow for one to more easily learn a language because conversations compel one to use learned vocabulary, and quickly form grammatically acceptable sentences” (Christine).

“You get to practice and apply your language skills” (Peter)

One method would be to date a native Korean. I find that, in learning any language, you must practice with native speakers.” (Jisu).

Subjects only hinted at the role of conversation as a source of input:

“You become acquainted with commonly used phrases” (Charles).

“It also helps with learning everyday common vocabulary” (Peter).

Subjects’ preferences for conversation, thus, boil down to forced speech, correction, and fluency practice, a view that is quite close to the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2005, discussed in Ponniah and Krashen, in press).

These results help explain the persistent popularity of the Comprehensible Output Hypothesis, in both theory and practice (“communicate approaches”), despite the overwhelming evidence against it (Krashen, 2003).

The next step is to see whether forced speech and output practice has actually helped these heritage language speakers. What have their experiences been in trying to engage native speakers in conversation? Do they profit from being forced to speak, and from error correction?

If Comprehensible Output has not helped, this helps to explain why heritage language speakers typically do not reach the highest levels of competence in their heritage language.

If Comprehensible Output has not helped, do HL speakers change their personal theories or do they blame themselves?

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Heritage Language Development: Exhortation or Good Stories?

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Despite the well-researched advantages, not all young people are interested in continuing to develop their heritage language. Their apathy may be due to “ethnic avoidance,” a preference for the new culture over the old (Tse, 1988), and/or it may be due to teasing by more advanced speakers in reaction to the young person's imperfect attempts to speak the language (Krashen, 1998). These barriers, plus a lack of input, have been hypothesized to be the cause of low heritage language proficiency.

We present here a case in which interest in the heritage language was stimulated in a 12-year-old boy, Daniel,

who came to the United States at age eight from China. Daniel's Mandarin proficiency was clearly declining, despite his parents' efforts: They sent Daniel to a Chinese heritage language school for three hours each Saturday. However, it was clear that Daniel was not interested in Mandarin.

Daniel was recently enrolled in a 4-week summer Mandarin program in San Francisco aimed at foreign language students of Mandarin who had had several years of Mandarin instruction in school and heritage language speakers such as Daniel. Daniel was among those with the highest proficiency in Mandarin in the class, having completed the fourth grade in China.

Daniel was clearly not enthusiastic about the summer program and did not participate in class discussion and other activities. He told his teacher that he found the entire program boring, far below his level, and that he couldn't learn anything new. The summer program included a great deal of free reading time, and the classroom had a book collection, but Daniel did not find any of the selections of great interest, with the exception of Old Master Q, a series with about 150 titles that are simple and easy-to-read, with many wordless volumes.

Daniel's teacher was very frustrated with him and asked him to consider leaving the program, and Daniel, in fact, was eager to do so.

This case suggests that the answer to encouraging heritage language development is not to exhort children to study the language, not to send them to dull classes, but simply to find some interesting stories. Their focus will be on the stories and heritage language development will be the incidental result.

When program administrators learned about this, they asked Daniel to come to the Program office. Instead of lecturing Daniel and urging him to stay, the program director gave him a few books to take home from the collection in her office.

Among the books Daniel took was an illustrated chapter book titled "The Stories of A Fan Ti" (this is the English translation). The next day, Daniel's mother told the program director that Daniel loved the book.

The book was a bit beyond his level, but thanks to the illustrations

and his ability to understand some of the text, Daniel was very interested in the story and begged his mother to read it to him.

Daniel was not aware that his Mandarin was improving again. He was, of course, only interested in the stories.

The program director then loaned Daniel more books from the "A Fan Ti" series, in comic book format. Daniel found the stories tremendously entertaining and begged his mother to read more, from two books to five stories everyday.

Daniel's mother found that it took her a lot of time to read the stories so she asked Daniel to help with chores while she read to him. This is a reversal of the usual practice of rewarding children to read; in this case, the reward for doing chores is being read to. Both Daniel and his mother were quite happy with this arrangement.

Daniel was not aware that his Mandarin was improving again. He was, of course, only interested in the stories.

"A Fan Ti" was Daniel's "home run book" (Trelease, 2006), a reading experience that re-stimulated his interest in reading in Mandarin in general. This case suggests that the answer to encouraging heritage language development is not to exhort children to study the language, not to send them to dull classes, but simply to find some interesting stories. Their focus will be on the stories and heritage language development will be the incidental result.

Post-script: One month later.

According to Daniel's mother, he is now reading less in Chinese. Daniel has now heard and read nearly all of

the A Fan Ti stories available and has no easy access to the Old Master Q series. Although he is a comic book reader in English, he has not found any Chinese comic series in which he is interested. Clearly, one home run

book is not enough. It needs to be followed with a steady and easy supply of compelling and comprehensible reading material. We know of no heritage language program that is taking this requirement seriously.

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Do Students Like What is Good for Them? An Investigation of the Pleasure Hypothesis with Middle School Students of Mandarin

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Introduction

The Pleasure Hypothesis states that activities that are beneficial for language acquisition and literacy development will be considered to be pleasant by students and teachers. * (Note that the Pleasure Hypothesis does not claim that all activities that are pleasant are beneficial.) If the Comprehension Hypothesis is correct (Krashen, 2003), the Pleasure Hypothesis predicts that activities that provide students with interesting and comprehensible input will be perceived as pleasant, more pleasant than activities that do not provide comprehensible input.

Evidence supporting this prediction includes studies showing that students perceive free reading and hearing stories to be pleasant but are anxious about being forced to speak in class. Data on correction and grammar study is mixed, with some students claiming that they enjoy grammar and want

correction, but student behavior does not correspond to their stated beliefs (Krashen, 1994).

In this study, we attempt to determine what activities middle school students of Mandarin in the US find effective and pleasant, hypothesizing that students will find activities that supply interesting and comprehensible input both more effective and more pleasant and that items that are considered more effective will be considered to be more pleasant; that is, there will be a positive correlation between effectiveness and pleasantness ratings.

Method

Twenty-one middle school children enrolled in a summer program in Mandarin in San Francisco filled out the questionnaire. All had previous exposure to Mandarin in school, and five children spoke some Mandarin at home. Nearly all were from middle-class families. No attempt was made to correlate background characteristics with the survey result because of the small sample.

Subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which took them approximately ten to twenty-five minutes, in class, at the beginning of the summer program.

Results

In Tables 1 and 2 presented below, the first four items are considered to be non-CI (not comprehensible input), and the last three are considered to be CI (comprehensible input).

Survey results reveal that stories and visual media were ranked the most effective (Table

1), although studying textbooks and practicing writing characters were not far behind. Statistical analysis (Table 3) shows that non-CI items were rated as less effective than CI items. The difference fell just short of statistical significance ($p = .11$, one-tail).

Table 1: Judgments of effectiveness

	yes	not sure	no	Total score
Practice writing characters	14	3	4	52
Memorizing textbook lessons	9	9	3	42
Studying textbooks	15	3	3	54
Reading required Chinese books	10	4	7	45
Reading Chinese books of my own choice	13	1	7	48
Listening to Chinese stories	18	1	2	57
Watch Chinese cartoons/movies/TV shows	17	3	1	58

"Yes" scored as 3, "not sure" as 2, "no" as 1

The results for pleasantness ratings were much clearer: all CI items were rated as more pleasant than all non-CI items (Table 2). Nearly all students considered hearing stories and watching Chinese cartoons/movies/TV to be pleasant with self-selected reading a distant third. Non-CI items were rated as significantly less pleasant than the CI items ($p = .0023$). Maximum score for effectiveness and pleasantness is 63, minimum

Discussion

Middle school students of Mandarin judged activities that were classified as providing comprehensible input to be somewhat more effective and much more pleasant than those classified as not providing comprehensible input. A positive correlation was found between effectiveness and pleasantness ratings for individual items.

Table 2: Judgments of pleasantness

	yes	not sure	no	Total score
Practice writing characters	8	3	10	40
Memorizing textbook lessons	5	3	13	34
Studying textbooks	7	4	10	39
Reading required Chinese books	6	5	10	38
Reading Chinese books of my own choice	13	1	7	48
Listening to Chinese stories	20	0	1	61
Watch Chinese cartoons/movies/TV shows	19	0	2	59

“Yes” scored as 3, “not sure” as 2, “no” as 1

score is 21.

The difference between non-CI and CI item ratings was much greater for pleasantness ratings, as seen in the larger effect size for pleasantness ratings.

The correlation between effectiveness and pleasantness ratings was .78. Activities thought to be more effective were also considered to be more pleasant.

Table 3: Non-CI versus CI items: rated effectiveness and pleasantness

	Not CI (4)	CI (3)	t	p	effect size
effective	48.25 (5.68)	54.33 (5.51)	1.42	0.11	1.28
pleasant	37.75 (2.63)	56 (7)	4.9	0.0023	4.43

All CI-related items were rated as more pleasant than all non-CI items. Listening to stories and watching TV and movies were the highest-ranking activities for both effectiveness and pleasantness, with reading self-selected books coming in fourth in effectiveness and third in pleasantness. The more modest approval for self-selected reading may be a reflection of the lack of good reading material for students at this level.

The results of this study provide clear support for the Pleasure Hypothesis. The modest sample and number of items, however, is a consideration. This study needs to be replicated with similar groups and with other groups of students, teachers, and non-professionals.

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VOA Special English – A Neglected Multimodal Resource

Abstract

A neglected multimodal resource for comprehensible, pleasurable and interesting input is Voice of America Special English. This paper sketches some ways Special English (SE) can be better utilized for Free Voluntary Reading, autonomous, student-selected extensive listening and new approaches to a more simplified scientific and academic English for the masses of acquirers of English as a lingua franca (ELF), a kind of ‘ESP-Lite.’ It suggests some avenues for badly needed research on SE and ways to augment its utility as a resource within ELF pedagogy.

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It’s almost like Hemingway. You can write something easy and direct, and it’s more powerful that way. --Shelley Gollust, VOA Special English chief (quoted in Goodman, 2007)

A much neglected cost-free resource for input that is comprehensible, pleasurable and interesting (Krashen, 2004a, p. 28) is Voice of America Special English, on shortwave since 1959, and digital now for nearly a decade (<http://www.voaspecialenglish.com>). This paper sketches some ways Special English (SE) can be better utilized for free voluntary reading (FVR),

autonomous, student-selected extensive listening and new approaches to a more simplified scientific and academic English for the masses of acquirers of English as a lingua franca (ELF), a kind of ‘ESP-Lite,’ anchored in large quantities of relatively easy graded input. This programmatic paper has nine sections, concluding with suggestions for future research and ideas for concrete steps to augment the utility of SE in ELF/ESL pedagogy.

1. Special English as a pedagogical power tool

A paradigm of a plainer American English, pitched at low intermediate level SE is based on a 1,500 headword core vocabulary, contained with simple definitions in a Word Book at the site. Sentences are short, averaging 14 words. There is a high degree of repetition. There are few adjectives per text and almost no idioms. Syntax is simplified with few relative clauses. The rhetorical structure generally proceeds with one ‘proposition’ per sentence, strengthening clarity and cohesion. Speed of delivery is ninety words per minute, about 25% slower than normal radio tempo. Broadcasters undergo extensive special training over six months in the techniques of SE enunciation.

In addition to the ten minutes of daily news, the SE half-hour broadcast includes two slow-speed ‘features’ in its thirty-minute broadcast. These features, in fourteen categories, are available as print texts and with audio, and many can be downloaded as MP3 files, for intensive, extensive and narrow listening (Krashen, 1996). Brief (370-1,380 words) and informative, they cover a wide range of topics from education, history, American biography and music to health, science, economics and development. Articles have high interest value and often deal with topics of global significance currently in the news.

1.1 Multiple modalities

As a genre, SE is multimodal, combining text and sound (Bateman, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), where visible digital text can reinforce aural input and vice versa. Reports on the arts also use visuals and music such as, “Christo, Jeanne-Claude’s Art Helps

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People See Their Surroundings in New Ways,”¹ or “Paul Robeson, 1898-1976: Singer, Actor, and Civil Rights Activist.”² A major question for empirical research on Special English is to what extent creatively combining the options of aural and visual text input is beneficial for some categories of learners. My own extended experience in provincial Thailand suggests that many ordinary learners have great difficulty with simple listening comprehension because they have exceptional trouble segmenting the speech stream. Seeing the text written – before, during or after listening -- is a highly useful instructional scaffold for schooling listening skills.³ Numerous Special English reports also include music so that their multimodal format is not simply the text spoken and on-screen.⁴

1.2 Library online

The unique SE archive of over 5,400 feature texts online (comprising all non-news broadcasts since early 2001 and a number from prior years) approximates in some ways the “library of print and

1 Broadcast on 28 October 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-10-28-voa1.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

2 Broadcast on 25 October 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-10-25-voa1.cfm>, and part II, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-11-01-voa1.cfm>, broadcast 1 November 2008, retrieved 2 November 2008.

3 An ongoing project using Special English at a large Bulgarian university indicates that learners at pre-intermediate level appreciate the option of both aural and visual input; students report that listening to Special English specifically aids in better understanding when listening to non-graded English on CNN telecasts. This may also bolster learner retention of new vocabulary and overall content, and strengthen student confidence, lowering affective filters (R. Danailova, personal communication, 21 October 2008), but an empirical research agenda is needed. See also Appendix 1.

4 Exploring multimodality, the Laboratory for Research in Semiotics at the Department of English Language and Literature at the National University of Singapore has experimentally investigated a wide spectrum of discourse in an approach that looks at word, visual and audio elements in their fusing (O’Halloran, 2006a). As O’Halloran (2006b, p. 7) puts it: “‘multimodal’ refers to the multiple modes (e.g. spoken, written, printed and digital media, embodied action, and three-dimensional material objects and sites) through which social semiosis takes place.”

aural comprehensible input” that Krashen (1997, p. 44) envisions, though all texts here are roughly at the same graded level, and nearly all are non-fiction.⁵ It now contains a corpus of some 3.5 million words. The archive can also be used for “narrow reading” (Krashen, 2004a), since it includes hundreds of texts on topics such as education, health, agriculture, music, development, economics and history. As Krashen (2004c, p. 7) has stressed:

We can’t reproduce the second language informal environment, but we can do much better, and the Comprehension Hypothesis gives us a clear idea of what to do: Foreign language students need better libraries, libraries filled with books, magazines, comics, as well as audiotapes and videotapes [...] Such a facility should be open to the public, to make it possible for anyone to get comprehensible input in the second language of their choice whenever necessary or desired.

Special English is just such a graded cyber-library, a mouse-click away, 24/7. Moreover, students can use the growing SE archive for a form of semi-controlled “free voluntary surfing” (Krashen, 2007). A storehouse of comprehensible input, the archive is expanding by some sixty-five texts every month. As a platform for FVS, it can be part of “the most obvious, least expensive, and least complex application of the computer to language education” (ibid., p. 8). Indeed, Heil (2003, p. 277) has termed SE “a university of the airwaves for millions.”

1.3 Bolstering fluency

Special English can also serve as a recreational input level for students with higher levels of proficiency (mid-intermediate and beyond) who are eager to have easier material for low-stress, self-selected reading

5 Significantly, Cengage Learning (Heinle ELT) has recently launched a series of 100 short graded non-fiction readers in the Footprint Reading Library, on 8 levels from 800 to 3,000 headwords, specifically designed to fill the perceived great need for graded non-fiction. See <http://higher.cengage.com.au/category/2032> (retrieved 30 October 2008) for some titles. These brief volumes may well prove too costly for most learners in many poorer economies.

and listening to strengthen overall proficiency. This can enhance fluency, “(H)elping learners make the best use of what they already know. In this strand, learners should be reading books that are well within their knowledge” (Nation, 2004, p. 21). The core Comprehension Hypothesis claim that “grammatical competence and vocabulary knowledge are the result of listening and reading, and that writing style and much of spelling competence is the result of reading” (Krashen, 2004c, p. 3) can be tested specifically utilizing the multimodal array of SE discourse.

1.4 Reaching for a million

A logical extension is to incorporate SE in a variant of ‘super-extensive’ reading known as SSS (Start with Simple Stories), which projects reading a million running words of easy English as an achievable shorter-term goal, strengthening “immediate fluency” by centering on input at the lower levels of students’ actual comprehension (Koch, 2006, p. 5). If we assume an average reading speed of 100 words-per-minute for an L2 reader at beginning level (McQuillan & Krashen, 2008), it would require some 166 hours of sustained reading to go through one million words, or about thirty minutes a day. Reading 2-3 SE feature reports daily on a regular basis would yield an input of about 11,200 running words per week, which is in excess of what Nation (2001, p. 169) stresses as a target. He notes: “(U)p to the 2,000 word level, about a book every one to two weeks is about right” for optimum extensive input, some 10,000 words per week or two, “in order to gain enough repetitions to establish substantial vocabulary growth” (Nation 2007a, p. 3). This would entail roughly two hours of sustained reading per week at the speed of 100 wpm (McQuillan & Krashen, *ibid.*), covering some 582,000 running words of text in one year. In a five-year study in Japan on motivating factors for extensive reading, Takase (2003) concluded that “(A)n abundance of extremely easy reading materials of interest are needed for the less motivated students” (p. 4), as reflected in experimentation with working-class learners in rural Malaysia (Asraf & Ahmad, 2003). For extensive listening, the thirty-minute broadcast each day (news plus two feature reports, at 90 wpm), 2,700 words, would amount to 972,000 running words annually.

1.5 Diversity, autonomy

All this integrates well with the pedagogical framework of what Nation (2007a) terms the “meaning-focused input strand,” and his conception of substantial exposure of students to diverse graded text materials. No battery of graded readers is so broad-ranging in its subject matter and so topical as SE, featuring stories from the news on any given day and an extensive battery of subject area reports. The ready, cost-free accessibility of the large SE archive online is also a potential lever for energizing autonomous student-selected extensive reading, grounding a more “constructivist” input syllabus (Reyes & Vallone, 2008). That can be coupled with extensive “narrow listening” (Dupuy, 1999; Krashen, 1996) on topics of personal interest. The large array of SE texts on specific subject areas can also be utilized in new directions for “sheltered subject matter teaching” (Krashen, 1997, pp. 20-26) and as a “conduit to harder reading” (p. 22). Students can, if interested, move on to regular (ungraded) VOA news and feature reports (<http://www.voanews.com>) likewise with audio at normal speed and daily videos (see also Appendix 1).

1.6 Online and on the air

Archived and multimodal online, SE is significantly also accessible by shortwave radio. In corners of the Global South, radio still remains a key low-cost link with the outside world. Political analyst Helle Dale (2006) has stressed: “There is nothing wrong with Internet and television, but wide swaths of rural populations throughout the world have no access to the Internet or even television. Yet, they, too, benefit from learning English by listening to VOA.”

In any event, extensive reading should not be limited to learners in the richer economies. SE is accessible via Internet shops in many parts of rural Thailand, for example, while average rural learners lack the funds or bookshops to purchase printed graded reading materials in English of any kind, with limited school and local libraries. The political economy and social geography of extensive reading need empirical investigation.

2. A brief excerpt

The excerpt below from a development feature report on clay, “Working with Clay: A How-to Guide”⁶ reflects the clarity of SE discourse, a cornerstone of its rhetorical structure:

Clay is found almost everywhere in the world. It is formed by the action of wind and water on rocks over thousands of years. The rocks change in both chemical and physical ways. Chemically, elements like potassium and aluminum are added and taken away. Physically, the rocks break down into smaller and smaller pieces. After a long time, some of the rock changes to clay. [...]

You can usually find good clay in low areas of islands or land, especially if volcanoes helped form the land. Clay often exists in fields covered with some water. The clay will be found about one meter below the ground. River banks often also have clay about one meter or less under the surface.

You can recognize clay because it is very shiny when it is wet. You can also perform a test. Take some of the material and add enough water to it to make it seem like you are making bread. Then press it in your hand until it is about the size of an egg. It is probably clay if it holds together instead of falling apart when you stop pressing.

2.1 ‘ESP-Lite’ and readability

The report “Working with Clay: A How-to Guide”⁷ is representative of SE feature articles. Its readability using standard measures is Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 7.2,

6 Broadcast on 24 August 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-08-24-voa1.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

7 Readability has been measured using http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp, and word frequency level using the Vocabulary Profile utility of Lextutor based on the British National Corpus, <http://www.lexutor.ca/vp/bnc/>, all retrieved on 30 October 2008. Lextutor offers an excellent array of utilities; it can be introduced to students for their own independent work.

which means seventh-grade reading proficiency, a level characteristic of many Special English texts.⁸ This sample text is thus highly suitable for ‘ESP-Lite’ recreational reading, with less than 1% of its lexicon not contained in the SE core vocabulary. Within the charted lexical range of SE, it thus does not exceed the percentage of unfamiliar lexis (ca. 2%), a density of one unknown word in every fifty running words, as recommended by Nation (2007b, p. 40; Hu & Nation, 2000) and others for “easy” intensive reading, despite the presence of some lower-frequency vocabulary (see also Appendix 1). Several scientists in Australia recently examined a representative selection of SE scientific-technical texts and praised the clarity and compactness of presentation as a model, noting the accuracy and quality of the content (personal communication, L. Brunckhorst, 14 June 2008).

3. Underresearched, eclipsed in pedagogy

Surprisingly, there has been virtually no empirical research on Special English since its inception in 1959 (Templer, 2007; 2008a, 2008b). Advocates of simplification and vocabulary control in ESL pedagogy (Nation, 2001, pp. 161-173; Nation, 2007b; Nation & Deweerdt, 2001; Krashen, 1997) make no mention of Special English. There is no published empirical investigation on SE in the TESOL literature (personal communications, Shelley Gollust, 2 November 2006; Paul Nation, 19 March 2007). Work on simplification and SLA such as Leow (1997) and Tickoo (1993) ignores SE. It goes unmentioned among numerous contributors of extensive reading activities in Bamford & Day (2004) and is not mentioned in Graddol (2006), though his core focus is on ELF, its pedagogy and political economy.

In East Asia, there is no reported current research on SE even in the People’s Republic of China (Damon Anderson, RELO Beijing, personal communications, 15 April, 5 June 2008). Nonetheless, there are numerous locally produced books and CDs utilizing VOA texts available in the market, and the paper *China*

8 The text is 422 words in length, averaging 12 words per sentence. There are relatively few adjectives, amounting to just over 5% of total word families. Its Flesch Reading Ease is 66.4, relatively easy. Significantly, only four words in the text are not contained in the SE **Word Book** of 1,500 word families.

Daily features links to SE.⁹ Nor is there any known research in Indonesia (Michael Rudder, RELO Jakarta, personal communication, 24 January 2008). Interviews I have conducted indicate that Special English remains virtually unknown among Thai, Lao or Malaysian EFL teachers or students.

Sanford Ungar, a former VOA director, notes: “Throughout much of Asia and Africa, a generation of young people learned to speak ‘American’ by listening to the VOA’s slow, limited-vocabulary ‘Special English’ broadcasts, which often served as teaching tools for Peace Corps volunteers” (2005, p. 2). Little of that experience has been investigated. Empirical inquiry is badly needed. In shortwave journalism research, a pioneering study by O’Keefe (1971) looked at VOA Special English, contrasting its “listenability” (patterned on Flesch-Kincaid formulae for “readability”) compared with VOA regular English news, BBC, and West German and Soviet shortwave news broadcasts in English. Of all shortwave broadcasting examined by O’Keefe, Special English was clearly the most “listenable.”

4. An easier ‘American mosaic’

SE incorporates an extensive archive of materials focused specifically on the US, a variegated, interesting and comprehensible mosaic, in “authentic”¹⁰ language. About half of the fourteen weekly feature stories center on some aspect of American society, education, history, music, science, and there is also some graded U.S. fiction. Among biographies, you can find the life of radical feminist Margaret Sanger,¹¹ the controversial African-American jazz singer Billie Holiday,¹² and

9 See http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/lt/lt_voaspecial.html, retrieved 30 October 2008.

10 In Krashen’s (1997) non-traditional sense of “authenticity” as a “text that is interesting and comprehensible” (p. 34) to specific readers; see also Nation & Deweert (2001, p. 56).

11 See <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2007-12-01-voa1.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

12 See <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/archive/2007-03/2007-03-25-voa1.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

the African-American poet Gwendolyn Brooks.¹³ Two recent multimodal features detailed the life and music of singer Bob Dylan¹⁴ and the African-American singer and civil rights activist Paul Robeson.¹⁵ This largely non-fiction textual world builds a wide window onto intercultural awareness in learner discourse.

5. Banned under the stars and stripes

The over 2,500 texts on aspects of U.S. life provide excellent material for VFR, sustained silent reading, extensive reading and listening and sheltered subject matter teaching for ELLs in the United States. Yet the Smith-Mundt Act (1948) specifically prohibits the VOA from broadcasting anything inside the U.S. (Chmela, 2006) including its Special English service. As Ungar (2005, p. 3) comments: “The prohibition on its broadcasting at home has guaranteed that few, if any, members of Congress have ever heard a VOA program.”

In 1999, former VOA director Charles Loomis posed the question: “Shouldn’t there be an amendment to the current law that would allow VOA Special English materials to be used in the United States for immigrants to these shores?” (Lewis, 1999).

SE Chief Shelley Gollust has emphasized that this restrictive law needs review: “If new immigrants could turn on their radios at 8 o’clock and listen to a half-hour of Special English to listen to the news, it would be very beneficial” (Chmela, *ibid.*). SE could be broadcast on local FM radio, PBS and other public service outlets in order to reach the millions of immigrant ELLs across the nation, nearly half of whom are now in rural localities. In any event, teachers should openly and robustly utilize digital SE materials and regular VOA online reports; school districts should promote it.

13 See <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-05-17-voa1.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

14 See <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/archive/2008-06/2008-06-08-voa2.cfm>; <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/archive/2008-06/2008-06-12-voa1.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

15 Broadcast 25 October and 1 November 2008, see fn. 2.

6. Building to a threshold plateau

At present, Special English centers on the largely receptive skills of listening and reading. One pedagogical thesis, envisioning a kind of paradigm shift in teaching ELF (Templer, 2008a), stresses the need to push toward over-learning at a crucial proficiency level of about 1,500 word families, with extensive recycling of high frequency lexis and structure, utilizing the SE model, to lay the foundation for a solid fluency at its level. This would be grounded on massive recycling of high-frequency lexis and basic syntax. A learner can say virtually anything with this working level of lexis.¹⁶ Krashen (1997) has emphasized that the prime goal in EFL pedagogy is “to develop intermediates, students who can continue to improve on their own (e.g. by using the library described earlier)” (pp. 50-51).

I wish to argue that SE can be used to get students to that intermediate level, primarily as a major cost-free source of easier extensive comprehensible input, but likewise as a target platform for active communicative output, part of a “meaning-focused output strand” in Nation’s (2007a) sense.¹⁷ At the present time, millions of learners are spending billions of boy-girl hours in EFL study, generally in a skill-oriented language classroom geared to some mode of comprehensible output. But a significant proportion, especially those “in difficult circumstances” (West, 1960) – which means much of the Global South -- often fail to move beyond a mid-elementary semi-proficiency. Even in Europe, an EFL teacher from Serbia notes:

I’ve mentioned several times how bad language education (in primary and high schools, but often the faculties too) in Serbia is, how after 10 years of second language study the vast majority of students [...] gets no further than a set of several basic sentences and a mediocre

16 As West emphasized (1955, p. 70): “At 1,700 words one can tell any strong plot, keeping much of the original style. A vocabulary of 2,000 words is good enough for anything, and more than one needs for most things.”

17 There are strong arguments against the Skill-Building and Comprehensible Output Hypotheses, and regarding the latter Krashen (2004c, p. 4) contends that “there is no evidence that it plays even a small role in language acquisition.” In any event, I would argue that the proficiency goal for many average learners should be “downshifted” to a workable level at about the platform of Special English for their own ELF communication.

vocabulary which they can’t put to any real use.¹⁸

This is a grassroots pedagogical reality which most teachers at the grassroots are well aware of.

6.1 Toward discursive equity

Social class in the EFL classroom impacts all aspects of learning and student attitude. We know that the socioeconomic level of students and their overall access to print (in the home, school and community) are remarkably strong indicators of how well they will perform in standardized reading tests in the U.S. (McQuillan, 1998; Krashen, 2008; idem, 2004a, pp. 68-73). Gee (2008) observes: “Children will not identify with – they will even disidentify with – teachers and schools that they perceive as hostile, alien, or oppressive to their home-based identities” (p. 39). Such factors play a role in ELF/EFL instruction across the planet but have to date been rarely investigated.¹⁹

My own experience with non-privileged learners on several peripheries suggests the imperative of rethinking paradigms for ELF and English as an international language (EIL) for the social majorities: the need to move from “real English” to what Seidlhofer (2003) terms “realistic English.” I would argue that for those who cannot or do not wish to move on “up the English escalator” (Graddol, 2006, p. 97) – a sizable segment of the learner community from working-class and rural backgrounds in much of the Global South -- a reasonable downscaled alternative target for mass instruction is needed. In re-interrogating the E in TEFL, one related pedagogical tack is to focus specifically on Special English as a flexible, variegated and low-cost comprehensible input source, a minimalist model that can serve as a learner power tool for transnational communicative competence, and a

18 See ‘Sage from Rage,’ <http://sagefromrage.wordpress.com/2008/06/17/a-different-kind-of-language-learning-classroom/>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

19 One relevant study on weaker learners in grassroots working-class Malaysia is Asraf & Ahmad (2003); for a broader framework on the intersections between social class, discourse and pedagogy, see the work of the Center for Working Class Studies, Youngstown State University, <http://www.centerforworkingclassstudies.org/>, retrieved 30 October 2008; see also Linkon & Russo (2007).

comfortable plateau for extensive reading and listening on a regular basis.²⁰ Learners can concentrate on building strong “fluency,” both in processing input and in communication, at this “realistic” level in terms of their own ecologies of learning.²¹

Those learners who have the motivation and funds required (in many places the privileged few) can, if they desire, continue the trek on up the Everest of more complex English.²² The more crucial question is how to better address the authentic ELF literacy needs of the working majority in solidarity with them and in the name of educational, social and discursive equity (Reyes & Vallone, 2008, pp. 168-172).

7. Meaning in the Service of Power?

Some students and teachers will question the potential bias of VOA SE reporting, since it is run by the U.S. government. SE is not a crude propaganda channel. Certainly many feature articles are shaped by a particular perspective. But there is a balance in approach and coverage which will appeal to a broad segment of learners.²³ VOA was born early in 1942 as part of the U.S. propaganda effort against Nazi Germany (Heil, 2003, p. 32). That legacy remained foundational for decades. For much of the Cold War, VOA general broadcasting and its SE service were clearly an ideological channel of information and persuasion. That has changed. Any transnational information media, whether corporate-controlled like

20 Another avenue under discussion is a revitalizing of Basic English 850, as developed by Charles K. Ogden and Ivor Richards (Seidlhofer, 2002; Templer, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008a).

21 Nation (2007a, p. 7) stresses: “In most language courses not enough attention is given to fluency development, possibly because it does not involve the learning of new language items and thus is not seen as moving the learners forward in their knowledge of the language.”

22 Nation finds that in standard complex English registers, “If 98% coverage of a text is needed for unassisted comprehension, then a 8,000 to 9,000 word-family vocabulary is needed for comprehension of written text and a vocabulary of 6,000 to 7,000 for spoken text” (2006, p. 59).

23 Such as features on dissident Americans like Paul Robeson (see fn. 2) and novelist Kurt Vonnegut, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/archive/2007-12/2007-12-15-voa1.cfm>, broadcast 15 December 2007, retrieved 30 October 2008.

CNN or FOX, or run by a government bureau, have their agendas, their tilt and spin. Chomsky (1997) reminds us that mainstream media are big business, and “the product of the media, what appears, what doesn’t appear, the way it is slanted, will reflect the interest of the [...] institutions, and the power systems that are around them.” Ideology is ever-present, what Thompson (1990) memorably termed “meaning in the service of power” (p. 8). Students can learn to analyze how power shapes and slants discourse, in VOA texts and elsewhere, drawing on tools from critical discourse analysis (Richardson, 2006; Gee, 2008) and critical literacy and media pedagogy.²⁴

Desirable would be a more progressive source online looking at global issues from a critical perspective, in easier English, but none today exists. A laudable but now defunct paradigm is “Global Issues for Learners of English,” a spin-off website based on the progressive left magazine, *The New Internationalist*. This website, still accessible,²⁵ operated from 1997 to 2002 but was then discontinued.

8. Spurring research agendas

Basic investigation, both classroom-anchored action research by teachers (Burns, 1999; Mertler, 2006) and in-depth case studies of actual SE use (Stake, 1995), is imperative. One paradigm is the array of research on FVR detailed in Krashen (2004a, pp. 1-55), where a number of analogous studies can be made in the field with experimental groups and classes using SE texts. Inquiry can focus on a range of key questions:

- Is SE particularly effective as a means to improve listening skills? Exploratory research from northeastern Thailand (Sikkhagit, 2007) indicates that listening skills can be significantly enhanced.
- How does SE listening comprehension

24 A fresh approach to critical literacy is OSDE, see <http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk/criticalliteracy.html> and two introductory OSDE videos, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRDp6FNynm0&feature=related>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ky61CGOsMRQ&feature=related>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

25 See <http://www.newint.org/easier-english/contents.html>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

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compare with listening on a medium like McQuillan's www.espod.com, which has more difficult (and more colloquial) lexis and spoken discourse styles?

- Can listening to SE assist in improving pronunciation in its various facets (segmental and suprasegmental phonology, speed)?
- Is SE especially effective for approaches in extensive listening (Waring & Brown, 2003)? As Waring notes,²⁶ extensive listening is neglected in research (see also Appendix 1).
- Where has SE had a demonstrable impact, how and why? Bedjou (2006) reports on extended experience in Algeria. Of special interest is how SE is still being used via shortwave radio, in the PRC, Africa, Russia and elsewhere.
- Can SE be used as a versatile, effective platform for ESP-Lite in a variety of fields of scientific and academic inquiry and exposition? In countries such as Malaysia, CLIL centering on science and math in the elementary school is proving far too demanding for many learners, and experimentation with a more 'downsized' mode of ESP is, in my view, clearly needed.²⁷ In teaching ELLs stateside, the effectiveness of using SE texts on American life and society and other subject areas is likewise a priority research focus.
- Can it be used to enhance Free Voluntary Surfing on the Internet, expanding research questions raised in Krashen (2007, pp. 6-7)?

9. Augmenting the utility of SE

Among concrete steps needed are the following:

- Encourage a new series of books written in SE on a range of topics, including anthologies of texts for academic and scientific subjects, to augment comprehensible input at this level. The large array of books written in Basic English during the 1930s and 40s on topics in science, architecture, philosophy and many other fields

26 See <http://www1.harenet.ne.jp/%7Ewaring/el/> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

27 See report in **The Sun**, 18 September 2008, <http://www.sun2surf.com/article.cfm?id=25777> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

by associates of Charles K. Ogden and Ivor Richards are a paradigm in a kind of "people's library of comprehensible input" in this sense,²⁸ best kept outside the profit-oriented agendas of large publishers. They could be made available under a Creative Commons copyright or "copyleft."²⁹

- Create an expanding exercise online database, written by teachers using Special English, with suggestions for exercises and activities grounded on Special English texts. This could also include exemplary lesson plans, perhaps along the lines of ReadWriteThink,³⁰ and extended explanations, as given by McQuillan on <http://www.eslpod.com> . Such activities can be geared to augmenting and energizing comprehension, and like ReadWriteThink, should be kept rigorously non-commercial and teacher/learner-generated.
- Experiment with graphic novels and non-fiction graphic works written in SE, as a form of free voluntary and recreational "lighter" reading (Krashen, 2004a, esp. pp. 91-110).³¹ Krashen (2005, p. 2) notes: "There is no current research that I know of on the use of graphic novels, but there is evidence suggesting that comic book reading can be a conduit to 'heavier' reading." As Cary (2004) and Carter (2007a) stress, such empirical research on how graphic storytelling can be utilized for teaching in the English language arts and EFL classroom is crucial. Carter asserts: "What is needed is more

28 See the various books at <http://ogden.basic-english.org/books.html> and <http://ogden.basic-english.org/readings.html> , retrieved 30 October 2008. Exemplary is Ivor Richards' (1942) simplified Basic English version of Plato's **Republic**.

29 See <http://creativecommons.org/> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

30 An initiative developed in tandem by the NCTE and International Reading Association, see <http://www.readwritethink.org> , retrieved 30 October 2008. Such skill-building exercises and activities should be seen with the reservations Krashen (2004c) spells out, yet can serve as some modicum of "supplementation" for recycling input.

31 Trelease (2006, p. 99) stresses: "if you have a child who is struggling with reading, connect him or her with comics. If an interest appears, feed it with more comics."

evidence from researchers that graphic novels improve literacy skills. These research studies would necessarily be conducted in concert with evidence from teachers who have used the format successfully, but these articles are also still relatively scarce” (p. 16).

- Graphic genres across a broad range are now emergent (Schwarz, 2002; Brenner, 2006), and SE should move to utilize this multimodal genre inventively open-access online, perhaps in a series *Graphic Tales in VOA Special English*. Attractive would be graphic storytelling modes in Special English akin to Marjane Satrapi’s *Persepolis* (2007), Laird’s (1997) history of African-Americans, Zinn’s (2008) history of American expansionism (2008), or graphic texts such as Sardar & Van Loon (2006) in the “Introducing” series.³² Another potential paradigm is Arnoldi (1998), a striking graphic autobiography on teenage single motherhood, written in a style analogous to Special English, which Carter (2007b) presents as a potential unit in American literature studies.
- Create a title and subject index of the online SE Archive. For example, there are nearly 400 articles under “Education Report” in the Archive, but users have no way of searching by title and topic.
- Begin to construct a corpus of Special English from the archives and other texts and make this available online. Such a corpus will be useful for lexical investigation in English as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2003) and as a resource for students and teachers interested in lexical collocations in Special English texts.
- Encourage more use of Special English through workshops and other material by U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, by Peace Corps volunteers, English Language Fellows, Regional English Language Officers, and within national ELT associations. There is need here quite literally to walk the talk.

32 Now 70 titles, published by Icon Books.

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Appendix 1 --- Further Comments on Readability and Listenability

Examining the SE lexicon

The 1,500 word-family lexis in the Word Book is geared to standard frequency counts, but also encompasses lexemes from the journalistic and academic registers. It thus contains a number of lexical items beyond West's Minimum Adequate Vocabulary of 1,650 word families (1960, pp. 95-134) and his 2,000-word General Service List (1953). One example is the recently added term genocide, which is ranked at the frequency level of 11,000 words in the British National Corpus, as analyzed by Lextutor. Yet it lacks lexemes such as eye, ear, nose, mouth, tooth. Needed is research that explores in depth how closely the lexis of SE texts actually adheres to the Word Book, how learners perceive text difficulty, and to what extent Special English lexis – by dint of its recurrent inclusion of lower-frequency lexemes -- is actually an effective bridge to more “authentic” academic and technical English.

How easy is easy?

Given the range of technical topics, Special English texts exhibit a notable range of lexical difficulty. For example, a feature report on health, “Brain aneurysms rare: But deadly if they burst,”³³ scores at Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level 8.1, Reading Ease 60. Yet only 85% of its lexis is within the range of the 2,000 most frequent words in the British National Corpus (BNC). The remainder are at the 3,000-word level and above, particularly medical terminology. Six items rank at 6,000-word frequency level (K6) and above. None of these lexemes is contained in the SE Word Book. So despite its high ‘reading ease’ as a result of brevity of sentences and relative clarity of rhetorical structure, the text is lexically quite challenging. A report on current problems in U.S. education, “Schools feel effects of weak economy, high fuel prices as classes begin,” scores at Grade Level 10.50, Reading Ease 50, yet contains 36 word families above the K2 band, nearly 9% of its total lexis.³⁴ Although this text is an excellent

33 Broadcast on 26 August 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-08-26-voa4.cfm>, retrieved 30 October 2008.

34 Broadcast on 30 August 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/2008-08-30-voa3.cfm>, re-

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springboard for class discussion on some current critical issues, how difficult is it perceived by average low-intermediate learners? That is a question only empirical research can answer.

By contrast, texts on regular VOA news often are in the range of 35-46 for Flesch Reading Ease, Grade Level 11-13, with some 15-20% of all lexemes above the 2,000-word frequency band of the British National Corpus. For example, “Obama airs primetime TV ad; McCain continues attacks on rival” scores at Grade Level 12.7, with a Reading Ease of 35.³⁵ Yet the range of difficulty of regular VOA news reports and features varies, and some come close to Special English articles in their measured readability. The blog “Ted Lamphair’s America,” supplemented with Carol Highsmith’s photography, is Grade Level 9, with a Flesch Reading Ease of 55. It is comprehensible, engaging and informative input on grassroots U.S. life and attitudes.³⁶ We can hypothesize that such ‘bridging’ encourages students to readily make the transition from graded Special English to regular VOA discourse, with mutually reinforcing input from both.

Listenability – a research priority

Looking at listening skills in L1 and L2, the author of answers.com (2008)³⁷ notes that

one might be surprised at how little research has been done on listenability. A search on ERIC for “readability” brings up 2,733 references, while “listenability” brings up only nine. It is not so surprising, however, when we consider that research into listening itself did not get well underway until the 1970s. The International Listening Association did not start until 1979.

Citing empirical research, he stresses that “after the 8th grade, listening skills do not keep up with the improvement in reading skills. After the 12th-grade level, the same text may be harder to understand

when heard than when read.”³⁸ He contends: “A large amount of verbal communication is not understood because it is too complicated. This includes speech in radio, TV, classes, educational materials, and communications between professionals and clients” (Dubay, 2008). It would be instructive to look at the special distinctive features of graded listening input in Special English through the lens of research agendas developed by scholars in the International Listening Association. Perspectives in inquiry on listening assessment, listening and SLA, intercultural listening, ways of researching listening and listening pedagogy as reflected in the International Journal of Listening provide a useful framework for re-examining aural comprehensible input.³⁹



retrieved 30 October 2008.

35 Broadcast on 30 October 2008, <http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-10-30-voa1.cfm> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

36 See <http://tedlandphairsamerica.blogspot.com/> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

37 An anonymous article authored by William DuBay.

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38 See also DuBay (2004, pp. 50-53), and his web site, <http://www.impact-information.com/> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

39 On the International Listening Association, see <http://www.listen.org> ; for access to back issues of the IJL, 1987-2000, see <http://www.cios.org/www/ijl/ijltocs.htm> , retrieved 30 October 2008.

RESEARCH PAPER SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

The International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal that advances theory and practice in foreign and second language teaching. IJFLT invites manuscripts on the topic of foreign and second language teaching. Manuscripts can deal with both children and adults in any first language and any target language.

IJFLT seeks manuscripts that deal with both theory and research in foreign and second language teaching that have the potential to speak to practice and practical papers that have the potential to inform theory. In addition, we encourage manuscripts that describe innovations in language teaching that include a theoretical rationale.

IJFLT especially invites short papers (2000 words or fewer). IJFLT believes the profession can be served better by short, succinct papers. Some topics, however, require a longer treatment. Papers will not be refused based on length, but IJFLT encourages authors to submit longer papers only when it is obviously justified.

IJFLT also especially invites replications of previously published studies.

Manuscripts should include the following:

- (1) An abstract, not to exceed 150 words.
- (2) While an extensive review of the literature is not critical, the manuscript should include a theoretical framework, rationale, and appropriate citations.
- (3) Whenever possible, authors of studies that include statistical analyses should include measures of effect sizes as well as statistical significance.
- (4) References and tables can be done in any of the following styles: APA, Chicago, or MLA.
- (5) Biographical information of approximately 25 words, including name, title, university or affiliation, location, and area of expertise. A photo is requested, but optional.

Submissions should be sent electronically to:

ijfleditor@gmail.com.



Improving Language Acquisition as an Adult

An informal list of brainstorms

collected by Jason Fritze, Steve Krashen and Karen Rowan

Experts in language acquisition are well-versed in applying language acquisition research to their classrooms and their students. After years and sometimes decades, though, of teaching beginning levels of a language, as teachers, our skills begin to deteriorate. We feel like stay-at-home parents who are accustomed to only using our language skills to speak baby talk and we wonder if we will ever again be able to speak as academically as we did in college or during our travels.

What can language teachers do to improve their own language proficiency? In an effort to answer that question, three of us sat down over coffee to brainstorm a list of the top three things that language teachers can do that are consistent with language acquisition research to improve their own language fluency in the absence of the opportunity to travel or to converse daily with a native speaker.

We are including our list of brainstorms here, and an invitation to let us know how they work for you.

Read for pleasure.

Junk reading is the kind of reading we never did in school. It is fun and entertaining light reading that does not require a dictionary. For Krashen, junk reading was, until recently, mostly Star Trek novels in translation, alternating one in French and one in German, one of which can often be found in his shirt pocket. He has recently become obsessed with the science-fiction novels of Bernard Werber, and has been doing pleasure reading only in French for the last six months. The problem, he told us, is that French

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novels are expensive, but he has been able to get a few from bookmooch.com, which he joined because it is a source of Werber's books. He especially recommends *Les Thanatonautes* and *L'Ultime Secret*.

He sneaks in extra reading time in airport security lines, while waiting for hotel staff to check him in and wait staff to arrive at his table.

For Fritze, junk reading is *El juego del Ángel* and *La sombra del viento*, by Carlos Ruiz Zafón. According to Fritze, pleasure reading is whatever makes you want to go to bed early to read extra chapters before falling asleep with the book on your chest and whatever compels you to set the alarm for an hour early to read first thing upon waking. Both of these books were that scrumptiously delicious according to Fritze.

For me, it is the kind of reading I would never, ever do in English because it is too self-indulgent and too lacking in any practical application. I am a great fan of Nora Roberts in translation. I have also found a series of romance novels originally written in Spanish that are much steamier than Danielle Steele.

Pleasurable classes

Access to comprehensible input is the second crucial component in a plan to improve our own language acquisition. Ideally, a class would be offered for foreign language teachers that would focus on sheltered subject matter. If we are interested in, for example, cooking, taking a cooking class in the target language is one way to improve our vocabulary within a narrow subject.

Alternatively, a class with a junk reading list would be just as fun. Rather than setting our sights on Don Quixote, just talking about topics that are relevant to us in our classes and hearing comprehensible input on those topics would be at least as helpful, if not more so. Language acquisition should be effortless and involuntary. We pick up new words and improve our grammatical accuracy not just through pleasure reading, but anytime we take our minds off of the language and put it on the content that the language is communicating.

Input at home

Lastly, since our focus is on gaining comprehensible input pleurably, another activity that we hypothesize would be helpful is listening to input. Watching movies in the target language and listening to podcasts can be appropriate for our level of understanding and also provide us with ample access to interesting, pleasurable and compelling input.

I have set my Netflix account so that every other movie is an award winner in Spanish, but before I started that account, I exhausted the Spanish language dubbing of every movie I already had in my private collection. I watched Sandra Bullock in *The Net* dubbed into Spanish and I rented *The Waitress* with Kerri Russell and watched it in Spanish before watching it again in English just to hear her lovely accent. These were not culturally appropriate, but I did have ample access and after each movie I found myself doing what I always do when I am immersed in the languages I love – I was thinking in Spanish again.

Another way to get interesting, narrow comprehensible input (input on one specific subject at a time) is to listen to podcasts. My favorite in English is www.eslpod.com, which is run by Lucy Tse and

Jeff McQuillan. There are a few for early language learners in Spanish at www.fluencyfast.com, as well. Click on “free resources.”

By applying language acquisition research to ourselves rather than our students we can create a list of basic principals to create our own, individualized refresher course:

1. Read for pleasure. Interesting, compelling, engaging junk reading in large quantities is more valuable than more elevated reading in low quantities. We are more likely to read more if we are excited by the prospect of returning to the book.
2. Focus on narrow listening. Listen to podcasts or movies in a genre that you already find interesting. Listen to that same topic or watch many of the same kind of movie so that similar vocabulary will continue to naturally come up until it is acquired. Do not listen to input that is incomprehensible or difficult. Large quantities of easy input create a feeling of acquiring language effortlessly and involuntarily.
3. Seek classes, podcasts, movies and books that are 100% comprehensible so that you can focus on the content, not the words.

Many thanks to Dr. Stephen Krashen and Jason Fritze, who developed this list with me over long discussions and, ultimately, helped to create immersion classes for foreign language teachers that include junk reading and lots of interesting, comprehensible input. Those classes are only offered during the summer in Spanish currently. www.fluencyfast.com. Click on “upcoming classes.”

Dr. Stephen Krashen, language acquisition researcher and author of many books and articles on comprehensible input is most fluent in German. He is currently working on Mandarin. (See Mandarin article – reference to previous IJFLT article). He is also on the IJFLT editorial board.

Jason Fritze, National Board Certified Spanish teacher, workshop presenter on reading, TPRS® and effective language teaching. Jason Fritze is fluent in Spanish and French.

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U.S. President-elect Barack Obama on Foreign Languages:

I agree with that, but, understand this, instead of worrying about whether immigrants can learn English -- they'll learn English -- you need to make sure your child can speak Spanish. You should be thinking about how can your child become bilingual. We should have every child speaking more than one language."

For comic effect, he added, "It's embarrassing when Europeans come over here, they all speak English, they speak French, they speak German. And then we go over to Europe and all we can say is 'Merci beaucoup.'"

He said a foreign language is a "powerful tool" to becoming more employable in the global economy and said children learn languages easier than adults.

"We should be emphasizing foreign languages in our schools from an early age, because children will actually learn a foreign language easier when they're 5, or 6, or 7 than when they're 46, like me," he said.

Traducido al español:

En su discurso en Georgia del 8 de julio, Obama dijo, respondiendo a una pregunta sobre bilingüismo: "Vivimos en una economía global. Y yo no entiendo a la gente que vive preocupada diciendo 'Debemos hablar solo en inglés'. Estoy de acuerdo en que los

inmigrantes deben aprender inglés. Pero es importante que se entienda esto: en vez de preocuparse porque los inmigrantes puedan aprender el inglés es necesario asegurarse de que sus hijos sepan hablar español. Deberían pensar cómo hacer ser bilingües. Todos los niños deberían hablar más de un idioma".

Obama agregó: "Es vergonzoso cuando los europeos vienen aquí... todos hablan inglés, hablan francés, hablan

alemán. Y cuando nosotros vamos a Europa, todo lo que podemos decir es: 'Merci beaucoup'. ¿No es cierto?"

According to the U.S. Department of Education, of every 100 university courses chosen by students, only 8.6 are dedicated to the study of a foreign language.

56% of Europeans speak at least one language other than their native language. This represents an increase from 53% just 5 years ago. 28% of Europeans speak two foreign languages, up from 26% 5 years ago. In Luxembourg, 99% of the people speak a second language.

CONCERNED ABOUT TOO MANY CARBS IN YOUR DIET?

For those of you who watch what you eat, here's the final word on nutrition and health. It's a relief to know the truth after all those conflicting medical studies.

1. The Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.
2. The Mexicans eat a lot of fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.
3. The Chinese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.
4. The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.
5. The Germans drink a lot of beers and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than Americans.

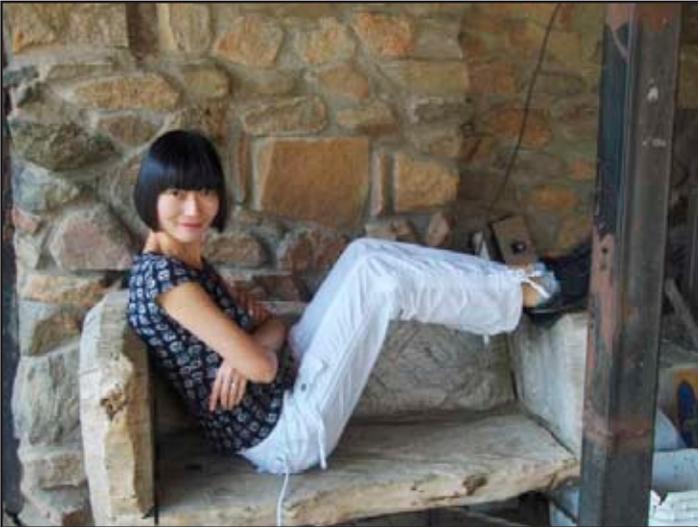
CONCLUSION:

Eat and drink what you like.

Speaking English is apparently what kills you.

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What are you reading right now?



***Linda Li, Bangkok, Thailand.
English teacher.***

I've just finished reading Daniel Pink's two books, *A Whole New Mind* and *Johnny Bunko*. Now I'm reading *Three Cups of Tea* <http://www.threecupsoftea.com/>. by Greg Mortenson.



***Kirstin Plante, English teacher,
The Netherlands.***

I've just started reading *Tools for Teaching* (Fred Jones) www.fredjones.com and I like it because it is practical and it has humor in it. Other books I've been reading lately are Dutch, so...

Other books we've heard recommended by language teachers lately:

The Brain That Changes Itself, Norman Doidge
Joyful Fluency, Eric Jensen and Lynn Dhority
Teaching With the Brain in Mind, Eric Jensen
Tools for Teaching, Fred Jones
English Fever, Stephen D. Krashen
The Reluctant Disciplinarian, Gary Rubinstein
Teach Like Your Hair's On Fire, Rafe Esquith
Johnny Bunko, Daniel Pink
A Whole New Mind, Daniel Pink

Other recommendations or book reviews? Send them to ijflteditor@gmail.com

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Access to Books and a Quiet Comfortable Place to Read: A Practical Guide to Establishing a Free Voluntary Reading Program

by Jason Fritze and Karen Rowan

According to Dr. Stephen Krashen, all that is required to turn children into readers is access to books and a quiet comfortable place to read. Students who read not only have more access to comprehensible input, but also have the opportunity to focus on pleasure reading. We acquire a language when we understand its use in real messages. Therefore we must receive comprehensible input, or understandable and meaningful experience of that language. Reading allows us to gain patterns of vocabulary, semantics and morphology without the cluttering details that would confuse if explicitly taught.

Stephen Krashen calls FVR “reading because you want to.” Free Voluntary Reading is one of the most powerful tools we have in language education and is the missing ingredient in foreign language instruction. It provides a foundation so that higher levels of proficiency may be reached. It results in better reading comprehension, improved writing style, a broader vocabulary, better spelling, and more advanced grammatical development. In *The Power of Reading*, Krashen says, “In my work in language acquisition I have concluded that we acquire language in only one way: by understanding messages, or obtaining comprehensible input in a low-anxiety situation. This is precisely what free voluntary reading is: messages we understand presented in a low-anxiety situation.

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Stephen Krashen, *The Power of Reading: insights from the Research*

In spite of ample evidence and teacher experience that creating classroom libraries of rich and varied texts motivates students to read, actually creating FVR libraries and programs present some problems. Krashen says that all that children need to become literate is access to books and a quiet, comfortable place to read. The reality for most teachers is that lack of access to books and lack of space to create a proper reading environment prevents many of the most dedicated teachers from creating classroom libraries for FVR programs. Access to books and a quiet comfortable place to read becomes a short list of obstacles rather than a simple description. Teachers faced with the task of creating a reading library from scratch have to be creative.

Overcoming Obstacle Number One: Access to Books

1. The first solution is a temporary one, but provides instant access to books until a permanent supply can be obtained. Check out the children’s books from the public library.
2. Download and print on-line books. Go to <http://homepage.mac.com/jasonfritze/Reading/Menu36.html> for a list of on-line books in translation.
3. Offer Scholastic order forms to students. Ask them to share their books throughout the year with the classroom library. At the end of the year, when they have read and re-read their original selections, ask them to donate the books to the classroom library. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/clubs/custsvc/tguide/gettingstarted.htm>
4. Contact book companies that sell Children’s Books at low cost. Sosnowski Books (www.SosnowskiBooks.com) or World of Reading (www.wor.com).
5. Go to www.comprehensibleinput.com for a list of recommended books and ideas for how to find them.

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6. Troll through used book stores, EBay, dollar stores and public library book sales. Children's books in other languages are often sold at a discount.

Overcoming Obstacle Number Two: A Quiet, Comfortable Place to Read

1. Mount standard hardware store rain gutters to the wall or beg book racks from the library. Books that are displayed with visible covers are more likely to entice students to read.

2. Ask for donations of bean bags, large pillows or comfortable chairs. Make sure the room has plenty of light.

3. Encourage students to take the titles that are interesting to them. The room will be mostly quiet, interrupted occasionally by one student pointing out to another something interesting or funny in the book he is reading. Expect chairs to scrape against the floor as some students return books they have finished or that they weren't interested in and select another. Students self-select interesting, comprehensible reading materials, return the books they don't enjoy or find to be too difficult or too boring and settle back into their reading nooks. It is important for students to feel free to read texts that they find comprehensible and interesting. Often they will choose a text and then decide to replace it with something they can understand better. The goal is for all students to eventually read chapter books, which will further stimulate their literacy development. Encouraging students to explore COMPREHENSIBLE readers and children's books beginning in level I boosts their confidence and fosters a love of reading in the target language. Students' reading successes will provide them with greater success in communication in general (listening comprehension, speaking and writing). Comprehensible reading activities allow students to reach ever higher levels of language acquisition and proficiency.

One of the most important components of an FVR program is teachers' modeling reading for pleasure. Teachers who neglect to read for pleasure during FVR time model the opposite and undermine their goals.

FVR is not a synonym for "Study Hall"

The students are quiet and busy. It's tempting to take attendance, catch up on paperwork or let students work on make-up work. One of the most important components of an FVR program is teachers' modeling reading for pleasure. Teachers who neglect to read for pleasure during FVR time model the opposite

and undermine their goals. Some students don't see books in the home, rarely see adult role models read and generally do not see teachers reading for pleasure while at work.

Model life-long learning and reading for pleasure.

Read while your students read. Read because it's fun. Read because it's intriguing. Read because it's a page-turner. Read at a level that is comprehensible to you to improve your own comprehension of the target language and expand your own vocabulary. Read in a comfortable chair. Read with your feet up on the desk and if you want your modeling to be even more powerful say, "Class, I need two extra minutes. I just can't put this book down!"

*Jason Fritze teaches Spanish at El Toro High School in Lake Forest, California and presents workshops on Reading and other Comprehensible Input techniques to language teachers. He is also the author of the **En Español TPRS® Supplement**. www.comprehensibleinput.com.*

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