rEFLections

KMUTT Journal of Language Education

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Editorial

This edition of *rEFLections* presents some recent work by teachers and students in the Department of Applied Linguistics and the Department of Language at KMUTT. The papers focus on issues related to language learning and teaching. All of them were written by teachers and masters students at KMUTT and all but the first study were conducted at this university. Nonetheless, I would like to emphasize that a central goal of this journal is to reflect issues related to the teaching and learning of English in Thailand and that we therefore welcome articles from beyond this institution.

The first article, by Richard Watson Todd, investigates an interesting but long neglected area in reading research. While the activation of schemata is widely regarded as being important for successful, fast and fluent reading, there has been virtually no research on switching schemata. This study compares native and non-native speakers reading a short text.

The second article, written by Pamararat Wiriyakarun, also identifies an issue that has not been widely investigated. The author notes that critical thinking has been incorporated into recent learner-focused educational reforms in Thailand but that it is usually assumed it relates to content subjects rather than language learning. This article challenges that assumption and investigates the compatibility of critical thinking and task-based language learning.

The third article, by Jakraphan Riamliw, Kulawadee Yamkate and Saowaluck Tepsuriwong, also takes a learner-centred theme, that of one-to-one consultations between undergraduate students and teachers. In this study, all the teachers were novice counsellors and the main focus is on the macro-skills, such as initiating, goal-setting and linking, that these counsellors used during their sessions with the students.

The last two articles take perennial issues in language learning and teaching and explore ways to raise awareness of them. Saowaluck Tepsuriwong's article identifies the issue of passive vocabulary and investigates whether training in vocabulary strategies, in particular memory strategies, can help to activate such vocabulary in students' writing. The final article, written by Jonathan Hull, Saratoon Oonkaew and Tanya Pakpoom, looks at introspective writing in teacher education; specifically, it analyzes the contents of journals written by two trainees doing teaching practice at a secondary school in Bangkok.

These articles provide perspectives, sometimes novel ones, on a wide variety of topics that are, I believe, of interest to applied linguists as well as to teachers of English in and beyond Thailand. I hope you find the articles interesting and thought-provoking.

Jonathan Hull, Editor

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Switching schemata

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Abstract
The importance of schemata in reading has been highlighted by many studies. However, one aspect of schemata, namely schema switching, has largely been ignored in the literature. For most texts several schemata are activated in turn, and readers' willingness to switch schemata may affect their comprehension. This paper investigates schema switching by looking at the referents readers assign to an ambiguous *it* in a text. Evidence for schema use comes from readers' identification of words not found in the text as referents of *it*. Most readers switch schemata as they read, with most changes in interpretation of the referent occurring at points where lexical cohesion plays a role. No differences in willingness to switch schemata between native speakers and non-native speakers were found.

Since Kenneth Goodman proposed his influential model of the reading process (1975), much of the research into reading has focused on schemata. A schema can be defined as "an abstract knowledge structure" (Anderson and Pearson, 1984) which provides a framework that facilitates the comprehension of relationships between semantic concepts in a text. Schemata are usually categorised as either content schemata or textual schemata (Carrell, 1988; Kitao, 1990). The latter refers to expectations concerning the organisation of the text and may be related to knowledge of genres (Nwogu, 1991) while the former are generalised expectations of content against which the specific information in a text can be matched. Content schemata are the focus of this paper.

Schemata aid comprehension of a text in two ways. Firstly, the generalised expectations allow the reader to make predictions about the content of the text, thereby facilitating comprehension (Bransford, 1979). This phenomenon is called "expectation driven understanding" (Cook, 1989:71) and allows top-down processing of texts. Secondly, where problems in interpretation, such as ambiguities, occur in texts, schemata help the reader to choose an appropriate interpretation (Bransford and Johnson, 1972).

Schema switching
Schemata, however, should not be seen as fixed. A novel which activates only one schema would probably be very boring. Most texts of reasonable length require the activation of more than one schema for understanding. The reader, then, should be willing to switch schemata as new evidence in the text suggests such a switch is appropriate. Such switching is crucial to understanding most longer texts and is a hallmark of an open mind (Cook, 1997).

Switching between schemata is prompted by information contained in the text (Morgan, 1998). Rumelhart (1980, quoted in Woods, 1996: 62) gives an example of a text requiring switching of schemata:

> Business had been slow since the oil crisis. Nobody seemed to want anything really elegant anymore. Suddenly the door opened and a well-dressed man entered the showroom floor. John put on his friendliest and most sincere expression and walked toward the man.

Rumelhart argues that the first sentence activates a business schema, which is somewhat weakened by the second sentence. The evidence in the third sentence (*well-dressed* and *showroom*) encourages the reader to discard the business schema and replace it with a car-selling schema. This alternative schema is then reinforced by the final sentence, which also allows the generalised expectations of customer and salesman to be instantiated with the specific occurrences of *a well-dressed man* and *John* respectively.

Reading, then, can be seen as a complicated interactive process whereby bottom-up evidence affects the schemata of top-down processing which in turn influence how bottom-up information in the text is interpreted (Driscoll, 1994). In spite of the importance of these effects, since Rumelhart's paper, there has been a lack of research into the ways in which text information affects choice of schema. One of the purposes of this paper is to investigate the kinds of text information which encourage readers to switch schemata.

Native speaker - non-native speaker differences in schema switching
A related area in which there is a noticeable lack of research is whether there is any difference between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) in their willingness to switch schemata. Research which has been conducted into NS-NNS differences concerning schemata (summarised in Barnitz, 1985; Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983) has focused on cultural specificity of schemata. Such research has largely involved comparison of NS and NNS responses to passages which activate a single schema, and thus willingness to switch schemata was not an issue in such research.

As we have seen, however, such willingness to switch schemata may be vital for adequate comprehension of texts. It could be posited that NNSs may be less willing to switch schemata since they may be less certain than NSs about the reliability and importance of information in the text. In addition, unknown cultural factors could also have an influence on willingness to switch schemata. If it were found that NNSs were less willing to switch schemata than NSs, this would have an impact on their reading comprehension with possible implications for the teaching of EFL reading. It is therefore important to gain evidence concerning any difference between NSs and NNSs in their willingness to switch schemata, and this is one of the purposes of this paper.

The study
This study then is an investigation of influences on schema switching and of readers' willingness to switch schemata. Before these are investigated, however, evidence that readers are using schemata to aid comprehension of the given passage is needed, and this is the focus of the first research question. The second question examines where in a

passage readers (irrespective of whether they are NSs or NNSs) switch schemata. The third question compares NS and NNS willingness to switch schemata.

Subjects

There were 60 subjects in the study, comprising 30 NSs (of British, American, Australian and New Zealand origin) and 30 NNSs. All subjects were professional graduates aged between 23 and 55. The majority of NS subjects were male, and the majority of NNSs were female. Although this difference may have some influence on the results, I believe that whether a subject is an NS or an NNS is far more important in determining their willingness to switch schemata. For the purpose of this research, then, it is assumed that there are no differences in willingness to switch schemata between males and females. The NNSs were all Thai and all were experienced English teachers with, presumably, a reasonable level of language competence to avoid problems of insufficient language competence affecting activation of schemata, at least for the text under consideration.

Method

Although Rumelhart's sentence-by-sentence description of a reader's interpretation described above provides a useful depth of data, the qualitative nature of the data makes inter-subject comparisons and analyses difficult. In this paper, then, the design was constructed so as to elicit responses which could be categorised as illustrative of one of two schemata.

The following passage (from *The Sandcastle* by Iris Murdoch) was used:

> (1) He pushed his plate aside. 'Aren't you going to eat that?', said Nan. 'Do you mind if I do?' She reached across a predatory fork and took the meat from Mor's plate. 'It's too hot to eat', said Mor. (2) He looked out of the window. (3) The tower of the school was idling in the heat, swaying a little in the cracked air. (4) From the arterial road nearby came the dull murmur, never stilled by day, of the stream of traffic now half-way between London and the coast. (5) In the heat of the afternoon it sounded like insects buzzing in the wood. (6) Time was longer, longer, longer in the summer.

The passage was split into six sections as indicated. The first section includes the relevant context up to the word *it* which is the focus of this study. After that, following Rumelhart's sentence-by-sentence approach to analysing schemata, the following five sections each comprise one sentence of the text. The six sections were presented to the subjects in turn. After reading each section, the subjects were asked what *it* in section 1 referred to. It was assumed that there are two possible referents for *it*: *meat* and *weather*, and subjects' responses were categorised as one of these. The study, then, is predicated on the assumption that the reader's interpretation of *it* will be dictated by the active schema being used.

Results

Evidence for schema use
Are the subjects using schemata in reading the passage? Before we can investigate schema switching, we must first find evidence that the subjects are using schemata in processing the passage. The subjects' responses to the question concerning the referent of *it* provide such evidence. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the 58 responses after section 1 which were categorised as *meat*. (Two subjects only gave responses which could be categorised as *weather*.)

Table 1: Responses categorised as *meat*

Response	No. of subjects
meat	31
food	18
other	9

The 18 responses of *food* (31% of the responses categorised as *meat*) are suggestive of schema use. The word *food* does not appear in the passage whereas *meat* does. If schemata were not influencing the readers' interpretations, we could expect all responses to be *meat*, taken literally from the passage. Since many responses were *food*, we can conclude that top-down processing indicative of schemata is involved. Further evidence comes from responses categorised as *other* in Table 1. These included "whatever it is that Nan is going to eat", "something she wanted to eat - I don't know what it is" and "whatever is on the plate". Responses such as these imply that an eating schema was activated with the instantiation of the food slot by *meat* being overlooked.

Similarly, of the 42 subjects' responses categorised as *weather* (41 subjects whose final responses were *weather* and 1 subject whose response was *weather* after stage 3 but who later switched back to *meat*), only three were taken literally from the passage (*heat* in section 3 of the passage) whereas the rest (29 responses of *weather*, 10 responses of *temperature*) imply use of schemata. We can therefore conclude that the subjects were using schemata in reading the passage.

Influences on schema switching
After which section do subjects switch schemata and what text information induces most switches? Table 2 below shows the responses of all 60 subjects after each section categorised as either *meat* or *weather*. We can see that, overall, the subjects' responses gradually changed from *meat* to *weather* as they progressed through the passage. At each of the five opportunities to switch schemata, more of the subjects interpreted *it* as referring to *weather* than previously, suggesting that the later sections of the passage continually reinforce a *weather* schema.

Table 2: Subjects' responses after each section

	meat	*weather*	No. of subjects switching schemata
After section 1	58	2	-
After section 2	48	12	10
After section 3	33	27	15
After section 4	32	28	1
After section 5	27	33	5
After section 6	19	41	8

If such schema switching were relatively independent of information in the text, we would expect the rate at which subjects switch to remain constant between all sections (i.e. we would expect 7.8 subjects to switch schemata after each section). By comparing the rates observed in the study with this expected rate, we find that the observed rates of schema switching are significantly different from a constant rate (χ^2 = 14.22, p < 0.01). This implies that there is information in the passage which has a significant influence on the schemata activated.

The comparatively large number of subjects switching from *meat* to *weather* after section 3 of the passage suggests that section 3 contains information likely to induce a schema switch in readers. I would suggest that the word *heat* in section 3, which Hoey (1991) would classify as a complex lexical repetition of *hot* in *'It's too hot to eat'*, provides a close link between sections 1 and 3. *Heat* in section 3 clearly refers to the weather, and thus *it* in section 1 is reinterpreted as referring to *weather*.

Similarly, section 2 also induces a higher than average amount of schema switching. Unlike section 3, in section 2 there are no explicit links to the weather, so the high number of switches is somewhat surprising. However, van Dijk (1977) analyses exactly the same event of a character looking out of a window as a link between two schemata. The *window* provides the link between schemata concerning inside activities and those concerning outside activities. Thus, after section 2, the reader may evaluate the active eating schema as being irreconcilable with outside activities and consequently switch schemata.

On the other hand, section 4 would appear to contain very little information likely to induce a schema switch. Although concerning outside activities, section 4 has no explicit links to the weather. Following section 3, which explicitly reinforces a weather schema, section 4 provides no additional information to induce readers to switch schemata and thus is the stage at which the fewest switches are made.

Differences between native speakers and non-native speakers
Do NSs and NNSs differ in their willingness to switch schemata? Assuming that willingness to switch schemata is closely correlated with schema switching, investigating any differences between NSs and NNSs in the amount of schema switching will be

indicative of differences in their willingness to switch schemata. Table 3 shows the number of NS and NNS subjects for each kind of schema progression between sections.

Table 3: Comparison of NS - NNS schema progression

Section	s = 1		s = 2		s = 3		s = 4		s = 5		All sections	
	NS	NNS	NS	NNS	NS	NNS	NS	NNS	NS	NNS	NS	NNS
M_{s+1}/M_s	23	25	13	19	14	16	12	15	6	13	68	88
W_{s+1}/M_s	5	5	10	6	0	3	2	3	6	3	23	20
M_{s+1}/W_s	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	1	3
W_{s+1}/W_s	2	0	6	5	16	9	16	11	18	14	58	39

M = *meat*   W = *weather*
M_{s+1}/M_s = number of subjects who responded *meat* after section s+1, having already responded *meat* after section s. For example, for the first column, where s=1, M_{s+1}/M_s refers to the number of subjects who responded *meat* after section 2 having already responded *meat* after section 1. Thus, for example, 23 NS subjects responded *meat* after both sections 1 and 2; 5 NS subjects responded *meat* after section 1 but *weather* after section 2; no NS subjects responded *weather* after section 1 and then switched to *meat* after section 2; and 2 NS subjects responded *weather* after both sections 1 and 2.

To see whether the differences between NSs and NNSs shown in Table 3 are significant, we can take the interpretations of the NSs to be the expected norm and compare the observed results of the NNSs against these. For schema progression in all sections and for the progression between each of the sections, there are no significant differences between NSs and NNSs (all sections, $\chi^2 = 7.50$; s = 1, $\chi^2 = 2.08$; s = 2, $\chi^2 = 3.22$; s = 3, $\chi^2 = 7.10$; s = 4, $\chi^2 = 2.46$; s = 5, $\chi^2 = 4.08$). We can therefore conclude that there are no differences in schema switching between NSs and NNSs.

Discussion
The study presented here provides additional evidence for schema use by investigating the words readers use in identifying referents. If a reader identifies a referent by using words taken directly from the text (such as *meat* in the text considered here), there is no reason to believe that schemata are necessarily involved in identifying the referent. If, on the other hand, the reader uses a paraphrase or words which do not appear in the text (for example, using *food* rather than *meat*), this may be indicative of the use of content schemata. Looking at how readers identify referents, then, may provide an alternative method for future investigations into schemata.

The results from the second question concerning schema switching highlight the importance of lexis and of links between schemata. With switching occurring most frequently after section 3, where *heat* is a complex lexical repetition of *hot*, the importance of lexical cohesion in processing texts identified by Hoey (1991) is supported in this study, since lexical repetition is the most influential kind of text information in inducing schema switching. In addition, the influence of sentences which may link

different semantic supersets or topics (van Dijk, 1977; Watson Todd, 1997), such as section 2, which provides a link between the inside and outside worlds in the text, is also highlighted. These influences on schema switching could be incorporated into the teaching of reading to aid learners in more efficient processing of texts.

Lastly, the lack of any support for differences between NSs and NNSs in schema switching could be viewed as a non-result. There is a tendency for non-results to be underreported in literature in many areas, but they are often as important as significant positive results. Above, I posited two possible influences on willingness to switch schemata, namely, cultural factors, and certainty about reliability and importance of information in the text. For Thais, at least, cultural factors do not appear to be a consideration. For Thais with advanced English language skills such as the subjects in this study, certainty about the information in the text also does not appear to be a factor. Although these findings might not be generalisable to non-Thais or to lower-level Thai learners, they do suggest that willingness to switch schemata may be one thing the reading teacher does not have to worry about, and thus may well be of importance to some readers of this journal.

This paper examined content schemata which may seem of more concern to background knowledge than language, and so of little relevance to language teachers. However, several points highlighted by this study are of importance in the language classroom. Firstly, content schemata play an important role in the comprehension of texts, and thus either texts should be selected which fit with learners' existing content schemata or teachers should be prepared to contextualise texts in terms of providing background knowledge crucial to understanding. Secondly, when looking at the discourse level, teachers need to consider whether to teach how lexical cohesion and links between semantic supersets can aid comprehension, in addition to teaching more usual language foci such as discourse markers. Thirdly, the ways in which meaning is assigned to an ambiguous *it* in this paper may inform the teaching of assigning referents to pronouns.

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Critical thinking and task-based learning: Are they compatible?

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Abstract
Critical thinking has become mandatory in the nationwide curricula under the present educational reform. However, a number of EFL teachers and curriculum developers still seriously doubt whether this skill can be cultivated effectively. How can they develop their students' ability to express critical thinking skills while simultaneously improving their language learning skills? Some researchers claim that critical thinking only seems applicable within content-based instruction. This paper explores its compatibility with other types of pedagogical approach, such as task-based learning, to see whether this approach can promote critical thinking within EFL settings in Thailand.

Introduction

As the world has changed dramatically in the past few years, the government of Thailand has realized that the old educational system that has emphasized 'chalk and talk' pedagogy may no longer be appropriate and cannot cope with the changing situation. Consequently, the National Education Act was enacted in 1999, and since then there have been many attempts to revolutionize the existing educational system. Many educators and teachers believe that the heart of educational reform is the reform of learning. Therefore, the Office of National Education Commission (ONEC), in collaboration with the nation's leading scholars and researchers, have conducted research on learning theories. They found five crucial theories to be implemented in the classroom to develop teaching-learning process. These theories involve Happy Learning, Participatory Learning, Thinking Process Development Learning, Moral Value Development Learning and Aesthetic Value Development Learning. In other words, the current educational system aims at developing Thai people in all the following aspects: physical and mental health; intellect; knowledge; morality; integrity; and a desirable way of life. Thai people must be equipped with all kinds of knowledge, and they must know not only 'what' but also 'how' and 'why' (Kaewdang, 2000).

Rationale

Even though recent trends in EFL/ESL instruction have emphasized the importance of integrating thinking skills in the English language curriculum, little research on critical thinking has been conducted, but this research reveals that critical thinking can be combined effectively with content-based instruction (Davidson and Dunham, 1996; Fairgrieve and Walton, 1996). I am, however, unaware of any research that has reported on the compatibility of teaching critical thinking skills with a task-based approach in spite of the fact that, like content-based instruction, task-based pedagogy is regarded as one particular development within the broader 'communication approach' (Littlewood, 2003).

What is critical thinking?

McWhorter (1988) defines critical thinking as the careful, deliberate evaluation of ideas and information for the purpose of judging their merit or value. Two key aspects

of critical thinking are evaluating statements and evaluating persuasive materials. The former involves distinguishing between fact and opinion, evaluating different viewpoints, evaluating generalizations, testing hypotheses and weighing the adequacy of data and evidence. The latter is concerned with recognizing persuasive language, identifying biased and slanted writing and evaluating arguments.

Bloom's taxonomy of learning behaviors consists of six levels ranging from Knowledge, the lowest level, to Evaluation, the highest one. Each level relates to a higher level of cognitive ability (Bloom, 1956). The following table relates Bloom's Taxonomy with materials and situations suitable for each level of thinking (Wakefield, 1998).

Table 1: Bloom's levels, materials and associated behaviors

Bloom's level	Materials / Situations	Measurable behaviors
Knowledge	Events, people, newspapers, magazine articles, definitions, videos, dramas, textbooks, films, television programs, recordings, media presentations	Define, describe memorize, label, recognize, name, draw, state, identify, select, write, locate, recite
Comprehension	Speech, story, drama, cartoon, diagram, graph, summary, outline, analogy, poster, bulletin board	Summarize, restate, paraphrase, illustrate, match, explain, defend, relate, infer, compare, contrast, generalize
Application	Diagram, sculpture, illustration, dramatization, forecast, problem, puzzle, organizations, classifications, rules, systems, routines	Apply, change, put together, construct, discover, produce, make, report, sketch, solve, show, collect, prepare
Analysis	Survey, questionnaire, an argument, a model, displays, demonstrations, diagrams, systems, conclusions, report, graphed information	Examine, classify, categorize, research, contrast, compare, disassemble, differentiate, separate, investigate, subdivide
Synthesis	Experiment, game, song, report, poem, prose, speculation, creation, art, invention, drama, rules	Combine, hypothesize, construct, originate, create, design, formulate, role-play, develop
Evaluation	Recommendations, self-evaluations, group discussions, debate, court trial, standards, editorials, values	Compare, recommend, assess, value, apprise, solve, criticize, weigh, consider, debate

Why critical thinking?
Thinking skills are considered a very important factor affecting academic success at college or university. Students who use thinking skills in their learning tend to be more successful in meeting the demands and expectations of the university (McWhorter, 1988). Critical thinking is a type of thinking skill that university students need to be trained to do. Students can become proficient language users if

they can display critical thinking through the language (Muhammad Kamarul Kabilan, 2000). Students' achievement in language learning depends on the students themselves, the pedagogy and their teachers. It could be said that it is the teachers who determine the students' success or failure in both learning and practising critical thinking. Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards pedagogy play important roles in students' perceptions of critical thinking.

What is task-based learning?
The term 'task' in task-based learning has been defined differently by several teachers and writers. For example, Williams and Burden (1997) viewed a task as 'any activity that learners engage in to further the process of learning a language' whereas Estaire and Zanon (1994) suggest a broader definition. They divide it into two subcategories: communication tasks that focus on communication and enabling tasks that focus on form. Many other teachers and writers make a clear distinction between tasks and exercises. Tasks involve communicative language use in which the learners' attention is focused on meaning rather than linguistic structures. Activities that focus upon and practise specific elements of knowledge, skills and strategies needed for the task are called exercises. Skehan's (1998) definition of task supports this distinction:
- meaning is primary;
- there is some communication problem to solve;
- there is some sort of relationship to real-world activities;
- task completion has some priority;
- the assessment of task is in terms of outcome.

In evaluating a task, three different perspectives should be taken into consideration: tasks as workplans, tasks in process and tasks as outcomes (Breen, 1989). In other words, a task evaluation can be done by investigating the various types of information: (1) information about how the task was performed, (2) information about what learning took place as result of performing the task and (3) information about the teacher's and the students' opinions about the task (Ellis, 1998).

What is the relationship between content-based instruction and task-based language teaching?
Carson et al. (1997) describe the relationship between content-based instruction and task-based language teaching and say that they are both based on the idea that real language learning is most likely to occur when the context of that learning is real and when the learners use their new language to fulfill 'real' communicative purposes. However, the two approaches are still different in terms of the selection of a curriculum organizing principle. For content-based instruction, the curriculum is organized around content whereas, for task-based language teaching, the curriculum is organized around tasks. Nevertheless, content plays a significant role in task-based language teaching. The content in a task-based approach is determined by the learning tasks. For example, if the tasks are academic in nature, such as writing essay exams, doing lab reports, participating in class discussions, content should be selected to maximize the opportunities to master these specific academic tasks.

The connection between content-based instruction and task-based language teaching may pinpoint the compatibility of teaching critical thinking skills with a task-based approach. Furthermore, the main characteristics of a task, particularly one that

involves collaborative learning and problem solving, may harmonize with teaching critical thinking skills.

Purpose of the study

In Thailand, thinking skills are becoming a recognized and accepted part of the school and college curriculum such as the innovative EFL curriculum at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). The Department of Language, School of Liberal Arts, include thinking skills in several tasks of English foundation courses to foster thinking and encourage students to understand and realize the importance and nature of thinking. However, there seem to be some doubts about the effectiveness of the tasks and the relationship of teaching of critical thinking and task-based learning. This research was, therefore, conducted to find out if there is compatibility between teaching critical thinking skills and a task-based approach by examining teachers' perspectives on teaching critical thinking in the language classroom and students' perceptions of the example task used to promote critical thinking.

Methodology

The subjects of this research were six English teachers of the Department of Language, School of Liberal Arts, who taught LNG 103, a foundation English course for undergraduate students that includes an Experiment task (described below), and eighty-five students who took the course in semester 2 of the academic year 2002. Two sets of questionnaires, a teacher questionnaire and a student questionnaire, were used as research tools (see, respectively, Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The teacher questionnaire was open-ended and concerned with teachers' attitudes towards teaching critical thinking in the EFL classroom and their reports on how they taught it in the 'real' situation. The student questionnaire inquired about students' perceptions and preferences towards the Experiment task. This task was designed to give students the chance to practice thinking critically and logically by conducting simple experiments, for example, cutting onions without their eyes watering, throwing eggs without breaking them, and making the most efficient paper aeroplane.

Experiment task

Time: 4 weeks (8 lessons = 8 steps)
Objectives: 1. To give students the chance to practice thinking critically and logically
    2. To have students carry out an experiment to reveal their thinking
    3. To analyze the results in order to conclude the findings
    4. To write a report of the whole research and experiment
Assessment: 1-minute presentation 2 %
    Written report 10%
    Oral presentation of the completed experiment 8%

Procedures

Step 1

Teacher leads a discussion regarding kinds of experiments students used to conduct in science subjects. Teacher gives an example of simple experiments such as finding ways to prevent eyes from watering when slicing onions. Each student must think of the topic he wants to work on for his experiment and prepare to give a one-minute presentation of his idea in the next lesson. Teacher explains some constraints of the task. For example, the experiment must:

- be practical and simple;
- be concluded in concrete observations and results;
- not use hazardous materials;
- not use any equipment borrowed from any laboratories or departments;
- not be concerned with any serious science from other courses;
- not be on things that people already know.

Step 2

Each student gives a one-minute presentation of his idea. Teacher writes on the board all the topics of the students' experiments. Students form groups of four and each group discusses and chooses one topic from the list. Each group must work on a different topic. Teacher tells students to find between two and four sources of information that can be used to explain the theory underlying their experiments. Teacher must explain that, even though their experiments must not be related to any 'serious sciences' from other courses (so as to prevent students copying the ideas of existing experiments), there must be some theories that can explain the rationale and result of their experiments.

Step 3

Teacher shows some model versions of how to write the methodology of the experiment. Students write the first drafts of their methodology consisting of 3Ms (materials, method and measurement).

Step 4

Teacher provides guideline questions for peer feedback. Students swap groups and discuss each group's drafts. Then students re-group and revise their drafts. Students are assigned to do their experiment outside class and bring their notes on results of the experiment for group discussions in the next lesson.

Step 5

Teacher provides a series of questions for their discussions. Students remain in the same groups and discuss how to analyze the results. When each group finishes their discussion, teacher walks around monitoring and then gets feedback from each group.

Step 6

Students study the format and the expressions of report writing and learn how to write each part, especially the review of literature and results of the experiment.

Step 7

Each group writes their report, which is composed of the following required elements: Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Results, Conclusion, and References.

Step 8

Each group gives a presentation on their experiment and hands in their written report.

Findings

Teachers' attitudes

All of the teachers in this study admired the instructional usefulness of critical thinking skills and realized the importance of critical thinking in English language teaching. They also suggested that critical thinking should be taught in every subject in order to train our students to become critical thinkers. Some viewed it as a necessary skill for an informed society. For the Experiment task, which aims at promoting students' critical thinking, most teachers stated that they could teach critical thinking through this task by using different methods such as identifying

problems, testing hypotheses, and evaluating results. Surprisingly, one teacher answered that students did not learn critical thinking through this task.

Students' perceptions
More than half of the students revealed their preferences toward the Experiment task (61.17%); 22.35% of the students reported that they liked it very much; 14.11 % said they neither liked nor disliked it; only 2.35% of them said they did not like it. However, almost all students (99%) accepted that the Experiment task was useful: 48.23% thought it was very useful; 41.17% considered it fairly useful; and 10.58% said it was extremely useful. Moreover, the majority of the students revealed that they thought this task was very useful for their academic studies and could be applied in their real-life situations. In doing this task, students reported they learned how to work cooperatively and practiced thinking skills such as reasoning, problem-solving, creative thinking, decision-making, determining the relevance and validity of information, and finding and evaluating solutions or alternative ways of treating problems. Also, a large number of students agreed that the Experiment task helped them improve their English proficiency because they could practice the four skills as well as grammar while working on this task. Besides, many students viewed the Experiment task as fun and thought it could broaden their knowledge of science. However, some drawbacks were also mentioned. For example, some students preferred to work in a smaller group or individually. Some said that they wanted to work on a more serious scientific experiment because they had faced difficulty in finding theories to support their experiments. Some asked for more practice on presentation skills.

Conclusion
Interestingly, although the teaching of critical thinking through a task-based activity in the EFL classroom yielded rather positive results, some surprising findings concerning teachers' and students' unclear understanding of the teaching and learning of critical thinking skills show that orientation, for teachers and students alike, is still needed for fostering critical thinking in the classroom. If teachers have a profound understanding of critical thinking and use appropriate strategies for teaching critical thinking skills, the students' ability to think critically will be enhanced.

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Appendix 1: Teacher questionnaire

Research topic: Critical thinking and task-based learning: Are they compatible?
Objectives: 1. To find out teachers' perspectives on teaching of critical thinking in the task-based English language curriculum at KMUTT
2. To investigate teachers' techniques in teaching of critical thinking in the task-based English language curriculum at KMUTT

Explanation: This questionnaire has two parts: Part 1 surveys teachers' perspectives on teaching of critical thinking in the task-based English language curriculum at KMUTT; Part 2 asks teachers how they teach critical thinking in the task-based English language curriculum at KMUTT using an Experiment task as a case study.

Part 1
1. Do you think that critical thinking can be taught in the English language classroom?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
2. Do you think that teaching of critical thinking in the English language classroom is vital?
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
3. Do you think that teaching of critical thinking can be done in the task-based English language curriculum at KMUTT? (If your answer is 'no', you don't have to do the rest of the questionnaire.)
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

4. What tasks in the task-based English language curriculum at KMUTT do you think can be used for teaching critical thinking?

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Part 2
Explain briefly how you teach critical thinking in the Experiment task of LNG 103.

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Give any other comments on the teaching of critical thinking (if any).

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Appendix 2: Student questionnaire

Research topic: Critical thinking and task-based learning: Are they compatible?
Objective: To find out students' perceptions and preferences of the Experiment task used to promote critical thinking

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1. How much do you like the Experiment task?
  ☐ Extremely   ☐ A lot   ☐ Neither like nor dislike
  ☐ Somewhat   ☐ Not at all

2. Do you think the Experiment task is useful? (If your answer is 'no', you don't have to do the rest of the questionnaire.)
  ☐ Yes   ☐ Don't know   ☐ No

3. In your opinion, how useful is the Experiment task to you?
  ☐ Extremely useful   ☐ Very useful   ☐ Fairly useful
  ☐ Somewhat   ☐ Not at all

4. In your opinion, to what extent is the Experiment task useful to you?
  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Do you think that the Experiment task should be improved? How?
  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
  ……………………………………………………………………………………………
  ……………………………………………………………………………………………

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The use of macro-skills in giving consultations

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Abstract
Consultations, which are sessions arranged for assisting students to manage the lessons or learning problems, have become a part of the learner-centred classroom. Teachers, especially those who are new to dealing with helping students in this way, would probably feel uneasy about them. This paper reports the results of a study on the use of macro-skills in giving consultations by novice university teachers. It also discusses some practical perspectives that would be applicable and beneficial in counselling.

How is consultation significant in language learning support?
Consultation is regarded as a crucial component of the language class since it is supposed to help support and promote self-directed and self-managed language learning. Johnson and Lozada (2001: 83-85) state that consultation can guide the students to monitor their weaknesses and correct their mistakes. A teacher working as a counsellor will give advice or suggestions to students in order to encourage them to be more engaged in their learning and more aware of their learning needs.

Consultation not only promotes self-directed and self-managed language learning, but it also helps reduce the gap between teachers and students because students are better able to discuss their problems privately with a caring helper (Johnson and Lozada, 2001: 85). So far, it could be seen that consultation is essential to the classroom. A teacher, thus, needs some practical skills to handle it. The next section will introduce the counselling skills that the teacher-counsellor should have in giving consultations.

Counselling skills
In giving consultations, Kelly (1996: 94-97) proposes two major counselling skills that the teacher-counsellor needs: macro- and micro-skills. Macro-skills are a group of counselling skills that consist of initiating, goal-setting, guiding, modelling, supporting, giving feedback, evaluating, linking and concluding. Kelly sees these skills as a framework in the process of giving consultations. In other words, they are skills for a teacher to manage the stages of giving consultations and facilitate learner self-management of a self-access project. Micro-skills are a group of behaviours that a counsellor engages in in various ways during any interaction with a learner. They, in other words, are seen as strategies that help the counsellor effectively communicate with the learner in any stages of giving consultations. The micro-skills in this context are composed of attending, restating, paraphrasing, summarizing, questioning, interpreting, reflecting feelings, empathizing and confronting.

In this study, however, the focus will be on macro-skills only since they are seen as skills that assist teachers to gain insights into the process of giving consultations, which is the basis of what novice teachers should know.

Background and purpose of the study

All first-year students at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) who take LNG 101 (a foundation EAP course for undergraduates) are taught and trained in learning strategies in class. They then have a chance to apply those strategies through the tasks that encourage them to study on their own at KMUTT Self Access Learning Centre and other resources. To do this, they need to fill in their task record forms and keep a record of their work in a portfolio. The students are also encouraged to study grammar points of their own interest or the ones where they made mistakes in writing. The consultations then are arranged on a one-to-one basis outside class time. The students are required to bring the materials they have studied to the consultation sessions. Each student must have two consultations with his/her teacher throughout the semester.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate both the macro-skills of counselling used by teachers who were inexperienced in giving language consultations and the outcomes from the skills used.

Subjects and methodology

The subjects were four pairs of teachers and students of LNG 101. The teachers were participants on KMUTT's masters in applied linguistics; they were teaching this course for the whole semester as a requirement of their teaching practice. In contrast, the students were randomly selected first-year undergraduates who studied and had consultations with the four teachers. Among the four subject teachers, two had had no experience in teaching before taking the teaching practice while the others had been teaching for a few years. However, none of these teachers had had any prior experience in giving language consultations. The two consultation sessions of each pair of teachers and students were recorded and transcribed to identify the types and frequency of macro-skills used. The outcomes were also investigated through the tapescripts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each teacher and student after each consultation to support the results from the tapescripts.

However, in analyzing data or categorizing macro-skills used in giving consultations, some skills and the description proposed by Kelly (1996: ibid) were adjusted to suit the situation of the study. The criteria used for data analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories and description of adjusted macro-skills for data analysis

Skills	Description	Purpose
Initiating	Introducing new directions and options	To promote learner focus and reduce uncertainty
Goal-setting	Helping the learner identify problems and solutions or formulate specific goals/objectives	To enable the learner to focus on a manageable goal
Guiding	Offering advice and information, direction and ideas; suggesting; demonstrating or explaining target behaviour	To help the learner develop alternative strategies and gain examples of knowledge and skills that he/she desires

Supporting	Providing encouragement and reinforcement	To help the learner persist; create trust; acknowledge and encourage effort
Following up	Helping the learner report on the task done and reflect on the problems/difficulties encountered	To check the learner's progress and problems/difficulties faced during working, leading to providing solutions
Giving feedback	Expressing a constructive reaction to the learner's effort, performance or task done, including helping the learner to self-evaluate own performance	To acknowledge the significance of the learner's effort and achievement, and assist the learner's self-awareness and capacity for self-appraisal
Linking	Connecting the learner's goals and tasks to wider issues, new issues/problems to the learner's existing knowledge or what the teacher has suggested to new issues	To help establish the relevance and value of the learner's project
Concluding	Bringing a sequence of work/self-study or process of consultation to a conclusion, including assisting the learner to conclude what the teacher has explained/guided, or main points of the topic consulted	To help the learner establish boundaries and define achievement

Findings

The findings of the study are presented under two major points as follows:

Macro-skills used in giving consultations

The findings reveal that the teachers used all types of macro-skills, but the proportion of distribution was different. The skills that were frequently used are 'guiding', 'giving feedback' and 'following up' (22.78%, 22.78% and 20.25%, respectively). 'Supporting', 'linking' and 'concluding' were used at lower frequencies (11.39%, 10.13% and 7.60%). The skills that were used least frequently are 'goal-setting' (3.80%) and 'initiating' (1.27%). The unequal number of the skills used by each novice teacher appears to be affected by:

- the lack of understanding of the nature of giving consultations and the counselling skills of the teacher-counsellors
- the language proficiency level of the students
- the topic selected for consultation
- the requirement for using English (L2) and marks given in consulting
- the way of conducting consultations (on a one-to one basis)

Moreover, it was found that the sequence of macro-skills used by each teacher was also different. It was not linear; for instance, the teachers did not always start the session with 'initiating' and end with 'concluding'. Each skill could be used at almost any time during

the sessions, and it could occur more than once. The sequence of the skills used tended to vary according to the level of language proficiency of the students rather than the teaching experience of the teachers. In addition, it was observed that the occurrence or the use of the macro-skills was often found along with such micro-skills as 'attending', 'questioning' and 'restating'.

Outcomes from the use of macro-skills
Using macro-skills in giving consultations provided positive outcomes for both teachers and students. The students revealed in the interview that they gained more techniques, knowledge and understanding of the topics studied as well as self-study and self-assessment. These might have resulted from the use of 'guiding', 'following up', 'giving feedback' and 'concluding'. With these skills, the teachers offered advice, tactics, or ideas, checked the students' learning progress, helped the students explore their strengths and weaknesses and concluded the main points of the topics discussed and so forth. The students, moreover, developed positive attitudes towards English learning and reported that they had more confidence about knowledge of the topics studied.

As for the teachers, they felt they were more aware of the constraints in giving consultations (e.g. time limitation, language proficiency of students, students' attitudes towards consultations) and their own weaknesses in giving consultations and in classroom teaching (e.g. insufficiently preparing the students for consultations or explaining the subject matter to the students directly during the consultations). In addition, they reported that they enhanced their knowledge and skills in giving consultations and developed better relationships with their students since both parties had chances to interact with each other more personally, particularly because of the use of the 'supporting' skill during the interactions.

In short, both teachers and students received positive outcomes from the use of macro-skills. However, there were some constraints concerning the lack of understanding of the nature of counselling skills, roles of teacher-counsellors and learners and ways of conducting consultations, which would obscure the ultimate outcomes from both parties.

Practical perspectives
The findings of the study suggest the following:

1. Although the different number of the macro-skills used in giving consultations has not proved their effectiveness, the results of the study convince the researchers that arranging a training session for giving consultations for the new teacher-counsellors would lead to more effective and efficient outcomes. This is sustained by Redman's statement (1995: 78) that "the newer you are to counselling, the more practice you need to get".

2. In a training session, there are three main facets that should be considered: macro- and micro-skills of counselling, roles of teacher-counsellors and learners, and ways to conduct consultations.

   The teachers, before conducting consultations, should be trained not only in macro-skills but also in micro-skills. This is because, throughout the consultation sessions, the teacher-counsellors used not only macro-skills but also some micro-skills in conjunction with the macro-skills.

Moreover, both teacher-counsellors and learners should be clear about their roles. The teachers should know what a counsellor is required to do and how to perform in a consultation. If not, they would still play the roles of a teacher as they normally do in the classroom. Riley (1997) points out that a classroom teacher and a counsellor have different roles and these roles should be acknowledged to enable the teachers to see the differences between the performances of counsellors and teachers (e.g. giving feedback instead of simply evaluating the students, suggesting instead of selecting materials for them, supporting instead of rewarding or punishing them). In terms of learners' roles, they also need guidance on what to do. The teacher-counsellors should give them suggestions on what issues to raise during the consultations, such as making an appointment with the teacher, bringing the materials studied to the sessions and reporting the problems faced. Above all, both parties should understand that consultations are not one-to-one teaching sessions where the teacher-counsellors explain to the students what they are not clear about.

Finally, alternative ways to conduct consultations (i.e. individual and group sessions as well as those that are a combination of both) should be included in the training session to overcome the time constraint. Individual consultations should be conducted for the learners whose learning problems, needs or topics selected for consultations are different from those of their peers whereas group consultations should be used with the learners who have the same problems, needs or topics.

3.   Simulation or role-play (see Gardner and Miller, 1999: 192) should be considered in training the teachers about counselling skills (both macro- and micro-skills) and roles of teacher-counsellors. This is because the training sessions require practical skills rather than theories, and it is insufficient to know and be able to talk about what to do. The counsellors have to be able to use the skills as well (Nelson-Jones, 2000: 83).

4.   The conditions in consultations, e.g. giving marks and the use of English (L2) as a medium, should be considered carefully because they could obscure the real objectives of the consultations. Marks can be an incentive but, at the same time, they can be a condition that causes stress and worry for the learners. Riley (1997) ascribes 'marking', or 'grading', to the role of teachers, not counsellors. Similarly, using English in consultations provides a chance for the learners to improve their speaking, but it is not an easy situation for them, especially for the weak ones, to express their ideas or reflect on the problems they face. Some cannot even understand the questions or whatever the teachers say to them.

Conclusion
This paper has revealed the findings of this study of university teachers' use of macro-skills in giving consultations for the first time. It is found that these consultations provided positive outcomes for both teachers and students. However, since consultations are a practical activity, the teacher as a counsellor as well as the learner as a counsellee should recognize their roles in order that both parties can achieve the ultimate goals of every consultation.

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Vocabulary strategy training: An attempt to activate passive vocabulary for written communication

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Abstract
This article is based upon the reflection on my own teaching situation in an attempt to answer the question 'Why can't my students make use of the vocabulary they encountered while reading in writing a report?' The problem inspired me to add lessons on vocabulary strategy training as a remedy. It was noticed that, after the lessons, most students successfully used a variety of memory strategies to help them enlarge their vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, the lessons helped them retrieve and activate words in their lexicon for writing, suggesting that vocabulary understanding is vital in activating passive vocabulary for written communication.

Introduction

In the task-based curriculum of the Department of Language, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), students are encouraged to learn the language by using English to participate in different tasks. While performing these tasks, the students are required to be actively involved in their language learning, choosing the topics of their own interest, planning and monitoring their work in order to complete the tasks. In this task-based curriculum, the characteristics of the learner-centered approach are thus clearly reflected. This, however, does not mean that the teacher's role is reduced. The teachers still have to be very active, acting as facilitators and helpers supporting the students to complete the task, equipping them with tools for acquiring the language rather than transmitting knowledge about the language to the students.

In one of the task-based courses at KMUTT, the students work on a problem-solving and resourcing task. This task consists of eight lessons which last four weeks. First, the students form groups of four to five and choose a topic of interest by themselves. They start from brain-storming on social issues or environmental problems and then negotiate with each other to choose the one that the group would like to work on most. They then set up pre-questions to use as a guideline for gathering information to help them make decisions in solving the problem. The next step is resourcing. In this stage, the students search for information from different sources such as the internet, books, magazines. They then read these sources, using reading and note-taking strategies learnt from class to help them organize the information obtained and prepare to write a report presenting the problem and the suggested solutions.

While facilitating the students to perform this task, I noticed that my students did not perform well in the first draft of their reports, especially in terms of vocabulary. They could not use correctly the words that they encountered in the reading stage even though they did not show any problems in reading and understanding the text. They explained in consultation sessions that, though the vocabulary in the reading passages was quite difficult, they could solve the problems by themselves, consulting a dictionary and discussing the meaning with friends. The words that they encountered in the reading stage, therefore, were merely their passive vocabulary. They could not use them accurately in their productive skills.

In an attempt to solve this problem, I decided to provide some vocabulary strategy training sessions for them. This class consisted of 38 engineering students. They were students who had obtained a diploma and furthered their bachelor degree in a special evening programme at KMUTT so their levels of English proficiency were not good. However, their motivation to learn was very high.

The vocabulary strategy training sessions
The training sessions could be divided into three stages: understanding vocabulary, introducing memory strategies and producing vocabulary cards. These stages were neither a program instruction designed to be used step by step in the lesson nor were they planned for systematic data collection for research. Rather, each step emerged one after another in an attempt to analyze the classroom situation and to solve problems that occurred in the classroom.

Stage 1: Understanding vocabulary
This session was arranged as a classroom activity. The lesson started with a class discussion on what is meant by understanding vocabulary. The teacher then gathered the suggestions made, summarizing the main information needed in knowing a word.

Rationale
This session was conducted as it was hypothesized that the students were unable to make a correct use of words because they did not 'fully understand' them. Watson Todd (2000) suggests that, in order to fully know a word, its translation into the first language alone is not enough. The learners also need to know such information as its spelling, its pronunciation, its meanings, its grammar, and how to use it. This information will enable the learners to use the word successfully in productive skills.

Reflection
It was observed from the discussion that, in fact, all of the students realized that, in order to fully understand the word or to say that they 'know the word', information about its spelling, its pronunciation, its meanings, its parts of speech, its collocations and how to use it in a context is necessary. They also knew that this information is readily available in a dictionary, especially a monolingual one.

However, while they read the passages to gather the information for their report, they simply focused on the meaning of the words without paying attention to their form or other grammatical information. This, in fact, reflected a characteristic of a good reader. The students seemed to realize that reading is not a vocabulary learning activity. They had a clear purpose for reading, i.e. gathering information, and they could achieve this goal, obtaining the information they wanted, so there was no need to study the new words in detail. However, they tended to forget that these new words might cause difficulties in the writing stage. They did not go back to study the new words after finishing reading, leaving a big gap between reading for information and making use of this information to write a report. I, then, planned to help them by providing opportunities to work more on the new words that they had encountered.

Stage 2: Introducing memory strategies
This stage was also organized as a whole class activity. At this stage, different memory strategies, such as drawing pictures, using diagrams, putting the word in a context, using

key word techniques and grouping words, were introduced. Then the students were presented with a list of 10 words. They were asked to study and remember them within 10 minutes using the techniques that they preferred. After that, they shared the strategies used with their friends.

Rationale
The main aim of the session was to introduce the students to ways of remembering vocabulary. This session emerged as I believe that every learner is different in their styles of learning. They preferred different strategies so they were provided with choices to be used as a tool for their own learning.

Reflection
It was noticed that the students enjoyed the lesson on memory strategies. They reported that they had learnt a lot of useful techniques for remembering new words. They also had fun talking and sharing the strategies they used with their friends. It was found that almost half of the class kept repeating the words again and again both by spelling them out loud and writing the words to help them remember. About ten of them wrote the words in their notebooks and grouped them according to some criteria, e.g. the parts of speech, similar meanings, similar sounds. A few of them either created a story relating the words together or used pictures. They also related the new words to the known ones both in terms of meanings and sounds.

This session was a satisfactory lesson. However, it was arranged just for a short period of time in class to introduce some memory strategies. The students still needed to practice more on their own. The next lesson was then planned as a follow-up practice session.

Stage 3: Producing vocabulary cards
At this stage, each student worked on the section of the report that they were responsible for. They went back to the reading passages and their notes, choosing the words they thought would be useful for their reports. Each of them then prepared vocabulary cards for the words. They were also encouraged to share their cards within the group.

After preparing the vocabulary cards, the students made use of the memory strategies they preferred and thought were effective for them in remembering the words. In doing this, they were advised to group the words into three categories: new words, processing words, and known words. *New words* are the words that they encountered in the reading passage. These new words might be the ones whose form, meaning or grammatical constraints they are not familiar with. *Processing words* are the words that they were working on in an attempt to 'fully know' them. *Known words* are the words that they 'fully know' and were confident they could use productively. The aim of this stage was, therefore, to move the words in the 'new' category to the 'known' one.

At this stage, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were used to motivate the students to participate in the activity. I convinced them that the higher the numbers of words in the known section, the larger the lexicon they would have and the better their productive skills would be. Moreover, the students were challenged to prepare as many cards as they could. They would get a special gift for producing the highest number of vocabulary cards, no matter which of the three categories the words were in.

Rationale

Vocabulary cards were taken into consideration to provide the learners with opportunities to make use of their preferred memory strategies. Moreover, in order to prepare the cards, the students were required to study the words in detail, adding the information needed to fully understand the words, as discussed in Stage 1. This also fosters their vocabulary learning after reading.

Fountain (1980) comments that vocabulary cards provide learners with a simple but effective way of increasing active vocabulary as words on cards are more efficient than words in a reading passage since learners can focus more on words they choose to study and work more with these words in order to master them. In addition, vocabulary cards allow the learners to review their vocabulary at any time. They are also easy to keep, rearrange and classify.

Reflection

All the students said the vocabulary cards are useful for their vocabulary learning. They spent about a week outside class time preparing the cards, choosing the words and studying them on their own. They designed their cards in many interesting styles as seen from the examples below.

In order to explore the number of words that each student worked on, they were asked to bring their cards to share with the class and report the total number of cards that they made, as well as the number of words in each category.
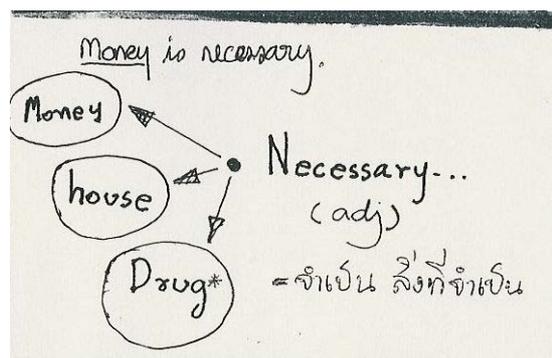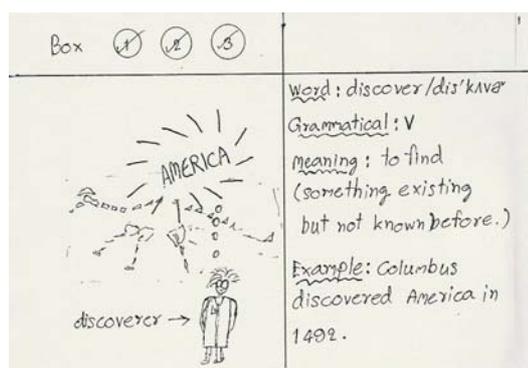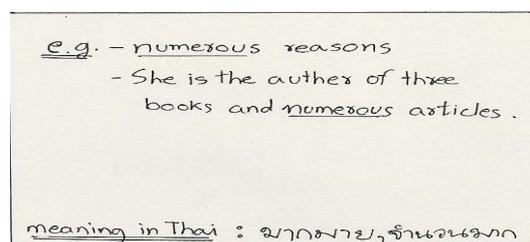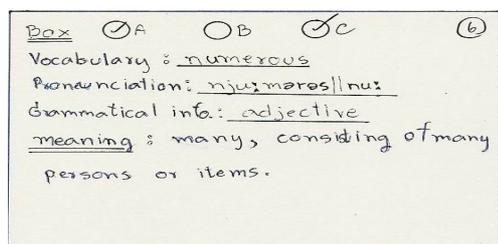
The number of cards each student prepared ranged from 18 to 32. The number of words that the students regarded as 'known' ranged from 5 to 24 while many of them were at the 'processing' stage. For me, the numbers of words that the students studied was satisfactory. Within a week, my students were confident to use more words and they enjoyed learning in this way. Almost all of them prepared a box to classify their vocabulary cards. All of them agreed that it was more systematic than writing the new words in their notebooks.

However, it was noticed that many students still needed help in selecting the meanings from a dictionary, especially the explanation of meaning in English. Many students wrote the meanings of the words in Thai together with the English explanations. However, some of the English explanations chosen from the dictionary did not match the Thai meanings well.

Many students also had problems choosing from the examples of how to use the words in contexts, especially the words that could be more than one part of speech. They sometimes, for example, prepared a card for the word 'income', stating that it is a 'verb' but provided an example using it as a 'noun'.

The production stage: Using the words
About a week after working on the vocabulary cards (and also because of the time constraint), the students revised the first drafts of their reports, making use of the vocabulary that they had studied. At this stage, my overall impression was that they could correct only some of the mistakes I spotted. This might be because they studied just 18 to 32 words and some of them still had problems in selecting meanings. Nevertheless, it seemed that the students were more confident in using the words that they studied. They could correct most of the words that they classified as the 'fully known' ones. A further systematic and well-planned study is, however, still needed in order to gain quantitative data to support this finding.

Conclusion
From my own observation, the vocabulary strategy training session and work on vocabulary cards, to a certain extent, helps learners expand their lexicon and activate their passive vocabulary. Students are fully engaged in vocabulary learning and this helps them fully understand the words which, in turn, increases their confidence in using the words, especially the ones that they have already put into the 'known' category. The activity also encourages learners to organize and assess their own vocabulary learning.

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Using journals in teacher training

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Abstract
Introspective writing, frequently in the form of journals or diaries, has become widely used in applied linguistics research. Its purpose is often to raise writers' awareness of a process they are undergoing, such as learning or teaching a second language. This paper explores and illustrates journal writing by two trainee teachers. Evidence is presented of the trainees' beliefs that such introspective work not only enhanced their teaching but also their interactions with each other as trainees and with their supervisors.

Introduction
The terms 'journal' and 'diary' are often used interchangeably in the literature. For Richards et al. (1992: 106), a 'diary study' for research in first and second language acquisition is "a regularly kept journal". Likewise, Bailey (1990: 215) uses one term to define the other; a diary study is "a first-person account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analyzed for recurring patterns or salient events". This overlapping terminology has led to confusion. While both journals and diaries involve introspective writing, the essential difference pertains to whether the writing is public or private.

Where there is an interaction between the writer and at least one other person (e.g., a reader who may write responses to the writer on a regular and potentially formative basis), there is a tendency to use the term 'journal'. 'Interactive journal writing' (also known as 'dialogue journal writing') refers to a procedure whereby the writer regularly completes an entry and the reader then reads and responds in some way. In contrast, the term 'diary' tends to refer to writing where the sole reader is the author. Nevertheless, although diaries are written in the knowledge that no one else will read them, for research purposes, the diarist will often eventually revise his or her entries to produce a draft for the researcher. Bailey and Ochsner (1981: 189) call this "a public version of the diary". Whether journals or diaries, the writing is writer-centred and largely unconstrained, allowing the writer to be autonomous.

This small study seeks to explore this kind of writing in the context of a teacher training course; more specifically, it aims to investigate whether the use of interactive journals written by teacher trainees and read by their supervisors can precipitate a sense of raised awareness in the writers. A brief literature review of journal writing in applied linguistics research is followed by a description of the study, its context and findings.

Introspective writing in applied linguistics
The purposes of this review are to illustrate the use of journal or diary writing in applied linguistics and to consider some of the advantages and disadvantages of using such writing for research in this field. Although, as already noted, this study uses interactive

journals, given the aforementioned definitional anarchy in the literature, the terms used in the studies cited (i.e., 'journals' or 'diaries') are observed here.

Studies of language learning, teaching and teacher training
In recent years, there have been several studies using journals or diaries to investigate adult second language learning. There are some interesting longitudinal studies of researchers recording their observations of both instructed and uninstructed learners (e.g., Schumann's 1976 study of 'Alberto', a Costa Rican man learning English; and Schmidt's 1983 study of 'Wes', a Japanese man learning English). There are also studies of teachers writing about their own development as language learners; these are often native speakers of English writing about their experience learning foreign languages (e.g., Schumann & Schumann's 1977 study of their own learning of Arabic in Tunisia and Farsi in Iran; Schmidt & Frota's 1986 study of Schmidt learning Portuguese in Brazil; and Clark Cummings' 2003 study of herself learning Japanese in Japan). Many of these researchers are veteran teacher trainers who feel the need to step back from their busy working lives and focus on whether their own language learning can inform their language teaching.

Focusing on teaching, Bartlett (1990) and Watson Todd (1997), among others, have noted that teachers can use journals to raise awareness of what goes on in the classroom, this awareness probably being raised during the process of writing their journals. Bartlett (1990) states that journal entries may include observations of teachers' behaviours in the classroom, their beliefs about teaching, critical incidents in a lesson, and events outside the classroom that influence their teaching.

In addition, there are studies by teacher educators who use trainees' written reflections to review and possibly modify their curricula. Numrich (1996: 148), for instance, observed that her analysis of novice teachers' diaries offered "insights into some of the unobservable factors influencing their experience". Without the benefit of reading these diaries, she felt she would have been unaware of some of their early preoccupations, such as the reasons they "choose to use or not to use particular teaching techniques … they had been taught".

Some advantages for researchers
This review now posits six possible benefits, several of which are interconnected, of the use of introspective writing in applied linguistics research: its lack of structure, its personal nature, the potential for an interactive dimension, its potential to raise awareness, its capacity for promoting positive affect and its permanence.

In their list of introspective elicitation procedures, Faerch and Kasper (1987: 16) refer to diaries as one of "the least structured instruments" as they leave informants to decide what, how much, when and how they provide introspective reports. Further, Cohen (1987, cited in Faerch and Kasper) makes the point that diaries are often written in a relatively informal context, such as at home, rather than in the classroom. The data would presumably be relatively informant-initiated, and the lack of pressure might foster open and frank reflection.

Bailey and Ochsner (1981: 189) note that "the central characteristic of the diary studies is that they are introspective: the diarist studies his [or her] own teaching or learning". They go on to say that an important contribution of the diary studies "lies in what they

can reveal about *personal* [their italics] variables in second language learning, acquisition, or teaching" (p. 191).

Writing reflectively, informants can articulate problems they are having and, assuming the entries are read, obtain help from the teacher, teacher trainer or researcher. Depending on the circumstances, feedback might be given in class or to an individual. Porter et al. (1990: 232-3) point out that, because it is "a safe place, students take advantage of the journal to talk about learning problems, and consequently more learning problems get addressed". Reticent and shy students or trainees might be emboldened to air their difficulties in a journal since writing about them is less face-threatening than initiating discussion of them in the public domain.

An interactive mode is thus created between teacher and student or teacher and teacher trainee, one that can empower the student or trainee and, at the same time, alert the researcher or teacher to unexpected difficulties. This interactive mode of communication challenges traditional notions of teacher and student/trainee roles, still very dominant in some East Asian contexts. It facilitates learner-centredness as student input can contribute towards shaping or reshaping course content (Porter et al. 1990: 237). The importance of an interaction with teachers has been reinforced by evidence from a recent study by Srimavin and Darasawang (forthcoming). Working in the area of autonomous learning, they had their subjects write journals focusing specifically on self-assessment. The researchers expressed disappointment in their results but attributed these, in part, to the lack of reactions from the teachers.

Porter et al. (1990) claim that autonomous learning can be promoted by journal writing, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning, to make connections between course content and their own learning, and to evaluate course content critically. This awareness is deemed to be promoted by the very act of writing "because writing both stimulates and shapes ideas" (p. 234). While it is clearly hard to prove a connection between writing and the generation of critical and creative thinking, it is nonetheless intuitively appealing that such relatively unguided writing, whether it be by language learners, teacher trainees or teachers, should tap the metacognitive domain.

It is conceivable that positive affective factors are triggered by interactive journal writing as students gain confidence from generating original insights. As a result, according to Porter et al., journal writing may lead to more productive class discussion; students, having reflected on and written about an issue, come to class feeling prepared and more confident to talk about it. This observation is likely to apply equally to supervision sessions for teacher training.

Finally, one of the advantages of having a written record is that it is relatively permanent. While the very act of writing is widely believed to raise writers' awareness of issues nominated, its utility is likely to be greatly enhanced if writers periodically read and reread their journals. Such reading of old journal entries can act to maintain awareness and perhaps to make links with current issues. It may also make explicit old patterns, both good and less good; for the latter, the journal writer can ponder further on possible ways to solve or at least modify problems, even providing a chance for innovation. The benefits of having a record are of value not only for the writer but for the researcher interested in interviewing the writer as a subject some time later about the contents of the journal. Alternatively, as will be shown in this study, a record can assist

the researcher as a writer subsequently seeking to recall his or her own mental behaviour.

Some disadvantages for researchers
The principal criticisms of introspective data, such as those obtained through journal and diary writing, are that they have serious problems of validity and reliability. These are now reviewed briefly.

Since studies using journal or diary writing are usually conducted on small numbers of subjects, there is the obvious threat to external validity. The crucial point here seems to be the nature and extent of the claims a researcher makes from data collected in this way. Moreover, several methods of collecting introspective data may be adopted, and the journal data may be used to complement the other data. Schumann (1980), Matsumoto (1987) and Numrich (1996), among others, have pointed out that, if multiple subjects are used and diary data are quantified in some way, the results may be more generalizable to other novice teachers than if just one self-observational study is done. Where no single introspective method is anywhere near perfect, triangulation may obviate the limitations of each (e.g., Watson Todd 2003). In addition, the objectives for obtaining the journal data may go far beyond strict data analysis. Nonetheless, there is also the issue of internal validity; specifically, two researchers, analyzing the same data, might well develop different categorizations and come to different conclusions.

Another potential disadvantage of diary studies, again like that of many introspective data gathering methods, is that they are unreliable or, worse, neither reliable nor valid. The researcher cannot be sure whether a subject's entries accurately reflect what actually happened or whether they merely reflect the subject's belief or speculation about what happened. Indeed, it is clearly impossible to be absolutely sure of what goes on at an unconscious or highly automated level of processing.

Ironically, however, this argument can be turned on its head since, as noted above, introspective writing may well act, over time, as a consciousness raising activity (e.g., Schumann and Schumann 1977, Schmidt and Frota 1986, Porter et al. 1990, Clark Cummings 2003). Moreover, Nunan (1992: 123-4) points out that it is difficult to see how the "rich insights into some of the psychological, social, and cultural factors" involved in language learning and teaching could be yielded other than through journal or diary writing.

Conclusion
To conclude this review, Porter et al. (1990: 239-240) provide an eloquent plea for syllabi for teacher training courses to include introspective writing, even at the expense of more traditional syllabus items:

> "Teacher educators may find themselves concerned about the amount of time journals entail for both themselves and their students. However, we as teachers and students [the authors] strongly recommend the addition of a journal to teacher education courses even if this involves eliminating some readings and/or assignments from the syllabus of an already developed course. The benefits … demonstrate that journals provide opportunities for ongoing learning that most course assignments do not. Throughout the course, they allow for a dialogue between teacher and students; they allow students to learn through writing without being evaluated on the writing itself; and they alert teachers to student concerns

and needs, and allow for these needs to be met in the course. The journal … enables students to develop a professional approach towards learning and to write as members of the larger language teaching community. In sum, it teaches them to do what we do as professionals – to work to integrate new ideas with what we already know and to talk with each other as we do so."

Background to the study

Students participating in the English Language Teaching (ELT) strand of the masters in applied linguistics at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) are required to take a course called 'Techniques in Teaching Practice'. This course requires students to teach a secondary-level or tertiary-level class for two hours a week for a semester and be observed about six times concurrently by two supervisors. As teacher trainees, they work in pairs and observe each other's teaching.

In the case being reported here, working as a pair of trainees, the second and third writers of this paper taught at a local secondary school. Each of them was responsible for a different group of approximately 50 students whose English could be described as elementary (Matayom 4; age range, 15-16). The teaching took place on Monday and Wednesday mornings throughout Semester 1 of 2003. As shown in Table 1 below, one of the trainees, Tanya Pakpoom (TT1), who had two years of teaching experience, usually had to teach her lesson first while the other trainee, Saratoon Oonkaew (TT2), who had no prior experience, observed and facilitated. This gave TT2 the benefit of being able to rework his lesson plan as a result of observing the effects of TT1's lesson before teaching his class, with TT1 facilitating. Six times during the semester, the two supervisors, a senior teacher in the Department of Applied Linguistics and the first writer, observed both trainees in the same week for all, or most of, the two-hour classes.

Table 1: Teacher training routine

Day	Teaching	Facilitating	Observing
Monday	TT1	TT2	Both supervisors
Wednesday	TT2	TT1	Both supervisors

Supervision sessions attended by both the supervisors and the trainees took place on Thursday mornings in the same week.

An additional requirement of the teaching practice course is that the trainees keep regular interactive journals on their teaching. These were written after the Thursday supervision sessions and delivered to the supervisors. The trainees wrote one journal entry (usually on A4 size paper and 3-4 pages in length with 1.5 spacing), for each of the six occasions on which they were observed. Each supervisor would then react to the trainees' introspective writing with both written comments in the journals and verbal comments during the subsequent supervision session.

To help the trainees focus while writing, they were given Richards and Lockhart's (1994: 16-17) 'reflection questions to guide journal entries' (see appendix). These questions were designed to take trainees beyond typical class records, which often merely list syllabus items (e.g., "I taught the past tense today."). The hope was that these questions would generate a much richer record of processes, reactions, successes and failures; or, to use TT2's expressions, 'fill in the blanks' (i.e., gaps in the trainees' teaching experience) and 'delete the problems'. The contents of these journals included

reflections on their own teaching, their peer's teaching and previous written feedback given by the supervisors, all of which informed discussion in the supervision sessions.

As already stated, this research was exploratory and sought evidence of trainees' raised awareness of issues confronting them in their teaching practice. Data analysis, which took place about three months after the end of the teaching practice course, comprised the following steps. First, the trainees (i.e., the second and third writers) read or reread their own respective journals from beginning to end and listed what they perceived to be the most salient points, each with at least one illustrative extract. Second, one of the supervisors (i.e., the first writer) reviewed the journals and the trainees' selected points and extracts and sought clarification from the trainees on a number of points. Finally, a draft of this paper was written and reviewed by the supervisor and both trainees (i.e., all three writers). Clearly, and as noted in the preceding literature review, this procedure is highly subjective: the journals were subjective in the first place; the researchers' perception of salient themes was subjective; and the categorization and selection of illustrative extracts was subjective.

Findings

From her journals, TT1 identified three areas where she felt she benefited from her introspective writing:

- Self-awareness in teaching
- Learning from observing co-trainee
- Learning from feedback (from supervisors and co-trainee)

An example of the first of these areas came from a lesson aimed at teaching students how to order food in a restaurant. TT1 noted that she asked her students to work on a task before ensuring that they had sufficient active vocabulary to do so:

> "I see that one thing that I have to be more aware is that teaching vocabulary. I should prepare the vocabulary about food because some students did not know some words. So I have to improve this problem by present the words that used in the restaurant before letting them work because they asked me a lot about the words." (TT1)

In the follow-up supervision session, there was a discussion about whether some of the food items in such a task could be Thai rather than western. This might be more realistic for these students as they are probably more likely to be talking to foreigners about food in a Thai restaurant rather than a western one; in addition, it would reduce the vocabulary load in this task and allow the students to focus on fluency.

Perhaps less anticipated was TT1's second main insight, learning from observing her co-trainee (TT2), whom she observed teaching the same lesson two days later (see Table 1 above). In the following extract, TT1 writes about how she and her co-trainee had a problem in common:

> "From the observation, I see that my co-teacher had to face the same problem is that the students were noisy. I think that this problem we will talk later in the next lesson. We think that we should help to manage them to pay more attention in learning by using the exercises to them." (TT1)

TT1's third area of heightened awareness concerned the receipt of feedback from both supervisors and co-trainee. Taking the supervisors' feedback first, the next extract

illustrates how, following observation of her co-trainee's class and discussion in a supervision session, TT1 felt she might modify her plan if she had to teach the lesson again:

> "From this point, I agree with them [my supervisors], when I compared my teaching with my co-teacher [TT2]. His class looked more fun than my class. It may be because he elicited the sentences instead of using the dialogue only." (TT1)

Apart from giving feedback during supervision sessions, the supervisors wrote comments in the trainees' journals, thus making them 'interactive' or 'dialogue' journals. In the extract below, where these comments are italicized and placed in square brackets, TT1 feels that the supervisors' probing on particular points raised in her journal helped to deepen her reflection on those points:

> "After that, we presented the new language from the books in order to see the sentences in using the telephone. Then we let them work in pairs by using games so that they could see the challenge in working in-group. We set 2 situations about telephoning and then let them draw lots. Finally, they could practice by following what they have got. *[Why is using games challenging?]*" (TT1)

As for awareness-raising triggered by her co-trainee's feedback, the example below illustrates how TT1 felt she had learned from TT2 when the latter suggested she could have omitted a phase in her lesson:

> "My co-teacher suggested that the part of revision should be skipped because it looked like redundant lesson. I agreed with him that I should do the next activity because this lesson focused on communication speaking activity." (TT1)

In this case, TT2 almost certainly benefited from having first observed TT1 teach the lesson. One of the main themes throughout the semester was that, following changes in the national curriculum, the syllabus for these students involved a lot of revision. This meant that there were more opportunities than usual for teachers to elicit students' prior knowledge rather than present new material.

Turning to TT2, he readily acknowledged in a supervision session that he had initially doubted if journal writing could help him much as a teacher trainee and admitted that he only did it because it was a course requirement. However, his view soon changed as he began to feel that it accelerated his development as a teacher, partly by helping him "say 'no' to my weak points" and by promoting reflection while teaching the next class. Indeed, he now uses this introspective approach in teaching content courses such as mathematics and physics.

TT2 identified the following areas where he felt his journal writing had promoted his professional development:
- Self-awareness in teaching
- Awareness of what students enjoy
- Awareness of a teaching technique (elicitation)

While the first of these areas is identical to one of TT1's areas, the other two differ. Like TT1, TT2 wrote reflectively about how he could improve his teaching:

> "There was unnecessary that I asked [all] the students perform the activity in front of the class every time. This could make the students get bored. The

teacher could choose some groups to perform the activity and choose another to perform next time." (TT2)

The second area where TT2 felt journal writing helped him focus his awareness was in knowing his students and what they enjoyed. One preference he identified was the use of realia in the classroom:

"The teaching topic was 'telephoning'. I brought the real telephone into class *[Good idea!]* and elicited the conversation from the students. They had to think about the situation when they were on the phone. This stage could lead them to use their knowledge of the world in order to produce the conversation." (TT2)

For a lesson the following week on eating out, TT2 reported bringing to class plates, spoons, forks and glasses and that these realia helped the students predict the topic. On another occasion, he brought a collection of items such as bread, chocolate and toothpaste in order to teach the function of asking about prices. He concluded:

"The reason why I brought the authentic material was when the students saw these things they would see clearer pictures and feel that lesson is closer to their real life." (TT2)

Finally, TT2 identified a teaching technique, elicitation, as an area where his journal writing enhanced his development as a teacher. Many new teachers stick closely to their lesson plans or to the language presented in the textbook; however, in his journal, TT2 reveals his belief in eliciting language from the students and, whenever possible, incorporating the language they produce into the lesson. The following extract refers to a lesson on shopping:

"After that, I let the students think about the situation when they went to the shop and elicited its conversation from them. I used their answers for building the conversation in the shop. The students had a chance to use their knowledge of the world and the knowledge of the previous lesson in order to produce the conversation, for instance, when the customer came to the shop, the first sentence that the assistant would say was 'Can I help you?'. Some students' responses were not the same as the unit's communicative focus, for instance, the students gave the sentence 'I'm looking for …' used for things but in the unit's communicative focus the students should use 'Can I have …'. I did not ignore these responses because I wanted to make the students feel save when they participated in class. Besides, I wanted to let them know that there is no exactly sentence or pattern in real situations." (TT2)

This lengthy extract seems to reveal an important realization, one that could encourage more experienced teachers not to insist on sticking too closely to language that happens to be presented in the textbook. Allowing students to produce what they know and then using it in the lesson seems likely to give them a sense of progression, something that is particularly important where, as in this case, the syllabus contains a considerable amount of revision. Eliciting and using appropriate language that students produce allows lessons to be flexible and to focus on communicating meaning rather than on practicing prescribed language items.

To summarize, Table 2 below shows the aspects of teaching and sources of learning each trainee believed benefited from the process of journal writing.

Table 2: Categories identified by trainees

TT1	TT2
Self-awareness in teaching	Self-awareness in teaching
Learning from observing co-trainee	Awareness of what students enjoy
Learning from feedback	Awareness of a teaching technique

The perception of raised awareness is clearly a major factor in this study. While both trainees identified a broad area of awareness, TT2 identified two rather narrower areas involving his knowledge of his students' enjoyment of the use of realia and his realization of the potential of elicitation. What all three of TT2's areas have in common is a growing sense of confidence and flexibility in teaching; as mentioned in the literature review, Porter et al. (1990) also found evidence of positive affect in their study. In TT1's case, her perception of learning from her supervisors' feedback in journals is likely to be an outcome of the interactive nature of the journal writing under study; however, it is possible, for instance, that TT2's reported learning through observing her co-trainee could, at least in part, have occurred without such introspective writing. In other words, what precipitated the trainees' perceived learning and raised awareness may well be multifactorial.

Conclusion

While there is no proof that journal writing accelerates improvement in trainees' teaching, some things about such reflective writing seem clear. It gives trainees an opportunity to think about a class just taught and how subsequent teaching might be better. Any positive outcome from such a process is likely to be enhanced when trainees can also write about their reactions to co-trainees' teaching. In addition, interactive journals offer the opportunity for trainees to reflect on their supervisors' comments and for important issues to be targeted for discussion in supervision sessions. In this small study, trainees' reflections included evidence of awareness of a wide range of issues in teaching and learning, including providing sufficient language for students to do an activity, utilizing language elicited from students whenever possible, being aware of the need to seek and maintain students' interest and thinking of ways of achieving it, learning from observing and facilitating in fellow trainees' classes, and being open to feedback from various sources. These are all important issues in teacher education. There are several possible avenues for future research; one of these might be collaborative studies where teams of experienced and less experienced teachers within an institution write about their teaching, subsequently pooling their observations with a view to identifying common problems that can then be aired and addressed.

Acknowledgment

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Appendix: Reflection questions to guide journal entries

(Source: Richards & Lockhart 1994: 16-17)

Questions about what happened during a lesson

Questions about your teaching
1. What did you set out to teach?
2. Were you able to accomplish your goals?
3. What teaching materials did you use? How effective were they?
4. What techniques did you use?
5. What grouping arrangements did you use?
6. Was your lesson teacher-dominated?
7. What kind of teacher-student interaction occurred?
8. Did anything amusing or unusual occur?
9. Did you have any problems with the lesson?
10. Did you do anything differently from usual?
11. What kinds of decision making did you employ?
12. Did you depart from your lesson plan? If so, why? Did the changes make things go better or worse?
13. What was the main accomplishment of the lesson?
14. Which parts of the lesson were most successful?
15. Which parts of the lesson were least successful?
16. Would you teach the lesson differently if you taught it again?
17. Was your philosophy of teaching reflected in the lesson?
18. Did you discover anything new about your teaching?
19. What changes do you think you should make in your teaching?

Questions about the students
1. Did you teach all your students today?
2. Did students contribute actively to the lesson?

3. How did you respond to different students' needs?
4. Were students challenged by the lesson?
5. What do you think students really learned from the lesson?
6. What did they like most about the lesson?
7. What didn't they respond well to?

Questions to ask yourself as a language teacher
1. What is the source of my ideas about language teaching?
2. Where am I in my professional development?
3. How am I developing as a language teacher?
4. What are my strengths as a language teacher?
5. What are my limitations at present?
6. Are there any contradictions in my teaching?
7. How can I improve my language teaching?
8. How am I helping my students?
9. What satisfaction does language teaching give me?