RETHINKING NEEDS IN AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAM: THREE CASE STUDIES IN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

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Individual case studies were undertaken to investigate the English listening and speaking needs of three international students at an American university. The purpose of this research was to determine how well the English language program at the university is meeting the needs of its ESL students. Ethnographic methods were used to document the experiences of the participants—graduate students in Engineering, Japanese, and Business—as they successfully adapted to the discourses of their majors during the course of a semester. Predictably, highly variable uses of language were found in the three very different disciplines. It is suggested that a more effective approach to teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is to focus on the learning processes of the students, rather than the diverse range of products they are required to generate. Various factors that facilitate these learning processes are discussed, as well as suggestions for incorporating them into pedagogy.

Good classroom instruction...can and should lead to meta-knowledge, to seeing how the Discourses you have already got (not just the language) relate to those you are attempting to acquire, and how the ones you are trying to acquire relate to self and society. But to do this, the classroom must juxtapose different Discourses for comparison and contrast. Diversity, then, is not an 'add on,' but a cognitive necessity if we wish to develop meta-awareness and overt reflective insight on the part of learners. (Gee, 1996, p. 141)

INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the results of three case studies that were conducted as a form of qualitative needs analysis in the English Language Program (ELP) at a large university in the United States. The study investigated the listening and speaking needs of three participants, all international graduate students at the university who had been enrolled in my ELP course in the fall of 1997. Beginning in January 1998, I accompanied these three participants to upper-level classes in their majors and talked to them extensively about the role of English in their academic fields. The purpose of this investigation was to discern—from the point of view of the students' themselves—how well the ELP is

meeting its stated mission of preparing international students for their academic careers at the university.

This project was partly motivated by a much older, deeply unsettling study conducted at the ELP in 1971. In order to test the validity of the language program's classes, the ELP director at that time automatically exempted nine international students from their ELP requirements and allowed them to enter their regular content classes. At the end of the semester, he compared the performance of this experimental group with that of a control group of students who had gone through the ELP courses. As he had hypothesized, the director found that there were no significant differences between the two groups, either in English skills or in overall GPA. In other words, skipping the ESL classes apparently had not hindered the academic success of the experimental group in any way. On the contrary, free from ELP requirements, the exempted students had completed many more credit hours than the control group (Mason, 1971).

Despite the nearly 30 years that have passed since this study, it is still the case today that instructors often struggle to convince students—and sometimes ourselves—of the program's benefits. Foreign students who are placed into the ELP frequently begin the courses with great reluctance and may be skeptical or even aggressively critical of the classes. Many believe that the ELP has no real purpose, beyond eliciting extra tuition dollars from pupils and providing teaching experience for graduate assistants (GAs) in the ESL department. Of course not every learner feels this way, but there are enough negative attitudes each semester to make it a significant issue for every instructor. It may take months to persuade reluctant learners that the ELP is a good investment in their academic careers; some learners seem never to be convinced at all. What makes it even harder is that sometimes the GAs themselves are not entirely confident about the benefits of the program. That is, we truly believe that students who are placed into the ELP need further specialized training in order to meet the demands of a full roster of regular courses at the university. We also believe that our classes provide an excellent opportunity for students to receive that training. What we are not always sure of is what exactly we should be focusing on in our classes.

In the spring and fall semesters of 1997, I had the opportunity to teach two sections of Advanced Listening and Speaking (ELP 80), a course in which I emphasized lecture listening and notetaking, small group and whole class discussion, interviewing, and individual oral presentations. I enjoyed teaching both classes and was pleased to receive positive evaluations at the end of each semester. Nevertheless, I wondered how my students would reflect on ELP 80 after they left my class and faced the real demands of their content courses. Had my classroom activities accurately represented the tasks my

students were now encountering? Had I adequately prepared my students for their academic lives at the university? Simply put, what are the academic language needs of foreign students at this university? Typically, research in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) answers questions like these via sweeping quantitative studies. I engaged in this project with the hope that another kind of study—an ethnographic case study—might fill in some of the gaps left by previous research. In the pages that follow, I will review the comprehensive literature that has been written about EAP, including the role and means of needs analysis. Then I will discuss the experiences of my three participants in their content courses, drawing on their situations and their well-informed suggestions to me, to posit some future directions for the ELP.

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

In defining EAP, it is important to note that it is but one category under the broader heading of English for Specific Purposes (though sometimes EAP and ESP are used interchangeably in the literature). Robinson (1991) claims that ESP is more "specific" than English for general purposes because instructors must take into consideration the learners' particular areas of interest as well as their future intentions for using the language, whether they be academic or professional. Instructors of ESP generally have some knowledge about their learners' work or study activities outside of the classroom, and authentic materials from those different realms are often integrated in the language lessons.

Types of ESP include EAP, English for Science and Technology (EST), English for Occupational or Vocational Purposes (EOP/EVP), and English for Professional Purposes (EPP) (Swales, 1985). This paper will focus only on EAP, the specific purpose of which is learning the language and study skills required for education in a particular academic discipline. Learners in EAP courses generally intend to enroll in undergraduate or graduate level university courses, or may even be taking such content courses concurrent with their ESL classes (Robinson, 1991). The ESL classes may include students from a wide variety of disciplines, or may focus on one field only. Diverse opinions exist in EAP as to whether or not "universal" academic skills exist that can be taught effectively across disciplines (Horowitz, 1986; Johns, 1988) Another more recent but no less controversial issue is whether EAP requires not just language and skills learning, but also the learning of some very unique norms: those of the university discourse community (Ballard, 1996; McKenna, 1987; Zamel, 1995).

Needs Analysis

Perhaps no area of EAP is more riddled with debate than that of needs analysis. Everyone familiar with the field tends to agree that an EAP course must start with needs analysis. Widdowson (1981), in fact, gives the traditionally accepted definition of ESP (and EAP by extension) when he explains, "If a group of learner's needs for the language can be accurately specified, then this specification can be used to determine the content of a language program that will meet these needs" (p. 1). It seems quite simple then— determine what the students' needs are by examining the academic situations they are in or about to enter and make those needs the objective of the course. As a number of researchers point out, however, the matter of needs analysis is far from simple. First, Robinson (1991) brings up several methodological issues: depending on who carries out the needs analysis (an "insider" teacher versus an "outsider" consultant, for example) results will be very different. Also, different sources of information—teachers, past or present students, administrators—will all cite different needs. Furthermore, what should the analysis focus on: linguistic forms? study skills? learning processes? or strategies? Inclusion or exclusion of particular aspects will reflect the biases of the researcher. Finally, the format of the needs analysis will also yield disparate results. Consider the different findings that might be drawn from questionnaire analyses versus observation and interview, versus testing, just to name three possible techniques. Commenting on the nature of needs analysis, Brindley (1989) aptly observes,

> ...needs are conventionally defined as being something like 'the gap between what is and what should be.' What is important to note here is that someone has to decide what should be. In other words, needs statements are open to contextual interpretation and contain value judgments. They do not have of themselves an objective reality. (p. 65)

Hutchinson and Waters (1985) comment on another aspect of the needs analysis debate: easily identified "surface" features—linguistic items, tests, tasks—may not even be an accurate reflection of what students truly need in a particular academic discipline. The researchers point out that all learners bring with them an "Underlying Competence" (p. 178) with which they are able to interpret and comprehend new information, regardless of the language of presentation. Non-native speakers of English will obviously have activated this knowledge and abilities in their first language, but may not have done so in the target situation, in English. Therefore, as Hutchinson and Waters suggest, perhaps EAP teachers should focus more on how students understand and achieve in academic classrooms, rather than what they study and produce.

Product vs. Process

What Hutchinson and Waters touch on, and what many other researchers (Widdowson, 1981; McDonough, 1986; Brindley, 1989; Robinson, 1991; Long & Crookes, 1992) have examined in detail, is the fundamental distinction between a product-oriented versus a process-oriented approach to needs analysis. Widdowson (1981) refers to the former as goal-oriented needs, in which the "ends" of learning—everything the user must be able to do at the end of the course, in the target situation—are described and then directly transmitted into a curriculum. This well-known approach to course design has a long and established history in the field of EAP (Robinson, 1991). A process-oriented approach, on the other hand, concerns itself with the "means" of learning—what the students actually do to comprehend and acquire the language, at all their various transitional stages between complete beginner and competent user. The individual learner rather than the language itself becomes the focus; thus, Widdowson (1981) suggests, a more effective approach to pedagogy is to focus on cultivating learning processes in the classroom. Language items or specific tasks are not important, except insofar as they develop the students' abilities to learn. Applying Widdowson's model to EAP, one can imagine a situation in which students do not actually acquire the language of their particular discipline. They do, however, improve their acquisition skills, so that when they do finally enter the target situation, they will be able to learn the terminology, and everything else they need to succeed in the academic environment.

An emphasis on learning process rather than language product becomes even more relevant when one considers that the classroom and its members always function in a larger social context: the academic "discourse community" of Western universities. An increasing number of authors (McKenna, 1987; Johns, 1988; Spack, 1988; Zamel, 1995; Ballard, 1996; Gee, 1996, among others) have written about this phenomenon, which refers not just to the linguistic and academic requirements of the university, but also to its often implicit social and cultural norms. In other words, international students have a lot more to learn and adjust to than simply the English language and the content material of their major. Ballard (1996) writes:

> Yet the explanation that 'poor English' is the basic cause of the academic problems of most overseas students is clearly inadequate;...Masked by language problems lie the much deeper problems of adjusting to a new intellectual culture, a new way of thinking and of processing knowledge to meet the expectations inherent in the Anglo educational system. (p. 150)

Gee (1996) expands on this concept of "a new intellectual culture" with the following definition of discourse, clearly not limited to an academic setting:

A Discourse is a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network,' or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'. (p. 131)

According to Gee, individuals acquire their primary discourse early in life, much the same way he or she acquires a first language: from family and other prominent members in their childhood sociocultural environment. Later, he or she may become apprenticed to any number of secondary discourses (for example, the one we are concerned with in this paper, the academic discourse of an American university). An individual has the potential of becoming "literate" in his or her secondary discourses, but only via extended interaction with members of that discourse. Specifically, he argues that "any Discourse is for most people most of the time mastered through acquisition, not through learning...it requires exposure to models in natural, meaningful, and functional settings, and (overt) teaching is not liable to be very successful—it may even initially get in the way" (Gee, 1996, p. 144).

Gee's pronouncement has repercussions for the EAP instructor; it implies that she cannot "teach" the discourse of the academic university to her students, at least not in any explicit way. Yet Ballard (1996) and McKenna (1987) charge that the English classroom must expose international students to the formation and maintenance of discourse communities, so that they too have a fair chance of succeeding in this new educational culture. Spack (1988), on the other hand, believes that the responsibility lies with professors in the academic disciplines, as EAP instructors can focus only on general skills. The role of the EAP instructor is not a settled matter, and it is more likely to be decided individually, according to one's personal teaching philosophy. However, the findings of this research project suggest that in fact there is a place for analysis and discussion of discourse communities in the EAP classroom.

A Survey of Needs Analyses in EAP

No discussion of EAP would be complete without reviewing some of the numerous needs analyses that have been successfully conducted in the field. A quick perusal of the literature reveals that the vast majority of these studies are quantitative in nature; in addition, most of them focus on the "literacy" skills—reading and especially writing— perhaps because these skills have traditionally been emphasized in university settings. For this paper, however, I will note only those studies which look at listening and speaking to some degree, as my own study focused primarily on these skills.

An early and oft-cited study is that of Ostler (1980), who investigated the academic needs of 131 ESL students at an American language institute via a questionnaire. She used a form which pre-listed 16 skills from which students could choose those they considered to be most crucial (taking notes was rated the most important overall). While self-assessment from the students' point of view is an invaluable source of information, it is not a complete picture: the content professors' perspective must also be included. Or so Johns (1981) argued when she conducted her survey of 200 faculty members at San Diego State University. According to the results of her questionnaire, Listening was considered to be the second most important skill (after Reading), and Speaking was ranked least important. A more recent and extremely comprehensive project aimed at specifically identifying listening and speaking needs was conducted by Ferris and Tagg in 1996 at four different academic institutions. The researchers collected a massive corpus of data, from which it was extremely difficult for them to draw any generalizations beyond the observation that requirements vary across major, type of institution, class level, delivery type, and class size (Ferris & Tagg, 1996). In addition to these broad survey approaches, research has also been conducted with more detailed examinations of a specific academic situation, or even a single listening-speaking event (see Jacobsen, 1986; Furneaux et al., 1991; Lynch & Anderson, 1991; Flowerdew & Miller, 1997).

It is clear, then, that the best-known needs analyses have been heavily quantitative in nature. Information of this kind is insightful and invaluable to the field of EAP, but like all research, it has its limitations and drawbacks. Questionnaires and surveys, for example, are the favored instrument in quantitative research, yet "instead of trying to discover and classify university...tasks—a logically prior endeavor—they [begin] with a set of preconceived classifications, forcing on the respondents the particular scheme used in each survey" (Horowitz, 1986, p. 448). Indeed, questionnaires rarely allow space for participants to respond in their own words. Furthermore, the researcher cannot be sure that participants have interpreted the question in the way the researcher intended. And even if they do fully understand the question, participants may not answer based on what they really do in an academic context, but on what they think they ought to be doing, or what they think the researcher thinks they ought to be doing (Johns, 1981, p. 52).

It is not the purpose of this paper to dismiss quantitative research, but merely to suggest that it can be substantially augmented with additional data gathered through interpretive-qualitative methods. Ferris and Tagg (1996) admit that although their "aerial view" approach allowed them to gather a large amount of data in a short period of time, it really acts only as a baseline for further research (ethnography and case studies are suggested as two possibilities) (p. 35). Spack (1988) notes that a list of required academic

tasks is meaningless without knowing the circumstances in which they were assigned, the professor's purpose in assigning them, the students' reaction to and performance of the task, etc. What she is arguing for is a holistic approach—a careful consideration of the events as they occur as well as the context in which they occur—and also an emic, or insider's perspective. All of these features can be found in a interpretive-qualitative approach. As Davis (1995) explains:

> An interpretive qualitative study utilizes interviews, observations, and other forms of data collection within the time frame necessary for gaining an understanding of the actors' meanings for social actions...thick description involves an emic perspective, which demands description that includes the actors' interpretations and other social and/or cultural information. (pp. 433-434)

Schmidt (1981) documents the benefits of qualitative research in her case study of a non-native speaker of English beginning her upper-division course work at an American university. Schmidt worked with a student (Yvonne) who had already finished her ESL requirements and was an advanced speaker of the language. Focusing on the sub-skill of lecture comprehension, Schmidt accompanied Yvonne to one of her lecture classes everyday for three weeks. Her methodology included observations of Yvonne in class, examination of Yvonne's notes, and interviews with the participant and her professor about her performance in the class. At the conclusion of her project, Schmidt notes that as a form of needs analysis, the case study is far more time-consuming than quantitative research methods. She also laments its "obvious lack of generalizability" (p. 201). This latter claim, however, has been shown to be misguided. True interpretive-qualitative research develops theories that can be transferred to a number of different contexts and populations. As long as the researcher has provided sufficiently rich and varied detail, a reader can then evaluate the study and determine its applicability in a completely new setting. Thus,

> the onus is on the reader of an interpretive qualitative study to determine whether and how the grounded theory described in one study applies to another situation. This determination is made by accumulating empirical evidence about the contextual similarity between the described situation and the situation to which the theory is to be transferred (Davis, 1995, p. 441).

In addition, the quantity and quality of data collected via the case study is significant. Not only does the researcher have the opportunity to observe the participants repeatedly in an authentic setting, she can also add to her own observations the learners' perspectives on how they experience that same setting. Long-term, in-depth study over an extended period precludes the type of misunderstandings or superficial answers one might

encounter in a questionnaire. Participants have many opportunities to express themselves in their own words, in detail, and with caveats and qualifications. Case studies also capture change over time. Thus, the researcher is able to identify difficult tasks and linguistic items that the participants encounter in an academic context (the product-oriented view) as well as the processes of learning: how the participants are acquiring language and skills, how they are learning to learn, what they are not acquiring, and so on. The case study, then, makes a valuable and distinctive contribution to needs analysis in EAP (Schmidt, 1981).

With this in mind, I initiated three separate case studies of my own in January 1998, as a form of needs analysis for the English Language Program. The questions that guided the early stages of my investigation were quite simple: essentially, what types of listening and speaking tasks are the participants expected to perform in their content classes? How well was my ELP 80 class able to prepare the participants for the aural and oral demands of their content classes? Ironically, at this time I had unconsciously adopted a strong product orientation to the project; I had anticipated that I would identify some common problems in my students' performances, "missing" skills that I could later incorporate into an improved ELP curriculum. I soon realized, however, that the reality developing through my research was far more complicated than this simplistic notion. Thus, new questions emerged towards the latter end of the research period: How did the participants come to be so successful in their individual academic disciplines? How did they make the transition from my ELP 80 class to their content classes, where expectations are completely different? And finally, how can this knowledge be utilized in the ELP?

THE STUDY

Setting: The English Language Program

Mission: The primary purpose of the English Language Program (ELP) is to provide English instruction for international and immigrant students who have been admitted to the University and who do not speak English as a native language, in order to facilitate their academic studies at the university.
(ELP Testing, Exemption, and Placement Policies, 1997)

Any international student who is admitted to the university, but whose TOEFL score is less than 600, must sit for the ELP Placement Test at the beginning of their first semester. According to the results of the test, students are placed into courses for any of three skills (Reading, Writing, or Listening/Speaking) at either of two levels (70 or 80).

Students may enroll concurrently in content courses in their individual majors, but all ELP courses must be completed within the first year of study (thus, in the case of students who place into the 70 level and may have to take as many as six ELP courses, we recommend that they not take as many content courses in their first semester). Courses in the ELP are rigorous and require just as much labor as any regular three-credit course at the university. The classes are in fact equivalent to three credits when the student's total course load (and tuition) is figured, but they are not credit-bearing classes; that is, they do not advance the student towards graduation. An ELP student beginning studies at the university can expect to work harder, take longer to graduate, and pay more tuition than non-ELP students. This together with the somewhat dubious reputation of the program— its instructors are graduate students, not "real" university professors—creates a formidable challenge to teachers early on in the semester. The majority of ELP students are resentful and resistant to the program from day one. Teachers often struggle to convince their students that in the long run the ELP will truly help them prepare for a better and more successful career at the university.

Instructors at the ELP are selected from among the Master and Doctorate students in the ESL Department at the university. No individual can teach in the program for more than four semesters (due to financial aid restrictions) and as a result there is an usually high turnover rate among the instructors. With so many new teachers starting this rather intimidating position each semester, it is particularly important for the program to establish clear course objectives at each skill level. Some form of needs analysis would be the obvious solution, but surprisingly, there has not been any sort of systematic needs analysis run in the ELP in over 10 years. The most recent investigation (Kimzin & Proctor, 1986) was conducted by two ESL students as part of their course work in the Masters program. They adopted a heavily quantitative approach, and collected a vast amount of data by means of an extensive literature review, student needs questionnaires, observations, and interviews. As part of their results, they presented a suggested taxonomy of micro-skills with corresponding justifications for each ELP skill level. At that time, the Kimzin and Proctor report had considerable influence on the program's curricula: many instructors adjusted their course syllabi to better meet the needs of ELP students, based on the findings of the study.

I began teaching one section of Advanced Listening and Speaking (ELP 80) in January, 1997. At first I relied on the syllabi and advice of past teachers to determine the main units of my course, and later I made adjustments according to student feedback and my own intuitions about the class. I also received a lot of valuable input from the other Listening/Speaking teachers, along with our Assistant Director. We met on a regular basis

throughout the year to discuss the ever-evolving goals and objectives of ELP 80. As of our final meeting in December 1997, they read as follows:

1. Introduce/review speaking and listening for socialization into the university
2. Introduce/review aspects of making a good presentation, and give them an opportunity to make academic presentations and get extensive feedback from the teacher (videotaping presentations is recommended).
3. Introduce/review aspects of classroom discussion and argument, and provide opportunities for discussion of issues.
4. Introduce/review pragmatics of English use, particularly academic pragmatics (e.g., what is appropriate in a discussion among colleagues, what is appropriate with a professor)
5. Extensive practice with listening leading to students' synthesizing information.
6. Introduce students to political and cultural issues in the U.S.
7. Make students aware of higher-level strategies
8. Extensive practice with note-taking while listening to lectures, radio discussion, and videotaped materials (such as documentaries), particularly activities that will require students to analyze and synthesize information
9. Opportunity to do self-editing on speaking tasks

These objectives emerged from a review of the SLA literature; student feedback; observations and suggestions by the Assistant Director; action-research; and most importantly, our collective experiences in the classroom. I was mostly satisfied with these course objectives and with the tasks designed to realize them. End-of-semester evaluations reflected, at least superficially, the students' approval of the course. It was at this point that I decided to track my students' experiences as they left the ELP and began a full roster of regular content classes. I wanted to observe with my own eyes what happened when they were called upon to perform listening and speaking tasks in those classes. Most of all, I wanted to ask my students in person whether or not, in retrospect, they considered their experiences in ELP 80 to be relevant and useful to their academic lives at the university.

Methodology

I proposed my study to students (in a slightly more concise fashion) on the final day of ELP 80 in the fall semester of 1997. Of the several students who expressed interest, I later narrowed down the volunteers to my three current participants: Amitava, a Ph.D. student from India, Hiroko, a Japanese MA student, and Hyun-woo, an MBA student from Korea. Having taught these three students for a semester, I had an excellent sense of

their general performance in oral English, their test scores, and final evaluation in the ELP—solid background information from which to launch my study. More importantly, I had already established a comfortable rapport with these three individuals. It did not take long for our teacher-student relationship to transform itself into a far more relaxed researcher-participant one, and then finally into an equal association of colleague with colleague.

Formal data collection for this study began in January 1998 and continued for nine months. During the first five months of this period, I met with the participants individually, approximately once every other week; I also communicated with them regularly via e-mail, and continue to do so today. Structured and unstructured interviews during these one-on-one meetings provide the main source of data, the language of the participants themselves. By allowing them to articulate in their own words their opinions, their feelings, or whatever aspects of their experiences they themselves choose, I attempt to capture the emic perspective. A second mode of data collection was that of non-participant observation. I joined one content class of each of my participants', and attended regularly for several weeks in February, March, and April of 1998 (approximately ten hours of observation per class). Primarily, I was interested in assessing what listening and speaking tasks were required in each class, and subsequently, how my participants engaged in those tasks. I also looked for how often and how well the students participated in lecture-listening and note-taking, group and whole class discussion, and oral presentations, as these are the three areas I emphasized in ELP 80. Finally, I conducted individual interviews with the three professors of the content classes. These served as an invaluable counterpoint to my own and the students' perspectives, in terms of what these professors considered to be "necessary" academic skills, at least in that particular major or field of interest.

As is the nature of qualitative research, the three stories that emerge from these data scarcely resemble what I expected to hear when I began the project. On the contrary, they exceed my expectations. Each of my participants has had a complex and unique experience at the university; it is impossible for me to do justice to such rich narratives in a paper of this length. However, I will attempt to share parts of their stories below, focusing on the diverse roles of listening and speaking in the three classes I observed.

Participants and Their Stories

Amitava. Amitava is a second-semester Ph.D. student in the Mechanical Engineering (ME) department. He is on leave from his university in India, where he received his Bachelor's degree in Engineering and also taught for six years. Amitava's first language

is Bengali, but he is also a speaker of Hindi and quite comfortable in English as well. He explained to me that in India, it is standard practice to conduct university courses in English, particularly in his field, where most of the books and materials are written in English. In addition, many of the professors he studied under while earning his Master's degree in India were educated in the United States; thus, Amitava has not felt the style of education at the university to be tremendously different from what he was used to at home. During the ELP 80 course in fall 1997, Amitava was one of the most confident members of the class. He asked questions and commented frequently during class discussion, and he handled all the major presentations very well. He also was the first and most enthusiastic member to volunteer for this project.

The ME class I observed was an upper-level seminar with six graduate students (five of whom speak languages other than English as their first language), that met twice a week for 75 minutes. In January when I asked Amitava to recommend a class for me to observe, he suggested this one, explaining, "It is not interesting for non-majors I think, but I like it very much...we listen to lectures, feel freely to interact, ask questions." I found this to be quite an accurate description. The professor, himself a fluent second-language speaker of English, lectured through the whole period, and students took notes almost non-stop during the class. My initial impression was that the students never spoke, but soon I became aware of a certain structure in the professor's lecture: as he spoke and wrote equations on the board, he asked questions at regular intervals, in such a way as to propel his lecture along. Some typical questions were "What did I miss in this equation?" "If I change K, would those numbers change?" "What is changing here?" "What comes next?" Sometimes the questions were rhetorical—the professor answered himself and moved on to further explanation. Other times, however, he paused, and the students provided the answer. The answers were short and did not generate discussion—such is the nature of the topic. Of these frequent questions, Amitava commented, "If you know [the answer], that's okay, if you don't know it, that is okay. I think like that. That means some good impression will be there, if you can answer...I don't feel any pressure. If you can't answer, I don't think it will bias him."

Amitava went on to explain that unlike many courses in the humanities (or those in the ELP), class participation is not taken into account when the final grade is calculated: "Our grade depends on our homework and exams. [Class participation] is not part of our class grade, it's not that kind of class." I wondered, then, which skill (listening, speaking, reading, or writing) was most important in the class; I posed that question to Amitava and he answered, "I think the most important part is understanding of the subject. That is the number one criteria...That depends on your background...Participation is not so

important." Thus, a student with sufficient knowledge of the topic can perform satisfactorily in these engineering classes, even without strong language skills. The professor expressed a similar opinion, confessing straightforwardly, "English is not necessary to be superb [in this department]." He evaluates students on the aptitude they display in the homework, a written project, and three in-class exams. The exams consist of short-answer questions and several mathematical problems to which students must apply theory and formulas they learned in class; the seminar members are allowed to refer to their notebooks during the exams. Students are encouraged to ask questions when they are confused and to answer questions when they know the answers (as opposed to a sheer display of knowledge and communicative ability). The professor added that language is not a cause of misunderstanding for the many international students who take his classes; rather, it is lack of understanding of the content that confuses students.

This same theme emerged yet again when I explored the issue of note-taking in the engineering class. During my first visit, I decided that note-taking was a critical skill in this class, since students literally took pages of notes during the 75-minute period. This is in fact the case, but not in the same way that we teach note-taking skills in ELP 80. There, we emphasize the students' listening skills, and their analytical ability as they filter out important ideas from the professor's lecture and organize them in a logical way in their notebooks. In the engineering class, I soon realized that the professor wrote almost everything he said on the blackboard. This again is due to the topic matter—he was not lecturing on issues, but working through and explaining complicated equations. Thus, as he spoke, he wrote each variable of the equation on the board, quickly filling up the entire board, erased, and began again. The students matched his rapid pace and copied everything he wrote into their notes—but little else. Amitava confirmed my observation: "Notetaking is very important. He writes everything on the board, everything important, and pronounces it all in a loud voice. So we have two ways to learn the material: listen and write." At one point, I wondered if this extensive use of the blackboard was an intentional strategy, aimed to help the international students who might have weaker listening comprehension skills. When I inquired about this, however, the professor laughed at the suggestion. He does not consider language difference to be an issue; the written notes are simply content that his students must know. He explained that in his undergraduate classes (where the majority of students are native speakers of English) he writes even more detailed notes, since these students do not have the background knowledge and experience of his graduate students.

Amitava spoke highly of this professor, describing him as "a very dedicated professor. Those materials he has collected, that is very difficult. He collects top-level material." On

the few occasions that he did not understand the material in class, Amitava knew he could rely on the professor to clarify it: "[Communication problems] rarely happens, not to me. A few times, because it is quite new to us, but when he explain to us then I understood. Generally I wait, after the professor explain. I wait for the explanation. Because they are very new, very advanced topics...So far I understand well."

Hiroko. In contrast to Amitava's confidence, Hiroko continues to have reservations about her academic performance at the university. She is a second-semester Master's degree student in the East Asian Languages and Literature Department, with a focus on Japanese. Hiroko received her Bachelor's degree in Japanese Literature from a university in Japan before coming to the U.S. She told me that she likes the style of American graduate education because professors here are clear about the requirements for class and their expectations of students. At the same time, it can be extremely challenging for new students because professors do not explain how to go about meeting those expectations. As Hiroko eloquently explained,

> It may not be only for international students, but American students also have a hard time figuring out how to write paper. I heard that. Especially in the last semester, I didn't know what to do with presentations and papers. But I think I had certain images of what I was supposed to do, but there was a gap between the images and where I am now. You know, I had to fill that gap, but I didn't know what to do and I didn't even know where I couldn't do that! It was tough.

Hiroko had to learn these skills very quickly, for they are critical for success in her discipline. In the class I observed, for example, each student was required to present two scholarly articles during the semester, a task that constituted 25% of their final grade. The class was an upper-level graduate course with five regular members and one auditor, all of whom were native speakers of Japanese. The professor is also a fluent non-native speaker of Japanese, but all the presentations and most of the discussion took place in English. Hiroko enjoyed this seminar very much, and recommended it to me strongly: "This is a high quality class. [The professor] gives the topics and students have many opportunities to speak...She asks a lot of questions to make us think."

During my observation period, I quickly came to agree with Hiroko's high opinion of the seminar. The class was the second half of a course that began in the fall, so students and professor were quite comfortable with each other. The presentations were about 20 minutes long and were fairly informal in that students remained seated at the table as they presented. Other members of the class were free to interject with questions or comments along the way. The professor seemed to be highly sensitive about students "having the floor" when they spoke—they were in control of the class during their presentation. As

Hiroko said, in general, this professor seemed to really want the students to participate throughout the class. This was articulated in her syllabus—"students are expected to take an active role in the presentation and discussion of articles and data"—as well as implicitly and explicitly during the class itself. For example, if she had been speaking without interruption for a while, the professor would stop herself and ask, "Comments, questions, input, output?" This was the prompt for them to respond, and in almost every instance, the students did so. At other times, she posed more complicated, content-oriented questions to the class. If students did not answer these, the professor rephrased the question, or backed up and asked an easier question. When follow-up questions arose after a student presented an article, the questions were gently redirected back to the presenter, so that he or she had an opportunity to answer it before the professor stepped in. I discovered later that these strategies were part of the professor's conscious efforts to give control of the discourse to her students, an implicit manifestation of her own teaching philosophy:

> I feel pretty strongly that there's two ways to learn. One of course is to sit and absorb stuff. But if you just sit and soak it up, it's never really yours. The only way it becomes yours is by thinking about it and talking about it...If you don't get practice in class, I don't know where you get that practice. That is something that, if it's not modeled, and if it's not something you have in your own training, you're not going to get it.

Hiroko is certainly her professor's student; whether consciously or not, she articulated the same concept when describing her own experience giving presentations in class:

> I saw many, many presentations this semester. I had a chance. But before actually I start doing presentations for my class, I wish I could see more models for that, because I didn't know that, how to do presentation...I'm learning a lot from actual presentations people do in conference, in class, a lot...Now I can say how to do presentation in a good way.

During her two semesters at the university, Hiroko has learned a great deal about English speaking skills, and she puts this knowledge to use in analyzing her own strengths and weaknesses. In a meeting we had together in early March, she was quick to point out problems with one of her article presentations, which I had just observed. At that time, she was still dissatisfied with her language skills—"but I can't help it, so far! I'm trying very hard, but I know I can't improve my English only in a short time"—as well as a number of content areas, including her critical evaluation of the article. As she explained, "I realized I criticized a lot. I couldn't elaborate well...I wanted to explain more, with my words. I wanted to say how we can learn from [the article]." Hiroko also felt that she

should have explained her handout more clearly and, in general, prepared more of her speech in advance. Less than two months later, at the end of April, she seemed to have achieved some of these goals in the final project: "I could become a little more confident than before because I just kind of succeed in my last presentation I did for [that class]." Hiroko is not the only one who has noticed how much she has learned in two short semesters. Her professor said of her, "Now you can see that there's been tremendous progress...Hiroko has really impressed me with her ability to pull things together. It's very exciting."

Hyun-woo. Hyun-woo is in his third semester in the Master's of Business Administration Program. In Korea, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Linguistics before joining an American-owned company, where he worked for four years. During his stint in that company, he was sent abroad to New York for six months. According to Hyun-woo, it was then, in America, that he first began to study conversational English in earnest. By the time he began his graduate studies in 1997, he no longer suffered from culture shock; language, however, was still a stumbling block. He says of his first semester at the university,

> Only problem is English. It was hard for me to understand the class and I never
> spoke in my class...Maybe the most difficult for me was to discuss in small
> student group. I think it's harder than class, because I should talk at the group,
> I should prepare something to share, I should be responsible for parts of paper,
> and I should have my opinion at the group. I think that might be some shock
> for me.

Hyun-woo was forced to overcome this "shock" very quickly, as oral fluency is highly emphasized in his academic discipline. "There's a need for [speaking skills] in business," explains Hyun-woo's professor. "All the students recognize the need for it, even the ones who are afraid."

An emphasis on speaking skills was certainly reflected in the graduate seminar I attended with Hyun-woo. During this three hour class, literally half the time was devoted solely to formal, structured student presentations. A number of factors made these speeches strikingly different from those in Hiroko's Japanese class: first, the speaker stood at the front of the classroom during his presentation. As this class was much larger (about 18 students), the speaker tended to be more "on display" in this teacher-like role. The professor in fact "ceded" his role by moving to the back of the classroom, where he sat unobtrusively through a series of three or four presentations. In addition, I noticed that the professor filled out an evaluation form for each speaker, rating aspects of both content and delivery. The speeches themselves ran about 15-20 minutes long and were not

interrupted by questions or comments from the audience. Speakers did not use handouts but had elaborate visual aids designed on Power Point and displayed via computer on a large screen at the front of the room. Each presentation was followed by a mandatory question and answer period, during which class members and the professor directed several questions to the speaker.

Hyun-woo informed me that these types of presentations are typical of business administration courses. In this particular class, grades were based on two presentations and two corresponding five to eight page papers. The professor offered an area of focus, from which the students were free to choose any topic they were interested in. I noticed that, during the presentations, class members listened attentively but did not take notes. It seemed, then, that the purpose of the presentations was mostly to enhance the speaker's experience and learning; edification of the class members was simply a secondary benefit. In an oral midterm evaluation conducted during one of the seminars I observed, one student noted how opportunities to give presentations in class led to greater career options in the future. At a later interview, Hyun-woo expressed a similar sentiment: "MBA students need good presentation skills after graduation. Those courses are good training for our careers."

Apparently, the requirements of the major itself place formal English presentations and speaking skills in general as a top priority. Given that, I was somewhat surprised to learn that there is no specific training on how to give an effective oral presentation, and sometimes the instructor will not even offer detailed guidelines. The professor of Hyun-woo's class explained to me, "I don't like to give a lot of structure. I get to see many more creative presentations that way." I pressed him on this point, suggesting that there must be certain standards within the business school that need to be met. He agreed that this was true and added, "The first few [presentations] are models; I make comments about the first few and they can figure it out from there. It's not 'anything goes.'" This type of approach may be convenient for the instructor, but it certainly can be difficult for the initial speakers. Hyun-woo told me the story of his earliest presentation in the department, a group project:

> We were the first group presentation…I noticed how my classmates are nervous, even with good English. We didn't know the rules or process. After our presentation, I got the first question, but I didn't know that there was a question. I was so surprised! I could not understand that question. My friend gave me some papers, but I could not understand that. I asked "Pardon me?"

Happily, Hyun-woo was eventually able to answer the question, and since then he has noticed that "experience and practice make better presentations." Not only practice, but

also his own dedication has contributed to the rapid improvement of his oral English. Like Hiroko, Hyun-woo has an acute metacognitive awareness of his own speaking skills, and on several occasions, he articulated his personal strategies for successful classroom presentations. Early in April, he told me that he was memorizing most of the material for his speech in order to avoid looking at his notes and to make eye contact with the audience (a skill highly weighted in the professor's evaluation). He purposely chose simple language so that his audience could easily understand the content. He was pleased with these aspects of his speech but was disappointed with his pronunciation and prosody. Moreover, he was aware that memorization was not the strategy of a proficient speaker: "By memorizing all sentences, I still feel like just reading, even though I never look at notes. It's not talking, not natural. Now I'm thinking about changing my presentation style, but I'm afraid I'll forget during the presentation..." Hyun-woo also has strategies for improving his classroom participation. He told me, "I try to ask questions in class. About one month ago [in February], I did my first question in that class. At that time, I was very nervous...Mostly I ask questions to native speakers. Un- [non] native speakers, I feel the same feeling with them. I know their fear!"

In a meeting with Hyun-woo in May, just a few days before the semester ended, I was pleased to learn that he had achieved some of the goals he set for himself. He told me, "I have been changing...I think the most improvement is speaking. I think it's about confidence. Before, when I talk, I should prepare whole sentence before my talking, but nowadays I can begin without whole sentence. I just start and I can make during talking. I think that's a big change." Hyun-woo added, "Recently I have more confidence in class. Amazing for me!" When I asked him how these changes have come about, he gave a lot of the credit to his class, the same one I had visited: "[That class] is the most comfortable class for me. Discussion is encouraged at that class. [The professor] wants us to speak, and he accepts the others' opinions, even it is different from his opinion. I am used to speaking at that class." Hyun-woo believes that opportunities provided by the professor to speak, opportunities to practice and gain experience, have been the main means of improving his English. I would add that the tremendous efforts and self-awareness of Hyun-woo himself have contributed equally, if not more so to his rapid progress.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR THE ELP

Metacognitive Awareness and Mushfake Discourse

In the early weeks of my observation period, I despaired of finding anything that might contribute to the betterment of the ELP. With three such different classes, with

such disparate roles of English, how could I address all of my students' listening and speaking needs? How could I add "missing" skills to the ELP curriculum, when in actuality my students seemed to be missing nothing at all? What was needed, I quickly realized, was a shift in perspective. Rather than searching for a common skill or "product" across the different academic disciplines, I focused instead on the shared ability of my three participants to succeed in their individual majors.

Amitava, Hiroko, and Hyun-woo were classmates in ELP 80, where they encountered and met a particular set of expectations. In the next semester, they each moved into completely different environments, with new norms and expectations. As if that alone were not a great enough challenge, these new expectations were not always clearly articulated. Hyun-woo's story of his first business presentation illustrates just such a situation, and this does not appear to be an uncommon incident. Each of my participants mentioned various occasions in which the guidelines for particular assignments were not explicitly outlined. The professors themselves expressed to me that they take for granted students' abilities to execute numerous tasks. Comments to that effect included: "I don't check if they're taking good notes. I assume grad students will do it;" "I was never given guidelines [for presentations] when I was a graduate student…My professors expected us to know this, or if we didn't know, we ought to know where to figure out how to do this;" "I assume they [students] will speak and read well. It's not my job to teach that."

What these professors are describing are the unspoken "ways of being" of particular discourses: those of various academic disciplines in an American graduate school. What my participants have been undergoing, then—and quite successfully at that—is the process of mastering these discourses. As Gee (1996) has argued, this process cannot occur effectively in a setting like ELP 80, but rather must take place individually for each of the students, and only in their own academic fields. Mastery requires a period of apprenticeship during which the student is immersed in the target setting and interacting with members of the community who are already fluent users of the discourse. When I looked closer at the words of my participants, I realized that they have been offering me glimpses of their apprenticeship process all along. Hiroko has repeatedly emphasized the value of watching other presentations, particularly those in her field which she can analyze for strong and weak points, based on the reactions of her professor, her colleagues, and herself. For example, in reference to the time limits for in-class presentations, she told me, "Time is short. Before in the class, I noticed other students getting time warnings. I wanted to control myself." Hiroko also pays attention to the teacher's reaction to her own presentations, as her comments tend to indicate some problem areas in Hiroko's performance: "[The professor] makes some comments at the

end of my speech. I don't feel bad...it's her way to point out places where I'm not clear. Next time I want to do better." In addition, Hiroko relies on her professor as a good role model, as she consciously works to improve her speaking ability: "Listener needs time to process the information, so maybe when native speaker speak in natural way, maybe they pause, then we can follow the speech. Emphasize, intonation. [My professor] is really good at that, so I think I'm learning naturally from her."

Hyun-woo described similar processes in his own class, whereby observing his peers he was able to ascertain appropriate behaviors: "Last presenter was Chinese student. He understood some questions, but could not answer clearly because of his English, because of listening comprehension. I want to prepare ahead of time, what questions and those answers." Hyun-woo also explained how he learned the value of eye contact, "after the first speech of other students, [the professor] really emphasized that they should not read our papers. He told us that." Comments such as these reveal that my participants are highly aware learners, both in terms of what they are doing themselves, and what is happening in the environment around them. Furthermore, their awareness has an unmistakable purpose. By focusing on appropriate models—classmates and especially professors—my participants first identify elements of acceptable performance, and then integrate those elements into their own behavior with the goal of becoming expert members themselves. Professors might offer occasional guidance or commentary along the way, but for the most part, the onus is on the student to be perceptive. Gee (1996) says of teacher feedback, "This sort of indirect feedback is quite unlikely to involve overt attention to [specific conventions of the discourse]. Nonetheless, these must be picked up, along with (and actually as part and parcel of) concepts, values, and ways of interacting that are specific to the [target] domain" (p. 134).

Amitava, unlike Hiroko or Hyun-woo, did not describe any specific incidence in which his careful observation led to understanding or application of conventions in his field. I speculate that this is not an indication of any lack of awareness on his part, but rather of the fact that he has already fully mastered the discourse of his field. Perhaps his apprenticeship took place during his long experience in a western-influenced, English-speaking engineering program in his home country. Amitava is also a doctoral student, with several more years experience in the academic community than either Hiroko or Hyun-woo. As a result, by the time he came to the university, he could observe,

The [educational] system of my Master's degree, that is very similar to this....I didn't feel that I am having any particular problem. Initially I was a little bit scared by the class taking policy and how to respond and all that, because I don't know,...but as you have seen, maybe it does not bother me.

As he told me the stories of his educational experiences, Amitava described himself as a flexible person, adept at adjusting to new environments: "I can adapt to any country easily. I quickly pick up new things." Perhaps he is skillful at adapting to new discourses as well as new countries. When I asked him how he developed such skill, Amitava shrugged it off as "just my personality." Yet I noticed that Amitava is also an extremely perceptive student. For example, when he was explaining the professor's style of asking questions in the classroom, Amitava noted, "If [someone in the class] answers the question incorrectly, [the professor] doesn't always say it. Sometimes he just smiles.... Sometimes he asks the question again. It's the same question, but he asks it again, a new way." This seemed to me an unusually astute observation about the professor's modus operandi in the classroom, and is, in fact, precisely what I observed occurring on several occasions. Furthermore, Amitava's description matches the professor's own report on his use of questions: "I can feel it when they don't understand, so then I turn it around, I ask questions and start again and explain it a different way, from the point I lost them." Amitava, like Hiroko and Hyun-woo, is a keen reader of intent and meaning.

Hiroko, Hyun-woo, and Amitava are acquiring, or have already acquired, the discourses of their academic fields at the same time that they are studying in those fields. Clearly, there is no other place to learn it: "If you have no access to the social practice, you don't get in the Discourse—you don't have it...You cannot overtly teach anyone a Discourse, in a classroom or anywhere else" (Gee, 1996, p. 139). What, then, does this imply for the ELP? Some students in the past have suggested that the ELP is superfluous since they can learn everything they need to know in their regular courses; but an attitude like this one dismisses everything the ELP could be. Of course the ELP cannot—and does not claim to—teach students everything they need to know in their majors. What it can do, however, is help students prepare to become better apprentices in their fields, developing the skills that will allow them to fully master the target discourse. My participants have demonstrated what some of those skills are: analyzing self and audience, awareness of and ability to "read" the evaluator, keen observation and mimicking of models, ability to learn from mistakes, persistence, and hard work.

In addition, along the way towards full fluency in the discourse, my participants have shown great resourcefulness in employing various strategies that compensate for their lack of mastery. Gee (1996) refers to this phenomenon as "mushfake Discourse," and notes that it often occurs when an individual encounters a new discourse "late in the game," and is unable to acquire it perfectly. Even without mastery, the novice may still find a way to succeed, employing "partial acquisition coupled with meta-knowledge and strategies to 'make do'" (p. 147). I have already seen evidence of great metacognitive

knowledge in my participants; I expect they are expert users of mushfake as well. Hyun-woo, for example, described in detail how he prepared for his earliest presentations by memorizing all the sentences so that he would be able to make eye contact with the audience. He also predicted what questions might be asked him after his presentation and prepared answers for those in advance. Hyun-woo is aware that a truly skillful public speaker does not need to prepare in this way, but for him, right now, these strategies serve practical purposes. Similarly, Hiroko told me that in preparing for her critique she "read the article many many times. All night long I read it! I didn't want to misinterpret." Like Hyun-woo, she may be investing extra time and energy in order to meet the standards of her discipline. My participants employ strategies in class as well. Hyun-woo confessed that during his seminar he always sits in the same place—in the center of the second row—so that he can hear the professor and other speakers more clearly, and to encourage himself to ask questions. He explained, "If I sit in back, maybe I'll sleep!...I don't have courage to call out my question with the whole room, from the back."

Finally, my participants can rely on the support of their peers as they all strive for success in their field. I often observed Hiroko sitting with the other members of her class at lunch time, everyone in heated discussion. She later told me that after each class, they eat together and review the main ideas of the day—in Japanese. This allows opportunities for anyone to ask questions about points they might have missed and for everyone to benefit from the shared information. Hiroko also requests feedback on her presentations; her friends comply with both compliments and productive criticism about her performance. Hyun-woo also "checks in" with classmates after his presentations in order to confirm that they understood his report. Even Amitava, an expert in his field, will collaborate with peers for help with difficult assignments: "Sometimes the problem sets are very challenging. The steps for doing the answers are not in the textbook...If I work with [two other students], we can finish the homework in time."

By focusing on the processes of their learning—everything my participants have been doing in order to become competent members of their academic fields—I was able to glimpse a potential new direction for the ELP. Instead of vainly trying to supply our students with the endlessly diverse language "products" they will need in their fields, we can instead fortify them with knowledge to enhance their own learning processes. Based on what my participants have demonstrated, this knowledge should include metacognitive awareness and flexible mushfaking skills. This is not to say that they are a sure "formula" for success; but cultivating such qualities in our ELP students can only facilitate their academic experience in the university. At the very least, instructors can introduce such strategies and make explicit their value as tools for learning. The difficult question, of

course, is how to implement such a plan in the ELP; how do we translate abstract qualities and decontextualized strategies into concrete lesson plans? Details of curriculum development are beyond the scope of this paper, but I was offered some practical suggestions during the course of my research.

Having found them to be my best source of information, I posed the question to my participants: what changes would they make to the ELP course to improve it? All three mentioned keeping the individual presentations in some form (currently, there are a series of three, each slightly more demanding than the one before). For Hiroko and Hyun-woo, the ELP presentations offered an opportunity to practice oral speaking in a format similar to what is required in their majors. In Amitava's case, I was somewhat surprised by his answer, considering how rarely he needs to present formally in Engineering. He pointed out to me, however, that as a Ph.D. student, he needs to be able to discuss his research in a clear and articulate manner, often to an audience of non-experts, for both funding and evaluation purposes. Presentations in the ELP helped him realize the importance of audience: "Sometimes I talk too fast and skip. I thought the people could understand, but it was not. The listener's point of view needs to be considered."

Hiroko added that presentation projects could be enhanced if the ELP instructor also provided more models of successful presentations in-class, via video or guest speakers. Such an activity would necessarily be accompanied by analysis and discussion. That is, the model would not be offered for students to merely copy; rather, they would be asked to evaluate it, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and to consider how and why certain qualities could be incorporated into their own speaking style in their own discipline. A similar type of activity was suggested by Hiroko's professor in a separate interview. Referring to the reluctance of some of her students to ask questions in class, she explained,

> They don't have an ideology, or a theory—they don't have a practice of course, but they don't even have a framework for what it means to ask a question. I think presenting them with their own assumptions, and demonstrating that those assumptions have a function, but not for this academic context, might be one of the most valuable things that you can teach them. You know, not just "Ask questions," but what's the function of questions, what kind of model of learning.

She went on to describe how this ideology might be manifested in a classroom lesson: "If you do any kind of ethnography in your class, which is a good skill for students to have anyway, let them watch tapes of American students. Let them think about what those questions mean, what are they doing...It's a different approach, but it's part of becoming a member of the group that's called graduate students."

Hiroko's professor focuses on the needs of graduate students, but there is no reason to exclude undergraduate students from this discussion; indeed, the ELP population is a mix of learners at all levels. If I had conducted my study with three undergraduates, undoubtedly the findings would have been somewhat different: perhaps the first-time experience of academic discourses would have been more formidable for the younger students, or their metacognitive skills not quite so developed as those of Amitava, Hyun-woo, and Hiroko. Nevertheless, an awareness-building approach in the ELP would certainly benefit undergraduates as well. In fact, a successful model was recently implemented in a freshman-level ESL writing course. In 1996, two instructors in the English Language Program designed their expository writing classes such that students became ethnographic researchers of the various academic discourses they were entering at the university (reported separately in Wooldrik, 1996; Segade, 1997). Their innovative curriculum was motivated by the same paradox I had discovered in my own class:

> But in order to succeed in [academic courses] students need more than basic writing skills; they need an awareness of and ability to adjust to different ways of using   language across disciplines and departments. Nothing in my own training had—or could have—given me the knowledge of writing conventions in all the disciplines...It was clear that, if ESL 100 was to accomplish its mission, students could not rely on me as the source of information. A different approach was needed. (Segade, 1997, p. 1)

Segade and Wooldrik's new approach was to offer students the opportunity to become researchers themselves and explore the writing conventions of their particular majors via interviews, document collection, reading, observation, and personal reflection. It was the instructors' hope that through this project, students would discover the implicit rules and expectations in their own fields. More significantly, they would be recognizing that differences do exist across the disciplines and developing the tools to discover these differences for themselves. Wooldrik (1996) also aimed to acknowledge and maintain the students' individual cultural identity and ways of writing, even as they explored "Western notions of writing" (p. 6). Similarly, Segade (1997) was concerned with enhancing critical thinking skills in her students so they would be more apt to question and evaluate discourse norms, instead of wholeheartedly accepting them (p. 5). The student-as-researcher curriculum succeeded to some degree in both classes, and generated many unexpected results as well (see Wooldrik, 1996 and Segade, 1997 for full accounts of this project). It offers a viable alternative for the ELP with its interactionist framework, one that could also be realized in a Listening/Speaking classroom, or in any of the skills, for that matter.

As Wooldrik and Segade's research suggests, the benefits of the analytical activities described above are (at least) twofold. First, learners will be armed with greater awareness and honed interpretive skills, thus better able to identify and acquire the conventions of whatever discourse community they choose to join. Secondly, by articulating the fact that different discourses exist at the university, each with their own set of "rules," we will hopefully be preparing learners to look critically at these rules. Classroom learning alone may produce extensive knowledge about a discourse, but not the ability to master it. At the opposite extreme, complete immersion in the target community leads to acquisition, but often without any critical awareness of the discourse and everything it entails: a new way of thinking, a different world perspective, and a whole new set of values (Gee, 1996, p. 136). It may be that the best we can offer our students is a little of both processes at the same time. Students will have the ability to appropriate the ways of knowing in their target discourse, without being denied the meta-knowledge that allows them to assess and analyze—and perhaps question or even transform—that discourse.

Conceivably, the best place to take on these pedagogical responsibilities is in the ELP and other similarly-structured ESL programs. Learners of English as a second language come from a variety of primary discourses, and each of them will be entering different target communities, where they will all encounter different secondary discourses. There exist varying degrees of compatibility between primary and secondary discourses, so for some students the experience will be a difficult and conflict ridden one. Most target communities—universities, for example—assume that students will work out the conflicts on their own, along with everything else they are responsible for. If they cannot immediately do so or if they do not fully understand the source of the conflict, students may develop a sense of personal incompetence, or perhaps even fail in their endeavor. The English language classroom, however, offers a unique environment for learners, one that can not only validate the experience of ESL students but can actually make the tension between discourses the focus of the curriculum. The diversity of ESL students creates a rich mix of different cultures and discourses, all of which can be laid side by side, compared and contrasted, discussed and, eventually, understood. Students may find that they can rely on each other as sources of insight, mushfaking strategies, empathy, and support. Perhaps it is only in the language classroom that we can find such a wealth of information and the opportunity to take full advantage of it. In my case, any doubts about the ELP's potential were quelled when I received the following e-mail from Hiroko in September of 1998. She had just finished reading the draft of this report and wrote:

I enjoyed the diversity of three of us, too. That gave me a great insight into considering the diversity of my [Japanese] class...What I want to say is there were a lot of chance to expose American classroom culture in the ELP 80. I want to scream now, ELP course is beneficial! I didn't realized that I saw you as a resource, an American teacher at that time. Maybe for both teachers and students, it is difficult to realize that learning American way from seeing an American teacher and how you are with us many different students. That is a starting point, I think. Do I make sense, so far? Sorry, I'm a little excited about this topic! I want to say that it was really beneficial for the student to see you and to have opportunities to speak up in the ELP 80.

Trust and Rapport

I would like to discuss one additional insight about successful learning that my three participants offered me during the course of our research. In addition to their ability to take on the challenges of their academic disciplines, I became aware of another common feature shared by Amitava, Hiroko, and Hyun-woo. Ironically, it ought to have been an obvious element from the start, but it did not occur to me until nearly halfway through the project: how remarkably similar, and positive, were my participants' feelings towards their professors, not only in terms of their professional ability, but also their personal character. The very first thing Hyun-woo told me about his business seminar was, "We have a good relationship with the professor. He is young and open-minded. He feels likes student." It was the amiable personality of the teacher that made the seminar Hyun-woo's favorite class, and the one he recommended to me for the study. In the same way, Amitava first recommended his Mechanical Engineering seminar to me as a place where he could "feel freely to interact, ask questions." When I commented on the friendly rapport I observed in the class, Amitava confirmed, "We have comfortable relationship with professor. He talks to us straightly...sometimes he can tell a joke. I like him very much." Hiroko said much the same of her professor; after two semesters together as a class, she, her classmates, and the professor had come to know each other well. Hiroko felt comfortable with her professor's style, which she described at different times as "encouraging," "eager to teach," "supportive," "free," "enthusiastic," and "fun."

Of course, it only makes sense that the three classes I observed were taught by three skillful, popular instructors. My participants self-selected the courses they wanted me to visit, and it is natural that they would choose their favorite classes, taught by their favorite professors. However, I do not think it is coincidental that it was in these particular classes that I was able to witness the processes of apprenticeship taking place. Apprenticeship

into an academic discourse does not happen automatically; there are certain facilitating factors that must be present in the social setting. Gee (1996) writes specifically of the process, "Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction, but by enculturation (apprenticeship) into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse" (p. 139). When a teacher is master and a student is apprentice, as is the case with my participants, it is the teacher who "scaffolds the students' growing abilities to say, do, value, believe, and so forth, within the Discourse, through demonstrating her mastery and supporting theirs even when it barely exists (that is, making it look as if they can do what they cannot really do)" (p. 145).

I was struck by this description of the scaffolding process, because I witnessed it at work every day in the classrooms I observed. The three professors were so deft at weaving this process into the natural course of the lesson, one could easily overlook it. The lecture style in the engineering course was itself a type of scaffolding, as the professor's frequent questions guided students to important elements in the material. A wrong answer was never censured, but rather used by the teacher for further instruction. For example, in one class Amitava responded to a question incorrectly. The professor did not correct him directly, but rather transitioned smoothly into an explanation: "Well, that's slightly different. But, since [Amitava] mentioned this, I'd like to show you how it relates ..." This was, as it turned out, a very deliberate strategy. During our interview together, Amitava's professor disclosed how he uses questions as a comprehension check. If students cannot answer correctly, it is a signal for the professor to clarify a point, not a reflection of the students' lack of ability, and the professor is careful to convey this attitude:

> I make it so even if the [student's] answer is wrong, they won't get embarrassed.
> I ask why they answered that way, and then I try to give the logics behind it....
> I want the students to feel free to ask and answer questions. I try to have a
> relaxed policy in the classroom.

Similar evidence of teacher scaffolding was found in the Business and Japanese classes as well. In Hyun-woo's class, the mandatory question-and-answer sessions that followed each formal presentation could have been quite grueling; yet they were made less intimidating by the instructor's behavior. I noticed that when a presenter seemed to be struggling with an answer, the professor would frequently step in to support that student. His aid was subtle; usually employing recasting, or a new question with a slightly different focus, to emphasize what the student could answer and to de-emphasize the trouble spot. He also used humor to reduce students' discomfort. One time a presenter could not answer a question and the instructor joked, "All those hours of research on the

internet, and you can't answer that question? You must have been distracted by some juicy gossip on the web!" After some friendly teasing, he answered the question himself, and the student's presentation appeared to be successful. In Hiroko's class, the professor provided scaffolding not only when knowledge was lacking, but also when language was an obstacle. The professor was careful to let her students have the floor, but if their language started to break down, she would quickly take up their point and re-state it for them. These recasts were always followed by confirmation checks, "Is that what you meant?" or "Is that what you're trying to say?" I noticed that these moments were not uncomfortable at all; on the contrary, they usually inspired grateful nods and smiles. One student, upon slipping into Japanese, burst out with, "Please [professor], rescue me!" The rest of the class, including the professor, laughed empathetically.

Hiroko's professor, like Amitava's, was able to explain to me her deliberate use of scaffolding strategies: "I think they get more confident when they find out that what they thought made sense.... What I do with what they say, I take their idea and run with it, and show them it doesn't stop there. It's a collaborative process." This collaborative process of apprenticeship was taking place in all three of my participants' classes. Furthermore, the process was greatly facilitated by the rapport existing among the class members and their professors. All three professors I observed expressed the importance of solidarity building as part of their own teaching philosophy, and I saw this value articulated in countless ways in the classroom: in friendly jokes and personal stories, encouraging words, positive feedback, sensitivity, awareness, patience, and in general, a frank and open manner. As a result, the instructors succeeded in developing excellent rapport with their students, and shared with them a trusting relationship. McDermott (1982) has argued that trust between teacher and student is the critical element in any successful learning environment. Erickson (1987) says more specifically,

> Assent to the exercise of authority involves trust that its exercise will be benign. This involves a leap of faith—trust in the legitimacy of the authority and the good intentions of those exercising it...If the teacher is not trustworthy, the student cannot count on effective assistance from the teacher. (p. 344)

In one of the few studies to examine the apprenticeship relationship between a professor and a graduate student at an American university (Rudolph, 1994), trust and rapport are seen to play an important role. The professor and his apprentice "co-construct their relationship through verbal and non-verbal indexes in a way that is mutually recognizable, and mutually desirable" (p. 200). They share the same goal—mastery of the discourse by the novice—and work together to achieve that goal. The student must have confidence in the professor's expertise and guidance; the professor must demonstrate

expertise in an inclusive, cooperative context in order to gain the student's trust. Thus, it is clear that the apprenticeship process does not automatically succeed in any setting within the discourse. On the contrary, it is a carefully balanced, collaborative procedure that requires the dedication and skillful participation of both parties.

These findings have repercussions for all instructors at the university. Segade's (1997) study in her ESL writing course reported similar findings: faculty-student interactions are crucial for students' success in college, yet students tend to avoid such interactions unless they feel comfortable with the professor. Thus, Segade urges instructors "to be aware of students' feelings and...at least attempt to minimize the students' anxiety.... They need to be aware that some of their behaviors may discourage students from seeking their assistance" (p. 32). I had the pleasure of observing three professors who are already keenly aware of and responsive to their students' feelings; unfortunately, they are probably the exception rather than the rule at the university. While it may be too idealistic to hope for a campus-wide reformation in teaching styles, an excellent place to start is within our own ESL classrooms. We should prioritize rapport and solidarity among our students, and prove ourselves to be trustworthy instructors. In many cases, our classes will be the students' first experience in a foreign educational setting; we too will be asking them to take many risks. By being sensitive to our students' feelings, and monitoring our own behavior—perhaps even providing a form of scaffolding via some of the strategies described here—our classrooms may become a comfortable space for our students.

Whatever instructors decide to do in order to create effective classrooms, they should not forget to turn to their most valuable source of input: the students themselves. This was perhaps the greatest insight I gained while conducting this research project. Where I expected to observe my participants struggling to meet the demands of an American university, I found them each succeeding in their content classes. Where I had hoped to advise them in their studies or with their English, I found instead that I was learning from them, as they explained to me their strategies for success. They even helped me to realize the implicit processes of discourse apprenticeship, something I had experienced and yet had never been able to articulate before. I can only speak for myself, but I suspect that other instructors have made the same mistake I have: seeing our students only as ESL students, as people "missing" something (language skills) that we, supposedly, can give them. This erroneous view wastes the valuable knowledge students can bring to the classroom. As graduate students and experts in their fields, my three participants control a vast repertoire of information about their academic disciplines; the discourses they must master; and the skills and strategies that facilitate acquisition. In addition to their

technical knowledge, they bring a rich background of personal understanding and experience to every task, a richness that is the source of academic creativity and achievement. I regret having never recognized or utilized their competencies when I was their instructor three semesters ago, and it is an oversight I will not repeat in future classes. I am indebted to Amitava, Hiroko, and Hyun-woo for teaching me so much during the course of this research.

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