



IN THIS ISSUE

CURRENT RESEARCH

What does it take to acquire English?
by *Giles Witton-Davies* 2

The Utter Hopelessness of Explicit
Grammar Teaching
by *Brenda Murphy and
Ashley Hastings* 9

A Comparison of “Pure” Extensive Reading
with Intensive Reading and Extensive
Reading with Supplementary Activities.
by *Ken Smith* 12

The Many Faces of Structured English
Immersion
by *Grace P. McField* 16

Making Movies More Comprehensible:
The Narrative/Paraphrase Approach
by *Brenda Murphy and
Ashley Hastings* 25

TEACHER TO TEACHER

Interviews with voracious readers and
prolific authors 29

An interview with Susan Ohanian 30

An interview with Alfie Kohn 33

The Homework Myth
Implications and questions for language
teachers
by *Karen Rowan* 35

The Mandarin Offensive
Inside Beijing’s global campaign to make
Chinese the number one language in the
world. by *Michael Erard* 38

LINKS & RESOURCES ..41

**“Own...what you can carry with
you: know languages, know
countries, know people.”**

*Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn,
The Gulag Archipelago*

What does it take to acquire English?

by *Giles Witton-Davies*

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Introduction

Taiwan, like other countries, currently suffers from “English Fever”, which Krashen (2006) defines as the overwhelming desire to (1) acquire English (2) ensure that one’s children acquire English as a second or foreign language. Popular responses to English Fever in Taiwan and elsewhere have been starting English earlier, sending children to extra classes (“cram schools”), hiring tutors and studying abroad.

The pressure to teach English earlier has resulted in the introduction of English at earlier ages (3rd grade nationwide, 1st grade in Taipei), based on the assumption that “younger is better.” Research, however, does not support this view: in fact, studies consistently find that older children acquire second languages faster than younger children. Those who start later (e.g. at the ages of 8, 9 or 10) rapidly catch up with those who started earlier (e.g. at 5 or 6 years) (Krashen, Long, and Scarcella, 1979). Older children, it has been argued, have an advantage because of their greater knowledge of the world, which makes input more comprehensible, as well as more advanced levels of literacy, which transfer to the second languages.

Extra classes and private tutoring have become a major industry; in fact, there is an unrelenting demand for English language schools for children of all ages in Taiwan today. Their value, however, has never been determined nor has what is taught in such classes been investigated.

Another popular approach to boosting English proficiency is the practice of seeking out and hiring foreign teachers in primary and secondary schools, as is done in several countries, including Taiwan. Again, this expensive practice has not been formally evaluated.

There is, however, consistent evidence that living in the country in which the second language is spoken is helpful for the intermediate language acquirer, if two conditions are met: the acquirer has a chance to obtain comprehensible input and the sojourn is long enough (Krashen, 1982). My own observation also suggests that students who have spent a year or more in an English-speaking environment and attended school abroad usually show a much higher than average level of proficiency in English.

What is probably the best-supported way of improving language competence is rarely mentioned in the professional literature: wide recreational reading, or “free voluntary reading.” There is enormous evidence from case histories, correlational studies, and experimental studies supporting the claim that recreational reading makes a major contribution to reading ability, the ability to write with an acceptable writing style, vocabulary knowledge, spelling ability, and the ability to use and understand complex grammatical constructions (Krashen, 2004).

In addition, some of the strongest and most consistent evidence supporting free voluntary reading comes from countries currently suffering from English Fever: Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. Studies have confirmed that sustained silent reading, free reading done in class, is typically more effective than traditional EFL methods for college students when continued for at least an academic year. Evidence for this has come from Taiwan (S.Y. Lee, 2005a, Liu, 2005) as well as from Japan (Mason and Krashen, 1997), and a series of studies has validated free reading for elementary school children in Korea in EFL classes (Cho and Kim, 2004; Cho and Kim, 2005).

In addition, the results of a multivariate study (S.Y. Lee, 2005b) showed that the amount of free reading in English reported by university students in Taiwan was a significant predictor of writing performance. The

amount of out-of-school English writing students said they did was not, however, a significant predictor of writing performance.

The motivation for this paper came in part from my personal experience over eight years of teaching at university level in Taiwan. During this time I have often been surprised to observe that many excellent learners of English have not had the “benefits” of an early start with English, study abroad, language school classes or private tutors. Conversely, many who have enjoyed such “advantages” do not have a high level of proficiency.

This study, therefore, aims to examine the power of each of the suggested “cures” for English fever mentioned above.

Procedure

The subjects were 38 freshman students at National Taiwan University enrolled in the foreign language and literature department.

Two measures of proficiency were administered: a standardized reading proficiency test, the Advanced level of the General English Proficiency Test or GEPT (LTTC, 2002, pp. 54-71), and a vocabulary test (Nation, 2001, pp. 418-428). The GEPT is a four-skill proficiency test widely used in Taiwan, with various levels of which the advanced is the highest in regular use. The advanced reading test used in this study is a 70-minute test in two parts -- one for careful reading, one for skimming and scanning. There are 6 longer and 4 shorter texts, with a total of 40 questions. Tasks include multiple choice questions, open questions (requiring a verbal answer), a gap-fill summary, and matching headings to paragraphs. The reliability estimate for this test is .83 (LTTC, 2002, p. 15).

The Nation Test probes vocabulary knowledge at several different levels. The levels included here were the 3000-, 5000-, 10,000-word and “academic” levels, in each case involving separate productive and receptive tests. Measures were administered separately in class over a period of a month. The results for all the vocabulary tests were added together and converted into percentages. Reliability estimates for these tests

are high, ranging from .86 to .91 for the productive tests (Laufer and Nation, 1999, p. 42), and ranging from .915 to .96 for different levels of the receptive test (Schmitt et. al., 2001, p. 71).

Students also filled out a questionnaire aimed to elicit information about key variables in each student’s English learning history. Questionnaires were completed by each student alone, but consultation with classmates and teacher was encouraged when doubts and difficulties arose. The questionnaire is presented below (additional information was included in the questionnaire but not analyzed in this study):

1. At what age did you first start learning English? (at the age of)
[Under age 5 was scored as “4”, age 6-8 as “3”, ages 9-11 as “2”, and age 12 as “1”.]
2. Have you ever learned English at a language school / cram school? (yes / no; foryears)
[A response of “no” was scored as “1”, two years or less was scored as “2”, more than two years but less than four as “3” and four years or more was scored as “4.”]
3. Have you studied English with a private tutor or teacher? (one-to-one lessons, visiting their home, they visit your home, in a coffee shop, etc.) (yes / no; foryears)
[A response of “no” was scored as “1”, two years or less was scored as “2”, more than two years but less than four as “3” and four years or more was scored as “4.”]
4. Have you ever spent time abroad in a country where you had opportunities to speak English (whether studying, on vacation or just living there) (yes / no; country: period of time spent)
[A response of “no” was scored as “1”, three weeks or less was scored as “2”, more than three weeks but less than one year as “3” and one year or more was scored as “4”.]
5. Have you had native English-speaking teachers in the past? (yes / no; for years)
[A response of “no” was scored as “1”, less than two years was scored as “2”, more than two years, but less than four years was scored as “3” and more than four years was scored as “4”.]

6. Have you ever had a friend (whether foreign or not) with whom you interacted in English (speaking or writing to each other in English)? (yes / no; We have been in touch for years.)

[A response of “no” was scored as “1”, two years or less was scored as “2”, more than two years but less than four years as “3” and four years or more was scored as “4”.]

7. Have you had opportunities to speak and interact in English with other people outside class? (yes / no; Have you done this / do you do this: sometimes, often, usually?)

[For questions 7, 8, and 9, a response of “no” was scored “1”, “sometimes” was scored as “2”, “often” as “3”, and “usually” as “4”.]

8. Have you read / do you read many books, magazines, comics or other material in English apart from what your teachers give / gave you? (yes / no; Have you done this / do you do this: sometimes, often, usually?)

9. Do you keep a journal, write a blog, write e-mails or BBS, write stories, write poetry or do other writing in English on a regular basis, outside your class work and homework? (yes / no; Have you done this / do you do this ... sometimes, often, usually?)

*Often = a few times a month, for several hours in total

*Usually = several times a week, for several hours in total

Both the questionnaire and the proficiency tests were administered during the second semester of the students’ first year at the university.

Questionnaire data and proficiency data were statistically correlated by calculating the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between each questionnaire variable and each proficiency measure. This was followed by a multiple regression analysis, which was intended to determine the independent contribution of each predictor to English competence.

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive data, along with an interpretation of the scores. Of particular interest is the fact that students reported having spent little time abroad in English-speaking countries, and reported limited interaction with friends who speak English. They reported doing more reading than writing in English. There was sufficient variability in the responses, however, to allow statistical analysis.

*Sometimes = a few times a year, for several hours in total

Table 1: Descriptive Data

Table 1: Descriptive Data	mean	sd	interpretation
1: age	1.87	0.78	9-11 years
2: school	2.59	1.14	more than two years
3: tutor	1.4	0.76	less than two years
4: abroad	1.82	0.92	less than three weeks
5: NS teach	2.13	0.98	more than two years
6: friend	1.72	1.07	less than two years
7: amt speaking/interaction	1.64	0.88	less than “sometimes”
8: amt reading	2.79	0.98	nearly “often”
9: amt writing	2.1	1.02	“sometimes”
10: reading	77.5	10.2	
11: vocab	67.3	12.7	

In general, intercorrelations among the predictors range from modest to low (table 2). The correlation between “friends” and “amount speaking/interacting,” however, is a substantial .67.

Several predictors were significantly correlated with the measures of English proficiency, some reaching the .01 level of significance ($r =$ or greater than .38, one-tailed test): time abroad, amount of speaking/interaction, amount of reading, and amount of writing

others constant. Tables 3 and 4 present the results of two multiple regression analyses, one with the reading test as the dependent variable and one with the vocabulary test as the dependent variable. All predictors were used except for “friends,” which, as

Table 2: Inter correlations	2: school	3: tutor	4: abroad	5: NS teach	6: friend	7:amt speak/ interact	8: amt reading	9: amt writing	10: reading test	11: vocab tests
1: age	0.14	0.05	0.31	0.07	0.02	0.25	0.22	0.03	0.22	0.32
2: school		0.12	0.1	0.03	0.06	0.2	0.15	0.35	0.12	0.3
3: tutor			0.23	0.44	0.31	0.16	0.31	0.33	0.1	0.08
4: abroad				0.18	0.29	0.38	0.34	0.3	0.41	0.45
5: NS teach					0.11	0.09	0.06	0.04	0.19	0.03
6: friend						0.67	0.32	0.48	0.36	0.3
7: amt speak/ interaction							0.32	0.4	0.51	0.51
8: amt reading								0.52	0.58	0.53
9: amt writing									0.38	0.48
10: amt reading										0.67

for both measures. Simple correlations, however, are inadequate for determining the relationship among variables when there are possible confounding effects of other factors.

Multiple regression analysis allows us to examine the impact of each predictor by itself, holding all the

predictor	beta	t	sig level
1: age	0.349	0.19	0.42
2: school	0.185	0.12	0.45
3: tutor	- 3.34	1.66	0.05
4: abroad	1.5	0.93	0.18
5: NS teach	2.79	1.67	0.05
7: amt speaking/ interaction	3.84	2.28	0.01
8: amt reading	5.07	3.08	0.002
9: amt writing	0.69	0.4	0.34

noted above, correlated highly ($r = .67$) with amount of speaking/interaction. Omitting this predictor avoids the problem of multicollinearity and makes sense theoretically: it is reasonable to hypothesize that those who have more friends with whom they speak English will also interact more in English, and it is the interaction that is predicted to cause language acquisition.

Table 3: Predictors of scores on the reading test

$r^2 = .54$ (adjusted $r^2 = .42$)
All significance levels one-tail.

Inspection of the standardized regression coefficients (beta) in table 3 reveals that the amount of reported reading in English is the strongest predictor of performance on the reading test, followed by speaking/interaction. Reported writing failed as a predictor, even though the correlation between

amount of writing and reading test performance was a respectable .38. The presence of a native speaker teacher, which had only a .19 correlation with reading test performance, emerges here as a significant predictor. None of the other predictors were significant, except for tutoring, and in this case the relationship was negative.

Table 4: Predictors of scores on the vocabulary test
 $r^2 = .54$ (adjusted $r^2 = .42$)
 All significance levels one-tail.

predictor	beta	t	sig level
1: age	2.55	1.13	0.14
2: school	-.53	0.3	0.39
3: tutor	- 5.6	2.34	0.01
4:abroad	2.59	1.34	0.1
5: NS teach	2.13	1.07	0.15
7: amt speaking/ interaction	3.55	1.76	0.05
8:amt reading	4.39	2.23	0.02
9:amt writing	3.23	1.55	0.07

Reading was also the best predictor of performance on the vocabulary test (table 4), with speaking/interaction again coming in second. This time, however, writing approached significance, and the experience of having had native speaker teaching was not significant. Again, having had a tutor was negatively associated with test scores.

The coefficient of determination (r^2) for both multiple regression analyses was substantial, indicating that the combination of predictors accounted for about half of the variation in test scores. The amount of speaking/interaction and reading alone accounted for about 40% of the variation in reading and vocabulary scores (for reading, $r^2 = .45$, for vocabulary, $r^2 = .41$). Adding “amount of writing” added only 2 percent to the r^2 for scores on the vocabulary test.

Discussion

Reading was the winner in both regression analyses, a finding consistent with other studies (Krashen, 2004). Speaking/interaction came in second place. Thus, the

only consistent predictors of proficiency were sources of comprehensible input (as speaking/interaction will normally involve at least as much input as output).

Output in the form of writing was less successful as a predictor. The amount of writing reported correlated with both measures, but dropped out in one multiple regression analysis and was weakened in the second, a result consistent with Lee (2005b). However, subjects engaged in a modest amount of writing, which could mean that the correlation between writing and proficiency was attenuated. In addition, it should be recognized that the positive effect of speaking/interaction could be due to subjects’ actual speaking output, not (only) listening.

Another source of comprehensible input, time spent abroad in English speaking countries, was not a significant predictor, but considering the small amount of time students reported spending abroad, the strong Pearson correlations with both measures and the near significant results in the regression analyses, it would be premature to reject this variable as a predictor, especially since other studies confirm its efficacy for longer stays (Krashen, 1982).

Having had a native speaker of English as a teacher was weakly correlated with proficiency, but this predictor reached statistical significance on one multiple regression. This could be a chance result and needs to be tested again in further studies.

Age of starting English study was not a significant predictor, which suggests that starting older is not a disadvantage. This appears to be contrary to recent results by Wu (2005), who reported that those who began English in Taiwan at grade 2 or earlier outperformed those who started in grades 3 and 4, who in turn did better than those who started in grades 5 and 6. Wu, however, also reported no advantage for those who began even earlier (preschool, kindergarten and grade 1). In addition, those who started younger had more total time studying English. They may have done better but were not necessarily more efficient. Finally, Wu’s subjects were tested in grades 5 through 8, when the later starters had only just begun to

study English. In this study, subjects were university students. It is possible that the differences observed by Wu will disappear after a few more years.

Attending cram school had no impact on test scores. In many countries, a substantial number of children attend cram schools, extra schooling designed to supplement the regular school offerings. One survey (Taiwan headlines, 2000) concluded that about 30% of school-age children in Taiwan attended cram schools, and the responses of the subjects in this study confirm this: 52% reported attending cram school for two years or more. Having had a tutor was a negative predictor.

It may be the case that those who go to language schools and/or have tutors do so precisely because they are weak in English. In fact, it could be argued that both tutors and cram school are effective, and some of these students might have been even weaker without these interventions, possibilities that can be investigated with experimental studies. Such studies should, of course, examine what cram schools and tutors actually do and attempt to determine whether some approaches are more successful than others.

This study tends to confirm doubts about the belief that “more is better” in second language learning, at least with respect to getting an early start and going to extra classes. The results presented here suggest that success in learning English as a foreign language does not necessarily depend on beginning at an early age, and that sending children to language schools may not be particularly helpful.

For teachers, perhaps the clearest message is that reading of the kind that is usually done out of class (i.e. pleasure reading) should be encouraged, and that time could also be dedicated to it in class.

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Learning a Foreign Language Can Reduce the Risk of Age Related Symptoms such as Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's

"You don't have to master it. Just the attempt to learn a language is like running different software through the brain. You're exercising more communication channels in the brain." *Healthy Aging*, Dr. Andrew Weil

Older Americans, too, increasingly are studying -- and successfully learning -- foreign languages. Although some observers believe children have the advantage in mastering a foreign language, other experts disagree.

Joan Rubin and Irene Thomson, authors of *How To Be a More Successful Language Learner*, wrote: "[T]here is little evidence that children in language classrooms learn foreign languages any better than adults [people over 15] in similar classroom situations."

Adults, they write, have better memories, more efficient ways of organizing information, longer attention spans, better study habits and greater ability to handle complex mental tasks. Children, however, are less afraid of making mistakes and seeming foolish, according to Rubin and Thomson.

Retirees are finding they now have the time to study a language. Many seniors have the financial means to travel to foreign lands and want to be able to order off menus, ask for directions and converse a bit with the locals in their native tongue. Other older Americans, descendants of immigrants, want to renew their ethnic ties and get in touch with the cultural heritage of their family's homeland by learning the language they may have failed to absorb in childhood.

Also spurring the 50-and-older crowd is evidence that learning a foreign language may provide the kind of mental stimulation that staves off mental disabilities such as Alzheimer's disease.

Americans Breaking Out of Their English-Only Shells by Jane Morse and Todd Bullock, Washington File Staff Writer (usinfo.state.gov)

The Utter Hopelessness of Explicit Grammar Teaching

***Brenda Murphy and
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It is common knowledge that every normal person above the age of six or so has acquired the grammar of his native language without explicit instruction and uses it without conscious attention. It is also common knowledge that normal people find it extremely difficult to understand or learn technical information about the grammar of any language, whether their own or any other. Nevertheless, many common approaches to teaching a second or foreign language continue to assume that explicit grammar teaching is necessary and effective.

Why does this delusion continue to exert such a powerful influence on education?

One reason is that the practice of teaching grammar is an entrenched habit, one that is accepted by both the student and the teacher. The more natural approach, with little or no grammar focus, is suspect.

Another reason may be that true language acquisition takes a lot of time. It is an incremental process consisting of a very long series of very small, often imperceptible steps, creating the discouraging impression that “nothing’s happening.” People may turn to grammar for the same reason that people in some societies and times have turned to magic: they hope that the impossible can happen if only they say the right words.

Yet another reason for the continued dominance of explicit grammar teaching may be the common belief that language grammars are thoroughly and accurately described in grammar textbooks. If this were true, then one might suppose that teachers can use these textbooks to teach the rules of grammar, just as chemistry teachers use their textbooks to teach the principles of chemistry.

If a chemist picks up a chemistry textbook, he’ll see familiar facts and terminology that he uses in his work. But if a person fluent in English (but not acquainted with grammatical analysis) picks up one of the popular grammar books intended for ESL/EFL students, he’ll see unfamiliar terms and explanations which may seem more confusing than enlightening. This is a clue that whatever the grammar textbooks are teaching, it is not anything that normal speakers know or use.

The examples we’ll provide in following paragraphs demonstrate that grammar textbooks do not even begin to describe real grammar accurately or completely. If chemistry textbooks were no better than the currently available grammar textbooks, alchemy would still reign supreme. Beyond this, though, we argue that no reasonable solution to the inadequacy of grammar textbooks is possible, because the actual facts of grammar are too abstract and complex to be

explicitly taught, learned, or used by ordinary people operating in ordinary educational environments.

All our examples are drawn from Azar (1999), which we have chosen because her grammar textbooks are widely regarded as state-of-the-art. Page numbers given below refer to Azar unless otherwise indicated.

On page 132, we are told that “A pronoun is used in place of a noun.”

This, however, is not true. Pronouns are used in place of noun phrases, as any good grammatical description makes clear (e.g. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1983, p. 122). According to Azar’s rule, we should be able to say either “The old man is asleep” or “The old he is asleep.” Obviously, the pronoun he should replace the entire noun phrase the old man.

Also on page 132, Azar states that, “A singular pronoun is used to refer to a singular noun. . . . A plural pronoun is used to refer to a plural noun.” When considering the singular/plural distinction, it becomes clear (once again) that most pronouns replace or refer to noun phrases, not nouns. Consider the sentence, “John, Mary, Alice, and Fred are playing tennis.” Since there are no plural nouns in that sentence, Azar’s rule does not allow them to be used to replace the subject. Instead, her rule would produce, “He, she, she, and he are playing tennis.”

Again on page 132, Azar tells us that “Possessive adjectives [“her” “your”] are followed immediately by a noun; they do not stand alone” and that “Possessive pronouns [“hers” “yours”] are not followed immediately by a noun; they stand alone.” The assumption is that possessive adjectives are, in fact, adjectives. If this were so, the possessive adjective my (like any other adjective) could be preceded by a determiner [“a” “the”], which would result in a construction such as “the my pen.” Another function of a true adjective is that it can appear in the predicate position in a sentence, which would give us the non-

standard usage, “The pen is my.”

What Azar calls “possessive adjectives” and “possessive pronouns” are actually two types of possessive pronouns, each referring to a different level of noun phrase. To illustrate: the possessive pronoun her in “her hat” corresponds to the possessive noun phrase “the girl’s” that is part of the larger noun phrase “the girl’s hat.” Her refers to the possessor but not to the thing possessed. On the other hand, the possessive pronoun hers in “This thing on my head is hers,” corresponds to the larger level of noun phrase

“the girl’s hat.” Hers refers to the possessor AND the thing possessed. The distinction between the two types of possessive pronouns resides in the different levels of noun-phrase construction, a matter which is not brought to the attention of Azar’s readers.

Another example involves the use of gerunds. On page 297, Azar states that “A gerund is the –ing form of a verb used as a noun. A gerund is used in the same way as a noun, i.e. as a subject or as an object.” This works sometimes, but consider the sentence, “Singing the national anthem respectfully is always appropriate.” The gerund here functions as a verb, taking a direct object and an adverb, which a noun cannot do. Nor is the gerund the subject of the sentence; rather, the subject is a reduced sentence functioning as the noun phrase, “singing the national anthem respectfully.” Azar’s gerund rule fails here because her grammatical framework lacks the technical concepts and terms needed to explain such structures.

What is the real problem with such pared-down approaches to teaching grammar? What adverse effect will this have on students?

The gaps in the textbook writers’ approach to teaching grammar are there because they are attempting to make the material simple enough to be teachable. But if students learn such rules and apply them, they’ll

People may turn to grammar for the same reason that people in some societies and times have turned to magic: they hope that the impossible can happen if only they say the right words.

eventually produce incorrect forms. They may then find they're better off ignoring the learned rules, which would mean that the textbooks and, in fact, the whole grammar-teaching approach were unnecessary.

On the other hand, if grammar-textbook writers were to attempt to state rules of grammar completely and accurately, learning the requisite concepts and terminology would take up massive amounts of students' time and mental energy. Not inconsequentially, the more rigorous the study of grammar becomes, the more remote the language learning process would be from the way that people actually acquire language.

The conundrum for the textbook writer -- and the paradox of teaching grammar at all -- is that if the grammar is simple enough to teach, it's inaccurate; yet if it is complex enough to be accurate, it's impractical to teach. So we are compelled to conclude that natural language acquisition, for which the human brain is adapted through ages of evolution, is the only practical way for anyone to gain proficiency in a language. (See Hastings and Murphy 2004 for additional discussion).

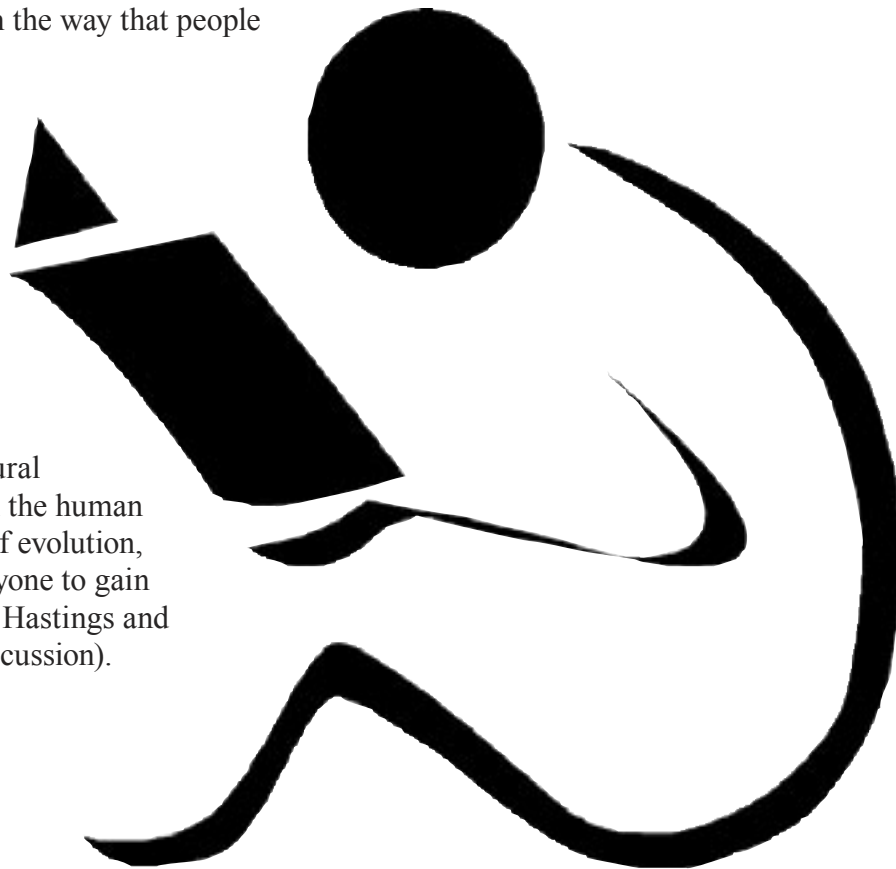
...whatever the grammar textbooks are teaching, it is not anything that normal speakers know or use.

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A Comparison of “Pure” Extensive Reading with Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading with Supplementary Activities.

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***Abstract.** Fifteen and sixteen year old students of English as a foreign language in Taiwan who participated in a “pure” extensive reading program made better gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension (cloze tests) than comparisons in “intensive” reading programs and extensive reading supplemented with activities in which students summarized and evaluated what they read. The advantage for the reading-only group was only evident for the first semester. All groups made similar gains the second semester of the project.*

There is overwhelming evidence that students engaging in free reading progress in language and literacy development. Studies thus far have shown that in-class free reading is as or more effective than traditional instruction: students who participate in sustained silent reading, programs in which some class-time is set aside for free reading, typically do as well or better than students in traditional programs on tests of reading comprehension and vocabulary, a result that holds for first language acquisition and foreign language development (Krashen, 2004).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate two issues related to sustained silent reading: Can SSR be improved by adding supplementary activities? Is SSR more effective than “intensive reading,” reading in which reading is not self-selected and attention is paid to details of the text, such as vocabulary and grammar.

The question is often asked whether sustained silent reading is enough. Does free reading need to be supplemented with activities in which students focus on form or write about what they read? Mason (2004) presents evidence suggesting that neither of these kinds of supplementation adds to the power of reading: Mason reported no difference in improvement for university level students of English as a foreign language in Japan who (1) wrote summaries of what they read in Japanese; (2) wrote summaries of what they read in English; and (3) wrote summaries in English that were corrected for grammatical accuracy. Mason also concluded that those in group (1) were more efficient: more gains were made in English proficiency with less time devoted to English.

To further investigate the impact of supplementary activities, this study investigates the contribution made by supplementary activities in which students are asked to summarize and evaluate what they have written.

In most studies of sustained silent reading, comparison groups are engaged in what researchers describe as “traditional instruction,” which often includes intensive reading. In this study, one comparison group focused exclusively on intensive reading. This is the first direct confrontation of extensive and intensive reading, two very different approaches to reading.

Method

The duration of the study was one academic year. All participants were first year Junior College English majors at Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. All were registered in a required first year reading course, taught by the same instructor, and were also taking the same additional English courses. All were 15 or 16 years old. The study compared three classes, each with 51 students.

A) Intensive Reading: (IR)

Students in this class studied short reading passages, answered comprehension questions, and analyzed sentence level components of the readings. In addition, students studied vocabulary, and identified main ideas within the reading passages.

B) Extensive Reading + Activities: (ER +)

This class focused on reading graded readers but also spent class time writing “post-reading Reaction Reports” adapted from Day and Bamford, 1998 and Bamford and Day, 2004. The Reaction Report asked readers to indicate the book read, pages read, give their overall evaluation (the book was great, good, fair/OK, poor), write a brief five-sentence summary, and write recommendations to future readers of the book. Students completed eighteen Reaction Reports, nine per semester, one every two weeks over the academic year.

Doing ‘pure’ extensive reading with no supplementary activities was more effective in producing gains in English competence than intensive reading or extensive reading with supplementary activities. In other words, the group that did the most reading made the greatest gains.

C) Extensive Reading Only: (ER Only)

This class read silently from graded readers throughout the study with no supplementary activities. It was, in other words, a “pure” sustained silent reading class. Class time was nearly entirely dedicated to free voluntary reading, and the teacher read while the students read. Some time was used keeping a log of what was read (author, title, pages, time spent reading). Students were not asked to write summaries or reactions.

Two measures of English competence were used.

1) EPER Placement/Progress Tests

The Edinburgh Project of Extensive Reading (EPER)

Placement/Progress Tests (Two Versions: Complete A and B; henceforth EPER P/P Tests) were administered to all three groups. The EPER P/P Tests are a set of modified cloze tests. According to EPER a pure cloze test is one in which every fourth, fifth or sixth word is deleted from a passage and the only correct answer is the deleted word. EPER’s P/P Tests are modified in the following two ways: (1) occasionally varying the frequency of the deleted words (meaning not always do the EPER P/P Tests omit every fourth, fifth or sixth word) and (2) by allowing a specified range of answers. (Hill, D. R. 1990, 1995) Test-retest reliability of the EPER P/P Tests calculated with a different set of subjects at the same institution, is .91.

Complete Test A was given to all three groups the first class meeting of the school year (September 2004). Complete Test

B was given to all three classes at the end of the first semester (January 2005) to measure progress over the first semester (18 weeks) and Complete Test A was then re-administered at the end of the school year to measure gains over a full academic year (late June 2005).

2) CSEPT (College Students English Proficiency Test)

The CSEPT consists of sections on listening, reading, and usage and is administered annually to college students in Taiwan. It was developed by the LTTC (Language Training and Testing Center) in Taiwan. According to the LTTC, (email correspondence, June 2006) the reliability of the CSEPT is high (alpha = .94).

The CSEPT was administered in September 2004 to all three groups, and students took an alternate form of the same test in November 2005. Classes ended in June 2005. Students thus took the CSEPT post-test five months after treatment ended.

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Results

Table one presents mean pre and post-test (end of year) scores for the EPER P/P T. The ER ONLY group easily outperformed both the intensive reading group (comparison of gain scores; $t = 2.28$, $p = .01$, one-tailed) as well as the extensive reading “plus” group ($t = 2.65$, $p = .005$).

Table 1: EPER P/P T results

	IR	ER +	ER ONLY
pre	23.9 (8.5)	23.0 (9.1)	22.3 (8)
post	34.8 (7.9)	33.7 (9.7)	36.7 (7.8)
gain scores	11.1 (6.6)	10.7 (6.3)	14.2 (6.7)

Table two compares the gains made from the beginning of the year to the end of first semester with gains made from the end of the first semester to the end of the second semester. The ER ONLY group made similar gains each semester, but the two other groups did much better the second semester. The ER ONLY gain was significantly larger the first semester (compared to intensive reading; $t = 2.05$, $p = .02$, one-tailed; compared to ER+, $t = 2.57$, $p = .001$), but there was no significant difference between the ER ONLY group and the others the second semester ($t = .838$, $t = .05$ respectively).

Table 2: first and second semester gains compared

	first semester gain	second semester gain
IR	3.3 (7.4)	7.68 (4.9)
ER+	3.9 (7.1)	6.74 (5.2)
ER ONLY	7.56 (6.8)	6.68 (5.4)

Table three presents the results of the CSEPT testing. ER ONLY again emerges as the winner, easily outperforming the intensive reading group ($t = 1.92$, $p = .02$, one-tail) and the extensive reading “plus” group ($t = 2.34$, $p = .01$, one tail).

Table 3: CSEPT test results

	IR	ER +	ER ONLY
pre	135.1 (31.8)	132.6 (32.8)	129.5 (32.9)
post	185.8 (40.3)	181.5 (40.4)	192.8 (45.1)
gain scores	50.7 (30.5)	49 (26.2)	63.3 (33.4)

Discussion

Doing “pure” extensive reading with no supplementary activities was more effective in producing gains in English competence than intensive reading or extensive reading with supplementary activities. In other words, the group that did the most reading made the greatest gains.

The results held for tests given at the end of the academic year as well as tests given five months after treatment ended. Effect sizes for the EPER P/P T are a bit larger (table 4), but it is clear that there is little, if any, degeneration over the five months between administrations of the two tests.

Table 4: Effect sizes

	ER ONLY vs. IR	ER ONLY vs. ER +
EPER	0.47	0.54
CSEPT (5 month delay)	0.39	0.48

The finding that ER ONLY’s advantage was due entirely to the gains in the first semester is surprising in light of findings showing that longer-term SSR programs are generally more effective than shorter-term programs (Krashen, 2004). Before we spend time speculating about the possible causes of this finding, it needs to be replicated. If it persists, interviews, close observations of students and an analysis of how much and what was read might give us some answers as well as information that will make SSR more effective in general.

This result is consistent with Mason (2004), as well as other studies of SSR done in the English as a foreign language environment with older students (Mason and Krashen, 1997; Liu, 2005, Lee, 2006). It is, however, premature to rule out all supplementary activities, as Mason (2004) and this study have only examined a few possibilities. It may be the case that some kinds of supplementation are more effective than others. This remains, however, to be demonstrated.

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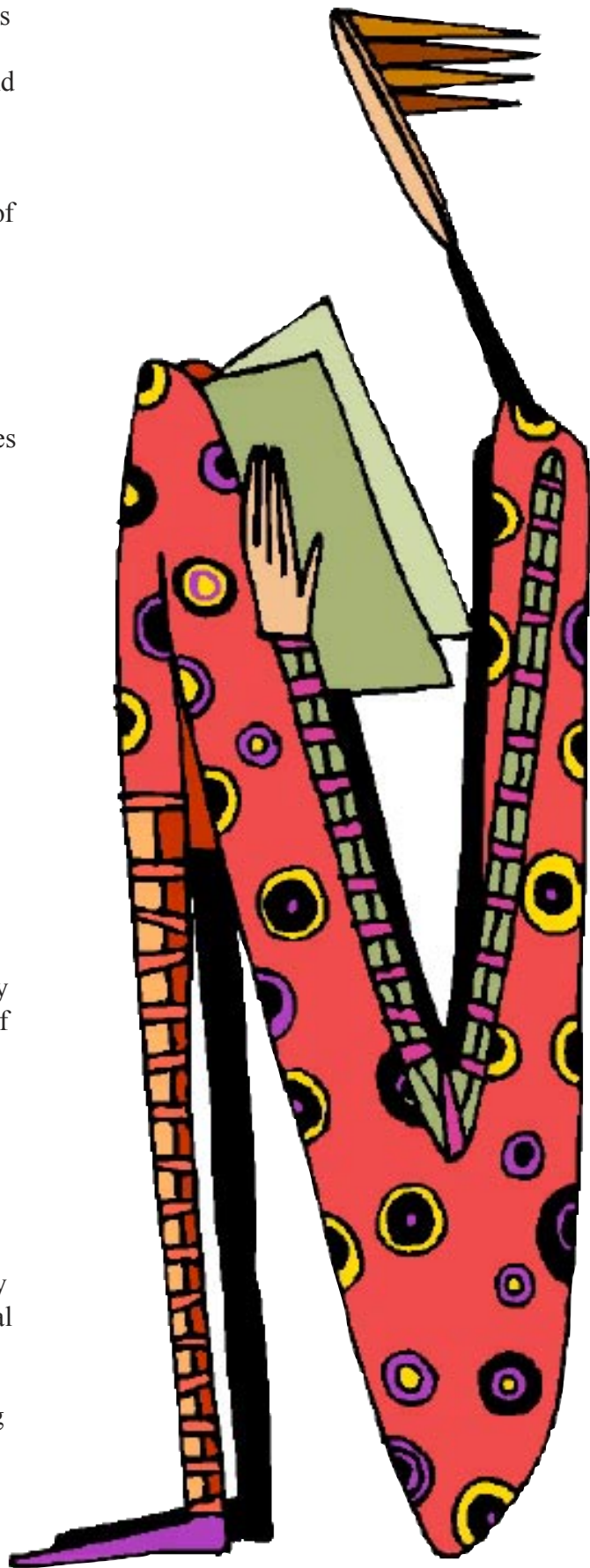
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The Many Faces of Structured English Immersion

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Abstract

This paper is the first in a three-part series that examines structured English immersion (SEI), the instructional program mandated by California's Proposition 227. In the first paper, the history of this program in the research base is examined and compared to what is mandated in Proposition 227. In the second paper, the current implementation of this program in various districts is reviewed, revealing wide variation in program types operating under the same label of SEI. The third paper examines the research on SEI before and after the passage of Proposition 227. The main implication of the collective analysis is that future research on the effects of Proposition 227 needs to consider both the wide variation in program description and program implementation in assessing the impact of Proposition 227 in the state.



Introduction and Background

In 1998, Proposition 227, the “English for the Children” initiative, was passed by 61% of California voters. Of Hispanic voters, 63% voted against this initiative. Statewide, the Bay Area’s Alameda County was the only county with a majority (55%) that opposed this measure.

Proposition 227 mandated “Structured English Immersion (SEI)” or “Sheltered English Immersion” (used interchangeably in the proposition) to be the default instructional program in California’s public schools. Proposition 227 also severely restricted the use of the primary language support or instruction in California schools. As a result, in 2001-02, only 9.7% of English Learners (EL’s) in California received some primary language instruction, down from 29.1% in 1997-98 (California Department of Education, Annual Language Census). More recently in 2004-05, among the 25.17% (1,591,525 out of 6,322,167) of California’s students that were EL’s, nearly half of that population (755,137 students 47.45%) were enrolled in SEI programs, and only 120,849 students (7.6%) were enrolled in alternative courses of study.

What is SEI and how are various districts implementing this program under Proposition 227? In answering this question, the origins of SEI are reviewed, and a brief comparison made to the term “sheltered instruction.” (Note: the second paper will be an examination of how different districts have interpreted and implemented SEI. The third paper will examine the research on SEI before and after the passage of Proposition 227).

The Evolution of Structured Immersion to Structured English Immersion in the Literature

The Origins of SEI: Structured Immersion in Baker & de Kanter (1983)

While the terms Structured English Immersion and Sheltered English Instruction were used interchangeably in Proposition 227, in fact, they have two very different histories in the literature and in practice. SEI was

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originally referred to as Structured Immersion (SI) about two decades ago (Baker & de Kanter, 1983). In their review of programs for EL's, Baker & de Kanter described Structured Immersion (SI) as follows:

Teacher L1 / student L1. "Instruction is in the second language (L2), as in the case of submersion, but there are important differences. *The immersion teacher understands L1, and students can address the teacher in L1;* the immersion teacher, however, generally replies only in L2. Furthermore, the curriculum is structured so that prior knowledge of L2 is not assumed as subjects are taught. Content is introduced in a way

that can be understood by the students. The students in effect learn L2 and content simultaneously. *Most immersion programs also teach L1 language arts for thirty to sixty minutes a day.* Structured immersion differs from TBE (transitional bilingual education) in that L1 is *rarely* used by the teacher (*except where it is a subject*) and subject-area instruction is given in L2 from the beginning of the program (all italics added)."

"*The immersion teacher understands L1, and students can address the teacher in L1...*" This suggests two critical aspects for program implementation, one concerning classroom language use during instruction and one concerning staffing. First, the use of a shared language other than English means students can draw upon their knowledge base in both the home language and English in the learning process. Most importantly, students can use the mother tongue and be understood by the teacher. Second, concerning staffing, like bilingual education programs, SI requires a teaching staff that understands English Learners' primary languages. This is an ideal scenario for EL's. However, in a society that has successfully fostered monolingualism over biliteracy, such a bilingual or multilingual teaching force does not exist in sufficient

numbers, making proper implementation of SI or bilingual education difficult. In contrast, 227 does not stipulate a bilingual teaching force to implement SEI. In effect, 227 legitimizes the overwhelmingly monolingual teaching force.

Instructional time in L1 "Most immersion programs

also teach L1 language arts for thirty to sixty minutes a day." It is an important and little known fact that Baker and de Kanter (1983) included some primary language instruction in their description of Structured Immersion without rendering it a bilingual program. For example, Gersten

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It is an important and little known fact that Baker and de Kanter (1983) included some primary language instruction in their description of Structured Immersion without rendering it a bilingual program.

(1985, p. 189) mistakenly refers to Baker and de Kanter's Structured Immersion program as being an all-English program: "The key to a (sic) structured immersion is that all academic instruction takes place in English." ¹

It is also of interest that the original 1983 description stated that "L1 is rarely used by the teacher (*except where it is a subject*) (italics added)," clearly suggesting that thirty to sixty minutes of L1 per day was separated from the use of L1 for non-instructional use on "rare" occasions. (Note: The use of the term "rarely" in the Baker and de Kanter review (1983) will be contrasted to the use of the term "overwhelmingly" in Proposition 227 (1997) mentioned later in this paper. However, if we were to ask the average person what SI might look like in the classroom, they would most likely assume that the term refers to an all-English program, given the reference to the word immersion, which suggests the exclusive use of the new language, English. The average person would not know that a program called SI actually included thirty to sixty minutes of primary language instruction a day.

Level of English Learner: Baker and de Kanter (1983) did not distinguish between different kinds of modified instruction for different levels of EL's. Baker and de Kanter's description of SI is that the program was to teach content and English simultaneously. Teaching content and language simultaneously is more commonly referred to in the literature and in practice as "sheltered instruction." Krashen (1991) and Edwards, Wesche, Krashen, Clement, & Kruidenier (1984) coined the term sheltered instruction to refer to the use of modified English in teaching academic or subject matter lessons: "(S)heltered subject matter teaching...[refers to a program] where intermediate-level English language acquirers learn subject matter taught in English." Thus sheltered instruction refers to the use of English to teach subject matter or content area lessons to EL's after the beginning stages of English language development, since subject matter instruction in English would be comprehensible only after the student had learned some rudimentary English. While it may sound appealing that both content and language could be taught at the same time to brand new EL's, veteran teachers and researchers both know that language learning has its stages of development, and that (subject matter) comprehension may be minimal at the very beginning.

In the beginning stages of English language development, English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Language Development (ELD) is the main type of instruction used. In the early weeks and months of ELD, although content area instruction in English is certainly employed, it would be most optimistic to state that ELs are able to fully comprehend the simultaneous teaching of content area (e.g., Science, History, etc.) and English. [Note: Also see similar interpretations of sheltered instruction by de Cos (1999), Gandara (2000), and Parrish, Linquanti, Merickel, Quick, Laird, & Esra (2002).] However, Baker and de Kanter (1983) did not make such a distinction between beginning and intermediate level EL's.

The average person would not know that a program called SI actually included thirty to sixty minutes of primary language instruction a day.

Duration: On a final note, Baker and de Kanter (1983) did not consider a timeline of how long SI would be used with EL's. In other words, the type of instruction used is not situated in the context of the length of time it may take a typical English Learner to acquire or learn English (see Table 1).

SEI in Rossell & Baker (1996)

Thirteen years later, Rossell and Baker (1996) revised the description of Structured Immersion (SI) as follows: "(I)nstruction is in the language being learned (L2)...*but the teacher speaks the students' native tongue (L1)*. The second language used in these programs is always geared to the children's language proficiency at *each stage* so that it is *comprehensible*. The native tongue is used only in the *rare instances* when the student cannot complete a task without it.

The student thus learns the second language and subject matter content simultaneously" (all italics added).

Teacher L1 / student L1: As with the 1983 version of SI, the 1996 version of SI would be taught by teachers who speak the students' first language, and students would be able to draw upon their knowledge base in their home languages.

Level of English Learner: The phrase, "geared to the children's language proficiency at *each stage* so that it is *comprehensible*" has replaced the phrase, "Content is introduced in a way that can be understood by the students" from the 1983 version, indicating some awareness of different levels of EL's. The term "comprehensible" is most associated with Krashen's articulation of sheltered instruction (Krashen, 1991; Edwards et al., 1984), wherein making basic English language comprehensible in the beginning stages of English language development programs generally precedes making both subject matter and English simultaneously comprehensible in later stages of second language acquisition.

Instructional time in L1: The 1996 description of SI no longer includes the thirty to sixty minutes of L1 language arts found in the 1983 description. Now the

L1 is only to be used in “rare instances.” Perhaps this change to the unspecified amount of primary language instruction was due in part to the difficulty in requiring a minimum amount of L1 (typically Spanish) instruction in a program called Structured Immersion. However, it may have seemed logical to include some minimal use of L1 during the day, since it is difficult to imagine bilingual teachers never ever using L1 instruction with students. This critical change will set the stage for Proposition 227’s requirements and language.

Moreover, in an increasingly divided terrain of language wars where one had to choose between being an English-Only advocate or a bilingual education advocate, perhaps the division between the use of English and L1 had to be made. Either teachers were an English-only/Structured English Immersion advocate, or not, and including a minimum amount of L1

instruction in the description would disqualify this program from being classified in the English-only category. As will be discussed later, this either-or stance is problematic in many ways, in relation to both program description and staffing. With regard to program description, the widely accepted definition of a quality bilingual education program includes SI or SEI as well as L1 components (Krashen, 1996). In regards to staffing, any demand for qualified bilingual staff to teach the 1.6 million EL’s in California under SI or bilingual program models would have massive implications. The 1996 program description can be seen as having been modified to include programs staffed by English-speaking monolinguals. The 1996 description, then, foreshadows Proposition 227’s requirement of SEI where the teacher does NOT necessarily understand the student’s L1, effectively legitimizing the overwhelmingly monolingual teaching force in the state and in the nation.

The second language used in these programs is always geared to the children’s language proficiency at each stage so that it is comprehensible. The native tongue is used only in the rare instances when the student cannot complete a task without it.

Duration: Finally, as with the 1983 description, no mention of the duration of the program is made. *Proposition 227’s Vision of “Structured English Immersion” aka “Sheltered English Immersion*

A year later in 1997, Unz & Tuckman described the term Structured English Immersion in CA’s Proposition 227 as follows: “ ‘Sheltered English immersion’ or ‘structured English immersion’ means an *English language acquisition process* for young children in which *nearly all* classroom instruction

is in English but with the curriculum and presentation designed for children who are learning the language.”

In Proposition 227, the term Structured Immersion (SI) was modified into the term Structured *English* Immersion (SEI). Further, “Sheltered English Immersion” is used synonymously with structured English immersion and defined as a program that would teach subject matter effectively in

the initial stages of English language development.

Level of English Learner and duration: First, the use of the term, Sheltered Instruction may be seen as a misuse of the term given that, in research and practice, Sheltered Instruction refers to English language development strategies for intermediate level EL’s, as noted above. From the viewpoint of Proposition 227, however, this conflation of Structured English Immersion and Sheltered English immersion makes sense since any immersion program has a time limit of one year. One possible interpretation of the newly crafted description of SEI and Sheltered Instruction being interchangeable is to see the description as an attempt to broadly include many modified strategies (ELD and ESL, as well as sheltered instruction, etc.) for teaching English for all levels of EL’s. Under Proposition 227, there is no need to distinguish between beginning and intermediate levels of EL’s,

since all students would acquire English in one short year.²

Instructional Use of L1: Second, under the SEI program mandated by Proposition 227, there is no L1 language arts instruction and the use of L1 is to be minimized. The Proposition only states that instruction needs to be “nearly all” in English and elsewhere in the Proposition specifies that instruction needs to be “overwhelmingly” done in English: “‘English language classroom’ means a classroom in which the language of instruction used by the teaching personnel is overwhelmingly the English language, and in which such teaching personnel possess a good knowledge of the English language.” *Teacher L1 / student L1:* Further, in sharp contrast to the 1983 and the 1996 descriptions of SI, SEI under Proposition 227 severely restricts the use of the students’ knowledge base in the home language, since (1) there is no longer a requirement for the teachers to be bilingual; and (2) English is stressed as the medium of learning to the exclusion of home language use.

In Proposition 227, there is also a fundamental misunderstanding of what bilingual education is. The Proposition states, “ ‘Bilingual education/native language instruction’ means a language acquisition process for students in which much or all instruction, textbooks, and teaching materials are in the child’s native language.”

In fact, the substance of bilingual education currently includes the best of comprehensible English instruction (ELD, ESL, Sheltered Instruction, Specially Designed Academic Instruction of English, etc.) and L1 instruction. Bilingual education includes the following three components (Krashen, 1996):

1. Comprehensible Input -- in English, typically in the form of ESL instruction (CI-ESL) at beginning levels; and comprehensible input in English in subject matter areas, typically in the form of sheltered instruction (CI-SM), at intermediate levels.
2. Literacy development or reading instruction in the primary language (L1-LIT).
3. Subject matter teaching in the primary language (L1-SM).

It is important to note that the presence of comprehensible input in English is a necessary component of bilingual education. Proposition 227 suggests that bilingual education does not include much English, yet volumes of research in the field documents the fact that the most common form of bilingual education that has been implemented in the U.S. has been early exit bilingual education, programs that included merely 30 to 60 minutes of L1, per day, and always included some English instruction from the beginning levels.³

In brief, the SEI program mandated by Proposition 227 reflects the political goal of promoting English monolingualism and diverting resources away from the maintenance of any (early or late exit) bilingual programs. What is ironic is that the very program mandated by Proposition 227, the SEI program, may not be effective in promoting English acquisition by the EL’s (see paper three in this series for an analysis on the effectiveness of SI and SEI before and after Proposition 227).

Baker on Proposition 227

Baker (1999) Comments on SEI from an SI (1983) Perspective

Soon after the passage of Proposition 227, Baker (the co-author of the 1983 description of SI) praised the newly mandated SEI program as a “breakthrough in teaching Limited-English-Proficient students” (1999). Noting that de Kanter and he were “the first to name and describe such a program,” he went on to describe SEI as a program in which “1) English is used and taught at a level appropriate to the class of EL’s (that’s different from the way English is used in the mainstream classroom), and 2) teachers are oriented toward maximizing instruction in *English and use English for 70% to 90% of instructional time, averaged over the first three years of instruction* [italics added].” For Baker (1999) Structured Immersion and Structured English Immersion are synonymous. In the following, he comments on SEI with little attention to the details of the statewide proposition.

Level of English Learner: "English is used and taught at a level appropriate to the class of English learners (that's different from the way English is used in the mainstream classroom)." Baker's (1999) description of SEI is virtually synonymous with the 1983 and 1996 descriptions of SI, which as noted above do not differentiate between beginning and intermediate levels of EL's.

Teacher L1: "Teachers are oriented toward maximizing instruction in English and use English for 70% to 90% of instructional time, averaged over the first three years of instruction." 70% to 90% would leave room for .6 to 1.8 hours of L1 in a typical 6-hour school day. Baker's 1999 description is a shift again from Rossell and Baker's 1996 description that emphasized "rarely" and from Proposition 227's "nearly all" and "overwhelmingly" English instruction, back to the original 1983 description that allowed 30 to 60 minutes of primary language instruction. In fact, his 1999 description includes more L1 than his 1983 description.

Duration: Further, in direct contrast to Proposition 227's one-year requirement, Baker believes the first three years of English instruction should be modified. Baker's three years is closer to the four to seven years it takes most students to learn English, as noted in the research literature on second language acquisition, than the unrealistic one year stipulated in Proposition 227.

Baker's endorsement of the newly mandated SEI program appears to be based on a complete misunderstanding of what the program under Proposition 227 entails. First of all, Proposition 227's SEI is a one-year program and he believes that the instruction would be over at least a three-year period. Secondly, according to him, 10-30% of instructional

time would be in L1, over a three year period, implying that in the beginning first year or so, L1 instruction may be significantly over 30%. His general endorsement of Proposition 227 notwithstanding, his detailed comments show significant differences in both content and duration between Proposition 227's SEI and his understanding of what an SEI program would look like.

Baker concludes, "SEI is not necessarily an all-English program, but it does make considerably less use of the non-English language for instruction than does bilingual education." This statement reveals that Baker believes bilingual education programs utilize more than .6 to 1.8 hours of L1 instruction per day. In fact, of the hundreds of bilingual education programs that were implemented in the thirty years since the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, the majority were early exit/transitional, not late exit/maintenance bilingual education programs, and utilized between .6 to 1.8 hours of L1 per day.⁴

Clearly, what we have here is an ideological war where the same amount of L1 instruction is considered SEI by one party and bilingual education by another. What

Bilingual education includes the following three components (Krashen, 1996):

- 1. Comprehensible Input -- in English, typically in the form of ESL instruction (CI-ESL) at beginning levels; and comprehensible input in English in subject matter areas, typically in the form of sheltered instruction (CI-SM), at intermediate levels.**
- 2. Literacy development or reading instruction in the primary language (L1-LIT).**
- 3. Subject matter teaching in the primary language (L1-SM).**

is at issue is not the number of daily instructional minutes in L1 vs. English, but what the program is called and by whom and for what purposes. It is striking that the political advocates of Proposition 227 and SEI are apparently ignoring not only the overwhelming body of research on bilingual education but also ignoring the conflicting descriptions and recommendations provided by the few researchers who do support SEI only in the context of English-only programs.

Finally, Baker also notes, “SEI argues that content and English can be taught together by teaching content through learner-appropriate English. Despite the demonstrated successes of SEI, this is asking a lot.” This statement is a realistic, practical one rarely found in the literature concerning Proposition 227’s requirement of SEI for one short year. This simple and important statement has been repeatedly verified in the plentiful volumes of bilingual and English language development research that has concluded that it takes several years to acquire English (Collier, 1989; Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000; Pray & MacSwan, 2002; Thomas & Collier, 1997). Given that even Baker’s endorsement of Proposition 227’s SEI assumes a minimum three-year period, the unrealistic political demand for transition into mainstream classrooms within a year can be taken for exactly what it is: an unrealistic political demand being made with no basis in practice and with no concern for the welfare of the 1.6 million EL’s in the state.

Summary

In summary, there are three consistent patterns observed in the review of SEI programs over three decades. First, the description and operation of SEI has shifted time and again markedly since its origins nearly 25 years ago, from one that included bilingual teachers and a minimum of 30 to 60 minutes of L1, to one that does not require bilingual teachers and requires a maximum amount of English.

Second, the L1 component was phased out in subsequent descriptions of Structured Immersion (1983, 1996) and SEI in Proposition 227. The original descriptions of SEI actually included bilingual teachers and a minimum amount of L1, rendering

the program effectively bilingual. However, the term bilingual education was never incorporated into the program labels. That is, even when the description of Structured Immersion included 30 to 60 minutes of L1, the program label did not reflect the bilingual education component of this program. This minimalization of the L1 component in Structured Immersion eventually led to the L1 component being effectively discarded, and the birth of a program called Structured English Immersion (Proposition 227), now with the term English inserted.

Third, despite the fact that the body of research showing the importance of L1 instruction for EL’s has continued to grow, the descriptions of SEI programs have continually failed to take this evidence into account and L1 is actually being used less and less. This ironic divergence can be explained by the political momentum toward English-only instruction that flies in the face of overwhelming research evidence indicating that programs that use a combination of L1 and English (whether the program is labeled SEI or bilingual education – see paper #2 in this series) are conducive to the development of English and academic competence.

In Proposition 227, SEI is described as employing an “overwhelming” amount of English instruction. The vague definition provided in the statute (possibly due to the lack of theoretical or research base informing the description), has resulted in districts interpreting the mandated program in an uneven manner, with legal adherence becoming the main focus, not the students’ learning and welfare. In the second paper, I examine the current implementation of SEI in various districts following Proposition 227, revealing wide variation in program types operating under the same label of SEI.



Table 1: Various definitions of Structured Immersion, Structured English Immersion, and Sheltered Instruction					
Source	Teacher L1	Student L1	Instructional time in L1	Level of English Learner	Duration
Structured Immersion Baker & de Kanter, 1983	Yes	Yes	Language Arts 30-60 minutes	All	No mention
Sheltered Instruction, Krashen, 1984, 1991	Not	Not necessary	None. Part of Bilingual Education		No mention
Structured Immersion Rossell & Baker, 1996	Yes	Yes	Rarely	All	No mention
Sheltered Immersion / Structured English Immersion Baker, 1999	Yes	Yes	10-30% over 3 yrs or .6 to 1.8 hours of L1 per day	All	3 years
Structured English Immersion and Sheltered English Immersion Proposition 227 (1997)	No	No	Overwhelmingly English	All	One year
Teacher L1 = teacher understands L1 Student L1 = students are allowed to speak the L1 to the teacher					

End notes

¹Another example of mislabeling and misinterpreting Structured Immersion programs is Gersten and Woodward (1985), in which programs at the Pacific City project were labeled Structured Immersion and bilingual education. Twenty years after the original publication touted the benefits of Structured Immersion over bilingual education, Rossell and Kudor (2005) comment that Gersten acknowledged that “the district undoubtedly mislabeled their ESL program as a bilingual program.” The reported benefits (Gersten, 1985), then, were of Structured Immersion being better than pullout ESL, not better than bilingual education.

²The one year limit imposed on EL’s under Proposition 227 flies in the face of second language acquisition research that indicates that it takes four to seven years to acquire English, with social English generally preceding academic English acquisition. [See Hakuta, Butler & Witt, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 1997; and others]

³The last few meta-analyses in the field reveal this. For example in Rolstad et al (2005), Slavin & Cheung (2005), and Greene (1997), the majority of bilingual education programs that met the selection criteria were transitional bilingual education programs with durations of one to less than three years.

⁴A review of the research both before and after the passage of Proposition 227 shows that the SEI program mandated by Proposition 227 has little or no advantage over bilingual education in developing the students’ English acquisition. See Krashen on Baker & de Kanter (1983), Willig (1984), Greene (1997), McField (2002), Krashen & McField, (2005).

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Making Movies More Comprehensible: The Narrative/Paraphrase Approach

Brenda Murphy and Ashley Hastings

Shenandoah University

Brenda Murphy, Associate Professor and co-founder of the TESOL program at Shenandoah University, received her PhD from New York University's Graduate School of Education, and later added the MEd-TESOL. She taught English in Japan for 17 years and recently spent 8 months in Italy.



Ashley Hastings has taught in Wisconsin, Texas, and Virginia, and is now Professor Emeritus of TESOL at Shenandoah University.



It can be argued that movies are today's literature: newspapers regularly report movie attendance and publish detailed reviews, and a sure way to open a successful conversation is to ask "Did you see?" But this potential source of comprehensible input is not available to second language acquirers until they reach the highest levels.

In this paper, we describe an approach to making movies more comprehensible for second language

students and present evidence supporting its effectiveness. The approach was developed as a part of the Focal Skills Approach (Hastings 1995, 1996) in which university level ESL students participate in models devoted exclusively to one aspect of language at a time. Each module lasts several weeks, and includes 15 hours per week of class-time. The approach we describe here is part of the Listening Module, which is presented first in the sequence of modules.

Movies have the potential of being excellent sources of comprehensible input, since they usually feature a coherent plot, a set of main characters, and recurring environments. Viewers thus establish a framework that facilitates the comprehension of new information as the movie progresses. But the language of movies is complex.

The central purpose of the Narrative/Paraphrase technique is to enhance the input that students hear, making it more comprehensible than the movie sound track. The technique has two key features.

First, the teacher narrates the scenes in deliberate, clear, simple English, describing and commenting on the objects, characters, places, and actions that are on the screen at that very moment. This enables the students to associate what they hear with what they see, making the spoken input more comprehensible than it would be without the images.

Second, the teacher paraphrases some of the dialogue, especially when it is of particular interest or importance in following the story. These paraphrases make the input more comprehensible than the original sound track by replacing less common words with more common ones, by simplifying structures, and by furnishing deliberate, clear pronunciation. This is important, because there is often little on the screen in the way of visible referents to assist students in understanding.

Research on Effectiveness

The movie technique has usually accounted for most of the class time in the Focal Skills' Listening Module. Thus, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Listening Module is, at least to some extent, an evaluation of the movie technique, even though other means of delivering aural comprehensible input are typically used.

In Hastings (1995), 74 students in the Listening Module of a FOCAL SKILLS program were compared with 42 similar students in a standard ESL program. The scores are from the FOCAL SKILLS Listening Assessment, and represent the percentage of items understood. As indicated in table 1, Focal Skills students easily outperformed the comparisons.

Table 1: Focus Skills vs. traditional ESL, Listening

	duration	pretest	posttest	gain/wk
Focal Skills	4 weeks	20.8 (18.8)	43 (26.9)	5.6
Comparison	6 weeks	20.7 (20.7)	27 (25)	1

Comprehension

Effect size (d) = 1.81, $p < .001$)

A Quantitative Lexical Analysis of the Narrative/ Paraphrase Technique

Additional evidence comes from a study of the vocabulary used in the movie technique, as compared to the vocabulary used in the actual film. In these studies, we asked two questions: First, to what extent does the teacher's narration use words referring to visible matters, and how does this compare with the soundtrack? Second, to what extent do the teacher's paraphrases of dialogue simplify the vocabulary of the soundtrack by using more common words?

“Illustrated” Words

In order to study the first question, we selected 15

movies that had often been used in the Listening Module. We then used a random number generator to pick a single one-minute segment from each movie. We viewed the segment, listening to the sound track and noting every instance of a word that was heard while its referent was visible (nouns, verbs, and adjectives were considered). We then replayed the segment and narrated the scenes, noting the nouns, verbs, and adjectives that we were able to use while their referents were visible. This procedure was repeated for all 15 movies; the combined results are given below.

Table 2: mean number of “illustrated words” in 15 segments

	sound track	narr/paraph
mean (s.d.)	2.1 (1.5)	18.5 (2.9)

It is apparent that the movie narration technique far exceeds

the typical sound track in terms of the amount of illustrated vocabulary provided, strongly suggesting that a student can get many more comprehensible words from the teacher's narration than he or she could obtain by listening to the sound track alone.

Word Frequency

We approached the second question by videotaping a portion of a Listening Module class taught by Brenda Murphy at Shenandoah University and studying the differences between the vocabulary used in the sound track dialogue and the vocabulary used in the teacher's paraphrase. We examined the first 100 nouns, verbs, and adjectives occurring in each source and determined their frequency by consulting Carroll, Davies, and Richman (1971). The mean ranks of the words in the dialogue and the narration are shown below.

Table 3: Frequency of words used in the film and in the narration

	sound track	narr/paraph
frequency rank	1265	670

Clearly, the teacher's paraphrase used a vocabulary that, on the average, contained more high-frequency words and fewer low-frequency words than the original dialogue. Because most of the words are relatively common, students are more likely to be at least somewhat familiar with them. The paraphrase can therefore be considered more comprehensible than the movie sound track.

Conclusion

The data presented here support the hypothesis that the narrative/paraphrasing movie technique enhances the comprehensibility of input. Students in the Focus Skills Listening Module spend many hours every week listening to spoken English that is transparently related to visible referents, or that is phrased in relatively accessible vocabulary.

Since the sound tracks are not very comprehensible to our students, we use narration and paraphrase. These measures allow the students to hear language that is much more comprehensible than the sound track, because the vocabulary refers to visible matters or is drawn from those words that they are likely to know already. The requirements for acquisition are thus satisfied, and we observe that our students do in fact develop listening comprehension much faster than students in other ESL programs that do not use the movie technique.

Of course, this technique is not the only one that can be used to make movies more comprehensible. Cho (in press) provides strong evidence that reading a graded reader corresponding to a movie before seeing it also enhances comprehensibility. We are eager to see if combining these two ways of making input more comprehensible will lead to even stronger results and more movie enjoyment for second language acquirers.

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- (4) References and tables can be done in any of the following styles: APA, Chicago, or MLA.
- (5) Biographical information of approximately 25 words, including name, title, university or affiliation, location, and area of expertise. A photo is requested, but optional.

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TEACHER TO TEACHER

Interviews with voracious readers and prolific authors29

An interview with Susan Ohanian30

An interview with Alfie Kohn.....33

The Homework Myth
Implications and questions for language teachers
by Karen Rowan.....35

The Mandarin Offensive
Inside Beijing's global campaign to make Chinese the number one language in the world. *by Michael Erard*.....38

Interviews With Voracious Readers and Prolific Authors

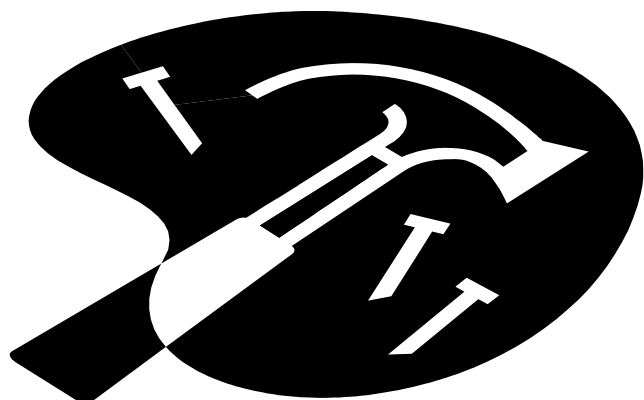
By Karen Rowan

There exists, ostensibly, a silent consensus on the best teaching strategies. Teaching reading involves rewards, written responses and a daily record of reading minutes. These strategies fly in the face of research in both the first and second languages according to Stephen Krashen (*The Power of Reading*), Jim Trelease (*The Read aloud Handbook*), Alfie Kohn (*The Homework Myth*) and countless others.

What is it we are trying to inspire in our students? What is it we hope will be the end result? What do we hope will be on their nightstands when they are adults? Do we intend for them to keep pencils handy near their bedside lamps to record the number of minutes they accomplished before falling asleep?

We interviewed two authors who are self-described voracious readers about their own reading habits as children and adults. Both became accomplished speakers and authors. Their answers are more valuable as prototypes of what we hope our children will strive for than as a formula for teaching reading. If the practice of reading is what creates a great writer, and the process of writing is what creates a great thinker, here we have the culmination of years of great reading, great writing and great thinking.

Dr. Alfie Kohn writes and speaks widely on human behavior, education, and parenting. The author of eleven books and scores of articles, he lectures at education conferences and universities as well as to parent groups and corporations. Kohn's criticisms of competition and rewards have been widely discussed



From now on, ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I will not put.
(Winston Churchill)

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and debated, and he has been described in Time magazine as “perhaps the country’s most outspoken critic of education’s fixation on grades [and] test scores.” His web site, www.alfiekohn.com includes a speaking schedule and complete book list.

Dr. Susan Ohanian extends her criticism of educational systems beyond national borders and is, perhaps, the most influential voice internationally against lunacy in the educational system. Her web site, www.susanohanian.com stands in

opposition to the onslaught of illogical test items and school practices that pull teachers and students further away from teaching and learning. Her web site pulls articles from newspapers around the world that are contributed by readers.

An interview with Susan Ohanian

www.susanohanian.org and <http://www.educatorroundtable.org>

Susan Ohanian is the winner of the 2003 NCTE George Orwell Award for Distinguished Contribution to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language and the author of such books as *Why Is Corporate America Bashing Our Public Schools?:* Heinemann, 2004; *What Happened to Recess and Why Are Our Children Struggling in Kindergarten?:* McGraw-Hill, 2002; *Caught in the Middle: Nonstandard Kids and a Killing Curriculum:* Heinemann, 2001; *One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards:* Heinemann, 1999. Dr. Ohanian contributed her responses by e-mail from Canada.

What are you reading for pleasure right now?

Not to nitpick, but I don’t accept the premise ‘reading for pleasure.’ *Reading The One Percent Doctrine* by Ron Suskind couldn’t quite be described as ‘pleasure’ reading, though I chose this particular volume on

post 9/11 government outrage because I do find pleasure in Suskind’s fine writing style. Now does the fact that I’m using information in this book to write an article, does this make it ‘functional reading?’

At the moment, I’m also reading *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* by Michael Pollan, *The Best American Travel Writing*, ed. Tim Cahill, *The Bridge* by Doug Marlette, and *The Shakespeare Wars*, by Ron Rosenbaum.

Did you have a “homerun book”?

The Secret Garden by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding, and *Free Agents* by Max Apple.

Do you tend to read one book at a time or have several going simultaneously?

I’m always involved in several.

Do you tend to read more fiction or non-fiction or a mixture?

I read a lot more non-fiction than fiction.

How much do you read in the average day? How much of that is for pleasure?

I’m on the Internet all day. That’s where I read newspapers, magazine articles, lots of e-mail, and so on.

I don’t categorize my reading like that. I get a lot of ‘pleasure’ out of informational reading. I try to walk

Language acquisition and reading research with international language expert and professor Emeritus Steve Krashen.
Free presentation available as podcast or listen on-line.

<http://www.speedofcreativity.org/?p=1302>

about 5-7 miles a day and while walking, I listen to books on tape. Does that count as reading too? Often, if I really like a book I'm listening to, I buy the book. That's what happened with *Omnivore's Dilemma* and *The One Percent Doctrine*. So I interrupt my listening to go back over a passage in the text. Neither subject is "pleasurable," but I admire both books a lot for the fine writing and the way they inform me of big issues.

Were you a reader as a child?

Voracious reader.

To what do you credit having become a reader? One book? A reading habit? A teacher?

My father read aloud to me. Books were a high priority at our house. We had no TV. I was

sick a lot and every time I had to stay home from school my father bought me ten new comic books. Every time I went to the dentist, we visited a bookstore afterwards, and my father gave me money to buy a book. When my sister and I took the train to L.A. every summer to visit our grandmother, we took an extra suitcase to carry the new books we'd bring back. My father gave each of us \$20 (a lot of money in those days) and we'd spend the whole day in a bookstore near our grandmother's house, choosing which books to buy.

My father was very parsimonious. Very. But there was always money for books. He bought his at library sales, but when, as an adult, I'd go visit, he'd drive me to a bookstore, hand me a \$100 bill, and wait in the car while I spent it.

After he died, in his memory, my sister and I took his grandchildren--and great-grandchildren--to a bookstore, handed everybody (including ourselves) a \$100 bill and told them to have fun. Afterwards, we went to lunch and everybody shared their purchases.

Stephen Krashen says that there are only two requirements for creating a reader: Access to books and a quiet, comfortable place to read. Where do you usually read?

I read at my computer, I read on my sofa, I read in bed. I always carry a book in my purse--in case I'm stuck waiting someplace. I can read anywhere--except I've never mastered reading in the bathtub.

Do you buy most of your books or get them from the library?

I mostly buy books. I can't seem to stop.

What makes you buy or check out a book? A recommendation? That you've heard about it in the news or on-line? Or do you browse before you make purchases or check out books?

I tend to buy books I've read reviews of and that I've heard about in news. Now that I live some distance from a bookstore, I am sure that I am Amazon.com's best customer.

What books do you recommend most highly?

That's hard. I'll say this. At this moment in time I'm thinking that if I saw a new book by Tobias Wolff, Anne Tyler, David Quammen, Tim Cahill, Jonathan Harr, Billy Collins, Donald Hall, I'd order it. But I don't like book lists. As soon as I send off this one, I'll think of 50...or 150 writers who should be on it.

I read at my computer, I read on my sofa, I read in bed. I always carry a book in my purse--in case I'm stuck waiting someplace. I can read anywhere--except I've never mastered reading in the bathtub.

--- Susan Ohanian



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How to Think Like Leonardo da Vinci: Seven Steps to Genius Every Day

by Michael J. Gelb

Curiosita

--- *An insatiable curious approach to life and an unrelenting quest for continuous learning.* (p.9)

Learn a New Language (70-73)

Learning a new language is a popular ideal hobby and a wonderful way to cultivate Curiosita. Like Leonardo, you can learn a new language at any age. We all know that babies are the best learners. Their openness, energy, and playfulness allow them to learn languages with ease. A baby raised in a home where three languages are spoken will learn all three without difficulty. The good news is that if you're willing to adopt key aspects of the baby's learning strategy, you can progress with similar ease and delight. And as an adult, you can take advantage of resources that can help you learn even faster than a baby.

Let's say, for example, that you wanted to learn la bella lingua (the beautiful language): Italian. Here are a few tips for accelerating your language learning:

Be willing to make a lot of mistakes. Bambini do not worry about looking cool or instantly achieving perfect pronunciation and grammar; they just dive in and speak. Your progress in learning will correlate directly with your willingness to play and embrace feelings of unfamiliarity and foolishness.

Have you ever noticed how babies will find a word or phrase and repeat it over and over? Do the same: repetition is the simplest secret of recall.

If possible, start your learning process with an "immersion course" Just as a rocket needs most of its energy to launch and fly out of your atmosphere, you will get the most out of your learning if you launch your efforts with a concentrated program. Your "intensive" with "jump-start" your brain circuitry to start rewiring for your new language.

If you can't find a formal immersion course, then create your own by listening to audiocassettes, watching Italian-language movies with subtitles, learning the lyrics of great Italian songs like "Rondini al Nido" and "Santa Lucia," singing along to Pavarotti recordings, sitting in Italian espresso bars and just listening to people talking, and going to real Italian restaurants and ordering in the native tongue. If you tell the waiter that you are trying to learn the language and ask for help, you will usually get a free Italian lesson, even better service, and sometimes extra antipasto!

Learn words and phrases related to areas of passionate interest. Many language programs are a bit boring because they focus on necessary but mundane matters such as "Where is the station?" and "Here is my passport." In addition to these every day matters, aim to learn the language of romance, sex, poetry, art, fine food, and wine.

Put Italian translation Post-it notes on everything in your house.

Most important, open yourself to the feeling of the language and culture. When you speak, pretend you are Italian (I recommend Marcello Mastroianni or Sophia Loren, for starters). Adopt the expressive gestures and facial expressions that go with the language; you will have more fun and learn much faster.

An interview with Alfie Kohn

www.alfiekohn.com

Alfie Kohn is author many books including *THE HOMEWORK MYTH: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing* (Da Capo Books, 2006); *UNCONDITIONAL PARENTING: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason* (Atria Books, 2005); and *PUNISHED BY REWARDS: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993/1999). He is also a frequent public speaker on education and parenting. Dr. Kohn contributed his responses by way of a phone interview.

What are you reading for pleasure right now?

No one makes me read anything so everything I read is ultimately for pleasure. In the last couple of weeks I've had the chance to dip into books not yet published. Mara Sapon Shevin has a wonderful new book coming out called *Widening the Circle; The Power of Inclusive Classrooms*. Right now I'm reading a book by my friend Roth Green, *The Explosive Child*. What else did I read? I read *The Reading Zone* by Nancy Atwell which is supposed to come out pretty soon. Directly relevant. In fact it speaks to the issue, among other things, of the kinds of reading that kids can do in school rather than having to do it after school. There is a book about patriotism. *Pledging Allegiance*. Joel Westheimer that is about to come out from the Teacher's College Press.

The fiction that I'm reading at the moment is for a book group that I've been part of for the last 20 some years. At the moment were reading Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locust*. We read roughly a book a month.

That answers my question about whether you tend to read one book at a time or have several going simultaneously.

Oh, yes. I've always had several going at the same time, to say nothing of newspapers, magazines and journals. It's more fun that way.

Are you familiar with the term, homerun book? Did you have a "homerun book"? Jim Trelease's The Read Aloud Handbook says that most people can trace their love of reading back to one book that they read as a child. Do you have a homerun book?

I started reading quite early and just devoured books by the bicycle basket full from the public library even in elementary school, but I don't remember a single book having a decisive impact on my disposition to read. I do remember a friend of mine in elementary school following me around in elementary school, even into the boy's room, and chanting, "You love to read." I can still hear that distinctive cadence even now.

Did you have access to a large number of books at home growing up?

They were mostly taken out from the library. I don't remember a large quantity of children's books that we owned.

And I don't need to ask .. whether you tend to read more fiction or non-fiction or a mixture?

Thank goodness for my book group. It's all pleasure reading, but I would read much less fiction if it weren't for the discipline of having a book of almost always fiction to discuss with this group of friends. We read roughly a book a month and have done so for better than 20 years so that adds up. And a good mix, by the way of contemporary and classic fiction.

When we start over-regulating, even telling kids how many pages they must read per night or for how many minutes, it's no longer something that kids view as freely chosen and purely delightful. – Alfie Kohn

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To what do you credit having become a reader? One book? A reading habit? A teacher? Were you read to?

I imagine I was read to, but then so are lots of kids who don't jump in the way I did. I'm honestly not sure and now as the father of two children I can tell you that there are enormous differences between them and also sometimes between what we do and what they like. One child is much more of a reader than the other and the one who is a reader is much less interested in fiction than I would have expected so, we do what we can but anyone who's a parent knows that children are not infinitely malleable.

Do you have books that you most highly recommend? Favorite books of all time?

Oh gosh, no. The Universe here of possibilities is far too large.

I think a particularly influential book for me when I was about 18 was Kamu's the Mythasythesis, but who knows whether you would love that book, too. And so it goes for wonderful novels.

Do you buy most of your books or get them from the library?

I do use the library, yes, though more for my children's reading than for my own. If there's a book that on a topic that I don't think I'm going to commit to, where I've heard there's a relevant chapter or its a service-oriented book about home repair or finances or something where I don't think I need to own it, then I'm awfully glad to have the library and by the way the invention of inter-library loan is second only to antibiotics as far as I'm concerned.

What is at the top of the list of things that we should not be doing in terms of education and teaching reading?

That speaks to my own work quite directly because when I give a talk to librarians or reading teachers I tend to focus, perhaps to a fault, on the things we do that get in the way. In fact, I've given a talk at several conferences called *How to Kill Kid's Interest in Reading*.

...by the way the invention of inter-library loan is second only to antibiotics as far as I'm concerned. – Alfie Kohn

One of the items on the list is rewarding children for reading. Research shows quite clearly that when you give kids incentives to read, they begin to read more superficially and with increasingly less

interest in reading itself. Books become for them a means to the end of a prize so that when there are no more prizes, their interest in reading has diminished.

Second would be forcing kids to outline chapters or write reports about great books, which turns something that can be a pure delight into a chore.

And then third would be the lack of choice about what to read and on what schedule. When we start over-regulating, even telling kids how many pages they must read per night or for how many minutes, it's no longer something that kids view as freely chosen and purely delightful.



The Homework Myth

Implications and questions for language teachers

By Karen Rowan

We often worry about what homework is doing to our families, but then limit the questions we ask of our children's teachers to those dealing with the details: When is this assignment due? What sorts of binders will our kids need? It's acceptable to ask, "How much time should they be spending on this each evening?" but not to ask, "Is it really necessary to assign homework on this topic?" Teachers, too, may catch themselves wondering just how useful it really is to send children home with those packets, but then assume their only option is to revise the packets' contents.

Why do so many of us recognize the detrimental effects of homework and yet continue to put up with it, even defend it?... It's hard for us to watch as our children mechanically, joylessly grind out their assignments, perhaps frustrated by those that are too difficult, perhaps exhausted from having to do too much. At least it's doing them some good, we tell ourselves. At least it's improving their achievement, teaching them independence and good work habits, helping them to become more successful learners.

But what if none of this is true?

So reads the back cover excerpt of Alfie Kohn's new book, *The Homework Myth, Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing*. In it the nationally known educator and expert examines each argument in favor of homework, from promoting higher achievement to teaching responsibility. He sheds light on questionable research into the value of homework to students as well as the detrimental effects of homework on students.

He examines the available evidence and concludes that there is absolutely no evidence in support of homework for younger children. He challenges the belief that there are legitimate non-academic reasons for assigning homework. He cites numerous studies that conclude that there is no significant relationship between homework and either test scores or grades and pokes holes in research that appeared to support homework as a justifiable educational practice but later turned out to be weak. He encourages teachers and parents to re-think homework in order to renew our children's love of learning.

Are there implications for foreign language, second language and English as a Foreign Language? Does *The Homework Myth* raise questions that should be discussed by language teachers and parents of language students? Could homework not only be unhelpful but in fact actually be harmful?

If comprehensible input leads to language acquisition, is homework necessary at all?

Comprehensible input is the foundation of the

Natural Approach, Total Physical Response and TPR Storytelling.

Do output activities make an impact on language acquisition?

Grammar exercises, writing sentences correctly, writing essays and fill-in-the-blank worksheets would seem to be monumental wastes of time if output has as little value in the process of language acquisition as research indicates.



Comprehensible input leads to language acquisition. Assuming that

100% of classroom contact time is in the form of comprehensible input, is that contact time sufficient to bring a student to an intermediate level of proficiency? Does increasing that time on task with output activities if output does not lead to language acquisition make a difference? Is homework functioning as just another assessment? Weighing the pig more often, says Stephen Krashen, will not make it grow faster. Are we actually wasting true classroom contact time grading and assigning and reviewing homework? Could that time be better used on comprehensible input activities designed to increase language acquisition?

Regarding his response to questions about how to “help kids master a language without doing these kinds of practice” he says, “I generally respond by having them raise the issue with the kids themselves so that even if kids are doing stuff outside the classroom, the kids have more to say about what they’re doing and on what schedule and for what reason, which tends to make homework more likely to be beneficial than if it’s purely assigned.”

Do homework and testing increase attrition in language programs?

Are there even more serious ramifications to excessive homework in language programs than time wasted on output? Does homework actually reduce student interest in studying languages? Is the dismal attrition rate in voluntary foreign language programs in the US related to programs that leave students feeling unsuccessful and unmotivated?

In *Learning Another Language Through Actions* by Dr. James Asher, he discusses a 1971 article by J.H. Lawson, “Should foreign language be eliminated from the curriculum?” (In J.W. Dodge (ed.) The case for foreign language study. New York: Modern Language Association Materials Center, 1971.)

“By Level II, according to Lawson (1971), 64% of all students who started in Level I have dropped out. By Level III, 85% of all those students who started in Level I have dropped out, and by Level IV, 96% of students who started in Level I have dropped out.”

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures, in the last few years we have approached a 6% success rate, up 2% since 1971. Perhaps in our zeal to raise test scores we have neglected to make the study of languages compelling.

What about reading as homework?

The benefits of “free” reading are manifold. Reading programs that allow children to have access to books, comfortable places to read and parents who read to them are profoundly effective both at instilling a love of reading and improving reading ability. Unfortunately, reading programs that involve rewards for reading, external measurements of reading or follow-up homework assignments reduce the positive effects of free reading and can even destroy them all together.

Kohn says, “Compelling as they are, the benefits of “free” reading are compromised if teachers stipulate that students must read a certain number of pages, or for a certain number of minutes, each evening. ...this is an example of turning something potentially



positive into a traditional assignment and thereby reducing its value.” [page 176]

Kohn quotes middle school language arts teacher Jim Deluca, “The best way to make students hate reading is to make them prove to you that they have read. Some teachers use log sheets on which the students record their starting and finishing page for their reading time. Other teachers use book reports or other projects which are all easily faked and require almost no reading at all. In many cases, such assignments make the students hate the book they have just read, not matter how good they felt about it before the project. Students will become good readers when they read more. Students will read more when they enjoy reading. They will enjoy reading when they enjoy their reading material. They will enjoy their reading material when they are left to choose it themselves, and to delve into it on their own terms. [page 177]

Kohn’s analysis of the flawed research upon which we have drawn our assumptions that homework leads to improved learning raises questions for foreign language teaching. First, is homework necessary in a language program? Second, are there changeable elements of traditional language programs that make students less likely to want to continue their language studies? And lastly, can homework be assigned in the form of input activities such as free voluntary reading rather than traditional output assignments?

Alfie Kohn is author many books including *THE HOMEWORK MYTH: Why Our Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing* (Da Capo Books, 2006); *UNCONDITIONAL PARENTING: Moving from Rewards and Punishments to Love and Reason* (Atria Books, 2005); and *PUNISHED BY REWARDS: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A’s, Praise, and Other Bribes* (Houghton Mifflin, 1993/1999).

Richard Rothstein, a research associate at the Economic Policy Institute and former education columnist for the New York Times, observed that, if raising test scores is our goal, food might be the easy answer ... “There’s evidence to suggest that giving every schoolchild a good breakfast will raise test scores more than ending social promotion, increasing accountability, or requiring more testing. It’s a fact that iron deficiency anemia, twice as common in low-income children as in better- off children, affects cognitive ability. In experiments in which students got inexpensive vitamin and mineral supplements,” reported Rothstein, “test scores rose from that treatment alone.” So where are the demands in Congress for an Eat for Success campaign? Plenty of us would march for No Child Left Unfed.

Susan Ohanian, *Capitalism, Calculus and Conscience*

Phi Delta Kappan, Vol. 84, 2003

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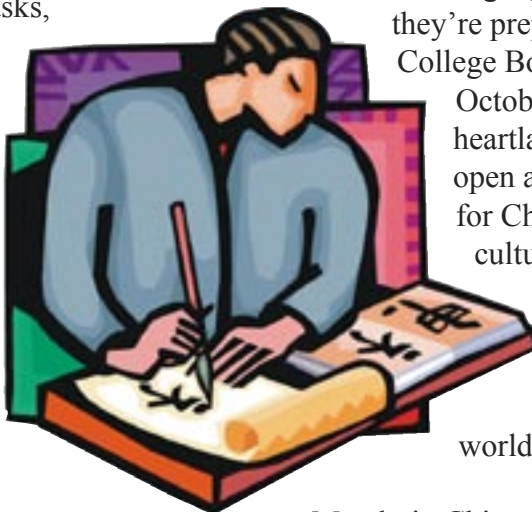
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The Mandarin Offensive Inside Beijing's global campaign to make Chinese the number one language in the world.

by Michael Erard
erard@lucidwork.com

reprinted from *Wired Magazine*
http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.04/mandarin_pr.html

A light snow is falling outside the windows of Cyrus H. McCormick School in southwest Chicago, but the second graders in Room 203 are not distracted from their lesson. May Cheung, an energetic teacher from Hong Kong, holds a cup to her lips and asks, “Wo he shemma?” (What am I drinking?) A forest of arms go up. “Cha! Cha!” (Tea!) An hour later, Cheung has kindergartners counting to 27 in Mandarin as she hands out Chinese New Year hong bao, the red envelopes that promise wealth, abundance, and good fortune. For most of the kids in this Mexican-American neighborhood, Mandarin is their third language - after Spanish and English.



The children at McCormick are part of the largest grade school Chinese program in the US. Seven years ago, after a post-college stint teaching English in China, Robert Davis wandered into the offices of the Chicago Public Schools and convinced the director to start a comprehensive Chinese language program and hire him to manage it. Now 3,500 Chicago kids, from kindergartners to 12th graders, learn Mandarin. “The days of everybody trying to be American are over,” Davis says. “When you do business with or go to other countries, be prepared to work on their terms.”

Far from Chicago - 6,597 miles to the west, to be exact - Ma Jianfei is pointing at a huge map on the wall of a plush meeting room in an otherwise dreary building in

Beijing. Ma is the deputy director general of the National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, better known as Hanban, and the map chronicles his success exporting Mandarin around the world. The map shows that the hottest markets for Mandarin are Thailand and South Korea, where all elementary and middle schools will offer Chinese by 2007. Europe, particularly France and Germany, is also doing well, thick with yellow circles (teachers), red triangles (test facilities), and blue squares (language centers).

There aren't many shapes in the US yet, but Ma is working on that. For the past two years, Hanban has been collaborating with the College Board, the nonprofit that runs the SAT and the Advanced Placement program; in 2007, high school kids across the US will be able to take the first ever AP exam for Chinese language and culture (this year they're prepping for the test in new College Board-accredited classes). In October, Ma was in the American heartland, inking an agreement to open a Confucius Institute, a center for Chinese language learning and cultural studies, at the University of Kansas. It'll be the sixth in the US, the 41st in the world. Soon there will be 100 such institutes worldwide.

Mandarin Chinese is already the most popular first language on the planet, beating out English by 500 million speakers. And it's the second-most-common language on the Internet. Now, just as China requires students to learn English, Beijing wants to make Chinese the must-take language for English speakers - and everyone else. Ma figures there are currently 30 million people around the world learning Chinese as a second language. Hanban aims to increase that to 100 million over the next four years.

It's an audacious goal, and the government is backing it by funding - to the tune of nearly \$25 million a year - the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language. Last year, Hanban sent 1,042 volunteer teachers to France,

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Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Mauritius, Nigeria, Colombia, and 16 other countries. This year, it will top that number.

Hanban provides schools, centers, and Confucius Institutes with seed money, textbooks, and game-based learning software. College kids and adults play Great Wall Chinese, while middle school students get a game called Chengo Chinese, which Hanban developed through a partnership with the US Department of Education. Nearly 15,000 American kids in 20 states helped beta-test the game, and it's now used in Mandarin classes offered through the accredited Michigan Virtual High School.

Beijing isn't doing anything different from what the British or the Americans or the French have done - sending emissaries abroad to spread its language and culture. It's not the first time the Chinese have pushed their native tongue, either: In the 17th and 18th centuries, imperial China brought several Chinese languages to much of Southeast Asia. But this 21st-century push is more global in scope, as befits an emerging world power. "This is the linguistic equivalent of sending a person to the moon," says Oded Shenkar, a professor at the Ohio State University and author of *The Chinese Century*.

Chinese bureaucrats take their evangelism seriously. The country is "merging into the world," Zhang Xinsheng, China's deputy minister of education, explained to reporters before the first World Chinese Conference last June. The event attracted diplomats and teachers from 65 countries - all there to partake in China's efforts to export Mandarin. "China, as the mother country of the language, shoulders the responsibility of promoting [the language] and helping other nations to learn it better and faster."

Chinese authorities also see spreading Chinese as an important part of the country's "peaceful rise," says

Elizabeth Economy, the director for Asia Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, a New York foreign-policy think tank. This was the philosophy articulated in 2003 by China's president, Hu Jintao. China wants to emerge as a global power without threatening global security. "I think the Chinese have been very careful and thoughtful about assuaging the fears of the rest of the world," says Economy. "There's a benign element of the language work: to help educate."

One of the people most responsible for providing that help is Zhang Yi. Over the past three years, she's been to South Africa, Thailand, Japan, and Canada on business - not bad for a 24-year-old government employee. Trained as a lawyer, she coordinates Hanban's volunteer teacher program, selecting, training, sending, and supporting the agency's pool of 10,000-plus volunteer instructors. Like missionaries, these full-time teachers receive no pay, only a small stipend from Hanban. Most are young women who sign on to see the world - and sow the seeds of Chinese along the way.

As a young cosmopolitan Beijinger, Zhang Yi celebrates Christmas and prefers coffee over tea, so when we meet one frigid evening in Haidian (China's Silicon Valley), she picks Starbucks. Zhang marvels at the remarkable popularity of her native language outside China - it's something European newspapers like to call "Chinese fever," or hanyu re. Zhang sees evidence of Chinese fever all the time. In Bangkok, her waiters spoke Chinese. In Jakarta, she helped a Korean traveler who couldn't speak Indonesian or English, only Chinese. She recently had dinner with three professors from Beijing who had just been in Cuba, where they met students who were learning Chinese. Zhang is delighted to see the language taking hold in all these places. "That's why we are feeding the fire," she says.

Back in Chicago, Robert Davis is fanning the flames, but he isn't asking for volunteers. He wants teachers who'll stay, not leave after a year or two. So Hanban



gave him \$70,000 to build a Confucius Institute at Walter Payton College Prep; it also sends him free software and books. This spring, the new institute will begin providing grade school instructors with teaching materials and lesson plans, and it will offer how-to seminars for parents who want to help their kids with Chinese homework.

If Hanban exports Chinese around the world, then the main American importer is Gaston Caperton. He looks like Bill Clinton – though thinner - and speaks, once he gets talking, with an unchecked southern accent.

Caperton caught his own version of Chinese fever on his third visit to the country in 1994, when he was governor of West Virginia and traveling to China as part of an international trade mission. Expecting to return to the raw, poor country he'd seen in the 1980s, he instead found people drinking Coca-Cola and using computers, and the hotel was as lavish as any in the West.

Normally you'd find him in New York at the College Board, where he's president and unofficial promoter for Chinese-language education. But ever since the AP Chinese course was established, he's been on the road, trying to solve the shortage of qualified Chinese teachers in the US by prodding American universities

to offer certification programs and persuading elementary schools and colleges stateside to offer more Chinese language classes. He's recently been in Beijing, meeting with Hanban officials about their volunteer-teacher program. But today he's in Shanghai with his wife, Idit Harel Caperton. She spent the fall teaching software engineering at a university here and is a consultant and major investor (along with MIT's Nicholas Negroponte) in a language software company based in China.

The College Board is among the few organizations that can have national impact in a public school system where most decisions are made at the local level. So Gaston Caperton hopes that the Chinese AP will spur interest in the language in high schools and even trickle down to elementary schools. "The future is in Asia, and we have to know Asian languages," he says. The point is to keep the US competitive. Learning Chinese isn't just a way for Americans to get jobs in China, but for them to do business with Chinese companies and compete with Mandarin speakers from other countries.

Hanban contacted Caperton in 2004. At first, the Chinese government was frustrated by the fragmented US public school system. "They said to me, 'In China, we made English the second language,'" Caperton says. "'So why don't you just make it happen in the US?'"

Caperton is working to spread Chinese however he can. After becoming president of the College Board in 1999, he urged the organization to offer courses and exams in more languages. Given the importance of

Chinese Facts:

Mandarin is the most widely spoken of the Chinese dialects. It is the official language of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Other dialects include: Wu, Xiang, Cantonese, Min, Hakka and Gan.

In the U.S., Cantonese is the most spoken dialect.

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standardized tests, decisions by the College Board inevitably filter down to high schools and even elementary schools. Hanban also wanted to import the curriculum they'd developed directly into US schools. But Caperton persuaded them to abandon their one-size-fits-all approach. The Chinese were "aggressive" about helping, he says. After speaking for a few moments, Caperton backtracks and changes aggressive to progressive. What's the difference? "Progressive is moving forward and up. Aggressive is simply getting what you want."

Alexander Feldman saw this behavior firsthand when, as the US government's coordinator for international information programs, he was touring a new library at the State Institute for Islamic Studies of North Sumatera in Indonesia. On the third floor, an "American corner" was stocked with books, magazines, and computers with Internet access. Feldman suggested to the university's chancellor that videoconference equipment be installed in the empty space next to the corner. That's a good idea, the chancellor said. But about a month after the American corner was built, the Chinese were here and proposed a Chinese corner, which would sit right next to yours and have more resources than yours, he said. "There is a bit of friendly competition," Feldman mused later. "Competition is a good thing, both in business and in public diplomacy."

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