From EFL to ESL:
Preparing Students for Study Abroad

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of pedagogical strategies that can used by instructors to help English language learners overcome the gaps that exist between EFL and ESL teaching methods and materials. While more EFL learners than ever before are choosing to study abroad, it is common for students to struggle with both the proficiency requirements and the underlying cultural and educational assumptions of ESL learning environments. Preparation in advance of study abroad should therefore be considered an essential component of pre-departure education. The authors have thus developed three practical approaches that can assist EFL instructors in carrying out this preparation. The first approach involves modeling and analysis tasks in order to introduce students to more complicated cognitive learning styles on Bloom's taxonomy. The second employs the use of simple academic topics as a means of scaffolding the academic skills needed to research and then orally present findings. In the third approach, teachers can develop a peer-mentoring program in which returnee students present to and guide students who are preparing to study abroad.

Introduction

The number of people around the world who choose to study abroad has

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seen dramatic increases in recent years, and this trend shows no signs of abating anytime soon. Along with this upsurge has come a commensurate expansion in options for students, including lengths of stay (ranging from as short as a week to multi-year residencies) and an ever-increasing selection of academic destinations. Whereas studying abroad used to be an opportunity for a select, elite few, air travel has become increasingly affordable and more universities are now openly welcoming international students, seeing in them a previously untapped source of revenue.

Perhaps the greatest increase in cross-border learning has come from language students, particularly those looking to improve their English proficiency. And of those studying language, the majority tend to go for short-term stays, taking advantage of the opportunity to learn a little English (or French, or German, etc.) while at the same time experiencing a few weeks in an exotic or cosmopolitan locale. For these university students, as well as their host institutions, this is a win-win situation: The learners can get away for a few weeks of "academic vacation" without any serious interruption to their studies while the schools they visit can claim a greater degree of internationalization while also increasing revenue. Moreover, many of the common challenges of living abroad are mitigated by the fact that total time in country is on the scale of weeks rather than months or years. Whether students experience homesickness, culture shock, isolation, or academic inertia, they can at least take solace in the fact that it will all be over soon.

Such is not the luxury for learners who choose to study abroad for longer durations of up to a year or more. For them, adjustment to the new culture, finding a social support network, dealing with demanding academic expectations, and experiencing a radically different cuisine, climate, and standard of transportation are not short-term inconveniences; they are requirements of survival. This can be especially true for learners who hail from cultures that are markedly different from those that they are visiting, and these learners are increasingly the rule rather than the exception.

Looking at some recent data, this trend becomes clear. For instance, in the 2015-16 school year over one million international students went to study in the United States, up from less than 600,000 in 2005-6, a nearly twofold increase. Of the top ten nations that send students to study in the U.S., English is widely spoken in only two (Canada and India), which account for just 19% of U.S.-bound students. Meanwhile in countries such as China (32% of international students), South Korea (6%), and Saudi Arabia (6%), English is hardly spoken at all (Open Doors, 2017). In fact, the vast majority of learners come from non-Western nations with distinctly different languages *and* cultures. Moreover, because many of these students may only have ever studied English in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, with different goals and pedagogical principles from those common in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, even their initial study in English-language bridge programs may prove to be challenging.

Differences between EFL and ESL environments

Despite the ostensible educational goal in both EFL and ESL contexts being improved proficiency in English, there are in fact quite stark pedagogical disparities between them. These differences begin with the context. EFL is taught in an environment where the dominant language used outside of the classroom is something other than English. ESL, on the other hand, is taught in English speaking countries where students have numerous opportunities to put what they have learned in the classroom to immediate use outside of it.

In addition to this fundamental contextual difference, there are other factors at work as well. Generally speaking, it is common for courses in EFL contexts to be taught bilingually (Matsuura, Chiba, & Hilderbrandt, 2001) as both the students and the teacher share a common L1 and have bilingual resources to fall back upon when needed. This would obviously not work in an ESL context, where students in any one classroom may represent a broad mix of first languages and they are often discouraged, if not outright forbidden,

from using their mother tongue in class. This lack of L1 support can cause otherwise competent students to struggle as they adjust to the L2-only environment, sometimes resulting in learners self-segregating into same-culture groups and thus falling even further behind (McCormack, 1998).

The EFL mix of L1 and L2 use in the classroom is frequently reflected in localized EFL textbooks, which are often bilingual. In these materials, difficult words in reading passages are commonly glossed with L1 translations, and instructions to students on how to complete the learning tasks and activities are regularly conveyed with first-language support. Coursebooks may also have a less communicative focus and provide unrealistic communication models, obscure grammar, and low-frequency vocabulary.

Moreover, teaching methods in EFL contexts may be rooted in principles of language education considered to be impractical or obsolete in ESL cultures. The grammar translation method still predominates language pedagogy as practiced in Japan, known there as *yakudoku* (Hino, 1988), despite the best efforts of the Ministry of Education to push English education in a more communicative direction (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). Nor is Japan alone in this respect; other countries in Asia are experiencing similar difficulties transitioning from grammar translation to communicative language teaching approaches due to the continued predominance of testing as the focus and goal of English study across the region (Ross, 2008).

This contrasts dramatically with English educational approaches and materials in ESL contexts, where an emphasis on improving communicative abilities (whether for academia, employment, or for general living) holds sway. Moreover, textbooks developed for ESL markets often have high proficiency requirements and assumed cultural knowledge that EFL learners do not possess. For example, textbook readings on an American presidential election or the plight of minority populations in the UK would be particularly opaque issues to many EFL students, not because of the vocabulary or grammar but because of a lack of background knowledge and cultural familiarity.

Instructional expectations for learners to critically think about and express opinions on these topics only adds to the burden for learners from cultures that do not emphasize these skills.

Further to this point, there are often cultural differences, including educational culture differences, to contend with. The ease with which students adjust to the target culture correlates to how similar their home culture is (Chen, 1996). Students from non-English speaking Western countries will typically find that the educational culture of English-speaking countries, based on Enlightenment ideals of egalitarianism and individual empowerment, aligns closely with their own. In contrast, students from many Confucian-heritage Eastern cultures, with their emphasis on hierarchical status and group enfranchisement, will not. That is to say, a typical European or South American student studying in North America will have fewer cultural hurdles to overcome than a student from Far East Asia due to the differing ways their heritage impacts on their ability to fit in socially and educationally (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002).

These underlying cultural variances often lead to differences in teaching and learning styles. In ESL environments, teachers are more likely to employ a student centered learning approach by putting the students in charge of their own learning and letting them explore and experiment. This contrasts with EFL environments where teachers often take on the role of expert and direct students on what to do and how to do it (Saito & Ebsworth, 2004). That is not to say that students have less freedom or responsibility, but that they are provided with more structure and clearer expectations. This sets up a circumstance where EFL students may find the transition to student-centered learning environment challenging as they are more used to a teacher-centered learning environment where they are told what to learn and how to perform.

All of these differences can manifest in a less-than-successful study abroad experience for the unprepared EFL learner. What follows then are a series of strategies and in-class activities that we have developed over years of

instructing pre-study-abroad learners in order to help prepare them for the challenges of making the transition from an EFL to an ESL learning environment. Although the majority of our experience using these is with Japanese EFL learners, and mention will sometimes be made of this particular context, this is by no means the sole learning environment in which these tasks can be carried out. We envision most of them being easily utilized in and adapted to a multitude of educational settings and have written our descriptions with a broad audience in mind.

Strategy One: Student Centered Learning Using Higher-Order Thinking Skills

HOTS, LOTS, and EFL learners

In 1956 Bloom and his colleagues published the first of his well-known taxonomies of learning skills. Their taxonomy of the cognitive domain describes six mental skills employed in learning ranked by degree of complexity. They are in order from least complex: remembering, comprehending, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956). In general, these six functions in the cognitive domain can be divided into two meta-groups, Lower-Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) and Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). LOTS are the two lowest levels of the taxonomy, remembering and comprehending, and HOTS are the remaining four skills, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating. Additionally, LOTS can be thought of as teacher-centered learning where the teacher is the expert who disseminates knowledge to the students who must try to understand and remember what the teacher has told them. HOTS employ student-centered learning requiring the students take the information provided by the teacher and "do something" with it like apply the knowledge to real-world situations or incorporate the knowledge into a larger context.

While there is considerable debate in the literature as to the degree to

which this is true, it is often said that secondary education, especially in Confucian heritage countries in Asia like Japan, comprises mostly teacher centered, LOTS type learning of memorizing and understanding (Nozaki, 1993). Whereas, tertiary education, especially, but not exclusively, in the west, is more likely to employ activities requiring students to use HOTS (Ikeda, 2016). Students coming from EFL education situations in Confucian-heritage countries in Asia are more familiar with LOTS. Whereas, ESL teachers in English speaking countries are more likely to use learning activities making use of HOTS.

Many students returning from study abroad regularly report that their studies were difficult. Specifically, they often report that not only was the language difficult, but also the demands placed on them. For example, they had far more homework than they were used to. They were also busy with having to do research, write papers, prepare to talk about their own ideas, give presentations, and so on. In addition, their classes were far more interactive than they were used to; they could not just sit passively and listen to the professor.

Therefore, it is proposed, a gap exists between what the students are used to doing in EFL classes (teacher centered learning using LOTS) and what they will be asked to do in ESL classrooms (student centered learning using HOTS). Perhaps the biggest debate in the literature is not whether or not a gap exists, or the degree to which it exists, but whether or not students coming from Confucian-heritage countries in Asia are even capable of HOTS (see Stapleton, 2002 for example). In the experience of the authors, Japanese university students are absolutely capable of employing HOTS in the classroom and regularly do so, especially as they progress to upper division courses. For example, HOTS are a regular feature of graduation seminar courses, so-called "zemis," at most Japanese universities. Nevertheless, in order to prepare students to study abroad, it is necessary to more quickly expose students to student-centered learning making use of HOTS.

Many EFL/EAP textbooks, despite publisher claims that they are student centered and make use of HOTS, are still largely teacher-centered with a large emphasis on LOTS. *Contemporary Topics* (Kisslinger, 2009), for example, a textbook series commonly used to prepare students for academic study in English is highly teacher centered. In this text each unit begins with vocabulary activities to help student understand and remember the vocabulary needed for the lecture. This is followed by a lecture on DVD with various comprehension activities, which are often nothing more than "what could you remember" type quizzes. The next section is a discussion lesson. The students listen and watch an example discussion on the DVD, which is once again followed by comprehension activities. The students are then given a few questions for discussion. Finally, the unit concludes with an output task, generally student presentations.

While there are student-centered activities employing HOTS in the text, on average they comprise no more than 40% of the class time and are still highly structured. For example, the discussion activities comprise a list of discussion questions, making the activity highly teacher, or at least textbook, centered. Whereas returning students have reported that the discussion activities they were asked to engage in while abroad consisted of the teacher providing only a topic for discussion. It was up to the students to come up with their own questions to focus and control the discussion.

In addition to the lack of student-centered learning and HOTS activities, the text fails to teach students critical interactive skills needed to engage in academic discussions. For example, it is important for students to know how to skillfully disagree with someone without offending them. The textbook offers only a small box of rather obtuse advice tucked away in the second unit with three example phrases. The advice is, "in most conversations, expressing disagreement without seeming to be disagreeable is key!" (Kisslinger, 2009: p. 18). This is difficult for most students as it appears to say that it is important to disagree without disagreeing. Along with this editorial box, students are

merely asked to understand and remember the examples. No other instruction or practice is given.

An Alternative Lesson Plan: Using Model Dialogues to Learn How to Disagree

An alternative lesson, and one that not only exposes students to student-centered learning and makes use of HOTS, but also teaches students how to disagree politely is described below.

The lesson begins with a reflective [Bloom, et al.: analysis] task. The students are given a list of people that they might possibly have to disagree with at some point during their upcoming study abroad and are asked what they would do if the people listed said something that they disagreed with. After spending a few minutes thinking about what they would do, they tell their partner what they came up with and in pairs decide which is the best response [Bloom, et al.: evaluation] and then share their ideas with the class and teacher.

Next, the students are given a model dialogue and asked to identify the language used to express disagreement and try to see if they can come up with a pattern or underlying structure in the examples [Bloom, et al.: analysis]. After sharing their answers with the class, the teacher points out any expressions that they have missed, and then provides the students with an explanation of how polite disagreeing works in English [Bloom, et al.: understanding].

After the mini lecture from the instructor, the students are given a list of example sentences and phrases that show polite disagreement, categorized by structure and type. They then compare the phrases identified in the model dialogue to the list and determine which category each of the example phrases used in the model dialogue belongs to [Bloom, et al.: analysis].

Following this, the students role-play the situation from the model dialogue, one student each taking an opposing side, and try to use as many of

the different kinds of disagreement structures as possible whether they truly disagree or not [Bloom, et al.: application].

After the role-play, the students choose one or two controversial topics from a list provided by the teacher and have a discussion with their partner or in a small group expressing their own true opinion of the topic. Where appropriate they should express their disagreement politely using the language they have just learned [Bloom, et al.: application].

Finally, the students go back to the beginning and redo the first reflective activity, thinking about what they would do if they disagreed with someone during their study abroad, to determine if any of their answers have changed [Bloom, et al.: evaluation].

Direct and Indirect Outcomes

This lesson makes use of both student-centered and teacher-centered learning and requires the students to use both lower-order and higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, it has a number of important outcomes, both direct and indirect. First, the direct outcome is that students learn how to politely disagree with someone in English, an important skill for their study abroad. The indirect outcomes are to introduce the students to student centered learning and allow them to practice using their HOTS in a low-stakes environment. In the EFL environment, students are evaluated on their participation in the tasks and activities, whereas in an ESL environment they are likely to be evaluated on the content of their analysis, application and evaluation of the information presented.

Strategy Two: Academic Oral Presentations
Background

One of the main reasons that Japanese students struggle when trying to communicate in English, especially in the more demanding ESL environment, is that they have very few opportunities to use spoken English in the classroom

before entering university (Apple, 2011). What little spoken English students are asked to produce usually consists of more "traditional methods" of practicing speaking, such as choral repetition (Nishino, 2008), rather than tasks that require students to present their ideas to an interlocutor or a group. There are many reasons for this ranging from large class sizes to the pressure teachers face with preparing their students for high stakes university entrance exams (Taguchi, 2002). For university teachers this means that getting their students ready to participate in an English only academic environment means teaching them more than just the lexical and syntactic skills that they will need. It also means providing them opportunities to practice the communicative skills necessary for the study-abroad experience.

One type of task that can be used to help students to prepare for this experience are Academic Oral Presentations (AOPs). Sundrarajan and Kiely (2010) describe an AOP as,

> a prepared talk according to a specification which combines language skills (pronunciation, grammar, lexical range and word choice) with related aspects such as register and discourse skills, critical perspectives and multimedia information management (e.g. use of PowerPoint or other visual displays). (p. 102)

AOPs are effective tools for the language classroom because they require students to use English to explain their ideas and to negotiate meaning with a larger community of language learners (King, 2002), both when they are presenting in front of their peers and when they are planning and practicing their presentations. AOPs have been shown to increase classroom interaction (Girard, Pinar, & Trapp, 2011) and to improve learner autonomy (Živković, 2014), both of which are necessary in an ESL environment. They also provide an excellent opportunity for students to improve the type of listening skills that they will need in order to participate in academic lectures and seminars (Brooks & Wilson, 2014). This is because AOPs provide students with the opportunity to listen to short, usually level appropriate, talks on an academic

topic while, at the same time, giving them the opportunity to interact with the person giving the presentation, something that is not possible when listening to prerecorded texts.

Despite the numerous benefits associated with using AOPs in the language classroom many teachers are still reluctant to use them in their own classes; either because of the time required to both practice and give the presentations, or because of the difficulties involved with implementing the task correctly (Wilson & Brooks, 2014). One of the biggest challenges with using AOPs in the language classroom is how to scaffold them correctly. This can include things like overlooking the complexity of the various skills involved in giving an AOP, and even the complexity of the topics themselves, and ignoring the effect that this task complexity can have on learners language skills (Larsen-Freeman, 2006); using presentations as a one off task and overlooking or ignoring the importance of task and language repetition in the classroom (Bygate, 2001); or underestimating the feelings of tension and apprehension that students feel when presenting in front of their peers, and the effect that this can have on language production (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Neff, 2007).

This section of the article introduces three activities that can be used by teachers to help to alleviate some of the problems involved with having students give AOPs in the language classroom. It presents an overview of these activities, along with the pedagogical and theoretical reasons behind why they are an effective way of scaffolding AOPs. These activities can be used within an existing presentation class or as a means of integrating presentation activities into a course that is not focused around presentations but is intended to prepare students for their study abroad experiences.

Techniques for Teaching AOPs

Presenting in stages. One of the first techniques that teachers can use to help improve the quality and usefulness of using presentations in the

classroom is to look at the specific skills required to give a presentation and teach those skills individually. Nation and Macalister (2010) discuss the importance of proper sequencing when designing a language course. The same is true for teachers who want students to successfully give presentations in their classes. Presentations are cognitively demanding and students often do not have the language skills needed to present effectively. Because of this it is often necessary to break the presentation down into the different speaking skills that the students need to acquire in order to be able to present effectively, and then teach those skills individually. These skills need to be explicitly taught and students need to be provided with the opportunity to practice both the language and presentation skills specific to oral presentations. This includes providing students with exercises that focus on one of the specific skills required for giving an AOP (for examples of activities that can be used to teach these micro-skills, see Gershon, 2008; Grussendorf, 2007; Powell, 2011). It also involves giving them the opportunity to practice these skills in actual presentations situations, outside of the high-stakes assessed presentations students are usually asked to give in plenary during the course. If possible these practice presentations should be low stakes and the students should be given multiple opportunities to recycle the information given in these presentations in order to allow them to focus more on the actual presentation skills. This allows students to practice these skills multiple times over a number of different presentations while reducing the amount of cognitive demands placed on the students by allowing them to recycle the lexical and grammatical content of their presentation in subsequent presentations.

In order to do this effectively teachers need to look at what skills their students require to present effectively. These skills should then be divided up into different presentations and students should be given the opportunity to recycle the skills taught earlier in the class in subsequent presentations. Teachers can help to implement this in the classroom in a number of ways. It can be as simple as given students the opportunity to repeatedly practice the

various parts of the presentation (for example, the introduction, first supporting idea, etc.). Alternatively, teachers could design a course where the genre and general topic of the presentation is recycled in subsequent presentations. For example, students could be asked to do a research presentation about the country they would be most interested in going to for their study abroad experience and comparing certain features of that country with Japan. After the students have completed this presentation, the teacher could then pair the students up into groups so that each student in the pair researched a different country. The students could then do a pair presentation comparing the two study abroad countries. This would allow them to recycle both the research, including the relevant grammatical forms and lexical items they learned while giving their first presentation, and the genre of the first presentation but use it to discuss a slightly different topic. This can help to reduce both the cognitive demands and the amount of research required by the students while still giving them the opportunity to do multiple presentations, something that is necessary if they are to learn and automatize the skills required to present effectively. The teacher can also make use of activities such as carousel presentations or video presentations, discussed in the next sections, as a means of allowing students to present the same content multiple times in a way that is not boring or repetitive.

Carousel presentations. One common task that can be used to help students improve their presentation skills is called the poster carousel, or "Merry-go-round," presentation. While there are a number of different variations on this task the general activity follows these simple steps. Participants are given the assignment to write a short presentation and prepare a poster that they can use to help them give their presentation. On the day of the presentation students are divided up into groups, depending on the time and class size the class can be divided up into as few as two groups or as many as three or four groups. The members of the first group attach their posters to

the walls of the classroom. The other groups take turns walking around the room, visiting their classmates' posters and listening to their short presentations (see Figure 1). The audience members are also encouraged to ask questions about the posters and the presentations. The audience members are only allowed a limited time at each poster then they are asked to move to another poster. After the presenters have been given the opportunity to give their presentations three or more times they are asked to take their posters down from the wall and another group is given the chance to present (see Figure 2). When all of the students have been given the opportunity to present the teacher can then provide general feedback to the class in plenary. Of
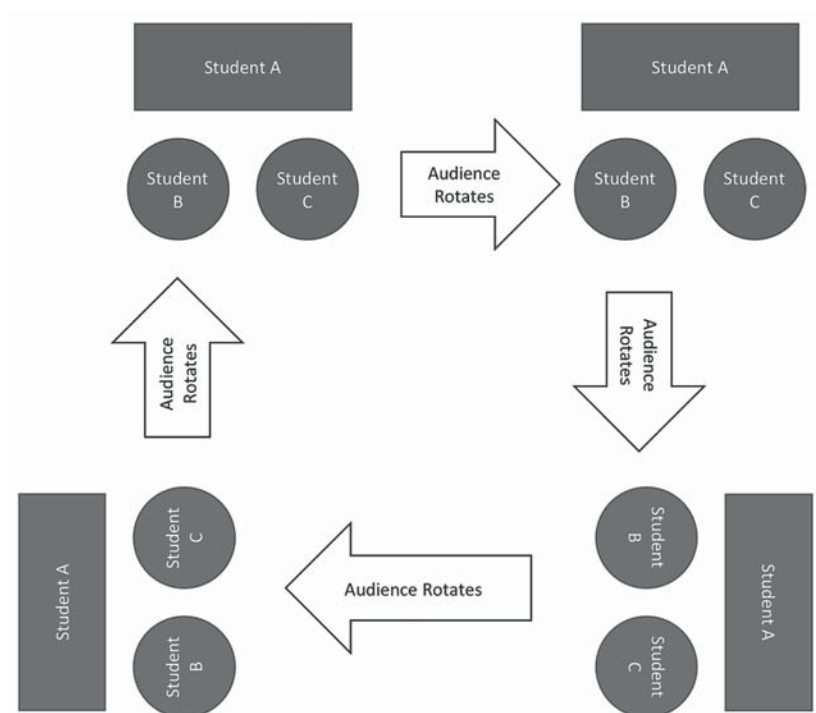

Figure 1. Example of classroom organization for a poster presentation with 12 students divided into 4 groups. The student A will present while the students B and C will act as audience members.
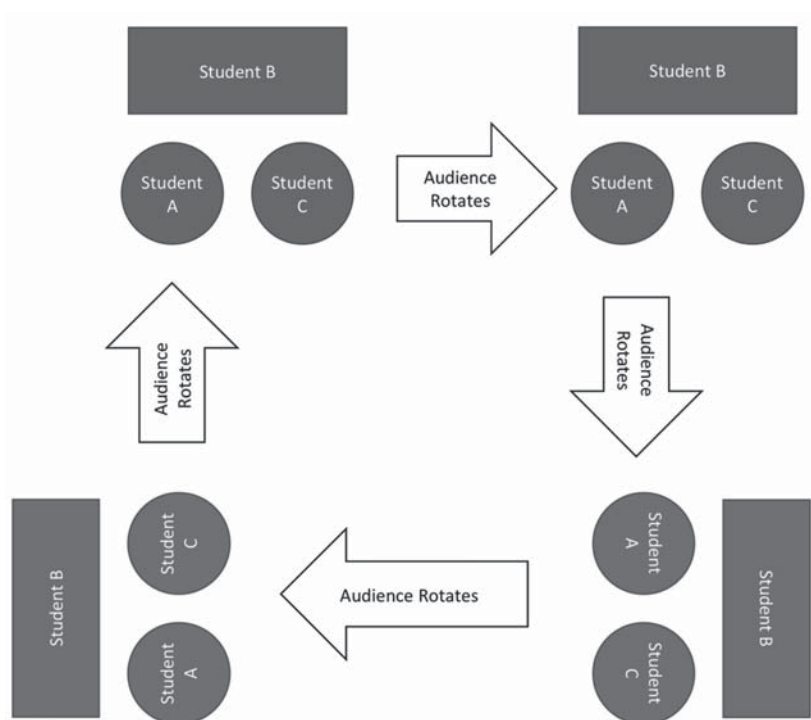
Figure 2. Round 2 of the carousel presentations. The students A and B have switched and now the B students in each group are presenting while the students A and C are acting as audience members.

course there are many variations of the carousel presentation, these can include different ways of making the presentations (for example, handouts or PowerPoint slides instead of posters), different ways of setting up the carousel task (presenting to a small group or presenting to a partner, giving students a set time to listen to a single presentation or allowing them to walk around freely and spend as much time as they want listening to a single presentation), or alternate ways that audience members interact with the presenters (for different descriptions of how to set up a carousel presentation see Apple, 2006; Lynch & Maclean, 2000).

Carousel presentations are effective because they allow students to

recycle, or retrial (Johnson, 1996) the information in their presentations. While this is not quite the same as the repetition of tasks described by Bygate (1996) it does provide students with the opportunity to improve their fluency through repeated presentations on the same topic. Researchers have shown that the repetitive nature of carousel presentations can lead positive linguistic changes in students (see Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Nakamura, 2008). Furthermore, Lynch and Maclean (2000) discuss other ways in which students can benefit from poster presentations including the opportunity to present in a less stressful environment than that found in traditional PowerPoint presentations where the students are asked to present in front of the whole class. Carousel presentations also provide a good opportunity for students to practice formulating and responding to questions as the audience members are much more likely to ask questions in a small group setting than in front of the whole class.

This type of presentation is especially useful for students who are preparing to study in an overseas context. Poster presentations are much more interactive than the PowerPoint presentations most teachers have their students do where one student, or a small group of students, stands in front of the class and gives a short AOP to their classmates using PowerPoint slides to help them present the information. Poster presentations give the opportunity for students to interrupt their peers during the presentation and ask questions if there are lexical items or ideas that they are not familiar with. This can help the audience members to improve their listening skills while, at the same time, making it necessary for the presenter to focus more on the needs of the audience. When presenting in front of the class it is often difficult for students to think about what their audience members do and do not understand in their presentation. However, in the more intimate environment allowed by poster presentations students are often more attentive to the needs of their peers and there is a tendency for students to use less complicated lexical items as well as explain academic ideas in a simpler way in this contexts. Poster presentations

also give the audience members an opportunity to participate in the discussion by asking questions or discussing their own ideas about the topic after the presenter has finished with his or her speech. This type of interaction is essential for the students to learn prior to going overseas because this sharing of ideas and discussing academic topics is so important in academic classes in English speaking countries.

Video presentations. As discussed in the previous sections of this article one benefit of using AOPs in the classroom is that they can lead to learning situations that are more meaningful, and therefore more effective, because they are rooted in a real world context. One activity that can be done as an extension of AOPs in the classroom is having students make and use digital videos of their presentations in the classroom. Having students use student created digital videos of their AOP and using those in the classroom can be an effective alternative to having students present in front of the class. This method of giving AOP has been shown to be especially beneficial for promoting active and creative learning (Loveless, 2002). The process of using English to create a video of their AOP can provide students with an interesting and enjoyable learning experience (Coleman, 1992). Furthermore, having students create their own videos in the target language and share them with their peers has been shown to help the learners to activate the language skills that they are being taught in the class (Pearson, 1990).

These video presentations can be as simple as having one student film another student while they are presenting. As most students in the class have access to smartphones, no additional technology is needed and the video can be filmed on an iPhone or Android phone and shown by connecting that phone to a television or projector. Students and teachers with more technical skills can create edited videos using free video editing programs like iMovie or Movie Maker Online. The finished videos can then be uploaded to a cloud storage account such as Google Drive or Dropbox. In both of these services it

is possible for the teacher to create a public folder that students can upload their videos to and then share the url of this folder to the class. The videos can then be shown to the other members of the class during class time or students can be asked to view the video for homework. Students can also be asked to create short assignments that their classmates can do while watching the videos. Doing the presentations in this way helps to create a more interactive and lower stakes environment for the students. Instead of simply participating in the ritualized proceedings of the formal classroom presentations, the students developed their own learning situations and interact with their peers both in the creation and in the viewing of these videos. This makes the students' involvement in the learning process deliberate and active (Nikitina, 2009). Producing their own videos also allows students to view their presentations as they are doing them, something that has been shown to encourage the learners to use more "real world" language (Secules, Herron, & Tomasello, 1992). The process of making videos has been shown to stimulate a greater amount of student participation in the learning process (Phillips, 1982), and to improve students' autonomy and confidence (Charge & Giblin, 1988).

Discussion

This section of the article covered the reasons why teachers would want to use presentations in their class and gave three activities that can be used to help both students and teachers get the most out of using presentations in the classroom. Based on our professional experience, academic study, intuition, and familiarity with using presentations in the classroom, we believe that these are activities that will not only help to make the students' presentations more successful but are also activities that students will enjoy and that will help them to improve both their presentations skill and their overall English language abilities.

Strategy Three: Peer Mentorship
The Value of Peer Support

For EFL learners planning to embark on a plan for long-term study abroad in an ESL country, some of the best guidance can come from those who have already experienced living for an extended period in the target culture. Although learners in this situation may think to rely first on instructors or administrators for insight and advice, peers also have the potential to be highly influential in improving preparedness and educational outcomes. Results from decades of educational research have demonstrated the power of positive peer reinforcement, and this is especially true when it comes to language learners. Specifically, a learning environment that emphasizes cooperation and support among peers can result in improved learner attitudes and increased language learning motivation (Dörnyei, 1997; Gunderson & Johnson, 1980). This of course does not preclude the need for supportive attitudes on the part of instructors, and help from both is considered an essential component of learning success (Cauce, Felner, & Primavera, 1982; Wentzel, 1994), but peers can offer a greater degree of reciprocal support than the instructor, who is, after all, a figure of authority (Huang, Eslami, & Hu, 2010).

In relation to study abroad and attitudes towards the culture(s) of the target language, peer assistance has the potential to be particularly invaluable, not only in terms of giving advice but also for impacting learners' ability to engage with that culture. For instance, MacIntyre, Baker, Clément, and Conrod (2001), in their study of factors affecting immersion students' Willingness to Communicate in a foreign language found that the "support of friends was...associated with higher orientations for travel and for friendship" (p.369) with speakers in the target language. Moreover, Wilkinson (1998) has asserted that participants in study abroad programs who lack peer support attain fewer positive outcomes and demonstrate less resiliency after initial difficulties conversing in the target language.

Peer mentoring in pre-study abroad situations can bring other benefits as

well. Those who are about to experience the new culture for the first time may hold images of the destination and its people that are based on broad stereotypes (positive or negative), or retain a skewed sense of everyday reality derived solely from news or entertainment media coverage. Such imaginings may heighten anticipatory emotions of excitement, worry, or fear, but these can be tempered with some well-considered advice from an experienced peer. Mentors can also help learners to become more successful *as* learners in the foreign culture through giving advice on setting and maintaining realistic language acquisition goals (Kinginger, 2008).

Peer Mentors

In order to adequately prepare learners prior to their departure, an effective teacher can harness the expertise of experienced overseas learners by developing a program of peer mentorship. These mentors, who would preferably have returned recently from living in the target culture, may help to fill in the gaps that cannot always be addressed through coursework alone. This can be done in a number of ways, depending on time available and degree of access to the peer mentors. Moreover, mentors from either the same culture as the peer mentee or that of the study-abroad destination can be valuable, albeit in different ways. For the sake of this article, students who hail from the same culture as their peers will be referred to as *shared-culture mentors* while those who originate from the destination culture will be called *target-culture mentors*. Each can bring complementary guidance to those about to embark on an extended study abroad.

Shared-culture mentors who have experienced life abroad will by definition have a deeper understanding of their peers' background, particularly in cultures where the population has a high degree of homogeneity. These mentors also have the advantage of sharing a common L1 with their peers, thus removing language as a potential communicative barrier. Such commonalities mean that shared-culture mentors bring a greater degree of

insight into the challenges that their compatriots may experience abroad, whether they be social, educational, culinary, religious, or in any other area where great distinctions exist between home and target cultures. This awareness can lead to advice-giving that is more empathetic and apposite to the needs of the mentee.

Target-culture peers, on the other hand, may lack this degree of shared understanding but can bring other, contrasting strengths to the mentor-mentee relationship. Their extensive cultural knowledge allows them to provide peers with a deeper understanding of target-culture social customs and can prepare them for dealing with societal norms in a way that is acceptable from a local perspective. They also bring a practical resourcefulness to the discussion, and can share important but perhaps lesser-known survival tips that may help ease the transition into the target culture.

All of the following suggested mentoring activities can be undertaken by both types of mentors, and ideally those going abroad would have access to multiple types of advisement before departure.

Pre-departure Mentoring

What follows are three examples of peer mentorship that can be easily arranged by instructors before their learners depart. One-to-one mentoring works better when there is a balance between the number of mentors and mentees while guest speaking is an alternative for situations in which time or the number of mentors is limited. Online mentoring is recommended when mentors have not yet returned from their own study abroad.

One-to-one mentorship. In cases where there is no lack of mentor support, arranging one-to-one (or one-to-a-few) mentorships is ideal. The advantage of allowing learners to ask their peers all manner of questions according to their individual concerns is difficult to overstate, so long as the peer mentors are engaged and ready to respond. The mentees too must be

responsible and come prepared to engage in meaningful discussion instead of simply being a passive receiver of knowledge. In order to increase the chances of successful communication between these peers, the instructor must provide a schedule and framework in advance that requires both participants to understand and actively engage in their roles as mentor/mentee.

In terms of scheduling, one-to-one mentorships work most effectively if they are undertaken as a series of regular, pre-arranged meetings as opposed to a one-off session. These need not be long (anywhere between 10 and 30 minutes per session should suffice), but the regularity of the meetings will improve the chances that important knowledge will be conveyed by the mentor and absorbed by the pre-study-abroad peer. Providing for more meetings also gives participants an opportunity to find a mutually acceptable mode of interaction, sometimes referred to as *alignment* in the field of sociolinguistics. Alignment can take time to develop depending on the interlocutors, but once attained it can greatly increase the degree to which each person invests in the communication (Pickering & Garrod, 2004). Multiple meetings also give participants a chance to ask and answer follow-up questions and to research and add pertinent information that was not discussed in the initial meeting. Additionally, each meeting could have a topical theme, such as social customs, holidays, travel, etc. so that as many areas of life in that culture as possible are covered.

In addition to keeping to a meeting schedule, it is crucial that both mentor and mentee come to their meetings prepared and ready to invest themselves in the relationship. To this end, the instructor should establish a framework of responsibility for each student according to their role. For instance, mentees can be assigned to come to meetings with a list of about 10 to 20 questions, covering a range of issues about living and studying abroad. These could even be forwarded to the peer mentor in advance. Mentors on the other hand should also make preparations by bringing realia to these meetings, such as photographs, souvenirs, mementos, scrapbooks, or anything else that will help

them elucidate life in the foreign culture. Shared-culture mentors can also bring objects such as textbooks they used to study English in order to help their peers understand the differences between EFL and ESL education.

In addition to preparing questions and answers, another way to encourage peers to take responsibility in the mentoring relationship is for mentees to keep a written journal between sessions in order to review new insights or practical advice gleaned from their meetings with the peer mentor. These should be checked by the instructor, and perhaps even by the mentor, as a way to validate or clarify information conveyed. An example of a well-written journal entry can be provided to students in advance of the first meeting in order to give them a suitable model upon which to base their own written reflections.

Peer mentors as guest speakers. In situations where there is a more limited number of mentors than one-to-one mentorship would allow, a suitable alternative can come in the form of guest speaking. In this approach, a peer who has experienced study abroad visits one or a series of classes with the target group of learners and discusses life in the study-abroad country. Compared to one-to-one mentorship, this requires somewhat more consultation in advance with the instructor so as to ensure the information conveyed is maximally relevant to the listeners.

Guest speaking arrangements can be set up in a number of ways depending on availability and circumstances, from one speaker visiting for one class session to multiple returnees attending multiple lessons. From experience, setting aside at least two classes for four or more visiting speakers can result in a more informative and meaningful experience for pre-study-abroad learners. This allows more time to address target culture concerns as viewed from a multitude of perspectives. Additionally, if there is access to both shared-culture and target-culture mentors, visits over multiple classes could be divided according to which category they fall into.

Meetings between instructor and guest speakers prior to the class are

essential for a successful class visit. In the initial meeting, discussion usually centers on practical matters—including deciding the format and scheduling—as well as assignment of topics to be covered. Typically, each peer mentor will cover one aspect of study abroad. Core issues could include: surviving the academic environment of a foreign university, social life and making friends, residing with a homestay family or in a dormitory, safety, and daily practicalities such as banking, shopping, and food.

Once the speaking topics are decided, the students need to prepare a short (around 10 minute) slide presentation. Emphasis should be placed on practical advice with the addition of anecdotes and stories from their study abroad experience to illustrate the issue. Difficulties experienced during study abroad, such as communication problems with a homestay family or inability to keep up with coursework, should certainly not be avoided but instead highlighted, although always in the context of a problem-solution approach. For every challenge, advice in how best to deal with it should follow.

Given enough class time, an effective guest speaking engagement would include three distinct sections: individual presentations on assigned topics, a follow-up, whole-class Q&A session, and finally a division into groups for further Q&A (possibly followed by one more whole-class Q&A at the end). After each speaker presents on his or her topic, it is important that the listeners have a chance to ask about the issues at hand (or other issues not yet discussed). Alternatively, in cases where listeners are reluctant to speak, the instructor can initiate the whole-class Q&A by asking some preliminary questions before turning it over to the listening students. Some examples of questions are: *How difficult or easy were the classes you took at the university? How easy or difficult was it to get along with your host family?* and *What sort of social/volunteer events did you participate in?* This whole-class format has its limitations, however, due to time constraints imposed by listeners in a large group only being able to ask one question at a time, so it is important to eventually divide the class into groups depending on how many guest speakers

there are (assuming there is more than one). Each speaker can visit a group and further answer questions on a more individual basis (even in the L1 if it facilitates smoother explanations). Given enough class time, it would also be beneficial to rotate guest speakers through the different groups in order to maximize advice giving.

Just as in the one-to-one mentorship, mentees in this scenario should also take on some responsibility by preparing questions in advance. Not only does this give them more time to formulate meaningful queries than can be made up on the spot, it also prepares them to consider the study abroad challenges ahead.

Long-distance mentoring. In circumstances where a prospective mentor cannot be physically present to provide guidance to peers, a technological solution can be a useful alternative. Now that long-distance video chat is both inexpensive and commonplace, those who are still engaged in their own study abroad can easily connect with students who have not yet departed.

Although meeting in this way may include additional scheduling burdens and technological issues, and precludes to some degree the naturalness of communicating in three-dimensional space, speaking with a participant still in the foreign setting also brings its own advantages. Mentors can introduce their study-abroad peers and members of their homestay family or dormitory mates. This would allow the mentees to ask questions about life in the study-abroad environment and receive a multitude of perspectives. These new contacts may even provide a base of human relationships for the mentee if he or she is planning to visit the same destination, thus easing anxiety among pre-departure students about meeting people and making friends since this is a common concern for students who choose to study abroad (Asaoka & Yano, 2009).

Now that video chat technology has become portable to the point of being easily used in small devices, another advantage of on-site peer mentoring is that mentors can give their peers a virtual tour of their environment, including

their residence, their school, or the city they live in. There is even the potential for real-time video streaming or recording of a class the mentor is taking (should the instructor allow this to occur). Such options will not be suitable to everyone—some may view it as "spoiling" the surprise. But for others, such tours can provide a nice preview of life abroad.

Arrangements for long-distance video sessions will basically mimic those for one-to-one sessions explained above. Mentees should prepare questions in advance, and mentors can bring real objects to the sessions that relate to their life abroad. As in face-to-face meetings, different sessions can have different themes, but in this case the situation will allow the mentor to share experiences in real time in a way that could be forgotten after returning home. An exceptional meal, a particularly difficult homework assignment, or an eventful weekend can be detailed with an immediacy that will make these events more real for the listener.

Conclusion

Despite the similarities, EFL and ESL contexts are different not only in terms of outcomes and purposes but also student expectations and experiences. Students in EFL environments are likely to be more comfortable with bilingual, teacher-centered learning tasks and activities whereas in ESL environments, teachers are more likely to employ student-centered, monolingual lessons. In EFL environments, teachers are more likely to employ grammar translation methodology with the goal of improving students' test scores. In ESL environments the focus is generally on communication. The gap between these two settings can create barriers that are difficult for students to overcome, but teachers can mitigate these difficulties by being aware of the differences and actively addressing them.

The strategies described above are by no means comprehensive, nor are they appropriate for all EFL contexts and situations. However, they do serve as a guide to the kinds of activities that EFL teachers can employ in order to

prepare students for their eventual study in an ESL environment. And as the number of long-term study-abroad students continues to increase, as looks to be the case for the near future at least, better preparation *before* they depart will help to ensure a better overall outcome during their time away.

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