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Foreword

Welcome to the 2014 Special Issue of *The Asian ESP Journal*!

This Special Issue is a collection of articles from Greeting the New Age of ESP: Practice, Innovation, and Vision, International Conference on Applied Foreign Languages, co-organised by Department of Applied English, National Kaohsiung University of Hospitality and Tourism, Taiwan and Research Centre for Professional Communication in English, Department of English, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, held in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, 23-24 May 2013.

We are happy to publish four articles that cover a range of research topics contributed by authors from Hong Kong and Taiwan, namely:

1. Multimodal analysis of hotel homepages: A comparison of hotel websites across different star categories, by Winnie Cheng and Amy O. Y. Suen, Hong Kong
2. A case study of Taiwanese college teachers' group exploring narrative pedagogy, by Ruo-Wan Lei, Taiwan
3. Local grammars of phraseologies of movement in financial English, by Susie Xin Sui, Hong Kong
4. Development of students' ESP competence in the hotel industry, by Mei-Jung Wang and Lou-Hon Sun, Taiwan

I hope you will enjoy reading the papers and recommend them to your colleagues and students to further disseminate the findings and enhance the impact of the research studies.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to the reviewers whose quality review work has made the current issue possible.

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**Multimodal analysis of hotel homepages:
A comparison of hotel websites across different star categories**

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Abstract

The paper reports on the two multimodal research studies of hotel homepages. The first study entitled ‘Hotel websites as corporate communication’ combines the approaches and methodologies of visual grammar and critical genre analysis in the study of the homepages of twelve five-star hotels in Hong Kong, focusing on language, visual images and hyperlinks; the professional and social practices of website design; and construction and use of these hotel homepages. The study also conducted a diachronic comparison of old and new versions of six hotel homepages to identify and discuss social, ideological, language, and image changes. The second study entitled ‘Multimodal analysis of hotel homepages: A comparison of hotel websites across different star categories’, expanding on the first one, aims to compare the patterns of use of multimodal features of hotel homepages of three-star, four-star and five-star hotels in Hong Kong. Both studies are designed to contribute to both the hotel industry in Hong Kong and beyond and inter-disciplinarity of applied linguistics and professional communication.

Keywords: Hotel websites, hotel homepages, grammar of visual design, critical genre analysis, multimodality

1. Background of two studies

The tourism industry is one of the four key industries in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2012) and has been a significant engine of foreign exchange for decades, contributing substantially to the social and economic development of Hong Kong (Lam & Hsu, 2004: 463). According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board, visitor arrivals increased to 48.6 million in 2012 because of the global economic recovery, and the average hotel occupancy rate

increased to 89 per cent in 2012. The Hong Kong government has taken important initiatives, such as transforming industrial and heritage buildings into hotels and reserving sites for hotel constructions, so as to promote hotel development to meet the needs of visitors (Hong Kong Tourism Board, 2012). Such statistics shows that the hotel industry in Hong Kong is booming. Hotel websites, as a means of promoting the image, services and products of the hotel and facilitating hotel accommodation reservation, contribute significantly to business success.

Corporate websites can achieve a variety of communicative purposes, including promotion of corporate identities and building relationships with readers (Topalian, 2003), as well as dissemination of company information, maintenance of investor relations, collection of customer data, and reinforcement of company identity (Truell et al., 2005). Other communicative purposes of corporate websites include transmitting an unlimited amount of information to all potential audience groups, allowing readers to search information as active seekers and to process information more effectively, and enabling companies to learn more about their audiences by utilizing interactive functions specific to online communication (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005; Pollach, 2005). Linguistic research studies on corporate websites in general have been concerned about cross-cultural comparisons of websites (Singh & Baack, 2004; Callahan, 2005; Wurtz, 2005), and the study of digital genres of personal blogs (Dillon & Gushrowski, 2000; Herring *et. al*, 2004) and news websites (Crowston & William, 1997).

2. Hotel website research

The World Wide Web (WWW) is important for improving corporate self-presentation by “enhancing site usability, message credibility, and information utility” (Pollach, 2005: 285). A

corporate website is regarded as an online identity of a company (Lepcha, 2006). Since the 1980s, hotels have been promoting themselves and handling transactions through their websites to enhance competitiveness (Law & Yeung, 2007). Hotel websites perform important functions, such as enabling consumers to contact the hotels directly to request information and purchasing products and services without geographical and time constraints, soliciting more business, and generating repeat business (Jeong & Choi, 2004). From the perspective of hotel management, websites reduce distribution costs and bring higher revenues and a larger market share (O'Connor, 2003).

In Hong Kong, research studies in the tourism and hospitality industry have focused on exploring and evaluating the technical aspects, usability, and functionality of hotel websites. Adopting the quantitative approach, Chung & Law (2003), for instance, compared the websites of luxury and mid-priced hotels in Hong Kong with self-developed performance indicators for hotel websites based on five dimensions, namely facility information, customer contact information, reservation information, surrounding area information, and management of the website. They found that luxury hotel websites received higher performance scores in all dimensions. Au Yeung & Law (2004: 311) compared website usability between chain and independent hotels in Hong Kong. They found that the usability performance of chain hotels is better than that of the independent hotels in terms of language usability and information architecture. Chan & Law (2006) traced the development of the Automatic Website Evaluation System and applied the system to the analysis of 61 Hong Kong hotel websites. Their findings showed that luxury and mid-priced hotels, compared to economy hotels, are likely to have a greater number of hyperlinks, graphs and tables, and that their homepages are longer because of the use of multimedia and hyperlinks. In line with previous studies, Qi, Law, & Buhalis (2009)

compared Mainland China and international online users in terms of their respective perceptions of functionality and usability of hotel websites, and did not find any significant differences between the two groups of users. In a recent study of hotel websites, Law & Chen (2012: 227) examined whether destination culture is reflected on the websites of hotels in Beijing by conducting content analysis of 168 websites, using twelve destination cultural factors identified by reviewing the literature and conducting nine interviews with local residents. The researchers found that among these destination cultural factors, Forbidden City is the most common destination found on the hotel websites.

Literature review shows that research on hotel websites has primarily examined the functionality and technical performance (c.f. Jeong & Choi, 2004; Law & Yeung, 2007). By analysing visual images, Jeong & Choi (2004) examined the current trends of picture presentations on 203 hotel websites in New York City in relation to customers' online purchase intentions in order to understand how customers perceive pictures on the Web. Their findings suggest that customers have a more positive attitude toward hotel websites that contain a variety of photographs of the hotel, service personnel and hotel guests, and thus supporting the belief that the photographs on hotel websites can influence the attitude of the readers. A different analytical approach was adopted in Law & Yeung (2007) which evaluated the usability of hotel websites in Hong Kong by conducting textual analysis. Their study shows that misleading headlines, incomplete text, or text that does not make sense are most likely to discourage users from using hotel websites. Despite the importance of hotel websites in promoting business and image and enhancing communication with different stakeholders, very few research studies have investigated WWW-mediated communication by examining hotel homepages in terms of how language and visual images are used to communicate varied meanings.

3. Objective of the paper

This paper introduces two hotel websites research studies. Both studies aim to contribute to the disciplines of web marketing and professional and institutional culture and communication, with a view to offering insights into ways of designing appealing and effective websites not only in the hotel industry but also other professional service sectors (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007). The first study analysed textual and visual images collected from the homepages of twelve five-star hotels in Hong Kong (Suen, 2009, 2010, 2013). The study also investigated the professional and social practices of website design and the construction and use of these hotel homepages, carried out a diachronic comparison of the old and new versions of six hotel homepages, and discussed social, ideological, language and image changes and developments. The second study, entitled ‘Multimodal analysis of hotel homepages: A comparison of hotel websites across different star categories’, extending the findings of the first, aims to analyse the language and visual images of the homepages of three-star and four-star hotels and then to compare the findings with those of five-star hotels (Suen, 2009, 2010, 2013).

The objective of this paper is two-fold: first, to briefly describe the analytical frameworks employed in the two studies (Bhatia, 2004; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006), and second, to discuss some findings of each of the two studies. In the case of the first study, the main findings of the analysis of the textual (multimodal), ethnographic, socio-cognitive, and socio-critical perspectives (Bhatia, 2004) are discussed. In the case of the second study, some initial findings are described to illustrate visual image analysis.

4. The first research study: Multi-dimensional and multi-perspective analyses of hotel homepages

The first study examines the homepages of five-star hotels in Hong Kong (Suen, 2009, 2010, 2013) as organizations and companies consider homepages to be their main gateway to the world (Callahan, 2005). Corporate homepages are regarded as the cover of the company websites, which fulfill such communicative purposes as creating a positive image of the company, introducing and offering products, strengthening the relation with the customer, and asking and giving information about the homepage itself. This study conducted a critical genre analysis of hotel websites. Bhatia's (2004) multi-dimensional and multi-perspective model of critical genre analysis was adopted as the primary framework as it offers a comprehensive way of analyzing written discourses and genres, taking professional practice and social practice into consideration. The model suggests that researchers have to account for four perspectives, i.e., textual, ethnographic, socio-cognitive and socio-critical perspectives when analysing genres. The 'textual' perspective was revised to multimodal analysis by adopting the grammar of visual design (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2006) and appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005).

4.1 Data

The data collected from the hotel homepages consisted of text, images and hyperlinks. All of the twelve Hong Kong luxury hotel websites listed in the Five Star Alliance were selected for analysis. Five Star Alliance is an organisation which offers reservation service of the world's best hotels via a website. It is regarded as the best travel website by the London Times and received positive comments by *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. Five Star Alliance is also approved and certified by trusted national consumer and business organizations, namely Better

Business Bureau, Verisign, TRUSTe, the International Airlines Travel Agent Network, and Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International. All the international five-star hotels were listed on the Five Star Alliance website.

Data collection took place in two phases. The first phase of data collection of homepages from the twelve five-star hotel websites was in January 2007 and the second phase in January 2010 so that a comparison of changes, if any, in website design and presentation could be made. Webzip 7.0 was used to save the hotel websites. Webzip 7.0 is a software program which can download webpages or the entire websites, including images, sounds and other media files, so that the browser can read websites offline.

4.2 Findings and discussion

The following describes the four perspectives, textual (multimodal), ethnographic, socio-cognitive, and socio-cultural (Bhatia, 2004), illustrated with some research findings (Suen, 2009, 2010, 2013).

4.2.1 Textual (Multimodal) perspective

From the textual perspective (Bhatia, 2004), a critical genre analysis of the five-star hotel homepages involved the move structure and the lexical-grammar of the written texts, hyperlinks, and visual images on the hotel homepages (Suen, 2013). The analysis identified eighteen moves, with examples such as identifying the hotel, attracting attention, indicating content structure, establishing contact, establishing credentials, and introducing accommodation, all of which tend

to cluster around the top section of the hotel homepages. Following the move structure analysis, Suen investigated the language of the homepages by adopting Martin & White's (2005) appraisal analysis for evaluating language in the introductory texts of the hotel homepages. The purpose was to investigate how meanings are constructed by means of linguistic resources with a view to promoting the hotels and persuade readers. Findings show patterns of use of attitudes, graduation and engagement as well as use of positive appreciation, with appreciation constituting the majority of instances of appraisal. Among different types of appreciation, 'Reaction: Quality' occurs most frequently; for example, *opulent guest rooms*, *highspeed broadband internet access*, and *Grand Rooms are beautifully presented*, when evaluating the quality of hotel products and services. The five-star hotels are also found to use superlatives to show that their products are of the highest quality, and thus conveying a sense of upscaling.

In addition to the move-structure and linguistic forms, different types of hyperlinks on hotel homepages were identified; the relationship between the texts connected by the hyperlinks and the functions of hyperlinks were examined. Obligatory hyperlinks, such as accommodation, dining and leisure facilities, were identified and analysed. Hotels were found to hyperlink their websites with external websites such as reputable organisations and travel agents to enhance their brand images.

The visual images of all hotel websites were also examined to find out how visual images, compared to verbal text, on hotel homepages create different types of meaning. The study adopted Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) grammar of visual design, which will be described in the second part of the paper, to examine all the visual images (N=59) collected from the twelve five-star hotel homepages in terms of representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. A major finding is that conceptual images are primarily employed in

order to show the quality and abundance of hotel facilities. Figure 1 shows the conceptual image of a guest room and Figure 2 the conceptual image of a fitness room.



Figure 1. Guest room

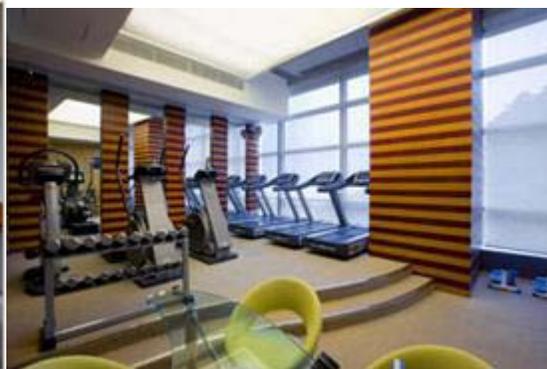


Figure 2. Fitness room

4.2.2 Ethnographic perspective

Bhatia's (2004) ethnographic perspective method was partially adopted. Insider informants' data about the context of website design was obtained by the survey method. Interview invitation letters were sent to all the twelve five-star hotels, resulting in interviews with a hotel practitioner and two hotel website designers. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted so that the researcher was able to probe into a deeper level of information. The questions were related to a range of language and image features of hotel websites; website design conventions and practices; the history, belief and goals of the culture of the hotel industry; audience reception of hotel websites; organisational behaviour of the hotels; and social changes reflected on the websites. Each interview lasted for about one hour and was tape-recorded. The interviews were then transcribed, followed by analysis of common themes and different responses among the interviewees. Interview findings show that the product of the hotel website has undergone

various stages of decision-making and involvement before it is launched to the market, and that website design is very much shaped by practitioners who have knowledge about the ideological orientation of the hotel and the interests and needs of the contemporary audience/clients.

4.2.3 Socio-cognitive perspective

From the socio-cognitive perspective, the analysis of hotel homepages involves investigating generic integrity, audience reception, disciplinary cultures, professional practice, the appropriation of generic resources, and use and exploitation of rhetorical strategies (Bhatia, 2004). The following discusses only generic integrity.

Generic integrity covers both text-internal and text-external factors. Text-internal factors, namely the moves and language features of the hotel homepages discussed under the textual perspective, were also discussed in terms of the use of social cognitive strategies (Osman, 2006: 41) which take the social context of the genre in use into account. Regarding text-external factors, information about disciplinary cultures and professional practice was elicited through interviews with hotel website designers (Suen, 2013). Findings show that the hotel homepage is a complex genre which integrates elements from genres existing in other media, namely photographs, slogans and evaluative texts from advertisements, and company introduction from sales promotional letters. Since the design of the website was also shaped by user preferences, information related to audience reception of hotel websites was collected by interviewing the hotel website designers for feedback from the website audience. In addition to hotel website designers, seven potential users of five-star hotel websites, who are frequent travelers and therefore potential hotel customers, were also interviewed to find out how they perceived the

five-star hotel websites. They were all professionals at the managerial level who stay in hotels routinely as part of the professional work.

4.2.4 Socio-critical perspective

Socio-critical analysis of the data includes the accounts of language, ideology and power; discussions of language and social structures; studies of social changes reflected in discourses; social practices, identities, and motives; organizational behaviours; and socio-cultural backgrounds (Bhatia, 2004). Information about social structure, social changes and practices and socio-cultural backgrounds was obtained through interviewing hotel website designers and reviewing the tourism and hospitality literature particularly that concerning the hotel industry in Hong Kong (Suen, 2013). Organizational behaviours and the accounts of language, ideology and power ideology were investigated by interviewing hotel practitioners. In addition, six diachronic case studies were conducted to compare the old (websites launched before 2007) and new (websites launched in 2010) versions of the hotel homepages to shed light on any organisational, professional and social changes that have taken place. These six hotels were the Peninsula Hong Kong, Langham Place Mongkok Hong Kong, Langham Hotel Hong Kong, Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, Landmark Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong, and the Excelsior Hong Kong. The diachronic study shows, within a span of ten years, signs of transformation of the hotel homepages in the areas of visual images, language, and layout. For example, the presentation angle of hotel websites has been changed from primarily representing the hotel's interest and perspective to increasingly representing the viewer's interest and perspective, by including a higher frequency of interpersonal features. The study also shows that the potential of electronic

media in corporate communication has been capitalized upon by moving away from a brochureware style to become increasingly experiential, interpersonal, and cinematic, with less text, more and large flash images, and more interactive hyperlinks, thus creating a virtual ‘walk-through’ experience for the viewer. The study identified reasons for the change, primarily transformation due to change in technology, change in readers’ preferences, and change in the perception of the concept of luxury (Suen, 2013).

In conclusion, the first study shows that effective hotel website design is closely related to a number of inter-related factors, including knowledge and skills about web writing, the ideological orientation and business objectives of the hotel or hotel group, as well as knowledge about the interests and needs of the readers/users and the website design team. The homepages of the twelve five-star hotels investigated are found to be largely multimodal. The diachronic aspect of investigation shows evidence of transformation of hotel homepages in terms of images, text and layout within the past ten years. It is suggested that the study is valuable for hotel practitioners and website designers, providing them with a critical understanding of the communicative purposes, language and visual images of hotel homepages as a genre and the way in which websites are designed, constructed, and consumed (Kalashnikova, 2010).

5. The second research study: Visual image analyses of hotel homepages

The second study aims to compare the websites of luxury five-star hotels with those of other star categories, namely three-star and four-star, in Hong Kong to achieve a better and more comprehensive understanding of how multimodality is exploited by Hong Kong hotels of different classes to appeal to specific target markets. Similar to the first research study, the

second one adopts two major frameworks for multimodal analysis, namely Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996, 2006) grammar of visual design and Martin & White's (2005) appraisal theory that informs the researcher of the extent to which the introductory text of the hotel homepage is aligned with the reader. In the following, the grammar of visual design is briefly described.

5.1 Visual grammar analysis

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1985) is characterised by three basic metafunctions of language: ideational metafunction which makes sense of our experience; interpersonal metafunction which realizes our social relationships; and textual metafunction which constructs coherent texts. Based on Halliday's (1985) notion of metafunctions, Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) develop a model that examines the representational (ideational), interactive (interpersonal), and compositional (textual) meanings of visual images (Table 1).

Table 1. The grammar of visual image

Representational meaning	Interactive meaning	Compositional meaning
Narrative (with vector)	Image act and gaze	Information value
• Transaction	• Demand	• Given/New
• Reactional process	• Offer	• Ideal/Real
Conceptual (without vector)	Social distance and intimacy	• Centre/Margin
• Classificatory	• Intimate	Saliency
• Analytical	• Close personal	Framing
• Symbolic	• Far personal	Modality
	• Close social	
	• Far social	
	• Public	
	Perspective – horizontal angle and involvement	
	• Frontal	
	• Oblique	
	Perspective – vertical angle and power	
	• High	
	• Medium	
	• Low	

First, the representational meaning is to represent participants (“objects” of a visual composition) (*ibid*: 47) and “their relations outside the representational system” (*ibid*: 42), revealed through narrative (action) and conceptual images. Participants in any semiotic act are classified into interactive or represented. Interactive participants are those who are engaged in “the act of communication, who speak and listen or write and read, make images or view them” (*ibid*: 47). The represented participant is “the subject of the communication: the people, places and things represented in and by the speech of writing or image” (*ibid*: 47).

In addition to participants, representational meaning is also conveyed via the image content. Image content comprises narrative and conceptual representations/images. Narrative images, the first type, are characterized by a vector between participants, referred to as a line or

an implied line that suggests direction between the participants. A vector may be formed by objects or parts of objects, by angles that are set up in the image, or by such elements as the direction of a person's eye. Participants in narrative images can function as either "Actor" or "Goal", resulting in two kinds of meanings, namely transaction and reactional process. The meaning of transaction is generated when a vector departs from the participant (Actor) and is directed towards the arrival point (Goal). Reactional process is evident if the vector is formed by an eyeline or a direction of the glance of one or more of the represented participants, with the participants (Actor) being "reactors" and the Goal being "phenomena" (*ibid*: 67). In the case of moving images, for example, shots of shimmering light on softly rippling water, they can realize events that do not have Actor and Goal (*ibid*: 261). Conceptual images, the second type, comprises three types of conceptual representations, based on the way in which visuals define their participants. They are classificational, analytical, and symbolic processes. Classificational processes "relate participants to each other in terms of a "kind of" relation, a taxonomy" (*ibid*: 49), with participants belonging to the same member class or group, having a superordinate-subordinate relationship. Analytical processes "relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure" (*ibid*: 57), with two kinds of participants: the whole being "carrier" and the parts being "possessive attributes" (*ibid*: 57). Symbolic processes, divided into symbolic attributive processes and symbolic suggestive processes, refer to "what a participant means or is" (*ibid*: 105). Symbolic attributes are "objects which are made salient in the representation" (*ibid*: 105); symbolic suggestive processes have only one participant (the carrier) and the details of the representation are de-emphasized to create a mood or an atmosphere (*ibid*: 106).

Second, the interactive meaning refers to the social relations between the "producers of signs and the receivers/reproducers of the signs" (*ibid*: 43), and can be realized by contact, size

of frame, social distance, involvement, and modality (*ibid*: 114). Contact is realized by ‘demand’ or ‘offer’. Demand is realized when a represented participant has eye contact with the viewer, such as a represented participant looking at or smiling at the viewer (*ibid*: 115); offer is realized when a represented participant has no direct eye contact with the viewer and the represented participant presents him/her/itself to be “looked at” by the viewer (*ibid*: 120). Size of frame concerns the use of close-up, medium and long shots (*ibid*: 124) to portray people as friends or strangers: the face or head at an intimate distance, the head and shoulders at a close personal distance, and a person from the waist up at a far personal distance. Social distance suggests the social relations between the viewers and the objects: the object being shown as if the viewer is “engaged with the object” at a close distance; the object being displayed in full without much space around at a middle distance; and “an invisible barrier between the viewer and the object” (*ibid*: 125) at a long distance. Involvement is realized through the use of angles. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006: 136), a horizontal angle shows whether the image producer or viewer is involved with the represented participants; a frontal angle suggests that the viewer is involved in the image and shares the same world; an oblique angle suggests that what the viewers see in the image is not part of the represented participants’ world and that the viewers are not involved in it. Angles can also be high or low. A high angle of the represented participant implies that the viewer has power over the represented participant. A low angle suggests the represented participant has power over the interactive participant. For an image at eye level, there is no power difference, and the point of view is equal. Modality is defined as the reliability, veracity¹ and authority of an image. While modality in linguistics refers to the “truth value or credibility of (linguistically realized) statements about the world” (*ibid*: 155); modality in visual communication refers to the “reliability” of images (*ibid*: 154). In visuals, people, places and

¹ the quality of being true, honest or accurate (CDO)

things can be presented as real as if they actually existed or were just as imaginings, fantasies, caricatures, and so on. The judgment of modality is “social, dependent on what is considered real in the social group” (*ibid*: 156). The realization of modality is “a complex interplay of visual cues” (*ibid*: 163), with different viewers having different degrees of judgment of modality. The notion of modality can also be used in moving images with the addition of the factor and movement. Similar to depth, light and colour, movement can be real or abstract.

Third, the compositional meaning, defined as the “coherence of the signs both internally and with the context in and for which they are produced” (*ibid*: 42), is realized through the interrelated systems of information value, framing and salience. Information value is the “placement of elements” from left to right, top to bottom, and center to margins (*ibid*: 177). The left of an image shows the given knowledge while the right shows the new information (*ibid*: 181). The top of an image shows the ideal and the bottom represents the real (*ibid*: 181). Visual communication can also be structured by the dimensions of centre and margin. If a visual composition makes significant use of the centre, the central element is regarded as centre and the elements around it are margins, with the centre presenting the nucleus of the information and the margins being subservient. Salience refers to the elements that are given to attract the viewer's attention to different degrees, and is created through relative choices in color, size, sharpness and placement. For example, borders between black and white create high salience; saturated colours and soft colours create a strong contrast; foreground objects are more salient than background objects (*ibid*: 202). According to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the reading path of the readers of non-linear texts, such as websites and magazines, begins with the most salient element, and then move to the next most salient element, and so on. They assume “the most plausible reading path” (*ibid*: 205) is that readers first look at the photograph and then optionally move to the

verbal text. However, since salience is “culturally determined” (*ibid*: 205), there may be more than one possible reading path depending on members of different cultural groups.

Framing refers to “the presence or absence of framing devices (realized by elements which create dividing lines, or by actual frame lines), with framing devices disconnecting or connecting elements of the image, which signify “whether the participants belong or do not belong together in some sense” (*ibid*: 177). The use of frame lines conveys individuality and differentiation while the absence of frame lines suggests group identity (*ibid*: 203).

5.2 Data

The data of the second study was collected by making reference to the website of Oriental Travel. Oriental Travel is an organisation which offers travel and hotel information in Greater China Region. It provides comprehensive information on the fifteen three-star hotels, fourteen four-star hotels, and twelve five-star in Hong Kong. Although hotels aim at targeting different kinds of visitors from the world using different languages on their websites, namely Chinese, English, and Japanese, only the English version was analyzed in this study as English is the international language of the hotel industry.

5.3 Initial findings

As an illustration of the grammar of visual design, the following discusses the representational, interactive, and compositional meanings of four images found on the website of a 3-star hotel,

Casa Hotel, in Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong

http://www.casahotel.com.hk/www/casahotel/en_chi/index.html

The homepage of Casa Hotel contains a slideshow of four photographs. The first photograph (Figure 3) shows a hotel room.



Figure 3. First photograph of Casa Hotel

For the representational meaning, the photograph is a conceptual photograph because no vectors are seen. It is analytical, presenting a part/whole structure. The whole, as a carrier (i.e. the room), possesses the parts as attributes (i.e. the bed, pillows, flowers, vase, television, etc.). Regarding the interactive meaning, the photograph is a visual offer about details of the hotel room. A moderate intimacy is created due to the close social distance at which the photograph is shot. From the horizontal perspective, the photograph is taken from a frontal angle to clearly show the room. From the vertical perspective, the photograph is taken at eye level, indicating equal power between the viewer and the image. Concerning the composition meaning, the system of information value, with left to right, top to bottom, and center to margins layouts does

not apply. Regarding salience, the most salient part of the photograph seems to be the bed because it catches the audience's eyes. Framing is found to be strong since different elements within the photograph are connected. The modality is also high because of the fully conceived colour, showing that the photograph is real.

This photograph in Figure 4 shows part of a restaurant in the hotel.



Figure 4. Second photograph of Casa Hotel

With respect to representational metafunction, as there are no vectors found, it is a conceptual image, with participants being related in terms of “a part-whole structure”, hence the image defines its participants as “analytical processes” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 57). The photograph is analytical because the restaurant acts as a whole carrying its “possessive attributes” (*ibid*: 57), such as the chairs, tables, condiments, lights and decorations. In terms of interactive meaning, contact is realized as “offer” (*ibid*: 115). Being taken from a close social distance, the photograph appears to generate a sense of slightly distant feeling to the audience. The photograph is taken from a frontal showing high degree of involvement. Equal power is

perceived from the medium angle as the same as human eye level. Analysis of the compositional meaning of the photograph does not show any layout arrangements related to information value. The restaurant as a whole is the most salient part. The elements in the pictures are strongly framed. Modality is found to be high, represented by the same tone in colour (i.e. yellowish brown), making the photograph look authentic.

The photograph in Figure 5 is a close shot of the supplements in the bathroom of a hotel room.



Figure 5. Third photograph of Casa Hotel

Regarding representational meaning, the photograph is a conceptual image owing to the absence of vectors. The toothbrushes, glasses, shampoo, soap and the plants presented in the photograph are the parts of the whole bathroom, indicating that the image belongs to analytical processes. Concerning the interactive meaning of the image, it is a visual offer. The social distance is quite short because it is taken from a close personal angle, creating a feeling of intimacy. The photograph is taken from a frontal horizontal angle, focusing on the toothbrushes.

The medium vertical angle of the image suggests equal power between the viewer and the hotel. Compositional meaning analysis shows that the image in the photograph is not analyzable in terms of the information value. The salience lies in the toothbrushes which are very much in focus, whereas the decorative plant is the least salient part as it is out of focus. The image is characterized with a weak framing because the elements in the photographs tend not to form close ties with each other, considering particularly that the right part is blurred. Modality is considered high because of the bright colour and real objects in the image.

The photograph in Figure 6 shows the lobby of the hotel.



Figure 6. Fourth hotel of Casa Hotel

Analysis of the representational meaning of the image (photograph) shows that it is conceptual, as no vectors are found. The image is analytical because the attributes, such as the stairs, reception and lift belong to the carrier (i.e., the lobby). In terms of the interactive meaning, the image is offering information about the lobby. There is medium intimacy, as shown by the close social distance from the camera to the lobby. The photograph is taken at a frontal angle as

the details of the hotel lobby are clearly captured and shown. The stair may create a higher power of the hotel compared to the reader because the photograph is taken from a relatively low angle. In terms of compositional meaning, the image is considered to have a centre/margin layout in information value because the lobby, which represents salience, is placed at the centre, while the margin contains the street view as reflected by the glass. Framing in the image is strong due to the connectedness of the different elements in the lobby. The image has a high modality because the represented participants are real realized by such modality markers as colour saturation, colour differentiation, detail, depth, illumination, and brightness.

6. Conclusion

At the university, hotel and tourism education has been identified as a niche to provide support for the continuous development of tourism, a pillar industry of Hong Kong's economy. The two related studies, briefly described in this paper, were designed to investigate the extent to which, and in what ways, the hotel homepage, similar to those of other industries, serves as a virtual gateway to the world (Callahan, 2005). Knowledge of the language features and visual images of hotel websites can help the website designer in the design and production process. Examination of the hotel homepages from multi-perspectives and multi-dimensions (Bhatia, 2004) has much enriched the study of hotel websites as a genre in a critical manner. This paper has reported on the working progress of the second study. Data analysis is being carried out to analyse each of the visual images (46 from fifteen three-star hotels and 33 from fourteen four-star hotels) in terms of the three metafunctions with a view to comparing the findings across the three categories/classes of hotels.

The two hotel homepage studies reported in this paper does not only contribute to the hotel industry and the disciplines of applied linguistics, professional communication, and hotel and tourism management, but also website designers by offering insights into ways of designing and constructing appealing and effective websites.

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A case study of Taiwanese college teachers' group exploring narrative pedagogy

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Abstract

Taiwanese college students regard writing as the most difficult part of their study of English. Teaching writing then becomes a daunting task for Taiwanese college teachers. Narrative writing has been used as a method to enhance student interest and to improve ESL students' English writing. Few studies talk about Taiwanese college teachers' beliefs about and experience with teaching narrative writing. This study aims at explicating Taiwanese college teachers' views of narrative. A teacher narrative study group was set up to explore the gap between narrative theory and its application in the local Taiwanese context. This qualitative research includes individual interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observations. Four Taiwanese college teachers were recruited to participate in the group discussions. The research findings show that it is not the English proficiency of the students which plays a crucial role in applying narrative writing to

a Taiwanese context, but rather the anti-narrative views of the teachers. This Taiwanese college teachers' group reveals the variety of seeing and teaching narrative writing. Though this research has limited progress introducing narrative writing to Taiwanese composition, it brings us a step forward in establishing the significance of narrative writing in Taiwanese academics.

Keywords: narrative writing, storytelling, teachers' group, teachers' belief, EFL Taiwanese college students.

1. Introduction

English writing is difficult for native language students, and it is definitely more challenging for foreign language students (Scott, 1996). According to Fang & Lin's (2009) research, Taiwanese college and university students have regarded writing as the most difficult part of their study of English, primarily in Taiwan's technological and vocational educational institutions. Teaching writing then becomes a daunting task for Taiwanese instructors. Liu (2005) argues that there is a need for instructors and course designers to figure out ways to improve current teaching approaches in Taiwanese institutions of higher education. Liu's findings show that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) college students prefer to spend more class hours on listening and speaking, and fewer class hours on reading and writing in their EFL classrooms. In a similar vein, Wu (2009) explores the perceptions of faculty and students at a Taiwan technical university regarding learning English in an EFL context. Wu's study shows that the obstacles to students' English learning include the lack of native speakers, lack of sufficiently trained teachers, limited real-life learning materials and teachers' unfamiliarity with new teaching methodologies. As Wu argues, most Taiwanese writing teachers have not been able to effectively bring new teaching

methods to the composition classroom.

The problem of learning English in Taiwan remains. This study asks whether narrative writing can be an alternative pedagogy in Taiwanese writing classes and how Taiwanese college teachers learn to teach narrative writing? The importance of helping ESL students to become effective and autonomous learners has been emphasized more and more in recent years (Spack, 2001; Yang, 2009). The time seems right for Taiwanese teachers to find ways to improve Taiwanese college students' English learning. To a great degree, teachers teach what they believe. Every teacher has his/her reason to teach, and that reason is connected to a belief system, which directs why they teach and what they teach (Belmonte, 2003). This study aims at exploring Taiwanese teachers' beliefs toward adopting narrative writing as pedagogy in Taiwanese EFL classes.

2. Literature review

The validity of using narrative in academic discourse has been widely discussed for years (Pagnucci, 2004; Spack, 2001). Storytelling has been used to motivate English learners and to help low achievers to improve their English learning in a secondary school in Hong Kong (Yang, 2009). A multimedia storytelling website has been implemented in one elementary school in Taiwan to test the effectiveness of narrative writing to promote English learning. In Tsou, Wang and Tzeng's (2006) study, a multimedia storytelling website can facilitate teachers' storytelling and children's story recall processes in an EFL classroom. The storytelling website overcame some obstacles to teaching storytelling in Taiwan. Those obstacles include teachers having little prior experience with integrating storytelling into language teaching and lacking the cultural and

language abilities to handle storytelling in English. Cheng (2008) proposes that genre-based pedagogy can produce positive results for Taiwanese Second Language (L2) college freshmen in target language writing. In Cheng's research, students are taught by explicit instruction on how to use language in the narrative genre. Cheng's findings of pre- and post-tests show that students develop rhetorical moves in linguistic features and content development of their narrative writings. Cheng's study calls for more Taiwanese-based research into narrative teaching using case studies or interviews to learn more about how genre-based pedagogy can benefit L2 students or what skills they require to improve their L2 writings.

Though Cheng's (2008) research does show that genre-base pedagogy in narrative writing holds promise for improving the English writing of Taiwanese college freshmen students, few other studies talk about the beliefs of Taiwanese teachers and their experiences with teaching narrative. This gap between the theory of teaching narrative and its application in Taiwan composition classes should be further explored. In order to gain a fuller picture of teaching narrative in a Taiwanese context, teachers' understandings and beliefs about teaching narrative should be taken into consideration. In this study, a teacher narrative study group is set up to explore the gap between narrative theory and its application in the local Taiwanese context.

2.1 What is narrative?

Roland Barthes (1977) remarks that narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. Narrative is a fundamental human activity. It does more than simply outline a series of incidents: instead it places those incidents in a particular narrative context and gives them a particular meaning (Tappan & Brown, 1991). Bruner (1986) states that there are

two modes of thought, the paradigmatic (called logico-scientific) mode and the narrative mode, each of them providing a way of knowing and a way of constructing reality. Bruner puts forth the idea that narrative is a fundamental way for human beings to think, to make sense of experience and to understand reality.

2.2 Why narratives

Why do we choose narrative as the pedagogy? What the meaning does narrative writing bring out in teaching? In practical way, there are four dimensions manifested in teaching narrative, which are discussed below:

2.2.1 Stories for defining self

Story constructs who we are (Coles, 1989). Witherell and Noddings (1991) propose that story can shape one's meaning and sense of belonging, and story can contribute to our knowing and being known. Story can give voice to human experience, make us understand the meaningfulness of everyday life, give power to emotion, intuition, and relationship in human lives, and help us find our places in the world. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that personal experience is important, and because of its importance, it became a subject of research in social science. Through narrative inquiry, researchers represent their experience in their texts. At this point, narrative is used as the method of inquiry. Narrative inquiry helps Fowler (2006) examines the difficulties of teaching and explores the meaning of existential being. Reading and writing narratively redefines her concepts of teaching and also allows her to understand herself.

2.2.2 Help students understand themselves

Storytelling can make meaning of our life. Encouraging students to write their stories can help them understand themselves. For ESL/EFL students, it is important to have clear and practical motivation to learn and write in English. Students will find it difficult to learn a second language in the classroom if they have neither instrumental nor integrative motivation, as is probably often the case in school language teaching, and if they feel negatively about bilingualism or are too attached to monolingualism (Cook, 2001).Cook's argument illustrate that motivation plays a crucial role in ESL/EFL students' English learning. Asking ESL/EFL students to write their own stories is assumed to help them understand themselves, and express their voices.

2.2.3 Help teachers understand students

Along with helping students to understand their lives, narratives can help teachers to better understand their students. Blitz & Hurlbert (2000) say they value the significance of storytelling and argue that story can make students' worlds more understandable, and lets students be seen and heard.

2.2.4 Help create community

Story is more than just a tool for individual imagination and self-discovery; story can shape relationships with others in the community. Story is a way of learning and knowing, which can organize personal experience, make meaning of one's own world and also can be an avenue for creating a community of culture (Schaafsma, 1989). Asking EFL students to write their stories in

a class can create a new community for them. Each one writes his/her own story and then shares the story with his/her peers. In a narrative writing classroom, these ESL/EFL students can learn that they are not alone. As each student makes efforts to overcome language issues and to put his/her personal experience into written words, these ESL/EFL students will not only learn to make themselves understood through writing personal stories, but also they will learn to understand with their peers through reading each other's stories.

2.3 Research questions

The main purpose of this study is to disclose the gap between narrative theory and the application of teaching narrative writing in the local context of Taiwanese college composition classes. The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. What are Taiwanese college teachers' starting beliefs about teaching narrative in Taiwan?
2. What ideas about teaching narrative in Taiwan evolve in a study group?
3. How does participation in a teacher narrative study group impact teachers' classroom practices?

3. Research methodology

This is a qualitative research study and the methodology includes individual interview, focus interview and classroom observation. Mandarin Chinese was spoken in all the individual interviews and focus group interviews. The focus group interviews were conducted as the primary qualitative method and individual interviews/ classroom observations as the supplementary qualitative methods. The focus group interviews were categorized into two stages based on the division of group discussion: first round group discussion and second round group discussion. In this study, focus group interviews also indicate to the group discussion. The first round group discussion was conducted before all participants went to teach narrative writing. Each focus group interview lasted for 2 hours. In each focus group interview, the researcher prepared the handout for all the participants. The discussing topics were listed in the handout. The in-depth interviews for each participant were adopted individually before and after they joined the focus group discussion. The classroom observations were carried out between the first and round group discussion. The process of all the qualitative methodologies are presented as follow (see figure 1):

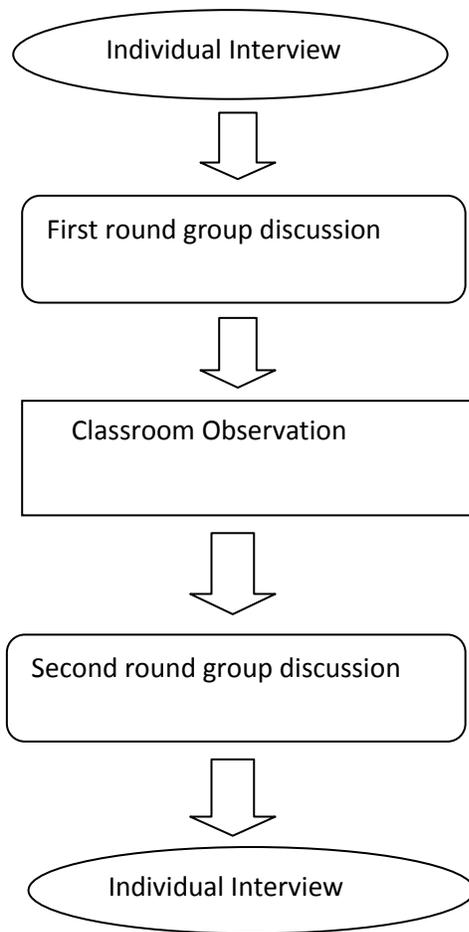


Figure 1. The process of qualitative methodologies adopted in this study

3.1 Participants

Four Taiwanese college English teachers were recruited as my participants. They were teaching a freshman composition writing course in the English department. All of them have more than five years of experience teaching English composition. Two are females and two are males. Four participants got the message of joining this study group from an email I send it to the Applied English/English department of some universities and colleges in specific city of Taiwan. The pseudonym is used and each of them is called as Joyce, Kenny, Crystal and Rock.

3.2 Data collection

Individual interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observation were recorded with a digital recorder. All individual interviews and focus group interviews were transcribed into English. Transcriptions do not capture non-verbal gestures and expressions. The primary purpose of transcribing individual interviews and focus group interviews was to transform all participants' verbal conversations into written word, so the content of the conversations was the main focus in transcription. In the focus group interviews and classroom observation, I observed each of my participants' reactions when they responded to other participants' ideas. Participants' feelings were described from my perspective along with their mutual perceptions and disagreements or agreements. Data discussion topics are coded and categorized in terms of main point which is revealed in individual interviews, focus group interviews and classroom observation.

4. Findings

4.1 Individual interviews

Teachers' beliefs in narrative writing

Teachers teach what they believe. What is teacher's belief in narrative writing? In this study, narrative writing is defined as the personal writing and four participants got this definition when they came to the group discussion. Phillion (2005) explains that narrative is special, and it is different from other forms of writing. Talking about his teaching experience, Phillion expresses that when he listens to stories and reflects on them, he starts learning the meaning of being a

teacher. He appreciates sharing his own classroom stories with his students and having them share their stories. Before the starting of group discussion, in individual interview, my four participants individually talked about what their understanding for narrative writing. Basically, they all view narrative writing as the personal writing. What four participants' beliefs in teaching narrative writing are:

Joyce: "Narrative writing describes the sequence of events. The sequence may not be only defined chronologically, but the sequence to describe the event. Through writing narratives, students are trained to organize their thinking and enhance their ability in writing a description of the event. To ask students to describe their lives in English seems artificial. It is difficult to tell students that it is necessary to write narratives in English, for any reason other than learning English."

Kenny: "Experience is also significant. When I read some teenagers' narrative writing, I find that they do not have much life experience, and their attempts end in something very artificial. It is weird and sound funny. For those students who are too young to have enough broad life experiences, how can they write their life stories? A student writer's life experience is significant in narrative writing, I sometimes feel that some stories are too mechanical because the content is lost; it is a story but the student writer does not put enough thought into it."

Crystal: "In most of academic writing textbooks, narrative writing is categorized at the beginning level. The lower the writing level is, the more narrative writing examples are in it. It is weird because narrative writing is complex, and it should not be labeled as simplistic. Taiwan's educational policy tells students that each

writing embodies its own unique characteristics and teaches students to learn each kind of writings individually rather than to use different writing styles mixed together in one piece of writing.”

Rock: “Narrative writing can train students to express their thinking, but in order to let their writing be understood, teachers need to take care of students’ grammatical errors. I think that narrative writing is a sort of descriptive writing, which can facilitate EFL students in learning particular sentence patterns, like sequential or chronological description. Narrative writing, like the commentary, supplementary, argumentative, expository and persuasive writing, is just one kind of writing.”

Joyce saw narrative from the issue of language learning. English writing proficiency seems to be more importance than storytelling itself. Kenny valued the significance of narrative writing, but concerned about the student writers’ maturity in writing storytelling. Crystal, a creative writing believer, embracing all writing pedagogies, disagreed with the idea that narrative is simplified. Rock treated narrative as just one kind of writing and highlighted the role English grammar plays in English writing.

4.2 Focus group interviews

In group discussion, we discuss what is narrative and the data is decoded into thematic sections as follows:

Narrative writing and academic writing

In the academic setting, there seems to be a(n) (in)visible wall between personal writing and academic writing. Williams (2006) believes that personal writing is likely to be thought of as emotional, subjective and lacking rigor; on the contrary, academic writing is usually viewed as objective, analytical and impersonal. Hyland (2002) points out that academic writing should not be viewed as universally impersonal, for this disguises its variety.

Joyce argued that narrative writing is not academic writing because academic writing is regulated by certain clear and irreplaceable rules, such as having main points and illustrating the evidence to support the arguments. Narrative writing is not within this category. It is not necessary for storytellers to provide the evidence in storytelling, and it is also not the point for the readers to examine whether the storyline is valid or invalid. Kenny stated that academic writing is regulated by MLA or APA format, but narrative writing is not constrained within this regulation. All the research papers need to follow that fixed format. The purpose of having that rigid format is for “communication.” MLA or APA format is used as the tool to communicate the academic language within academics. Narrative writing is not within such regulation, so it can transcend this boundary. Narrative writers can use their personal style to write their stories without following any standardized academic format. Crystal believed that there should not be an absolute separation between narrative writing and academic writing because her definition for narrative writing and academic writing was not arbitrary.

In this study, narrative writing is defined as “personal experience and life storytelling.” Incorporating the storytelling into a specific form, Wajnryb (2003) decodes the structure of narrative as: beginning (abstraction, orientation), middle (complication, evaluation) and end

(resolution, coda). There is more than one way to write narrative. Narrative can go beyond the limitation of single-structure narrative. Multidimensional structures of narratives, Double-voiced narratives and fractured narratives are advocated to break conventional thinking of narrative as a single structure. (DePeter, 1997; Tobin, 1997).

Joyce did not think that those multifunctional and fragmented narratives were written casually. Like meta-fiction or post-modernism novels, those multifunctional and fragmented narratives were designed on purpose. Narrative has its own world, which is self-served and self-sufficient. If narrative is structured as storytelling, Joyce doubted the flexibility of free style in narrative writing.

Good story or good writing

In EFL context, the importance of English writing form or content meaning is the issue. In Joyce's opinion, good stories and good writing are equally important in Taiwan's composition context. She emphasized that storytelling in Mandarin Chinese is different from in English. If writing a story in English, students definitely fail to control English as they do Mandarin Chinese. Students tend to write fractured or incomplete sentences in English. If students cannot write complete sentences, it is the teacher's obligation to take the students' writing ability into consideration when talking about writing narratives in English.

Kenny preferred to get good stories when teaching students narrative writing. While he is teaching, he is learning. He believed that teachers should teach students writing skills in writing classes. Students can reflect on themselves through writing a story. The example Kenny illustrated was that one of his students wrote a story about her experience of telling a lie. He

clearly remembered that at the beginning, that student described a story, but at the end of the story, that student deeply reflected on herself. While students are writing, they are in the process of thinking/ reflecting. Going through the reflecting process, this student's trauma of telling the lie was healed. The function of healing is embedded in the writing process itself. This argument is under the assumption that students would like to get involved in the writing process rather than treat the writing as just an assignment. If narrative writing is treated only as an assignment, it will not lead students to genuinely reflect upon themselves and their lives.

Crystal argued that collecting good stories is more important than collecting good writings. Grammar errors can be corrected, but a personal story is unique, which cannot be replaced. "To be only one is more significant than to be the number one." Telling the personal story is the only one. On the contrary, when Rock reads students' stories, in spite of sometimes resonating with sympathy and empathy, he can only understand the whole framework of students' stories under the condition that students' stories are grammatically readable. Reading those unreadable writing, Rock tried to correct their writing.

Similarity of participants' perception on teaching narrative

For Kenny and Crystal, getting good story is more important than getting good writing.

Difference of participants' perception on teaching narrative

Crystal did not think that experience would affect narrative writing teaching. However, Kenny reminded us that most students do not know how to write before coming to the writing class. In

Kenny's understanding, when storytellers try to turn their stories into written words, they may write the story in three parts: beginning, middle and end. The storyteller may not have difficulty writing the beginning part; therefore, they tend to describe their story background easily. Since a personal story has no end, the storyteller may encounter some conflicts in their lives and get stuck trying to describe them. For an event which had already happened, the storyteller can write the resolution based on their real experience. But for an event the storyteller is experiencing, they need to make an effort to find the solution, make up the story ending or give the story an open ending.

Teaching narrative writing in an EFL writing context

When we teach Taiwanese EFL college students narrative writing, how do we deal with students' language issues in their storytelling? Can we put EFL students' language issues aside in their storytelling? Rock, having taught English for more than ten years, argued that we cannot ignore students' low English proficiency writing problems. Kenny also added that, for EFL students, writing personal stories may be "kidnapped" by sentence or grammatical structure. Responding to Rock and Kenny's argument, Joyce commented that we should open up the acceptance of minority language within the English learning context. "To be limited within language means to be limited within creativity".

On the contrary, in Crystal's opinion, language issues do not really get in the way of students' storytelling. She illustrated two examples to support her idea. Both examples came from the activities she designed for her writing course. In the first example, she gave students poetry, and took out some verbs or adjectives and left some blanks for them to fill. Crystal

showed that the answers students filled out for those blanks were very creative. In the second example, when students were writing, Crystal played a series of songs as background music. In that activity, students started to write while the music came out. Students were asked to stop when each song ended. While the songs kept coming out from the CD player one after another, students kept passing around their writing to their peers who sat to their right side. Every time a new song came on, students needed to read what their peers who sat on their left side wrote and add to their story making. When all the songs were played, each creative story, which was made from all the student writers, was completed. Crystal told us that all her students were so excited and engaged by that writing activity. Due to language issues or a lack of creativity, some students can only write one or two sentences when it is their turn. But for her, that did not hurt the writing. Those students who could only write a few words in that activity still made their contribution to the final story making.

Crystal did not let the students' language issues bother her in teaching writing; rather, she made efforts to help them write or improve their writing. While reading students' personal stories, Crystal was also collecting their life stories. From reading their stories, she saw the transformation of how students improved their writing, matured, and enhanced their interactions with their peers, friends, and family members.

Giving students story formats

Joyce argued that the purpose of writing is to empower writers to use sentences to express their thinking. Those students whose English proficiency is limited definitely have difficulty expressing themselves. When teaching Taiwanese EFL college students narrative writing, it is

necessary to provide them with the format of writing a story. This is because students do not have a basic idea about how to write a story; they need to obey the story format in order to write the story.

Kenny revealed that just asking students to write without giving them instruction would cause them to be quite lost when doing this assignment. Furthermore, he also added that some stories may not be finished yet. Likewise, some personal experiences still keep going while, the storytellers are looking for the solution of their problems or waiting for the ending of the event they are experiencing. When storytellers try to turn their stories into written words, they may write the story in three parts: beginning, middle and end. The storyteller may not have difficulty writing the beginning part; therefore, they tend to describe their story background easily. Since a personal story has no end, the storyteller may encounter some conflicts in their lives and get stuck trying to describe them. For an event which had already happened, the storyteller can write the resolution based on their real experience. But for an event the storyteller is experiencing, they need to make an effort to find the solution, make up the story ending or give the story an open ending.

Assessment

Joyce said that she would divide the grading into two parts: one is to grade the story itself and the other is to grade students' writing. "Teachers cannot teach something behind the storytelling itself." It is because every student has their own stories. What we can do is teach students to write correctly without making grammar errors rather than teach them how to write powerful stories. Rock insisted that we need to have grading standards to grade the writing. Crystal

reminded us that some students would only write three sentences in their writings. This is unacceptable to her, so Crystal forced them to write more. Joyce added that the only thing we can do is grade something else other than stories. All we can and need to do is to ask students to write more because encouraging them to write more lets them expose more about themselves. It is important to train students to cultivate the habit of writing stories. To prevent students from only writing a few sentences, Joyce always asked for a minimum number of words in their writings. She additionally proposed that we need to have teacher-student conferences and classroom discussions before asking them to write. As teachers, all we can do is encourage students to read more and to be active writers.

Challenges of teaching narrative writing

Joyce mentioned that some powerful stories are artificial, so she raised a question: “What does a powerful story mean?” When we say that this is a powerful story, do we mean the experience itself is powerful or the narration (written skill) is powerful? Moreover, she thought that the powerful story is also related to the writing skills. Joyce believed that a banal story can be decorated into a powerful story if the writer has good writing skills. Experienced writers still need to experience the transformation from turning a spoken story into a written story. Writing skills play a very important role in story writing. We can teach our students writing skills; however, students’ life experiences do not relate to our teaching objectives.

Crystal responded to Joyce by saying that: “Before fifty, what writers write is based on their experiences. After fifty, writing is part of writers’ experiences.” Crystal did not think that experience would affect narrative writing teaching. However, Kenny reminded us that most

students do not know how to write before coming to the writing class.

4.3 Classroom observation

In the first round of group discussion, all my participants expressed that it is necessary to show students story formats before asking them to write a story. I provided my participants with story formats (Appendix A and B). They then agreed to put narrative writing in their syllabi for the coming semester. Before we started the second round of group discussion, I went to observe how each of the participants taught narrative writing. After the observations, I got all of my participants back to our group discussions. The second-round group discussion mainly focused on what they learned, what impressive stories they remembered and what problems they encountered in teaching narrative writing.

Joyce's classroom

The class Joyce taught was a seminar— special topic. She asked her students to play the Facebook game— City Ville and write a final paper about playing this game. The idea of designing this activity came from Joyce's belief—that the game may elevate students' interest in learning English and would like to learn English without feeling pressure. Joyce inserted narrative writing exclusively in this class twice. For the first narrative assignment, she asked her students to pick one of the characters in any fairytale they liked and write the story from a character's point of view. The second time, Joyce asked them to write a reflection about playing City Ville since they started playing this game for the class.

Joyce was disappointed about the effect of teaching narrative writing in her class. Taking the writing a story from a different character's point of view in fairytales as an example, a lot of students re-wrote the fairytale rather than writing the story from a different character's point of view. They could not figure out the point of writing the story from a different character's point of view in this assignment. For the second assignment, students got used to following certain rules and the format in her class. When she asked her students to write about their experiences of playing City Ville, students began panicking. Students felt it was too difficult to write about themselves without having any format to follow.

Kenny's classroom

Due to school curriculum policy, Kenny needed to teach English lessons from the assigned textbook. The writing section of one unit in that textbook was about writing an interesting story. Only when Kenny taught this unit was I able to observe his teaching of narrative. In this class, Kenny asked his students to write their personal stories without giving them any story format.

Crystal's classroom

Crystal put narrative writing in her creative writing course. She did not completely follow the story formats (Appendix A and B) them. Not completely following the story format made students write stories more creatively. By doing this, students could have clear guidelines of a story structure to follow, but they didn't need to be constrained by the story formats. In this way, students felt more secure and could write a better story.

Rock's classroom

Rock gave students the story format (Appendix A) to let them have a basic understanding for the story structure. He asked his students to pick one of the story titles (Appendix C) to write their stories. Rock also added some titles about job experiences in the title pools. Since Rock believed that learning English should benefit students in job hunting, he was interested in reading students' stories about their working experiences. Rock encouraged students to write about their part-time/full-time working experiences if they had any or their dream job for the future.

4.4 Teaching narrative writing and (not) giving story formats

All participants showed that they needed the story formats before they started to teach narrative writing. In classroom teaching, some followed the story formats, but others did not. Both Joyce and Crystal asked their students to write a story from a different character's point of view. This narrative writing assignment was interpreted by Joyce as the one way to train her students to read an event from different angles. Disappointedly, her students misunderstood the meaning of telling the story from a different character's point of view, and re-wrote the story from the setting, plot and the ending. Kenny commented that it is because students cannot figure out what role the narrator plays in the story telling.

Crystal gave students the story format of Cinderella (Appendix B), and asked them to pick one character, other than Cinderella, and to write the story from his/her/its point of view. One student chose Cinderella's shoes as the narrator. In this story, Cinderella's shoes complain about Cinderella's stinking feet. This student gave Cinderella's shoes voices and let readers figure out how difficult it was to go through day after day of the smell of Cinderella's feet. From

the narration of Cinderella's shoes, the beautiful image of Cinderella was completely subverted.

Crystal said that students like storytelling, but Joyce expressed that students don't like it. Joyce even showed that her students complained about re-telling a story. Since they did not like to write, they did not like this classroom activity, either. In Joyce's case, her students were nervous about creativity. They neither enjoyed writing the fairytale from a different narrator's point of view nor did they like to write about their own experiences in playing City Ville. Regardless of the fact that Joyce reminded the students to put the mechanics issues aside and focus on telling the story, her students still worried about their word choices and grammar issues. They still took storytelling as a writing assignment rather than enjoying the storytelling.

5. Discussion

Four participants cannot represent all Taiwanese college English teachers and Taiwanese composition students. This study aims for depth rather than breadth. It points out that teaching narrative writing in a Taiwanese context is far removed from teaching it in an English native context. The theoretical framework of teaching narrative writing discussed above is founded on L1 context. The content of group discussion shows that the situation of teaching narrative writing in Taiwan is so different from what L1 narrative teacher experienced. There are four major findings of this study: 1. Discussing narrative writing is distinct from teaching narrative writing. 2. Language barriers should be taken into consideration when teaching narrative writing to Taiwanese college students. 3. Re-telling the story plays a significant role in low English proficiency Taiwanese college students' narrative writing. 4. Anti-narrative views are implied in classroom teaching.

5.1 Discussing narrative writing as distinct from teaching narrative writing

In our group discussions, we talked about narrative writing from the theory-based to the classroom-based context. Before my participants started to teach narrative writing, the discussed narrative was theory-oriented, and after they had taught narrative writing, we discussed teaching narrative writing based on practical concerns related to the Taiwanese composition context. Discussing what narrative is and whether narrative writing is academic writing is not unpractical, but rather it is more significant to actually teach Taiwanese college students narrative writing. In this study, discussing the genre of narrative is one thing while teaching narrative writing is another.

In the first round of group discussion, all participants were engaged in discussing what narrative is. Each participant had their own definition of narrative and held firm beliefs about teaching narrative writing. Participating in this narrative study group did not change too many of their beliefs in teaching narrative writing. This may be because it is not easy to change one's belief, or two semesters are not long enough to change a teacher's perspective. The ultimate purpose of setting up this narrative study group was not for changing my participants' beliefs in teaching narrative writing, but aims at facilitating the flow of dialogue and exchange of different ideas about narrative writing.

5.2 Language barriers in teaching narrative writing

When discussing narrative writing in a second language writing context, storytelling is closely connected to language issues. All participants felt that Taiwanese college students' ability to write personal stories was constrained by their English proficiency. Though English ability does

stand in the way of writing narrative, using code-switching or the first language can help Taiwanese college students write personal stories.

Buell (2004) advocates for the use of code-switching in second language writing. According to her, analyzing second language learning and writing through the lens of code-switching offers the “possibility of heterogeneity” (p.102). She proposed that we need to see the meaning located in both reader and writer when exploring the approach of using code-switching. Code-switching offers rich resources for second language writers. Friedlander (1990) contends that for L2 students, using the first language in writing topics which are related to their native language background has a positive effect on their planning and writing.

Both Buell’s and Friedlander’s arguments match exactly what Kenny carried out in his classroom. In Kenny’s case, he allowed his students to mix both English and Chinese in their journal writing. In those journals, Students expressed their ideas in various forms, such as drawing pictures and inserting dialogue which resembled that of a comic. The interesting pictures, funny dialogues, and mixing languages were woven in the students’ journal writing. Although Kenny always questioned about the language issue of narrative writing, his classroom practice did show that the language barrier did not affect students’ storytelling. In his class, both first language and code-switching were encouraged. He also allowed students to use picture drawing or comic pictures to express themselves as best they could.

Using of the first language, code-switching, and drawing only happened in the journal writing of Kenny’s classroom. In teaching narrative writing, Kenny’s students wrote their stories in formal form— English words only. Kenny did not meant to have different criteria in journal writing and narrative writing, but his requirement of formal English for the narrative writing

created a real distinction. Narrative writing as the writing assignment should follow the rules of the standard curriculum policy. Journal writing, used as the complementary material to record students' learning process, became the medium for students to better express their ideas. The journal writing, without being constrained in formal written form, was a good tool to capture students' imagination and creativity. In those journals, there were many good stories, which were even more funny and interesting than those in the narrative writing assignments.

Taiwanese college students' storytelling is undoubtedly restricted by language factors. To enhance students' motivation in writing stories and encourage them to write more interesting stories, we need to open up the medium of storytelling and look at English language learning from more angles. Narrative writing can be more meaningful than only learning functional English skills. Storytelling has its own value, which should be independent from the context of language usage. Though it is unavoidable and necessarily to take language issues into consideration when teaching narrative writing in a Taiwanese EFL context, the most important thing in teaching narrative writing is to value the story itself.

5.3 Retelling the story

Schaafsma & Vinz (2011) put forth that point of view is the lens through which experiences of the narrative are filtered." Rewriting a story from another character's point of view is a common assignment in English classes. In this study, three out of my four participants favored asking their students to rewrite the story from a perspective other than the narrator. One participant showed that retelling the story is easier for EFL students than asking them to write about their personal experiences. The other said that it is more interesting. Though we talked about the value

and significance of teaching narrative writing in the first round of group discussion, my participants tended to favor retelling the story more than personal experience writing. Perhaps retelling the story is the first step for Taiwanese students to learn narrative writing. From my participants' perspective, asking students to rewrite the story from another perspective is based on a certain story, which is less difficult than asking them to write their personal story because retelling the story begins with a fixed story, but a personal story must be written from scratch. Teaching retelling the story embodies the function of introducing Taiwanese students to what a story is. Before asking Taiwanese students to write a narrative, training them to see a story from other perspectives is important.

5.4 Pro-narrative and anti-narrative

Four participants joined my narrative study group because they were interested in discussing narrative writing. That does not mean that they were all narrative proponents. On the contrary, some of them may be anti-narrative. None of my participants said that they opposed narrative; however, from some of their arguments, they do not think narrative writing is an academic writing and they may not emphasize the value of teaching narrative writing. No one in the study wanted to publicly announce they were an anti-narrative teacher. Their ideas of teaching narrative writing in the discussions were very different from their actions in their classrooms.

6. Conclusions

This study shows that applying narrative writing in the Taiwanese EFL context is constrained by

English proficiency. The Taiwanese college students that my participants taught had limited English proficiency, which had a certain influence on the results we discussed on teaching narrative writing in Taiwan's context. Four participants generally saw storytelling as being bound to language. Teaching narrative writing in the Taiwanese context is far from the same as those L1 narrative theorists argue. Cultural, rhetorical and linguistic differences contrast Taiwanese college teachers' methods from L1 teachers' methods, as well as how Taiwanese college students learn narrative writing contrasts with L1 learners. Silva (2001) pinpoints the fundamental difference between L1 and L2 writing and illustrates the inappropriateness of adopting an L1 writing theory for all L2 writing practices. Teaching narrative writing, in contexts other than native English speaking countries, does face the challenge of language proficiency.

The significance of teaching narrative writing to Taiwanese students is to value storytelling rather than to test their English proficiency. If we try to carry out narrative writing in non-English speaking contexts, we need more research on methods for doing so, which can solve the problem of language issues in teaching narrative writing. When we are more open-minded of accepting multiple genres in academic papers, EFL students can find a new way to learn narrative writing without being completely constrained by their English proficiency. The limitation of this study lies in its only focus on Taiwanese college teachers. It left room for more research on Taiwanese college students' interest and motivation in learning narrative writing.

Four participants' discussion confirms the argument that teachers' teaching is based on their beliefs. This narrative study group may not have changed participants' beliefs about narrative writing too much. It doesn't have any conclusion for the certain way of teaching narrative writing, either. It contributes to present the variety of seeing and teaching narrative writing in Taiwanese college composition context.

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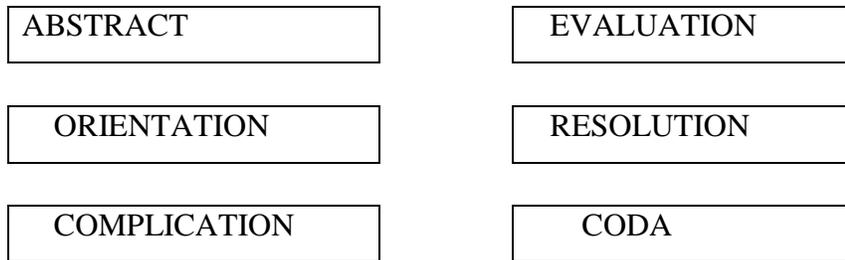
Appendix A

Narrative Writing Format

Definition on the stages of the narrative:

Beginning	abstract orientation	An optional part of the story, usually only a sentence, summarizing the story that the listener is going to hear Orients the listener to where/when the story is, who is in it, etc
Middle	complication evaluation	A crisis or problem in the story that creates the drama A personal comment on the events in the story
End	resolution coda	How the complication is solved An optional ending which rounds off the story, explaining why the story was worth telling

1. Schematic structure



Texts

2. My Mother's Diary

ABSTRACT

This is a story about how my parents married, which I found out when I read my mother's diary after her death.

ORIENTATION

My mother came from a tiny village where rules were very strict for women and arranged marriages were common. When she was quite young, my mother's parents had promised her to a man from a well-off family. This particularly pleased my mother's parents, who were not wealthy

My mother left school early and during the year before she was due to be married, she worked as a seamstress in her parents' tailoring business. She spent her time working, or in the home under the watchful eye of her grandmother.

COMPLICATION

One day, my mother went into the town to deliver a customer's clothing. When she knocked on the door of the house, the owner's son opened the door. My mother and he were instantly attracted to each other and had some time at the door in conversation. Before she left, they agreed to meet again, and soon my mother was delivering orders to this customer on a weekly basis. Very quickly my mother knew she was in love.

My mother was too afraid to tell her parents that she had fallen in love with someone else as not only was she promised to someone else, but also they would punish her severely for meeting a man unchaperoned. Eventually, she and the young man had to make a decision as the arranged marriage was looming.

EVALUATION

My mother was in a terrible position—either run away with the man that she loved and never see her own family again, or marry a man she did not love but have a safe, comfortable life.

RESOLUTION

Finally, my mother could not stand the indecision any longer, and decided to submit to her parents' wishes. On 1st July, she went one more time to see the young man and told him that she could not break her parents' hearts and bring disgrace on her family by running away. On 1st August, my mother submitted to the arranged marriage. Her true love was heartbroken and soon left the town, never to return. My mother had a safe, comfortable life, but wrote that she often woke at night in tears, dreaming of her true love.

CODA

After I read this story it explained to me the secret tears that my mother cried every year on 1st July

3. The Wallet

ABSTRACT

This story is about a reward for doing the right thing.

ORIENTATION

It was the day before Christmas. An old man, Roger, was sitting alone in the street, crying. He lived alone in a large city. The only family he had were his son and two grandchildren who lived in another city. He wanted to see them, but he was poor and had no money to get the bus to see them.

COMPLICATION

Roger got up slowly and began to walk back to the tiny room where he lived. Suddenly, on the street in front of him he saw a very old wallet. He picked it up and opened it. Inside was \$500. There was also a driver's license that had a name and address on.

EVALUATION

If Roger took the money, he would be able to get a bus ticket and buy presents for the grandchildren. However, he was an honest man, and he saw that the wallet looked old. It did not look as if it belonged to someone rich. Maybe the owner needed the money for Christmas too.

RESOLUTION

Roger decided to return the wallet to its owner. The owner was extremely happy to get his wallet back, because it had been a gift from his wife before she died. He gave Roger the \$500 as a reward. Roger hurried to the bus station and bought a ticket out of town.

CODA

Honesty is often rewarded.

Appendix B

Format of Retelling Stories

1. Procedure

Tell students that they are going to rewrite the story from the viewpoint of one of the other characters. There are five viewpoints: one of the ugly stepsisters, the fairy godmother, the prince, the stepmother and the widower.

2. Text

Cinderella

Once upon a time, there was a widower who had a beautiful daughter. He was keen to marry again to give his daughter a mother, and he was overjoyed when at last he met and fell in love with a woman and married her.

This woman had two daughters of her own, and they all came to live with the widower and his daughter. Unfortunately, the new wife turned out to be a cruel and jealous woman and her daughters were the same. They were particularly hateful to the widower's daughter because she was beautiful and they were exceptionally ugly. They made the widower's daughter a slave to their wants, and sent her to work day and night in the kitchen. Because her clothes were dirty from the cinders of the oven which she sat next to most of the time, the woman and her daughters called her Cinderella.

One day, there was much excitement in the house, because the Prince of the city announced that he would be holding a ball and all the women of the city were invited. Cinderella's two ugly stepsisters were particularly happy as their mother bought them both beautiful dresses and shoes and spent hours getting them ready. When Cinderella asked if she could go too, the stepmother and stepsisters laughed at her. 'What do you plan to wear? Do you think the Prince would let you in the door wearing those rags?' they said.

Alone in the kitchen by the fire, Cinderella tried not to cry as she heard the sisters and her stepmother leave for the ball. Finally she fell to the floor sobbing: 'Oh, how I wish I could go to the ball!'

All at once, there was a large puff of smoke. Cinderella leapt to her feet in surprise. In front of her stood a tall woman with the kindest expression she had ever seen in her life. The woman was carrying a wand and had wings on her back. Cinderella was almost too shocked to speak.

'Wh...who are you?' Cinderella asked.

'I'm your fairy Godmother,' she answered. 'I heard your wish, and it will be granted. Go and get me a pumpkin, six mice and six lizards, and you will go to the ball.'

Not knowing why she should get these things, Cinderella nevertheless did as she was told and brought a pumpkin, six mice and six lizards to the fairy Godmother. The Godmother waved her wand at the pumpkin and white mice and there appeared a beautiful coach drawn by six white horses. She then tapped each of the lizards and there appeared six handsome footmen.

‘Oh, Godmother! Cinderella exclaimed. ‘But...what will I wear...?’

The fairy Godmother tapped Cinderella on the head and suddenly she was dressed in a beautiful gown with matching jewelry and glass slippers on her tiny feet. ‘How can I ever thank you enough, Godmother!’ said Cinderella, throwing her arms around the fairy. ‘Just one warning!’ said the fairy Godmother. ‘Be sure to be home before the clock strikes twelve, for the spell will wear off at this moment.’

Cinderella promised she would, then climbed into the coach and was taken to the ball. When she arrived, everyone was looking at her and commenting on how beautiful she was. The Prince could not take his eyes off her, and soon Cinderella was dancing in his arms.

A few hours later, Cinderella heard the clock chiming. She looked up at the clock in fright. It was chiming twelve! Cinderella dashed out of the great ballroom. The Prince saw her running away and followed her quickly. But by the time he had reached the street, she had vanished. On the footpath, he found a tiny glass slipper that she had been wearing. The Prince declared: ‘I will travel around the kingdom. Whoever’s foot shall fit this shoe will become my wife!’

The news of the Prince’s plans to marry reached the city the very next day, and all the eligible young women in the town were very excited, hoping that they would be the one whose foot would fit the slipper. However, the slipper was tiny, and the Prince had been to almost every house in the city without anyone’s foot fitting it. Finally he stood outside Cinderella’s house. It was his last hope.

The ugly stepsisters were determined to fit the shoe, and nearly broke the slipper by forcing their huge feet into it. ‘Enough!’ said the Prince angrily. ‘My bride is nowhere to be found!’ At that moment, Cinderella stepped out of the kitchen dressed in her dirty clothes. The ugly stepsisters gasped in shock, but the Prince said to her gently: ‘Please try on the sleeper.’

She did, and of course it was a perfect fit. The Prince was delighted, and took Cinderella in his arms and asked her to be his bride. She happily said yes, and they were married the next day.

And they lived happily ever after.

Appendix C

Topics of Narrative Writing

Section I:

What experiences have made you feel really happy or very sad?

What experiences have been very alarming or really frightening?

What experiences have made you feel proud of yourself?

What have been the most difficult tasks you have had to undertake?

What experiences have made you realize that you truly care about someone?

What experiences have made you laugh a lot?

Section II:

What do you wonder about and why?

Section III:

Recall a favorite trip and write about it.

Three factors are important when deciding on a story:

1. Choose stories that meet your objectives.
2. Choose stories that you enjoy and want to share.
3. Choose stories that are right for your audience

Local grammars of phraseologies of movement in financial English

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Biodata

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Abstract

By introducing a study of the local grammars of phraseologies of movement in financial English, this paper aims to illustrate the value of the study of local grammar of phraseologies in the description of specific language patterns or specific kinds of language use and the procedure for describing local grammars. In financial settings, the language of movement is closely related to risks and returns, and therefore of great importance. The main study sets out to describe and compare the language of four types of movement (upward movement, downward movement, no movement, and unspecified movement) across five types of discourses in corporate annual reports. Using *ConcGram 1.0*, the corpus-driven study analysed word co-occurrences specific to phraseologies related to movement in the 1.5-million word Corpus of Company Annual Reports (CCAR) composed of 18 annual reports from Hang Seng Index constituent companies in Hong Kong. The top five phraseologies in each movement category in each subcorpus of discourse are

studied for language description and comparison. The paper reports on the findings related to the local grammar of a two-word concgram *increase/HK\$* in the subcorpus of public relations discourse in the CCAR. It also describes implications for further research and teaching and learning in ESP and professional communication.

Keywords: local grammar, phraseology, movement, corporate annual report

1. Introduction

Following Sinclair's (1987) concept of "idiom principle", i.e. words do not occur at random but are co-selected, research studies have examined lexical items (Sinclair, 1996; 2004; Stubbs, 2001; Partington, 2004; Cheng, 2006), lexical bundles, word clusters, or lexical clusters (Biber, *et al.*, 1999; Biber, Conrad, & Cortes, 2004; Mahlberg, 2007), collocation (Gledhill, 2000), word combinations (Nesselhauf, 2003), multi-word sequences (Biber, Conrad & Cortes, 2004), skipgrams (Wilks, 2005; Guthrie, *et al.*, 2009), and concgrams (Cheng, *et al.*, 2006, 2009).

In Gledhill's (2000) study that examined the discourse functions of collocation in a corpus of cancer research article introductions, the researcher aimed at establishing "a typical or generic phraseology for an overall description of the genre" (p. 117). Findings showed that collocation reflects "the recurrent semantics of the specialist domain" (p. 130), e.g. *shown* is "invariably followed by qualitative, biochemical or technical explanation" and *reported* is "associated with quantitative, empirical observations" (pp. 121-22). Findings also showed that collocation reflects "the dominant discourse strategies in the research article" (p. 130), e.g., *has been/have been* in the perfect passive construction perform a reporting function in Introductions (p. 121).

Different from other kinds of word co-occurrences, a concgram is comprised of all of the permutations of the association of two or more words, irrespective of whether the words occur in different sequence relative to one another (i.e. positional variation, AB and BA) or when one or more words drop between the co-occurring words (i.e. constituency variation AB and ACB) (Cheng, *et al.*, 2006). The concgrams that are found by the software are all instances of co-occurrences. Not all of them are necessarily meaningfully associated. Thus it is useful and necessary for users to open up the concordances with the concgram search function to distinguish between ‘co-occurring’ words (i.e. concgrams) and ‘associated’ words (i.e. phraseology). While concgrams extracted using *ConcGram 1.0* (Greaves, 2009) are fully automatically generated data, the determination of meaningfully associated instances is subjectively based on the interpretation of and parameters set by the users or researchers.

It is noticed that in the study of collocations and phrases, there are often sets of similar forms that are not covered by “formal rules of either the phrase structure or transformational type” (Gross, 1993: 26), and hence cannot “be adequately described by whatever parser developed for the main body of the text” (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000: 76). In other words, since a parser is developed for the whole text, there are always items that cannot be adequately described. However, it has been noted that the organisation of the items that fail to be described and retrieved is “substantially different” from that of the rest (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000: 76). The subset of language is found to share similar forms, similar meanings, and similar functions; for example, adverbial phrases correspond to dates and synonymous phrases such as *lost his temper*, *lost his cool*, *blew a fuse* (Gross, 1993).

2. Literature review

2.1 Local grammar

In response to the lack of adequate description of certain items, Gross (1993) proposed the concept of “local grammar”, which is a grammatical system that deals with only a subset of language rather than the language as a whole. Gross (1993) introduced finite state automata and permutation rules to describe local grammars. Finite state automata are graphs representing the formation elements of the utterances in a linear order; permutations rules are transformation rules that introduce the relationship of equivalence to modify the finite automata to avoid redundancy. Gross (1993) suggested three steps to generate local grammars: to divide the utterances into constituent elements and represent them in a linear order, i.e. in finite state automata; to conduct constituent analysis on these elements, i.e., to map the grammatical, semantic and functional labels in the constituent elements; and by following permutation rules, to identify the equivalent elements of the utterances and rearrange the finite-state graphs.

Compared with general grammar, i.e. the grammar developed for the language as a whole, local grammar focuses on the structures and features of a small set of a language, which can be “one set of meanings” (Hunston, 2002: 90) or a “subset of normal language, the sub-language” (Barnbrook, 2002: 94). The small set of a language does not use all the grammatical structures of the language and does not have all the linguistic features (Barnbrook & Sinclair, 2001). Rather than reducing the rules of the general grammar to avoid non-specialised sentences being produced, local grammar devises a unique grammar and relies very little on received categories in general grammar such as the subject and object of a verb (Barnbrook & Sinclair, 2001). Hunston (2002: 157) further illustrated that “the elements of the local grammar are more useful than elements of a general grammar”. For example, when analysing the sentence of definition “An **albatross** is a very large white sea bird” (*Collins Cobuild Student’s Dictionary*: 14, cited in

Barnbrook and Sinclair 2001: 247), it is more useful to know that albatross is the headword than to know that it is the subject.

Hunston & Sinclair (2000) argued that analysis using local grammars can be more simple, by using a limited number of terms; more precise, since each local grammar could be stated in its own terms; and more useful, due to its relation with discourse function. Similarly, Barnbrook & Sinclair (2001: 241) contended that a local grammar will outperform a general grammar because general grammar is structurally oriented, and so it is not able to work out the functions, while local grammar “stays very close to the functions of the restricted language”.

Generally speaking, studies of local grammar fall into two categories. The first category of studies, following Gross (1993), regards local grammar as an approach to language extraction and concerns the development of computational programs that enable the extraction of all instances of language that conform to the local grammar. Gross’s (1993) local grammar research focuses on language parsing; that is, the formation (i.e. the forms) and transformation (i.e. the relationship of equivalence) of the constituent elements of utterances that express a similar meaning, rather than the functional or semantic roles of these elements. Examples of Gross’s (1993: 29) local grammar study were synonymous phrases like “*lost his cool*”, “*lost his temper*” and “*blew a fuse*”, adverbial phrases associated with dates, and expressions of precise dates. In Hunston’s (2002) words, the aim of devising local grammars is to enable computer programs to identify the elements in the local grammars automatically. Examples are the extraction of anthroponyms in European Portuguese for the development of machine-readable dictionaries (Baptista, 1998; Baptista, Batista & Mamede, 2006), the extraction of Korean proper names (Nam & Choi, 1997), the extraction of sentiment bearing language in financial news in English, Arabic and Chinese (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2005, 2006).

The second category studies the local grammars of language with certain functions, examples being the local grammar of the expressions of sameness and difference (Hunston, 1999), the local grammar of definition (Barnbrook, 1995; Barnbrook & Sinclair, 1995; Barnbrook & Sinclair, 2001; and Barnbrook, 2002), the local grammar of evaluation (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000), and the local grammar of cause and effect (Allen, 2006). In these studies, the focus has shifted to the functional and semantic roles of the constituent elements. The study of the functions of the elements is regarded mandatory in the study of local grammar.

Take the study of the local grammar of definition as an example. In Barnbrook & Sinclair's (2001) study, they analysed and parsed a corpus of definition sentences containing 434,220 words extracted from the *Collins Cobuild Student's Dictionary* (CCSD). One of the features of CCSD is that in each paragraph of the dictionary, there is only one sentence that carries the definiendum, thus "each sentence is a text in itself" (Barnbrook & Sinclair 2001: 244). The analysis of the local grammar focuses on the function of the definition sentence to explain the meaning of the definiendum. Each definition is divided into two parts, namely a left-part, which usually contains the definiendum, and a right-part, which usually contains the definiens, with the two parts connected by a hinge. The definitions are divided into four groups and seventeen types, according to the organisational patterns of the sentences. These four grammatical groups cover 99.88% of all the 31,407 definitions, with only six exceptions (Barnbrook & Sinclair, 2001).

Local grammar and phraseology are closely interrelated. Studies in collocations and phrases have indicated inadequate description of certain sets of language, resulting in the concept of local grammar (Gross, 1993). Studies of local grammar have in turn further confirmed the importance of the co-occurrence of words and recurrent phraseological patterns in meaning

construal. A local grammar may be associated with a specific word or phrase or a language function, and it may be possible to describe the local grammar of phraseologies which exhibit variation (Sinclair, 2010). Sinclair (2010) studied the definiendum in a dictionary as a lexical item which has “its own, unique local grammar” (*ibid.*: 41). The local grammar of a lexical item was analysed by adopting the five categories of co-selection of a lexical item to understand the extended units of meaning, namely collocation, colligation, semantic preference, semantic prosody, and the invariable core (Sinclair, 1996, 2004). Sinclair’s (2010) findings supported inclusion of multi-word units of meaning in the dictionary and giving them “the same status as the usual headwords” (*ibid.*: 37).

In another study, Hunston & Sinclair (2000) examined the local grammar of evaluation by specifying the limited patterns that are typically used to evaluate and identifying co-occurring evaluative adjectives. Six patterns were identified to be typically used in evaluation (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000) (see Table 1). In addition, functions were identified in different parts of the patterns of evaluation, represented by functional terms, including “evaluative category”, “thing evaluated”, “evaluation carrier”, “evaluator”, “evaluating response”, and “evaluating context” (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000). Figure 1 shows two example sentences that illustrate the grammatical and functional terms specific to Pattern 3.

Table 1. The local grammar of evaluation (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000)

Pattern 1	It + Link verb + Adjective group + Clause
Pattern 2	There + Link verb + Something/Anything/Nothing + Adjective group + About/In + Noun group/-ing clause
Pattern 3	Link verb + Adjective group + To-infinitive clause

Pattern 4	Link verb + Adjective group + That-clause
Pattern 5	Pseudo-clefts
Pattern 6	Patterns with general nouns

Pattern 3

<i>Thing evaluated</i>	<i>Hinge</i>	<i>Evaluative category</i>	<i>Restriction on evaluation</i>
<u>Noun group</u>	<u>Link verb</u>	<u>Adjective group</u>	<u>To-infinitive clause</u>
The car	was	terrible	to park.
This book	is	interesting	to read.

Figure 1. The local grammar of evaluation: Pattern 3 (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000)

The local grammar of movement

Other studies of local grammar concern the language of movement in financial English (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2005, 2006). Ahmad, *et al.* (2005) suggested that the neighbourhood of the specialist words typically used in financial news announcements carries sentiment information, and the study of the local grammar of the specialist words can enable the retrieval of sentiment bearing language. They studied the local grammar of specialist words such as *percent*, *share*, and *bank* in news stories to identify the sentiments, i.e. whether good news or bad news. Their findings showed that the language of movement constitutes sentiment bearing language. The key collocates of *percent* indicating the movement of increase, such as *up*, *rose*, and *rise*, convey positive sentiments, and those indicating the movement of decrease, including *down* and *fell*, convey negative sentiments. The local grammar of *percent* in association with its key collocates was then generated in the form of a finite state automaton for retrieving sentiment-bearing

sentences. For example, the local grammar of *percent*, when it co-occurs with *down*, is “*down + (more than/ nearly/ to/ from/ over/ about) + numeral cardinal + percent*” (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2005).

Ahmad, *et al.* (2006) extended the use of local grammar in data extraction to other languages, such as Arabic and Chinese.

2.2 Studies of corporate annual reports

Linguistic research into corporate annual reports has long been established (Adelberg, 1979; Chang & Most, 1985; Rogers & Brown, 1999; Stittle, 2003). Rutherford (2005), for example, studied the word frequencies of the Operating and Financial Review (OFR) sections of 44 corporate annual reports from 69 companies from Times UK 1000 for 1998 classified into seven groups based on profit- and loss-making. Words from OFR sections were classified into four panels, namely words with statistically significant differences in frequency, all comparison words, charged words, and words with no statistically significant difference in frequency. Findings showed that across all company groups, there were greater number of references to profits than losses and to assets than liabilities and “greater use of positively charged words and ‘up’ words” (Rutherford, 2005: 366), and that poorly performing companies have a stronger tendency.

More recently, research has found that corporate annual reports fulfill different communicative purposes catering to the needs and interests of multiple stakeholders (Stanko & Zeller, 2003; Stittle, 2003; Bhatia, 2010). Bhatia (2010: 39), for instance, identified “a typical combination of at least four interesting but different discourses included in the same document” of corporate annual reports. The discourses are:

1. *Accounting discourse*, which forms a major part of the Annual Reports, duly endorsed, certified by public accountants.
2. *Discourse of economics*, in the form of what is conventionally known as the financial review section of the report.
3. *Public relations discourse*, in the form of the chairman's letter to shareholders, for which public accounting firms do not take any responsibility.
4. *Legal discourse*, which forms a major part of disclaimers, often necessary to comprehend the full implications of the information disclosed in the report.

(Bhatia, 2010: 39)

3. The study

This paper reports on part of a research project that aimed to analyse the local grammars of the language of movement (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2005, 2006) in the genre of company annual reports. In texts and discourses in finance services, the word *movement* refers to “a change or development”, as in “*movements in the underlying financial markets*” (*Oxford Dictionary of English 2005*: 1149). The description of movement in company annual reports is considered important, especially for investors, since it reflects the company business performance in the previous financial year and predicts the company business performance in the following financial year, potentially influential in investors' decision making. The present study aims to describe the local grammar of the language of movement in a self-compiled corpus of company annual reports published by 18 constituent companies in the Hong Kong Hang Seng Index. The objectives of the study are, as follows:

1. To describe the local grammars of movement in different discourses in company annual

reports to understand how the meanings of movement are construed in financial settings;
and

2. To explore similarities and differences in the local grammars of movement across different discourses in company annual reports.

3.1 Method of study

The corpus examined was the Corpus of Company Annual Reports, 1.5 million words comprised of the latest annual reports of 18 Hang Seng Index constituent companies collected in June 2010. The Hang Seng Index constituent companies were selected because they are “the largest and most liquid companies listed in Hong Kong”, and therefore “have an enormous impact on the Hong Kong economy” (Oxfam, 2010: 4). The longest annual report had 272,946 words and the shortest one 45,577 words.

After all of the 18 annual reports had been read, one more discourse was added to Bhatia’s (2010) four kinds of discourses. It is corporate governance discourse, composed of such sections as corporate governance report, report of the directors, risk management report, remuneration report, and biographical details of directors and senior management.

Table 2 shows the word counts of individual discourses (sub-corpora) of the Corpus of Company Annual Reports (CCAR).

Table 2. Corpus of Company Annual Reports (CCAR)

Sub-corpus of CCAR	Word count
Accounting discourse	594,522
Discourse of economics	419,589

Public relations discourse	110,076
Legal discourse	5,796
Corporate governance discourse	373,149
Total	1,503,132

The procedure to analyse local grammar basically followed the sequence of three steps: divide the text into composing elements and represent them in a linear order; conduct constituent analysis on these elements, i.e. map the grammatical, semantic/functional labels on the constituent elements; and combine the texts that share grammatical patterns into several groups.

A multi-method approach was adopted in the study, utilising both quantitative corpus-driven approach and qualitative exploration of the corpus data. *ConcGram 1.0* (Greaves, 2009) was used. *ConcGram 1.0* is a phraseological search engine designed to automatically retrieve instances of word co-selection irrespective of positional variation or constituent variation (Cheng, *et al.*, 2006, 2009). The unique word lists of the five sub-corpora were generated respectively with the Statistics-Unique words function of *ConcGram 1.0*. The 2-word concgram lists were then generated with the Create new concgram list (automatically) function based on the unique word lists. The cutoff of frequency in the sub-corpora of accounting discourse, discourse of economics, public relations discourse and corporate governance discourse was 10, and the cutoff in the sub-corpus of legal discourse was set to be 3 due to the small size of the sub-corpus.

The 2-word concgram lists were studied to identify potential concgrams that convey the meaning of movement. Analysis showed that concgrams fall into four semantic categories, namely upward movement (e.g., *increase/million*, *growth/business*), downward movement (e.g., *decrease/million*, *declined/cent*), unspecified movement (e.g., *changes/value*,

movement/liabilities), and no movement (e.g., *same/authority*, *same/derivative*). The potential concgrams in each semantic category were then searched for in the five subcorpora respectively with the Concgram search function. The concordance lines containing the concgrams were displayed automatically. In order to have longer cotexts, the width for concordance strings from the list box was adjusted from 50 to 100.

The concordance lines were then examined to identify the degree of associatedness of the co-occurring words. Judgment was made based on whether the two words occur in the same clause, i.e. in the same ‘unit structured around a verb phrase’ (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 120). For example, the words *decrease* and *million* in the first concordance line of the two-word concgram *decrease/million* are associated because they occur in the same clause, while that in the second concordance line are not associated as they occur in different clauses.

1 with rapid credit expansion. There was a **decrease** of RMB511 **million** for impaired loans with a

2 **million** tonnes, representing a year-on-year **decrease** of 8.1%; the consumption reached approximately

The concgrams were then re-arranged based on the frequency of associatedness. The local grammars of the top five eligible two-word concgrams in each semantic category of each sub-corpus were included in the study.

3.2 Some findings and discussion

Ahmad, *et al.*'s (2005, 2006) studies have provided a firm grounding for further investigation into the local grammar of the language of movement. However, three general limitations have been observed, namely sentiment bearing language without description of movement cannot be retrieved; the local grammar for *percent* cannot retrieve all the language of movement; and the local grammar does not cover all the grammatical patterns of the use of *percent* (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2005, 2006).

In the pilot stage of the present study, in order to provide some insights into these limitations, textual examples taken from the sub-corpus of media releases in the Hong Kong Financial Services Corpus (HKFSC) were examined.

Example 1

the Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. (NYSE: GS) and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, Inc. (SMFG) (TSE: 8316) announced today an agreement that includes the investment by Goldman Sachs in SMFG convertible preferred stock, the provision by SMFG of credit loss protection to support Goldman Sachs' lending activities and a broadening of business cooperation between the two organizations (HKFSC)

It is noted that Example 1 conveys a positive sentiment, without any language of movement being involved, and so there is not a direct relation between the language of movement and sentiments.

Example 2

net revenues in Equities increased to \$349 million from \$105 million for the first quarter of 2002 (HKFSC)

In Example 2, the phraseology *increased to ... from* expresses movement, clearly showing that in addition to *percent* (Ahmad, *et al.*, 2006), there are other expressions of movement.

The third research question asks about more and other patterns in the local grammar of *percent*. A preliminary study of the local grammar of *percent* in the HKFSC showed five other patterns of *percent* that are not covered in Ahmad, *et al.* (2005, 2006).

In the following, the findings of the two-word concgram *increased/HK\$* in the discourse (sub-corpus) of public relations in the CCAR are presented and discussed to understand the local grammar of the language of movement in financial settings and; above all, to demonstrate the way in which local grammars of phraseologies usefully combine the form, meaning and function of language.

Concordance analysis of *increased/HK\$* shows that in all the 53 instances, the symbol ‘\$’ always co-occurs with *HK*, which is followed by a figure, to indicate a monetary unit, e.g., *HK\$3,278 million*, and so the study of *increased/HK* is actually the study of *increased/HK\$*. Among the 53 instances of *increased* and *HK\$*, 34 are found to be associated with each other.

The 34 word co-selections occur in 23 concordance lines, with *increased* co-selected with a single occurrence of *HK\$* in 12 instances in the form of ‘increased ... HK\$’, e.g. ‘Group turnover for 2009 **increased** by 10% to **HK\$**17,553 million on account of strong recurrent rental income’ (line 12), and with two occurrences of *HK\$* 11 times in the form of ‘increased ...

HK\$... HK\$', e.g. ‘Division **increased** by **HK\$4,638** million to **HK\$21,654** million at 31st December 2009’ (line 3).

The local grammar of two variants of *increased/HK\$* are discussed below (Tables 3 and 4):

Table 3. Local grammar of ‘increased ... HK\$’

	n	v	prep	num	prep	num			Freq
	colli; sempre; sempro	core	collo; colli	colli	colli	core	colli	collo; colli	
1	the thing that moves	movement	hinge	percentage of movement	hinge	amount after movement			6
	<i>Group turnover for 2009</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>10%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>17,553</i>	<i>million</i>	
	<i>profit before tax</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>7.1%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>5,915</i>	<i>million</i>	
	<i>total operating expenses</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>38.4%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>12,141</i>	<i>million</i>	
	<i>total equity</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>21.7%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>39,523</i>	<i>million</i>	
	<i>EBIT</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>30%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>5,692</i>	<i>million</i>	
	<i>net rental income</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>21 per cent</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>7,271</i>	<i>million</i>	
2	the thing that moves	movement		percentage of movement	hinge	amount after movement			2
	<i>profit attributable to equity holders</i>	<i>increased</i>		<i>14.8%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>547.3</i>	<i>million</i>	
	<i>profit attributable to shareholders</i>	<i>increased</i>		<i>103%</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>million</i>	

Table 4. Local grammar of ‘increased ... HK\$... HK\$’

	n	v	prep	num			adv	prep	num			adv	Freq
	colli; sempre; sempro	core	collo; colli	core	colli	collo; colli	colli	collo; colli	core	colli	collo; colli	collo; colli	
1	the thing that moves	movement	hinge	amount of movement				hinge	amount after movement			period of movement	3

	<i>net assets employed by the Aviation Division</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>4,638</i>	<i>million</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>21,654</i>	<i>million</i>	<i>at 31st December 2009</i>	
	<i>net assets employed by the Beverages Division</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>530</i>	<i>million</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>4,573</i>	<i>million</i>	<i>at 31st December 2009</i>	
	<i>net assets employed by the Marine Services Division</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>452</i>	<i>million</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>7,882</i>	<i>million</i>	<i>at 31st December 2009</i>	
2		<i>move-ment</i>	<i>hinge</i>	<i>amount of movement</i>				<i>hinge</i>	<i>amount after movement</i>				2
		<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>3,237</i>	<i>million</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>8,475</i>	<i>million</i>		2
3	<i>the thing that moves</i>	<i>movement</i>	<i>hinge</i>	<i>amount of movement</i>			<i>period of move-ment</i>	<i>hinge</i>	<i>amount after movement</i>				2
	<i>net debt</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>1,235</i>	<i>million</i>	<i>during the year</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>31,681</i>	<i>million</i>		
	<i>the Group's total net assets employed</i>	<i>increased</i>	<i>by</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>18,396</i>	<i>million</i>	<i>during 2009</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>HK\$</i>	<i>185,030</i>	<i>million</i>		

Table 3 shows two grammatical patterns of *increased ... HK\$* (N=8, 66.67%). Since each of the other 4 instances occurs once, it does not constitute a grammatical pattern. The word *increased* is the only word that conveys the meaning of movement in these two grammatical patterns. The two patterns are described below:

Pattern 1. the thing that moves + movement + hinge + percentage of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=6)

In the six instances of Pattern 1, the things that move are represented by six different phrases, namely ‘Group turnover for 2009’, ‘profit before tax’, ‘total operating expenses’, ‘total equity’,

‘EBIT’, and ‘net rental income’, e.g., ‘Net rental income increased by 21 per cent to HK\$7,272 million’ (line 24). The movement and hinge are represented by ‘increased’ and ‘by’ respectively. In this pattern, two amounts are involved: ‘the percentage of movement’ and ‘the amount after movement’. Five out of six ‘percentages of movement’ are in the form of ‘number + the symbol %’, such as ‘7.1%’, with only one exception which is in the form of ‘number + per cent’, as in ‘Net rental income increased by 21 per cent to HK\$7,271 million’ (line 24). The ‘amount after movement’, which is in the form of ‘HK\$ + number + million’, is connected by the hinge ‘to’ with the ‘percentage of movement’, e.g., ‘Total equity increased by 21.7% to HK\$39,523 million’ (line 23).

Pattern 2. the thing that moves + movement + percentage of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=2)

The only difference between Pattern 2 and Pattern 1 is that in Pattern 2, the movement word *increased* is connected with the percentage of movement directly, rather than by the hinge ‘by’ as in Pattern 1, e.g., ‘Profit attributable to equity holders increased 14.8% to HK\$547.3 million’ (line 30). The things that move in Pattern 2 are ‘profit attributable to equity holders’ and ‘profit attributable to shareholders’, and the percentages of movement are both in the form of number + %, e.g., ‘profit attributable to share holders increased 103% to HK\$468 million’ (line 11).

As shown in Table 4, seven instances of *increased ... HK\$... HK\$* can be categorised into one of the three grammatical patterns (63.64%). Since each of the other 4 instances occurs once, it does not constitute a grammatical pattern. The word *increased* is the only word that conveys the

meaning of movement across the three patterns.

Pattern 1. the thing that moves + movement + hinge + amount of movement + hinge + amount after movement + period of movement (N=3)

The things that move in these three instances are represented by ‘net assets employed by the Aviation Division’, ‘net assets employed by the Beverage Division’, and ‘net assets employed by the Marine Service Division’. Movement is represented by ‘increased’; hinges by ‘by’ and ‘to’, and period of movement by ‘at 31st December 2009’. The differences are in the amount of movement and amount after movement, which are in the same form of *HK\$ + number + million* but with different numbers, e.g., ‘Net assets employed by the Aviation Division increased by HK\$4,638 million to HK\$21,654 million at 31st December 2009’ (line 3).

Pattern 2. movement + hinge + amount of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=2)

In Pattern 2, the thing that moves does not appear in the concordance line, possibly due to the long insertions as compared to the limited length of the concordance lines, e.g., ‘which primarily adjusts for changes in property valuations and the associated deferred tax, increased by HK\$3,237 million to HK\$8,475 million’ (line 6).

Pattern 3. the thing that moves + movement + hinge + amount of movement + period of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=2)

In Pattern 3, the things that move are ‘net debt and the Group’s total net assets employed’. The movement *increased* is connected with the amount of movement in the form of ‘HK\$ + number

+ million' by the hinge 'by'. The amount of movement is followed by period of movement, represented by 'during the year' and 'during 2009' to specify when the movement occurred. The period of movement is connected with the amount after movement in the form of 'HK\$ + number + million' by the hinge 'to', e.g., 'Despite strong operating cash flows, net debt increased by HK\$1,235 million during the year to HK\$31,681 million' (line 8).

Since no word is always co-selected with *increased* and *HK\$*, *increased* and *HK\$* are the core words of the phrase.

Analysis of semantic preference shows that the two-word concgram *increased/HK\$* has the semantic preferences of 'profit and income' (70%) and 'assets' (30%), based on analysis of associated words and phrases observed in the things that move.

The semantic preference of 'profit and income' was observed from associated phrases such as 'net rental income' (N=2), 'profit attributable to shareholders' (N=2), and 'earnings per share', e.g., 'Net rental income increased by 21 per cent to HK\$7,271 million' (line 24) and 'Profit attributable to shareholders and earnings per share increased 12% to HK\$14,168 million and HK\$3.32 respectively' (line 17). All these words and phrases are associated with profit and income. They all occur at the N- position of the core words *increased* and *HK\$*.

The expressions associated with the semantic preference of 'assets' fall into two groups, 'use of assets' (66.67%) and 'ownership of assets' (33.33%). The group of 'use of assets' refers to the assets employed by the corporation or a certain division for profit-making, such as 'net assets employed by the Aviation Division', 'net assets employed by the Beverages Division', and 'the Group's total net assets employed', e.g., 'Net assets employed by the Aviation Division increased by HK\$4,638 million to HK\$21,654 million at 31st December 2009' (line 3). This

group constitutes 66.67% of the expressions associated with the semantic preference of ‘assets’. The second group of associated phrases refers to the assets owned by the corporation (33.33%). They are ‘total assets’ and ‘total equity’, e.g. ‘Total assets increased by HK\$63.8 billion, or 8.4 per cent, to HK\$826 billion’ (line 1).

Analysis of the semantic prosody of the two-word conogram *increased/HK\$* shows that the conogram has two semantic prosodies, namely ‘improved’ (76%) and ‘active’ (24%).

The semantic prosody of ‘improved’ is mainly identified from the co-selection of *increased* and the words and phrases associated with the semantic preference of ‘profit and income’, such as ‘profit attributable to shareholders and earnings per share’, e.g., ‘Profit attributable to shareholders and earnings per share increased 12% to HK\$14,168 million and HK\$3.32 respectively’ (line 32). These words and phrases account for 73.68% of all the words and phrases associated with the semantic prosody of ‘improved’. The co-selection of *increased* and ‘total equity’ and ‘total assets’ is also considered to express the semantic prosody of ‘improved’, e.g. ‘Total equity increased by 21.7% to HK\$39,523 million’ (line 23).

Three other expressions reflect the semantic prosody of ‘improved’ more directly. They are ‘recorded improved results’, ‘continued improvement in the division’s cost structure’, and ‘the deposit mix also improved’, e.g., ‘operations recorded improved results compared to last year and profit attributable to shareholders increased 103% to HK\$468 million’ (line 11).

The second semantic prosody ‘active’ is mainly identified from the co-selection of *increased* and the first group of the expressions associated with the semantic preference of ‘assets’, i.e. the expressions indicating ‘the use of assets’ for profit-making, such as ‘net assets employed by the Aviation Division’, and ‘the Group’s total net assets employed’, e.g., ‘The

Group's total net assets employed increased by HK\$18,396 million during 2009 to HK\$185,030 million' (line 9). The increase reflects that 'the use of assets' by the corporation or certain divisions for profit-making is 'active'. These phrases account for 66.67% of all the phrases associated with the semantic prosody of 'active'. Other associated phrases are 'strong operating cash flows' and 'net debt', as in 'Despite strong operating cash flows, net debt increased by HK\$1,235 million during the year to HK\$31,681 million' (line 8). After this concordance line, the writer further explains that the debt was used for the acquisition of additional interests and investments in property projects and new vessels. In this way, the increase in 'net debt' and 'strong operating cash flows' both reflect the active investment of the corporation.

The above analysis has followed Sinclair's (2010) approach to analysing local grammar by adopting the descriptive model of five categories of co-selection of a lexical item. Five grammatical patterns have been identified from the 34 instances of co-selection of *increased* and *HK\$* in 23 concordance lines in the subcorpus of public relations of the CCAR, as follows:

Two grammatical patterns of *increased ... HK\$* (N=8, 66.67%) (see Table 3):

Pattern 1. the thing that moves + movement + hinge + percentage of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=6)

Pattern 2. the thing that moves + movement + percentage of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=2)

Three grammatical patterns of *increased ... HK\$... HK\$* (N=7, 63.64%) (see Table 4):

Pattern 1. the thing that moves + movement + hinge + amount of movement + hinge + amount after movement + period of movement (N=3)

Pattern 2. movement + hinge + amount of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=2)

Pattern 3. the thing that moves + movement + hinge + amount of movement + period of movement + hinge + amount after movement (N=2)

Specific functional terms including the thing that moves, movement, hinge, amount of movement, amount after movement, percentage of movement, and period of movement are used in the description of grammatical patterns. In the majority of cases, these specific functional terms apply to all the patterns. Variation in the patterns is found in the sequence of the constituent lexical and grammatical units. The 2-word concgram *increased/HK\$*, as a lexical item (Sinclair, 1996, 2004), has been found to be co-selected with specific collocational and colligational patterns that together express the semantic preferences of profit and income and assets and semantic prosodies of improved and active. The analysis of the local grammar of the two-word concgram *increased/HK\$* indicates, with the use of the language of movement (going up), the writers' desire to establish a positive image of the company. The meanings created in *increased/HK\$* are that the company has achieved improvements in the profit and income, and the company has invested and used the assets actively for profit-making. In public relations discourse, in the form of the chairman's letter to shareholders, the writers try to "promote a positive image of the company to its shareholders and other stakeholders in order to sustain their confidence in future corporate performance" (Bhatia, 2010: 43).

4. Conclusions

By using the example of *increased/HK\$*, this paper has illustrated how the local grammars of the phraseologies of movement in financial settings were studied and findings discussed. A major conclusion from the analysis is that the studies of local grammars of phraseologies can usefully combine the form, meaning and function of language, making valuable contribution to the language study and language description of subsets of language rather than the language as a whole (Gross, 1993). Being focused and specific, local grammars can describe “the language features of specific language patterns or specific kinds of language use” (Cheng, 2012: 215), in a more simple, more precise, and more useful manner (Hunston & Sinclair, 2000), underscoring the relation between grammatical patterns and meanings and functions.

By exploring the local grammar of the language of movement in the public relations discourse incorporating the model of five categories of co-selection of a lexical item, the current study makes a more thorough description of the local grammars of lexical items/phraseologies in the CCAR, and thus enabling identification of various discourse-specific communicative purposes and extended units of meaning in business and professional communication.

The main study explores and compares the local grammars of phraseologies of movement across the five types of discourses (accounting discourse, discourse of economics, public relations discourse, legal discourse, and corporate governance discourse) (Bhatia, 2010) in the annual reports of 18 companies listed in the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong. It examines and compares four different types of movement, namely going up, going down, unspecified movement, and no change, across the five discourses in company annual reports. By studying the extended units of meaning of certain phraseologies, the study is able to identify and describe

their local grammars and fuller and more specific descriptions. Findings will have useful and important implications for teaching and learning in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and professional communication, particularly in the writing of instructional materials and classroom activities and in organizing seminars for practitioners in the financial services industry. The methodology can also be replicated in the study of the local grammars of subsets of language in other genres in other contexts.

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Development of students' ESP competence in the hotel industry

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Abstract

This study explored the self-perceived English proficiency of university students in hotel-related fields in order to examine if technology and vocational university students feel that they are able to meet the high demand for English when starting their careers in the hospitality industry. In comparing the self-perceived English proficiency of hospitality students with that of hotel employees in Taiwan, we found that discrepancies exist between the perceptions of English proficiency between students and industry personnel, which suggests a need for the revision of ESP courses to better prepare students to access their target workplace, the innovations of

teaching materials and assessments, and the collaboration between industry and education institutes.

Keywords: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Hotel English, language skills,

1. Introduction

Different methods and strategies have been adopted to facilitate internationalization in higher education. One of the goals set by most universities in Taiwan is to enhance interaction and academic exchanges with foreign countries and increase students' global competitiveness. To adjust to this trend of globalization, 45 percent of corporations in Taiwan now list English language proficiency as a basic requirement when recruiting employees (Tsou, 2008). Under these circumstances, traditional English education in universities, which has tended to concentrate on basic language learning and assist students in developing the four main skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) is not sufficient for preparing students for work in their respective fields. In other words, English language learning should not only focus on language, but should be combined with the learning of professional abilities (C. M. Chen, 2008).

Currently in Taiwan freshman English courses in universities play a key role, and oftentimes even the only role, in enhancing students' English language abilities. For most university students, their only chance to study English in a classroom setting takes place when students take required English courses in the first or second year of university. Chang (2007) suggests that the goal of a domestic English education policy should be life-long learning that embraces working, learning, and everyday living so that all citizens develop communication skills to increase participation in international affairs, and conquer the challenges of

internationalization and globalization. Chen (2007) calls for a new conception of the frame of English language instruction, since employers currently favor candidates with language proficiency over those with professional training. He believes that English teaching in universities should not focus merely on correct language usage; instead, teaching methods should be geared towards necessity and practicability. Cianflone and Coppolino (2009) are also of the view that the integration of language acquisition and content knowledge increases students' motivation because students realize how the discourses pertaining to their field of specialization are organized in the target foreign language.

Focusing on students in hotel departments and hotel employees in Taiwan, a number of recent studies have initiated an exploration of ESP training for hotel employees and how they perceive their English use in their workplace (e.g. W.-Y. Chang, 2009; Shieh, 2012). Shieh's (2012) survey findings showed that hotel employees tend to rate reading and writing skills as being of lower importance, indicating their negative self-satisfaction levels for these two skills, and suggest that the survey can help determine the criteria needed to improve hotel employees' language skills. As a result of investigating the written texts in the brochures of the hospitality industry, Yang (2012) suggests some curricular changes for genre-based instructions in ESP writing courses. However, though these studies have begun investigating the views of employees in the industry, they have not examined the students' perspectives to see if there are any gaps in the perceptions of students and employees.

The present study aims to determine the level of English proficiency that students of technology and vocational universities, particularly students of hospitality and tourism, should acquire by the time they graduate. The research question is: With the Hotel English course aiming to develop students the language competency necessary for working in a hotel as an entry

level staff through speaking, reading, and class discussions and presentations, can technology and vocational university students meet the high standards for foreign language—in particular English language—proficiency required of them when starting their careers in the hospitality industry? This study compared the self-perceived English proficiency of university students in hotel-related fields, who have taken the Hotel English course, and entry-level hotel employees in Taiwan to investigate if there are any major gaps between the English proficiency of the fourth year students and the employees.

2. Literature review

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been the subject of increasing attention in recent years. The goal of ESP is to assist students in acquiring and applying English in actual academic, business, and professional situations (Al-Mumaidi, 2009; Dudley-Evans & John, 1998). ESP spans multiple fields and professions such as Business English, Tourism English, Legal English, and Hospitality English. Basturkmen (2006) indicated that among the objectives of teaching ESP are revealing subject-specific language use and developing target performance competencies. She summarizes ESP courses in terms of two trends. The first one strives to help students gain access to their target workplace, academic, or professional environments. By doing so, it is believed that learners can become socially and psychologically integrated into their target discourse community and can thus learn the necessary subject-specific language. The other is that ESP courses attempt to create an optimal linguistic environment by giving learners sufficient input in the form of exposure to the target specialist language, as well as opportunities for student interaction using this language (Basturkmen, 2006).

Some studies have been conducted to evaluate the language competence and needs of employees in the hospitality industry on the international level. For instance, Luka (2008) evaluated the English language model in the development of tourism specialists' ESP competence in Latvia. The author determined specific ESP competence criteria and developed indicators of language use for professional duties (indicators: mutual oral communication, understanding of a specialized professional text, business correspondence), professional thinking (indicators: cooperation and creativity) and intercultural communication abilities (indicators: openness and understanding). In Japan, Iwai (2010) conducted two surveys to analyze English language requirements in the hotel industry. The first survey involved 153 responses obtained from questionnaires distributed to 308 member hotels of the Japan Hotel Association. Results show that only 47 hotels were currently practicing English education. Iwai (2010) also found that most of the language courses provided consist mainly of basic English to improve the quality of service for foreign guests. The difficulties related to such training are learners' low motivation, high costs, and the respondents' unfamiliarity with ESP. Iwai's (2010) second study which surveyed 55 subjects from two hotels where English training was offered found that speaking and listening were used more frequently in face-to-face interactions, but that many respondents had difficulty expressing themselves in English. In addition, many respondents were motivated to learn materials related to their job, and wished to focus on speaking and listening. In other words, ESP materials were preferred to general English materials (Iwai, 2010).

Various studies have examined the language skills and attitudes of students majoring in hospitality-related subjects, evaluating the language use in the workplace and proposing suggestions to solve linguistic problems. For example, Martin and Davies (2006), examining the language skills of Scottish hotel staff, suggested that hotel staff should be offered referenced lists

of key messages in foreign languages and should learn how to read these messages. Likewise, Brunton (2009a) examined hotel employees' attitudes towards general and specific English instructions during an eight-week course. Ten participants from five-star hotels were involved in the study, which tracked participants from the pre-course training needs analysis to the post-course training evaluation. The results of the students' perceived needs analysis fully supported integrating a general English component into an ESP course. More specifically, the participants expressed a desire to study topics outside of the hotel setting and to be able to speak about themselves as individuals; this is likely because the participants considered hotel English to be important for their present lives and jobs, but viewed general English as important for their daily life and their ability to express themselves more effectively (Brunton, 2009a).

Other studies have been conducted on the education and training of hotel and catering students. O'Gorman (2007), for example, proposed that hospitality was not a subject matter that can be covered by objective knowledge, but was rather an attitude of generosity towards guests. Spowart's (2006) study examined students' experiences of work-integrated learning and explored the question of what educators can do to better prepare students for work-integrated learning. She suggested that students should be informed earlier about the information contained in the assigned unit, and should be allowed to express their opinions on the assignment. In terms of methods of training hospitality students' language skills, Dawson, Neal, and Madera (2011), for example, conducted a laboratory session with a scripted scenario, allowing students to assume the perspective of non-English-speaking individuals in an English-dominated workplace. From this demonstration, students learned that gestures, along with other non-verbal forms of communication, were important in cross-cultural communication. Through role-playing scenarios, students could adopt the perspectives of non-English-speaking individuals (Dawson,

Neal, and Madera, 2011).

Some studies have been conducted on the possible gap between expectations among students, recruiters, and industry personnel. For instance, Raybould and Wilkins (2006) investigated the degree of realism in undergraduate hospitality management students' perceptions of the skills expected in the workplace. They observed that, in general, the students' perceptions were realistic, but still recommended early communication within the program to assist students in setting realistic goals and prepare them with the best tools to pursue a successful career. Ersoy's Raybould and Wilkins' findings are echoed by Ersoy (2010) who reported that the expectations of students and industry tend to be similar and interrelated. Kuppan (2008) investigated the language needs of hospitality management students to determine whether the English for Hospitality Purpose (EHP) course met the actual needs of the hospitality industry. The findings revealed three minor weaknesses in the course, namely course content, usage of materials, and teaching methodology. It was found that, beyond speaking skills, there was a gap between the skills taught in the course and the skills required in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, the students lacked confidence when using the language, even after completing the EHP course. Kuppan's (2008) findings therefore indicated the need to revise some aspects of the course based on the current needs of the students, as well as the needs of the industry.

Though some studies suggest that students and industry may share consistent expectations of students' skills for the workplace, other studies have contradicted these results. Staton-Reynolds, Ryan, and Scott-Halsell (2009) examined whether there were discrepancies between recruiters' and educators' emphasis on the skills required for the catering workplace. They suggested that recruiters may focus on equipping individuals with less tangible skills and

incorporating the various skills into a generalized manager requirement, while educators may focus more on technical skills. Their study thus proposed that post-secondary education should go beyond the knowledge of technical skills and evaluate alternative methods of preparing students for a career in hospitality.

Similarly, Yuan, Houston, and Cai (2006) studied the differences in expectations among hospitality managers, recruiters, and students, but their focus was mainly placed on the students' language skills. The study found that managers valued some attributes more highly than students and recruiters did. For instance, managers value foreign language ability more highly than do students and recruiters. This indicates a discrepancy in the perceptions, and a lack of effective communication among managers, students, and recruiters. Likewise, Mohd Noor's (2008) research, focusing on the linguistic needs of hotel and catering students, suggested that there may be significant discrepancies between the perceptions of students and the responses of industry personnel, especially regarding the importance of speaking and listening. In addition, Lam, Cheng, and Kong's (2014) study looked at the frequency of occurrence of different types of workplace discourse genres in instruction materials and in actual professional settings based on the findings of Evans (2010). Their findings reported that there were gaps between the teaching materials and the professional settings, namely the over-emphasis on complaint-related genres and the poor quality of business meetings and emails presented in the teaching materials. These studies thus contradicted the results of Raybould and Wilkins' (2006) and Ersoy's (2010) research, and further proposed a need for the renovation of current program frameworks alongside integrated communication between industry, educators, and recruiters.

Several studies on the language use of the hospitality industry have been conducted in Taiwan. Shieh (2012) explored hotel employees' perceptions of their language needs. Her survey

study, involving 652 international hotel staff in Taiwan, found that they have a higher self-assessment and perception of the importance of listening and speaking skills, but lower regarding reading and writing. Chang (2009) investigated the perception of Taiwanese hotel employers and employees toward ESP programs. She suggested that other than language needs, there may be two potential needs for employees' language achievements: instructors' knowledge of technology and employees' learning motivation. Comparing the brochures of UK hotels with the writing of Taiwanese students, Yang (2012) found that the vocabulary that students adopted were different from those of the authentic texts, and further highlighted the importance of instruction in the keywords and context of the genre in writing lessons. Chang and Hsu (2010), who explored the development framework for tourism and hospitality in higher vocational education in Taiwan, suggested that four determinants should be emphasized simultaneously in the developmental framework for tourism and hospitality studies in higher vocational education. They were administration and management, service and resource acquisition, teaching and HR fostering, and academic research and development. In a qualitative study on the relationships of ESP and the job positions of the hotel employees in Taiwan, Lin, Wu, and Huang (2013) found the relationship between learning styles, ESP, and language proficiency to be statistically significant, and thus suggesting that English and ESP are important.

3. Methodology

This study sets out to compare the self-perceived English proficiency of university students in hotel-related fields, who have taken Hotel English course, and entry-level hotel employees in Taiwan to investigate if there are any major gaps between the English proficiency of the fourth

year students and the employees. First, industrial and academic experts were invited to design a questionnaire on perceived English proficiency based on the four language skills for hospitality students. A total of six experts were invited; three were managers in hotels and three were English teachers at universities. They worked collaboratively to develop the questionnaire to include tasks that hotel employees are expected to perform in English.

The questionnaire was divided into four parts according to the language skills: listening (exploring abilities to understand conversations between customers and colleagues), speaking (inquiring the abilities to explain, discussion, and introduce), reading (investigating the abilities to read duty diaries, reports, letters, and contracts), and writing (examining the abilities to write duty diaries, reports, letters, and contracts). Each part contained 10, 19, 12, and 11 items, respectively.

126 fourth year students majoring in hotel-related departments from three universities in Taiwan answered the questionnaire. They had taken Hotel English in the first or second year of study. This course aimed to enhance students' abilities to converse in English accurately in hotel environments and confidently deal with hotel customers in diverse roles. Teachers usually followed one textbook which covers topics such as dealing with calls (reservations and enquiries), welcoming guests, dealing with check-in problems, dealing with complaints, meeting customer needs, and health, safety and security. Activities like conversations, listening practice and role plays were adopted. Students were evaluated by midterm and final written and oral examination.

With respect to the 20 hotel employees involved in the survey, they answered the same questionnaire as students, and had a 100% response rate. They worked in three five-star hotels in

Taiwan. 30% of them were female and 70% male. Regarding their working experiences, 26% of the subjects have less than 5 years of working experiences and 74% have 5-10 years of working experiences. 40% of them graduated from hospitality-related departments.

4. Results and discussions

The results are presented in Table 1 which shows mean values and standard deviations. T values which measure the statistical significance for the two groups of subjects are reported in the texts. For each item, the mean and standard deviations columns are divided into two, with the left representing the students and the right representing the employees. For Part 1, ten items related to “listening ability in hotel-related English” were included. The means were 3.27 and 4.04 for students and employees respectively, resulting in a highly significant difference ($T=-4.166$, $p < 0.000$). In Part 2, “speaking abilities in hotel-related English”, nineteen items were included; the means were 2.98 and 3.78 for students and employees respectively, showing a highly significant difference ($p < 0.000$). For Part 3, “reading abilities in hotel-related English”, which contained twelve items, the students somewhat agreed (mean = 3.24) and the employees mostly agreed (mean = 3.96), leading to a highly significant T-value of -4.061 ($p = 0.000$). Eleven items were included in Part 4, “writing abilities in hotel-related English”, with the students generally close to neutral or somewhat disagreeing on these items (mean = 2.72), and employees somewhat agreeing (mean = 3.42); the T-value of this section showed a significant difference ($T = -2.919$, $p = 0.008$).

Generally speaking, the employees had higher mean values than the students for all 52 items. It can thus be inferred that the hotel employees are more confident than the students in all

four English-language skills when it comes to working in hotels. The student group was more comfortable with their listening and reading skills than speaking and writing. They had mean values of three or above for all items in the listening part and all but three items in the reading part: the latter three each had to do with professional business documents. As for the other two sections, in speaking, the students had mean values lower than three for almost half (nine out of twenty) of the items; for writing, only two items out of eleven showed mean values over three. The students have the lowest level of confidence in the writing aspect of hotel English. The hotel employees also had the lowest mean values in the writing section with all items falling below four, as opposed to the other three sections, where average values were consistently closer to four. The mean values for listening, speaking, and reading were generally higher, with listening and reading slightly higher than speaking. This indicates that for the writing part, the difference in abilities between the two groups might not be as large as the other three parts.

	Students		Employees		T
	M	SD	M	SD	
Part 1 : “Listening” abilities in hotel-related English					-4.166 (.000)
1. I understand when customers make reservations and check out in English.	3.49	.892	4.10	.912	-2.823** (.005)
2. I understand the customers’ needs when they call the front desk and speak English.	3.37	.917	4.15	.745	- 4.229*** (.000)
3. I understand the customers’ inquiries in English.	3.25	.952	3.95	.945	-3.074** (.003)
4. I understand the customers’ complaints in English.	3.24	.950	3.90	.912	-2.909** (.004)
5. I can understand product introductions made by my supervisors in English.	2.97	.963	3.90	1.071	- 3.959*** (.000)
6. I can understand English dialogues between colleagues.	3.44	.881	4.15	.875	-3.368** (.001)
7. I can understand my supervisor’s orders and demands in English.	3.21	.917	4.10	.968	- 3.981*** (.000)

	Students		Employees		T
8. I can understand my colleagues' comments in English.	3.41	.822	4.15	.813	- 3.730*** (.000)
9. I can understand when co-workers from other departments communicate to me in English.	3.28	.882	4.05	1.050	-3.541** (.001)
10. I can understand when customers ask questions regarding the bills in English.	3.07	.989	3.95	.826	- 4.295*** (.000)
Part 2 : "Speaking" abilities in hotel-related English					- 4.410*** (.000)
11. I can explain room assignments to group customers in English.	3.06	.915	4.05	.759	- 4.612*** (.000)
12. I can explain the time and place of the next day's breakfast to customers in English.	3.50	.856	4.20	.696	- 4.040*** (.000)
13. I can offer information to customers in English.	3.22	.954	3.95	.999	-3.149** (.002)
14. I can deal with customer complaints when speaking English.	2.90	.975	3.75	1.070	-3.554** (.001)
15. I can discuss business affairs in English.	2.49	.883	3.55	1.099	- 4.806*** (.000)
16. I can introduce facilities in the hotel to customers in English.	3.25	.977	4.00	.918	-3.231** (.002)
17. I can communicate with colleagues in English.	3.10	.928	3.75	1.070	-2.835** (.005)
18. I can report business matters to my supervisors in English.	2.90	.954	3.70	1.031	-3.461** (.001)
19. I can introduce the hotel's promotion plans to customers in English.	2.90	.987	3.50	1.051	-2.518* (.013)
20. I can make business presentations in English.	2.56	.960	3.40	1.095	- 3.585*** (.000)
21. I can express my feelings and opinions to my supervisors in English.	3.02	.934	3.85	.988	- 3.648*** (.000)
22. I can communicate with workers in other departments in English.	3.03	.946	3.85	1.137	-3.493** (.001)
23. I can confirm room contracts with group customers in English.	2.73	.933	3.65	1.040	- 4.032*** (.000)
24. I can introduce the local sightseeing activities and transit system in English.	3.15	1.028	3.60	1.046	-1.811
25. I can explain safety procedures in English.	2.85	.956	3.65	.933	-3.492** (.001)

	Students		Employees		T
26. I can give directions to the hotel in English.	3.46	.882	4.10	.718	-3.082** (.002)
27. I can explain the contents of the invoice to my customers in English.	3.09	.984	3.90	.912	-3.459** (.001)
28. I can explain the currency exchange rates in English.	2.83	.930	3.85	.933	- 4.574*** (.000)
29. I can promote premium products and raise the company's income using English.	2.85	.880	3.50	1.100	- 4.195*** (.000)
Part 3 : "Reading" abilities in hotel-related English					- 4.061*** (.000)
30. I can read English duty diaries.	3.33	.930	4.05	.759	-3.794** (.001)
31. I can read English accident reports.	3.05	.945	4.00	.795	- 4.269*** (.000)
32. I can read customer feedback in English.	3.48	.883	4.05	.759	-3.067** (.005)
33. I can read letters and e-mails in English.	3.33	.930	3.95	.826	-2.795** (.006)
34. I can read meeting records in English.	2.97	.920	3.80	1.005	- 3.708*** (.000)
35. I can read schedules in English.	3.33	.858	4.05	.686	- 4.180*** (.000)
36. I can read product sales plans in English.	2.90	.884	3.70	1.081	- 3.657*** (.000)
37. I can read standard business procedures in English.	3.33	.921	3.95	.826	-2.819** (.005)
38. I can read message notes in English.	3.47	.846	4.05	.826	-2.867** (.005)
39. I can read the room contracts of group customers in English.	2.94	.978	3.70	1.081	-3.198** (.002)
40. I can read floor directions in English.	3.69	.753	4.25	.550	-3.186** (.002)
41. I can read data in English and make files.	3.12	.917	3.95	.999	- 3.718*** (.000)
Part 4 : "Writing" abilities in hotel-related English					- -2.919** (.008)
42. I can write duty diaries in English.	2.68	1.001	3.65	1.089	- 3.967*** (.000)
43. I can write accident reports in English.	2.56	.917	3.45	1.191	-3.211**

	Students		Employees		T
					(.004)
44. I can respond to customer feedback in English.	2.67	.938	3.45	1.191	-2.806* (.010)
45. I can write letters and e-mails in English.	2.80	.963	3.50	1.192	-2.911** (.004)
46. I can write meeting records in English.	2.45	.873	3.25	1.251	-2.747* (.012)
47. I can write product sales plans in English.	2.39	.839	3.05	1.234	-2.312* (.031)
48. I can make standard business procedures in English.	2.61	.912	3.10	1.252	-1.677
49. I can correctly leave message notes in English.	3.05	1.003	3.50	1.192	-1.825
50. I can make changes in reservation for my customers in English.	2.85	.980	3.80	1.105	- 3.959*** (.000)
51. I can set up morning calls in English.	3.21	1.063	3.90	1.021	-2.694* (.008)
52. I can make tourist guides for my customers in English.	2.65	.935	3.10	1.294	-1.501

Examining the items in more detail reveals a number of noteworthy points. For five out of the ten items in Part 1, “listening abilities in hotel English”, the results were highly significant regarding the differences in perceptions between students and employees; for the other five items, the results were also significant. Students’ and employees’ beliefs were highly significant factors in determining their different perceptions of English listening abilities with respect to understanding customers’ needs (T=-4.229, p=0.000), supervisors’ English introduction (T=-3.959, p=0.000), supervisors’ English orders and demands (T=-3.981, p=0.000), colleagues’ English comments (T=-3.730, p= 0.000), and customers’ questions in English regarding hotel bills (T=-4.295, p=0.000). In terms of the perceptions of understanding customers’ reservations and check-outs in English (T=-2.823, p=0.005), customers’ English inquiries (T=-3.074, p=0.003), customers’ English complaints (T=-2.909, p=0.004), English dialogues between colleagues (T=-3.368, p=0.001), and conversations in English with co-workers from other

departments ($T=-3.541$, $p=0.001$), the results are statistically significantly different.

Of the nineteen items in Part 2, “speaking abilities in hotel English”, eight items showed highly significant differences between the abilities of students and employees, including explanation of room assignments to group customers in English ($T = -4.612$, $p = 0.000$), explanation of the time and place of the next day’s breakfast to customers in English ($T = -4.040$, $p = 0.000$), English discussion of business affairs ($T = -4.806$, $p = 0.000$), English business presentations ($T = -3.585$, $p = 0.000$), expression of feelings and opinions to supervisors in English ($T = -3.648$, $p = 0.000$), confirmation of room contracts with group customers in English ($T = -3.648$, $p = 0.000$), explanation of the currency exchange rates in English ($T = -4.574$, $p = 0.000$), and promotion of premium products to raise the company’s income in English ($T = -4.195$, $p = 0.000$). Furthermore, an additional nine items showed significant differences, namely the abilities to use English to offer information to customers ($T = -3.149$, $p = 0.002$), deal with customer complaints ($T = -3.554$, $p = 0.001$), introduce facilities in the hotel to customers ($T = -3.231$, $p = 0.002$), communicate with colleagues ($T = -2.835$, $p = 0.005$), report business matters to supervisors ($T = -3.461$, $p = 0.001$), communicate with workers in other departments ($T = -3.493$, $p = 0.001$), explain safety procedures ($T = -3.492$, $p = 0.001$), give directions to the hotel ($T = -3.082$, $p = 0.002$), and explain the contents of an invoice to customers ($T = -3.459$, $p = 0.001$). The ability to introduce the hotel’s promotion plans to customers showed somewhat significant differences between students and employees ($T = -2.518$, $p = 0.013$), and the capability to introduce the local sightseeing activities and transit system in English showed no significance ($T = -1.811$).

Part 3 was concerned with respondents’ “reading abilities in hotel English”, and included twelve items. Among these twelve items, five were shown to be highly significantly different

between students' and employees' English reading abilities: accident reports ($T = -4.269$, $p = 0.000$), meeting records ($T = -3.708$, $p = 0.000$), schedules ($T = -4.180$, $p = 0.000$), product sales plans ($T = -3.657$, $p = 0.000$), and related data to make files ($T = -3.718$, $p = 0.000$). The other seven items showed significant differences in students' and employees' English reading abilities when reading various materials. These materials comprise duty diaries ($T = -3.794$, $p = 0.001$), customer feedback ($T = -3.067$, $p = 0.005$), letters and e-mails ($T = -2.795$, $p = 0.006$), standard business procedures ($T = -2.819$, $p = 0.005$), message notes ($T = -2.867$, $p = 0.005$), room contracts for group customers ($T = -3.198$, $p = 0.002$), and floor directions ($T = -3.186$, $p = 0.002$).

In examining respondents' writing abilities in hotel English, Part 4 contained eleven items. Highly significant differences in the writing ability between students and employees can be seen when writing duty diaries ($T = -3.967$, $p = 0.000$) and making changes to customer reservations ($T = -3.959$, $p = 0.000$). The composition of accident reports ($T = -3.211$, $p = 0.004$), and letters and e-mails ($T = -2.911$, $p = 0.004$) also showed significant differences. Four items were somewhat significant in highlighting the differences in the writing abilities of students and employees, namely responding to customer feedbacks ($T = -2.806$, $p = 0.010$), writing meeting records ($T = -2.747$, $p = 0.012$), writing product plan sales ($T = -2.312$, $p = 0.031$), and setting up morning calls ($T = -2.694$, $p = 0.008$). Other items, including writing standard business procedures ($T = -1.677$), correctly leaving message notes ($T = -1.825$), and making tourist guides for customers ($T = -1.501$) showed no significance.

For two language skills in particular, speaking and writing, both groups had lower means compared to the other two language skills. The students had considerably higher means in listening and reading than in speaking and writing, with writing being the lowest. Almost the

same can be said for the employee group, with the exception that their mean values were higher. The employee group had mean values close to four on most items for listening and reading, slightly lower means for speaking, and the lowest means in writing. Writing is thus proven to be perceived as being the hardest of the four skills for both groups of subjects.

The result shows that all the subjects were more confident in receptive skills (reading and listening) than productive skills (speaking and writing). Traditionally, reading and listening were more emphasized in most general English courses in secondary schools in Taiwan, probably because English is a foreign language here and therefore students have few opportunities to practice productive skills outside of classrooms. Thus teachers tended to stress and evaluate more on these two skills. Also, for university students, they take about four-to-eight hours of General English courses in their first or second year of university, where conversations and reading are emphasized (Tseng, 2014). Regarding the hotel English discussed in this study, most of the learning tasks enhanced students' oral communicative ability, while few writing tasks are included in the course. In addition, the assessments mainly test students' conversation and reading abilities while tending to ignore writing skills.

The above phenomena might result in the lower self-perception of writing ability which is consistent with findings observed in other studies in Taiwan (e.g. Lin, Wu, & Huang, 2013; Shieh, 2012) and aligns with Kuppen's (2008) and Mohd Noor's (2008) findings that there is a gap between the skills taught in courses and the skills required in the hospitality industry. For example, in Yang's (2012) investigation of the written texts in brochures of the hospitality industry and the writing of Taiwanese students, he suggested changes to the genre-based instruction in ESP writing courses to help students express hospitality information accurately in written form.

Moreover, detailed item analyses show that the student group seems to be least confident with tasks that have to do with product introductions and business sales plans. For the listening and speaking parts, they had the lowest mean values for understanding product introductions and reporting business affairs to supervisors. For reading and writing, the item for which they had the lowest mean values in both cases concerned business sales plans, i.e., how to read and write them. It may be the case that the students lack the confidence necessary to perform the above tasks, probably because they are not familiar with these particular documents or matters. We may infer that the topics and tasks included in most textbooks adopted in Taiwan lack components about product introductions and business sales plans. This echoes Lam, Cheng, and Kong's (2014) study comparing secondary school textbooks for workplace English and survey findings about English language needs and usage reported by practitioners in Hong Kong. Their findings show discrepancies between the workplace genres in English language textbooks and in actual business settings. As Cianflone and Coppolino (2009) suggested, language acquisition and content knowledge should be integrated to help students comprehend the discourses of the target industry. Spowart (2006), similarly, proposed that students should be instructed with work-integrated information. The results from the student survey thus support these views and may reflect the current lack of industry discourses taught in university courses in Taiwan; this in turn may lend more credence to the call for the cooperation between industry, educators, and recruiters (Mohd Noor, 2008; Staton-Reynolds, Ryan, and Scott-Halsell, 2009; Lam, Cheng and Kong, 2014).

Similar findings were also recorded for the employee group. The items regarding product introductions and sales plans also showed the lowest mean values. This is not surprising since Iwai's (2010) survey shows that only about 15% of the hotels conducted on-the-job training for

English; thus after starting their careers, the employees still find the same tasks difficult as they did as students. The genre knowledge for English writing may be sacrificed by educational institutes (Yang, 2012) and students might lack nuanced process knowledge relating to text production, distribution, and reception in professional contexts (Zhang, 2013). This calls for the attention of the hotel industry to provide on-the-job training to narrow the divide between the academy and the workplace.

However, our survey result that hotel employees had significantly higher self- perceived English competence than the students in all four language skills might imply that either the hotels recruit employees with better language competences or the working experiences facilitate the progress of the employees' language skills. Take listening as an example. Such items as understand customers' English inquiries, customers' English complaints, English dialogues between colleagues, and conversations in English with co-workers from other departments show significant differences. We may infer that even if some topics or tasks are included in the textbook, the contents can vary across contexts because each instance of human interaction must be handled in a specific manner by taking account of such contextual parameters as the role relationships, tasks, and industry-specific practices or concerns (Zhang, 2013). Thus, the hotel employees have the advantage of the real professional practices to improve their language skills

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This research explored the self-perceived English proficiency of university students in hotel-related fields and compares their perceived performance to that of hotel employees in order to determine whether the students perceive that they are learning and performing near or at the

same level as hotel employees. Results reveal that the hotel workers had higher averages in all items than the students. While the differences between the two groups vary from item to item, it can be observed that the gaps are larger for the tasks related to speaking and writing, whereas the hotel employees led by a slighter margin in terms of listening and reading. This can show that the students might have better prior knowledge or ability in listening and reading English when they first start working, and may need additional practice or training at university in order to make greater gains to approach professional levels of speaking and writing.

There are some pedagogical implications based on this study. First, echoing Basturkmen's (2006) view on the trends of ESP, the hotel-related courses should be revised to better prepare students to access their target workplace and create an optimal linguistic environment in the target specialist language. The students from hospitality-related departments should not only be given enough background knowledge about their target workplace and professional environments through their courses, but also be familiarized with how to handle business documents, presentations, and discourses which are found inadequate from the current Hotel English courses. In our context, productive language skills need considerable polish for certain topics and tasks that the hotel employees meet in their everyday contact with customers. Teachers can address these two skills more specifically in class.

Second, with the ongoing innovations in technology, the workplace has become a complicated communicative space, and thus students need to develop the ability to use the four skills together to multi-communicate in the workplace so as to be better prepared for the communication demands of today's workplace (Chang, 2009; Gimenez, 2014). Thus, technology-enhanced pedagogical tasks should be designed for the on-the-job English courses to promote hotel employees' motivation and equip them with adequate language abilities for their

careers. Instructional designers should involve practitioners and researchers when attempting to identify, document, and execute best practices for business and industry (Tracey, 2012). By so doing, the gaps between the current Hotel English courses and the real needs of the workplace can be bridged.

Third, the teaching materials, methods, and assessments should be designed based on the above course revisions. Teachers need to adopt appropriate materials and effective teaching methods, and make new and emerging communication technologies available to meet learners' needs and wants (Brunton, 2009b). For example, more work-integrated tasks involving business writing and presentation should be included. To achieve this goal, professional development for teachers plays a crucial role. Short-term industry internship, if possible, could be provided for teachers. In addition, workshops should be designed for teachers to exploit the methodology, integrating language learning and subject learning such as problem-solving techniques, case studies, and project work which are found effective for ESP courses (Dudley-evans & St John, 1998). Finally, teachers are suggested to balance oral and written components in the assessment to evaluate students' ability to use four skills for their target workplace genres.

Last but not least, collaboration between the hotel industry and education institutes regarding course revision and materials development is of great importance. Seminars could be organized for the hotel associations and ESP teachers. Both the industry and educational institutes can benefit through collaboration. On the one hand, the industry can gain more training for their staff members, improve their language skills and in turn provide better service to foreign customers. On the other hand, educational institutes can offer their students more professional knowledge and familiarize them with the discourse of the workplace.

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