The Role of the TOEFL Speaking Tasks
in Communicative Pre-university EAP Classes:
East Asian Students' and Teachers' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

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The oral communication demands of North American university classrooms can be challenging for non-native speaker students (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a). This is particularly true for East Asian learners who have usually had limited exposure to the type of oral interaction expected in English for academic purposes (EAP). The revised Test English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL®) includes a speaking component designed to reflect the oral communication needs for successful university study (ETS, 2005). Accordingly, it has been predicted that the TOEFL practice would have a positive impact on EAP oral skills development (Butler, Eignor, Jones, McNamara, & Suomi, 2000). This case study investigated this claim, by examining the responses of both East Asian students and their teachers to a set of TOEFL-type speaking tasks which were integrated into an existing communicative language teaching (CLT) oriented university preparation program, alongside regular academic speaking tasks (e.g., group discussions and oral presentations).

The research site was a language institute at a Canadian university which had recently incorporated TOEFL speaking tasks as part of curriculum reform. Classroom observations conducted for seven weeks revealed the types of speaking activities typically used prior to the reform and identified similarities and differences between the TOEFL practice and regular speaking practices. Semi-guided interviews with three teachers and questionnaires administered to 24 Japanese, Korean, and Chinese students

elicited their perspectives on the usefulness of TOEFL speaking tasks for developing academic speaking skills and for promoting participation. The findings revealed that East Asian students valued TOEFL-type individualized practice with its built-in structure for guiding and 'forcing' oral production. They also valued the emphasis on delivering spontaneous, coherent speech under a time limit, which was a novel activity in their program. However, the teachers found that this type of oral practice was at odds with their CLT beliefs and practices. Factors contributing to this mismatch between teachers' and students' perspectives on the usefulness of TOEFL practice for improving EAP oral skills are explored, and the implications of the findings for addressing East Asian learners' speaking needs are discussed.

DEDICATION

To my family and Marcelle.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2005, a new version of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL®) was introduced after a major revision that added a speaking component and integrated skills tasks. The Educational Testing Service (ETS), the organization which develops and administers the TOEFL, described this new Internet-based version of TOEFL (TOEFL iBT) as "an accurate, reliable, and fair" English proficiency test that measures the ability of non-native speakers to use and understand English in academic settings (ETS, 2004, 2005). Thus, it has the potential to provide information from which test-score users can make better decisions. Furthermore, ETS claimed that the new test will have a positive impact on both teaching and learning such that the type of preparation required to succeed on the test will enable learners to communicate with confidence (ETS, 2004, 2005). In other words, it may also benefit the test-takers themselves.

One of the motivations that propelled the inclusion of a speaking component has been the need to take into account the oral communication demands of university studies. Speaking skills in EAP have become increasingly important as North American university practice has shifted from utilising formal lecture formats to interactive discussion formats of teaching (Lucas & Murray, 2002; Mason, 1994; Meyers & Jones, 1993). Many NNS students find it difficult to meet the demands of this teaching approach (Ferris, 1998). The scoring rubric of the new TOEFL test (ETS, 2005) indicates that speaking tasks focus on measuring test-takers' ability to respond to a series of questions accurately, fluently, and coherently within a set time frame. For example, the questions ask test-takers to describe personal experience, defend a choice, and synthesize or summarize reading and listening input related to academic lecture or campus situations.

The new emphasis on oral communication competence in the iBT TOEFL can be challenging for many learners from East Asia whose second language education focuses heavily on reading and writing at the expense of speaking (Burton, 2005). However, if ETS's claim that practice for the TOEFL will enable learners to communicate with confidence is true, then the new TOEFL would actually be good news for East Asian students. The practice for the test may offer an opportunity to develop their much needed oral skills to communicate at universities.

As part of curriculum reform, a language institution at a Canadian university has recently introduced TOEFL type tasks to a pre-university English for academic purposes (EAP) program, and piloted the TOEFL speaking practice in advanced classes. This was an interesting decision because the students in the institution did not necessarily aim to take the TOEFL. In other words, the TOEFL speaking tasks were utilized simply as supplement to their regular oral practice, not necessarily as test preparation. This presented a research opportunity to explore the feasibility and usefulness of using the TOEFL test-tasks as a teaching and learning tool.

Looking back to my studies in a Canadian University for nearly five years, I, as a non-native speaker of English from East Asia, was very successful at writing academic papers in various genres and achieving high scores on exams. Nevertheless, I was never successful at being an active participant in the university classroom, and felt frustrated with this failure. In fact, from the very beginning, in university preparation classrooms where I was supposed to practice oral skills, my participation was always minimal. I also noticed that I was not the only one with a problem: other East Asian students at the university seemed to experience the same difficulties. I started to question what made it

difficult for us to participate in discussions and what could be done to overcome such difficulties. This was how my thesis project was born.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks for facilitating East Asian learners' English academic speaking skills development and for promoting participation. To achieve this aim, the similarities and differences between the TOEFL tasks and regular oral tasks are compared. East Asian students' and teachers' perceptions of usefulness of the TOEFL practice are also probed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review comprises three sections. The first section describes the characteristics of academic speaking and reviews the findings of studies that have analyzed academic oral communication needs and difficulties, particularly in relation to East Asian students. In the second section, in order to better understand East Asian learners' oral needs and difficulties, factors affecting East Asian students' oral skills development and participation such as their culture of learning, unwillingness to communicate, differences in oral communication patterns and expectations, East Asian learners' learning styles and the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are discussed. The last section describes the negative impact of the former TOEFL, the speaking component of the new TOEFL, and the expected positive impact on teaching and learning. The motivation for the study and the research questions are outlined at the end of the review.

EAP Speaking: Needs and Difficulties

For successful study in English-medium universities, non-native speaker (NNS) students are required to possess adequate English language skills for academic purposes. Among the EAP skills requirements, academic literacy has long been considered to be the most essential (Johns, 1981). However, speaking skills in EAP have become increasingly important for NNS students to acquire as North American university teaching practice shifted from a formal lecture format to an interactive discussion format (Lucas & Murray, 2002; Mason, 1994; Meyers & Jones, 1993).

Characteristics of Academic Speaking

Speaking for academic purposes, according to Jordan (1996), refers to the spoken language in various academic settings, which is "normally formal or neutral, and obeys the conventions associated with the genre or activity" (p. 193). He lists typical situations or activities in which academic speaking occurs: asking questions in lectures, participating in seminars/group discussions, making oral presentations, and describing data.

Spoken academic discourse differs from general spoken language used for social interaction in that academic speaking often requires extended discourse or long turns. Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish transactional long turns from interactional short turns. The primary purpose of transactional long turn is to convey and transfer information. Graham & Barone (2001) note that English as a second language (ESL) learners who can successfully maintain short turns for social interaction are often unable to produce comprehensible extended discourse presumably due to cognitive overload of extended turns. Brown and Yule also comment that producing extended discourse on a transactional task induces a higher level of communicative stress.

Challenge of Meeting EAP Speaking Demands

As North American university classes have become more interactive, oral participation is valued and often required for academic success. However, academic speaking tasks pose major challenges for many NNS students. In Berman and Cheng's (2001) survey study in a Canadian university, perceived difficulties in academic language skills by NNS undergraduate and graduate students (n=113) were compared with the ratings by native speaker (NS) counterparts (n=73). It was found that unlike the NS

students whose perceptions of difficulty for all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing) were fairly equal, the NNS group rated the productive speaking skill as the most difficult. Among academic speaking tasks, giving oral presentations, participating in class discussions, and answering questions in class were found to be difficult for both NNS undergraduate and graduate students.

Other studies that centered on academic oral skills have shown similar results. Ferris and Tagg (1996a, 1996b) investigated instructors' views on academic oral communication needs and their NNS students' difficulties by surveying 234 instructors in various academic disciplines from four tertiary institutions in the U.S. In the study, ESL students' fluency in expressing themselves and their ability to give clear and coherent answers were identified as the primary concerns of course instructors. Interaction with peers was also one of the areas of difficulty identified by ESL students. Ferris (1998) inquired into ESL learners' own perceptions about academic oral skills requirements and difficulties. Ferris surveyed 768 ESL students in three different universities. The majority were undergraduate immigrant students from various language backgrounds and their average length of stay in the U.S. was 5.7 years. For those students, formal speaking (e.g., giving oral presentations) and whole-class discussions were found to be difficult.

Unlike other needs analysis studies that target NNS students in general, S. H. Kim (2006) examined East Asian graduate students' (N=70) difficulties in meeting academic oral expectations at a US university. She reported that at the graduate level, students considered oral presentation skills as the most important skill to have for academic success and expressed difficulties with participating in whole-class discussions and leading class discussions.

All the aforementioned EAP needs analysis studies, except for S. H. Kim's (2006) study, indicated that speaking in the academic context was perceived as difficult by NNS students in general. However, meeting academic oral communication needs in North American universities seems particularly daunting for East Asian students, specifically from China (Taiwan), Korea, and Japan because their English oral proficiency development is often limited due to the lack of speaking practice in their home country. In addition, they are unfamiliar with the type of oral interaction expected at North American universities.

According to J. Liu (2000), US universities are expressing a growing concern about some Asian ESL students' "minimization of the importance of verbal communication in their content courses" (p.1). J. Liu (2001) examined Asian[1] graduate students' oral participation in content courses in a US university. Twenty Asian graduate students from multiple disciplines were observed in their content classes and interviewed. J. Liu found that students' classroom reticence resulted from various factors: socio-cultural, linguistic, cognitive, affective, and pedagogical/environmental factors. Among them, socio-cultural factors had the largest effect on the lack of oral participation. Similarly, university instructors in Ferris and Tagg's (1996b) study viewed ESL students' lack of participation as inability or as unwillingness resulting from cultural inhibitions.

Understanding East Asian Learners' Needs and Difficulties

In the ESL and English as a foreign language (EFL) and EAP literature, students from East Asian countries are often found to be silent or reticent in the classroom. Many

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[1] In Liu's (2001) study, East Asian students (n=16) comprised 80% of the participants; the four others were from Indonesia.

researchers have explored the reasons behind these students' silence or reticence and identified their culture as a major factor. However, some researchers (Cheng, 2000; N. Liu & Littlewood, 1997) do not agree with the prevalent view; they claim that not all East Asian students are silent or reticent and they do not always remain to be so. Therefore, their culture is not to blame for their reticence. To better understand East Asian learners' EAP oral skills development and oral communication patterns in a second language (L2), the following review will focus on the literature concerning East Asian learners' cultural and educational backgrounds that may negatively affect their development of oral proficiency and class participation in L2 and discuss the mismatch between East Asian learners' learning styles and current CLT methodologies.

Before reviewing literature on East Asian learners, it is important to note that most of the claims made regarding their profiles in the literature have been obtained through studies of East Asian students only; to be able to substantiate the claims, it is necessary to compare East Asian learners with learners from other backgrounds.

East Asian Culture of Learning: Influence of Confucianism

In order to identify learners' specific needs, fist we need to understand the learners' "cultures of learning." Cortazzi and Jin (1996) provide this term, cultures of learning, to emphasize the importance of understanding the nature and purposes of education from their cultural and historical roots. Learners from East Asian countries such as China (Taiwan, Hong Kong), Korea, and Japan display many common characteristics in their approach to L2 education. Although these countries indeed have their distinct cultural values, when education is examined, they have similar practices and values which are deeply rooted in Confucian philosophy. The influence of Confucianism

on L2 learning and teaching in East Asian countries, such as China (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Wen & Clement, 2003), Korea (Lee, 2004; Huh, 2004), and Japan (LoCastro, 1996; Nelson, 1996) has been clearly recognized.

Memorization is a common way of learning in East Asian countries and this learning style is closely linked to Confucianism in which the focus of traditional education was memorization of Confucian Classics. This tradition still influences current educational practice. For example, in L2 education, grammar is equated with the Confucian Classics based on the notion that grammar serves as the absolute, unchallengeable truth and that rules are to be memorized (Wen & Clement, 2003). Memorization is also the preferred and crucial way of L2 learning in China, Japan, and Korea because the primary motivation for studying English in the countries is to pass exams, not to communicate in L2 (S. J. Kim, 2004; LoCastro, 1996; Nelson, 1996; Rao, 2002; Wen & Clement, 2003). Achieving high scores on tests such as university exams, the TOEFL, or the TOEIC that mainly measure reading and/or listening comprehension ability in a written format is very important for success in life (LoCastro, 1996; Nelson, 1996). In addition, much effort is made to analyze L2 texts based on grammar rules (Wen & Clement, 2003).

East Asian learners' approaches to learning L2, which focus on memorizing grammatical rules and analyzing L2 texts based on grammar for the purpose of passing written tests does not seem to be conducive to developing oral proficiency in L2. Wen and Clement (2003) point out that East Asian learners' memorization of grammar hinders the development of oral fluency in L2. Learners' oral production is often hesitant and minimal because a conscious knowledge of grammar is rigorously employed to check the

accuracy of their utterances. The authors further note that Chinese learners consider poor mastery of grammar as the reason for lack of oral fluency; thus, they study grammar even harder instead of engaging in oral communication practice. East Asian learners firmly believe that focusing on grammar helps improve their oral proficiency in English.

Unwillingness to Communicate

As we have seen, lack of oral proficiency development after years of intensive studies in L2 has been identified as a common problem among East Asian learners. They indeed have limited opportunity to engage in oral communication in grammar-oriented classrooms that are usually very large (Nelson, 1996). This is not a desirable situation for developing oral proficiency as second language acquisition (SLA) theories such as Long's interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996, cited in Kumaravalivelu, 2006) or Swain's output hypothesis (Swain, 1993; 1995) have emphasized learners' oral production via interaction as crucial for L2 development. However, when there is opportunity for oral communication in the classrooms, East Asian learners are often unable to fully engage in oral interaction.

East Asian learners' reticence in the language classrooms and factors affecting their oral communication has been widely researched in the field because reticence limits opportunities to practice oral communication skills; thus, it impedes oral proficiency development in L2. The studies that will be examined below unanimously report a large influence of socio-cultural factors on reticence.

First, in the EFL context, M. Liu's (2005) case study looked into first-year, non-English majors' (N=24) reticence in oral English classrooms at a Chinese university and explored factors affecting their reticence. The data were collected via the Language Class

Sociability (LCS) scale developed by Ely (1986, cited in M. Liu, 2005), a questionnaire, classroom observations, and students' reflective journals. She reported that although the findings of the LCS and journal data indicated that the participants were willing to interact with each other in L2, the observations revealed their actual oral participation was limited in cases such as answering easy questions in chorus or interacting in pairs. She further noted that few students volunteered to answer difficult questions during whole class discussions or to make a presentation in front of the class. Twelve factors were speculated on to explain the Chinese learners' reticence: 1)culture, 2) personality, 3) low English proficiency, 4) previous educational practices, 5) lack of practice, 6) lack of courage and/or confidence, 7) fear of losing face, 8) lack of interest in/familiarity with topic, 9) poor pronunciation, 10) lack of vocabulary, 11) perfectionism, and 12) difference between the Chinese & English language.

Another study by Tomizawa (1990) was carried out in the ESL context to investigate Japanese adult learners' reticence. The study analyzed factors affecting the learners' oral production in an intensive language program offered by a US university. By conducting a small-scale qualitative study (*N*=6), the researcher first identified three major categories of factors affecting reticence: a). socio-cultural factors (e.g., instructional pattern differences between the US and Japanese classroom, perfectionism, less talkativeness in public, careful thought vs. spontaneity in responding), b). psychological factors (e.g., intolerance of ambiguity, lack of confidence in oral English, beliefs about learning to speak in English, motivation, fear of losing one's self-identity by using English, and c) linguistic factors (e.g., lack of listening skills, discussion or communication skills). Then, a questionnaire including those factors was administered to

112 Japanese students. The quantitative analyses confirmed that the factors identified in the qualitative results were also salient; however, socio-cultural factors were ranked higher than other factors.

In Hwang's (1993) research, a broader group of East Asian learners' oral participation were studied. The participants (N=15) were Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese learners in an intensive program. Hwang also found a strong influence of socio-cultural factors on reticence as found in Tomizawa's (1990) study. By studying learners from three different East Asian countries, she intended to posit distinct factors for the learners from each country. However, a large number of factors were shared by all three groups. Other studies looking into East Asian learners' oral behaviours in the language classrooms such as Japanese learners' turn-taking patterns (Sato, 1981, cited in Bang, 1999) and Korean learners' risk taking behaviours (Bang, 1999) also identified socio-cultural factors exerting a large influence on students' classroom behaviour.

All the aforementioned studies indicate that socio-cultural factors influence East Asian learners' unwillingness to communicate. Regarding Chinese learners' unwillingness to communicate, Wen and Clement (2003) correctly point out that the "learners' unwillingness to communicate is not a language phenomenon that is specific to learning the English language. It is deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy and culture, … governing interpersonal relations: an other-directed self and a submissive way of learning" (p. 19). Wen and Clement further note that the other-directedness includes face-protected orientations (i.e., sensitivity to others' judgments) and in-group orientations. Due to these orientations, Chinese learners find it difficult to engage in oral communication in the language of out-group with outsiders. This in-group orientation is

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also found in the Japanese culture (Hinenoya & Gatbonton, 2000). The next section examines explanations for this reticence.

Differences in Oral Communication Patterns and Expectations

J. Liu (2000) points out that Asian learners' poor linguistic ability alone has been ascribed mistakenly to the lack of oral participation in university content classrooms and emphasizes socio-cultural influences on oral communication. One of the salient socio-cultural factors that negatively affected university class participation in J. Liu's (2001) study is classroom participation and instructional pattern differences between Asian countries and the U.S. This was also found in the studies on reticence in the language classrooms (Bang, 1999; Hwang, 1993; Tomizawa, 1990). The classroom communication and instructional pattern differences were discussed in the literature concerning Chinese (M. Liu, 2005; Wen & Clement, 2003), Korean (S.J. Kim, 2004), and Japanese learners' WTC (Doi, 1976; Klopf, 1984, cited in Hwang, 1993).

Teacher-dominant, one-way classroom communication patterns and passive L2 learning styles are common factors shared by the learners from the three countries. According to Wen and Clement (2003), Chinese learners' submissive way of learning English relates to their cultural values such as submission to authority. In classrooms, teachers are the authority and their words are to be memorized and not to be questioned. This also applies to language learning as Wen and Clement (2003) points out that "students and their teachers tend to believe that learners' English proficiency is built on the teacher's lectures rather than on their own practice" (p. 23). This would appear to be very different from most North American teachers and learners' perception of the acquisition of language proficiency.

In addition to the teachers' authoritative role in education, East Asian culture also has a different view on verbal communication in the classroom settings. Unlike Western culture, Eastern culture values silence and interactive silence is common as a way of communication (Bruneau, 1973, cited in J. Liu, 2001). J. Liu (2001) points out that in Asian classrooms, "students' silence is expected and encouraged as a sign of respect for their teachers and classmates" (p. 191). Asking questions in class, for example, is considered as disruptive; students are generally advised to do so after class (Hwang, 1993; S. J. Kim, 2004; J. Liu, 2001). Similarly, expressing opinions in class is considered as an intention "to challenge to the teacher' authority or knowledge" or "to show off their knowledge to the teacher and the class" (S. J. Kim, 2004, p. 30). However, this interpretation and expectation of silence in Asian classrooms does not hold in North America because silence in class is viewed as a lack of communication (J. Liu, 2001); active class participation is often valued.

East Asian Learners' Learning Styles

While the influence of culture on East Asian learners' reticence has been well postulated and supported by numerous studies, this cultural explanation to reticence has been refuted by several researchers. N. Liu and Littlewood (1997), in their large-scale survey studies conducted at a university in Hong Kong, found East Asian learners' preference for group discussion as the most enjoyable English lesson activity. Based on this positive attitude toward participation in classrooms, the authors concluded that the students' reticence is not culture-bound, but situation-specific (e.g., teachers' error treatment, mismatch between teachers' and students' expectations of performance during oral tasks). They also discussed other reasons such as lack of proficiency and confidence

in oral English for those learners' reluctance to participate. Cheng (2000) supported N. Liu and Littlewood's view by arguing linguistic deficiency and unsuitable teaching methodologies are the primary reasons. Although there is no consensus on the influence of culture on East Asian learners' reticence among researchers, it seems undeniable that a conflict between learning styles and teaching styles can lead to undesirable learning outcomes, including learners' lack of active participation in oral tasks as found in N. Liu and Littlewood's (1997) study.

Much research attention has been paid to exploring ESL/EFL Learners' learning styles since Reid's influential study appeared in 1987. Learning styles are defined by Peacock (2001), as "natural, habitual, and preferred way of observing, and learning a second language" (p. 1). In Reid's (1987) survey study, perceptual learning style preferences of both NS and NNS students of English (N=1,388) were examined. She found that there was a significant difference in learning style preferences between NS and NNS students. Based on the findings, she hypothesized that a mismatch between teaching and learning style can be detrimental for maximizing desirable learning outcomes. Peacock (2001) tested this hypothesis based on empirical data. Using a questionnaire and interviews, learning and teaching style preferences of Chinese EFL students (n=206) and Western EFL teachers' (n=46) in a Hong Kong university were indentified. The findings indicated that there was a mismatch between learning and teaching styles. Interview data showed that 72% of the students reported that they were frustrated by the mismatch and 76% stated that it also affected their learning. 81% of the teachers also agreed with Reid's hypothesis: a mismatch can be detrimental to learning.

It is not at all surprising that numerous studies have documented that learning styles

are largely influenced by learners' culture (Bedell & Oxford, 1996; Reid, 1987; Woodrow and Sham, 2001). Rao (2001) noted that East Asian learners' learning styles are influenced by traditional EFL teaching styles such as teacher- and textbook-centered, grammar-translation methods, and rote learning. Cultural influence on learning styles seems to persist regardless of the context of education. In Woodrow and Sham's study, British-Chinese and British-European secondary students' learning styles were compared. They documented that significant differences in their attitude towards learning; unlike the British-European counterparts, the British-Chinese students preferred autonomous, individual work, and rote learning. The authors pointed out that although the majority of the British-Chinese students were born in England, Chinese traditional rules and values in education still exert influence on those learners. Rao (2001) looked at East Asian learners' typical learning styles from a cultural perspective. Based on the findings of numerous studies that looked into East Asian learners' classroom behaviour (e.g., N. Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Nelson, 1995; Sato, 1982), Rao identified East Asian learners' preferred learning styles as introverted, closure-oriented, analytic and field-independent, concrete-sequential, detail-and precision-oriented, visual, and thinking-oriented (reflective).

East Asian Learners and Communicative Language Teaching Approach

Many researchers advocate that matching learning and teaching styles will maximize classroom experience and produce desirable learning outcomes (Nelson, 1995; Rao, 2001; Reid, 1987; Van Lier, 1996; Willing, 1988) and the mismatch between them is detrimental (Peacock, 2001). Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a dominant English language teaching (ELT) methodology in which the enhancement of

learners' communicative competence is targeted. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986), CLT is characterized by "its learner-centered, and experienced-based view of second language teaching" (p. 69). This is the opposite of East Asian traditional teaching methods that are teacher-centered and rote-based. Thus, when CLT is implemented in the East Asian context, learners' (and teachers') difficulties in coping with this method arise (Li, 1998; LoCastro, 1996). The difficulties are also documented in other countries such as South Africa (Chick, 1996), Pakistan (Shamim, 1996), and Singapore (Pakir, 1999).

Several studies have examined learners' perceptions of effectiveness and preferences of teaching/learning activities in CLT. Barkhuizen (1998) studied the perceptions of high school ESL students in the South African context. He found many mechanical (formal) language practice (e.g., learning English tenses and correct spelling) was ranked high by the learners on the three variables: enjoyment, learning English, and usefulness after school. Class discussions and debates were ranked very high on the enjoyment, but low on learning English and usefulness after school. The author explained this contradiction from his observations of classrooms; he commented: "Only a handful of students actually participated in the [debate, discussion] activity; the others sat back and enjoyed the show, not practicing any English and not acquiring any specific speaking skills" (Barkhuizen, 1998, p. 99).

Similar results were documented in Rao's (2002) study which looked into Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative tasks in EFL classrooms. A questionnaire was administered to randomly selected university students (N=30) majoring in English in China and ten of them were interviewed. The results indicated that most of the students favored non-communicative activities over communicative activities

and believed that non-communicative activities (e.g., traditional activities such as audio-lingual drill and workbook-based drill) facilitate their learning. Both Barkhuizen (1998) and Rao noted that these students' perceptions "surprised" the CLT trained teachers, indicating teachers' and learners' perceptions do not always match. In Rao's (2002) study, 83% of the Chinese students reported that "their traditional learning styles and habits had prohibited them from being actively involved in communicative activities" (p. 96). Similar results were found in Chen's (2003) study which examined one Japanese and one Korean student's experiences with CLT in a university ESL writing class. Chen noted that their reticence stemmed from their cultural beliefs (e.g., silence as virtue of student) and habitual learning styles (e.g., individual work) which countered communicative activities such as group discussions.

Implementing CLT among East Asian learners whose learning styles and beliefs in language learning process are in conflict with the concept of ideal learning embedded in CLT needs caution. Littlewood (2007) discussed problems in implementing CLT in East Asian classrooms and asserted that teachers need to adapt their classroom methodologies to suit their own situations.

The importance of matching teaching and learning styles has been brought out by many researchers. According to Reid (1996), matching teaching and learning styles will allow all learners to have equal chance in the classroom and to develop self-awareness of learning styles effective for them. Willing (1988) further suggested that teachers should attempt to accommodate all learning styles even if the styles conflict with their view of what is effective in the classroom.

The studies discussed above suggest that the current and prevailing method of

language teaching, CLT may not adequately address East Asian learners' needs as their traditional learning styles or habits do not fit in CLT. Researchers maintain the importance of matching learning and teaching styles. How the mismatch between East Asian learners' learning styles/preferences and teaching styles in CLT can possibly be resolved remains an important question to be investigated.

The review of literature above was provided to understand East Asian learners' difficulties with oral skills development in English. The existing literature on East Asian learners is concerned primarily with identifying the difficulties they display in oral communication in L2 both in language and university content classrooms, and exploring why they have such difficulties. However, few studies have looked at *how* this problem could be addressed. As noted earlier, meeting oral communication demands at universities is difficult for East Asian learners. Nonetheless, little attention has been paid to how those learners prepare for the challenge or what pre-university EAP classes offer to address this issue.

The next section will discuss the TOEFL test, which now includes an EAP speaking component to reflect oral demands at universities. The practice for the oral component of the new TOEFL has been predicted to help NNS students to meet oral demands in EAP. This offers consideration for the use of TOEFL speaking practice in order for East Asian learners to prepare for their well documented challenge in academic speaking.

TOEFL Test and Practice for the TOEFL

This section first details the criticism of the old TOEFL test and explains the revised TOEFL test: TOEFL iBT. Speaking tasks in the new TOEFL test and the positive

impact of the new TOEFL test on learning and teaching English are further discussed.

Criticism of the Old TOEFL Test

TOEFL for university admissions. The TOEFL test, the most recognized

proficiency test of EAP, has been widely used for measuring NNS prospective students'

language ability for university admissions. However, there was growing concern about

the utility of the TOEFL test used prior to 2005 for such purposes because the previous

two versions of the TOEFL mainly measured discrete knowledge of the language and its

proper usage, not the actual ability to use English in academic settings (Graham, 1987).

In particular, because it did not test oral proficiency, oral communication and academic

speaking skills required in the academic settings were neglected by NNS students who

intended to study in English-medium universities. As a result, some NNS candidates have

been admitted to university programs unprepared or under-prepared to meet the speaking

demands of university classrooms. This might have contributed to the reason why

instructors and NNS students in needs analysis studies reported students' difficulties with

oral tasks in the university classrooms.

Impact of the TOEFL on teaching and learning. The TOEFL is frequently used by

English-medium higher-education institutions as part of the admission criteria and by

employers to evaluate prospective applicants' level of English. Thus, the TOEFL is a high

stakes test for non-native speakers of English. High stakes exams tend to urge test-takers

to partake in specific test preparation practice (Mehrens & Kaminsky, 1989, cited in

Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996). Accordingly, TOEFL preparation courses are offered in

many language institutes around the world, either to supplement regular language classes,

or sometimes to replace them (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996). A major criticism of the

old TOEFL is related to the process and product of this specific preparation practice for the TOEFL. Cumming, Grant, Mulcahy-Ernt, and Powers (2004) point out that discrete point test items of the former TOEFL "can easily be coached or can have a negative washback on learning and teaching English by directing students' attention to learning such items rather than developing their abilities to communicate proficiently" (p.109). This negative washback effect of the TOEFL has been found in many preparation classrooms.

Washback is generally defined as "the effect of testing on teaching and learning" by Hughes and he notes that the influence of testing can be either beneficial or harmful (1989, p.1, cited in Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Another conceptualization of washback, according to Alderson and Wall (1993), is the extent to which the test influences language teachers and learners to "do things *they would not otherwise necessarily do*" (p.117). This conceptualization of washback seems to focus on the impact of a test on the individuals such as test-takers and teachers who prepare students for the exam. However, tests can have a further impact on educational systems and society at large (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Washback has become a widely discussed issue in second language testing and education since Alderson and Wall's influential paper appeared in 1993. The importance of examining test impact has been strengthened because testing experts such as Bachman and Palmer (1996) include test impact as one of the key elements in measuring and discussing test usefulness. Similarly, in Messick's (1989, cited in Bailey, 1996) unified view of validity, washback plays a prominent role as a consequential aspect of test validity. Specific instances of negative washback stemming from the old TOEFL are reviewed in the next section.

TOEFL washback studies. The negative impact of the old TOEFL on teaching and

learning has been discussed in several washback studies that examined the TOEFL

preparation practice in preparation courses in ESL (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996;

Roberts, 2002) and EFL contexts (Wall & Horak, 2006) as well as in the regular intensive

classroom (Johnson, Jordan, & Poehner, 2005). Alderson and Hamp-Lyons (1996)

examined washback in TOEFL preparation classrooms in the U.S., using interviews and

classroom observations. The study reported that most teachers who participated in the

interviews expressed their negative attitude of the TOEFL and of TOEFL preparation

pedagogy. They considered the test to be "inauthentic and non-communicative", and

teaching TOEFL preparation, "boring and fragmentary." In the preparation classrooms,

the students and the majority of the teachers spent most of their class time on "same

format practice" for the TOEFL by doing mock tests in TOEFL preparation textbooks and

by reviewing difficult test items. Based on the findings of this study, Alderson and Hamp-

Lyons (1996) concluded that tests will have different amounts and types of washback

depending on issues such as "the level of the stakes, the extent to which the test is counter

to current practice, the extent to which teachers and textbook writers think about

appropriate methods for test preparation, and the extent to which teachers and textbook

writers are willing to innovate" (p. 296).

Wall and Horak (2006) also investigated washback of the TOEFL in Central and

Eastern Europe. Their study was part of a longitudinal project and it aimed to establish a

baseline for a further study of washback from the new TOEFL. The data were collected

from ten language institutions in six different countries and the instruments utilized in the

study were classroom observations of TOEFL and non-TOEFL classes, and structured

interviews with 10 teachers, 21 students and 9 directors. The findings of the study were very similar to those of Alderson and Hamp-Lyons's (1996); heavy dependence on preparation textbooks and same format practice was found.

However, a different finding of this study was that unlike most teachers in Alderson and Hamp-Lyons's (1996) study, most teachers in Wall and Horak's (2006) study did not express a negative attitude toward teaching TOEFL. Wall and Horak (2006) noted that their teachers seemed to accept their job as TOEFL instructors who focus on preparation practice more easily than the teachers in Alderson and Hamp-Lyons's study carried out in the U.S. The teachers in Eastern and Central Europe accepted that "getting through the examination was the aim of teaching – not (usually) preparation for life in an English academic institution and certainly not language development" (Wall & Horak, p. 119). Another interesting finding of Wall and Horak's study was that although English was the medium of instruction in all classes but one, little attention was paid to developing speaking skills simply because speaking was not tested on the TOEFL.

Another washback study was carried out by Roberts (2002). Unlike the two aforementioned studies that largely focused on teachers and teaching methods, his study was concerned only with students' perspectives of and attitudes towards TOEFL preparation. The participants were 14 Korean students enrolled in TOEFL preparation courses in private language institutes in Toronto. The findings indicated that although students' overall perceptions toward the TOEFL practice were positive, not all of them expressed their satisfaction with the TOEFL preparation methods. Students' satisfaction with the methods seemed to be determined by their motivation and expectation for a TOEFL preparation course; students felt that preparation methods were effective to

achieve high scores, but not helpful to improve overall language proficiency. In a case study which carried out by Johnson et al. (2005) in a non-TOEFL preparation ESL classroom in the US, the authors looked into an instructor's and two students' views on the TOEFL practice in relation to their regular language practices. Johnson et al. noted that "learning English and studying for the TOEFL were not identical activities" (p. 77).

Mismatch between raising scores and developing proficiency. What the findings of aforementioned studies show is indeed Hamp-Lyons's (1998) concern that preparation practice for the TOEFL in preparation classes has tended to be counter to current instructional practice in English language teaching and learning in North America. There was usually no or little communicative teaching; teachers and learners spent most of their class time on same format practice provided by preparation textbooks. Engaging in same format practice may raise students' test scores, but it does not necessarily lead to improvements in actual English language use. To Hamp-Lyons (1998), this type of test preparation practice is educationally indefensible and unethical.

The negative washback of the TOEFL points to the product, the undesirable learning outcomes that the test produced. Although this is not empirically researched sufficiently, it was presumably possible that TOEFL preparation practice through textbooks allowed test-takers to achieve high scores without being able to speak or to write in English because the previous two versions: the computer-based TOEFL (CBT) and the paper-based TOEFL (PBT) simply did not include any oral tasks and the PBT comprised neither oral nor writing tasks. To these learners, TOEFL preparation practice was not helpful in improving their overall language proficiency due to the lack of speaking or writing skills development. This was reported by the Korean students in

Roberts's (2002) study.

Moreover, if one views the aim of TOEFL preparation practice as improving proficiency in English for academic purposes or as getting students ready for university life in North America, this aspect of negative washback of the TOEFL is even more evident. In Wall and Horak's (2006) study carried out in the EFL setting, the teachers hardly considered either developing EAP skills or preparing students for university life as the aim of TOEFL preparation practice; their aim as a TOEFL teacher was to improve students' score. It seems that these teachers were aware of the mismatch between improving their students' TOEFL scores and developing their actual language ability in English. Teachers, including the majority of US teachers in Alderson and Hamp-Lyons's (1996) study felt uneasy about teaching TOEFL preparation courses via same format practice because they knew very well the negative consequences of raising a test score without mastery of skills on their NNS students' academic life in North American universities. With the problems of the old TOEFL clearly established, the discussion now turns to attempts to improve the test – the oral components in particular.

Speaking Tasks in the New TOEFL

As discussed above, the major criticisms of the former TOEFL arose from the task types employed in the test. The test tasks did not reflect academic oral communication needs in university settings (Cheng, Myles, & Curtis, 2004; Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b). Furthermore, preparation practice focusing on such tasks did not promote good language teaching and learning (Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996; Hamp-Lyons, 1998; Johnson et al., 2005; Roberts, 2002; Wall & Horak, 2006). In the process of revision of the TOEFL, these concerns are well addressed. Unlike the previous versions

of TOEFL, the new iBT TOEFL emphasizes using English for effective communication, and tests all four language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (ETS, 2005). In the development of content and tasks for the test, a corpus-based approach was used to better represent language use in the academic setting; spoken and written academic language corpus was constructed and analyzed (Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, Helt, Clark, Cortes, Csomay, & Urzua, (2004). The revised TOEFL has adopted a new approach to testing by using integrated skills tasks in which test-takers are required to combine more than one skill (e.g., speak from reading or listening), to closely mirror real-life language use at universities.

The new TOEFL speaking section includes two independent tasks and four skills integrated tasks (ETS, 2005). Table 1 describes the six tasks in detail. The independent tasks require task-takers to describe a personal experience and to defend a personal choice from two contrasting ideas. The integrated tasks include two read/listen/speak tasks and two listen/speak tasks. The topics include campus-related issues and academic courses. In the integrated tasks, test-takers are asked to summarize or synthesize the information from reading and listening material, to relate the information from reading and listening to a topic, and to express opinions toward the topic. Test takers are given 15 to 20 seconds to prepare their responses and then speak for 45 seconds on the independent tasks and 60 seconds on the integrated ones into a microphone.

Table 1
Descriptions and Examples of the TOEFL Speaking Tasks

	Type	Topic	Overall description	Sample question/topic
1	Independent speaking	General	Talk about a topic with several different examples and details	Who is the teacher you admire and why?
2	Independent speaking	General	Tell your preference and support your choice by giving several different examples and details.	Which do you prefer individual or group class work?
3	Integrated listening, reading, & speaking	Campus-related	State the speaker's opinion and explain reasons for it by linking the information in reading and listening	Tuition increase
4	Integrated listening, reading, & speaking	Academic	Explain a topic by linking listening (specific examples) to reading (general information)	Animal domestication
5	Integrated listening, & speaking	Campus-related	Briefly describe the problem, two solutions, and state the solution you prefer and why	Organizing a schedule for coursework
6	Integrated listening, & speaking	Academic	Summarize the main points and the examples (details) for each point in the lecture	The emergence of a national culture in the US

Note. Sample questions and topics are taken from *the official guide to the new TOEFL iBT* (ETS, 2006).

The new TOEFL includes speaking as one of the four equally important sections. This clearly indicates that the new test recognizes the importance of developing speaking skills for academic purposes, as numerous EAP needs analysis studies pointed out. Furthermore, the use of integrated tasks to measure speaking ability reflects how spoken English is used in the academic context: speaking does not frequently occur in isolation. Speaking with reference to reading and listening materials is also an area of focus identified previously. Johns (1981), based on the findings of her needs analysis study, suggested that "speaking instruction should include response to readings or lectures rather than the preparation of dialogues or presentations" (p. 56).

Predicted Positive Impact of the New TOEFL

Regarding the impact of the new TOEFL test, Zareva (2005) points out the revision of the TOEFL emphasizes that for NNS students to succeed at university, they need not only to understand English, but also to communicate effectively. Therefore, the test will allow institutions to better gauge prospective students' academic readiness and help test-takers to build confidence by knowing that they have required skills for their university studies.

The improvement in content and format of the new TOEFL also anticipates positive outcomes of EAP teaching and learning. ETS and field experts involved in the revision have predicted positive washback in TOEFL preparation classrooms. Wall and Horak (2006) examined the intended impact of the new TOEFL by surveying the experts who contributed to the test revision and by reviewing new TOEFL framework documents that reported conceptualization of the tasks for the new TOEFL test components. Wall and Horak found that the predictions of the impacts from both the experts and framework documents were positive. One of the most promising predictions was that the new TOEFL will have TOEFL teachers and textbooks focus more on the use of English for communication at university; thus, TOEFL preparation courses will "more closely resemble communicative-oriented academic English courses" (Bejar, Douglas, Jamieson, Nissan, & Turner, 2000). As for speaking, Butler, Eignor, Jones, McNamara, and Suomi (2000) anticipated a positive washback effect by commenting: "by using constructed-response items, which are less likely to be coachable … we will encourage students to learn to communicate orally – not to learn a skill simply to do well on a test" (p.23).

Motivation for the Study

Ample research has shown that EAP speaking is difficult and important for many NNS students including East Asian learners and called for support; however, little is known about EAP speaking skills development. Research on EAP skills development has long been focused on academic literacy (i.e., academic writing) whereas research on the development of academic speaking skills is scarce as noted by Carkin (2006), and Flowerdew and Peacock (2001). In addition, the research that exists has largely targeted a specific group of EAP learners, namely, international graduate student teaching assistants (Carkin, 2006; Graham & Barone, 2001; Papajohn, Alsberg, Bair, & Willenborg, 2002). There is no research into academic speaking skills development among pre-university EAP learners who intend to study at university. This is a real need for research with this population considering the difficulties they will encounter in the future.

As outlined above, the TOEFL test, the EAP proficiency test widely used for North America university admissions, has recently added a speaking component and adopted integrated skills tasks in order to measure test-takers' communication skills that were neglected in the previous versions. As I have argued, this new emphasis on communicative competence in the TOEFL test can be challenging for many learners from East Asia. Burton (2005) noted that the new speaking component of the TOEFL put East Asian test-takers at a disadvantage because their L2 education focuses heavily on reading and writing at the expense of speaking. However, upon the revision of the TOEFL test, test developers and experts have predicted that practice for the TOEFL speaking will help students to develop speaking skills required in the academic setting. If this is true, the TOEFL speaking practice will benefit East Asian learners by providing an opportunity to develop their much needed skills, oral communication skills in EAP. However, this claim

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has not been tested yet.

East Asian learners' difficulties with oral interaction and the reasons behind this problem have been widely researched (Hwang, 1993; J. Liu, 2000; Tomizawa, 1990); however, few studies have looked at effective tasks to address this problem. It has been noted that the design of the typical communicative classrooms does not always address East Asian students' needs (Chen, 2003; Rao, 2002). The same format practice of the TOEFL speaking test-items can be useful for East Asian learners particularly in CLT oriented classrooms.

For instance, the same format practice of TOEFL speaking test-tasks provides opportunities for forced oral production. In communicative ESL classrooms, learners' participation is encouraged but rarely forced; East Asian learners can opt for silence in oral tasks such as class discussion and often lose opportunities to speak because students from other cultural backgrounds participate more readily, and may even dominate class talk (Chen, 2003; Hwang, 1993). The individualized practice of the TOEFL speaking can also be expected to benefit East Asian students because it matches their learning style preference of individual work over group work identified in Woodrow and Sham's study (2001).

The TOEFL speaking practice can also address some of their learning styles that may not be conducive to effective oral communication. Thinking-oriented and precision-oriented East Asian learning styles often make them difficult to respond timely or to take a risk in oral interaction (Chen, 2003; Rao, 2001). Practicing the TOEFL type speaking tasks that require speakers to respond fairly spontaneously by giving a short preparation time might foster guided style-stretching among those learners.

In addition, because the TOEFL speaking tasks are originally designed for a test, learners are more likely to be given more focused instruction targeting successful performance. For example, specific instruction on how to construct and deliver oral responses for different tasks (e.g., giving opinions or summarizing ideas based on written or listening materials) in a limited time could be given. The learners would be provided with the tools that help them construct and organize their oral responses, and the tools could include specific vocabulary, phrases and structural patterns useful for describing, detailing, and supporting their ideas or opinions. For East Asian learners who lack experience in giving opinions or answering questions orally in the classrooms, this type of instruction might be very helpful. It also seems possible that the learners would be more aware of what they need to improve in their speech production, if the scoring criteria are consulted to improve speech and more feedback from teachers is given. The learners would have more opportunity to monitor and to analyze their speech by means of frequent recording or transcribing to evaluate their speech as suggested by the official TOEFL guidebook (ETS, 2006). However, because all of these possible teaching and learning methods are test-oriented, they are less likely to be employed or entirely absent in non-test preparation classrooms.

Test experts have predicted that the new TOEFL test will have positive impact on teaching and learning in test preparation courses by making TOEFL classrooms more communicative. However, the speculations above suggest that the practice for the new TOEFL speaking test can extend benefits *far beyond* the TOEFL preparation context. The focused and individualized nature of the TOEFL speaking tasks has the potential to address learners' needs, more specifically, those of East Asian learners in CLT oriented

classrooms. For all of these compelling reasons, this study investigated the potential usefulness of the TOEFL speaking practice for East Asian learners.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks for facilitating East Asian learners' English academic speaking skills development and for promoting participation. The study was exploratory in nature; thus, specific hypotheses were not developed. The following two research questions were explored.

1. To what extent is the TOEFL speaking practice similar to/different from the kind of speaking practice East Asian learners normally get in pre-university, communicative EAP classrooms?

2. What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the relative usefulness of TOEFL speaking tasks?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of how the study was designed and undertaken. The instructional context of the study, the development of data collection instruments and the process of data collection are further discussed.

Context and Design of the Study

Opportunity for a Case Study

When this study was proposed, the original plan was to collect data from TOEFL preparation classrooms and intensive communicative classrooms separately in a university language institution. However, this was not feasible for two reasons. First, for the winter semester of 2007, which was the intended data collection period, the number of East Asian students who were enrolled in the TOEFL preparation course in the intended research site was too small. Second, the access to the TOEFL preparation classroom was denied. However, a curriculum change that was to take effect in the winter term of 2007 presented a new opportunity to address the research questions. The institution planned to incorporate the practice of prototype TOEFL test-tasks into its regular intensive program for advanced learners. For the practice of the TOEFL speaking, prototype TOEFL speaking tasks were developed based on various commercial test preparation materials. Hereafter, the TOEFL tasks or the TOEFL speaking tasks will refer to the prototype test-tasks that are mock test-items of the new TOEFL test. A selection of the TOEFL speaking tasks were to be piloted in four different classes of the two highest levels (two Advanced 1 and two Advanced 2 classes). There were 24 East Asian learners registered for the two levels. This presented an opportunity to conduct a case study,

documenting the institution's experience with the TOEFL type speaking tasks, and exploring teachers' and East Asian learners' responses to the TOEFL tasks in the communicative classes.

Site and the Program

The research site was a language institute at a center for continuing education at a Canadian University. The institution offers an eight-level intensive ESL program. The intensive class meets five days per week and lasts five to four hours for ten weeks. Each class is taught by two teachers, each of whom teaches either morning or afternoon part of the class. This program is primarily designed to prepare NNS students for university studies; successful completion of the highest level (Advanced 2) enables students to automatically meet language requirements for admission to the university. Therefore, focused instruction targeting both language and study skills in EAP is given to learners at higher levels and delivered with a communicative teaching orientation.

As part of curriculum reform, the institution decided to incorporate the practice of TOEFL type tasks into its regular intensive program. This was rather an unusual decision considering the fact that preparation for the TOEFL test was not part of the program. The TOEFL test played a limited role in the university because the university's own language proficiency test, was much more widely used for admission of NNS candidates than the TOEFL. Consequently, for the assessment of students' overall performance throughout the semester and for the final evaluation of students' successful completion of the highest level for university admissions, the program used its own in-house assessment tools. In addition, the institution offered a part-time TOEFL preparation course for students who needed to study for the TOEFL. Because there seemed no immediate need for teachers

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and students in the intensive program to work on the TOEFL in this context, the TOEFL practice was incorporated as a learning or teaching tool to provide additional oral practice for the students.

Participants

Twenty-four[2] East Asian students, seven teachers, and a program coordinator participated in the study. 12 students were enrolled in the Advanced 1 course and the other 12, in the Advanced 2. There were 10 female students and 14 male. Their countries of origin were China (n=14), Taiwan (n=5), Korea (n=4), and Japan (n=1). Their ages ranged from 19 to 35 with a mean age of 23. The mean length of stay in Canada was 15 months. Eighteen students intended to study in English-medium universities and the majority of them had already applied to programs at the university where the course was being offered.

Out of the seven teachers who participated in the study, six were native English speakers and a bilingual speaker of English and a Slavic language. All were experienced teachers of EAP. Their experience with teaching EAP varied as the teachers' years of teaching the advanced levels ranged from two to over ten years. The program coordinator had worked for the institution for 17 years and was involved in developing and revising syllabuses and materials for ESL courses.

Mixed Method Case Study Design

A mixed methods case study was chosen for the research design. By adopting a case study design, it would be possible to portray teachers' and students' new experiences with the TOEFL tasks holistically and to analyse the particularity and complexity of this

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[2] Out of 25 East Asian students registered, one student in an Advanced 1 class dropped out in the middle of the semester.

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unique case, and its interaction with the context (Stake, 1995). The two research questions guiding the study were: "To what extent is the TOEFL speaking practice similar to/different from the kind of speaking practice East Asian learners normally get in pre-university, communicative EAP classrooms?" and "What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the relative usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks?"

In order to better answer the first question, classroom observation, interview, and questionnaire techniques were selected; by gathering data concerning teachers' and students' behaviours from two different sources, observation and participants' self-report, the research was able to provide a thick description of the case. For the second research questions, a questionnaire and interviews also gathered the participants' perceptions of and attitudes towards the TOEFL speaking tasks. A mixed methods design which employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data analysis was also selected: students' and teachers' behavioral patterns and opinions toward the TOEFL tasks were quantified and submitted to quantitative data analyses. By analyzing the participants' reported perceptions qualitatively, a richer descriptive detail about the case could also be added. As is common with a case study design, it was necessary to adapt certain aspects of the data collection and analysis strategies when the study progressed. This organic and adaptive process will be described in-depth in the following two sections.

Data Collection Instruments

This section describes the instruments used in the study: classroom observation, questionnaire, and interview. The following section will provide details on how the instruments are employed.

Classroom Observation

As noted earlier, in order to answer the first research question concerning the differences or similarities between the TOEFL speaking practice and other regular speaking practices, a classroom observation method was chosen. Classroom observations focused on the pedagogy used for oral skills development and teachers' and East Asian learners' behaviour during different tasks. To facilitate comparison of behaviour among different tasks during observations, a structured observation scheme including a detailed checklist and rating scale was developed. The observation scheme was adapted from Part A of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) designed by Spada and Frohlich (1995). The observation scheme included categories such as students' working mode and type (group, pair, individual work) and the content of teacher talk (e.g., broad or specific instruction, corrective feedback on language or feedback on task). The scheme was used for the first observation, which lasted 3 hours. However, during the observation, it was found that teachers' and students' behavioural patterns did not vary and the frequency of certain behaviours (e.g., instruction on speaking, error correction) was extremely low. Therefore, the observation grid was revised to allow detailed field notes of the teachers' and students' overall responses to various task types and participation patterns (see Appendix A).

Questionnaire

Rationale and development. In order to examine students' perceived bahaviour during different tasks and their opinions about the usefulness of the TOEFL, the questionnaire method was chosen for a number of reasons. First, to determine overall trends of 24 students' perceptions, a questionnaire was more useful than the interview

method as responses could be easily quantifiable for quantitative analysis. Second, due to the limited number of observations, the observation data were not useful for a detailed behavioural analysis. Thus, a questionnaire was more appropriate than interviews for an objective behavioural analysis on various aspects as students could report their perceived behaviour on a scale. Finally, interviews intended to gather data for the analyses of students' behaviours and opinions anticipated a problem of practicality; lengthy interviews with all the 24 students were not practical.

As the case was novel, questionnaires used in other studies were of limited benefit. Thus, all of the items for the questionnaire were originally developed primarily based on the information obtained from classroom observations. The questionnaire was developed according to guidelines provided by Dörnyei (2003). A two-part questionnaire (Appendix B) was developed: the first part gathered perceptions of and opinions about the TOEFL and regular speaking tasks, and the second part obtained background information including English learning history both in the students' home country and Canada. The first part included six main questions based on four categories: 1) level of difficulty with different oral tasks used in the courses 2) motivation and participation, 3) comparison of the three tasks: TOEFL, oral presentation, and group/whole class discussions comparison, and 4) opinions about TOEFL speaking practice. Five additional questions related to the research interest were also added to the questionnaire. These components are discussed in detail in the following section.

Level of difficulty. Students were asked to evaluate their level of difficulty in doing regular and TOEFL speaking tasks. The regular speaking activities included six different tasks: 1) group discussion based on reading, 2) group discussion based on

listening, 3) group discussion expressing opinions, 4) whole class discussion, 5) oral presentation, and 6) debate. The TOEFL speaking included all six task types – two independent speaking tasks (talk about personal experience and preference) and four integrated speaking tasks (listen & speak, and read, listen & speak on a campus life related and academic topic). A six-point Likert scale was used, where 1 was very difficult and 6 was very easy.

Motivation & participation. Students' level of motivation and participation was rated on a ten-point Likert scale (1: extremely low and 10: extremely high). Motivation for doing regular speaking activities and for doing the TOEFL tasks was included. As for participation, level of participation in group discussions, whole class discussions, and the TOEFL tasks were rated separately. Students were asked to evaluate their participation in comparison with other students. The intention of using of a 10-point scale for participation and motivation was to facilitate students' grading; the scale could allow students to consider the proportion of their participation and motivation for the evaluation. However, for other questions described in the following sections, a six-point Likert agreement-disagreement scale, which do not allow respondents to choose a middle score, was used to accurately determine trends in responses.

Three tasks comparison. Students were asked to rate their own and their teachers' behaviours during three types of oral tasks (TOEFL, oral presentation, group/whole class discussions[3]) and perceived usefulness of the three tasks. The tasks were compared on 13 items: eleven behaviour-related items and two opinion items. Five items were related to attention to language form and use (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and

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[3] The TOEFL tasks were compared with oral presentation, and group/whole class discussion activities as the two were most common oral activities identified during the observations.

organization). Four items were concerned with instruction, feedback, and self-evaluation. Two items were related to efforts to participate. The last two items were concerned with students' opinions about usefulness of the tasks for improving speaking and confidence. Thirteen statements were created based on the items (e.g., I pay attention to my pronunciation while I am speaking, I received feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance from teachers, I force myself to speak even when I'm not interested in the topic, Repeated practice with this speaking activity is a good way to improve my speaking skills). In the questionnaire, the 13 statements were presented for TOEFL, oral presentation, group/whole class discussions respectively and students rated the items on a six-point Likert agreement-disagreement scale.

The questionnaire was piloted with two Asian students (one Vietnamese and one Thai). While piloting, it was found that responses on the items across the tasks did not differ, even though students' verbally indicated different attitudes towards the tasks when comparing them directly. Therefore, another question was added for direct comparison by asking students to decide for which activity, each statement was the most, the second most, and the least true.

Opinions about TOEFL speaking practice. Two questions concerning the TOEFL speaking tasks were also included. The first question was related to the potential of the TOEFL as a regular activity. Students were asked to rate three negative and four positive statements (e.g., It is a waste of time because I don't have to take the TOEFL test., I might be able to express my opinions more easily) on a six-point Likert agreement-disagreement scale. The second question was open-ended one; it asked students' likes and dislikes about doing the TOEFL tasks.

Additional questions. The questionnaire also included five additional questions. Three questions were related to perceived difficulty with speaking and reasons for the difficulty and lack of participation. Another open-ended question concerned students' opinions about how teachers and the program could change to facilitate their oral skills development. The last question asked students to choose three effective tasks for improving EAP speaking skills out of six regular and six TOEFL tasks.

Semi-structured Interview

Rationale for interview. In order to examine teachers' perceptions of the TOEFL speaking tasks, a semi-structured interview method was selected. After all the observations were made, it was found that teachers' use of the TOEFL tasks was very limited in number. In addition, only three teachers covered the entire six different TOEFL speaking tasks. Accordingly, it seemed to be more desirable to focus on the three teachers who had more experience in using the TOEFL tasks than to include all the teachers who used the TOEFL tasks. The interview method was more appropriate for gathering the three teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of the TOEFL tasks in-depth and their experience of teaching the TOEFL tasks in general. To understand the context of the inclusion of the TOEFL tasks in the regular intensive program, an interview with the program coordinator who was in charge of developing curriculum was also included.

Interview protocol. Similar to the questionnaire used for probing students' perceptions, questions were developed based on the information obtained via observation (Appendix C). Topics for the question included perceived differences/similarities between the TOEFL speaking tasks and regular oral tasks, advantages/limitations of the TOEFL tasks, perceived effectiveness of the TOEFL for promoting participation and building

confidence, opinions about TOEFL teaching methodology, and potential usefulness of the

TOEFL speaking tasks for evaluation and feedback. Teachers were also asked to

comment on potential applications of the TOEFL tasks for various purposes (e.g.,

homework, self-evaluation) and some techniques recommended by ETS for TOEFL

preparation classrooms (e.g., recording for feedback, self-evaluation, using scoring

rubrics, role play).

An interview protocol for the program coordinator was also developed in order to

gather background information about the inclusion of the TOEFL tasks in the regular

curriculum (Appendix D). The topics of the interview questions were motivation of the

TOEFL inclusion, decision-making process, material preparation, implementation plans,

anticipated problems, and overall evaluation. This information was considered to be

crucial for interpreting and discussing the data from the teachers and students.

Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected over a five-month period. Class observations of regular

and the TOEFL speaking activities were made between week 3 and week 10 of the winter

2007 semester. After all the observations were carried out, the questionnaire was

administered to the 24 students and individual interviews were conducted with three

teachers and with the program coordinator. The following section will describe the

process of data gathering in depth.

Observations of Selected Regular Speaking Activities

Class observations of speaking activities were carried out between week 3 and

week 10 of the winter 2007 semester. To observe regular speaking activities, The teachers

was asked to identify when the class would spend more time on speaking as language skills were not usually taught in isolation in the institution. Thus, I decided to visit classes when they were primarily focusing on group and whole class discussions or oral presentations by East Asian students and following Q & A sessions after the presentations. For the regular speaking, all the four Advanced 1 and 2 classes taught by five different teachers were observed and the total number of observation was 11 (Table 2). The time observed ranged from 28 to 157 minutes with average of 87 minutes.

Table 2
Summary of Observations for Regular and TOEFL Tasks

	Advanced 1				Advanced 2				total
	Class 1		Class 2		Class 1		Class 2		number
	TA	TB	TC	TD	TE	TF	TI	TG	
Regular									11
- oral presentation	1				2		2		
- G/WC discussion	1	1	2		1		1		
TOEFL		5	1	1	1	2	4		13[a]

[a]One observation took place when TE and TI team-taught the TOEFL tasks.

Observations of the TOEFL Speaking Practice

The implementation of TOEFL speaking practice had been planned to begin at the beginning of the semester, but it was postponed due to a delay in materials development. The tasks were to be implemented between week 6 and week 10. However, it was not until week 8 that the tasks were finally used, due to a misunderstanding between the coordinator and the teachers regarding when and how to use the tasks. When the material became accessible to the teachers, it was approaching the end of the term, and the teachers were increasingly focused on the final exams. (There were additional reasons behind the teachers' reluctance to use the TOEFL tasks or certain TOEFL tasks, which

emerged during the interviews, which will be reported in the analyses and discussion chapters.) This posed a problem for the research project because without intervention, it appeared that the teachers might not incorporate all the different TOEFL tasks into their already busy schedule. Accordingly, very unusual in case studies that normally do not require the researcher's control over the case (Yin, 2003), the need for the researcher to intervene in the process emerged. I asked teachers to try out all the tasks at least once for the sake of the research. I was also involved in task and material selection and/or lesson planning; I suggested introducing the scoring rubric of the TOEFL and helped to choose topics for the tasks.

In the end, the TOEFL speaking tasks were implemented during the two-week period at the end of the semester. TOEFL speaking was observed in the four classes taught by six different teachers (Table 2). The total number of observation was 13 and the observation time ranged from 27 to 59 minutes with average of 43 minutes.

Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaire was administered to the students after the semester ended. In order to administer the questionnaire, the researcher met with 17 students individually and seven students in two groups. As the nine-page questionnaire had many questions and was in English, it was important to ensure that students fully understood the questions. Thus, when the students gave contradictory or unexpected answers, I double-checked the truth of answers, rephrased questions, or explained questions further to obtain different or more accurate answers. For example, when students' rating of their participation level did not match with the participation patterns observed in the classrooms, the students were asked to explain why they considered their participation to be at the level. I also asked

additional questions to verify or expand answers particularly when students' writing of

the answers on the open-ended questions was unclear. For example, students wrote doing

TOEFL speaking tasks was helpful without noting how it was helpful or on what area(s)

it helped them to improve. The information gathered while interacting with the students

through the administration of the questionnaire was also added to the field notes.

Therefore, the administering of the questionnaire was interactive, allowing the researcher

to be able to obtain additional information related to the research issues. On average, it

took an hour for the students to complete the questionnaire.

Interview Procedures

Individual interviews with the three teachers and the program coordinator were

carried out after the end of semester. The interviews took approximately an hour and they

were recorded on a computer. The program used for recording was *Cool Edit 2000*. All

the interviews were transcribed.

CHAPTER 4: ANAYSES AND FINDINGS

This chapter reports the analysis of the data collected from the three instruments used in the study: the classroom observations, the student questionnaires, and the teacher and administrator interviews. There are separate sections for each instrument, in which the following information is provided: the rationale for the instrument (with respect to the research questions), the analyses, and the findings. A fourth section summarizes the findings across the three instruments.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations were carried out to answer the first research question: to what extent is the TOEFL speaking practice similar to/different from the kind of speaking practice East Asian learners normally get in pre-university, communicative EAP classrooms. The observations focused on teachers' and East Asian learners' behaviour during different tasks and the pedagogy used for oral skills development.

Data Analysis Procedure

A total number of 24 observations were carried out, without video- or audio-recording. Based on the field notes taken during the observations, similarities and differences among the speaking tasks used in the classrooms were examined. The information from the field notes was arranged in eight categories: activity, activity type, duration, materials (topic and sources), student work mode, teachers' behaviour/speech, students' behaviour/speech (all, non-East Asian, and East Asian students), and notes. The analyses revealed three types of speaking activities: the TOEFL, small group and whole class discussions, and oral presentations. There were also two story-retelling speaking

activities which students performed in pairs or in group of three. Although the activity was not designed to be a discussion activity, in both cases, the activity generated considerable student discussion among the pair or group members. It was therefore included in the small group discussion category.

For each speaking activity, purposes of activity, speech type (e,g., spontaneous, prepared, rehearsed), and participation type (voluntary vs. mandatory) were analyzed. For students' behaviour/speech, students' focus (e.g., form, content), class participation pattern, East Asian students' participation pattern, and frequency of peer feedback were also analyzed. For teachers' behaviour/speech, specific instruction on speaking skills, and frequency of teacher feedback, including corrective feedback were focused on. As the analyses were based on the field notes without the benefit of audio- or video-recording, it was not possible to assign numbers of instances for many categories and sub-categories. In these cases, adverbs of frequency (rarely, often etc) are used to provide some quantification of the observations recorded in the field notes or derived from the analyses.

Findings

The findings from the classroom observations are reported in two parts. The first part provides overall descriptions of group and whole class discussions, oral presentations, and TOEFL speaking practice respectively, based on the information from the field notes. The second part summarizes the similarities and differences among the three tasks.

Group and whole class discussions. During the 11 observations for regular (as opposed to TOEFL) speaking activities, students usually spent a considerable amount of their class time talking in small groups unless they were giving or listening to oral presentations or working on other skills-oriented activities (e.g., reading course materials

or watching video-clips). Table 3 shows a summary of class time spent in five different

teachers' classes during the six observation sessions, which took place when there was no

oral presentation. The time spent on small group discussions ranged from 44% to 100%

of the total time spent on speaking activities, with an average of 75%. In TC's class in

which only eight students were enrolled, it was found that the time spent on whole class

discussions was as substantial as the time for small group discussions during one

observation. Speaking in pairs was observed only twice in two different classes.

Table 3

Class Time Distribution for Regular Speaking Activities without Oral Presentation

Class	Activities			Student Work Mode Speaking Activities			during
	speaking-focused	other skills-focused	total	small groups	whole class	pairs	total
TA	63% (105)	37% (62)	100% (167)	88% (92)	0% (0)	12% (13)	100% (105)
TB	100% (28)	0% (0)	100% (28)	100% (28)	0% (0)	0% (0)	100% (28)
TC-1	57% (52)	43% (40)	100% (92)	44% (23)	46% (24)	10% (5)	100% (52)
TC-2	67% (97)	33% (48)	100% (145)	72% (70)	28% (27)	0% (0)	100% (97)
TE	76% (65)	24% (20)	100% (85)	69% (45)	31% (20)	0% (0)	100% (65)
TI	55% (44)	45% (36)	100% (80)	80% (35)	20% (9)	0% (0)	100% (44)

Note. Numbers in parentheses indicate minutes

The small group discussions were primarily used to provide students with

opportunities to speak from reading, listening and writing. Most of their reading, listening,

and writing materials came from their course package that included texts and discussion questions for each thematic unit, and from video-clips related to each theme. The video-clips were mostly taken from TV news or documentaries. Various themes (e.g., education, happiness, body image) and numerous projects (e.g., book report, interview, public lecture, research, academic textbook) provided topics for discussions. Students usually shared, discussed, or checked answers from listening and reading worksheets in the course package. Checking and sharing information was also important for preparing their writing assignments. In small groups, students also discussed various topics prior to reading, listening, or writing activities and exchanged personal experiences or opinions on the topics as pre-activities. Whole class discussions were used for similar purposes. Teachers led information- or opinion-oriented discussions to check students' level of understanding, or to wrap up discussion sessions.

Although small group discussions were the most frequently used speaking task, this task was not used for evaluation of students' oral skills and performance. This may explain the observation that neither students nor teachers focused much on the quality of oral performance during the small group discussions (e.g., content development, and accurate language use). Teachers tended not to give specific instructions on speaking skills and rarely provided feedback on the quality of the oral performance or directed peers to do so. During small group and whole class discussions, explicit error correction was extremely rare. When it did occur, it tended to focus on pronunciation or of word-choice. Although students' erroneous questions during whole class discussions were often reformulated to the whole class, overall, the recasting of students' erroneous speech was infrequent.

Although teachers encouraged all the students to participate in small group and whole class discussions equally, participation in discussion was always voluntary; thus, there was often unequal participation. During discussions, it was rare for East Asian students to dominate talk whereas domination of talk by non-East Asian students was often observed. When teachers posed a question to the whole class, non-East Asian students often volunteered to give answers. Occasionally, TC and TI called on several individuals who had not yet participated – usually East Asians. As participation in discussions was voluntary, students were able to opt for silence if they had not completed the relevant homework, missed the previous class, or had not gathered enough information from the reading or listening input for discussions.

Oral presentations. Oral presentations were another frequently used speaking activity in the Advanced 1 and 2 classrooms. Throughout the semester, four or five formal presentations were assigned to each student, usually at the end of a thematic unit or a major project. Presentations normally included a Q & A session that was led by a presenter or presenters. Oral presentations were the evaluation tasks through which students' achievement and progress in oral skills development were assessed. Although debates were also used for evaluation, oral presentations were the more frequent and the more important of the two.

Oral presentations were observed on five classroom visits, and during that time, 11 East Asian students gave a talk. Although students were advised to present with note cards comprising only major points, most students prepared sentences for the entire speech in advance. As the tasks were important for their final grades, teachers asked students to rehearse their presentations at home. The presentations were also intensively

rehearsed in the classroom; students who were scheduled to present were given class time to practice the speech in groups or individually on the day. In TI's class, students were able to practice their final presentation in a separate room individually while other students were working on other projects. While presenting, it was common for East Asian learners to read their prepared text or to recite it from memory.

Compared to group discussions, much more guidance for preparing and delivering oral presentations (e.g., do not read, speak slowly and clearly, maintain eye contact) were provided. There was ample opportunity for teacher and peer feedback. Peer feedback was given during a discussion session after a presentation, and peer feedback in a written format was mandatory for one oral presentation task in the Advanced 2 classes. After each presentation, teachers also gave oral feedback to the presenter, either individually or in front of the whole class.

TOEFL speaking practice tasks. TOEFL speaking practice tasks were used at the end of the semester. Six out of eight teachers implemented the TOEFL tasks, and the range of the task use was once to six times. With the exception of TB's and TC's first use of the TOEFL speaking practice, all occasions of TOEFL speaking practice were observed.

Materials for the TOEFL speaking practice were developed by the program coordinator. A number of commercial TOEFL preparation textbooks and an official guidebook by ETS were consulted for topic selections. Reading and listening materials were taken from them and copied to CDs. Two types of speech (professors' lectures/instructions and conversations on campus) were used in the listening materials for the integrated skills tasks; thus, formality of speech varied. Excerpts of simulated

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professors' lectures on various subject matters (e.g., biology, English literature, psychology, business) and instructions on laboratory work at university comprised formal speech whereas speech in simulated conversations between two students or between a teacher or a student concerning life or study situations on campus was casual.

Before implementing the tasks, teachers pointed out that the purposes of the TOEFL task use were to familiarize students with the TOEFL test which is commonly used for admission in other universities in North America, and to provide students with an opportunity to practice speaking in a different format. Most of the teachers emphasized that the similarity between the TOEFL speaking tasks and their usual speaking practice via discussion activities was a skills integrated approach (speaking from listening and/or reading) and that the main difference was the time constraint on the speech preparation and delivery.

Teachers gave brief instruction on the procedures of the tasks, and students practiced mock test tasks. During the TOEFL practice, teachers attempted to simulate a test-taking situation closely without modifying the time allocation for the tasks or the task implementation (e.g., listening materials only one time). However, there were two exceptions. TD, the only teacher with experience in teaching new TOEFL preparation, did not adopt the same method of test simulation when she was doing integrated tasks on academic topics with her students. She went over new vocabulary found in reading or listening materials for the TOEFL tasks, allowed them to listen several times, and gave more time to prepare and to respond. After class, when asked why she did not use the tasks the same way as the tasks were done for testing, she believed that it was too difficult for her Advanced 1 students to do the academic topic tasks under the real testing

condition. Similarly, TB included a brief lecture on guessing meaning of unknown words from the context, using examples from the TOEFL tasks before they were actually doing the tasks. He also taught how to predict information that students were about to hear from the given reading input and how to relate reading input to listening input.

Except when TE and TI team-taught the TOEFL speaking for the first time, most of the teachers used a pair work mode in which students alternated speaking turns. After speakers gave their answer, teachers asked listeners to evaluate their partners' performance. As the tasks required students to produce relatively short speech within a time frame, students seemed to find it easier to remark on whether or not their responses were complete or to report their peer or self evaluation to the class than to do so during discussion activities. In TB's and TI's class, several students brought out the similarity between the TOEFL speaking and academic writing: the importance of organization and content development. The importance of note-taking and effective use of preparation time to improve their responses was also discussed. In TI's class, a few students did the tasks in front of the class and their oral performance was used for a whole class discussion topic.

After observing TB's first TOEFL teaching, TB and I had a brief discussion on how he would do the TOEFL speaking tasks next time. I suggested to TB that he could introduce the scoring rubrics to his students. Following my suggestion, TB was the only teacher who utilized the scoring rubrics for the class. They were asked to read score descriptions for categories in the rubrics and to pay attention to the features.

Although teachers pointed out the importance of organizing speech and giving complete answers, they rarely gave specific instructions on how to improve oral

responses for the TOEFL tasks. In addition, as teachers usually controlled the procedures in front of the class and timed the students' speech, they did not have much opportunity to listen carefully to each student' responses. As a result, teacher feedback was rare.

As TOEFL speaking practice tasks were individualized tasks mostly done in pairs, students were given equal opportunities to speak and forced to speak regardless of their readiness for speaking. Although some East Asian students looked perplexed after listening to academic lectures of the TOEFL speaking tasks or others commented on their limited comprehension after listening, their attempts to speak were notable: there were only two cases in which East Asian students remained silent when it was their turn to speak.

Summary of Observations

Table 4 summarizes similarities and differences among the three types of tasks observed during classroom observations; group discussions, oral presentations, and TOEFL speaking practice tasks. Both group discussions and TOEFL speaking practice tasks (integrated) were speaking practice tasks in which students spoke spontaneously from reading and listening whereas oral presentations (independent) served as evaluation tasks. Although students spent much class time discussing in small groups everyday, students and teachers paid little attention to language use and form, and focus on meaning was paramount. In addition, teachers' specific instruction on speaking and opportunities for teacher and peer feedback were rare. Students' participation was voluntary and unequal; they opted for silence when they were not ready for discussions.

Table 4

Summary of Observations for the Three Tasks

	Group discussions	Oral presentations	TOEFL speaking practice tasks
Task type	skills integrated oral task	independent oral task	independent and skills integrated oral task
Topics	occasionally university-related	occasionally university-related	always university-related
Main purpose	speaking practice	evaluation of oral skills	speaking practice
Frequency of use	Everyday	4-5 times per semester	3-6 times per semester
Students' focus	Content	form and content	form and content
Speech production	spontaneous	prepared rehearsed memorized	spontaneous
Instruction on speaking	Rarely	usually	sometimes
Teacher feedback	Rarely	always	rarely
Peer feedback	almost never	often	almost always
Participation	unequal voluntary	equal mandatory	equal mandatory
East Asian students' reticence	often visible	never	almost never

Unlike group discussions, as oral presentations and TOEFL speaking tasks were individualized tasks, their "built-in structure" for forcing oral production and guiding equal participation was notable. Speech for the TOEFL and discussions was far more spontaneous than the rehearsed and memorized speech for oral presentations. Although the TOEFL practice tasks were not used for evaluation of oral production, due to the design of the tasks for assessment, students paid more attention to forming complete and coherent oral responses, and gave each other feedback. For oral presentations and TOEFL speaking practice, teachers gave some instructions on speaking, but they were rather

general (oral presentation tips), or focused on content development (organization). Teachers provided little instruction on speaking during discussions.

TOEFL speaking practice tasks provided students with exposure to simulated life situations on campus and academic lectures in university content classrooms. Although the intensive program was geared towards preparing pre-university EAP students for university studies, the teaching and learning materials were gathered from rather general sources such as TV news clips and newspaper articles. University lecture excerpts or informal conversations taking place on campus were rarely chosen for materials of speaking activities in the institution.

Student Questionnaire

In order to answer the two research questions about 1) comparisons between the TOEFL speaking practice and regular speaking practice and 2) the teachers' and students' perceptions of the relative usefulness of TOEFL speaking tasks, a questionnaire was administered to 24 East Asian students. Students' perceived bahaviour during different tasks and their opinions about the usefulness of the TOEFL and regular speaking tasks were examined.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data obtained from the student questionnaire were both quantitative and qualitative. Students' responses on the questions related to the level of motivation and participation, and the perceptions of different speaking tasks (e.g., usefulness or perceived behaviours) provided quantitative data. Three open-ended questions generated qualitative data. The following section describes the analysis procedures for these data.

Quantitative data. The majority of the questions utilized a six-point Likert scale. For the level of difficulty for speaking tasks, a one to six scale (very difficult as 1 and very easy as 6) was used. For the analyses, 1, 2, 3 were collapsed as "difficult" and 4, 5, 6, as "easy." For the other questions (e.g., task comparison and potential usefulness of the TOEFL), a six-point agree-disagree scale was used. For the analyses, strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree were collapsed as "disagree" and somewhat agree, agree, strongly agree, as "agree." Frequency of responses for each item was analyzed by counting the number of students who marked "difficult" or "easy" and who chose "agree" or "disagree" for the items.

For two questions regarding students' level of motivation and participation, a ten-point Likert scale was used. Descriptive statistics were employed for the analyses. Two statistical tests, the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test (non-parametric equivalent of the dependent samples t-test) and the Friedman test (a non-parametric of repeated measures ANOVA) were used to check significance.

Qualitative data. The questionnaire included three open-ended question items: i) reasons why students liked doing the TOEFL tasks, ii) reasons why students disliked doing the TOEFL tasks, and iii) students' opinions about how teachers and the program could better facilitate the development of speaking skills. To carry out content analysis of the qualitative data, a coding scheme was developed. For each question, all the items of information taken from students' written responses were first identified. Then, the concepts related to the research questions were categorized into main categories and sub-categories. Each student's response was coded on a spreadsheet based on the coding scheme and the number of students who identified each concept was counted. Appendix

E shows the coding for each question. Via this procedure, it was possible to provide a qualitative assessment of the comments, and to report on the frequency of the comments across the sample, thereby demonstrating the representativeness of the comments. The data were then coded by a second coder. The coder was an MA student in Applied Linguistics with an experience in teaching EFL in China and Taiwan. She was instructed to code students' responses, based on exact wording with a minimum level of interpretation. The inter-rater reliability was calculated by checking the exact agreement of coding for each student between the two coders. The percentage of agreement for the reasons for likes was 84%, for the reasons for the dislikes, 87%, and for suggested improvements to the program and teachers, 92%.

Findings

The following section reports results from the student questionnaire.

East Asian students' difficulties with language skills. Table 5 shows students' perceived difficulty with English skills. Out of 24 East Asian students, almost half (11) considered speaking to be the most difficult skill to improve. However, only five students chose EAP speaking as the most difficult skill while studying at English-medium universities. East Asian participants essentially found all four skills difficult in EAP as the numbers of students who anticipated (or experienced[4]) their difficulty were fairly evenly distributed to all four skills. The reasons for their speaking difficulty and lack of participation, which the majority of East Asian students (14 to 18) agreed with, were related to lack of confidence in speaking, limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with classroom practice of discussing and giving opinions in class, and lack of efforts to talk

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[4] Three participants had already studied at a university in Canada and their length of study varied from two weeks to two years.

when having little information.

Table 5
Students' Difficulty with English Skills in General and EAP (N=24)

	Skills			
	reading in general	writing in general	speaking in general	listening in general
the most difficult to improve	3	4	11	6

In pursuing studies at university,	EAP reading	EAP writing	EAP speaking	EAP listening
the most difficult	7	7	5	5
the second most difficult	8	6	3	7

Level of difficulty for speaking tasks. The ratings of level of difficulty for regular and

TOEFL speaking tasks are shown in Table 6. The majority of the East Asian students

considered regular speaking activities as easy.

Table 6
Level of Difficulty for Regular and TOEFL Speaking Tasks (N=24)

	Difficult % (n)	Easy % (n)
Regular speaking		
- Whole class discussion	33% (8)	67% (16)
- Group discussion (listening)	33% (8)	67% (16)
- Oral presentation	21% (5)	79% (19)
- Group discussion (topic)	13% (3)	87% (16)
- Debate	13% (3)	87% (16)
- Group discussion (reading)	8% (2)	92% (22)
TOEFL speaking		
- Listen & speak (academic)	75% (18)	25% (6)
- Read, listen, & speak (academic)	71% (17)	29% (7)
- Read, listen, & speak (campus)	38% (9)	62% (15)
- individual (preference)	29% (7)	71% (17)
- Listen & speak (campus)	21% (5)	79% (19)
- individual (topic)	13% (3)	87% (21)

Whole class discussions and group discussions on a topic (e.g., expressing opinions) were

the two tasks which 33% of the students rated as difficult. For the six TOEFL tasks, the majority of the students found the two individual and two integrated speaking tasks on campus-related topics easy, but, most (73%) found the two integrated tasks on academic topics difficult.

Motivation & participation. The mean of students' level of motivation for doing regular speaking activities was higher than the mean for the TOEFL tasks (Table 7). The students' reported participation during the TOEFL tasks was lower than participation during group discussions, but higher than whole class discussions. However, the differences were not statistically significant. The motivation for regular tasks did not significantly differ from the motivation for the TOEFL speaking, using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, $z = -1.63, p = .10$. Participation in the TOEFL tasks did not differ significantly from participation in whole class discussions, or from participation in group discussions, using the Friedman Test, $\chi^2 = 5.452$ (2), $p = .065$.

Table 7
Level of Motivation and Participation (N=24)

	M	SD	Min	Max
Motivation				
- regular speaking tasks	7.25	1.622	3	10
- TOEFL practice tasks	6.75	1.871	3	10
Participation				
- group discussion	6.92	1.840	3	9
- whole class discussion	5.96	1.967	3	9
-TOEFL practice tasks	6.54	1.769	3	10

Three tasks comparison. Table 8 shows the percentages of East Asian students who agreed with the 13 statements regarding perceptions of their own and teachers' behaviour and task usefulness, when they were asked to rate degrees of agreement and

disagreement for three types of oral tasks: TOEFL, oral presentation, group/whole class discussions respectively.

Table 8
Students' Perceptions of Each of the Three Speaking Tasks (N=24)

Topics of the statements	Oral presentation	G/WC discussion	TOEFL
	Percentage of students who agreed with the statements		
Focus on language form and use			
- pronunciation	75% (18)	75% (18)	67% (16)
- grammar	71% (17)	79% (19)	63% (15)
- vocabulary	83% (20)	75% (18)	67% (16)
- fluency	96% (23)	75% (18)	88% (21)
- organization	96% (23)	75% (18)	92% (22)
Instruction, feedback, & self-evaluation			
- clear and specific instructions	92% (22)	83% (20)	83% (20)
- feedback from teachers	100% (24)	71% (17)	46% (11)
- feedback from peers	71% (17)	42% (10)	71% (17)
- self-analysis of weaknesses & strengths	88% (21)	67% (16)	88% (21)
Efforts to participate despite			
- lack of interest	88% (21)	54% (13)	88% (21)
- lack of information	63% (15)	50% (12)	83% (20)
Perceived usefulness for improving			
- speaking skills	92% (22)	88% (21)	88% (21)
- confidence	100% (24)	96% (23)	83% (20)

Note. Raw numbers are indicated in parentheses.

For oral presentations, more students agreed with all the 13 statements than disagreed; the percentages of the students who agreed ranged from 63% to 100%. For group/whole class discussions, the percentage of the students who agreed ranged from 42% to 96% and for the TOEFL tasks, 46% to 92%. For group/whole class discussions, three items: opportunities for peer feedback, efforts related to participation despite lack of interest, efforts related to participation despite lack of information were the ones that

indicated relatively low level of agreement. For the TOEFL tasks, only 46% of the students agreed that they received feedback from teachers. Except for these four cases, East Asian students' perceived behaviour during and task usefulness of all the three tasks were positive, considering higher percentages of agreement than those of disagreement. In addition, for many items, the number of students who agreed regarding one task did not differ dramatically from the numbers for another task.

Table 9

Students' Perceptions of the Three Speaking Tasks When Compared (N=24)

Topics of the statements	Oral presentation	G/WC discussion	TOEFL
	Number of students who rated the statement as the most true		
Focus on language form and use			
- pronunciation	19	1	5
- grammar	17	3	8
- vocabulary	16	2	8
- fluency	17	2	7
- organization	20	1	8
Instruction, feedback, & self-evaluation			
- clear and specific instructions	23	2	5
- feedback from teachers	22	3	2
- feedback from peers	15	3	8
- self-analysis of weakness & strengths	17	2	9
Efforts to participate despite			
- lack of interest	11	1	13
- lack of information	11	0	15
Perceived usefulness for improving			
- speaking skills	17	4	5
- confidence	17	7	7

However, as Table 9 shows, there was a substantial difference in the their perceptions of the usefulness of the tasks and of their behaviour during the tasks, when students were asked to decide for which activity each of the 13 statements was the most,

the second most, and the least true, and when they were also allowed to chose more than one task for the items.

Opinions about TOEFL speaking practice. A question regarding the potential of the TOEFL as a regular activity was included due to two reasons. First, because the participants enrolled in the advanced classes did not necessarily aim to take the TOEFL test, it was important to probe whether or not they perceived the TOEFL practice as a valid practice for the development of oral skills in EAP, not just as a practice only useful for the test. Second, due to the limited use of the TOEFL in class, it was required to ask the participants the potential usefulness *if* the tasks were to be implemented regularly throughout the semester.

Table 10 shows that the students' perceived potential usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks as a regular class activity was very positive. High percentages of disagreement were reported on three negative statements, and high percentages of agreement, on four positive statements. In particular, all the East Asian students agreed that the TOEFL practice would be useful for delivering organized speech.

Table 10
Students' Perceptions of Potential Usefulness of TOEFL as a Regular Class Activity
(N=24)

Opinions and reasons	agree	disagree
Not useful		
- it is a waste of time as I don't have to take the TOEFL	17% (4)	83% (20)
- the skills and tricks are useful only for the TOEFL test	17% (4)	83% (20)
- some tasks are too difficult for me	8% (2)	92% (22)
Useful		
- I might be able to express my opinions more easily	92% (22)	8% (2)
- I might be able to speak more spontaneously (quickly)	96% (23)	4% (1)
- I might be able to speak more coherently (organization)	100% (24)	0% (0)
- I might feel more confident during class discussions.	88% (21)	12% (3)

Table 11 shows the findings of the open-ended questions regarding students' likes

and dislikes about the TOEFL speaking tasks.

Table 11

Reasons for Liking and Disliking the TOEFL Speaking Tasks (N=24)

Reasons for likes	N	Reasons for dislikes	n
Task characteristics		*Task characteristics*	
- time limit	10	- time limit	4
- new/different format	5	- not helpful for daily life/studies	4
- fun/interesting	4	- difficult academic topics	2
- topics	3		
- forcing oral production	3	*Task implementation*	
- related to real-life	1	- not important for course	2
Helpful for speaking		- lack of teacher preparation	1
- organization	9	- not enough practice in class	1
- speaking in general	6	- already done in prep course	1
- confidence	2	*Affective*	
- pronunciation	1	- nervous	2
- academic speech	1	- boring	2
Test-related			
- test preparation	3		
- TOEFL information	2		

The time limit (lack of preparation time) of the TOEFL tasks was the most

frequently mentioned reason for liking the TOEFL speaking practice; ten students noted

the merit of the time limit. The comment below explains how the time limit for

spontaneous speech was perceived to be helpful for improving speaking skills.

> *S2*: When we do presentations in class, we already prepared the informations.
> However, when we do the TOEFL tasks, we need to listen and reading. Then we
> need to think about how to speak in short time. This help us to improve speaking
> skill.

Another frequently mentioned reason for liking the TOEFL practice was related to

the students' attention to organization in their speech preparation or delivery. Nine

students mentioned that the TOEFL speaking practice helped them with the organization

of their speech.

> *S16*: The time limit help me organize and speak faster.

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S17: It helps me to think fast and speak in a more organized way.

The comment below indicates that this skill was viewed as an important oral skill required in Canada.

> *S11*: I have to organize my thinking in very short time [before speaking]. This is a very important English skill if I want to live or work in Canada in the future.

Three students mentioned the built-in structure of the tasks forcing oral production as a reason for liking the TOEFL practice.

> *S19*: I am someone who doesn't like to speak actively. Giving me some pressure can force me to speak more than usual.

> *S22*: It forces you to think and talk about information that you don't like.

Compared to the number of reasons for likes, Table 11 shows that the number for dislikes was far smaller. Seven students answered that there were no dislikes because they could not think of any negative aspect of doing the TOEFL tasks. The time limit, which was the most frequently mentioned reason for their liking the tasks, was also the most frequent reason why they did not like doing the tasks (but note it was not cited often). The following comment illustrates this.

> *S11*: There is no enough time for you to prepare, it challenge you to be a native speakers.

Four students also considered the TOEFL tasks were not helpful for their daily life or studies. There were negative comments related to the way the tasks were implemented such as the following.

> *S21*: It was not a regular course so that classmates considered it as a light task.

Students' choice of effective tasks for improving EAP oral skills. Students were asked to choose three effective tasks for improving EAP speaking skills out of six regular

and six TOEFL tasks. By including all the oral tasks used in the classroom, this question

was designed to reveal *specific* types of oral practice which East Asian students perceived

to be effective exclusively in the academic settings. Table 12 shows that oral

presentations and debates were the two highest ranked tasks chosen by more than half of

the students, as one of the three effective tasks. Group discussion for expressing opinions

on a given topic was chosen by 10 students and ranked third. Although students showed

very positive responses toward the potential usefulness of the TOEFL as a class activity,

which was reported in the previous section, the TOEFL speaking tasks, compared to

regular speaking activities, were chosen by a relatively small number of students (zero to

six, depending on the tasks). In particular, only five students chose the read, listen, and

speak task on academic topics, and two students selected the listen and speak on

academic topics.

Table 12

Students' Choice of Three Useful Tasks for EAP Skills Development (N=24)

Rank	Task type	Task	n
1	Regular	Oral presentations	15
2	Regular	Debates	14
3	Regular	Group discussions (topic)	10
4	Regular	Group discussions (listening)	6
	TOEFL	Read, listen, & speak (campus)	6
5	Regular	Whole class discussions	5
	TOEFL	Read, listen, & speak (academic)	5
	TOEFL	Listen & speak (campus)	5
6	Regular	Group discussion (reading)	2
	TOEFL	Listen & speak (academic)	2
	TOEFL	individual (preference)	2
7	TOEFL	individual (topic)	0

Suggested improvements to the program and the teachers. To help improve their

speaking skills, East Asian students believed that teachers and the program could change

the points shown in Table 13. Four students believed that teachers should talk more with

students individually. Twelve students made a comment regarding teachers' instruction

and feedback. Focused and specific instruction/feedback for speaking skills development

was commented on by four students and instruction/feedback on grammar in their oral

production was also mentioned by four students. Students also viewed that the program

should offer more focused speaking activities; they requested that the program include

more oral presentations, more TOEFL tasks, and more TOEFL-type tasks (individualized

tasks with time limits), and more debates. There were four comments related to topic

selections for each level in the program; students thought different and diverse topics

would motivate them to speak more actively.

Table 13
*Students' Opinions on the Program Changes for Facilitating Speaking Skills
Development (N=24)*

	Topics	n
Teachers	talk more with students individually	4
	force SS to speak/stop talkative	1
	Instruction/feedback	
	- focused and specific for speaking skills	4
	- grammar	4
	- pronunciation	2
	- vocabulary/expressions	1
	- informal/casual speech	1
Program	different/diverse topics	4
	focused speaking activities	
	- more oral presentations	3
	- more TOEFL tasks	2
	- TOEFL type tasks	2
	- more debates	1
	more grammar activities	1
	more after-class activities	1
	better prepare students for university	1

Students' oral skills practice outside the classroom. To probe East Asian students'

speaking practice outside the classroom, students were asked to report amount of time spent on four language skills practice as homework or out-of-class activities assigned by their teachers. Table 14 shows that East Asian students' speaking and listening practice outside classrooms was minimal, compared to their writing and reading practice. During the administering the questionnaire, students reported that assigned speaking practice mainly focused on preparation for oral presentations.

Table 14
Average Time Spent on the Language Skill Practice outside Classrooms

	Writing	Reading	Speaking	Listening
Hours during 10 week session	80.00	67.08	7.67	7.15

Summary of Findings from Student Questionnaire

The questionnaire data show that nearly half of East Asian students considered speaking skills to be the most difficult to improve. For the speaking activities used in the classrooms, the majority of East Asian students found all the regular speaking tasks easy whereas they found the TOEFL speaking tasks on academic topics to be difficult. The data also indicate that East Asian students valued individualized speaking tasks with a "built-in structure" for forcing oral production (e.g., oral presentations, the TOEFL speaking tasks). Students' efforts to participate were the greatest during the TOEFL speaking tasks, and their attention to language form and use was at its lowest during group and whole class discussions. Although students showed very positive attitudes towards the potential usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks as a regular task, the TOEFL tasks were far less frequently chosen by the students as effective tasks for EAP skills development than other regular speaking activities.

Interviews

In order to answer the two research questions concerning the similarities and differences between the TOEFL and regular speaking practice and teachers' perceptions of the relative usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks, individual interviews with three teachers who covered the entire six different TOEFL tasks in class were carried out. Teachers' perceptions of task similarities and differences, perceived usefulness of the TOEFL and opinions about potential use of the TOEFL tasks were investigated.

To better address the research questions and to understand issues in the research context, another interview was conducted with the program coordinator (administrator) who played a major role in including the TOEFL practice in the intensive program. The motivation behind the inclusion of the TOEFL and his view on the value of the TOEFL speaking practice were probed.

Data Analysis Procedure

The data from individual interviews with the three teachers and the program coordinator were transcribed into MS Word. In order to facilitate the comparison of the three teachers' opinions, the transcribed data were arranged into sections related to the questions from the protocol for the semi-structured interviews on a spreadsheet. Based on the relevance of teachers' responses to the research questions, five main themes were selected for the report. The five themes are a) similarities and differences between the TOEFL and regular speaking tasks, b) usefulness of the TOEFL tasks for oral skills development, c) usefulness of the TOEFL tasks for participation, d) potential use of the TOEFL speaking tasks for evaluation, and e) opinions about potential applications of the

TOEFL tasks. Quantification of the qualitative data was unnecessary as the number of

teachers interviewed was small.

Findings

The findings from the interviews with three teachers and the program coordinator

are reported in this section. The report focuses on the teachers' opinions on the five major

themes discussed above: task similarities and differences, usefulness of the TOEFL for

oral skills development and for participation, potential use of the TOEFL for evaluation,

and potential applications. The program coordinator's views on the TOEFL speaking

practice, which motivated the inclusion of the TOEFL speaking tasks follow.

Similarities and differences between the TOEFL and regular speaking tasks. All

three teachers TB, TF, TI pointed out that the integrated skills approach in TOEFL

speaking tasks was in line with the approach to teaching and learning oral skills in the

program. TB pointed out that the de-emphasis on grammar-structure of the TOEFL

speaking was another similarity between the TOEFL tasks and their regular speaking

tasks. TI perceived topics for the TOEFL as similar to the ones for the regular speaking

activities.

Regarding the differences, all three teachers considered the time limit for students'

preparation and response in the TOEFL speaking tasks to be the main difference between

the TOEFL and the regular speaking tasks. TB also mentioned that the TOEFL speaking

tasks were more speaking-focused as the tasks were designed to evaluate oral ability.

Another difference mentioned by all the three teachers was that, unlike for the TOEFL

tasks, topics for regular speaking activities did not come out of the blue, as they were

derived from thematic units in the curriculum.

Usefulness of the TOEFL for oral skills development. The three teachers

interviewed covered all six different TOEFL task in his or her class. However, when the

interviewer prompted them to comment on the usefulness of the TOEFL tasks for oral

skills development, they all acknowledged that they did not employ the tasks frequently

enough to be able to accurately evaluate task usefulness based on teaching or learning

outcomes. Nonetheless, they gave opinions based on their limited experience with the

TOEFL teaching.

Among them, TB, who used the TOEFL speaking tasks the most frequently, had

the most positive attitudes about the usefulness of TOEFL speaking for both improving

speaking skills and promoting participation. Regarding the advantages of TOEFL

speaking tasks for improving speaking skills, in comparison with the advantages of

regular speaking activities (e.g., oral presentations, group discussions), TB commented

that the focused nature of the TOEFL tasks and the time limit would give students some

pressure to motivate them and to focus their energy. He also pointed to the TOEFL tasks

as a tool to gauge students' progress:

> *TB*: Something more focused like this where you have recurring topics and you're
> able to look closely at how the students can improve their speaking on a particular
> topic.

However, although TF and TI mentioned some features of the TOEFL speaking

tasks as advantages, they did not fully believe that those features could be indeed

beneficial for improving speaking skills. Both TI and TF mentioned the time limit or

spontaneity as the advantages which the TOEFL could uniquely offer, but at the same

time, they expressed ambivalent reactions toward to it.

> *TI*: [The advantage of the TOEFL is] just to think quickly, and to be able to respond
> quickly. I think they're missing that a little bit in general in any intensive course

because we have so much time, we really give a lot of time, which is good, but I think they do need the time. The same limitations as the advantages. In other words, sometimes because they have so little time to respond, some students who do not, or are not capable of thinking so fast are at a disadvantage and yet their language maybe better in many cases than others.

TF: There is a spontaneity to it, which is lacking in the rest [of the tasks used in the program]. It's a nice little thing for that. Hopefully, that's not really what the students are needing at this point. They should be able to spontaneously talk about things at the level.

TF mentioned that the variety of the TOEFL practice in terms of topics and task design could be another advantage, as he believed that variety was always important for students. However, he did not agree that TOEFL speaking tasks are useful for students to develop their oral skills because TOEFL does not push learners' language further.

TF: The TOEFL tasks are valid tasks to practice your English, but you're practicing at the level you are. You're not getting any better because you're not using language you don't have already. It's good to put them on the spot. It's a test of a person's English language ability. I think it's a great exam for that, but that's not what we do here. We try to say, we know you are here, we want to get you higher. Those kinds of tasks will never get anybody higher, they will only prepare them to take the exam to display the level that they are at.

TF believed that although the listening and reading input in the TOEFL speaking tasks were challenging for students, the tasks could not bring students to a higher level due to the limited input and insufficient time to process the input. TF mentioned:

TF: Of course it [the listening input] is [challenging], and the reading as well. But you need much more time in order to proceduralize. If you were to accept the idea that you have to notice the language, but it is different from, or a higher level than your interlanguage, to structure it and to proceduralize it. There is absolutely no way that the 30 second listening task can do much of that. To an extent, the topic may push, but they're not going to use different language from the language at their level. You are never going to get $i + 1$ out of that.

TF's disagreement with the usefulness of TOEFL practice for oral skills development was also related to his lack of belief in content validity of the test. TF mentioned:

TF: There is a disconnect ... measuring your English level, which is the purpose of the TOEFL and to build English language skills. There is certainly a lack of content validity ... because how often are you given this esoteric academic topic and then told to synthesize it orally like that. That doesn't happen very often in life. The other ones about the academic life... Would they extrapolate from that, go from this activity in the class to say: "oh, now I can speak with my professor about disagreement for a grade." I would be as a teacher reluctant to say that they would be able to do that at a better level after participating in those types of activities than before. In that specific one, they will be able to do the task, but how would they transmit that into actual oral production in a normal situation. I am not saying no, but I'm not saying yes right now.

Usefulness of the TOEFL for participation. Before asking their opinions about the usefulness of the TOEFL for participation, teachers were asked to comment on East Asian students' reticence. All of them agreed that culture might affect students' verbal communication to a certain extent; they found that students from certain cultural groups just love talking whereas East Asian students in general tend to be quieter particularly at lower levels. However, the three teachers did not agree that their East Asian students at the higher levels were reticent. They pointed out that *some* East Asian students were strong speakers and reticence did not result from cultural inhibition, but from other factors such as lack of listening comprehension, incomplete homework, or personality.

TB, who used the TOEFL speaking tasks the most often, had the most positive attitudes about the usefulness of TOEFL tasks for improving speaking skills, and also expressed a positive view on the TOEFL speaking for promoting participation. When the interviewer asked if he found the TOEFL speaking tasks to be effective ways of encouraging more active participation by reticent students, TB answered:

TB: Definitely, definitely. I think that this is because it is a focused activity and it's oriented towards a task. It's motivating for students.

TF agreed that the TOEFL speaking tasks could force reticent students to talk to a certain

extent, as it guides equal participation, but commented that participation forced by the

TOEFL could be too short.

> *TF*: It [the TOEFL practice] can encourage participation but other ways can as well.
> ... it does force, it does put everyone on the spot, and say here is a guarantee 10
> minutes for each to talk. Not even 10 minutes, it's 2 minutes.
> *Interviewer*: It's 1 minute or 45 seconds.
> *TF*: That's not enough.

TI did not agree that the TOEFL tasks could be effective to promote more participation

from reticent students. When she was asked why she did not believe so, she answered:

> *TI*: Because I think in our groups, I think the encouragement of people to talk in
> small groups and larger groups as such that it would be the same result for the
> [TOEFL]. I think there's more chance of them speaking in the small and larger
> groups than there is for them to speak so fast in that time limit. It's my feeling, but
> I'm not sure. It would have to be tested out.

Potential use of the TOEFL speaking tasks for evaluation. All the teachers

considered that overall TOEFL to be a good test. Even TF and TI, whose attitudes toward

the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking practice were not always positive, believed in

superiority of the TOEFL.

> *TI*: I believe that the TOEFL test is the best evaluation tool that I know of.

> *TF*: It [the TOEFL] certainly captures more than any test I've seen until now, in
> terms of wide-spread test.

Nevertheless, teachers expressed various concerns with the use of the TOEFL speaking

task for evaluation in their own programs.

In Advanced 1 and 2 classes, the program required teachers to evaluate students'

oral skills through oral presentations and debates, which allowed students to prepare in

advance. Thus, evaluation of spontaneous speech, or discussion skills was not included.

Accordingly, teachers were asked if they saw the TOEFL speaking tasks as potentially

useful for providing additional/different types of speaking activities for evaluation of a broader range of oral skills needed for academic life. Among the three teachers, TF was the only one who expressed the need of including such skills in their speaking evaluation; thus, the TOEFL speaking could potentially serve that purpose.

TB and TI expressed some concerns with the use of the TOEFL speaking tasks for evaluation. The comment by TB below indicates that although there were other teachers who advocated the inclusion of spontaneous speech in the program's assessment, he did not support their claim because of a stress factor involved in such testing situations.

> *TB*: You have to be careful a little bit for some students about putting them on the spot too much. The thing is with a debate or an oral presentation is the students are allowed to prepare. So they have their notes. Some teachers, not me particularly, but other teachers have said, "we don't do enough to evaluate their spontaneous speaking." Yes, that's true. But it can be very stressful to have your spontaneous speaking evaluated, particularly if you overdo it.

He also mentioned that such stress-inducing evaluation could be used *only* when students and teachers had built some kind of a closed and relaxed rapport among them, but not in the beginning of semester. Accordingly, even if the TOEFL test might offer a more accurate evaluation of speaking, he did not support using the test for his students by indicating such testing situations would be against one of the important conditions in Krashen's (1982) language acquisition theory: keeping learners' affective filter low.

> TB: We don't want to have a more accurate evaluation of their speaking abilities at the expense of rendering this kind of the affective filter.

Similar to TB, TI was not fully supportive of the use of the TOEFL for evaluation, but due to a different reason. TI's comment was primarily concerned with unfairness or disadvantage of time-framed speaking evaluation for some students who think a lot before talking.

TI: Personally I don't like to evaluate students on a timed anything because I don't personally find that we're really evaluating the language skill of the person, if they are able to say it within a little time frame. ... I find the response time is very short. Preparation time is so short. For people who are thinkers, it may be a bit too short and it doesn't express what they are capable of doing.

There were some other concerns with the use of the TOEFL for evaluation, which were not restricted to the assessment of speaking. TB's concern pointed to the fact that teachers and the program were not fully responsible for assessing students' readiness for university.

TB: The situation is ... that we're not fully responsible for evaluating whether the students are ready for university. That's not our job completely. It's shared with the people who are running the university language proficiency test.

TF also brought up other issues. If the TOEFL were to replace the existing placement test or final achievement test in the institution, the high cost of the TOEFL could be burdensome for students. In addition, in placing students in advanced levels, the heightened focus on oral skills in the TOEFL may not be necessary as he believed that the abilities to process input and to write were of primary importance for the levels.

Other potential use of the TOEFL speaking tasks. During the observations, it was found that the teachers' use of the TOEFL speaking tasks in the classrooms was primarily concerned with providing students with an opportunity to know what the new TOEFL speaking tasks were and how the tasks were implemented in a real testing situation. Therefore, teachers were asked to comment on the potential use of the TOEFL tasks for other purposes (e.g., homework, self-evaluation) and on some techniques recommended by ETS for TOEFL preparation classrooms (e.g., recording for feedback and self-evaluation, using scoring rubrics, role play, TOEFL-style group discussions).

TB and TF agreed that they could possibly use recording during the TOEFL

speaking tasks in class, so that teachers could give feedback and students could examine their own oral performance and monitor progress. TB and TF also agreed that the TOEFL tasks could possibly be given to students to provide speaking practice at home. In regard to the speaking practice at home, both also expressed concern with technology or computer access. TF brought up the idea of creating a web-based homework activity if the technology allowed.

> *TF*: The only problem is that here we don't have the technical ability at this point; we're a little bit behind. ... You see, this kind of stuff [TOEFL speaking as homework], it just doesn't make sense when we don't have a website that we can put up these types of things. [But when we do have a website,] students could just go home, they could listen, they could speak, and they could even be uploading their own answers, too. With that, we could be monitoring from time to time as teachers.

However, TI had somewhat different views on the using the TOEFL via recording for feedback, and TOEFL homework. First, although she asserted that recording for self-analysis is always good, she did not find it feasible to fully incorporate this into her class due to the limited time to cover the curriculum.

> *TI*: For teacher giving corrections to students, I don't think I would do it to the whole class. I think I might, I would use that maybe for the students who are having problems in pronunciation and grammar, and so on because it's a little too much. ... It's interesting, but in our advanced levels, we have a lot to cover.

In regard to the use of the scoring rubric of the TOEFL for the TOEFL speaking tasks in order for students and teachers to evaluate speech based on the elements in the rubric, all the teachers responded positively. TB, who introduced the scoring rubric to his students, also reported that his introducing and discussing the rubric with students was a good use of class time because it allowed them to examine specific aspects of speech that could be helpful for improving speech (e.g., pronunciation, fluency, topic development). TI also agreed that it would be useful to utilize the rubric in her class.

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TI: I think it's probably a good idea we do that. We do a lot of peer evaluation of all kinds, mainly in reading and writing. But there's no reason why it can't be done in speaking.

Teachers agreed that role-playing based on the TOEFL integrated tasks on academic topics and the TOEFL-style group discussion could be used, TF noted that the latter, for example, could be useful if the regular group discussion format did not appear to result in sufficient participation from all participants. However, he asserted that such intervention (TOEFL-style group discussion) would be unnecessary as all his students already participated actively.

Program coordinator's perspectives. This section reports some of the findings from the interview with the program coordinator. The report focuses on the motivation for the curriculum change: the inclusion of the TOEFL speaking tasks. During the interview, it was revealed that it was not the teachers but the program coordinator who alone made the final decision to include the TOEFL speaking practice into the regular intensive classes. He noted several motives for this decision. He asserted that preparing students for the type of oral tasks in the TOEFL test was important and necessary for the program. He believed so because the skills required in the TOEFL speaking tasks would be necessary for oral communication in university classrooms. In addition, building such skills would require additional training as the TOEFL tasks are different from other interactive oral tasks which do not specify a time frame for speech preparation and delivery.

> *Program Coordinatior:* [TOEFL speaking practice] will help students respond very quickly to a question that is posed in an academic setting, either a professor asking a question in class or asking for an opinion or some information from the student. And the student doesn't spend forever … in integrated speaking tasks, students have 20 seconds to prepare an answer from the question that is asked and they must say what they have to say in 60 seconds. So they need training for that.

It's not that they can't do it, but they need training to do it [because] it's a different kind of task, taking your time and [talking], taking 5 minutes, then, I'm going to answer a question now.

He further noted that it was important to pilot the TOEFL speaking in particular because the program was really lacking a component that offered training for such oral skills as their discussion activities did not have a set time frame.

Another motivation for the inclusion of the TOEFL practice was related to the high stakes status and predominance of the TOEFL test in other North American higher institutions. Although the majority of students enrolled in the advanced 1 and 2 classes did not need to take the TOEFL, the program coordinator also felt responsible for preparing the students for the TOEFL to some degree. He commented that as the TOEFL test was a high stakes test and the most widely used EAP test for admissions into higher education institutions in North America, *some* students might need to take the TOEFL test in the future. Therefore, he asserted that it was important to prepare students for the types of tasks in the TOEFL, so that they would be successful if they were to take the actual TOEFL test.

Summary of Findings from Interviews

The interview with the program director revealed the motivation for the curriculum change: the inclusion of the TOEFL speaking tasks. The program coordinator initiated the reform because he believed that although students in the advanced classes were not necessarily aiming to take the TOEFL test at that moment, it was important and necessary to provide practice for oral skills required in the TOEFL speaking tasks. He noted that the skills would be helpful in order for students to meet oral demands in university content classrooms; however, the oral tasks used in the program lacked a focus

on such skills development.

The data from the interviews with teachers indicate that all the three teachers considered that the skills integrated approach of the TOEFL speaking were similar to the program's approach to teaching and learning speaking. Teachers also identified that the main difference between the TOEFL and regular tasks was the timed aspect of the former.

Regarding the effectiveness of the TOEFL, TB who used the TOEFL tasks most had the most positive views for both improving speaking skills and promoting participation. Although TF and TI noted some advantages of the TOEFL speaking practice, TF and TI were not fully convinced of the usefulness of the TOEFL practice. TF questioned the effectiveness of the TOEFL for improving speaking skills because he believed that TOEFL could not push learners' language further due to the limited and fragmental input and insufficient time to process the input. TI was also doubtful as she did not find the ability to think and respond quickly to be a main criterion of oral ability necessary for the students. Overall, TF and TI did not consider TOEFL speaking tasks better than regular speaking activities for promoting more participation.

Teachers' opinions on the potential use of the TOEFL tasks for evaluation varied; TF was the most positive among the three teachers. Teachers recognized potential uses of the TOEFL tasks for out of class self-evaluation and feedback opportunities via recording. Teachers also viewed introducing the scoring rubric of the TOEFL to the students as potentially beneficial. However, they also expressed some reservations related to those uses.

Summary of Findings

The analyses of observation data indicate several differences and similarities between the TOEFL speaking tasks and regular speaking tasks (group and whole class discussions, and oral presentation). TOEFL speaking tasks were similar to group or whole class discussions as students responded to questions spontaneously based on reading or listening input or expressed their opinions or personal experience on a given topic. Nevertheless, the TOEFL tasks quite differed from group or whole discussions as group and whole discussions did not have a set time frame for speech preparation and delivery.

Unlike the TOEFL tasks and oral presentations whose built-in structure forced oral production from each speaker, participation in group and whole class discussions was voluntary and unequal. East Asian students' efforts to participate, self-reported in the questionnaire, were higher in the TOEFL tasks than in group/whole class discussions. The questionnaire data also revealed that TOEFL speaking tasks provided more opportunities to pay attention to oral performance (e.g., topic development, and organization) during oral production than group and whole class discussions.

Questionnaire data show that East Asian students' perceived usefulness of the TOEFL tasks for improving speaking and building confidence was rated lower than that of oral presentations, but not lower than that of group and whole discussions. High percentages of students agreed on the potential usefulness of the TOEFL if the TOEFL speaking tasks were to be used regularly in class. Responses from the open-ended questions also show that the time limit of the TOEFL tasks was valued by many East Asian students.

However, teacher interview data indicate that not all the teachers agreed on the usefulness of the TOEFL for developing oral skills and for promoting participation. The

time limit of the TOEFL speaking tasks was not favourably perceived by all the teachers. The interview with the coordinator disclosed that providing students with an opportunity for oral practice with time limits which lacked in their typical oral tasks was the reason for the inclusion of the TOEFL tasks.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This study set out to examine the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks for facilitating East Asian learners' English academic speaking skills development and for promoting participation in pre-university communicative classrooms. In order to achieve this aim, 24 East Asian students' behaviour and seven teachers' behaviour during the TOEFL speaking tasks were compared with their behaviour during regular speaking activities (e.g., group and whole class discussion, and oral presentation). The students' and three teachers' perceptions toward the TOEFL speaking practice were also probed.

The two research questions addressed in the study are: 1) to what extent is the TOEFL speaking practice similar to/different from the kind of speaking practice East Asian learners normally get in EAP classrooms?, 2) What are the students' and teachers' perceptions of relative usefulness of TOEFL speaking tasks? Data analyses revealed that the TOEFL speaking tasks were similar to discussion activities as both types required students to speak from reading or listening and to express opinions. TOEFL speaking tasks were also similar to oral presentations as the tasks guided equal participation among the students. Accordingly, the TOEFL tasks encouraged more participation than group and whole class discussions. The TOEFL tasks, originally designed for oral skills evaluation, drew students' attention to formal aspects of speech (e.g., topic development, organization) more than group and whole class discussions.

Even though students did not necessarily aim to take the TOEFL test and the use of the TOEFL tasks was very limited, students perceived the TOEFL practice useful as a regular oral practice in the classrooms. In particular, many students noted the merit of practicing for organizing and delivering spontaneous speech in a coherent manner via

TOEFL speaking practice. However, not all the teachers shared similar perspectives with students and displayed various reservations regarding using the TOEFL tasks in their classroom. The mismatch between the teachers' and students' perceptions was notable.

The discussion of this chapter focuses on four topics: a) value of the TOEFL speaking for East Asian learners, b) factors affecting the mismatch between students' and teachers' perceptions, c) teachers' reluctance to use the TOEFL, and d) the indirect impact of the TOEFL test on the research site.

Values of the TOEFL Speaking Practice for East Asian Students

One of the notable findings of this study was that the East Asian participants showed overall positive responses toward the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking practice in their classroom, even if they were not necessarily aiming to take the TOEFL test. The majority of the participants did not believe that doing TOEFL speaking practice in their classroom was a waste of time although they did not need to take the TOEFL test. Neither did they believe that the skills learned through the TOEFL practice were useful only for the test. The majority of participants also agreed with the potential usefulness of TOEFL tasks as a regular classroom activity. They believed that the tasks could help them to express their opinions more easily, to speak coherently and spontaneously, and to improve their confidence. In the following section, factors contributing East Asian participants' positive responses toward the TOEFL practice are discussed.

Focus on Developing Spontaneous and Coherent Speech

In particular, East Asian participants perceived the TOEFL speaking practice as useful for developing an ability to organize and deliver speech spontaneously in a

coherent manner. As reported in findings for the observations earlier, the design of the

TOEFL speaking tasks in which speakers are required to give a complete answer to a

given question in a limited time made students notice that organization and complete

content development are important not only in academic writing but also in speaking.

This newly focused EAP oral skill was valued by many East Asian students as the

comments on the reasons why they liked doing the TOEFL tasks were very frequently

related to this particular skill. Nine students reported that they liked doing the TOEFL

because the tasks helped them with organization of speech and ten students liked the

TOEFL because of the spontaneity of the TOEFL.

The East Asian students' positive perception of the spontaneity of the TOEFL

speaking practice merits attention. As discussed in Chapter 2, thinking-oriented and

precision-oriented East Asian learning styles often make it difficult for these learners to

respond in a timely fashion or to take risks in oral interaction (Chen, 2003; Rao, 2001).

This may hinder the development of effective oral communication in a second language.

The TOEFL speaking practice has the potential to address this problem as the design of

the TOEFL speaking tasks requires speakers to respond fairly spontaneously by providing

a short preparation time. This short time frame does not allow speakers to ponder deeply

on a subject or to precisely organize what they are going to say. The questionnaire results

demonstrate that the East Asian students perceive this as a potential benefit of the TOEFL

tasks. It will be important in future research to investigate whether practicing the TOEFL

speaking tasks could foster learning style-stretching among these learners.

In addition, the skill to organize reading or listening input and give an oral response

spontaneously as required in the TOEFL speaking tasks might be useful for East Asian

students in dealing with the oral communication demands in university content classes. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, North American university practice has shifted from a formal lecture format to an interactive discussion format (Lucas & Murray, 2002; Mason, 1994; Meyers & Jones, 1993). East Asian students who lack experience with this type of classroom interaction in their home countries are very much in need of developing such discussion skills. This was one of the main reasons why the program coordinator decided to include the TOEFL speaking tasks in the intensive program. As noted in the previous chapter, he asserted that skills required in the TOEFL speaking tasks would be necessary for oral communication in university classrooms and students would need training to develop such skills as the TOEFL tasks are different from other speaking tasks without a time frame.

Although students showed very positive attitudes towards the potential usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks, East Asian participants chose regular speaking activities as effective tasks for EAP skills development far more frequently than the TOEFL tasks. TOEFL tasks, although valued, are not perceived by East Asian students being as effective as I had thought. Several factors that might have contributed to this finding are speculated. First, the use of TOEFL speaking tasks was sporadic and unsystematic; the tasks were only used at the end of the semester and were not yet a regular feature in the intensive program. Second, the limited use of the TOEFL speaking practice might not have allowed East Asian students to experience improvement in their oral skills or in confidence. In particular, skills integrated tasks on academic topics were the only tasks that majority of East Asian students perceived as difficult among all the oral tasks (including regular oral tasks). Nonetheless, students were not given more opportunity to

fully practice for those tasks.

TOEFL Tasks Designed for Evaluation

Another interesting finding of the study was East Asian students' strong preference for oral presentations. This was prominent particularly when the participants compared three tasks (TOEFL, oral presentations, and group and whole class discussions) in regard to the usefulness for improving oral skills and confidence. Oral presentations were an oral task which students are able to *and* required to prepare and practice for at home; the more students practice, the more they improve, and the more confident students become. There are two other reasons that could explain this strong preference. The first reason is related to the individualized task characteristic of oral presentations, in which each individual's talk is guaranteed and forced. This built-in structure for guiding participation will be discussed further in the next section.

The second reason behind the East Asian participants' preference for oral presentations is related to the evaluative purpose of the task use. As oral presentations were the most important evaluation task for the advanced levels in the program, it seemed natural that students should focus on language form and use during their oral production and there should be more opportunities for feedback, instruction, or self-evaluation on oral skills or performance. This was exactly what the East Asian participants reported in the questionnaire regarding oral presentations. Discussion activities, despite being the most frequent form of speaking practice in the levels, were never used for evaluation of oral skills. As a result, far fewer East Asian students agreed that they focused on language and use, and that there were opportunities for feedback, instruction, and self-evaluation on oral skills or performance during discussions.

Like discussions, the TOEFL speaking tasks were not used for evaluation

purposes. However, the *focused* nature of the TOEFL speaking tasks, which were

originally designed to assess oral skills had students pay more attention to their language

use and form than discussions. In addition, East Asian students believed that there were

more opportunities for peer feedback, instruction, and self-evaluation on oral skills or

performance during the TOEFL tasks than during discussions. This could explain why

East Asian participants rated the TOEFL as *not* less useful than group and whole class

discussions for improving speaking skills despite the infrequent use of the TOEFL.

Built-in Structure for Oral Production

One of the most commonly identified problems of East Asian students in

communicative language classrooms is the lack of participation in oral tasks; East Asian

learners can opt for silence and often lose opportunities to speak because students from

other cultural backgrounds participate more readily, and may even dominate class talk

(Chen, 2003; Hwang, 1993). This study also found this problem during the observations

of group and whole class discussions in which students' participation was encouraged but

seldom forced. However, unlike group and whole class discussions, the *individualized*

and *forced* nature of the TOEFL speaking tasks enabled East Asian student to participate

equally. The questionnaire data also show that many more students forced themselves to

speak in the TOEFL tasks than in group or whole class discussions. In the open-ended

question eliciting positive aspects of the TOEFL, three students specifically identified

this built-in structure for forcing oral production as a feature they valued.

Nevertheless, East Asian students' own perceptions of their participation in the

TOEFL speaking, group or whole class discussion did not differ significantly. This

finding was contradictory to the findings from the observations and the questionnaire. A speculation on this contradiction could be the possibility of students' misinterpretation of the question that was intended to probe the quantity of participation (how much they talk), comparing the amount of participation with other classmates. However, students might have considered the quality of participation (how well they talk compared to their partner) in addition to the amount of the talk, as some students who I observed did not give up their turn to speak during the TOEFL tasks rated their participation for the TOEFL relatively low.

Focused Speaking Activity: East Asian Students' Preference

As discussed in Chapter 2, some researchers (Cheng, 2000; N. Liu & Littlewood, 1997) believe that reasons behind East Asian students' lack of participation are situation-specific rather than culturally pre-set. They noted that the conflict between learning and teaching methodologies could result in reticence. Cheng explained that Western teachers' teaching of reading, for example, involved a lot of discussion, but East Asian students did not seem to agree with this method for effective learning of reading. The skills-integrated approach to language learning and teaching was paramount in the institution where the current study was conducted; the four skills were rarely taught individually. In particular, although group discussions were categorized as a speaking activity, much of students' attention was often drawn to reading or writing comprehension or to writing preparation. In other words, students' focus was not necessarily on speaking during discussions.

East Asian participants' desire to have more *focused* speaking activities was notable from the open-ended question regarding the required changes to facilitate their oral skills development. Eight students reported that non-discussion type speaking

activities (e.g., TOEFL, oral presentation, debates) should be used more in the classroom. In addition, oral presentation was the one that received the most positive ratings on the usefulness for developing oral skills. These findings hint that East Asian participants seem to believe that their speaking skills could be better developed when they are engaged in activities in which their focus is drawn primarily to speaking. Considering their limited experience with the integrated approach to L2 learning and teaching in their home country, East Asian learners' preference for and belief in *focused* speaking activities for oral skills development are understandable. This could explain why East Asian students made the fewest efforts to participate during discussions.

The integrated speaking tasks of the TOEFL were similar to discussions as students respond to reading and listening input. Nevertheless, students' attention was drawn to speech preparation and delivery because the design and nature of the tasks (e.g., provision of preparation time, short response time, and evaluative purposes) required them to do so. Students' positive responses toward the potential benefits of the regular TOEFL practice in the classroom might have stemmed from their perception of the TOEFL practice as a *focused* oral activity; their preferred method of speaking practice.

Mismatch between Students' and Teachers' Perceptions

As discussed above, despite the limited experience with the TOEFL speaking tasks, East Asian participants' overall responses toward the TOEFL practice were positive. However, although all the three teachers who were interviewed considered the TOEFL speaking practice to be a valid practice of oral skills, not all of them were fully convinced of the usefulness of the TOEFL. In this section, factors affecting this mismatch are

discussed.

Limited Experience with the TOEFL Tasks

Although the three teachers covered all six different TOEFL task in his or her

class, the number of the TOEFL practice was small. TB used the TOEFL six times, TI,

four times, and TF, only twice. In particular, integrated speaking tasks (listen and speak;

read, listen and speak) on academic topics were used only once or twice. During the

interviews, they all acknowledged that they did not employ the tasks frequently enough to

be able to accurately evaluate task usefulness based on teaching or learning outcomes.

The interviews reveal that TB, who used the TOEFL speaking tasks the most frequently,

had the most positive attitudes about the usefulness of TOEFL tasks for both improving

speaking skills and promoting participation. There are two possible explanations for the

more positive attitudes about TOEFL: more familiarity with the tasks has allowed him to

appreciate the benefits, or because he perceives the benefits of TOEFL, he uses them

more.

As noted in Chapter 4, TB was the only teacher who introduced the scoring rubric

of the TOEFL to the class and discussed it with students, following my suggestion. He

reported that he was contented with this experience. Unlike TF and TI whose use of the

TOEFL tasks was restricted to close simulation of test-taking situation, TB was also one

of the two teachers who tried out different approaches to the teaching of the TOEFL from

the approach of test simulation. For the teaching of the integrated speaking on academic

topics, TB included a brief lecture on guessing meaning of unknown words from the

context, using examples from the TOEFL tasks before they were actually doing the tasks.

He also taught how to predict information that students were about to hear from the given

reading input and how to relate reading input to listening input. He commented on the teaching of integrated tasks of the TOEFL as below:

> **TB**: I enjoyed doing some of the later ones [integrated tasks]. I was doing a little bit more explanation, so it's a little bit more fruitful. I saw it first as more like a kind of practice of the test. But with your encouragement, I did a little bit of teaching around the topics to give them a little bit of help.

Earlier, I speculated the two possible explanations for the more positive attitudes about TOEFL expressed by TB: more familiarity with the tasks has allowed him to appreciate the benefits, or because he perceives the benefits of TOEFL, he uses them more. His comment above hints that his view of teaching the TOEFL tasks has changed from mere test practice to a fruitful teaching tool. This seems to lend support the first speculation: the more familiar with the tasks, the more positive on the usefulness.

Teachers' Perspectives on East Asian Students' Needs

As discussed earlier, East Asian participants perceived the TOEFL speaking practice as useful for developing an ability to organize and deliver speech spontaneously in a coherent manner. The program director believed that this skill would be useful for participating in discussions in university content classrooms, and that this skill would require training. The students in the program might lack training for the skill as the discussion tasks used in the classrooms did not have a time frame. Many East Asian students seemed to welcome this opportunity to develop such a skill via the TOEFL speaking practice.

However, some teachers did not share the perspective of the students or the coordinator. TF and TI, whose perception of the usefulness of the TOEFL for oral skills development was rather negative than positive, did not seem to perceive that training for such a skill required in the TOEFL was necessary or important. TF commented that a

focus on spontaneity might not be necessary at the higher levels as he believed that his students should already be able to express themselves spontaneously. TI also expressed her faith in the students' ability to do the TOEFL tasks on academic topics at the advanced levels. Furthermore, TF did not seem to believe that the skills required in the TOEFL speaking tasks were useful for academic oral communication as he questioned the practical value of the TOEFL speaking practice. He did not believe that students would often encounter situations where they would have to synthesize information on academic topics orally. He disagreed with the applicability of the TOEFL speaking skills in real-life situations.

TF and TI did not accept that the TOEFL speaking tasks were particularly useful for promoting participation because the group discussions would offer more chance to speak than the TOEFL due to the limited time allotted for speaking in the TOEFL. They believed that forcing East Asian students to participate might be unnecessary because in their view, East Asian students' level of participation at the advanced levels was already quite high. The teachers also believed that lack of participation arose more from other factors, such as listening comprehension problems, incomplete homework, or personality, than from cultural inhibition. It was indeed observed that the quantity of participation in discussion tasks often depended on listening or reading comprehension, homework completion, or topic familiarity. Although the TOEFL tasks could address situation-specific reticence by encouraging students to participate regardless of their readiness for speaking, the teachers may not have considered this as a potential merit of the TOEFL speaking practice because they perceived little need for promoting greater participation among the East Asian learners during oral tasks.

Teachers' CLT Beliefs and Practices

Another factor that affected the mismatch between students' and teachers' perceptions concerns the teachers' beliefs and practices in CLT. The TOEFL speaking practice seems to be at odds with these teachers' beliefs and practices in communicative language teaching and learning. TE did not agree that TOEFL speaking tasks were useful for students to develop their oral skills because the TOEFL practice did not push learners' language further. He commented that in practicing the TOEFL speaking, students would use the language *only* at the current level, but not the language at a higher level. He believed so because the TOEFL speaking tasks provided neither comprehensible input (*i* + 1) nor sufficient time to comprehend or to process input. His notion of oral skills development seems to be in line with Krashen's (1982) language learning model in which the role of comprehensible input is paramount.

TI was not fully convinced of the usefulness of TOEFL speaking practice for a different reason: speaking activities under time pressure do not allow students to display their language skills at best and such tasks place students who are not capable of thinking fast at a disadvantage. This notion is also related to another important factor in Krashen's (1982) language learning theory: the affective filter. According to the affective filter hypothesis, conditions where learners feel stressed or uncomfortable are not conducive to successful language learning.

Compared to TE and TI, TB was much more positive about the usefulness of the TOEFL practice for oral skills development and participation. However, he was not supportive of using the TOEFL tasks for speaking evaluation of his students due to the same reason: high affective filter in the TOEFL speaking. He commented that he would

choose a less accurate evaluation if the test would render the high affective filter. Similar to TI's case, this indicates that he seemed to support the importance of relaxed conditions in language learning.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) noted that Krashen's (1982) language learning model was very influential in supporting CLT in North America. This study showed that the teachers' beliefs in fundamental concepts behind CLT and their current teaching practices in CLT certainly had an impact on their view on the TOEFL test itself and the usefulness of the TOEFL as a learning or teaching tool.

Teachers' Reluctance to Use the TOEFL

Although the program coordinator had advised that teachers should incorporate TOEFL speaking practice in the latter part of the semester, the TOEFL tasks were never fully incorporated into the curriculum by the teachers: not all teachers used the TOEFL tasks, and the use was sporadic and unsystematic. It appeared that the teachers were reluctant to use the TOEFL tasks. During the interviews with the teachers, reasons behind their reluctance emerged. As pointed out in the previous section, not all the teachers agreed with the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks for improving speaking skills and promoting participation. They perceived few benefits of the TOEFL practice; thus they used infrequently. In addition, some other factors also influenced the teachers' adoption of TOEFL speaking tasks in the class. These factors are discussed further in the following.

Insignificant Role of the TOEFL Test in the Program

A primary reason behind the teachers' reluctance to incorporate these tasks

seemed to be related to the role of the TOEFL test in their program. The university

utilized its own English proficiency test for university admission of prospective NNS

students residing in the city. This test was also used for placement of current NNS

students into credited ESL composition courses. The test focused heavily on grammar,

reading comprehension, and writing without a speaking or listening input. Therefore, the

teachers at the institution did not find a valid reason why they needed to include TOEFL

speaking practice in their class. They needed to prepare their students for the university

language proficiency test, not the TOEFL test. TB, who was very positive about his

teaching of the TOEFL pointed out that this situation would demotivate him from fully

incorporating the TOEFL into his classroom.

> TB: The message we're getting from the university is that the university wants the
> university language test to continue … if that's the case, then that's going to have
> an effect on my enthusiastic adoption of [the TOEFL], spending a lot of time on
> preparation for the TOEFL.

Furthermore, for the intensive program, the language institution also had a

different test for placement and different evaluation process for summative and formative

evaluation of the students. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, oral presentations were an

important evaluation task for the advanced levels. Some of the skills required to do well

on the TOEFL speaking test (e.g., speaking in response to listening and reading

spontaneously) were not necessarily important for oral presentations.

Time Pressure and Lack of Guidance in Teaching the TOEFL

Due to the delay in the material development, the TOEFL tasks were incorporated

near the end of the semester when teachers were increasingly focused on the final exams.

As a result, teachers did not seem to find a rationale to spend a lot time on the TOEFL

speaking practice since it did not seem to be useful for their final evaluation.

In addition, the program coordinator believed in the beginning that the advanced level teachers with much experience in teaching EAP and ESL could easily figure out how to implement the TOEFL speaking tasks in their classroom without much guidance. However, this was not the case for the teachers. First, the TOEFL speaking tasks were originally designed for evaluation, not for teaching. Second, some of the skills required in the TOEFL tasks (e.g., organizing and delivering speech in a limited time) were not taught previously in the program. Third, only one out of the eight advanced level teachers had experience in teaching the new TOEFL speaking, and none had advanced training in teaching the new TOEFL speaking offered by ETS. Finally, no teacher meeting was held to discuss how to do the tasks in the classroom. As a result, it was apparent that the teachers were unsure how to do the TOEFL speaking with their students. Under time pressure for final evaluation, teachers could not afford to invest much time in planning lessons for their TOEFL teaching. Due to such reasons, the program coordinator decided to prepare a teacher's guide for the teaching of the TOEFL in advanced classes. He commented that this would help teachers overcome "fear" of teaching the TOEFL first time and use the tasks more frequently.

In the end, if the teachers had had firm belief in the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking practice or in the importance of practicing skills required for the TOEFL for their students, they would have made greater efforts to fully integrate the TOEFL tasks into their classroom practice regardless of the time pressure or the lack of guidance. However, this was not the case, either. Their reluctance seems to be understandable, considering that the decision to include the TOEFL tasks was made by the program coordinator, not by the teachers themselves, and that teachers were advised to use the

TOEFL, but not *yet* obliged to.

Indirect Impact of the TOEFL Test

Because the TOEFL test is the most recognized and widely used EAP test, it has potential consequences for EAP teaching and learning. Bachman and Palmer (1996) noted that in addition to the direct impact that a test (in particular a high stakes one) may have on test-takers, teachers who prepare students for the test, and score users; the test may have a further indirect impact on the educational systems and society at large. This indirect impact of a high stakes test was visible in the institution; the TOEFL tasks were incorporated in pre-university EAP classrooms where students did not necessarily aim to take the TOEFL test.

The decision was largely made by the program coordinator whose role was to develop curriculum. After the institution became an official TOEFL testing center, he was also in charge of administering the TOEFL test. With close exposure to the TOEFL test tasks from administrating the test numerous times, he was convinced of the need to incorporate the TOEFL tasks. During the interview, he noted one of the reasons for the inclusion; regardless of the limited role in the university in which most advanced students would study, he felt responsible for preparing students for the TOEFL because it was a high stakes test, predominantly used in *other* North American higher institutions. Probably more important, he recognized the potential benefits of using the TOEFL speaking tasks; they could offer the types of speaking practice which would help students to cope with oral communication demands in university content classrooms, but were absent in the program.

As discussed in Chapter 2, upon the revision of the TOEFL test, test developers and experts have anticipated positive impact: practice for the TOEFL speaking will help students to develop speaking skills required in the academic setting. This study evidenced the predicted positive impact of the TOEFL on learners, based on East Asian participants' positive responses toward the TOEFL practice reported and observed in the study. The TOEFL practice provided an opportunity to develop their much needed oral skills in EAP, in particular, a skill to organize and deliver spontaneous speech based on listening and reading input. The practice also addressed their problem of reticence that would hinder the process of oral skills development.

As discussed above, East Asian participants were positive about the usefulness of the TOEFL practice because the method was addressing their needs and possibly matching their preferences for learning oral skills. However, it is possible to say that East Asian students' positive views on the TOEFL practice have also resulted from the important role of the TOEFL test recognized in their home countries. As discussed in Chapter 2, the score users of the TOEFL test are not restricted to North American universities. In East Asian countries, the TOEFL scores have been used for various purposes such as career advancement (LoCastro, 1996). Therefore, the East Asian participants' active involvement in the TOEFL practice and positive responses toward doing the TOEFL practice in their classrooms might have been affected by rather an instrumental reason: their perceived utility of the TOEFL practice for non-academic applications.

Although this study illustrates a positive impact of the new TOEFL test on learners, the predicted positive impact on language instruction was observed only to a

limited extent. At the outset of the study, it was speculated that because the TOEFL

speaking tasks were originally designed for a test, students were more likely to be given

more focused instruction on speech preparation and delivery and more frequent feedback

on oral skills to ensure successful performance. However, this was not found in the study.

As noted earlier in Chapter 4, when the teachers introduced the TOEFL speaking tasks,

they primarily focused on giving students exposure to the TOEFL test and what test-

takers were supposed to do in real testing situations via the same format practice of

simulated test tasks. Lack of focused instruction and feedback on oral performance

during the tasks is understandable considering the insignificant role of the TOEFL test in

the program or the university; there was no need to focus on improving their performance

on the tasks.

Summary of Discussion

In this chapter, the values of the TOEFL speaking practice for East Asian learners

were discussed based on the participants' perceptions on TOEFL tasks and other oral

tasks. Factors that contributed to East Asian participants' positive views on the TOEFL

speaking practice were speculated upon: the TOEFL addressed their needs in developing

spontaneous and coherent speech. The built-in structure of the TOEFL for forcing oral

production and for drawing their attention to formal aspect of language was also

beneficial for East Asian students to in communicative classrooms. The TOEFL also

matched their preference for focused speaking activities.

Regarding the factors affecting the mismatch between students' and teachers'

perceptions, teachers' limited experience with the TOEFL and different perspectives on

East Asian students' needs, CLT beliefs and practices were discussed. Reasons for the

teachers' reluctance to use the TOEFL could have resulted from the insignificant role of

the TOEFL test in the program, and time pressure to cover regular features in the

curriculum, lack of guidance in teaching the TOEFL. The inclusion of the TOEFL in the

program in which the TOEFL played a limited role also indicated the indirect impact of

the TOEFL test. How the predicted impact of the new TOEFL was manifested in the

research site was also discussed.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study explored the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks for developing EAP oral skills and for promoting participation in pre-university, communicative classrooms. In this chapter, the contributions and pedagogical implications of the study are presented. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggested directions for future research.

Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the field of L2 research and ELT. Firstly, the study contributes to the understanding of the EAP oral skills development in the pre-sessional contexts. As Carkin (2005) noted, development of academic speaking skills is one of the most neglected areas in second language research. In particular, few studies have looked into teaching and learning of EAP oral skills in the pre-university settings. By observing students' and teachers' behaviour during different oral tasks, the study revealed that discussions, despite being the most common oral practice task, did not encourage students and teachers to attend to accurate language form and use in speech production. Discussions provided fewer opportunities for specific instruction on speaking or feedback than other oral tasks (oral presentations or TOEFL). In the course of examining teachers' and students' perception of the new TOEFL speaking practice, this study found a definite mismatch between students' and teachers' perceived needs in EAP. From the students' perspective, the TOEFL speaking tasks could be a viable pedagogical tool to address learners' needs in developing academic oral skills.

Secondly, this study contributes to the understanding of test impact in second

language testing and learning. As discussed above, upon introducing the revised TOEFL, ETS and field experts predicted positive washback of the new TOEFL on teaching and learning practices in test preparation classes. The study shows the impact of a recognized and frequently used test of EAP could have an indirect impact on existing pre-university EAP classes even when there was no apparent need for test preparation. In addition, based on East Asian students' and some teachers' positive attitudes, this study lends, albeit limited, empirical support for the predicted positive impact on English language teaching and learning by the TOEFL test.

Thirdly, this study addresses the commonly discussed problem of East Asian students' reticence to participate in oral interaction in their second language classes, and offers a possible and practical solution to it. Many studies have discussed East Asian students' reticence in language and content classrooms, but few have suggested types of practice that could facilitate these learners' active participation. This study found that *focused* (e.g., non-discussion type) and individualized oral speaking tasks resulted in East Asian students making greater efforts to participate.

Finally, this study has also made a practical contribution to the language institution chosen as a research site, which was piloting the use of the TOEFL speaking tasks in regular classroom for its curriculum reform. By documenting the processes and outcomes of the inclusion of the TOEFL speaking tasks into the regular program, this study provides the institution with valuable insight on ways to improve teaching practice in EAP speaking and the potential benefits and limitations of incorporating TOEFL speaking tasks into the curriculum. This information can also be shared with other language institutes that offer pre-university EAP intensive programs and with universities

that offer EAP speaking courses.

Pedagogical Implications

This investigation of the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking practice in pre-university communicative EAP classrooms has immediate implications for EAP teaching and learning. In the course of conducting the study, potential uses of the TOEFL speaking practice in CLT oriented classrooms emerged. This section provides potential applications of the TOEFL speaking tasks and potential benefits of using them. In addition, I will discuss the pedagogical implications for both pre-university EAP teachers and EAP programs that have East Asian students.

Potential Applications of the TOEFL Speaking Practice

This study sheds light on the potential use of the TOEFL tasks to address East Asian learners' needs in oral skills development and participation. This section focuses on how the tasks could be used or modified to maximize learning outcomes.

Providing additional speaking practice outside classroom. As noted earlier, EAP skills development has long been focused on academic literacy (i.e., academic writing). The focus on academic writing skills in this program became evident when the students' reported amount of time spent on language practice for the four skills outside of the classroom was examined (Table 14). Compared to their writing and reading practice, East Asian students' speaking and listening practice outside of the classroom was minimal. In addition, assigned speaking practice mainly focused on preparation for oral presentations. In such context, TOEFL speaking practice could provide an additional and different type of speaking practice outside of the classroom to help develop oral skills, in particular, the

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skills that were valued by East Asian students and perceived as useful for university by the program coordinator. Questions for the independent TOEFL speaking tasks could be easily prepared and given to students so that they can practice describing personal experience or expressing opinions or preferences in a coherent manner within a time frame. Speaking based on reading and listening input could also be practiced via integrated TOEFL tasks. The tasks could be adapted as a homework activity by asking students to take notes while listening to news or documentaries on radio or TV and orally summarize them based on their notes. Speaking based on reading could be done in a similar way; students might takes notes while reading a passage, then summarize it and/or express opinions toward a topic or issue presented in the reading. Speaking based on academic lectures could possibly be practiced with university lectures available on the Internet.

Using the TOEFL speaking tasks for a homework activity would allow students to practice EAP speaking skills at their own pace, possibly in more relaxed settings. This could also help minimize the negative aspect of the TOEFL practice in the classroom – the high affective filter, which some teachers were concerned about.

Focus on form through task repetition and recording. When learners are engaged in meaning-focused activities, studies have shown that little attention was paid to language forms or structures (Pica, 1994; Williams, 1999). Pica (1997) noted that learners do not negotiate over form not because it is not possible, but because the kind of activities typically used in communicative classrooms rarely required them to do so. The lack of focus on form was also notable when students were engaged in group or whole class discussions in the study. The importance of focus on form or form-focused

instruction in communicative classrooms has been documented in classroom SLA research (e.g., Doughty & Williams, 1998; Lightbown, 2000). The use of TOEFL speaking tasks in communicative classrooms could address this inherent problem of communicative language teaching: lack of focus on form.

Studies have found that exact repetition or modified repetition of oral tasks is useful for developing accuracy and speech repertoire (Bygate, 1996; Lynch & Maclean, 2000; Nation, 1990). Even during the limited TOEFL practice in the classrooms, it was found that students had an opportunity for exact repetition because the allotted time for the tasks was very short. Accordingly, the TOEFL speaking tasks seem to be suitable for task repetition.

All the teachers interviewed also agreed on the effectiveness of recording in practicing oral skills. Recording and reviewing students' own speech or performance also helps them build accuracy (Graham & Barone, 2001; Lynch, 2001, 2005). As Lynch's study found the effectiveness of self-transcribing and noticing for developing oral accuracy for EAP learners, via recording, students could self-transcribe their speech during the TOEFL tasks and review it individually or in pairs for accuracy. This transcribing and editing of speech during the TOEFL tasks is manageable considering the short response time.

Implications for Pre-university EAP Teachers and Programs

The findings of this study indicate that although the intensive program, particularly at higher levels, focused primarily on preparing students for university, the instructions given to students were not always EAP focused. This seems to be the case for many university-offered intensive programs. Because programs with an EAP orientation

often offer training for higher level English than training for English for general communication, they tend to attract advanced learners who are not necessarily enrolled for an academic application, but for broader application (e.g., mastery of English skills for their career). In such weaker EAP settings or mixed settings, EAP instruction could be ensured and strengthened by utilizing the TOEFL test-tasks that are designed exclusively for EAP.

In many language institutions in North America, the East Asian student population is substantial. Those students whose cultural values and educational practices are very different from North American ones are not always familiar with Western styles of teaching and learning. In this study, although teachers accepted that the TOEFL speaking tasks could be a valid practice, they were reluctant to fully incorporate them into their classes. One of the reasons was that the type of practice required for the TOEFL speaking tasks was at odds with their beliefs and practices in CLT, a very Western methodology for language teaching. It seems that the teachers did not necessarily approve of learning through exam preparation. However, East Asian students come from a culture where exams are a very important part of their lives. For these students, exam results are of primary importance; therefore, more attention is paid to the product rather than to process. Taking this into consideration, East Asian students' preference for individualized oral tasks used for evaluation and their beliefs in the usefulness of such tasks for their skills development are understandable.

Many researchers have asserted that matching learning and teaching styles are important for improving learning, attitudes, behaviour, and motivation (Nelson, 1995; Peacock, 2001; Willing, 1988). Willing claims that teachers should try to do so even if

their view of effective learning and teaching is in conflict with students' view. I do not suggest here that teachers should restrict use of their preferred practices informed by CLT (e.g., activities emphasizing learners' active roles via group work and focusing on comprehensible input through meaning-based tasks). These are also important tasks beyond ESL settings, which East Asian students should become familiar with if they intend to study in North American universities. What I stress here is that learning could be maximized if they are *also* given an opportunity to learn through a familiar or preferred mode of learning. In her discussion of teaching styles accommodating different learners' different needs, Ehrman (1996) asserts:

> The best approach is to gradually build in an increased array of options for classroom work and homework assignments. Guidance to students in structuring their own homework along lines that begin in their comfort zones and gradually stretch them out of the comfort zones is generally well received (p. 129).

In that regard, using the TOEFL speaking tasks could be desirable and useful. Studies have shown empirical support for improvement in learning when students are matched to the learning approach that best suits their profile (Wesche, 1981).

Limitations

There are several limitations that need to be discussed for interpretation of the findings and for consideration in future research. First of all, because the study does not have data from non-East Asian students, it is unknown that the degree to which the perceptions expressed are particular to East Asians, or possibly representative of pre-university EAP students as a whole.

In addition, as is often the case with research with a case study design, the generalizability of the current findings to other pre-university, CLT oriented EAP

program is limited. In particular, both the language institution and the teachers who were interviewed endorsed a "strong" version of CLT with little emphasis on focus on form when the study was conducted. As with the inclusion of the TOEFL for the curriculum renewal, more explicit form focused instruction (e.g., teaching of grammar features) was to be included in the advanced levels. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Another limitation is related to the lack of distinction between specific EAP and general speaking practices or instruction in the study. Although the primary aim of the program was to prepare students for university, during the observations, it was found that designs of and topics for oral practices were not always focused specifically on EAP. Accordingly, a few items in the student questionnaire and a few questions for the teacher interview did not specify speaking for academic purposes as doing so was considered to be more relevant for the context. Therefore, the study might have found different results if all the questions were restricted to EAP.

From a methodological point of view, the sampling approach to classroom observation used in the research was problematic. As this study targeted four different classes which were co-taught by two teachers, the observations for regular speaking tasks were limited in number. Therefore, some significant episodes could have been missed. There was also the possibility of teachers' and students' behaviours being atypical as only a sample of their classroom behaviour was observed. In addition, due to the desire to observe a range of classes with East Asian students prior to the implementation of the TOEFL speaking tasks, the two teachers who agreed to participate in the interviews at the end of the study had only been observed once (for 28 minutes) doing regular speaking

activities. Therefore, it was not possible to compare their behaviour during the TOEFL tasks with their behaviour during regular speaking tasks.

Although the notes taken during the observations were detailed and useful for describing overall classroom events, video- or audio-recording the classes would have been desirable for more detailed record and objective data analyses. Without aid of recording, documenting all East Asian participants' behaviour particularly when they were working in small groups was not feasible. In analyzing observation data, judgment on frequency of classroom interaction was often made without support from numbers. Quantifying behavioural patterns and classroom events for more objective judgment would have been feasible via recording.

In this study, the investigation of the usefulness of the TOEFL speaking tasks for developing EAP oral skills and for promoting participation was carried out through triangulating data from classroom observations, a questionnaire for students, interviews for teachers. While this is a strength of the study, as pointed out above, without recording, participation in small group discussions was difficult to measure objectively as students spread out in the classroom. In addition, for the EAP oral skills development, investigation was inferred from students' and teachers' perceptions and their behaviour without utilizing objective measurement of their actual speaking skills development. Using objective measurement would have been necessary if the TOEFL tasks had been used more frequently or more fully integrated into the curriculum.

Future Research

Several limitations discussed above hint at areas to address in future research.

Whether or not TOEFL speaking practice leads to the development of actual oral skills in EAP among pre-university East Asian learners, and whether the gains are greater than in classes that rely on discussions or oral presentations only remains an empirical question. Among the objective assessment tools that could be used is the TOEFL scoring rubric itself. More analytic scoring could also be used assess whether there were specific areas of improvement.

It would be also interesting to study if the skills learned through the TOEFL speaking practice could be transferred to other contexts. East Asian participants in the study believed that the TOEFL practice would be helpful for building confidence in participating in discussions. To be successful at the TOEFL speaking tasks, students need to develop specific skills: organizing answers for various types of questions in a limited time and delivering them spontaneously regardless of their readiness for speaking. These skills are supposedly useful for participating in any type of discussion. Whether or not these skills practiced via TOEFL practice facilitate their active participation in small group or whole class discussions in language classrooms and beyond ESL classrooms could be examined.

The point discussed above points to another important issue that needs to be addressed in future research: whether the TOEFL speaking practice actually prepares East Asian students to meet oral communication demands at university. As noted earlier, East Asian students' lack of participation in university content classrooms was worrisome for many educators and researchers. East Asian students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TOEFL practice for meeting academic oral demands could be investigated after they are mainstreamed into university content classrooms. This could be an important study to

examine content validity of the new TOEFL test from students' perspectives.

Another direction for the future research could be obtaining data from non-East Asian pre-university EAP learners for a comparison of their views on TOEFL speaking practice with those of East Asians in order to further examine the relationship of reticence, culture, and previous educational practices when learning oral skills. Finally, taking into consideration the particularity of the context of the current research in which the TOEFL practice was unnecessary, it would be necessary to examine East Asian learners' responses toward the TOEFL practice when the TOEFL is required.

Closing Comments

This case study was motivated to investigate a neglected area in L2 research: development of oral skills in English for academic purposes, particularly among East Asian learners in the pre-university context. To do so, the practice for the TOEFL speaking test, which have been predicted to have positive impact on EAP teaching and learning was compared with other types of oral practice used in communicative classrooms. The study documented East Asian students' positive responses toward the TOEFL practice. Based on this finding, the TOEFL tasks can be a viable classroom method addressing East Asian students' needs in EAP as the tasks offer *focused* and *forced* practice of academic speaking. However, to successfully incorporate the TOEFL practice into communicative classrooms, issues around challenges with using the TOEFL among CLT trained language teachers need to be addressed.

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APPENDIX A

Date:	Day:	Teacher:	# of Ss:	# of EA Ss:

Time:	Activity/Material	Teacher' behaviour/comment	Students' behaviour/comment

Please help me by answering these questions about your experience with learning English in Canada. The information you provide will be confidential; your name will not be used and your teachers will not read this. This is not a test, so there are no "right" or "wrong" answers. I want to know what you think. Please answer sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of my research. Thank you very much for your help.

Your opinions & perspectives on English learning & speaking

1. To me, (reading, writing, speaking, listening) is **the most difficult** to improve.
   (please circle one)
   And Why?

   _____

2. When you study your major at an English-speaking university, which do you think is the most difficult and the second most difficult? If you have not studied in university in Canada, please imagine what you will experience.

Reading:	Writing:	Speaking:	Listening:

Please write 1 for the most difficult and write 2 for the second most difficult.

3. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements below.

Sometimes, doing **speaking** activities is **difficult** or I don't talk much in **group/class discussions** BECAUSE	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In general, I am not confident about my speaking in English.						
My vocabulary is limited, so it's difficult to express what I want to say.						
I miss chances to talk because other students say the answers quickly.						
I don't get a chance to talk because some **talkative students dominate** discussions.						
I m not used to talking in class because teachers in my country do **not usually ask us to discuss in the classroom.**						
I am not used to giving my opinions in class because in my country, **we don't usually give our opinions** in the classroom.						
I do not always have an opinion about a topic (e.g., education, pollution), so I need more time to think.						
I prefer to listen when I don't have much information to talk about.						
I am not good at finding main ideas, examples or the connections between the ideas.						
When I give my opinion, it is not always easy to find supporting examples or details for my idea.						
When teachers ask us "discuss in groups," I am not always sure what to talk about.						

My reading is slow, so I often want more time to read a text before discussing the content.						
My listening is not very good, so I often want more time to listen before discussing the content.						
I hesitate to talk because I am not sure if my answers are correct.						

Regular speaking activities (NOT the TOEFL speaking tasks)

A. Please evaluate **your** level of difficulty in doing **regular speaking activities**.

Activities	Very Difficult Very Easy
1.Group discussion about information from reading Talk about main ideas and examples/details from **articles, reports, or book Chapters**	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.Group discussion about information from videos/listening Talk about main ideas and examples/details from **videos, tapes, and guest lectures**	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.Group discussion on a topic Express my opinion about a topic (e.g., happiness, education, book/movie review) and explain why I have that opinion.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.Whole class discussion Talk about information and express my opinion to the **whole class,** or ask and answer questions to the whole class	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.Oral presentation Give an oral presentation (e.g., book review presentation, topic presentation, research paper presentation) **in front of the class**	1 2 3 4 5 6
6.Debates Choose one side and defend your side by presenting several arguments.	1 2 3 4 5 6

B. Please evaluate your level of motivation and of participation.

1. **My motivation** for doing **regular speaking activities (described above)**:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
Extremely low   Extremely high

2. Compared to other students in my class, my level of **participation in group discussions**:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
Extremely low   Extremely high

3. Compared to other students in my class, my level of **participation in whole class discussions**:

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10
Extremely low   Extremely high

C. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements about **doing oral presentations** (e.g., topic presentations, research paper presentations).

When I am doing my oral presentations,	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I pay attention to **my pronunciation** while I am speaking.						
I pay attention to **my grammar** while I am speaking.						
I pay attention to **my vocabulary** while I am speaking (choosing good vocabulary).						
I pay attention to **fluency** (trying not to hesitate, repeat, or pause).						
I pay attention to the **organization** of my speech (organize my talk before I speak and make my speech coherent).						
I receive **clear and specific instructions** for giving oral presentations **from teachers.**						
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my teachers.**						
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my classmates.**						
I **analyze my weaknesses and strengths** in my speaking skills or oral performance.						
I force myself to speak (or I have to speak) even when **I'm not interested** in the topic.						
I force myself to speak (or I have to speak) even when **I don't have enough information** to talk about.						
Repeated practice (doing many times) with oral presentations is a good way **to improve my speaking skills.**						
Repeated practice (doing many times) with oral presentations is a good way to **improve my confidence** in my speaking skills.						

D. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements about **group/whole class discussions.**

When I am doing group/whole class discussions,	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I pay attention to **my pronunciation** while I am speaking.						
I pay attention to **my grammar** while I am speaking.						
I pay attention to **my vocabulary** while I am speaking (choosing good vocabulary).						
I pay attention to **fluency** (trying not to hesitate, repeat, or pause).						

I pay attention to the **organization** of my speech (organize my talk before I speak and make my speech coherent).					
I receive **clear and specific instructions** for doing group/whole class discussions **from teachers.**					
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my teachers.**					
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my classmates.**					
I analyze my weaknesses and strengths in my speaking skills or oral performance.					
I force myself to speak (or I have to speak) even when **I'm not interested** in the topic.					
I force myself to speak (or I have to speak) even when **I don't have enough information** to talk about.					
Repeated practice (doing many times) with group/class discussions is a good way **to improve my speaking skills.**					
Repeated practice (doing many times) with group/class discussions is a good way to **improve my confidence** in my speaking skills.					

TOEFL speaking tasks

A. Please indicate if you did each task below and evaluate **your level of difficulty** in doing **TOEFL speaking tasks**.   (please circle)

TOEFL speaking tasks	I did this task in class	Very Difficult Very Easy
1.Speak Talk about a topic (e.g., favorite city, memorable event) with several different examples and details.	Yes/No	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.Speak Tell your preference (small vs. large class in university) and support your choice by giving several different examples and details.	Yes/No	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.Listen & speak (about campus life) Briefly describe the problem, two solutions, and then, tell **your** preference and reasons why you prefer the solution you choose.	Yes/No	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.Listen & speak (about academic topic) Summarize the main points and the examples for each point in the listening (e.g., professor's lecture on psychology, biology, instruction on how to use a microscope).	Yes/No	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.Read, listen, & speak (about campus life) Talk about the speaker's opinion and reasons for the opinion by linking the information in the reading (e.g., campus policy) to listening.	Yes/No	1 2 3 4 5 6
6.Read, listen, & speak (about academic topic) Explain a topic by linking listening (specific examples) to reading (general information). (e.g., explaining animal domestication from the text and lecture)	Yes/No	1 2 3 4 5 6

B. Please evaluate your level of motivation and of participation.

1. **My motivation** for doing the **TOEFL tasks:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Extremely low   Extremely high

2. Compared to other students, my level of **participation** in the **TOEFL tasks:**

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Extremely low   Extremely high

C. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements about **doing the TOEFL speaking tasks.**

When I am doing the TOEFL speaking tasks,	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I pay attention to **my pronunciation** while I am speaking.						
I pay attention to **my grammar** while I am speaking.						
I pay attention to **my vocabulary** while I am speaking (choosing good vocabulary).						
I pay attention to **fluency** (trying not to hesitate, repeat, or pause).						
I pay attention to the **organization** of my speech (organize my talk before I speak and make my speech coherent).						
I receive **clear and specific instructions** for going the TOEFL speaking tasks **from teachers.**						
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my teachers.**						
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my classmates.**						
I **analyze my weaknesses and strengths** in my speaking skills or oral performance.						
I **force myself to speak** (or I have to speak) even when **I'm not interested** in the topic.						
I **force myself to speak** (or I have to speak) even when **I don't have enough information** to talk about.						
Repeated practice (doing many times) with the TOEFL speaking tasks is a good way **to improve my speaking skills.**						
Repeated practice (doing many times) with the TOEFL speaking tasks is a good way to **improve my confidence** in my speaking skills.						

—

Now compare your behaviors and opinions for the three speaking activities: oral presentations, group/class discussions, and the TOEFL speaking tasks. Please decide **for which activity**, the statements below are the most, the second most, or the least **true.**

Write 1 for the most true, 2 for the second most true, 3 for the least true.

	Oral Presentations	Group Whole class discussion	TOEFL Speaking Tasks
I pay attention to **my pronunciation** while I am speaking.			
I pay attention to **my grammar** while I am speaking.			
I pay attention to **my vocabulary** while I am speaking (choosing good vocabulary).			
I pay attention to **fluency** (trying not to hesitate, repeat, or pause).			
I pay attention to the **organization** of my speech (organize my talk before I speak and make my speech coherent).			
I receive **clear and specific instructions** for doing this speaking activity **from teachers.**			
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my teachers.**			
I receive feedback on my speaking skills or oral performance **from my classmates.**			
I **analyze my weaknesses and strengths** in my speaking skills or oral performance.			
I **force myself to speak** (or I have to speak) even when **I'm not interested** in the topic.			
I **force myself to speak** (or I have to speak) even when **I don't have enough information** to talk about.			
Repeated practice (doing many times) with this speaking activity is a good way **to improve my speaking skills.**			
Repeated practice (doing many times) with this speaking activity is a good way to **improve my confidence** in my speaking skills.			

D. Imagine you take another intensive course in which the **TOEFL speaking tasks are used regularly from the beginning to the end of the course**: how much do you agree or disagree with the statements below?

My opinion on doing the TOEFL tasks **regularly** in the classroom:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is a waste of time because I don't have to take the TOEFL test.						
It is not helpful to improve my speaking because the skills and tricks are useful **only** for the TOEFL test.						
I will not improve my speaking skills because some tasks are too difficult for me.						
I might be able to express my opinions more easily.						
I might be able to speak more spontaneously (quickly).						
I might be able to speak more coherently (good organization of my speech).						
I might feel more confident during class discussions because I practice giving answers & opinions quickly.						

E. Please give me your opinion about doing the TOEFL speaking activities in your advanced class.

1. I liked doing the TOEFL speaking tasks because _____

_____

_____

_____

2. I did NOT like doing the TOEFL speaking tasks because _____

_____

_____

_____

F. What do you think the program or CELI teachers could **change** to help you improve your speaking skills?

_____

_____

_____

_____

G. Look at the all the speaking activities you have done in your class. Choose three (3) that you think help you improve your speaking skills for university studies and life in Canada.

1: _____   2: _____   3:_____

Regular speaking activities	
R1	1.Group discussion about information from reading Talk about main ideas and examples/details from **articles, reports, or book Chapters**
R2	2.Group discussion about information from videos/listening Talk about main ideas and examples/details from **videos, tapes, and guest lectures**
R3	3.Group discussion on a topic Express my opinion about a topic (e.g., happiness, education, book/movie review) and explain why I have that opinion.
R4	4.Whole class discussion Talk about information and express my opinion to the **whole class,** or ask and answer questions to the whole class
R5	5.Oral presentation Give an oral presentation (e.g., book review presentation, topic presentation, research paper presentation) **in front of the class**
R6	6.Debates Choose one side and defend your side by presenting several arguments.
TOEFL speaking tasks	
T1	1.Speak Talk about a topic (e.g., favorite city, memorable event) with several different examples and details.
T2	2.Speak Tell your preference (small vs. large class in university) and support your choice by giving several different examples and details.
T3	3.Listen & speak (about campus life) Briefly describe the problem, two solutions, and then, tell **your** preference and reasons why you prefer the solution you choose.
T4	4.Listen & speak (about academic topic) Summarize the main points and the examples for each point in the listening (e.g., professor's lecture on psychology, biology, instruction on how to use a microscope).
T5	5.Read, listen, & speak (about campus life) Talk about the speaker's opinion and reasons for the opinion by linking the information in the reading (e.g., campus policy) to listening.
T6	6.Read, listen, & speak (about academic topic) Explain a topic by linking listening (specific examples) to reading (general information). (e.g., explaining animal domestication from the text and lecture)

<u>Your background information</u>

Level: Advanced 1: _____ Advanced 2: _____ Names of your teachers:

_____

Name: _____ Name used in class: _____ Gender: Male _____ Female

_____

Phone number: _____ Email:

_____

Date of birth: _____ (mm/dd/yyyy) Country:

_____

How long have you been in Canada? _____ years _____ months (total length of my stay)

Education

1. Did you attend **an elementary, middle, or high school** in Canada or US? Yes _____ No _____

● If yes, which school: (elementary, middle, high), how many years? _____, and where?

_____
                    (please circle)

2. Did you attend **an international (English) elementary, middle, or high school** in **your country**?

● Yes _____ No _____ If yes, which level(s): (elementary, middle, high), and how long? _____
                         (please circle)

3. Did you study in **college/university in your country?** Yes _____ No _____

● If yes, how many years? _____ Major (area of studies): _____

4. Have you studied your major in **college/university in Canada?** Yes _____ No _____

● Which university: _____ How many years? _____

Undergraduate _____ Graduate _____ Major (area of studies): _____

5. Are you planning on studying at a university **in Canada/US?** Yes _____ No _____

Which university: _____ Major (area of studies): _____

6. Have you already applied to a university program **in Canada/US?** Yes _____ No _____

If so, have you been accepted? Yes _____ No _____

English learning in your country

1. I started to learn English when I was _____ years old.

2. Did you learn English in elementary school? Yes _____ No _____ For how long? _____ yrs

3. Did you learn English in middle and high schools? Yes _____ No _____ For how long? _____

yrs

4. Did you learn English in college/university **in your country?**

                                   Yes _____ No _____ For how long? _____ yrs

5. Have you attended a **private language institute** to practice English **conversations** **in your country?**

                                   Yes _____ No _____ For how long? _____ yrs

6. **In my country,** my English education focused **mainly** on (reading, listening, writing, speaking,

                                grammar, vocabulary, translation)

                                (you can circle more than one)

English learning in Canada

1. What were the reasons why you took this advanced 1 or 2 course at CELI?

_____

—

2. Intensive courses you have taken at CELI (Concordia Continuing Education)

		When (season/year)			When (season/year)
Level 1: Beginner 1	□		Level 5: Intermediate 1	□	
Level 2: Beginner 2	□		Level 6: Intermediate 2	□	
Level 3: Elementary 1	□		Level 7: Advanced 1	□	
Level 4: Elementary 2	□		Level 8: Advanced 2	□	

3. Have you taken other English courses in **Canada?**   Yes _____ No _____

Name (e.g., intensive, CELDT or TOEFL preparation, university ESL, pronunciation, writing course)	When	How long	Where (city)

4. Have you taken the TOEFL test before?   Yes _____ No _____

- When _____ / What version: _____ / Total score : _____

- If you have taken the iBT TOEFL (new TOEFL), your score of the speaking section _____

5. While you were taking your Advanced course, **on average,** how many hours did you usually spend **each week** to do your homework or to prepare for class?
If you

Reading	( ) hr per week	Listening	( ) hr per week	Speaking	( ) hr per week	Writing	( ) hr per week

Interview - Teachers

<u>Background</u>
Name: Native speaker of English?
Years of ESL teaching: Years of ESL teaching at CELI:
Years/semesters of EAP teaching (Advanced 1 & 2):
Teacher training (what type & when):
TOEFL training:

<u>A. TOEFL teaching & satisfaction</u>
1. Can you remind me of which TOEFL speaking tasks you did?
2. Which of those did you enjoy and why?
3. Which of those did you not enjoy and why?
4. Overall, how different were these tasks from the regular speaking activities (e.g., oral presentations, group discussions) that students do? How similar were they?
5. Compared to regular speaking activities (e.g., oral presentations, group discussions), what advantages do TOEFL speaking tasks offer for improving speaking skills? What are their limitations?
6-1. Do you find that students from some cultural backgrounds are more active participants in small group or whole class discussions?
6-2. If yes, how do you usually try to encourage more participation from the more reticent students?
6-3. Did you find any of the TOEFL speaking tasks to be effective ways of encouraging more active participation by these students? Why or why not?
6-4. Did you find (or believe) TOEFL speaking practice to be effective ways of building students' confidence in their oral skills? Why or why not?

<u>B. Observed TOEFL Methodology</u>
1. Student work mode
● I noticed that you asked students to work on the TOEFL speaking tasks in pair rather than to work in small group (SS' usual working mode). Why?
2. Modeling/demonstration & follow-up discussion
● I noticed that you asked (did not ask) a few students to do the task to the class as a model and to comment on their performance. What made you decide to do this, and how effective was it, in your view?
3. Test-taking strategies
● Did you teach TOEFL-taking techniques/strategies (tips that are helpful for the real exam) and why? Do you think they are also helpful for SS' oral skills development?
4. Scoring rubrics
● Using the TOEFL scoring rubrics
    □ How was your experience with introducing the scoring rubrics?
    □ Why did you not use them?

<u>C. Evaluation & feedback</u>
● I noticed that speaking is evaluated when SS are doing debates & oral presentations. How well do you feel they capture a student's oral abilities (i.e., To what degree do the two tasks reflect the range of academic contexts in which oral speaking skills are needed)? [whether the TOEFL tasks provide opportunities to evaluate a broader range of the types of oral skills needed for academic life].

- Do you see the TOEFL tasks as potentially useful for providing additional/different types of speaking activities for evaluation?

D. Potential of the TOEFL speaking tasks
- If you use the TOEFL speaking tasks again, would you make any changes to how they were used? If yes, what would you do differently? If no, why not?

If the potentials described below are not mentioned by the teacher, ask their opinion about each.

[These are the techniques that are used in the TOEFL preparation classrooms or recommended by ETS, do you think they are also helpful/feasible for your regular class?]

1. Recording for **self**- analysis/evaluation/monitor progress and for TEACHER feedback
- Students regularly record their responses on the TOEFL tasks to analyze/evaluate them and to check progress themselves.
- Teachers give corrections to my pronunciation/grammar mistakes in my recorded TOEFL speech.
2. Test
- Diagnostic test: TOEFL tasks are used to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses in their speaking skills at the beginning of the semester.
- Placement test: TOEFL tasks are used for new students to place at a certain level.
- Progress test: TOEFL tasks are used regularly to monitor students' progress in speaking.
- Achievement test: TOEFL tasks are used to evaluate their achievement at the end of the semester.
3. Homework
- TOEFL tasks are given as homework, so that students can practice regularly at home.
4. Using scoring rubrics
- Students evaluate their own and partner's TOEFL speaking responses based on the elements in the scoring rubrics.
- Teachers evaluate students' speaking based on the rubrics.
5. Modeling/Ss doing evaluation
- Listening to others' performance at various levels (scores) and evaluate/discuss.
6. Role play: Task 3.Listen & speak (about campus life): Briefly describe the problem, two solutions, and then, tell **your** preference and reasons why you prefer the solution you choose.
- In groups of 3, two students do a role play of stating a problem and giving suggestions/advice and the other does the TOEFL task 3 based on the role play.
7. Turning regular discussion activities into the TOEFL style
- Discussion questions for regular small group discussion activities are arranged with time limit & equal opportunity for each student

APPENDIX D

Interview – Coordinator

<u>Background Information</u>
Years of ESL teaching:
Years of ESL coordinator (at CELI):
Teacher training:
TOEFL training & TOEFL information (iBT TOEFL test center):

1. What were the motivations for including the TOEFL test-tasks in the regular EAP curriculum?

2. What were the purposes/aims of using the TOEFL speaking tasks?
● In what ways can the TOEFL speaking practice help pre-university EAP students develop academic speaking skills?
● What are the other advantages of using the TOEFL tasks in a regular class?

3. Decision-making process
● Who was involved in the decision-making process?
● How?

4. Material preparation: preparing mock test items?
● Who?
● Sources?

5. Planning & Predictions
● How were the materials distributed to the teachers?
● How were the teachers informed?
      1.   Meeting? What was discussed at the meeting?
● What did you expect the teachers to do with the materials?
      1.   Give the tasks
      2.   Teach skills & strategies
      3.   Other uses (e.g., an evaluation tool – self or peer evaluation, homework)
      4.   Student work mode
      5.   Evaluation & feedback
● Anticipated difficulties for teachers?
● How did you predict that the students would react/respond?

6. Success
● Comments on success according to your own criteria of success
● Do you anticipate using this again? If so, how?

Coding categories

Reasons for likes

	categories		sub-categories	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
A	task characteristics	1	new/different format								
		2	time limit/lack of preparation time								
		3	related to real-life								
		4	fun/interesting								
		5	topics (different,interesting,familiar)								
		6	forcing oral production								
B	helpful for speaking	1	improving speaking in general								
		2	organization								
		3	pronunication								
		4	academic speech								
		5	confidence								
C	test-related	1	test preparation								
		2	TOEFL info								

Reasons for dislikes

	categories		sub-categories	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
A	none										
B	task characteristics	1	time limit								
		2	not helpful for daily life/studies								
		3	difficult academic topics								
C	task implementation	1	not important for course								
		2	lack of teacher preparation								
		3	not enough practice in class								
		4	already done in prep course								
D	Affective	1	nervous								
		2	boring								

Suggested improvement

	categories		sub-categories	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
A	to teachers	1	talk more with students individually								
		2	force SS to speak/stop talkative								
		3	Instruction/feedback								
		a	*grammar*								
		b	*focused and specific for speaking skills*								
		c	*pronunciation*								
		d	*informal/casual speech*								
		e	*vocabulary/expressions*								
B	to program	1	different/diverse topics								
		2	focused speaking activities								
		a	*more oral presentations*								
		b	*more debates*								
		c	*more TOEFL tasks*								
		d	*TOEFL type tasks*								
		3	more grammar activities								
		4	more after-class activities								
		5	better prepare students for university								

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