

Proposal for Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) via Internet and the Assessment of Oral Presentation in English

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Nakano, Michiko. 2007. Proposal for Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) via Internet and the Assessment of Oral Presentation in English. *Linguistic Research* 24(1), 105-126. The commitment of prominent universities and professional schools to the development of digital course material for the Web has stimulated debate about its efficacy for promoting learning. We argue that the unique properties of the Internet (connectivity, non-linearity, de-centering, and virtual presence) and multi-point distance learning offer opportunities for turning a learner's point of view into trans-cultural ones which may be termed as Global Literacy Education with Cross-Cultural Competence. According to Kramsch (2005), "neither intercultural nor multicultural education put into question the mainstream principles of the dominant Anglo American culture, ... (2005, p.13). Since we embody different and incommensurable world views, both Kramsch and Cameron (2002) oppose the world view of 'unity and diversity.' Real world problems cannot be solved by native-like communication skills. Instead, they propose transcultural competence and we can argue that 'Cross-Cultural Competence' offers necessary concepts of English Language Education in Asia. This paper describes our educational efforts in Asia to encourage our students to adopt flexible and strategic multiple point of views to overcome incommensurable world views. In our cyber space, we might be able to find a 'cultural third place outside the domination of the markets and the tyranny of national and ethnic communities': Kramisch (2005, p. 31). At the same time, our initial attempt to assess Oral English among Asian speakers of English is reported. The present assessment is based on Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), in order to make our assessment international. (Waseda University)

Keywords CCDL (Cross-Cultural Distance Learning), Cross-Cultural Competence, digital course material, oral English assessment

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1. Introduction

The recent advancement of IT technology enables us to achieve our educational policy of Global Literacy Education and Cross-Cultural Competence in the manner of Inter-University Collaborations. One of the Educational policies at Waseda University is to educate our students as Intellectual Individuals who can cope with real problems in the world, such as Environmental Issues, Free Trade Agreement, Food Safety, Intellectual Property Issues, Standardization of Laws, etc.. Distance Education Center, along with Digital Campus Consortium (DCC) and Forum for on-demand Lecture Circulation (FOLC), has encouraged faculty to promote Inter-University Collaborations since 1997, using Video Conferencing System, on-demand Internet Courses, Moodle, and PC oral chat. We define Global Literacy as globally adaptable Mind-Set (Positive-Mind, Can-Do Spirit, Readiness for Cross-Cultural Differences) together with Expert Knowledge relevant for a specific problem. We regard Cross-Cultural Competence as more suitable in this incommensurable world than Intercultural Competence or Communicative Competence in which cultural values and assumptions of native speakers of English are implicitly presupposed. English we use as a tool of communication is denationalized and de-cultured. In the face of hybrid, changing and conflicting cultures and socio-economic policies, real-world problems cannot be solved only through Anglo-American norms alone; we Asians have to think independently and contribute. With the increasing globalization of markets and international migration, we ought to notice that no stable knowledge can be passed on from one generation to the next. Each generation has to discover each solution to each problem on its own, because each set of circumstances is different in each generation. But this discovery can take place only in dialog with others. For these purposes, inter-university cyber collaborations in Asia-Pacific regions are urgently needed.

2. English as an International Language in the Global Society

New roles of English have been proposed in recent years in accordance to the development of technology and globalization: World Englishes (WE), English as a glocal language, English as a lingua franca (ELF) and English as an International Language (EIL). Most people agree that today English has achieved the status of a lingua franca, not because of the growth in the number of native speakers but because of an increase in the number of individuals in the world who have acquired English as an additional language.

Although the initial spread of English was due to speaker migration, resulting in the development of largely monolingual English-speaking communities (USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand), the current spread of English is due to individuals acquiring English as an additional language for international and, in some contexts, intra-national communication. This type of language spread results not in monolingualism, but rather large-scale bilingualism.

1. Many learners of English today have specific purposes in learning English, which in general are more limited than those of immigrants to English-speaking countries, who may eventually use English as their sole or dominant language.
2. Many L2 speakers of English will be using English to interact with other L2 speakers rather than with 'native speakers'.
3. Many current learners of English may desire to learn English in order to share with others information about their own countries for such purposes as encouraging economic investment, promoting tourism, etc.

This is the position of English as a global lingua franca. On the other hand, English as an International Language (EIL) tends to emphasize the three points:

1. Learners of EIL do not need to internalize the cultural norms of 'native

speakers' of English

2. The ownership of EIL has become de-nationalized
3. The educational goal of EIL is often (and should be) to enable learners to communicate their ideas and cultures to others.

English is being studied and used more and more as an international language in which learners acquire English as an additional language of wider communication. As a result, the dominance of 'native-speakers' and their culture has been seriously challenged. It is time to recognize the multilingual context of English use and put aside a native speaker model of curriculum development. Only then can an appropriate EIL curriculum be developed in which local educators take ownership of English and the manner in which it is taught. For this shift in the nature of English, we prepared the omnibus on-demand course with occasional multi-point video conferencing called 'World Englishes and Miscommunications' or 'Co-existence in Asia'. In the former course, we focus on specific syntactic, lexical, phonological, pragmatic, para-linguistic features of each variety of English that might cause misunderstanding. The varieties we dealt with are Chinese English, Korean English, Malay English, Singapore English, Philippine English, Indian English, Hong Kong English, Thai English, Taiwan English and Japanese English. This is one of the examples as Inter-university collaborations which Waseda University has been prompting in Asia since 1997. Since the on-demand lectures reflect the 18 lecturers' first-hand experiences in multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies in Asia, we begin to think of the use of English in the larger context, encompassing our future pedagogical directions. Firstly, the students have repeatedly argued the following points in our live sessions with Asian partners.

- ⌘ English is denationalized. It does not belong to any nation-state. Since English users in Asia outnumber Native speakers, some say that it is an Asian language.
- ⌘ English can be used as a culturally neutral tool of communication:

We do not need to internalize NS cultural norms.

- /// Spoken English can be judged as adequate if it conforms to the criteria of Intelligibility, Comprehensibility and Interpretability.

With the view toward overcoming linguistic challenges and to meet the future needs of its students, Waseda University initiated the Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) Project which is also called 'global literacy education'. This project began in 1997 and currently has sixty eight participating universities mainly from twenty-two countries: Philippines, Malaysia, Korea, England, Scotland, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Russia, USA, Taiwan, and China (Peking and Hong Kong), etc.. It has three main objectives for the undergraduate level of education: to develop mutual understanding of different cultures, to enrich the foreign language learning experiences and to encourage equitable access to advanced information technology through co-operation and sharing of resources. The project is also concerned with the graduate level of education; it aims at enhancing teacher/facilitator skills through a series of cyber lectures and virtual workshops where leaders in the field share their views on language teaching or applied linguistics with all participating members of the project. The project thus caters for the needs of both facilitators and students.

3. The Importance of NNS-NNS Interactions in Asia (the Expanding Circle)

Some students seem to assume that unless they are taught by or communicate to native speakers, they cannot improve their English. In fact some students categorically deny the importance of NNS-NNS interactions. In their mind the model of English is that of native speakers. In this case it is important for us to point out that there are three views about English, as we have noted in Section 1.0: World Englishes (WE), English as an International Language (EIL) and English as Lingua Franca (ELF). In fact, Jenkins (2002

and 2004) and Seidlehofer (2003) propose the simpler inventory of learning in pronunciation and lexico-grammar for the purpose of ELF. Widdowson (2005) also recommends us to appropriate the goal of English Language Learning to suit the purpose of local or personal needs. These views reflect the global spread of English use in the world.

Kachur's view of World Englishes classify varieties of Englishes into three cases: the inner circle Englishes which include native speaker varieties in Britain, USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, the outer circle Englishes which includes varieties in the countries colonized in the past where English is one of their official languages and the expanding circle Englishes which include the varieties in the remaining countries where English is taught as a foreign language and it is recognized as the language of the mainstream economy and power. The outer circle Englishes are NS-norm-independent, regarding localized varieties as relevant. On the other hand, the expanding circle Englishes are NS-norm-dependent, but there are many proponents that as long as intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability is guaranteed, some deviations from NS standards can be tolerated; at least, some accent derived from our native tongues should not be regarded as stigmatized or inferior to NS varieties.

We should recognize some advantages in NNS-NNS interactions in Asia. Although there are some individual differences, our speech rates are slower than those of NS, which facilitates basic or intermediate learners of English to understand their interactions. Asian Englishes are syllable-timed, as opposed to stress-timed NS Englishes (see Nakano 2006). Asian Englishes share common grammatical deviations (see Nakano, 2006). Furthermore, since Confucius traditions permeate in Asia, we share presuppositions such as family values, and seniority factors, we can understand pragmatic implications much more easily among Asians. Our use of English tends to reflect these Asian assumptions. Our students can learn these during the CCDL computer-mediated interactions. Furthermore, according to our research, a fair number of Asian users of English are advanced and proficient users of English. For this reason, NNS-NNS interactions can improve our learners' ability in English.

4. Significance of Global Literacy Education in Asia

Our Global Literacy courses and Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) courses have three progressive educational goals. The first basic goal is to enable our students to achieve the English ability to integrate the four components of communicative competence: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence: see Canale (1983). This is to prepare learners for real-life communication in the non-threatening atmosphere. The second intermediate goal is to enhance our students' inter-cultural or cross-cultural awareness so that rather than adopting native English cultural norms, they are encouraged to create culturally third-place in which Asian youths can deal with real problems in the world, possibly fostering pluri-cultural personality. The third advanced goal is to enable Asian youths to impart their local values in view of global perspectives so that their cultural and social literacy should be shared among them. We adopt a Project-based group work; a group of four to six students choose two-related sub-themes out of the project themes: gender roles, environmental issues, and socio-economic issues. The purpose is for the students to look at our traditional concepts in relation to the changing society, so that they can discuss a given issue from multiple perspectives all the participants bring with them. During the computer-mediated communication (CMC) sessions, the students should be able to explain in English the topic they choose. They are also encouraged to make short video (5-10 minute long) in English and present a PPT during the cyber sessions. Through these sharing activities, Asian instructors and our students begin to recognize the following points:

- /// On the assumption that we have an Asian community, it is necessary for us to promote awareness of an Asian identity; if it is a community we need to defend human rights in the community; we have other issues such as parliamentary democracy and the rule of law, and how to standardize various countries' social and legal practices.

- ⌘ We have a common consensus that in our networked education, through authentic collaboration via Network, which is our interpersonal activity in Asia, we should develop inter-subjectivity in our students' mind-set, which is an essence of Social Constructivism in Asia.
- ⌘ Learning takes place as a result of social interactions and sharing information.
- ⌘ In the face of hybrid, changing and conflicting cultures and socio-economic policies, real-world problems cannot be solved through native-like communication skills in English nor Anglo-American norms; we Asians have to think independently.
- ⌘ We need a lot of Cross-Cultural Cyber Seminars (CCCS) in which our understanding and our relationship to our own culture and society can be transformed in light of the other cultures and society in contact.
- ⌘ CCCS can create a cultural third place outside the domain of the markets and national and ethnic communities.

The student presentations clearly illustrated the following points:

- ⌘ They have realized our common heritage in the Asian community.
- ⌘ They strengthened and raised their awareness of the sense of belongings to the Asian community, and they experienced how to be co-operative in the community.

As a result, it appears that our educational objectives were not only to improve linguistic skills, but also to educate our students as Active and Intellectual individuals who can cope with real problems in the world. In fact, the former objective is negligible in comparison to the latter broader objective. With the increasing globalization of markets and international migration, we ought to notice that no stable knowledge can be passed on from one generation to the next. Each generation has to discover each solution to each

problem on its own, because each set of circumstances is different in each generation. But this discovery can take place only in dialog with others. With Globalization comes the opportunity to create other communities beyond the borders of nation-state. We should help our students expand their Asian personalities. Inter-university Collaboration in the cyber space seems so far to be promising.

5. Assessment of Oral English in Asia

As stated in Abstract, our assessment is based on Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). CEF sets six proficiency levels, using “illustrative descriptors.” The following table gives their simplified descriptions.

C2 (Mastery) Conveys finer shades of meaning precisely and naturally.
C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) Shows fluent, spontaneous expression in clear, well-structured speech.
B2 (Vantage) Express points of view without noticeable strain.
B1(Threshold) Relates comprehensibility the main points he/she wants to make.
A2(Waystage) Relates basic information on, e.g. work, family, free time etc.
A1(Breakthrough) Makes simple statements on personal details and very familiar topics.

North and Hughes 2003

The purpose of our initial experiment is to assess Oral English in Asia, in reference to CEFR, in order to validate the practicability of CEF for the assessment of Asian English learners. 10 human raters rated 73 Asian learners of English, based on CEFR, with respect to the three major categories of Intelligibility, Comprehensibility and Interpretability. We also evaluated their

speaking abilities by 24 subordinate items.

- Loudness
- Sound pitch
- Quality of vowels
- Quality of consonants
- Epenthesis of unneeded vowels
- Elision of needed consonants
- Word stress
- Sentence stress
- Prosody
- Speed
- Fluency
- Place of fillers
- Frequency of fillers
- Place of silent pause
- Frequency of silent pause
- Length of silent pause
- Absence of paralinguistic cues (e.g. Laughter, sigh, clicking, sound of blessing)
- Confidence
- Cheeriness
- Familiarity
- Accuracy
- Coherency
- Absence of tension
- Absence of foreign accentedness

5.1 Participants

73 Asian speakers of English participated in the experiment.

Korean	23
Thai	0
Filipino	6
Taiwanese	6
Chinese	9

- 13 Korean participants are graduate students.
- Average of learning English: 10.7(S.D. 3.6) yrs.
- 9 participants studied abroad over 1 year.
- Age range (16-29).

Ten Japanese who have MA in English education rated their performance. Their average years of learning English are 18.3 yrs with (SD. 6.5). Their average years of teaching experiences are 10.9 yrs (SD. 8.7). Rater trainings were carried out three times in March 2006. The raters discussed the criterion of CEF with DVD issued by Council of Europe. The raters assessed the recorded participants' speech individually on the web page

5.2 Objective Measurements

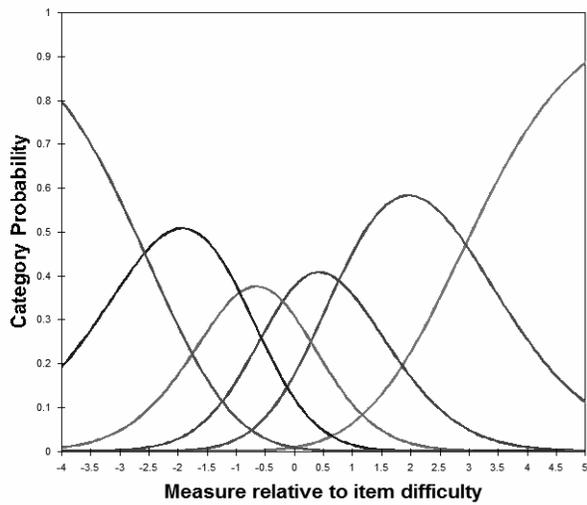
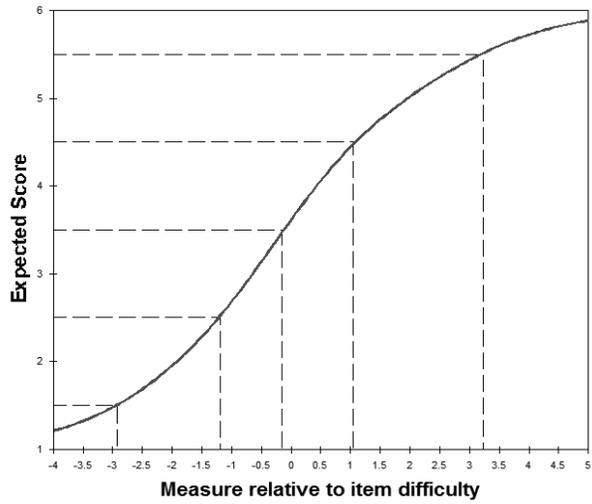
Rate of easy words	Rate of words of JACET8000level 1
Rate of difficult words	Rate of words of JACET8000level 2 + higher
Rate of proper nouns	Rate of proper nouns
WPM	The Number of words in a minute
Rate of non-error	Rate of C-units without errors
C-unit	The Number of C-units
Flesch Reading Ease	Index of reading ease
TTR (Type/token ratio)	
Total length of pauses	Total length of filled pauses and silent pauses
Filled pauses	The number of filled pauses
Total length of silent pauses	Total length of silent pauses
Average length of filled pause	Average length of filled pauses (sec.)
Average length of pauses	

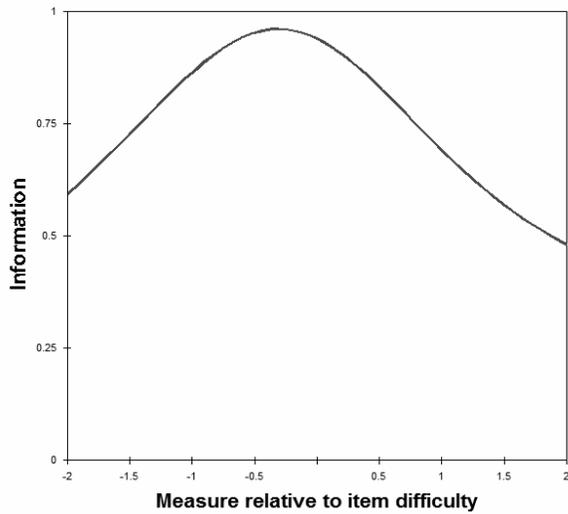
	Average length of filled pauses and silent pauses
Frequency of pauses (words)	
	Average number of words between two pauses
Frequency of pauses (sec.)	Average seconds between two pauses
Frequency of filled pauses (words)	
	Average number of words between two filled pauses
Frequency of filled pauses (sec.)	
	Average seconds between two filled pauses
Rate of filled pauses	Rate of filled pauses per length of time of utterance
Rate of silent pauses	Rate of silent pauses per length of time of utterance

We analyzed the data by using the four methods: Item Response analysis, co-relational analysis of human judgments and objective measurements, step-wise multiple regression analysis and Goodness of fit with the levels of CEFR.

5.3 Result

By using FACETS, we can estimate (1) examinee's ability, (2) rater's severity and (3) item difficulty. Examinee's abilities are reliably estimated, independent of rater's severity and item difficulty.





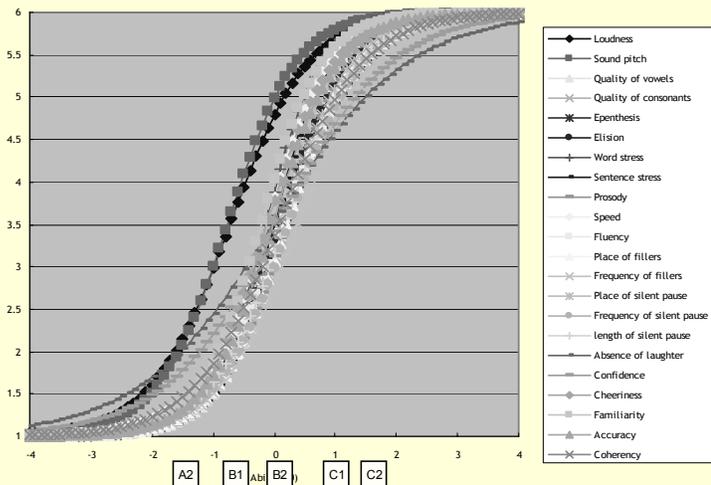
- Misfit items and examinees were deleted according to the criteria of Kondo-Brown (2003), Infit MS Mean $\pm 2.0SD$.
- Examinee's abilities were re-estimated by using the newly selected items.
- Participants' Reliability =.98
- Raters' Reliability=1.00
- Items' Reliability =.97

As a result, 2 items are deleted

	Measure Logit	InfitMS
Loudness	-0.73	1
Sound pitch	-0.77	0.88
Quality of vowels	0.09	0.8
Quality of consonants	0.11	0.81
Epenthesis of unneeded vowels	0.09	0.97
Elision of needed vowels	0.03	0.91
Word stress	-0.18	0.7
Sentence stress	-0.05	0.71
Prosody	0.11	0.86
Speed	-0.18	0.82
Fluency	0.1	1.01
Place of fillers	0.14	0.93
Frequency of fillers	0.32	1

	Measure Logit	InfitMS
Place of silent pause	0.07	0.96
Frequency of silent pause	0.18	0.98
Length of silent pause	0.1	0.99
Absence of Paralinguistic cues	-0.07	1.32
Confidence	0	1.31
Cheeriness	-0.17	0.85
Familiarity	-0.26	0.76
Accuracy	-0.08	0.87
Coherency	0.01	1.04
Absence of Tension	0.22	1.66
Absence of Foreign accents	0.91	1.87

Item Characteristic Curves



Difficulty ranking

	Item	Measure Logit
more difficult ↑	Frequency of fillers	0.4
	Frequency of silent pause	0.25
	Place of fillers	0.2
	Quality of consonants	0.17
	Prosody	0.17
	Length of silent pause	0.17
	Fluency	0.16
	Quality of vowels	0.15
	Epenthesis of unneeded vowels	0.15
	Place of silent pause	0.13
	Elision of needed consonants	0.09

Less difficult items

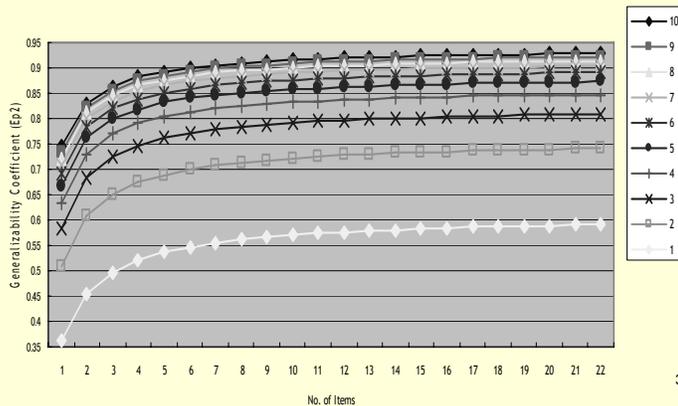
↓ less difficult	Coherency	0.07
	Confidence	0.06
	Sentence stress	0
	Relevant paralinguistic cues (e.g. laughter, sigh, clicking, sound of blessing)	-0.02
	Accuracy	-0.03
	Speed	-0.13
	Try to sound cheerful	-0.13
	Word stress	-0.14
	Try to sound friendly	-0.22
	Loudness	-0.73
	Sound pitch	-0.77

Is 6 point-rating scale valid?

Category	Occasions	%	Outfit	CatPeak
1	424	3%	1.1	100%
2	2078	13%	1.1	48%
3	4272	27%	1.0	44%
4	4145	26%	0.9	38%
5	3681	23%	0.9	49%
6	1460	9%	1.1	100%

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Generalizability Theory Analysis: Are the number of items and raters valid?



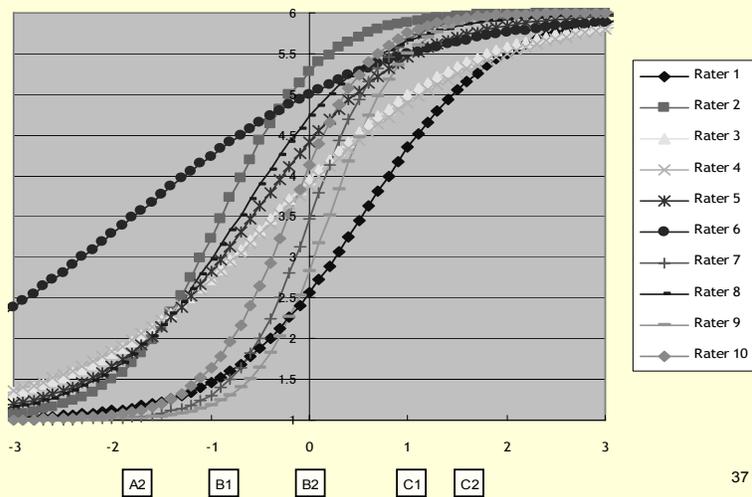
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This statistics shows that we do not need 22 items and ten raters. We only need four or five items and four or five raters. In terms of rater severity, the following table indicates that four raters are most reliable. For this reason, we tried to examine which items contribute strongly to the four reliable raters' judgments by means of step-wise regression analysis below.

Raters

	Measure Logit	InfitMS
Judge1	0.51	1.1
Judge2	-0.8	0.9
Judge3	-0.3	1.3
Judge4	-0.3	1.4
Judge5	-0.4	1.2
Judge6	-1.5	1.6
Judge7	0.04	0.4
Judge8	-0.6	1
Judge9	0.18	0.5
Judge10	-0.2	0.6

Rater Characteristic Curves



Relation between participants' ability and objective measurements with multi-regression analysis

Independent variable	R^2	F	β
Examinee's ability			
Step 1 WPM	.65	134.72**	.89**

** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 73$.

- Explained 65 % of examinee's ability only by WPM

Step-wise Multi Regression Analysis

Dependent variable		R^2	F	β
Proficiency				
	Step 1 WPM	.72	56.7**	.84**
	Step 2 Frequency of Filled Pause			-.28**

** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 30$. $df = 2, 27$

- WPM and Filled Pause explain 72% of proficiency

4 most reliable raters

Independent variable		R^2	F	β
Examinee's ability	Step 1			
	WPM	.78	56.7**	.99**
	Ratio of Filled Pause			-.27**
	TTR			.26**

** $p < .01$, two-tailed. $N = 30$.

- **Explained 78%**

Overall our results show that

- 6-point scale ratings based on CEFR are applicable for assessing speech in English among Asian users of English.
- 6 proficiency levels by our rating procedures are consistent with the results of our objective measurements. In particular, G-statistics shows that we only need four raters and four or five items.
- Step-wise Multiple regression analysis shows that abilities estimated by FACETS are reliably predictable by three objective measurements of Word per Minute, Ratio of Filled pauses and type-token ratio. These three items explained 78% of our data.

The present experiment suggests that we need four reliable raters and we managed to abstract three important explanatory variables of word per minute, ratio of filled pauses and type-token ration. Once we find the fourth variable in our future experiment, we can propose a robust automatic measurement of Spoken English for Asian learners of English.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we talked about three views of communicative teaching: communicative competence, intercultural competence and cross-cultural competence. It is argued that cross-cultural competence view is most desirable for Asian users of English. This view accords with the main claims proposed by EIL, and ELF. It indeed supports the human rights view proposed by the proponents of World Englishes. ICT can bring Asian users of English together so that our students can talk about current issues in Asia and in the world, such as environmental issues, child abuse, gender issues, etc. We have demonstrated how ICT can be used in such cyber communication among Asian students. Then, we showed our experiment of whether we can assess the progress of Spoken English among Asian youths as the result of cyber exchanges. Our experiments demonstrate that the six point rating scale based on CEFR can differentiate learners' ability reliably and that wpm, ratio of filled pauses and TTR are most important explanatory variables and that we only need four reliable raters. All these issues strongly suggest that we should adopt ICT cyber seminars in our classrooms to enhance our students' ability in English so that they can be Globally relevant citizens and at the same time Locally relevant citizens.

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