

Students' Attitudes Towards a Resourcing Task in a Fundamental English Course at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

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Abstract

This study surveyed students' attitudes towards a Resourcing Task in a Fundamental English Course at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). The study looked at the positive factors that influenced their attitudes and the problems that the students encountered during the process of doing such tasks. The subjects were 4 groups of 135 undergraduate students enrolled in a Fundamental English course, Fundamental English II (LNG 102), at KMUTT. The results showed that most subjects had positive attitudes towards the Resourcing Task. The main factor that motivated them to do the task was they had freedom to do what interested them and work freely outside the classroom. However, it was found that the subjects were not prepared in terms of planning or working skills, and some group members did not assist their groups in finishing the task and did not take responsibility for their own work, so they could not finish their work on time. They also had some conflicts among themselves. For these reasons, it can be said that, if the subjects did something that they were interested in and if they were psychologically and methodologically well prepared for the task, they could complete their task successfully.

Introduction

Nowadays, learning exclusively inside the classroom is inadequate; therefore, learning outside class can take place as an alternative way for improving language learning. To support this idea, Hyland (2004) shows that, by having learners learn and develop their language skills outside the classroom, the learners tend to choose activities suited to their own interests. It has been emphasized that language learning is not limited to the classroom but can take place at any time and in any place, including home. Orlando (2006) shares the same idea that it is important to consider a range of learning approaches and opportunities, since learning does not appear to be limited to one approach. In particular, the huge opportunities that exist outside the classroom need to be promoted and developed; therefore, students should be encouraged to carry out tasks to learn from available resources independently.

Tasks and Motivation

Definitions of task

In recent years, the task has become an important factor to enhance motivation in language learning. Prabhu (1987, quoted in Leaver & Willis 2004: 14) mentions that a task is “an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process”. Lee (2000, cited in Ellis 2003: 4) shares an interestingly similar definition that a task is:

“(1) a classroom activity or exercise that has: (a) an objective obtainable only by interaction among participants, (b) a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction, and (c) a focus on meaningful exchange; (2) a language learning endeavor that requires learners to comprehend, manipulate, and/or produce the target language as they perform some set of work plans”.

Ur (1996) adds that tasks should be as attractive as possible, encourage the students to engage in them, and invest the effort and success of the students. For this reason, accelerating the difficulty of a task to keep abreast of student development has a beneficial effect on learning and motivation. Motivation is an important factor that can affect students’ success in accomplishing their tasks.

Motivation

Motivation is one of the most important factors in language learning (Willis, 1996). From previous studies, many researchers believe that motivation is one variable that could affect students’ attitudes towards language learning (Littlejohn, 2001). It is usually defined as “an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action” (Brown, 1987: 12). Brown says that motivation is divided into three levels: global motivation, which consists of a general orientation to the goal of learning a second language; situational motivation, which varies according to the situation in which learning takes place (i.e. the motivation associated with classroom learning is distinct from the motivation involved in naturalistic learning); and, task motivation, which is the motivation for performing particular learning tasks. Dickinson (1987) states that task motivation is concerned with the day-to-day activities involved in language learning and, for many learners, these are not so very different from the tasks done in their learning.

Motivation can be of two basic types: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Brown, 2000: 160-161). Deci (1975: 23, cited in Brown, 2000: 164) defines an intrinsically motivated activity as one “for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself”. People seem to engage in the activity for its own sake and not because it leads to an extrinsic reward. To support this idea, Woolfolk (1993) states that motivation that stems from factors such as interest or curiosity is called intrinsic motivation. When people are intrinsically motivated, they do not need incentives or punishments to perform because the

activity itself is rewarding; they enjoy the task or the sense of accomplishment that doing it brings. On the other hand, extrinsically motivated behaviors are carried out in anticipation of a reward outside and beyond the activity; typical extrinsic rewards are money, prizes, grades, and even certain types of positive feedback. It can be concluded that, to enable the learners to fully intend to do the task, the teacher should consider how far the task itself motivates the learners to carry out the work.

In order to prepare the students to do the task properly, psychological and methodological preparation are main factors that should be considered.

What is a Resourcing Task?

The task in this study is referred to as a Resourcing Task, which is an activity in a course entitled LNG 102: Fundamental English II that is offered to first-year undergraduates at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). The purpose of LNG 102 is to provide strategy training for students to overcome difficulties in English language learning. It also places a strong emphasis on cognitive skills, which include logical, creative, and critical thinking in order to help students improve their skill of systematic thinking together with reasoning.

To enhance language skills, cognitive skills, and metacognitive skills while studying this course, the students have to carry out the Resourcing Task which is the main task of the course. They have to take the whole semester to work on this task. The processes of their work are as follows.

The students are assigned to form groups of 3-4 persons and gather more information on a topic that is selected by and interests all the group members. Then, they set at least 4 questions they will have to answer. However, they need to find information from at least 3 sources of different types (e.g. textbooks, journals, newspapers, and the Internet) by using KMUTT's Self-Access Learning Centre (SALC) as well as the main library or other places such as their home. After finding out information, they have to write a summary of their findings and a reference to each source. Moreover, they have to write a report of their study and findings. This includes their working procedures as well as any problems they have faced, any solutions they have discovered and what they have learned from this task. While working on the Resourcing Task, each group consults their teacher three times outside class. After having finished collecting their information, all the group members have to take part in an oral presentation lasting 15-20 minutes to share their experiences with their classmates. However, before being assigned to do the Resourcing Task, the teacher has to prepare them for the language points and study skills for the task by doing some exercises or activities after reading the provided passages.

As the Resourcing Task is a large-scale task aimed at developing both language learning and thinking skill, it is interesting to find out what students think about the Resourcing Task and what factors influence their attitudes towards it.

Thus, this study aims to answer the following research question: “What factors influence students’ attitudes towards the Resourcing Task?”

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects were 135 first-year undergraduate students, both male and female, from the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering at KMUTT. Along with the scores of the English entrance examination, it could be regarded that they all had a similar level of English. These subjects were randomly chosen from both the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering. All of them were asked to answer a questionnaire after finishing the Resourcing task. Five subjects were randomly chosen out of the 135 to be interviewed for clarification of their answers to the questionnaire.

Instruments

The research instruments in this study were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. They were used to survey students’ attitudes towards the resourcing task and to discover the factors influencing their attitudes. The questionnaire consists of three parts: the first part looks at the requirements of the Resourcing Task; the second part involves problems in conducting the task; and the last part includes what students have learned from the Resourcing Task. In terms of reliability and validity, the questionnaire and the questions in the interview were piloted and approved by an instructor of the English Department. In order to facilitate and prevent misunderstanding of the questions, the questionnaire was presented in Thai (for an English version, see appendix). The semi-structured interview was conducted with 5 randomly chosen subjects to clarify their answers to the questionnaire. They were interviewed individually after the researcher finished reading the responses to the questionnaires in Thai.

Procedures

This study was conducted in two main steps as described below:

1.1 Gathering data from the questionnaire

The questionnaires were distributed to 135 subjects who answered them inside the classroom. Then the data collected from the questionnaire were interpreted and analyzed by the researcher.

1.2 Conducting the interview after interpreting data from the questionnaire

Five subjects from the questionnaire respondents were randomly chosen. They were individually asked by the researcher to clarify unclear points in their responses. Then the data from the interview were interpreted.

Data analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted by using percentages, arithmetic means (\bar{x}) and grouping into themes of problems and solutions. The criteria of the interpretation were: 1.00-1.83 = strongly disagree; 1.84-2.66 = disagree; 2.67-3.50 = partly disagree; 3.51-4.33 = partly agree; 4.34-5.16 = agree; 5.17-6.00 = strongly agree. Only responses that agree or strongly agree or disagree or strongly disagree are presented in the results below. The data from the semi-structured interview were grouped into themes (Positive attitudes to the Resourcing Task, The hindrance to achieving the Resourcing Task, and Lack of planning skills) and analyzed by interpretation.

Data presentation

The purpose of this section is to present the results of the study gathered from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview.

Positive attitudes to the Resourcing Task

1.1 Subjects' satisfaction in forming groups by themselves

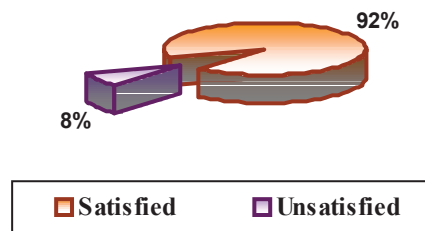


Fig. 1: Subjects' satisfaction in forming groups by themselves

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the majority (92%) of subjects were satisfied with forming groups by themselves. The reason for this is also clarified by the subjects from the open-ended questionnaire, as this extract illustrates.

"I'm really satisfied with forming a group by myself because I can work with my classmates that I am close to and I feel free to express my opinions."

According to the subjects' opinions from the semi-structured interview, all of them were satisfied with forming groups by themselves, as shown in the following extracts.

"When I work with my classmates whom I know well enough, I feel free to speak and express my ideas. In addition, I think if we are not close to each other, I feel uncomfortable." (Subject 1)

“I think if I do not have a chance to form a group by myself, and I have to work with classmates who are from different faculties, it might cause problems such as available time to work together.” (Subject 2)

To sum up, this means that most of the subjects reported that they liked forming groups by themselves because they could express their opinions more freely and they were free to work together.

1.2 Subjects’ satisfaction in choosing topics and setting questions by themselves

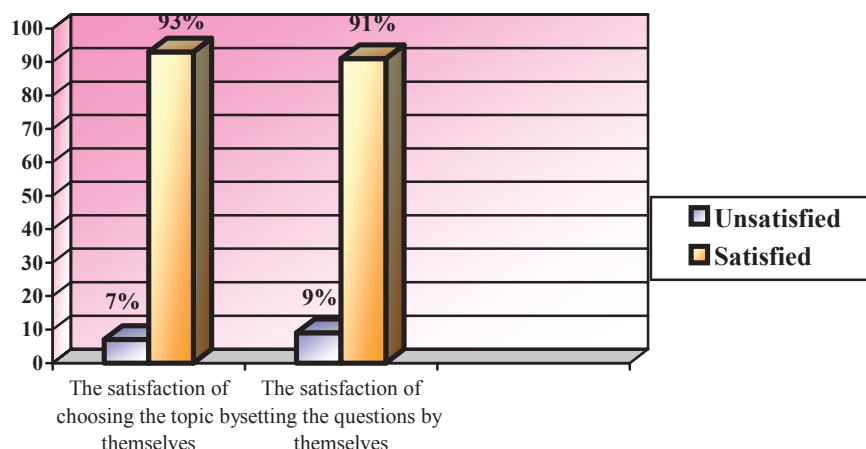


Fig. 2: Subjects’ satisfaction in choosing topics and setting questions by themselves

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the majority of subjects were satisfied with choosing topics and setting questions by themselves (93% and 91%, respectively). According to the open-ended questionnaire, as the data extract below shows, they claimed that the Resourcing Task could promote independent learning and they were fully motivated to do what they were interested in.

“I’m really motivated to do what I’m interested in and I like the way that I can work by myself without a teacher and feel independent from the teacher.”

To sum up, most subjects were satisfied with choosing the topic and setting up questions by themselves.

Issues concerning consultation

Table 1: Issues concerning consultation

Issues	Mean	Meaning	SD
• No.13 Three consultation sessions are not enough.	2.64	Disagree	1.64
• No.14 Group consultation is not appropriate.	1.84	Strongly disagree	1.07

Note: The numbers represent the items in the questionnaire (see appendix).

From Table 1, the data from the questionnaire (item 13 and 14) reveals that the subjects were satisfied with three sessions of consultation and with group consultation. Based on the open-ended questionnaire, they pointed out that, apart from the work that they were responsible for, they gained knowledge from group consultations since they had to listen to their friends' input. According to the data from the interview, they could compare their work with their friends and see whether they should edit some parts of their work, e.g.:

“The number of consultation is suitable. I gained more knowledge from my friends when we had consultations together. I think that is better than individual consultations.” (Subjects 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

“Three sessions of consultation are enough. My friends and I can learn from the mistakes of written report from each other when we have group consultations.” (Subjects 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

To sum up, generally, the number of consultations is suitable for them; also, they prefer group consultations since they can learn from their friends' mistakes.

What have subjects learned from the Resourcing Task?

This section presents the subjects' report on what they learned from the Resourcing Task

Table 2: Practicing cooperative working skills

Things learned	Mean	Meaning	SD
• No.34 Practicing cooperative working skills	4.81	Agree	1.60
• No.35 Taking responsibility for my own work	4.56	Agree	1.81
• No.36 Accepting the opinions of others	4.45	Agree	1.75

Note: The numbers represent the items in the questionnaire (see appendix).

From Table 2, it can be seen that the Resourcing Task helped the subjects to practice cooperative working skills, take responsibility for their own work, and accept others' opinions. The data obtained from the semi-structured interview also support these points, e.g.:

“Sometimes, I had to accept that my ideas were not suitable for this task and accept the opinion of others. Moreover, I had to be responsible for my own work because it was not only my individual work but group work.” (Subject 3)

“I have learned many things about cooperative working skills, such as accepting others’ ideas and helping each other if we do not understand some information. I had to try my best in doing my work in order to get good marks for my group.” (Subject 5)

To sum up, the subjects reported that the Resourcing Task enabled them to take charge of their own learning as part of a team.

The hindrance to achieving the Resourcing Task

1.1 Not well practicing in classroom

Table 3: Students’ preparation

Issues	Mean	Meaning	SD
• No.6 Teacher teaches skills (word tackling, note-taking, getting main ideas, etc.) for doing the Resourcing Task insufficiently.	2.52	Disagree	1.22
• No.8 Teacher does not give clear instructions.	2.58	Disagree	1.25

Note: The numbers represent the items in the questionnaire (see appendix).

From Table 3, it can be seen that the subjects from the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview agreed that the teachers taught adequate language input and study skills and gave clear instructions for doing the Resourcing Task.

1.2 Study skills

“I think the study skills that the teacher taught each time were adequate. However, I need to practice them before doing the Resourcing Task.” (Subjects 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)

However, according to the semi-structured interview, three subjects mentioned that the teacher should emphasize some skills to them, as seen in this extract.

“I think there were some study skills that the teacher should emphasize, such as summarizing. It was quite important for the written report.” (Subjects 1, 3 and 5)

In conclusion, it can be seen that most subjects from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview said that they had been adequately prepared for study skills but that they needed more practice in the classroom.

Lack of planning skills

From Table 4, most of the subjects reported that they did not have problems about their role, responsibility, and time in group work. It can be seen that there is a link between item numbers 17 and 18 in the questionnaire since the subjects had no plan of time management for their work; therefore, they could not finish their work on time.

Table 4: Lack of planning skills

Issues	Mean	Meaning	SD
• No.15 There were unequal roles and responsibilities of each member.	1.70	Strongly disagree	1.49
• No.16 Every member is available at different times to work together.	2.46	Disagree	1.78
• No.17 The Resourcing Task could not be finished on time.	4.35	Agree	1.99
• No.18 There was no plan for doing the Resourcing Task	4.47	Agree	1.84

Note: The numbers represent the items in the questionnaire (see appendix).

The findings from the semi-structured interviews show that four subjects had problems about planning and timing. They worked without planning the duration of each stage of work; moreover, they did not start working until the deadline was approaching, e.g.:

“I did not think about when I should start working and I started my work very late, therefore, I missed the first consultation.” (Subject 1)

“For three months, it seemed that I had a long time to do this task. After 1 month, I just started doing my task. I knew that it was too late for me. Thus, my work was not good enough.” (Subject 2)

“I did not start working until the deadline was nearly approaching.” (Subject 3)

“I could not finish the writing task on time because I did not start my work at the beginning of the period of time that the teacher assigned me.” (Subject 4)

To sum up, the subjects lacked time management skills and they had no plan for their work. Thus, they could not finish the Resourcing Task on time.

1.1 Lack of cooperative working skills

Table 5: Lack of cooperative working skills

Issues	Mean	Meaning	SD
• No.19 Some group members miss meetings.	2.18	Disagree	1.71
• No.20 The members do not accept the opinions/ideas of one another.	1.62	Strongly disagree	1.22
• No.21 The members have different ideas.	1.44	Strongly disagree	1.26
• No.22 Some group members do not take responsibility for their own work.	1.99	Disagree	1.83

Note: The numbers represent the items in the questionnaire (see appendix).

According to the questionnaire (items 19-22) and the semi-structured interview, the majority of the subjects said that they did not have problem about cooperative skills. However, in the interviews, some of them confessed that they encountered this problem. Some group members did not take responsibility and did not cooperate. Furthermore, they sometimes claimed that they were not available for meetings since they had other tasks to do. To solve this problem, they asked other members in their group to help and be responsible for their classmates' work in order to finish and submit the report on time, e.g.:

"My classmates did not take responsibility for their own work and sometimes they miss meetings." (Subject 1)

"My classmate missed two meetings, so we could not know his improvement and it made the process of doing the Resourcing Task continue slowly." (Subject 3)

"I knew that I was much better at English than my classmates. Therefore, my classmates asked me to do some parts of their assignment that they could not do. In addition, I had to be responsible for some parts of my classmate's work if he did not do his task." (Subject 5)

To sum up, the subjects lack cooperative working skills, perhaps since they had not been trained and prepared adequately in terms of working skills.

1.2 Lack of basic language skills

Table 6: Lack of basic language skills

Issues	Mean	Meaning	SD
• No.10 Subjects lack basic language skills	4.48	Agree	1.05
• No. 23 Writing the report was difficult	4.48	Agree	1.82

Note: The numbers represent the items in the questionnaire (see appendix).

Table 6, item 10 shows that most subjects agreed that they lacked basic language skills. Based on the data from the semi-structured interviews, all subjects thought that writing the report was difficult for them due to their poor language proficiency, e.g.:

“My English is not good; therefore, writing a report is very difficult for me.” (Subject 1)

“The main problem that I have when writing a report is an inadequate knowledge of grammar. Sometimes I feel discouraged when I have to edit my report too often.” (Subject 2)

A link can be seen between items 10 and 23, as presented in Table 6; it shows that most subjects agreed that writing the report was difficult. To clarify the cause of this problem, the subjects explained in the semi-structured interviews that the information from the chosen passages was difficult, especially some technical passages. Consequently, it was very difficult for them to understand the passage in order to write the report, as this extract shows.

“The information that I found was very technical and I did not know how to make it understandable when I wrote the report.” (Subjects 1, 2, 3 and 4)

Furthermore, the subjects gave suggestions that the teacher should teach common mistakes in class, and not outside class, since they can learn from one another's mistakes so that they can improve themselves on writing a good report, e.g.:

“I think common mistakes should be taught in the classroom not in consultation periods since if the teacher shows my classmates' mistakes, I can learn from the mistakes of other groups, not only from my group. Moreover, the teacher should give more time to teach grammar in order to help us write a good report.” (Subjects 2, 3 and 4)

“It's OK for me for language preparation, but I think common mistakes should be taught in class in order to learn from one another's mistakes so that we can improve ourselves.” (Subjects 1 and 5)

To sum up, the subjects were weak in language proficiency. They had not been trained to select the passage which is more appropriate for their language proficiency. Therefore, they could not have a clear understanding of the passage they have selected. Moreover, they need more practice and a discussion on common mistakes in class in order to learn from one another.

Summary of findings

It can be concluded that the subjects see the benefits of the Resourcing Task as likely to be more meaningful and better than learning inside the classroom because the Resourcing Task promotes independent learning which is an important factor for motivating the students to perform the task. The positive factors that help the learners to do the task are: the task allows the learners to

choose the topics that they are interested in, the learners are allowed to choose the members for their group work by themselves, and they have freedom to set questions for their task by themselves.

On the other hand, there were two main factors that became problems for their work: the subjects' preparation, and their background knowledge in terms of language input, study skills and working skills. The subjects' English proficiency was not high enough. Also, they had not been trained to select the passage which is more appropriate for their language proficiency. They did not have adequate chance to practice what they have learned with the teacher, so, writing the report became quite difficult for them. Furthermore, they need to discuss common mistakes in class in order to share the mistakes with their classmates.

In addition, it was found that although the Resourcing Task was interesting for the students, some students had some unclear ideas about working independently for this task. Some of them could not work cooperatively with their members in their group. For these reasons, learner psychological and methodological preparedness is considered to be the main factor helping students complete the task (Dickinson 1992).

Discussion and implications

Psychological and methodological preparation

Although most subjects were satisfied with working by themselves outside class, the teacher may review or elicit the purposes of working outside class from them. The teacher may point out the benefits they would gain from doing this. The researcher thinks that psychological preparation is an important stage. Therefore, the teacher has to prepare for the learners, since psychological preparation is a gradual process that helps the learners realize that there are other ways of learning languages. It is not necessary to learn languages as they are doing with their teacher in a class. There are 3 factors that the teacher should keep in mind for the psychological preparation of the learners: the teacher should persuade and facilitate the learners to see the benefits of independent learning, so they can have a good attitude towards it; the teacher may need to build confidence in the learners so they can gain self-confidence in their ability to work independently of their teacher; moreover, the teacher should let the learners try self-instruction, so they can know how to instruct themselves for successfully learning languages (Dickinson 1994: 121). For this reason, methodology preparation is also important to the learners.

Psychological preparation

Psychological preparation is concerned first with persuading learners to try self-instruction; secondly, with facilitating a change of attitude about language learning away from false assumptions and prejudices; and thirdly, with helping learners to build their self-confidence in their ability to work independently of the teacher (Dickinson 1994: 121). Accordingly, teachers should scaffold their learners to show how being an independent learner is important to their future education. In doing that, they need to be trained to be able to select and

implement appropriate learning strategies, monitor their use of strategies and change them if necessary, and monitor the effectiveness of their learning. When they work outside class, they encounter some problems, therefore, the role of teacher should be as a facilitator or consultant in order to help them in facing and solving problems for completing the tasks.

Methodological preparation

Dickinson (1992) states that methodological preparation is a matter of teaching learners techniques which facilitate more active and independent involvement in language learning. Thus, learners should be methodologically prepared before they start working by themselves in order to achieve their goals.

Metacognitive skills preparation

Although learners are academically prepared for tasks in terms of language, they should be able to manage things in order to work effectively. Therefore, metacognitive skills should be introduced to the learners.

Metacognitive skill refers to a level of thinking that involves active control over the process of thinking that is used in learning situations (Wikipedia 2009: 1). Wilkins (1996) believes that metacognitive skills involve planning, monitoring, and assessing one's own thinking to enable learners to take control of their own learning. These skills ensure that language learning does not end as soon as learners step outside the classroom but continues for independent learners.

To introduce metacognitive skills to learners, the teacher may retell the purposes, the scope, and the deadline of the task. In doing so, the teacher can plan along with learners and teach them how to evaluate their plans. The researcher thinks that the awareness of metacognitive skills can be promoted by engaging students in activities that require reflection, such as group planning and group discussion. Learners can share their learning processes when they are encountering and solving problems. These activities allow them to see alternative strategies that they can try. The components of metacognitive skills and suggestions are described below.

Planning

Based on the findings, it can be seen that the subjects had problems about finishing the Resourcing Task on time. So, it is possible to say that the subjects lacked time management; they could not finish the task on time. Planning is an important skill that leads learners to set and achieve their goal. As Nikitina (2008: 1) says: "A plan is like a map. When following a plan, you can always see how much you have progressed towards your goal and how far you are from your destination. Knowing where you are is essential for making good decisions on where to go or what to do next."

Rasekh and Ranjbary (2003) share an interesting idea that by preparation and planning in relation to their learning goals, learners think about what their goals are and how they will go about accomplishing them. With the help of the

teacher, learners can set realistic goals within a set time for accomplishing that goal. Setting clear, challenging, and realistic goals can help students see their own progress; and hopefully, by becoming consciously aware of their progress, their motivation for learning would be increased.

The researchers think planning to manage time should be divided into two steps: planning with the teacher and planning with the group. The former is to set the time for submitting their work, and consulting with their teacher; furthermore, the teacher and the learners should talk together about the progression of each piece of work that needs to be consulted. For the latter plan, teachers should allow the learners to plan with their groups in class in order to set the time for meetings and share their responsibilities and ideas. One or two weeks later, the teachers should check whether the students are following their plan and ask whether they have any problems.

Monitoring

The subjects in the semi-structured interviews said they needed to practice language input and sub-skills that they had learned in class before dealing with new passages outside class. Thus, they have to monitor the application of sub-skills with their passages in order to see how well they can understand the passages.

By monitoring their use of learning strategies, learners have higher chance of success in meeting their learning goals (Anderson, quoted in Rasekh and Ranjbary 2003). Although the learners have learned sub-skills, the teacher should emphasize how to select and use specific strategies, and they should check whether the selected strategies of reading and working are appropriate and effective for their reading and task. For example, when reading, they can use the context to guess the meaning of some unknown vocabulary items. They should pause and check to see if the meaning they guessed makes sense in the text and, if not, go back and modify or change their strategy (Rasekh & Ranjbary 2003). When working with friends, they can monitor their own working process, so that they can become aware of this potential problem in their group and think of ways to be flexible and change their plan.

Assessing

According to the findings, most subjects had problems of writing the report and of cooperative working skills. Therefore, they had to reflect on and assess their learning processes whether their application of what they have learned was appropriate to their task.

Assessing is one of the most important components of metacognitive skill. It is used to help learners to do quality work. In order to assess working or social skills, the teacher should teach the learners how to assess whether they have followed their plan, what their problems are, and select ways to solve their problems. To do this, the learners may use checklists of working or social skills that they have brainstormed in order to assess themselves. To support this idea, Rasekh and Ranjbary (2003) state that the checklists of strategies can be used

to allow learners to reflect on their learning. In terms of assessing their written work, they should be able to assess their written language via the criteria given by their department.

Language input and skills preparation

Language input (grammar and common mistakes) preparation

Language input is the main obstacle that prevented the subjects from doing the task well. The questionnaire findings show that most subjects were adequately prepared in terms of language input. However, in the semi-structured interviews, they claimed that they needed to practice what they had learned before doing the Resourcing Task in order to do it by themselves outside class. It is possible to say that the teachers did not show how to link what they had learned to their own Resourcing Task. Therefore, teachers should give more chances to the students to practice in class. Moreover, common mistakes which were dealt with outside class should be taught in class in order to share ideas about common mistakes in their writing. By doing this, the teacher could show the students' rough drafts and discuss common mistakes with the students in the classroom.

Study skills

Most subjects from the questionnaire were sufficiently taught sub-skills (skimming, scanning, getting main ideas and supporting details, note-taking, summarizing and organizing ideas). Although all subjects in the semi-structured interviews were adequately prepared in their sub-skills, they still needed to practice these skills by themselves before doing the task outside class.

As mentioned above, the teacher should provide a vital link between the language input and sub-skills and the passages that learners get from three different sources. To do this, the teacher can select one passage from the whole class in order to review language input and sub-skills that the students have learned and demonstrate how to deal with the passage by using the skills that they have learned in plenary class. The teacher can then ask the learners to choose one passage from three different sources for each group to work on together. The teacher could walk around the classroom to check the students' understanding. In doing this, the students may be able to apply what they have learned to other sources of reading outside class.

Apart from language preparation and study skills, selecting a proper text to read is also a necessary skill for doing the Resourcing Task. The students choose overly difficult passages to do the task. Therefore, they need to be trained how to select the passages which are appropriate to their level of English proficiency. The teacher may guide them to select passages which are not too technical or too complex in terms of vocabulary and grammar. The teacher may show a passage and encourage the students to analyse it in terms of language points and the content, so the students can apply what they have learned to their own situation.

Cooperative learning

According to the results from the questionnaire, although the majority of the subjects who responded to the questionnaire did not have problems of cooperative working, other students such as the 3 subjects from the semi-structured interviews said they faced problems with cooperative working or social skills. As the subjects' major fields were science or engineering, some of them might not have paid much attention to this task; if they had some other assignments in other courses, they would perhaps have ignored this task.

Many studies have found that cooperative learning is beneficial for language learners. Killen (1998) points out that cooperative learning encourages learners to verbalize their ideas and to compare them with the ideas and feelings of other learners, which can be particularly useful when the learners are solving problems. It also helps learners learn to respect the others' strengths and limitations and also to accept these differences. Moreover, they should know their roles and responsibilities in their group work through the process of the Resourcing Task and how to cooperate and compromise with their classmates. In doing this, the researcher thinks the teacher should guide the learners to see the importance of cooperative learning and let them practice cooperative working before they perform a real task. The teacher may elicit the problems that learners have faced when working in teams. Then, learners discuss among themselves to find out the causes of these problems. After that, the teacher may assign learners to brainstorm the keys of social skills and select some of them to solve their problems. Then the learners help each other in small groups to conclude why and how the skills are beneficial to them. If the learners are aware of the importance of these skills, they will work with their classmates more effectively.

Consultation

As mentioned earlier, the interviewed subjects reported that they need to discuss common mistakes in class and they thought the consultation should be about the content of the report. Thus, the teacher has to analyze the content of the course and consider which topics would need consultations and then determine when each consultation should take place.

The researchers think that three consultations should be arranged along three processes of writing: topic approved, drafting, revising and editing. The first consultation should be about topic approved: the learners should submit the topic and the scope of work to be approved. During drafting, the learners identify the main idea and supporting details of their reading as they practiced with the teacher in class. It needs to be done after the learners finish their topic approval. Learners need the last consultation for revising and editing their reports.

Learners should know their roles in consultation. They should not simply wait for the teacher's suggestions but prepare themselves to ask questions or discuss with the teacher about their problems or anything that they do not understand. As Chan (1999) states, the students themselves should be in charge of the

discussion. They have to prepare their own agendas, and come ready to talk about issues they have found relevant to their needs and interests (e.g. their plans for improving their English, the kinds of reading/writing that they have done on their own initiative, their learning problems, and the use of the university self-access centres). Therefore, the teacher should ask learners to prepare beforehand what they want to discuss, the points that they want to improve, and the problems they are facing.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that most subjects had positive attitudes towards the Resourcing Task since they could work independently outside class and they had more freedom to choose the passage that interested them. Furthermore, they saw the benefits of the task in teaching them to work cooperatively. However, they faced many problems that had prevented them from fully achieving their goals. In terms of common mistakes or language inputs, these should be discussed in class in order to help students learn from the others' mistakes. In addition, the subjects did not choose passages suitable for their language proficiency; also, some of them did not help their friends to do the task. So, the teacher has to play an important role to support and prepare the learners in terms of psychological preparation, methodological preparation, and cooperative skills which could help them know their role in group work and perform tasks appropriately.

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Appendix: Questionnaire on students' attitudes towards the Resourcing Task in a Fundamental English Course

The questionnaire consists of 3 parts. It aims to survey your attitudes, opinions, perceptions towards the Resourcing Task. Please give your cooperation to answer the following questionnaire. The data obtained will be very useful for teaching and learning to improve the curriculum and syllabus. Your responses will not affect you in any way negatively. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Please show your opinions by placing a tick (✓) in each suitable box.

Part 1: The requirements of the Resourcing Task					
1. The duration of working time for the Resourcing Task (3 months) <input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient <input type="checkbox"/> Insufficient					
2. The number of the members in a group (4 members) <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfied					
3. The satisfaction of forming a group by yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfied					
4. The satisfaction of choosing topics by yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfied					
5. The satisfaction of setting the questions by yourself <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfied					
Part 2: Problems					
1. Problems while learning	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
• No. 6 Teacher teaches skills (Note-taking, getting main ideas, etc.) for doing the Resourcing Task insufficiently.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 7 Teacher gives inadequate advice in terms of language input (word tackling, language patterns or common mistakes) for writing a report.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 8 Teacher does not give clear instructions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 9 Teacher uses difficult language while teaching.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Students' problems	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 10 Subjects lack basic language skills. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Issues concerning the Resourcing Task itself	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 11 The process of searching for information is difficult. No. 12 The information obtained contains difficult language. No. 13 Three sessions of consultation are not enough. No. 14 Group consultation is not appropriate. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. Problems during working process	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 15 There were an unequal role and responsibilities of each member. No. 16 Every member is available at different times to work together. No. 17 The Resourcing Task could not be finished on time. No. 18 There was no plan for doing the Resourcing Task. No. 19 Some group members miss meetings. No. 20 The members do not accept the opinions/ideas of one another. No. 21 The members have different ideas. No. 22 Some group members do not take responsibility for their own work. No. 23 Writing the report was difficult. 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Part 3: What you have learned from the Resourcing Task?					
Things that you have learned and the benefits of the RT	Strongly agree	Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
• No. 24 Practicing reading skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 25 Practicing finding main ideas and related detail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 26 Practicing note-taking skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 27 Practicing summarizing skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 28 Practicing organizing the ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 29 Practicing writing skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 30 Knowing ways to find out information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 31 Reading interesting, useful, and realistic information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 32 Finding information that meets my needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 33 Finding a variety of sources of information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 34 Practicing cooperative working skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 35 Taking responsibility for my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 36 Accepting the opinions of others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• No. 37 Dealing with impromptu problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments