The Benefits Occur during Elementary School-aged EFL Students in Taiwan Engaged in Keypal Exchanges

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Abstract

The ultimate objectives of this study are intended to examine whether the email can be utilized as an effective Communicative Language Teaching environment in Taiwan for reading and writing interaction, and to explore if EFL elementary school-aged students involved in the email projects are stronger in their motivation in language learning.

The quantitative approach used in this study employed an experimental research design with two groups. Prior to the study, participants were randomly assigned to two different groups. It included pre-testing EFL students before the email keypal project and post-testing students immediately following the email keypal project. In addition, the pre-study and post-study survey comprised of two questionnaires concerning students’ motivation levels.

The findings showed that the email keypal project improved the EFL students’ reading and writing performance. Participating in the keypal project also elevated the EFL students’ levels of motivation in using English. Therefore, this study strengthened that the email keypal project not only became one of natural teaching aids to incorporating the CLT method as an English teaching and learning, but also fulfilled the goals for Grades 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines in Taiwan which are: 1) to foster students’ basic communicative competence in English; and 2) to enhance students’ interests and motivation for English learning. Further recommendations were also conducted for future researchers and educators who may be interested in further avenues of research related to the effect of the email keypal project.

key words: email keypal project, communicative language teaching (CLT), motivation, reading and writing performance
Introduction

Taiwanese students need increased opportunities to develop their communicative abilities in reading and writing English as a foreign language. English has been described as a “global Language” (Crystal, 2003), and learning it has become important for Taiwan's goals of increased globalization. Since the fall semester of 2001 in Taiwan English has been taught to fifth graders in elementary school as a foreign language. Most importantly, the government strongly hopes that enhancing the English ability of the Taiwan students will help upgrade the country’s ability to compete with China and other nations. In addition, some evidence shows that learning two languages at the same time during childhood generally enhances proficiency in both the native language and their second/foreign language (Lenneberg, 1967; Lanza, 1992; Reich, 1986). Therefore, many parents in Taiwan support this language decision. Some of them send their children to a bilingual kindergarten elementary school in order to give their children a head start in English. Some of them send their children to study abroad in order to learn English during summer or winter vacation. With these increasing social and educational needs, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE) decided to begin English Instruction in the third grade in Taipei.

In 2003, the MOE advocated the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method as an English teaching and learning goal for Grades 1-9 Curriculum Guidelines. The educational reform in elementary English teaching has changed from the Audio-lingual method to CLT, with concentration more on communication in listening and speaking. Therefore, almost all of the elementary school English teachers concentrate on these two skills in class. When it comes to the methodology used in teaching reading or writing skills, most Taiwanese elementary English teachers still believe that teaching should focus on the presentation of discrete grammar points and that students should strive for high accuracy. The traditional grammar-translation method will continue to be dominant if teachers focus on reading and writing. Despite the official shift to CLT, however, many EFL teachers are not prepared very well due to a lack of teacher training to teach English in a communicative way (Liao, 2000; Li, 1998) and there is a limited number of teaching hours devoted to English instruction (Su, 2006).

In 2004, the Cambridge Examinations Center published a study of English proficiency of Taiwanese children and ranked them 11th among the 16 nations that took part in the study, which is down from 9th in 2003. This evidence revealed that there still are some problems adapting CLT in Taiwan elementary school English education. In addition, it is debated whether CLT has presented a proper account of EFL teaching context in spite of its first growth in foreign language teaching in Europe( Anderson, 1993). In CLT, the use of communicative activities and authentic language tasks that are meaningful for the
students and create opportunities for them to engage in real communication and social interaction are often not planned for the Taiwanese context. The EFL classroom in Taiwan is frequently considered an “artificial” environment for using and learning a foreign language. Therefore, an important focus for this study is how to enrich the English teaching and learning environment in Taiwan.

In EFL classrooms in Taiwanese elementary schools, reading and writing are largely ignored by the elementary English teachers. Elementary school children in Taiwan lack the opportunity in the beginning stages to read or write because their teachers struggle to teach these two language skills in a communicative way. They sometimes attempt to create a meaningful context, usually by having students imagine a particular situation, especially in teaching writing. Nonetheless, most students usually write for the sake of the teacher or peer evaluation and not for communicative purpose.

In the Taiwanese EFL context, with its lack of an interactive learning environment, the unavailability of authentic English materials, and teachers’ limited English proficiency and knowledge of CLT, there are many challenges in the application of communicative methodology. Therefore, the application of computer technology such as email has become one method of promoting interactive situations and improving learners’ communicative competence. Through technology, students have increased opportunity to be exposed to the authentic contact with native speakers and the target language, which supplements what they learn in class. Thus, email communication can become a natural teaching aid to fulfill the communicative goal and to motivate students to improve their English skills. Therefore, it is important to determine whether email can be utilized to facilitate reading and writing in a communicative way, just as is done with listening and speaking skills. The purpose of the present study is to examine the following questions:

1. Is there a significant difference in English reading and writing proficiency in pretest and posttest scores between an email group and a non-email group?
2. Is there a significant difference in English reading and writing proficiency of students in the email group or students in the non-email group when comparing pretest and posttest scores?
3. Is there a significant difference in EFL pupils’ pre-study and post-study scores in motivation to learn in English between the email group and the non-email group?
4. Is the pre-to-posttest difference in students’ motivation to learn in English learning statistically significant in the email group and in the non-email group?

Review of Literature

The following section contains a review of the literature most relevant to
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the concerns of this study. First, research in technology will be briefly described. Second, the published literature of email effects on L2/FL learning outcomes will be reviewed. Based on the findings of the reviewed literature, pedagogical benefits for conducting the present study will be provided at the final stage.

The use of technology is widespread and brings great potential for educational use, specifically in second and foreign language education. Increasingly, technology has found a welcome home in English as Foreign Language (EFL) or English as second Language (ESL) education. Because today's computer banks are filled with lots of knowledge, teachers in schools and parents at home understand the importance of technology in language education and love to use computers to enlighten children. Instructional activities that integrate technology have become popular and have had a tremendous impact on language education. Zhao (2005) stated that the importance of ample opportunities through technology for practice of communication in naturalistic settings that need to be put for children and adults to enhance second language learning. Chapelle (2001) asserted that language learning through technology has become a fact of life with important implications for second language acquisition. Numerous EFL research studies found that the integration of technology improved learners’ academic performance, promoted their motivation, and enhanced their language learning (Blake, 2000; Cheng, 2003; Cheng & Liou, 2000; Egbert, 2002; Skinner & Austin, 1999; Strambi & Bouvet, 2003; Williams & Williams, 2000).

Technology can complement formal classroom instruction to enhance foreign language learning in numerous ways, such as web-based courses, group emailing, video-conferencing, or chat room discussions. Electronic mail (Email), one of the asynchronous forms of telecommunication, has been called “the mother of all internet applications” (Warschauer, Shetzer & Meloni, 2000, p.3) and has brought our big world closer together. Keypals (computer keyboard pen pals) are the modern manifestation of traditional pen pals and have become a convenient medium for cultivating students’ language, communication, and keyboarding skills. Instead of using the pen, keypals, use computer keyboards as their communication tools, being paired or grouped with others of similar age or interest (Hopkins, 1999). Recently, Email keypals have begun to be popular and added to the language classroom to increase the authentic interaction between students from different locations, thus enriching the quality of the learning environment. Kitao and Kitao (1997) pointed out that keypals are not only a good opportunity for students to practice English, but also a fun way to learn from other cultures, to share their own culture, and to get real communication. Students’ motivation in English is enhanced as they receive replies from their keypals.

Email has not only drawn great attention from researchers leading
to hundreds of studies, but has also provided the pedagogical benefits in the following aspects. The advent of the email continues to impact second and foreign language education in numerous ways. Free correspondence by email has been discovered to be an unusually high motivator for stimulating learners to read and write (Warschauer, 1995). It is perceived by students as a popular, modern, fast, and convenient means of communication (Kinkead, 1987). Email has been reported as an effective medium for exchanging information, discussing opinions, and socializing with people (Rice & Case, 1983; Liaw, 1998). Learners involved in the Email projects are stronger in their autonomy and responsibility for language learning (Tella, 1992; Van Handle & Corl, 1998; Wang, 1993). Brown (2001) pointed out that the goal of English teaching is to enhance the ESL/EFL learners’ interaction with people in the real world. Email has created authentic communications in a natural environment and motivated students outside of the classroom (Kern, 1996). It allows ESL/EFL learners to read and write to native speakers across the globe on a regular basis at no cost and in an efficient and economical way (Hoffman, 1994; Warschauer & Healy, 1998). Most research into email has begun to show that email interactions between native and nonnative speakers are a powerful motivator to increase L2/FL proficiency (Aitsiselmi, 1999; Floréz-Estrada, 1995; Leahy, 2001; Stockwell & Levy, 2001; Fedderholdt, 2001; Ioanniou-Georgiou, 2002; Stockwell & Harrington’s, 2003; Vinagre, 2005; Berman, 2005).

Methodology

Sampling

The total numbers of EFL participants in this study were 103 sixth-graders from Happy Elementary School, a public school, located in Happy Town, Change, Taiwan. (In this study all of the names, including participants, the school, the place where the research took place, etc. have been changed with pseudonyms.) The EFL subjects consisted of 56 females and 47 males with an average age of 11-12 and their first language is Mandarin Chinese. They (sixth-grade students) were placed at the beginning level in English ability and were learning English as a foreign language (EFL) and had been studying English as a required subject since their third grade year of formal instruction at school or the equivalent. The EFL participants were chosen because they were taught by the same English teacher, Rita. In the experimental design part, participants in three intact classes of sixth-graders from the same school were randomly divided into two groups. Email group contained 57 students and non-email group has 46 students, which were appropriate numbers of subjects for statistical analysis. To access Americans keypals, who were students of the elementary school in USA, the researcher discussed the experiment through an online website called ePal Global Community (www.epals.com/) with an American teacher who taught elementary school students enrolled in a social studies
class in a suburban public elementary school in San Diego County, California.

**Textbooks and Email Topics**

The email group (experimental group) was taught using CLT instruction with the additional treatment of email interaction with American keypals. Students in the email group were given specific topics related to the course syllabus or matched with the cultural themes in the textbook for the email topic discussions and were asked to exchange their opinions on the topics. Furthermore, the textbook utilized for this CLT class contained numerous CLT-oriented syllabus and lessons plans which introduce:

1) eating and drinking habits; 2) daily routines; 3) special events; and 4) leisure activities, and share some cultural topics that are usually included in the instructions such as the western festival of ‘Easter Day’, Chinese traditional festival of ‘Tomb Sweeping Day’, Mother's Day, and breakfast in the East and West. They were also allowed to respond to the weekly topic in the first paragraph of email, and expanded their own personal issue or referred any questions to their epals in the second paragraph of the email letters if desired. The email topics were listed in Figure 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topic 1</td>
<td>Introduce your family and yourself including your hobby to your pal(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 2</td>
<td>Please describe to your pal(s), using as many as character as possible, the festival in Taiwan/America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 3</td>
<td>Please introduce your best friend to your e-pals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 4</td>
<td>Write to your pal(s) about your favorite school subjects and school activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 5</td>
<td>Please describe to your pal(s) your Mom and talking about your Plan for Mother's day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 6</td>
<td>Please tell your pal(s) (1) traditional snack in your family/country (2) your drink preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 7</td>
<td>Please describe to your pals about the breakfast and lunch you usually eat in your country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 8</td>
<td>Introduce the traditional arts in your town/country to your pal(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 9</td>
<td>Write to your pal about the date of your birthday, your birthday wishes, or what you like the most for your present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic 10</td>
<td>Please describe to your pals the festival you celebrate recently in your town/country. Taiwanese Traditional Festival: Chinese Dragon Festival and Rice dumplings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Email topics of Each Task
Testing Instruments: Pre-test and Post-test

To validly assess students’ English learning outcomes on reading and writing, the Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) tests was administered to the participants. In Taiwan, the tests are very popular and have been extensively used in primary schools and language centers. The tests are prepared by the University of Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages (Cambridge ESOL), UK's largest overseas examining board. There are three levels: Starters, Movers, and Flyers. Each level includes three components: Reading & Writing, Listening, and Speaking. To match with the participants’ level and collect the data to answer the Research Questions 1 and 2 in this study, the reading and writing part of Movers, which were suitable for children between 8 and 11, was taken directly from the Cambridge YLE as the pre-test and post-test measurement. The reading tests contained multiple choices, whereas the writing tests are all fill-in items for investigating Research Question One and Two. Results in the pretest or the posttest were scored on the basis of 100 points. (Appendix A).

Motivation for Learning Questionnaire (MLQ)

In order to answer the research questions 3 and 4, which investigated the difference in motivational levels between the email group and the non-email group before and after the experiment, the 12-items of the pre MLQ first used in this study are a revised questionnaire adapted from motivational intensity of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) by Gardner (1985). AMTB is the most well-known and widely used motivation questionnaire for educational field and it has been used extensively in many studies (Gardner et al., 1959; 1972; 1983; 1979; 1985; 1989; 1994; 1995; 2001; 2004; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) as a valid and reliable measure of assessing motivational and attitudinal variables among students’ learning of a second language. The Cronbach coefficient $\alpha$ were at .83. In order to make the questions easier for children in the elementary school and fit the present EFL context in Taiwan, further modifications and Chinese version on this MLQ were made. Response options were coded to 4-point scales, with 1 representing ‘strongly disagree’ and 4 representing ‘strongly agree’ (Appendix B).

Data Collection

A pre-test, the Cambridge YLE test, was given in the first week of the study to all the participants in order to measure their proficiency in English reading and writing. Each participant had 50 minutes to complete the pre-test. In addition to the pre-test, a motivation survey was administered to all participants on the same day before the experiment start. The experiment was conducted for one and half hours per week, a total of 15 hours of CLT English instruction at the regular class time. The two groups were provided with the same instructions, as well as the same topics. They received the same amount of instructional hours and the same lesson plan prepared by the same instructor. Participants in the email group
were told to write their email during the lunch break so that the email reply did not take any class time. After the weekly lessons, the email group was assigned a topic which was related to a specific theme from the lesson for email communication each week. Every week, they got together once or twice in the computer lab to receive and replied to emails for information or opinion exchanges on topics the teacher introduced or that they preferred. Each student in the email group were required to sent the copies of emails to the researcher and their instructor as they replied to their American epals. The non-email group (control group) remained in the regular English class and completed CLT instruction without the additional use of email interaction. On the final week of the study, data collection for the quantitative sources was comprised of the post-test of the students reading and writing of Cambridge YLE from the email and the non-email group, and post-survey about the participants’ motivation in learning English.

Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data was entered and analyzed using the software package Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 15.0 version for Windows. The significant level alpha, was set at p<.05 for all statistical analyses. There were two types of analysis for the research questions. The differences in participants’ achievement or motivation levels between the groups before and after exposing to the email will be evaluated using an independent t-test between the email group and non-email group. In addition, changes within each group were accessed before and after the treatment using a paired t-test.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1

To answer this question, participating students in the study groups were required to complete the reading and writing section of the Cambridge Young Learners English (YLE) pretest and posttest. To determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the means, an independent t-test was utilized for between group analyses. Significance was determined at the (p < 0.05) level.

Table 1
Independent Sample t-test of the Reading and Writing of the YLE Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30.015</td>
<td>18.317</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-email</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30.076</td>
<td>18.153</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.05
Table 1 indicates the results of the pretest. The results of the procedure revealed that there was no significant difference at the .05 probability level between the two groups’ pretest performances ($F=.412, p<.05$) with the non-email group exceeding the email group by 0.061 mean points. Thus, there was no significant difference between the two groups on the pretest measure of reading and writing ability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41.429</td>
<td>22.344</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>5.515*</td>
<td>2.485</td>
<td>.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-email</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31.271</td>
<td>18.253</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$

As seen in Table 2, the results of the procedure presented that there was significant difference at the .05 probability level between the two groups posttest performances ($F=5.515, p<.05$) with the email group exceeding the non-email group by 10.158 mean score. The email group, therefore, showed a significant increase in their posttest scores on the reading and writing measures when compared with the non-email group.

**Research Question 2**

To determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the means, a paired $t$-test was utilized for within group analyses. Significance was determined at the ($p < 0.05$) level.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email group</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30.015</td>
<td>18.317</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-6.156</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41.429</td>
<td>22.344</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$
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Table 3 shows a paired sample t-test was applied to examine differences in the mean scores between the pretest and the posttest of the participants in the email group. The result revealed that the email group showed a statistically significant increase in the posttest scores. An examination of the students’ performances revealed that the computed p value was .000. There was a significant difference between the pretest scores and the posttest scores (p<.05) of students in the email group.

Table 4
Paired t-tests of the Reading and Writing of the YLE Pretest and Posttest Scores for the Non-email Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>30.076</td>
<td>18.153</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-.738</td>
<td>.464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>31.271</td>
<td>18.253</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.05

Data appearing in Table 4 showed the results of a paired t-test that was computed and applied to examine differences in the mean scores between the pretest and posttest of the participants in the non-email group. An examination of the students’ performances on the pretest and the posttest revealed that the computed p value was .464 \( t (45) = -.738 \). There was no significant difference between the pretest scores and the posttest scores of students in the non-email group.

To sum up, the Cambridge YLE pretest scores were similar between the two groups, and significant difference was found between groups only in the posttest. The difference could be attributing to the effects of the email keypal project.

Research Question 3

To answer this question, the respondents were asked to respond on the Motivation for Learning Questionnaire (MLQ), 12 items of the questionnaire. In order to compile the data, the scores from the 12 questions were summed into one composite score per participant. In order to generate the data for this research question, an independent t-test was utilized for between group analyses. Significance was determined at the p < 0.05 level.

Table 5
Independent Sample t-test of Pre-MLQ Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.719</td>
<td>6.295</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>1.448</td>
<td>.288</td>
<td>.774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-email</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.326</td>
<td>7.574</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p<.05

28
As seen in Table 5, no such difference between the two groups was found ($t=0.288$, $df=101$, $p>0.05$), indicating that students motivation in the email and non-email groups were similar in this regard. Thus, there was no significant difference between the two groups on the pre-study scores in motivation to learn in English.

Table 6
Independent Sample $t$-test of Post-MLQ Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.631</td>
<td>7.772</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>.595</td>
<td>4.749</td>
<td>000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-email</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.608</td>
<td>7.053</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$

As shown in Table 6, the email group had a mean score of 35.631 while the Non-email group had a mean score of 28.608. Results revealed a statistically significant mean difference in English learning motivation scores between the email and non-email group in favor of the email group ($t=4.749$, $df=101$, $p<0.05$). The email group, therefore, showed a significant increase on their post-study scores in motivation to learn in English when compared with the non-email group.

**Research Question 4**

To answer this question, the respondents were asked to respond on the MLQ. In order to compile the data, the scores from the 12 questions were summed into one composite score per participant. To determine whether a statistically significant difference existed between the means, a paired $t$-test was utilized for within group analyses. The significant level was set at .05.

Table 7
Paired $t$-tests of Pre-to-Post MLQ Scores for the Non-email Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-email group</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-MLQ</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.326</td>
<td>7.574</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-.178</td>
<td>.860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-MLQ</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.608</td>
<td>7.053</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p<.05$

Data appearing in Table 7, showed that there was no significant difference between the pre-study scores and post-study scores in motivation to learn in English of students in the Non-email group ($t (5) = -.178$, $p>.05$).
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Table 8
Paired t-test of Pre-to-Post MLQ Scores for the Email Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-MLQ</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>28.719</td>
<td>6.295</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>-5.779</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-MLQ</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35.631</td>
<td>7.772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As appearing in Table 8, post-MLQ scores were greatly higher than pre-MLQ scores. The result revealed a high variation in the mean scores of MLQ in the email group. (t (56) = -5.779, p<0.05). Thus, there was a significant difference between the pre-study scores and post-study scores in motivation to learn in English of students in the email group.

**Conclusion**

**Email Improves Student's Reading and Writing Performance**

The first and the primary conclusion drawn from this study is that elementary school-aged pupils in this project achieve significantly higher performances in the reading and writing sections of the Cambridge YLE test after incorporating the keypal project than pupils who do not participate in this keypal project. On these grounds, the conclusion is reached that email is shown to improve FFL students’ communicative competence in reading and writing performance in the study. Furthermore, email is an efficient instrument for learners to make impressive proficiency gains in L2/FL linguistic performances, such as speaking, reading, writing, and communication.

**Email Promotes Students’ Motivation in learning English**

This study compared the mean differences of the motivation scores between the email group and the non-email group. The independent t-test and the paired t-test indicated that there was no significant difference in the non-email group when comparing pre-study and post-study scores of motivation in learning English. However, there are significant gain scores in the email group when comparing pre-study and post-study scores of motivation in learning English before and after the ten-week research period. The second major conclusion drawn is that elementary school pupils’ motivational changes between the two groups could be attributed to the effects of the email keypal projects. We can conclude with certainty that email communication with keypals from other countries promotes students’ motivation in English learning.
Implications and limitations

In terms of how to adequately involve the email project in EFL class, as the teacher in this study works on this project, numerous obstacles were discovered. For example, because epals.com was an English website, learning to become familiar with this English email site and pre-training to get students ready to join the email project took the educator's time. Monitoring student’s emailing was also time-consuming for the teacher. For instance, in order to escape from technical problems, such as network traffic, students had to type their emails in Microsoft Word and save it. After they had finished composing it, students visited the ePals website. Then they cut and pasted the paragraph into the email and submitted it.

Although the current study has yielded results that have pedagogical implications, the research design has many shortcomings. Since the study involved only three classes containing 6th graders from a rural public elementary school in Midwestern Taiwan, the results cannot be generalized. For instance, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the different educational backgrounds and locations, such as younger or older children in the big city like Taipei. Due to the use of teacher-centered approaches with CLT instruction in this study, the result cannot be generalized into students-centered approach or other ESL contexts.
Appendix A

Cambridge Young Learners English
Movers
Reading & Writing
Sample Paper

UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations
English for Speakers of Other Languages

There are 40 questions.
You have 30 minutes.
You will need a pen or pencil.

My name is: .................................................................
The Benefits Occur during Elementary School-aged EFL Students in Taiwan Engaged in Keypal Exchanges
Part 3
- 6 questions -

Read the text and choose the best answer.
Peter is talking to his friend Jane.

Example

Jane: Hello, Peter. How are you?
Peter: A I'm not very well.
B I'm John's cousin.
C I'm going outside.

Questions

1 Jane: What's the matter? Have you got a headache?
Peter: A No, thank you. I don't want one.
B No, I've got toothache.
C No, I haven't got it.

2 Jane: Would you like to come to my house?
Peter: A Yes, I went home quickly.
B No, thanks. I want to go home.
C Well, I like my house a lot.

3 Jane: Have you got a coat?
Peter: A Yes, it does.
B OK, he's here.
C No, I haven't.

4 Jane: Do you want a drink of water?
Peter: A Yes, please.
B Yes, it is.
C Yes, I had.

5 Jane: Shall I walk home with you?
Peter: A He can walk there.
B I'd like that, thanks.
C I can go with her this evening.

6 Jane: Is your mum at home?
Peter: A It's his new home.
B Next to the bus station.
C Only my dad's there today.
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Movers Reading & Writing

PART 4
- 7 questions

Read the story. Choose a word from the box. Write the correct word next to numbers 1-6. There is one example.

My name is Daisy. I like dogs, but I like books and best. I love stories about and on the moon and about (1) (2) who live in different countries.

I read a good story yesterday. In the story, a boy climbed a (3) evening, but the boy could see the forest below him. He (4) sat up at all the (5) after that. Something was big and round. (6) And quickly behind a cloud.

What was it? The boy didn’t know and he didn’t wait to see it again. He (7) down on a rock to have a drink and to look home to his village because he was very afraid.

I wasn’t afraid! I enjoyed the story a lot.

---

Tick one box.

1. A play that Daisy knows
2. A film that Daisy watched
3. A story that Daisy liked

---

---
Part 5

10 questions

Look at the pictures and read the story. Write some words to complete the sentences about the story. You can use 7-8 words.

A family holiday

Vicky lives with her parents and her two brothers. Sam and Paul are in the city. Last week, they had a holiday by the sea. Sam is ten, Vicky is eight, but Paul is only five. They went on holiday to the beach. They didn’t like watching them and he closed his eyes.

Examples

Vicky’s family went on holiday last year.

Vicky has two brothers.

Questions

1. The family had a holiday by

2. It and the family went to the cinema.

3. Paul didn’t enjoy seeing

in the film.
On Friday, the family ate breakfast in the garden because it was very sunny but Paul didn't want any. Then they all went to the beach again. The sea was very blue. Paul looked. There were three beautiful dolphins in the water! He ran to the sea and swam to them. Then Paul's dad threw a ball in the sea and the dolphins played with it. It was great and Paul stopped thinking about the sharks in the film. That evening, all the family went to the cinema again. This time the film was about a funny dolphin and they all enjoyed it.

7 The family had breakfast in __________________ on Friday.

8 Paul saw __________________ in the water.

9 Paul's dad __________________ into the water.

10 All __________________ enjoyed another film at the cinema on Friday evening.
Part 6
- 5 questions -

Read the text. Choose the right words and write them on the lines.

Cats

Example

1. Cats ______ good eyes. They can see very well at night. __________ cats climb trees and eat meat. They can move very quietly and catch animals. Then they eat them. They have strong teeth.

2. There __________ small cats and big cats like lions and tigers. Only tigers live _________ the jungle. Lions don't. Some people go and see lions and tigers at the zoo.

3. A lot of people have small cats in _________ homes. These cats are pets. People _________ them because they are beautiful.

4. __________

5. __________

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Appendix B
Motivation for Learning Questionnaire (MLQ)

Please answer one of the following: 請用下列數字回答你的意見
(4) Strongly agree非常同意,
(3) Agree同意,
(2) Disagree不同意,
(1) Strongly disagree非常不同意

1. I actively think about what I have learned in English class.
   我在上英文課時非常的主動積極參與。

2. Besides Learning English in the classroom, I study English on my own.
   除了在學校的英文課, 我會自己研讀英語。

3. Learning English is interesting. 學英語真有趣。

4. I really enjoy learning English. 我很喜歡學英語。

5. When I face difficulty in English task, I will exert effort and be persistent.
   當我面對英語學習上的困境, 我會盡全力而且努力不懈。

6. I want to learn English because I like the foreign culture.
   我想要學英語是因爲我喜歡外國的文化。

7. I want to learn English because English is useful tool.
   我想要學英語是因爲英語是一種有用的工具。

8. I want to learn English because I like to travel to the English-speaking countries.
   我想要學英語是因為我喜歡去英語系國家旅行

9. I want to learn English because I like to communicate with foreigners.
   我想要學英語是因為我喜歡跟外國人用英語溝通

10. I want to learn English because I like foreign movies, TV programs, and pop music.
    我想要學英語是因為我喜歡外國的電影、電視節目和流行音樂

11. I want to learn English because I like foreign products.
    我想要學英語是因為我喜歡外國的產品

12. I want to learn English because there are a lot of people around the world who speak English.
    我想要學英語是因為全球有許多人是來自英語系國家
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探討「電子郵件筆友專案計畫」應用於台灣國小學童英語學習之成效

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摘 要

拜科技進步之賜，電腦輔助教學已廣泛成為台灣國民中小學運用於英語學習的工具之一。隨著全球國際化及電腦科技的進步，「電子郵件筆友專案計畫(Email Keypal Project)」已被視為是一種不受空間及時間限制的語言學習策略，亦是強化英語為第二語言學習者國際觀的有效方式。本研究選取台灣中部某鄉鎮國民小學六年級的學生103人為研究對象，以隨機分派方式分成實驗組(57人)和控制組(46人)，透過10週的「電子郵件筆友專案計畫」進行量化研究(前後測英語讀寫成績、英語學習動機量表)。由於教育部的九年國教政策目前正積極推動國民中小學英語課程實施「溝通式英語教學法(communicative language teaching CLT)」。有鑑於台灣鄉鎮地方的學童多因爲地緣或家庭經濟因素，較少有機會到國外遊學或與英語為母語者互動，本研究之目的乃針對此類區域學童，利用交換電子郵件筆友方式，讓參加本項研究的實驗組學生與美國五年級學生，藉由每週Email不同主題交流寫信討論方式，為國小學童於溝通式英語教學中增加其英語讀寫之學習機會，同時提升其英語學習動機與成效。

本研究之發現結果如下：

一、參與「電子郵件筆友專案計畫」國小學童(實驗組)與未參加計畫學生(控制組)，於實驗結束後，英語讀寫之後測有顯著的差異，實驗組學童的讀寫成績後測高於控制組學童的後測成績。

二、實驗組與控制組學童，於實驗結束後，英語學習動機上有顯著的差異，實驗組學童的英語學習動機比控制組學童有較高的學習動機。

本研究結果建議「電子郵件筆友專案計畫」可以作爲推行國小學童之溝通式英語讀寫知能的可行性，同時提升台灣國小學生英語學習動機與成就，希冀未來作爲教育部的九年國教政策之英語教學策略改進之參考。

關鍵字：電子郵件筆友專案計畫，溝通式英語教學法，學習動機，讀寫成就