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Evaluation of teacher induction practices in a US university English language program: Towards useful evaluation

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This article reports on a formative and internal evaluation of teacher induction practices for newly hired teachers in a US university ESL program. By adopting a utilization-focused approach, evaluators produced a design that was articulated to the information needs of the evaluation users. The ensuing findings were then used to develop and improve program practices in specific and high-priority ways. This paper calls for attention to ways of enhancing the utility of evaluations within language education programs – and thereby enhancing the value of what language educators do – and it illustrates how a utilization-focused approach can help to ensure the actual uses and the utility of evaluation practices.

Language program evaluation is experiencing renewed recognition along with increasing demands in language education programs and in applied linguistics more broadly. In his explication of a systematic approach to language program development, Brown (1995) pointed out that evaluation is the heart that connects and gives blood to all the other program elements. Unfortunately, during its early implementations, evaluation was often used quite narrowly, with a primary focus on making judgments about language programs based on experimental designs and limited quantitative analyses (e.g., Beretta & Davies, 1985; Scherer & Wertheimer, 1964; Smith, 1970). More recently, language education practitioners have begun to realize the benefits of broader notions of evaluation as a means of informing program development, and a focus on program processes (in addition to products) has gained substantial attention in this regard (Beretta, 1992; Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005; Lynch, 1996).

Despite these positive developments, a central concern with language program evaluation has yet to be resolved. A major question in language education is how we can ensure and maximize the uses and usefulness of an evaluation, from the point of view of any given program and its major stakeholders. In addressing this concern from a program-insider's point of view, I have found Patton's (1997) utilization-focused approach to evaluation particularly valuable. In the current report, I review how this approach helped me to facilitate an evaluation of teacher induction practices in a US university academic English language program. This evaluation case demonstrates the potential of

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a utilization-focused approach for helping language teachers to initiate evaluations of important features of their own programs, the procedures that should be involved, and most importantly, the formative uses that such evaluations can bring about. I will first outline a utilization-focused approach to evaluation for meeting the particular needs of language programs. I then report the evaluation study in detail, illustrating the application of utilization-focused procedures to the resolution of particularly important challenges in my own program.

I Utilization-focused evaluation

Perhaps the most important recent advance in language program evaluation is the increased attention being paid to evaluation utility and the conditions that contribute to it. Beretta (1992) anticipated early on that language program evaluators would need to begin providing utilizable information to their clients and program stakeholders, if evaluation were to make any difference in language teaching, and his predictions have by now found their way into contemporary assumptions about language program evaluation practice. Thus, Kiely and Rea-Dickins (2005) have suggested that it goes without saying that evaluation process and findings should be used (p. 37), and Norris (2006) has called for utilizing student learning outcomes assessment for program learning and improvement instead of simply 'doing it' in college foreign language programs. Indeed, these trends in language education reflect the broader concerns of professional program evaluators, who have clearly posited utility as the top priority in professional evaluation standards, above feasibility, propriety, and accuracy (Joint Committee, 1994). Despite these developments, in the real world of evaluation practice, making evaluation useful and getting evaluations actually used pose major challenges. Particularly in the history of language program evaluation, '[e]valuation use has been a persistent problem' (Kiely & Rea-Dickins, 2005, p. 39).

Envisioning the centrality of evaluation use, and responding to the serious problem of under-use, nonuse, and even misuse of evaluation findings, Michael Quinn Patton (1978, 1986, 1997) developed utilization-focused evaluation (UFE). The essence of UFE is that it is 'done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses' (Patton, 1997, p. 23). It is 'a comprehensive framework within which to develop and implement an evaluation *with attention to use built in*' (Patton, 1997, p. 20, emphasis in original). Utilization-focused evaluation starts with identifying primary intended users (PIU) of an evaluation, negotiating with them the purposes and intended uses of the evaluation, and generating among the PIUs a commitment to these uses. In this manner, uses of the evaluation are clarified and built in from the very beginning, with evaluation users committed to participation throughout the process. Subsequent evaluation activities, including the design, data collection, analysis, and presentation of evaluation findings, all find their guidance from and strong association with the pre-specified intended uses.

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Different from other evaluation approaches, the evaluators in UFE work collaboratively with the primary intended users and facilitate their decisions about the purposes, uses, focus, design, and implementation of the evaluation. The evaluators' role is more of a facilitator, negotiator, collaborator, coordinator, and consultant, as contrasted with received views of evaluators as decision-maker or judge. The primary intended users are the people who make major decisions like what the evaluation is about, how it shall proceed, and how it shall be used. In this vein, evaluators need to be 'situationally responsive' (p. 134), to be able to recognize and respond to distinct program situations, and to conscientiously 'act, react, and adapt' (p. 136) while working with PIUs throughout the evaluation process. The goals are to meet the information needs of a distinct program and its people, and to respond to changing, evolving, and dynamic program situations.

The application of utilization-focused evaluation in language education has been scant to date. To my knowledge, the only major evaluation study that has specifically adopted this approach in the L2 literature is John Norris's (2004) *Validity Evaluation in Foreign Language Assessment*. In response to the challenge of ensuring the assessment qualities in US college foreign language education, Norris (2004) proposed a reconceptualization of assessment validation as validity evaluation, and he provided a framework for applying a utilization-focused evaluation approach to the validation process. His three-year evaluation of the placement assessment program in a college FL program illustrated the potentials, procedures, and benefits of utilization-focused validity evaluation. Norris (2004) concluded that a utilization-focused evaluation approach '[provided] mechanisms for local experts to contribute the substance of program context and evaluation needs, and for the external evaluator to contribute a methodological framework and associated recommendations' (pp. 450–451). Perhaps most importantly, the evaluation process and findings were put to use to develop and revise the program and to ensure that the placement assessment was actually serving its intended uses. Similar to Norris's (2004) study, the current work applied a utilization-focused approach in a language education context. However, in this study, the focus was on evaluating teacher induction practices within a U.S. university academic English language program, and the evaluation was initiated and facilitated by program-internal evaluators.

II Program context and evaluation focus

The evaluation occurred in the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM), and the focus of the evaluation was a set of pre-semester induction practices for newly-hired teachers in the ELI. The ELI is part of the Department of Second Language Studies (DSLS) at UHM:

> The primary purpose of the ELI is to provide English instruction for international and immigrant students who have been admitted to the university and who do not speak

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> English as a native language, in order to facilitate their academic studies. (English Language Institute, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 2003)

The ELI offers academic English courses in three curriculum areas: listening and speaking, reading, and writing, each of which is normally coordinated by one lead teacher. In spring 2006, when the evaluation was conducted, the ELI consisted of three full-time administrators (Director, Assistant Director, and Coordinator), and 18 teachers, including curriculum area lead teachers. The ELI teachers are all graduate students enrolled in the DSLS, working as graduate assistants (GAs). In this institutional context (and in many other college EAP programs), every semester there is a change in the teaching staff, as teachers who are graduating leave and new teachers are hired. Thus, there is a constant need for the ELI to provide pre-semester induction to new teachers, with an eye towards preparing them for appropriate and effective teaching in the particular educational setting and curriculum, and with the unique population of learners.

The evaluation was initiated by two ELI teachers (me as the primary investigator, and another teacher as assistant) in the spring 2006 semester. The proposal for an evaluation that focused on teacher induction practices emerged from our internal concerns as teachers. Having gone through the teacher induction process, we perceived gaps between what was provided and what was needed in order to prepare for teaching and to pursue teaching-related activities. We questioned how well the teacher induction practices were functioning with the steady stream of diverse teachers, all graduate students with distinct educational and experiential backgrounds. This concern for teacher development was also prioritized by the ELI itself as part of its ongoing research agenda, noting: 'What can the ELI do to help beginning GA instructors? Continuing GA instructors?' ('ELI research agenda,' 2003). In our initial contact with the three ELI administrators, they all showed great interest in and support for an evaluation project with a focus on teacher development.

Based on initial discussions with the ELI administrators, existing program documents, and our own experiences and observations, we (the internal evaluators together with the administrators) first agreed upon what constituted the pre-semester induction program for new teachers. As a group, we illuminated the following 12 practices which new teachers could actually engage in: (a) doing the ELI job interview; (b) attending an orientation meeting with the Assistant Director; (c) attending an orientation meeting with the Coordinator; (d) meeting with lead teacher of curriculum area; (e) observing ELI classes; (f) talking to ELI teachers; (g) reading the ELI Teacher's Manual; (h) reading the ELI website; (i) reviewing the curriculum area readings; (j) previewing textbook/teaching materials (including the online resource room); (k) attending the all-ELI meeting; and (l) doing an internship. At the onset of this evaluation, only three of these were required practices for all new teachers in the ELI (a, b, and k above); the remaining practices were optional.

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1 Primary intended users, purposes, and uses

Although prevalent forms of evaluation to date often reflect demands by an empowered group of users (often program sponsors, funders, and accreditors) who stipulate certain evaluation purposes and uses, this evaluation was initiated by internal stakeholders who were not themselves the users of the evaluation. After deciding on an overall evaluation focus, we proceeded to identify the primary intended users (PIUs) and to seek their priority purposes and intended uses of the evaluation. Focusing on the people who could actually make decisions about the teacher induction practices and any needed changes, we identified the ELI administrators (Director, Assistant Director, and Coordinator) as the PIUs of this evaluation. In addition to running other aspects of the overall program, these individuals were responsible for supervising ELI teachers, including providing and facilitating teacher induction and development. In other words, they were the people who would be able to use the evaluation findings, and we deemed it essential to work closely and collaboratively with them throughout the evaluation process.

To start with, we first engaged them in specifying the evaluation's purposes and intended uses, and in identifying appropriate corresponding methods. We, as internal evaluators, facilitated this process by proposing evaluation plans and activities to the PIUs, seeking their thoughts, comments, and priorities, and negotiating with them about what would work best. In an *Evaluation Statement* document, we proposed to the PIUs a utilization-focused approach to the evaluation, informed them how the PIUs and the internal evaluators would work together and what their different roles would be, and proposed the anticipated intended uses of the evaluation based on our early informal conversations and observations. Along with the *Evaluation Statement*, we administered an on-line survey to the PIUs, through which we sought their understandings of the evaluation purposes and their roles in the process, as well as, above all, their agreement or disagreement with the anticipated intended uses. The results of the survey showed that the PIUs perceived two overarching purposes for this evaluation project: (a) generating program knowledge, and (b) developing and improving program practices. Their descriptions of perceived roles showed their commitment to the uses of the evaluation findings and their involvement in the evaluation process as decision-makers.

Reacting to the four specific intended uses we anticipated, as listed in Table 1, the PIUs all regarded uses 1, 2, and 3 as 'Very Important'. For the fourth intended use, two of the PIUs expressed 'Very Important' while the third expressed 'Somewhat Unimportant'. It was later confirmed with the third PIU that he or she would consider the fourth use as important on the condition that the evaluation turned out to produce solid findings. The internal evaluators further assured the PIUs that they would strive to carry out the evaluation with rigorous, credible, and directly useful methods and processes.

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Table 1 Potential uses of the evaluation

1)	Specifying what the new-teacher induction practices are trying to accomplish
2)	Finding out how well the current new-teacher induction practices are able to meet new teachers' needs and administrators' expectations
3)	Identifying specific areas for improvement and suggesting ways for improvement
4)	Forming a basis for implementing necessary changes for the improvement of new-teacher induction practices

In addition to the above, one additional potential use was suggested by one of the PIUs: 'Possibly we can use it if we are asked to justify our practices overall. That is, having an evaluation done highlights our commitment to professional practices.' The PIU clarified that the ELI could possibly use the evaluation to justify their practices to the Chair of DSLS, Graduate Chair and Graduate Faculty of DSLS, Dean of the College, and other interested parties (such as accreditors). The results of the survey were reported back to the PIUs via email to summarize what they agreed on as the purposes and the intended uses of the evaluation.

2 Focal evaluation questions

Based on the agreed-upon intended uses, the following initial question helped focus the evaluation activities:

> *How well are the pre-semester induction practices helping new teachers to get ready for the teaching tasks in the ELI?*

The internal evaluators generated and proposed the question, and the PIUs found it reasonable and agreed on pursuing it. A subsequent evaluation question was then generated in terms of the goals and objectives of induction practices:

> *What are the intended outcomes of the pre-semester induction practices for new teachers in the ELI?*

III Evaluation design and methods

In order to answer the evaluation questions with available resources, four evaluation methods were used to gather data from different groups of stakeholders. These methods were: (a) interview with the ELI Administrators, (b) interviews with new ELI teachers of spring 2006 semester, (c) focus group with experienced ELI teachers in spring 2006 semester, and (d) questionnaire for incoming ELI new teachers of fall 2006 semester. Table 2 below outlines these methods and their major uses. We drafted and proposed the evaluation design and methods at this point, while the primary intended users executed a final check on the design by providing their thoughts on each method proposed. Their comments were taken into consideration when revising and improving the evaluation methods and the specific questions designed for each method.

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Table 2 Evaluation methods

Evaluation methods	Informants	Major uses
Interview	ELI administrators	Specifying the intended outcomes of the pre-semester induction practices; finding out the administrators' satisfaction with current practices
Interview	New ELI teachers of spring 2006 semester	Finding out how well the pre-semester induction practices were able to meet the new teachers' perceived needs
Focus group	Experienced ELI teachers of spring 2006 semester	Finding out experienced ELI teachers' perceptions, comments, and suggestions on pre-semester induction practices for ELI new teachers
Questionnaire	Incoming ELI teachers for fall 2006 semester	Identifying incoming ELI teachers' needs and expectations for pre-semester teacher induction

One of the PIUs also enhanced the utility of the design by sending emails to the different groups of teacher informants to encourage them to participate.

1 Interview with the ELI administrators

The major uses of the interview with the ELI administrators were to specify the intended outcomes of the pre-semester induction practices for new teachers, and to find out about the administrators' satisfaction with current practices. At the same time, details about the current practices were confirmed with the administrators. Thus, interview data were used to fulfill the first intended use, as well as to identify areas of uncertainty, and to provide some basic information for the design of the other evaluation methods. The interview was conducted with the ELI Director and the ELI Assistant Director. The ELI Coordinator was not able to attend the interview, but provided email input and comments on the interview results. The interview asked the following two main question topics: (a) What are the intended outcomes of the pre-semester induction practices for ELI new teachers? (i.e. what changes will ELI new teachers experience through the pre-semester induction practices, e.g. changes in their knowledge, abilities, and possibly dispositions?); and (b) To what extent do you think the current induction practices are occurring to your satisfaction, and are achieving the outcomes you described in Q. 1? What areas of uncertainty do you have for the processes and their intended outcomes? Which seems to need more attention?

2 Interview with new ELI teachers of spring 2006

The major intended use of the interviews with new teachers was to find out how well the pre-semester induction practices were able to meet the new teachers' perceived needs. Being in their first semester of teaching in the ELI,

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the new teachers could freshly reflect on the pre-semester induction process in helping them to get ready to teach. Among the four new teachers in this semester, three were interviewed (the fourth was one of the internal evaluators). The interviews posed the following questions: (a) Before you started to teach in the ELI, what kinds of pre-semester orientation did you receive from the ELI, and what kinds of pre-semester practices did you engage in on your own? (b) Overall, how well do you think these pre-semester practices were able to help you to get ready for the teaching tasks in the ELI? (c) Of these pre-semester activities, what (if anything) seemed to be particularly helpful or useful, not so helpful or useful, unnecessary or overloading, insufficient or lacking? Why? (d) Overall, in your opinion, how can the pre-semester orientation/induction processes further improve in order to serve the new teachers' needs better? In addition, the interviews asked whether the new teachers were able to achieve each of the intended outcomes for induction practices the administrators had specified. (See Table 3 for the items.)

3 Focus group with experienced ELI teachers of spring 2006

The major intended use of the focus group was to find out experienced ELI teachers' perceptions, comments, and suggestions on pre-semester induction practices for ELI new teachers. As experienced ELI teachers, they could draw upon their past experiences in the ELI, think about the desired outcomes of the pre-semester induction process, comment on the current practices, and make any necessary suggestions. Among the 12 experienced ELI teachers of spring 2006, 11 attended the focus group (one had a teaching time conflict). During the focus group, the teachers first discussed the following two questions: (a) Through the pre-semester induction process, what knowledge, skills and maybe new dispositions do you think new ELI teachers should develop, so that they can be adequately prepared for the teaching tasks in the ELI? and (b) Think back to *your* first semester of teaching in the ELI: **overall**, how well do you think the pre-semester practices you received from the ELI and you engaged in on your own helped to achieve the elements identified in Q. 1? How so? After discussing these two questions, the teachers individually filled out a short questionnaire about how helpful they thought each of the current 12 pre-semester induction practices could be to a new teacher, rating the helpfulness on a four-point scale (1 = not helpful; 2 = not so helpful; 3 = helpful; 4 = very helpful) and providing any comments or suggestions for each of the practices. After they completed the questionnaire, they discussed their comments on the current practices as a group.

4 Questionnaire for incoming new ELI teachers of fall 2006

The major intended use of the questionnaire was to identify incoming new teachers' needs and expectations for teacher induction. Incoming teachers may

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have had very little knowledge about teaching in the ELI, and their identified needs for pre-semester induction could be compared with the current practices in meeting their needs. Due to the small amount of information we needed from them and the relatively straightforward nature of the questions we wanted to ask of them, we chose a questionnaire format. The questionnaire was administered online through a commercial survey tool (Surveymonkey.com, 2006). All of the five incoming teachers responded to the questionnaire. A text version of the questionnaire is in Appendix A.

5 Procedures and analysis

When designing the evaluation methods, we had certain themes in mind which we thought could address the focal evaluation questions, so we designed corresponding questions to obtain information about those themes. The main themes were intended/desired outcomes of pre-semester teacher induction, achieved or not; the most helpful current induction practices; and teachers' comments and suggestions for induction practices. Therefore, the questions we asked in each of the above methods were highly structured, as we had a clear idea of what we needed to find out. For the interviews and focus group, which were audio-recorded, we transcribed answers and responses to the questions using the participants' exact words. Since questions related to each of the above main themes appeared in two or three of the methods we used, we triangulated the data across from sources based on themes, and analyzed and interpreted them thematically. When analyzing the data, we also obtained a clearer picture of the implementation status of the current induction practices. In the next section, I present and describe the findings about each of these four themes in detail, and explain any answers, insights, or understandings we gained about the focal evaluation questions.

IV Evaluation findings

1 Intended/desired outcomes of pre-semester teacher induction: Achieved or not?

The interview with the ELI Director and the Assistant Director revealed what they saw as the intended outcomes of pre-semester induction practices, as shown in Table 3. Note that these intended outcomes touched on the very basics new teachers needed to achieve at the overall program level (the ELI, outcomes 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and at the course level (the specific courses they were to teach, outcomes 2 and 3). In addition, qualifiers like 'overall', 'surface-level', 'preliminary', and 'a sense of' appeared frequently in the statements of the intended outcomes to be achieved at the institution level. The two outcomes at the course level were more focused statements of the very basic knowledge and skill new teachers needed to develop about the course: knowing what the

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Table 3 ELI administrators – intended outcomes of pre-semester teacher induction

Through the pre-semester induction, an ELI new teacher will
1) Get an overall picture of the ELI, including its mission, student population, curriculum areas, language policy etc.
2) Feel confident in making the syllabus for the course he or she is to teach
3) Become familiar with the goals and objectives of the course he or she is to teach
4) Acquire surface-level knowledge of the administrative duties of the ELI teachers
5) Develop a preliminary sense of ownership of being part of the institution
6) Get a sense of the ELI as a work environment where administrators, lead teachers, and colleagues are approachable and supportive
7) Get to know the resources that teachers can make use of for their teaching (e.g. ELI Online Resource Room, equipment etc.)

Note: The wording of the intended outcomes is based on what the administrators produced during the interview, and was confirmed with the administrators both during the interview and after the interview.

course goals and objectives were, and being able to make a course syllabus confidently.

Turning to the experienced ELI teachers, they also articulated what they saw as the desired outcomes of pre-semester induction for ELI new teachers during the focus group session. Table 4 shows these results, grouped into course-level outcomes and institution-level outcomes. Note that teachers identified many more desired outcomes for preparation at the course level (10 out of 15 in total) than at the overall institution level. The course level outcomes touched on concrete knowledge and understanding new teachers needed to develop about the course, including its goals and objectives, projects, lesson plans, teaching materials, and the connections among these course elements, as well as notions of teacher autonomy, tips and suggestions from experienced teachers, and some basic terminology.

A comparison of Tables 3 and 4 shows that there were both similarities and discrepancies between what the ELI administrators and the experienced ELI teachers perceived to be needed by incoming new teachers. Both groups regarded knowledge of the ELI curriculum and approaches, the student population, and the course goals and objectives as important outcomes of new-teacher induction. In terms of discrepancies, while the intended outcomes specified by the administrators emphasized minimal knowledge, skills, and senses that new teachers needed to achieve, the outcomes articulated by experienced teachers were quite specific and focused on the practical knowledge and understanding that new teachers needed to develop, especially to be able to function at the course level. Further, many of these were not evident in the intended outcomes stated by the administrators. These differences in perception on the part of administrators and teachers – unknown prior to this evaluation – highlighted an important question regarding whether the existing induction practices could adequately address new teachers' needs, as they prepared to teach in the ELI.

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Table 4 Experienced ELI teachers – desired outcomes of pre-semester teacher induction

Through the pre-semester induction, it is desirable that an ELI new teacher will

(1) at the institution level:

- Know the ELI curriculum and its approaches
- Know the student population
- Know the attitudes ELI teachers are encouraged to take towards students
- Know the roles of lead teachers in the curriculum areas, especially their availability to new teachers
- Become clear of some policies like attendance policy, exemption policy, and the use of interim report

(2) at the course level:

- Know the goals and objectives of the course he or she is to teach
- Know how intermediate- and advanced-level courses differ in terms of the goals, objectives, teaching materials, and course projects
- Understand the connection between course goals/objectives and the design of course projects and lesson plans
- Have an idea of how the course materials are translated into actual lessons
- Have an idea of what actual lesson plans look like and how they are used
- Understand what the course projects really mean and how to do the projects
- Know which course projects are required and which ones are optional (Listening/speaking curriculum and Reading curriculum)
- Have a clear idea of how much autonomy teachers can have in constructing the course (e.g., in choosing alternative teaching approaches, and in using alternative textbook and course projects)
- Get to know the experiences and suggestions lead teacher and other experienced teachers have for teaching the course
- Understand some basic terms like needs analysis and diagnostic activity

Note: The desired outcomes are a summary of what the teachers produced when answering the question during the focus group.

Moving to the question of whether intended outcomes were being achieved, perception data were obtained from the ELI administrators and the new teachers of spring 2006. One of the administrators expressed in the interview that he/she could not be confident about the intended outcomes being achieved because of institutional constraints such as uncertainties brought by using GAs as instructors and limited resources. The other administrator seemed to agree on this point, by confirming the institutional constraints. When the three new teachers were asked during their interviews whether they were able to achieve the points outlined in Table 3, all three teachers felt that they were able to achieve 1), 3), 4), and 7), that is, getting to know the ELI as a whole, the course goals and objectives, the administrative duties expected of teachers, and the resources teachers can use. However, all three new teachers expressed concerns about achieving 2), that is, feeling confident in making the syllabus for an ELI course. One of the new teachers did not feel confident in making both the course syllabus and schedule, since he/she was

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particularly unsure about what projects to do and what the projects should look like. Another new teacher felt the syllabus was not hard to put together, but was not confident in making the course schedule. The third new teacher had a hard time in using the pre-set and non-negotiable goals and objectives on the syllabus. For intended outcome 5), one of the new teachers felt that he/she was able to develop a preliminary sense of ownership before the semester started, but the other two new teachers did not. For intended outcome 6), one of the new teachers already felt that all the ELI staff members were approachable and supportive before he or she started to teach. The other two new teachers felt that the ELI administrators and lead teachers, but not all the other teaching colleagues, were approachable and supportive. In sum, based on these three teachers' perceptions, intended outcomes 1), 3), 4), and 7) were achieved, and intended outcomes 2), 5), and 6) may not have been achieved.

In sum, compared with the desired outcomes perceived by experienced teachers, administrators targeted a smaller set of outcomes and placed less emphasis on preparation to engage in course-level activities. Further, it was reported by a group of new teachers that they were able to achieve some of the intended outcomes but not necessarily all of the others in their experiences.

2 Status of current practices for pre-semester teacher induction: Happening or not?

Through the evaluation process, we also obtained a more accurate picture of the implementation status of the existing pre-semester induction practices, mainly through the interview and follow-up talks with the administrators, and the interviews with new GAs. This information illuminated whether the current practices were happening and in what variations they were happening. The information was also used to compare what was in place in the program with what teachers perceived as the most helpful practices. As shown in Table 5, many of the current practices had a clear status of being required or being suggested but not required, but a few practices did not have a regular or clear status at the time of the evaluation. These unregulated or unclear practices included orientation meeting with the Coordinator, meeting with lead teacher, and curriculum area readings.

The interview data showed that, for the three new GAs, all had a meeting with the lead teacher(s) to talk over course-related issues. None of them had an orientation meeting with the Coordinator or were given the curriculum area readings. Two of them had the chance to observe one or two ELI classes, and the third did not have a chance. To different degrees, all of them read the Teacher's Manual and previewed the textbook and other materials (including online resource room) on their own. One of them had some discussion with the teachers after class observations. Another new teacher initiated a lot of discussions with ELI teachers in informal situations.

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Table 5 Status of current practices for pre-semester teacher induction

Current practices	Required	Suggested but not required	Other
Job interview	✓		
Orientation meeting with assistant director	✓		
Orientation meeting with Coordinator			Not regular yet
Meeting with lead teacher			Administrators were unsure whether it should be required.
Observing ELI classes		✓	
Talking to ELI teachers			Dependent on individual new teachers
Reading ELI *Teacher's Manual*		✓	
Reading ELI website		✓	
Curriculum area readings			Sometimes given to new teachers, sometimes not
Previewing textbook/teaching materials (including online resource room)		✓	
All-ELI meeting	✓		
Internship			When initiated by a SLS student, the ELI administrators, or SLS faculty

3 The most helpful pre-semester induction practices for new teachers: Accessible or not?

The interviews with current new teachers, the focus group with experienced teachers, and the questionnaire for incoming new teachers all sought to identify what teachers perceived as the most helpful pre-semester induction practices. Table 6 shows which induction practices the three new ELI teachers of spring 2006 semester thought to be particularly helpful. Table 7 shows the result of the short questionnaire used in the focus group with experienced ELI teachers, where teachers rated the helpfulness of the current practices on a four-point Likert scale. Table 8 shows the most important things the incoming ELI new teachers for the fall 2006 semester would like to do or wish to do in order to be prepared to teach in the ELI. These practices came from their responses to open-ended questions.

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Table 6 The most helpful practices for new ELI teachers of spring 2006 semester

The most helpful practices	*N* of teachers
Observing ELI classes	2
Meeting with lead teacher(s)	2
Reading materials on the ORR	2
Talking to ELI teachers	1
First CAM at the all-ELI meeting	1
Reading Teacher's Manual	1

Total *N* of teachers = 3
ORR = Online Resource Room; CAM = Curriculum Area Meeting.

Table 7 The helpfulness of current practices perceived by experienced ELI teachers

The helpfulness of current practices	*M*	*SD*	*N* of respondents
Observing ELI classes	3.90	0.32	10
Internship	3.71	0.49	7
Meeting with lead teacher(s)	3.64	0.50	11
Talking to ELI teachers	3.64	0.50	11
Previewing textbook/teaching materials (including ORR)	3.45	0.69	11
Orientation meeting with ELI administrators	3.36	0.50	11
Reading ELI website	3.00	0.45	11
Reading *Teacher's Manual*	3.00	0.63	11
Curriculum area readings	2.80	0.79	10
All-ELI meeting	2.64	0.67	11

Total *N* of teachers = 11; ORR = Online Resource Room;
1 = Not helpful; 2 = Not so helpful; 3 = Helpful; 4 = Very helpful.

Table 8 The practices most needed by incoming ELI new teachers

The most needed practices	*N* of teachers
Meeting and talking to ELI teachers	5
Observing ELI classes	4
Previewing textbook/teaching materials	2
Short internship	1
Reading ELI teacher orientation catalogue	1
Attending a teacher-training workshop	1
Doing a little research to get familiar with academic English	1

Total *N* of teachers = 5.

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The three sets of data consistently showed that 'Observing ELI classes', and 'Meeting and talking to lead teacher and other ELI teachers' were perceived by teachers as the most helpful pre-semester induction practices for ELI new teachers. In addition, from the focus group data with experienced ELI teachers, 'Internship', 'Previewing textbook/teaching materials (including ORR)', and 'Orientation meeting with ELI administrators' were also perceived as quite helpful pre-semester induction practices for new teachers.

A few quotes from the interview data and the questionnaire data will be helpful here as concrete illustrations of some of these key findings. When one of the new teachers of spring 2006 semester was talking about the pre-semester practices that were particularly helpful, he/she pointed out 'probably a combination of observation, and meeting with teachers and lead teachers'; he/she also commented that 'If you observe different classes, and if you talk with different teachers, and then if you talk with lead teacher, that helps a lot.' One of the incoming ELI new teachers for fall 2006 semester wrote an additional comment in the questionnaire as follows: 'I think a thorough orientation and plenty of chances to observe others' courses is the most important. What courses you would teach and the material (book) that you would use should be handed out to the new teacher in advance to fully prepare for the courses they would teach.'

Although all of these helpful practices were available in the ELI, it remained in question how accessible they were to the incoming new teachers. When compared with the status of current practices presented earlier, the most helpful practices did not appear to be entirely accessible. 'Observing ELI classes' was suggested but not required; the administrators were unsure whether 'meeting with lead teacher' should be a required practice; and 'talking to ELI teachers' was largely dependent on individual teachers. Current program implementation, then, had not made the most helpful practices as accessible as possible to incoming new teachers.

4 Specific recommendations from new and experienced ELI teachers

During the interviews and focus group, both new and experienced ELI teachers of spring 2006 made a number of specific recommendations for pre-semester induction practices to help new teachers be prepared. The recommendations are listed in Table 9, grouped by topics.

Table 9 shows that the ELI teachers had many suggestions and recommendations for pre-semester induction practices for new teachers. Their suggestions and recommendations provided a useful baseline source of insights for subsequent decisions about maintaining, revising, and improving the practices, as they reflected the views of individuals who had experienced teacher induction and who had direct personal evidence regarding what would work and what would not work for helping new teachers to get ready for their teaching.

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Table 9 Specific recommendations for pre-semester teacher induction

Observing ELI classes

- Videotape a typical/regular class for each of the ELI curriculum areas, and put it up on the online resource room for easy access; **
- Decisions for hiring new teachers should be made earlier so that they will have more chances to observe classes;
- Encourage DSLS students who plan to apply for GAship in the ELI to observe ELI classes.

Meeting with lead teacher(s)

- It should be a required practice for pre-semester induction for new teachers; **
- Specify what to be covered during the meeting with the lead teacher which everyone in the curriculum area finds most useful for a new teacher to know about teaching the course;
- Lead teachers could go over the annotated syllabi, calendars, and course projects with new teachers when meeting them;
- Make clear to new teachers what lead teachers are all about and the fact that they are accessible, and approachable.

Meeting and talking to other ELI teachers

- Make clear to new teachers that, besides lead teachers, other ELI teachers are also available and approachable;
- Decisions for hiring new teachers should be made earlier so that they will have more chances to talk to other ELI teachers.

Teacher's Manual (TM)

- Mark out in the TM the most important messages for new teachers to read; **
- Make the TM content more concrete and easier to understand for new teachers, probably by providing examples;
- Place a hard copy of TM in each ELI office. Hard copies can be easier to use.

Textbook/ teaching materials (including online resource room – ORR)

- Add more details about the course projects and activities in the handouts on the ORR, e.g., what they really are, the rationales for using them, and how to use them; **
- Have annotated lesson plans available on the ORR, instead of just teaching materials; **
- Let teachers have the textbooks and teaching materials well in advance;
- Prioritize the materials on the ORR for new teachers to read;
- Point out to new teachers which sections of the textbook to preview, that is, the ones that are more relevant to the course;
- Keep some books about second language teaching pedagogy in the Resource Room.

Administrative procedures (by administrators, lead teachers, or other teachers)

- Have meetings/ workshops where teachers can share ideas about course projects, activities, and lesson plans; **
- Let new teachers know which course to teach earlier, and avoid last-minute change;

(Continued)

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Table 9 (*Continued*)

- Ask new teachers to read certain sections of TM that are really important before the orientation meeting with the Assistant Director, so that they can prepare questions to ask and can have discussions during the orientation;
- Orientation meeting with the Assistant Director can be conducted with several new teachers together;
- Make clear to new teachers that course syllabus and schedule can be given to students in the second week, and that making minor changes to syllabus and schedule later is okay;
- Let new teachers know the ELI intranet document;
- Have a new teacher share office with an experienced teacher in the same curriculum area;
- Make a pre-semester checklist for new teachers about what to do and what to know;
- Make internship more accessible;
- Have cross-curriculum meetings and gatherings;
- Update ELI website so that it can give accurate and concrete information to new teachers.

Note: The items with ** at the end are the ones that appeared in both the interview data and the focus group data or the ones that were mentioned by two new teachers during the interviews. The items without ** at the end were either mentioned only in the focus group session or mentioned by one new teacher during the interviews.

V Reporting of evaluation findings

With all the data collected and analyzed, the evaluation findings were reported to the primary intended users, in a working session with them, as well as in a two-page executive summary and a full evaluation report. The PIUs first read the executive summary. I then presented the complete findings to the PIUs in the working session, in which I briefly reviewed the evaluation process, presented the key findings one by one, and explained where the findings came from by referring to the specific data collection methods. During the meeting, I allowed the PIUs to ask for clarifications at any point, and more importantly, to interpret what the findings meant and what actions to take from there. At the end of the meeting, I presented the full evaluation report to the PIUs for their individual reading later. In the evaluation report, I also proposed three major ways of using the evaluation findings: (a) re-examining and re-thinking the goals and objectives of pre-semester teacher induction by comparing the intended outcomes administrators had in mind and the desired outcomes teachers suggested; (b) creating a system to make 'Observing ELI classes' and 'Meeting and talking to lead teacher and other ELI teachers' more accessible and useful to new teachers, since they were perceived by teachers as the most helpful practices; and (c) carefully considering the specific recommendations made by teachers (Table 9), and finding ways to use the recommendations. The PIUs then read the full evaluation report in careful detail, asked for clarifications as needed, and met to discuss how to use the evaluation findings.

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VI Uses of evaluation findings and process

Upon completion of the evaluation activities, the primary intended users took immediate actions in using the evaluation findings, as they reported them to be particularly useful. In fall 2006, the PIUs made a detailed action plan and implemented a number of program changes based on the findings:

- Meeting with curriculum lead teacher became a required pre-semester induction practice.
- Class observation was made a required pre-semester induction practice.
- Three ELI classes were videotaped in teaching practice, these tapes to be edited and used as an alternative to live classroom observation. Plans were made for more videotapes of classes in future semesters.
- Hiring decisions were made earlier to allow new teachers adequate time for observing classes and interacting with administrators and current teachers.
- The opportunity of volunteering/internship in the ELI was announced to DSLS graduate students. (Note: there were four interns in the Fall 2006 semester; there were hardly any interns in previous semesters.)
- Prioritized sections on the Teacher's Manual were highlighted for new teachers to read through. Teachers were asked to read them before the orientation meeting with the Administrators.
- Orientation meeting with the Curriculum Coordinator was made a required pre-semester induction practice.
- Efforts were made to re-arrange the materials and to fill out the gaps in the Online Resource Room to make it more useful and user-friendly to future teachers.
- As required end-of-semester submission from each teacher, an annotated syllabus was replaced by the options of annotated lesson plan, project, schedule, syllabus, or a teaching reflection. These were then uploaded to the Online Resource Room.
- A new activity was used during the All-ELI meeting to help new teachers to prepare for teaching by getting veteran teachers' advice and tips.

In spring 2007, in addition to continuing the above program changes, the PIUs assigned me to make checklists for pre-semester teacher induction, to be used by ELI administrators, lead teachers, and new teachers. I drafted these checklists based on the evaluation findings and the implemented program changes, in consultation with the ELI administrators and lead teachers. The checklists were piloted and further revised. These checklists could thereafter serve as a mechanism for maintaining improved program practices and for building more cogent and systematic program practices.

In addition to the anticipated uses of the evaluation findings, several process uses occurred as the evaluation played out, although they were not explicitly planned. Process use 'refers to and is indicated by individual changes in thinking and behavior, and program or organizational changes in

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procedures and culture, that occur among those involved in evaluation as a result of the learning that occurs during the evaluation process' (Patton, 1997, p. 90). For instance, through this evaluation, the administrators developed a better and more sophisticated understanding of what evaluation is, what good it can do in a program, and how it can possibly proceed. One of the administrators commented that, instead of the preconception of evaluation as collecting data, he could now 'see how evaluation is connected to the evolution of the program', and 'understand the philosophy of how program evaluation can help our program to evolve in positive (proactive) ways'. In addition, during the evaluation process, the administrators gained increased understandings of the program component in focus of evaluation. By specifying the intended outcomes of pre-semester teacher induction, the administrators considered seriously what it was all about and what it was to accomplish. One of the administrators observed that the evaluation set him thinking more about what the administrators (the providers of teacher induction practices) were doing, and how it would affect the teachers (the recipients of teacher induction practices). Last but not least, the evaluation empowered the ELI teachers, as their thoughts and ideas about teacher induction were heard and highly valued, and their suggestions taken. The fact that the evaluation focus was proposed by two teachers out of our internal concerns added to the empowerment of teachers.

VII Conclusion

The report of this evaluation study calls attention to uses of evaluation and showcases the application of a utilization-focused approach (Patton, 1997) in a language program setting. It is evident from this example that, with this approach, not only did the evaluation produce useful findings, but the evaluation findings were actually put to use in developing and improving the program as intended, thereby promoting positive program changes. Again, the key of utilization-focused evaluation was that it was 'done for and with specific, intended primary users for specific, intended uses' (Patton, 1997, p. 23). In this evaluation study, the uses were built in from the very beginning by identifying the primary intended users and negotiating with them the purposes and intended uses of the evaluation. The uses were made possible and maximized by working closely with the primary intended users throughout the evaluation process and having them as decision-makers for major evaluation steps taken. The uses were further ensured by designing evaluation methods that directly informed the pre-specified intended uses. Additionally, the uses were enhanced and localized by responding to the specific program needs, characteristics, and situations. In conclusion, then, I naturally ask for attention to and espouse the utilization-focused approach that the evaluation rested on. It is one approach that we can and should learn from and use, if we are to prioritize uses and utility in our evaluation efforts.

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This evaluation also demonstrates the power and value of engaging in internally motivated evaluation. In contrast to externally imposed evaluation, internal evaluation can be less of a threat or pressure, and more of a motivating and involving factor leading to program learning and improvement. When carefully and feasibly built into a program, evaluation is an engine that continuously drives development and improvement. To initiate internal evaluations, I would suggest that major stakeholders of a program, or representatives from each group, first come together to decide and prioritize the most immediate evaluation needs of the program, that is, the program components about which they have most concerns and questions. This is probably the most democratic and participatory approach to starting an evaluation (see Mackay, Wellesley, & Bazergan, 1995). What this process produces is a menu of prioritized evaluation projects that the program can take on. Starting from here, for each evaluation project, identifying primary intended users, specifying intended uses, designing methods that pursue the intended uses, conducting the evaluation, and so on and so forth, will come together. Although the focus of the evaluation reported here did not come from a discussion from all the major program stakeholders, it did recognize that different stakeholders would likely have their distinct concerns for the program and it brought their perspectives to bear. Even mostly reflecting the immediate concerns of teachers rather than other stakeholders, the study demonstrates the potential value of internally motivated evaluation. I urge language programs to seriously consider building internal evaluation into their regular program practices, if they truly care about program effectiveness and the achievement of program outcomes.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for incoming new ELI teachers of fall 2006 semester

Welcome to the ELI!!
This questionnaire is distributed to all the new teachers joining the ELI this Fall.
This questionnaire is part of a program evaluation project looking at pre-semester orientation/ induction practices for new teachers in the ELI. Please help us with this questionnaire in order to best know your needs before teaching & to improve the new-teacher orientation/ induction practices of the ELI. Your input here will be valuable information for the evaluation, & will facilitate the ELI in meeting your needs better.
Completion of the questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes. Please provide your answers to each of the questions. Your answers will be kept anonymous. Please provide your name so that we can keep track of who has responded.

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1. Your name
2. Please briefly describe what you already know about the ELI, & through what means you developed the knowledge.
3. Suppose that you already know which ELI courses you are going to teach, what are the four most important things you feel necessary to know more about before you start to teach in the ELI?
4. If you have any more to add to the list, please add in the box below. If not, leave it blank.
5. Suppose that you already know which ELI courses you are going to teach, what are the four most important things that you would like to do or wish you could do in order to be more familiar with the ELI & to prepare yourself for teaching the course?
6. If you have any more to add to the list, please add in the box below. If not, leave it blank.

Thank you very much!

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