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Promising Practice of Technology Integration in Math and Science Instruction: A Case of California Charter High School

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the promising practice of using technology in teaching math and science in a charter high school in California. The research employed an in-depth qualitative case study method. The main participants were principals, lead teachers, teachers, and support staff. Interviews, observations, and archival documents were the main data collection tools. The study found that the practice of using technology in teaching by the school, Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART), has lead to positive educational outcomes. These include increased student achievement in standardized test scores, increased motivation, growth in mean GPA, less behavior problems from students, and improved school attendance by students. Implications for policy and practice were discussed.

Keywords: Promising practice, Teaching, Research

1. Introduction

This study intended to uncover the promising practices associated with technology integration, especially as they pertain to instruction of mathematics and science at the Center for Advanced Research and Technology (CART). CART is a charter high school in Fresno California. The school was authorized as a charter school in 1998 by the California Department of Education. CART is technology inclined school set up for the purpose of exposing its students to cutting edge technology that are relevant to the career chosen fields of its students. It is a half-day school program in which students can either attend it in the morning or in the afternoon after getting off their home school.

The curriculum of the CART is designed mainly around science and technology themes. The vision of the school as stated in their charter is to motivate students by creating education relevant to the workplace, with the goal of preparing students for post-secondary education and to prepare them to eventually contribute to the technology workforce (CART, 1999). To achieve this vision, the school developed curriculum that captures student interest by exposing them to a myriad of career options in medicine, technology, engineering, etc. CART help its students develop transferable skills that will prepare them to adjust to an ever-changing work environment.

CART has a population of about 1200 students and non-union faculty membership of 29. The demographic of the school is distributed as follows: African American is 6.4%; Asian American is 18.4%; Hispanic is 27.2%; White is 45.1%; and other is 2.8%.

Students earn credit in four classes (English, science, or social science, a career focused class, and technology) during their daily 3-hour session at CART. The curriculum in each core academic class is built upon the California State Academic Standards. All CART classes are college-prep, and most are approved and designated as meeting the University of California A-G requirements. Several technology classes prepare students to take industry certification exams, while other classes help students earn college credit through the CSU Unitrack program. In their home school, students take classes required by the State of California to graduate from high school, such as math, English, science, social science, and foreign language.

2. Literature Review

During the last decade, technology expenditures tripled in K–12 schools in the United States: estimates suggest that more than $6 billion was spent in 1999 and 2000 too old statistics! (Sivin-Kachala & Bialo, 2000). Since no one wants these funds to be wasted, educators need insight into how to maximize the impact of their investments in technology

Many believe the recent changes in instructional technology hold great promise for revolutionizing education (David, 1994). In fact, instructional technology is often considered an important tool for bringing about the kind of systematic changes called for by those involved in reform efforts across the nation (Means, Blando, Olson, & Middleton, 1993):

"When computers, e-mail, and other high-tech tools are used, many educators believe, students improve their thinking skills. Teachers change the way they run their classrooms. Parents become more involved. Assessments reflect real-world activities. Children enjoy learning" (Fatemi, 1998, pp. 12-13).

Raising student achievement is a key reason districts formulate technology plans to aid instruction. For example, a study on the impact of learning technologies on student achievement in Illinois reported that scores on state assessment improved in many areas (e.g., eleventh grade science and tenth grade reading), although gains were not uniform across subject matter areas (Silverstein, Frechtling, & Miyaoka, 2000). Swan and Mitrani (1993) also compared the interactions between (a) high school students and teachers involved in computer-based instruction and (b) those involved in traditional instruction. They found that student-teacher interactions were more student centered and individualized during computer-based teaching and learning than during traditional teaching and learning.

A number of studies have been reported that demonstrates that technology integration in mathematics and science are beneficial to the field of education. Wenglinsky (1998), of the Educational Testing Service (ETS), used data collected from the mathematics section of NAEP of 1996 and from a questionnaire completed by students, teachers, and administrators to analyze a number of different questions about computer usage in schools. Wenglinsky was particularly interested in Students' access to computer in school for mathematical tasks; students' assess to computer and frequency of computer use at home; preparedness of mathematics teachers in computer use; and the ways in which the mathematics teachers and their students use computers. (p. 80).

He found that those who used computers primarily for higher-order thinking activities did better on the mathematics section of the test than did students who used computers for other activities. In addition, he found that, in eighth grade, lower-order thinking skills were negatively related to mathematics achievement. The data seem to suggest that, if computers are to teach higher-level thinking, then students will be better mathematics students and thus earn higher achievement scores on standardized tests than if computers are not used for this purpose.

Research also suggests that students who use technology as a primary recourse are better able to understand the applications of mathematical principles (Mariotti, 2002). When students are freed to explore math through technology and a result not confined to paper and paper tasks, problems that are easy to manipulate, or workable data sets, they are able to explore rich math present in real- world math modeling. By providing a technology- rich classroom, student work is no longer limited to simple symbolic manipulation. Instead, students can interact with complex, real-world problems that enhance their understanding and pique their interest in school mathematics. The powerful influence of quality technology use in classrooms is well researched (Cuban, 2001).

While the effectiveness of computer technology on science instruction has been studied extensively, the results are inconsistent. For example, Morrell (1992) investigated whether computer-assisted instruction (CAI) would improve students' achievement scores in high school biology. Morrell found no significant difference between the means of the achievement scores of the CAI group and those of the traditional group. When Yalcinalp, Geban, & Ozkan (1995) examined the effectiveness of using CAI for teaching the mole concept in high school chemistry, they found that students who used CAI accompanied with lectures scores significantly higher than did those who attended recitation hours, with respect to school subject in chemistry and attitudes towards chemistry subjects.

The use of technology in teaching changes the role of the teacher from that of lecturer to that of constructivist. Waxman and Huang (1996) found that instruction in classroom settings where technology was not often used tended to be whole-class approach in which students generally listened to the teacher. Instruction in classroom settings where technology was moderately used had much less whole-class instruction and independent work. Another important finding from Waxman and Huang (1996) study was that students in classrooms where technology was moderately used (more than 21% of the time) were found to be on task significantly more often than were students in other groups where technology was only infrequently used (less than 10% of the time) or in which technology was only slightly used (11% to 19% of the time).

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to gain insight into the promising practices employed by CART in integrating technology into instruction. Even though the practice involves teaching all subjects to their students, this study is focused on the integration of technology in mathematics and science instruction. By uncovering these promising practices, it is the hope of the researcher that others can replicate them.

4. Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1) What promising practices in the area of technology does CART use to teach mathematics and science?

2) How are resources used to implement these promising practices successfully?

3) What evidence exists that the promising practices have resulted in positive educational outcomes?

5. Research Methods

5.1 Data Collection

Data collected for the study was done through interviews, observations, and archival documents. The first method, interview, was the main data collection instrument. The researcher interviewed the principal, two lead teachers of technology, three math teachers, three science teachers and some other administrative staff connected with technology usage at CART. These were the people who were directly connected with technology integration at CART and there were four of them. The second form of data collection instrument was observations. The researcher observed mathematics and science teachers as they teach lessons. The researcher also observed a couple of professional development activities. In those observations, he was able to gain insight into what happens in the classroom that relate to technology integration. Professional development activities observation made me understood the structure, those leading, and the effect of such activities on the teachers. The third method of data collection was archival documents. The documents were obtained prior to the school visitations. They provided useful information about the school's population and demographics, status of the school, year founded, budget information, and charter. The information is necessary if one is to ascertain how long the practices of mathematics and science using technology have been in place. The document analysis enabled the triangulation of sources.   Collected and analyzed were the following documents: the charter, curriculum guide, lesson plans of the teachers interviewed, and relevant student work.

Interview questions (see the Appendix) for the study were open-ended so as to allow participants the opportunity to comment about, explain, and share experiences and attitudes. The questions were developed from the research questions and therefore led fielders to say how long their practice had been in working; describe the practice of using technology in instruction; elaborate on the goals, identify the resources used; and highlight evidence indicating that what they are doing with technology is yielding positive educational outcomes.

5.2 Data Analysis

Because of the qualitative design of the study, data analysis came primarily from the transcripts of interviews with the principals, teachers, and the lead teachers. All interviews were taped and transcribed by the researcher. Then codes were established that corresponded with the research questions of the study. All observations and archival documents were also coded. For example, answers supplied by participants on the question of the promising practice identified the goals of the practice and stated the benefits to all stake holders (students, teachers, and parents). On the question of impact, codes that corresponded to performance on GPA, classroom behavior, constructive teaching, and higher achievement in standardized test scores were identified. On the question on resources, the following codes were identified and discussed in detail: budget information, staffing, roles of all those involved with technology, facility, and space.

6. Findings

6.1 Explanation of the practice

As stated before, CART is a charter high school that uses technology in instruction. Most of the instruction is related to projects in which the teachers finds real-life applications in which the projects that be tied. CART has technology labs that are organized into four broad career clusters that integrate math and science. A student in the engineering cluster, for example, might select biomedical engineering as a sub-focus and can use the technology lab to study the impact of poor air quality on lung capacity.

At times, the teachers collaborate in lab sessions to help students integrate all the subjects into the learning process. For example, a lesson was observed in which the class designed a plastic cup or plate with the computer and printed out the design using the three dimensional printer in the lab. Each of the three teachers in the lab had distinct roles in instruction: The physics teacher wanted them to use the computer to calculate the weight of the plastic, the chemistry teacher asked them to find the chemical compositions of various kinds of plastics and to use the computer to graph melting and viscosity rates of the plastic when exposed to heat, and the technology teacher provided them with a software package with design applications to aid them in the drawing process. At the end of the 3-hour class, most students working in groups of about four each had designed and printed out plastics from the three dimensional printer. As the chemistry teacher stated, "This kind of learning stays with the students forever" (personal interview, chemistry teacher).

6.2 Goals of the Practice

The goals of using technology in real-life situations and in problem-solving were addressed in detail in the interviews. The chief operating officer (COO), who is also the principal, pointed out that a major goal of using technology in teaching was to motivate and inspire students to do more than minimal work in school. According to her, the real-life application of technology helped to acquaint students with career choices that they may be interested in. She stated further that students in traditional settings, taught only through lectures and the blackboard, are less engaged in the process of learning. She noted, "They [students in traditional classrooms] do enough to pass but are not learning, so we

are using technology in the way it is used in the world to inspire and motivate kids to learn" (personal interview, chief operating officer).

The lead teacher and network administrator (Note 1) of the school also spoke in the same vein. The network administrator thinks that the goal of the promising practice is to emulate what a business is like so that students have some real-life experience. As a result, they will not be lost when they enter the world to actually perform a job task; the exposure they received at school will help them to know what is expected of them in such an environment.

The lead teacher (who is also the dean of curriculum and instruction) also thinks that the goal is to be proficient in software use and to be able to operate in the workplace. According to him, our world is technology-based and everywhere you go … there is specific software that's being used to advance that company in the marketplace. So we feel that the minimum technology need for our kids to get out there, they have to have their hands on a computer, know what a computer is, know how to save files, know the general logistics of navigating a computer, and know some basic applications (personal interview, lead teacher).

The goal of the promising practice as explained by the administration and staff of the school can be readily seen in the work that the students are doing in the technology labs. For example, the researcher observed the following in a class in the biomedical cluster: In a class session on calculating Body Mass Index (BMI), students were asked to offer medical advice to those sampled for the experiment. The math teacher gave the formula for calculating the BMI using the weight and height of those in the sample. The students were to use either a calculator or a computer to calculate the BMI of at least 20 people, as well as to calculate the average BMI of all those involved in the study. Next, the calculated BMI and other information pertaining to each of the subjects were entered by students into a BMI/age graph. The graph clearly illustrated to the students whose BMI was above average and thus needed a "doctor's advice." The teacher stated, "We have to expose them to things like these to have a sense of what they will be facing in the future in the medical profession" (personal communication, math teacher).

6.3 Benefits to Students, Teachers, and Parents

Those interviewed pointed to the benefits to using technology in teaching math and science. For example, the chemistry teacher thinks that it creates interest among the students, and it also helps them store and recall information. The teacher stated that because the students are engaged in constructive learning, they tend to be more involved, and once they learn by discovering things by themselves, they do not easily forget.

Another benefit to students is that those who might usually fear or dislike the sciences are having no such problems, as the learning is tied to real-life situations. The science teacher stated, A lot of kids come in fearful of heavy science classes such as physics and chemistry. And I think the way we teach, they say that they go back to their home school and tutor other kids. If you look at our grades, I think kids are more successful here than in traditional science course classes. (personal interview, science teacher).

The environmental science teacher thinks that the practice is very beneficial to teachers. He thinks that to have teachers of different disciplines working together is an asset. Each teacher brings his or her own perspective to the table in planning the curriculum. He commented, I think it is better for the students when teachers with different perspectives work together to plan lessons for them. Also, professionally, it is better for us; we become better teachers in seeing how other people teach their curriculum and how we could adapt some of the strategies they use into our own curriculum area (personal interview, environmental science teacher).

The network administrator thinks that the technology used by the school is good for everyone, including the parents. The technology the school uses gives parents the ability to monitor the progress of their children and wards without having to personally go to the school or make phone calls. He stated, "Students and parents can look up homework online. Parents can look up and see what their kids are supposed to be doing" (personal interview, network administrator).

6.4 Evidence of Impact of the Practice

According to the principal, test scores, graduation rates, and anecdotal evidence have all shown that the practice of using technology in teaching is positively impacting students' performance. When asked if the real-life situations for learning about and using technology were making a difference with or impact on the kids, she noted, we have hard data that shows that grades are higher. We have hard data which shows that kids who would never have taken physics are taking physics now. We have graduation data. We have test score data. The test scores have gone up. On the other hand, we have a lot of anecdotal data: students who have said, "I never thought I could go to college" are and now saying, "I am going." (personal interview, chief operating officer).

For example, during the 2004–2005 school year, part of CART's program evaluation effort was to compare the registration levels of sciences taken at CART to those taken at home schools. It was found that students "get immersed in sciences when they get into CART" (personal communication, chief operating officer).

Information obtained from the school's Web site buttressed the principal's arguments that the promising practice of using technology in teaching was improving the test scores, attendance records, and cumulative GPA of the students at CART. Data reveals that the students at CART have a 98.5% rate of attendance compared to the 96.5% attendance rate at a traditional high school. (A traditional high school in this context is a non-charter school that does not use technology like CART.) According to the COO/principal, the students simply want to come to school because they know that they will not be bored with lectures. They come to be part of a student-learning-team that makes discoveries by themselves and with the help of their teachers.

Data comparing the 2003 STAR Exam scores of all students in both CART and traditional high schools showed that the mean score at CART is averaging 780, while is it a mere 650 out of the 800 maximum at a traditional high school. Again, according to those interviewed, using technology in instruction means that students are learning constructively. They are motivated. The inspiration that they get from their teachers is transferred into achievement in the form of test scores. The lead teacher commented, "I see technology as a hook for students. And with that they are motivated to learn" (personal interview, lead teacher).

The GPA of students attending CART is also increasing from year to year. Available data compared the cumulative GPA at the beginning of the school year to that at the end of the school year. There was a net gain of about 0.16 points in cumulative GPA at CART by the end of the 2004–2005 school year.

6.5 Resource Requirements

6.5.1 Budget information. The practice of using technology in teaching at CART requires a yearly per-student budget of about $3,800. The director said that grants and donations of up to $8 million were used to set up the school. The most notable donors were Intel and Microsoft. Apart from the initial exorbitant costs, software needs amount to $20,000–$25,000 per year. The school has recently embarked on a 5-year plan for technology replacement with costs of about $300,000 a year.

6.5.2 Staffing. The staffing at CART is unique because of the structure of the program. As stated earlier, the teachers instruct their students in teams. For example, the environmental science teacher is part of a team that includes a math and an English teacher in the environmental science lab. Each of the teachers has a responsibility in teaching the math and science concepts that students need to complete assignments.

The roles of the COO/principal, the lead teacher, and the network administrator also need to be highlighted. According to the COO/principal, she has been involved from the very beginning. She works to obtain support from the business community in order to finance projects for the school. For example, she worked with an architectural firm to design the facility. She was also responsible for curriculum and instruction for the first 5 years before she assumed the role of a director last July.

The dean of curriculum and instruction (also known as the lead teacher) acts as bridge between the network administrator and the teachers in the school. According to him, the network administrator may not understand educational programs and the teachers do not always know how use the available technology. The lead teacher stated, "I came on board to play the in-between and find a way to make the technology work for the teachers and help them understand how to use the technology in the classroom" (personal interview, lead teacher).

The network administrator makes sure that things work for everybody in the school—teachers, students, and administrators. If students need access to a blocked Web site to complete an assignment, the network administrator unblocks it. He is also responsible for setting up the sharing of group folders. He makes sure permissions are obtained, that the Internet is always working, and that everybody has an e-mail account. According to him, "I just kind of make sure everything works, and whenever a teacher wants something or a student needs something, I just make it happen" (personal interview, network administrator).

6.5.3 Facilities and space. According to the lead teacher of technology, whoever is looking at a project like this should design "smart classrooms" like they have at CART. The smart classroom consists of a screen and a projector mounted to the ceiling that enables the teacher to connect the PC to the projector for presentations. Also, provision should be made for computer labs. Depending on the number of programs one is planning to have and the availability of funding, the lab should be cutting edge with features that enhance learning. In the labs, there should be individual computers for all students, as well as a teacher computer with a front screen, electricity backup, conference rooms, and phones. The availability of these facilities makes it easy for teachers and students to embark on the practice of using technology in teaching and learning.

6.6 Professional Development

Professional development activities are attended by every teacher on every Tuesday. The school started by having every teacher attends the same professional development session, but as time went on there was need to individualize the

professional development activities. They have four or five teachers participate in a professional development activity as identified by their need, and fellow teachers present the professional development sessions. She said that it does not make any sense to force a particular training session on every teacher at the same time. She continued,

The Technology Committee plans who is presenting and what is to be presented. The Technology Committee is comprised of the principal, the lead teacher of curriculum and instruction, the lead teacher of telecommunications, and a representative of each lab. For example, the biomedicine lab is represented by the chemistry teacher, the environmental science lab is represented by the environmental science teacher, and the bioengineering lab is represented by the English teacher. Apart from deciding on the professional development presentations, the committee also decides on students' needs in the classroom. Decisions reached by the committee are disseminated to all faculty and staff. Recently, the technology committee decided that prior to purchasing any software, teachers should have an input on how they are going to use it. (personal interview, chief operating officer)

Another quality of the professional development sessions at CART is that teachers have the choice of picking two sessions from a total of four sessions. According the COO/principal, "All sessions are two hours in length. If a teacher who wants a third choice and he could not get it, we will figure out how to give him that" (personal interview, chief operating officer). She elaborated further that the reason for the choices is to give every teacher the necessary tools to effectively use technology in the classroom. It is a way of individualizing professional development and targeting the specific needs of teachers.

The teachers I interviewed explained how the professional development structure helps them in the classroom. The teachers think that to have choices in the professional development sessions is great, and even greater is the fact that fellow teachers are the presenters. The environmental science teacher shared his excitement and enthusiasm regarding professional development:

Today, for example, we have a staff development meeting with different teachers sharing lessons they use in their labs that they feel could work in other labs. Their lessons involve integration and mixing and grouping the students so they get more in different group structures and don't stay in their cliques. We've had teachers showing how they use different technology available to us to meet the standards for language arts, math, and the sciences. (personal interview, environmental science teacher)

All of the interviewees concurred that the quality and quantity of professional development provided to teachers at CART is adequate to sustain the promising practice of using technology in teaching math and science.

7. Discussion of the Research Questions

7.1 What promising practices in the area of technology does CART use to teach mathematics and science?

The CART is engaged in constructive learning because of their inclination with using technology for real-life applications in the classroom. The culture of CART cultivates an environment in which the students have the opportunity to explore and be creative in using computers for real-life situations. To help support this, the school continues to procure cutting-edge technology for their students.

The use of cutting-edge technology challenges students of CART and it offers exposure to real-world tasks that provide the students with knowledge and learning. This technique prepares the students with life-skills that go beyond classroom instructional techniques. Carswell, Thomas, and Petre (2001) suggested that the combination of an interactive learning group with challenging assignments may maximize the learning outcome. Bringing in this mode of learning while using technology to assist in skill mastery gives the student the opportunity to build more skills than what s/he would gain in a more traditional, lesson-based learning situation. One teacher affirmed by comparison, "They cover twice as much material" (personal interview, teacher).

Research by Hardwick (2000) confirmed that when students are introduced to problems relating to themselves in their world, they will feel more challenged and will commit to challenges more easily. An additional attribute of the practice is that it provides a base for student work. The real-world application gives the students the opportunity to become productive participants in the community in which they live.

In learning problem-solving skills in the computer labs, the students find the answers to the problems presented to them whether the answers come from a book, a team member, or a forum made up of staff members. Due to the flexibility of being able to learn several state-of-the-art technologies, teachers work more to facilitate rather than teach, and they are not expected to know every computer application. The learning is up to the student.

The principal/chief operating officer play a key role in establishing and maintaining a school culture that supports the integration of computer technology into the curriculum at CART. Research indicates that teachers need considerable support to integrate technology into the curriculum, including a nurturing work environment that provides opportunities for teachers to take risks and collaborate with one another (Bailey, 1996). MacNeil and Delafield (1998) argued that a faculty that becomes more comfortable with the ideas of technology will more easily integrate it into the curriculum.

7.2 How are resources used to implement these promising practices successfully?

Human and material resources support the practice of the school in this study. The human resources include the teachers, lead teachers, technical support team, principal, and other staff. As was evident in the interviews, all of these people play important roles in implementing the promising practices. In addition, material resources, including the gadgets, hardware, software, and so on, are also paramount in the implementation.

The combination of both resources to enhance the practice of technology integration can be seen in their professional development activities at CART as their professional development activities are ongoing. Dexter, Anderson, & Ronnkvist (2002) confirmed in their study that most teachers do not receive adequate instructional support for this purpose. The principals and teachers interviewed in this study, however, painted a picture of satisfaction with the training that teachers receive. This difference may be due to the fact that these are charter schools rather than public schools.

Reed (2003) asserted that professional development for teachers of pre-K–12 classrooms is important, and deemed it a critical component for the effective use of technology in the classroom. In this study, the "desk practices" (described as training of teachers by teachers), which is a component of professional development activities, have positive implications in what teachers take to the classroom from such professional development activities. CART gives a number of opportunities for professional growth by offering various professional development activities for the teachers to choose from. This model eschews the "one size fits all" approach that often discourages teachers. It also reduces the likelihood that professional development activities will be viewed as only large-scale, isolated events over which the participants have little or no control. Consequently, the problem of having little time for growth (as noted by Loucks-Horesely, 1998) is reduced.

Planning and collaboration is another way that human and technology resources have been used in enhancing the practice of technology usage described in this study. This is the case with CART; more than one teacher plans and teaches a class in a cluster. Teachers are often scared of appearing foolish or inadequately prepared by their lack of technical knowledge, but this collaboration among the teacher group serves to reduce fears related to technology use. Working with colleagues who feel comfortable highlighting student expertise can help reduce the perception that the teacher must be the expert and center of all instruction in the classroom. Collaborative efforts also serve to emphasize the benefits of technology use, which can help diminish the perception that efforts to learn a certain technology will not yield results.

7.3 What evidence exists that the promising practice has resulted in positive educational outcomes?

There are positive outcomes documented by the study as a result of the promising practice of using technology in teaching: Increased student achievements on standardized tests, improved school attendance, growth in cumulative GPA, and, of course, increased motivation on the part of the students to keep learning. For example, the average Academic Performance Index (API) is 780 out of the maximum of 800. Compared to neighboring schools whose score averages 650, this is commendable. While, attributing this to technology, the principal/chief operating officer added, "parental involvement and the flexibility we have for teachers is also a factor" (personal interview, chief operating officer). The principal/chief operating officer also provided attendance records that showed that about 95.99% attendance rate is recorded daily in the school. The principal/chief operating officer also provided the researcher with the GPAs. The cumulative GPA for each grade are as follow: Grade 10 is 3.65; Grade is 3.77; and Grade 12 is 3.89. The principal/chief operating officer opined that compared to the home school of these students where average GPA is in the neighborhood of 2.50, there is reason to believe that technology integration is helping their students learn and hence the higher GPAs. The principal/chief operating officer also hinted that they do not have a dean of students to deal with discipline and incursions as behavior issues do not occur in the school. She feels that it has to do with engagement that students are put as soon as they are on campus. She said that they are motivated intrinsically by the environment. The literature is rich in evidence of technology creating all of these positive outcomes.

Those interviewed in this study believe that student learning is enhanced through the use of technology. They also expressed their belief that technology provides a critical element of preparing students for future education and employment. These beliefs are supported by large-scale research, such as that conducted by the Milken Foundation (1998). The report, "Technology in American Schools: 7 Dimensions for Gauging Progress," substantiates local teachers' perceptions that technology accelerates, deepens, and enriches basic skills … motivates and engages students in learning … helps relate academics to the practice of today's work force … increases economic viability of tomorrow's workers … strengthens teaching … contributes to change in school … [and] connects school to the world. (p. 43).

That teachers inherently understand and openly express their beliefs in these trends is indicative of their willingness to use technology in their instructional practice.

There are studies consistent with the findings of this study that students' performance increases by using technology in instruction. For example: In a meta-analysis study, Christmann, Badgett, and Lucking (1997) compared the academic achievement of students in Grades 6 through 12 who received traditional instruction or traditional instruction supplemented with computer-assisted instruction (CAI) across eight curricular areas. From the 42 conclusions, they found an overall mean effect size of 0.21, indicating that on average, students receiving traditional instruction supplemented with CAI attained higher academic achievement than did the 58.2% of those receiving only traditional instruction. They reported that their meta-analysis showed that CAI is an effective intervention for improving students' academic achievement. Christmann, Lucking, & Badgett (1997) also contended that the result of their meta-analysis study lends support to the assumption that CAI effects vary among the different subject areas. For example, "it appears to have its strongest effect among science students; whereas its effects are weaker in mathematics, and weakest in the area of English" (p. 292).

The data in this study showed that improved student scores is only one of several ways that the promising practice of using technology in teaching has produced positive student outcomes. In CART, there has been increased attendance, fewer behavior problems, and increased motivation. Beyond the obvious benefits of promoting a familiarity with technology that will serve students in any number of current and future endeavors, proponents of technology integration cite the positive impact that instructional technology integration has on school climate and student engagement and motivation (Sivin-Kachala & Bialo, 2000). Related research suggests that technology use has a positive impact on student attendance and drop-out rates, and also enhances feelings of independence and responsibility (Coley et al., 1997).

8. Major Findings of the Study

The following are the major findings of the study:

a)   Teachers were more willing to be involved in the professional development activities because of the structure of having teachers lead the sessions and the room for differentiated professional growth. This is also part of the "desk practices" explained by one of the principals, which referred to the act of teachers training teachers.

b)   In CART there was constructive teaching and learning due to the use of technology.

c)   The promising practice of using technology in teaching led to increased student achievement at CART, as evidenced in their standardized test scores.

d)   The practice has lead to other positive outcomes like increased motivation, increased attendance rate, increased mean GPA, and fewer behavior problems among students.

9. Implications for Policy and Practice

9.1 Teachers

The findings of this study are useful in several ways for a teacher who hopes to integrate technology in his or her teaching: First, the study highlighted the resources and planning that is involved in each promising practice of using technology in teaching. This information should equip teachers with the knowledge of software and hardware needs, and it should provide them with a sense of what it takes for two or more teachers to plan lessons. Second, the study highlighted what is there to be gained from using technology in teaching in the way employed by both schools in this study. For example, instead of standing in front of the class to deliver lectures (which is, by the way, more taxing), a teacher can act as a facilitator by providing activities that will enable the students to discover and construct their own learning. Also, teachers should know that it is easier to be innovative when they teach with technology than with the traditional teaching method.

9.2 Principals

The implication of this study for principals is in the area of resources management and professional development for teachers. Principals should understand that instructional technology integration will vary in appearance and complexity depending on a teacher's instructional and formative learning circumstances. While seemingly obvious, this becomes an important factor when creating or supporting professional growth opportunities that challenge the prescriptive nature of many professional plans and activities for instructional technology integration—an endeavor that the research suggests is often unsuccessful for any meaningful instructional change (Kimble, 1999). The understanding and support for varied types of professional growth and progress towards integrating technology could manifest themselves in supportive discussions and evaluations of teacher performance during the school year.

If principals and teachers are committed to an integrated approach for using computer technology to enhance student learning, then the issue around management and organization of computer integration needs to be embedded into the overall school plan. Principals, together with teachers, must decide the best way to integrate computer technology into the mathematics and science curriculum.

9.3 Policy Makers

The implication of the findings here to district leaders and policy makers is that they must identify the need and the establish goals for using technology in teaching math and science. Next, they must consider the materials that will go into it. Following this, they must plan an improvement process and identify how and where instructional technology can support the improvement process. There also needs to be a deliberate process to measure not only the success of the curriculum but also the degree to which the available tools contribute to the success. For example, the district leaders might want to know if a particular software program is aligned with the curriculum.

9.4 Researchers

The data that have emerged from this study offers a foundation for building classrooms integrated with technology and demonstrates careful planning for the effective use of technology in a program aimed at raising the standards to a challenging level for students. This study indicated that students' performance and achievement improved in the case studies. However, more qualitative research should be conducted within the classroom to gather more evidence and to use the research to demonstrate the progression of learning in the technology classroom, as well as to discuss the uses of technology that support learning performance and achievement.

10. Suggestions for Further Research

It would be interesting to replicate this study in a traditional school system to see the other side of the spectrum: How innovative teachers and administrators at a traditional school would implement the promising practice of using technology in teaching. Also, since the research was carried out in California and is specific to California charter school, further research is recommended to investigate the practices of using technology in teaching math and science in the charter schools of other states.

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Appendix A

ON-SITE LEAD TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

School Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of Interview Subject: _____

Position: _____

Researcher:_____

Start Time: _____ **End Time:** _____ **Total Time (minutes):** _____

[*Introduction*]

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am working with the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education.   We are studying promising practices in California charter schools.   Through a nomination process, your school was identified as having success in/with [*promising practice*].   The purpose of this interview is to learn more about [*promising practice*] at your school.

The information garnered from this research will be used to develop a Web-based compendium of promising practices as part of the Multiple Measures of Accountability for California Charter Schools (MMACCS) project. The goal of the compendium is to spread new knowledge and innovation about promising practices to inspire educators to improve school performance.

By participating in this study, your school will get recognition at the annual California Charter Schools Association conference, publicity in the media, and a one-year free membership to MMACCS.

This interview should take around 45 minutes.   Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

A. Theory of Action and History

1. Can you briefly describe [*promising practice*] at your school?

2. What is the goal of [*promising practice*]?

3. Please tell me about the history of [*promising practice*] at your school.

(*Probe: How/why did it get started, who were the people initially involved in developing the practice*)

4. Can you tell me a little about your role as lead teacher with respect to [*promising practice*]?

5. Who have been the main people involved with the planning and implementation of [*promising practice*]?

6. In your opinion, what factors have contributed to the successful implementation of [*promising practice*]?

7. How do you think that [*promising practice*] will lead to school improvement and higher student achievement?

B. Implementation Details

8. How long has [*promising practice*] been in place?

9. How much start up/planning time was needed to implement [*promising practice*]?

10. How much planning time on a monthly basis is needed to maintain implementation of [*promising practice*]?

11. How often do you collaborate with other staff members in order to sustain [*promising practice*]?

12. What do you see as the next steps for ensuring sustainability of the [*promising practice*]?

13. How do you know [*promising practice*] is making a difference? [*What is the evidence of impact?*]

14. What are the benefits of implementing [*promising practice*]?

(Probes: Benefits for students, staff, administrators, parents)

15. What are the challenges of implementing [*promising practice*]?

(Probes: Challenges for students, staff, administrators, parents)

16. What lessons have you learned by implementing [*promising practice*]?

C. Resource Requirements

17. How much of your budget is spent on [*promising practice*]?

18. What is the level of staff expertise required with respect to [*promising practice*]?

19. What facilities are needed to carry out [*promising practice*]?

20. How much professional development time has staff received to implement [*promising practice*]?

21. Do you think the training/professional development that has been conducted meets the needs for people to effectively implement [*promising practice*]?

(*Probe: What other types of PD do you think would be helpful to effectively implement promising practice?*)

D. Recommended Resources for Additional Information

22. Are there any books that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

23. Are there any articles that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

24. Are there any Web sites that have been helpful to you in learning about [*promising practice*]?

25. Are there any sources of technical assistance that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

26. Additional Comments:

[*Closing*]

Thank you very much for your time. Your comments and insights are invaluable for our research.

Appendix B

ON-SITE TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

School Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of Interview Subject: _____

Position: _____

Researcher:_____

Start Time: _____   **End Time:** _____   **Total Time (minutes):** _____

[*Introduction*]

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am working with the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. We are studying promising practices in California charter schools. The purpose of this interview is to learn more about [*promising practice*] at your school.

Through a nomination process, your school has been identified as having success in/with [*promising practice*]. A Web site that includes this knowledge will be developed detailing promising practices in California charter schools. The Web site is being hosted by Multiple Measures of Accountability for California Charter Schools (MMACCS) and the Center for Educational Governance.

This interview should only take 30 minutes. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

A. Evidence of Impact

1. What has been the impact of [*promising practice*] on students?

2. What has been the impact of [*promising practice*] on parents?

3. What has been the impact of [*promising practice*] on teachers?

4. What has been the impact of [*promising practice*] on other constituents/stakeholders (*e.g. investors, community groups etc.*)?

5. Was any system for measuring the success of [*promising practice*] adopted during the planning stages?

6. Are you aware of any research studies that confirm the impact of [*promising practice*] on student achievement?   If yes, may we please have copies?

B. Lessons Learned

7. What benefits have you experienced as a result of implementing [*promising practice]*?

(Probes: Benefits for students, staff, administrators, parents)

8. What challenges have you experienced while implementing the [*promising practice]*?

(Probes: Challenges for students, staff, administrators, parents)

9. Have there been any efforts to improve the effectiveness of [*promising practice]*? If yes, explain.

10. What efforts have been made to help sustain [*promising practice*] at your school?

11. What future steps are needed to ensure the sustainability of [*promising practice*]?

12. What recommendations would you make to other educators that are thinking about adopting [*promising practice*]?

C.   Recommended Resources for Additional Information

13. Are there any books that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

14. Are there any articles that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

15. Are there any Web sites that have been helpful to you in learning about [*promising practice*]?

16. Are there any sources of technical assistance that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

17. Additional Comments:

[*Closing*]

Thank you very much for your time.   Your comments and insights are invaluable for our research.

Appendix C

ON-SITE PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

School Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of Interview Subject: _____

Researcher:_____

Start Time: _____   **End Time:** _____   **Total Time (minutes):** _____

[*Introduction*]

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am working with the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education.   We are studying promising practices in California charter schools.   Through a nomination process, your school was identified as having success in/with [*promising practice*].   The purpose of this interview is to learn more about [*promising practice*] at your school.

The information garnered from this research will be used to develop a Web-based compendium of promising practices as part of the Multiple Measures of Accountability for California Charter Schools (MMACCS) project. The goal of the compendium is to spread new knowledge and innovation about promising practices to inspire educators to improve school performance.

By participating in this study, your school will get recognition at the annual California Charter Schools Association conference, publicity in the media, and a one-year free membership to MMACCS.

This interview should take around 45 minutes.   Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

A. Theory of Action and History

1. Can you briefly describe [*promising practice*] at your school?

2. What is the goal of [*promising practice*]?

3. Please tell me about the history of [*promising practice*] at your school.

(*Probe: How/why did it get started, who were the people initially involved in developing the practice*)

4. Can you tell me a little about your role as principal with respect to [*promising practice*]?

5. Who have been the main people involved with the planning and implementation of [*promising practice*]?

6. In your opinion, what factors have contributed to the successful implementation of [*promising practice*]?

7. How do you think that [*promising practice*] will lead to school improvement and higher student achievement?

B. Implementation Details

8. How long has [*promising practice*] been in place?

9. How much start up/planning time was needed to implement [*promising practice*]?

10. How much planning time on a monthly basis is needed to maintain implementation of [*promising practice*]?

11. How often do you collaborate with other staff members in order to sustain [*promising practice*]?

12. What do you see as the next steps for ensuring sustainability of the [*promising practice*]?

13. How do you know [*promising practice*] is making a difference? [*What is the evidence of impact?*]

14. What are the benefits of implementing [*promising practice*]?

(*Probes: Benefits for students, staff, administrators, parents*)

15. What are the challenges of implementing [*promising practice*]?

(*Probes: Challenges for students, staff, administrators, parents*)

16. What lessons have you learned by implementing [*promising practice*]?

C. Resource Requirements

17. How much of your budget is spent on [*promising practice*]?

18. What is the level of staff expertise required with respect   to [*promising practice*]?

19. What facilities are needed to carry out [*promising practice*]?

20. How much professional development time has staff received to implement [*promising practice*]?

21. Do you think the training/professional development that has been conducted meets the needs for people to effectively implement [*promising practice*]?

(*Probe: What other types of PD do you think would be helpful to effectively implement promising practice?*)

D. Recommended Resources for Additional Information

22. Are there any books that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

23. Are there any articles that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

24. Are there any Web sites that have been helpful to you in learning about [*promising practice*]?

25. Are there any sources of technical assistance that have been helpful to you in implementing [*promising practice*]?

26. Additional Comments:

[*Closing*]

Thank you very much for your time.   Your comments and insights are invaluable for our research.

Appendix D

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

School Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Teacher's Name: _____ **Observer:** _____

Type of Class: _____ **Grade Level:** _____

Time Started: _____ **Time Ended:** _____ **Total Time (minutes):**_____

Number of Students Observed: _____

Lesson Topic (e.g., volcanoes, verbs): _____

Instructional Goal (e.g., word recognition, comprehension): _____

Indicate Language(s) Used for Activity:

English □ Spanish   □   Eng/Span. Combo □ Other □ _____

A. Classroom Environment

1. How does the arrangement of the room support [*promising practice*]?

(*seating, learning centers, bulletin boards, display of student work, etc.*)

2. What resources in the classroom support [*promising practice*]?

(*presence of aids/parents, technology, books, learning manipulatives, etc.*)

B. Academic Lesson

1.   What is the intended purpose of the lesson?

           (*As written or stated by teacher-consider related standards*)

2.   What is the structure of the lesson?

(*Whole group, small group, pairs-consider instructional time spent*)

3.   Explain the sequence of events and distribution of time during the lesson as it relates to [*promising practice*].

4.   Describe the Teacher-Student interactions observed.

5.   Describe the Student-Student interactions observed.

6.   List (and collect copies) of pertinent resources from the lesson.

(*lesson plans, handouts, teacher's guide*)

Additional Notes

Appendix E

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBSERVATION

School Name: _____   **Date:** _____

Professional Development Topic: _____

Researcher: _____   **Activity Location:** _____

Time Started: _____   **Time Ended:** _____   **Total Time (minutes)**: _____

Number of Participants: _____

A. Professional Development Leadership

Who led training *(check all that apply)*?

Teacher *(from the school site)*	
Administrator *(from the school site)*	
Teacher from another school	
Administrator from another school	
University faculty member	
Outside consultant *(describe)*	
Other *(describe)*	

1. List the names and positions of professional development session leaders:

B. Professional Development Session:

2. Describe the intended purpose of the Professional Development Session.

3. List the Agenda Items for the Professional Development Session.

(If available, include a printed copy of the agenda)

C. Structure of Activities during Professional Development Session

Structure *(lecture, small group, whole group, etc.)*	Intended Purpose

4. Describe the content of the professional development session in detail:

(*Probes: Key terms, theories and implementation issues related to promising practice*)

5. List materials used for the professional development session

[*Note: Collect all that are available*]

Type of Material	Description of Material

6. Additional Comments:

Notes

Note 1. The network administrator works with teachers in troubleshooting and fixing equipment and Internet-related problems and also installs math and science programs purchased by CART.

Strength Development for Young Adolescents

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Abstract

Participation in strength training is important for older children or young adolescences who wish to improve fitness or participate in sports. When designing strength training programs for our youth this age group is immature anatomically, physiologically, and psychologically. For the younger or inexperienced group the strength training activities may include push-ups, sit-ups, lunges, or pull-ups without barbells or dumbbells. These activities employ one's body weight as resistance. After training at this level those who demonstrate progress may move to machines that provide resistance or dumbbells. When the preparation is sports related the training goals should focus on developing power and strength related to sport specific skills. These types of exercises may be used for those who are entering puberty. Remember, muscle balance must be maintained at all times. Strength training activities should be supervised by those with education and experience in these areas. Although some injuries occur in most physical activities the American College of Sports Medicine supports young adolescences and children's participation in appropriately designed and competently supervised strength training programs. Although all participants should understand the risks and benefits of strength training, a young child should not be expected to comprehend the intricacies of muscle action. Focus on lifetime fitness and teach kids how to exercise properly. Provide a stimulating program that develops in our youth a positive attitude towards strength training and a healthy lifestyle. Benefits include increasing muscular strength, muscular endurance, body composition and sports performance. The primary objectives throughout all levels of youth training are safety, fitness, health, and enjoyment.

Keywords: Adolescents, Benefits of strength training, Designing strength programs, Muscle balance, Sports medicine, Strength training

1. Training Young Adolescents

Providing resistance training education to young adolescent groups is etched in our minds. For the most part it is a very enjoyable experience, but can require constant supervision and control. The older student should be allowed, with guidance, to set up a personalized program to fit specific needs. In comparison, the main goal for younger students is to develop basic training principles. Along with proper training guidelines, the main focus of any training program should center on improving levels of fitness and injury prevention.

When talking to adolescents about injuries, students often blink to prove they are still coherent, but have no earthly idea about concepts or issues. In their minds, they are 6' 6" feet tall (very tall for a young adolescent) and bullet proof. It is our responsibility to provide the guidance required to maintain participant safety and health. Although growth plate injuries are related to long bone growth, they are not as common as other injuries. Still, they may pose a threat to this age group. It is important to develop awareness about all types of injuries and risks involved in weight training. Longitudinal bone growth "depends on both proliferation and hypertrophy of chondrocytes in the growth plate with physiological limitations of bone tissue, thus a need to maintain function during this growth process (Wheeless, n.d.).

Growth plates, also known as the epiphysis, are the growing areas of the long bones of the upper and lower extremities. During human development, these areas of the body remain vulnerable to injury during adolescence with the occurrence

of injury most prevalent among 14 to16 year-old boys and 11 to 13 year-old girls. Older girls experience these fractures less frequently than their male counterparts due to earlier physical maturation. In young athletes, a serious joint injury is more likely to damage a growth plate than the ligaments surrounding a joint. A sprain injury in an adult can be compared to a growth plate injury in a young athlete (Panagis, Ballock, Ehrlich, Goodwin, & Salter, 2001).

Approximately one half of all growth plate injuries occur in the lower end of the radius at the wrist. These injuries are also common to the tibia and fibula of the lower leg bones. After a growth plate injury has occurred, it is possible the injury may contribute to premature arrest of bone growth. "The affected bone grows less than it would have without the injury, and the resulting limb could be shorter than the opposite, uninjured limb. If only part of the growth plate is injured, growth may be lopsided and the limb may become crooked." (Panagis, Ballock, Ehrlich, Goodwin, & Salter, 2001, p.2).

From 1991 to 1996, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, through its National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS), estimated the annual number of injuries associated with strength training as 20,940 to 26,120 for individuals under the age of 21 (Committee of Sports Medicine, 2001). Although these figures are not recent, they highlight the injury risk to those who do not receive proper resistance training or are not closely supervised. Research on growth plate injury is inconclusive, due to limited case reports involving epiphysis damage. The fact remains, these injuries are more common than we would know and are completely preventable. As professionals, we need to advise young athletes about proper technique and limited maximum lifts. Growth plate injury is typical of improperly supervised training episodes. As coaches, instructors, and trainers, we must realize that an ounce of prevention will last an athlete a lifetime (Committee of Sports Medicine, 2001).

2. Could Strength Training   Damage Bone Structure or Stunt Growth?

A common concern for youth strength training is the belief that this exercise method can damage growth plates. Growth plates are made up of a layer of cartilage near the end of a bone where bone growth occurs. Although a few cases have been reported, there is no current evidence indicating structural damage due to strength training in adolescents. In fact, the American College of Sports Medicine states the main risk for these injuries are due to a lack of supervision and improper lifting.

The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) support children's participation in appropriately designed and competently supervised strength training programs. Benefits include increasing the muscular strength of children and children's muscular endurance, body composition and sports performance improvements.

When designing children's strength training programs it is important to remember they are anatomically, physiologically, and psychologically immature. Adult strength training guidelines and training philosophies should not be used for this age group. Although all participants should understand the risks and benefits of strength training, a young child should not be expected to comprehend the intricacies of muscle action. The instructor should focus on lifetime fitness and teach children how to exercise properly. Above all, the instructor should provide a stimulating program that develops positive attitudes about strength training and healthy lifestyles in children. Generally speaking, if 7 and 8 year-old children are ready for organized sports or activities (e.g. little league baseball or gymnastics), they are ready for some type of strength training. Despite the previously held belief, that strength training is unsafe and ineffective for children, health organizations such as the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) now "support children's participation in appropriately designed and competently supervised strength training programs."

Basic Guidelines for Resistance Exercise Progression in Children

Age 7 or Younger:

Introduce the child to basic exercises with little or no weight; develop the concept of a training session; teach exercise techniques; progress from body weight calisthenics, partner exercises, to lightly resisted exercises; keep the volume low.

Ages 8-10:

Gradually increase the number of exercises; practice exercise technique in all lifts; start gradual progressive loading of exercises; keep exercises simple; gradually increase training volume; carefully monitor toleration to exercise stress.

Ages 11-13:

Teach all basic exercise techniques; continue progressive loading of each exercise; emphasize exercise techniques; introduce more advanced exercises with little or no resistance.

Ages 14-15:

Progress to more advanced youth programs in resistance exercise; add sport-specific components; emphasize exercise techniques; increase volume.

Ages 16 or older:

Move child to entry-level adult programs after all background knowledge has been mastered and a basic level of training experience has been gained.

3. Training Guidelines for Young Adolescents

An instructor to child ratio of at least 1 to 10 is recommended to provide adequate supervision and instruction. When children learn exercises for the first time, closer supervision by the instructor may be required. Children learn best by doing. When teaching a new exercise to a child, have the child perform the exercise under your supervision. Ensure that the training environment is free of hazards. Before classes begin, be aware of the exploratory nature of the child and remove or disassemble any broken equipment from the exercise room. The training room should be well lighted and adequately ventilated. Children are more prone to heat illness than adults; encouraged participants to drink water even if they are not thirsty.

Perform calisthenics and stretches before and after every strength training class. Begin with 1 set of 10 to 15 repetitions for 6 to 8 exercises; focus on the major muscle groups of the upper and lower body. Start with a relatively light weight and high repetitions. Increase the load and decrease the repetitions as strength improves. Beginning with relatively light loads will allow for appropriate adjustments to be made in addition to improved technique. Maximal lifting is not recommended for general conditioning purposes. Two to three training sessions per week on nonconsecutive days is sufficient. Increase the weight gradually as strength improves. Generally, a two to five pound increase in weight is consistent with a 5% to 10% increase in training intensity. Progression can be achieved by increasing the number of sets (up to 3) or number of exercises. Multi-joint exercises such as squats may be introduced into the program based on individual maturity and competencies Treat children with respect and speak with them in a language they understand. Remember that children should feel comfortable with the program and should look forward to the next workout. Strength training should be one part of a total fitness program. Keep the fun in fitness and promote lifetime health.

4. Guidelines for Strength Training Young Athletes

Help adolescents strive toward achieving their personal best. As coaches, parents and physicians, we need to be able to guide them so they can reach their goals without injuring themselves. One way to prevent injury is having the athlete train to increase strength and muscle flexibility through a properly developed strength training program.

What is the definition of strength training?   This type of training refers to a method of conditioning designed to increase an individual's ability to exert or resist force. The goal is not to see which adolescent is the strongest, but to improve musculoskeletal strength. Strength training can mean using weights, or it can mean doing sit ups, pushups, and lunges without weights. Experts have found that strength training programs can be safe, effective and may help prevent certain sports-related injuries among young athletes. Recent findings suggest that strength training during childhood and adolescence may make bones stronger, a benefit which may last a lifetime.

For pre-adolescences in beginning weight training programs, the instructor should emphasize lifetime fitness and proper exercise techniques. Adults designing training programs should provide a stimulating environment that helps adolescents develop healthier lifestyles. When beginning conversations about physical training programs, the instructor should inform participants about the importance of a healthy, balanced diet to ensure student athletes get enough carbohydrates, protein and dietary fat to maintain energy for exercise. This is part of the healthy lifestyle image that will benefit athletes through their adult years.

When teaching adolescents' proper strength training techniques, the instructor should keep in mind they learn best by "doing". The instructor should show correct technique, and then closely supervise them to make sure they understand how to perform the movement. Pushups and sit ups are great for beginners, but as adolescents advance it is important to use weight machines or free weights to enhance their workouts to maintain interest and motivation. This progression is ideal if a trainer is available to teach correct lifting technique and supervise the athlete's progress.

Warming up and stretching should be performed before every workout. It is important to remember to warm up prior to stretching. For a beginning program, start with one set of 10-15 repetitions of 6-8 exercises that focus on the upper and lower body major muscle groups. Begin training with light weight and high repetitions. As technique and strength improve, increase the resistance and lower the number of repetitions. Two to three training sessions per week on nonconsecutive days is sufficient. Remember, strength training should be only one part of a total fitness program. Teaching young athletes the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and strength conditioning can give them the strong base on which to build their adult lives.

Safety First

Guidelines for youth strength training programs:

1)   Express realistic expectations

2) Teach positive lifestyle habits

3) Closely supervise technique

4) Give proper instruction and progression for upper and lower body exercises (i.e., bench press and leg press).

5) Give proper instruction and progression for single and multi-joint exercises (leg curl and shoulder press).

6) Allow gradual increases in volume and intensity, usually 2.5-5 pound increments.

7) Systematically vary their strength training program for diversity and continued improvement.

8) Encourage participation in a variety of sports and activities.

Contraindicated-Activities

The catch phase is the upward movement of the bar from a resting position on the floor to chest height or the highest point in the movement of the bar. This movement involves a braking action to stop the momentum of the bar. The movement evolves as the elbows drop under the bar and the wrists move from flexion to hyperextension to absorb the force of the weight and prevent the downward movement of the bar. This process places a great deal of stress on the boney and ligamentous structures of the wrist. The catch phase of the power clean may damage bones, tendons, and ligaments that produce flexion, extension, ulnar flexion, and radial flexion of the wrist. Replace the finish of the power clean with a high pull; do not use the catch phase. An additional contraindicated power movement is the full squat. The lower phase of the full squat may damage ligaments, tendons, cartilage, and some muscle tissue that produce flexion and extension of the knee. Replace the full squat with quarter-squats or half-squats.

• The lowest part of the downward movement of the barbell when performing the bench press may be a contraindicated activity. Place a folded towel approximate 2-3 inches in height across the sternum. Perform the bench press by lowering the bar until it makes contact with the towel. Stop the movement and begin executing the upward ascent of the barbell. Use this technique when performing the bench press. This movement not only reduces stress on the sternum and ribs, but also decreases stress of muscles, ligaments, and tendons of the shoulder joint.

• Keep exercise fun; vary the routine often. Weight lifters are more likely to stick with strength training if they do not get bored by it. Results will not come overnight. Over time, you and your athlete will notice a difference in muscle strength and endurance.

5. NSCA's Recommendations for Youth Strength Training

• All athletes should be taught proper exercise and spotting technique. Exercises should initially be taught with no load to allow proper technique to be learned.

• All training sessions should be supervised by an experienced fitness professional.

• Each participant should be physically and emotionally prepared to participate in strength training program. Consider the athlete's mental and physical level of maturity when introducing more advanced exercises.

• All participants should have realistic expectations/goals.

• The exercise area should be safe and free from hazards.

• Every exercise session should be preceded by approximately five-10 minutes of a general warm-up; Warm up sessions should be followed by several sport specific warm-up exercises performed at light intensity.

• Equipment should be properly sized for the participant.

• Begin lifting, preferably, with body weight exercises. Athletes may also engage in basic machine exercises if they use light loads that allow athletes to complete 12-15 repetitions.

• To encourage athletes, the program should progress from 1-3 sets of the exercises on 2-3 non-consecutive days. Each set should consist of 6-15 repetitions.

• Never increase the load being lifted by more than 5% for upper body or 10 % for lower body exercises.

• Competition between participants should be discouraged as this may lead to athletes performing maximum lifts.

• At any sign of injury, strength training should be stopped, and participants evaluated prior to re-entering strength program.

• Never force participation in resistance training programs.

• Keep the program fun.

6. A Healthy Habit for a Lifetime

When young adolescents show interest in strength training, know these programs can be safe and effective with proper supervision. Supervision can come from a number of resources, including parents of young children. Local fitness clubs and school programs offer outstanding opportunities to acquaint young people with the benefits of resistance training,

while instructing them in the need to follow specific principles and guidelines to minimize serious injury. Along with resistance training, stretching, and aerobic or anaerobic exercise should play a role in a well-rounded fitness program. Encourage physical activity in all children; it is a key step to becoming a healthy adult (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2006).

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Cassirer's View of Language

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Abstract

Myth is the breakthrough point of Cassirer's philosophy; Art is one of key words to understand his defined language; and Symbolism infiltrates into all aspects of human cultures especially language. The shift of Cassirer from great theories of science and philosophy to the world of art, language, myth, and culture mirrors his bold and imaginative analyses of human culture and language.

Keywords: Language, Art, Symbolism, Rationalism, Myth, Metaphor

1. about Language and Art

1.1 Background: the Understanding of Language and Art of Plato

Poet is the object of scorn and derision in Plato's *the Republic*. He even thought manufacturer was a more socially recognized occupation than poet. In Plato's idea, handicraft was the "copy" of the "real world", and the literary output was only the imitation of "copy", which not only stray from the "true", but would even misguide people. Plato's opinion mirrors the philosopher's distrust of Language and Arts, leading us in the dilemma of Antinomy and Skepticism once again.

Plato's opinion is not unfounded. At that time, Sophists using the Art of Rhetoric as their weapon was prevalent in Ancient Greece. In Plato's view, the inflation of Language fallacy and sophistry was due to Art fallacy and sophistry, and the members of Sophists were not "Word philosopher" but "Word artists". Meanwhile, in the early stages of human culture, poetry and metaphor, as one of the most primitive and basic characteristics of language, were used in sorcery and superstition. Therefore, Plato disdained and revolted against the "artistry" of "language" after seeing through the whole picture.

1.2 The View of Cassirer

Considering Plato's understanding was ex parte, Cassirer re-interpreted the value of language and art in his masterpiece *Language and Art*. Although admitting "the copy of the world would never as true and perfect as its real features", Cassirer pointed out "language should not be regarded as copies of matter but the condition of object concept." Why? Cassirer supported his view by linguistics, psychopathology and psychology of speech and held many interesting examples.

There is a kind of disease named aphasia in psychopathology. Although people with aphasia do not lose their ability of word application, they can not use words modestly to denote and style objects. In other words, patients may not accurately call the name of an object, but they are really good at using words in another purpose: to express their feelings. For example, they may find it difficult to get out the word of "fire" when they encounter the fire, but they can say "fire" to express fear when they are in dangerous situation. The famous British psychiatrist Jackson has brought forward the terms of "low-level language" and "high-level language", the former means using language to express emotions while the latter means using language in declarative way. Psychology of speech has proved that the characteristic of objective "statement" of language is the most significant features of human language.

So, what is the value of the characteristic of objective "statement"? Its value lies in helping us to "unit all sense datum into a notional entia". Animals are invariably lack of identify ability when they are in changing environment, however, human would not. Thanks to the abstract thinking and the identity of language symbols, people can sum up universal "concept" from former "experience". Thus, although without its own real world, language becomes the tool of human thinking and helps us to understand the world instead of just imitating it.

The role of poet is certainly not as low as that in Plato's book; on the contrary, the poets are the best person in dominating these concepts. They turn "the stone of universal language" into a "literary gem"; they throw the abstract general day-to-day language into the Gold Furnace of imagines to cast it into a new form. Therefore, some people regard "poesy" as the superlative form of literature. In their opinion, Poesy is a form of domination of "concept", but Novel is the imitation to the "real world" to a certain extent.

The creative process of the Art, in Cassirer's idea, was a configuration process that need for emotional and rational

thinking, therefore, the form of the Art was a kind of "emotional - rational structure". However, fundamentally speaking, the Art was primarily a perceptual intuition and would bring spiritual freedom to audients in the process of the aesthetic.

This shows that the traditional view of "Arts is the imitation of nature" is narrow-minded. "Like all the other symbolic forms art is not the mere reproduction of a ready-made, given reality. It is one of the ways leading to an objective view of things and of human life. It is not an imitation but a discovery of reality," Cassirer wrote in Essay on Man.

Cassirer concludes that both Art and Language, which are not just "second nature" but quite independent, are original human capacity and ability. With this capacity, human successful found and organize their perceptual world, notional world and intuitive world. What they own is not only the re-creation but the features and value of creation and conformation, which make the Language and the Arts significantly influential in the human society.

2. about Language and Symbolism

2.1 Background: Descartes' view about rationality and irrationality

The main stream history from Ancient Greece to the present History of Western Thought is a history of competition between rationality and irrationality.

From the view of methodology, Cartesian rationalism started with the Universal Scepticism and regarded "Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am)" as the starting point, and deduced to the whole epistemology system by the intuitive and interpreted way. The formation of Cartesian rationalism philosophy is mainly due to the promotion of traditional culture in three aspects, that is, the profound impact of the rational tradition of the Ancient Greece, the full preparation of rational spirit of Medieval Philosophy and the powerful impact of the Renaissance humanistic ideas. Cartesian rationalism philosophy has brought great influence to the rationalism of the European continent and the development of other philosophy.

With the reasonable corpus of free will, Cartesian rationalism philosophy excludes the thinking, actions and existence that not comply with the new rational requirement from the western social life. Although there were self-induced conflicts in the view of physical and psychological dualism of Cartesian philosophy, it brought far-reaching effects to the subsequent rationalists.

There is a complement philosophic objective between rationality and irrationality, which reflect on not only the rationality unable to do anything without imagination, intuition, emotion and will, but also the truth is sometimes from the mouths of irrational persons.

There is no denying that human knowledge, thought and reality are all included with these two factors-rationality and irrationality, thereby we should return to the historical origin of the this integrated mass.

2.2 The View of Cassirer

Cassirer's symbolic form has different presentation in different periods of history and impenetrates in all human culture such as language, myth, art and science.

Cassirer defined people as "symbolic animal" in his symbolic philosophy. In his view, human beings were symbol-making as well as tool-making animals. They understood their world and shaped their lives in large part by assigning meanings to objects, beings, and persons, by connecting things together in symbolic patterns, and by creating elaborate forms of symbolic action and narrative. Studying how symbols were created and structured and how they were drew on and gave meaning to different domains of the human world could enable us understand language, the Existence of the World and the Significance of the World.

"Man has, as it were, discovered a new method of adapting himself to his environment. Between the receptor system and the effector system, which are to be found in all animal species, we find in man a third link which we may describe as the symbolic system. This new acquisition transforms the whole of human life. As compared with the other animals man lives not merely in a broader reality; he lives, so to speak, in a new dimension of reality."

Page.26-An Eassy on Man

In term of the whole symbolic system, Cassirer thought the form of symbol was perceptual and the formation process was motile; he pointed out that the Art, as a form of symbol, was quite different from Science.

In Cassirer's view, language is rational - "or even the same as the source of rationality". In a word, rationality is not a very adequate way to understand the rich and diversity of human cultural life. Therefore, Cassirer came to the conclusion that "human" should be defined as "symbolic animal". While the emotional language is paratactic with the concept of language, the logical or scientific language is tied for the language of poetic imagination; thereby language can not be summed up only by rationality.

3. about Language and Myth

In *Language and Form* Cassirer wrote that language and myth began as one, originally standing "in an indissoluble correlation with one another, from which they both emerge but gradually as independent elements..." Language also bears within self, from its very beginning, the power of logic.

In the earliest phases language clings to the concrete phenomenon, exemplified among others by the Arabic use of between five to six thousand terms to describe a camel. The expression of words came from the sacred name, which has the decisive force in the thought of early man. Myth develops into art and the development of written language leads eventually toward mathematics and science, although in poetry language still has its original power. The abstract of language derived from metaphor thinking, which is the foundation of language classification. It is clear from the language generation that language is poetry in nature. "The greatest lyric poets, for instance Hölderlin or Keats, are men in whom the mythic power of insight breaks forth again in its full intensity and objectifying power."

Since language and myth were expressive ab origine in Cassirer's opinion, he combined language with myth and inspected this combination, and paid great attention to both natural sciences and humanities - literature, history and the arts.

Cassirer's own merit lies in the fact that he took the lead in guiding philosophy into the scope of myth and language through developing and promoting the West "unorthodox" humanistic philosophy from Vico to Herder and Humboldt.

As is well known, anthropology, mythology, linguistics, psychology and other disciplines have rapidly developed since the second half of the nineteenth century. It is not difficult to know that Cassirer's "extended epistemology", to some extent, reflected the request of rapid rise in these subjects and, with the continual development of human knowledge, the inevitable trend of cultural synthesis and philosophy sum-up. It can be said that the rise of the French Structuralism promotes Cassirer's "extended epistemology" at a higher level, thereby, the "humanities philosophy" in Continental Europe entered upon a new stage.

The noteworthiness of Structuralism is that, on one hand, it tried to seek for a unified and universal foundation of epistemology and methodology for every dispersive and specific areas of humanities research (structural linguistics); on the other hand, all its main representatives have "critical" studied a specific field of humanities and promoted significant changes in that field, such as: Anthropology and Mythology (Levi. Strauss), History and Sociology (Michel. Foucault), Literary Theory and Literary Criticism (Roland. Barthes), the Depth Psychology (Jacques. Lacan) and so on.

The effort made by Cassirer to guide the philosophy study into the scope of myth and language in the 1920s could be considered as the critical inspection of the humanities from epistemology.

Everything has greatly changed when philosophy entering into the field of myth. Because the act or practice of envisioning things in myth, as Cassirer has pointed out, is not in accordance with the logical way of thinking but its unique way of mythological thinking, which is named the "metaphorical thinking" by Cassirer. This kind of thinking also has ideational function. However, while logical thinking forms "abstract conception" by abstract method, metaphorical thinking forms "concrete concept" according to the principle of "Pars prototo".

"Whenever any word, that was at first used metaphorically, is used without a clear conception of the steps that led from its original to its metaphorical meaning, there is danger of mythology; whenever those steps are forgotten and artificial steps put in their places, we have mythology, or, if I may say so, we have diseased language, whether that language refers to religious or secular interests."

Page.86-Language and Myth

Language and Myth is to indicate that the Metaphorical Thinking in myth is the most primitive and basic way of thinking for human being, as the "metaphorical" is the essential feature of "language" (language develops with myth), and the function of logical thinking and abstract conception could only be founded and developed on the basic of metaphorical thinking of myth and concrete concept. This means that all knowledge and culture of human being is not fundamentally based on logical concept and logical thinking but the "prelogical concept and expression".

4. Epilogue

Since the advent of *Language and Myth*, this book has become a classical reading for theorists of Western Aesthetic and Literary. The efforts made by Cassirer to guide philosophy into the field of myth and language not only reflected the important trend of philosophy in Continental Europe, but also demonstrated the causes and development of his "Philosophy of Symbolic Forms". Reading *Language and Myth* and its related books would be the best way to understand Cassirer's thinking and a wonderful approach to go deep into language.

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Preparing Tomorrow's School Leaders with a Standards-Based, Prescriptive Curriculum

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Abstract

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 holds public schools in the United States accountable for increased student achievement and adequate yearly progress (AYP). Schools that do not make AYP for three consecutive years are subject to stringent sanctions. Principals, teachers, and students are under tremendous pressure to demonstrate increased achievement each year. State Boards of Education are insisting that school leaders have knowledge about curriculum and instruction in addition to the managerial skills that were the hallmarks of educational administration programs in years past. Colleges that prepare prospective principals are redesigning their instructional leadership programs to ensure that they are prescriptive, standards-based, and curriculum-focused to meet NCLB's rigorous requirements.

Keywords: Instructional Leadership, Principal Leadership, Standards-Based Curriculums, Prescriptive Approach to Curriculum Development, Adequate Yearly Progress

The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act* of 2001 with its provisions for high-stakes testing and sanctions against poorly-performing schools has stimulated curriculum reform in America's public K-12 and post-secondary institutions. Significant changes have been made by colleges of education that are discarding principal-as-manager professional development models in favor of standards-based curriculums that will empower tomorrow's principals to lead students to increased academic achievement, which NCLB defines as making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Changes in leadership curriculums were based on decisions made by local boards of education to replace criterion-referenced tests in public schools with a national, norm-referenced assessment that compels third through twelfth grade teachers to teach a prescriptive curriculum focused on attaining that goal.

Schools are under tremendous pressure to make AYP. Test preparation receives so much emphasis that teachers have reduced or eliminated instruction in subjects other than those to be tested. Abrams & Madaus (2003) discovered that "in some states, 80% of the elementary schools spend 20% of their instructional time preparing for the end-of-grade tests" (p. 32). Klein (2005) noted that students "are coached on how to take standardized tests, subjected to pep rallies to get them revved up to do their best on high-stakes tests, treated to breakfast at school on the day of testing, given sugar snacks just before testing, and presented with gift certificates to stores in the local mall when they do well on the state tests" (pp. 51-52).

All students are required to make (AYP) by 2014 in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Results, however, have been discouraging. Guilfoyle (2006) noted that, "over 19,000 schools nationwide failed to make AYP in 2002-2003; more than 11,000 were identified as being in need of improvement" (p. 10). Hoff (2008) reported that, "almost 30,000 schools in the United States failed to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act in the 2007-08 school year," and "half those schools missed their achievement goals for two or more years, putting almost one in five of the nation's public schools in some stage of a federally mandated process to improve student achievement."

Unintended consequences of NCLB's emphasis on increased student achievement include its *de facto* redefinition of the principal's role as an instructional leader and a correlative adjustment in the effort school leaders must make to help teachers improve their teaching skills. Gaziel (1995) reported "A serious discrepancy between the amount of time principals spend doing important tasks and the time they think they should spend on them" (p. 184). Attaining AYP, the product of data-driven instruction, means that principals must have the knowledge and ability to analyze student test data to make decisions about curriculum, instruction, and professional development, a condition unique for administrators who were trained as managers, not as instructional leaders.

Linda Darling-Hammond (1997) emphasized a principal-leader's importance, however, by writing, "when principals work to provide the conditions and means for teacher learning, student achievement increases" (p. 57). NCLB, however,

defines achievement in a narrow context and relies on school officials to alter curriculums and practices that nhibit a school's ability to attain AYP. Changes are prescriptive, not experimental.

Revising an outdated model begins with developing a shared vision of the knowledge and abilities instructional leaders should have. Jazzar and Algozzine (2006) concede that "it is difficult to define the role of a principal as the instructional leader" (p. 106), but "the educational reform movement of the last two decades has focused a great deal of attention on that role" (p. 104).

Recognizing that teachers alone were unable to create the conditions needed to attain AYP, state boards of education investigated discrepancies between the principal's roles as building manager and instructional leader. They discovered that many administrators did not have adequate knowledge about curriculums nor the skills to analyze data to make decisions that would improve instruction, in part because the programs that had prepared them to become school leaders were grounded in the wrong curriculum model.

The governor of Alabama formed a task force of teachers, civic leaders, and community representatives to create a vision of effective school leadership. The state department of education published the group's findings as standards with accompanying descriptions of what principals should know and be able to do to satisfy a prescriptive curriculum's first requirement, *to select appropriate learning objectives.*

The second step in designing a prescriptive curriculum is *to select learning experiences* that are useful in attaining those objectives. Ralph Tyler (1949) advised curriculum theorists that, "a student must have experiences that give him an opportunity to practice the kind of behavior implied by the objective" (p. 65). Each of the state's 14 post-secondary institutions with principal-preparation programs was encouraged to redesign its curriculum to include the newly-approved standards and to ensure continuity, sequence, and integration in clinical experiences that would give future principals opportunities to observe, practice, and lead teachers and students toward improved academic achievement.

The next step was *to organize the learning experiences* to reinforce each other to produce a cumulative effect (Tyler, p. 83). Selected standards were woven through the curriculum because of their importance in developing effective principals. As examples, leadership students will be expected to demonstrate ethical behavior, to communicate effectively, and to use technology appropriately during and after their program.

Evaluation is the final step in creating a prescriptive curriculum. Care must be given to include assessments that measure changes in student behavior. Traditional post-secondary evaluations focus on work products or tests that, at best, infer student understanding. The impetus for changing an Instructional Leadership curriculum, however, is to instill more appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes in prospective school leaders than management-oriented curriculums in years past.

T. J. Sergiovanni (2009) suggested dispositions, or the professional attitudes and beliefs that administrators display during interactions with others and toward their job, either unite a school organization or cause it to languish. Appropriate dispositions encourage its members to "transcend ordinary competence for extraordinary commitment. and require that people be transformed from subordinates to followers, which requires a different kind of theory and practice" (p. 89). Principal-as-manager curriculums failed to provide opportunities for students to develop a perspective about leadership. They emphasized instead the managerial duties school administrators are expected to perform. The vagaries of curriculum, servant-leadership, and professional attitudes were subordinated to more exacting knowledge, such as school law and finance. NCLB's underpinnings, however, require principals to lead students to greater academic achievements, a process rooted in effective communication skills, successful interpersonal relations, and shared school governance.

School districts in every state are beginning to recognize instructional leadership's connection to student achievement. NCLB, a national trend toward standards-based curriculums, and pressure from state and local boards of education for improved student learning are moving those responsible for preparing school leaders to refine their efforts. Principal-preparation programs unable or unwilling to reform their curriculums are likely to fall by the wayside. Resnick (2002) emphatically noted that, "it is reasonable to expect principals to learn instructional leadership competencies" (p. 2) that include shared governance with school stake holders, meaningful interactions with students, and using data to make decisions about teaching and learning.

Marsh and Willis (2007) described curriculum theorizing as a general process involving individuals in activities requiring them to be sensitive to emerging patterns of phenomena, to identify common patterns and issues, and to relate those patterns to one's own teaching context (p. 100). Although Tyler discouraged theorists from using his syllabus as a manual for curriculum construction (p. 1), his prescriptive approach met the needs of Instructional Leadership curriculum designers at the University of South Alabama. Careful evaluation of student achievement and the redesigned program over time will determine whether or not a standards-based, prescriptive curriculum for instructional leaders is effective.

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Reflection into China's Business English Teaching Practices Based on GDUFS Graduates' Employment Status

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Abstract

GDUFS, as one of China's top three foreign language universities with the longest history in business English teaching, has accumulated over 20-year experiences in this discipline. This research reflects into its business English teaching practices based on its graduates' employment status in recent years, and concludes that the students of business English major tend to have higher level of employment status than those of other majors, and their employers are more likely to be consultancy MNCs, commercial banks and other firms. It is suggested that new efforts for reform should be made in disciplinary development, teaching development, curriculum designs and teaching methods.

Keywords: Business English, Teaching reform, Reflection

1. Introduction

Business English has been generally defined by Chinese scholars as a cross-discipline science combining the application of English linguistics and cross-culture communication in the context of business management. Currently in China, there are at least 800 higher education institutions where business English is taught as a major or a course, among which three universities including Guangdong University of Foreign Studies in Guangdong, University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, and Shanghai Foreign Trade Institute in Shanghai are in their pioneering position of the whole nation.

Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, abbreviated as GDUFS, is one of China's top three foreign language universities with the longest history in business English teaching practices, and has accumulated over 20-year experiences in this discipline. In 2001, four undergraduate programs were set up to take advantage of its multi-skilled teaching staff and to cultivate its students with multi-skills in both English language and business knowledge through four specific programs such as business management, international trade, international finance and international economic law. Ever since then, its graduates of business English major has become the most-welcome students by the society and recruiting organizations.

In 2007, as the first move of the whole country, the State Council and the National Ministry of Education approved GDUFS' application for independently setting up the second-level discipline of business English with both undergraduate and postgraduate programs in the university, which places GDUFS in the leading position of the whole nation in terms of business English development.

Apparently, GDUFS' current success in business English teaching practices must have some underlying reasons or advantages. The paper will make a detailed analysis of its employment status and causes in order to summarize some beneficial experiences for reference and to achieve some enlightenment to the reformation of business English teaching practices in the whole country or even in the whole world.

2. Employment status

Based on the author's survey, GDUFS' graduates each year have been warmly welcome and highly recognized by the society and employers. And the employment level (namely well-known firms and high-pay job positions) of its students

tends to be higher and higher as well. This can be illustrated through the following two factor analysis:

Ratio of employment

According to the data announced by GDUFS in 2008, the employment ratio of the graduates of business English major from its School of English for International Business in the past five years between 2004 and 2008 respectively reaches 99.1%, 99.5%, 100%, 100% and 100%, which exceeds that of the graduates of all other majors in the university. And such a high ratio of graduate employment is even much higher than that of any other universities in Guangdong province and even the whole country.

Direction of employment

Still according to the data announced by GDUFS in 2008, employers of the graduates of business English major are more likely to be well-established foreign consultancy service companies, commercial banks, airline companies, government agencies, and other firms, etc. And these firms or agencies are usually this type of organizations that are considered to those usually offering better employment conditions and pay benefits to their employees. This can be illustrated by the following figure (Refer to Tigure 1).

Insert Table 1 Here

From Figure 1, it is clearly seen that among GUFS' 373 graduates of business English major that have been employed, in 2008, there are 141 people who have been recruited by well-known and well-established domestic and international organizations which usually offer admirable good pay and fringe benefits in China. In addition, there are also a large number of graduates of business English obtaining offers to further study master or doctor programs in Beijing University, Fudan University, Nankai University, and famous foreign institutions.

Compared with graduates of other majors, this employment status is much better. Taking the four famous consultancy service corporations and their recruitment of business English major students as an example, they have only recruited about 100 employees from GDUFS' graduates of all majors in 2008. However, the 52 graduates of business English major recruited account for over 50%, demonstrating students of business English major have been highly recognized and preferred by these world-famous MNCs.

3. Cause analysis

The reasons why the students of business English major are so socially acceptable these years may be explained as follows:

3.1 Bilingual Teaching mode

It can be seen from the curriculum design that nearly all courses for business English major in GDUFS are taught with bilingual languages or even only in English. The so-called bilingual teaching mode for business English major refers to the teaching of business management courses with both English and Chinese languages at the same time, but of course, with priority given to the usage of English language in the teaching practices. In other word, this mode of teaching, from the perspective of students, may be defined as a method of learning a certain business management course with original English teaching materials taught by the teacher in both English and Chinese, and with class discussions, assignments, presentations, examinations and dissertations done by the student in English. This mode of teaching can not only enhance the students' practical ability of English language, but also strengthen their knowledge base for contemporary business management theories and practices in the world today.

3.2 Unique teaching staff

The teachers teaching business English in GDUFS are unique ones because they usually possess two degrees. One is a degree in foreign language and literature, and the other is a degree in business management, economics or law, etc., so they are multi-skilled professors who are not only proficient in English language but also knowledgeable in a certain aspect of business management. And what is more important is that over 80% of these teachers have been awarded with master or doctor degrees by universities in UK, US, Australia, and other Western countries. What's more, quite a number of these teachers have working experiences in businesses or other economic areas. It is this kind of unique teaching staff that enables the bilingual teaching mode for business English major to be smoothly executed in GDUFS.

3.3 Outstanding student capacity

3.3.1 Proficiency of English language

Through the medium of business management courses to learn English language in bilingual languages, the students of business English major are more in a better position to master more useful and practical terms and expressions. And what they learn in classes is more related to their daily economic and social life so that their attitude and motivation of study can be stimulated more actively. As a result, their learning results are generally better than students of other foreign language majors. Their proficiency of English language can been evidenced with the comparison of the recent years' pass rates of TEM Band 8 (China's Test for English Major, representing China's highest level of English ability

for English major students) of the whole nation's universities, and even of the whole university of GDUFS. Let's take the data of TEM pass rates between 2005 and 2008 as an example (Refer Figure 2). From this figure, we can draw a basic conclusion that in terms of TEM Band 8 pass rates at an average, the students of business English major in GDUFS have been higher than those of other English language majors within the same university, and have been even much higher than those of English language majors in the whole country's universities.

Insert Table 2 Here

3.3.2 Advantage of comprehensive knowledge

In addition to their better mastering of English language, the students of business English major are advantageous in terms of their comprehensive knowledge. They have learned a series of business management courses Contemporary Business, Economics, Trade Theory and Practice, International Finance, International Business Law, Cross-cultural Communication, etc., and have participated in a series of internship or social activities such as Canteen Fair and volunteer activities. They are not only proficient in English language but also familiar with business management theories and practices so they are a mixed type of talent with comprehensive knowledge and multi-skills that can more satisfy the need of enterprises participating in the global market. That's the reason why these students are so acceptable by employers and so adaptable in modern society.

In summary, the practice of business English teaching in GDUFS has been proven to be successful as a result of teaching mode, teacher advantage and student capacity, which deserves doing some reflection into them in order to promote the sound development of this emerging cross-discipline in China and even in other countries.

4. Implications

In conclusion, the above discussion of business English teaching practices in GDUFS has at least triggered our thinking in the following areas:

Firstly, the bilingual or pure-English-taught teaching mode for business management courses of business English major in GDUFS is so far a very successful one based on employment status and student performance, therefore, it is of realistic importance for universities in China and even in the whole world to together promote the development of this emerging cross-discipline so as to benefit the whole world society.

Secondly, the development of multi-skilled teaching staff is the very foundation or prerequisite for the successful implementation of this mode of business English teaching. It is thus argued that those universities that want to promote business English teaching mode should first develop a multi-skilled teaching force not only proficient in English language but also familiar with a certain field of business management theories or practices. Their staff training and developing strategies should target at satisfying this very need of multi-skilled teachers or talents.

Thirdly, the cultivation of outstanding student capacity by means of business English curriculum designs and teaching materials implies that the emphasis of teaching should be placed on the development of students' comprehensive knowledge and wide social adaptability, which means that due to business employers' preference to sound comprehensive knowledge base of a student in recruitment of employees, for instance, a student of business English major in international finance may be more likely to be recruited by a government agency rather than a commercial bank, a student of business English major (in international finance, trade, law, or whatever specific direction) should not strictly limit his or her study of the specific courses required for that specific discipline, but should widen his or her knowledge base of business management and strengthen his or her practical application ability of English language in the context of international business environment.

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Table 1. Employment Distribution of GDUFS' graduates of business English major in May, 2008

Series No.	Name of Employer	Number of employment
1	Pricewatercooper and other three world-famous consultancy corporations	52
2	State-owned commercial banks, foreign-invested commercial banks and other banks	51
3	P&G, Marski and other famous-brand companies	24
4	China Mobile and Southern China Airline	14
5	Foreign trade firms and any other small-and-medium size organizations	232

Table 2. Comparison of TEM Band 8 Pass Rates at an Average

Test Year	Type of English Language Major	Pass Rate
2005	**Students of Business English Major in GDUFS**	**92.05%**
	Students of Other English Language Majors in GDUFS	87.79%
	Students of English language majors in the whole country's universities	60.00%
2006	**Students of Business English Major in GDUFS**	**92.06%**
	Students of Other English Language Majors in GDUFS	80.14%
	Students of English language majors in the whole country's universities	54.17%
2007	**Students of Business English Major in GDUFS**	**90.78%**
	Students of Other English Language Majors in GDUFS	87.89%
	Students of English language majors in the whole country's universities	47.30%
2008	**Students of Business English Major in GDUFS**	**96.07%**
	Students of Other English Language Majors in GDUFS	90.02%
	Students of English language majors in the whole country's universities	45.28%

Armenians' Dual Identity in Jordan

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Abstract

William Saroyan, a famous American Armenian writer states, "For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia"(video, google.co.uk, 2009). This quote assures that there exist Armenian individuals who are willing to work for the group and its future in a global society. It is this way they have, up to now, succeeded in maintaining their cultural identity, and reproducing it through the years no matter what has happened in their surroundings. For example, the strength of Jordanian-Armenians lies in their solidarity. Through maintaining their unique cultural heritage and the assets that have always belonged to them, the community has, through the years, created an identity that will live on as long as there exist individuals to maintain it. By keeping the group's infrastructure intact, this dual-identity Armenian and Jordanian in Jordan with different cultural differences, has continued to exist. This identity is reproduced within the group through global education, global socialization techno globalization and a common basis of values that sets it apart from new Diasporas.

Keywords: Globalization, Diaspora, Identity, Migration, Education, Techno globalization

1. The Armenian Diaspora and Education

To write about Armenians in Jordan can seem rather far-fetched to the uninitiated. But I wanted to write about as I am an insider, an Armenian-Jordanian person with dual identity. My grandparents were exposed to extermination and genocide in 1915. To Armenians, especially for the senior members of the community, April 24 is a day of mourning and remembrance. To the younger generation, it is a day to openly profess their Armenian heritage and demand justice for their ancestral loss to remind the world about the first genocide of the 20th century (Surmelian, 1968). The Genocide was the great "equaliser" of identity. Everyone became a victim or was affected by it. Being Armenian, namely in the Diaspora, meant being a survivor of Genocide and a member of a community of sufferers. This mentality of victimhood is an important part of Armenian identity. Gallegos (2002) described Diaspora as exiled people, and has its origin in the Jews' exile from their historical homeland. The term has, over the years, also been applied to immigrant and political refugees. These are individuals who live in exile, most often with the goal of at sometime returning home (Gur-Ze'ev, 2008). At times both the Jewish and the Armenian Diasporas have undertaken international political initiatives that conflicted with the desires of their homeland governments (Shain, 2002). Thus, through analyzing the Armenian and Jewish cases it will be clear the existence of an important third level in the negotiation and resolution of ethnic conflicts which can have a significant impact on the sovereign decision making of states (Shain, 2002).

The Armenian Diaspora has the most in common with the archetypal Jewish Diaspora (King, Schilling-Esters, Fogle, Lou & Soukup, 2008). Just like the Jews, the exiled Armenians have a historical homeland and origin. They have been exposed to some form of attempted genocide. The genocide was deliberate and systematic destruction of the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire during and just after World War I. This genocide was characterized by the use of massacres, and the use of deportations involving forced marches under conditions designed to lead to the death of the deportees, with the total number of Armenian deaths generally held to have been between one and one- and- a- half million (Armenian National Institute, 2009 ; Panossian, 2002). The genocide survivors may still live outside their home country but they keep their identity.

The Armenian Church, as the heart of the community and its identity, has preserved Armenian history and culture. Therefore, priests are responsible for organizing youth groups in which they teach Armenian language and history. Working with youth is important for the continuing existence of the group (Gur-Ze'ev, 2008). In other words, an Armenian whose family has for generations lived in Tokyo or Europe is often aware of the same cultural origins as an Armenian in Jordan and in the Middle East. Even if those people have grown up in different places and have never met, if they have strong connections with the church, they likely will have grown up with the same values and collective cultural inheritance (Chan-Tibergien, 2006; Loutzenheiser 2005). However, as the Armenian Church plays big role in the community these people will also find a strong relationship between education and identity.

Loutzenheiser describes how "identities are changing and constructed within the text or lecture" this shows how literature helps to form identities. Not only is the teaching of literature help to enforce the cultural identity but language itself strengthen cultural identity. It is important to point out that the future of any language, including Armenian, is in the hands and mouths of the speakers themselves. They are the ones who must set their language goals through indigenous institutions, organizations, and activists (King, 2001). Literature, history, culture, and language affect one's identity but one should benefit from education for the future. For this reason, literacy must be understood in terms of culture, language, identities, as a way of being and knowing, in addition to other elements that make up education (Harris & Wills, 2003).

White (2004) argues education has a critical role to play in humankind's acceptance of a new global social reality and adaptation to the future, which will be different from the present social existence. White (2004) illustrates that globalization must be incorporated in curriculum from the perspective of "a view from below." In other words, he shows the importance of motivating and improving the conditions of Third World people. For this reason he points out the necessity to teach critically about empirical problems and explore genuine solutions that have practical implications from the perspective of those who suffer. "By basing education on the past we fight evolution and force it to force us, through extremity" (White, 2004, p.78). The past reveals how the future is built by illustrating a futurist interpretation of education. Thus, futurology or the vision of education and future evolution will lead into an effective global education. Hall (1996) describes lost identities: "Actually identities are about questions of using the resource of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being." For me, as an Armenian-Jordanian with dual identity, I wonder "who we are" or "where we came from," so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves." Further, Willinsky (2002) supports this saying by asking who-belongs-where? In short, education, language, place, history and culture shape identities through teaching and learning.

Therefore, an affective learning process should be designed specifically to assist learners to re-think about identity. My interpretation for this is illustrated by Figure (1) identity. This figure shows three levels (a) self identity as an earthly being (b) identity between self and group (c) intergroup level identity. It illustrates how identity is continuous as it moves from the self identity to the community identity and finally to the global identity even if we do not physically move in Diaspora but are living it in the techno global era that leads to the so-called great human families. Thus, techno global era is the new technological movement that leads to social movements. However, technology is an essential tool for globalization as it enables people to easily communicate in different parts of the world. This, of course, enhances the global identity and strengthens the concept of one world.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Utilizing Figure (1) is an attempt to educate individuals about becoming global citizens. Therefore, moving education toward future globalization is essential in global political, social, economic issues. All these are included under the new techno-global Curriculum model umbrella (White, 2004). Kress (2008) addresses this when he writes that by "producing a global (lised) curriculum" through involving social and economical factors, a culture will act as a reminder for both global and local forces to work in equal measure. In other words, to construct a globally relevant curriculum requires a simultaneous account of the communities and their cultural shapes for whom such curricula are needed. Lipman (2005) describes the resistance between education and social situations related to parents, students and communities. He adds "how difficult [it] is to analyze what is happening in schools and other educational sites without examining relationships to this broader context." Loutzenheiser (2005) in her study explains the effects of "feeling different." Torres, Millan and Inda (1999) argue "what makes your difference different from my difference? That is our ethnicity." Thus, ethnicity is one way to describe cultural specificity.

In addition, Kelly (2006) explains that culture is embedded within literature. She adds it is important to experience cultural differences in order to have the knowledge to write about a specific culture. Further, to examine cultural differences. However, individuals require being educated toward human oneness, toward a community beyond the individual in order to reach the dream of "one world" (White, 2004). Roth and Selander (2008) explain the use of education to shape identity. Moreover, they discuss the future work force for a better world and its implications for identity formation and learning in an age of globalization (Roth and Selander, 2008; Willinsky, 2002). However, this fact of using education to shape identity does not mean that global societies have no role to play; on the contrary, they are of critical importance. For it is the wider society that largely determines whether indigenous languages such as the Armenian language will be valued (King, 2001). Different civilizations with various languages lived in Jordan. Armenians are one of these and they maintained their language. History is the story of people. It illustrates the relationship between different cultures and points out place and language identity.

2. Historical Background in Jordan

Jordan is a young country that occupies an ancient land, one that bears the traces of many civilizations. Separated from Palestine/Israel by the Jordan River, the region played a prominent role in biblical history; the ancient biblical kingdoms

of Moab, Gilead, and Edom lie within its borders, as does the famed red stone city of Petra, the capital of the Nabatean Kingdom and of the Roman province of Arabia Petraea. Of Petra, British traveler Gertrude Bell said, "It is like a fairy tale city, all pink and wonderful" (Jordan, 2009). Jordan was also part of the Ottoman Empire until 1918 and later a mandate of the United Kingdom. Jordan has been an independent kingdom since 1946. Jordan is among the most politically liberal countries of the Arab world, and although it shares in the troubles affecting the region, Jordan's rulers have expressed a commitment to maintaining peace and stability (Jordan, 2009).

The modern history of Jordan has given the country a population derived from many ethnic backgrounds. The native Jordanians are the bedou ("Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009). The majority of the people are Arabs 98%, basically Jordanians and Palestinians. Although the Palestinian population is often critical of the Jordanian monarchy, Jordan is the only Arab country to grant wide-scale citizenship to Palestinian refugees (Jordan, 2009). Moreover, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, periodic waves of people from Caucasus region of Asia, Armenia, Hejaz (western Saudi Arabia), and Syria settled in Jordan 2%, adding to the ethnic mix of the indigenous population ("Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009). The expatriate workers in Jordan also add diversity to the ethnic mix of the population. Jordan hosts approximately 200,000 Egyptian workers, and another 80,000 Fillipinos, Srilankans, Indians, Pakistanis, Lebanese, Europeans, and North Americans ("Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009).

The Circassians who came from the Caucasus region in the late 19th century have strong loyalty to King Abdullah; therefore, the king allocated large tracts of land to them (Al-Khatib 2009 ; "Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009). Circassians also hold key positions in the army and serve as the king's ceremonial bodyguards. Although devout Muslims and fiercely loyal to Jordan, the Circassians retain their own customs and habits and still speak their own language along with Arabic ("Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009). Also from the Caucasus region came the Chechens, who retain their own customs and language and have a similar role in the country ("Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009).

3. Armenians in Jordan

Armenians are another ethnic group that migrated to Jordan. Unlike the Circassians and Chechens, the Armenians are Christian but have also retained their language, customs and habits. Traditionally skilled at manual crafts, the Armenians long excelled in fields such as jewelry making, photography and maintenance of machinery (Al-khatib, 2009, "Asiatour, Jordan/People," 2009). Of course, languages, as well as the social and cultural systems in which they operate, have never been static. Indeed, historical linguists point out that language shift and language death are not new phenomena; the world's languages have constantly changed and merged, sometimes disappearing altogether in the process (King, 2001). How language shapes and is shaped by identity is a key topic within sociolinguistics. An individual's identity is constituted through a variety of different factors, including the social, linguistic, cultural and ethnic

contexts (Riley, 2007). Riley examines aspects of multilingual identities and through analysis of language and social identity he points out their importance for continuous global identity. Armenian Language is a great resource for educators, students, folklorists, and anyone interested in Armenian culture and identity. That is Armenian language is an historical process of Armenians. Norms and values addressed in language are important factors that give continuity to certain cultures (Stephens, 1992).

Al-khatib (2005) in his article, "Language and Cultural Maintenance among the Gypsies of Jordan," mentions that the social and cultural isolation of the Gypsies from the Jordanian mainstream has contributed to cultural maintenance among them. A comparison between the results of this study on Gypsies identity and those of Al-khatib's work (2001) on the Armenians of Jordan, another minority group inhabiting the country for the same period, shows that, unlike the Armenians, the Gypsies of Jordan are experiencing a clear-cut case of language maintenance and shift. Al-khatib (2001) in his article "Language Shift among the Armenians of Jordan" argues that Armenians of Jordan are assumed to be experiencing a kind of shift in their speech. The main aim of Al-Khatib's (2001) study is to gauge the shift and to highlight the sociodemographic factors enhancing it. The results of the study show that Arabic is used mainly in social domains. However, the Armenian language is found to be used in very restricted situations and by a very small number of people, particularly the elderly. The study suggests that the Armenians of Jordan are experiencing a gradual shift toward Arabic that may lead to language loss.

By calibrating Al-khatib's (2001) results against those of Dweik's (2000) work on the Jordanian-Chechens, Al-Khatib finds that Chechens are much more faithful to their language than the Armenians. The distinction between them is accounted for in terms of the size of each group, demographic concentration, and types of occupation held by them among other sociopsychological factors. Moreover, Al-khatib (2000) in his article "An Introduction: The Arab World: Language and Cultural Issues" traces the effect of globalization on language education. He outlines the impact the language has had on different societies/cultures and the kind of reactions this language has generated among various cultures. The findings reported here are based on data collected from a town in the north where there are few Armenian families living far away from the school, church and clubs. However, most Armenians live in the capital near to the church, school and clubs where the Armenian community established the Armenian quarter.

4. Armenians in Jerusalem

Armenians have inhabited parts of modern Turkey, Iran and the Caucasus Mountains for more than four thousand years. The first known instance of an Armenian to come anywhere near Jerusalem arrived in 95 BC under King Tigranes II of Armenia (Jordan, 2009; Panossian, 2002). The Armenian armies traveled to several cities in Judea before leaving Israel. It was at this time that Jews may have come to trade with Armenia and settle in that far away land. Likewise, some Armenians came to know of the lands around Jerusalem and may have traded with Israel (Jordan, 2009). Following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 the Romans imported Armenian traders and merchants, craftsmen, soldiers and administrators.

The establishment of the Armenian community in the Middle East specifically in Jerusalem was between 95 BC-AD 640. The connection between Armenia and Jerusalem goes very far back. More than anything, the Orthodox Christian Church has been the link between the countries throughout history (Jordan, 2009). Thaddeus and Bartholomew, both Christian apostles, arrived in Armenia to preach to the Armenians and the small Jewish community there. Subsequently, Christianity spread to higher echelons of Armenian royalty. In 301CE, Armenia was proclaimed a "Christian state" under its king Terdat III. During this period it is believed Armenian pilgrims were already making their way to and from Jerusalem (Jordan, 2009; Panossian, 2002). To conclude, the paradigm of being the "first Christian nation" reinforces the unique national character of the Armenians who are proud of being the "first Christian nation" even if they do not at all take part in Christian rituals or attend church. For example, the role of the Kaghakatzi Armenians in Jerusalem was preserving religious places in the Old City of Jerusalem. Hagopian, the editor of "Armenia's Special Gift to Jerusalem" illustrated his project which aims to record and preserve the history, culture and traditions of the Kaghakatzi (literally "city dweller") in recognition of their status as the original, native denizens of the Old City, as opposed to the newcomers who fled the Turkish massacres of the early 20th century, and who found refuge within the nearby Armenian Convent of St James (Armenians of Jerusalem, 2009). Over the centuries, the Kaghakatzi, enriched the Holy City's multifaceted ethnic and social fabric with a proliferation of talent, vision and hard work, creating a unique culture and identity, unlike any other in the Armenian Diaspora (The Kaghakatzi Armenian Family Tree, 2009). Hagopian added "the project was launched two years ago and now there is a database containing genealogical details of over 3100 people, in addition to other pertinent information" (Hagopian, personal communication, March 18, 2009).

5. Church, School, Clubs and Armenian Language Preservation

An estimated 5,000 Armenians are living within the current kingdom of Jordan. An estimated 4,500 of these are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church, and predominantly speak the western dialect of the Armenian language. They make up the majority of non-Arab Christians in the country (Jordan, 2009). The majority of these Armenians are the ancestors of survivors from the Armenian Genocide during World War I who fled to Jordan on foot from Ottoman Anatolia to the north. The early Armenian refugees in Jordan mainly resided in places like Ma'an, Shobak, Karak and Madaba. Currently, the majority of Armenians live in the capital Amman, with a few families in Irbid, Aqaba, Madaba and Zarqa (Jordan, 2009). Jordan also became a refuge to many Armenians leaving Jerusalem and the Armenian Quarter after the Six-Day War (Jordan, 2009).

The Jordanian-Armenian Diaspora's infrastructure can be said to have three cornerstones. Each of them played an equally large role in the survival of the group through the years: The Armenian Church, the club, and the school. Such pillars are not unique to the Jordanian group. One finds a similar infrastructure in all countries that contain large groups of the Armenian Diaspora. Church and education played significant role as symbols of Armenian identity. For example, The *Mush Menologium* (Homilies of Mush), which was written in 1200-1202, is the largest known Armenian book, weighing about 62 pounds (28 kilos), with page sizes of 28" by 14" (71 by 35 centimeters) (Abrahamian & Sweezy, 2001). To save this book during the Turkish Genocide of 1915, two sisters living in Western Armenia split it in half and carried away the two parts on their shoulders; when they could no longer carry it, they buried one part in the yard of the Erzurum church, split the other part into two halves, and carried them to Echmiadzin. Later, a Russian army officer discovered the buried part of the book and had it taken to Echmiadzin, where the two halves were rejoined. This book is now deposited in the Matenadaran. Matenadaran means, literally, "repository of books" (Abrahamian & Sweezy, 2001). The *Mush Menologium* is extremely precious for Armenians as it shows the value for the survival of the independent Armenian Church and Armenians themselves (Vlasta Radan, 2009).

Culture is an historical process of human norms and values addressed in books and gives continuity to identity (Stephens, 1992). However, following Armenian beliefs, manuscripts, handwritten charms, crosses or parts of *Khatchkar* are carefully wrapped up in the embroidered cloth and placed on the family shrine and function as saint of the home, protecting their owners from evil and misfortune. Religious books in particular had a power to protect from disasters, help curing disease, and ensure prosperity of the whole community (Vlasta Radan, 2009).

Another example of the importance of the church for Armenians is obvious from the Armenian translation of the biblical gospels. The term "rock" is substituted for the name "Peter" ("Peter" means "rock" in Greek), and so the English verse "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church" reads in Armenian, simply, "Thou art the rock

and upon this rock I will build my church" (Abrahamian & Sweezy, 2001). Armenians take great pride in their ancient history and religion they consider themselves to be lovers of freedom and fairness.

After the pagan period, and specifically in 301, Armenia embraced Christianity as the state religion and became the first nation that accepted Christianity to do so this was due largely to the efforts of St. Gregory the Illuminator who built the Mother Church, Holy Echmiadsin, in 303 (Cherdt, 1959 ; Panossian, 2002 ; Bjorklund, 2003). Armenians all over the world look to the Holy Echmiadsin near Erevan, the capital of Armenia, as the center of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Through many centuries, the Church acted as protector of national culture and values. Although Armenian society is mostly secular, the Church retains its role as the national faith. More than 90 percent of the Armenian population world wide belongs to the Armenian Apostolic Church. To conclude in the second century A.D., Gregory the Illuminator converted king Tiridates, and established Christianity in Armenia (Cherdt, 1959 ; Panossian, 2002). Pagan music, customs, and holidays, were adapted for use in the infant church, which was destined to be a strong unifying force in Armenia. Later, the fifth century saw the invention of the Armenian alphabet by St. Mesrob Mashdotz, the development of musical notation, the translation of the Bible into Armenian, and the appearance of the first Armenian historians (Cherdt, 1959; Panossian, 2002).

St. Thaddeus Armenian Apostolic Church in Amman serves the Armenian Apostolic community. It was built in Amman in 1967. The first priest, a Syrian, studied in Jerusalem. At present the Armenian Archbishop, who serves the Armenian Church in Jordan, is from Lebanon. The first thing the Archbishop did was to renovate the church as well as the school. He sees the church as the heart of the whole community, and therefore considers it important that it functions and plays its role, but also that is preserves Armenian history. Since the church is important for Armenians' identity, the Archbishop is also responsible for youth groups (where he teaches the Armenian language and history) as well as different activities at the club and in the church where some of the group's youth function as choir boys and girls.

Moreover, the Armenian Church has always played a tremendously important role in Jordan. Ties to the government are through church. The Archbishop represents Armenians in the Hashemite Kingdom and any official work for the Armenian community and sometimes for individuals is through him. He also represents Armenians during official celebrations in the country. This appointed leaders in Armenian Diasporic communities have done cultural production and political work to preserve and empower exiles to live on as a collective, or at least represent their situation as such to themselves and others (Panossian, 2002).

Next to the church is the Armenian Elementary School "Youzbashian – Gulbenkian School." The school was opened in 1949, considering that the number of Armenian students weren't more than 200. Money for building the school was donated from Gulbenkian Foundation. Almost all the students and the teachers in the school are Armenians. Most Jordanian-Armenians' have chosen to place their children in the Armenian school. After that students finish their studies in Jordanian missionary private schools. The opening of Usbeshian Gulbenkian Armenian School marked a momentous event in the educational history of the Armenian Diaspora in Jordan. Armenian youth no longer faced the separation from home, family, and culture. Most children now attend the elementary school located within the Armenian quarter in the capital Amman and after that students finish their studies in Jordanian missionary private schools.

Increased mobility and access to technology have given Armenian youth greater accessibility to the mainstream world. Regular family and school excursions to neighboring towns and cities in addition to media and technology, especially television and the computer, have greatly broadened the exposure of Armenian youth to mainstream global Armenian culture (King, 2001). Technology is important for designing curriculum and instruction that is accessible for all learners. Thus, it encourages the use of digital materials and software programs to facilitate learning (Rose, Meyer & Hitchcock, 2006). Technology creates strong bonds between Diasporic Armenians in Jordan and in the world as well as between Diasporic Armenians and Armenians in the homeland.

The Homenetmen club is also next to the church and the school. The area that once was inhabited by most of the city's Armenians has played an important role through the years, particularly as a gathering place. The *Dashnaktstiun,* a strong force in the *Spiurk* (Diaspora), the new, post-genocidal diaspora, the fervently nationalist, mildly socialist and staunchly anti-Soviet Armenian party had played a vital role in the Diaspora and succeeded in taking control in the *Katholikosate* of Antelias in Lebanon (Bjorklund, 2003).

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) is the largest organization for Armenians in the Diaspora. The AGBU was founded in 1906 and has its main office in New York. The chapter in Jordan was created in 1949 It is also located next to the church and functions as a combined cultural center and sports association. AGBU enriches Armenian projects all over the world. It was established to preserve and promote the Armenian identity and heritage through educational, cultural and humanitarian programs (The Armenian General Benevolent Union [AGBU], 2009). Moreover, the Gybrahyer chapter in Cypress connects Armenian Diasporic people with their homeland, as is clear from the following letter.

An open letter published in the Gibrahyer Magazine (2009) to the Minister of Diaspora stating "Dear Minister of Diaspora, It is with sincere regret and disappointment we are made aware that the profession, care, and patriotism of the Diaspora is not put to any constructive use in our homelands." This letter illustrates the importance of homeland for almost all Diasporic Armenians. It is clear that Armenians in the US share the same attitudes as the Armenians in Cyprus such as "we are made aware that the profession, care, and patriotism of the Diaspora is not put to any constructive use in our homelands" in addition the letter shows the volunteer work of Diasporic Armenians in their homeland and this is clear in the quote "For the record, we were able to volunteer in Karabakh two years ago" the letter also shows the professional cultural and diverse experiences of Diasporic Armenians "Our qualifications include actively practicing medicine in 3 different countries, including well-known hospitals in the USA, over 40 years of experience in the medical field, and fluency in 5 languages" Moreover, this letter was published in web-based magazine established by Diasporic Armenians in Cyprus. This shows the strong techno global era of globalization where Armenian people together with people from different parts of the world can communicate through the net through organized magazines, web pages and other technological facilities. It is clear that through these facilities Armenians' all over the world can share their Diasporic experiences and this is how in the new era of globalization Armenians' will maintain their culture and identity (Gibrahayer-e magazine, personal communication, March 18, 2009).

6. Conclusion

Language and identity have a home in the context of culture, in daily activities, in social institutions and in ritual performances and ceremonies (King, 2001).Armenian identity continues in the Armenian world. For Armenian youth who grow up in the Diaspora, the Armenian world is the first world they come to know in the course of "living it" through active participation and involvement (King, 2001). The continuing maintenance of the Armenian language and culture, then, offers a strong prospect for effective and successful identity preserving (King, 2001).

Diaspora shapes the identity of a person. For me, identifying as a Diasporic Armenian with dual identity Armenian-Jordanian and rich experience, education shapes my understanding of the "one world" theory. The idea of ethnicity and difference, globalization, and how futurology/futures studies inform my thoughts and plans is illustrated by the figure (1) that shows how identity is continuous. We move from the self identity to the community identity and finally to the global identity, even if we don't move physically in Diaspora but are living it. Not surprisingly, in this era of techno globalization, we are all becoming Diasporic.

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Self identity as
an earthly being

Identity
between self
and group

Intergroup level
(global
community)
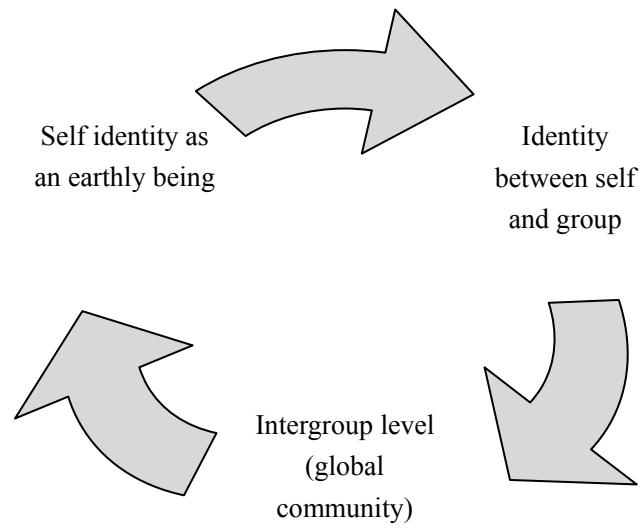
Figure 1. Identity

Cooperative Principle in Oral English Teaching

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Abstract

The Cooperative Principle by American linguist Grice is one of the major principles guiding people's communication. Observing the Cooperative Principle will be helpful for people to improve the flexibility and accuracy of language communication. The ultimate aim of spoken English teaching is to develop students' communicative competence. Therefore, it is significant to apply the Cooperative Principle to oral English teaching. This paper tries to prove the applicability of Cooperative Principle in spoken English teaching.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, Oral English teaching, Communicative competence, Pragmatics

1. Introduction

Grice's concept of the Cooperative Principle and its four associated maxims are considered a major contribution to the area of pragmatics, which not only plays an indispensable role in the generation of conversational implications, but also is a successful example showing how human communication is governed by the principle.

In foreign language teaching, the four basic skills have been greatly improved for Chinese college students in the past decades. However, these skills have not been developed at the same pace, especially the ability in speaking. Some college students can understand what others say in English but cannot express themselves effectively in English, and some even cannot catch others' meaning conveyed by spoken English. Speaking still remains the most difficult skill for the majority of college students, who remain poor in oral communication in English after years of study in universities. This phenomenon has a close relation with the pedagogy of spoken English. My paper is devoted to setting out the theory of Cooperative Principle and its application to spoken English teaching.

2. A Brief Account of the Cooperative Principle

2.1 The Concept of Cooperative Principle and Its Maxims

In the book entitled Logic and Conversation, Grice provides us with the definition of Cooperative Principle, i.e. make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose of the talk exchange in which you are engaged (1975, p.45). During the selection of the categories, the connection with human rationality is highlighted. Under the principle, there're four maxims (1975, pp.45-46):

I. The maxim of Quantity (concerning the amount of information to be conveyed):

Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of exchange).

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

II. The maxim of Quality (try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically):

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

III. The maxim of Relation (make your contributions relevant).

IV. The maxim of Manner (concerning not so much what is said as how it is said, be perspicuous):

Avoid ambiguity.

Avoid obscurity of expression.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

It is said that the conversation would be most successful if the principle and these maxims would be complied with. But people always violate this principle or these maxims, which make the conversation partially successful or simply a failure, or generate conversational implication.

2.2 The Function of Cooperative Principle

In reality, people who go into conversation with each other follow the maxims of Cooperative Principle, that is, both the

speaker and listener are assumed to want the conversation to work. Its maxims specify what participants have to do in order to talk in a rational, efficient, and cooperative way and that they should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly while providing sufficient information (Levinson,1987, p72).Cooperative Principle is a guarantee for successful communication and a premise for the generation of any conversational implication. Moreover, the Cooperative Principle is a successful example showing how human communication is governed by general principles.

2.3 The Application of Cooperative Principle

As the cornerstone theory of pragmatics, the Cooperative Principle is one of the major principles guiding people's communication. The Principle and its maxims can clearly expound the literary meaning and its implication of communication. Therefore, the principle can be applied to various areas. The following conversation is between Premier Enlai Zhou and an American journalist (A: Premier Zhou Enlai; B: American journalist):

B: Mr. Premier, could you please tell me, why you Chinese having high aspiration and boldness of vision still use the pen made in U. S.A.?

A: Talking about this pen, there's a long story. This is not an ordinary pen. It's war booty, in fighting against the U. S. troops, sent by a Korea friend of mine, as a souvenir. I thought it significant, and accept this pen, which is manufactured in your country.

This is a typical example which violates the maxim of relation and the maxim of quantity. The American journalist intends to laugh at China, the country he considers to be lagging behind the U.S.A. However, Premier Zhou Enlai does not answer the question directly, but chooses to violate the conversational principle. It is a common pen but with great meaning. He calls the pen a souvenir from a Korea friend, which stands for the failure of American troops in the War to Resist U.S Aggression and Aid Korea. Premier Zhou's answer shows his outstanding diplomatic competence.

Cooperative Principle and conversational implication by H. P. Grice, as a branch of pragmatics, has played an important part in the practice of translation. Translation is a dynamic communicative activity going between two languages, and changes with the communicative context, the mental, cognitive, cultural, social and linguistic factors related to both participants. Translation process can be analyzed from the perspective of Cooperative Principle.

"mian hua wo liu"is a euphemistic idiom in Chinese culture, which means having sexual relation with prostitutes. However, we can break the maxim of Quality of Cooperative Principle, and literally translates it into "frequented the budding groves". It is rather difficult for readers to understand the implication of the phrase. As a result pragmatics must be introduced and employed into the translation,.

What's more, it is feasible to apply the Cooperative Principle to listening class. Listening class is part and parcel in English language teaching. Focusing on Cooperative Principle in inferring the conversational implication, we find that the principle can improve students' competence in listening comprehension.

The following example is from CET-6: (W: woman, M: man)

Example: W: Be careful, John. That car is speeding.

M: You have to keep an eye out for motorcycles, too.

Q: What does the man mean?

A) He sees a nice motorcycle.

B) Motorcycles look nicer than cars.

C) Motorcycles can be dangerous, too.

D) Motorcycles are as fast as cars.

In the above conversation, the man violates the maxim of Relation. We realize that his answers seem irrelevant to the woman's questions. In the conversation, the woman reminds the man that a car near theirs is speeding, but the man replies that she should pay attention to the motorcycles. We can infer that his implication should be car speeding and motorcycle speeding are both dangerous. Therefore, the correct answer should be C.

3. Spoken English Teaching

3.1 The Current Situation of Spoken English Teaching

With the development of economy in China, Chinese students' enthusiasm for English learning has reached its climax. Spoken English, as a major part of communication, is gaining unprecedented momentum. Accordingly, the teaching of spoken English is put on agenda. We note that the College English Syllabus has following stipulations:

Language is a tool for communication; the ultimate aim of language teaching is to foster students' the ability of communication both orally and through written channel. Language teaching should not only aim at the development of the students' linguistic competence but also at the development of their communicative competence.

In traditional teaching of spoken English, teachers focus on grammar, discourse analysis, dull repetition and water-down form of language teaching. They always neglect an important thing, i.e. the application of language. As a result, those approaches of teaching lead to students' poverty in skills to apply what they have learned from books to communication, though they are very capable of dealing with linguistic problems. Especially in intercultural communication, misunderstandings often come into being due to inappropriate selection of words and sentences.

Therefore, spoken English competence of students in China is by no means satisfactory.

3.2 The Reasons for Poor Spoken English of Students

3.2.1 The Poverty of Practice for Students

Because college enrollment enlarges steadily, there are more than 40 or 50 students or even 80 or 90 students in each spoken English class in many universities and colleges. Therefore, it is hard for the teachers to offer a practice opportunity to every student in class. Besides, after class, there is a short of English practice and English atmosphere for many students.

3.2.2 Less Attention being Paid to the Teaching of Pragmatics

As we all know, traditional teaching of spoken English often neglects the introduction of the knowledge of pragmatics. Like Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle, Speech Acts are several basic principles of pragmatics which guide people's communication. However, in today's spoken English teaching, we seldom acquire to knowledge. Lacking pragmatic knowledge makes us result in achieving a successful communication in intercultural communication.

3.2.3 Lack of Interactions

Judging from the current situation of spoken English teaching in China, we can easily find that teachers play the dominant role in classroom teaching, and the students are mainly passive listeners. Open questions or the topics which the students have passion for are not sufficiently dealt with. Last but not the least, some learners who lack confidence in their ability to participate successfully in oral interaction often keep silent while others speak enthusiastically. All in all, we realize that there are limited interactions between the teachers and their students and among the students.

4. How Cooperative Principle Guides Spoken English Teaching

4.1 The Principle of Spoken English Teaching

The traditional principle of spoken English teaching is based on 'Three Ps' Methodology: Presentation-Practice-Production. However, how does one 'practice' narrative evaluation? How does one 'produce' discourse markers naturally? How does one 'present' transaction boundaries? (Michael McCarthy, 2006, p67). By asking those questions, we note that the 'Three Ps' teaching method seems not so effective in spoken English teaching. Hence, Michael McCarthy in his book proposes an alternative methodology to supplement the 'Three Ps' named 'Three Is', which is as follows:

Illustration-Interaction-Induction. Illustration means looking at real data where possible. Interaction means talk among learners and teachers about language, sharing and forming views, breaking down cultural barriers and stereotypes. Induction means drawing conclusions. (2006, p67).

4.2 The Aims of Spoken English Teaching

The main purpose of English language teaching is to improve learners' communicative competence, namely, the ability of oral English communication. Teaching is the communication between teachers and students, and the result of interactions. Since the ultimate aim of spoken English teaching is communication, we should enhance students' oral abilities.

4.3 The Application of Cooperative Principle in Spoken English Teaching

4.3.1 The Relation between Cooperative Principle and Spoken English Teaching

The notion of Cooperative Principle is relevant to the spoken English teaching in many ways. First, the Cooperative Principle is one of major principles which guide people's communication, and the ultimate aim of spoken English teaching is communication. Second, the aim of spoken English teaching is to improve students' communicative competence, and Cooperative Principle can have positive effect on spoken English teaching. Third, in order to work out the conversational implication (which I will talk about in following part) in spoken English teaching, it is necessary for the students to master the basic knowledge of Cooperative Principle. As a result, the Cooperative Principle can be applied to the teaching of spoken English.

4.3.2 The Violation of Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implication

The four maxims can be violated for various reasons, but only when they are "flouted", or violated blatantly, i.e. both the speaker and the hearer are aware of the violation, does conversational implication occur.

4.3.2.1 Violating the Quantity Maxim

The maxim of quantity makes us make our contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange and do not make our contribution more informative than is required. However, a speaker violates the Quantity maxim and invites the hearer to consider the conversational implication by saying more (that is, providing more information) or less (providing less information) than is required. Let's see how the maxim of quantity is flouted in the following examples:

Example:

A: Are you able to find the type of ink cartridge I need for my printer?

B: Well, yes I do, you should visit that new office building because they have hundreds of printer cartridges, all you'd ever want to see or buy, and my son works there, you know, he is a very intelligent man.

A: Boss B: Secretary

The conversation is between a manager and his secretary in their office. Instead of just saying "Yes", we can easily find that the secretary violates the maxim of Quantity, because she provides much more information than the manager actually needs. The implication of her utterances is that she would like to introduce her son to the manager.

4.3.2.2 Violating the Quality Maxim

The maxim of quality requires us not to say what we believe to be false and what we lack adequate evidence. The violation of the Quality maxim is realized by saying things that are not true.

The following example is the analysis of conversational implications generated by flouting the Quality Maxim of the Cooperative Principle. People often use polite and indirect strategies to express their real meanings.

Example:

A: What do you think of Jason?

B: He is a good friend. He always keeps eye on my pocket.

This example shows us that how the maxim of Quality is breached. When A asks B the question, he may have already thought that Jason is not a good friend, and he wants to ensure that B has the same opinion with him. But B deliberately says that Jason is a good friend, which himself considers to be incorrect. Then B adds that Jason always asks him for money. The reason why B says so indirectly is that he wants to save Jason's face.

4.3.2.3 Violating the Relation Maxim

The violation of the Relation Maxim means that the utterance of the speaker is irrelevant to the context for some reasons. Some conversational implications are produced by violation of the relation maxim. The speaker may not say anything explicitly related to the topic of the conversation but invite the hearer to seek for an interpretation of possible relevance. The following example can be used to analyze conversational implications produced by the violation of Relation Maxim.

Example:

Tom: Tom is such a noisy man, isn't he?

Dick: I saw a fantastic movie yesterday. (TEM8)

This is a dialogue between two roomates; Dick's answer flouts the maxim of relation. What can we know from Dick's answer? He did not want to talk more about Tom's topic.

4.3.2.4 Violating the Manner Maxim

The violation of the manner maxim means giving obscure and ambiguous information.

Below we analyze how the following example violates the Manner Maxim that gives rise to conversational implications.

Example:

Teacher A: Shall we get something for the kids?

Teacher B: Yes. But I veto C-A-N-D-Y. (TEM8)

Here Teacher B intentionally breaks the maxim of Manner by spelling out the word "candy", and thereby conveys that Teacher B would rather not have candy mentioned directly in the presence of the children, in case they are prompted to demand some.

5. The Enlightenment to Spoken English Teaching

5.1 Lay a Solid Foundation of Spoken English for Students

In order to make students observe the Cooperative Principle, spoken English teaching can not be limited to conversation

practice, listening and reading practice are significant as well, for they can be helpful to lay a solid foundation of speaking for students. Teachers should make students have a clear understanding that oral ability is based on listening comprehension, and listening comprehension is based on the reading comprehension.

5.2 Innovating the Methods of Spoken English Teaching

Based on Grice's Cooperative Principle, teachers should be conscious of cultivating students' sense of cooperation. Creating free, active classroom atmosphere will be helpful for teachers to develop students' potential of English language learning and strengthen the friendly cooperation and communication between the teacher and students and among the students. English learning should be a social activity. When considering about the teaching aims and teaching requirements, teachers should take students' abilities, interests and hobbies into account at the same time. Innovating the methods of oral English teaching and using some free and cooperative teaching methods, such as role-play, impromptu speech, and topic discussion, group debate and so on can make classroom teaching interesting and lively.

5.3 Compiling Suitable Textbooks

The goal of spoken English teaching is to develop students' communicative competence. It is properly implied that pragmatic competence is a part of communicative competence. Because of that, the textbooks of oral English teaching should cover some rudimentary knowledge of pragmatics and give students a fundamental understanding of pragmatics. What's more, the selection of oral materials should also be stressed in textbooks compiling. Materials from literature conversation, classic film dialogues in films, and daily conversation and so on are best choice for those textbooks, whatever materials we select should be from real oral functions bank.

5.4 Activating the Students in Spoken English Teaching

Spoken English teaching is a bilateral activity between teachers and students. Successful teaching and learning require active cooperation between teacher and students. During the teacher and student oral interaction, raising questions is a significant way. For questioning interaction between teachers and students is a way of feedback for teachers to check the effect of teaching and learning. Students develop their creativity and improvisational ability in the process of preparing and answering the referential questions. The interaction among the students are vital in oral activities, such as situation dialogue,role play, conversation,information-gap, survival games, debate on current issues and so on. According to Johnson (2000, pp13-14), student to student interaction can enhance students' abilities to work collaboratively and foster positive attitudes toward English learning, student to student interaction cannot become an ignorable dimension of classroom communication.

6. Conclusion

Oral English teaching has always been a drawback in College English teaching though both teachers and students consider it necessary to reinforce the oral English training so as to improve students' oral English competence. Practical oral English teaching is confronted with many difficulties. As a cornerstone theory of pragmatics, the Cooperative Principle is one of the major principles guiding people's communication. The principle and its maxims can neatly expound what is literary meaning and its implication in communication. Applying the Cooperative Principle in spoken English teaching can be conducive to developing students' communicative competence, which is viewed as the ultimate aim of oral English teaching.

Unavoidably, limitations are guaranteed to exist in my study. Hence I hope this will be overcome or supplemented through others' deeper research and exploration on the topic.

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A Qualitative Study of Postgraduate Students' Learning Experiences

in Malaysia

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Abstract

In Malaysia, postgraduate coursework and research training have expanded significantly in attracting both domestic and international students from Southeast Asia and the Middle East. The task of evaluating the student learning experience in postgraduate education can point out to researchers and university educators various mismatches that would not be immediately known otherwise. In this study, 83 MA and MEd students in two public universities in Malaysia submitted written narratives to discuss their postgraduate learning experiences. Of this total, 10% of the respondents (12 postgraduate students) also volunteered to be interviewed. The findings of this qualitative study showed that the following dimensions impacted on students' learning experiences: knowledge, values and contacts acquired, professional and personal values acquired and specific learning problems encountered. The implications of the results of this study suggest that public universities in Malaysia can take proactive steps to celebrate learner diversity when addressing students' difficulties in their continuous effort to further enhance support and facilities for their postgraduate students.

Keywords: Postgraduate students, Learning experiences, Qualitative study, Higher education, Professionalism

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, educational systems in many countries in the Asia Pacific region have undergone significant changes in so far as programmes of reform and restructuring of higher education (both in the provision of undergraduate and postgraduate education) are concerned. In contemporary higher education systems, there is always a conscious effort to align these innovations to respond to the ever changing economic, social and political contexts within which higher education takes place. The push for change is a result of continuous pressure on educational systems to change and this has come from stakeholders such as students, parents and employers alike. Notwithstanding this, there has also been a rapid growth in demand for access to education at all levels, with demand for postgraduate education escalating in some developing countries. In Malaysia, for instance, there has been a marked increase in postgraduate numbers in many public universities since 2002 and as such, postgraduate education in Malaysia has undergone tremendous changes and a variety of trends and factors continue to affect higher education institutions offering a range of postgraduate programmes to diverse students. Kaur & Abdul Manan (2008, p. 14) account for this change as stemming from the "continued demands from students, university administrators and policy makers for access to a greater share of the population to meet the needs of new economies that require trained and qualified employees in today's increasingly globalised workplaces". Since 2005, the Graduate School in Universiti Sains Malaysia reported a three fold increase since the 1990s to the present enrolment of over 5,000 postgraduate students who are enrolled in 39 schools and four centres of excellence in the areas of Medicine, Science and Technology, Engineering and Arts (Handbook, Institute of Graduate Studies, 2008).

The provision of postgraduate education in many countries often takes the form of graduate studies either by mixed mode or research modes. University educators have engaged in active discourses on the need for postgraduate education to develop broad repertoires of literacy practice that will build on students' specific academic disciplines, cultural and linguistic diversity, and expand their knowledge base and skills in an effective manner so that they can be assured of a high quality education at their respective higher education institutions. Indeed, while these discourses continue to

contribute significantly towards improving postgraduate education, issues such as student diversity among postgraduate enrolments in some contexts, Malaysia is a good example in point, give rise to concern about 'performance chasms' in academic success among students as the realities often pose other complexities concerning current pedagogic practices. With increasing participation of Middle East students in the landscape of postgraduate education in Malaysian public universities, the diversity of students' prior learning is more complex in its realization than in the past, when university teachers only had to deal with fairly homogenous graduate student populations. The participation of international students in Malaysian higher education stood at 30,397 students in 2002 but at the end of 2007, the number increased to 47, 849 (Wan, Kaur & Jantan, 2008). The international mobility of the student is currently an important concern for most higher education institutions in the Asia Pacific region as the concept of higher education as a 'market' has a long history in some countries, such as the Phillipines, Indonesia and Korea (Yonezawa, 2007). With transnational higher education now becoming popular, student diversity is now more commonplace and as Scott (2005, p. 298) points out, students now represent "multifarious histories, expectations and responses; and these are continually being shaped and reshaped in an interaction of student agency with socioculturally and politically formed pedagogic imperatives".

Arguably, the provision of postgraduate education in many developed and developing countries has been in response to increasing demands of students (both traditional and non-traditional students who either follow courses on a full-time or part-time basis) who realize the value of postgraduate education in enhancing their career prospects. This trend is in response to the now greater mobility of capital, information and ideologies and of people and this has significantly enhanced the nature of economic activity, creating new forms of global markets, global competition and global management for today's global economy is characterized as "informational, knowledge-based, post-industrial and service-oriented" (Rizvi, Engel, Nandyala, Rutkowski & Sparks, 2005, p. 3). Following this trend, there is a pronounced need for new post-Fordist regimes of labour management and a new kind of worker that education must now produce. Hence, the proliferation of postgraduate courses has been evolving in the past two decades. Knight (1997, p. 149) observes that "coursework master's courses have proliferated in old industrialized countries and the signs are that the same is happening in industrializing countries". While this trend has been observed in some Asia Pacific countries, in Malaysia too similar patters of postgraduate coursework and research training have expanded proportionately more than undergraduate work and postgraduate student intakes too have seen significant increases in numbers largely due to initiatives taken by public universities to aggressively market graduate programmes in ASEAN and Middle Eastern countries as well as within Malaysia. Notwithstanding these trends, there is much to be learned from postgraduate teaching and learning especially in relation to the increasing social, economic and political pressures placed on providing quality education as institutions now have to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness through performance indicators, teaching assessments and quality audits intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning (Penny, 2003; Akerlind, 2004).

2. Professionalism in Teaching

In general, education can be viewed as either a public good (benefiting the general public) or a private good (providing benefits to the individual consumer). Under the conditions of globalisation, internationalization and marketisation, this distinction might not always hold as education has increasingly become linked to the logic of the market (Rizvi et al., 2005). Labaree (1997) observed that education has traditionally been thought to have three distinct but sometimes, competing purposes: democratic equality, social mobility and social efficiency. While these three purposes of education are not mutually exclusive, educational ideologies have often involved giving precedence to one over others. The scholarship of teaching is indeed a key concern for teachers at any level for the general aim of teaching is to make student learning possible. As any educator will realize, while this aim seems simple in nature, it is often plagued by many complexities, uncertainties and dilemmas because teaching as a professional activity is not value-free for it is undertaken within one or more possible paradigms or world views (Magennis & Farrell, 2005). While this suggests that teaching is a process that deals with new input when one already has certain acquired knowledge, the process of learning is necessarily a complex one, involving putting together an array of understandings and knowledge that a person already possesses, with new incoming information (Abdul Rahim & Abdul Manan, 2008). In a sense, it makes reference to the need to support learning in higher education contexts by viewing it widely in that it can have a wide range of goals, disciplines and contexts of any professional activity. Devising academic frameworks that support and validate support for learners in the higher education sector has therefore been viewed by many as being an ambiguous task.

Within the realm of postgraduate teaching, there have been calls to professionalize teaching practices as this will enhance the scholarship of teaching for underlying this premise is the notion that teaching is all about learning (Boyer, 1990). In Boyer's terms (1990, p. 24), good teaching "means that faculty, as scholars, are also learners" as they continually need to reflect on their teaching activities as they learn from their teaching and apply the learning to further teaching. Essentially, cultivating the practice of being professional in our teaching endeavours necessitates that teachers actively engage in reflecting on and evaluating their own teaching as well as consciously looking for creative ways to apply new ideas and new understandings about how students learn. This essentially propagates the notion that good

teaching is all about examining and rethinking pedagogical procedures because it involves more than just transmitting knowledge to our students; it is also about transforming and extending knowledge.

Current discourses on university teaching continue to question the term 'professionalism' in university contexts. In a recent review in the Times Higher Education (16 April 2009), Elton poses the question "are academics professional"? He suggests that courses in university teaching should be based on up-to-date research in teaching and examining and cautions that current judgements on the "quality of university assessment and of the assessment of university teaching are equally suspect". Indeed, for many educational contexts, it has often been assumed that education systems have for far too long been inefficient and ineffective in ways that prevent them from meeting its functional goals as pointed out by popular media and corporations. Increasingly, there have been calls for university educators to pursue reforms that are not only more socially and economically efficient but are also cognizant of the new 'realities' of the knowledge economy in producing graduates or future employees in an increasingly globalized world. What this means for professionalizing teaching is to make our teaching more instrumentally defined, in terms of its capacity to produce students who have good knowledge of new information and communication technologies and are able to work in culturally diverse environments. To further elaborate on this, the scholarship of teaching, especially at postgraduate level, will also help to develop and strengthen the "synergies between professional development for teaching and for research" (King, 2004). In a similar vein, Walker (2001) argues for a view of professionalism that acknowledges and celebrates the complexity of professional judgments in which outcomes may, but cannot always be determined in advance and where reflection and improvement is integral to professional work in higher education.

Globally, universities have and are changing rapidly – there are more students, more universities and of different types, reduced funding allocations and increasing emphasis on defining 'standards' and 'effectiveness' (Walker, 2001). Notwithstanding global forces and intentions facing the offering of postgraduate education, some educators point to a potential dissonance between the kinds of actual student learning experience and the expected learning outcomes that employers want exhibited outside the constraints of the university classroom or setting. Without a doubt, studies that take on the task of evaluating student learning experiences are research activities that will make significant inroads in pointing out various mismatches that would not be immediately known otherwise. Hence, the present study on enhancing postgraduate learning in today's emerging global market will help shed more light and go a long way in challenging established assumptions of teaching and learning at the postgraduate level, especially in a rapidly developing country like Malaysia. Indeed, adopting a realistic stance in the evaluation of postgraduate students' learning experiences is crucial in any academic setting which is striving to provide and maintain high quality education for its consumers. To address various complex issues assailing postgraduate education in Malaysia, the researchers used a qualitative approach in analyzing postgraduate students' learning experiences in a Masters of Arts and a Masters of Education programme over the past year in two public universities.

3. Methodology

This study aims to evaluate postgraduate students' learning experiences in their MA and M.Ed degree programmes with an aim of analyzing students' perceptions about their postgraduate learning experiences. The researchers, who are faculty staff at two public universities, sought the opinions of postgraduate students at their respective institutions of higher learning over the past one year (two semesters in the academic year 2008). The sample size comprised 48 students from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM, Penang) and 35 students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM, Shah Alam). Both the programmes have a mixed mode structure in which students take courses which they have to pass before they embark on writing their dissertation (partial fulfilment towards the degree programme). The postgraduate students at USM were enrolled in the MA in English Language and Linguistics degree programme at the School of Humanities while the students at UiTM were enrolled in the M.Ed course. 10% of the respondents (12 students) volunteered to be interviewed and the researchers used the qualitative interview method in an effort to get close to the students' individual perspectives in relation to their postgraduate learning experiences. A pilot interview was conducted with 2 postgraduate M.Ed students in USM and minor modifications were made to ensure that the interview questions were clear and easily understood by the prospective interviewees. Upon receiving the student consent forms from the 12 interviewees (4 international students and 8 Malaysian students), the respondents were interviewed by individual researchers in their respective universities for approximately 40-60 minutes (Refer to Appendix II). The researchers took notes as it was earlier determined that the respondents did not wish to have their interviews tape recorded. Student interviews were coded by numbers (Interviewee 1-12).

The 83 respondents also completed a fact file and checklist for narrative writing (Refer to Appendix I) which aimed to obtain accurate information on students' personal details and reasons for embarking on the MA programme. As the researchers were keen to explore various kinds of concerns experienced by the postgraduate students, they also asked all students to hand in written narratives (two to three pages) detailing their postgraduate learning experiences at the end of their academic year of study. Student consent forms were collected from students who expressed their willingness to participate in this qualitative study. The researchers gave freedom to the students to discuss both positive and negative

aspects of their postgraduate learning experiences that they wished to highlight as the researchers did not wish to limit students' views by providing guidelines of topical areas. From time to time, a few students made appointments with the researchers in each of the universities to seek clarification about the content of their narrative writings and these matters were explained and clarified to the students concerned. The researchers read students' narratives several times and highlighted emergent themes that were discussed by the postgraduate students. For ease of referencing, each student's narrative was coded by numbers (S1-S48 were students from USM and S49-S83 were students from UiTM). The data analysis for the interviews and student narratives made use of several indicators relevant for this study and data were sorted by emergent themes that were mentioned by the respondents. After preliminary categories were formed, the researchers compared summaries through each category/theme before refining them to capture all perspectives.

4. Findings and Discussion

In this qualitative study, the respondents comprise Malaysian students and international students enrolled in postgraduate (Masters) courses in two public universities in Malaysia. UiTM (based in Selangor) is categorised as a teaching/comprehensive university while USM (based in the island state of Penang) is categorised as a research university. In 2008, USM was selected as an APEX (Accelerated Program for Excellence) university in Malaysia; this is a fast track development programme for institutions of higher education to achieve and to be recognised as world-class institutions.

Table 1 below shows the profile of the respondents in this study at a glance:

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Of this sample group of respondents, 67.4% of them (56 students) were Malaysian secondary school teachers who were undertaking their postgraduate studies on a part-time basis while 32.6% of them were full-time students. A majority of the respondents were Malaysians (73.5%) while 26.5% were international students from other countries. A large majority of the postgraduate students (89.1%) were between the ages of 23-32 years.

The following discussion is based on the researchers' analysis of the postgraduate students' checklist of personal details, interviews and narrative writings. Of the 83 students, there were more female postgraduate students (49 students) than males (34 students). Additionally, 26.5% (22 students) of the sample comprised international students from the Middle East (19 students), Thailand (1 student) and Indonesia (2 students). Table 2 below shows the main reasons cited by the respondents for pursuing postgraduate education:

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

The findings showed that affordability in pursuing postgraduate education in Malaysia was cited as the most common reason by 93.9% of the respondents in this study. The motivation for students to pursue postgraduate education in Malaysia clearly indicates that this is a "push" factor (Mazzard, Sootar, Smart, & Choo, 2001, p. 3) as a majority of students feel that this can help them procure better employment. Even among working professionals, the prospect of upgrading academic qualifications was seen as a compelling reason to pursue affordable postgraduate education. Other reasons to pursue postgraduate education included the intention to pursue further knowledge (85.5%) and personal fulfilment (83.1%). From the students' interviews and narrative writings, the following categories of emergent themes were detected:

4.1 Knowledge, values and contacts acquired by students

The data from the interviews (n=12) and student narratives (n=83) were coded by allocating numbers as explained in the earlier section. In most student narratives, the international postgraduate students (n=22) wrote extensively about the knowledge, values and contacts they acquired in the process of their studies. Most international students felt welcomed by their Malaysian coursemates and professed that they learned a lot from their course lecturers but felt inhibited during some discussions in class by their English language proficiency. The following are some excerpts from a few international students' narrative writing:

"*Initially, I was held back by my English proficiency when I first enrolled in the MA course as I didn't communicate much in English in Yemen. However, having more practice in class discussions and presentations, thanks to the friendly nature of my Malaysian coursemates, I believe my level of English has improved and I am definitely more confident now in using academic English to express my views on education issues*" (S15)

"*Coming to Malaysia to study my MA was a new experience for me. It wasn't all easy going for me I can say. I had so many new and difficult experiences; such as housing matters, making friends with Malaysians and coping with my studies and learning how to use the library*" (S 19)

"*I thought coming here from Iraq wouldn't cause me much stress. I did face the stress but thanks to God Almighty, I have learned to overcome many problems. I have made good friends in my MA course – they help me to find my way around the campus and some of them invite me and my family to their homes – that's very nice as it's the same like home. I'm continuing to make more friends on campus and am happy with my experience here*" (S 30)

"I'm the only Thai student in class but so far, all my friends are so nice to me and I don't think it's hard for me. Even my lecturers are understanding towards me and I'm enjoying my time here. Of course, I only worry about my English proficiency but I am truly working hard to improve my writing skills" (S 39)

During the interview sessions too, most Malaysian postgraduate students discussed with the researchers that they have learned valuable research skills and honed their academic writing ability. Some of the students spoke candidly about key values that the course helped bring out in them – values such as being more hardworking, managing their time well and being accountable for what they do and say in class discussions. The following are excerpts from three interviewees:

"By following the MA course, I've become more disciplined. Now I consciously plan my work better and structure my study time better even though I'm a teacher during the day" (Interviewee 8)

"These days I plan my timetable better and it's all because I'm more knowledgeable about what I've set out to do for myself. It helps that many of us keep in touch regularly by phone and email and we're always able to share ideas and journal articles on relevant topics" (Interviewee 11)

"I particularly enjoy the experience of learning with friends from other countries, something I did not experience in my undergraduate course. I have learned so much cultural and world knowledge from my Middle Eastern friends and I've welcomed them to the Malaysian shore and I try to help them during preparations for presentations. It has been a good learning curve for me as I realize how lucky I am to have this valuable learning chance" (Interviewee 2)

"This course experience has helped me value my peers even more and I am eager to read up so I can share my knowledge and experience better. I'm also learning more from my coursemates and I like this information-sharing" (Interviewee 7)

Other than the above three interviewees, the other postgraduate students who were interviewed spoke at length about the value of teamwork when group seminars or assignments were done and most of the postgraduate students enjoyed this learning experience. The emergent theme of making and keeping contact with one another was discussed and highlighted by almost all the postgraduate students. While the international postgraduate students (from mostly Middle Eastern and Gulf countries like Yemen, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman etc.) wrote lengthier accounts of this aspect, most Malaysian postgraduate students informed the researchers that this aspect was already present in their undergraduate degree course experience in various public universities in Malaysia.

4.2 Professional and personal values acquired by students

Another emergent theme that was evident from data gleaned from the interviews and student narratives concerned the aspects of how their postgraduate MA studies helped the students in their professional and personal lives. A majority of the students in the study (76%) expressed the view that much of what they learned from the course really helped them to become better teachers as the theoretical and practical underpinnings of various models of learning provided them with opportunities to apply their knowledge-base to their working lives. In terms of learning experiences, some of the postgraduate students expressed positive benefits they had gained from the various presentations and seminars they participated in during their MA course. This seemed to provide an opportunity for a broader outlook and greater maturity, which outweighed the academic course itself. The following excerpts from the student narratives highlight this:

"I feel I'm really seeing the benefit of the theories that actually have authentic implications in teaching…before I did not see this relationship so clearly. Now I feel I can make better professional decisions because of this understanding and feel I can improve my own students' learning in the language classroom and I'm beginning to use authentic examples and my students like it" (S43)

"While I've become more hardworking in carrying out my academic responsibilities, I also see how this has changed me personally and professionally. At least this two-way relationship and change in me will directly benefit the way I approach other problems in teaching English. I must admit prior to this, I wasn't that keen to engage in reflective thinking" (S22)

"I especially like it when my friends tell me that I'm now giving more mature answers to situation-based issues in the class. This has come about because I've been reading so much more and it has helped broaden my horizon in many ways; now I can link practical strategies to language theories more adequately" (S12)

In general, the data revealed that many students were conscious of a new 'experience curve' and despite some frustrations along the way, most of them were beginning to experience feelings of confidence that they were eager to share with each other. In highlighting how the postgraduate programme affected their personal values, almost all the respondents from both public universities mentioned the following benefits:

a.   made them more hardworking

b.   disciplined to read more journal articles on related academic issues

c.   learned to set realistic goals

d.   became more focused in their studies

e.   became more adept at managing time

f.   learned to handle stress more effectively

4.3 Specific learning problems encountered

Language difficulties were cited by many of the students as being the main obstacle to academic adjustment of postgraduate students in this study. While more international postgraduate students in USM spoke at length on this aspect, many ethnic Malay students at UiTM and USM similarly aired their concerns to the researchers about their inability to write research papers effectively in English. Many postgraduate students, while initially reluctant to speak on this aspect in the beginning of the interview sessions, stated that insufficient knowledge of discourse patterns in academic articles hindered their meaning-making process and some of the students openly said they usually take about 3 hours to read and understand one journal article. Other postgraduate students reported that the vocabulary and terminologies in some academic articles created difficulties for them to comprehend key arguments posited by the author(s) of the article. Among the international postgraduate students, the prospect of having to speak and write well in English is even more daunting as many of them come from educational systems where English is relegated the status of a foreign language. Some of the comments cited in their narrative writing include the following: shy to speak as they have a strong Arabic accent when they speak English, having to pronounce English words and expressions carefully so that their coursemates can understand what they are trying to say, realizing that the way they speak English is markedly different from their Malaysian coursemates.

Similarly, writing in English seems to be a frustrating experience for many postgraduate students. While only about 25% of the postgraduate students stated that they do not experience this problem, the rest of the students wrote extensively about their inability to express their ideas eloquently in English stating that they attributed this to their lower English proficiency level, weak argumentation skills, inability to think in English while writing essays and coming from a background where reading in English was not done frequently. Some of the mature postgraduate students (those aged 38 – 42 years) also wrote about their experiences in having to learn with much younger students. Although only 10.9% (9 students) of the total sample comprised mature learners, because of their extensive teaching experience in secondary schools, these students wrote about their inability to absorb information at a faster rate compared to the younger learners and they observed that their younger coursemates were more energetic and seemed to know a lot more about borrowing books from the library and doing effective powerpoint presentations during class presentations while they acknowledged that they needed to enhance their ICT skills to keep up with their younger coursemates, with one mature student in her early 40s (S44)saying that it was daunting for her to "*see the flurry of excitement among the younger students as they go about actively searching for new information from search engines on various databases on the internet*".

In many of the student narratives, the theme of experiencing 'study shock' (Burns, 2000) was experienced by several international postgraduate students who were mostly enrolled in USM. Burns (2000) aptly points out that this phenomenon can be experienced by students who shift between different cultures of learning. Among many international postgraduate students, the expectation imposed upon them by their MA course lecturers to develop or hone their independent, critical thought is met with much trepidation as many of them come from cultures of learning that dealt mainly with more traditional modes of learning i.e. where knowledge is basically transmitted from the lecturer to the students. As such, many of their narrative writings contain interesting anecdotal accounts which outline some of the specific academic difficulties:

"Back home in Yemen, our lecturers conduct classes very differently, so I feel it's a very new experience for me here and I have to make many learning style adjustments. It surely will take time to get used to this" (S19)

"In particular, I find seminar presentations very difficult –I'm always nervous when I have to do them because I'm not used to them" (S33)

"What's really new for me here in USM is having to learn also new stuff with technology, like how to use the overhead projector OHP and also how to prepare powerpoint presentations. Well…….that's not easy for me!" (S35)

"I didn't use good English when I was in school in Jordan; now I have to write good essays and assignments in English because my lecturers expect us to write well; I'm also not so good at taking notes because we didn't do much of this in uni back home. These are new for me and I know I have to improve on my own so I'm doing a lot of practice in my own spare time" (S40)

"I embarrassed myself by asking my lecturer to change my assignment grade, which we can do in Jordan. Here, this is not appreciated and I understand the system here now as my lecturer did explain where in the assignment I went wrong

and the feedback she gave me was good. In my undergraduate experience, we can consult our lecturer for grade improvement if we feel our work deserves a better grade" (S48)

"I've been used to 100% exam-based undergraduate courses but now I see that this is not the case here in Malaysia. I'm adjusting to this different assessment method here. I also feel the lecturers here are more approachable than my university lecturers back home" (S28)

Although many Malaysian postgraduate students understand that the educational system in the country is exam-oriented, there are clear differences with regard to the slant towards more independent learning in undergraduate degree programmes in public universities with greater degrees of independence and critical thought practices expected in postgraduate education. Arguably, some Malaysian postgraduates still experience difficulty in adjusting to this mindset as they seem reluctant to accept the fact that they now have more opportunities to argue out various standpoints as long as they can provide evidence to justify their thought orientations on various educational or academic concepts and theories.

5. Concluding Thoughts

Paradigms of teaching and learning at the postgraduate level have indeed shifted with the push towards greater democratization and globalization of education (Abdul Rahim & Abdul Manan, 2008). The learning process within any postgraduate environment is often dominated by the dissonance which arises when students from diverse backgrounds learn together. In Malaysian higher education contexts, diversity in student learning is now a common phenomenon for many university educators handling postgraduate education. However, this reality has numerous complexities and concerns which need to be addressed if quality education is to be provided to all postgraduate students. Of significance is the fact that while such diverse student cohorts bring with them an array of cultural and linguistic knowledge and learning experiences which can greatly enhance the student learning experience, they also require university teachers to make careful considerations when they revisit academic learning.

This qualitative study was limited to the perspectives of the 83 postgraduate students from two public universities in Malaysia and generalisations cannot be made for other postgraduate students' learning experiences in other Malaysian universities. More significant results can be achieved if the sampling size were bigger and covered more public universities in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the findings of this study have shown that there are several dimensions to postgraduate students' learning experiences in higher education contexts. Despite the limitations, this study is significant as it examines students' strategic responses towards their learning experience and helps researchers, policy makers and administrators to be aware of the tensions and complexities that are at play in higher education environments which cater to increasingly diverse student populations in today's emerging global higher education contexts. While expectations are imposed on postgraduate students to be academically self-sufficient, the findings of this study suggest that it is pertinent for both students and university teachers to take cognisance of learning domains that have to be realized before effective learning can take place, a form of learning where strategies used can be more interactive and socially oriented. The new millennium forces internal and external pressures on educational institutions to re-examine teaching and learning practices from new paradigms. Thus, having a thorough working knowledge of postgraduate students' actual learning experiences can have a tremendous impact on a university's curriculum, discipline, cultures and work practices that charter the direction with multiple changes and innovations. Arguably, recognizing the various multifaceted issues and challenges confronting postgraduate students can help move the debate from putting blame on the students towards a more democratized view of education which tries to get university educators to look objectively at the learning environment and this includes looking at the problems, if any, faced by the postgraduate students in some of these domains: identifying specific academic problems or difficulties, appropriate use of technology and know-how, the need for changed work practices, a willingness to work differently with different groups of students in different ways after taking into consideration their prior knowledge.

While this study has highlighted that there are a number of common themes that run parallel in the student narratives and the interview sessions, essentially the following are some of the key concerns plaguing postgraduate students' learning experiences:

1) pressures of undertaking and coping with the requirements of postgraduate work

2) the initial difficulties encountered when adjusting to a new environment and academic culture

3) the problems of reading and comprehending academic texts in a critical manner

4) writing using appropriate language

5) lack of knowledge in research skills and

6) different cultural expectations

Institutions of higher learning can take proactive steps to overcome such student difficulties and they can provide the much-needed support and facilities to their postgraduate students, considering that the current trend shows that the

number of postgraduate students is multiplying over time in many developing countries. Suggestions to set up a Reading and Writing Centre for postgraduate students, the creation of reading groups and the introduction of a properly structured Orientation Programme can easily be implemented as such schemes will enhance the quality of postgraduates and their research output.

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Appendix I

FACT FILE AND CHECKLIST FOR NARRATIVE WRITING BY MA/M.Ed STUDENTS

SEX: MALE (   )   FEMALE (   )   **NATIONALITY**: _____

AGE: _____years old   **MARITAL STATUS:** _____

ETHNICITY: _____ _**FUNDING FOR STUDIES:** Scholarship (   ) Self financing (   )

BACHELOR'S DEGREE: B.A._____

UNIVERSITY/YEAR OF AWARD: _____

WORK EXPERIENCE: _____

CURRENT STATUS: Employed as _____Full-time student (   )Part-time student (   )

REASONS   FOR   PURSUING   MA/M.Ed   STUDIES:
_____
_____

ELABORATE ON <u>SPECIFIC DIFFICULTIES</u> FACED WHEN STUDYING FOR THIS COURSE: (e.g. language difficulties, inability to do effective seminar presentations, reading journal articles, getting library resources, understanding lecture content, making personal contacts, financial difficulties, adjusting to student life, adjusting to culturally different teaching and learning styles etc.),

_____
_____
_____
_____

WHAT DID YOU LIKE MOST ABOUT THIS COURSE?

_____
_____
_____

HOW HAVE YOU BENEFITED FROM THIS COURSE?

_____
_____
_____

WHAT SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT DO YOU HAVE?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix II

Interview Questions (Students)

1. What are your main reasons for pursuing your MA/M.Ed studies in this university?

2. Are you pursuing your studies on a part-time or full-time basis? Does this mode cause you any difficulty?

3. What are some *specific* difficulties you have encountered in your postgraduate studies? What are your perceptions of your own ability to cope with reading and writing tasks for this course? Do you encounter any problems when doing oral presentations for your courses?

4. How do you cope with coursework demands? Do you work well with your peers in this course/programme? Have you made good friends in this course?

5. Do you have any financial difficulties? Are there any other obstacles that hinder your progress in your academic studies?

6. Have you encountered any problems adjusting to student life after your BA studies? How different is this course from your BA course?

7. What did you like most about this course?

8. In what way/s do you feel you have benefited from this course?

9. What are your suggestions, if any, for improving the way this MA/M.Ed course is taught?

Table 1. Profile of respondents

	Number of Respondents (*N*=83)	Percent
Gender		
Male	49	59.0
Female	34	41.0
Age		
23-27	34	40.9
28-32	40	48.2
33-37	5	6.1
38-42	4	4.8
Nationality		
Malaysian	61	73.5
International students	22	26.5
Respondents' University		
Universiti Sains Malaysia	48	57.8
UiTM	35	42.2
Work Experience		
Secondary school teachers	56	67.4
Full-time students	27	32.6

Table 2. Reasons for Pursuing Postgraduate Education

Reasons for pursuing postgraduate studies	Number of Respondents (*N*=83)	Percent
Personal fulfillment	69	83.1
A continuation of undergraduate degree in the same university	32	38.6
Pursuing further knowledge	71	85.5
Learn more about current trends in teaching English	48	57.8
Improve research skills	29	34.9
Motivated to learn in a foreign country	22	26.5
Affordable postgraduate education	78	93.9
A role model for my students and family	25	30.1

Cognitive Analysis of Chinese-English Metaphors of Animal

and Human Body Part Words

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Abstract

Metaphorical cognition arises from the mapping of two conceptual domains onto each other. According to the "Anthropocentrism", people tend to know the world first by learning about their bodies including Apparatuses. Based on that, people begin to know the material world, and the human body part metaphorization emerges as the times requires. Because mankind possesses same body structure, perceptive organs, same perceptive and cognitive abilities, so people have many similarities in their cognition. At the same time, both the metaphor thinking and the conceptive system are from human living experiences. As a kind of thinking mode and behavior mode, the metaphor doesn't exist along, and it can not break away from the social and cultural environment, and it must be combined closely with certain language situation and culture. As a result of cultural influence, metaphor shows its unique nationality. Taking English-Chinese animal and human body part words as the example, the cultural cognitive difference of Chinese and English metaphors is analyzed in the article.

Keywords: Metaphor, Anthropocentrism, Cognition, Mapping, Body part metaphorization

1. Theoretical base

Metaphor is regarded as a kind of linguistic phenomenon in traditional linguistics which thought it is the rhetoric in the linguistic form and the decorated measure of language. But the modern cognitive linguistics thought that the metaphor is only the linguistic decorated measure and a kind of thinking mode. As the base of human cognition, thinking, experience, language and behavior, the metaphor is the basic mode to know the world and survive in the world for human beings. In daily life, people always use their familiar, material and concrete concepts to know, think about, experience and treat immaterial concepts which are difficult to be defined for references to form a cognitive form among associated and different concepts (Zhao, 2001). According to Lakoff's understanding, human language is a symbol system with the character of metaphor, and the metaphor in the language is just a kind of surface phenomenon, and the metaphor concepts concealed in human concept system deeply work really (Shu, 2000). The structured mapping between the concept domain and the cognitive domain forms the metaphor mapping from the source domain to the target domain (Lu, 2005, P.470-485). The understanding of metaphor is to map the initiative domain or the source domain to the target domain and achieve the target of recognizing the characters of the target domain. For example, "Argument is War", this metaphor concept, denotes human cognitions and understands about the argument, and the mode that people treat the argument is formed by mapping the concept of war to the concept of argument. The cognition of metaphor was first recorded in the Pre-Qin Days in China, i.e. "Jin Qu Zhu Shen, Yuan Qu Zhu Wu (XiCi of Zhou Yi)". The philosopher in ancient Greece, Protagoras (485 B.C. – 410 B.C.) said that "human being is the scale of everything". Chinese ancestors also had the "experienced cognition" in their thinking, and they always took the experiences they acquired as the standard to measure the world (Wang, 2005). According to the "Anthropocentrism", "all things start from human themselves to arrive for exterior things such as space, time and character (Shen, 1994, P.17-24)". The words which denote human body parts are easily to be mapped to other semantic domains by the metaphor (Chen, 2005), and the human metaphor emerges as the time requires. The human metaphorization includes three kinds of type, i.e. the structured mapping from the body-part domain to the non-body domain, the mapping from the non-body domain to the body-part domain, and the mapping between two organs in the human-part domain. The mapping relationship between the source domain to the target domain is relative, i.e. they can be mapped each other not only from the source domain to the target domain, but from the target domain to the source domain (Lu, 2005, P.470-485). For example, the word of "neck" generates the word of "bottleneck" based on the metaphor cognition with similar position and form, and generated the words, "bottleneck for road traffic" and "bottleneck for production development" based on the metaphor cognition with similar function or attribute (Li, 2001, P.118). Taking the mapping from the non-body domain to the body-part domain or the mapping from the animal domain to the human body-part

domain as the example, the differences of cognitive culture in metaphors of Chinese and English animal and human body-part metaphor words will be analyzed in the article.

2. Analysis of cultural cognition of metaphors of English and Chinese animal and human body-part words

Out of the human world, there is a colorful animal world which is closely linked with our life. The neighbor relationship between human and animals makes people to be very familiar with the habits of animals, and gradually, people begin to associate some characters on some animals with someone's characters in human lives, and map them on the cognitions and expressions to other things, and the human glossary is one of important objects of the mapping of animal words. For example, "Zhang Mei Shu Mu (roe's eyebrows and rat's eyes)", "Lang Xin Gou Fei (being brutal and cold-blooded)", "Cong Yan (Insect's eyes)" and "Mao Yan (cat's eyes)" in Chinese all belong to this category, and some English human words such as "horse faced", "dragonhead" and "cat's eye" also belong to this category. Based on human basic experiences (Li, 2001, P.126), as a kind of human thinking mode and behavior mode, the metaphor is not isolated, and it can not form spontaneously without the social and cultural environment, and it must be associated with certain language environment and culture. Just as Lakoff predicted, "Metaphorical mappings vary in universality, some seem to be universal, others are widespread, and some seem to be culture specific." The commonness and nationality in human thinking make the metaphor to possess the universality and cultural specific characters.

2.1 Similarities of metaphors of Chinese and English animal and human body-part words

Because the human beings have same body structure and perceptive organs and same perception and cognitive ability, so they can acquire similar concept structure when they face same material world, which make different nations and cultures possess obvious commonness for the cognition of the metaphor. For the understanding process to the material world, Chinese culture and English culture possess similar cognitions to some animals, which are represented in the similarities about the structure and meaning of human body-part metaphor in English and Chinese such as "horse back (Ma Bei)", "horse-faced (Ma Lian)", "horse hair (Ma Zong)", "cat's eye (Mao Yan)", "sheep skin (Yang Pi)", "ox-eyed (Niu Yan)" and "chicken-shit (Ji Mao) (In English, "Shit" is selected and "Mao" is selected in Chinese, but their meanings are same)", and from above examples, the similarity about the metaphor thinking are obviously same in English and Chinese cultures.

2.2 Cultural characters of metaphors of Chinese and English animal and human body-part words

However, "the expressions to one true event will be different because of observers' different angles, focuses and detailed degrees, and these differences will form different images in the brains and reflect different cognitions to the things (Zhao, 2001, P.109)". At the same time, the metaphors rooting in different cultural soils are one part of the culture, and they can reflect the content, faith, attitude and behavior of the culture to the largest degree, and they have specific cultural brand, so the nationality of metaphor forms. Because of the influences of different cultures and thinking modes, Chinese-English human body-part metaphors must have certain cultural differences which are mainly embodied in following aspects.

(1) The literal meanings are same, but the metaphor meanings are different. Because of different associations inspired by different cultures, in two kinds of languages, there are some expressions with same literal meanings but different metaphor meanings such as "Ji Xin (heart-form things)" and "chicken-hearted (scary)", "Gou Tui Zi (henchman)" and "dog-leg", "quack medicine" and "dog skin", "cock" and "dragonhead", "Zhu Tou" and "pig-headed". Above Chinese-English animal and human body-part words have same literal meanings but they have obviously different metaphors. In Chinese, "Dan Xiao (cowardice)" is always associated with "rat", so people always say "Dan Xiao Ru Shu (chicken-hearted as timid as a hare)", but the rat is replaced by chicken in English. "Gou (dog)" is always the symbol of "beggarliness" in Chinese, and all human body-part words about the god have derogatory sense, such as "Gou Yan Kan Ren Di", "Gou Xue Pen Tou", "Lang Xin Gou Fei", "Gou Tou Jun Shi", "Gou Dan Bao Tian" and "Gou Zui Li Tu Bu Chu Xiang Ya". But in English countries, dog is man's best friend, so many human body-part words about dog are neutral terms such as "dog-eared", "dogsbody", "dogface" and "dog fall". In Chinese, "Long (dragon)" is the symbol of "luck", and it is the special product that the tradition of Chinese culture roots in Chinese land, and the body of the emperor was called by "the dragon body", and the "Long Ma Jing Shen (the spirit of a dragon horse)" means vigorous spirit. But western people think that the dragon is the symbol of evil, the fierce and cruel monster, and in western pictures, dragon has a pair of added wings than in Chinese pictures, so it is not hard to understand that a few human body-part words about dragon are independent of the animal, "dragon", such as "dragonhead", "dragon-blood" and "dragon's teeth". "Zhu (pig)" is the pronoun of "stupidity" in Chinese, but the word means "greedy" and "obstinate", so human body-part words have different cultural metaphors.

(2) Except for structured metaphors of human and animal body-part words, the cultural metaphors of these words are not same in English and Chinese languages. Almost all these words in Chinese have certain cultural metaphor meanings, but there are few words with cultural metaphors in English, taking "fish" as an example, British is a island country around seas, English living depends on seas, and many English metaphors are related with ocean culture such as "give up the ship", "all at sea", "go with the stream", and "in the same ship", however, the human body-part words about

"fish" are very rare such as "fish-eye lens", "fish finger", "fish-skin disease" and "fish joint", and in these words, there are no one to contain cultural metaphors. Though China is agricultural country with land, but there are many human body-part metaphors about "fish", such as "Yu Chun (fish's lip)", "Yu Gan You (fish liver oil)", "Yu Mu Hun Zhu (passing away the sham as the genuine)", "Yu Rou Bai Xing (being cruel to common people)" and "Yu Du Bai (the color of the sky at dawn)".

(3) The quantities of animal kind evolved in English and Chinese human and animal body-part words are different. In Chinese, all animal words can be mapped to the human body and generate human-body metaphor words, such as "Ying Bi Yao Yan (eagle's nose and snipe's eye, describing bad people's appearance)", "She Zu (snake's feet, describing useless things)", "He fa Tong Yan, describing strong old man's body", "Jian Zui Hou Sai (describing small face and ugly appearance)", "Hu Bei Xiong Yao (describing human strong body)", "Ji Kou Niu Hou (the man who would rather rule the roost in the small place, not be dominated by others in the big place)", and "Shu Mu Cun Guang (being shortsighted)". But in English, there are few animal and human animal words and the evolved animal kinds are rare.

In a word, the culture is very important to form the concept metaphor. The experiences to form the concept metaphor are complex social and cultural structure (Wang, 2003). The metaphors root in not only human experiences but cultures. Under the influence of culture, the metaphor can exactly reflect the specific culture.

3. Conclusions

Human cognitive rule from far to near, from entity to non-entity, from simple to complex, and from concrete to abstract decide human and their organs' important basic function in the cognition process. The metaphorization of mapping between human glossary and inhuman glossary each other is the important measure to know the world for human beings. Because the human beings have same body structure and perceptive organs and same perception and cognitive ability, so they can acquire similar concept structure when they face same material world, and there are many similarities in English and Chinese human body-part words. Though metaphor and culture have commonness, but because of the differences in living environment, cultural background, custom, habit, psychology and observation angles, the English and Chinese cognitive cultures including animal and human metaphor words are obviously different, and these differences can help us to further know two kinds of cultures and make for trans-cultural communication between English and Chinese.

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Teacher Effectiveness Examined as a System: Interpretive Structural Modeling and Facilitation Sessions with U.S. and Japanese Students

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Abstract

This study challenges narrow definitions of teacher effectiveness and uses a systems approach to investigate teacher effectiveness as a multi-dimensional, holistic phenomenon. The methods of Nominal Group Technique and Interpretive Structural Modeling were used to assist U.S. and Japanese students separately construct influence structures during facilitation sessions. The influence structures represent maps for understanding teacher effectiveness as a system. The influence maps indicate that there are a number of teacher behaviors and characteristics that promote, support and influence one another within the overall system; however, the plurality of teacher elements, which are structured with priority, concerns teacher knowledge characteristics and verbal teacher immediacy behaviors for both cultural groups. The findings of the study were explored from thematic perspectives in intercultural communication such as power distance, identity and contact orientation. Given the qualitative nature of the study, participants' own theories-in-use were important in the study. Also, Confucianism principles were significant in the Japanese assessment of teacher effectiveness. The study has implications for professors across fields since the majority of professors are educators who have not been formally trained in the education field. The study points to the importance of ongoing faculty development in teacher effectiveness.

Keywords: Teacher effectiveness, Systems approach, Nominal Group Technique, Interpretive Structural Modeling

1. Introduction

The more vantage points we use to understand teacher effectiveness, the more complete our understanding will be about its complex nature. Communication education scholars are faced with the incredible challenge of not only understanding communication, but also understanding culture within the teaching and learning context. A number of scholars across disciplines have addressed the issue of teacher effectiveness (Aubrecht, 1981; Cashin, 1994; Furhrmann & Grasha, 1994). After reviewing more than 1,300 research pieces on student ratings of teaching, Cashin (1994) argued that "there is no agreed upon definition of 'effective teaching' nor any single, all-embracing criterion" (p. 533) and further suggested that "no single source of data…provides sufficient information to make a valid judgment about teaching effectiveness" (p. 531). Considering the complexity of teacher effectiveness, communication education scholars need alternative models to better understand and assess teacher effectiveness since no single model should be considered sufficient or superior. This study was designed to examine teacher effectiveness globally as a set of relationships among a number of teacher behaviors and characteristics. This methodology is different from the majority of past research in teacher effectiveness and immediacy, which have examined one or a few constructs in isolation (Allen, Witt & Wheeless, 2006; Johnson & Miller, 2002; Teven & Hanson, 2004). The dynamic relationships involved with a host of teacher communication behaviors and teacher characteristics in relation to teacher effectiveness are to date largely unknown; therefore, a systems approach has great merit in communication education research since it involves discovering how the different teacher communication behaviors and characteristics interact and work together. Nuanced relationships can be captured and the interplay of teacher behaviors and teacher characteristics can be assessed. Social science research has successfully used the systems approach to facilitate our understanding of organizations, families, society, conflict (Schellenberg, 1996) and diversity (Broome, DeTurk, Kristjansdottir, Kanata, & Ganesan, 2002).

1.1 The Concept of an effective Instructor

What is an effective instructor? Researchers and scholars involved in instruction have sought answers to this important question and years of research have been devoted to answering this question (Powell & Arthur, 1985; Nussbaum, 1992). Given current globalization trends, understanding teacher effectiveness across and within cultures should be at the forefront of concern for communication education scholars. As Gay (2006) stated "a semiotic relationship exists among

communication, culture, teaching, and learning, and it has profound implications for implementing culturally responsive teaching" (p. 326). Culturally responsive teaching largely relies on an emic or insider understanding of teacher effectiveness yet studies from this perspective are limited.

What is clear from past research is that Mehrabian's (1971) concept of immediacy, Andersen's (1979) further delineation of nonverbal immediacy, and Gorham's (1988) extension of immediacy to verbal immediacy are important since substantial research indicates that nonverbal and verbal immediacy positively relate to teacher effectiveness as well as student learning outcomes for domestic and international students (Collier & Powell, 1986; Collier, Ribeau & Hecht, 1986; Johnson & Miller, 2002; Powell & Harville, 1990; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

First, the purpose of this study is to problematize U.S. definitions of teacher effectiveness and teacher immediacy often used in communication education research and to apply alternative methods to explore these phenomena. Second, the study will focus on criticisms of cross-cultural applicability of immediacy (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006), lack of emic notions of teacher effectiveness, and uncertainty about how teacher effectiveness functions as a system.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Applicability of Teacher Effectiveness and Culture

Teacher effectiveness is dynamic and complex. Examination of the U.S. education literature supports this sentiment, as there is no clear agreement on the definition of teacher effectiveness. Cashin (1994) concluded that there is a plurality of ideas surrounding what constitutes teacher effectiveness. Despite these arguments, the conceptualization of teacher effectiveness most popularly used by communication education scholars is Andersen's (1979) definition: "one who produces positive outcomes in all three domains of learning: student affect, behavioral commitment to the course content, and student cognitive learning" (p. 54). Andersen's measure of teacher effectiveness is culturally bound and culturally grounded; therefore, her measure may likely be culturally incommensurable when applied outside the U.S. Narrow definitions limit our understanding of a phenomenon. Approaching three decades, Andersen's (1979) conceptualization of teacher effectiveness requires critical examination from contemporary communication education scholars. If we continue to use the same lens we limit what we can observe. No teacher behavior functions separately and in a vacuum, thereby supporting the application of a systems approach in the investigation of teacher effectiveness. The next section critically examines teacher immediacy as it relates to teacher effectiveness within cultures.

2.2 Culture and Teacher Immediacy

"Teacher immediacy has received unsurpassed scholarly attention in the field of instructional communication over the past three decades" (Zhang, Oetzel, Gao, Wilcox and Takai, 2007, p. 228). The concept has also been shown to garner positive student outcomes across cultures (Johnson & Miller, 2002; Roach & Byrne, 2001; Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). Despite the popularity of teacher immediacy, several problems surround its assessment across cultures. Most problematic is that the operational definition of teacher immediacy is used as a 'main mean' for making cross-cultural comparisons (Johnson, & Miller, 2002; Neuliep, 1997; Roach & Byrne, 2001; Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). The majority of research executed across cultures has measured teacher immediacy according to Andersen's (1979) conceptualization of teacher effectiveness or one type of her measure of learning without a critical examination of the effects of culture.

Other researchers have reported problems with the validity of verbal immediacy (Mottet & Richmond, 1998; Richmond, McCroskey & Johnson, 2003; Robinson & Richmond, 1995) and nonverbal immediacy related to cultures outside of the U.S. (Zhang & Oetzel, 2006). Mottet and Richmond (1998) reported that verbal immediacy should include a repertoire of text-based linguistic codes. Zhang and Oetzel (2006) argued that the focus of verbal immediacy should be on content messages rather than on the modality of messages. They argued for an emic perspective given the controversy surrounding verbal immediacy across cultures. In a unique emic study, Zhang and Oetzel (2006) found that Chinese notions of teacher immediacy are qualitatively different from the United States notions, therefore it stands to reason that across disparate cultures teacher immediacy should take different forms and functions as well. It is important for communication education scholars to examine the cultural meanings associated with teacher immediacy as well as the unique teacher outcomes that ensue from teacher immediacy expressions.

The role of teacher immediacy in relation to other teacher behaviors and characteristics is important considering that instructor use of both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors has been associated with student perceptions of instructor use of other communication behaviors (Myers, Zhong, & Guan, 1998). For example, past research has shown that immediacy is associated with perceptions of instructor clarity (Powell & Harville, 1990), humor orientation (Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), instructor socio-communicative style (Thomas, Richmond, & McCroskey, 1994), instructor use of behavior alteration techniques (Kearney, Plax, Smith, & Sorensen, 1988), teacher competence and trustworthiness (Teven & Hanson, 2004), motivational factors for student learning (Allen, Witt, & Wheeless, 2006), teacher credibility (Johnson & Miller, 2002), and other positive outcomes. Allen, Witt, and Wheeless (2006) argued that an immediacy learning process exists; however, the interrelationships and the particular content involved in this process need to be examined. They argued that their meta-analysis and previous meta-analysis studies do not capture the

function, influence, evaluation, and direct assessment of immediacy in relation to student evaluations of their teachers. The dynamic relationships involved in a host of teacher communication and teacher characteristics in relation to teacher effectiveness are to date largely unknown. Therefore, this study represents a step in the direction to advance this type of research.

Although the immediacy-exchange theories including Burgoon's (1978) expectancy violation theory, Capella & Greene's (1982) discrepancy-arousal theory, and Andersen's (1998) cognitive valence theory yield different predictions for changes in immediacy behavior, they all stress that interpretations, expectations, and evaluations of immediacy are significantly guided by culture. It is clear that culture plays a key role in assessment of immediacy. Consequently, this study explores how teacher immediacy and a variety of teacher characteristics influence each other according to a group of United States and Japanese students who represent two distinct cultural groups.

2.3 Culture and Theoretical Framework

Culture is pervasive and it permeates social interactions in instructional contexts. Thus, any investigation of the instructional setting must be done with an acute awareness of the cultural landscape that exists since it is clear that cultural factors mold teachers' status, demeanor, and relations with students. The cultural dimensions that are important to the current study are power distance, identity, and degree of contact communication. These dimensions have been popularly used to understand communication across cultures (Andersen & Wang, 2006). The United States and Japan differ in terms of their general orientations toward power distance, nonverbal communication and immediacy (Andersen, 2008). Most notably, Confucianism significantly influences Japanese orientations toward collectivism, high power distance, and teacher communication, whereas individualism influences United States orientations toward low power distance and teacher communication.

The Individualism/Collectivism construct describes the relationship between the individual and the group surrounding him or her in a given society (Hofstede, 1980). Individualism emphasizes the particular self and uniqueness. Collectivism, on the other hand, is the opposite; members of a collectivistic society underscore in-group interests, conformity, and cohesion. According to Hofstede (1980), the United States is considered the most individualistic country in the world while most Asian cultures (e.g., Japan, Singapore) are considered collectivistic. Triandis (1995) examined this construct further and suggested individuals in cultures express both individualist and collectivist themes. He presented individual level values of the self, based on independence or interdependence as well as similarity or difference. He referred to the all the combinations of self as horizontal collectivist, vertical collectivist, horizontal individualist, and vertical individualist. This research indicates that it is wise for researchers to explore the inclusion of both individualism and collectivism within cultures.

Another important dimension of culture to this current study pertains to power distance. Mulder (1977) argued that across every society those holding high status strive for the maintenance or enlargement of distance between themselves and those in lower status. In cultures influenced by Confucianism, high power distance is accentuated by communication behaviors that support hierarchical relationships. Authoritarianism is closely related with the power distance index (Hofstede, 1980). Individuals from low power distance societies strive for the reduction of distance and accentuate communication behaviors that support egalitarianism and closeness. Immediacy behaviors should be in conflict with high power distance cultures and in congruence with low power distance cultures since Mehrabian's concept of immediacy reduces physical and psychological distance through behaviors that convey interpersonal warmth, intimacy and availability for communication. Also, the cultural distinction between contact and noncontact cultures is noteworthy when describing communication within United States and Japanese cultures (Hall, 1966). People in contact cultures typically are nonverbally expressive, which leads to more overall sensory stimulation. By contrast, people in noncontact cultures are nonverbally distant and more emotionally reserved. Andersen (2008) presented evidence that Japan is a noncontact-oriented culture while the United States is moderate to moderately high in terms of contact orientation.

Given the emic nature of the current study, a Japanese perspective was necessary. McDaniel's (2006) Japanese cultural thematic analysis of communication provided a useful framework for understanding a Japanese perspective. She linked Japanese nonverbal communication with the following cultural themes: hierarchy, harmony (wa), empathy, interdependence, formality (ritual expression, protocol compliance, and tradition), humility, sacrifice (gaman), perseverance, and Confucian-rooted collectivism. She concluded that superior nonverbal understanding results from a relatively homogeneous, collectivistic-Japanese culture. This closeness supports nonverbal familiarity, intuition and tacit understanding while it takes precedence over verbal discourse. While McDaniel (2006) limited her investigation to nonverbal communication, cultural themes can be applied to verbal communication as well.

Finally, it stands to reason that unique cultural interpretations will surround the behaviors that support teacher effectiveness since the United States and Japan are distinct. Given the qualitative nature of the present study, it is important to discover participant's own theories about the meaning of teacher communication that supports teacher effectiveness. According to Nishida (1996), communication theories from the United States have been criticized for

their application in Japan and "this has resulted in arguments regarding general views about nature, human relations, and communication, and the unique characteristics of Japanese communication patterns" (p. 102). Schwarz (2002) used the term theory-in-use to exemplify checking in with participants during facilitation sessions in order to tap into member meanings. The purpose of this study is to better understand teacher effectiveness, from the people who talked about teacher effectiveness so the study is open to emergent theories-in-use. Given the lack of research concerning emic notions of teacher behaviors and teacher characteristics, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: What types of immediacy behaviors and teacher characteristics promote student perceptions of teacher effectiveness within the U.S. culture?

RQ2: What types of immediacy and teacher characteristics promote student perceptions of teacher effectiveness within the Japanese culture?

Particularly interesting in immediacy research performed within cultures is the degree of influence that immediacy has on other teacher characteristics. Currently, no study has investigated immediacy in terms of generating "influence maps" that position immediacy in relation to other effective teacher characteristics within particular cultures. Given the lack of a systems approach in the investigation of teacher effectiveness, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ3: How do different immediacy behaviors and teacher characteristics significantly influence, support, and relate to student perceptions of teacher effectiveness for a group of U.S. students?

RQ4: How do different immediacy behaviors and teacher characteristics influence, support, and relate to student perceptions of teacher effectiveness a group of Japanese students?

Research questions three and four are proposed to explore the nuanced relationships involved in student assessments of teacher effectiveness from an emic focus. The specific purpose underlying these research questions is to obtain a better understanding of the influential agents that significantly support student perceptions of teacher effectiveness for each cultural group.

3. Methods

The methods of Nominal Group Technique (NGT) and Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) were used to assist separately United States and Japanese students in constructing influence structures during facilitation sessions. Nominal Group Technique (Broome & Cromer, 1991; Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975) provided information that was necessary in the early stages of the study while Interpretative Structural Modeling was applied to the majority of the study in the facilitation workshops (Broome & Cromer, 1991; Warfield, 1976).

3.1 Process

NGT is a method that allows ideas to be generated in relation to a situation that is surrounded with uncertainty. It has been associated with five distinct and important steps (Broome & Cromer, 1991; Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975). First, the technique requires that a query of interest be presented to a group in the form of a question that is designed to stimulate ideas. Second, NGT requires a group of people to generate ideas individually. Thus, ideas are generated silently without external distraction, evaluation, or judgment. Third, the set of ideas generated by individuals in the group are visually displayed for all group members to view. Fourth, participants in the group become familiar with all ideas through a serial discussion and clarification of items. The firth and final step in NGT is a voting procedure that requires all members in the group to select the most salient items.

Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM) is associated with the more global problem solving design of Interactive Management (IM). Interactive Management was developed to deal with complex issues that are not easily approached by traditional methods of problem solving (Broome, 1997; Warfield, 1982; Warfield, 1995; Warfield & Cardenas, 1995). Additionally, IM adheres to three important characteristics proposed by Broome and Christakis (1988) in order to create a culturally-sensitive methodology. The first characteristic is a holistic approach where there is "recognition of the systems nature of combinations of ideas and entities" (p. 221). Second, a process orientation must be adopted where "those who 'own' the issues become engaged and responsible for dealing with them, thus preventing the imposition of external perceptions on the definition…of the…situation" (p. 221). Because IM promotes collaboration of group members who share a commitment in addressing complex issues within a framework that utilizes systematic and logical reasoning, the design provides a powerful methodology to unveil the complexity involved in understanding teacher effectiveness within culture.

The use of the ISM methodology is comparable to focus group sessions in several respects. First, like focus groups, ISM draws from gathering participants who have experience and knowledge about an issue. As Blumer (1969) spoke of the power of utilizing a select group: he suggested "seeking participants…who are acute observers and who are well informed….A small number of such individuals brought together as a discussion and resource group, is more valuable many times over than any representative sample" (p. 41).

Unlike the focus group, however, ISM is a computer-assisted methodology that has the advanced feature of software that uses "mathematical algorithms that minimize the number of queries necessary for exploring relationships among a set of ideas" (Broome, 1998, p. 4; see also Warfield, 1976). Therefore, the nature of the current study is quantitative as well as qualitative. The ISM software program facilitates what otherwise might be an impossibly complex task of organizing items into a comprehensible set of relationships and displayed as a structure (Broome, 1998). ISM can be used to develop several types of structures (Broome, 1998), but for the purpose of the current study the supportive influence type structure was selected.

3.2 Participants

The United States and Japan were selected for this study because cross-cultural research most notably compares Eastern and Western cultures because these cultures are culturally distinct (Zhang, Oetzel, Gao, Wilcox & Takai, 2007). Japan typically is identified as a Confucian-based collectivistic, high power distance, low immediate, noncontact culture and in contrast the United States typically is identified as an individualistic, low power distance, contact, and high immediate culture (Zhang, Oetzel, Gao, Wilcox & Takai, 2007). Additionally, differences between the United States and Japanese communication patterns have been widely documented in past research in terms of communication theories, personal relationships (Nishida, 1996), facework strategies (Cupach & Imahori, 1993), self-disclosure, self-knowledge, boundaries of public/private self (Asai & Barnlund, 1998), and immediacy behaviors (Neuliep, 1997).

A group of 14 Japanese students formed one group and a group of 13 U.S. students formed a second group. Each group separately participated in an idea generation and idea structuring workshop. The Japanese group included six males and eight females. The U.S. group included six males and seven female students. The average age for the Japanese group was 20. The average age for the U.S. group was 22. Japanese students had advanced English proficiency and lived in the U.S. for less than a year. Participants were selected according to Morse's (1994) criteria of a good informant as "one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study" (p. 228). The study viewed students as a site for understanding effective teacher behaviors and teacher effectiveness. This view of students was based on recommendations of Tanno and Jandt (1994), who called for a need to redefine the "other" in research as participants, experts, and co-producers of knowledge, and Broome (1991), who emphasized the need to form an understanding by "co-creating with the other a shared reality" (p. 247).

The researchers solicited Japanese and U.S. students through various instructors on campus as well as through the technique of snowballing. As an incentive, both set of students were informed about their opportunity to learn facilitation techniques and meet new people.

3.3 Conceptual Definition of Teacher Effectiveness

Notions of teacher effectiveness in the present study draw on students' local knowledge concerning this phenomenon in the context of instruction. Students were asked to reflect on their "best teacher" in college who they perceived to be "effective." Thus, the phenomenon of teacher effectiveness was not discovered from an a priori framework, but rather from particular communities (students) speaking about particular situations (effective teaching). Teacher effectiveness in this examination is defined in terms of teacher processes whereby a number of teacher behaviors/communication and characteristics are thought to significantly interact, influence, promote, and support each other within an overall system.

3.4 Procedures

During this project, Nominal Group Technique involved the following steps: (1) presentation of a triggering question that was provided two weeks prior to the workshop in a questionnaire, (2) silent generation of ideas in writing by each student in response to an open-ended questionnaire, (3) display of ideas collected from the group on surrounding walls, (4) serial discussion of the generated ideas that allowed clarification and editing of ideas, and (5) selection by the participants of the more important items through a voting process. The workshop began with the context statement that the facilitator read to participants as follows:

In today's U.S. classrooms, it is increasingly necessary to understand how teacher verbal and nonverbal behaviors and characteristics of a teacher contribute to teacher effectiveness. Many academic institutions have recognized the need for training that helps teachers promote their effectiveness, but many of these programs do not allow sufficient time for students to voice and examine many of the critical issues involved, and participants are often not able to fully share their experiences and views. This workshop is designed to allow students an opportunity to examine a wide range of factors that are important for the establishment of teacher effectiveness, and it will help students explore how these factors influence one another.

After the facilitator provided participants with a clear overview and objectives for the

day's activities, the facilitator recapitulated the "triggering question" as following:

Imagining a *best teacher* who you also perceive to be your most *effective teacher* you have ever had in college (in your home culture), answer the following questions:

(1) What are all the teacher characteristics that you associate with this teacher?

(2) What are the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that you associate with this teacher?

Since the focus of the study was to determine more precisely the role of verbal and nonverbal immediacy in effective teaching, all behaviors associated the construct of verbal immediacy (Gorham, 1988) and nonverbal immediacy (Richmond, Gorham and McCroskey, 1987) as U.S. derived were displayed on butcher-block paper and placed on the walls during the workshop. Students in both groups were able to select their preferences among the immediacy behaviors during the workshop.

After the idea generation phase, students were asked to place items in appropriate categories based on emergent themes and extant research. When items did not fit an extant category, the process was open to a new emergent category. Notably, Nassbaum's (1992) comprehensive review of literature concerning effective teachers, which included one thousand studies gathered from 1983 to 1990, was used as a basis for developing categories in the current study which included the following extant categories: immediacy behaviors (verbal and nonverbal), clarity characteristics, relational characteristics, organization and class control characteristics, affective characteristics, skill characteristics, personal characteristics, knowledge characteristics, goal and outcome characteristics (Nussbaum, 1992).

Next, the workshop was devoted to steps involved in Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM). In this phase, students were asked to make pair-wise comparisons between highly desirable teacher behaviors and characteristics using the contextual relationship: "In the context of imaging your best and most effective college instructor in your country, does: …A significantly promote B?" Through discussion, the students were asked to provide a rationale for a "yes" vote and "no" vote. Both groups of students spent approximately seven hours making judgments about the relationship between pairs of ideas, with ISM computer assistance.

The last hour was devoted to understanding, displaying and discussing the influence map, and amending ideas as desired by the participants. The group agreed on a majority vote rule when ambiguity surrounded an items' placement in the map. Thus, items were not viewed as static but rather in flux in relation to members' meanings.

4. Results

Two workshops were held. "Workshop One" included U.S. students and "Workshop Two" included Japanese students. The first research question inquires about the types of immediacy behaviors and teacher characteristics that promote student perceptions of teacher effectiveness within the U.S. culture. The U.S. group generated 120 items in response to this question. The second research question is identical but inquires for a Japanese perspective. Japanese students generated 124 items. Priority selections for the U.S. group are featured in Appendix A and priority selections for the Japanese Group are featured in Appendix B. These items reflect each group's perceptions of the major contributors in the promotion of teacher effectiveness.

Research questions three and four inquire about the saliency, influence, interrelationship, and support among elements involved in teacher effectiveness for each cultural group. U.S. students structured 39 of the 120 items in their influence map. Japanese students structured 33 of the 124 items they generated. The influence maps are illustrated in Appendix C for the U.S. students, and Appendix D for the Japanese students. The maps represent the interrelationship among elements using the relational question: "significantly promotes."

The influence maps featured in Appendices C and D should be read from bottom to top, with the elements at the base of the structure exerting the majority of influence to the remaining items in the structure. The arrows identify the direction of positive influence and relationship among items. Arrows connect elements that receive the most immediate support. The letters next to each item identify it in terms of category. Boxes around elements indicate a cycle, which suggests that elements are related and have the same degree of influence within the influence map. Elements toward the top of the influence map receive support from all elements preceding them if an arrow connects them. The numbers are included for identification purposes only and do not indicate priority or weight. The influence maps are referred to as the "Supportive Cultivation of Teacher Effectiveness" for each culture and the specific findings for U.S. and Japan are discussed below.

4.1 Findings from U.S. Group's Supportive Cultivation Map of Teacher Effectiveness

The U.S. Supportive Cultivation Influence Map featured in Appendix C revealed several important findings. The structural analysis indicated that there are three lines of influence affecting the structure. Distinct paths with high priority selections followed from Knowledge Characteristics (Category E) and Verbal Immediacy Behaviors (Category A). Although Skill (Category J) was not as influential as the above mentioned categories in the map, one element (J-85)—"Keeping the class interesting" came from this category at the base of the structure and defined the third path of influence.

A total of nine verbal immediacy items appeared in the map with three verbal immediacy items observed in the first stage. The three verbal immediacy items located at stage one extended influence to a total of 29 other supportive elements and involved teacher praise, student feedback and answer solicitation. Thus, 74% of the remaining items on the map were supported by these three items, which accounted for a significant percentage of the total support in the cultivation of teacher effectiveness. Also, five items from the Knowledge Category appeared in stage one and are reflected in three separate cycles. Qualitative differences emerged in the knowledge category since separate cycles were found. The first cycle associated with teachers who keep abreast of topics they teach, and who are proficient in their subject area and influenced 23 items on the map, meaning that 59% of the remaining items on the map were supported by this cycle. The second cycle indicated that U.S. students valued teachers who have acquired experience outside of the academic setting and extended influence to a total of 16 other items, meaning that this item influenced 41% of the remaining items. The third cycle indicated that students valued teachers who have proficiencies in teaching styles and influenced a total of 16 other items, meaning that 41% of the remaining items were influenced by this cycle. After these categories and specific items are considered, other categories located further up in the influence map should be addressed.

Items located at the top of the structure received a high degree of support in the overall system and most notable associated with Affective Characteristics (Category H). Relational Characteristics (Category I) and Organization/Class Control Characteristics (Category D) were also supported significantly but to a lesser extent.

4.2 Findings from Japanese Group's Supportive Cultivation Map of Teacher Effectiveness

The Japanese Supportive Cultivation Influence Map featured in Appendix D revealed several important findings. Two distinct paths of influence were noted that followed from two items involved with Knowledge Characteristics (Category E). Thus, the knowledge category provided the majority of support to the remaining elements in the structure. Specifically, "Having knowledge in many different areas" (E-25), which is located at stage one extended influence to a total of 29 other supportive elements. Thus, this single item supported 88% of the remaining items on the map. Also, "Having real-world experience outside of the class" (E-111), exerted support to 85% of the remaining items on the map. Important, but to a lesser extent than knowledge, Skill (Category J) was presented at the base of the structure and included items "Using time well," (J-26) and "Having adequate teaching ability and/or communicative skill," (J-26), which provided support to a significant number of elements in the structure.

In the assessment immediacy behaviors, seven verbal immediacy and two nonverbal immediacy behaviors were structured in the influence map. Thus, verbal immediacy had more significance in the overall system. The verbal immediacy item that received high priority related to teacher feedback. In terms of nonverbal immediacy, eye contact was important. The teacher characteristics that received a high degree of support within the system included the large cycle of 10 items found in stage seven. Thus, the structural analysis of the Japanese Supportive Cultivation Map showed that the categories titled Affective, Clarity, and Goal/Outcome received a high degree of support within the overall system.

5. Discussion

Considerable research in the cross-cultural communication field calls for alternative research methods that use alternative paradigms to understand cultural phenomena (Carbaugh, 1990; Hecht, 1993; Martin & Nakayama, 2000; Zhang, & Oetzel, 2006). Also, researchers (Shuter, 1998) stress that more work should investigate cultures using rich descriptions akin to earlier research studies (e.g. Hall, 1966). Because of the systematic and integrative nature of group problem solving, NGT and ISM offered powerful methodologies for exploring student's rich descriptions of teacher behaviors and characteristics following a systems approach. The findings reveal what teacher behaviors and characteristics promote, influence, cultivate, and support student perceptions of teacher effectiveness. This study supports the concept that culture shapes preferences for teacher effectiveness in both United States and Japanese students.

5.1 Discussion of Findings for U.S. Students

The base of the U.S. influence map points to knowledge characteristics and verbal immediacy as the categories that exerted the highest influence on all other categories. Specifically, in the eyes of students, teachers with applied backgrounds were preferred over teachers who had primarily an academic background. Students expressed that teachers with these backgrounds effectively translated course concepts into to real world applications. Also, U.S. students emphasized preferences for teachers who have been trained both in their subject area as well as in instructional pedagogy. These findings indicate that teachers' mastery and experience within their subject area are not sufficient for their students. Students in the current study explained that their effective teachers understood "effective teaching practices" and applied them in the class. Students expressed a strong desire for teachers to receive ongoing training in effective teaching. Interestingly, the majority of U.S. academic institutions have mandated student evaluations as a

means of determining teacher performance. This institutionalized practice may work as a reminder for students to value not only what is being taught but also how they are taught.

Interestingly, the knowledge characteristic category directly influenced elements in the teacher verbal immediacy category. U.S. students' preferences for verbal immediacy were not surprising, given that verbal immediacy is a U.S. originated construct. The United States is an individualistic culture whose members prize verbal communication over nonverbal communication because of the heterogeneous nature of the culture (Hostede, 1980). Also, U.S. culture is affiliated with competition, uniqueness and individuality. The immediacy priority selections, such as praising an individual student and giving feedback on an individual's work focus on individual level rather than group level teacher responses. These elements support individualistic identity, low power distance, and contact orientation affiliated with dominant U.S cultural values. U.S. students in the current study stated that their preferences of verbal immediacy over nonverbal immediacy were due to the concrete and direct nature of verbal immediacy. They explained that the meanings associated with nonverbal immediacy messages are more difficult to interpret across teachers especially in light of cultural differences between them and their teachers. Research by Smythe and Hess (2005) supports this finding as they found a discrepancy and insignificant relationship between student reports and coded observations of teacher nonverbal immediacy. Also, students in the current study expressed a desire for a democratic relationship with their teachers and that verbal immediacy expressions supported this relationship. Verbal immediacy actions signal a reduction of physical and psychological distance and communicate warmth, approach, and availability for communication (Andersen & Wang, 2006). These qualities are consistent with individuals operating at low power distance (Hofstede, 1980). Cultures with low power distance encourage expressions that reveal a reduction of distance.

Another notable example of verbal immediacy in the study was humor. Given that the United States is a society that prizes not only individualism but also entertainment, this finding was not surprising. For U.S. students, the expectation and desire of an interesting class promoted a teacher's use of humor. A teacher's use of humor subsequently supported creativity in teaching and ultimately supported the affective component associated with teacher effectiveness. Wanzer and Frymier (1999) reasoned "students may pay more attention and be more willing to attend class when humor is used regularly in the classroom. Using humor to present information may make the content more memorable, helping students to retain more information" (p. 58). Additionally, Appendix A includes all top priority selections in verbal and nonverbal immediacy.

The path of influence leading from items associated with verbal immediacy and knowledge categories affected numerous teacher characteristics and behaviors; however, the plurality of items they supported concerned a teacher's expression of affect toward students and the subject being taught. These findings are in alignment with Andersen's (1979) work that indicated the existence of an immediacy-affective relationship. While support was found for this relationship in the current study, the findings indicate that the relationship is significantly more complex than Andersen (1979) had initially conceived, since the current study provides evidence that immediacy interplays with a variety of teacher communication and characteristics to ultimately support the immediacy-affective relationship.

5.2 Discussion of Findings for Japanese Students

Turning to the influence map generated by Japanese students, it was necessary to couch the findings in reference to the Japanese culture, which has roots in Confucian-based collectivism (McDaniel, 2006). In fact, Confucian principles have existed for hundreds of years in Japan and are embodied in the Japanese educational ideology (Yum, 1997). Due to the historical influence of Confucian philosophy in Japanese education, it is not surprising that Japanese students structured the knowledge category with high priority at the base of the influence map. One of the four principles of Confucianism includes chih (wisdom or a liberal education), which relates to knowledge (Yum, 1997). According to Chen and Chung (1997) "the perfectibility and educability of human beings is central to Confucian thinking" (p. 322). The Confucian emphasis on education functions as a great asset in the economic prosperity and modernization of Japan (Chen and Chung, 1997). In the context of Confucian traditions, wisdom, knowledge, and the role of a teacher are held in high regard since they have a significant impact on the benefit of the collective culture (Myers, Zhong, Guan, 1998). The influence map generated by the Japanese students supports these concepts.

Additionally, Japanese students emphasized several items from the skill category, which were structured with high priority in the overall influence map. Japanese students perceived that their best teacher expressed strong communication skills, teaching skills, and time management skills. Several of the skill characteristics supported Japanese cultural themes described by McDaniels (2006). For example, time is highly valued in Japan so formality to time protocol is expected (Andersen & Wang, 2006). According to the Japanese students, being skillful is woven into the fabric of Confucian-based teachings.

The influence map corresponding to the Japanese group included only a few nonverbal immediacy elements. This finding is in alignment with the noncontact orientation and high power distance dimension, which are affiliated with Japanese and other Asian cultures (Andersen & Wang, 2006). Japanese students in the current study provided their explanation that the U.S. concept of nonverbal immediacy is not part of the behavioral nonverbal repertoire used by

Japanese teachers. This finding is consistent with McDaniel's (2006) comprehensive study of Japanese nonverbal cultural themes since her study also lacked inclusion for nonverbal immediacy. Students explained that interpersonal touch, excessive movement, close distance and forms of gaze are inappropriate expressions for Japanese teachers. Thus, researchers who make assertions that Japanese have inclinations toward nonverbal behaviors such as U.S. delineated nonverbal immediacy based on Hall's (1966) classification of high context cultures should proceed with caution, since preferences for nonverbal immediacy may likely be superceded by preferences for culturally commensurable types of nonverbal behaviors.

While verbal immediacy preferences were markedly higher than nonverbal immediacy preferences, Japanese students ascribed different meanings to many of the verbal immediacy items they selected. This finding indicates that Japanese conceptualization of teacher immediacy may likely be different from the U.S. perspective. Interestingly, Japanese students described immediacy in their culture to function similar to instructional, relational, and personal dimensions that were described by Zhang & Oetzel (2006) in their emic examination of immediacy from a Chinese perspective. Japanese students described an immediate teacher to be one who cared for their moral, personal, and instructional development. Again, this ties in with Confucian-based collectivism since the development of the whole person is of value in Japan. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to point out that several verbal immediacy items were structured with priority in the map, which indicates that these behaviors, while they may mean something other than immediacy, are significant in the cultivation of teacher effectiveness in Japanese students' eyes.

Although Japan is identified to be high in power distance, Japanese students' influence map revealed students had preferences for teachers who reduce power distance with their students. Japanese students suggested that while it is atypical for teachers to violate the authority norms, they enjoy it when teachers do so with communication acts that convey closeness, care and connectedness within the instructional setting. Expectancy violation theory (Burgoon, 1978) could potentially be used to understand these effects since in several instances violations of norms have been found to ensue positive outcomes. Viewed collectively, the influence map indicated that Japanese students valued several teacher behaviors and characteristics that have been stereotypically associated with popular forms of expression utilized in the West. An explanation for this finding may be that in present day Japan, Japanese are expressing a stronger desire for Western style and/or individualistic forms of communication. In fact, Yum (1997) suggested "there have been substantial changes in the Asian societies since World War II. There has been an irrepressible influx of Western values; imported films and television programs are ubiquitous" (p. 87). In Japan, the co-existence of strong Confucian-based collectivism with new-age individualism should be expected if one accepts the premise that cultures are not static but dynamic. Triandis (1995) suggested that across cultures the self expresses both individualist and collectivist values to unique degrees. Thus, it is not surprising that amid rapid societal and progressive technological changes, Japanese students valued teacher communication that supported collectivistic expressions as well as individualistic expressions. Teacher behaviors and characteristics influenced a number of categories in the map; however, the plurality of elements structured in the map supported affective teacher characteristics foremost and clarity characteristics to a lesser extent. Japanese students explained that Japanese teachers support affective relationships with their students because they care about developing students into fine example Japanese citizens. Additionally, affective characteristics are important in rapport building. Building social rapport is woven into the fabric of Japanese culture and tradition as well, which is a collectivistic value. Students explained that just as rapport building is necessary in Japanese business transactions, rapport building is essential to the teacher-student relationship.

Additionally, the importance of the clarity category can be understood when one explores Japanese system rote memorization. The Asian assessment tasks reported in Baumgart and Halse's (1999) study "revealed the necessity for an extensive knowledge base but, in addition, demanded challenging skills in interpretation, translation, application and analysis" (p. 329). More precisely, the finding that clarification is necessary in the context of instruction in Japan may be suggestive of the possibility that learning from the approach of rote memorization in Asian societies requires a rich and deep understanding, so teacher behaviors and characteristics that support teacher clarity are valued.

In summary, the inclusion of elements in the map can be understood in light of the Confucian-based Japanese culture. The systems approach exploration of teacher effectiveness in Japan revealed that a host of teacher elements is responsible for student perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

5.3 Implications, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

It is not sufficient to assume that particular teacher behaviors or characteristics alone shape notions of teacher effectiveness. Consequently, the relative importance of teacher behaviors and characteristics in relation to each other is informative given the complex and dynamic nature of this phenomenon. In this study, the structural analyses produced through NGT and by ISM do not only provide systems for understanding teacher effectiveness, but also they establish a mechanism for understanding immediacy behaviors within systems. The study sets a foundation for understanding 'how' teacher effectiveness is supported through antecedent and succedent elements within an overall system that supports positive teacher outcomes.

Comparisons between the cultural groups were beyond the scope of these preliminary emic qualitative studies; however, just as ethnographies can be compared across similar cultures when several ethnographies exist about a phenomenon, so can findings from consensus methodologies (e.g. influence maps) be compared when several of them have been performed (Broome & Keever, 1989). Also, Carbaugh (1990) described how cross-cultural comparisons of communication phenomena should be approached through movements between what is known generally and what is known specifically as follows: etic-1 to emic to etic-2. Carbaugh (1990) suggested that "The first such phase presents a general etic framework of the phenomenon, which grounds the study conceptually, providing an initial orienting definition of the phenomenon…" and continued by suggesting that "In the second phase, the studies apply the etic framework heuristically in particular situations and communities, in order to discover the nature of such phenomena, and rules for its use, in local systems" (p. 291). In the last phase, Carbaugh described that "Finally…what the local systems (emic orders) suggest generally about the phenomena under study, a movement from emic back to the etic…" (p. 291). The current study is a contribution to the Carbaugh's (1990) second phase, which is the emic phase. In order to develop a global perspective of teacher effectiveness, future research should proceed through Carbaugh's (1990) three sequence approach.

This study presented only two cultural groups' qualitative notions of teacher effectiveness; however, cross-cultural instructional scholars can benefit from an increased qualitative understanding of teacher effectiveness from an emic perspective of other cultures. In light of diverse student populations present in classrooms, teachers who are open to adopting a variety of approaches may enhance their ability to be effective with disparate learners. Although this research did not examine individual teacher behaviors and/or characteristics in depth an important purpose was to provide an impetus for future research in this area. A recent study by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk and Smith (2006) provides an excellent example of the types of research that can spawn from the current research. Their study distinguished between appropriate and inappropriate types of humor within the U.S. instructional context. The study set forth rich descriptions of humor across category types. Along these lines, validating emic teacher immediacy scales within particular cultures is necessary so that teacher effectiveness can be assessed appropriately (Zang & Oetzel, 2006). It was clear from the current study that immediacy behaviors in both verbal and nonverbal forms are not commensurable with the Japanese conceptualization of immediacy. Even more important, several immediacy behaviors are inappropriate for Japanese teachers to express. Interestingly, substantial support was found for verbal immediacy for both cultural groups, which should raise concerns over past research that has discouraged its assessment. A systems understanding of teacher communication is important, but an equally important area for scholars in future research is discovering emic meanings associated with particularly important teacher elements within cultures.

When teacher effectiveness research is advanced from a global perspective that encompasses an understanding of stylistic differences from a variety of instructional approaches in contrast to a single instructional approach, then teachers will be able to tap into new terrains of teacher effectiveness that may be cross-culturally useful. A global understanding of teacher effectiveness is important given that U.S. educators have been overly dismissive of the strategies and practices of teachers from different countries particularly since the practices are linked to different value orientations (Stefani, 1997). This is not to suggest a complete transformation of teacher approaches, but rather a creative blending of a variety of approaches that may likely benefit students from disparate cultures. Finally, the study has important implications for teachers since both groups expressed preferences for teachers who continuously learn about best teaching practices, theories, skills and behaviors. Teacher training and development seem to be linked to teacher effectiveness.

6. Conclusion

This study provides a new insight into the emic nature of teacher effectiveness with special consideration to the role of immediacy within two cultural groups from the U.S. and Japan. Future research should burgeon with the new conceptualization of teacher effectiveness set forth by this study to explore this phenomenon holistically.

Although analysis of all the items generated for this study was beyond the scope of the present article, analysis of the relatively more important elements should be the focus of future research. When this type of analysis is performed, an increased cultural understanding about notions of teacher effectiveness within several cultural groups is far more likely to develop.

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Appendix A.

Summary of U.S. Student's Categories and Priority Items for Each Category

Categories	Examples
A - Verbal Immediacy	Providing feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc. [15]
	Asking of questions or encouraging students to talk [4]
	Praising students' work, actions, or comments [6]
	Using personal examples or talking about experiences she/he has had outside of class [1]
	Using humor in class [13]
	Getting into conversations with individual students before or after class [3]
	Addressing students by name [12]
	Getting into discussions based on something a student brought up even when it didn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan [7]
	Asking how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topic [10]
B - Nonverbal Immediacy	Using a variety of vocal expressions while talking to the class [21]
C - Goal & Outcome	Stimulating the thinking of students beyond the obvious [36]
	Showing sincere interest in student progress [83]
D - Organization & Class Control	Being well prepared for class [104]
	Establishing, goals, guidelines, policies, and procedures for the class [110]
	Being organized [92]
	Creating a safe environment where students can share their thoughts and idea [116]
E - Knowledge	Having knowledge from real-world experiences outside of class [119]
	Being proficient and exhibiting complete knowledge of the subject [60]
	Being adequately trained in the field of teaching [28]
	Having Proficiencies in teaching styles [80]
	Knowing and teaching up-to-date information [117]
F - Clarity	Being proficient and coherent in the English language [54]
	Being able to explain difficult concepts in a clear manner [87]
G - Personal	Being fair [101]
	Being trustworthy and reliable [44]
	Being an best listener [91]
	Showing respect to students [72]
H - Affective	Understanding of students' lives, problems, and special circumstances [32]
	Possessing vigor and excitement about the subject and cultivating the interest and excitement to the students [67]
	Willing to take extra effort for students [57]
	Possessing enthusiasm toward the subject [78]
	Showing compassion, concern and consideration to students [111]
	Showing an interest and care in the subject & the students they teach [84]
I - Relational	Being very personable and approachable to students [76]
	Promoting students interaction [109]
J - Skill	Keeping the class interesting [85]
	Being creative in teaching [90]
	Being able to communicate best [51]
	Possessing leadership skills [88]

Appendix B.

Summary of Japanese Student's Categories and Priority Items for Each Category

Categories	Examples

A - Verbal Immediacy

Providing feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc. (15)

Getting into conversations with individual students before or after class (3)

Inviting students to telephone or meet with him/her outside of class if they had questions or wanted to discuss something (14)

Using humor in class (13)

Using personal example or talking about experiences she/he has had outside of class (1)

Asking of questions or encouraging students to talk (4)

Asking questions that solicited viewpoints or opinions (11)

B – Nonverbal Immediacy   Looking at the class a lot while teaching (19)

Using a variety of vocal expression while talking to the class (21)

C - Goal & Outcome   Getting students to think by themselves (103)

Motivating students to learn (121)

Establishing students' interest in studying (109)

D - Organization &   Creating a good structure and organization to class (117)

Class Control

E - Knowledge   Having knowledge in many different areas (25)

Having real-world experience outside of the class (111)

Having proficiencies in teaching and teaching styles (35)

Having adequate teaching ability and/or communicative skills (26)

Having a good understanding of the material being taught (44)

F - Clarity   Teach step by step so that it is easy for students to follow (93)

Checking if students can understand material or not (119)

Establishing clear messages (61)

G - Personal   Being fair (31)

Being unique (27)

H - Affective   Being encouraging and supportive of students (83)

Willing to help students (33)

Showing an enjoyment toward teaching (67)

Possessing a positive attitude and behavior (85)

Showing interest in students' opinions (82)

Understanding students' personal problems and concerns (88)

J - Skill   Using time well (116)

Providing course material with examples to everyday life (81)

Having a lecture skill that catches students' attention in class (95)

Appendix C.

U.S. Students' Supportive Cultivation Map

- Being well prepared for class (D-104)
- Possessing enthusiasm toward the subject (H-84)
- Asking how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topic (A-10)
- Being adequately trained in the field of teaching (E-28)
- Being proficient and coherent in English (F-54)
- Having proficiencies in teaching styles (E-80)
- Being organized (D-92)
- Getting into discussions based on something a student brought up even when it didn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan (A-7)
- Being trustworthy and reliable (G-44)
- Being fair (G-101)
- Possessing leadership skills (J-88)
- Stimulating the thinking of students beyond the obvious (C-36)
- Showing sincere interest in student progress (C-83)
- Showing an interest and care in the subject and the students they teach (H-78)
- Showing compassion, concern and consideration to students (H-111)
- Being able to communicate effectively (J-51)
- Being very personable and approachable to students (I-76)
- Using a variety of vocal expression while talking to the class (B-21)
- Establishing goals, guidelines, policies, and procedures for the class (D-110)
- Using students name (A-12)
- Being able to explain difficult concepts clearly (F-87)
- Providing feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc. (A-15)
- Asking of questions or encouraging students to talk (A-4)
- Showing respect to students (G-72)
- Praising students' work, actions, or comments (A-6)
- Being proficient and exhibiting complete knowledge of the subject (E-60)
- Knowing and teaching up-to-date information (E-117)
- Creating a safe environment where students can share their thoughts and ideas (D-116)
- Being an effective listener (G-91)
- Willing to take extra effort students (H57)
- Getting into conversations with individual students before or after class (A-3)
- Understanding of students' lives, problems, and special circumstances (H-32)
- Promoting student interaction (I-109)
- Possessing vigor & excitement about the subject & cultivating the interest and excitement to the students (H-67)
- Using personal examples or talking about experiences she/he has had outside of class (A-1)
- Having knowledge from real-world experience outside of class (E-119)
- Being creative in teaching (J-90)
- Using humor in class (A-13)
- Keeping the class interesting (J-85)

Appendix D.

Japanese Students' Supportive Cultivation Map

Applying SF-based Genre Approaches to English Writing Class

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Abstract

By exploring genre approaches in systemic functional linguistics and examining the analytic tools that can be applied to the process of English learning and teaching, this paper seeks to find a way of applying genre approaches to English writing class.

Keywords: Systemic functional linguistics, Genre-based approach, Context of culture, Schematic structure, Context of situation, Field, Tenor, Mode

1. Introduction

Genre-based approach has been widely adopted in language teaching and researching. In referencing to Coffin (2001, pp. 108-113) and Hammond and Derewianka (2001, chap. 27), genre-based approach is discussed mainly from three perspectives: English for Specific Purposes (ESP), New Rhetoric studies and systemic functional linguistics. ESP mainly concerns with equipping the target group of language learners with the form of language in need (Swales, 1990a; A. Johns, 1991; Bhatia, 1993; Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998; cited in Hammond & Derewianka, 2001, p. 186). New Rhetoric studies take a primary concern on the relations between text and context and it considers genre a way to accomplish social actions or purposes (Coffin, 2001, p. 111; Hammond & Derewianka, 2001, pp.186-187). The study of Genre-based approach in this paper is discussed from a systemic functional perspective.

2. Examining Genre-based Approach from a Systemic Functional Perspective

2.1 The outline of systemic functional linguistics

Systemic functional linguistics is mainly aimed at solving problems confronted language users (Coffin, 2001, p. 94). It attempts to enable language users to learn and use language proficiently in social situations. Just as Coffin (2001) summarizes, systemic functional linguistics mainly focus on "the social and culture role of language" (p. 94). Compared with other linguistic schools, there are some distinguishing features of systemic functional linguistics. As mentioned by Martin (2001, p. 151), systemic functional linguistics holds a primary concern on the choices of language. In other words, language is considered as sets of choices from which speakers make choices to convey different meanings; Second, systemic functional linguistics focuses on the relation between language and context. Malinowski (as cited in Knapp & Watkins, 1994, p. 4) used the terms 'the context of culture' to refer to 'beliefs', 'values' and 'attitudes' of language users; and used the term 'the context of situation' to refer to the 'immediate' language circumstances. Christine and Unsworth (2000, p. 2) noted three distinctive features of systemic functional linguistics. First, systemic functional linguistics concentrates on three major functions of language: 'ideational' or 'experiential' function applied to represent experience; 'interpersonal' function applied to maintain and build relationships between people; 'textual' function applied to combine the sentences and clauses into a cohesive text. Second, language is taken as sets of choices of meaning. Thirdly, systemic functional linguistics takes the study of the whole text as an object. Coffin (2001, pp. 94-96) mentioned that systemic functional linguistics approach deals with both the spoken and written language; sentences, clauses and text.

To sum up, systemic functional linguistics has provided a broad perspective on language. Language is served as resources consisting of potential meanings from which language users can make choices and turn out functional texts in terms of different contexts.

2.2 What is Genre?

In terms of the context genre embedded and the text types it produces, the term *genre* can be explored from three aspects. First, genre is a social process. It is a kind of social activity following some sequenced stages, in which language is used and composed into spoken or written texts. The form of the texts can be either formal or informal; either standard or non-standard, in terms of the contexts embedded. Second, genre-based possesses a certain purpose or goal. People use genre approach to achieve a goal or accomplish a purpose in social activities. For example, the genre used in a sales encounter is used to sell or buy something. Third, the schematic structure of genre is dynamic rather than statistic. Genre is a social activity; it differs in accordance with the social contexts, including the context of situation

and the context of culture. It is changing horizontally as well as transversely. By horizontal change, it mean it is changing in conformity with values, beliefs, ideologies and habits of peoples from different cultural backgrounds. By transverse change, It means it is changing with the progressing of the times. For example, the development of technology usually leads to new genres; such as the invention of telephone make the verbal texts available on telephone. However, it does not mean that genre cannot be taught and the teaching of genre is unnecessary. As Knapp and Watkins (1994, p. 20) explained, genres are 'relatively' stable in social interaction and it is proved and shown that text types including report, exposition, explanation and debate are essential for school students learn and compose texts.

3. SF-Based Genre Approach in Language Learning and Teaching

SF-based genre approach has developed analytic tools to help language learning as well as language teaching. It examines the surface structure of a text by following the schematic structures of a text and also it can look into the inner structure of the text by analyzing the register variables (field, tenor and mode) of a text (Burns, 2001, p. 126).

Schematic structure (or generic structure) is valuable in working out the overall structure of a particular text. By learning the schematic structure of a text, students can become a good controller over different text types. Knapp and Watkins (1994, chap. 1) have developed a Teaching and Learning model based on SF-based genre approach. There are three stages in this teaching and learning process: Stage 1 aims to connect students' experiential knowledge with the language of writing. Stage 2 aims to expose the students to the generic structure of a particular text. Stage 3 aims to help the students with the grammar involved. In addition, Hammond (as cited in Burns, 2001, p. 202) has modeled a Teaching-learning circle to demonstrate how genre can be applied in teaching and learning process. There are also three stages to follow: Stage 1 involves modeling the generic structure of the model text. Stage 2 involves the joint efforts of a teacher and students to work out another text with the same genre. Stage 3 involves students' individual work and the teacher and learners editing (Burns, 2001, p. 202).

Another analytical tool in SF approach is based on the analysis of register variables. Knapp and Watkins (1994) defined, "register is a term for understanding how the variable elements of the context of situation (what/ field, who/tenor, how/mode) affect the form and meaning of a text" (p.12). Therefore, by valuing the context of situation through register analysis, we are able to get the particular functional genre in a particular culture. Chrisitie and Unsworth (2000, p. 13) drew a table that showed clearly the relationship between genre, register and language. It was illustrated that Genre is realized by combination of different values of the register variables. The register variables are realized by language. Language is the means by which we 'read' both register and genre (p. 13). The variables of register, field, tenor and mode, are defined by Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks and Yallop (2000) as follows:

Field: what is to be talked or written about, the long and short goals of the text;

Tenor: the relationship between the speaker and hearer (or, of course, writer and reader);

Mode: the kind of text that is being made. (p. 5)

These three variables of the context of situation are correspondent with the three metafunctions of language and will influence the form and meaning of the text. As Gerot (1995, p. 38) noted, field tenor and mode, respectively influences experiential meanings, interpersonal meanings and the textual meanings.

In addition to the context of situation, another aspect of the context-context of culture may also influence the form and meaning of a text. Gerot and Wignell (1994) explore it from three aspects: "being ('who we are'), doing ('what we do') [and] saying ('what we say')" (p. 10). For example, if you are a college teacher in china, the being of a Chinese teacher determines what you do and what you say. You are not expected to act as a foreign teacher. We hold the different values. You are respected by your students and most time you are a problem-solver and a knowledge-conveyer. While in western countries, a teacher can encourage the students to work out the problems on their own.

To draw a conclusion, SF-based genre approach has provided language teachers and language learners with an overall and a specific view to texts. It can work as a problem-solver to facilitate language learners to overcome the problems in learning. And it can work as a good assistant; teachers can use it to work out an effective teaching model.

4. Applying a SF-Based Genre Approach to Teaching Practice

4.1 Outline of This Course

This course is a common-core college English course. It is attempting to improve students' English skills, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is a basic language skill required in language learning. This paper is aimed to explore genre-based approach in teaching narrative.

4.2 Pre-lesson work

Before the lesson, a research was conducted on the generic structure of a narrative. Based on the analysis of several narrative texts, in referencing to the book of Butt et al. (2000, p.11), the generic structure of a narrative is as follows:

Orientation: Tell the readers about who was involved and where it was happened?

Complication: What was happened and the evaluation of the problem or crisis that contended in the   event?

Evaluation: What are the evaluations of the people involved in this event?

Resolution: How the problem or crisis was settled down and resumed to normal?

After that, an authentic text was selceted to serve as the model text in teaching. And the criterion for selecting is to see whether the text has a clear generic structure, the cohesion of the text, the language of the text and it should be of much interest.

4.3 Teaching narrative writing in class

The teaching was conducted through several stages: first, made the students clear about what is the function of writing a narrative. Second, lead the students to learn about the generic structure of a narrative and the lexico-grammar used in a narrative. Thirdly, asked the students to write about one of the unforgettable events happened in their life. This is not a straightforward task. Before they start to write their individual essay, they were asked to do several exercises to generate their ideas on what to write and how to organize the essay. Finally, the students composed their own essay. And after that, an assessment was carried out on their essays. Now the teaching is demonstrated into four steps.

Step 1: Model text:

Bicycle Adventure (C)

When I was a little girl, I rode my bicycle every afternoon. My bike was blue and shiny. I loved to ride it round my neighborhood after school. I spend an hour on it before going home every night. One day I met my sister, and we decided to ride to a new place. My sister was much more daring than I was. She was also stronger and more confident. We took our bikes to the hill in our neighborhood. My sister said she wanted to ride fast. I didn't think the hill was steep, so I agreed. I was excited to be going somewhere new. When we begin to ride, I discovered that the brakes on my bike didn't work. I squeezed and squeezed on the brakes, but the bike went faster, not slower. How did I know my brakes didn't work? I started to panic. My sister was laughing and shouting. She pretended that she was riding a horse. I crashed at the bottom of the hill. My bike hit a rock, and the front wheel turned. I fell to the ground. My leg got caught in the bike. My sister fell on the top of me. She was right behind me, yelling at her horse. My sister, her bike-horse, my bike, and I were in a pile at the bottom of the hill. I will never forget that day. I broke my leg, and my sister hurt her arm. When I got home from the hospital, my sister drew on my cast. She drew a horse that said "Sorry!" (Pike-Baky & Blass, 2001, pp. 19-20)

Questions for students to think:

Q 1. Who were involved in the text?

Q 2. What was happened to them?

Q 3. What did the narrator think about their experience?

Q 4. How did the problem be solved?

By asking these four questions above, students are able to get access to the stages of writing a narrative. The stages incorporated the content of the text are as follows:

S1.Orientation: *who, where?*	*"my sister" and "I"* *"One day I met my sister, and we decided to ride to a new place."*
S2 Complication: *What was happened?* *What were the problems or crisis in the event*?	"We" rode in the hill. The brakes on "my" bike didn't work. I was injured.
S3. Evaluations	"I will never forget that day."
S4. Resolutions	"I" was sent to the hospital. "My" sister apologized to "me".

Since the stages of composing a narrative can be changed, the teacher can draw the attention of the students to see the changes of stages and the effects of changing.

First, the teacher can ask a question:

Do you think all the narratives are following the same stages? Can we make some changes to the order of the stages?

The potential answers should be:

No. Sometimes, there are some changes in the order.

Secondly, the teacher can convey to the students that how the sequence of stages can be changed, and what are the effects after changing.

We can organize an essay following the orders below:

Option 1: S3-S1-S2-S4

Option 2: S1-S2-S4-S3

Option 3: starting from stage 2

The first change may produce an attractive start. For example, you may start your essay like this: *I still remember the first lecture in university which is a turning point in my life.*

We can also change the order of stage 3 and stage 4. You can show your evaluation at the end of the text. It might convey to the reader the implication of the text. For example, you may end your writing like this: *Since then, I know that we should not too mean to forgive others.*

We may come across the third order in a detective novel. The writer often lays the problem or crisis at the initial of the novel to raise the interest of readers. Since the structure of the novel is much more complex, and novel writing demands an innovative idea and sometimes it involves many genres.

Step 2 study of lexico-grammar:

In order to lead to students to have an insight of the lexico-grammar used in a narrative. The teacher can prepare some exercises for the students to practice. You can mainly focus on the time expressions, including time words, phrases and clauses; and the simple past tense. In doing the exercises, students may come across some problems about the usage of the time expressions and the regular and irregular changing of verbs. The teacher can collect their problems and conduct the teaching concentrating on their problems.

Step 3 essay writing and assessment.

In this stage, students are required to write an unforgettable event happened in their life.

First, I set a brainstorming exercise to generate their idea of what to write. Ask the students, what kind of events will impress you a lot and you will remember forever?

The potential answers are: something very funny, sad, meaningful, miserable, scared, romantic, etc. Students are expected to offer more.

Second, I asked the students to discuss with partner how to compose their essay around the topics: what is the event you want to put down in you essay? What were the problems or crisis involved in this event? What were the solutions to them? What do you think or feel after this experience. While they are discussing the teacher can serve as a facilitator to help them clarify their ideas.

Finally, I asked students to compose their own essay individually. The teacher assesses their essays after they finish writing. The assessment will be conducted around two points: the generate structure of their essays and the lexico-grammar used in their essays.

5. Conclusion

To draw a brief conclusion, SF-based genre approaches provide language learners as well as teachers an overall view on learning and teaching language. I am expecting the feedback from my genre-based teaching class, hoping that my teaching experience can contribute more to the development of this genre-based approach.

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A Spreadsheet-Based Approach for Operations Research Teaching

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Abstract

This paper considers the use of spreadsheet for introducing students to a variety of quantitative models covered in an introductory Operations Research (OR) course at the University of Malaya, Malaysia. This approach allows students to develop skills in modeling as they learn to apply the various quantitative models in a spreadsheet. Indeed, imparting spreadsheet and modeling skills with OR skills will make students highly sought after in the modern workplace. This paper goes on to report on the experience in using spreadsheet in the Introductory OR course and students evaluations.

Keywords: Spreadsheet, Operations Research, University education

1. Introduction

The primary emphasis of a typical Operations Research (OR) course in the mid-to-late 1980s was on the theory and algebra of various solution algorithms, while the primary format was the traditional lectures. Modeling and empirical work i.e. real world problem solving received little attention. While the traditional lecture imparts factual knowledge, it did not develop the basic modeling skills of students, which will enable them to apply OR in the real-world. Cochran (2000) wrote that many students who had taken a traditional OR course complained that OR was not relevant and found that at the end of the course students were unable to recognize when application of the various operations research models was appropriate, how to formulate all but the simplest problems, or how to properly interpret the results of their analyses.

Using the spreadsheet approach in teaching OR has been strongly recommended as one of the ways to develop students modeling skills (Powell 1997a, 1998; Savage, 1997; Thiriez, 2001). The use of spreadsheet in OR teaching has gained general acceptance. There is evidence of movement in this direction. More OR text-books are being produced that address this approach to teaching. These books allow adopters to go beyond teaching theory and algorithms and provide students with practice of modeling management problems (for example, Managerial Decision Modeling with Spreadsheet, Balakrishnan et al., 2007). There are workshops on teaching OR using spreadsheet that share and debate teaching innovations around spreadsheet, where instructors have the opportunity to refresh their teaching skills (for example, INFORMS Annual Teaching of Management Science Workshop). Many articles on spreadsheet are written in high-visibility publications such as MS/OR Today and Interfaces (for example, Grossman 2003, 2006; Larry and Thomas, 2008; and Hesse and Scerno, 2009). Students are also demanding modeling and spreadsheet skills because they know that they need these practical skills to succeed in their jobs.

The next section provides the background of the introductory operations research course taught at the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University Malaya, Malaysia. The following section summarizes the aim of the OR course, its' underlying philosophy; how spreadsheet fits into that philosophy and the implications of using spreadsheet on the course design. This is followed by a section on the teaching approach taken to facilitate and enhance learning. The last section reviews the authors' experiences and students reactions to using spreadsheet in the introductory OR course. It also reflects on the design and planning of the introductory OR course using student evaluation measures.

2. Background

Introduction to Operations Research is a second-year undergraduate level elective course offered in the Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya. This course is offered through the Department of Applied Statistics and the author was assigned to teach the course for the first year. The students enrolled have economics background. A total of 52 students enrolled for this course in the 2004/05 session. Most of the students have taken no other OR courses, and the only common quantitative background they possess is a quantitative analysis course and a statistics course taken during the first year of the undergraduate programme. Initially their spreadsheet abilities vary greatly. Some students have already taken a course in spreadsheet and had some basic spreadsheet skills such as graphing and copying cells (but not model building); others had little or no experience of Excel.

Common topics included in the course are linear programming, PERT/CPM, inventory control, decision making, queueing theory and simulation. The course does not cover topics on regression, time series and forecasting because

they are covered in other courses in the area of statistics delivered by the department. The topics were selected because they are most frequently used in practice (Thomas and DaCosta, 1979; Fortuin and Zijlstra, 2000). Each topic addresses the theoretical underpinning of the models covered. The emphasis is on understanding key concepts rather than detail of a specific algorithm. The author decided to try a spreadsheet based approach. Thus, the course views the OR topics through the lens of Microsoft Excel. The course meets three times in a week for one hour each in a computer classroom. The computer classroom has an instructor's PC and 30 students PCs. Hence, the students have to pair up and share a computer.

3. A View of the OR Methodology and the Underlying Philosophy of the Course

The aim of the course is to expose the students to the OR methodology and techniques, and to provide students with an understanding of its role in decision-making and problem solving. The phases of OR methodology are summarized in Figure 1. It is viewed as a three-phase process, covering problem formulation, model development and implementation. Each of the phase consists of several steps focusing on particular aspects of the phase, and the various phases are connected by feedback loops, and the process is iterative in the sense that the analyst may backtrack and go back to earlier steps (Winston and Albright, 2001). The second stage of the methodology is considered to be the most important because this is where the students learn model building and using them. If the groundwork is laid here then the students will be able to apply their skills to find practical solutions to real-life problems. The second stage deserves a different approach than traditional OR courses offers. Traditional OR courses have focused primarily on models. Models are the approaches and methodologies, such as those of linear programming or queueing theory, that present ready-made models by which situations may be analysed (Morris, 1967). Morris (1967) wrote that "the teaching of modeling is not the same as the teaching of models". Rather than the details of individual ready-made models, the students should be provided with an understanding of the logic associated with model development. They must be taught how to think about OR problems. Models are no substitute for thought and deliberation (Pidd, 1999). By learning the essentials of modeling, students can then create their own models and solve new problems that are different from the ones they have seen. Then the properly educated student can use the modeling skills to improve their own decision making and that of their organizations. Thus, I like Pidd (1999) and Powell (1997b), consider the real technical heart of OR to be modeling. When I refer to modeling, I am referring to the fundamental activity of explicitly creating a simplified representation of reality in order to understand reality better and to change, manage and control it in some way or another.

Spreadsheet such as Excel supports the development of modeling skills. They allow the instructor to teach students to be active modelers, besides helping the instructor to make concepts more concrete. Recently, some OR instructors have begun using spreadsheet as the primary modeling vehicle for teaching the concepts and tools in an OR course. In fact, many regard the spreadsheet as an excellent teaching tool for modeling (see for example, Powell 1997a; Powell, 1998; Savage, 1997; Thiriez, 2001 and Balakrishnan et al., 2007). Savage (1977) has discussed the pros and cons of using spreadsheet modeling. He stated that a compelling reason for using spreadsheet is the fact that there are "thirty million spreadsheet users" and that "spreadsheet has overwhelmingly become the analytical vernacular". Today there are many products and spreadsheet add-ins for mathematical optimization, stochastic simulation and decision analysis, such as Solver, Crystal Ball, Tree Plan and others. These allows OR models to be put on spreadsheet and, thereby, facilitate the application of OR.

Also, I believe that the aim of OR is not primarily to find optimal solutions, but to provide insights for informed decision making. An optimal solution is optimal only with respect to the specific model being used to represent the real problem and the model parameters used. Such a solution becomes a reliable guide for action only after it has been verified as performing well for other reasonable representation of the problem and when the potential consequence of changes in model parameters are recognized. This gives increased emphasis to sensitivity and error analysis. The spreadsheet has the ability to support sensitivity analysis or "what if" analysis of all kinds (Vazsonyi, 1993; Bodily, 1986; Leon et al., 1996). The effects of any number of assumptions on costs, revenues, profits and resource availability can be calculated quickly. This enables the solution to be analysed from a decision makers' perspective. Also, the interpretation of the results of using spreadsheet is important and this should be given emphasis.

The design of the OR course was firmly based on these considerations. The emphasize was on spreadsheet modeling; to focus on model building and analysis of results, rather than the model types themselves, and to use active-learning methods in which the students are empowered to identify, model, analyse and solve problems themselves rather than passive model consuming.

4. The Teaching Approach

The teaching approach reflects five principles: first, it is led by OR examples; second, there is a stepwise progression of skills; thirdly, active learning is used; fourthly, a structured methodology is discussed along with technique and examples; and fifthly, user-friendly design is encouraged. The discussion of each of these follows.

4.1 Example-driven

Consistent with the philosophy of decision making and problem solving as an integral component of operations research, the course is taught using numerous realistic examples, many based on actual real-world problems (with modified data for illustrative purposes). The OR concepts and techniques, and the spreadsheet modeling concepts are illustrated with examples to provide a more meaningful and easier learning experience. Small problems are used to facilitate the learning process. This also allows solving by hand first before the spreadsheet solution is demonstrated. The examples are explained in a logical step-by-step fashion to guide the students, so that the students can subsequently emulate them in the homework problems. The actual computer output generated in solving the example problem is used to discuss the economic interpretation of the solution. The examples used are OR orientated and are across the curriculum: finance, marketing, operations, economics, and accounting. These examples show the variety of problems to which OR can be applied. They also demonstrate the relevance of OR in the real world and to other courses in the curriculum. Using real-world problems and using examples that relate to topics that the students have seen (or will see) elsewhere in the curriculum is considered to be one of the keys to the success of operations research (Winston, 1996; Powell, 1998).

4.2 Stepwise progression

The student modeler needs to acquire modeling skills that will be used in building and analysing any models, from the simplest to the most complex. Using spreadsheets such as Excel requires training in both the software and in modeling alongside the underlying OR techniques. The course does the training in progression. First, the students are introduced to the electronic spreadsheet and Excel. They are taught basic spreadsheet skills, such as the roles of label, value and formulae; how to use simple formulae; how to use various Excel functions, how to structure in blocks and copy formulae; how to distinguish between absolute and relative reference and how to create charts. At the next level, they are taught the basics of spreadsheet modeling, such as how to design a good spreadsheet (discussed in Section 4.4 below); how to create data tables and lookup tables, how to categorize variables, how to isolate parameters and how to establish a base case. The advanced level covers the use of Goal Seek and Solver; efficient sensitivity analysis; generation of random numbers; simulation; pattern analysis and the use of add-ins.   These skills are all necessary in all modeling activities and the students learn these spreadsheet skills by following along with class examples, working on homework problems and course assessments.

4.3 Active-learning

The course was designed to allow students to take an active role in learning. This style of teaching replaces lectures with activities in which students do real work under the eyes of the instructor. The lecture is brief and one or two breaks is provided during which students undertake modeling tasks with the computer on problems related to the lecture. Additional problem sets are given for students to work on during class or as homework assignments. The students present their models and analysis in the class or during the discussion-based tutorials. In these activities, the students are building and analyzing models, rather than just listening to the lecture and watching the instructor doing them. By learning by doing, the students are being trained to be active modelers - the new paradigm of OR proposed by Powell (1997b).

4.4 Structured methodology

The course places emphasis on good spreadsheet modeling habits for the purposes of clarity, communication and reliability. 'Best practices' of spreadsheet modeling is particularly appropriate when designing spreadsheet for other users (Ronen, Palley and Lucas, 1989). This will benefit not only the students but also colleagues, instructor or even a boss. An important element of good spreadsheet modeling is the documentation of spreadsheet model for the purpose of sharing them with others or communicating them in presentations and reports. The other important element is readability. Grading homework assignments and exams can be a very time-consuming chore if students are permitted to construct their models in any form. Spreadsheet is inherently free-form and imposes no particular structure on the way problems may be modeled (Conway and Ragsdale, 1997). Although model building is an art and comes only with practice (Mathur and Solow, 1994), there is also a place for a relatively structured approach so that students have a conceptual approach and design guidelines they can follow whilst they gain experience. The OR course therefore introduces a structured spreadsheet modeling methodology, along with the specific OR techniques and examples. The structured methodology aims to lead to better spreadsheet models and enhanced reliability. This methodology teaches students for example to have a clear, logical layout to the overall model; separate different sections of the model i.e. inputs, decision variables and outputs with clear headings; separate different parts of a model across multiple worksheets; make liberal use of range names, formatting features, labels, comments and text boxes. A clear overall layout is important as to what should go where. Students are urged to plan ahead, before diving in. And if the plan does not look good once they start filling in the spreadsheet they can immediately revise their plan. The separation of the inputs, outputs and the decision variables means that the underlying model becomes more independently manageable. The students are encouraged to use labels, cell comments, and text boxes in order to document the logic behind the models whenever it is appropriate. One short sentence can be all it takes to let the reader know how or why some things

are done in a certain way. Other useful methodological and design principles are debated in Conway and Ragsdale (1997) and Mather (1999).

4.5 User-friendliness

As noted by Conway and Ragsdale (1997), apart from positional separation, the inputs, decision variables and outputs can be color coded to enhance user-friendliness.   For example, all decision variables cells can be in a red border, all input cells in a blue border and shaded, and the target cell (output) in a double black border. Color coding helps to improve the clarity of the model. The student modeler as well as the user can see the logical flow of calculation dependency.

5. Results of Practical Experience Using Spreadsheets

5.1 My experiences

In order to be able to teach this course successfully, each student must have his or her own computer. The classroom used to teach this course must have a projector so that the computer images can be projected on a large screen.   An OR course is usually packed with topics and introducing spreadsheets may cause apprehension amongst some instructors. This is a legitimate concern. When spreadsheet was introduced, some of the traditional OR topics such as transportation and assignment models, network models, forecasting, multi-criteria decision making, etc. were omitted. Teaching OR via spreadsheets takes away some of the time that can used to teach a new topic, but the few topics taught   imparts valuable spreadsheet and modeling skills that students can appreciate, apply and take with them into their careers. Teaching a spreadsheet-based OR course is very time consuming. It takes considerably more time to prepare for classes. The spreadsheet model examples exhibited in class must work correctly, must be presented in a logical step-by-step manner, be well-documented and written clearly so that students can learn from them and subsequently apply them in homework problems. Grading homework and tests also takes a long time. Also, the instructor must be available to help students when they get stuck in doing their homework problems.

5.2 Student evaluations and responses

A survey was taken in the lecture of 52 students to gauge their satisfaction with the OR course and to collect information on abilities and attitudes in using the computer and spreadsheet. The course had been running for thirteen weeks and most of the material was covered. The questionnaire asked about the relevance of the course and the expected value in the students' future career. It also asked about the four learning methods used in the course: lectures, tutorials, spreadsheets and the textbook. The students were asked to state how interesting and useful they found each of the learning methods. A five-point Likert scale was used which ranged from very unfavorable (score 1) through to very favorable (score 5).   The results of these responses are presented in Table 1 and 2.

Table 1 presents the results of the relevance and expected value of the course in the students' future career. The results show that all students generally agree that the course was relevant and will add value to their future career.   76% of course feedback respondents believed that the course was relevant or very relevant and about 70% found the value added to their future career to be high or very high. The general conclusion is that the course is well received and students recognize its contribution to their collection of tools for OR.

The students' perception of the interest level and the usefulness of the different learning method are presented in Table 2. The students' perception in this analysis appears to be relatively insensitive to the different course delivery modes. It may be that students' responses are affected by factors beyond the scope of the student satisfaction questionnaire. Also, at the similar point of time, the departments in the Faculty of Economics and Administration evaluate teaching performance across all courses using students' ratings. So, the students end up filling so many questionnaires that many just tick boxes without reading questions. This may explain the ratings given to the question on the level of interest and usefulness of the different learning methods. Within this limitation, the students were generally quite satisfied with the course and its design. The use of spreadsheet to teach OR has received positive feedback. The design of the course by integrating spreadsheet appears to have been regarded as making the course interesting and useful to help learning of the OR techniques.

Representative comments of the student who took *Introduction to Operations Res*earch regarding the use of spreadsheet is given below, followed by the rating the comment was given:

'Excel is very complicated and easy to make mistakes.' (2- unfavorable)

'I don't have enough skill and knowledge to use spreadsheet. Special lectures on Excel is needed.'   (2 – unfavorable)

'We need to be taught more basic spreadsheet to enhance understanding. But Excel is very useful in solving problems.' (3- average)

'The use of spreadsheet made topics more clearer and saved time.' (3 – neutral)

'It is very practical because problems can be easily solved. There is a lot of spreadsheet usage in the working world and taking this course will help the students in future.' (4 – favorable)

'Very interesting. We learnt how to use Excel and how to model a problem using Excel. We learnt how to separate the different parts of the model and know which formula goes in which cell.' (4 – favorable)

'Very useful in solving various problems. And the results generated by spreadsheet is quite easy to understand.' (5 – very favorable)

'Spreadsheet is interesting because we can apply the knowledge that we have learned in the real working world.' (5-very favorable)

'The usage of spreadsheet to solve problems in OR was interesting and relevant.' (5 – very favorable)

The feedback provided an indication that the majority students found the use of spreadsheet for modeling interesting, practical and useful. There were a handful of students who requested for more training in Excel. The review of basic spreadsheet skills given in the lecture was found to be insufficient to bring this small group of students to the skill level of their peers who have previous or concurrent training. The remedy to this problem is discussed in the following paragraphs. Nonetheless, the general conclusion is the use of spreadsheet is an effective way to encourage the development of modeling skills in students taking an introductory OR course.

The questionnaire also asked the students to assess their attitude and ability to use computers in general and spreadsheet in particular. The computer and spreadsheet ability was a subjective self-assessment. The measure of attitude and ability was again the five-point Likert (1 – dislike computer/poor, 5 = like computer/excellent). Students' attitude towards using computers and spreadsheets is given in Table 3 while students' perception of their ability to use computers and spreadsheets is presented in Table 4.

The students generally possess a positive attitude towards using computers and spreadsheets. The results were split between students who have previous or concurrent computer and spreadsheet exposure and those who had not. There is a difference in attitude between the groups of students who have previous or concurrent exposure to computers compared with those who had not. The students that have previous or concurrent exposure to computers possess a higher attitude level towards using computers than those who had no previous exposure. One obvious reason why the non-exposed group favour less the use of computers and spreadsheet is because they have difficulty in using them. The problem can be overcome by offering computer and spreadsheet classes to all students before the OR course commences. Alternatively, these students can be identified later and remedial teaching provided.

Generally, the students perceive themselves to be quite able to use computers and spreadsheets. Since data on students' perceived ability was not collected at the start of the course, the changes in ability between the start and end of the year could not be measured. However, it is comforting to note that all of them are starting to acquire the necessary computer and spreadsheet skills needed in the workplace. Again the results were analysed according to students' level of computer and spreadsheet exposure. As with the students' attitude, the students who have computer and spreadsheet exposure display a different result to the students who did not have computer exposure. The self-measured ability of the group that had exposure to computers is significantly higher than the group who has no exposure. Another general conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that there is a positive relationship between the attitude of the students and their perceived ability to use computers and spreadsheets.

6. Conclusion

There are many compelling reasons for integrating computers and spreadsheet in the OR course, especially the desire to prepare student for the 'real world'. By using spreadsheet we are developing students' skills with a standard tool of today's business world and simultaneously opening their eyes to how a variety of quantitative OR model can be applied with popular commercial software packages being used in the business world. The ability to do 'what if' analysis, to make tables, graphs and charts to show the analysis of the results, and in addition the ability to do OR modeling, all gives students a competitive advantage when job hunting.

Grossman (2001) encouraged OR instructors to consider the needs and interests of the students when designing and delivering the OR course. We must understand the mindset of the students and give them a foundation of effective, efficient spreadsheet modeling with a few basic OR techniques that they can appreciate and take with them into their future career (Grossman, 2003). The students response in this OR course indicate that they know that they need spreadsheet and modeling skills to succeed in their jobs. This course delivers these in abundance.

This paper has described and explained one course's approach for spreadsheet-based OR teaching. It is hoped that the approach is found useful to other instructors, and the paper stimulates further interest in the use of this powerful software for OR teaching and use.

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Table 1. The relevance and expected value of course in future career

	Mean	*Standard Deviation*
Relevance	3.846	0.538
Expected value	3.778	0.637

Table 2. Students' perception of the interest level and the usefulness of the different learning methods

Learning methods	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*
Lectures	3.692	0.579
Tutorials	3.635	0.595
Textbook	3.730	0.528
Spreadsheet	3.712	0.957

Table 3. Attitude to using computers and spreadsheets

Computer & Spreadsheet Attitude	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
All students	52	3.750	0.764
Students with previous or concurrent exposure to computers and spreadsheets	41	3.786	0.782
Students with no exposure to computers and spreadsheets	11	3.363	0.674

Table 4. Self-measured computer and spreadsheet ability

Computer & Spreadsheet Ability	**N**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
All students	52	3.654	0.738
Students with previous or concurrent exposure to computers and spreadsheets	41	3.738	0.734
Students with no exposure to computers and spreadsheets	11	3.273	0.647

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1. Problem Formulation:     Observe system and summarize problem situation
                             Identify problem for analysis
                             Define problem
2. Model Development:        Construct a mathematical model
                             Find preferred solution
                             Verify model and test performance
                             Analyse sensitivity of solution
3. Implementation:           Generate report and demonstrate model
                             Plan implementation
                             Establish control over solution
                             Implement solution
                             Follow up on solution use
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Figure 1. Summary of the main phases of the OR methodology

On Cultivating College Students' Humanistic Qualities in Western Fine Arts Appreciation Course

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Abstract

In recent years, western pragmatism has been prevalent on the campuses of Chinese universities. Its direct result is the emergence of such a trend in fine arts teaching which attaches high importance to the pragmatic side of the art learning and disregards fostering the humanistic qualities of the students. One of the most serious phenomena of this trend is that cultivating college students' humanistic qualities has been duly neglected. This paper attempts to discuss the possible causes of this phenomenon from both subjective and objective perspectives, illustrating the great importance of western fine arts appreciation course on cultivating students'character. It attempts to unite cultivating college students' humanistic qualities and art education together theoretically and practically in order to change the present situation of art teaching, some solutions and suggestions concerning course arrangement and teaching are also offered.

Keywords: Fine arts teaching, College students, Cultivating, Humanistic qualities

1. Introduction

Modern China after opening-up policy has become famous for its emphasis on education. Its enthusiastic embrace of a strong educational system made it possible for the country to rise from the ashes of the Cultural Revolution and during the ensuing 30 years rebuild itself as one of the world's top economic powers, with affluence and freedom firmly in its grasp. China has recently been the focus of a great deal of international attention, not only from those concerned with politics and economics, but also from people interested in the field of education. One source of such attention is the western thought, who through the force of the industrial revolution became a great economic power, but now suffer from what is often referred to as "western pragmatism" and are earnestly trying to pull themselves out of this quagmire. In debates about educational reform, China is often cited as a good example; it is an economic success, and the foundation of that success is thought to be its superior system of education. In comparative studies of science and math proficiency in different countries, China is always in the top ranks. The high proficiency levels of Chinese students are seen as signs of an efficient education system. This is not only something to be happy about, but also something that those born in China can be proud of.

All the same, we find the recent tendency to forget the spiritual side of life and make light of morality truly lamentable. Especially in recent years, western pragmatism has been prevalent on the campuses of Chinese universities. Its direct result is the emergence of such a trend in fine arts teaching which attaches high importance to the pragmatic side of the art learning and disregards fostering the humanistic qualities of the students. One of the most serious phenomena of this trend is that cultivating college students' humanistic qualities has been duly neglected.

2. The importance of cultivating college students' humanistic qualities

To counter the above phenomenon, we would like to take a look at the present state of education in China and, think about what kind of education we need for the future.Western fine arts appreciation course, a branch of art education curriculum, has existed for a long time. In traditional class, art education is to appreciate art such as painting, singing, dancing. In such a class, students are taught to knowledge of art, skills and technical ability. Art, as an accomplishment of human being's cognition, is treated as an entity and enclosed in a small area, ignoring people's attitude, feelings, experience. The outcome of such a teaching method is as the follows: most college students believe that the only task of an artist is to create beautiful things like paintings, sculptures, and so on without paying attention to the feeling and spirits of most common people.

New curriculum reforms are now being carried out in many universities, aiming at changing the knowledge-orientation of curriculum, emphasizing the shape-up of students' active attitude of studying, turning the course of acquisition of basic knowledge and skills to the course of configuration of right value outlook, cultivating students' abilities of analyzing and solving problems and abilities of interaction and cooperating ,encouraging students to feel and appreciate the beauty of life ,nature ,and science. The notion of education is changed, learning and teaching styles should be changed accordingly.

In fact, beauty universally exists around the world where human beings acknowledge. Everyone tastes the world by his own way. Appreciation is internal spiritual demand of people and it connects not only with one's moral standards of behaviors, world outlook, life attitude, but also with one's state of mind. So appreciation of beauty is an individual's spiritual activity. It is affected by one's experience and cognitive competence. For instance, people have different opinions on paintings of modernism. Some people may not stand it, while some may love it to their death. Everyone appreciates the beauty of a painting by his own way and makes his own judgment. The judgment generates and becomes his experience. The experience will affect his later appreciation of beauty. When he accumulates the experience to a certain amount, his concept of appreciation of beauty comes into being. Configuration of the concept heralds of configuration of his deep psychological structure, that is, his moral standards of behavior and world outlook. This deep psychological structure is stable than before, but is relative and can be changed. Therefore appreciation of beauty is human beings' spiritual activity. It is arbitrary and connects with the formation of one's world outlook. Vise versa. If measures are taken to influence college students' appreciation, their deep psychological structure will come into being. Moreover, it will be good for the moulding of their good characters. In terms of aesthetic education, appreciation of beauty is a way by which college students' humane qualities can be strengthened, their discerning power can be promoted and their potential intelligence can be stimulated.

The tasks of art education are to develop students' sense of appreciation of beauty and ability and train their creativity. The essence of appreciation of beauty is to continually transcend the limits of the selves. Its aim is to shock students' mind, soul as well as characters, accelerates the growth of students' spiritual life. It enlarges connotation and denotation of art education and deepens human being's cognition of appreciation of beauty. The activities of appreciation of art provide entrance for the inspiration and expressions of lives.

As mentioned above, Western fine arts appreciation course is a kind of education of feelings which focus on tasting and puts emphasis on perceptual education. Appreciation is a special active value-orientation activity of human being's. The standards of value of art education firstly must be beauty as well as truth and virtue. The more one has improved his humanistic quality, the better he could appreciate fine arts, especially Western fine arts, for arts are humanistic products.

3. Approaches to cultivating college students' humanistic qualities

Western fine arts appreciation course is a union of art teaching and humanistic education, feelings and tasting is one of its properties. It aims at shaping up students' good characters, life attitude, and perfect personalities. Teaching of appreciation of beauty is a sophisticated cognition styles. It is different from rational cognition and logical reason. So feelings and tasting are treated as a principle. There are many essential methods for improving students' humanistic quality, among them are following ones.

3.1 Using various and interesting activities

It is effective and functional to apply various and interesting activities with moderate challenge to attract students to arouse their curiosity in art appreciation. If the students can realize that art appreciation can be interesting and fun with their involvement in the process, they will be willing to participate in Western fine arts appreciation course. Numerous solo and group exhibitions in different cities are welcome to college students.

Exhibitions are a rich source of new ideas and applications and, as such, play an important role in strategic planning and business generation. Exhibitions are a focal point for industry, attracting a broad cross-section of representatives, from buyers and sellers, to trade associations and the media. A full program of associated activities provides a wealth of additional networking opportunities from seminars and social events, to competitions and award ceremonies. As paintings depict landscapes and folk activities of different countries and regions, the painters' unique individual styles is reflected in their strokes, colors and lights. Exhibitions allow students to put their book knowledge comprehensively to the practice easily by examining the art products for themselves, and comparing and contrasting different creators' performance, Exhibitions are a recognized launch pad for new products, and an extremely time-efficient way to keep the students to date with the latest innovations. Well-chosen exhibitions are valuable activities as they give students a chance to improve their humanistic spirits and at the same time allow students to practice their art appreciation skills. Teachers can compile a wide range of various and interesting activities in a concentrated period of time to encourage students to involve as much of the time and effort as possible so as to employ meaningful and useful appreciation skill and improve college students' humanistic qualities.

3.2 Involving new and effective techniques

As some techniques have been employed in teaching, there are more choices and more methods for teachers to stimulate students' intrinsic motivation, among them is computer assisted teaching, that is, with the help of multimedia, Internet and educational software, to stimulate college students' humanistic qualities. These methods are innovative, interesting, practical and effective with colorful pictures, vivid voices, plentiful information and effective interaction that arouse students' curiosity and interest in art appreciation and promote their intrinsic motivation. With intrinsic motivation, many students can start self-study in schools or at homes to effectively improve their humanistic qualities.

Computer assisted teaching offers multi-media enhanced state of the art teaching and learning materials, individualized programmed instruction that guarantees college students' success in mastering knowledge. Internet provides an enriched worldwide learning environment with access to worldwide knowledge webs to extend and enrich students' learning experience. The focus is the learner, rather than the teacher and on students' mastery of material through interactive teaching and learning. Computer assisted teaching increases students' computer skills necessary for success in the workforce. Core skills for today's workplace include the challenges of creatively using the "information highway" to critically analyze information, solve problems and communicate with others.

3.3 Creating a relaxed and positive learning climate

Climate is important because it creates an environment that encourages both achievement and motivation (Raviv, Ravivi, & Reisel, 1990, p457). From the view

of Maslow's hierarchy theory, motivation and need are of great importance in learning, a relaxed and positive learning climate should be providing for college students' art appreciation course. In a friendly atmosphere, students can feel secure and their sense of understanding and learning motivation can be promoted.

Teachers should allow students to discuss broadly without the fear of expressing their own thoughts different from others besides every lecture. When students make some mistakes, teachers should describe them with warm comments, with more smiles and encourages, teachers can have more interactions and stand closer to students. And when students are dealing with the tasks, teachers should prepare to give supportive aids at any moment.

3.4 Cultivating college students' five virtures of afftection, justice, courtesy, wisdom and sincerity

To transform our current education system, with its overemphasis on intellectual training, into one that produces persons who live up to the ideal of what man should be, we would like to propose the following educational goals centered on the five Confucian virtues of affection, justice, courtesy, wisdom and sincerity. Affection means helping each other and nurturing a compassionate heart; Justice means not behaving unfairly and doing what you feel is right; Courtesy means using honorific language to your superiors and nurturing personal humility; Wisdom means acquiring correct knowledge about a variety of things and nurturing sound judgment ;Sincerity means never deceiving and dealing with others with sincerity.

To make sure that these five universal virtues are acquired, college students need to be taught in a gradual manner and in a variety of situations. Moreover, at home, school, and in society, students should be taught that they should become adults who are useful to others and to society, and they should be encouraged to actually try to act that way in all three areas. If teachers can do this, we believe they can create a more humane society.

It must be re-emphasized in conclusion that the issue of humanistic quality cultivating is far from simple, and there are no simple solutions to the questions of how to improve college students' humanistic spirits. The aim of Western art appreciation lies not in the mastery of strategies but in heightening students' humanistic awareness, in enhancing the ability to self-monitor and self-regulate in the learning process as well as humanistic quality improvement.

4. Conclusion

It is quite clear that humanistic quality enhancement is very important to both the teachers of art in college and their students. As teachers of art, we should flexibly carry out different teaching approaches to improve the quality of 45-minute class, and take an active part in art teaching innovation so that college students should be aware of the importance of cultivating their humanistic ability in their daily studies.

Western fine arts appreciation course aims at shaping up students' good characters, life attitude, and perfect personalities. It is a sophisticated cognition styles which is different from rational cognition and logical reason.

Generally speaking, teaching aims, teaching contents, teaching organization and method as well as textbooks, should be in pursuit of humanistic quality enhancement. Students are edified by the materials and enlightened their intelligence. They are attracted by the approach of beauty and stimulated the desire of seeking knowledge.

In conclusion, like building a house, cultivating college students' humanistic qualities takes some time, just as the saying goes, Rome was not built in a day. With the help of the teachers, as long as students command a good knowledge of the world, the humanistic spirits of students is surely to be greatly improved.

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Information Technology Tools Analysis in Quantitative Courses

of IT-Management (Case Study: M.Sc. - Tehran University)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the most suitable ICT-based education and define the most suitable e-content creation tools for quantitative courses in the IT-management Masters program. ICT-based tools and technologies are divided in to three categories: the creation of e-content, the offering of e-content, and access to e-content. In this study the first two categories are considered for on-campus education and virtual education (both synchronous and asynchronous).

In the comparisons, eight modes of delivery styles were verified using two methods; first they were compared two by two in an ordinal questionnaire measured by an Eigenvector technique. Next they were compared by a single-weighted method. The results were then agreed upon by experts using a personal approach in group decision making. The most effective ICT-based education was defined as on-campus education and the Collaborative Learning Environment with Virtual Reality (CLE-VR) received the highest level for virtual education because it highlighted the social presence, and then synchronous and asynchronous virtual education. Slides of Microsoft PowerPoint ranked in the upper-level for smart boards for on-campus education but they ranked in the same level for virtual education.

E-content creation tools were measured by an interval questionnaire using a semi-metric scale of [0-100] by the single-weighted method. The results of second section found that the most suitable tool for creating e-content are Microsoft Office PowerPoint.

Questionnaire analysis revealed a preference for social interaction in studying quantitative courses, creating, and customizing e-content as soon as possible.

Keywords: E-learning, Creating e-content, Group decision making, Information technology, University courses.

1. Introduction

These days, ICT-based tools are insufficiently used for education in universities, so the analysis on them causes to define suitable ways of using them such as introducing them to teachers in order to use ICT-base education more effectively. Computer-based instruction is not as useful as traditional methods despite it being found to be user friendly and being recommended to educational staff (Stephenson, Brown, Griffin, 2006). There are too types of educational tools and technologies that are the basis for other methods for offering course content, such as using PowerPoint slides, using Smart Boards in real and virtual environments, and various channels of multimedia (e.g. voice, text, image). Comparing these methods and defining suitable ones for every subject area would be beneficial in the education system.

The key to success is identifying the best-suited use of technology for the course type, therefore it needs through analysis and planning (Knight, 2005). Firstly it is essential to analyze the teaching and learning environment; this includes understanding the course material, the students, the teacher, and the team; secondly it is critical to look at the technical environment in which it is taught.

It is generally believed that ICT can empower teachers, promote change and foster the development of 21st century skills, but the support of these beliefs are still limited and ICTs are very rarely seen as central to the overall learning process. An enduring problem is putting technology before education. Specifically, the continuing difficulties of technology used in education is that educational planners and technology advocates came up with the technology first and then investigated the educational applications of it (Trucano, 2005).

While it is obvious that the application of various ICTs are the most important determinants of the effectiveness of such tools' in education, the choice of tools is quite varied and each tool has its own advantages and disadvantages. Policymakers and donor staff are often bombarded by information and studies from vendors on the suitability of their products or services, and there is a need for further, independent research on the appropriateness on specific tools with potential to help meet education-related MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). *(Alexander J. Romiszowski, 2004)*

Documents and text content are important parts of education in traditional and modern education approaches. Besides the advantages of the hardcopy format, in comparison with management styles and the review of computer-based and e-content, their transfer and distribution are slower. In addition, when a text is written on paper, it cannot easily be saved, edited and reviewed. One of virtual education's challenges is to provide E-content. Thus, in this paper E-content creation tools will be verified.

2. The History of E-learning throughout the World

Education over far distances was considered correspondence in 1800 A.D. Correspondence education was managed by schools or qualified institutes offering the program to students and teachers while in High School and University. As the United States of America started to provide education using summarized pamphlets, the term 'distance education' came about in 1892 and this form of education was dependent on mailings. The idea of this approach should be probed in the mid 20th century. Half-attendance education is considered to be the start of Internet-based education or virtual university and was a project of private universities in England. According to this project, university students were taught by television programs after which they were tested and acquired their certification. Along with setting up free consulting services and educational departments in the U.S.A in the 1960s, other successful steps was taken towards this method of education in the middle of the 20th century. There were various educational programs for people who could not attend central classes. Due to the considerable fame of radio and television, professors became intimate with new technologies to present distance education courses that were not dependent on mailing system. Finally, the first university education radio received authorization in 1921 and became the first base of the e-learning form. In the 1970s, due to wide access to computers in the U.S.A, unattended education became common. In the early 1980s one of the founders of virtual universities offered a unit of a course online. This important event was accomplished using modem-based access to a bulletin board system (BBS). Since then, virtual universities have improved extensively. In the 1980s, television broadcasting was reinvented with the arrival of satellite and cable program services and this event improved the e-learning industry. With the emergence of the internet, the first online Bachelor degree program courses were offered by the New Jersey Technology Institute in 1984, and this caused quick development of e-learning. Through the same educational channel, the U.S.A National University offered Engineering Bachelor degree programs and post Graduate courses, granting degrees to students starting in 1985.

In 1988, for the first time, powerful software named the "digital-professor" was developed, marking a revolutionary movement in electronic systems. This system offered voice chat in education affairs, a very practical tool for enhancing communication. The first online education program was offered by Monix University in 1989, which opened 100 virtual universities with 1500 courses in California. Since then educational institutes in the U.S.A have accessed and improved e-learning approaches around the world by revising and strengthening some of the methods in this system. In 1995, at first public the opinions considered websites that said they offered virtual education a flash in the pan. However, these days there are hundreds of education sites that offer more than 500 low expense courses over the universal internet and cover a variety of science subjects. As a statistical assessment, over one billion people around the world access the internet and one million of them joined prominent universities to continue their studies over the internet. Hence, we can claim that universal learning has been established internationally through the use of modern communication technology. This association has linked not only different scientific centers, but also professors and students of different majors to each other. Undoubtedly, virtual education will occupy the largest portion of the internet in the future.

3. The History of E-learning in Iran

Distance education does not have a strong background in Iran, with the exception of a few private universities, before the Islamic revolution, and Payamenoor University, which based their systems on a distance communication approach. At the end of the 1990s in Iran, virtual learning was established at Tehran University and was practiced from the first half-semester of that year. In the same year, the Science, Research, and Technology departments announced the establishment of an online university managed through the same ministry, but via a more private medium with no public financial support. Following the same trend, some universities also announced their establishment of e-learning education offering single university courses online (Majed Esmail, 2006). In recent years, the online university of the Islamic Azad University has become one of the most advanced and biggest virtual education centers in Iran.

4. Research Questions

1) What is the ranking of virtual education as compared to on-campus education? Also, what is the recognition of presentation of courses through PowerPoint slides, smart board, virtual environment, and video conferencing in teaching of quantitative courses in an IT-management Masters program?

2) What are the most suitable tools for creating e-content for quantitative courses in an IT-management Masters program?

5. ICT-Based Education and E-content Creation Categories

Every educational environment is tightly coupled with its teachers, students, and the content of the courses and the key to success is identifying the most appropriate utilization of technology for the course. Firstly, the educational environment should be analyzed, thus in this paper various ICT-based educations are examined. Next the understanding the course and its students are essential; Hence in this paper, experts' opinions are used to define suitable methods and technologies. Finally, technology aspects of educational environments should be considered. Professors must also supervise the development of e-content for each course as they are the ones offering the course content using various educational methodologies.

The concept model of research and ICT-based education categories and e-content creation tools are shown in Figures.1 and 2.

Insert Figure 1 and Figure 2 Here

6. Research Methodology

In this paper, two aspects of e-learning have been considered separately. First, the survey of ICT-based educational environments has been analyzed and then the factors affecting the ranking utility of e-content creation tools. Phases of this project involved a pilot study of professors from various universities in Iran. The universities Alzahra University, Tehran University, Shahid Beheshti University, Allameh University, Tarbiat Moadarres University, and Science Research Islamic Azad University were chosen ones for this study.

Professors of these universities have been teaching quantitative courses such as, Operational research, Expert and decision systems, Statistical analysis, Fuzzy and artificial intelligent. They all have Ph.D. degrees and are familiar with ICT tools in educational systems and were chosen as subject-matter experts in this paper. 9 people with these specifications contributed to this research.

First phase: Survey on the Importance of ICT-based Education

In this section, two methods have been used to measure the importance of various methods of ICT-based education. Then, by using combination patterns (Toloei, 2006) the importance of each are measured.

The two methods are:

1).Two by two comparison according to Eigenvector (Saati,1999): In this method, by using pair comparisons, the final matrix for each person is exploited and the convergent weights are calculated as follows:

(1)

Where D is the comparison matrix, e is unique vector, e^t is reverse vector and k is an integer counter.

2. Single-weighted method (Toloie, 2006):

In this method a semi-metric scale on the [0-100] interval is used and then normalized to make the weights comparable.

In pair comparison, according to the Thomas Saaty algorithm, ICT-based education is compared two by two, then the weights are converged by Eigenvector and then measured. To make some deviations more reliable, every variable is measured by the second method offered by Toloei. Then arithmetical averages of the two methods results are calculated.

The ICT-based educations studied in this paper are listed below with the name of each variable represented in parentheses.

- (A1) On campus education and presentation of courses using PowerPoint slides.
- (A2) On campus education and presentation of courses using a Smart board.
- (A3) Online education and presentation of courses using PowerPoint slides.
- (A4) Online education and presentation of courses using Smart board.
- (A5) Video conferencing / Web conferencing

- (A6) Virtual reality and multi-media, providing communication tools to support collaboration amongst students and teachers using avatars (which help them feel a greater sense of immersion in the educational environment [6]).

- (A7) Text-based structured electronic courseware with information presented in manageable "chunks". (offline)

- (A8) On screen synchronous presentation of PowerPoint slides and recorded video/audio of teachers. (offline)

One of the experts' results is shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5, Table 6, Table 7 Here

The final weights for this method for this expert are shown in Table 2.

Arithmetical averages of two methods are shown in Table 4.

After weights and importance of variables for each of the 9 professors in the study were calculated, the Borda technique in group decision making approach brought them in to agreement. The results of this technique are shown in Table 5.

Insert Figure 3 Here

As shown in Figure 3, attendant education presented by PowerPoint slides was ranked first, followed by attendant education by Smart Board presentation courses, and the 3rd ranked teaching method was the virtual reality environment for online education. This ordering places online education using Smart boards and PowerPoint slides at the same level, followed by on screen synchrony of PowerPoint slides and recorded teacher's video/audio (offline), Video conferencing/Web conferencing, and Text-based structured electronic courseware (offline).

7. Second phase: Define suitable e-content creation tools

In this section the experts' data were tabulated by the Single weighted method. Table 8 presents the experts interval data on a [0-100] semi-metric scale. In addition, Table 9 shows calculated weights of experts' data using the single weighted method.

Insert Table 8, Table 9

Insert Figure 4 Here

Then tools weights were transferred to ranking numbers according to each person, as are shown in Table 10. Table 11 transfers ranking numbers to the Borda ranking numbers. Fig 4 shows that the ranking of e-content tools was agreed upon by the committee of experts.

Insert Table 10, Table 11 Here

As illustrated, PowerPoint ranked first, then graphic tools, followed by Smart board, and finally the iCam2. So for e-content creation for quantitative IT-management course for students in an MS degree program, Microsoft Office PowerPoint is the most suitable methodology.

8. Results of Hypothesis Verification

The first purpose of this paper was to define a suitable ICT-based education methodology for quantitative courses of an IT-management M.S. Program; Methodologies that have been thoroughly analyzed and their related tools verified and ranked.

The first methodology received the highest rank according to some independent studies and the facts that students can review the materials at their own convenience and can pause and resume as many times as necessary (Stephenson, Brown, Griffin, 2006). Also, based on the student motivation at the post graduate level and their level of knowledge the first hypothesis the paper is based on, on-screen synchrony of PowerPoint slides and recorded voice (offline) is the most suitable one for presenting courses. But, according to experts' opinions, this style was ranked lower.

The second purpose of the paper was to determine the most suitable tools for E-content creation for quantitative courses for an IT-management MS program. Based on this purpose and the results gathered in this paper, the tools were ranked. According to the related studies, the second hypothesis is the more suitable one as it utilizes graphic utility tools in a computer-mediated environment and has various features which make e-content more interesting. Hence students can easily communicate with the environment and interact in it (Tung, Deng, 2007). On the other hand, according to the results of this paper, the tool mentioned is not suitable for quantitative courses because prompt creation and updating of e-content is of great importance in post graduate levels and this tool is incapable of satisfying the requirements .

9. Conclusion

According to the results of this study, in an educational environment communication and interaction with peers and teachers is of great importance for learning in quantitative IT- management courses. So, on-campus education is the most suitable method of teaching. If it is necessary for some students to take online course, a virtual reality environment is the most appropriate method, as students can gain a sense of being present in the same environment as their peers, despite their remote physical locations. Hence e-learning is not just about completely turning traditional,

classroom-based courses into online versions but rather more about identifying opportunities where the technology will add value to learning.

According to results of the first phase analysis of this paper, the video/web conferencing method, despite of having interactive features, took the 7th position. This is due to the absence of suitable technical structure in the environment under study.

The results of second phase analysis of this paper found that prompt updating of the e-content is the most important factor for post graduate level and Microsoft Office PowerPoint was defined as the most suitable method for accomplishing this. Therefore, special software capable of creating electronic and web-based quantitative course content that can be utilized to quickly update and customize the course contents for teachers and classes are proposed.

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Table 1. Importance of ICT-based educations according to an expert based on the Eigenvector method

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8
A1	1	5	7	8	6	7	9	3
A2	1/5	1	7	9	7	7	9	9
A3	1/7	1/7	1	8	6	5	9	9
A4	1/8	1/9	1/8	1	3	3	9	9
A5	1/6	1/7	1/6	1/3	1	3	5	5
A6	1/7	1/7	1/5	1/3	1/3	1	9	9
A7	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/5	1/9	1	7
A8	1/3	1/9	1/9	1/9	1/5	1/9	1/7	1

Table 2. Final weights by Eigenvector method for the expert.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8
Final weights by Eigenvector method for one person	0.3680	0.2693	0.1502	0.0724	0.0481	0.0506	0.2280	0.0186

Table 3.The results of the same expert person by using Single weighted method.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8
Interval weights [0-100] in scale of semi metric	90	80	60	50	10	20	30	70
Normalized weights	0.2195	0.1951	0.1463	0.1219	0.0244	0.0488	0.0732	0.1707

Table 4. Arithmetical averages of Eigenvector and Single weighted methods according to an expert.

	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8
Arithmetical averages of two methods	0.2938	0.2322	0.1483	0.0972	0.0362	0.0497	0.0480	0.0947

Table 5.Importance of each variable according to all experts.

	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5	DM6	DM7	DM8	DM9
A1	0.2938	0.3429	0.1407	0.0234	0.1897	0.2607	0.116	0.368	0.1163
A2	0.2322	0.234	0.1009	0.044	0.1212	0.2389	0.1676	0.2693	0.064
A3	0.1483	0.0874	0.0866	0.0706	0.0624	0.1625	0.1158	0.1502	0.0514
A4	0.0972	0.0874	0.086	0.0937	0.0498	0.1154	0.062	0.0724	0.1399
A5	0.0362	0.037	0.034	0.0671	0.1899	0.0919	0.0125	0.0481	0.2558
A6	0.0497	0.1467	0.0254	0.3488	0.3392	0.0822	0.0281	0.0506	0.2535
A7	0.0480	0.0301	0.3325	0.1966	0.016	0.0277	0.0169	0.0228	0.0436
A8	0.0947	0.0344	0.194	0.1559	0.0317	0.0208	0.481	0.0186	0.0755

Table 6. Ranking of ICT-based educations according to whole experts.

	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5	DM6	DM7	DM8	DM9
A1	1	3	1	1	3	8	1	3	4
A2	2	4	2	2	4	7	2	2	6
A3	3	5	3	4	5	5	5	4	7
A4	4	6	4	5	6	4	4	5	3
A5	8	7	6	7	2	6	6	8	1
A6	6	8	5	8	1	1	3	6	2
A7	7	1	7	6	8	2	8	7	8
A8	5	2	8	3	7	3	7	1	5

Table 7. Borda ranking results (the total row of Borda numbers are in the last column)

	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5	DM6	DM7	DM8	DM9	The total row of Borda numbers
A1	7	5	7	7	5	0	7	5	4	47
A2	6	4	6	6	4	1	6	6	2	41
A3	5	3	5	4	3	3	3	4	1	31
A4	4	2	4	3	2	4	4	3	5	31
A5	0	1	2	1	6	2	2	0	7	21
A6	2	0	3	0	7	7	5	2	6	32
A7	1	7	1	2	0	6	0	1	0	18
A8	3	6	0	5	1	5	1	7	3	31

Table 8. Experts' interval data.

	Graphic tools	PowerPoint	Smart board	iCam2
a1	70	50	70	80
a2	90	70	30	30
a3	80	70	50	30
a4	20	10	40	90
a5	60	60	40	40
a6	89	75	72	62
a7	70	80	50	50
a8	40	70	90	80
a9	30	30	72	90

Table 9. Calculated weights of experts' data by single weighted method.

	Graphic tools	PowerPoint	Smart board	iCam2
a1	0.127505	0.097087	0.136187	0.144928
a2	0.163934	0.135922	0.058366	0.054348
a3	0.145719	0.135922	0.097276	0.054348
a4	0.03643	0.019417	0.077821	0.163043
a5	0.10929	0.116505	0.077821	0.072464
a6	0.162113	0.145631	0.140078	0.112319
a7	0.127505	0.15534	0.097276	0.09058
a8	0.07286	0.135922	0.175097	0.144928
a9	0.054645	0.058252	0.140078	0.163043

Table 10. E-content creation tools ranking according to each person.

	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5	DM6	DM7	DM8	DM9
A1	3	4	2	1	4	2	4	2	1
A2	4	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2
A3	1	3	3	3	2	4	1	3	4
A4	2	1	4	4	3	3	3	4	3

Table 11. Borda ranking numbers.

	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5	DM6	DM7	DM8	DM9	
A1	1	0	2	3	0	2	0	2	3	13
A2	0	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	2	20
A3	3	1	1	1	2	0	3	1	0	12
A4	2	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	9

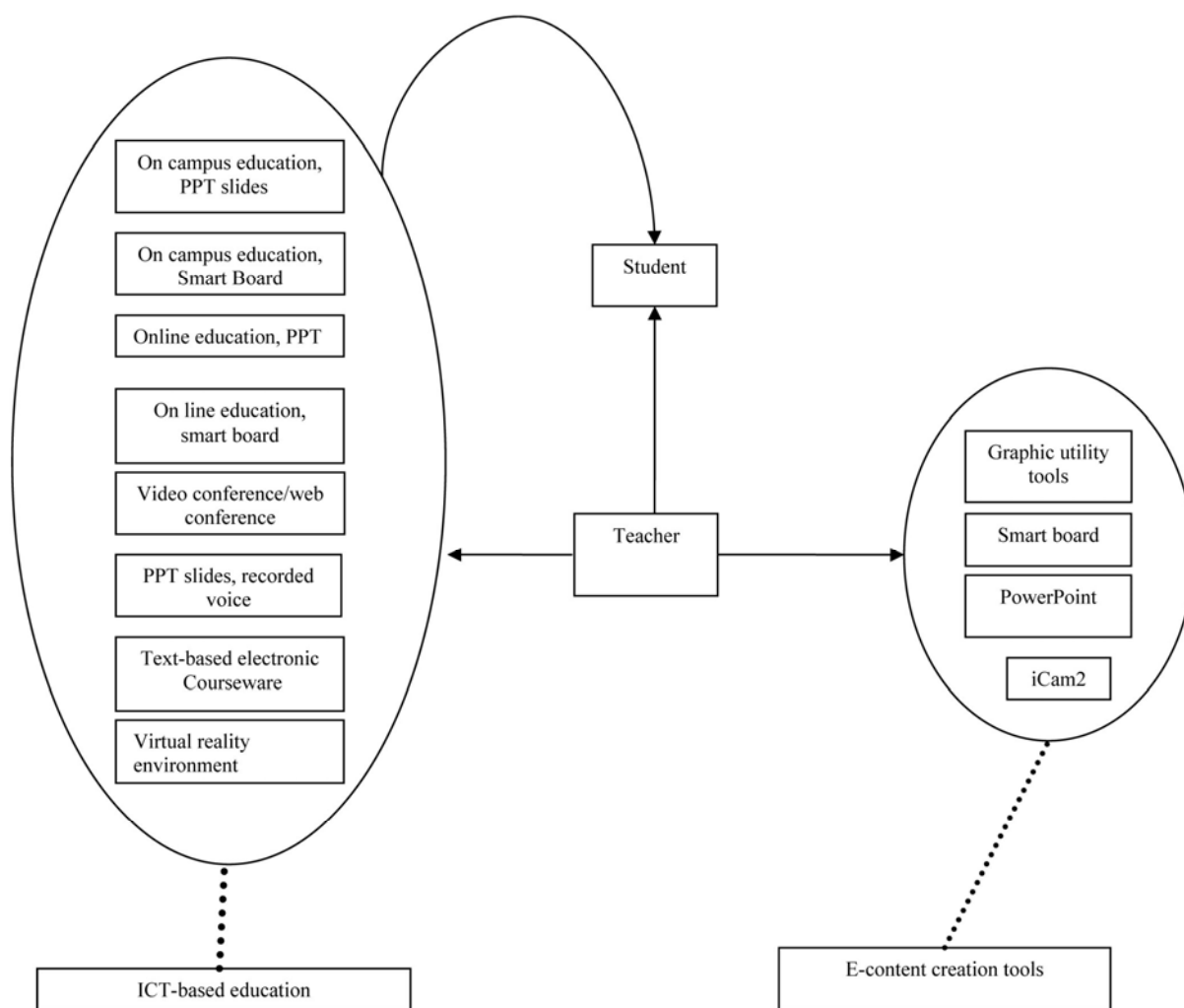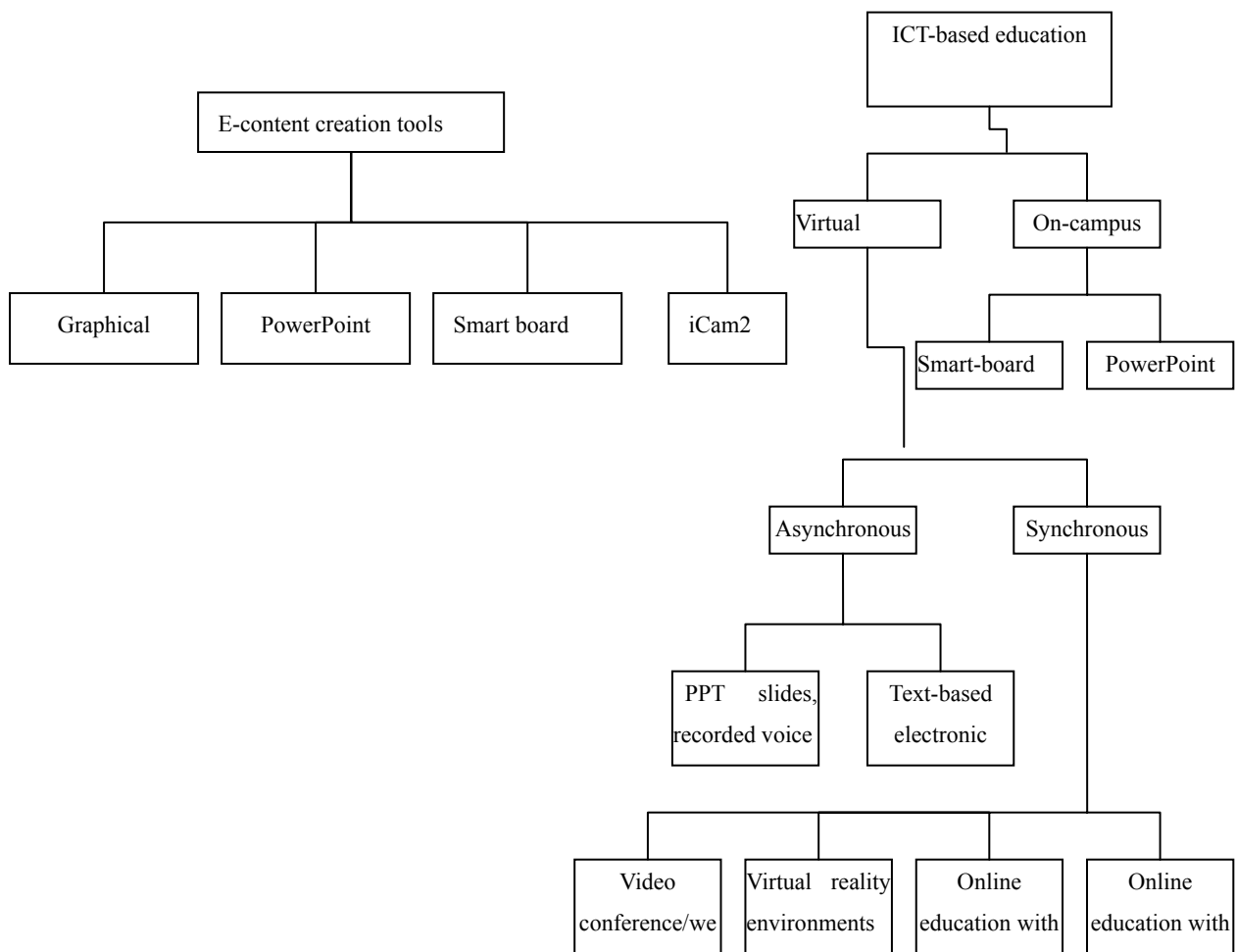Figure1.The concept model of research
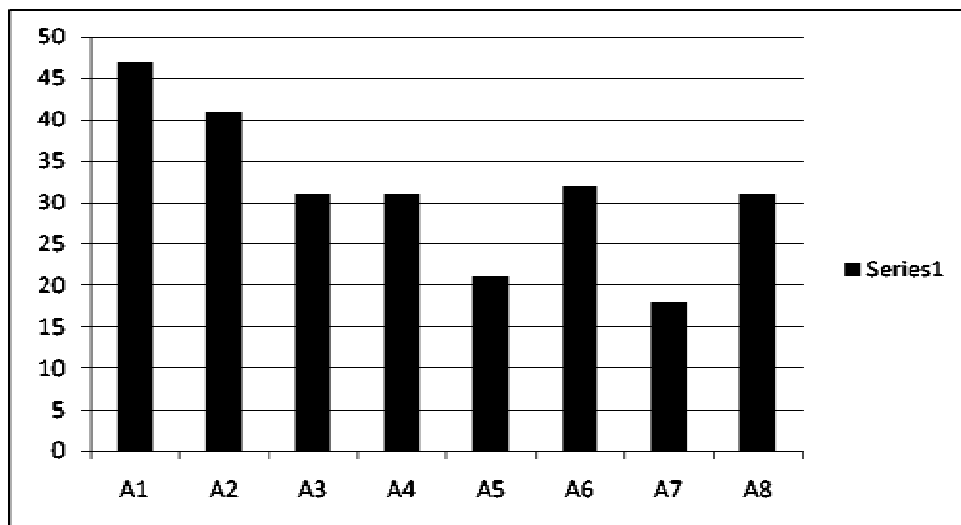
Figure 2.The category research model

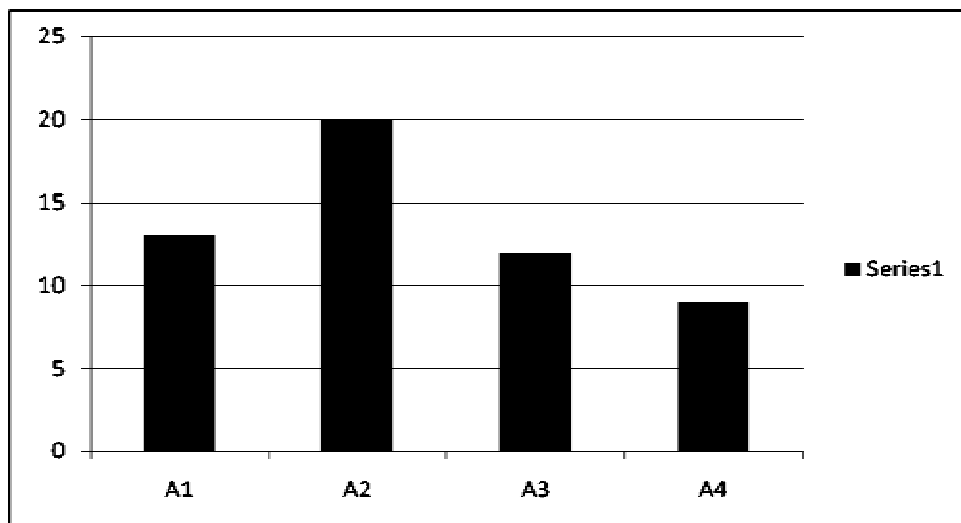Figure 3.Importance of ICT-based education according to research methodology.

Figure 4. E-content creation tools ranking according to agreement of the experts.

On the Problems Existed in Chinese Art Education and the Way Out

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Abstract

Nowadays Chinese art education has mostly four problems: The first one is to make art education skilling; The second is to make art education moralization; The third is to make art education mechanization; The fourth is to make art education marginalization. The root of the problems has two aspects: First, the actuality of education system affects current art education; second, the lag of art education development affects current art education. Chinese art education has the only one way out——the eco-style art education that has the fundamental characters of intercourse and dialogue.

Keywords: Art education, Problem, Way out, Eco-style art education

In Chinese new era, with the vigorous development of education, quality education has moved forward, and the art education as one of the basic ways to school quality education became an important part of the overall school education. During this period, Chinese art education has achieved a great score, but there are still many problems. This paper attempts to begin with these problems and their countermeasures to explore the development way of Chinese art education.

1. The problems of Chinese art education

Chinese art education is multi-faceted and has multi-type. Overall, according to the teaching object, content and training objectives, the school art education system can be divided into three types: The first one is professional school art education, whose goal is to foster the pure artists. So it is also known as "pure art" education; The second is the general art education, including all the non-professional art education from kindergarten, primary and secondary schools to colleges and universities; The third is the art education of normal colleges whose objective is to foster the teachers for art education. The second is the general art education, and the first and the third belong to professional art education. At present, Chinese art education has four main aspects of the outstanding questions:

Firstly, the skilling of art education. Chinese art education has inherited the Western academic realism which is good at technical training, abandoned Chinese traditional art education model which cultured art talents through humanistic approach. Particularly, with the introduction of Soviet art education system, the art categories and specialities have been divided finer and finer, and a variety of professional art institutions have emerged. The speciality has been growing increasingly stronger and stronger, but the integration weaker and weaker. The students' technology has been becoming better and better, but their humanistic quality worse and worse. Traditional art education confused professional knowledge, crafts and skills, and ignored the distinctions between them. Art education has emphasis only on imparting and learning knowledge and skills briefly, rather than focus on the thing that the knowledge and skills are improved to artistic ability and wisdom to survive that can contributed to the growth of the lives of individuals. Thus, art education can only be monotonous and boring imparting knowledge and skills, and the sense of life and richness, "language can be ended, but the significance infinite", which only the artistic image has, are gone. In this way, the arts have become the yoke imprisoning people's creativity and imagination, and the students also have become the slaves possessing knowledge and skills, and the art educators have become the mouthpiece and machinery transfering knowledge and skills.

Secondly, the moralization of the art education.. First of all, it is believed that art education is quivalent to moral education. In the traditional art education, moral education is an important part of art curriculum. Art teachers often have centered on teaching the whole works how to express moral thought but neglected the artistic value of the works. Second, In the traditional art education, the art emotional feelings are equivalent to Ethics emotional feelings. The artistic images have been diagrammatized barely with moral and ethical emotional feelings. Thus, the emotional feeling

education has brought a very clear ethical purpose, and the art has been made into a tool loading with moral and ethic. The art education that became a tool cut off the bridge that communicates art and human nature. It became a "bad check" that art education can nourish and cultivate human nature.

Thirdly, the mechanization of the art education. First of all, the mechanization of art education is reflected in the teaching process of art education. In the teaching process of traditional art education, because of the misleading of the teaching objectives of moral education and skills, art teachers thought that the teaching objectives of course were completed as long as the aspects of moral and teaching techniques were completed. Therefore, the preaching and spoon-feeding teaching methods were taken. The art classroom should have been interesting and vivid, but it has become mechanical, dull, rigid and stale, and could not mobilize the enthusiasm and keen interest of the students; In addition, the education of ethic and skills in the art education also contributed to the rigidity of the relationship between teachers and students in the teaching process. The relationship between teachers and students is not that of exchanges, dialogue, but the traditional subject-object relations. Secondly, the mechanization of art education is also reflected in the idea that the artistic creation is equivalent to non-artistic creation. Finally, the mechanization of art education is also reflected in the rigid evaluation criteria.

Fourthly, the marginalization of art education. Marginalization of art education is that the art education is not taken serious and have not been placed in a prominent and important position, but have been placed in the edge of education, of which the most prominent manifestation is that art education is non-curriculum-based. The teachers, teaching conditions, teaching hours and so on of art education curriculum have not only failed to be protected, but also often in a state of atrophy. The art education in most schools is basically still in spontaneous "art activity" level, and some even think art education is the extra-curricular activities, and the art education has not really gone into the curriculum areas, and most of them are arbitrary and impromptu, and lack scientific and rational arrangements, and the objectives and content of art education are also not taken into the scope of curriculum.

2. The root of art education problems

The skilling, moralization, mechanization, marginalization of art education are the four outstanding problems objectively existing in Chinese art education. However, what is the root causes of these problems? The author believes there are two principal fundamental reasons:

First, Chinese education system impedes the development of art education. Since the foundation of New China, the main way of selecting talents has been the "test" system. Exam-oriented education system has resulted in deviation from the training objective, "improving the quality of students comprehensively", resulting in the deficiencies in art education in culturing students' quality, resulting in the serious deficiencies in art quality of non-art university students and primary and secondary school students. If China wants to change the embarrassing situation of art education, it is necessary to change the exam-oriented education mechanism into the national mechanism of quality education, and it is necessary to fully develope art education that bears the important mission to improve the quality of citizens. If our exam-oriented education mechanisms is adjusted and reformed fundamentally, we must adjust our educational purposes first——the cadre training should be changed into a comprehensive improvement of the quality of whole people.

Secondly, the lag of art education self-development impedes the current development of art education. The lag of Chinese art education development is mainly manifested in two aspects: First, the theory of art education lags behind; Second, the theory of art teaching lags behind. There are two main reasons for the lags of Chinese art education self-development: First, since the exam-oriented education has not changed into quality education, the art education has not been paid enough attention, but more maintained a mere formality. Second, all aspects of art education has developed behind. The laggard factors of art education have led to the relaxation of art education, so it is difficult for art education to play the role to comprehensively cultivate and improve the quality of the students, and the art education is contrary to its fundamental purpose.

3. The reform and the way out of Chinese art education

Chinese art education has a lot of problems. It is necessary to carry out reform if we want to change the status quo and enable it to develope healthily. However, where will the Chinese art education go? The author believes that there is only one road——"eco-style art education".

The so-called "eco-style art education" is a kind of art education with the dual dialogue and communicating ecological model that accords with the whole nature, human society and thinking (including the deep unconsciousness). It has the main features such as the dual contact, dialogue and communication, and man's comprehensive sustainable development is promoted through the contact between the binary oppositions, communication and dialogue (rather than opposition). It emphasizes the link, communication and dialogue between the binary oppositions such as teachers and students, students and students, students and the world, main lessons and deputy lessons, the curricular and the extra-curricular, schools and society, Oriental culture and Western culture, and so on, and it also stresses the dialogue and mutual generation between the awareness of the humanities and the awareness of science, the awareness of humanity disciplines and the awareness of scientific disciplines. Eco-style art education can change the ecology

imbalance between all kinds of knowledge, so that the ecological relationship between all kinds of professional knowledge, knowledge and self, can form. Eco-style art education can create a rich experience of students through art appreciation, and the experience can be further transformed and expressed creatively through the discussion, communication and dialogue between teachers and between students. It is through creating the ecological relationship actively between art classes and other subjects, art classes and extra-curricular activities that eco-style art education enhances the interest and quality of each class and alleviates the students' studying burden positively and effectively. The eco-style art education is an art education of organic integration, which emphasizes the comprehensiveness of students' development, the integration of activity content, the integrity of the activity process, the communication of activities and the equality of teacher-student interaction. It is an important means to improve the quality of students comprehensively, and its purpose is to develop "all-round developed people" with truly rich intelligence.

The characteristics of eco-style art education such as contact, communication and dialogue, is reflected primarily in the following aspects: First, in the eco-style art education, the relationship between teachers and students is no longer the relationship between subject and object, but the equal relationship between subject and subject.Teachers and students stimulate and enhance mutually, and there is a mutual complementary symbiosis between them. Second, the eco-style art education can break the circle of closed awareness which takes "I" as a center, and take an open attitude. Third, the eco-style art education has the fundamental purpose to foster the overall quality of person, and the sign whether the quality is high or low is whether the person has the ability of innovation and sustainable development. Fourth, the eco-style art education pays much attention to setting up an ecological relationship between the different disciplines. Fifth, the eco-style art education treats each unit as an ecosystem. Sixth, the eco-style art education makes use of the teaching method of "event-style". The teaching method, "event-style", is a teaching method that can integrate the professional knowledge the students learn with their real-life activities. Seventh, the eco-style art education can integrate the knowledge of natural sciences with the knowledge of social sciences so that the ecological relationship is established between all kinds of knowledge in the whole range of art education.

To transfer the traditional art education into the eco-style art education, the most fundamental thing we should do is to convert the basis and paradigm of philosophy, because the crisis of traditional art education is in fact the crisis of rationality, and the crisis of rationality is the crisis of traditional philosophy paradigm, and namely the crisis of rationality is the crisis of traditional subject awareness philosophy. This is a bad consequence which attributes to the fact that traditional art education starts from the cognition and purpose behavior relation of subject philosophy. Only to transfer the subject philosophy into inter-subject philosophy, to convert the instrumental rationality to the communication rationality, to change the awareness philosophy into the language philosophy, to stand on the base, can we build our buildings of eco-style art education and help Chinese art education out of the predicament.

In the eco-style art education, all kinds of knowledge learnt by educatee in his mind contact, collide, dialogize and mingle each other, and all kinds of brainpowers intercross, dialogize and mingle mutually. So the educatee has been continuously inspired, trained and edified, and the correct and healthy aesthetic viewpoint and aesthetic taste has gradually formed, and the ability to taste beauty, appreciate beauty, express beauty and create beauty has been cultivated, and simultaneously the good characters have been developed, and the body and spirit of educatee are promoted to all-round development. The person that the eco-style art education trains is not a person with "single vision", a biological person, a "civilized barbarian", a "broken person", a "examination person" or a person with IQ but without EQ, but a "Master", a person standing to sense and seeing the larger issues and the general interest, a all-round developed person, who has developing coordination of body and spirit, lofty sentiment and rich wisdom and strong practical ability.

Overall, Chinese current art education primarily has a series of questions: The art education lacks awareness and attention in varying degrees; The art education management mechanisms are not effective; The art education is made skilling, moralization, moralization and marginalization. The root causes of these problems are: One is the backward educational system, and the other is the self-development lag of the art education. The only way out of Chinese art education is to go to the eco-style art education whose fundamental features are contact, communication and dialogue. The eco-style art education is an art education of organic integration, which emphasizes the comprehensiveness of students' development, the integration of activity content, the integrity of the activity process, the communication of activities and the equality of teacher-student interaction. The eco-style art education is able to fully tap the full potential of people and to improve completely people's all aspects of quality. The eco-style art education is the self-reflection and transcending of the concept of traditional art education, and is the only way out for Chinese art education to get rid of the predicament.

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Enhancing the Critical Role of Malaysian Institute of Higher Education from Ivy League American Universities Research Culture Experiences

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Abstract

Emulation by example is an old adage that has been a pragmatic initiative in great endeavors. To create a dynamic research culture too requires revisiting eminent personality and renowned organization by which one can copy in order to establish credibility. This paper explores the practicality of the emulation activities that help to establish this dynamic research culture. Here, the writers address the American Ivy League universities as the exemplary institutions of knowledge that have been long established and that Malaysian institutions of higher education can continue to learn and adapt in order to continue achieving academic excellence, particularly in research practices. Pertinent areas covered are the current research and innovation taking place in the US tertiary education, nurturing academic entrepreneurship, the need for effective research leaders, creating talent pool for researchers' succession planning and internationalization, just to state a few. Simultaneously, establishing the research infrastructure and capacity is also another exploration that provides insights into the pertinent scope of academic establishment. This needs undivided attention by the leadership in the university. Through this sharing which is part of the experience acquired by the first author being an associate of an Ivy League institution, invaluable information in the paper can assist readers in understanding what is needed to establish a dynamic research culture for tertiary community.

Keywords: Research culture, Ivy League, Academic entrepreneurship, Talent pool, Research leadership, Tertiary, Academic excellence

1. Introduction

Yale University is ranked 2nd Top World Ranking University by *Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)* – Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings (WUR) in 2007 and 2008 and is one of American Ivy League universities. Significantly, it contributes to the major infrastructure and talent pool for academic excellence, industry-research collaborations, and internationalization networking. Hence, sharing this article should help tertiary community in Malaysia gain some insights on the interactions with a range of multi-agent stakeholders and help to contribute in transforming themselves into dynamic institutions. Hence, the efforts through an Ivy League experience can empower a dynamic research culture which will enhance the norms of academic scholarship, creating talent pool,

team collaboration, discipline knowledge and participation in colloquia, journals and other peer review mechanisms. These are initiatives that will subsequently create ripples of research and innovation excellence.

2. Research and innovation scenario in USA tertiary education

Several cases are quoted below in order to learn from the challenges faced by the US tertiary community. These cases are indicators of vibrant academic entrepreneurship experience undergone by the United States academia in their very own research culture. A starting point is the experiences of Professor Emanuel Derman (http://www.ederman.com) of Columbia University, USA (ranked 10th. placing by THES in 2008). He had negative experiences as an "early career" researcher at Bell Laboratories by going through poor research management. However, the investment bank Goldman Sachs interacted by promoting a culture that valued academic rigour, business acumen, and conceptual skills and thus, has helped to provide a more satisfying experience (Derman, 2004).

Innovation advocates most often refer to information technology companies such as Google and Sun as exemplars of the pivotal role that universities play in new venture creation and industry or sectoral development (Vise, 2005; Vise & Malseed, 2006; Hamel, 2007). Likewise are American giant companies such as Apple Incorporation, Roche, Satmetrix Systems, Proctor & Gamble, Bristol-Meyers Squibb, where university research was "catalytic" and that followed the process below for new venture creation. Hence to quote Yale's 'Apple University', Apple Inc. has hired the Dean of the Business School, Yale University to head an educational initiative to be called Apple University. In another example, Procter & Gamble, supports Yale University Collaboration for public health training throughout China.

Fruitful collaboration between Bristol-Myers Squibb and Yale Medical School fosters innovations in education and research. Continuing a partnership with the School of Medicine that was forged more than 30 years ago, the Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. has renewed its fellowship support for graduate students in the Combined Program in the Biological and Biomedical Sciences at Yale. This is commonly known as the BBS Program which has transformed the university's graduate education in the life sciences since its inception in 1996. Since then, Yale/Bristol-Myers Squibb Educational Alliance, has enabled Yale graduate students to gain exposure to private-sector biomedical research through summer rotations at BMS research and development campus in nearby Wallingford, Connecticut. More recently, at the School of Nursing's Program for the Advancement of Chronic Wound Care, an effort to devise clinical "best practices" for wound treatment, got under way in 2002 with support from the BMS Foundation and BMS's ConvaTec unit. In addition, with the guidance of Michael H. Merson, M.D., the Anna M.R. Lauder Professor of Public Health, the foundation has recruited Yale experts to evaluate the effectiveness of its Secure the Future initiative, which supports community-based initiatives in Southern and West Africa aimed at stemming the AIDS pandemic.

Recently, while at Yale, Dean Robert J. Alpern M.D., and Yale University President Richard C. Levin hosted BMS Chairman and CEO Peter R. Dolan, M.B.A., and other senior executives at a celebration of the alliance and other collaborations between BMS and Yale. A permanent plaque now honours the company's extraordinary contributions to medical research and education in Yale. Yale's President Levin said "It helped shape the direction and range of intellectual activity at the School of Medicine." For his part, BMS' Dolan offers a succinct assessment of the company's long relationship with Yale, "We are all better off". More notes and highlights of this success environment can be read from the latest 2008 monthly *Yale Bulletin Research News and Yale Magazine.*

Another leading provider of enterprise solutions for improving business loyalty and profitability, Satmetrix Systems announced that Yale University President Richard C. Levin has been appointed to its board of directors. Levin, the Frederick William Beheinecke Professor of Economics, was selected as the twenty-second president of Yale in 1993. Satmetrix Systems officials cited Levin's global business leadership, adroit stewardship as head of one of the world's premier universities, and his economics acumen as a much sought-after public policy advisor, renders him to be member of the board. Levin has articulated a compelling vision of Yale's fourth century as an international university by forging new alliances and the creation of programmes in emerging fields that include the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization (The former British premier, Mr. Tony Blair, was appointed as Visiting Professor/Fellow for Center for Faith & Globalization); and the Yale Law School's China Law Center, a collaboration to increase understanding of China's legal system and assist China's legal reform process.

Exploring further, Lee Faulkner, as media director for Yale University's Digital Media Center for the Arts (DMCA), is always looking for the next cutting-edge way to connect art and technology. Lee found what he was looking for in Image Portal - a Web-based Lee Digital Asset Management (DAM) solution from NetXposure built specifically for the Apple Mac OS X platform. Now that Image Portal A/V is facilitating creation and collaboration among Yale's arts departments, the next step is to explore new ways of technology that can connect artists and art lovers outside the university and around the globe. Yale DMCA and NetXposure have initiated a project allowing arts departments of other universities to join Yale and engage in interactive, rich media messaging through flat-screen plasma display panels.

In yet another dynamic emergence is financial engineering as a new sub-discipline in corporate finance that illustrates the "co-evolution" of new industry sectors, markets and universities. Cold War era science and technology projects created the demand in the 1960s and early 1970s for a cohort of mathematicians and physicists. However, by the mid-1980s, a geopolitical climate of detente and a decline in S&T projects meant that many people in this cohort left government research laboratories and universities. Wall Street investment banks and hedge funds provided the catalyst, where these researchers were able to adapt their domain expertise to build financial models for derivatives, options and futures trading. By the late 1990s, these researchers had developed enough industry credibility to create and fund new departments at major universities in the United States. In a move that saw some practitioners come full circle, they left Wall Street to oversee these new teaching and research programmes (Lindsey & Schachter 2007; Mehrling 2005; & Derman 2004). Collectively, these approaches suggest that universities will continue to have a pivotal role in knowledge generation and transfer.

3. Forging industry-academia partnerships

In the last two decades a new entity has emerged on the campuses of America's research universities. This entity is known as the University-Industry Research Center or UIRC or in Malaysia, University Business Centers. Such centers composed of research groups led by renowned endowed Professors whose focus is on problems that have relevance to a particular sector of industry and these centers receive support from that industry. In 1990, more than 1,000 existed and involved more than 35,000 faculty researchers and 17,000 PhD students in the States. Many more exist today.

Strictly speaking, universities are not creating them. For example in Yale's Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), it was determined that individual faculty members, not university administrations, typically provide the impetus for the center. Motivations vary, but the need to create funding alternatives to declining or uncertain federal support is important, as is the desire to turn research efforts to a practical end. Additionally, nearly one quarter of all US PhD recipients in the sciences are finding positions in industry; so students are looking for training that is relevant to their career prospects.

4. Nurture and promote academic entrepreneurship

From the above observation, Malaysian universities need programmes with the conviction that educational structures reflect the increasingly fluid and interdisciplinary nature of biological science. Hence, such a culture is yearned for and Malaysian universities need this culture of cross discipline in Faculties, Centres or Institutes. Despite the efforts of thinkers, the Malaysian academics, for a long time have remained in the safe waters of premier, academic and scientific institutions. The thoughts of one scientist illustrate the following "Scientists are not supposed to think about the economic perspective on research and development projects. A scientist's work is supposed to provide scientific knowledge. Economics is quite another discipline..."(Ella, 2006) This mindset has to change.

This decade, which is all set to see a Malaysian academic–industry link boom, will belong to those who have the power to convert their dreams into reality. In other words, it will see the rise of the academic entrepreneur. These are shapers and movers who will move away from the safe waters of the laboratory and convert a patentable/testable research dream into a viable business proposition. Having just strings of medals from money biased organized research medal competition in the US, UK or Switzerland is not sufficient to nurture entrepreneurship.

Every Malaysian academia entrepreneur must thoroughly understand the grassroots features of any technology-based sector such as research, collaboration, infrastructure, and technology and commercialization capital and come up with an alternative business model to achieve success. An example of a spin-out is an airborne remote sensing company like the one first established four years ago in Universiti Putra Malaysia known as Aeroscan Precision (M) Sdn. Bhd. is progressing well till today. The details of academic entrepreneurship are available from the first author's book entitled *"Academic Entrepreneurship: A Malaysian Research University Perspective"* published this year (edited by the second author) by Universiti Teknologi MARA Publisher.

5. Creating talent pool for researcher succession planning

Great emphasis on the enhancement of research and innovation will definitely render for dynamic participation of all levels in the academia to play their role in the research arena (Kamaruzaman & Siti Akmar, 2008b). Committed participation of every university citizenry in all aspects of academic excellence vis-a-vis international recognition has to be continuously enhanced. This aspiration requires the effort to generate excellence that begins from the fundamentals of leadership to create, generate and innovate. It is vital that research leaders apply leadership principles and insights into their own leadership styles to help generate cycles of academic activities, and hence, to attain the status of a research university.

In order to create such a research culture in the university, developing research leadership brings about positive outcomes based on a shared vision (Middlehurst, 1993). To do so, the creation of talent pool of potential research leaders can assist the university attain this daunting task.   In Malaysian institutions of higher education, the crisis of succession planning occurs clearly in the public universities and colleges. Finding replacement for vacated position is not any easier when academic leaders have to retire or leave in absence due to emergency or taking a break (Zaini *et al.*,

2008). In an executing position to enhance research activities, similar scenario takes place.   Suitable candidates to lead research activities need to possess leadership skills in both teaching and researching skills (Blanchard & Miller, 2007).

Accordingly, in tandem with the government's mission and vision to enhance the standard and quality of higher education, university has pivotal role in establishing the country as an excellent research hub (Kamaruzaman & Siti Akmar, 2008a). However, evidence reveals significant shortage in research leadership that can envisage the constantly changing research environment. With inadequate leadership skills, results and performance of the organisation are affected. The persistence of the occurring problem might have lagged the progress of research activity in Malaysian institutions.

The unique characteristics of academicians and the complexity in the career development in terms of research and its related area inside the higher education institutions in Malaysia need a special model of talent pool searching and succession planning. The system should accommodate and be in the favour of the needs of higher education institution to ascertain the flexibility of the academic performance while at the same time build core competencies for the institution to intensify research through competent research leadership. The standards and quality of higher education must be well maintained in order for a particular institution to be globally recognized (Brennan *et al*, 1997). Hence, a mark of standards and quality of higher education is the intensification of research activities with capable academia in the pool of leadership.

Good research leaders develop through never-ending process of self-study, education, training, and experience. Research leaders usually have the ability to lead research groups and to influence team members and other people and the activity of leading research. They are visible, accountable to the research team or staff and have a commitment to further the purpose and goals of research (Evans, 1999).   Meanwhile, an innovative leader is someone who has the skills and creative followers to produce new products, processes or services. In short, good and innovative research leaders must be creative, visionary, imaginative, inspirational, insightful, foresighted and intuitional in leading their pool of researchers. It is not enough being innovative, research leaders must be emerging leaders too (Carucci, 2007).

Succession planning is a process that selects employees, develops their competencies, which then prepares them for future assignment in positions which require these competencies for effective performance in the organisation. The process involves understanding the institutions long-term goals and objectives, identifying the workforce's developmental needs and determining workforce trends and predictions. With good succession planning, which is commonly practiced in corporate organisation, it has been observed that academic institutions need to have this initiative to ensure effectiveness and smooth running of the institutions for new leadership roles as the need arises or one's term has ended (Boettcher & Craven, 2008). There is a need for selection criteria for these talents to be readily 'groomed' for leadership role particularly in academic tasks such as research in institutions of higher education. A good succession planning can reduce the risk of one organization going into losing the target of the shared vision, that is, achieving the research university status and to ensure sustainability not only of the organization, but also the research culture within the organisation, as indicated through the significance of succession planning stated by Wolfred (2008).

The establishment of the succession plan and related models helps to nurture and strengthen the high performance culture in institutions of higher education via professional work force that exhibits self personality and professional personality, possession of competency and vital values towards sustainable achievement of their future. The key strategy of the succession plan is to mould and harness the talent of professional work force at academic leadership level to fill in strategic positions. The plan aids in the career path and laid foundation of guidance necessary for the accomplishment of tasks and duties of the future, in particular, academicians as research leaders.

6. Leadership in Institutions of Higher Education

Dynamic growth in the economic and educational sectors renders policy documentations and recent domestic debates in the country to continue to be galvanizing more efforts for quality in higher education. This has also pointed to the need for a shift in the growth trajectory with stronger emphasis on 'endogenous innovation' and 'harmonious development' as far as research initiative is concerned. It is imperative to define innovation here as the generation and application of ideas and skills to produce new product, process and service that improve economic and social prosperity in the society.

Malaysia is rapidly developing its own higher education innovative policy and infrastructure to ensure its competitiveness and continued growth in the global marketplace. This is imperative so as to make Malaysian institutions of higher education to the top 100 placing in the *Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)* – Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings (WUR).   This unprecedented move will have tertiary education be benchmarked against international standards and simultaneously, will enhance the quality of academics in terms of leadership, expertise and a sense of undivided commitment for educational excellence.

Through observation, it is pertinent to note that the shift in policy of a research university is towards research innovations, businesses and openness to establish an institutional setting of clear direction an institution needs to move towards, as far as research is concerned (Pfeffer & Stutton, 2000). This initiative,   together with other factors such as

the presence of a high standard "Key Performance Index (KPI)" or "*Sasaran Kerja Tahunan*" (SKT) for all levels of academia, enhances significant research and development activities, in particular and learning and innovation in general. Subsequently, when there is a move to ensure excellent research leadership qualities, institutions of higher education will help to shape the institutional framework which in turn resulted in extremely high rates of capital accumulation, in research products and commercialisation.

In a more serious observation, it is clear that academic reputation of the faculty member based on refereed journal publication, working paper presentations, and academic networking at high impact world conventions, is the main factor that could help to propel efforts to enhance the quality of Malaysia's higher education system. A key component of research policy and innovative development is the assimilation and demand for high performance and innovative research that requires inspirational research leaders who publish research work in internationally renowned citation indexed or very high impact factor journals like *Science* or *Nature.*

Leaders of this calibre, develop collaborations with the top 10 universities in the world. Not only is their ability to contribute to rank respective institution through some of the often-cited global university ranking, but also to ensure that the institution graduates are in demand by some of the largest multinational companies, locally and overseas. Unnecessary campaigns like ISO, standardized teaching methods, long hourly meetings in faculties, competing for medals in international product competition, should not be the main focus of our Malaysian public universities as time, money and energy has long time been wasted and over-emphasized for nothing.

7. The need for effective research leader

Developing the research culture requires competent research leader. One has to be able to motivate academic staff and to lead them through change. (Blanchard & Miller, 2007) This is a necessity as such an initiative helps academicians to be innovative in carrying out research process that eventually leads to research products and services. Research leader possesses ways of working creatively as research environment is ever changing, particularly in the new and challenging institution of higher education policy and innovation. Henceforth, knowledge-based research leader should be one who stewards protégé and mentee, be familiar with major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, international outreach and historical trends in research leadership.

This leader needs also the knowledge and understanding of research leadership theories and skills. His application of leadership principles, in addition with the development of insights into his own leadership styles are vital (http://www.sedl.org/change/leadership/history.html). The application includes spiritual and ethical components as well as effective strategies for leadership of self and of others. Most importantly, being leaders, the capability in decision making and technology management in research has to be manifested with the ability to use legal, technical and decision-making knowledge for research purposes. Nevertheless, it is significant that such a leader utilizes a broad range of tools in research decision making practices.

8. Internationalization and research leadership excellence

To support the need of institution of higher education to move forward towards such excellence as Research or APEX University, academic and research exchanges with top notch world renowned universities abroad must be common in every field of study. Academic staff and researchers should often be sent abroad to acquire advanced PhD degrees or study specific fields of knowledge. Technical links with top 10 foreign universities like Harvard, Cambridge, Stanford, Yale, MIT and Oxford to do joint research in advanced and innovative technology can be materialized via efficient top-most stewardship of the institute. Expansion of such links allows local university's research leaders to improve their industrial capabilities faster, and subsequently, incorporate highly trained personnel who have professional connections to research institutions. More of our well reputable Malaysian Professors should be given an opportunity to be attached abroad as Visiting Professors or Scholars with sufficient funds supported by the government.

Moreover, cooperative research agreement between institutions of higher education and foreign firms should be a source of funds, infrastructure and commercial technology for local research leaders. Foreign firms usually bring the necessary research and technology. Strategic technical alliances with other world market leaders allow research leaders to penetrate new markets faster and give them access to a broader range of cutting-edge technology (Smith, 1996). Strategic cooperation is the process of identifying gaps in endogenous research and technologies, seeking out the technology, and then engaging the owner of the technology in a cooperative relationship that results in the transfer in technology.

In another advantage, such a co-operation can also include participation in joint international research. As the initial focus of this research is pre-competitive, start up institution spin-off companies from high impact research should be more willing to share their technology. Sufficient research and development funding set aside for basic industrial technology development is being allocated for the joint research and development cooperation.

It is important to highlight that improvement of public funds management and the development of scientific community-based evaluation would largely increase the efficiency of knowledge production. This shift can actually be

combined with a   more intense communication with industry both in research and higher education. In a more global knowledge society, is also important to participate in international academic communities and to expose the academic research to international competition. Such changes would certainly increase the rate of return from the increased investment in research and development for the community in institutions of higher education.

High performance and innovative research in the institutions of higher education requires inspirational, authenticable and emerging young research leaders. This should work in tandem with the government's mission and vision to enhance the standard and quality of higher education. Public universities now have a pivotal role in establishing a country as an excellent research hub. However, evidence reveals significant shortages in research leadership skills that relating to creating a sense of vision in a fast changing research environment, motivating research staff and leading them through change, and being innovative in research products and services.   The standards and quality of higher education must be well maintained in order for a particular institution to be globally recognized (Brennan *et al*, 1997).

There are several leadership theories in literature of which opinions are given on how one becomes an innovative research leader (Middlehurst, 1993). Trait, behavioural and contingency theories represent conventional approaches to leadership and have provided important foundations for research on the subject.   Some traits of a good innovative research leader in the arts, sciences and technology are creativity, technical foundation, confidence, consultative but decisive, inspirational, visionary, leading by example, and high technical standards.   Personal qualities include being ethical, caring, ready with deserved praises, clear but gentle criticism and most importantly,   never hurting a team member or subordinate's confidence.

9. Establishing research infrastructure and capacity

Up-to-date research infrastructure and learning tools are essentials for a researcher to enhance the quality of the teaching, learning and research environment. With the latest technology tools for leadership in teaching, learning, research and career development, these kinds of support help to enhance the desired quality of research leadership. Together with this and an uncompromised usage of technology, Malaysian universities must recruit and retain to graduation, excellent and diverse undergraduates, graduates, and professional students and high impact research staff. Hiring and keeping the best researchers would lead towards successful commercialisation and business effectively (Anon, 2007). This will in turn enhance and better serve the Malaysian industry.

Strategic technical alliances with other world market research leaders allow participating universities to penetrate new markets faster and give them access to a broader range of cutting-edge technology. These cooperative efforts will enable spin-out Malaysian firms to move rapidly onto the national as well as world stage. Malaysian universities can provide any number of incentives for technology transfer, including funding commercialisation, providing plants and equipment, contributing other technology, or facilitating local market access. Strategic cooperation can also include participation in joint international research. In the long run, Malaysian universities will also engage in international R&D projects in such fields as environment, energy and natural resources and expanding international education and training programmes.

10. Conclusion

In every aspiration, total commitment and concerted efforts from all parties are needed to ensure the successful development of innovative research leaders and research culture in Malaysian tertiary institutions.   Not only academia plays an important role in ensuring success of Malaysian universities of international stature, but also the supportive environment within and outside the institutions.   The "way forward" includes the internationalization of research innovation and competent leadership. The above areas discussed need the concerted effort of university leadership to champion those causes as they are policy and decision makers in such drives. In Malaysian public institutions of higher education, the position of the Deputy Vice Chancellor under the Research and Innovation portfolio executes an overall plan that can develop and enhance rich research culture through faculties, institutes, centres of excellence and units.

This article though is partly an account of a 'personal' experience of a Yale University Visiting Professor who experienced first-hand value of international academic exchange; proves to be of great value to Malaysian public service and universities,   to fund potential research leaders to visit only the Top 10 world class foreign universities, research labs or institutes. Expanding links with these universities also allow Malaysian research leaders to improve their industrial capabilities and to employ highly trained personnel who have professional connections to research institutions.   A joint initiative by Malaysia Academy of Science's Brain Gain Malaysia (BGM) and the Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation (MOSTI)'s initiative is one of the good examples. Perhaps, MOHE should be deeply associated with its own programme to ensure that Malaysian institutions of higher education get listed in the Top 100 World Ranking Universities in 2020, if proper measures highlighted   in this article are given due consideration.

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A Case Study on the Influence of Organizational Culture

on Language Classroom

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Abstract

This paper tries to probe the influence of the organizational culture on language classroom at a newly-established local college. It firstly reviews the knowledge of the organizational culture and finds out its features, and then discusses how the organizational culture was greatly influenced by the host educational environment. On the basis of this, the paper interprets how organizational culture in turn influences the classroom culture in terms of English language teaching and learning in China.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Influence, Language classroom

1. Introduction

With the development of economy and society, and in view of the urgent need of different kinds of high-level practical and compound personnel in the field of modernization construction, China speeds up the reform of higher education in order to develop a modern education system applicable to the socialist market economy. In the meantime, as another feature of the educational reform, the major curricula of school education and of tertiary English, both initiated by the Ministry of Education, have been reviewed and revised again and again. As a result of the reviewing processes, three new English language curricula have been produced and put to experiment: National Curriculum for English language teaching(ELT) for Compulsory education, National Curriculum for ELT for Senior Middle School Education, and Curriculum Requirements for University Non-major English Education. Together with the introduction of new curricula, the training of enough qualified English teachers has been adequately addressed with a view to improve the teaching quality of ELT in the countryside schools. The specific objective of the program was "to introduce them [teacher trainees] to new ideas in the theory and practice of English language teaching, particularly to the communicative language approach and the learner-centered classroom" (Ward, 1995:14). A more general objective was to narrow the gap between the urban cities and rural regions in education (Ouyang, 2000).

Now we're thinking whether it is effective or just a waste of human and material resource to take a top-down reform with little regard to regional differences, and whether teacher training programs that prepare teachers for such reform should be focused on methodological aspects or on the social contexts in China. A further question is why it is important to think about language teaching and learning beyond the immediate classroom in view of a wider society. Therefore, we choose this topic to probe the influence of the organizational culture on language classroom at a newly-eatablished local college.

2. The definition of the organizational culture and the characteristics of our organizational culture

As Schein (1997) and Seihl (1985) clearly note in their seminal article on organizational culture, organizational culture is 'a product of the experience of social groups'. And Prosser (1999:11) identifies 'organizational culture' as 'a collection of theories that attempt to explain and predict how organizations and people in them act in different circumstances' and as 'a way of looking at and thinking about behavior of and in organizations, and offers a useful perspective for understanding what is occurring in school and other kinds of educational institutions…' Therefore, organizational culture is: 'the interweaving of the individual into a community and the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one known group from another. It is the values, norms, beliefs and customs that an individual holds in common with members of the social unit or groups' (Ogbonna,1993:42). According to Schein's(1980) model of organizational culture, which has become an influential theory of organizational culture, beliefs and assumptions form the core of an organization's culture.

From the reviewing, we find that not a single definition can interpret 'organizational culture' theory appropriately; but we believe that one way that researchers have tried to understand what a culture means is to find ways to identify the types of 'assumptions' that underlie organizational cultures and try to make sense of these assumptions. When we tried to identify the types of 'assumptions' that underlie our organizational cultures, we found that it's a special integration.

Firstly, with government control over higher education diminishing, universities and colleges are given more powers to determine their own management style. Therefore, the president is responsible for the overall management of the university and plays a decisive role. He may enforce a series of rules and regulations, and exercise direct supervision to oversee and control the work of the departments and the way they interact. Thus, he is stereotyped as a bureaucracy, which is the typical example of the Role Culture.

Secondly, the university is job or project oriented. It is the most important thing for the university administration to strongly promote the quality of graduate education, and standardize systematic management so as to go through the initial examination and re-examination for the admission and training of graduates, and for degree conferment, which is approved by the Disciplines Appraising Groups organized by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council. And then the disciplines and specialties, and even the number of the teachers with postgraduate degrees are subject to re-examination and approval.

Thirdly, the university seems to be more oriented toward individualism and utilitarianism. In order to develop a modern education system of higher learning applicable to the socialist market economy, reforms allow colleges and universities to be run by themselves or by non-governmental bodies under government macro-management. Now the old practice of government alone financing institutions of higher learning is being replaced by a new one, and, accordingly, the government budget remains the main part while diversified sources provide the remainder. Up to this point, the university has to raise more funds to improve the infrastructure and to realize the diversifying. Thus, the University has been actively pioneering the flexibility in enlarging the recruitment of students irrespective of their different levels, which may include some short courses for special purposes.

To sum up, as a newly-established local college, influenced greatly by the host educational environment, our university no doubt will be job oriented and utilitarianism with very clear characteristic of "the Role Culture" [Note 1]and " the Task Culture"[Note 2].

3. English language learning and teaching in China

On the institutional level, English is not only the core course which is responsible for training the pre-service English teacher at the secondary school, but also a compulsory subject for non-major graduates which helps them to get B. A. We have to emphasize here that College English Test (CET or, Band-4 and-6 tests), known as the English proficiency tests, plays an important role in higher education in China. First, Bachelor degrees are only conferred to those who succeed in CET. Second, without test certificates many government institutions and private companies will refuse to accept the applicants. As a result, many universities in China, including ours, have been forced to lay emphasis on the test scores and turn teaching and learning into a sort of test-oriented education. Hence there is a dilemma for all the teachers: to be students-oriented or to be test-oriented? With the exception of this, the ever-increasing demand for English proficiency provides the university with great opportunities to make profit. In this case, our university encourages the teachers to be flexible in teaching method to meet different learners' various needs. Therefore, ELT is seen as a key to realise two objectives: one for degree conferment, another for economic development. So whatever teachers do should serve these purposes.

On the national level, English is perceived by the government as a necessary means for helping the nation to further open up, a valuable resource for realizing its modernization program and an important cornerstone of international competition. This led to the change of English education. According to the latest national syllabuses, the new conceptions of ELT represent a departure from the traditional teacher-centered and textbook-driven teaching in the sense that they highlight a learner-oriented, educational approach, with a view to bring about character education in general and to develop the learner's ability to use English in communication in particular (Wu , 2002). While English learning is stressed in relation to the rapid development of information technology, the globalization of economic activities and the basic abilities that citizens in the 21st century must possess. Owing to these ambitious objectives, teachers are required to give priority to the students' development of communicative competence, to strive for an all-round development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, to encourage active learner participation in the learning process, and to develop learner autonomy. In addition, to cope with the aims of the new courses of study, teachers are expected to move in the direction of adoption of the communicative language teaching approach. It is hoped that it will give classroom teachers more freedom within the framework of the curriculum, and this will in turn lead to more progressive methodologies and practices to be adopted. Indeed, the Ministry itself see the new curriculum as a means to force teachers to change their classroom practices and thereby better help learners to develop the ability to use the language to communicate competently. Yet many of the teachers themselves still do not have a high level of communicative competence in the language. In addition, there is a general lack of teacher education. While the situation is beginning to change with more and more language teachers seeking training, it is still possible for a teacher to become certified to teach English on the basis of obtaining a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, and to participate in outside in-service training and retraining activities. Therefore, short courses are offered by government at all education levels.

3.1 Classroom behavior

As ours is a normal university, it was selected to host the in-service training program at the regional level. In the summer of 2005, we were assigned to teach an English listening and speaking course for the Junior Middle School English Teacher Training program ("junior" here refers to the first three years in the six-year secondary school system) for a month, which is designed to cover 80 class hours of instruction. There were at least 40 teachers coming from the remote, less developed counties. In these areas, the prevailing methodology was a teacher-centered, grammar -translation pedagogy; the quality of ELT was at its lowest. From their brief self-introductions made in class and our close interviews with them after class, we found that there are big differences among them. Some were originally teachers of other subjects other than English and they became English teachers because of the serious shortage. Others are teachers of English majors who have received some formal training in the normal college. Obviously, big gap exists in the trainees' English proficiency level.

The teaching materials--*"True Colors"*, assigned by the institutional administration, is an excellent textbook for such short course training, especially for adult or young adult course in English as a foreign language. According to the writers, Jay Maurer and Irene E. Schoenberg (2003), the book presents the true voice of the native speakers of American English, and systematically teaches students to communicate in their own words—"to let their true colors shine through." As a major innovation of this book, it systematically builds students' ability to present their own ideas, opinions, and feelings – both accurately and confidently. To us, it is just like a beam of sunshine in cold winter.

As mentioned above, our university gives the teacher enough freedom in practical teaching. We can design teaching goals and choose teaching method on our own. So we designed four goals according to the objectives of this training, which guided what went on in our class:

- Teacher trainees should be actively involved in their interactive activities.

- Teacher trainees should acquire communication skills as a result of being engaged in authentic language use.

- Teacher trainees should master two essential listening skills: determining context and focusing attention.

- Teacher trainees should be able to present their own ideas, opinions and feelings accurately and confidently.

In order to provide the trainees with more exposure to English, and in consideration of the trainees' different levels, we chose the communicative teaching method (CLT) with the help of visual-audio-lingual method rather than the task-based language teaching suggested by the textbook. We made our teaching plan in detail and divided our teaching procedure into three main parts:

Part 1 *Social language and grammar lesson* included conversation and pair practice. In this part, we began with a short dialogue presentation, and followed with a modeling of important social language through videocassette playing while providing clear and well-explained grammar presentations integrated with the social language, before we encouraged the trainees to manipulate it. The same dialogue was repeated later, when the trainees were asked to personalize the social language in pair practice.

Part 2 "*In their Own Words*" In this part, trainees watched and listened to a short passage which centered on two essential listening skills --- determining context and focusing attention. Trainees are required to do some listening comprehension exercises orally and, on the base of this, some of them were asked to retell this short passage.

Part 3   "*Heart to Heart*" This part always came near the end of the unit, ensuring adequate preparations for success, since the trainees were encouraged to express their own opinions, ideas and feelings on a variety of topics.

In addition, we made a very good use of the audio and video cassettes of this course and a multi-media language lab as well, even to the extent that we downloaded some additional listening texts. It seemed that everything was ready and we were confident of our teaching.

However, things turned out contrary to our wishes. And in this regard, three episodes that happened in the classroom can serve as a demonstration.

Scene 1 At the very beginning of our class, we divided the trainees into five groups in order to facilitate real communication and naturalistic language use. We tried to begin each class with a warm-up activity so that the trainees could interact and communicate with each other in English more actively. At the same time a discussion was held before the trainees watched the video, which was intended to help them follow the video more easily. During the small group work and pair practice, we walked around and monitored the trainees, leaving them as unperturbed as possible. To our surprise, we found that they slipped back into using the Chinese or even dialects. And when they realized our monitoring, they stopped talking altogether. The problem became even more complicated when we asked representatives from the small groups to report on their work --- no one wanted to be a volunteer. Nevertheless, when we went on with the class by asking some questions, they were active in answering in chorus.

Scene 2 In the listening comprehension section, even though the trainees could finish the written work as quickly as

possible with the help of listening skills introduced, some of them still asked me to read the script and translate them into Chinese, because they wanted to know the detailed meaning in Chinese.

Scene 3 When we tried ourselves to speak English in class and persuaded the trainees to communicate with each other in English, they said to me that, "we all know it's useful for us to learn the language by communication, but we don't think it's useful for the examination. On one hand, if you speak English all the time in class, we couldn't follow you; on the other hand, if we give all the instruction in English, our students couldn't understand, and of course they will fail in the examination. So why should we be trained in this way?" What's more, they worried a lot about the achievement test we will give them at the end the training program.

After these episodes, we changed our teaching plan accordingly. We spent most of our time primarily listening to and watching the video. The rest of the time was spent on helping them understand the message given by the video, and providing the information that the trainees specifically asked for. Our classroom changed from monolingual to bilingual. No complaint emerged.

3.2 Interpretation of the classroom behavior

The short course training didn't go as we had planned. As English teacher trainers (to some extent), we attempted to interpret the classroom behavior in terms of our own cultural setting and seek for contextual explanations. As the literature defines, the classroom is situated in a host institution, which is in turn situated within a host educational environment. Therefore, the host educational environment will influence the host institution and in return, the classroom. Bowers (1987:9) have pointed out that "the classroom is a microcosm which, for all its universal magisterial conventions, reflects in fundamental social terms the world that lies outside the window".

With regard to our organizational culture, the function a university actually performs is the result of compromise between what is needed and what is demanded (Coleman, 1996). In other words, functionalism is a substitute for utilitarianism. Though we have seen ourselves as sensitive teachers, we have been familiar with various teaching approaches such as: whether old or young, traditional or advanced, grammar-translation method, the audio-oral method, the visual-audio-oral method, the pattern-and-drill approach and the communicative approach, and so on, we have never studied and used rootedly any of them systematically from start to end, that is, from primary school education to college education, from teachers' learning and teaching to student learning. Immersed by the instrumental function of the university environment, for us, English language teaching is becoming a so-called "task-based" work. On one hand, we have been kept busy with our teaching on our routine life because of the rapid-increasing enrollment of students; on the other hand, we teachers want to grasp the opportunity granted by the university to get higher degree through further education, and then we spend most of our time on the preparation for the entrance examination. Thus, it would be difficult for us to delve into each methodology, say nothing of sufficient theoretical research. That's why we swung back and forth like a pendulum, from CLT to TM, from students-centered, the modern and advanced way, to teacher-centered, the old and traditional one, and vice versa. And such is the result.

With regard to our trainees, if they think their students couldn't understand the instruction given in English, English speaking and listening are not the most basic language skills, and then they don't want to be trained in this communicative way. Furthermore, our trainees assume that it is necessary for them to do some translation work and to give some grammatical explanation in favor of the examination-oriented education, in which the National College Entrance Examination is the compasses in their voyage of English learning and teaching. The last but not the least, there is a general consensus among the trainees that the teacher is a knowledge giver, a what-he-says counts authority as well as a disciplinarian (Ouyang, 2000). Teacher-centered instruction is overwhelmingly an efficient and a successful way as it is, for the primary and secondary schools to face the challenge given by outnumbered students. In other words, the students-centered approach is just an ideal to some extent. From this point , we may find that people think and behave according to their own "thinking". Their thinking is influenced by culture norms and physical environments ((Wedell & Fairhurst, 2005). And so classroom practices reflect attitudes and beliefs about language and language learning that is embedded in the sociocultural context.

It follows from what has been said that both our trainees and we strived for the instrumentally orientation. Thus we see if a university develops towards more practical concerns such as producing better scores and passing rate at important exams; if the trainees bring different experiences, personalities, styles and feelings to a teaching and learning context and be unable to refresh the view in such a short course; if the top-down reform carries out with little regard to regional differences and irrespective of the trainees' different levels, the reform in ELT will turn out to be deficient, that is, to some extent, a waste of human and material resources. Otherwise, it is important for us to think about English language teaching and learning beyond the immediate classroom and relate it to the world outside, as we found that it was so greatly influenced by the host institution and the host educational environment.

4. Conclusion

As the literature suggests, if a new curriculum or a set of textbooks based on new approaches are planned and

introduced into an education system, the success of the planned change depends on the extent to which teachers are able to rethink at least some of their ideas about or expectations of teaching and learning, and adapt their classroom behavior or expectations accordingly. That means teacher training program might take account of the social contexts, which are rooted in our social surroundings and hence have influential effects on many aspects of everyday routine life, educational learning and teaching. The short training course we described here is one example of explaining this idea from our own experience.

One implication here is that teacher education should be seen as a crucial key link in the successful implementation of the reform in changing ELT. Furthermore, successful teacher training or teacher development is a systematic observation and exploration of classroom teaching. In the recognition of promoting the healthy interaction of teaching and learning, we should have a deep understanding of organizational culture and then develop positive attitudes to be more conscious of the development of ELT, and continually readjust and develop in every field. Meanwhile, we could have a clear distinction between teacher training and teacher development, especially at regional level. Especially, in-service education dealing with the on-going professional development of teachers should not only focus on classroom methodologies appropriate for different situations, but also on teacher self-evaluation, teacher belief system and teacher cognition, which is the target of the training programme.

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Notes

Note 1. *The characteristics of the Role Culture*

a. It is often stereotyped as a bureaucracy;

b. It is characterized as a Greek temple, a large building whose upper stories and roof are supported by huge stone pillars: these pillars (the departments) of the organization are its strength, and the organization can grow very large;

c. It has clear procedures to control the work of the

departments and the way they interact. Each person understands the roles she/he plays and the appropriate communication channels and the rules for settling disputes.

d. It has managers on the upper stories who co-ordinate activities and engage in planning.

e. It regards job descriptions as more important

than individuals; people are frequently chosen to fit roles.

f. It will succeed as long as there is a stable environment: it does not appreciate, and usually does not respond well to, rapid change: if the environment changes quickly and/ or the ground shake, it can come tumbling down.

Note 2. *The characteristics of the Task Culture*

a. It is job or project oriented and can be presented as net. Some of the strands of the net are stronger than others; a hole in the net can be stretched to a breaking point;

b. It seeks to bring together the human and material resources needed to complete the job and then let individuals get on with it;

c. It has a hierarchy in which influence is widely dispersed and power is based on expertise; day to day control is vested in individuals working on the job rather than on top managers; teamwork is emphasized;

d. It is very adaptable and is appropriate where flexibility and sensitivity to the market or environment are essential;

e. It moves quickly and encourages individual talent: it thrives in a fast-changing environment, but finds it difficult to produce economies of scale or depth of experience.

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Influence of Demographic Factors on Students' Beliefs

in Learning Mathematics

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Abstract

Learning mathematics has been recognized by many as important. It does not only develop students' ability to think in quantitative terms but can also enhance skills such as analytical and problem solving skills. However, to enable us to tell our students how important mathematics is we have to understand students' beliefs in learning mathematics so as to find ways to improve students' performance in mathematics. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between business students' beliefs in learning mathematics and demographic factors. Data were collected from three hundred and seventy six students in three higher learning institutions enrolled in business mathematics class. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe the sample and Pearson chi-square test will be used to test students' beliefs and the relationship between students' beliefs and demographic factors (gender, institutions, previous mathematics grade, secondary education and major). Our results suggest that students' beliefs are positive and significant in learning mathematics. Using Pearson chi-square test, generally the results suggest that there are significant differences in means between students' beliefs based on institutions and mathematics grade. In addition, we find that overall there are no significant differences in means between beliefs based on gender, secondary education and major.

Keywords: Beliefs, Mathematics, Business Students

1. Introduction

As everyone agrees, learning mathematics is beneficial. Accordingly, one is able to develop abilities to think in quantitative terms and enhance students' skills in analysis and problem solving. Yet, nobody really bothers what makes people believe that mathematics is one of the difficult and uninteresting subjects. With the help of technical ways and means as well as innovative approaches in teaching mathematics, we believe that mathematics can be of interest and creative as well. However, to enable us to develop the right approach, we first have to investigate what are the students' beliefs in learning mathematics and what are the factors that affect their beliefs.

Therefore, we take this initiative to investigate students' beliefs in learning mathematics and whether demographic factors do influence their beliefs.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section, Section 2 outlines the literature review, while Sections 3 and 4 discuss the data and methodology used in the study. Section 5 presents the findings and Section 6 concludes.

2. Literature Review

A positive attitude is considered as one of the most valuable tools in learning mathematics because any task attempted is vastly influenced by one's attitude towards it. A person who believes that performing a given behavior will lead to mostly positive outcomes will hold a favorable attitude towards performing the behavior where as a person who believes that performing the behavior will lead to mostly negative outcomes will hold an unfavorable attitude (Ajzen, 1988).

Kloosterman and Stage (1992) measure beliefs about mathematical problem solving using five beliefs scales; I can solve time-consuming mathematics problems, there are word problems that cannot be solved with simple, step-by-step procedures, understanding concept is important in mathematics, word problems are important in mathematics, and effort

can increase mathematical ability. They found that these scales were useful tools for researchers and instructors. Consistent with this, as reported by Ajzen (1988) in McLeod (1992) has suggested that positive affect might lead to positive achievement. McLeod has categorized beliefs towards mathematics into four categories; beliefs about the nature of mathematics, beliefs about self in learning mathematics, beliefs about the role of teachers in learning mathematics and beliefs about socio context.

Beliefs are also seen to be closely related to learning (Kloosterman and Stage, 1992) and also academic achievement (Purvis, 2000). Kloosterman, Raymond and Emenaker (1996) reported that increasing a student's belief that mathematics is useful will often increase motivation and thus achievement. They indicated that certain beliefs result in high motivation where as other beliefs diminish motivation. To explain how motivation improves learning is not an easy task. But there is a considerable amount of research done on understanding how motivation relates to academic achievement (see for example, Tahir and Nor Mazlina, 2005).

Most studies on students' beliefs focus on students at elementary level (for example, Kloosterman, Raymond and Emenaker 1996; Vanayan, White, Yuen and Teper 1997) middle school (Purvis, 2000). and secondary level (Lazim Abu Osman and Wan Salihin 2004; Kadriye, 2005), but very little on students at tertiary level (McLemore, 2004). As a result of the shift in teaching and learning mathematics and the use of technology in mathematics instruction at lower levels of education (primary and secondary), it is an important concern to investigate the university students' beliefs towards mathematics.

Kloosterman, Raymond and Emenaker (1996) did a three year study involving students at elementary level to examine changes in their beliefs in learning and doing mathematics. They found out that students have a narrow conception of the usefulness of mathematics, their perspectives on the value of group versus individual work reflected the variety of classrooms environments to which they had been exposed, and they had fairly accurate conceptions of their own achievement, and most had a tendency to like mathematics more as it became harder.

Carter and Norwood (1997) examined the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about mathematics. Results from the study indicated that the students of the teachers whose beliefs were in alignment with the NCTM Standards had significantly different beliefs about factors that lead to success in mathematics than did other students. Students felt that interest, effort and striving for understanding would help one to do well in mathematics. It is evident that what the teacher does in classroom influences students' beliefs about mathematics. It is also evident that what teachers believe about mathematics influence what they do in the classroom and that their beliefs may be translated into students' beliefs.

Purvis (2000) looked at the relationship between students' attitude towards mathematics and their performance. By grouping students (middle school) according to response towards mathematics (negative, neutral or positive) and calculating the academic average for each group, a positive relationship is found between self-perceived academic performance and academic average. A positive relationship is also found between student's self perceived academic performance and their liking for mathematics.

A survey on students' habits was conducted by Cerrito (2000), using a cluster sampling of all entry level courses. Students were asked to write a one week diary listing times of study, work and leisure activities. The diary results were compared to results of the survey and found to correlate highly. It was found that students have tremendous leeway in their leisure activities, and do have sufficient time available to study mathematics. However, students are choosing not to utilize their time. In addition, it was determined that regular collection and grading of homework is highly correlated with increased study time in mathematics. In another study by Lazim Abu Osman and Wan Salihin (2004), four factors were identified; teacher and learning, usefulness, competency and excellence, in the components of beliefs. Students hold strong beliefs that the teachers play a major role in contributing to their interest in mathematics. They also found that 'drill and practice' is a very important element in learning mathematics.

A study by McLemore (2004) analysed students' perspectives on their learning and mathematics anxiety by using notebooks in a mathematics classroom. Students responded with overwhelmingly positive comments on the use of the notebooks, demonstrating an ability to use the journal as a productive instrument in a problem-oriented classroom. They used the journal as means of discourse with themselves and the teacher, and in so doing recreated their own understanding of the nature of mathematics. The positive results demonstrate that reflection is a valuable way to enhance students' understanding of and appreciation for mathematics.

Leedy, Lalonde and Runk (2003) found persistence in the belief that mathematics is a male domain. Even in a sample of students chosen for their interest and aptitude in mathematics, the girls have less confidence in their abilities and view their mothers as having lower expectations of their success in mathematics. Also, parental differences were noted, with the mothers frequently focusing on the use of mathematics for computational task, while the fathers more frequently discuss. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2004) explored gender differences in self-perceived abilities and motivation in mathematics and verbal arts. In all samples male students had significantly higher math self-concept than female

students did. Male students also had significantly higher performance expectations and intrinsic motivation interest for mathematics than female students in the grade and among adult students.

Kadriye (2005) used an exploratory study examining factors that might be associated with achievement in mathematics and participation in advanced courses in various countries. Confidence in mathematics was the strongest predictor of achievement for students from Canada and Norway, where as for the students from the USA, parents' highest education level was the highest predictor of achievement. Schommer-Aikins, Duell and Hutter (2005) examined the structure of middle school students' general epistemological beliefs and domain-specific mathematical problem-solving beliefs to 1,269 students in the Midwest of US. They found that epistemological beliefs are linked to mathematical problem-solving beliefs.

3. Data

This study is conducted to examine students' beliefs in learning mathematics. The research was undertaken at three different higher institutions in the East Coast of Malaysia and was done under the university grant. Questionnaires were distributed among the students from Business Mathematics classes enrolling in May session 2005 and November session 2005/06. Students were randomly selected using the convenience sampling method. A total of 376 students (100 male and 276 female) participated. Students were from KUSZA (42 percent), Kolej Yayasan Terengganu (KYT) (53.3 percent) and University Technology MARA (UiTM) (44.7 percent). The majority of students (52.4 percent) reported obtain grade A, 30 percent with grade B, 15.2 percent with grade C and the rest, 2.4 percent with grade D, in mathematics at secondary level. The majority of students (68.4 percent) had a secondary education at National secondary schools, 18.4 percent from Islamic schools, 5.6 percent from Chinese secondary schools and 7.7 percent from schools with technical background. Of these, 27.7 percent are majoring in Accounting and the rest 73.3 percent are business related course (non-accounting).

4. Methodology

The questionnaire was adopted from Lazim, Abu Osman and Wan Salihin (2004). Instead of taking all the 19 items as suggested by Lazim, Abu Osman and Wan Salihin (2004), we selected only 17 statements pertaining to students' beliefs towards learning mathematics. These items were measured using a 5-point, Likert-type format with the following anchors: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree.

A frequency distribution was used to describe the items used in the survey. Mean was used to describe the level of agreement among the statements asked. Finally, Pearson χ^2 tests procedures were applied to the data set to test whether the mean of the students' beliefs differ by gender, institutions, mathematics grade at secondary level, secondary education and major.

5. Findings

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all the items under investigation.. The results showed that all the items are positive and significant at <0.01. This finding is consistent to Lazim Abu Osman and Wan Salihin (2004).

5.2 Level of Agreement

The respondents were asked to express the extent of their agreement with the statements about students' beliefs in learning mathematics. A summary of their level of agreement is presented in Table 2 below.

Looking from Table 2 below, 89 percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed that " I believe 'drills and practice' is one of the best ways of learning mathematics" was a key factor in their beliefs while 87 percent agreed or strongly agreed that "good mathematics teachers spark my interest in mathematics" and " mathematics is a challenging subject", were important. This is followed by 86 percent of those believed that "teacher gives encouragement to work harder". A total of 85 percent of the respondents believed that "mathematics is important in real life". Statements like "mathematics is considered as one of the difficult subjects", showed 62 percent and "I have been doing well in mathematics" showed the least important (52 percent).

5.3 Students' Beliefs and Demographic Factors

To examine the relationship between students' beliefs and demographic factors of the respondents (gender, institutions, mathematics grade, secondary education and major), χ^2 was computed. This test was used to see whether there were any significant differences in response, since there were different groups involved in the study. The results are shown in Table 3.

The reported χ^2 showed that as an overall, there were significant differences in means between students' beliefs based on institutions and mathematics grade. However, our results indicated that there were no significant differences in means between students' beliefs based on gender, secondary education and major.

6. Conclusion

Based on the work of Lazim, Abu Osman and Wan Salihin (2004), this study was undertaken to examine business students' beliefs in learning mathematics.

Our study indicates that business students hold positive beliefs in learning mathematics. This is consistent to that found by Lazim, Abu Osman and Wan Salihin (2004). We conclude that students appreciate the subjects and hold positive beliefs in learning mathematics. This implies that teachers could think of the various ways so as to make their teaching approach innovative and interesting.

Analysis of variance and χ^2 were also performed to test whether the mean of the students' beliefs differ by gender, institutions, mathematics grade, secondary education and major. Our results indicated that there were significant differences in means between students' beliefs based on institutions and mathematics grade and there were no significant differences in means between beliefs based on gender, secondary education and major. This would imply that students coming from the same institutions and mathematics grade do differ in terms of their beliefs toward mathematics.

Further research is recommended to study these differences in details how far these beliefs differ among students.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Students' Beliefs in Learning Mathematics

Item	Mode	Mean	SD	*t*-test
I have been doing well in mathematics	3.00	2.407	0.865	53.94**
I have been interested in mathematics since primary school	2.00	2.197	1.009	42.24**
Good mathematics teachers spark my interest in mathematics	1.00	1.694	0.769	42.71**
I still remember well my good mathematics teachers	1.00	1.676	0.820	39.60**
Teacher gives encouragement to work harder	2.00	1.774	0.700	49.14**
My teacher contributed to my interest in mathematics	2.00	1.971	0.791	48.31**
Mathematics is a field of manipulating numbers and symbols	2.00	2.035	0.880	44.82**
Mathematics is important in real life	1.00	1.657	0.814	39.45**
Mathematics is a way of thinking using symbols and equations	2.00	1.955	0.820	46.22**
Mathematics is considered as one of the difficult subjects	2.00	2.372	1.115	41.27**
Mathematics is a challenging subject	1.00	1.678	0.817	39.85**
I believe 'drills and practice' is one of the best ways of learning mathematics	1.00	1.444	0.728	38.46**
Mathematics provide foundation for applied sciences	2.00	2.077	0.824	48.87**
I like mathematics	1.00	2.037	1.009	39.17**
Mathematics enables men to understand the world better	3.00	2.508	0.929	52.32**
My lecturer really wants us to enjoy learning	2.00	1.872	0.813	44.66**
My lecturer appreciates it when I tried hard	2.00	1.915	0.866	42.87**

Note: SD = standard deviations, One-sample *t*-test, ** significant at <0.01

Table 2. Beliefs in Mathematics (Level of Agreement)

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		
	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%	Rank
I have been doing well in mathematics	58	15.4	140	37.2	149	39.6	25	6.6	4	1.1	16
I have been interested in mathematics since primary school	111	29.5	125	33.2	100	26.6	35	9.3	5	1.3	14
Good mathematics teachers spark my interest in mathematics	173	46.0	156	41.5	38	10.1	7	1.9	2	0.5	2
I still remember well my good mathematics teachers	191	50.8	129	34.3	46	12.2	7	1.9	3	0.8	6
Teacher gives encouragement to work harder	141	37.5	182	48.4	50	13.3	3	0.8	0	0	4
My teacher contributed to my interest in mathematics	108	28.7	184	48.9	73	19.4	9	2.4	2	0.5	9
Mathematics is a field of manipulating numbers and symbols	122	32.4	135	35.9	104	27.7	14	3.7	1	0.3	13
Mathematics is important in real life	195	51.9	128	34.0	43	11.4	7	1.9	3	0.8	5
Mathematics is a way of thinking using symbols and equations	121	32.2	163	43.4	82	21.8	8	2.1	2	0.5	10
Mathematics is considered as one of the difficult subjects	88	23.4	145	38.6	74	19.7	53	14.1	16	4.3	15
Mathematics is a challenging subject	185	49.2	144	38.3	33	8.8	11	2.9	3	0.8	3
I believe 'drills and practice' is one of the best ways of learning mathematics	255	67.8	81	21.5	35	9.3	4	1.1	1	0.3	1
Mathematics provide foundation for applied sciences	96	25.5	170	45.2	98	26.1	9	2.4	3	0.8	12
I like mathematics	135	35.9	134	35.6	72	19.1	28	7.4	7	1.9	11
Mathematics enables men to understand the world better	57	15.2	121	32.2	156	41.5	34	9.0	8	2.1	17
My lecturer really wants us to enjoy learning	134	35.6	171	45.5	58	15.4	11	2.9	2	0.5	7
My lecturer appreciates it when I tried hard	133	35.4	161	42.8	69	18.4	7	1.9	6	1.6	8

Table 3. Students' Beliefs and Demographic Factors (Pearson one-way ANOVA)

Items	Gender		Institutions		Mathematics Grade		Secondary education		Major	
	χ^2	Sig.	χ^2	Sig.	χ^2	Sig.	χ^2	Sig.	χ^2	Sig.
I have been doing well in mathematics	3.467	0.483	34.843	0.000	75.634	0.000	21.736	0.041	5.012	0.286
I have been interested in mathematics since primary school	0.855	0.931	6.877	0.550	62.167	0.000	10.110	0.606	5.073	0.280
Good mathematics teachers spark my interest in mathematics	8.769	0.067	8.606	0.377	16.008	0.191	12.568	0.401	1.202	0.878
I still remember well my good mathematics teachers	6.336	0.175	3.177	0.923	20.831	0.053	6.121	0.910	3.134	0.536
Teacher gives encouragement to work harder	2.717	0.437	2.822	0.831	8.104	0.524	8.783	0.458	3.100	0.377
My teacher contributed to my interest in mathematics	5.060	0.281	23.375	0.003	27.666	0.006	9.399	0.668	2.732	0.604
Mathematics is a field of manipulating numbers and symbols	4.382	0.357	40.732	0.000	21.273	0.047	10.289	0.591	10.310	0.036
Mathematics is important in real life	6.117	0.191	17.542	0.025	17.250	0.140	13.571	0.329	2.030	0.730
Mathematics is a way of thinking using symbols and equations	2.044	0.728	24.532	0.002	18.501	0.101	6.191	0.906	1.727	0.786
Mathematics is considered as one of the difficult subjects	6.521	0.163	26.880	0.001	17.246	0.141	6.676	0.878	6.438	0.169
Mathematics is a challenging subject	7.359	0.118	9.841	0.276	12.041	0.442	20.196	0.063	4.695	0.320
I believe 'drills and practice' is one of the best ways of learning mathematics	5.095	0.278	31.220	0.000	17.918	0.118	4.255	0.978	14.397	0.006
Mathematics provide foundation for applied sciences	4.649	0.325	21.197	0.007	24.761	0.016	14.339	0.280	4.669	0.323
I like mathematics	0.967	0.915	4.762	0.783	67.225	0.000	13.889	0.308	0.444	0.979
Mathematics enables men to understand the world better	7.510	0.111	36.070	0.000	15.671	0.207	14.841	0.250	1.204	0.877
My lecturer really wants us to enjoy learning	3.575	0.467	14.074	0.080	11.131	0.518	5.312	0.947	11.911	0.018
My lecturer appreciates it when I tried hard	4.682	0.322	9.800	0.279	18.736	0.095	8.802	0.720	2.175	0.704

Logic Analysis of Painting Modeling Rules and Avoiding Narrative Viewing

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Abstract

Painting modeling rules are constructed based on objective representing with material substances as the main body and the construction methods and orders are mostly limited to narrative viewing and expression, which, obviously, is not the best method. Logistic thinking in virtue of modeling art could gender a more "painting-like" cognitive order. The modeling elements extracted from dots, lines and planes lead us to the door for painting context and by way of personalized organization with explicit aims, we could be able to obtain "selective", "comparative", "holistic" and "sole" (creative) modeling and viewing principles.

Keywords: Modeling, Art logic, Painting context

Painting is the art of modeling. Researches on modeling rules directly guide viewing and expression in practicing process. Modeling is to create images while images are extracted from natural substances. Hence, extraction certainly involves selective acceptance and creative expression. Such selection and creation start from visual apperception, to understanding, to comprehending, to trans-translation and to expression and at the same time, involve various factors of modeling.

Visual apperception is mainly to view. The selectiveness of viewing is so obvious. A famous Chinese thinker wrote, "Blindmen touch elephant and describe the elephant differently. Then a man of good sight comes, what will he say?" It tells the selection and limits of blindman's apperception. Actually, man with good sight is not better. Different viewing angles, light environments, knowledge backgrounds and moods will bring different observation results. Although we consider all factors well, what "I" see may also be different from what "you" see. What is more important is that according to the main stream points of western modern philosophy, objects exist in our apperception and practices and co-exist with us. However, this kind of existence is not the existing objects but is non-real status. Besides, objects must have non-real status freedom; we apperceive various information of objects while "objects" are always more than the contents that we have apperceived. We just apperceive selectively; in addition, when we use drawing to describe our apperception, we have to depend on our experience and drawing language (signifier), which is greatly different from the signified that we want to express.

Since we could not, to an absolute sense, grasp the "object" in apperception and could not control the final results of the receiving of art creation with painting as the carrier, we shall not have too many expectations on it. For works, it is pretty good if they could express their basic connotations. The core problem lies in whether what we intend to say could deeply impress the audiences.

To put it simply, assume that we are describing a weary character image. We choose a model named "W" who is sloven, bald, and crookbacked. Firstly, these features that we apperceived testify the existence of "W", however, obviously, "W" is not the features or even it is not the man named "Zhangsan". It is just the name we call him. Visually, the real W is just the collection of "objects" believed to be male. It is not necessary for us to find all his features and we only need to describe his weary image. When modeling, we just need to find and grasp relevant features. The next time when we need to describe a happy image, if we still have this model, we also just need to grasp some other features of this model.

Certainly, to achieve this kind of selective extraction in modeling, we must change our traditional viewing methods and the first step is to learn to view with painting elements as the fiducial line. That is:

1. What we shall view and what we see?

Usually, people will choose the following two viewing ways. They are not "space" or "holistic".

1.1 Serial viewing from single dimension

To view by way of linear narration is the normal status when we observing objects. For example, when we are observing a bottle, if some one has not accepted training on it, he or she will use the language narrative elements as the organizing method, such as bottle cover, bottle neck, bottle body, label and bottom. When describing, they also will follow this organizing method. The apperception process is also influenced, customarily, by top-down and left-right alignment ways. Generally speaking, any artistic category could not lapse from narrative elements. Language and words are just the main methods fro narration while others, such as painting and music, also need the complements of narrative elements. However, to put control on it and to avoid it under appropriate circumstances is also necessary, which is not just the needs for keeping their artistic pureness but also is the results of the establishment of development of their professional contexts.

1.2 Infatuated viewing

Infatuated viewing is a viewing method with immense individual emotions. Mostly, painting beginners usually use this kind of method. They pay special attention to colorful or detailed section. It is the same as when we watch a movie because we like the star in it rather than the movie itself. We could call it fans complex, which is also a common phenomenon among art lovers. The better viewing method is holistic and comprehensive viewing, which could help painters to control subjectively and to represent objectively. This is the most obvious psychological difference of art creation and appreciation on description objects.

The aim of modeling training is to break through this kind of unprofessional observation ways and to teach painters to use painting observation method, which is shown as follows:

Narrative elements are replaced by modeling elements. It starts from dots, the positions of dots, and the distances and angles and space orders among dots; ant then is the observation and comparison of lines and faces, involving length, thickness, inclination, sizes and colors and etc.

The holistic control over the painting forms focuses orders with clear aims. It usually starts from the division of the entire painting. The object is holistically shown by way of groups. Firmness, emptiness or hardness are compared according to regions and are apperceived and represented.

Subjective intention judgment will control the viewing contents and representation methods, which is to selectively apperceive among the many objects.

When your eyes are full of distances, proportions or extended angles, the object images will be lost in these abstractions and the painting picture will become dim and unsure. It will be hard for find the specific object images such as label or eyebrow. When we lose narrative logistic, we get the complement from modeling artistic logic and hence enter painting context. From some extent, it realizes the demand of traditional painting theory "mountain is not mountain in the eyes".

2. Methods and training on painting picture construction

If the narrative logistic is broken, the organization way that description depends on does not exist either. Then what should we depend on to organize painting picture? How to determine what be drawn first and what the next? How to determine what is the main or second painting picture elements?

Two comparatively simple organization ways are listed below for reference.

2.1 Painting picture organization practice based on negative shape

Negative shape refers to the non real shapes generated from the interlacing of positive objects. Before, people use it to check whether the shape is correct with negative shape as an auxiliary method. Currently, it is required to pay attention to the painting picture form structure brought by negative shapes and take it as the organization elements fro painting picture so as to have holistic observation and imaginary observation and to solve the problem of the lose of painting organization way when language narrative elements are broken.

2.2. Painting picture organization practice based on channel

The aim of this practice is also for solving the losing of organization way. If negative shape concept is limited to plain status, the channel concept is the cubic extension of negative shape concept. For example, we could imagine the cracks among objects as rivers among mountains. When we describe these mountain rivers, we usually will not require the integrity of mountains. As an understanding of negative space, its sense is extremely the same as channel. Therefore, we will ask in the process of detailed description (such as scene or static objects), could he channel sense brought by the cracks among objects become the theme of the painting?

When the construction ways is clear, the new logistic relationship among objects, pictures and objects, souls and expression is established, which is totally different from narrative logic. We attribute it to the special art logic of modeling art. When we need to show certain theme, artistic logic thinking method will lead the eyes to view selectively. The special modeling requirement of this theme will become the tache of the painting, eventually form systematical expression for the theme, and realize the visual allusion and metaphor function of modeling to the utmost so as to

arouse psychological apperception and emotional resonance of the art receivers.

3. The formation of transformation and abstraction

We have fixed the object-for-our-use modeling and viewing principle. Painting is not to mechanically represent objects. For theme, the object shapes in the works could be cut or transformed for certain needs. Even, the space could be freely extended according to the demands of the painters. A typical case could be found in Cézanne's works. To emphasize the connection between sky and mountains and to enlarge the color difference, Cézanne put the sky closed to the mountain top. At the same time, through several geometric shapes' operation, Cézanne combined multi-angle contents into one picture. This kind of method enlarges and enriches our visual cognition on the nature and changes traditional aesthetic rules.

What needs to be complemented is that when entering painting context, we also find the cut-in point of abstract concepts. The said abstraction means to abstract some common elements from objects (all modeling painting elements could certainly be taken as abstract element) and to do research and find rules so as to have further creation. When we could freely treat the specific objects in the process of painting and the objects are all for our use, we obtain the modeling freedom beyond objects.

The real result to construct new picture orders is to find independent and individual picture orders according to the real conditions of the objects and painters so as to master the key picture structures and realize diverse observation painting angles. Because the new picture orders are obtained through the logic reasoning of natural objects, it could certainly be understood and appreciated by viewers. When people understand and accept the special observation method, they realize the jump of "mountains are still mountains in the eyes". The "mountains" here are not the original image of mountains but rather the thoughts carrier and reference tools abstracted by the painters.

4. Replace painstaking with writing and reinforce the emotional expression of the creation body

Modeling logic could not be parted from creation emotion. We encourage to replace painstaking with writing due to avoiding narrative expression in art practice. Each one's writing will be different due to his personality, experience and environment. These differences will represent the personality, hobbies and creation emotions of painters, which will to the utmost transfer the works' connotation and art sense through pictures so as to move viewers and achieve resonance.

As the opposite of writing, painstaking refers to tidiness and time spent. A good works will take the painters' lots of time so as to be orderly. However, if a works is too orderly, it will lose the elf sense of art works and will be reduced to works easy to be duplicated. Its creation connotations will also become the simple narration of structure and plots. There forms a theory opposed to traditional narration logic. For one hand, we need to carefully observe and draw and be special in creative representation; for another hand, we need to hide this hard skill behind when representing works. The emotions of painters should be natural without tracks when transferring emotion to receivers. Works that consumer painter's too much energy to draw and viewers' too much time to understand will, to the most, become a good works and could not break through to become the best works.

To reinforce the emotional expression of creation bodies has always been popular in eastern painting field. Traditional Chinese painting emphasizes painting meanings. It pursues soul similarity in modeling, human science character in spirit, and not-so-open creation emotions. Western traditional painting emphasizes painting reality. The art emotions are hidden in works. Personalized writing touch and emotional revealing are mainly shown from the post-impressionism, hot abstractionism to other schools. In sculpture works, the carve tracks are gradually reinforced and they purse open and obvious visual force and creation emotions. The drawing full of writing sense is closely related to creation emotions. When bring moves to the works, it also contains the painter's cognition and apperception of art space relationship. Up to now, most modern painters could consciously avoid narrative elements, which reinforces the representation pureness of art works and improves the meaning-expressing ability and inner characters of works.

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Notes

A Case Study of Faculty Development through Distance Education: Teaching Early Childhood Students in the United States and South Korea

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Abstract

This unique format of distance education instruction was executed between multiple faculty, staff and graduate students at the University of Missouri, St. Louis and the faculty and undergraduate students at Kongju National University in South Korea. The method of instruction allowed for visual presentation from one country while only one person at a time was able to react from the other country. The purpose of the seminar was to test the use of distance education for a course in early childhood education in Korea and the United States. The undergraduate students at the Korean university also increased their ability to speak and write in English. This case study indicates a possibility for delivering cultural and curricular expertise for university faculty and staff development in a much needed area of cultural education. As a result of this course, the American and Korean faculty and students are much more knowledgeable of each other customs, history and early childhood curriculum as well as English language skills. This knowledge in turn, will enable them to better understand in their own classes. The course was a success as indicated by continued faculty and student engagement.

Keywords: Distance Education between American and Korean universities, Centra Software

1. Introduction

Technology-rich distance education is being heralded as the next big superhero in education. It is thought to have arms so long that it can reach rural and forgotten urban places that traditional university classrooms could not. Its fingers are flexible enough to fit gingerly around every student's needs. It delivers to every willing institution its special hero-juice, a type of penicillin that will cure all types of educational diseases such as teacher shortages and budget cuts. And as fantastic as this may sound, technology-rich distance education probably does exist in superhero form – but he is yet a little boy, not yet grown enough to realize his full potentials.

The reality is that technology-rich distance education programs probably still only reach those students that would normally populate a traditional classroom (Grill 2003). And studies suggest that only certain types of students flourish in distance education classes (Kochman and Maddux 2001; Jordan and Spooner 1999; Harrington 1999; Coe and Elliott 1999). Teachers of technology-rich distance education classes can easily feel overwhelmed, overworked and frustrated with handling such large class sizes online or via satellite. Perhaps the most telling characteristic of the immaturity of our superhero is that the technology-rich education is quality-poor in most institutions. Students continue to endure production problems such as poor lighting, and muffled audio.

Although the distant course may be delivered creatively to encourage peer and teacher-student interaction, it must still support a knowledge base shared among teachers (Chai and Tan, 2009; Lewis, 2003). Technology can encourage self-regulated learning for students (Miller, 2009). Some problems are that the expectations of students in distance education classes remain the same as they would have in face to face classrooms. Some students question the traditional pedagogy in on-line classes as our gawky little boy develops into the superhero we once fantasized about.

The technology-enhanced learning influences learning outcomes. One is that successful language learning depends to a large degree on the motivation and collaboration of the learners. What remains crucial for the use of the new language learning technology, is that pedagogues, while valuing the potential of technology integrated delivery, continue to maintain a critical balance between what is technically possible and pedagogically sound (Han, 2005).

Technology-rich distance education is creating new opportunities for students and also for faculties even though it has some problems (Cook, Crawford and Warner, 2009). It is already providing better access to education for many areas (Korea Herald, 2000; BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, 2005; Schneiderman, Corbridge and Zerwic, 2009; Miner and Hofmann, 2009; Mayadas, John and Bacsich. 2009; Larvin, 2009; Johnson and Gardner, 2009). Many more will benefit from this increased access in the coming years (Mayadas and Bacsich. 2009).

This article connects American and Korean universities in a seminar on early childhood education. The Internet is a useful distant education media in schools but not frequently used to educate university faculties and students. The aim is to explore the capabilities of using the Internet for instruction between American and Korean faculties. Dimensions of international Internet instruction are discussed as used for language, cultural and instructional development. Recommendations are made for future international Internet courses.

2. Background

December 21, 2004 Dr. Eunsoon Oh arrived at the University of Missouri, St. Louis as a Visiting Professor. Unknowingly, the she selected an office in the wing of the education building where the university outreach faculties, known as continuing education instructors, were located. This faculty, Dr. Stephen Viola and Ms. Mary Ann Horvath, managed and taught courses throughout Missouri delivered through the Internet in computer skills and special education. They had previous experience teaching one course internationally to elementary children and teachers in Russia. However, the course was no longer offered because the Russian Educator Coordinator resigned and was not replaced. It was with great enthusiasm that the author and the outreach faculty arranged for Korean students from Kongju National University and kindergarten teachers to participate in a distance education course with the Missouri continuing education faculty, pre-school teachers and education faculty.

The research hypothesis was to use different methods of instruction to teach early childhood education content to Korean students using Centra educational software. The strategy was to invite guest lecturers of special education, early childhood and kindergarten centers, professors of education and graduate students employed by the University of Missouri, St. Louis. These Americans were selected by Professor Oh who served as presenter and translator and whose students were attending the distance education class at Kongju University in Daejeon, South Korea. Dr. Oh was a Visiting Professor at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. The American presenters constructed power points, showed pictures and attempted to show videotapes. The successes of the presentations were obtained by the feedback given by the students to Dr. Oh and the questionnaires administered by Mrs. Horvath, Information Technology Specialist for the University of Missouri. The original plan had been for one Korean professor to provide instruction supervision of the students and provide discussion exchanges on Korean early childhood programs from Korea. In the frequent absence of the Korean professor, the Korean students stepped into the vacuum and developed presentations, delivered them in English by necessity and continued to participate in distance education seminars where they received no academic credit. This was a very unexpected outcome and unusual for Korean students to design the content of their own learning.

Internet exchange sessions started February 25, 2005 through November 17, 2005. No sessions were conducted during vacations and one session was cut short by prior commitments. Once a week sessions were held for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. English was the language of instruction placing additional responsibilities for English preparation and translation for the Korean students and kindergarten Professor and for the co-author who assisted students and faculty with understanding in Korean and English.

The Internet software used was Centra, an Internet communications application, allowing participants and presenters to speak through the Internet from their desktop computers. Participants' names were submitted one week prior to the course. Ms. Horvath, University of Missouri Technical Coordinator, presided throughout the sessions and conducted software training and evaluation for all participants. She then sent permission identification and passwords. Only education content was recorded. The University of Missouri Extension Centra Server was utilized, free of charge for this pilot study. The time difference between the two locations was fourteen hours meaning that Missouri held the sessions on Thursday starting at 3:00 pm and Koreans started their program on Friday at 6:00 am. After November, Missouri went to daylight savings time meaning that the course started at 4:00 pm on Thursday but there was no time change in Korea.

3. Sessions Outline

February 25, 2005

The aim of the first session was to explore the possibility of conducting an early childhood course between the University of Missouri, St. Louis and Kongju National University. During the first trial, Dr. Viola prepared a presentation of special education. University Extension Specialist Mr. Eber Cude presented information on marionette and Russian dolls and Russian early childhood materials. Dr. Oh presented an introduction on South Korea. Ms. Horvath installed software, speakers and mikes in the different offices, downloaded power point presentations and

pictures. The speech was audible and the pictures were clear. It was determined that the software enabled the University of Missouri, St. Louis to conduct an early childhood course with Korean students and teachers.

March 23, 2005.

Ms. Horvath and Dr. Oh assisted Korean Vice Director of Kindergarten and Graduate Students at Kongju National University, Mrs. Hong. Ms. Horvath sent the software with installation instructions to Mrs. Hong. With Ms. Horvath's assistance, Mrs. Hong was able to communicate effectively with the Missouri faculty. At the second session, Dr. Oh presented a session on "Women Leaders." The second meeting also focused on things Korean students have to know when participating in distance education. Students had to tell working family members that they would be leaving earlier. Students needed to be quiet so they don't disturb the family when they leave for the 6:00 a.m. class.

April 13, 2005

Eight attended/ four Korean and four Missouri participants.

Dr. Oh presented about the Montessori Conference that opened in April in Chicago. Missouri kindergarten pictures and early childhood education were presented by Dr. Oh.

April 28, 2005

Ms. Horvath, Ms. Decker, Dr. Navin, Director of the Early Childhood Center and Dr. Oh participated from Missouri. Mrs. Hong, and seven freshmen and sophomore students from Kongju National University participated. Mrs. Hong showed pictures of her kindergarten from Chungbuk Province. Her program was government supported, not private. Her presentation was followed by a question and answer session which followed. The video camera was tried but it did not function well.

May 4, 2005

Ms. Decker presented her facilities and her kindergarten program. There were thirteen participants and not enough time for all to speak.

May 12, 2005

The presentation was on Korean Children's Day with nine participants.

Several Korean University students prepared and presented, in English, PowerPoint presentations with photos and written explanations of the children's events.

May 19, 2005

Twelve participants learned of the Kongju National University kindergarten viewing the facilities and listening to an overview of the curriculum.

May 26, 2005

Eight participants learned of UMSL's Day Care Center presented by Dr. Navin, Director of the Early Childhood Center. Ms. Horvath introduced the breakout room as structured by the Centra software system. In this process, the teams discussed the same topic. A team leader was randomly selected by the Centra software. This was a unique concept for the Koreans as they usually select the leader as the most senior person. The teams met 10-15 minutes in the breakout rooms and then returned to the total session to discuss the topics. It was agreed upon that both Korean and Missouri governments need to assist in the placement of elementary and kindergarten pre-service teachers. At this point principals and some teachers can reject student teachers. Thus, student teacher placement is difficult for faculties responsible for Korean and Missouri teacher education.

October 6, 2005

This session started later due to problems with the microphone. Dr. Navin presented the University of Missouri St. Louis's Early Childhood Curriculum and Dr. Oh presented the Kongju National University's. Dr. Navin identified the strength and the weakness, which was strong practical application of instructional procedures and its lack of content specialization. A comparison was made with the Korean curriculum, which has greater complexity and specialization. The Koreans have professors for early childhood math, language, music, dance, art, play and program development. The curriculum is weak in the practical applications needed to deliver the content. This session also included a presentation by a Korean student on the Korean Language Festival. Ms. Horvath presented photos and information on Hannibal Missouri, the hometown of Missouri author Mark Twain.

October 27, 2005

Dr. Viola presented information on Russian, Kenyan and Croatia special programs for Early Childhood and Special Education. Ms. Horvath presented pictures and the history of the American Halloween Festival. Korean students presented about Kongju City and its history and showed pictures of historical sites. Dr. Cochran presented web-based

videotape of methods used for educating elementary children as demonstrated by St. Louis children and teachers. Unfortunately the videotape was not visible in Korea so the tape was stopped.

November 17, 2005

Dr. Cochran used a power point presentation to present how to effectively teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) using children's music. Dr. Navin discussed lessons she had given in pre-schools teaching foreign languages. The Korean students presented the Division of Early Childhood Festival and the kindergarten environment at Kongju National University. The students had pictures of monthly themes in the kindergarten. For example, October is the United Nations sponsored month on the theme of Anti-Bias. Some faculty members had left the seminar. Mrs. Hong was paid to prepare for graduate thesis exams and Ms. Decker had a position where she had to prepare a test for kindergarten teachers.

4. Discussion

This case study demonstrated the possibility of conducting an international class for pre teachers and teachers for an hour and a half in length. The two-way presentation was useful in several ways. First, the faculties from two different countries increased their cultural awareness. They were able to share images of their country and programs, conduct discussions and compare curriculum for the same age of children. Secondly, the technology used was at times difficult but showed promise. Initially, the mikes did not work, the videotape could not be shown from a website, and the camera, although used once, showed the capability of a more advanced function for a later date. The cultural sharing was insightful for both the Missourians and the Koreans. From the American perspective, the faculty was impressed that the Korean students were so well prepared to present in English at 6:00 am in the morning. They were also interested that students continued to come to the course even though they were not getting credit for the course. This seemed to be a testimony to the engagement of Korean students in the Internet course. The American faculty did not expect the Korean students to be told how to treat their families when they left their home. In this manner, Korean students indirectly taught the American professors about their cultural expectations.

Students were uncomfortable when they had to call the American faculties, director and their professors' by their names in sessions. In Korea, professors are addressed by their title only. The younger ones have to use the respect words to the old ones in Korean culture. In the Breakout Room, any students could become a leader, whether or not they are the older and lower one. This too was a cultural difference. The Korean students were taught the American manners and leadership models. While the Korean students were afraid to speak and present in English, American faculties encouraged them. They were happy to join the sessions, even though they had to be awakened so early, prepare in English and receive no academic credit. Americans were not aware that student encouragement and support was a motivation for attendance for the Korean students. The courtesy toward students was an unexpected area of educational and cultural difference.

The Korean students complimented Dr. Cochran on her pretty blond hair, which made her aware that the students all had black hair. This is a consistency not often found in American classrooms which have greater racial diversity. In addition, the students were pleased to have the professors be so supportive of their comments, presentations and usage of the English language. The Korean professors are much "harder" on student work. When they had technical problems in the sessions, all participants waited and faculty spoke in a relaxed manner. These were important differences to the Korean students who had a difficulty speaking and writing in English and were strangers to the American culture. Students were also pleased that the instruction as organized allowed them to ask every question that they wanted to know. And finally, festivals for children were quite different in both countries and also in those presentations made about festivals in Russia and Kenya. Cultural differences were taught in an interesting and non-threatening manner.

The students left the experience with different knowledge. As stated by Ming Keong Song, "I have been very hard. I prepared for three to four hours. But as I presented, efforts were finally rewarded." And another student wrote, "The very beginning, it helped me a lot. When I prepared my own presentation, I could become aware of several things I didn't know before. Most important part to me is that I could show some foreign people some part of my own culture. It made me worthwhile. Also, holding information in common with foreigners is useful experience to me." (HaYoung Jang). "I reached a level of proficiency in my English. The CENTRA implanted self-confidence in me and I elevated the standard of vocabulary. Secondly, I understood Early Childhood Education and system difference both in America and Korea. For example, American students have a practical training lab." (Ming Keong Song.) "I learned many, many things. I feel that Korea and America's kindergarten have many similarities." (Ilhan You.)

The uniqueness of this exchange was that many in Missouri faculty interacted with each other and with the Korean students to provide a seminar for Korean students and faculty. The usual format for Internet courses is for the teacher to interact with multiple students. In this case, the faculty in both countries enjoyed learning about each other and about their shared interest of early childhood education. The question is why were American students not included in this wonderful experience? The answer is in the nature of adult education in the United States. First, the American faculty

has a set schedule for their classes. For example, Dr. Cochran taught two classes on Wednesday and none on Thursday at 4:00 p. m when the Centra course was conducted. Her students were taking other classes at that time or working in the schools in the after-school programs. As this class started after the education courses were scheduled, there were no education students taking early childhood courses available at that time.

Secondly, the American faculties involved in this course were interested in international education even though their subject specializations were computers, special education, early childhood, and EFL and adult education. Their motivation for meeting the Korean faculty and students was one of personal knowledge expansion. So even though they received no pay, recognition from their directors, or other external rewards, they continued to prepare, come to sessions and enjoy the course. The same might be said of the students, one of whom cried when the sessions were over, as she would no longer get to meet with the American faculties. Although from the American faculties' perspective, the improvement in the Korean students' English and the increasing complexity of their presentations demonstrated that content knowledge had been increased in early childhood and English.

The limitations of this course relate mostly to the technology. While there was one person at each computer in Missouri, occasionally two Korean students shared one lab computer at Kongju National University. This was difficult as only one person could speak at a time. Observers could respond with a visual smile, clap, yes or no but there was no sound making the responses less enjoyable. Another limitation was the embryonic stages of the Centra software. While the pictures were clear and the voices well understood, the integration of website videos, tapes cameras and mikes need to be perfected. Without the excellent management of Ms. Horvath, the course would have been less than technically adequate.

5. Summary and Conclusions

The world can become much smaller through the use of Internet. This was an exchange program with no need to travel. All participants received direct instruction in the culture of other country in a gentle and friendly manner. As there is frequently a need to provide cultural experiences for faculty, this course was uniquely structured to do so. Before faculty meet each other in person, the participants know each other with little or no stress. The many images and the positive responses to the presentations built trust among the participants. Students were able to acquaint themselves with American faculty and get their e-mails and correspond about presentations. Students used e-mail to frequently contact the author regarding their presentations. Student to student e-mail could also be assumed to have occurred. In summary, this seminar introduced cultural differences, shared interests and a feeling of trust among students and faculties.

There were some limitations caused by the time differences and the need to prepare in English. Many of the Korean students spent two or three days in preparation before participating at 6:00 am. They would apologize for not sending their presentation early as it had taken them such a long time to gather the information, pictures and write the dialogue in English. For them, this was the first global classroom taken through the Internet. If the video camera functioned, the class would have been improved and possibly been even more engaging.

The Missouri Television System (MoRENET) has been used to televise as many as seven locations simultaneously by a single instructor. This technology is not available for international classes. However, many of the functions of the televised system have been integrated into the Centra software where it is possible to send powerpoint presentations and pictures to support lecture presentations. This software, with a single person presenting, does not give responders the opportunity to speak and the presenter cannot evaluate the effectiveness of the presentation as he or she cannot see members of the audience.

Furthermore, Centra is effective software for adult instruction. It is a real life connection with people who are far away. If smaller children are in the audiences, their shorter concentration will require more participation activities. Managing such activities when you cannot see the children will require the presence of a teacher/director at each location. In this case study, the students were frequently without a Korean professor on site. This did not limit them from learning, developing their presentations and selecting topics that were of interest to the American faculties and other students. Again, the most interesting aspect of this case study was the composition of the adults who were learning. The first group was early childhood education students at Kongju National University and one Director of a government kindergarten. The second group was continuing education instructors in the fields of computers, special education and pre-school director. The third group was an Professor from Kongju University who developed this project through her personal contacts with the Korean University and the continuing education instructors and an Endowed Professor of Education who attended two sessions but learned the messages of this pilot study. All were all able to directly touch people half a world away, sharing knowledge, friendship and enthusiasm for learning.

During these sessions all participants spoke English. So even though participants didn't focus the English lesson, all Korean attendees could take the opportunities to practice their English skills.

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Applying Group Work to Improve College Students' Oral English

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Abstract

After a brief introduction, this paper dwells on the merits of group work, and then suggested the evaluation methods of group work. The author also mentioned the Demerits of group work and how to avoid them.

Keywords: Group work, College students, Oral English

1. Introduction

English as an important international language has gained increasing attention from Chinese educational institutions of different levels over more than two decades. Every Chinese college graduate has at least ten years of English learning experience. Many of them do very well in various English examinations. However, their ability to use the language in real communication does not seem to conform to the score that they have achieved. One major reason is that many Chinese classes are composed of 50 to 60 students, and most Chinese conventional EFL classrooms have been characterized by a predominance of displaying questions and an extremely high proportion of teacher-initiated interactions. The quality and amount of students' participation in EFL classes is indeed limited. Therefore, group work is definitely a good solution.

2. The merits of Group work.

2.1 Group work gives students a positive affective climate.

Language learning, to a large extent, is an emotional and psychological experience. The affective filter of the student, or some psychological factors, can obstruct language acquisition to some degree. Even understandable messages will be impeded, and language and conceptual development will not happen if a student has little motivation, lacks self-confidence, or is afraid of making errors. Obviously, in the traditional context of whole-class work, those negative psychological factors have immensely obstructed students' language acquisition and learning. Some students are afraid of making mistakes or losing face in public and are "vulnerable to what they may perceive as criticism and rejection" (Brown 1994: 174). The key then is to create a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere in the classroom for optimal learning. Such atmosphere can be pervasive in well organized small group work. It seems easier for students to have less psychological pressure when they are thinking and speaking without being watched by a whole class or the teacher, whose higher proficiency level could also be one of the possible elements to shape the students' negative psychological factors. It is even a "magic" (Brown 1994: 174) of small group work that some silent students suddenly become active participants. It is the comfortable and safe environment of group work that has put less emphasis on the product (the right answer) and more on the process of getting an answer.

2.2 Group work increases the students'self-confidence and self-esteem.

College life is a very important and rememberable time in one's life. Most college students are top students in class in the previous years of school life, so, it is a key factor to help them sustain their self-confidence and self-esteem. Group work activities can build greater learner confidence and self-esteem than is likely in a competitive environment, where self-validation is dependent upon a continuing need to demonstrate success. Researchers found that students developed greater self-confidence in public speaking and in participating in classroom discussion, both situations where anxiety is likely to be the greatest and self-confidence most threatened for most language learners. An increase in self-confidence and self-esteem will lead to increased learner effort in language learning and a greater willingness to take risks or to continue attempting to make one's views understood. So group work in English classroom is very useful and important for every student to have a chance to express and demonstrate themselves, although before a very small audience.

Group work can provide a more comfortable and relaxing learning atmosphere. So the students can get more self-confidence and self-esteem from this learning atmosphere. Group provides them the opportunity to be good teachers, good helpers, good speakers and good listeners.

2.3 Group work promotes the students' social interaction.

Given the psychological comfort and security in group work, students are provided with more opportunities for interaction, for giving and taking face to face, for practicing in negotiation of meanings, and for students to build social relationships. In this face to face communication, students are learning to collaborate with their peers. By applying such a learning strategy, students are promoting both their cognitive learning and interactive skills. They are exposed to new ideas and information, to different perspectives and approaches. They are in a process of discussing, questioning and organizing, which facilitates the comprehension and internalization of critical concepts and new information. As they are learning to justify and clarify their own points of view when exploring an issue or solving a problem, they are improving their linguistic competence as well as their overall communicative language competence.

In addition, Brown (1994, 159) asserted that "the best way to learn to interact is through interaction itself". Group work provides learners with the best stage to "show off" when they are applying what they have newly known. Students can get both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as they are experiencing a sense of community. In group work, students may receive peer encouragement and support such as spontaneous feedback on errors. Having students work together also teaches them an important life skill — cooperation. By means of such cooperative learning, group work, affects students' attitudes and improves their interpersonal relationships, which plays an important part in their present daily and future professional life.

2.4 Group work initiates learners' flexibility and independence, esp. in a Chinese cultural and educational context.

Despite the merits of grouping strategies, experienced practitioners are fully aware that not all EFL learners are convinced that "four heads are better than one" (Kinsella 1993: 24). This is especially true in lots of Chinese classrooms since students are influenced by Chinese Confucian culture, which seeks compromise between people.

When it is applied to language learning, it is obvious that students are reluctant to air their views loudly for fear of losing face or offending others. In such a cultural and educational setting, the teacher dominates the whole class by generating and transferring knowledge to the learners, who sit there passively waiting to receive it. Students simply take it for granted that teachers are perfect knowledge holders and so they rarely challenge teachers, even when teachers accidentally make mistakes. In this way, a majority of students, if not all, have developed the habit of relying largely upon their teacher — the authoritative source of knowledge for everything. The time has come to have a change now from teacher-centered to learner-centered methodology. It is teachers' responsibility to encourage students not only to actively participate in various classroom activities (e.g. group work), but also to instruct students patiently about English speaking culture conventions. Thus students can be fully aware of the significance of maximizing interaction with the teacher and their peers. Therefore, it is an integral part of language teaching to make all types of learners value and benefit from this active context of learning (Kinsella & Sherak 1993) and become more independent, flexible, as well as successful learners.

2.5 Group work will benefit the teachers.

Not only the students benefit from group work in English classrooms, but also the teachers. Through group work, the teachers can spare time to go around the classroom, take part in some groups or offer helps to some weak groups, therefore easily know what the students'strong points and weak points are, and which students have good understanding and active participation. In the following period, the teacher can be very clear what further explanations he needs to give, and which students could answer his questions and which could give a good report of the subject they are discussing. It is very useful for the teachers to adjust their teaching plans and helpful to know what they need to do next. As a method of teaching, teachers can use their teaching time economically and efficiently. This will help to improve the quality of language teaching.

3. Group work evaluation

The evaluation of the process of group work in college oral English teaching is a very important component of group work which can efficiently superintend group work and implement it's appropriately. It can also check the students' participation by a scientific system. The scientific evaluation system will be added to the grading system of college English teaching in order to make the grading system more comprehensive. The evaluation should consist of three aspects of evaluation: group members' evaluation, in-class peer evaluation and teacher's evaluation. Evaluate the following points on a scale from 1 to 5 and the total grade is 100. The general grade of group work is suggested to be divided as follows: 30% group members' evaluation + 30% in-class peer evaluation + 40% teacher's evaluation.

3.1 Group members' evaluation

Group members' evaluation lays emphasis on the evaluation at an angle of group peers. As group work is a process which is implemented with group mates through the whole process, the group mates observe the whole effort of the student and the evaluation can objectively reflect the participation of the student. Therefore, students in one group should provide a grade for each other in the group. The grading process can be based on the following elements and

take into account the quality and quantity of the individual participation: punctuality, respect, honesty, ideas, creativity, and commitment preparation. The total grade of this section is 30.

3.2 In-class peer evaluation

In-class peer evaluation is another important part of the evaluation system. It lays emphasis on the evaluation at an angle of in-class peers. When there's a group presentation in front of the rest of the class, the teacher can ask three or four students who are not members of the presenting collaborative group to evaluate the presentation. It is essential to set the standards for such an evaluation, so that the evaluators clearly know how and what to evaluate. The teacher can ask them to evaluate the following points on a scale from 1 to 5: fluency, body language, grammar, information, confidence, teamwork. The teacher can hand out a spreadsheet with those (or other) elements and enough space for grades and the very important element—justification.

The justification for grades in co-evaluation is very important. It's essential that students should be unbiased in their judgments and base their grading on the quality of the presentations, not on the individual's presentation. The total grade of this section is 30.

3.3 Teacher's evaluation

The teacher's evaluation can evaluate whether the group work meets the requirement of the common goal. The teacher's evaluation is similar to in-class peer evaluation, which should cover the same following subjects: the fluency, body language, grammar, vocabulary, information, confidence, the regular check and teamwork. The total grade of this section is 40.

4. Demerits of group work

Through the implementing of group work in the writing course, some demerits have been found in the group work of college English collaborative teaching.

4.1 Unbalance in participations of students

In the group work, the students with a better mastery of English and communicative competence will get more opportunities for participating. On the contrary, those who learn English poorly and have been categorized into the shy will always be the onlookers. They rarely get opportunities to think independently, but directly, learn the information from their peers who are more active participants, which leads to the result that these students learn far less in group work than in the knowledge transmission of teachers. This obviously violates the original intention of implementing group work. This problem results from the fact that the teachers and students only attach an importance to the outcome of group work, while paying no attention to the whole process of learning and to the learning process of different individuals. It also results from the improper group forming.

4.2 Unbalance in contribution to the success of the group

In the group work, the students with a better mastery of English often get the heavier group task and gather more information about the group task. And at the same time, based on the ability of such good students, more plans and ideas can be produced by themselves. On the contrary, the students who learn English poorly provide less information and knowledge. It can not be denied that some students have no interest in participating in group work, but the main reason of this unbalance in contribution to the success of the group is improper group forming and the poor work assignment.

5. Conclusion

Well-organized group work is an efficient means to improve language teaching, especially college English teaching. In discussion, students collect different information and develop a more profound understanding of knowledge through incorporating the new information into their own knowledge. By means of group work, students' linguistic competence and the ability to make use of new knowledge will be strengthened. The success of group work largely depends on implementing in the whole process. The expected effect can be reached only when it is well organized, and the teacher should be very flexible at this. For example, assign different tasks to dissimilar learner types; Let the usually taciturn learner be the reporter, the noisy one be the secretary, and the sheepish learner be the leader. When they are entrusted with roles which will require them to interact with their peers, they are learning to focus more on meaning than on grammar.

The group work implementation and tasks designing ask for the responsibility of teachers who are the designers and organizers as well as leaders and encouragers of the group work. Equipped with sufficient knowledge of linguistics, culture, psychology and pedagogy, classroom teachers in China can have enough confidence in carrying out group work.

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Nurturing Writing Proficiency through Theme-based Instruction

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Abstract

This paper explores the effectiveness of theme-based instructional (TBI) method as a means of honing the writing skills and the motivation for writing of 36 pre-degree ESL learners in a Malaysian tertiary institution. The method which focused on development of language skills through discussion of themes provided the teacher a direct and effective way in guiding the learning processes the learners underwent in terms of how information was shared and kept and how the outcomes were ensued in pursuing writing. What surfaced as the semester progressed was that most learners had developed enthusiasm due to the empowerment entrusted to them and were more competent in writing due to the amount of research, reading, reviewing and conferencing they had done. Thus, this article discusses the concept of theme-based instruction and presents some remarks gathered from six selected students.

Keywords: Nurturing, Writing proficiency, Theme-based instruction

1. Introduction

After teaching English as Second Language (ESL) for almost thirteen years, it is disheartening to see many of the learners detached from the teaching and learning process, not knowing what they are learning and what they have learnt. Since the affection for learning is diminishing, ESL educators need to take a closer look at an alternative instructional method. It is because success in language learning will be achieved only if learners are required to use the target language in a meaningful way and are empowered some form of autonomy (Little, 2005).

Effectiveness is assured when language learning and content of subject matter are brought together within the Content-based Instruction (CBI). CBI which refers to the concurrent teaching of academic subject matter and second language skills (Brinton, 1989) emphasises the learning of content while simultaneously developing language skills. According to Davies (2003), CBI focuses on how information and meaning from meaningful content are utilised in texts, on the integration of skills of the target language and on their involvement in all activities. Grammar is a component of all language skills and language is used for a purpose which is to communicate meaning.

The term 'content' comes in a variety of definitions. Crandall & Tucker (1990) define it as 'academic subject matter'. Meanwhile, Chaput (1993) and Genesee (1994) are more lenient in their definition by suggesting that content '...need not be academic; it can include any topic, theme or non-language issue of interest or importance to the learners that contributes to the students' understanding of language in general, and the target language in particular'. Such content when exposed to learners can provide a motivational and cognitive basis for language learning as learners find it interesting and valuable to them (Brewster, 1999) and people learn a second language best when the information they acquire is perceived as interesting, useful and leading to a desired goal (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Due to its thematically organized materials which are easier to learn and remember, its coherent and meaningful information, it relationship with learner motivation and interest and its ability to develop learners expertise in a topic through a sequence of complex tasks (Rivers, 1992), CBI is deemed significant.

Of the three models of CBI, the model proposed for the study is theme-based. Stoller & Grabe (1997) suggest that theme-based language instruction lies close to the language-driven end of the continuum. Thus, teachers extract language activities which follow the content material. As an illustration, learners in CBI are supposed to 'read, take notes, listen, write a summary or respond orally to things they have read or written'. Since the essence of is exploiting the content and using it to the maximum for the teaching of skill areas, learners will become more familiar with the topic and the meaning of the topic. It is through this method that Brinton, Snow & Wesche (1989) believe learners

will develop the mastery of vocabulary, grammar, paragraph structure, communication skills and types and styles of writing (Shang, 2006) and also writing skills (Kavaliauskiene, 2004). Shih (1986) shows that CBI can be effectively used to teach writing as learners are supposed to write something related to the topic they have read or heard in class and the writing should focus on 'synthesising and interpreting' the input.

One of recommended strategies for the implementation of TBI is cooperative learning which allows learners to learn from other capable learners, and this supports Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Wu, 2007). Since the better students know the language, the more easily they can learn content through it and assist others with the content and language. Findings from 25 studies show that cooperative learning is more effective than traditional ones (Slavin, 1980). Aspects such as structure, individual accountability and group rewards increase lower level learning outcomes, and that higher level learning outcomes improve by the components of autonomy and group decision-making. Despite Randall's (1999) debate on the ineffectiveness of cooperative learning, Troncale (2002) experience that when learners are given responsibility; they enthusiastically take on the opportunity teach and learn from each other. Finding by Wu (2007) proves that when less capable learners collaborate with more capable learners in group learning activities, the learning outcomes can be greatly enhanced.

As a matter of fact, TBI provides teachers and students with a rich source of information to refer to when doing writing tasks. When the teacher and learners are involved in continual discussion, analysis and evaluation in the processes and progress as writers (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005); the materials and the pieces of essay they write can be reviewed and revised. Such reflection is a key concept in learner-directed learning (Park, 2005) that will help develop their proficiency and skills, particularly writing.

Since the effectiveness of TBI method on the development of writing skills has not been widely explored in Malaysia, it was put to practice with the purpose of determining whether:

1) it would improve Malaysian tertiary learners' writing proficiency in the language and

2) it would make learners more motivated to write in the target language.

2. Methodology

The action study was carried out throughout fourteen weeks, which made up a semester. During the instructional period in the experimental group, TBI was used. The study aimed at gathering insights on how TBI enhanced learners' writing skills and also their motivation in writing. Thirty-six students who participated in the experiment were all in the third semester of their three-year pre-degree studies and they had been studying English for almost 12 years. Data was gathered from a specific six respondents of three different proficiency levels; weak, average and excellent and the teacher's feedback. The characterization was made by adopting a Malaysian University English Test (MUET)-like trial speaking test.

2.1 Building coherence in TBI

TBI is normally implemented by adopting the Six-Ts Approach as put forward by Stoller & Grabe (1997).

2.1.1 Themes

Themes are the major ideas around which the units are organized and are determined by taking learners' interests, needs and likes, relevance and institutional appropriateness into account. Giving them choices during the learning process is strongly advocated by theme-based instruction. Therefore, to ascertain learners' interest, the group was given a list of ten themes which were thought to be important for them. The students were also asked to write any missing topic(s) they like. Then they were asked to rank each of the topics from 1 to 10 or any other numbers based on the total number of topics that they had according to their order of preference. The results revealed that the theme that they wanted to learn most is 'social ills', followed by 'health' and 'environmental issues'. Since one of the objectives of theme-based CBI is to tap students' existing schemata, the students' schemata on the theme was checked. After letting them know that the first theme was 'health', we first checked whether they had any idea about health in general and then tried to build up the necessary information through the discussion on possible sub-themes.

2.1.2 Topics

Subunits of themes are topics. A theme may subsume several topics. Topics are organised by building one topic on the other. These were generated through discussion two weeks before each theme was supposed to be discussed. Examples of sub-themes of 'health' are dimensions of health, tips on maintaining good health, preventive measures of bad health etc. and each of the groups was in charge of one.

2.1.3 Texts

Language in classroom is presented in meaningful texts. Stoller & Grabe (1997) claim that students' interest, relevance, and instructional appropriateness, length, coherence, connection to other materials, accessibility, availability, and cost are important. To make learning meaningful, learners were empowered some form of autonomy by getting them

gather authentic materials from various sources such as the Internet, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets and a few others at their efforts, aside from the materials distributed by the teacher throughout the TBI during the semester. Each learner was required to keep a file to house all the materials together with the course syllabus and past semesters' examination papers. This was done with the purpose of ensuring that each student would have all the materials /texts intact for present and future references, especially for process writing and prepare them for continuous and also final assessment.

2.1.4 Tasks

Students can develop valuable study skills, such as note-taking, summarizing, and extracting key information from texts through tasks. They may also develop skills in synthesizing, problem solving, and critical thinking.

As for the study, learners experienced the processes of conferring, assigning duties, decision making, problem solving, gathering materials, reading materials, synthesising information, preparing materials and visual aids for presentations and doing cooperative process writing. They were also provided practice in listening and/or speaking, writing and reading and language by the teacher. They were given one week to do preparation for the first task – oral presentation; which came in the form of academic presentation, forum, drama and so on and the discussion of each theme through various activities took up three weeks. Audience was encouraged to do note-taking during the presentation as the points included in handouts may be too brief for them to understand the meaning of the topic. Question and answer session was also held after each presentation. Any pluses and minuses of the presentation, language and content were tabled after each presentation.

2.1.4.1 Cooperative learning

TBI was implemented by having learners to work together as a group. Grouping was determined based on a trial speaking test, and the scores were used to form heterogeneous (mixed-ability) groups. Once the first theme with its sub-themes was assigned, learners started conferring and searching for materials at their own time continually. After presenting their respective themes, learners wrote essays in the cooperative group.

Such experimentation was to promote learner-centred and self-directed learning. We wanted the students to take greater responsibility and to have ownership of their learning and of their abilities to communicate ideas in English. In other words, we wanted to empower our students as real learners of English.

The criterion that made the TBI different from other approaches is the emphasis given to cooperative learning. In our study, the students were encouraged to work and present their materials in pairs and most of the time in groups. This was done through role-plays, discussions and sometimes through materials, one pencil or one worksheet per group and through roles assigned to them in their group work. Students were asked to share their products and views with their classmates. By this way, the students were provided the chance to learn from their classmates and to develop their social skills.

2.1.4.2 Cooperative process writing

Writing in a cooperative manner was implemented because of the two distinct but complementary roles of writing. First, it is a skill that draws on the use of strategies (such as planning, evaluating, and revising text) to accomplish a variety of goals, such as writing a report or expressing an opinion with the support of evidence. Second, writing is a means of extending and deepening students' knowledge; it acts as a tool for learning subject matter (Keys, 2000; Shanahan, 2004; Sperling & Freedman, 2001). Because these roles are closely linked, it is recommended that language teachers use content-area texts to teach reading and writing as this coincides with the principle of theme-based instruction.

Cooperative writing requires learners to work together to produce quality writing.   Writing quality is defined here in terms of coherently organized essays containing well-developed and pertinent ideas, supporting examples, and appropriate detail (Needels & Knapp, 1994). It involved peers writing as a team in planning, drafting, revising and editing their compositions. A higher achieving student was assigned to be the Helper (tutor) and a lower achieving student was assigned to be the Writer (tutee). They were instructed to work as partners on a writing task. The Helper student assisted the Writer student with meaning, organization, spelling, punctuation, generating ideas, creating a draft, rereading essays, editing essays and evaluating the final product. They would transfer the information they had obtained from earlier discussion into the essays. Thus, it made the essays more comprehensive, as they contained more facts and were worth reading.

Throughout the intervention, the teacher's role was mainly monitoring, prompting and praising the students and addressing their concerns (Yarrow & Topping, 2001).

The grammar details were not left out though it was not the main concern. For the first writing assignment, the teacher discussed the nine essays submitted by highlighting the problems and errors committed.   For the following assignments, students were required to do peer review. Grammatical error identification was done by referring to the list of errors given by the teacher. They would read through another group's essay and checked for the cohesion and

coherence of the essay and also the errors the group had committed. The teacher would then be the second reviewer. The marking process that required them to identify the cohesiveness of an essay and the language errors had empowered them some form of autonomy also allowed them to improve their writing skill in a very practical way.

They were also told to keep all the drafts that they had worked on. This was to provide evidence of the process they had gone through and as a license to enable them to move on to the next draft

The principles adopted by the teacher when giving feedback on learners' assignments were:

• Not correcting more than a paragraph or two

• Giving rules or strategies for language errors (by referring to the 'list of common errors in writing essays')

• Distinguishing language issues from comments on the substantive issues about the assignment

• Giving feedback anonymously to the whole group highlighting common problems, rather than to each individual

2.1.5 Transitions

Curricular coherence is provided by transitions. Topics and tasks are linked smoothly by transitions. Since TBI is about integration of skills, a theme which took two to three weeks to finish encompassed activities which were grounded on listening, reading, oral and writing besides grammar, vocabulary and language (Klenowski et al., 2006). Tasks began with reading and writing, followed by speaking and listening before they finally proceeded to process writing.

2.1.6 Threads

Another curricular coherence is provided by threads. They are defined by natural linkages across themes. They help students to recycle content, use learning strategies, and to synthesize. Language skills, such as reading and writing as well as vocabulary and grammar were given in an integrated way. Once sub-themes were generated and each group had chosen one to work on, all groups started conferring. The outcome of meetings and conference sessions were handouts; the outcome of synthesising details to be distributed on the day of presentation and visual aids to assist them in the presentation. Next was the listening practice on the same theme before they were finally asked to write an essay in the form of report, article or speech. Since theme-based instruction advocates the whole language learning, the language skills were given in an integrated way at anytime necessary throughout the two to three weeks of the discussion of one theme.

2.2 Analysis

A qualitative inquiry method within a case study was adopted with the purpose of obtaining a detailed description from the respondents' perspectives. Patton (2002) asserts that qualitative inquiry method advocates 'voice, perspective and reflexivity'. Such a method conveys authenticity and worthiness.

This was done by requiring the six selected respondents representing three different proficiency levels to write logs on their progress throughout the 14 weeks of study. Oral feedback from the teacher was also gathered to illuminate the learners' perceptions regarding the change in their writing proficiency and their motivation when writing in the target the language.

3. Results and discussion

The findings below were the gist gathered from the learners' logs in which they wrote comments on the TBI processes and progress.

3.1 Respondents' feedback

Candidates A, C, D and F: Absolutely Fantastic

Candidate A, who enjoyed the method claimed: Fabulous! I was allowed to include new knowledge in my writing. The best course in English so far!!

She described the whole working process to be smooth and absorbing. She had several ideas and was very keen to start working immediately. She went to the library to gather information about possible topics and then started processing the information. She credited the learner centred freedom and responsibility empowered by the cooperative TBI approach the reasons for her effort and enthusiasm. The following extract were her comments

• *First, I started to gather my group members. We were all excited to get started. We brainstormed a few sub-topics and each one of us was assigned a sub-topic to research. We met again from time to time to discuss the progress in work. We helped one another a lot.*

• *It was exciting to see a lot of us enthralled with the theme 'social ills'. We shared lots of examples and this theme is close to our hearts. We incorporated those ideas in our essays and even suggested to others to include them.*

• *It helped me to hone my writing skills.*

- *We couldn't wait for the next theme.*

They felt great being assigned the task of an examiner and given the room to express their thoughts of the essays and apply the knowledge they gathered from the presentations in evaluating the cohesiveness of the essays. Identifying the language errors made them see the context in which the language is used, to illustrate, the use of certain tenses, subject-verb agreement, pronoun reference, verb form and various word forms.

Below are several remarks passed by students (Candidates C, D and F) regarding their proficiency in writing.

- *I could make my thought clear through writing.*

- *I become open-minded towards my mistakes and I can identify my weakness.*

- *I managed to correct my mistakes in grammar, sentence construction and usage of punctuation.*

- *I had never known about the use of perfect tenses before. I may have learnt but had no idea when to use them.*

- *I became wiser now than a semester ago.*

- *I realized there were many ways and chances to improve my English.*

- *Now I know what is subject-verb agreement.*

- *I had the opportunity to think about things deeply and express my thoughts in English. It was good.*

- *The planning stage help me overcome mental block.*

- *I don't rush into writing anymore. I planned what to write first.*

- *I enjoyed writing with group members. Never did this before.*

Candidate E: Agony

Among the six students there was one student (Candidate E) who clearly disliked the cooperative TBI approach but worked hard and responsibly. The cooperative process seemed to cause her considerable stress and anxiety throughout the whole course.

Throughout the working process the student felt that this kind of a working method was not for her. She was afraid that she would not be able to assume the responsibility and that her English was not good enough for independent work. Nevertheless, she started working immediately and worked rather systematically every week. Consequently, she completed all her work.

On the whole, the student was very discontented with her work.

- *I have studied in English 12 years. Still I do not know the language. My works are very terrible.*

- *Every time the teacher corrected my work, I felt stressed and disliked being the attention of the class.*

All in all, the TBI approach did not seem to suit this student. She drudged alone, felt very stressed and worried about the responsibility and the quality of her work, and declined others' help. Moreover, the approach discouraged her enthusiasm to learn and use English:

- *This course makes me feel that I don't know any English, and I most probably will never even learn.*

- *I feel like I am getting worse.*

- *It's a waste of time. We have other work to do.*

Candidate B: TBI is Rubbish

Finally, there was a male student who did not like the TBI method, thus did not work very actively or responsibly.

- *Well, at the beginning there was chaos. We don't know what to do. It just didn't interest us.*

- *I was not a very hardworking person. I don't like being asked to write again and again.*

- *I spend so much time correcting an essay. I make the same problem again next time.*

- *Personally, it's not for me, I'm not a hardworking person.*

- *I don't really know whether I learn anything new. Perhaps my writing may have improved a bit.*

- *A complete waste of time. Students are forced to produce pieces of work when we have a lot of work to do.*

- *It seems that the teacher is not doing her stuff. I still don't know how to use tenses correctly.*

All in all, he preferred teacher directed teaching because the TBI approach simply was not to his liking:

- *This demands much too much work and still doesn't teach what I think we should learn. I prefer the traditional teacher directed teaching because I consider learning the language important.*

- *It is not by doing cooperative writing. There's so much work to do.*

3.2 Teacher's feedback

The teacher's feedback confirmed the feedback obtained from the participants. Enhancement in writing skills was noted in all six respondents, especially in terms of coherence and cohesiveness of texts. Even though the rate of improvement varied among learners, all of them managed to identify irrelevant ideas and rearrange misplaced ideas and use appropriate connectors to link the ideas. They were able to do this as they had understood the meaning of the themes and their subsequent topics through the thorough discussion done. They also realized having only one idea in a paragraph would make the writing easier to comprehend. Otherwise, the main ideas were to be separated in different body paragraphs. The ideas were then clearly and logically presented. They were reminded to use the new words that they had discovered during reading.

In general, the students considered giving and getting feedback very difficult, yet also helpful. The teacher also tried to monitor and comment on the students' work while it was in progress and provided immediate support to those who needed it. In terms of errors, they did not know exactly what to focus on during the first evaluation session; but the 'list of common errors' did guide them in identifying those errors. The errors included spelling, punctuation, tenses, subject-verb agreement etc.

Most of them claimed that when the evaluation was done as a whole-class process, they felt inhibited and rather defensive as they were not used to it. They were not used to having a review done publicly. But when the others' work was brought to attention and flaws were highlighted the same way, they felt much better. They took it constructively as they knew it would later develop their proficiency as a writer. Indeed, they had fewer difficulties in evaluating their own essay when writing on the subsequent topics.

However, Candidate B expressed his discomfort in hearing comments from peers on his essay. He believed that they were more or less of the same proficiency level, thus they might do more damage to the essay instead of repairing it.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the implementation of theme-based instructional method and cooperative process writing did to some extent improve the learners' motivation and proficiency in the language, mainly their writing skills as they learnt about writing, underwent learning processes of writing, assessed each other's writing, corrected the errors committed and were informed of their performance, and, in so doing, were encouraged to do their best. They were made to undergo a variety of phases such as brainstorming, outlining, planning, revising, and correcting together. This is important in the development of ESL students' confidence and attitudes towards their growth in learning English as a second language. This works in tandem with Little's approach that target language use is driven by learner involvement, learner reflection and self-assessment (2005).

This study highly recommends that secondary ESL teachers and ESL practitioners start inculcating the proposed theme-based instruction for the development of cooperative process writing. In most cases, process writing is not done as a result of integrated-skills learning, resulting in learners being lack of facts and vocabulary to be incorporated in the text. Doing it the theme-based way will generate learners' interest to find information and present it to others as they know the information will benefit them as activities/tasks throughout the few weeks revolve on the same theme. The best thing about theme-based instructional method is materials can be adapted and used in a variety of ways to meet the needs of learners. The sharing of materials helps learners overcome mental block in writing and help them write in a more organised manner. Thus, this may generate learners' willingness to get active and to be enthusiastic in the learning of ESL at large.

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Cultivation of Science Teachers' Information Literacy in China

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Abstract

In the paper, we focus on the information literacy of science teachers in China. Information literacy encompasses knowledge of one's information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information. Science teachers should have information literacy which is a basic capability to carry out their everyday teaching lives. Science teachers should be sensitive to information resources in daily life, reinforce technology skills and integrate information technology with their instruction, and learn how to make use of WWW resources in their classroom. Constructivism theory can help teachers better integrate information technology with science education and promote instructional quality of teaching.

Keywords: Science teacher, Information literacy, Science education

1. Introduction

Science teachers' role in the current wave of science education reform is challenging, especially in the information society. In the information society, information literacy has become a necessity for everyone; it forms the basis for lifelong learning (Abdelaziz, 2004). Everyone needs to use information literacy to make choices that arise every day. Over the past decade, information literacy has been an area of increasing interest to science teachers.

Information literacy encompasses knowledge of one's information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand; it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic human right of life long learning (The Prague Declaration, 2003) . Information literacy is no longer just a library issue nowadays. It is of keen importance to all teachers and students in campus. So it will be useful for a student to be able to transfer their information literacy capability to their private life. There will also be people who have fallen through the net of formal education. Some of them may not have benefited from science education in school, but might particularly benefit from information literacy if they were information literate. An information literacy foundation could be involved in developing a strategy for information literacy as keystone for the information society and knowledge economy.

Evidences suggest that teachers are not necessarily confident users of information themselves and tend to restrict their information resources to relatively few sources (Williams and McConnell, 1997). In the case of information literacy the mediator should be a teacher. But most of science teachers use more traditional teaching methods and teaching strategies in their classroom. Science teachers must shoulder the responsibility for the cultivation of students' ability to obtain and filter information rapidly, to discriminate kinds of information accurately, and to work on and process information creatively. As the educator (facilitator and guide), science teachers should improve their information literacy which influences their professional teaching and life-long learning.

2. Information literacy of science teachers

The focus of the Chinese science education is the canonical knowledge of science facts, concepts, and theories. The focus on canonical knowledge is also demonstrated by the fact-driven curriculum and teacher-centered pedagogies that dominate the Chinese classrooms. In Chinese science education, the teaching content is traditional structure with less adaptation for education purposes. It has fallen behind the new development of science and information society. Science in contemporary schools should play a key role in the general education of students all of whom as citizens will have to deal with a complex technological change.

Taking into account the background of Chinese basic education reform, and on the basis of Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education (ALA, 2000), we think that an information literate science teacher is able to:

- Have sensitive conscious of information resources.
- Determine the extent of information which is needed in science education.

- Access the needed information effectively and efficiently.
- Evaluate information and its sources critically.
- Absorb selected information into one's knowledge instructure.
- Use information effectively, ethically and legally to accomplish instruction purpose.

3. Cultivation of science teachers' information literacy

In order to accomplish teaching goals and develop professional literacy, science teachers should manage to cultivate their own information literacy by some effective methods.

3.1 Have sensitive conscious of information resources

In the traditional Chinese science education, science teachers implement teaching that mainly rely on the textbooks and teaching syllabus, and this tradition leads to the information being used in science teaching is limited in a narrow area. Wang and Sun (2005) reported that 8 percent of the physics teachers implement teaching only depend on the textbooks, and in all 62% of them implement teaching on the basis of instruction syllabus and exam syllabus. Science teachers often have no interest to obtain other information resources to expand and enrich their teaching. Today, in the contemporary world, with the development of science and technology, students have more chances exposure to massive information which consists of much useful and useless information. Facing the information, students always can't identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively use and communicate information, they feel at a loss what they should do in the information society. Science teachers are responsible for guiding students conquer this problem. Students are to be willing and compliant recipients of the teachers' guiding.

Information-literate science teachers should have sensitive conscious of information resources in daily life, and broaden perspective of science education. Teachers should realize that textbooks aren't the only way to obtain information. Besides taking the information from textbooks into teaching practice, science teachers can obtain information from other resources, such as books, newspapers, periodicals, radio, TV, internet, even other educators. Teachers should have a comprehensive knowledge of their field, be able to adjust that knowledge to the circumstances of teaching, and be thoroughly prepared and organized for science teaching. They should focus on the collections and arrangements of information which involve development and frontier of science, history of science, social problems, teaching theories and student's fashions.

3.2 Reinforce information technology skills

Information literacy is related to information technology skill (Mustafa Koç, 2005). In China, the majority of teachers do not feel well prepared to integrate technology into their teaching. They usually think that information technology is computer operation, and always use computers as presentation tools providing additional resources in the classroom. Most of the teachers use technology to process word and make PPT course ware, they rare use technology to simulate experiment and explore software (ZHong, 2003). A study demonstrated that only 13 percent of the physics teachers usually apply technology in their classroom, 30% of them never use technology in their classroom, in all 25% of them use technology in their public class or seminar class, but it has been used as a showing tool to some extent (Wang and Sun, 2005).

Science teachers will always find a way to benefit from any new technology. Technology greatly expands science teachers' chances access to information, and changes the learning environment from a scarcity of information resources to an abundance of information resources. Science teachers should reinforce technology skills and integrate information technology with their instruction, and push forward the informational development of science education. Information technology can be used not only as an information management tool, but also as a means of teaching students of diverse information in their classroom, and promote students' problem-solving and higher-order thinking abilities.

Information technology skills enable science teachers to operator computers, software (such as PowerPoint, Excel, Flash, Authorware) applications, databases, and achieve a wide variety of information for science education. Science teachers should have capacities of obtaining information by means of information technology. Use of technology can help teachers relate to today's students who are very media aware, prompt new approaches to curriculum, and encourage developments in teaching skills (Schwarz, 2000). It can also assist teachers in helping students make connections with a worldwide community. Science teachers should understand more than how to find information; they should understand its limitations and the need to think over and examine how they chose and use information, and how to manage and communicate information in the classroom.

3.3 Learning how to best use Word Wide Web in science education

3.3.1 Instructional strategies of using Word Wide Web

The Word Wide Web (WWW) is a significant resource of science education materials (lessons, activities, projects, references, tools, etc.). Science teachers should have a positive attitude and motivate to use the WWW. Teachers with

high motivation will find creative ways to use the WWW during lessons and be more adapt to try different approaches if one fails. Science teachers should learn how to make use of WWW resources in their classroom. Science teachers ought to learn how to use information retrieval systems (such as Google, Baidu, CNKI, et al.) access and collect the needed information for science teaching.

The instructional strategies may be designed using the WWW in any of the following ways (Relan A, 1997):

• As a resource for the identification, evaluation, and integration of a variety of information.

• As a medium of collaboration, conversation, discussions, and communication of ideas.

• As an international platform for the expression and contribution of cognitive understandings and meanings.

• As a medium for participating in simulated experiences apprenticeships, and cognitive partnerships.

3.3.2 The WWW ought to be used as a distance education tool

The WWW also can be used successfully as a distance education tool when the teachers and students have access and are comfortable with technology. Therefore, teachers can take advantage of the web resources and construct a web-based science education platform which breaks the limitation of time and space. The web-based science education platform is composed of electronic textbook, lecture materials, multi-media components, asynchronous communication tools (such as email, bulletin boards and chat rooms). From the viewpoint of science teachers, once the instruction resource is in electronic format, it's easy to organize the lecture material, modify instruction materials, communicate with the students, keep track of grades, and obtain feedback of students. The web-based science education obviously is a useful complement to in-class interactive engagement techniques. Assessing the progress of students on the Internet is similar to the conventional classroom. Homework is posted on the web and must be returned electronically to the teacher by email. Web-based assessment can be done quickly.

The web-based science education extend the boundaries of learning, help the classroom changing from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered environment in which students are active participants in the learning process. On the other hand, science teachers can communicate quickly with other teachers and experts through Internet, and obtain more information about science education.

Sciences teachers should note that information is also available outside the WWW. Information is generally concerned with families, communities, workshops, conferences, and media. These facilitated resources tend to have good values and are easily accessible.

3.4 Implementing science teaching on the base of constructivism theory

Science teachers must develop the knowledge and skills to integrate information technology into the existing classroom, curriculum and environment so that they become proficient in using information resources. In general, the integration between information technology and science instruction can be guided by constructivism theory, and help teachers accomplish teaching goals. The constructivist perspective is becoming a dominant paradigm in the field of the science education. Constructivism has provided the theoretical base for the science teaching approaches. Constructivist-informed teaching approaches to the process of learning are viewed as activities that explicitly aim to help students to make the constructions that lead to a conceptual understanding of the scientific points of view. As students actively make sense of the world by constructing and reconstructing their own viable meanings, constructivist-informed teaching approaches then become a matter of creating situations in which students actively participate in activities that enable them to make their own viable explanations of their sensory experiences (Peter, 2005).

Learning science is something that students do, not something that is done to them. Learning science is a process, in which students learn such skills as observing, interpreting, and experimenting (Danuse, 2007). When students learn science curriculum, they attempt to make sense of whatever phenomenon, sensory experiences or knowledge they encounter, and a consequence of this sense making process is the establishment of structures in the mind, which constitute the meaning and understanding of their own science world. Students actively develop their understanding of science by combining scientific information with reasoning and thinking skills. Therefore, on the base of abundant information, science teachers create experiences in which students will faced that will lead to appropriate processing and knowledge acquisition. Science teachers ought to reflect their own experiences of extracting information from social, and guide their students' learning effectively.

As we know, experiment and practice is the basis of science and science education. Science teachers often demonstrate scientific phenomena and experiments which can encourage students to think and make predictions about what they see in their lives. Science experiments often have been demonstrated by two forms. One is actual experiment which can be done in the laboratory and another is simulative experiment which is often simulated by computer. Computer simulation can play an important role in creating virtual experiments and inquiry. Simulations give students the opportunity to observe a real world experience and interact with it. Problem based simulations allow students to monitor experiments,

test new models and improve their intuitive understanding of complex phenomena (Sami, 2006).

4. Conclusion

Information literacy is highly important not only for science teachers' teaching and lifelong learning but also fundamental for their own subject disciplines. Information literacy enables teachers to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own teaching and learning. We emphasized that information literacy is more than the ability to use technology; instead, it is the ability to find, evaluate, analyze, integrate, communicate, and use information to teaching science curriculum. Information-literate science teachers should have sensitive conscious of information resources in daily life, reinforce technology skills and integrate information technology with their instruction, and construct a web-based science education platform.

Constructivism has provided the theoretical base for science education. Constructivism theory can help teachers better integrate information technology with science education and promote instructional quality of science education.

Cultivating information literacy is the effective method to promoting science teachers' professional development, and it is the responsibility of the university and education administration to help science teachers to become information literate.

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Television and Media Literacy in Young Children: Issues and Effects in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Television viewing among young children has been an on going issue as it is found to effect their development in various areas. This problem is getting more worrisome as the percentage and amount of hours of television exposure among young children is increasing, especially with the growing production of children television programs.   Studies have found that television exposure to young children could effects their language and cognitive development, lead to behavior problems, attention disorder, aggression and obesity. This paper will discuss the issues of television exposure to young children, and the effects of promoting media literacy.

Keywords: Television viewing, Children television programs, Behavior problems

1. Introduction

Television is an important tool for most people, young or old, as today most information are delivered to the public via this technology. It can now be assessed easily via cables or satellite, which could provide consumers with every type of information that they need, either for work, leisure, interest, and so forth. With the emergent of this media and the production of various programs, television has caught the attention of most people. Comparable to other media, television is the most accessible media to most people, including young children, where television is their most favorite form of media (Burton). The use of television by young children particularly has raise debates and concerns to many organization and researchers (e.g. Anderson & Pempek, 2005; Griffiths & Machin, 2003) due to the boundless access to various types of information which could affect their development, behavior, health and learning.

For the past 15 years, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has put their concerns about the amount of time children spend viewing the television (AAP, 2001). Referring to the AAP guidelines, children older then 2 years old should watch no longer than 1 to 2 hours of quality programming, and children under 2 years old should not have any television viewing, as the first 2 years of life is a critical period for brain development. In addition, no media should be in the child's room, especially young children. However today, it is an epidemic scenario for children to ask for their personal television in their own bedroom. In a study by Roberts, Folour, Rideout, & Brodie (1999), it is reported that 32% of the children between 2 to 7 years old and 65% of 8 to 18 years olds have television sets in their bedrooms (AAP, 2001). These percentage leads to an estimation of 3 hours per day of television and an average of 6 hours 32 minutes per day with various media combined (AAP, 2001; Roberts et al., 1999).

Looking at this scenario, it is still not clear to many researchers why parent could allow media to be in these young children room, with access to various channels and leaving them to watch television by their own. One possibility might be that parents believe that media could offer a positive learning environment, and that children could develop certain skills from viewing TV. This is shown in a study by Dalzell & Msall (2000) where majority of parents of 0-35 months old believed that television could improve a child's vocabulary (Certain, & Kahn, 2002).

With the production of more young children television programs, such as *Baby Einstein* and *Teletubbies*, it has substantially increased the amount of foreground television for young children (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). In a survey by Pierroutsakos, Hanna, Self, Lewis, & Brewer (2004) on 100 parents on the amount of time that children aged 2 and younger attend to the television, it is reported that their infants were exposed to about 120 minutes of TV per day, 50% of which was infant and toddler programming, 40% adult programming, and 9% preteen programming (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). Regardless the amount of time that these young children used to watch TV at home, it is currently reported that 70 percent of the child care centers today use television during a typical day, and in one year, an average

child would spend about 900 hours in his school and nearly 1,023 hours in front of a television (Gavin, 2005). It is then estimated that at average the television is on for approximately 7 hours a day and when the child graduated from high school, he or she might have watched 15,000 hours of television (Sparrow, 2007). These figures shows that there are increments in the numbers of hours spent in a child's life, which illustrates the changes of life-style in the youngsters today which television place a huge influence in their daily activities. However, these percentages are reported higher in low to moderate income families, because such families are found to use television extensively (Huston & Wright, 1997; Wright, Huston, Murphy, Peters, Pinon, Scantling, & Kotler, 2001). In a survey by Certain & Kahn (2002) the percentage of hours on young children watching television is related to several variables, which include early television viewing and maternal education. Their longitudinal study indicates that greater television viewing in early childhood is associated with greater viewing at school age, due to continuing environment influence, child preferences or habit, or the interaction of both, and less educated mothers tend to watch more television at all ages. Regardless of the variables above, child care, maternal employment and marital status were found not among the strongest predictor of increased television viewing (Certain & Kahn, 2002). Hence, this runs to the notion that these scenarios probably due to more productions of children's television programs, such as *Sesame Street* (Wright et al., 2001) as well as parenting style, where excessive television viewing is allowed to the child as an easy way out for parents to calm them down as parents runs their errands (Certain & Kahn, 2002; Gadberry, 1974). Such parenting style has first been reported in earlier studies where parents has used television to baby sit their child, as television was associated with significantly more attention shifts, sitting and self-stimulation (Gadberry,1974). Therefore, it is then to be questioned why such parenting styles still exist when many concerns about TV and young children are being addressed and more parents are being more 'media educated'. A few rationale reasons that could reflect this scenario might be to having more working parents, or parents are loaded with various daily agendas due to financial constrains, personal problems, family errands, or it is the family members habit to watch television in their free time. Any of these scenarios could put their child to television addiction, which will eventually affected their child's daily activities, that leads to an unhealthy childhood experience and later development (e.g. Anderson, Huston, Schmitt, Linebarger & Wright, 2001; Hapkiewiez, 1979; Healy, 2004) and many health issues (e.g. Klesges, Shelton & Klesges, 1993; Pine & Nash, 2002).

According to the American Academy of Pediatric (2001), as much as 10% to 20% of real life violence may be attributable to media violence. The recently completed 3-year National Television Violence Study found that nearly two thirds of all programming contains violence, with children's programs contain the most violence, portrayals of violence are usually glamorized and perpetrators often goes unpunished (AAP 2001; Federman,1998). Besides that, a recent comprehensive analysis of music videos found that nearly one fourth of all Music Television (MTV) videos portray overt violence and depict weapon carrying (AAP, 2001; Durant, Rich, Pmans, Rome & Alfred, 1997). Additional to that, along with the main course of programs, commercials are showed, promoting various types of children items. It is reported that the commercials in prime time programming has steadily increased so that today at least 16 minutes of an hour-long show are devoted to the advertisements, with the average of more than 40,000 television commercials per year (Christakis, 2006). Many previous and recent researches have reported more negative outcomes rather than positive outcomes, which is a worrying scenario for parents and professionals. Therefore, it is important for parents to teach their children to be media literate, as young children are particularly vulnerable to the message conveyed through television, which could influence their perception and behaviors (AAP, 2001).

2. Issues in television viewing and young children

Television viewing among young children has raised issues and concerns to many researchers and professionals. As television series can be affectionate to watch, it could glue children on the couch; continuously watching one program after another. Many studies have found that children who live in 'heavy' TV-viewing households are more likely to have poor academic performance (e.g. Razel, 2001), violence (e.g. Ni Chang, 2000) and health problems (e.g. Christakis, 2006). However, to put such blame on each viewers does not seems appropriate as the effects on television viewed by young children might differ as they passed through a certain stage of age.

2.1 Attention disorder

Early television exposure is now a common scenario, where babies as young as a few months old are exposed to either foreground and background television. In a recent study by Christakis (2006), it is reported that there is an association between early television viewing and later symptoms of attention disorder (Anderson & Pempek, 2005; Healy, 2004; Obel, Henriksen, Dalsgaard, Linnet, Skajaa, Thomsen, & Olsen, 2004). Time spent TV viewing (without reference to content) was assessed from parent estimates when the children were 1 1/2 to 3 1/2 years old, and symptoms of attention disorders were assessed at age 7 years old based on maternal report of child behavior including restlessness, concentration problems, impulsiveness, confusion and obsession. The finding shows a small positive association between viewing at both ages of 1 1/2 years old and 3 1/2 years old and having symptoms of attention disorders. Besides, it is also reported that there is a 9% increase in risk of attention problem for each daily hour of television-watching. Healy (2004) reported that these cases could happen due to the power of environmental

experiences in shaping the developing brain because of the plasticity of its neuronal connectivity. Repeated exposure to any stimulus in a child's environment may forcibly impact mental and emotional growth by either setting up particular circuitry ("habits of mind") or depriving the brain of other experiences (Healy, 2004).

However, in a duplicate study by Obel et al. (2004) in Denmark, they found no significant association between hours of watching television and behavioral problems in any of the age groups, even though for those who spend the longest time in front of the television. However, they reported that the children in their study who were watching television for more than 1½ hours at the age of 3½ were more likely to have ADHD-like behavior already at that age, as compared to Christakis (2004). Analyzing both findings, these contrasts probably due to US children apparently watch much more television than Danish children (Obel et al., 2004). Besides, as these studies focuses only on the amount of time children viewing the television, there might also be a possibility that the content of the program could also put effect to the result of the study, as many other studies have suggested that content is a crucial part of television viewing which could affect several areas of development.

2.2 Learning

Previous and recent studies have been done to see the effect between television viewing and school achievement, including language and cognitive skills. Correlational studies show a small but consistent negative relation between concurrent total viewing and various indices of school achievement (Comstock, 1995; Wright et al., 2001). In the other hand, positive outcomes are also found in correlation to language development (Anderson et al., 2001), cognitive development (Diaz-Guerrero & Holtzman, 1974; Carew, 1980) and positive school achievement (Razel, 2001; Uchikoshi, 2005). However, several studies have found that television could promote positive development and learning outcomes for younger children and negative results on older children, and vice versa.

In two studies using *Sesame Street* program, (Linebarger & Walker, 2005; Nelson, 1973) negative associations of language development are reported on children younger than the age of 2 years old (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). However, in contrast Rice, Huston, Truglio, & Wright (1990) found that there is positive language development among children at 24 months old and older with watching *Sesame Street*. This is because *Sesame Street* have always considered their audience to be children 2 years and older, and there is a possibility that being too advance for younger children could actually hinders rather than promotes language development them (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). Besides, Uchikoshi (2005) in his study on Spanish-speaking English-language kindergartners watching *Arthur*, a children's television program, reported that routine and attentive viewing of *Arthur* can assist non-mainstream bilingual children to develop English narrative styles that match the English-speaking school norms faster, even prior to formal literacy instruction. Hence, this shows that to successfully promote language development in young children, language learning via television should only be introduced to children older then 24 months old, as most programs are produced for children at this age and older, and also probably due to the readiness of these very young children to perceive such level of information.

The same patterns of results are also reported in studies on young children television viewing and cognitive development. In two studies reviewed by Anderson & Pempek (2005), Wachs (1986) found that background noise from the television is associated with poorer cognitive development on infants and toddlers. Carew (1980) in his longitudinal study on the impact of six "intellectual sources" on spatial and language skills related to intelligence, his results were consistent with the hypothesis that television had a negative impact on cognitive development during the first 2 years of life but the impact became positive for children 24 months old and older. This is probably because very young children are sensitive to the sequential and linguistic comprehensibility of video to at least 18 months of age (Anderson & Pempek, 2005), and also that very young children have difficulty using a symbolic representation as a source of information about an existing situation (Troseth, & DeLoache, 1998) which explains that they are most likely not developmentally ready to receive information or learn from the television.

Inconsistent findings have been reported, in previous and recent studies on television viewing and school achievement. Negative relationship is found between television viewing and school achievement – the more a student views television, the lower are his or her educational achievements (Razel, 2001; Williams, Haertel, Haertel, & Walberg, 1982), positive relationship – the more the student views television, the higher his or her educational achievement (Blosser, 1988; Razel, 2001) and no relationship between television viewing and educational achievement (Razel, 2001; Scarborough, 1989). However, in recent studies by Razel (2001), different results are obtained for children of different ages towards television viewing and school achievement. Positive correlation are found for children ages 5 and 6, average negative correlation among children ages 7 to 9 and even more negative correlations are found among older children and adolescence; 10 to 17 years old. Hence, it is to be questioned, if children older than 24 months old tend to show positive language and cognitive development due to the appropriate content viewed by these young children, why as these children gets older, their school achievement tend to decrease? Razel (2001) concluded that it is possible that the amount of television viewing is responsible for lowered achievement, similar as suggested earlier by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, (1994) that poor achievers tend to watch more television, where else Numan (1986,

1988, 1995) stated that socioeconomic status (SES) is responsible for the low achievement and Hornik (1981) cited IQ as the cause (Razel, 2001).

Regardless to the above reasons, as television is accessible to most young children and adolescence, with hundreds of channels that they receive from cables or satellite, the entertainment from this media could be endless to them, which could affect their time management, and influence their tendency to keep on watching the television. In an interview by Ballard (2003) on children between age 8 and 13, 75% of the children reported that watching television sometimes or often kept them from getting their homework done, which makes them keep on wanting to watch and makes school work boring. Looking at these scenario, there is also a possibility that older children tend to watch more television as they probably have more access to the television compared to younger children, which also could eventually affected their school performance due to more homework and higher level of instruction where they usually need to put more attention and focus on their studies.

2.3 Aggression

One of the most worrying behaviors that parents faced with their young children today is the tendency to perform any motion of aggression. Many television shows today tend to insert aggression behavior in most of the scenes, which is not just the actions of kicking or hitting, but to the extent of raping and killing. In 1990, the National Association for the Education of Young Children has raised their concern in the NAEYC position statement where they stated that there has been an increase in the number of reported violent acts directed at children and severity of violent acts observed by children through the media, including television (p.18) (Ni Chang, 2000). In relation to that according to the American Psychological Association Task Force on Television and American Society, by their graduation from elementary schools, children will have seen 8,000 killings and more than 10,000 other acts of violence (Carter, 1995; Ni Chang, 2000).

Many believed that there is a correlation between an excessive viewing of violence on television and children's exhibited aggressive behaviors (Hapkiewiez, 1979; Ni Chang, 2000; Rothenberg, 1985). In an experiment on aggressive behavior among preschool children, the results show that children who viewed aggressive programs showed significantly greater increases in aggressive behavior than those who watched non aggressive programs. Analyzing the above scenario, it reflects Bandura social learning theory, where most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling, which involve observing others forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions it will serves as a guide for action (Berks, 1994). Hence when young children continuously watch aggressive actions from the television, there will always be a tendency for them imitate the actions, thinking such actions as part of their play, which could lead to actual aggressive behavior. This is because repetition of violence in the mass media could results in a decreased emotional sensitivity to media violence and increased probability for decreased emotional sensitivity to actual aggressive behavior in real life situations (Rothenberg, 1985).

2.4 Advertisement

With the increment of television viewers' percentage in the recent years, the number of advertisement has also increased, which presents products for people of all ages. Recently, Christakis (2006) has reported that the commercials in prime time programming have steadily increased so that today at least 16 minutes of an hour-long show are devoted to the advertisements, which focuses for the targeted viewers based on the type of program being showed at the time. For example, when children television programs are being broadcasted, there will be advertisement that is intended for children, which is mostly about food and toys. Previous and recent studies have raised their concern on the effect of advertisement towards children behavior (e.g. Feshbach, Dillman, & Jordan, 1979; Greer, Potts, Wright, & Huston, 1982) and whether young children are capable to understand the information being advertised (Chan & McNeal, 2004; Levin, Petros, & Petrellsa, 1982).

Obesity and consumption of unhealthy food among children has raised concern among pediatricians. Christakis (2006) reported that in 1997 food manufacturers spent $7 billion in advertising processed and packaged foods, where more than 90% of these advertisements which are shown in between children programs, are focused on high-sugar cereals and candy bars, salty canned foods, fast food or other junk food. In result, there has been a 54% increased in obesity among children between 6 to 11 years old, and a 98% increase in extreme obesity over a year period (Klesges et al., 2001). The increment in obesity is reported due to increases in the consumption of foods commonly advertised on television, where each hour increase in television viewing was associated with an additional 167 kcal/s (Wiecha, Peterson, Ludwig, Kim, Sobol, & Gortmaker, 2006), and less exercise (Klesges et al., 2001). This is supported by a study by Vandewater, Shim, & Caplovitz (2004), where it is reported that children who use a lot of media have a lower activity level, which results on lower metabolic rates during television viewing compared to resting periods among normal weight children (Klesges et al., 1993)? This is probably because during television viewing, there will be less physical activities, which could extend for several hours.

Another concern on the effects of advertising on young children is the influence of advertisement towards their behavior. Many consider children to be more vulnerable than adults to the impact of images on television (Huston, Zillman, & Bryant, 1994; Larson, 2003), as they are lack of cognitive skills to protect themselves against advertising messages (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003). Young children generally think that television advertising is informative, truthful and entertaining (Chan & McNeal, 2004), and they are usually influenced by the advertisement as soon as they begin watching the television (Levin et al., 1982). Buijzen & Valkenburg (2003) reported that advertising could enhance materialism, parent-child conflict and unhappiness. As most advertisement ideology focuses on the notion that possessions are important and those desirable qualities, such as beauty, success and happiness can be obtained only by material possessions (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003; Pollay, 1986; Wulfemeyer & Muller, 1992), materialism was found to establish among children in early and middle childhood, as well as adolescents from families who do not discuss on consumption matters.   Children tend to beg and crave for what they saw in the advertisement, which could either lead to parents being a genie granting their wishes, or in the other hand- a conflict. According to a study by Stoneman & Brody (1981), children who had seen the candy and toy commercials tend to ask for the advertised products twice as often than those who had not been exposed, and these children have made approximately 50% more purchase requests than children who had not seen the commercial (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2003).

  In a study by Greer, et al. (1982), it is found that children who saw high salience commercials were more aggressive after viewing than those who saw low salience commercials, which results in weaker tendency for imaginative play. They further explained that increased aggression following exposure to television characterized by high action, high pace, and high levels of visual change supports the hypotheses that such features lead to generalized arousal which in turn increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in a situation where there are cues for that kinds of behavior (Greer et al., 1982).

3. Importance of media literacy

The definition of media literacy has been defined in many studies, but it all focuses on 'the ability to *access*, *understand* and *create* communications in a variety of contexts (Ofcom, 2004). In other words, it is the ability to read and understand the visual, aural and digital messages and having the skills to understand and interact with the media analytically, critically and knowledgably (Burton, 2005).   With the emergent of various television programs and the issues that are being raised by researchers on young viewers, media literacy is thus, an important aspect that everyone need to learn, as the language of the media is as complex and interesting as our verbal and written language and therefore, it is important for us to be articulate in it (Burton, 2005).

In reality, many researches would argue that children today are more media literate than the children of previous generations, and indeed significantly more media literate than their own parents (Ofcom, 2004).   However, to what extend can a child be acknowledged as media literate? Can a 4 year old child be seen as media literate when he knows how to turn on the television and browse the channels himself? Although he probably knows how to get *access* to the channels or programs that he wants, being media literate is also depends on his ability to perceive and understand the information on the television. However, it is reported that young children cannot discriminate between real and imagination (AAP, 2001) and they do not have the ability to regulate their desire and behavior to what they see on television.

The use of television among young children has raised many issues, as discussed above which has put great concern to parents, professionals and researchers. Looking back at the content of television programming that we could access from cables and satellite, the amount of advertisement, violence, and other unhealthy behavior and scenes are being broadcasted for the viewing of the audience. Regardless of the issues raised above, whether TV is harmful or not, depends on several factors; what is being watched, who is watching, with whom, while doing what and for how long (Sparrow, 2007). Hence, it is then the role of parents particularly (as television are watched most at home), to teach their young children about media literacy. This is because, when children are thought to be media literate, they could become a more savvy TV viewer, who are able to distinguish reliable information from manipulation (Sparrow, 2007) and thus gradually reducing the problems addressed above.

Sparrow (2007) has suggested several ways on how parents could teach their young children to be media literate. Despite setting limits, reducing and carefully choosing channels for young children and school age children viewing, it is suggested that parents discussed with their young children about what is right and what is wrong, especially on aggressive behaviors. This is because when adults express disapproval of on-screen behavior, raise questions about the realism of televised information, and encourage children to discuss I, they teach children to evaluate television content rather than accept it uncritically (Berks, 1994). Besides, when parents engaged children with moral reasoning, they tend to engage children in social problem solving and prosocial acts, such as helping, sharing and defending victims of injustice (Berks, 1994).   More over, as young children are easily influenced by television commercials that are targeted to them, Sparrow (2007) suggested that parents watch the television commercials together with their children and create a discussion about the program being watched. It is important for parents to encourage their young children to wonder

about advertisements, the advertiser's motives, and the effects of consuming the advertised products, so that they understand the real meaning of advertisement, as well as preparing them to be a better consumer.

4. Conclusion

The use of television among young children as well as school age children has been critically discussed by many previous and recent researches. This is because there are more negative outcomes that can be seen among these children due to excessive amount of television viewing and also with the broad range of content being broadcasted, which include violent, sexual, alcohol and so forth. Thus, it is now important for parents to make sure that their children are media literate so that they could later be a better consumer, being prosocial, and develop other positive development. However, as young children today are the people of tomorrow, it is important for them to be media literate once they are exposed to the television, as it would be easier for parents to develop their children with positive behavior and attitude at a younger age.

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Practice and Cognition to Strengthen College Students' Moral Education

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Abstract

College students' ideological morality always is the hotspot concerned by various circles of the society, and to strengthen and improve the ideological and moral education in colleges, continually enhance the pertinence and actual effect of the moral education, help college students to dissolve their worldly confusion in moral culture, further enhance their moral level and make them become eligible socialism successors with cultures and morality, needs mutual endeavors from society, colleges, families and students themselves.

Keywords: College students, Moral education

1. Actuality of modern college students' total morality

Every one has his moral base line and the influence of the external moral environment on the individual morality can not be ignored, but individual moral deviation will not influence the enhancement and construction of the whole moral level. College students are excellent young students though various knowledge selection and moral evaluations, and most of them have accepted good family education and school education, and they have basic moral quality. With the increase of their ages and the enhancement of their scientific and cultural level, their cognition ability and self-morality to the society have been strengthened, and strong responsible consciousness and talent consciousness continually encourage them to study the professional knowledge hard and try to perfect their own personalities. The special human environment of the college provides conditions for college students' healthy growth, and the education concept imparting knowledge and educating people and the teachers' morality continually enhancing build the barriers to resist bad moral influences for college students, and add their strengths to continually enhance their morality. The practices of the moral education in recent years indicate that modern college students are anxious for knowledge, want to become useful persons, and would like to contribute their intelligences for the nation and society. They have courtesy and honesty, and they observe disciplines and obey laws, and they are rich in love and aggressiveness, and their whole morality is good, and the moral level is high. Of course, we can not deny some individuals' moral deviation and demoralization, and these anomic individuals have produced destructive influences to the moral education. To fully cognize the existence of these problems and try to explore corresponding solutions can further enhance and improve the moral education works for colleges, and to only aggrandize these influences or deny the existing results of the moral education can only produce negative effect to the future moral education.

2. Rational analysis of college students' moral deviations

In modern college students' growth process, they will encounter many confusions and challenges, and the behavior deviation even the out-of-control induced by the moral confusion is most concerned and worried by the public. The relative reasons should be found from college students themselves and their exterior environment. The modern college students are in the transition period of the society, and in this period, the whole core value view of the society has certain uncertainty, and some moral rules which have been accepted by most people for a long time are broken, but new moral rules have not been confirmed completely. In this social environment, the moral confusions existing in teachers and students are inevitable. The formation of human value concept and moral quality is realized by two kinds of mechanism including social modeling and individual learning, and their development status always depend on the degree that their vital interests are realized. At present, most colleges emphasize students' moral education, and have done large numerous of effective works, but because of the influences and limitations from subjective cognition, work methods and various objective conditions, the effect is not entirely satisfactory. Many problems such as psychology, learning, employment and poor student surrounding college students have not been completely solved, and individual students lack in sufficient cognitions to the moral education and loosen their self moral requirements because of their inertia mentality, which induces the fuzzy cognition to the moral selection diversification and moral value judgment, and differences occur between the moral cognition and moral behavior, and knowledge, feeling, will and behaviors can not effectively unified, and the double standards about the moral requirement and moral evaluation are produced, i.e. the moral confusion requiring others in the mainstream and requiring him in the popular. There are many factors to produce the moral confusion, and the existence of the moral confusion is adverse to students' growth, which makes students lack in self-examination and self-control, and will finally induce the moral deviation. Though some students don't admit that they have moral confusion, and won't accept moral education and self-morality culture, but it is not obviously enough to depend on a little simple moral base to reply continually developing moral requirements.

3. Resolving college students' doubts in the moral education

The formation of college students' morality must transverse a long-term complex process, and it needs helping college students to eliminate moral confusion from all directions and layers. The whole society should exactly grasp students' individual characters, fully exert education functions of society, college and family, try to mobilize college students' enthusiasm of self-improvement, really implement the moral education into various aspects in the education and teaching, and help them to go out from the shadow of the moral confusion.

Firstly, the social moral environment is very important for the college students' moral formation, and good moral environment is the base for college students to become useful persons. Student enrollments always will return to the society, and they need to know the society, and hope the society will give them good moral supports, and want to use their own good moral quality to influence the society. However, their moral ideals are often broken by the astringent reality, and many bad social memories often make them loss their direction and their rough experiences to apply for a job also make them to suspect their own values. To dissolve the moral confusion from the society, two aspects including the social environment and college students should be considered. On the one hand, the social practice of college student moral education should be strengthened, and the colleges should further enhance college students' social cognition ability and moral evaluation ability, and combine traditional moral education with the moral innovational education, and unify individual moral ideal with social moral requirements, lead students to actively perform self-education and self-improvement, and correctly face the existence of moral confusion, and scientifically analyze the reasons of moral confusion, and actively dissolve various moral conflicts in the social development. On the other hand, the social moral environment should be further optimized, the influences of bad mood in the society on college students should be eliminated, and the scientific morality evaluation system should be established. College students are in the middle phase of youth growth, and they have deficient moral cognition ability and lack in deserved education, which will make them get into the moral confusion. They also pay more attention to the moral requirements and moral evaluations from the society, and the public always thought college students are outstanding persons of the time and require higher standards for them. Individual moral deviation will be regarded as the drop of the whole quality, which is not scientific obviously. The society should exactly evaluate the moral actuality of college students, objectively treat the moral deviations, and really embody the responsibility consciousness and function of the society for the college students' moral education, which is the key to enhance college students' moral level and the important approach to help them go out from the moral confusion.

Secondly, the school education is the key stage for the growth of college students, and the base point to realize their moral ideals. When the so-called "worldly ideal", college entrance examination, is realized, many college students will loss their targets and drives, and they also suspect their own self-orientation in the social reality with increasingly drastic competition. The colorful world has made them be stranded, and whether they pursue ideals or common customs facing truth and money also make them have heavy suspicion. The occurrences of college students' life confusion or conflict mentality are not occasional, and the reasons exist in not only students but college education. The essential of moral confusion is the suspicion of ideal and faith and the loss of life value, which is presented not only by the weakness of the ideal and faith education in colleges, but by students' demands for the life value education. To dissolve college students' growth confusion radically, the moral education actuality must be reflected. First, the relativism of moral education weakens the contents of moral education, and the impartation of practical knowledge replaces the edification of moral personality and weakens the influences of moral education. Second, the political liability of moral education deviates from the essential of moral education, and the political education replaces the moral education and influences the effect of moral education. Third, old education method breaches students' growth rule and the forming rule of moral quality, and students loss learning interests and generate the inertia of self-improvement. Fourth, the lagged moral education management system makes moral educators dissolve in common public and get away from the responsibility of moral education, and students lose examples and direction. To try to eliminate various disadvantages of moral education is the premise and base to develop the moral education, and to continually explore scientific education method is the important measure to enhance the moral level. The moral education needs good environment, teachers with good quality and scientific education method. To establish and perfect the guarantee system of moral education, further strengthen all teachers' moral consciousness, make moral education near actuality and life go into the classroom and students are very important to comprehensively enhance the whole education and teaching level for colleges.

Thirdly, the family education is the base to form college students' morality, and the important part of the moral education. College students' basic morality comes from family, but a few moral confusion also come form family, and the civilized family education is the activator of college students' healthy growth, and the conflicts in family will easily produce moral confusion. It is very important to fully utilize the influence of family education and actively exert parents' function in moral education for enhancing the pertinence and actual effect of college moral education. First, the special identity of parents decide their unique position in moral education, and in some aspects, they more understand students than teachers, and know the sticking point of the conflict, and more easily find out the breakthrough point to solve problems. For example, for the idea confusion and moral confusion induced by family accident and poverty, parents have more confidences to solve these problems. Second, the family's affection enhances the appetence of

education. Parents and family depend on each other and trust each other, and they can achieve consensus more easily. Third, college students' gratitude consciousness strengthens the persuasion and centripetal force of education. College students are the hope of the family, and their growth can not leave the care and help from colleges and society, and parents' painstaking efforts and sweats, and they want to become useful persons to redound upon colleges and society, and they would like to use excellent achievements and good moral quality to redound upon their parents. Fourth, parents' model function is always the complex that college students can get rid of. Every one's moral cultivation can not leave parents' education and cultivation, and good family education is the base of college students' growth, and excellent parents are the models for them to learn. The family education is the important part of the education, and it is the essential requirements of carrying out educating people by all society, from all directions and in all processes to fully exert the assistant function of family education in college students' moral education. However, college students' moral education is always obligatory responsibility of college, and to emphasize the function of family education and parents' educational obligation can not draw a forced analogy, but concretely analyze concrete problems. At the same time, the negative effect possibly produced by family education should be clearly realized, and good family education has active meaning for college students' growth, and parents' bad moral influence is the forcing house to produce moral confusion.

Fourthly, to strengthen self-improvement is the key to enhance the moral level. The moral self-improvement means college students' self-education and self-construction of morality according to social requirements, and it is the key to enhance the moral level and realize moral ideal for college students. The education without self-education is unsuccessful education, and in the same way, the morality construction without self-improvement can not achieve the intention of education. The moral education can exert its deserved function only when students' interior drive of self-improvement is inspired. Traditional moral education mode ignores students' subject status, breaches the rules of moral cultivation, lose good education opportunity, and influence students' healthy growth because it over emphasizes educators' leading function, which should be highly concerned by educators. The process of self-education and self-improvement is a complex process, and not all people pay more attention to self-education, and not all college students can actively strengthen their morality improvement. Educators' responsibility is to lead college students to actively participate in various moral education activities through their educational influences, and continually enhance the enthusiasm and consciousness of morality improvement. There are many methods to improve students' moral cultivation same as wrong regions, and it is the key of enhancing educational effect to continually enhance the scientific character and reduce the blindness of the education method. In practice, the society should emphasize not only the drive function of educational encouragement, but also the affection function of personality power, and the society should not only pay attention to the supervision function of morality evaluation, but fully exert the active meaning of self-control. The college should organically combine classroom education with social moral practices, actively develop moral evaluations through usual moral practices, instruct college students' self-moral consideration, continually enhance the responsible consciousness of self-improvement, and further strengthen the consciousness of becoming useful persons. The time that college students accept college education is limited, and the time of self-education and self-improvement is long. To fully exert the subject function of moral education has deep influences for college students' healthy growth and lifelong education.

4. Conclusions

College students are the future of the nation and the hope of the nationality, and they are the new force to realize the project of the socialist modernized construction. The moral education and the moral construction are the key to improve students' growth, and they are the important part in the quality education, the essential requirement to construct the harmonious society, and the hope project to ensure worthy successors to construct the socialist cause. The growth of college students is flexuous and the formation of the morality is complex, so the whole society should fully mobilize various powers from society, family and college to participate in the moral education, try to enhance college students' enthusiasm about self-improvement, and really take college students' basic moral education, moral accomplishment education and moral enhancement education as one integrated system to develop, and it is the duty-bound responsibility to cultivate socialist eligible successor with cultures and morality for the whole society. The social development varies from minute to minute, and the moral education still shoulders heavy responsibilities.

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Antecedents of Psychological Empowerment in the Malaysian Private Higher Education Institutions

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Abstract

Psychological empowerment comprising four cognitive dimensions i.e. meaning, competence, autonomy and impact in the context of private higher education institutions is being validated. Five factors considered as antecedents i.e. access to information, resources, organizational support and opportunity to learn and develop, and trust were studied. This study examined on a sample of 312 lecturers from 25 private higher education institutions in three states (Penang, Kedah and Kelantan) in Malaysia. Survey data was analyzed using correlation and regression analyses to assess the relationship among the factors as well as the contribution of each factor to psychological empowerment. The study verifies that psychological empowerment comprised four dimensions as suggested by Spreitzer (1992). The results indicated that all antecedents under study have significant relationship with psychological empowerment at .01 significance level. It has also been found that access to opportunity to learn and develop and access to resources are significant predictors of psychological empowerment. It is recommended that management of higher education institutions use these findings to improve the level of psychological empowerment of lecturers.

Keywords: Antecedent, Academia, Private Higher Education, Malaysia

1. Introduction

In 1991, the Malaysian government unveiled its Vision 2020, the year by which Malaysia would achieve the status of an industrialized and developed country in terms of its economy, national unity, social cohesion, social justice, political stability, system of government, quality of life, social and spiritual values, national pride and confidence. Under Vision 2020, the liberalization of education policies has caused democratization, privatization and decentralization of Malaysian education system. The development and changes in education make the educational administration and management could not be effectively done at central level. Decentralization also could overcome bureaucracy and enable decisions and actions, especially those that are not related to policy making, carried out at the lower level (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Pendidikan, 1995). Decentralization is difficult to be implemented because the nation's education system is still centralized (Marzita, 2005).

The decentralization of education management system is to promote institution-based management and empowerment of teachers (Lee, 1999). Implementing empowerment, either in education or other institutions, requires certain prerequisites or antecedents to empowerment. For example, work environment that provide access to information, organizational support, resources and opportunity to learn and develop are empowering and enhance employees' power to accomplish work within an organization (Kanter, 1977; 1983). Trust is also a critical condition before management could empower their employees (Mishra & Spreitzer, 1994).

The practices of empowerment had actually being implemented long ago at all levels in the Malaysian Ministry of Education (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Pendidikan, 1995). The department of Educational Planning and Research has proposed a few aspects that ought to be empowered i.e. managing teaching time, controlling the class, communication and developing relationship with the students according to ways that are considered best and suitable with the curriculum used, students' ability and the environment. An empowered teacher has significant authority in the

strategy selection process and implementation methods of education policies (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Pendidikan, 1995). Empowerment is defined by the Ministry of Education as 'a professional practice of the educational administration and management'. These empowerment practices include those related to the smooth and efficient implementation of education policy; teachers' and teaching autonomy; and the sharing of power by the leader of the institution with its subordinates (Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Pendidikan, 1995).

The concept of empowerment carries different meanings in different contexts (Zimmerman, 1990). Hence, to study the concept of empowerment at the workplace, Spreitzer (1995a) used the intrapersonal concept specifically for workplace as described by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). This psychological perspective of empowerment focuses on the perception of employee on empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995b, 1997; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). The level of psychological empowerment experienced could be influenced by geographical location and organizational environment and work (Spreitzer, 1995b). Therefore, the psychological empowerment experienced by lecturers depends on the lecturers' perception of empowerment in their institutions.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined psychological empowerment as the process of enhancing the feeling of self-efficacy among the members of an organization through the identification of condition that caused powerlessness and also through the reduction of the powerlessness state. The state of powerlessness can be reduced by giving efficacy information through formal and informal technique of organizational practices (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). The psychological approach to empowerment focused on the intrinsic motivation and not on the managerial practices that are used to increase the level of power owned by the employees (Dee *et. al*., 2003).

Psychological empowerment comprises four different cognitive dimensions: meaning, competence, autonomy and impact (Spreitzer, 1995b; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). These dimensions reflect the individual orientation towards his task role (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and are the basic core for psychological empowerment in the workplace (Houghton & Yoho, 2005). Low rating in any dimension will lower overall empowerment. Therefore, higher ratings in all dimensions are needed to ensure a high level of empowerment (Lee & Koh, 2001). According to Brancato (2006), a worker should understand the dimensions of psychological empowerment and the strategies related to this concept. The administration should examine each dimension and be ready to take actions necessary to increase the level of employee agreement towards the dimensions and increase the level of psychological empowerment experienced by employee (Hancer & George, 2003). Therefore, the objective of this study is to identify the validity and reliability of the four dimensions of psychological empowerment based on 1992's Spreitzer's theory. This study also examines the relationship between antecedents and psychological empowerment as well as the effect of antecedents on psychological empowerment.

2. Method and materials

2.1 Sampling design

This cross sectional study utilizing ex-post facto research methodology and correlational in nature is carried out in 25 higher education institutions in three states in Malaysia, i.e. Penang, Kedah and Kelantan. The sample comprised 312 lecturers. The researcher used multi-stage sampling method to select the states, the institutions and respondents. Random sampling method was used to select the institutions from the list provided by the Department of Higher Education Institution (Private) Administration while convenience sampling was used to select the respondents as the researcher did not have any influence in the selection process. Cochran's (1977) sample size formula and finite population adjustment (Lohr, 1999) was used to determine the sample size. A total of 430 questionnaires were distributed to achieve the 312 completely filled questionnaires, hence, the response rate was 73%.

2.2 Measured variables

Psychological empowerment was measured using 12 items from Spreitzer (1992, 1995b) based on four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, autonomy and impact. The scores from these dimensions are averaged to form an overall score for psychological empowerment for each respondent. To measure trust, the subscale of trust to principal from the Omnibus T-Scale (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003) was used. Four items from the instrument used by Spreitzer (1996) was modified to measure access to information. Five items were modified from the short form of Perceived Organizational Support Scale developed by Eisenberger *et. al*. (1986) to measure access to organizational support. Three items from Spreitzer (1996) to measure access to resources was modified and two new items were added to include access to teaching materials, equipments, funds, work space and time as resources. Four items from Short and Rinehart (1992) were modified to measure access to opportunity to learn and develop.

The data collected was analyzed using correlation to find out the relationship between variables under study. Regression analysis was also conducted to identify the contribution of each antecedent to psychological empowerment.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Verification of psychological empowerment dimensions

The study verifies that psychological empowerment comprises four dimensions as suggested by Spreitzer (1992). Although the exploratory factor analysis using principal component extraction and varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization proves that psychological empowerment consists of only three dimensions, the scree test and confirmatory factor analysis shows that it consists of four dimensions with factor loading between .76 and .92. This finding is consistent with those empirical studies of Thomas & Tymon (1993), Gomez & Rosen (1994), Sparrowe (1994), Spreitzer (1995b, 1996), Kirkman & Rosen (1996), and Carless (2004). Therefore, this finding verifies that the scale developed by Spreitzer (1992) can be used in the context of private higher education institution in Malaysia.

To test the internal consistency of each factor or dimension, reliability coefficient of Cronbach Alpha is determined using SPSS software version 15.0. Each factor was found to have sufficient internal consistency with alpha values ranging from .84 to .90. The value of alpha for meaning, competence, autonomy and impact is .85, .87, .84 and .90 accordingly. The alpha value for the overall psychological empowerment is .86. The alpha values for antecedents range from .82 to .92. Table 1 below shows the mean and standard deviation for each variable in this study.

3.2 Relationship of antecedents to psychological empowerment

Analysis of correlation finds that all antecedents under study have significant relationship with psychological empowerment at .01 significance level. Based on the correlation values, trust, access to information and access to organizational support has a low positive relationship (r = .20, .24 and .26 accordingly) with psychological empowerment while access to resources and opportunity to learn and develop has a moderate positive relationship (r = .34 and .35 accordingly) with psychological empowerment.

In terms of its dimension, trust does not have any significant relationship with meaning and competence, but has low positive relationship with autonomy (r = 24) and impact (r = .198). Access to organizational support also does not have any significant relationship with meaning and competence but has low positive relationship with autonomy (r = .21) and impact (r = .29). Access to information has low positive relationship with meaning, autonomy and impact (r = .19, .19 and .23 accordingly) but does not have any significant relationship with competence. Access to resources has moderate positive relationship with autonomy (r = .34) but low positive relationship with meaning (r = .23), competence (r = .19) and impact (r = .22). Access to opportunity to learn and develop has moderate positive relationship with impact (r = .30) but has low positive relationship with meaning (r = .21), competence (r = .18) and autonomy (r = .29). All five antecedents under study has significant relationship with the dimensions of autonomy and impact. Table 2 below illustrates the Pearson Correlation Coefficient of the antecedents in relation to the dimensions of psychological empowerment and overall psychological empowerment.

Regression analysis shows that access to opportunity to learn and develop (t_{311} = 3.28, p < .01) and access to resources (t_{311} = 2.55, p < .05) is significant predictor of psychological empowerment. Access to opportunity to learn and develop is the most important predictor of psychological empowerment (β = .25). Therefore, it can be concluded that psychological empowerment is a function of access to opportunity to learn and develop and also access to resources. Trust, access to information and access to organizational support are not significant predictors to lecturers' psychological empowerment. The β values (- .14, .10 and .01) and t values (-1.39, 1.18 and .07) show that these factors are not significant at .05 significance level.

This study has proven the validity and reliability of the psychological empowerment scale (Spreitzer, 1992) in the work context of private higher education institutions. This scale defined psychological empowerment as a motivational construct manifested through four cognitive dimensions, i.e. meaning, competence, autonomy and impact (Spreitzer, 1992; 1995a; 1995b). Therefore, high rating in all dimensions is needed to ensure high level of overall psychological empowerment (Lee & Koh, 2001). First, management ought to evaluate the level of psychological empowerment at their institution to get information on the lecturers' perception about the structure of psychological empowerment. The management should examine each dimension of psychological empowerment and play active role to increase psychological empowerment by focusing on dimensions that are poorly evaluated by lecturers.

The management also should encourage lecturers to work collaboratively to overcome problems or to carry out certain tasks or project to ensure the achievement of the institution's goal and vision. The management can also increase the feeling of autonomy among lecturers by giving them chances to determine their own work schedule at the time of time table preparation. Lecturers should be given freedom to a certain tolerable level to decide the subject or field for them to teach. The implementation of flexible time table could also give lecturers opportunity to determine their working time according to their preferences.

4. Conclusion

This study proves the validity and reliability of the psychological empowerment scale developed by Spreitzer (1992) in the work context of private higher education institutions. The result of regression analysis shows that the most

important predictor for psychological empowerment is access to opportunity to learn and develop ($\beta = .25$, $t_{311} = 3.28$, $p < .01$), followed by access to resources ($\beta = .20$, $t_{311} = 2.55$, $p < .05$). This study also finds that lecturers are more likely to create new ideas, initiate support and seek endorsement for new ideas, apply and evaluate the use of innovative ideas if they have access to needed strategic information. Therefore, management should create the work environment that is empowering to lecturers by giving lecturers access to opportunity to learn and develop and access to resources.

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Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Variable

Variable	$\overline{x}$	SD
1. Trust	4.49	1.18
2. Access to information	4.90	1.17
3. Access to organizational support	4.35	1.13
4. Access to resources	4.68	1.13
Access to opportunity to learn and develop	5.08	1.04
6. Meaning	6.34	0.79
7. Competence	6.15	0.73
8. Autonomy	5.59	0.97
9. Impact	4.57	1.27
10. Psychological empowerment	5.66	0.68
11. Innovative behavior	4.70	1.16

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient of Antecedents to Psychological Empowerment

Dimension	Psychological Empowerment				
	Overall	Meaning	Competence	Autonomy	Impact
Trust	.20(**)	.08	- .01	.24(**)	.20(**)
Access to information	.24(**)	.19(**)	.07	.19(**)	.23(**)
Access to organizational support	.26(**)	.10	.07	.21(**)	.29(**)
Access to resources	.34(**)	.23(**)	.19(**)	.34(**)	.22(**)
Access to opportunity to learn and develop	.35(**)	.21(**)	.19(**)	.29(**)	.30(**)

** Correlation is significant at .01 levels (2-tails).

Internationalization of Higher Education in China: Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools and the Introduction of High-Quality Foreign Educational Resources

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Abstract

With the acceleration of the internationalization process of higher education in China, the Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools (CFCRS) has been developing at an expeditious pace nowadays. It positively enhances the internationalization process of Chinese higher education and greatly contributes to providing the society with talents. However, the existence of lacking real practical experience in CFCRS greatly undermines introducing high-quality foreign educational resources and personnel; and this does not comply with the idea of CFCRS, which is introducing high-quality foreign educational resources and personnel. This paper deals with the research of CFCRS firstly, followed by the definition and concepts of CFCRS and educational resources. The motive of introducing high-quality foreign educational resources and personnel is annalyzed and the quality of the introduced foreign educational resources and personnel is evaluated, which will assist the improvements and benefit the internationalization of Chinese higher education.

Keywords: Internationalization of higher education, Chinese-foreign cooperation in running schools, High-quality educational resources, China

1. Introduction

Scott (Scott, 1998) pointed out, "investment in [higher education] can be translated into comparative economic advantage, a belief encouraged by theories of post-industrial society, which suggest that 'knowledge' has become the primary resource in advance economies". Since China's reform and opening-up, especially in the 21st century, partnerships between Chinese and international educational bodies have been gradually increased and extended.

International cooperation in higher education is not a totally new phenomenon. Knight and de Wit (Knight & de Wit, 1995) pointed out that there were arguments for 'the use of a common language, and of a uniform program of study and system of examination' to facilitate mobility of students and scholars and exchange of ideas in the Middle Ages and up to the end of the 17th century. From that time, universities cooperated across national borders for the reasons of economy, politics, as well as intellect.

According to the statistics, as of 2005 there are some more than 1,000 Chinese-foreign CFCRSs and projects distributing across China's 28 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities (Jiang, 2006). Undoubtedly, CFCRS is for introducing high-quality educational resources to promote China's educational development. Article 3 Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (RCoCFCRS), which started taking effect on September 1st, 2003, clearly stated that the State encourages CFCRS to form partnership with high-quality foreign educational bodies to provide high-quality education (SCPRC, 2003). The idea was then again emphasized in the Opinion on Some Issues Concerning Chinese-Foreign Co-operation in Running Schools at Present (OSICCFCRSP, 2006). It is not only the fundamental principles of parties to carry out CFCRS projects but also a requisition.

However, CFCRS is still lack of real high-quality foreign educational resources.This limits the promotion of China's education development (Wen, 2005). Therefore, a study on how to ensure the intake of real high-quality educational resources becomes essential to the future of CFCRS. This paper will discuss the following questions:What is high-quality foreign educational resources? What is the reasons for introducing high-quality foreign educational resources? How to evaluate high-quality educational resources?

2. CFCRS and High-quality Educational Resources

Defining the main subject is a basic task of any academic study; it creates preconditions and premises for further studies. So defining CFCRS comes as the first task of all.

What is CRCRS? Article 2 RCoCFCRS describes it as: the activities of foreign and Chinese educational organizations form partnership with the interest of recruiting Chinese domestic students(SCPRC, 2003). This concept includes the ideas that both foreign educational organisations and Chinese educational organisations are the main bodies of CRCRS, the facilities must be located within the territory of China, recruitment must be mainly Chinese national oriented, etc.

CRCRS is a new thing after China's Reform and Opening-up, and it has undergone three stages of development. (Huang & Wang, 2006)

The first stage: from the beginning of the Reform and Opening-up, i. e. 1978, to 1995, before the Provisional Regulations on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (PRCFCR) was enacted.

Since 1987, a lot of top Chinese universities actively conduct various forms of cooperation and exchange programs with oversea institutions from US, Japan, Germany, France, UK and Canada. Remin University of China, Fudan University have successfully held Sino-US Economy workshop and Sino-US Law workshop. Beijing Foreign Studies University and Japan Foundation collaboratively found the Beijing Japanese Studies Centre.

The second stage: from 1995 to 2003 when RCoCFCRS was enacted.

From the beginning of 1990s, as China's "Reform and Opening-up" has further progresses, Chinese higher education has speed up its internationalization process. A few domestic universities started to form partnerships with foreign educational institutions. As a result, the National Education Committee (now the Ministry of Education) enacted PRCFCR on January 6, 1995. CRCRS has been developing fast since then. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education, by the end of 2002, there were 712 Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools and projects altogether in China, mostly found in East Coast area. That figure was ten times more than that of 1995(MEPRC website, 2003).

The third stage: after PCoCFCRS enacts in 2003.

According to PCoCFCRS, CRCRS should be developed according to the following criteria: to gradually enlarge the scale of CRCRS, to gradually improve quality, to increase the diversity of CRCRS modes. All these criteria serve for the purpose of introducing high-quality foreign educational resources.

What are high-quality resources? The definition of high-quality resources should be based on the understandings of the concepts of resources and educational resources.

Originated from economics, "resources" has been widely used in other fields. With the meaning of the basic condition for people to conduct an activity, it not only includes labor, physical and financial resources, but also includes time, place, and information, as well as referring to the related policies, culture, and conception. In addition, related crucial experience, model and research method are as well important "resources". Above all, any element that functions as the basic condition for an activity is called resources.

So, what are educational resources? Some scholars suggest, "the constitution of educational resources can be divided into principal elements and correlating elements. The educators, students, courses, and facilities are principal elements, while the brands, funds, markets, and management are correlating elements." According to the definition in the Grand Education Dictionary, educational resources are also described as "educational economic conditions", which mainly include two aspects: one refers to the laboring, physical and financial sources consumed in the process of education; the second aspect is referred as the education history and experience as well as related educational information (Gu, 1999). Whereas, according to the basic definition of "resources", the educational resources are referred to all the basic conditions needed to conduct educational activities.

Educational resources are complex collections of resources, and can be defined and analyzed from different viewpoints. In terms of the form, educational resources can be divided into tangible and intangible educational resources. In terms of the content, educational resources can be defined as educational human resources, educational material resources, educational finance resources, educational authority resources, educational space resources, educational system resources, educational academy resources, and educational reputation resources; in terms of quality educational resources can be regarded as high-quality educational resources, average educational resources, and low-quality educational resources; in terms of the application of educational resources, they are divided into valid educational resources and invalid educational resources.

What are high-quality educational resources? According to the above definitions of resources and educational resources, high-quality educational resources can be defined as followings: high-quality educational resources are the educational resources that promote education development. It is of course just a general definition and does not specify exact extent to high quality, as the quality extent conceived as high-quality varies along with different projects. As to CFCRS, not all foreign educational resources are high-quality and worthwhile being introduced. Therefore, in the practice of CFCRS, the key to success is the selection of proper cooperative subjects and the introduction of related educational resources. At the same time, the overall academic levels of the resources-exporting party, the selected subject, and related educational resources exporting policy should be taken into account. The most important is that the introduced educational resources

should have positive effect on the enlargement of school scale, optimization of discipline structure, improvement of education quality, and effectiveness of school running. As to the evaluation of resources quality, there are three major criteria for the exporting and introducing parties of the resources: teachers' quality, teaching quality, and students' quality. There will be no good teaching effect or high-quality students without high-quality teachers. There are three criteria in evaluating the benefits of CFCRS: the benefit scale, the economic benefit, and the social benefit. The benefit scale can be measured in terms of the total number of involved teachers and students at the school; while the economic benefit can be measured in terms of the ratio of the quality, quantity of graduates and the cost of the education; the social benefit refers to the contribution and effect of CFCRS on the society, including the effects on the economic development, and the contribution to the moral and cultural constructions of the society, which reflects the real value of CFCRS as well as the purpose of introducing high-quality foreign educational resources. Hereby, the high-quality foreign educational resources in present study refer to the concepts, systems and policies, managements, courses, teaching materials, teachers, education features and styles, and other education materials, which have reached world leading level or have special feature in running schools.

3. Motivation of Introducing High-Quality Foreign Educational Resources

The motives for a collaborative relationship, however, are numerous.

The importance of inter-university cooperation lies not just in the free movement of staff and students, but in the creation and development of a wide range of strategic alliances that, amongst other options, facilitate the exploitation of scarce capital resources amongst partner institutions; . . . provide essential ways of introducing new voices into the thinking of the university, of initiating new conversations that cross the traditional faculty or administrative boundaries, of bringing new perspectives to bear . . . and confer competitive advantage on the partners (Layton , 1997).

The basic goal of CFCRS is to promote China's education development by introducing high-quality foreign educational resources. The motivation of CFCRS can be analyzed from macro, average, and micro-aspects, in which it comes from aspects of the government, educational institutions, and education consumers.

3.1 The Macro-motivation of CFCRS

First of all, the rise of economy, information, and market globalizations is the direct motivation of CFCRS to introduce high-quality foreign educational resources at the end of 20th century. Surely the globalizations of economy, information, and market have increased the international competition of comprehensive national power. Actually, it is the competition of science, technology and national quality, and the most important one is the competition of education. Presently, education development is regarded as the basic national policy in many countries of the world, and the reform and development of education have been greatly accelerated. Facing the challenging situation, Chinese government realizes that the only way to rapidly improve the national education level is to increase the national education opening up, is to introduce advanced education concepts, excellent education talents, curriculum resources, and management experience. Therefore, China can change from an education importing country into an education exporting country, and finally its international competitiveness would be significantly enhanced.

Secondly, CFCRS can increase the diversity and choice scope of education to meet people's growing education demand and release the conflict between the demand and supply of education (Yuan, 2006). There is no doubt that there are still big gaps of education quantity and quality between China and those internationalized countries in top level. The contradictions of education supply and demand are mainly reflected in three aspects (Fan, 1999): firstly, in terms of quantity, the present national education supply is far from meeting the vast education demand in China, as the national education demand is growing rapidly. Whereas, the education supply increases in a much lower speed. The pressure of education demand is resulted from the growing population, individual's scope widening and level of increasing education demand. In the market economy environment, the competition of employment has become fiercer, and the education background has been taken as the key condition for employers to evaluate and select candidates. Therefore, candidate will need to have high education training to seek ideal job with good payment, which is mainly determined by education background. Secondly, in terms of education quality, the present education can not meet people's demand of high-quality education. In the current education market, high-quality education, elite education, and distinctive education are rather rare, however, people's demand for high-quality education is increasing vastly. Furthermore, the pressure of employment, the high payment temptation, and people's self-achievement urge are all in need of an increasing education supply. Thirdly, in terms of education structure, the conflict between the national education supply and demand has been reflected in a lack of high level, high-tech education, and the shortness in meeting people's increasing variety of needs.

3.2 The Average Motivation of CFCRS

Universities now reach out to the international community not only for academic reasons but also to enhance their influence, visibility, and/or market share (Denman, 2000).

There are three major motivations for Chinese education organizations to run Chinese-foreign cooperative schools. First of all, it is to promote the construction of their teaching and management groups, and also to promote and optimize their

education reform by introducing high-quality foreign educational resource, learning advanced school-running and management experiences, the advanced education concepts, teaching mode, teaching content and methods, and sharing qualified teachers, etc. Secondly, it is to improve their school conditions through introducing high-quality foreign educational resources, as the tuition fee revenue for Chinese-foreign cooperatively-run schools is much higher than that of normal schools, which can be used to improve school conditions and to cover the shortage of the government's education investment. Thirdly, it is to improve the education scale, social adaptability of education and training, international applicability of the education, to increase the social benefit of school running. As in the situation of economic globalization and China's market economy, there is an demand of interdisciplinary and creative talents who are not only familiar with international economic operational regulations, but also understand the culture, as well as grasping foreign languages and advanced technical equipments. Fourthly, through introducing advanced study planning from overseas, courses setups, teaching materials and techniques, the competence and reputation of the institutions have been greatly improved, which enhance the potentials of the institutions.

3.3 The Micro-motivation of CFCRS

The demands of international education for consumers can be met with introduced advanced foreign curriculums, original edition of teaching stuff, and foreign teachers, which can provide the advanced foreign education without going abroad. For instance, Chinese students can learn the proper advanced foreign knowledge and English expressions in a professional core lesson, which is given by a foreign teacher. The education costs are much reduced by attending such kinds of lessons compared with going abroad. Secondly, many studying opportunities are created for students by introducing high-quality foreign educational resources. For students who want to advance their study, they can go to the foreign cooperative university to take high level courses by applying credit transfer. Thirdly, the comprehensive ability and English ability of students can be improved by introducing high-quality foreign educational resource, which enable them to become international talent with updated knowledge, broad social relationships, and also become competitive employee and candidates in both international and national employment markets.

4. The Basic Characteristics of High-Quality Foreign Education Resources

Introducing high-quality foreign education resources is a key to CFCRS, it is challenging at the same time. The hinge is how to distinguish high-quality education resources from those of low-quality? Comparison is the only way of distinction; a judgment can only be concluded while utilizing the educational resources. Whether the resources induction is successful should be judged by their applicability and capacity in practical teaching application. According to the basic purpose of CFCRS, introduced high-quality foreign educational resources should have three basic characteristics.

4.1 The Relativity of Evaluations

High-quality is relative, and also dynamic, meaning that its evaluation criteria would change along with different subjects and different places. The evaluation results of the introduced education resources are different from different introducing organizations and geographical locations. For those schools owning national top subjects, the level of the introduced resources from outside for the subjects should be higher than the national top level of these subjects. These kinds of projects are strong-strong cooperation. Whereas, for those schools owning subjects in a normal level, the introduced education resources are not necessarily better than those with national top levels, however they should be better than those normal schools. Similarly, the introduced resources for areas with different developing levels are also not necessarily the same but still should be higher than those of their introducing organization. This is called the relativity of high-quality resources. Similarly, the quality of introduced resources should be judged by their importing party, the area, and the discipline.

4.2 The Complementarity of Application

Drawing on the strengths of foreign organizations to offset weaknesses of the national schools is the purpose of introducing high-quality educational resources. By doing so, education reform and development can be promoted. The academic level and teaching quality can be improved. Competitive talents with international view and sense can be educated. The resources introduction can be divided into overall introduction, partial introduction, and unit introduction. The overall introduction takes place when the total available resources from the introduced school are better than those of the introducing school. Therefore the project is an overall cooperation of both parties. The partial introduction takes place when only a part of available resources from introduced school are better than those of the introducing school, in which case both parties have their own advantages and the selective introduction for both parties can be called complementary cooperation. The unit introduction takes place when only certain unit resources available from the introduced school are better than those of the introducing school and the rest of the resources of both parties are in similar levels. The unit introduction is also complementary cooperation for both parties.

4.3 The Capacity of Resources

The introduced education resources are supposed to live and develop in the new environment. Education resources introduction should be like organ transplanting rather than "education cloning", meaning that it should not introduce too

much rejection reaction. The introduced resources should be useful and practical to the introducing party, meaning that they shouldn't be identical and compatible with the introducing party and have the potential for innovation. The new environment significantly influences the effects of introduced resources. The adaptability of resources is determined by their capacity to new things, which plays a great role in the digestion and absorption of the introduced resources.

5. Conclusions

At a presentation on institutional strategies for internationalisation, Tse (Tse, 1996) ended his speech with the following remarks: "Whatever situation you are in, go international, you won't go wrong".

It is an open world nowadays, with the economy, science and technology, culture and education being open to each other, and tends to be a plural world of interdependence. Internationalization of higher education has brought development and opportunities to China's higher education, making the introduction of high-quality foreign educational resources possible. "Appropriate introduction of high-quality foreign educational resources, such as brand, curriculum, teachers, teaching methods, management, and appraisal system and using foreign education experiences are effective ways to improving China's educational standards."(Guo, 2001)

In section 1, the concepts of CFCRS and high-quality educational resources have been defined, explaining both the concept of CFCRS and its development stages. On the basis of the analysis and understanding to the concepts of "resources" and "educational resources", high-quality foreign educational resources are suggested to be the general designation of all the concepts, systems and policies, managements, courses, teaching materials, teachers, education features and styles, and other education materials, which have reached worldwide leading situation or have special feature in running schools.

In section 2, the motivations of introducing high-quality foreign educational resources are discussed. Detailed analyses are conducted from aspects of educational institutions, the government, and education consumers. Firstly, the introduction of high-quality foreign educational resources through CFCRS is an inevitable choice of China's education opening-up and the internationalization of higher education. It is a great significance to the absorption of latest human achievements in science and technology and education, and to the expending of high-quality educational resources to meet the society's demand to high-quality education. Secondly, to educational institutions, the introduction of high quality foreign educational resources is the demand of educating international talent, innovating school-running mode, deepening education reform and promoting discipline construction, improving the quality of teachers, and widening education channels. Finally, to education consumers, their demands of education can be met without their going abroad.Thus, the costs of education are highly reduced. For those who want to advance their studies in foreign cooperative universities, the academic credits can be transferred between the cooperative universities.

In section 3, the basic characteristics of foreign high-quality educational resources are illustrated. It pointed out that, "high-quality" is a relative concept, and thus the evaluation to the high-quality foreign educational resources should be conducted relative to their subjects, the regions, and the academic disciplines. The introduction of educational resources should be with unique features, based on their capacities and in line with national and school conditions. The introduced educational resources should be an effective compensation to China's education. It promotes the reform and development of China's higher education, and enhances academic quality to cultivate talents with a global vision and international competitiveness.

In short, CFCRS are still new, and still in the exploratory stage. It is inevitable to encounter some difficulties in the implementation process. However, under the guidance of China's macroeconomic policies, CFCRS will become better to adapt to the pace of internationalization of higher education.

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Can "Withitness Skills" Improve Instruction and Safety

for Those Who Coach or Train?

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Abstract

"Withitness skills" developed by Kounin in the 1970's have been emphasized as an important classroom tool for student management and instruction. (Kounin, 1970) "Withit" instructors develop the ability to know what is going on in the classroom. Improving awareness in the classroom may reduce misbehavior and improve instruction. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how "withitness skills" may be applied to coaching and personal training to improve coaching methods, training techniques, and safety. "Withit skills" include withitness, overlapping, momentum, smoothness, group focus, behavior monitoring techniques, and the ripple effect. By improving "withit" skills" the level of skill performance may increase which may lead to more success during competition and fewer injuries.

Keywords: athletes, behavior monitoring techniques, coaching, group focus, momentum, overlapping, ripple effect, smoothness, withitness

"Withitness skills" developed by Kounin in the 1970's have been emphasized as an important classroom tool for student management and instruction. (Kounin, 1970) "Withit" instructors develop the ability to know what is going on in the classroom. Improving awareness in the classroom may reduce misbehavior and improve instruction. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how "withitness skills" may be applied to coaching and personal training to improve instruction and safety.

1. Can "withitness" be used in coaching and personal training?

Coaches and personal trainers teach skills that require constant attention and feedback. Their focus is on skill pattern performance and how the skill may be improved. In most cases, preventing misbehavior is not the primary goal; instead these professionals focus on evaluating technique, improving skill performance, and safety issues. Important "withit skills" include visual search and tracking. Coaches and trainers must be constantly searching with their eyes observing skill technique and safety issues. While auditory, visual, and kinesthetic processes are occurring, coaches and trainers will be evaluating the movement and providing feedback that may improve skill performance. An additional concern is safety. Because these skills involve performing physical movements improved safety awareness by those who supervise skills is needed. These professionals must be aware (withit) of what is happening and create a safe learning environment by preventing injuries to those who are performing skills.

2. Withitness

"Withitness," was a term developed by Kounin (Wuest. 1999) to illustrate a teacher's awareness of what was going on concurrently in the classroom. To the unsuspecting learner, it would seem as though instructors have been blessed

with a skill indicative of a rare physiological state where they have eyes located at the back of their head. Coaches and personal trainers must be aware of what is going on during practices or competition and develop anticipation skills to improve performance, assist in the process of reducing injuries to participants, and winning the game.

3. Overlapping

Kounin described overlapping as attending to two or more events at the same time. The ability to attend to multiple events may include giving a lecture while patrolling the room to prevent student misbehavior. This term has evolved into "multitasking". Coaches and personal trainers participate in multi-tasking whether in practice sessions or during competition. Additional goals for this group would include safety issues related to preventing or reducing injuries that occur during practice or competition by improving multi-tasking skills.

4. Momentum

Momentum involves the flow of the lesson. Not only does the teacher need to know what is going to happen next, but must be prepared for unexpected changes. Maintaining high levels of student interest and engagement may be challenged by a number of occurrences. Students may introduce variations in the assigned task, work mechanically on the task without giving it much thought, try to create some excitement through fooling around with a classmate, or engaging in other forms of misbehavior. Kounin suggests reducing satiation by providing students with a feeling of progress, offering students challenges throughout the lesson, and being enthusiastic. Variety reduces satiation and alleviates boredom. (Kounin, 1970)   Practicing during the week to prepare athletes for competition on the week-end also requires moment.   These concepts relate to feedback provided to athletes by coaches who constantly set goals for athletes and together with the athletes strive to reach those goals. Throughout this process athletes are provided feedback on skill performance or game strategies. At the same time maintaining the momentum to provide the best learning environment for those involved to be successful during competition.

5. Smoothness

Smoothness is closely related to momentum. Classroom consistency involves the transitioning from one learning activity to another without a lot of disruption. Instructors should avoid going from one task to another without direction; this may include "flip flops" where the instructor closes one subject, begins another and then jumps back to the previous subject. Kounin suggests that instructors avoid "dangles." Interruptions, or inadvertently leaving something unfinished and returnings later are identified as dangles. He also suggested teachers minimize "truncation". This is experienced when the teacher is interrupted, leaves the topic and fails to return to it. (Kounin, 1970) Once again these principles relate well in coaches and personal trainers who have transitions related to physical activity. These transitions are more effective if performed with smoothness and without loss of momentum.

6. Group Focus

The focus of any educational experience involves student engagement.   Lessons need to be well thought out, while the presentation of material needs to be stimulating to evoke high levels of interest.   Students are enticed into the learning experience through careful planning and a basic concept of instructional design. (Kounin,1970) Planning practices and develop practice plans are equally important when organizing for competition. Some coaches believe that you play how you practice. If you have good practices leading up to competition athletes may have better performances. Most experienced coaches have the ability develop team focus and athlete engagement in addition to instilling the will to win.

Behavior Monitoring Techniques

Withitness involves knowing what is happening or what may happen. It involves preventing problems before they begin. The person incharge should:

- Always be alert to sights and sounds.

- Arrange the participants within eyesight of the coach or trainer.

- Scan the surroundings while working with individuals or small groups. When assisting one individual maintain a position where the most participants can be seen.

- Briefly acknowledge misbehavior at first detection; let others know that you know. Do not let misbehavior escalate before action is taken.

- Coaches, and trainers need to continue to improve in their ability to effectively handle two events at the same time. Do not becoming engrossed in one event and let other unnecessary events occur due to neglect.

- When instructing one group the person incharge should be able to acknowledge difficulties participants outside of the group may be experiencing. This includes handling distractions from outside the practice or training areas.

7. Ripple Effect:

Kounin believed how a teacher handles one student's misbehavior influences the other students who are not misbehaving. The end product here is to promote good behavior. This idea is an effective coaching or training tip.

Improving Safety by Using "Withit skills" In Coaching and Training

- Teach proper technique and monitor skills when performed to promote skill development.

- Use peripheral vision to detect any unusual skill movements or misbehavior when working with a group.

- While working with groups select a position on the perimeter where you can see all or the greatest number of participants.

- Stay alert at all times

- Use safety warnings at the beginning, throughout each skill taught, and at the end of the activity

- Treat and document potential injuries as soon as possible.

- Preplan emergency procedures "prepare for the worst scenario".

When introducing new skills or relearning previously acquired skills the following "withit" techniques may be use:

- Conduct demonstrations

- Provide constructive feedback

- Utilize drills to practice the skills being taught

- Provide opportunities for practical application of the skill (situations during competition)

- Develop a plan for instruction whether it is practice or competition

- Post rules for behavior, issue safety warnings, have an emergency plan

For those who work in areas of training physical skills, litigation and accountability remain a vital consideration. "Withitness" skills may not only improve skill performance, but reduce the risk of injury and liability issues.

8. Withitness skills for trainers who work in resistance training

"Withitness" is also a safety practice that involves the processes of anticipation and observation. The purpose of "withitness" is to prevent the occurrence of injuries and improve instructional techniques. One of the primary modalities of resistance training is weight training. Below is a list of "withit" techniques specific to weight training:

- Selection of weight to be lifted

- Demonstrate and teach proper technique

- Monitor posture and joint alignment (biomechanics) while lifts are being performed

- Frequently monitor stress placed on joints and lower back

- Provide opportunities to warm muscles before lifting heavy weights and cool down afterwards

- Use a step progression and progress at a reasonable rate

Do not forget weight training basics teach proper stance, grip, and lifting technique. Resistance training professionals emphasize proper technique by providing the following: demonstrations of the exercise, emphasizing techniques to prevent injury to those performing the exercises, and tips for those who spot various exercises. Additional "withit" instructions include safety warnings, demonstrations, and tips specific to each new lift for those performing lifts and their spotters.

With proper spacing, participants performing resistance training exercises may participate without injuring others. Coaches and trainers should check equipment and facilities at the start of each training session, during each session, and at the end of the session to assist in preventing accidents. Additional "withitness" skills related to weight training involve the process of observing the speed of weight and path the weight follows. Slow bar speed may indicate fatigue is prevalent and the lifter is close to failure in exercise completion. If the ends of the bar bearing the weight are uneven, the participant should stop the movement and place the weight on the floor or rack with good technique or assistance from a spotter. Then, the trainer adjusts the grip or weight and continues with the exercise. Don't forget the emergency plan.

9. Withitness skills for trainers who work in power training

Plyometric training involves the performance of skills that generate powerful muscle contractions. Before powerful contractions are initiated, a quick stretch of the muscle fibers involved should be performed. The muscle power is generated by the elasticity of the stretched muscle in its attempt to return to normal length combined with the muscle

contraction of the same muscles. Some of the critical "withitness" elements related to plyometric training include the number of jumps and the height or depth of jumps. Training progressions should first utilize a level surface, then progress from low jumps to progressively higher jumps whether jumping up or down from boxes (depth jumps) or both. The impact of surfaces and the number of foot-strikes should be considered when monitoring and developing plyometric programs. Concrete surfaces provide the highest impact; avoid performing jumps on concrete.

The coach or trainer should establish a pre-test for lower body strength utilizing the performance of 3-6 repetitions with near maximum weight and proper technique. A pretest should be completed by the coach or trainer to assist in the process of determining strength readiness for participants. Upper body plyometric exercises may be performed with medicine balls. "Withit" instructors begin by counting the number of throws and start the program with few repetitions, fewer sets, lighter medicine balls, and then progressively increase the intensity in all of the previously mentioned areas.

Spacing participants is a critical issue when utilizing medicine ball throws. It is important to constantly observe the spacing of participants for a safe training environment. When coaching or instructing plyometric activities, instructors should direct their focus on proper breathing, specific technique, step-wise progressions, provide feedback related to skill performance, and motivation. Again do not forget the basics such as proper stance and technique in the movements being used. Power training professionals emphasize proper technique by providing demonstrations of the exercise, tips to improve power skills, feedback on progress, and safety warnings.

10. Withitness tips for new coaches

For those just entering the professional field of coaching or training it is typical to want to teach at all times. A major component of effective teaching and leadership comes from one's ability to observe. Qualitative analysis is a key factor in recognizing inefficiencies in training technique or procedures. The purpose of developing the ability to perform systematic qualitative analyses of selected athletic performances and/or other human movement will validate the worth of instruction.

Through the acquisition and practice of observational "withit" skills, the facilitator will become better able to detect and correct technique faults that may compromise performance and/or result in athlete's injury. In addition, all professionals involved in human performance should stay current, be aware of the latest research findings pertaining to the biomechanics of selected sports. Remember, you do not have to teach all of the time to be successful. You will be surprised with the knowledge you will gain by employing well designed observations of your athletes. (Hinrichs, 2006)

11. Conclusions

The acquisition of "Withitness skills" may improve instruction and safety for coaches and trainers. This paper has demonstrated various ways that these skills if used properly may improve instruction and safety. The problem seems to be where, when, and how they should be taught. One suggestion would be to include these methods as part of coaching or trainers certification. Withitness principles and training certification should be taught by certified coaches or trainers with several years of experience.   The process of teaching coaches and trainer's withitness skills would be enhanced by the development of labs and videos that modeled correct and incorrect methods of instruction.

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Research on Teachers' Maxims in Language Teaching

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Abstract

This article focuses on the nature and role of teaching principles. Observations of teachers and conversations with them about how they conduct their lessons suggest that teachers develop personal principles which inform their approach to teaching. These principles function like rules for best behavior, or maxims, and guide many of the teachers' instructional decisions. The nature of teachers' maxims is discussed. Teachers' maxims appear to reflect cultural factors, belief systems, experience, and training, and the understanding of which maxims teachers give priority to and how they influence teachers' practices is an important goal in teacher development. Implications for teacher education are discussed.

Keywords: Research, Teachers' maxims, Language teaching

In both general research on teaching (Cortazzi, 1991) as well as research on L2 teaching (Bailey & Nunan, 1995), the need to listen to teachers' voices in understanding classroom practice has been emphasized. What is missing from the knowledge base for teaching, therefore, are the voices of the teachers themselves, the questions teachers ask, the way teachers use writing and intentional talk in their work lives, and the interpretive frames teachers use to understand and improve their own classroom practices.(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 2)

1. The Dimensions of Teacher Knowledge

Teachers employ different types of conceptual organization and meaning when they teach. One level of meaning relates to subject matter knowledge and how teachers conceptualize curricular and content aspects of teaching (Shulman, 1987). Woods (in press) describes teachers' conceptions of lessons as made up of conceptual units or elements at different levels of abstraction. He distinguishes between overall conceptual goals-the overall purpose teachers identify for a course; global conceptual units-the individual subcomponents of the curriculum (e.g., the grammar, reading, writing, and listening components of an integrated skills course); intermediate conceptual units-activities or clusters of activities framed in terms of accomplishing one of the higher level conceptual goals; local conceptual units-the specific things teachers do to achieve particular instructional effects. Other constructs which have been proposed to account for how teachers realize the curricular agendas they set for lessons and the kinds of cognitive processes they employ include lesson formats (Wong Fillmore, 1985), task, Doyle, 1983), scripts, and routines (Shavelson & Stern,1981). Constructs such as the ones above seek to describe how teachers approach the subject matter of teaching and how they transform content into learning. Much of this research has drawn on a frame work of cognitive psychology and has provided evidence of the kinds of pedagogical content knowledge, reasoning, and problem solving teachers make use of as they teach (Clift, 1991).In addition to the curricular goals and content which lessons are planned around, teachers have other more personal views of teaching. In describing the basis for teachers' conceptualizations of good teaching, Clandinin (1985) introduces the concept of image, which she describes as "a central construct for understanding teachers' knowledge" (p. 363). An image is a metaphor such as the classroom as home, setting up a relationship with children, meeting the needs of students, which teachers may have in mind when they teach. Johnston (1992) suggests that images such as these are not always conscious, reflect how teachers view themselves in their teaching contexts, and form the subconscious assumptions on which their teaching practices are based. In a study of what L2 teachers perceive to be good classes, Senior (1995) found that experienced ESL teachers in an Australian educational setting attempting to implement a communicative methodology, appeared to have arrived at the tacit assumption that to promote successful language learning, it is necessary to develop a bonded class, that is, one in which there is a positive, mutually supportive group atmosphere. The teachers appeared to employ a range of both conscious and unconscious strategies in order to develop a spirit of cohesion within their class groups.

Halkes and Deijkers (1984) refer to teachers' teaching criteria, which they characterize as personal values teachers pursue and use while teaching. Teachers hold personal views of themselves, their learners, their goals, and their role in the classroom, and presumably try to reflect these in their teaching. The principle of teacher authenticity involved the teacher presenting herself in such a way that good personal relationships with students and a socially supportive classroom atmosphere would be achieved. This principle required the teacher to attempt to be open, sincere, honest, as well as fallible.

2. What Do Teachers Set Out To Achieve In Lessons

Teachers often describe their approach to lessons in terms of beliefs or principles which they try to put into practice in their teaching, reflecting their individual belief systems. Teachers' belief systems are founded on the goals, values, and beliefs teachers hold in relation to the content and process of teaching and their understanding of the systems in which they work and their roles within it. These beliefs and values serve as the background to much of the teachers' decision making and action and hence constitute what has been termed the culture of teaching (Richards & Lockhart, 1994). Teachers' belief systems are stable sources of reference for teachers, are built up gradually over time, and relate to such dimensions of teaching as the teachers' theory of language, the nature of language teaching, the role of the teacher, effective teaching practices, and teacher-student relations.

Teachers are generally articulate in describing their belief systems, as the following examples.

Celia, a British Council ESL teacher in Hong Kong, completed her education degree in the 1960s and taught elementary school children for many years but only recently returned to L2 teaching. She thinks it's important to be positive as a personality. The teacher has to be a positive person and has to show a tremendous amount of patience. if you have a good attitude you can project this to the students and hopefully establish a relaxed atmosphere in your classroom so that they will not dread to come to class but have a good class, it's important to have a lesson plan. Because you need to know what you want to teach and how you are going to go from the beginning to the end. And also taking into consideration the students, where their ability is, what their background is.

Celia's philosophy emphasizes the teacher's attitude and the need to create a supportive environment for learning in the classroom. She emphasizes the need for lesson planning but her justification for lesson plans is based on helping the students rather than helping the teacher.

Teresa also teaches for the British Council in Hong Kong. Over the years, her view of her role as a teacher has changed, moving from an earlier phase being teacher-led, tightly planned and executed approach to teaching, to her current approach in which she sees herself as more of a guide or facilitator; she tries to create lessons which enhance communication and cooperation between learners and in which the teacher takes a back seat.

She tries to implement this philosophy in every lesson, including a business English class she is currently teaching. She knows it's a business lesson but she really like to activate their knowledge. Her beliefs are very much humanitarian in that they will learn if they feel a warm cooperative atmosphere in the classroom, so she is very concerned that they build up a trust amongst themselves, and with her, so she likes them to do activities that are more student-centered rather than relying on the teacher all the time. She'd like to be more a guide, a motivator rather than the one-and-all person who knows it all. A lot of students here are reluctant to accept that. They are reluctant to take on that responsibility. So sometimes it's like teaching them how to learn, and she finds it a bit frustrating sometimes.

Here Teresa articulates a student-based approach to teaching that is dependent on establishing trust between the students and the teacher. In order to achieve a student-centered lesson, Teresa conducts most of the lessons as small-group activities, with students working on tasks in pairs or groups .The teacher's role is limited to setting up activities, monitoring activities, occasionally correcting errors, and maintaining variety and pace throughout the lesson. To enable her to achieve variety and timing she makes use of a brief written lesson plan and monitors students' interest level throughout the lesson to decide when to move from one activity to the next.

As the examples above illustrate, teachers are generally concerned with more than simply issues of curriculum content. When they teach they also attempt to implement a personal philosophy of teaching which reflects their understanding and beliefs about what good teaching is and how it is achieved.

3. The Nature of Teacher's Maxims

Conversations with teachers and observations of how teachers conduct their lessons suggest that teachers' belief systems lead to the development of rational principles which serve as a source of how teachers interpret their responsibilities and implement their plans and which motivate teachers' interactive decisions during a lesson. These principles function like rules for best behavior in that they guide the teacher's selection of choices from among a range of alternatives. They hence function as maxims which guide the teacher's actions. These maxims are reflected both in how teachers conduct their teaching as well as in the language they use to talk about it.

Teachers possess rational orientations toward teaching as well as personal beliefs about what constitutes good teaching and these lead them to try to create specific conditions in their classrooms. These conditions reflect the teacher's view of the role of the teacher and of the learners, their beliefs about the kind of classroom climate they think best supports learning, what they believe constitutes good methodology, and the quality of classroom interaction and language use they seek to achieve. The working principles or maxims which teachers develop reflect their personal and individual understanding of the "best" or "right" way to teach and provide the source for much of the teacher's interactive decisions throughout a lesson.

Other maxims which teachers refer to in describing their teaching philosophies and which appear to account for many of their preactive and interactive decisions include:

The Maxim of Accuracy: Work for accurate student output.

The Maxim of Efficiency: Make the most efficient use of class time.

The Maxim of Conformity: Make sure your teaching follows the prescribed method.

The Maxim of Empowerment: Give the learners control.

Teachers presumably have a range of maxims they employ and in any particular lesson choose the ones which seem most likely to help them create a successful lesson. Maxims that a teacher seeks to realize in an elementary level class may be different from those the teacher feels are appropriate for an advanced class. The constraints of the classroom, however, often restrict the teacher's choice of maxims, accounting for the fact that teachers sometimes do not practice what they preach. For example, Yim (1993) describes a study of L2 teachers in Singapore, who in describing their approach to teach, articulated a clear preference for a communicative methodology in which the focus was on authentic meaning-focused activities. But when observed in their classrooms, many of the teachers made greater use of accuracy focused activities because they felt these were necessary in order to prepare students for examinations. This problem is articulated by Frank, an experienced ESL teacher at the British Council in Hong Kong, who is committed to a communicative approach to teaching and who sees his role as a facilitator whose role is to create an optimum learning environment. In one of his observed lessons, however, this philosophy was less in evidence. It was more of a grammar-focused series of activities which culminated in a writing task. When asked if this lesson reflected his beliefs in a communicative approach to teaching, he commented:

I don't necessarily apply teaching principles all the time. My general principle is just to make things student-centered and communicative. The problem with this class is that I can't always do that because people are very shy. So you can't really make it student-centered because the students don't say anything. You have to call everyone by their name which makes it a little bit more teacher-centered. It was communicative in a sense there were writing together in groups rather than by oneself. That's why I got them around the table to emphasize they are not just working on their own.

Ulichny (1996) provides a detailed account of how a teacher renegotiates her teaching in process as one working principle is replaced by another. The teacher is an experienced ESL teacher teaching a college ESL reading class. Among the principles the teacher sought to bring to her teaching was a belief in the need to help students see reading as the building of meaning from texts (rather than focusing on linguistic forms), to create lessons that were at an appropriate level of difficulty which were not discouraging to students, and to provide lessons in which students were actively engaged in reading rather than directed by the teacher. In a segment of a lesson Ulichny describes in detail, the teacher has assigned students to read a chapter from a sociology text. She has given the class a simplified lecture that restates some of the main points of what they have read and the students are asked to locate some of the main points in the text. As the lesson proceeds according to the teacher's first principle of helping the students make meaning from the text, she discovers that they have not understood the main points of her lecture. So she decides to adjust her planned lesson in order "to make the text and the classroom talk comprehensible to the students" (p. 184). A different principle now comes into play, the principle of creating a lesson at an appropriate level of difficulty, which she does by creating a scaffold or propositional structure of the text through questions and answers with the students. Gradually the teacher takes on more of the tasks she had originally planned for the students to do. Her first recourse in the face of difficulty is to simplify the level of the Teachers' maxims thus can be viewed as outcomes of teachers' evolving theories of teaching. They are personal working principles which reflect teachers' individual philosophies of teaching, developed from their experience of teaching and learning, their teacher education experiences, and from their own personal beliefs and value systems. Maxims are more specific and practical than the images which have been described by researchers such as Clandinin (1985, 1986) and Johnston (1990, 1992). They can be regarded as images that have been transformed into models for practical action. The development of personal working principles or maxims can be viewed as an important goal in teacher development.

At the initial stages of teacher development, what Shulman (1987) terms instructional skills are a central component of the teacher's expertise. Instructional skills refer to strategies for organizing and presenting content and for the effective management of teaching and learning in the classroom. Developing skill in these aspects of teaching involves the mastery of routines and procedures which teachers can call upon in order to move successfully through the agenda of a lesson (Berliner, 1987). To move to the next level in teaching involves the development of a personal theory of teaching, one containing a coherent set of beliefs, values, and principles that provide an orientation to teaching and a framework for practice. Elbaz (1981) refers to this growth from use of procedures to the employment of principles by distinguishing between "rules of practice" and "principles of practice," the latter corresponding to the notion of teaching maxims presented here.

4. Implications for Teacher Education

The view of teaching presented here offers a perspective on teacher development which has some useful implications for teacher education. The focus on teachers' subjective accounts of the principles underlying effective teaching offers an important perspective on what teaching is and how teachers acquire the capacity to teach. If teachers are guided in their teaching both by personal maxims as well as by general instructional considerations, the nature, status, and use of such maxims clearly deserves recognition in teacher education programs.

Personal maxims or principles might provide a useful perspective for student teachers to examine in the course of their professional preparation, as they explore both their own thinking-in-action as well as that of other teachers. The making explicit of beliefs, principles, and values can be an ongoing focus of teacher development programs, Identifying the maxims which teachers and student teachers use to guide their teaching can be achieved in a variety of ways, including narratives, journal writing, discussion, and other forms of critical reflection.

Once identified, student teachers' maxims can serve as one source of information that can help them interpret and evaluate their own teaching as well as the teaching of others. In practice teaching, for example, student teachers can articulate the maxims they hope to draw on during a lesson. Following the lesson they can then review the lesson to see the extent to which they were able to implement their maxims or whether others would have been more appropriate.

However, as with images of teaching, it is not the case that teacher's maxims should go unchallenged. A supervisor may conclude that a teacher is teaching with an inappropriate maxim, for example, or that a maxim is being overused to the detriment of student learning. Although a supervisor may not agree that the maxims a teacher follows represent an appropriate way of teaching, recognizing them and examining their role in shaping thoughts and actions can be a useful step in facilitating the student teacher's future professional growth.

5. Conclusion

Basing on the extensive research on what successful language teachers actually do in language teaching, we are aware of maxims that effective language teachers tend to use, which can make our lessons very smooth and interact with the students in a manner that makes their progress and enhances their success.

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The Struggles of Reluctant Workplace Bloggers

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Abstract

Blogs act as knowledge repositories and personalize knowledge management within learning organizations. These knowledge repositories allow capturing and disseminating tacit knowledge which improve task implementations. However, workplace blogging is not popular among academicians as there are not many academicians blog about their working experiences. Thus, this study investigates the causes of workplace blogging resistance among four language lecturers at a local university in Malaysia. Interviews were conducted to identify the arguments over the resistance of workplace blogging. The findings of the study suggest several suggestions to overcome the resistance of workplace blogging.

Keywords: Knowledge workers, Tacit knowledge, Workplace blogging, Knowledge conversion, Language lecturers, Reluctant workplace bloggers

1. Introduction

Learning organizations are organizations where people continuously improve their capabilities to achieve organizational aims through collective thinking, aspirations and collective learning (Senge, 1990). A blog ; an online journal contains dated entries in reverse chronologically arranged about topics of the author's choice, provides opportunities for reflection and analysis through feedback. These opportunities allow the writers and the readers to understand knowledge and construct new knowledge as blogs capture and disseminate tacit knowledge which encourage workplace learning. External workplace blogs are public relations tools as they discuss new products or the opinions of spokespersons for the organizations. Internal workplace blogs are communal and allow workers share views regardless of the hierarchy.

Most learning at work is non-formal as learning is clearly not specified or planned in advance and influenced by (Nonaka,1994). Organizational knowledge is categorized into three types of knowledge; tacit knowledge, explicit knowledge and background knowledge (Choo,1998) . The knowledge conversion between explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge converts either tacit knowledge to explicit knowledge or explicit knowledge to tacit knowledge (Nonaka et al, 2000). Learning organizations comprise of communities of practices which act as living repositories of their members' knowledge. A community of practice is a social structure which shares a shared identification, learning process through communal activities and its practice in form of communal routines, stories and lessons learned (Lave and Wenger , 1996). Competent practitioners rely on a tacit knowing-in-action to help them act within circumstances (Polanyi,1966).

In teaching profession, experienced teachers develop rich and well-organized knowledge bases which enable them to draw readily on their past experiences (Calderhead, 1996). Experienced teachers are expert in subject matter , pedagogy and didactics (Broome,1991, Beijaard ,Verloop and Vermont,2000).The expertise in the domains are influenced by teaching context, teaching experiences and the biography of the teachers.Darwin (2000) propogates mentoring as a strategy to share intellectual and emotional resources where individuals are encouraged to share both tacit and explicit knowledge with others. In training novices to become experts, Darwin (2000) states those critical reflections mentoring is considered as one of the strategies to share intellectual and emotional resources. Individuals are encouraged to share both tacit and explicit knowledge with others in mentoring relationships.

Stories in learning organizations enable workers understand the works of an organization. Through stories, tacit knowledge is being converted as it provides richer engaging interaction that connect listeners and storytellers (Weinberger, 2001).Blogs share salient features of storytelling and are more accessible as they reach wider audience (Nichani and Rajamanichan, 2001). Dwyer (2007) explains that blogging is a collaborative activity that lets colleagues and competitors to the blogger's internal thinking which requires openness in order to unlock the benefits of blogging. The objective of this study was to identify the arguments of the reluctance of workplace blogging among four language lecturers at a university in Malaysia.

2. Methodology

The research was a case study of four language lecturers at a local university. They were experienced lecturers teaching English to diploma and degree undergraduates in multiple disciplines for more than 10 years. Their highest level of education was at master's level. All of them were competent computer and internet users in their professional and personal lives.

A blog was created for all the participants who were members of a collaborative research team at the university to enable these participants to share their experiences. The participants were informed about the aims of the blog and they were asked to write about their teaching experiences. The participants were given freedom to write the topics for their entries in the blog. They were given the address of the blog, the user identity and the password for the blog. Nevertheless, these participants were not given any training on posting blog entries.The participants were given a month to contribute to the blog. However the participants did not write any blog entries. The action propelled the researcher to investigate the arguments of the participants for not participating in the workplace blogging.

The interview session was conducted a month after the blog creation. English was used during the interview session. The interviews were conducted to determine the arguments for the resistance of workplace blogging. Several themes and phenomena that emerged from the data were scrutinized to enable more understanding of the resistance of using workplace blogging for capturing and disseminating effective documentations of tacit knowledge using workplace blogs.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Time constraint

All four participants agreed that time constraint influenced their decisions not to contribute to any entries in the blog. All the participants allocated their time on daily demands such as family demands, students' demands, teaching load, researches and writing journal articles. The participants had to teach sixteen to twenty hours per week. Another reason contributing to time constraint was poor internet connection. The participants believed that they sacrificed their valuable time if they wrote entries in the blog as these participants needed a long time to construct ideas, edit the content, the grammar and reply comments. The participants were language lecturers. Thus, it is natural for language practitioners to be conscious about the language as they believed that they needed to be perfect in their writing when they wrote the blog entries.

3.2 Unfamiliarity

All the participants were familiar with the internet as they had to use the internet for internal and external communications such as internal and external email services to communicate for work and personal purposes. Internet was heavily used for research purposes. The participants depended on online journal and online articles for research purposes. Another usage of the internet among the participants was online dictionary.However, they were unfamiliar with blog navigation. Three of the participants confessed that the last time they posted blog entries was five years ago. Furthermore, a participant has never posted a blog entry in her life. She was a novice in blog navigation. Thus, the participants confessed that they needed to learn more about writing and posting blog entries. Nevertheless, all the participants were reluctant to learn more about workplace blogging as the participants were not willing to allocate time for the blog training and workplace blogging.

3.3 Preference for face- to- face informal discussion

All the participants preferred face-to-face interaction such as informal discussions during breakfast or lunch at the cafeteria and at their own offices .The participants concluded that these informal discussions were more intimate, friendlier, less threatening and more conducive for sharing session. Thus these participants allocated time for informal discussions by having lunch , attending social gatherings and chatting at colleagues' offices. The participants conceived by attending these face-to-face informal discussions, they invested in quality time with their colleagues as well as one of effective ways to reduce their stress. The participants were able to socialize with colleagues and at the same time were able to exchange working experiences and best practices. Interaction through workplace blogs was deemed to be impersonal and threatening. Thus, the participants did not prefer interaction through workplace blogging.

3.4 Willingness to share the knowledge

All the participants were not interested in sharing their knowledge with the public as they felt that teaching was a private domain. They believed that other lecturers at their institution and other higher institutions knew the best teaching practice for their classes. Thus, the participants believed that their knowledge were not able to help other practitioners even though they believed in their best practices.However three of the participants determined that their knowledge only be shared with preferred colleagues at their own institute. The position taken might be influenced by their beliefs that their colleagues had helped these participants in the past and they were expected to return the favours. Nevertheless one of the participants was unwilling to share her knowledge with others.The participant adamantly

believed that her knowledge could only benefit herself as the efforts to get the knowledge were her own. Thus, it was only fair to be the sole beneficiary for her knowledge.

3.5 Risks

All the participants were concerned about the errors of the content and the language of the as the blog entries were available to the public.The contents and the language were available to be scrutinized by the public. The participants were apprehended of being misjudged by the public as the public might have negative impressions of the participants. In addition, the participants were concerned about the liability risks as the posts in the blog served as the evidence of their writings. The participants were concerned that their entries in the blog jeopardized their careers or they might be sued by the public or the institution. For example, a former Delta Air Lines stewardess was allegedly being fired after she posted her photos in uniform (Baldas, 2008). Furthermore, the participants were unsure other language lecturers appreciated their best practices as others did not ask about the participants' practices.

3.6 Lack of interest

The participants admitted that it was due to their lack of interest in blogging that they did not post any entry in the blog .They were not interested in the blogging activity itself. The participants contributed their lack of interest in workplace blogging was caused by their belief that workplace blogging was insignificant when compared to their teaching loads and researches.

The poor internet connection influenced the participants' decision to blog. The participants were convinced that the poor internet connection deterred them from spending less time when writing entries in the blog. Therefore, the participants decided not to blog as blogging prevented them from their demanding demands.

3.7 Health issues

The participants attributed the health issues as one of the reasons they did not blog at work. One participant suffered from severe back pain and eye strain when she worked continuously in front of the computer for a long time. Other participants admitted that dealing with the unfamiliar experience such as writing the blog increased their stress level and jeopardized their health.

4. Conclusions

Farmer and Bartlett-Bragg (2005) predict the new bloggers face several difficulties during initial phase of blogging. These difficulties lie in learning software formats, feelings of uncertainty in writing publicly and lack of motivation during blogging sessions. These difficulties were apparent among the four language lecturers. Other emerging issues that contribute to this workplace blogging resistance were time constraint, willingness to share knowledge with others, preference for face-to-face informal discussions and health issues. These emerging issues influenced these four language lecturers not to participate in the workplace blogging.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are suggested to academicians and administrators of higher institutions so knowledge can be shared and new knowledge can be constructed. Blogs offer opportunities to the lecturers as the blogs are more personalized, accessible and flexible. Academicians rely other academicians' expertise to comprehend knowledge .The present method of capturing and disseminating knowledge depends on socialization through face-to-face interaction .Since academicians do not have much time for face- to- face interaction, they need of a more accessible medium of communication which can be archived for future references or for others usage. This need demands new tools of capturing and disseminating tacit knowledge. In addition to that, administrators should realize in the long run it is beneficial to have workplace blogs as these blogs act as knowledge repositories. This is beneficial whenever any faculty members leave the institutions, their tacit knowledge could still be retained and accessed by other faculty members. It could act as an informal training tool for the new faculty members.

Academicians should be trained to be more competent in knowledge management tools which expose them to more accessible knowledge repositories. When the higher institutions as learning organizations advocate workplace blogging among academicians , the number of reluctant workplace bloggers among academicians is decreased .This is because the academicians aware of the importance of the practice at their institutions. Therefore, these academicians will be motivated and make efforts to write and contribute their knowledge to the organizations.

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Study on the Higher Vocational Mode Combining Production

with Learning and Research Based on AHP

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Abstract

In this article, we applied the AHP method with quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis to analyze three sorts of basic educational mode combining production with learning and research, i.e. the automated instruction, the mode combining production and learning, and the integration combining production with learning and research, and obtained that the educational mode combining production with learning and research was the optimal mode to realize the value of the higher vocational education.

Keywords: AHP, Combining production with learning and research, Mode

For the problem how to better carry through the education policy of CPC, make the higher vocational education develop healthily and realize the values of the higher vocational education, people mainly pay more attention to the educational mode combining production with learning and research. Because most scholars adopts the qualitative method to study the problem combining production with learning and research, we use the AHP method to analyze the relation between the educational mode combining production with learning and research and the realization of higher vocational education from the view of the combination of qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis, and expect providing more scientific references to select exact mode for the integration combining production with learning and research for high vocational education.

The analytic hierarchy process (AHP) was proposed by the US operational research expert, Profess T.L. Saaty of Pittsburgh University in 1970s, and he first utilized AHP to study the "Emergency Plan" for United States Department of Defense, and at present, the application and theory of AHP have been developed and perfected continually. The basic principle of AHP is the ordering, i.e. ordering various methods (or measures) and taking them as the reference of the decision-making. Its character is to combine the qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis, and give expression to human subjective judgment by the quantitative form, and implement scientific process. Therefore, AHP is more suitable for the complex domain of social science, and it can more exactly reflect the problems in the social science domain.

1. To establish the hierarchical structure

First, the combination of production, learning and research is a sort of educational mode, and it is a sort of approach. And its final aim is to realize the values of the higher vocational education, which is the objective layer A.

Second, the higher class character and the occupational character of the higher vocational education decide the values of the higher vocational education are mainly embodied in three aspects such as the cultivation value, the economic value and the social value, and these three aspects are the rule layer B. The talent cultivation value of the higher vocational education is mainly represented in the higher class character and the occupational character, and the economic value is mainly represented in that it can offer larger numbers of excellent talents to make contributions for the society through the scientific and technological innovation, and the social value is mainly represented in that the occupation training can increase the opportunities for citizens to accept the education, achieve the justice of the education through the popularization of the higher education, and these six points are the rule layer C.

Finally, no matter what the form combining production with learning and research is, and as a sort of operation mode of the education, the education combing production with learning and research can be mainly divided into three sorts of basic mode from the practical main bodies, i.e. the independent mode by the colleges, the cooperation mode by the colleges and enterprises, and the cooperation mode by the colleges, enterprises and scientific research institutes (i.e. the automated instruction, the mode combining production and learning, and the integration combining production with learning and research). In these three sorts of basic mode, the problem which one mode is the optimal mode to realize the values of the higher vocational education is the project layer D which should be solved through the decision-making.

Through confirming the factors on various layers and their positions and connecting the relations among them, the hierarchical structure can be established (see Figure 1).

2. To establish the judgment matrix and ask experts to fill in it

The filled judgment matrix is $A=(a_{ij})_{n \times n}$, and it possesses following characters.

(1) $a_{ij} > 0$

(2) $a_{ij} = 1/a_{ji}$

(3) $a_{ii} = 1$

For the special situation, the judgment matrix can possess the transitivity, i.e. it fulfills the equation $a_{ij \times} a_{jk} = a_{ik}$.

When the above equation exists for all factors in the judgment matrix, we call the judgment matrix as the consistency matrix.

The expert group includes 20 members such as the teaching managers, the teaching personnel, the scientific research personnel, the enterprise personnel, the government personnel and so on. Through the paired comparison for factors on each layer in the hierarchical matrix (seen in Figure 1) and endowing values for the importance degrees according to Table 1, the judgment matrix table can be composed (seen in Table 2).

3. Single layer ordering and test

The single ordering means to confirming the corresponding weights for various factors in each judgment matrix aiming at their own rule, and we adopt the sum method to compute the weights.

In the layer-layer ordering, we should implement the consistency test for the judgment matrix, and only the judgment matrix passes the test, it is reasonable in logic, and we can continue to analyze its results.

The consistency test includes following approaches.

First, compute the consistency index C.I.

$$C.I. = (\lambda_{max} - n)/(n-1)$$

Second, check the table and confirm the corresponding average random consistency index R.I.

According to the different orders of the judgment matrix, check the table and we can obtain the average random consistency index R.I. (seen in Table 3).

Third, compute the consistency ratio C.R. and judge.

$$C.R. = C.I. / R.I.$$

When C.R. < 0.1, we think the consistency of the judgment matrix can be accepted, and when C.R. > 0.1, we think the judgment matrix doesn't accord with the requirements, and we need to remodify the judgment matrix.

According to the above method, the single hierarchical ordering and the test results are seen in Table 4.

For all single orderings, C.R. < 0.1, so we think the consistency of each judgment matrix can be accepted.

4. Total layer ordering and test

The total ordering means to confirm the relative weights of various factors in the judgment matrix aiming at the objective layer (the top layer). For the computation of the weights, we adopt the method from top to bottom and integrate the weights layer by layer.

Obviously, the single ordering result of the second layer is the result of the total ordering. The total ordering of the factors on the K'th layer for the total objective is $W^{(K)} = (W_1^{(K-1)}, W_2^{(K)}, \ldots, W_n^{(K)}) = P^{(K)} \ W^{(K-1)}$.

We also need implementing the consistency test for the result of the total ordering. $C.I. = C.I.^{(K)}/R.I.^{(K)}$.

When $C.I.^{(K)} < 0.1$, we think the integrated consistency of the judgment matrix can be accepted.

According to above method, the total layer ordering and the test result are seen in Table 5 and Table 6.

For the total ordering, C.R. < 0.1, and we think the integrated consistency of the judgment matrix can be accepted.

5. Analysis of the results

Through analyzing the ordering results, we can obtain the final decision-making project.

From the ordering results of the rule layer B, we can see that the weight of the economic value (B2) is the lowest weight (0.1304), the weight of the social benefit (B3) is little high (0.2174), and the weight of the talent cultivation is the highest weight (0.6522). So, for the decision-making, we should emphasize the value of talent cultivation and the social value, and require little the economic value of the higher vocational college. The first task of the higher vocational education is to provide large numbers of vocational talents with high skills for the society. The main measure to serve

the society is to increase the employment, which will make lower directly economic contribution for the society, and that also indicates the correctness of the educational concept of the higher vocational education which takes the employment as the direction, takes the service as the tenet and takes the talent cultivation as the core.

For the single ordering result of the rule layer C, we can see that for the talent cultivation value (B1), the weight of the vocational skill (C2) (0.7500) is much bigger than the weight of the higher class (C1) (0.2500), and for the economic value (B2), the weight of offering talents (C3) (0.8333) is much bigger than the weight of the scientific technical innovation (C4) (0.1667), and for the social value (B3), the weight of increasing employment (C5) (0.8333) is much bigger than the weight of education justice (0.1667).

For the total ordering result of rule layer C, we can see that the weight of the vocational technology (C2) is the highest weight (0.4892) which is far bigger than the weights of other factors, and the weight of increasing employment (C5) (0.1812) takes second place, and the weight of higher class (C1) (0.1631) takes third place, and the weight of education justice (C6) (0.0362) takes fourth place, and the weight of the scientific technology innovation (C4) (0.0217) takes the final place.

The coherence of the single ordering result and the total ordering result on the rule layer C further demonstrates the status, the character, the cultivation objective and the talent standard from scientific view. The higher vocational education possesses double attributes of the higher education and the vocational education, and it is not only the higher stage of the vocational education, but also the important part of the higher education. Its fundamental task is to cultivate the application talents with higher technology, and its aim is to fulfill the demands for the middle and higher application technical talents in the first lines such as the social production, the management and the service. It takes the cultivation of the technical application ability as the main line to make students become the special talents with certain basic theoretical and professional knowledge, basic skills in the professional domain, and good vocational morality. And it is a sort of higher education type which can run through the whole process of the individual vocational development (Yi, 2005, P.10-14).

According to the single ordering result of the rule layer C, we can review and compare the differences of three modes in realizing the values of the higher vocational education. For the concrete factors, if we only consider the higher class of the talent cultivation, and the realization of the education justice and talent input to the society, three modes are almost same, and if we mainly consider the cultivation of students' vocational skills, increasing employment and scientific technology innovation, the integration combining production with learning and research is the optimal mode, and the cooperation by the college and enterprise takes the second place. And the education mode of the automated instruction is hard to realize the cultivation aim of the higher vocational education.

From the total ordering result of the project layer, we can see that the weight of the integration combining production with learning and research (D3) (0.5313) is far bigger than the weight of the cooperation by the college and enterprise (D2) (0.3413) which is much bigger than the weight of the automated instruction (D3) (0.1277). So the optimal mode to realize the value of the higher vocational education is the integration combining production with learning and research, and the cooperation by the college and enterprise takes the second place, and the mode of automated instruction can hardly realize the value of the higher vocational education.

To sum up, whether from the concrete factors or form the total ordering of the project layer to study three sorts of basic mode, the results are completely same, which further proves that in these three sorts of basic mode, the integration combining production with learning and research is the optimal mode to realize the values of the higher vocational eduction.

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Table 1. Meanings of the importance scales

Importance scale	Meanings
1	Two factors are same important
3	In two factors, the former factor is little important than the latter one
5	In two factors, the former factor is obviously important than the latter one
7	In two factors, the former factor is intensely important than the latter one
9	In two factors, the former factor is extremely important than the latter one
2, 4, 6, 8	The medians of above judgments
Reciprocal	If the importance ratio of the factor i with the factor j is a_{ij}, and the importance ratio of the factor i and the factor j is $a_{ji}=1/a_{ij}$

Table 2. Judgment matrix

A	B1	B2	B3		B1	C1	C2		B2	C3	C4		B3	C5	C6
B1	1	5	3		C1	1	1/3		C3	1	5		C5	1	5
B2	1/5	1	2		C2	3	1		C4	1/5	1		C6	1/5	1
B3	1/3	1/2	1												

C1	D1	D2	D3		C2	D1	D2	D3		C3	D2	D2	D3
D1	1	1/2	1/3		D1	1	1/3	1/5		D1	1	1/2	1/3
D2	2	1	2		D2	3	1	2		D2	2	1	2
D3	3	1/2	1		D3	5	1/2	1		D3	3	1/2	1
C4	D1	D2	D3		C5	D1	D2	D3		C6	D2	D2	D3
D1	1	1/3	1/7		D1	1	1/5	1/7		D1	1	1	1
D2	3	1	3		D2	5	1	2		D2	1	1	1
D3	7	1/3	1		D3	7	1/2	1		D3	1	1	1

Table 3. Average random consistency index R.I. (1000 times computation result of reciprocal judgment matrix)

Orders of matrix	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
R.I.	0	0	0.52	0.89	1.12	1.26	1.36	1.41	1.46	1.49	1.52	1.54	1.56	1.58	1.59

Table 4. Single layer ordering and test result

A	Single ordering weight		B1	Single ordering weight		B2	Single ordering weight		B3	Single ordering weight
B1	0.6522		C1	0.2500		C3	0.8333		C5	0.8333
B2	0.1304		C2	0.7500		C4	0.1667		C6	0.1667
B3	0.2174		CR	0.0000		CR	0.0000		CR	0.0000
CR	0.0000									

C1	Single ordering weight		C2	Single ordering weight		C3	Single ordering weight
D1	0.1667		D1	0.1111		D1	0.1667
D2	0.3333		D2	0.3333		D2	0.3333
D3	0.5000		D3	0.5556		D3	0.5000
CR	0.0000		CR	0.0000		CR	0.0000
C4	Single ordering weight		C5	Single ordering weight		C6	Single ordering weight
D1	0.0909		D1	0.0769		D1	0.3333
D2	0.2727		D2	0.3846		D2	0.3333
D3	0.6363		D3	0.5385		D3	0.3333
CR	0.0000		CR	0.0000		CR	0.0000

Table 5. Total ordering of layer C (CR=0.0000)

C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
0.1631	0.4892	0.1087	0.0217	0.1812	0.0362

Table 6. Total ordering of layer D (CR=0.0000)

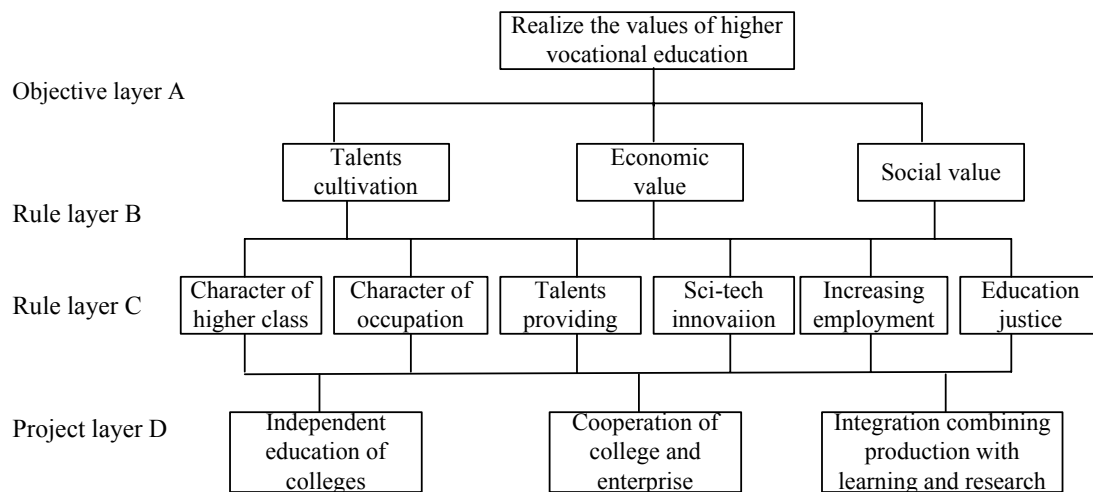| D1	D2	D3
0.1177	0.3413	0.5313

Figure 1. Sketch Map of the Hierarchical Structure

A Study of Subject-Verb Agreement: From Novice Writers

to Expert Writers

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Abstract

Students in higher learning institutions need to write lots of reports based on the projects done. Since they are at the tertiary level of education, they are required to use English in their reports. This is to ensure that they are able to function well in English later at the workplace. Writing requires students to apply rules regarding sentence structures, grammar and also its mechanic that refers to punctuation and capitalization. However, many of the students have problems in applying these rules in their writing even though they have been learning English for about 12 years in school. This is a case study on BEL 311, semester 3 students at one local higher learning institution that comprises 'Bumiputra' (a <u>Malay</u> term widely used in <u>Malaysia</u>, embracing ethnic <u>Malays</u>, <u>Javanese</u>, <u>Bugis</u>, <u>Minang</u> and other indigenous ethnic groups such as the <u>Orang Asli</u> in Peninsular Malaysia and the tribal peoples in <u>Sabah</u> and <u>Sarawak</u>) students regarding their problems with subject-verb agreement in their writing. These students are required to write a term paper that worths 30% out of their 100% total score. They are taking their BEL 311, English for Academic Purposes –an undergraduate diploma course. The researcher gathered information for this study through her observation, interview and written assignment given to students. The findings from the study are of significant important since this will help the lecturers to further enhance their teaching methods and find ways to help students improve their writing and avoid making errors in subject-verb agreement as possible.

Keywords: L1, L2, Bumiputra, Errors, Mistakes, Bahasa Malaysia, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), ESL

1. Introduction

"I always have lots of errors in my writing. I am not confident with my English."

"I don't know why I still have problems with my grammar even though I have learnt all the rules before."

"It is quite confusing when you have a singular subject in a sentence, but you have to add 's' to the verb. I don't have this kind of rule in Bahasa Malaysia (the Malay Language spoken in Malaysia)."

These are some of the statements and complaints received from my students. Majority of these students still have problems with their subject-verb agreement in their writing. In English Language, the subject must agree with the verb. If the subject is singular, a singular verb is required. On the other hand, a plural subject takes a plural verb. This rule applies greatly in Simple Present Tense. Therefore, any mistakes made by the students in agreement are very noticeable. In Simple Past Tense, however, only the verbs 'was' and 'were' need to be considered. This is the general rule for subject-verb agreement. Besides, having its general rules, it also has its sub-rules. Based on my observation, I noticed that my students have mistakes in these both general and sub-rules of subject-verb agreement in their writing. The researcher tried to investigate the difficulties in the use of subject-verb agreement in their writing and also to determine remedial actions that need to be taken in order to overcome their difficulties in using subject-verb agreement correctly in their written performance.

2. Literature review

Students need to clearly write what they want to convey in order to transmit their messages effectively to the receiver. In other words, choices of words and correct grammatical rules need to be employed by them. However, these students of L2(a language which is not a native language in a country but , it is widely used as a medium of communication) in the researcher's class have difficulties in constructing correct sentences in English. This is because they have problems in the subject-verb agreement rules. These students have problems in subject-verb agreement because in their L1 (generally a person's mother tongue or the language acquired first) which is Bahasa Malaysia, it

doesn't have rules regarding subject-verb agreement. That's why majority of learners have problems in their writing. All subjects either singular or plural require the same form of verb. For example:

Abu   *pergi*   ke kedai.   Abu-singular subject

(subject)   (verb)   (expansion)

Abu dan Amin *pergi* ke kedai.   Abu and Amin-plural subjects

(subject)   (verb) (expansion)

This is supported by Bahiyah & Basil Wijayasuria (1998) where they find that Malay learners have difficulty in the subject-verb agreement because Bahasa Malaysia does not differentiate between person and, therefore it is not necessary for verbs to agree with the subject. In English, however, this is essential in the present tense and with the verb 'be'. Because of this, it creates confusion among learners. These students tend to make errors in their writing. Although the subject-verb agreement structure was introduced early to students i.e. when they were in the primary level, they still face problem in acquiring the correct form of it. Murcia & Freeman (1983) as cited by Nor Arfah (1988), state that in spite of the early introduction and the superficially simple rules of the subject-verb agreement, they still pose problems for the ESL learners at all levels or proficiency. Some examples from an advanced level Malay ESL learner are as follows:

It really **make** me unhappy. Fortunately, my family especially my father **need** me to help his business. Recently, my father **want** to expand his business by selling LPG gas. It really tedious to get a license.

As the example shows, the learner failed to employ the correct rule of subject-verb agreement where a singular subject requires a singular verb. The learner's writing should be:

It really makes me unhappy. Fortunately, my family especially my father needs me to help manage his business. Recently, my father wants to expand his business by selling LPG gas. It is really tedious to get a license.

Hughes & Heah (1989) state that some examples of the typical mistakes made by the Malaysian speakers of English are:

I cannot work anymore. My body **feel** weak. (My body feels)

Foreigners are people who **comes** from another country. (people who come)

Everybody **were** watching to see what would happen next. (Everybody was)

In addition, Munir (1991) in his research on the various types of agreement in English, finds out that the subject-verb agreement (especially the number agreement) appears to be the most problematic area faced by Malaysian learners of English. Some examples are:

Their students **is** in good health.

Boarding schools **is** better than day schools.

As the examples show, the learner again failed to employ the correct rule of subject-verb agreement.

Writing involves constructing sentences correctly. Therefore, in English for students to effectively communicate their ideas well in writing, they must be able to construct meaningful sentences that have correct grammar. Dorn (2000) states that the sentences created by words and phrases are the essential blocks of meaning that allow us to communicate thoughts. If there are not constructed carefully, they can make reading difficult. He further states that major basic usage and grammar slips in written English are those associated with verbs. Based on the fact that subject-verb agreement area is very important to express ideas especially in writing, where non verbal communication is absent, the students really need to master this rule in order to write effectively. As a result, they can convey their message clearly and effectively. By writing a piece of work that is error free, it shows that learners have mastered the English grammar rules and it will give a good impression to others who read their work.

3. Method

The study dealt with the subject-verb agreement in students' written production. The written method is used because of several reasons. The first reason is that written work can test the students' comprehension and production of the grammatical rules they have already learnt in a more appropriate way. Besides, when they are given a chance to choose their own topic for their term paper, they can have more freedom to write on the topic that interests them. In order to gather the information needed for the study, the researcher has referred to her students' term papers. These students are semester three students from Diploma in Industrial Chemistry. They have to take BEL 311 (English for Academic Purposes) this semester that is semester December 2008-April 2009. They have to write a term paper that worths 30% from the total overall score of 100%. Previously, they had taken two English papers in semester one and semester two. The samples involved in this study are the L2 learners of English since they use Bahasa Malaysia as their L1. These students who are taking BEL 311 have to write a term paper that requires them to be critical and creative in their

thinking where they have to search for one issue that interests them and write on it. At the same time, they have to find causes for the problem and offer solutions to it. This term paper should be done in pairs. They are advised to use 450-700 words for their term paper. They should also include in- text citations in their term paper. This requires them to do library research for information. Some of them also conduct their own interview to get the information needed. In order to get information needed for the study, the researcher who is the lecturer at UiTM (a university that offers quality programs to Bumiputras) interviewed some students randomly in her class regarding their problems in using the subject-verb agreement in their writing. The researcher also observed these students when they do their written work in class especially when they discussed and brainstormed their ideas. The researcher had 6 contact hours per week with her students. The researcher spent 14 weeks with these students this semester. Within these 6 hours, the researcher had to focus on the other components under BEL 311 syllabus which are Reading Comprehension, Speaking and Grammar. Students' written work was checked several times before they submitted the final draft. Students were required to submit their first draft of their term paper including the in-text citation before they submitted their final draft. This first draft was marked and checked by the researcher. Then, this draft was returned back to the students for their final revision and final submission. These students were not aware that their work would be used in this study. The reason why they were not told is because the researcher wanted to let the students freely write their sentences without having any conscious feeling that their writing is going to be analyzed. The sample errors in this research are taken from their first draft work.

4. Results and discussion

As in the researcher's class, these students have studied English for almost 12 years. Unfortunately, they still make subject-verb agreement errors in their writing. According to Corder (1967), an error refers to a systematic deviation made by learners who have not yet mastered the rules of L2. A learner cannot self-correct an error because it is a product reflective of his or her current stage of L2 development or underlying competence. A mistake, on the other hand refers to a random performance slip caused by fatigue, excitement etc and can be readily self corrected.   Therefore, as their lecturer I would like to help them minimize if not stop them from making this error in subject-verb agreement. My students have taken 2 English papers so far in their diploma course, this BEL 311 is their third paper. From my observation and my experience teaching them this semester (December 2008-April 2009) for almost 12 weeks, I can conclude that my students are having difficulty in correctly and effectively use the subject-verb agreement rules in their writing. Furthermore, they can be put under the category of novice writers. Scardamalia & Bereitner (1986) as cited in Lee (2004) state that novice writers use the trial-and-error approach to trigger more writing. They also spend little time planning and start off writing although they are still confused about the task (Richard, 1990 as cited in Lee 2004). This is evidence in my students writing where they tend to just quickly write their term paper without proper planning since they say that they are struggling with other subjects as well.

According to Hyland (2006), novice writers are not used to seeing writing as interactive or to imagining the perceptions, interests and requirements of a potential audience. Thus, it is a duty of the lecturer to create greater reader awareness among their students. Students should be told that they are writing for other readers as well not just for themselves.

On the other hand, skilled writers or expert writers are those who are able to handle audience concerns and consider more perspectives with regard to their rhetorical problem.   They also develop more sophisticated thinking about the writing topic through inferences about their audience and their anticipated response and evaluation of their arguments and assumptions against their reader's imagined position. Conversely, the less skilled writers are writers who have limited linguistic ability in English and difficulty in problem-finding and problem-solving (Hanizah & Moore, 2003)

From the first draft submitted by the students, I noticed that they have difficulties in general and sub -rules of subject verb agreement. The following are sample errors made by these students.

1)   Nobody **care** for health and fitness till the age of 30 or 35 years, but after crossing the 40's, we find a lot of changes in our activity and work style.

2)   Psychologist **believe** that pressure is the cause for hysteria attacks (Nizam, 2005).

3)   These are the symptoms shown when someone **were** attacked by hysteria.

4)   As we look around at the atmosphere of university, we tend to find many couples and **some of these couple** end up getting married while studying.

5)   So, it **show** that every person in this world include the students have their own spouse to get married and it is not wrong for them to get married early.

6)   Spouse who **choose** to get married early tend to face with a lot of problems because they do not have their own money to support their lives.

7)   The number of unmarried women who **is** having a good career has increased.

8) For example, Anis Ramlee, the mother of three and the group CEO of Esthetics International **believe** the childhood experiences given her the firmness, guts and strength to pursue whatever passions she has.

9) The man **need** to have a good family background.

10) One of the benefits when student **involve** in sports is they can manage their stress.

11) Student who **come** from either a primary school, secondary school, college, university or even 'pondok' (religious school) have their own learning styles.

12) Good and smart style **promise** better results, but bad style can fail them.

13) Difficulty in controlling teenagers' desire to stay on-line for long period is one of the factors that **make** them addicted to the internet.

14) **All the problem** have its solution.

15) It is very clear that smoking **cause** this problem.

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that students have more tendency to make errors in the general rule of subject verb agreement. This may be because they try to avoid using the sub rule of subject verb agreement. This is proven since majority of the errors made are under the general rule of subject verb agreement.

Another factor that causes them to make errors in subject verb agreement is because of the L1 interference (inter language errors) where these students notice that in their L1, there is no rule which says that a singular subject requires a single form of verb. Besides, faulty generalization or over-generalization also involves where a deviant structure has been constructed by these students based on their experience of other structures in the target language. It can also be concluded that interference from the native language is a source of difficulty in second language learning.

Since the subject and the verb are two most important components in constructing correct and complete sentences in English, students should be made aware their importance. Thus, it is important for the lecturers in general who are teaching BEL 331 to do revision on grammar especially on subject verb agreement at the beginning of the semester before they start writing their term paper. Exercises in subject verb agreement should also be given to them to ensure that they master in subject verb agreement. Exercises on error correction especially on subject verb agreement should be done more to make them familiar with the correct rules of subject verb agreement. In writing their term paper, these students actually avoided using the sub-rules of subject verb agreement. The avoidance strategy used by them should not be encouraged especially in their writing. These students should be made aware that all subject verb agreement rules are important in their writing, so there will be variations in terms of words and styles used to explain something. As a result of this, their piece of writing will be more interesting and enjoyable for the reader to read.

Lecturers should also consider using direct approach in teaching grammar at the beginning of semester 3 before these students start writing their term paper. Direct approach involves teaching the rules first then the students need to apply these rules in their writing. In addition, students who have more problems in the usage of subject verb agreement should be grouped together and more attention should be given to teaching them. Another possible way to employ in reducing errors made by them in subject verb agreement is to get students to check each other's work. This will involve them in an active search for errors and English can be used for a genuine communication while discussing these errors in class. By adopting and implementing the above suggestions, hopefully the students will do well in their term paper and can further enhance their writing skills.

5. Conclusion

There is evidence that students still possess problems in the usage of their subject verb agreement in their writing. Majority of the students have problems in their general rule than sub-rules. Students have problems in subject-verb agreement because they don't have this kind of rule in their L1. Furthermore, since these students have to concentrate their study on other subjects learnt this semester, they don't really put as much effort as they could to further improve their writing. Besides, some student didn't realize that they made errors in their writing since they have problems in this area. Therefore, remedial actions should be taken in order to help them produce a good piece of written work. Lecturers can employ direct approach in teaching these students and at the same time organize activities which are related to subject verb agreement. These students should also be allowed to do peer- correction to their term paper and other activities on subject verb agreement together to involve them in learning directly. By doing this, hopefully the students can improve their writing and can function well in English.

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A Tentative Study on Teaching Arts in Vocational English Class

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Abstract

Nowadays, it is a vigorously-developing project to improve teaching arts in English class. As a result, this article focuses on how to improve English teaching efficiency, how to improve English teaching quality, how to encourage students to participate in studying activities actively as well as how to deal with teaching links at class.

Keywords: English class, Improve, Teaching arts, Teaching Link

English teaching is a branch of art as well as science. Therefore, it is increasingly important to think over how to improve English teaching quality, how to encourage students to participate in study actively and how to deal with teaching links at class. Roughly, some necessary teaching arts are as follows:

1. Introduction Design Arts

I tell my students that a good beginning is half done at the very beginning of every term. Introduction design can be closely related to the creation of a harmonious and happy atmosphere and attracting students' attention. For example, when I dealt with a text named *Happiness is a Choice* last term, I employed different ways in two classes. For Pharmacy 3-3 in Grade 2007, I asked students about their choice of happiness among money, happy feelings and health at the very beginning and got different answers. Instead of telling them the definition of "happiness", I gave them a proverb about it--- "If you want to be happy for a few hours, go to get drunk. If you want the happiness to last three years, get married. If you want a life-time happiness, take up gardening. The reason for the last option is this. Gardening is not only useful, it helps you to identify yourself with nature, and thus brings you new joy each day besides improving your health." While in another class, I directly gave students some questions to think over such as "what's happiness?" "Are you happy?" "Are you seeking happiness today?" "Do you remember a time when you were happy?" Once they couldn't give their answers, I said, "you will find it in the title of the text because happiness is a choice in heart and can be defined accordingly. If you want to know more about it, let's move on to the text." In this way, students can be trained in listening and speaking as well as encouraged to learn the text with great interest.

2. Situational Debate Arts

Due to the shortage of language environment among Chinese learners of English, we are supposed to select proper teaching means according to the content of textbooks and create English teaching environment in order to stimulate students' enthusiasm and improve their understanding, grasp and use of this language. When teaching "job", students can play the roles of different jobs, such as a doctor with a stethoscope or a farmer with a sickle. As a result, every student can be fully encouraged to participate in class activities. For example, when learning the text called *Men's Four –legged Friends? Why or Why Not?*, I divided students into two groups to debate against each other.

Pros: dogs are our friends.　　　--- keep us company

　　　　　　　---do many jobs for us

　　　　　　　---be used in sports and police work

Cons: dogs aren't our friends.　　----carry diseases

　　　　　　　----cost money and time

　　　　　　　---- Bring people to death with their bites

That class witnessed heated debate atmosphere and students enjoyed it very much. As for English vocabulary and phrases, situations can be created to help students to learn and use them because it is easier for students to understand their meanings, enjoy the great interest in learning them and memorize them deeply. For example, I say "Good evening!" to my students every time I enter the classroom and "Good night!" when I leave. Gradually, students are able to distinguish the two phrases. Another example, when dealing with some words expressing food and drinks at class, teachers might as well turn the platform into a food store. Playing the role of a store-keeper, the teacher can ask students "What would you like for breakfast?" and students will answer them. Next, students can take turns to go on with this role-play activity.

3. Language Arts

Vivid class teaching language is an enjoyment for students while dry and boring one is an agony. In order to improve students' interest in English learning, teachers are expected to make the textbook more interesting, make the class more vivid and employ various methods to stimulate students' interest and to help students experience success. For example, the following dialogue will help students to experience the sense of humor embodied in English culture.

Teacher: I lay one egg here, and I lay one egg there. How many eggs are there all together?

Students: No, you can't lay eggs.

Some daily expressions such as "please", "Thank you!" and "I'm sorry." will educate students about politeness and friendly interpersonal relationship. When asking students to answer questions or do something, teachers are expected to say "Would you like…?" or "Will you please…?" to display the tactful beauty of English. When remarking on students' answers or performance, teachers should often use some positive expressions such as "Good", "Good job!", "Wonderful!" and "Marvelous!" to give students confidence, encouragement and a sense of achievement.

The language arts of English lie in how to explore the characteristics and connotations of English beauty and put it into practice to create a beautiful language environment for students and hence to stimulate their interest in experiencing, learning, using and improving the language. As is required by the beauty of teaching language, teachers should speak as much as English instead of Chinese; they should have correct pronunciation and intonation as well as fluent expression; teachers are also expected to create a vivid and humorous class atmosphere instead of a boring and tedious one. Accordingly, teachers should employ various kinds of teaching methods in a direct way. In addition, because interest is the best teacher, teachers are supposed to create a beautiful language environment to attract students to be absorbed in the English class. Only in this way can students' interest be stimulated and therefore their efficiency of study be improved.

4. Demonstration and Performance Arts

As is known, it is impossible to fully exert the communicational function of language in life only by creating some real situations at class. In addition to that, students need to understand language by listening to it consciously, which calls for a systematic employment of different teaching means in class. It is true that real situations will help students to experience language in a real way. However, with these situations employed in a comprehensive way, students will have the opportunity to experience language and further use it in life. Besides, demonstration and performance are indispensable skills and means in modern English teaching. It is important for teachers to skillfully employ concrete objects, acts, dialogues and plays to create certain situations. Put into real life situations, students will be unconsciously attracted and absorbed in their roles, hence achieving more knowledge and having their enthusiasm for thinking and practice stimulated. During performance, properties should be used as much as possible, such as in seeing the doctor, shopping, making telephone calls, asking the way and so on, to make students slide into the created situations more easily. If there is no property, students' imagination and aesthetics can be more easily improved. For example, when I taught the present perfect tense, I dropped an old glass on the ground all of a sudden and of course it was broken. Then I asked them a question.

T: What have I just done?

S: You have just broken the glass.

These performances are characterized by simple motions, visualization and operability. Therefore, it is easier for students to be interested in, to accept them and to have greater achievements with less effort. As a result, students will be able to learn about certain situations to use language and its meaning. What's more, students will develop right language habits and improve their own skills in using language flexibly.

To sum up, in order to have high-efficient English class, the former stereotyped teaching pattern must give way to an atmosphere in which teachers and students appreciate the beauty of English together. A teaching environment with the harmonious development of teaching and learning, knowledge and ability, will and emotion should be formed to produce powerful teaching stress. In order to achieve the best teaching effects, artistic teaching is expected to be conducted in class.

5. Communication and Interaction Arts

In English class, teachers can create some "information gaps" based on specific activities and students' reality to encourage students to communicate with others with what they have learnt in class. For example, I employed "information gaps"to teach the expressions to ask the way and give directions when I dealt with the text named *How Can I Get to the Post Office?*. I designed some questions: 1. Do you often ask for directions?   2. From whom do you often ask for directions?   3. Do you always get the right answers?   4. Why are foreign travelers often confused in a Japanese city? 5. What will a Greek do when you ask him /her for directions?   6. Are you sure of getting the right answers when you ask for directions in your hometown? Students would finish reading one paragraph when they answered one question. At the same time, they understood the fact that they would get different answers in different countries when they asked the same question of "How can I get the post office?" was caused by different folk custom.

In another activity, Student A1 and A2 got a map with some places unmarked, such as the Great Wall Hotel or a bank, which they could get from Student B1 and B2. Meanwhile, B1 and B2 were eager to find some places such as a hospital or McDonald's on their map under the help of A1 and A2.

Due to the information gap between the two groups, they interacted with each other, during which they practiced some necessary sentence patterns such as "Could you tell me where…is?", "Would you please tell me how I can get to …?" and "Do you mind telling me the way to…?" as well as some positional prepositions and some expressions to give directions.

6. The Arts of "Turning War to Peace"

Although class accidents are common, an impolitic approach will lead to a failing class and spoiled teachers' image. On the contrary, a proper approach will achieve a wonderful effect. For example, I came across an expression of "hit itself" when I taught reflexive pronouns. I didn't figure out a proper situation to use it before class. I was about to explain that phrase to students when a butterfly flew around the classroom and then rushed to a window. Suddenly I had an idea and said to students, "It hit itself". Of course, students burst into laughter, "Yes, it hit itself". Here is another example, when I explained "a good sleep", I found a student sleeping in class. So I said, "Please be quiet, she has a good sleep!". As a result, all students burst into laughter and that student inclined her head with embarrassment.

7. Blackboard Writing Arts

Writing on blackboard has an indispensable role in class teaching. According to English handwriting arts, the writing of letters should be standardized; the distance among letters, words, sentences and lines should not be too long or short; the layout should be neat and clean. Besides, there should be a reasonably-designed outline in which a board is employed for each class and certain small parts can be used for repeated writing and erasing; the title should be put to the top middle part; the key and difficult points should be written in the middle part while the minor points on sides for later use. The middle part is expected to have clear outline, emphasized key points as well as concise content.

8. Various Teaching Forms

A variety of teaching forms can be employed to integrate knowledge with interest. Students tend to feel tired and their attention will be distracted when the class is coming to the end. Therefore, some discussions can be conducted to attract students' attention. I once divided my students into four groups to have a discussion when we learnt *Gambling*.

Gambling ----

         A social evil;

         Injurious not noly to the individuals but also to the society;

Discourages habits of industry;

Throws a man and his family into misery

Ends up in theft, robbery or in crime of violence

In the end, I summed it up--- "We will never develop the habits of gambling. We must tell people to stay away from gambling……."

According to psychology, constantly changing stimulations will attract and keep people's attention. A certain teaching form will attract students' attention at the very beginning but fail to keep it after a relatively long period. Therefore, it is particularly important to change teaching forms from time to time. For example, a text can be read by teachers, individual students, small groups and the whole class. Dialogues can be conducted among students, a teacher and a student, groups, male and female students and so on. Different forms to deal with a dialogue such as reading aloud, reciting, interviews and performances can be employed. A text can be recited, retold, summarized, changed into dialogues or role-play activities in order to help students to memorize what they have learnt. Besides, different means can be used, such as tapes, projectors, concrete objects, wall maps and stick pictures. Of course, we can not change the form too much. That is, the change of forms should be based on the purpose and requirements of teaching. Generally speaking, interesting content can have a longer circle while those uninteresting one should be changed more often. At class, knowledge and interest should be integrated to give students a relaxing atmosphere to study English. In our modern age, the diversified information channels will definitely lead to diversified ways for students to gain knowledge. Accordingly, the former English pattern in which the textbook and teachers are focused on should be changed. Instead, various teaching forms should be employed to cultivate students' learning capacities in the whole teaching process. Therefore, teachers are expected to find out effective teaching methods to create interesting and wonderful teaching atmosphere.

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