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Edited By:
Roberto Bergami, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia
Sandra Liliana Pucci, PhD, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA
Annamarie Schuller, Chisholm Institute, Melbourne, Australia

Founder/Director
Dr. Bruce C. Swaffield, School of Communication & the Arts
Regent University, Virginia Beach, USA
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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Making a difference: A global intelligence briefing for educators

Dr. Rose Lee Hayden
International Consultant/Author

Good morning and welcome to Rome! Thanks to all of you, and in particular to Dr. Bruce Swaffield, this Worldwide Forum has become a far more diverse international gathering since I first addressed this group ranting and raving about how little policy relevance professionals such as yourselves seem to have in the so-called “real world.” Well, guess what? I am going to do it again! I am going to rant and rave about the fact that the more we learn in our field, the less we seem able to contribute to assuring a better future for our increasingly violent and fragile planet. It is a fatal paradox, my friends. Can we international/intercultural educators make a difference, even on our own campuses, or are we only making a little “politically correct” noise here and there? We possess more and more knowledge, knowledge that has never been more relevant. Witness Dafur, Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and the Congo – only a few of the seemingly endless genocidal tragedies in today’s news. What about New York, Madrid, London, Bali, and now Mumbai, where the murderous intentions of a whole new generation of global psychotics use religious zealotry to fuel their pathetic delusions and justify their hideous deeds.

So what’s the deal? Is this an “open moment” or an “insurmountable opportunity” for our field? Robert Benchley supposedly remarked, “Drawing on my fine command of language, I said nothing.” You may wish that this were so this morning, but bear with me while I outline some challenges that I feel our field is uniquely prepared to address. I will also suggest some specific projects that we can, indeed, make a difference.

Fear not...I will not deal with each at length, given time considerations. I will, however, touch upon these pressing concerns: demographics, wars and immigration; new technologies and their ethical implications; the current economic crash and its impact on societies and humanitarian assistance; crime and nation building; global warming; and “ethno-environmentalism.” Within the realm of education per se, I will briefly focus on the globalization of higher education, the growth of English as THE global language, and international exchanges of students, faculty and professionals. Finally, I will conclude with a quick look at the Obama phenomenon, and end with what is for me, at least, the most intriguing of all cross-cultural phenomena – humor and jokes!

War & Demographics

As Ambrose Bierce remarked, “War is God’s way of teaching Americans geography.” In fact, thanks to the media’s insatiable coverage of worldwide uprisings, all of us have had to focus on regions and nations that would otherwise not even be blips on our daily radarscopes. As I once jokingly noted, my infallible Peace Plan would be to prohibit ANY American President from going to war with any nation that a majority of Americans cannot find on a map!
It is important to stress that the very definition of what constitutes a “war” and what types of wars there are out there is not so straightforward. In fact, our international dealings are complicated by the existence of three very distinct classes of countries: 1) the Pre-Moderns that are tribal and face a choice between order and chaos; 2) the Moderns (e.g., Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America) that are 19th Century entities much devoted to nationalism; and 3) the Post-Moderns: countries that have shed nationalism and hang ups about sovereignty (e.g., the European Union), are moving beyond the nation state, and increasingly depend on international constraints and multilateral mechanisms.

Of the many hotspots today where genocidal wars are taking place, category one, the Pre-Moderns, account for most of the flare-ups currently in the news. Let’s take the case of the Talls and the Smalls, the Tutsis and the Hutus. Tutsi rebels continue their massacres in towns in North Kivu province, and the 17,000 UN peace keepers there are unable to cope. In the past two years, 850,000 people have fled their homes due to fighting between rebels, Congo’s army and assorted militias. At least 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus have been killed. The genocide in Dafur, murderous raids in Liberia and slaughter in the Ivory Coast are, sadly, only a few of the most recent entries in this category that document our specie’s murderous behaviors.

Category two, the Moderns, account for the bulk of what global threats, violence and outbursts are regularly in the news. Skirmishes between Thais and Malays in contested ethnic conclaves involve nation states with higher per-capita incomes and industrialized economies. Ruthless dictatorships in North Korea and elsewhere routinely starve thousands of their own citizens, while much of global terrorism is aided and abetted by politically unstable Middle Eastern regimes capitalizing on traditional hostilities to support religious sects and fellow ethnics across borders. Many of these regimes are in fact quite unstable and use external “enemies” to justify their own internal corruption and brutality. This is certainly true of Iran where at least 70% of the population is under the age of 30, is non-Arab, and is often pro-Western. The equivalent of an Islamic SS patrols the streets to impose 7th century laws upon their own peoples. Extreme modernism and 7th century fundamentalism live uneasily side-by-side in Saudi Arabia, while Turkey and other nations in the region struggle to protect secular civil societies from fundamentalist rivals.

Religion

Historically, the root of more violence and wars than any other has been and remains that of religion. As you know, there are three major monotheistic religions in the world: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. In the 16th century, Judaism and Christianity reconciled with the modern world, not always peacefully. Over time, church and state became separate, thus allowing the Western world to experience an unprecedented scientific and cultural awakening. Islam, which developed in the 7th century and counts a billion or so Moslems around the world, has not managed to reconcile itself with modernity and has periodically attacked the West when its radical clerics are in charge. From the 7th century and well into the 16th and 17th centuries, the Moslems (Ottoman Turks) were literally at the gates of Vienna battling, interestingly enough, on September 11, 1683. Global terrorism is yet another attack on Western civilization by radical Islam. We can only hope that both Moslems and non-Moslems who deplore this indiscriminate killing in the name of God will prevail, and that
Islamic moderates will, over time, find a way to bring Islam forward into the 21st century.

Fundamentalism, of course, is not confined to Islam. All religions have their lunatic fringe. Remember, going to church doesn’t make you a Christian any more than going to a garage makes you a mechanic! There are a lot of self-righteous, bigoted fundamentalists loose in many nations, including my own, the United States, where challenges to secularism take place daily at school board meetings, community hearings, and most predictably during political elections at all governmental levels.

It seems that everyone is raised to hate somebody else, thanks to ethnic and religious grudges that are passed along over the centuries. Even the so-called Post-Modern Europeans do not escape these Cain and Abel-like hatreds that pit the Irish against the Irish, the Basques against the Spanish, and so on. It would take all day to list the ethnic and other rifts in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union. The need for negotiators and peace keepers with linguistic and multicultural skills is evident, but there seems to be little input from our field with respect to this pressing priority. What can we multicultural educators contribute to prevent a fanaticized, globally operative minority from committing even more mass murders? Samuel Huntington’s “clash of civilizations” is awfully close to home these days.

The haves and the havenots: demographics and inequality

I invented the term “techno-feudalism” to describe our post-colonial world. Remember, in feudal times, if you did not own land or provide commercial and other services to those who did, you were a “serf.” Today, those who are not part of the global system where information or money changes hands are, in effect, “techno-serfs.” Inequalities are bound to grow because the technological and telecommunications revolution is only in its infancy. It has already changed the way human beings live as much as the agricultural and industrial revolutions and is a fertile breeding ground for global social unrest.

Demographics certainly fuel this explosive mix. Over-population in areas with scarce resources coupled with corrupt regimes limits the possibility of escaping poverty, especially in nations where the vast majority of the population is under the age of 22. It has a direct role in breeding fundamentalist terrorists who resent the wealth and freedom of the West at least as much as they purport to be agents of their faith. Undereducated masses of young males with no future and few if any skills to enable them to compete even within their own economies latch onto fundamentalism as a way of getting even with those who have supposedly victimized them. Are these so-called “martyrs” just bad losers who know it? Forget the religious justifications.

Home-grown young male terrorists, like those in London, were often raised in non-fundamentalist homes, yet latch on to fundamentalism as a way of coping with their own failure to succeed in their adopted European homelands. In fact, their sisters regularly outperform them scholastically, yet are still victims of so-called “honor killings” let alone other 7th century punishments. Just recently, here in Italy, a young Pakistani girl was murdered by her own father who resented her socializing with her non-Muslim peers. This is a pan-European problem and a recipe for disaster. Moslems make up 10% of the French and German population as well as a reasonable percentage of the population on other European nations but, overall, are not being integrated in their host countries. Add to this the current severe economic crisis which is feeding
natavist and racist sentiments across Europe. Will immigrants become the victims of yet another “holocaust” in Europe? Is anyone in our field addressing this very real and current danger?

At the other extreme of the demographic boom is the demographic bust in developed nations. To put it bluntly, most countries in the Western world have stopped breeding, despite an obsession with sex. Maintaining a steady national population requires a birth rate of 2.1. In Western Europe, it is 1.5 or 30% below replacement levels. The rate in Germany 1.3, Spain and Italy 1.2. With the working age population declining by one-third, ever smaller numbers of workers must support ever-expanding numbers of the elderly and infirm. The economic consequences of a world where three times as many people will be over the age of 60 and where there are only 2 workers to support one pensioner are real.

Japan’s rate of population growth is 1.3, which means that Japan will lose up to 60 million people over the next 30 years. Japan generally refuses to import people so immigration is not a credible alternative. Japan has already closed 2,000 schools and is closing them down at a rate of 300 per year. Meanwhile, in the U.S. the population growth rate is somewhat higher, 2.0, just below replacement level. However, this reflects a higher birth rate among immigrants. The Anglo rate is 1.6, the same as France, while America’s Hispanics have a 2.7 rate.

China and India do not have declining populations, but in each of these nations, 70 million males will never find wives thanks to female infanticide and widespread abortion of female fetuses. The birth rate in Russia is so low that by 2050, Russia’s population will be smaller than that of Yemen. Russia has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world with a death rate double that of other developed nations. Indeed, given these statistics, the relative balance of world power and predominance of Western nations is bound to shift even more during our lifetimes and with unpredictable results.

**Immigration**

Wars, demographics and economic hardship have always fueled immigration which is bound to increase exponentially. Most nations have no clue as to how to manage, let alone cope with this vast, shifting tide of humanity. Politicians are quick to manipulate fear in the face of these “invasions,“ further complicating prospects for peaceful cultural integration.

About 3% of the world’s population or 200 m people have left their homelands to live elsewhere. The current global recession is particularly rough on migrants who are being deported in record numbers. Mexican immigration to the United States is down about 42% in the past two years, and there have been 36,000 deportations from the U.S. in 2008 alone. Spain is offering money via a “plan of voluntary return” to encourage 87,000 migrants to leave. Xenophobia is increasing throughout Europe where more and more violence is directed at immigrants. “Undesirable” immigrants from Romania, Bulgaria and Albania in particular are constantly in the news in Italy where a rash of rapes, murders, robberies and other crimes is fueling a backlash that has serious socio-political implications.

Let’s look at the United States and its so-called “melting pot” that has absorbed hundreds of millions of immigrants throughout its history. Despite myths to the contrary, immigration in the States has never been without its alarmists. To quote one commentator, “These immigrants are ‘the most stupid in
the nation. Few of their children speak English and through their indiscretion or ours, or both, great disorders may one day arise among us.” The immigrants in question here are NOT Latinos, and the statement was made by none other than Benjamin Franklin who was referring to the influx of German immigrants some 200 years ago!

In the United States, which is the fourth-largest Spanish speaking country in the world, Latinos are poorer than other Americans and fare poorly in schools and colleges. Hispanics have an overall unemployment rate of almost 8% compared with the national rate of 6.5%. Seven American cities account for half of all Latino immigrants, while whites leaving cities add to a new demographic with political as well as economic ramifications. It must be noted, however, that the tide of Hispanic immigration has slowed thanks to the current global slump and increased crackdowns at the border. Many migrants are returning home where remittances to Mexico have dropped over 4% in the past year.

True to its history, immigration continues apace in the United States where it is amazingly diverse. In the New York City borough of Queens, students in one school speak 26 foreign languages at home. Schools everywhere face the challenge of schooling new immigrants, and bitter debates have taken place, especially those related to bilingual education which was banned in California because it was seen as a political sop to the teachers’ unions. Test scores have risen since, according to one source.

Educators in southern California regularly encounter students who speak Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Armenian, Cantonese, Khmer, Mandarin, Tagalog, Arabic, Japanese, Farsi, Russian, Thai, Lao and Urdu. There are 800 schools where at least ten languages are spoken by students not fluent in English. In fact, in some areas, the concentration of immigrant sub-communities means that whites are now a minority and are assuming the behaviors of a minority as well.

The political fallout is real. Caught between nativism and multiculturalism, American politicians know they cannot win. Without our professional intervention on this front, bitterness can lead to socio-political divides that will harm our body politic, and have already done so. And while America, compared to many nations, has had substantial experience educating and absorbing immigrants and refugees, we must still address ways multicultural educators can ease the integration of immigrants into the political and cultural mainstream without destroying their unique cultural and linguistic heritage. While many Americans are monolingual, one in five Americans does speak another language at home – most often Spanish, Chinese or Russian. How can we protect and cultivate these linguistic resources while at the same time teach English and assimilate these newcomers?

These are important issues because immigration is shaping America more profoundly than trade or technology. You may not know that Iowa has been quietly importing Bosnians and Sudanese to rejuvenate its aging population. In Silicon Valley, whites are now in the minority, while Levittown, a quintessential Pennsylvania suburb, has a Turkish mosque. Detroit claims to be the Arab capital of America, and Miami, long seen as an essentially Cuban enclave, now hosts citizens from more than 156 nations.

By 2050, one in four Americans will be Latino, and if you add Asians, one in three will be “non-Americans,” as some “nativists” would phrase this. Roughly one million immigrants enter the United States each year -300,000 illegally. In times of economic crisis, the possibilities of a backlash increases, as it has in Italy where gangs of young men have been attacking immigrants whose skin
color is different than theirs. It has become a national scandal here that is not at all in keeping with Italy’s laws and overall tolerant cultural norms.

Since 1990, the number of foreign born in America has risen by 6m to over 25 m, and half of the 50 m new U.S. inhabitants in next 25 years will be immigrants or children of immigrants. Beware of generalizations, however, because immigrants are surely not all alike. It makes no sense to lump together a computer geek from Bangalore, a shopkeeper from Seoul and Hmong tribesmen. Tejanos are not Chicanos. As a profession, we need to keep examining whether or not the so-called “melting pot” is still working. Does the middle class understand that without these immigrants, their standard of living would fall apart? What can we do as educators and professionals to prevent violent reactions from those most affected, such as low-skilled Americans and immigrants from the previous wave? These are not academic issues, and as noted elsewhere, we need to train a cadre of professionals who can work with policy makers as well as with educators to address these tensions and provide constructive policies.

Lest I leave the impression that U.S. immigration policy is somehow coherent or effective, let me state that America’s immigration system is a mess. However, let me also point out that this suits most people just fine as it provides loopholes for those who come and for those who hire them illegally. What can you say about a country that annually conducts a Green Card Lottery that allows 50,000 new immigrants a year to enter the States with papers more or less in hand? I know this for a fact because during the past several months, every time I opened my computer, I was invited to enter this lottery which offered me the tantalizing prospect of eventually becoming an American – a status I somehow assumed I already possessed having been born in New Jersey some 66 years ago, and having held an American passport for the past 50 years!

As multicultural educators we must monitor and learn from others re: what works when it comes to educating and integrating immigrants. An international comparison in a recent edition of The Economist showed that among the world’s best performing immigrant children are Chinese children being taught in Australia. They even outperform two-thirds of all Australians! It also revealed that first-generation immigrant students are more motivated than succeeding generations, and are often more motivated than the native born. We also need to look at these realities and ask ourselves how our multicultural knowledge can be applied to improve the educational achievement of immigrant populations who do not succeed in our schools. After all, there must be something about Asian cultures that promotes academic achievement. Can we identify those socio-familial cultural patterns and design pedagogies that would be more effective with under-achievers?

**Life in times of recession**

Focusing now on the international financial and economic crisis that has frightful parallels with the Great Depression, I note that in times of great downturns, there is always a turning inward. Americans, as well as Europeans, are war-weary and fear for their economic futures. This has serious implications for humanitarian assistance programs and for charitable donations. President-elect Obama must make the difficult case for humanitarian intervention abroad – in Somalia, Dafur, Rwanda, Congo, and elsewhere despite the backlash sure to come thanks to America’s involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and the economic slump. He must also be prepared for the fact that Europeans and other allies
may not step up to the plate when it comes to the military interventions that must take place before any humanitarian programs can function. Witness Bosnia and the years of killing there before NATO and America finally got involved. Dafur is another instance where military force is needed to protect threatened communities and refugees. The same is surely true in the Congo where UN peacekeepers are undermanned, badly trained, and desperately need reinforcements. While not endorsing military adventures, no peace-keeping or humanitarian efforts can succeed until the violence is ended.

Another aspect of today’s global financial scandal is that of outright criminal activity on the part of nations as well as individuals, and the widespread ease with which monies can be squirreled away in tax havens worldwide. This, in my opinion, is the most frightening aspect of today’s brand of “globalization” and encourages the spread of lawlessness which, in turn, spawns terrible social crises in countries both rich and poor. According to the IMF, 5% of Gross World Product or about $1.5 trillion is laundered every year. About 33% of GDP in developing countries and 15% in developed nations is “off the books.” Even if some of this flow is not out-and-out criminal money, it nevertheless is money that is being looted by the leaders of every nation, in particular the most impoverished. In Nigeria, this figure approaches 80%, while in Switzerland it is a mere 10%. Some refer to post-Soviet Russia as a “kleptocracy.” The point here is that corruption increases the divide between rich and poor, inhibits nation building, degrades civil societies and puts them in danger of anarchic collapse. Criminal empires hook our children on drugs, force scores of young women into sexual slavery, and here in Italy, even keep garbage from being properly collected so that toxic and other wastes become real health hazards. Obviously cultural norms affect the rule of law. Why is it that the Swiss and Scandinavians outperform the Greeks and Italians, let alone the Nigerians, Russians, Chinese and Petro-dollar oligarchies when it comes to corruption indices. Money laundering and tax evasion are financial cancers that have serious consequences and undercut our prospects for sustaining our respective civilizations.

Before concluding these remarks with a specific focus on education, let me quickly turn to economic and environmental issues, which I shall shamefully gloss over given time constraints. Looking at current international business and economic realities, the new buzz word is GLOBALITY, not globalization which implies only a one-way street. Flows are increasingly in both directions, with the result that multinationals are reducing their use of expatriates. However, Americans still dominate the top slots of the largest multinationals. Even at GE, which is wholeheartedly committed to emerging markets, around 180 of the top 200 managers are still Americans. The single biggest gap is the lack of emerging market experience in senior executive ranks. Boardrooms are even less representative with only 5% being non-Americans. Family-owned firms present another problem.

However, the trend favors a much more multicultural workforce, and not just on the factory floor. Today we talk about the G20 as much as the G7. There is a substantial and growing demand for those who can provide effective cross-cultural and language training for the world’s (not just America’s) businesses. I suggest that multicultural educators reach out and work with the business schools on your own campuses to create team-taught courses to prepare more effective global managers. You can visit your local chamber of commerce to design training programs to enable local and multinational managers to deal more effectively with their increasingly diverse workforces.
Global warming and “ethno-environmentalism”

Culture counts when it comes to corruption, and equally so when it comes to environmental degradation. Why is it that Northern Europeans make the most of solar power when the sun does not shine all that much in their part of the world? Why do some nations have clean streets and others trash-littered ones? In a word, why is Denmark or Scandinavia, for that matter, more environmentally inclined than China?

The stakes are high – that of the very survival of our planet. The world burns some thirty-one billion barrels of oil, six billion tons of coal, and a hundred trillion cubic feet of natural gas that produces, in aggregate, some 400 quadrillion B.T.U.s of energy. This yields around 30 billion tons of carbon dioxide, of which about one-third ends up in the sea where it helps form a weak acid. Another 25% is absorbed by terrestrial ecosystems, and the rest remains in the air that we all breathe. At least 15% and possibly as many as 30% of the planet’s plant and animal species are threatened, and as sea levels rise, drought and flooding will occur in many parts of the world. An expanse of the Artic icecap the size of West Virginia melts each year, and matters can only escalate when all those Chinese and Indians buy their first cars. Today, China has fewer than 3 cars/100 and India even less. The number of cars there is expected to increase from 700,000 to 3 billion. Who are we to tell them they cannot enjoy the same mobility and privileges that we have for the past century?

Global warming will create unimaginable waves of immigrants, refugees and social chaos. Again, educators must do what we can to learn about the cultural dimensions of environmentalism, to teach children around the world about environmental dangers, and to modify negative cultural behaviors with respect to environmental practices.

What’s right and what’s wrong? Are there universal human values?

One topic that must be treated more seriously in a future Worldwide Forum is that of providing much more in the way of culture-neutral ethical and civic education in our schools and universities. In the name of anti-terrorism, most of us have experienced a serious threat to our civil liberties and have had to face the ugly realities of Guantanamo, of widespread civil disorder, and worse. Are today’s students at all concerned about civic issues? Do our educational systems even bother to teach civics anymore? If not, why not, and what does this mean for our particular professional field? In a word, what’s right and what’s wrong? Are universal human values compatible within the context of cultural relativism?

There will always be heated arguments with respect to ethnocentrism vs. cultural relativism. Often common sense does not prevail, especially when one attempts to craft universal standards for human rights and humane practices. There are some truly abhorrent cultural practices out there which in good conscience cannot be dismissed in the name of cultural relativism.

Unfortunately, those of us promoting “multiculturalism” are accused of fostering divisiveness and rewarding dysfunctional social behaviors. In the United States, critics believe that “diversity” is merely a code word for reinforcing ethnic, racial and class hostilities.

At a global level, matters are even more contentious when it comes to local/national vs. universal norms, especially with respect to the protection of human rights and dignity. What can we do to strengthen the bonds of unity and disseminate universal humane values while respecting diverse cultural practices?
Specifically, what happens to one’s multicultural beliefs when one comes into contact with aspects of another culture that one finds totally unacceptable, such as female circumcision or slavery? In Niger, there are 43,000 inherited slaves, plus tens of thousands of others in West Africa, notably in Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania. Many children are sold into slavery and are subsequently sexually abused. Does our field provide any meaningful input here? Are multiculturalists overlooking cultural behaviors that conflict with fantasies of “noble savages” a la Rousseau? Is the current practice of slavery mentioned at all in African or Black Studies courses? Is being imprisoned by Castro somehow better than being imprisoned by Kim Jong II? Sadly, “intellectuals” often overlook abuses in countries they admire, even as they denounce these same practices in other autocratic regimes. There are some truly evil cultural practices out there that, frankly, should be eliminated in the name of our shared humanity. We must avoid romanticizing pre-industrial societies and must not confine ourselves to exploring the novelty or folklore of other cultures. Intellectual honesty requires that we examine societies and cultures in their entirety – warts and all.

**English as a global language**

In 1898, Otto von Bismarck, by then an old man, was asked by a journalist what he saw as the decisive factor in modern history. His answer: “The fact that the North Americans speak English.” The use of English as a global language has been exponentially accelerated by electronic as well as the traditional media. As an operating standard for global communication, English increasingly influences the future of all languages. Today, over 80% of all information stored in the world’s computers is in English. Technology also adds vocabulary to the English language - close to 60% of all new entries to Webster’s Third New International Dictionary.

Technology, in and of itself, is neutral and can actually be used to protect and archive exotic languages even as it disseminates and reinforces the global use of English. Unlike TV and radio, the World Wide Web has limitless space and one can find people chatting in Aragonite, Armenian, Basque, Breton, Cambodian, Catalan, Esperanto, Estonian, Gaelic, Galician, Hindi, Hmong, Macedonian, Swahili, Welsh and Yoruba...and so on. With languages, we either use them or lose them and it seems that the Internet does facilitate their use in many instances and keeps speakers in touch and proficient.

The Internet can also be actively used to archive and preserve these “endangered” languages threatened with extinction. Of 6,900 tongues spoken today, some 50 – 90% could be gone by the end of the century. Oral history and preservation teams are badly needed do deal with these “endangered species.” Of course, the only real way to save a language is to speak it. People have to talk to people and when the last speaker dies, so does the language.

But having said this, let us focus on the undeniable fact that in the history of our species, there has never been a language spoken by so many people in so many places as English is today. Soon it will be a language spoken by more people as a second tongue than a first. While Britain and the U.S. constitute 70% of native English speakers, with an additional 57 million Creole speakers out there, within a decade or so, mother-tongue or native speakers will be outnumbered. Just think of it: English will be taught mostly by non-native speakers to non-native speakers in order to communicate mainly with non-native speakers!
English is now the dominant language in over 60 countries and around 2 billion people – one-third of world’s population – are routinely exposed to English. Given that the demand for English is only in its infancy, educators face the challenge of providing effective instruction via improved pedagogies that take into account different learning styles and end uses of the language. This should keep ESL types busy for many a generation.

And now for some more surprising facts. There is no such thing as English, per se. There are many ENGL\(\text{ISHES}\): an “Inner Circle” made up of the U.S., the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; an “Outer Circle” consisting of Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and Zambia; and an “Expanding Circle” – which includes, among others, China, Egypt, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Nepal Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Russia, and Zimbabwe.

The internationalization of English has reshaped the language and its literature, providing linguistic innovations and a truly wondrous expansion of the cultural identities associated with the language. The circles mentioned above illustrate the types of spread, patterns of acquisition and functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts. The “Inner Circle” represents the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English; the “Outer Circle” the institutionalized non-native varieties of English spoken in regions that have passed through extended periods of colonization with English being more or less an official language (used in educational and commercial institutions, but not generally by the native citizens). The “Expanding Circle” includes regions where the active varieties of English are used in foreign language contexts, but do not have official status and are more restricted in their uses.

In sum, English has and continues to develop multicultural identities and represents a repertoire of cultures whose underlying assumptions are no longer exclusively Judeo-Christian. So beware, native speakers in the “Inner Circle.” Do not assume that others, no matter how fluent in English, are thinking like we do. I have had this experience more than once, especially with Germans who speak English so well that I am still inclined to assume that they are thinking like me and not like Germans. As Unamuno observed, an idea does not pass from one language to another without change. As more and more non-natives learn and speak English, we must keep this in mind.

Many of you teach internationally or teach persons from other cultures, and while you may not know the technical term, ethnopedagogy, you do know that you must adjust your teaching to take into account the fact that culture shapes learning styles, expectations and behaviors. Even within the same geographic region, there can be real differences. For example, one ESL teacher noted that her Slovak students liked to assemble lots of facts with no conclusion, while her Hungarian students liked to reach lots of conclusions without bothering about any facts. As many of you have learned the hard way, teaching in a society where students are rarely asked their opinion, where they have never practiced the means for independent thinking and argumentative expression, where higher educational institutions are almost inert with apathy and anxiety challenges our very identities as educators.

Teaching English effectively is not just a matter of dealing with foreign students and immigrants. In fact, the sad truth is that while English literacy is increasing around the world, America’s literacy rates are eroding. Fully 21% of adult Americans did not read a book last year because they could not, making this one of the worst rates in the entire world. A National Assessment of Adult Literacy in 2003 found steep declines in the English literacy of Hispanics in the
U.S., although there was a significant increase among Black Americans and Asians. Black literacy increased from 29% - 33% and Asian literacy from 45% to 54%. Hispanics, on the other hand, suffered big declines in English proficiency. The Hispanic reading proficiency failure rate increased from 35% in 1992 to 44% in 2003. Once again, those of you teaching English face a real-world challenge teaching this new generation of Hispanics who often arrive later in the United States, stay for a shorter period of time, and are much less likely to speak English at home. Have any of you set up language learning partnerships in your schools pairing Johnny (who needs to learn Spanish) with Juan (who needs to learn English)? I know that in my own case, I learned my Spanish thanks to making friends with a Cuban refugee new to my high school. It was a mutual exchange of language and culture that I value to this day, and one need not travel internationally to have the benefits of such “exchanges.”

**Cultural imperialism means always having to say “you’re sorry?”**

Inevitably, whenever we speak about the expanding role of English as a world language we face serious charges of cultural imperialism - a phenomenon almost always equated with the intentions and manipulations of the United States. Americanization originally meant the shaping and assimilation of turn-of-the-century immigrants, and in Europe, after WW II, a program of de-Nazification, rebuilding and extending a freedom-loving ethos imbued with an anti-Soviet stance. Post Cold War, Americanization has brought mostly cheap, violent images to the rest of the world which, as a result, has no idea about how the Protestant work ethic laid the moral foundations of America as a great nation. There is no sense of the human solidarity that holds Americans together in times of adversity, or of just how much human achievement is valued and acknowledged, unlike in most of the rest of the world. Particularly for young people, America is a brand name for big money, quick success, and sheer force largely unconnected with the moral tradition and work ethic that shaped American society.

When you teach or live or study abroad, and if you are American, be prepared to be stereotyped as a typical “Ugly American” by people who have never been to the United States, who know very little about it, who have never studied about it in any intellectually valid way, but who think they know everything about it. Americans refer to these mostly Western critics as “Eurotrash.” In fact, during America’s recent Presidential campaign, to a person, every Italian I spoke with was convinced that America is such a totally racist country that no Black man could ever be elected president. And when Obama was indeed elected president, the nay-sayers response was to note that Obama is “not really a Black American since his father was born in Kenya.” That makes me wonder if I am a real American given that my father was born in Russia!

And speaking about anti-Americanism, if people choose to eat at McDonald’s maybe it is because they like it! Does everything have to be viewed as a cultural conquest? Perhaps we should ask why so many are so intolerant of the free choices willingly made by others? For me, the real question here is, “Why is American culture so popular around the world?” As the Czech leader Masaryk put it: “I see no harm in becoming Americanized; we’ve been Europeanizing America for centuries!”

All of which points to a need for a whole new approach to American Studies, one that is not ethnocentric or jingoistic, one that is not defensive and blind to the negative as well as positive aspects of our history and society. American
studies should convey what American values are all about, and how these have and continue to evolve in our still-young nation. Educators used to dedicate more time and effort here given federal support in the wake of WW II and the Cold War. However, for the past three decades, America has been unilaterally disarming itself intellectually by closing down USIS libraries around the world, by cutting back on international exchanges, by harassing applicants for student and research visas, and by otherwise ignoring “soft” as opposed to “hard” power. Hopefully under an Obama Administration this will change and we can update American studies reflecting our more recent history and diversity.

Surely we must battle against the xenophobia that terrorism has spawned and overturn knee-jerk, short-sighted student visa processes that have caused the number of foreign students in the United States to decline by 90,000 in recent years. The need to build a successor generation of allies is more urgent than ever before. Not only do these foreign students spend $12 billion per year in our country – an “invisible export” in economic terms – they teach and conduct research on the cutting edge of human knowledge and constitute our best hope for a more peaceful and just world. Foreign students who no longer feel welcome in the States are going to Australia or to the U.K. instead. Our days of exclusively benefiting from the so-called “brain drain” are over. In 2004, 60% of U.S. research universities reported a decline in applications by foreign graduate students between 2003–2004. Nine of the top 25 reported over a 30% decline.

To repeat, the United States has failed to invest in a “successor generation” of area/language/multicultural specialists at home and abroad and we shall pay dearly for this mistaken policy. We must work together to support more gatherings like this Forum which I hope will explore more fully the challenge of increasing international educational exchanges at all levels and of all types.

The “Net” generation

One surprising fact, at least for me, was that while reading for pleasure and writing with pens and pencils is no longer the norm, the so-called “New Generation” is not at all brain dead, despite having spent on average 20,000 hours on the Internet and 10,000 hours playing video games by the time they are 20 years old. To quote Don Tapscott in an article entitled, “Growing Up Digital: How the Net Generation is Changing Your World, “As the first global generation ever, the Net Generers are smarter, quicker and more tolerant of diversity than their predecessors... These empowered young people are beginning to transform every institution of modern life.” He adds that they care strongly about justice and are actively trying to improve society. Obama’s recent election campaign victory is pretty solid proof that this is so. Unlike the more passive couch potatoes of my TV generation, these Net Generers are interactive and are better at multitasking and processing complex visual information. According to the author, they also value freedom and choice, love to personalize, and demand integrity and openness. They want entertainment and play in their work and educational settings, as well as in their social lives. They love to collaborate, want everything to happen fast, and expect constant innovation.

But like it or not, these Net Generers are now our students. Perhaps we should look at them as culturally different, not only from us professors, but from the culture represented in the texts we teach them. If we recognize that all our students are in a sense “foreigners” (or, conversely that we are foreigners in their country), it would surely improve our teaching. We could even create a
new sub-specialty called “techno-pedagogy” to explore more effective means of reaching today’s wired generation.

Net Geners are also causing culture clashes in the workplace where older managers consider them spoiled, narcissistic brats who spend too much time instant messaging. However, taking steps like banning Facebook in the workplace is the equivalent of forbidding rolodexes and is counterproductive. According to a report from PricewaterhouseCoopers, a consultancy, 61% of CEOs admit they have trouble recruiting and integrating these Net Geners, although the recent economic downturn has reminded these Millennials that the world, in fact, does not owe them a living, and that hopping from job to job in search of personal fulfillment is no longer much of an option.

“The clash of civilisations” American style: Race, Class & Obama

And now for a quick take on America’s culture wars, the American “mullahs” vs. the “godless liberals,” the Red States vs. the Blue States, and on matters of race and class, which our recent election has certainly brought to the attention of the entire world. Educators like us have a duty to address America’s serious cultural divides. Today’s political climate seems too divisive for reasoned debate, and despite Obama’s victory, our nation remains deeply divided. We have entered an “Age of Dichotomy” where there is little, if any, capacity for compromise, where our citizens read only what they already believe, and where educators are as much part of the problem as they are part of the solution.

We “Liberals” are portrayed as the devil incarnate, not considered to be “real” Americans, whatever that means. Educators like us who are concerned about the overall human condition, the health and welfare of others, the loss of civil liberties worldwide, the scourge of war, the plundering of the planet and environmental degradation might as well have cloven feet, horns and a forked tail. There is indeed a closing down of the American mind.

This “clash of cultures” at home, as well as abroad, has blinded most of us to the central truth of our times, namely that we cannot make common cause with our own people, let alone with others. I, for one, have difficulty communicating with my fellow Americans who are (statistically) three times as likely to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus (83%) as in evolution (28%). I am in favor of one’s freedom to embrace such beliefs, but a “live and let live attitude” must prevail on all sides. Welcome to the “Balkanization of America.”

The complexities of race and class are universal social phenomena. I, for one, have always wondered why Americans would rather admit to being racist than to having any social classes. But, as I will show, the recent and historic election of Barrack Obama as president of the United States is testimony to the emergence of a new political coalition made up of people of all colors, ages and drawn from all walks of life. For in fact, Obama owes his victory to Blacks (95%), Hispanics (66%), the young (66%), women of all races, the poor and even the very rich. McCain did best among uneducated voters in Appalachia and the South. Republicans won in the South and Great Plains. But the interesting aspect here, and this is not to deny that racism exists, is that the Republicans have become the Wal-Mart party while the Democrats have forged a minority-meritocracy party, an alliance joining upscale whites with blacks and Hispanics of all income levels. The Republican Party’s divorce from the intelligentsia is self-defeating given that 25% of Americans have college degrees. Its anti-intellectual stance could not be more evident than in the cynical choice of Sarah Palin, a right-wing “ideocrat” who took five years to earn her degree in journalism. In terms of
demographics, this Republican redneck strategy will leave it appealing to an ever-shrinking and backward-looking portion of the electorate who regard Palin’s ignorance as a badge of honor. Joe the Plumber becomes a cultural icon for that large swath of our population that is steeped in fundamentalism, xenophobia, homophobia, and takes a Yahoo stance with respect to science and technology. For this significant percentage of Americans, politics is war, and there is no such thing as a “good loser.”

At least Obama’s victory makes my life here in a small Italian town a lot easier. I no longer have to pretend to be a Canadian or to reply that, “I come from New York City, a small island off the coast of Europe!”

My point here is that the Red/Blue divide still exists. Obama faces the challenge of governing bitter and disparate groups who no longer believe in the so-called “American Dream.” The poor are getting poorer, the rich are getting richer, and it is not simply a matter of race. America does indeed have its social classes, although they are more subtle and difficult for foreigners to spot. The current economic meltdown, worldwide recession, a staggering national debt, global terrorism and wars on two fronts mean that Obama will have to forge consensus, will inevitably have to compromise and will need to draw on all the talent and determination of the American people. Red and Blue must somehow be reconciled as the future unfolds.

Why is this so important? Let me just put it this way: when the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, things get dangerous. Paul Krugman noted that America is becoming a society in which the poor tend to stay poor, no matter how hard they work; in which sons are much more likely to inherit the socioeconomic status of their fathers than they were a generation ago. A Business Week article, “Waking Up from the American Dream,” shows that social mobility in the States, never as high as legend had it, has declined considerably over the past few decades. As I observed, American looks more and more like a class-ridden society. According to the Congressional Budget Office, between 1973 and 2000, the average real income of the bottom 90% of American taxpayers actually fell by 7%. Meanwhile the income of the top 1% rose by 148%, the income of the top 0.1% by 343% and the income of the top 0.01% by 599%. These numbers exclude capital gains so reality is even more skewed in favor of the top income strata. Around 1% of the population of the United States receives 44% our GDP, up from 20% in 1979, and equal to the income of the poorest twenty million households in America. Close to 35 million Americans now live in poverty, and close to 50 million have no health care. With millions of jobs being lost and a serious recession on our hands, will America go the way of Weimar Germany? Will neo-Nazi militias become popular once again as household incomes plunge? Anti-Semitism is on the rise, especially in Europe. There are over 700 hate groups in the United States, many armed and dangerous. Is anyone in our field dedicating research and outreach to this issue of race and class, of the impact of economic recession on the under- and middle class and its implications for social unrest and “hate crimes”? Do communities have programs, do universities have courses? Do any of YOU address what is the most important single social development in America’s recent history, namely the decline of the middle class? If not, why not? Remember, it was the middle class that supported fascist governments in Europe in the 1930s and initially backed military juntas in the Americas in the 1980s. History is littered with “revolutions” fueled by socio-economic malaise.

This divide between the “haves” and the “have nots” also infects our campuses where downward or frozen mobility is now the rule rather than the
exception. Many college teachers are looking more and more like migrant factory labor – lacking health benefits, job security, retirement funds, and any influence over either their employment conditions or the goals of the institutions they work for. As the percentage of adjunct faculty increases from today’s 43%, a two-tier class system has become the norm in American higher education, with a tenured elite doing their own self-referential thing at the top, while a cadre of indentured servants does most of the real work in the classroom. Perhaps former Berkeley Chancellor Clark Kerr was correct when he noted that the three central preoccupations of the American academy are sex for the students, sports for the alumni, and parking for the faculty.

**The global university and you**

Universities, your professional home, have also been “globalized” in our lifetimes. There has been a worldwide democratization of higher education, a massification if you will. OECD enrollments are up from 22% to 41% between 1975–2000. China has doubled its enrollments in the late 1990s, and India is trying to follow suit. The number of students studying abroad has doubled over the past 20 years to 1.9 million, while universities are opening campuses all over the world.

There is also increased competition between public and private universities. The largest private university in the States is the University of Phoenix with 280,000 students, 29 campuses and offshoots around the world. It is owned by the Apollo Group and caters to working adults who make up 95% of its students. Courses focus on practical subjects. It also spent a whopping $383 million on marketing last year.

Corporate universities include, for example, Microsoft and Schwab. Some are awarding degrees in conjunction with traditional universities. These institutions may or may not offer courses in international business, but I doubt very much if many of them have developed applied multicultural studies courses for their students. This is a very promising target of opportunity for our field, but requires us to become far more entrepreneurial on our home campuses, especially within our own departments where we tend to be marginalized. I believe it is largely our own fault that we are not seen to be very relevant or “practical” despite the fact that both at home and abroad, what we teach has never been more relevant. Ever-narrowing specializations and the race for tenure which so undervalues teaching and service, despite rhetoric to the contrary, means that as far as the real world is concerned, we cannot see the trees for the leaves, let alone the forest for the trees!

In general, universities and colleges in the United States are more flexible and better funded than their counterparts worldwide. Our academics are not civil servants trapped in a national labor market, and are very diverse. In France, for example, only 2% of academics are foreign-born. In fact, European universities are, overall, a mess. Only 1.1% of GDP is spent on higher education compared with 2.7% in the States. In Italy, thousands of university students are protesting recent attempts to reform higher education even though Italy has one of the worst managed, most corrupt, and most badly performing university systems in the world. Nepotism is widespread. In fact, tenured professors are called baroni (literally, barons). For example, over 33% of the medical faculty at the University of Palermo has the same last or family name! Furthermore, not one Italian institution is in the top 100 of the Times Higher Education world university rankings. Italian universities offer literally hundreds of courses with fewer than 15
students; 37 with one. Most shameful of all is that the university dropout rate in Italy is 55%. Given Italy’s low birth rate, this sector is not likely to be vigorous or contribute to Italy’s badly needed knowledge base in a very competitive world.

Private universities may take up the slack to some degree. In Portugal, private universities and colleges have grown from almost nothing two decades ago to account for over 66% of higher education institutions and 40% of all students. They have also learned that compared with traditional European university prejudice, it is all right to be useful.

In developing countries, higher education is also on the rise and faces the universal problem of combining equity with excellence. There is much distortion of education budgets. In Rwanda, for example, 15% of the total education budget is spent on the mere 0.2% of students who attend universities. Many students are attempting to study abroad as there is dramatic growth in the supply of potential students. Here again, our field can contribute much more practical policy input with respect to cultural orientation, dealing with differences in national standards, and coping with corruption. Remember, in many nations, cheating, cronyism and the selling of degrees is considered business as usual.

The “good news” is that overall, nearly 3m students were enrolled in higher education outside their own countries, an increase of more than 50% since 2000. China exports the most students, 200,000, while a fifth of university students in Australia were born abroad. The “bad news” is that the United States has proportionately fewer foreign students in relation to the size of the sector, a mere 3-5%. This limits the exposure that Americans have to students from other countries and cultures. Educators such as yourselves must work to “internationalize” your campuses since one of the most effective multicultural tools is direct contact between and among young people worldwide.

Why multicultural education? When ignorance is not bliss

To recap former presentations of mine, and returning to the U.S. university scene, America desperately needs “brainpower” as well as “firepower,” especially given the colossal ignorance of our citizens about the rest of the world. How can we make informed choices when 40% of those surveyed in a recent American Council on Education report did not know that the Euro is a currency?

Let’s face it. American college and university students – despite numerous international course offerings and intercultural resources on campus – graduate without any credible knowledge about other nations and peoples. They are simply untouched by the international/intercultural dimensions of their alma mater. Again we must ask, why?

Perhaps we are our own worst enemies. If it is true that departments will outlive universities, it is equally true that many divisive tribes inhabit the headwaters of international education: specialists in international relations; area studies; comparative studies; foreign languages and literatures; technical assistance and development. All too often, we form our firing squads in circles.

Again, what’s an educator to do? What can multiculturalism contribute to prevent a fanaticized, globally operative minority from committing even more mass murders? The time has come to breathe real life into our calls for international education and exchange. Why? Because we know that terrorism breeds in the fertile soils of poverty, fundamentalism and authoritarianism. Therefore, we must get actively involved in politics to make sure that our government’s policies minimize rather than exacerbate these root causes of terrorism. But have we multicultural educators spoken up about these matters in
any consistent and sensible fashion? And if not, why not? If we do not speak out and work to make a positive difference, then we are definitely part of the problem.

Just what should an international or multicultural education be all about? I, personally, would like to cite Robert Hanvey’s most insightful definition of an attainable global perspective, one which consists of these five basic components:

1. **Perspective Consciousness**: The recognition or awareness on the part of the individual that he or she has a view of the world that is not universally shared.

2. **State of the Planet Awareness**: Awareness of prevailing world conditions and developments, including emergent trends.

3. **Cross-Cultural Awareness**: Awareness of the diversity of ideas and practices to be found in human societies around the world, of how such ideas and practices compare, including some limited recognition of how the ideas and ways of one’s own society might be viewed from other vantage points should be tolerated.

4. **Knowledge of Global Dynamics**: Some modest comprehension of key traits and mechanisms of the world system, with emphasis on theories and concepts that may increase intellectual consciousness of global change.

5. **Awareness of Human Choice**: Some awareness of the problems of choice confronting individuals, nations and the human species as consciousness and knowledge of the global system expands.

This is an ambitious educational agenda that promises exciting times for individuals like you should you decide to work towards its implementation. You serve as transnational carriers of an emerging planetary awareness: that governments ought to promote the general welfare of those they govern; that starvation is unacceptable; that the use of nuclear or biological weapons is equally unacceptable; and that cultural and ideological diversity should be tolerated. We must make other more consciously aware of the fact that there is no longer any neat line between what is “domestic” and what is “international.” In fact, we could probably use the term “intermestic” to describe the bulk of humanity’s dealings today.

**Get real or get out of the way**

Throughout these remarks, I have tried to emphasize areas where practical, policy relevant work desperately needs to be done. We have the research, skills and experience to do it. Applied targets are many and include: (1) providing multicultural input to those involved in assessing political risk for business and government; (2) training managers and volunteers for NGOs and multilateral agencies, as well as other organizations posting people around the world; (3) developing effective training materials that focus on developing cross-cultural skills utilizing case studies and simulation techniques with a practical focus; and (4) reaching out more effectively on our own campuses to develop cross-disciplinary courses with professional schools (business; nursing, journalism, education, etc.).

Last but not least, if we train students for practical rather than academic careers, we must help them find jobs. How many of you have ever worked with your campus placement offices to make sure that recruiters from a wider range of organizations visit your campus and interview your students? Recruiters from business, NGOs, foundations, and professional associations of all types desperately need more multiculturally competent employees even if they do not
yet widen their net to recruit them. It is our responsibility to see that our students get a fair deal in today's marketplace for intercultural skills and careers.

Specifically, I would recommend that in the future, this annual Worldwide Forum should actively solicit papers focusing on these topics: (1) educating and integrating immigrants; (2) developing improved multicultural training courses for peacekeepers, NGOs, and negotiators; (3) managing corporate diversity; (4) restructuring American Studies and ESL programs to reflect current socio-political realities; (5) improving orientation pre- and post-arrival for foreign students and faculty and for American students going abroad; (6) increasing teaching abroad options in teacher training programs; (7) creating Internet-downloads and blogs on any of the above. Hopefully, one panel could address comparative research projects that have developed thanks to this Worldwide Forum, for example, research on immigrant student achievement across nations.

In defense of humor

In closing, let me stress that “no one gets it completely right” when it comes to cross-cultural communication. I repeat, no one. If we were all alike, there would be no need for multicultural education in the first place. What a dull world it would be! And one thing that we must never lose, at all cost, is our sense of humor when confronted with linguistic and cultural differences.

One panel I would personally like to have on the agenda for your next Worldwide Forum would take a comparative look at humor. Yes, you heard this right. It is my firm belief that to understand a country, you can study its economic data and demographic statistics or you can collect its jokes. Laughter is a civilized form of a primitive lethal instinct, after all, being a sublimation of the ancient urge to kill.

All too often, politically correct censorship has limited what is permissible with respect to jokes. Nowadays, most popular jokes lampoon the strong rather than the weak, leaving only blondes to pick on these days. But let’s not forget the lawyers, in general not well-loved in any nation. Here’s one: “What do you call 30,000 lawyers up to their necks in sand?” Answer: “Not enough sand.” And while racist jokes and jokes about women are generally considered in bad taste, dumb white males are fair game, as in “How many men does it take to wallpaper a room?” “That depends on how thin you slice them...” Now while this seems unfair to men, at the end of the day, men do less than half of the work in the world, own 90% of the property and can wear the same suit every day, which is not fair either.

Of course, while humor is universal, some jokes do not translate well. However, they provide lots of cultural information about the local landscape. For example, in the Congo, high denomination banknotes are called “prostates” in honor the cancer that killed the kleptocratic president Mobutu Sees Seiko.

Some situations are too delicate for cross-cultural projects. Palestinian muppeteers did not want their muppets to live on the same street as the Jewish muppets. And some nations seem to prefer humor that to others is simply smutty or intensely stupid, like a surprising percentage of Japanese television shows.

Political shifts also affect jokesters. In a way, we will all miss the former Soviet Union. However, Russia’s new kleptocrats do spawn a successor generation of jokes, for example: “A new Russian is in a serious car crash. Climbing out of the wreckage, he wails: “My Mercedes! My Mercedes is
smashed!‖ “How can you worry about your car,” asks a passerby, “when your arm is ripped off?” The new Russian looks at his bloody stump and wails, “MY ROLEX!”

In any event, jokes can be a great release for political frustration in non-free societies. In general, the less democratic the government, the less developed its leaders’ sense of humor. I would suggest that the thinnest book in the world would be “My Favorite Jokes” by Kim Jong II.

But my all-time favorite category of humor is based on GLOBISH, on truly innovative uses of the English language that all travelers encounter on menus, in hotels, and so on.

I saw a sign in a doctor’s office here in Rome that read, “Specialist in Women and Other Diseases.”

Here are some other linguistic gems you just might enjoy:

- Mexican Hotel on Bathroom Sink: “All water personally passed by the management.”
- Munich: “In your room you will find a minibar which is filled with alcoholics.”
- Spanish beach: “Beach of irregular bottoms.”
- Italian flat-pack furniture leaflet: “Open the legs and screw as hard as possible.”
- England: “Will any guest wishing to take a bath please make arrangements to have one with Mrs. Harvey.”
- New Delhi: “Beware of your luggage.”
- Paris: “Please leave your values at the front desk.”
- Thailand donkey ride offer: “Would you like to ride on your own ass?”
- Indonesia: “Someday laundry service.”
- Vietnam: “Toilet was cleaned and spayed.”
- Japan: “You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.”
- Finland: “If you cannot reach a fire exit, close the door and expose yourself at the window.”
- Madrid: “Our wine list leaves you nothing to hope for.”
- Torremolinos: “We recommend the hotel tart.”
- Taiwanese shampoo: “Use repeatedly for severe damage.”
- Hong Kong: “Indonesian Nazi Goreng.”
- Tokyo Bar: “Special Cocktail Hour for the ladies with nuts.”
- Pirated videos in Suriname: “Deep Trout” (for “Deep throat”) and “Dead on the Nail” (for “Death on the Nile”)
- Indian Shop: “Why go somewhere else to be cheated when you can come here?”
- France: “Swimming if forbidden in the absence of the savior.”

And finally, here’s my all-time favorite. While in Japan on a business trip, a colleague called for a wake-up call. Given the 14-hour time difference, she was groggy when the phone rang and unnerved when a sweet little voice at the other end intoned, “Dr. Jordan, your time has come!”

So has mine. Thank you very much indeed for your kind attention and best wishes for a successful Worldwide Forum here in the Eternal City.

Bibliographical Note

Statistics taken from numerous articles and surveys about globalization and technology regularly published by The Economist. Please be aware that statistics are time sensitive, especially during these turbulent economic times. Quotes re:

Author’s Note

The opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the conference sponsors or planners. They have been deliberately provocative as a “Keynote Speech” is supposed to stimulate debate and keep people awake, if possible.

A Race-conscious Approach to Teaching American Literature

Agnieszka Lobodziec
University of Zielona Gora, Poland

The continued need for a race-conscious approach to teaching American literature is exemplified by endemic racism in the United States and Europe. In 2007 the FBI reported: “hate crime incidents in the United States rose (in 2006) by nearly 8 percent,” and the US Justice Department revealed that it was “actively investigating a number of noose incidents at schools, work places and neighborhoods around the country. According to the Justice Department, ‘a noose is a powerful symbol of hate and racially motivated violence’” <MSNBC.com>. In November 2008, after Barack Obama was elected President, the American press began to talk of a so-called “white backlash” (Jonsson), citing “Cross burnings. Schoolchildren chanting ‘Assassinate Obama.’ Black figures hung from nooses. Racial epithets scrawled on homes and cars” (Washington).

The aforementioned events, among many others, testify to the timeliness of Toni Morrison’s poignant comment that “racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment” (63).

Black American writer James Baldwin wrote: “People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them” (138). Race is central to American history and is also not marginal in relation to the history of Eastern Europe, specifically Poland. A number of American fictional and non-fictional resources relate Midwestern Polish racism. Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye is set in Loraine, Ohio. One of the characters is a racist Polish immigrant named Mr. Yakobovskiy, a shopkeeper, who treats Pecola Breedlove, a poor black girl, with distaste and even avoids touching her hand when she pays for the sweets. Morrison writes:
How can a fifty-two-year-old white immigrant storekeeper with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth, his mind honed on the doe-eyed Virgin Mary, his sensibilities blunted by a permanent awareness of loss, see a little black girl? Nothing in his life even suggested that the feat was possible, not to say desirable or necessary. (48)

The “doe-eyed Virgin Mary” is a reference to the holiest icon in Poland, the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Nevertheless, most Poles are not conscious of her blackness and gaze upon the image through the filtering lens of white Christian aesthetics. The icon’s black African features are erased and rationalized. Danita Redd observes in her article “Black Madonnas of Europe: Diffusion of the African Isis:”

Many anthropologists attribute the blackness of the European Madonnas to their fertility quality, with black representing the earth. Another theory attributes the blackness to extreme age or smoke from candles, but no explanation is given why only the hands, face and feet were affected. Unquestionably, all so-called “Black Madonnas” are not actually black. (120)

Chicago, Illinois has the largest Polish community outside of Warsaw. Historically, there has been a racial tension between the Black and Polish American communities. In 1966, during a march at Chicago’s Marquette Park, “Martin Luther King declared he had “never seen anything so hostile and so hateful as I’ve seen here today’ (…)” (Garrow 500). Not even in the South was he confronted by such racial hatred.

Nowadays, “(i)t seems that (racism) has a utility far beyond economy, beyond the sequestering of classes from one another, and has assumed a metaphorical life so completely embedded in daily discourse that it is perhaps more necessary and more on display than ever before” (Morrison 63). For instance, the Polish language in daily discourse is replete with negative references to blackness. Linguists and journalists have an ongoing debate on the use of the word “murzyn” which is equivalent to the English word “Negro,” a term regarded in the US as a racial slur. In fact, in daily discourse, the Polish language is replete with sayings that affirm the word’s pejorative connotations. In November 2008 racial thinking has scandalously revealed itself even within the political milieu. One of the most outrageous cases reported upon by the international media was a speech made in the Polish Parliament by a legislator, who contended that Barack Obama’s “election heralds ‘the end of the white man's civilization’” (Weeks).

The information cited above is just the tip of the iceberg. It evidences that heralds of a post-racial America and Europe are most premature; the pendulum is swinging back and forth. There is hope in the struggle against racism but there are also grounds for pessimism.

In the context of racialized America and Europe, the use of canonical mainstream American literary texts may raise students’ awareness of the complex systemic nature of racism that produces ubiquitous racist stereotypes, images of black marginalization and white supremacy. A race-conscious approach to teaching literary texts may help in understanding that racism is manifested not only by extremist behavior, but also by certain mindsets that
subconsciously evolve from exposure to mainstream societal negative representations of blackness.

Toni Morrison advocates, more often than not, a race-conscious approach to the analysis of American literature that focuses on literary whiteness and blackness. She observes that American literature contains images of impenetrable whiteness (that) need contextualizing to explain their power, pattern, and consistency. Because they appear almost always in conjunction with representations of black or Africanist people who are dead, impotent, or under complete control, these images of blinding whiteness seem to function as both antidote for and meditation on the shadow that is companion to this whiteness – a dark and abiding presence that moves the hearts and texts of American literature with fear and longing. (33)

Such a race-conscious approach assists in discerning "the nature – even the cause – of literary ‘whiteness’ (and) what parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as ‘American’” (9). Canonical literature has historically portrayed the American as “new, white, and male” (43) alongside a marginalized, pitiful or even demonical black presence. Blackness became an oppositional reference point in forming the representation of dominant, inaccessible, and spotless whiteness.

This whiteness is reflected in descriptions of characters in Scott F. Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby who, dressed in white, live in “white palaces” (6), drive a "white roadster” (48), speak “as cool as their white dresses (...)” (10) and whose “complexion (is) powdered milky white” (20). Whiteness is not only represented in the realm of aesthetics, but it also complements and companions the worldview of some characters. Tom Buchanan very explicitly conveys a white supremacist stance when he says:

Civilization’s going to pieces (...). I’ve gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read The Rise of the Colored Empires by this man Goddard? (...) The idea is if we don’t look out the white race will be – will be utterly submerged. (...) This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It’s up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things. (...) This idea is that we’re Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and (...) we’ve produced all the things that go to make civilization. (10-11)

Therefore, metaphorically, whiteness counters a perceived black threat to white civilization. Paradoxically, the characters are situated in the 1920s, the so-called Jazz Age and the period of the Harlem Renaissance. They imbibe black music and at the same time reject black presence.

Toni Morrison further states that: “cultural identities are formed and informed by a nation’s literature, and that what seemed to be on the ‘mind’ of the literature of the United States was the self-conscious but highly problematic construction of the American as a new white man” (39). The new white men of primarily Western European origin, fled from the Old World of “oppression and limitation to freedom and possibility” (34). Yet, “it is just as important to know what these people were rushing from as it is to know what they were hastening to” (33-34). In the New World, “Power – control of one’s own destiny – would replace the powerlessness felt before the gates of class, caste, and cunning persecution. One could move from discipline and punishment to disciplining and
punishing; from social ostracism to social rank” (35). The transformation from an object into subject required a referent that would embody all that was sinful, fearful, horrific, and sinister. The Black Man, a figure imagined by the Puritan characters in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter, exemplifies such a diabolical presence. In the novel and reality alike, the concept of the Black Man was a “common euphemism for the Christian devil, whom the Puritans associated with the forested wilderness that surrounded their settlements, and with the Native Americans who dwelled within it” (Hawthorne 250). Up until today the association of blackness with devilish forces and whiteness with angelic purity prevails in Western religious aesthetics.

American literature also offers an allegorical representation of American society by its particular focus on social and racial stratification. For instance, in John Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men a black man is marginalized among the marginalized. The character Crooks,

the negro stable buck (...) and a cripple (...) was more permanent than the other men, and he had accumulated more possessions than he could carry on his back (...) several pairs of shoes, a pair of rubber boots, a big alarm clock and a single-barreled shotgun. And he had books, too; a tattered dictionary and a mauled copy of the California civil code of 1905 (...). Crooks was a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and demanded that other people keep theirs. (66-67)

On the one hand, isolated and servile Crooks is associated with marginalized others in the white man’s world: a mentally retarded Lennie, Curley’s nameless wife, and elderly Candy. However, Curley’s wife reminds Crooks of his inferior status and powerlessness when she warns him: “Listen, Nigger (...) Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain’t even funny” (80).

These three novels evidence that the “literature of the United States, like its history, represents commentary on the transformations of biological, ideological, and metaphysical concepts of racial difference” (Morrison 65). They elucidate some of the foundations upon which white supremacy is based. The focus on the racialized language of classic American literature and its ideological implications uncovers the pernicious nature of racism in ways that may lead to students’ critical analysis. Such an approach may enable critically thinking students to enter a contemporary debate on the issue of race, attempting to ascertain whether indeed we are living in a post-racial space, whether being post-racial means post-racist, and, finally, whether an internalized deracinated stance should not be replaced with an appreciation and admiration of racial difference and distinctiveness because recognition of difference does not in itself lead to hostile expressions.

In this manner, academia might contribute to the teaching of values as Toni Morrison offers in her essay “How Can Values Be Taught In the University.” She writes: “I tend to think (...) that in the course of teaching, the material I ask students to read, in the dialogue that ensues following those readings, and the threads of argument I nudge students to explore, make up one part of how I communicate value.”

References
Usage of Social Software in Indonesia State Universities; A Qualitative Case Study

Akhmad Riza Faizal
Department of Communication Studies
Lampung University, Indonesia

Background

Uses and usage of social software within education field have been investigated, suggested and reported by many scholars from developed countries (Alexander, 2006; Anderson, 2007; Bryant, 2007; Franklin, G., 2007; Franklin, T., 2007; Kirriemuir, 2007; Maxymuk, 2007; Miners and Pascopella, 2007; Shim et al., 2007; Topper, 2007; Eijkman, 2008; Virkus, 2008). However,
information or research that wrote about implementation of this software in developing countries still remain low nonetheless insignificance. This condition was quite irony because emerging of this web technology has impacted globally thus uses and usage of social software emerged ubiquitously in many developing countries. In Indonesia, as one of developing countries which has been impacted by the emergence of this technology and advances of web development so called “Web 2.0”, the condition of uses and usage of social software could also be found and investigates particularly in relation to education field and more over to teaching-learning practices.

This article purposed was to seek some cases of implementation of social software for teaching-learning process in Indonesia education system especially in Indonesia state universities. By finding some examples of usage and uses of this software in Indonesia educational system, it can be a reference for the next researches either quantitative or qualitative approaches to seek and design an appropriate education pattern and architecture. Significant from this article especially dedicate to educators and researchers who have interest to more investigate and implement these web technology nevertheless educational technology researchers in general. Hopefully, with the same interest we could build a network on this topic.

To reach the purposes, method that been used to investigate was qualitative case studies. For data collection techniques, in order to have more understanding about quality of usage of social software in university level, combination of observation to several Indonesia state universities website and interviews to several lectures in those universities who have been using and as users of social software were conducted. The reason to used qualitative instead quantitative approach comes from the needs to have a better view on the condition of usage of social software in Indonesia state universities but not in means of generalization because there is no sufficient enough data that can showed practices and characteristics of usage of this software in Indonesia and therefore can help the researcher to investigate more deeply. Robin Mason (Seegmüller, 2008) has argued, depends on the political circumstances, that it is hard to implementing social software in education in terms of student-centred teaching in developing countries because there is a lack of books and poor internet access. Indeed, nonetheless the more resources become available; the more teaching with social software is possible. Thus, by having qualitative data this article can be seen as a preliminary studied to the problems. Orderly, in this article, we will have a look to the conception of social software hitherto in general then shows some discussion and cases of usage of this web technology in education field by numbers of institution report and literatures. Afterwards, we will see some facts about internet adoption in Indonesia. Mainly, we will discuss about several condition of usage of social software in Indonesia state universities based on research findings.

Social Software: A Short Review

Social software is not just about new application, and the emergence is more to “humanity” rather than “technology” (Bryant, 2007). Keep it in mind, social software is not the same with Web 2.0 although social software has emerged as major components in Web 2.0 (Bryan, 2006) but the history of this technology might goes in different direction with the web itself. Christopher Allen (2004) has done a splendid work to trace the history of social software. He related the terms and the existence of software back to 1940s when Vannevar Bush wrote,
the famous, “As We May Think”, then to the emergences of late development of, so called, collaborative technology such as ARPA, Licklider and augmentation technologies (1960s), Office automation and Electronic Information Exchange System/EIES (1970s), Groupware and Computer-Supported Collaborative Work/CSCW (1980s and 1990s).

Allen (2004) pointed that the term ‘social software’ was not commonly use until late 2002 when Clay Shirky organized “Social Software Summit” in November 2002. In fact, the definition whether social software is still vogue, Clay Shirky defined social software as simply “software that support group interactions” (Allen, 2004; Futurelab, 2006) while other practitioner like Tom Coates see social software as “augmentation of human's socializing and networking abilities by software, complete with ways of compensating for the overloads this might engender” (Allen, 2004; Farkas, 2007). Futurelab, a non-profit organization based in UK, attempted to define social software by showing some key attributes of social software in relation to education which are it; delivers communication between groups, enables communication between many people, provides gathering and sharing resources, delivers collaborative collecting and indexing of information, allows syndication and assists personalization of priorities, has new tools for knowledge aggregation and creation of new knowledge, and delivers to many platforms as is appropriate to the creator, recipient and context (Futurelab, 2006).

Taking from a different point of view, Patrick and Dotsika (2006) posted that social software effectively is a convergence of the thinking of the domains of social networks, human-computer interaction (HCI) and web services. Instead requesting the users to adapt with the software, social software more attempt to fit with users’ environment nevertheless the software can be more intuitive and attracting users to continue use it (Patrick & Dotsika, 2006). This change shifting from pull to push technology has been influenced and matched with the development of web, refers to O'Reilly term Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005), thus applications of such software can be found in most of web technology “2.0”. Table 1 listed various categories of social software from different perspectives, Wikipedia attempted to list the categories from functional approach, Futurelab see the range of social software in relation to education technology, while Patrick & Dotsika described the list more to understanding of social software as web services.

Table 1: List of Social Software

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<td>blogs, clipping, instant messaging, internet forums, internet relay chat, eLearning, Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOGs), media sharing, media cataloging, personals, social bookmarking, social cataloging, social citations, social evolutionary</td>
<td>Text-based software (Weblogs, wiki, social bookmarking and tagging, fan fiction sites, RSS), Audio-visual software (Codeck, Broadcast Machine, radiowaves), spatial and geographic social software (Google Earth), Finding like minds (profile matching)</td>
<td>Online services, online networks (social and business), collaborative shared/writings, Tools/Services (communication, group discussion, media sharing), Open standards (web services, content aggregation, network)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computation, social networks, social scripting, virtual worlds, and wikis.</td>
<td>Systems, affinity systems, personal networks, mobile phone software (Push toTalk, Mobiluck)</td>
<td>Sharing, persona identity, reputation system, New forms of collective action (Open Source, Civil Society Projects, Smart Mobs)</td>
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**Social Software for Education**

Personalization is one of the key aspects in social software hereafter; Shim *et al.*, 2007 have conducted a research using media-richness theory to test factors that influenced students to use podcast and also RSS feature that already include in this technology, in relation to their learning process. They found that although podcast has many beneficial qualities including students’ familiarity with the new technology, and the cost effectiveness in the long run nevertheless podcasting technology should not be seen as a tool to replace traditional classroom teaching of fundamental principles. Rather, it should supplement class materials, so that students can better understand concepts, theories, and applications that may not have been available during the class (Shim *et al.*, 2007).

Wikis is one of the most popular social writing platform software (Alexander, 2006) and being used in a variety of ways within education. Examples using wikis such, as a course website where students present their research findings and for collecting and storing data, or as a place to host a series of ice-breaking activities for a group of distance learners. Franklin, G. (2007) has highlighted tools such as wikis offer a new ways to engage and communicate with students and to some extent as a reflection, especially when it relates to information literacy skill. Information literacy skill is one of new literacy skills (Miners and Pascopella, 2007) to be consider as 21st century skill beside media literacy and ICT literacy. In wikis, students and teachers be able to quickly and easily explore an area of knowledge, developing only as much structure as they need along the way, by allowing this collaborative work wikis not only providing a medium in teaching-learning process more over it is encouraging both student and teacher to be active based on their own strength and style in writings (Bryant, 2007).

Although such open access software like Wikipedia, GoogleDocs, Socialtext, and TWiki have proved to become very useful tools for education, there are some debates and doubts about credibility and its content consistency since it is vulnerable against malicious editing, vandalism, and group sabotage (Stvilia *et al.*, 2005 in Anderson, 2007; Futurelab, 2006). Rector (2007) has conducted a comparison study on Wikipedia articles and articles from Encyclopedia Britannica, the Dictionary of American History and American National Biography Online about comprehensiveness and accuracy. Her findings were reveal inaccuracies in eight of the nine entries and exposed major flaws in at least two of the nine Wikipedia articles. Overall, Wikipedia’s accuracy rate was 80 percent compared with 95-96 percent accuracy within the other sources. This study does support the claim that Wikipedia is less reliable than other reference resources. Furthermore, the research found at least five unattributed direct quotations and verbatim text from other sources with no citations.

Other social writing platform software is weblogs (blogs) and perhaps the most common social software that has been used in education practices (Bryant, 2007). Activity that using blogs for education purposes for an instance; collaborative project by a group of bloggers using their individual blogs to build
up a corpus of inter related knowledge via posts and comments. This might be a group of learners in a class, encouraged and facilitated by a teacher, or a group of relatively dedicated life-long learners. Other example, teachers can use a blog for course announcements, news and feedback to students and combine it with syndication technologies (RSS feed) to enable groups of learners to easily keep track of new posts (Franklin, T., 2007). By using RSS feature or tags, teacher and student also can use websites like Technorati and IceRocket to look for a particular blog in their subject. Other social software is social bookmarking and Bryant (2007) has argued that social bookmarking is ideally suited to classroom use as it enables groups to build up a collection of resources very easily around a particular topic such that each individual can benefit from the work of others. Websites like del.icio.us and Bibsonomy are some of “folksonomies bracket” which allow its users to bookmark online resources and easily build up their own cluster of interest and “share” it with other users. This “create and share” principle, also applies to media and file sharing websites such as Youtube, Live Journal, Flickr, and Megaupload.

**Internet Adoption in Indonesia**

The number of internet users in Indonesia has increased rapidly by more than 1.150% from 2 million users in year 2000 to 25 million users by second quarters of 2008 (Internet World Stats, 2008). Although it is indeed a fascinate quantity but considering a population of 238 million, the density of internet users is only 10,5% from total country population which is still below average percentage of world internet users (21,9%) and Asian users (15,3%) (Internet World Stats, 2008). Indonesia Internet Service Provider Association (APJII, 2008) report on internet users in Indonesia also showed some increasing numbers.

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<td>MRTG (Multi Router Traffic Graph) Report</td>
<td>2,05 Mbps (Feb. 1999)</td>
<td>3,9 Gbps (Jan. 2005)</td>
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A study carried out in 2004 found that two thirds of internet users in Indonesia gain their access through internet cafés and 68% of those internet cafes’ users are men (Wahid, Furuhol, and Kristiansen, 2004 in Wahid, 2007). Using Technology Adoption Model (TAM), Wahid (2007) has conducted a research on internet adoption among men and women in Indonesia. His studied found that internet adoption among men is affected by perceived of usefulness rather than perceived ease of use, in contrary to women perceived. Men are found to have a more flexible internet access venue when compared to women.
Proportion of women who use internet for chatting and study-related activities is significantly larger than that of men. Conversely, proportion of men who use internet for reading online news, testing and downloading software, shopping, entertainment, seeking job vacancy, and visiting pornographic sites are larger than women. High cost internet access, low access speed of internet and a lack of English proficiency are identified to be most severe obstacles of internet adoption in Indonesia. However, his concluded generally in Indonesia, internet adoption among women is lower than that among men.

Center for Research and Application of Information and Electronic Technologies of the Office for the Research and Application of Technologies, Indonesia in 2001 have conducted a survey about internet users profile in Indonesia. They found that users of Internet based on their professions can be divided as follows: students (39%), workers (22%), managers (17%), assistant managers (5%), professionals (5%), directors (4%), entrepreneurs (3%), and others (5%). The users of Internet based on their educational backgrounds are as follows, elementary school/junior high school (2%), high school (41%), college graduates (9%), undergraduates (43%), and graduates (5%) (Yuhetty, 2002).

Social Software in Indonesia State University Websites

There are 46 state universities and more than 2200 higher education institutions including institute, college, and academy all across Indonesia (DIKTI, 2004) and for the state university, Directorate General of Higher Education under Indonesia Ministry of National Education (Direktorat Jendral Pendidikan Tinggi/DIKTI) obligated them to have an official university website. To have a robust database and investigate deeper into usage behavior of social software in those universities, researcher attempted to find whether implementation of social software already occurs along with other cyber-features in Indonesia state university websites. Hence, a simple survey has been conducted to see how many of them have put at least one of many social software platforms in their websites. For operational definition, researcher took the social software categories base on the list made by Wikipedia. The researcher used Wikipedia list of social software instead others because of two reasons first, the list was categorized based on common label that already familiarize by the social software users since the article its self was constructed by the users. Second, is to avoid misinterpretation for social software platforms label nonetheless ambiguity.

For comparison on educational cyber-infrastructure, researcher also counted availability of digital library in those websites; the assumption behind this decision was the prominence of university digital libraries appears as a necessity to have technology for education thus social software could be considered as within the same need. The result (Figure 1.) shows that availabilities of e-Learning and Digital Library stand in highest percentages among other applications and software (50%). Between other platforms, researcher found from 18 types of social software in Wikipedia list only 5 of them are used in observed websites including e-Learning. The percentage of usage however, can be said, are not quite significant by quantity especially if we consider web 2.0 applications have been worldwide known at least since 2004. Nevertheless, researcher gives an applaud to Padjajaran University effort to create a ‘youtube-like’ media sharing websites (http://video.unpad.ac.id/) where lectures can store video of their presentation and or as a class materials and it is open for public,
this website also a breakthrough among other university websites in Southeast Asia countries for implementing web-based educational technology.

**Figure 1: Social Software in Indonesia State University Websites (Per July 2008)**

Result of the initial observation was an availability score table of social software usage in Indonesia state university websites, distributed as 1-2 (low score), 3-4 (medium score), and 5-6 (high score). 9 invitations were distributed to 9 universities based on availability score of social software in their website, 3 from each high, medium and low score universities to participate in this research. Responses only came from 4 universities, 2 from high score universities which are Padjajaran University and Lampung University, and 2 from low score universities which are Sriwijaya University and University of General Soedirman. Thus, interviews were conducted between July-August 2008 to 4 lectures, 3 men and 1 woman, with informants’ age range between 26 to 38 years old. The interviewees are coming from responded universities with range of teaching experience between 3 to 6 years. Interview was choose as the data collection technique because the time when research conducted was during midyear semester break so it was hard to conduct a field observation to informants actual teaching environment which are the classes since all the responded universities have academic breaks. However, the main focus for the interview was whether they, as a teacher of a subject(s), have embedded social software as a part of teaching-learning process in their class.

**Interviews Findings**

University internet infrastructure affect usage of internet among informants, 3 of them said that wifi/LAN facility provided by their university indeed leverage their online hours between 6 to 12 hours per week, only 1 informant used dial up connection since there is not wifi/LAN facility in her faculty, and the main reason they choose to have internet access from university because it is free of
Second place beside university as their main place to have internet access is internet café and the intensity is between 1 to 6 hours per week. Only 1 informant said that a friend of his taught him how to use internet, the rest of informants said that they learnt how to use internet and social software by themselves. These findings might not correlate with previous research on internet adoption among students in Indonesia by Wahid (2007) since this research particularly look on qualitative aspect of usage on internet of lectures in Indonesia state universities nevertheless it does support early research finding by Wahid, Furuholt, and Kristiansen (2004 in Wahid, 2007) that most of internet users in Indonesia gain their access from internet cafés.

From the interviews, researcher indeed found that usage of social software already been embedded by informants as part of teaching-learning process in their class. Popularity is one of motives why they using the technology while there is also some need to just keep up with the latest fashion of technology. It became understandable when it comes to remember type of social software that they used the most hence they start the answers from the most popular social networking websites such as Facebook, Multiply, and Friendster, then goes to YouTube for media sharing website, Blogspot for blogging, and Wikipedia. For others social software platforms they admit that they know about it but never use it. Despite the form, one informant from University of General Soedirman mentioned that he just begun to familiar with the use of social software for about a year even though he still attempt to keep up with constant changes of social software technologies nevertheless he seen the effort is quite exhaustive. Thus, basic internet usage behaviors such as downloading, uploading, searching, browsing, reading, watching are the most activities he do while using social software. More advanced features in social software such as sharing, commenting, tagging, flagging, and embedding are least activities that the informant do.

That early finding is interesting since the advance features in social software is kind of abilities that developers of social software brought to attract user at the first place. However, relates to usage of social software in teaching-learning activities, researcher found several models that represent, so to speak, some of many activities that informants have conducted relate to usage of social software that they already familiar of, there are;

a. Encouraging students writing skill by using blogs.

Learning is not always about the outcomes, especially for students in social science and humanities field, they also need to be motivated and encouraged about the way they see phenomena in social reality. One of activities that can lead students to learns how to expressing their thought is by writing. Ease of use and plenty of platform options made blogs is not only suitable for helping students in their learning process and also for the teacher to express their thought about the material itself. One informant attempted to combine students’ appreciations about his class material and their fond of blogs. Hence he asked students to put their writings in their blogs, afterwards he select some of the best articles as a component in semester exam. From 40 students, who participating in his political communication class, 23 students have their own blogs.

b. Using examples from media sharing website for explaining class material.

There are many subject studies that sometimes students are get really hard to understand it unless the teacher helps them with visualization of examples. All the informants admit they are a YouTube user hence for
embedding it as part of their teaching process, one informant said that he uses video example of Public Services Advertising (PSA) product that he found from YouTube in his Social Marketing class. It was difficult before for the informant to have even an example of video because copyright and limited budget for class activities in his university. By using file sharing website like YouTube, it can help his students to have a better understanding on how to see social phenomena and to take a portrait of it.

c. Putting examination grades and class material in teacher blogs.

Since more and more internet infrastructures are provided by the government and university, Indonesian students are become more familiar with using internet for leveraging their study process nonetheless for the informants. They realize with all the limitation they have as teachers, they can use these web technology to leverage and support their teaching activities too. When researcher asked them whether they have used social software for helping their teaching activity and for what reason, most of them admit that they have used at least blogs to publish their class examination grades and also their class material. One informant pointed that the reason he choose to use blogs to disseminate his class material because it was more easy in term of more effective and efficient in time for him instead delivering hand to hand the materials to the students. He also argued that by using the blogs, he gives his student more free time to access the class materials or reading the exam grade without interfering their study hours at campus.

d. Sharing the class material using file sharing websites.

The prominence of file sharing websites such as Megaupload and Slideshare that providing user with free file storage capability leverage informants teaching activities by helping them store and disseminate any class materials they have and made it available online.

e. Showing more empathy to the student through social networking site.

Another interesting fact that researcher found is by using social software, especially the popular one, most of the informants feels that they are more closer to their students than before using it. One informant mentioned that since she joined as a member of one of the most popular social networking sites in 2005, she met her students more than she met her colleagues. By adding or approving her students’ invitation to become their friends, she felt like the students or more open to her in the sense when she asked the students to give their feedback about what the students had during the class activity, some the students are frankly said that s/he did not really understanding of what her have taught to them. Not only has that, the students sometime asked her about the class schedules and, in her own words, talks ‘heart to heart’ with her. In spite of personal matter, the talks that she had with the students given some sour of insight for her of what actually students in her class thought about her class material. For her, this kind of information is indeed a very good reflection for her and gives her a more reason to deliver and improve a better class material.

Some Challenges

Although, by using social software indeed helping informant jobs on other hand usage of the technology also arise, so to speak, some resistances from people who do not really being embrace by the technology. One informant said that he was once gave his students an assignment using blogs for delivering the task and ask students to send their answer via email to him. Then, he received a
protest from one of his student that the assignment causing the student to spend more money to access the internet in internet café, in that time there was no free internet access in the informant university. The resistance was not only coming from students but also from other informants colleagues who do not use the technology because a lot of factor, especially for senior lecture, such as age and cost. As one informant said:

“Generally in my faculty, there are many people who still do not understand this technology even though the Dean office has facilitated it. They ignorance and lack of understanding basically because they unwillingness to learn...”
(Male/38 years old/Padjajaran University)

Despite those resistances above, the challenge might come from themselves such as they knowledge of software and how to use it although most of the popular social software that online in web these days are very easy to use and more intuitively, as one informant pointed that sometimes he also encounter some problem using some of the social software because his lack of understanding about use of the software.

**Conclusion**

Prominences of social software or also well known as social media has affect in many aspect of human activities these days. As the study about usage of the web technology in education have been carried significantly in many of developed countries, the study for developing countries remains low. Thus from this pilot study, researcher attempts was to seek some cases of implementation of social software for teaching-learning process in Indonesia education system especially in Indonesia state university. Initial survey that researcher conducted to Indonesia state university websites in July 2008 found that usage of social software in those academic websites are, so to speak, insignificant by numbers. Nonetheless, the finding has been followed up with interviews to several lectures from 4 Indonesia state universities. Researcher thus proposed several model of usage of social software in Indonesia state universities such as; encouraging students writing skill by using blogs, using examples from media sharing website for explaining class material, putting examination grades and class material in teacher blogs, sharing the class material using file sharing websites, and showing more empathy to the student through social networking site.

**References**


Vocational training in the Swiss and Romanian system of education and teacher formation

Liliana Anton
Ecological University of Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

At present, the European educational systems tend to be more knowledge-based than practice-oriented. On the opposite side, the Swiss model of education comes in favor to the process of putting theory into practice from the institutional level to teaching methods. The vocational training represents one major educational dimension in Switzerland. The main principle is to create and support a system of education according to the social and professional needs. Teachers play an active-reflexive role and the methods are adapted to students on curricular basis.

Key words: practice-oriented, vocational training, active/ reflexive roles in education

The knowledge-based system of education in Europe, a common framework

“A Europe of knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space.”

According to the Bologna Declaration, all the European member states have a common institutional framework regarding qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Qualifications frameworks are important instruments in achieving comparability and transparency. The modules and study programmes are based on learning outcomes and credits.

In the process of restructuring the educational systems, the objectives are represented by comparable criteria and methodologies, the curricular development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research. Each system of education aims to be comparable, compatible and competitive.

The social dimension has a special importance as “Higher education should play a strong role in fostering social cohesion, reducing inequalities and raising the level of knowledge, skills and competencies in society. Policy should therefore aim to maximize the potential of individuals in terms of their personal

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1 The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999, Joint Declaration of the European Ministers of Education
development and their contribution to a sustainable and democratic knowledge-based society. We share the societal aspiration that the student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations. We reaffirm the importance of students being able to complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background.”

These reforms are expected to have as a result the functioning of one of the best performing system of education in the world.

**Policies of the vocational training in Romania and Switzerland (an analytical perspective)**

The analysis of the objectives and methods of education should be based on the systematic approach of the cultural, economical and political background. This perspective might help politicians to take the right decisions and to manage properly various issues or problems that occur frequently because of a set of particular factors that are specific for each European country.

Since 2005, the political guidelines in Romania and Switzerland have had common priorities, such as: the assurance of the quality of education, free access to education and equal opportunities given to children.

The specific priorities for the Romanian political agenda are the following:
- Restructuring the educational system according to the European norms;
- Lifelong learning, adult education; and
- Vocational education with a focus on the individual development, the professional values and the rapid integration in the active life, increasing the chances of the individual to integrate in the labor market.

The Canton of Geneva has a set of priorities in education as follows:
- To take measures against the educational failure at the individual level;
- To have a close cooperation with the social partners for the professional formation;
- Excellence and democratization of higher education;
- To oppose ill treatment;
- To have a partnership with families;
- To have as a priority the cultural element in education; and
- To have a political perspective based on evaluation and participation.

**Reflexive politics needed**

The politics of education have long-term effect on each domain of interest in a country. In this context, setting clear priorities in education politics is of crucial importance for the future structures at all national levels. A possible set of factors in determining the priorities and influencing them could be:
- The political arena:
  - local factors: governance, types of local politics (left, right and centre orientation) and categories of partnership: politicians-professionals in education and economics; and
  - external factors: the political international affairs and continental area influence;

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2 London Communiqué, Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world
• The economical background and conditions (micro and macro economy) at the external and internal level, specific economical processes and particular aspects of the external and internal local market;

• The educational system and its history, its cultural substratum and particular aspects (main orientation, modalities of implementing new educational policies and degrees of acceptance);

• The population categories that are involved in the process of education (general education, vocational training, long life learning, higher education) and their particular characteristics that could be analyzed from cultural, economical, sociological, psychological and anthropological perspective;

• The presence/absence of the ethical approach of examining the students and enrolling them in the process of education, the juridical aspects in terms of respecting the human rights; and

• Other particular aspects of the country in case, of political, economical or cultural origin such as the presence of positive discrimination in ethnical or cultural terms (see prejudices)

Apprenticeship or vocational training?

Common European politics have as a result the process of implementation of the new educational programs, curricula and syllabuses. Apprenticeship and vocational training represent mainly the same concepts. The difference resides in the fact that in Geneva this educational system focuses on the professional training while in Romania the vocational training is represented by apprenticeship schools in which the knowledge based curricula contain topics of general interest and culture and professional topics.

The National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development in Romania is functioning since 1st January 1999 and gives its contribution to the qualitative technical and vocational education. Since 2003 NCTVETD supported the process of restructuring the vocational system of education and the reform is to be continued up to 2010. The systemic reform is focused on quality, equity and efficiency. The Centre decides the number of Romanian students enrolled in the vocational schools, according to the estimation made after the analysis of the internal market.

In Geneva apprenticeship studies are based on the national curricula. At the same time, there is a close cooperation between the social and economic partners and on the other hand the educational institutions. This has a result the schooling of a certain number of students enrolled in vocational schools, as a precise request of the economic partners.

Results/ benefits of the vocational training in Romania and Switzerland

Apprenticeship or vocational training should be based on the internal market needs of certain category of professionals in various domains of interest: commerce, banking, services, industry, sales, computers, etc. Consequently, the communication between the educational institutions in this area and the economical factors is vital. In Romania the number of students is based on the estimations made in a transition economy as long as in Geneva this number is according to the market needs.
Teacher formation – common policies in Europe

Nowadays, there are common policies in Europe on teachers’ formation. But how should a teacher adapt the teaching methods in a vocational school?

As long as the educational system in apprenticeship is different from the knowledge-based systems which are the other specific aspects that should be taken into account? There is a need of having an adapted national curricula and special programmes according to that type of education, lesson plans and visual tactics. What’s the teacher’s role in the programme or what type of role should the teacher play? In Romania there is a common educational system for the teachers in all the institutions. Mainly they have to adapt themselves to the vocational training according to the system. In Switzerland, there are special programmes such as “Professional minds” destined to the teachers who work in vocational schools.

The teacher’s reflexive attitude – the Swiss approach

The teacher’s reflexive attitude might be perceived as the rejection of “the fear, the seduction, the power, and the evaluation, the dilemma given by the order, the lack of responsibility, the ambiguous solitude, the routine and the liberty without responsibility”. 3

The teacher’s reflexive attitude might be considered nowadays as being one of the fundamental principles of teacher’s formation in Switzerland. The relationship between the action and the reflexive attitude should be considered when taken into account the knowledge, the theories, the discourse. It is the “know-how” of acting, of knowing and applying principles. Professionals in education focus on the feedback at the psychological individual level. The observational practices as monitoring the lessons by videotaping are generally accepted.

Pedagogy, didactics and methodology are commonly grounded by teacher’s reflexive attitude studies. The apprenticeship and the process of education are closely connected with the reflexive attitude.

The benefits of the teacher’s reflexive/active attitude

This type of approach leads to a better knowledge at the individual level in professional terms. As a teacher you become aware of your potential, attitude and the ways of communicating knowledge. At the same time this attitude helps to a better understanding of your students in terms of behavior, knowledge, types of communication. The process of understanding the methodologies from this perspective improves communication at interpersonal, professional level and the one of assimilating new information.

Non-conventional methods of teaching: the playful and the theatrical ones

The teacher should not be only the transmitter but the mediator of a certain amount of knowledge or information. During the lessons he might use his

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3 Perrenoud, Ph. (1995) Dix non dits ou la face cachee du metier d’enseignant, Recherche et Formation, no.20, pp.107-124
theatrical abilities to find the appropriate type of communication in order to shape the less attractive information in an appealing form.

In these terms, the type of communication between the teacher and the class should be adapted to the students in case. The teacher becomes an actor who gives to his public a certain amount of information, according to a set of pre-established rules. A possible comparison with the Greek theatre could be made in using a set of social masks and their meanings. In the Greek theatre, the men were playing women's role, their dressing was specific, the scenery was painted, etc. All the rules are known and they are accepted by the public before the play.

Non-verbal communication plays an important role as well: gestures, mimicry and body position. In anthropological terms, the body language should be educated in order to transmit the proper message to the audience. On the other hand, the active role of the teacher should be based on a thoroughly knowing process of his students, of their temperament and personality. The teacher should adapt his communication and behavior to a choleric, melancholic type, an extravert or introvert one. The teacher’s active role comes with the adaptation his speech in terms of adjusting the information.

The teacher should be

In the teacher-student relationship, the teacher should be:
- active;
- supportive;
- energetic;
- a good listener;
- parenting not patronizing;
- a professional;
- always be there in need;
- understanding;
- ethical;
- moral;
- correct;
- not siding a student;
- a model;
- friendly;
- open; and
- to prove the power of a good example.

Conclusion

As the knowledge-based system of education, the vocational training might be a result of the progress made by the entire educational system according to a variety of factors in the society it belongs to. Consequently, the types of politics that give the guidelines play an important role. On the other hand the economic factors and the development in progress represent the basis on which the educational system develops its programmes and implements its strategies.

Vocational training is responsible for the category of professionals in various important domains. Professions, such as: banking, cookery and other various domains keep a society working. As much important as the intellectual potential of a society, vocational training provides the necessary structures in a well-balanced administration in the society.
References

Bridging the gap between higher education and industry

Anush Shahverdyan, Ph.D.
USAID/Competitive Armenian Private Sector (CAPS)

Successful development of industry depends on the availability of a competent workforce. Industries demand special requirements and skills in those who are committed to make a career among their ranks. Higher education is seen as a major engine for economic, cultural and social development. However, it has been noted that recent graduates of higher educational institutions in Armenia are not qualified enough to perform effectively in ever-changing industries. Moreover, they do not understand the expectations and realities of their profession. The strong message from industry (O’Brien and Hart, 1999; Owen, 2001) is that students need to have experience of the workplace. In essence, students need appropriate skills to communicate across disciplinary and institutional boundaries in order to be effective in their careers.

The quality of higher education has a direct impact on the industrial development and hence socio-economic advancement of the country. The industry expects the workforce to have skills keeping abreast with the latest developments, while in a situation in which academia is facing hardship in bridging the gap. The gap between the skills available and the skills required has continued to increase, thereby adding to the already acute problem of unemployment in Armenia.

In the face of international competitiveness, higher educational institutions need to place a bigger emphasis on meeting labor market requirements and responding to demands for more skilled workforce. They must also continue to fulfill their traditional role of providing future "knowledge workers" with the necessary competencies to succeed in an increasingly competitive labor market and complex society.

Higher Education in Armenia is strong in human resources. Armenian educators are tremendously dedicated to their profession and devoted to their students. Armenia has a long history of making education a priority. Even in the face of difficult circumstances, there is still nearly 100% literacy in the Republic of Armenia http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/armenia_statistics.html and one of the highest percentages of people with graduate degrees in the Former Soviet Union. To quote one Armenian educator, “An Armenian parent would rather starve than fail to provide the resources for their children to study and get an education.”

Educators, while well respected by society, are underpaid in Armenia. However, despite the lack of adequate remuneration, education is one of the most popular majors in Armenian universities. Education is seen as incentive for progress.

Weaknesses of higher education in Armenia include limited financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, lack of professional development opportunities for faculty resulting in outdated skills, and obsolete or scarce instructional materials and equipment. Poorly maintained buildings and equipment at public Universities and a high proportion of outdated content have contributed to the current low-level-use of libraries, for instance. Even more
importantly, Armenian higher education faces serious challenges in the quality and relevance of programs to prepare students to build careers.

The gap between academia and industry is affected by several factors:

1. The current higher education system and its disadvantages, including the following:
   a. Lack of practical skills of the new graduates
   b. Overly broad and general education with a lack of focus on specialization
   c. Limited communication between stakeholders and higher educational institutions.

2. Workload of the academic staff, which consumes most of their energy and time to communicate with industry specialists. The varied workload of instructors includes teaching, involvement in research and development, supervision of students’ research work, graduation projects, etc. Additionally, lecturers are responsible for curriculum development and compiling new teaching material. At the same time, teaching staff need training and updating of knowledge as much and as often as students, especially at the present age of immediacy.

**CAPS Research**

In 2007-2008, the USAID-funded Competitive Armenian Private Sector (CAPS) Project conducted Skills and Knowledge Needs Assessment for the Tourism industry in Armenia. The assessment included detailed interviews with key tourism firms, organizations and tourism education programs (TEP) representatives, as well as extensive surveying of 250 managers and employees within the Armenian tourism industry. The purpose of this research was to assess the gap between required and available knowledge (awareness of theories, facts, and workplace behaviors) and skills (worker functions, hands on actions, and tactile activities) and to find out the issues causing the gap between academia and the hospitality industry. Determining the extent and specific components of this disconnect was another of the principal objectives of the research which then led the way to finding possible solutions.

This research poses some major questions emphasizing the main problems that can help solve some of the major issues that are forming the gap between the academic studies and the hospitality industry in Armenia. The responses gathered helped to focus on the problems facing each party, thus suggesting ways to overcome them and finding simple approaches to help the hospitality industry obtain better graduates from the Hospitality Educational institutions.

There are 16 public and 83 private universities, several of which are providing Tourism specializations. It is encouraging that so many TEPs have sprouted up in recent years. Yet, through the course of background research and industry interviews, it became clear that the TEPs are simply not producing graduates with the specific qualifications to meet the needs of the tourism industry.

As the survey revealed, though a number of tourism education programs have emerged in recent years, there remains a certain disconnect. This is not only between educational offerings and the skills necessary to successfully perform the jobs, but also in the business/education partnerships that must be in place to achieve this alignment.
Other findings, garnered primarily through interviews, related to the TEPs. One of the key underlying questions the research posed involved evaluating factors serving as the root cause behind the inadequately prepared graduates. Some of the principal explanations that emerged by way of explanation were:

- They are too focused on tourism and not enough on hospitality (where most positions are),
- Their (academic institutions) curricula are not well-matched to the needs of the industry,
- Professors often do not have sufficient (industry-related) experience and/or academic qualifications,
- Internships are not as effective as they could be,
- Other practical experience opportunities are lacking,
- There is not enough communication between TEPs and industry, and
- Resources (within the institutions) such as libraries and computers are limited.

The Skills and Knowledge Needs report offers a series of recommendations to help address the skills and knowledge gaps that had been identified. First, creating a universal baseline for various skill sets will be important as a means to communicate a common level of achievement needed within the Armenian tourism industry. Therefore, a number of national and international certification programs are proposed as an approach to creating this baseline for skills in: wait staff and other hospitality training; customer service; foreign languages; destination management; event management; food hygiene; tourist guide training; heritage interpretation training; and first aid.

A set of ‘knowledge’ recommendations are provided in the area of curriculum development, including courses/modules to be added and skill development activities or approaches to be integrated into coursework. The knowledge or theoretical enhancements are complimented with recommendations for enhancing ‘skills’ through: the use of internships and other practical experiences; building industry knowledge of professors and TEPs; and improving connections between TEPs and the industry as a means to better equip graduates with the reality of the Armenian tourism industry.

To address the mentioned gap, first of all, it is important to embed skills into curricula. But how?

There are many existing examples of embedding skills development into taught programs. Broadly speaking, this can be achieved through the teaching of skills either as a ‘stand alone’ taught unit or embedded within and throughout the curriculum to ensure a fine balance of academic content and vocational relevance. Furthermore, skills development is enhanced by the inclusion of teaching staff with industry experience, the addition of visiting speakers, other good contact and input from relevant professionals and the opportunity to undertake work-based learning, e.g., ‘live’ projects, work experience and placements (Treby & Shah, 2005).

If students are to gain the qualities needed for employment, not only does the academic focus of the course have to be suitable, but also, transferrable skills need to be developed to ensure critical awareness, initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, originality and creativity, self-reflection and personal responsibility (SEEC, 2003; QAA, 2001). Transferrable skills are ultimately what the employers want and need (Owen, 2001), hence academic
degrees must be focused to provide the skills their students will need in the workplace.

**CAPS Copying Strategies**

CAPS strives to play the role of a catalyst to enhance the employability of the available workforce for all kinds of jobs in Tourism, IT, Engineering, and Pharmaceuticals. Since its launch in 2006, CAPS established a direct interaction with institutions of higher learning to ensure readiness and alignment of graduate talent to the world of work as early as possible.

While students would traditionally remain in the student mode until the very end of their course, CAPS is making headway in changing the culture by enabling them to take employment opportunities during the course of study. Through its Internships program for graduating and recently graduated students in the fields of tourism and IT, and those who employ individuals within these sectors, CAPS attempts to bridge the gap between the skills acquired in higher education and the needs of employers and to assist individuals with limited work experience to acquire a career oriented position. CAPS strives to provide: students with authentic experience in working life; enterprises with a clear idea of what the university stands for and how the future graduates might fit in as prospective employees; and the university with feedback and cases which can be integrated into courses. Having obtained the working experience and the skills required, the promising candidates get hired by the companies. The Internships program ensures the gap between academia and practitioners has been bridged to develop students with a wide range of knowledge and skills and who are well-equipped for the workplace.

Leading this mind shift, CAPS is establishing Career Centers within Universities where students are provided with job counseling in the preparation of their resumes, cover letters and interviewing techniques, company background research, seminars on job search techniques, career and labor market information, tips on how to be successful on the job, and internship possibilities: [www.rau.am/career](http://www.rau.am/career). The system benefits students by ensuring that once their profiles are on a particular company’s database they become readily available for reference and consideration for matching jobs. This time-effective tool allows students to interact directly with potential employers for access to a variety of employment opportunities.

In an effort to encourage more use of industry lecturers at higher and vocational education institutions, CAPS has organized guest lectures by visiting consultants and experts. Guest speaking is used to ensure students are exposed to leaders in the field (both academic and practitioner), and aim to develop the sense of ‘reality and relevance’ and to inject realism into a subject matter.

CAPS Project is in the process of establishing Academic Partnerships between Universities in Armenia and the USA to ensure skills development are embedded into the curriculum. The initiative aims to upgrade and re-align curricula to be more responsive to the employer market, offering more current teaching methods and forming longer range professional relationships to transfer knowledge from western institutions to those in Armenia. The skills that students require need to be driven by an understanding of the workplace. Therefore, the curriculum needs to shift to reflect changes in the industry and the specifics of the workplace.
Thus, CAPS conducts initiatives in Armenia to soothe the mismatch between graduate skills and market demand, provide a fine balance of academic content and vocational relevance and mobilize higher education in support of regional development

**Recommendations**

The following steps are proposed as recommendations to address the problem of a disconnect between academic institutions and industry.

1. Increase the communication between industry stakeholders and higher educational institutions: conduct joint projects with businesses, increase job opportunities for students, improve university reputations, contribute to the regional community, and combine on-campus education with company-based work, and set programs with industry to give real practical training

2. Add vocational relevance to academic content in course syllabi: close integration of theoretical/academic studies and practical training. Place more focus on competences, not disciplines.

3. Place more focus on students’ personal qualifications required by the industry market.

4. Apply a “whole-year-training-program” (Industry Placement). Students should not graduate unless they finish with a “Pass” under a one-year-training/internship before graduation.

5. No longer is an advanced degree an automatic factor in the hiring process. Employers now define what skills they need for a job and the types of personal attributes they expect. Therefore, an integrated survey should be conducted to reach the actual indicators about the required specifications, characteristics and personality skills in the fresh graduate.

6. Increase the number of faculty and conduct in-service training of the existing staff.

7. Cooperate with other institutions locally and abroad in the field of curriculum development, in-service training and preparing of new learning resources.

8. Include practitioners among teaching staff who are experts in their field and are well compensated.


10. Equip the facilities technologically to allow practical, hands-on classes.

“Knowledge has to flow from those who know things to those who make things. There are many forms these flows can take, from the lectures, philosophical societies, and encyclopedias of the 18th century to the community colleges and internet of the 21st. But the institutions that facilitate these flows have to exist.” Joel Mokyr, The Gifts of Athena, Historical Origins of the Knowledge Economy, 2002, p. 291
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Industry placement for university academics - putting theory into practice? An Australian perspective

Roberto Bergami, Senior Lecturer, School of Applied Economics, Institute for Community, Ethnicity and Policy Alternatives, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

Annamarie Schuller, Teacher, School of Business and Management, Chisholm Institute, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Abstract

In the past decade, universities have seen their very essence challenged, by both neo-liberal governments with a “corporate agenda”, regarding education as business and manage it as such, and also by students seemingly more interested in practical applications and less so on theories.

The “professionalization” of educational courses has also led to changed approaches to teaching and learning in the higher education (university) sector. Some universities have embraced the idea that aspects of vocational education can be incorporated into higher education programs. In Australia, the learning
pathways negotiated from the Vocational Education and Training (VET\(^4\)) sector to provide credits towards a university qualification, exemplify the acceptance of vocational studies towards the completion of an undergraduate degree.

In the VET sector, competency based learning and assessment and practical applications are used for classroom learning. In the context of vocational teaching, industry placements for VET teachers has been encouraged to broaden teaching skills, develop networks, and connect the classroom learning activities to industrial processes. An industry placement requires a teacher to be seconded to a relevant industry host organisation for a pre-determined period of time to undertake specific tasks generally agreed to beforehand.

Research on the perceptions of the value of industry placement for VET teachers, was conducted in Australia by the authors during 2007. That study has now been extended by also surveying business studies teachers at an Australian university. This paper reports on the results of the research study with the university teachers, and compares this with the results of the VET teachers’ study.

The paper concludes that there are a number of similarities between the two groups, but the implementation of teacher industry placement programs will probably require a very different approach in the higher education sector to the one used in the VET sector.

Although more in-depth research is required, this study provides some preliminary data that may be a catalyst for further investigation, and may prove useful in the early stages of policies, planning and development, to facilitate the acquisition of practical skills for university teachers in the future.

### 1. Introduction and Background

Australian universities are publicly funded bodies (with the exception of two private universities) that operate under their own statutes, and self-accredit their educational programs. It is generally accepted that university programs in Australia provide comparable teaching and learning philosophies to those in the western world, such as the USA or UK. Undergraduate and postgraduate programs are offered in a comparatively more liberal style of education than the VET sector can offer. The reason for the difference between the university and the VET sectors is that the latter relies on competency based instruction, whereas the former does not, and therefore arguably this encourages a more ‘free thinking’ spirit. The pedagogical content and approach is quite different between these two sectors, however, discussion on their differences is beyond the scope of this paper. Although there are a small number of dual sector universities in Australia, offering both VET and university education, the two systems are administered and delivered separately – they receive different funding from different government sectors and for all intents and purposes operate as if they were independent bodies, and in the majority of cases they do not even share the same campus accommodation.

University education is perceived to contain a high degree of theoretical content and an overwhelming number of diagrams used to explain processes and ideas. These perceptions appear to be consistent regardless of the study discipline - be it engineering, management, or almost anything else. Recently, in

\(^4\) In Australia VET education is competency based training (CBT), largely offered through the publicly funded Technical And Further Education (TAFE) institutes.
some countries, the relevance of university education has been questioned by industry and governments alike, as

in many countries, higher education institutions are or aspire to be focused on academic research with little practical orientation (Hatakenaka 2007, p. 4)

Under these conditions research has a tendency to drift and become research for its own purpose, rather than research for further motives, that is application to industrial processes. Yet,

there is a complementary role in which academics undertake ... work with industry ...this interaction with industry allows academics to learn about industrial needs, but the relationships inform them equally about what is relevant. A good starting point for building relevance is a dialogue between universities, industry, and government. For that to be effective, society needs to drop its scepticism and believe that universities can contribute to its development, and equally academics need to recognize that they can strive for relevance without compromising their scientific integrity (Hatakenaka 2007, p. 4)

One way to make sure that university teaching curricula are relevant is for academics to be more exposed to industrial practices. This may be achieved through an industry placement program, whereby the academic is voluntarily seconded for a specified period of time to work in a firm. In Australia, at least, industry placement for VET teachers is quite common, and this is probably due to the focus on practice that is embedded in vocational education and training, however for higher education the process of an industry placement is not so common, yet in the context of curriculum relevance, the authors argue here that perhaps this ought to become more common than is currently the practice for the university sector.

It is the context of making classroom education relevant to university students, industry and the wider society, through the development of communities of practice, that this paper reports on a scoping study of academics teaching in business discipline areas, undertaken in Australia in 2008, to gather their perceptions on the value of an industry placement. The paper firstly presents and explains a previously developed industry placement model. This is followed by the method by which the survey was conducted. The main results of the scoping study are presented and discussed next. These results are used to ‘test’ the model for its relevance to study and this if followed by the conclusion.

2. A theoretical model for industry placement for teachers

The model shown at Figure 1 (Schuller & Bergami 2008, p. 201) depicts the major inter-related factors that comprise the industry placement experience. Although this model was initially devised for industry placement for VET teachers, its components ought to be generic enough in their nature to equally apply to an industry placement experience for university academics.
There are a number of considerations that are derived from the model shown at Figure 1, and these are discussed clockwise from the ‘industry placement’ box before considering the items inside the circle.

- **Industry placement and industry placement experience**
  An academic is expected to be a discipline specialist, able to impart relevant knowledge to students. Industry placements provide an opportunity to develop a curriculum that includes practical applications and insights into particular industry sectors, to enhance teaching and learning practices. To be able to develop such a curriculum, the academic will firstly need to be exposed to industrial practices *in situ*. The length of industry placement is an important consideration because “true learning often proceeds slowly” (Gela 2004, p. 8) and it will take time to understand and appreciate a particular industry’s ‘culture’. Funding and workload issues for relevant stakeholders: teachers, educational organisations and industry, will also need careful consideration and planning.

- **Industry placement skills**
  An academic is likely to bring prior theoretical knowledge to an industry placement. Theories may assist a comparatively faster assimilation of new knowledge - the industrial processes that the academic will observe and participate in as part of the placement. These activities should cause the academic to reflect on the application of existing theories and consider alternatives.

- **Theory development**
  From the observation and participation in industrial processes, the academic may identify gaps in existing theories and may be able to suggest amendments to these, or develop completely new theories, based on experiential learning.
- **Classroom teaching**
  The placement experience should provide the academic a greater repertoire of resources and examples to illustrate the theories of industrial processes. As a result of this, the curriculum could be enriched, and the teaching and learning experience enhanced. Additionally, the knowledge of a company’s management techniques, of marketing, financial management, the chance to develop curriculum materials and laying the foundation for a link with a local firm are just a few positive spin-offs (Meadon 1990, p. 28).

- **Theory into practice**
  The end of a placement secondment does not preclude further collaboration between the academic and industry, indeed the development of longer terms relationships are envisaged, as discussed later in the paper. This means that the academic may have an opportunity to test amended or new theories in the future *in situ*, and this may lead to other placement opportunities.

- **Community of practice: community engagement, knowledge and skills acquisition, industry networks**
  The academic, by nature, should be an agent of change and influence, but this agency should not just be confined to the classroom, rather it should become a catalyst for the development of a community of practice (CoP) among the stakeholders— that is the academic, the university, industry and the students.

  A CoP has been defined as a group of individuals sharing a common interest in their activities within a community (Lave & Wenger 1991). This definition of CoP allows for participation at various levels. For this community to be successful though, its membership must have a degree of commitment and behave in a mutually respectful and trusting manner (Mittendorf et al. 2006, p. 300). Based on these notions, it is possible for an academic to incorporate industry participation in the classroom through invited guest speakers (an example of a CoP resource). It is generally accepted that guest industry speakers add another dimension to classroom interactions, as usually the focus will be on contemporary practices and challenges, thereby providing a degree of industry exposure to the students. Whilst it is acknowledged that this exposure is limited, it is argued here that nevertheless it falls into the concept of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ through “increased access of learners to participating roles in expert performances” (Lave & Wenger 1991, p. 17). The invited speaker, the expert performer, can be a role-model to the students. The classroom interactions provide industry with opportunity to scout for new talent among the student cohort, and this symbiotic relationship creates a ‘win-win opportunity’.

  As can be observed the model provides a theoretical framework to explain the industry placement experience, however the model needs to be ‘tested’ for its relevance and therefore a scoping study was organised as discussed in the next section.
3. Methodology

The scoping study instrument used was a written questionnaire. The target population was academics teaching in the business disciplines at an Australian university. The survey was distributed after obtaining the pre-requisite ethics approval. Part of the approval requirements were that:

- the survey had to be voluntary,
- the surveyed organisation and/or respondents could not be identified, for confidentiality and anonymity considerations, and
- prior organisational consent be obtained before distributing the survey.

Two hundred and twenty five surveys were distributed, and 54 completed were returned, making the response rate approximately 24%. Once received the surveys were coded and analysed accordingly. Because of space limitations, only the major findings of the scoping study will be reported and discussed in the next section.

4. The scoping study findings

4.1. The average teaching experience of respondents was about 16.7 years, with about 50% having other than university teaching experience. Whilst the majority of respondents have higher degrees, only 24% identified their formal qualifications as being in ‘education’, and this is indicative of the focus that is placed on discipline knowledge by universities.

4.2. Nearly all the respondents (96%) have no prior industry placement experience and of these 61% expressed no interest in pursuing an industry placement in the future, largely because they believed they did not need it. It should be noted that for the industry placement experience to be attractive, the academic would firstly need to perceive some inherent benefit, and clearly, where the benefit is not perceived to exist, given that the industry placement is voluntary, then no action will take place.

4.3. The top five scoring motivating factors for those considering an industry placement in the future were (in ranking order):

- to gain industry experience,
- flexibility in placement arrangements,
- understanding industry practices,
- enhancing teaching practices / relevance to teaching area, and
- networking.

These factors represented just over 72% of all responses. It can be observed that for this group of people at least, that there appears to be some links between external engagement, forming relationships and teaching and learning activities, all of which are elements of a CoP.

4.4. In relation to industry placement barriers, about a third of respondents believed these existed and significantly, the most cited reason was that of lack of employer support. The reason for this is not known, but perhaps the existence of sabbatical leave provisions, already in place at most universities, may be regarded as a substitute by the universities.

4.5. The response to the industry placement duration preference was clearly in favour of a full time semester release, and this was preferred more than twice over a fractional semester release. This is interesting because these were the two top responses to the question, accounting for more than 80%, still favour a
relatively longer period of involvement with industry. It would seem that for this group at least, the placement needs to be of some duration, perhaps this may be attributed to the fact that a longer placement can be expected to yield deeper understanding and therefore provide a ‘better value’ experience.

4.6. The personal benefits expected to be derived from the industry placement experience were (in ranking order):

- enhance classroom teaching practices,
- increased understanding of industry practices/processes,
- link theory to practice in the classroom, and
- community engagement: networking/development of relationships, and
- opportunities for applied research

and these responses in total accounted for more than 85% of all responses.

Based on the results from the survey, the theoretical model, shown in Figure 1, is reviewed in the next section.

5. The model and the findings

The results of the survey tend to support the theoretical model, as follows. The responses to the questions discussed at points 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6 above, indicate a desire to engage with the wider community and develop networks, nurture relationships and acquire knowledge and skills – all of these are part of the ‘product’ of a CoP, and therefore this supports the inclusion of the elements in the circle of the model shown at Figure 1. Likewise, the industry placement skills, the development of theories, and their subsequent linking to classroom activities, as shown in the boxes of the model at Figure 1 are supported by the responses to the survey questions. Overall it is considered that the model correctly reflects the perceptions that academics have of an industry placement experience and its resultant benefits.

6. Conclusion

This paper reports on the results of a scoping study undertaken in Australia with academics from the business discipline areas. There are some limitations to this study that need to be firstly acknowledged. The sample size was small and furthermore it was restricted to one university only, therefore bias may be present in the responses.

Nevertheless the study provides at least anecdotal evidence to support the perception that an industry placement experience could be beneficial to key stakeholders, identified as: the academic, the university, industry and the students. Furthermore there is some evidence that suggest that an industry placement experience may lead to the formation of longer term relationships that could foster the development of a CoP.

The model shown at Figure 1 is supported by the findings in this scoping study and may therefore be useful in explaining the inter-related elements that form the industry placement experience. The model should be more rigorously tested through additional studies. These studies do not need to be limited to Australia, and indeed it would be interesting to see whether the model has generic international application.

It would also be desirable to design a study, in the future, that incorporates interviews with the sampled population, with a view to gather richer data for more in depth analysis.
Italian Canadian and Italian Australian Adolescent Speech: a Comparative Analysis

Biagio Aulino, EdD
University of Toronto, Graduate

Roberto Bergami
School of Applied Economics, Institute for Community, Ethnicity and Policy Alternatives, Victoria University, Melbourne

Abstract

This paper reports on two separate studies in Canada and Australia on adolescent speech varieties used by high school students studying Italian as a foreign language. The focus is on examining Italian Australian speech used as the social dialect spoken by Italian Australian in certain social contexts. Students pursuing Italian studies as a second language (L2) in a local high school in Melbourne, Australia, completed a voluntary written questionnaire. The analysis of the data collected reveals patterns of adolescent communication of clique-coded language discourses. This pattern was used as the basis for cross-cultural comparisons between Italian Canadian and Italian Australian adolescent discourse.

The paper provides some contextual background to the Canadiana and Australian immigration experiences, with comments on the study of Italian a L2 in both countries. This is followed by a discussion of a framework for analysing adolescent speech, with a framework that focuses on clique-coded discourse. The data is then analysed and discussed with a focus on clique-coded discourse.
The paper concludes by acknowledging that Italian Canadian and Italian Australian adolescent speech reflects the types of observations suggested in the literature by researchers such as Aulino (2005), Clivio & Danesi (2000) and Danesi (2003a, 2003b); who are among the very few who have carried out cross-cultural comparisons, that is a manifestation of similarities in a distinct and recognizable speech code. The findings of these studies may have pedagogical implications in the context of curriculum content.

Introduction

Students of Italian origin pursuing Italian studies in Canada and Australia at the secondary level display a speech that constitutes a particular discourse code. In order to gain further understanding about these speech patterns and their meaning, an investigation was conducted to learn whether Italian Canadian and Italian Australian adolescent reveal similar patterns of adolescent discourse which can be categorized as slang. Slang refers to the coinage and use of informal vocabulary, especially short lived coinages, that does not pertain to the target language’s standard vocabulary (Clivio & Danesi, 2000; Aulino 2005). Students from both countries similarly ranged in age (from 14 to 18 years), as well as sociolinguistic background.

History of Italian Immigration to Canada

A survey on the development of Italian in Canada conducted by Kuitunen (1997, p. 40) reported that the history of immigration from the time of Canadian Confederation in 1867 can be subdivided into four distinct periods: from 1867 to 1896, from 1896 to the beginning of the first world war, from 1914 to 1939 and finally to the post second world war period, which was the most significant. During this period 4,249,309 Italians were admitted to Canada representing 3.4 % of the population (Kuitunen 1997, p. 40). The 2006 Canadian census (Statistics Canada, 2006) reported that 1, 449, 695 Canadian residents stated that they had Italian ancestry consisting of 4.6 % of the total Canadian population making Italians the 5th largest ethnic group in Canada. The province of Ontario in Canada has the largest concentration of Italians with 867,980 persons accounting for 7.2 % of residents in the province followed by the province of Quebec with 299,655 comprising 4.0% of Quebec’s population (Statistics Canada 2006).

Teaching of Italian Language in Canada at the Secondary Level

The teaching of Italian plays a significant chapter in the history of language education in Canada. Italian was among the first foreign languages taught in the bilingual country of Canada where French and English are the official languages (Danesi 1997; Mollica 2008). Italian is taught at all three levels of education: primary, secondary and university.

The teaching of Italian at the secondary level is regulated by the Ministries of Education of the various provinces, who set the curriculum guidelines and teacher training. Italian is taught at the secondary level in five Canadian provinces: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and Ontario, and can be studied for a total of 3 to 4 consecutive years (Mollica 2008). The study of Italian language continues to attract students across all three levels of education today.
Italian Spoken by Adolescents in Canada

In order to better understand the typical Italian Canadian student pursuing Italian studies at the secondary level, it is necessary to understand the nature of the Italian language to which the second language (L2) learner is exposed, both in and outside the home. In his discussion of the languages of Italian Canadians, Nuessel (1999) cites Vizmuller-Zocco (1993, p. 513) who points out the following:

The bulk of linguistic studies on the language of Italian Canadians deals basically with two aspects of language contact: 1) lexical borrowings from English (Clivio 1986, Danesi 1985); and 2) linguistic interference illustrated in pedagogical settings where Italian is being taught to students who are speakers of dialects and English. (Pietropaolo 1974; Ferrara 1980, Danesi 1985)

Vizmuller-Zocco (1993, p. 514) cites Clivio (1985, p. 73) who explained the following about the Italian language spoken by Italian Canadians:

Italiese, or Italo-Canadian, must not be regarded as a language separate from Italian; rather, it may be considered as a new dialect of Italian, or, better still, a continuum of idiolects, all of which share a large common core and are mutually intelligible, but which reveal the influence of English in an uneven manner, especially, but not exclusively in the lexicon.

Italian sociolinguists commonly refer to the Italian spoken abroad as “ai margini della lingua” (as being on the periphery) (Menarini 1974). According to Vizmuller-Zocco (1993), the L2 Italian Canadian learner’s reality is Canadian, not Italian, therefore, the majority of their referent is colored through English and not Italian. This author (p. 514) also cites Danesi (1985, p. 3) who makes the following observation about the Italian spoken by Italian Canadians:

I[tal]-C[anadian] does not have a single form; it is shaped by the many dialects and regional variants which shape spoken peninsular Italian ... [as regards to loanwords] there really appear to be two nativization forces at work: a dialectally-based one which characterizes the language of the home and a more general one which characterizes the I-C koine used in the ethnic community at large. In the case of the former, it is more accurate to say that the loanwords are assimilated into a Sicilian I-C, a Calabrian I-C, a Friulian I-C, and so on; in the case of the latter, it can be said that the loanwords are given a more generalized Italian form.

History of Italian Immigration to Australia

Although there is evidence of Italian migrating to Australia in the 1850s as a result of the gold rush in the State of Victoria, the most significant period of migration was between 1950-1971, and this often referred to as the period of ‘mass migration’. Italy was not in good economic shape immediately after the
war and “encouraging the active discontent to leave” (Bosworth 2001, p. 505) appeared to be a desirable option, so much so that Alcide De Gasperi (then Prime Minister) in 1948 advised Italians to “Imparate le lingue e andate all’estero (Learn some languages and go abroad)” (Bosworth 2001, p. 505).

Australia was not a mainstream destination at that time yet, but gained increasing attention as a migrant destination, partly due to the assisted migrant passage agreement signed between the Australian and Italian governments in 1951. Although many more unassisted migrants arrived to Australia, than assisted passage migrants, that agreement was nevertheless a contributing factor to enhancing the positive perception of Australia at the time. It estimated that net migration over this period was over 300,000 (Cavallaro 2003). Many more Italians migrated to Australia, but remigration back to Italy for permanent settlement was a considerable factor, especially as the economic ‘miracle’ of Italy began unfolding from the 1960s onwards. It should be noted that discussion on migration experiences and remigrations factors are beyond the scope of this paper.


- Italians are one of the largest ethnic groups with 199,124 persons born in Italy,
- 852,417 persons in the Census identified themselves as having Italian ancestry (either alone or in combination with another ancestry). This is about 4.5% of the Australian population, making Italian the fifth most identified ancestry in Australia, surpassed only by ‘Australian', 'English', 'Irish' and 'Scottish', and
- among the top 10 countries of birth, people born in Italy were the oldest, with half of this group (or 98,000 people) aged 66 or over. (This reflects the pattern of post-War migrations arrivals).

As can be observed, Italians in general represent a significant ethnic proportion of the Australian population and their influence over Australian society has been commented on as follows:

“Italians brought with them strong family and religious values, great resourcefulness, and ethics of hard work ... Italians have been able to maintain a strong sense of identity and pride, while at the same time participating successfully in Australian life – be it political, economic, social or cultural. They have played a critical role in transforming Australian into the multicultural society it is today.” (Church 2005, p. xiii)

**Italian Spoken in Australia**

The most common non-English language was Italian, with 311,600 speakers accounting for 1.8% of the Australian population. As is the case in Canada, Italian is taught at all three levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary. There are also a number of private providers, who offer non-award courses mainly aimed at the adult population.

As Australia is a federation of states, primary and secondary school content and curricula are the domain of each State Education Authorities. Significantly there are a number of private schools, both Catholic and non-Catholic that offer Italian as a L2 at the primary and secondary levels. The ethnic composition of Australia differs to that of Canada, as there is a higher representation of foreign
origin groups in Australia, making Australia much more culturally diverse than Canada. The 2006 Australian Census discloses that a quarter of the population was born abroad and that there are about 200 countries represented in Australia. Although the majority of Italian L2 students would have some ancestral links to Italy, it is known that the study of Italian as a L2 at each of the three levels of education is also pursued by non-Italians.

Research on adolescent speech

In North America since the 1960’s and Europe since the 1980’s, and Australia since the 1990s, a tradition in the language sciences of investigating teenage speech patterns in themselves has been established by a wealth of researchers, among which are: Gusdorf (1965); Leona (1978); Labov (1972, 1992); Rizzi (1985); Shapiro (1985); Aulino (2005); Danesi (1988, 1989, 1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 1999, 2003a, 2008); Clivio & Danesi (2000); Nippold (1988); Giacomelli (1988); De Paoli (1988); Eble (1996); Munro (1989); Banfi (1998); Cortelazzo (1994); Marcato and Fusco (2005); and Ciliberti (2007). Due to the limitations in this paper it is not possible to comment on each of these authors’ work, but the most relevant publications are referred to later in this paper.

Despite these investigations on adolescent speech patterns, little or no work exists that correlates these patterns to the pedagogical implications except for the research carried out by Danesi (1997), Nuessel (1999) and Aulino (2005). Despite these investigations on adolescent speech patterns, little or no work exists that correlates these patterns to the pedagogical implications except for the research carried out by Danesi (1997), Nuessel (1999) and Aulino (2005). They examined in a study how Italian second language (L2) teachers could be in a better position to make classroom much more responsive to their clientele by better understanding the nature of contemporary adolescent talk in Italy.

Adolescents have indeed made use of slang words since the Middle Ages in order to confirm peer-group identity and to set themselves apart from adults. For example, medieval university students coined the word ‘lupi’ (wolves) to refer to spies who reported someone for using the vernacular instead of Latin (Eble 1989, p. 11). The origin of the word ‘slang’ is unknown.

Clivio & Danesi (2000) define this special communication tool used by young persons as ‘pubilect’, (p183) which is a social dialect of puberty, a contraction of puberty and dialect. Pubilect according to these authors is “simply the sociolect of teenagers” (p. 183). These authors see pubilect as a primary vehicle for carrying out appropriate social interaction with peers.

A framework for studying adolescent discourse

Adolescent speech patterns detect three main discourse categories: emotive language discourse, connotative language discourse, and clique-coded language discourse (Danesi 1989, 1994, 1997, 2003a, 2003b; Clivio & Danesi, 2000). This paper focuses on the clique-coded language discourses only. Adolescent discourse is part of Roman Jakobson’s (1960) model of verbal communication. Clivio & Danesi (2000) listed constituents that determine different communicative functions according to Jakobson. In relation to clique-coded, this is primarily about the themes and topics that are of direct interest to the specific cliques to which they belong.

Jakobson’s analysis of verbal communication suggests that discourse goes well beyond a situation of simple transfer – it is motivated and shaped by the setting, the message contents, the codes and participants (Clivio and Danesi 2000). In other words, discourse makes an emotional claim on everyone in the social situation. It is a form of acting, of presenting self through language.
Jakobson’s model clearly points out the role of communication. Verbal communication among adolescents is based on diverse forms of expression—gestures, the vocal language, the need to engage in shared action that all play an important role in communicative competence. Jakobson’s model can be applied to any communicative interaction occurring in the second language (SL) classroom. It can serve as the basis for developing new methods and techniques for SL teaching of Italian (Danesi 1989, 2003b). The present study highlights clique-coded language discourse (CCLD) that is used as a framework for the data analysis.

**Methodology**

**Description of the Italian Canadian study**

The school at which the study was conducted is located in an area comprising the largest Italian population in Ontario. Presently, the student population is approximately 88% second and third generation Italian Canadians. Students who were pursuing Italian studies either at the grade 10, 11 or 12 level were asked to voluntarily complete a written questionnaire. Data was collected from 25 adolescents (10 males and 15 females) between the ages of 15-18.

**Description of the Italian Australian study**

The Canadian study was similarly replicated in Australia with high school adolescents. Students form a secondary school in the State of Victoria, Australia, who had studied Italian for at least 12 months in Year 8 and 10, were asked to voluntarily complete a similar written questionnaire. Data was collected from 25 adolescents (19 males and 6 females) between the ages of 13-16.

**Cross-Cultural Comparisons**

After the initial Italian Canadian high students study was conducted, a separate study was conducted in Australia on Italian Australian Adolescent Speech (IAS). This study aimed to gather information on two broad questions:

1. Do Italian teenagers from Australia make use of a unique lingo when dialoguing with their peers?
2. Would any of the three basic language discourse categories surface in IAS?

The aim of the questionnaire was to quantify the frequency of teenage vocabulary usage in the Labovian (1992) tradition to examine particular usage of certain phrases, words and metaphor. This paper reports on some of the results obtained in both the Australian and Canadian studies.

**Clique – Coded Language Discourse (CCLD)**

Teenalect also varies according to the specific clique to which an adolescent belongs. Clique-Coded language discourse (CCLD) refers to the fact that teenalect constitutes a means for establishing peer-clique bonds (Danesi 1994, 1999). It mainly refers to discourse in which each clique engages. Adolescents like to dialogue mainly what is of interest to their clique members (Danesi 1988, 1989, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Clivio and Danesi 2000; Aulino 2005).
The themes that surfaced mostly in the Italian Canadian and Italian Australian data are centered around their immediacy and urgency of peer-related events, for example, music preferences, automobile ownership, clothing, physical appearance, and academic achievement. Students were asked to list words that they use to describe other teenagers and provide a definition as well as define a list of common clique names.

Some of the responses by the Italian Canadian adolescents include:
1. A *gino/a* connotes: “someone who wears tight clothes, usually are of Italian or Latino descent drives a Honda Civic, listens to freestyle music and hangs out at Tim Horton’s café and speaks with a certain Soprano type cadence.”
2. A *thug* connotes: “someone who listens to rap, hip-hop music, wears baggy clothes. Speaks using black “lingo” and walks with a limp. Also, it is someone who has crossed over from being a “gino”.
3. A *jock* connotes: “someone who is very muscular, athletic and tough”.
4. A *burnout* connotes: “someone who skips classes, smokes all day and has a low academic average”.

Some ‘teenalect’ items were recognized:
- A *nerd* connotes: “a person who receives high marks in a course, spends a lot of time on the computer, not considered cool”
- A *geek* connotes: “someone who tries hard to be funny, does not have many friends and tries to act cool”.

A few students put these three “teenalect” items into a global perspective by stating that nerds and geeks dorks are all related in someway. Since Danesi’s work in the 1980s and 1990s the only ‘teenalect’ item that seems to have changed was ‘geek’, as in Danesi’s study a ‘geek’ was seen as someone who doesn’t take showers, who is slimy, greasy, and drippy.

The definitions provided by the Australian students included:
1. A *gino/a* connotes: “refers to Italian dudes and girls”.
2. A *thug* connotes: “someone who is a tank, tough, rebel and a bully.”
3. A *jock* connotes: “someone who is very muscular, athletic and tough”.
4. A *burnout* connotes: “someone who skips classes, smokes all day and has a low academic average”.

The recognized ‘teenalect’ items included:
- A *nerd* connotes: “a person who is unpopular, studies all the time and does not socialize, wers thick glasses, is intelligent.”
- A *geek* connotes: “someone who is similar to a nerd, is a computer freak, is lame and smart but dressed as a dork.”

**Conclusion**

Italian Canadian adolescent speech of adolescents pursuing Italian studies as L2 in Canada and Australia were surveyed. The cross-cultural comparisons results confirmed that ‘teenalect’ categories are apparent in all cultures where adolescence forms a distinct social category.

McLuhan (1962) was convinced that in the global village, the world’s languages would connect and interface in various ways, especially in the encoding of thoughts and ideas. Adolescent speech has become the unique
social dialect of the world, uniting youth in different continents of the earth in a remarkable way (Danesi 2003a, 2003b).

This investigation of adolescent talk confirmed that the L2 Italian teacher, as part of their pedagogical approach towards teaching and learning, should provide a syllabus that meets the cultural and linguistic needs of the L2 adolescent learner. The teacher of L2 Italian needs to be a ‘curriculum designer’ where a learning syllabus is tailored to adolescent interests, making it much more meaningful for their communicative needs (Danesi 1996a, 1996b).

There is a need to constantly review the presentation of the pedagogical material to cater for a changing clientele (Nuessel 1999; Danesi 1996a, 1996b, 1997) and to ensure that the curriculum content does not become devoid of any significance to the adolescent’s world of experience (Danesi 1996b, p.9).


Further study in this area of research may be warranted. For example further investigation could be undertaken in the future to determine whether the study conducted in these two countries has international applications and implications for communication and study of any language. After all, “teen lingo is here to stay, whether we like it or not, or just choose to ignore it” (Perruccio 2004, p.3).

References


Learner Autonomy and its Indispensability in Second Language Acquisition in Albania

Bledar Toska
University of Vlora, Albania

Abstract

This study enlightens Learner Autonomy (LA) in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) from the theoretical and practical perspective. From the theoretical framework LA is approached from its core factors, that is, linguistic, cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social ones. Other elements in center of this process are students’ leading role and teachers’ supporting role in facilitating conditions under which autonomy can prosper. Of great importance is also the concept of LA concept and especially its necessity in the language acquisition context.

The second part, which is based on the theoretic notions of autonomy, analyses collected data in order to assess its level in some Albanian educational institutions, where empirical research was carried out. Four questionnaires were compiled and an interview was conducted so as to discuss the LA impact on the acquisition of English as a foreign language our Albanian students. The third part tentatively lists a number of relevant, theoretic and practical conclusions drawn from the study and also suggests important points for further study.

Introduction

There has been a lot of research and discussion on how to teach students to learn a foreign language. In the SLA field, studies have demonstrated that teaching is of primary importance, but some controversial issues concerning the efficiency of knowledge retention and use have emerged. A new and more central role of students in SLA process has been proposed and emphasized in the last few decades. This process appears to be far more complex than it could be expected. And indeed, several aspects, such as affective, social and psychological factors and the role of teachers and students have been recognized to occupy and play an indispensable part in SLA.

LA enables students not only to acquire a foreign language independently but also to use it in various sociocultural and linguistic circumstances. However, students are expected to undertake the language acquisition responsibilities, to collaborate with one another as well as with teachers so as to determine and to fulfill educational purposes in the future. They are also supposed to evaluate their own progress in the autonomy framework. Furthermore, in this LA process teachers occupy a new role, less ‘dictating’ than they used to.

The concept of autonomy was first introduced to foreign language teaching and learning when the communicative method became widely known and was regularly applied to classrooms. The linguistic notion was not thought of as an autonomous process before, since language was mostly seen as a closed system, which could be mastered and regularly improved only if students mastered various grammatical structures. But, in fact, these isolated linguistic
constructions did not constitute proper language acquisition. Freeman (2000) observes that,

In the 1970s ... some educators observed that students could produce sentences accurately in a lesson, but could not use them appropriately when genuinely communicating outside the classroom. Others noted that being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistic structures. ... In short, being able to communicate required more than linguistic competence; it required communicative competence. (Freeman 2000: 121)

Thus, focus on foreign language learners’ communicative competence was also a shift to a more autonomous approach to acquiring languages. Old methods, such as grammar-translation or direct methods, were abandoned and a new concept was adopted to assist students overcome many of the problems they encountered when acquiring a new linguistic code.

Research into LA and SLA has been prominent mainly in two directions. Firstly, scholars in the sociology and psychology fields have demonstrated that autonomy has a very positive impact on all school curricula and secondly, studies have extended to the linguistic field over the last decades by supporting the autonomy factor, especially in SLA.

The purpose of the present article is to explore, to some extend, the representation of these two directions in the new post-communist area in Albania and how to gear our students to a more elevated level of autonomous selves, particularly in SLA. As far as we know, there are almost no studies in regard to LA in the Albanian educational context. And this was one of the main reasons for writing this paper.

1. Defining Learner Autonomy

It is, by no means, an easy task to define LA. Different scholars describe and consider the LA concept from their own perspective and in accordance with the priorities they attribute to it. For instance, Holec (1981: 3) defines LA as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” and Little (1991: 4) describes it as “a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action”.

The drawback of the above definitions is that they include only some aspects of LA; namely, learner’s ability, independence, consciousness and initiative. Broadly speaking, apart from them there are additional significant factors for LA, that is, learner’s responsibilities, setting one’s own objectives, undertaking initiatives, self-evaluating acquisition and use efficiency, social linguistic interactivity etc. In other words, LA requires a set of internal and external elements, which would favorably accommodate themselves within the (meta)cognitive, psychological, linguistic, sociocultural and affective dimensions, which almost always interact with each other in the SLA process.

1.1 Factors in Center of Learner Autonomy
In this short section we shall briefly discuss some theoretical contributions to SLA, as approached by various schools. Various elements and aspects are listed in order of their priority within the field of study which they have been treated.

Sociolinguists describe language in terms of the sociocultural context, in which it develops and serves as a means of communication and perception. As Shkurtaj (1999: 77) observes, individuals display their linguistic solidarity through their communicative competence in order to accept and alter social reality. In doing so, they should be account for the social reality in their speech and be aware of when, where and what to say to whom. From this perspective, linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge ought to be appropriately used.

Individuals are socioculturally organized, and this reality, which constantly changes and evolves, appears to be part of their language acquisition. Furthermore, individuals are directly connected with and able to affect the sociocultural context in a determined way by means of their language. Language, learnt mainly at school, is used in very different ways, so it is impossible for students to learn everything about it only through formal education. At this stage, LA in SLA becomes especially prominent in practical tones. It rests with students to deal with myriads of linguistic situations they encounter.

Psychologists suggest that students should occupy a central role in their experience development, which can hardly be taught since it is unique by nature to every individual. And the process of SLA is interwoven with student’s personal experience and needs. There should be some self-awareness level preceding successful SLA. Dubin and Olshtain (1986: 50), as cited in (Hayo 2000), add that people should undertake their own responsibility to acquire, to make decisions, and to undertake initiatives.

This psychological theory has had its own positive impact on SLA and has redefined to a considerable extend students and teachers’ roles in knowledge acquisition and language assimilation. For instance, in the Silent Way technique teacher’s role is that of the facilitator in the learning process. Freeman (2000) states that

... one of the basic principles of the Silent way is that ‘Teaching should be subordinate to learning.’ In other words, Gattegno believed that to teach means to serve the learning process rather than to dominate it. (Freeman 2000: 53-54)

Students’ personal development is also affected by affective factors, such as encouragement and courage. Freeman (2000) suggests that students be equipped with self-confidence and following George Lazanov’ dessuggest method she summaries

The reason for our inefficiency, Lazanov asserts, is that we set up psychological barriers to learning: We fear that we will be unable to perform, that we will be limited in our ability to learn, that we will fail. One result is that we do not use the full mental powers that we have. ... In order to make better use of our reserved capacity, the limitations we think we have need to be desuggested.

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5 A more detailed discussion about the LA aspects and characteristics can be found in Hayo (2000). Certain discussions in this section are attributed to his research.

6 A more detailed talk about affective factors will follow in the data discussion section.
Dessugestopedia ... has been developed to help students eliminate the feeling that they cannot be successful or the negative association they may have toward studying and, thus, to help them overcome the barriers to learning. (Freeman 2000: 73)

Studie's in cognitive psychology have also contributed to LA in SLA. The core notion of these studies emphasizes the parallel development of students' knowledge with their personal experiences. For instance, active students, who usually show high degree of self-motivation, are very willing to undertake innovative initiatives and do not rely on external stimuli to be autonomously involved in the SLA process. Furthermore, they recognize the potential of their mind capacity and efficiency. They are aware of the whole learning process and develop their own strategic plans.

Some linguists have provided theories and interpretations as to SLA process. Krashen (1987), for example, sustains that the only and the most important factor in SLA is students' exposure to comprehensible linguistic input. Following Chomsky, such situation would activate the language acquisition device (LAD), which enables FLS and SLA. Their main drawback is to attribute the entire acquisition process to the passive mind, something which would neglect other social and psychological factors.

Unlike some scholars, we do not wish to confine the LA concept to a single definition, in which the description of it would take a more fixed character. Various factors do influence its nature and play an important and frequently simultaneous role in constructing LA in SLA. Thus, we distinguish the following factors:

1. Cognitive factor. It is the ability to critically reflect so as to make decisions as regard the autonomous learning consciously and willingly.
2. Affective factor. It is the willingness to undertake language acquisition as a part of student’s role in SLA process. Students equipped with this factor, are self-confident, believe in their abilities to be leaders of the entire SLA process.
3. Metacognitive factor. It is ability to direct the acquisition process by defining aims, the processing its content and exploiting the self-evaluative mechanism for the progress of the process.
4. Social factor. It is the social ability to collaborate with others. The higher the collaboration the higher the level of knowledge acquisition.

2. Empirical Data and Discussion

This section of the paper focuses on students, their viewpoints and concepts on LA, SLA and its motivation, as well as various factors which help autonomy and language acquisition. These elements were discussed from the theoretical viewpoint in the first part of this article. Now, we shall attempt to discover and consider their practical representation among our students.

They are grouped under different headings, that is, LA concept and hesitation to undertake it, external and internal motivation, social, (meta)cognitive and affective factors. We have not included in this article some additional but less important aspects such as foreign language use or language resources, which, though significant in SLA process, fall out the scope of this paper.
2.1 Research Methodology

We used two very frequent ways to collect information for our empirical discussion, questionnaires and interviews. Thus, the data collection was concentrated on two acting planes with two main actors, students and me, the teacher. Firstly, we conducted 30 interviews with students of different linguistic levels and secondly, we asked about 130 students to fill in four different types of questionnaires. Also various observations were made in some English classes so to complement the information obtained from our students. Through the observations, we wished to discover problems regarding the LA in SLA, which might not have been encountered in theoretical literature and which occupy an important part of our empirical research.

2.2 Data Discussion

a. LA concept and hesitation to undertake it.

The notion of LA in SLA for 63% of the students was rather vague and for 27% was little or hardly clear at all. Also 46% have made minimal efforts to construct autonomy (questions 12, 13, questionnaire 4). It was noted a need to make them more aware of LA notion and to show more initiative to build it.

Only almost half of the students valued individual undertaking as helpful with regard to acquisition, a fact which showed a shallow viewpoint on autonomy (q 4, Q 3). Furthermore, 58% stated openly that they were hesitant to go beyond the homework given by their teachers (q 1, Q 4).

b. motivation

Motivation is one of the most crucial factors when it comes to foreign language learning. It appears in two forms, as internal motivation and external motivation. The former is general and very characteristic for the individual. It comes from internal stimuli (desires, objectives, needs or decisions) and is both at the same time stable and unstable, much conditioned by circumstances, which also vary among individuals. The latter is also part of motivation in general but it refers to external stimuli (such as those which students perceive in classroom from their teachers or from their classmates or in similar environments). It affects student mainly through different factors such as the ones we are about to discuss below.

Both the external and internal motivations, either negatively or positively, were present in our students. Below we shall try to summarize and highlight the main points concerning these factors in question.

In the second questionnaire, constructed to measure the level of motivation, students were asked to express their own opinion on it. Almost all the students recognized both their own capacity in acquiring foreign languages in general, and the importance of English as an international/global language (q 1, 2, 3). Additionally, only a small number of them, about 12 or 10%,
demonstrated little self-confidence as regard SLA (q 11, Q 2). In q 4 and 8 Q 2 students were explicitly asked about their motivation for learning foreign languages. Around 90% were interested in SLA and were ambitious to obtain good results.

On the other hand, external stimuli were not very promising. From what was perceived, external motivation can potentially affect internal motivation, since the two interact silently with one another. We discovered an unsatisfactory high percentage of students, who were not enough motivated by their teachers (58%, q 6, Q 2). Also quite surprisingly, 75% were little or not satisfied at all with teaching (q 10, Q 2). Furthermore, 65% thought that the whole teaching process was not inviting enough (q 13, Q 2).

Questions 5 a/b in the interview dealt with the most and least useful teaching and learning class. What was dominant in interviewees’ answers was the creation of an environment where the communicative method could dominate. Some students did not even like the fact that they were not encouraged to be integral part of the lesson. Some students did hate a class, in which teacher’s aim was to mark student’s answers.

c. social factors

A very high number of students (88%, q 11 and 93%, q 12 in Q 3) observed that they were in favour of a close interactive relationship among themselves and teachers. This tendency was also dominant in the conducted interviews. Collaboration was also seen as a key factor for the benefit of SLA. On the other hand, from what we observed and from our experience, collaboration is closely connected with other aspects such as active participation in classroom (usually only a small number of student contribute to it), linguistic competence (not many possess it) or the subject which is under discussion in a certain lesson. The above mentioned aspects were not common in our classes, not to mention the low level of linguistic collaboration outside classrooms.

Almost all the questioned students (92%) were willing to be part of the teaching/learning process (q 5, Q 4), to collaborate with their classmates (82%) (q 7, Q 2) and they also recognized the contribution they can offer in a successful process (67%) (q 15, Q 2). In reality, only 46% (q 4, Q 4) said they were really collaborative. And they mostly enjoyed working in groups (q 4 in the interview), in which they could acquire linguistic abilities.

It appears from these figures that students are aware of the collaboration benefits, but their approach is little encouraging and hardly applicable to reality, as it was observed in our classes.

d. cognitive factors

The percentage of students determined to decide themselves what is useful to be studied in FL was low, only 38% (q 1, Q 3) and 81% (q 2, Q 3) believed that the linguistic knowledge they received in academic institutions would suffice and they also showed little enthusiasm to extend the acquisition process outside the classroom.

e. metacognitive factors

As mentioned above, the most important metacognitive factors are setting learning objectives and self-assessing the progress already made. Questionnaire
3 contains three questions regarding these factors. So, in question 8, 77% agreed or almost agreed about setting their own learning goals. Question 9 had to do with the nature of acquisition process; 50% thought that results could be measured by students themselves. 46% (q 10) did not think as necessary to self-assess their progress. Thus, judging from the data, the metacognitive factors are represented only in almost half of the students.

Questions 9 and 10 were intended to highlight studying strategies that students applied. Some of the answers we obtained during the interviews were relevant to these questions. Many interviewees showed considerably dependency on school and its elements such as, teachers, books, dictionaries, classroom and other institutional facilities. There were few of them who preferred individual work and focused themselves on communicative aspects of language learning. All in all, we noted lack of implementing the metacognitive factors properly, even when they were partially present in our students.

f. affective factors

The factors included here have to do with student self-determination in constructing his own autonomy in order to lead himself towards a successful learning process. His emotional state and viewpoint are among the most important aspects in SLA. We exploited some questions from questionnaires 3 and 4 to learn more about these factors. In q 3 and 5, Q 3, 85% highlighted the necessity for undertaking the SLA process themselves autonomously. However, only 54% expressed to be self-confident enough to undertake such a responsibility.

In q 6, Q 3, very similar to q 5, was noticed a low percentage of students (38%), who were ready to be self-leaders, even though 77% were able to work according to their needs (q 7). We think that this high percentage is in accordance with their various needs, and in only few of them, it appears as an ability to construct their autonomy.

43% are not ready to know the reality of their academic progress (q 6, Q 4), so they do not prefer to face negative aspects of their work, such as poor results. All their viewpoints directly affect their work, possibly unconsciously. It seems that they are more for innovative learning and teaching methods (79%), for new environments (88%) and for new friends (65%) (q 7, Q 4).

Their affective filter acts on their wish to be actively involved in FL communication. 46% thought that a poor linguistic performance would diminish their linguistic self-image (q 15, Q 3). Also students’ emotional state in the SLA process has a considerable impact on their academic results. In some students, this state could totally “block” the whole process. Autonomy demolishes psychological and affective barriers, and reduces undesired emotional states and ultimately assists students in the SLA process. 78% stated that these situations prevent them to successfully communicate in a FL and for 70% they are an obstacle to be overcome in exams (q 10, Q 1 and q 14, Q 2).

3. Conclusions

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10 Affective Filter is one of the five main hypotheses of Krashen’s Theory of Second Language Acquisition, according to which learners with high motivation, self-confidence, good self-image and low level of anxiety are bound to perform better in SLA process.
From the theoretical viewpoint, LA opens up a new bright perspective in SLA education, in which students are encouraged to assess their own viewpoints and to undertake their own responsibility in the SLA process. This method is independent from the pedagogical styles, students’ age and cultural background, learning environment and goes beyond the different curricula. LA ought to be one of the fundamental characteristics of education because only when LA is allowed to act can education flourish.

In this paper we empirically discussed the indispensability of LA in SLA. The analyzed data demonstrated that, generally speaking, students welcome autonomy in the acquisition process, even though their notion on LA is not crystallized sufficiently. Unfortunately, their attempts to master linguistic abilities are accompanied by their minimal efforts to construct autonomy.

Based on the four factors in center of LA, we tentatively reached the following conclusions:

a. As for the social factors, Albanian students are self-conscious for collaboration, but, in most cases, they show little initiative to implement cooperation and spread it. From our viewpoint, this can be owing to their restricted linguistic competence. However, this provisional conclusion is not to be generalized whatsoever.

b. Our data and observations show that students are not cognitively mature enough to self-decide and that they rely mostly on academic institutions and their teachers. The cognitive factors do not seem to be well represented in them.

c. Metacognitively speaking, students ignore making their own assessment in SLA. Other aspects, such as learning planning activities or setting learning objectives appear not to be sufficiently represented in many of them. There is a general stream to neglect these elements.

d. In terms of the affective factors Albanian students recognize the indispensability to undertake the SLA process, but lack of self-leading abilities. However, it is not uncommon to find students who are self-determined to monitor their own progress.

Stimuli phenomenon is possibly another element which could explain some of the drawbacks and difficulties in our students’ linguistic progress. We believe that there is a clash between the internal and the external motivation, rather than a real interface between them. This is a fact which deserves a study from the cognitive aspects of language acquisition.

The amount of data considered here was rather limited in scale. Certainly, there need to be a more extensive and detailed research in quantity and quality in future studies. But we hope that this modest research could serve as a new impetus to the educational emancipation, through which LA in SLA could act as an indispensable aspect in Albanian schools for foreign language acquisition.

References


**Appendix**

**Questionnaire 1**: General remarks about SLA. Choose from 1, the lowest score, to 4 the highest score. Please do not write your name.

1. Foreign language is primarily learnt through imitation. ___
2. Only very intelligent students are bright learners of a foreign language. ___
3. The most significant indicator of success in SLA is motivation. ___
4. The sooner we start learning a foreign language at school, the more successful its acquisition will be. ___
5. Most mistakes learners make in a foreign language occur because of the influence of their mother tongue. ___
6. Reading is the best way to acquire new vocabulary. ___
7. Teachers should make use only of those teaching resources which include only those language structures learners have studied. ___
8. When learners are given the opportunity to talk freely to one another (for instance, in a group or in class activities), they are likely to learn from each others’ mistakes. ___
9. Students can grasp not only language but also academic content (e.g. literature, history, phonetics etc.) concurrently in class if the subject is taught in a foreign language. ___
10. The experience of feelings affects the use of foreign language in conversation. ___

**Questionnaire 2**: Student’s motivation. Answer the questions given below. Choose from 1, the lowest score, to 4 the highest score. Please do not write your name.

1. ___ How competent are you to learn foreign languages in general?
2. ___ How much do you like English?
3. ___ How important is for you to learn English?
4. ___ How much interested and motivated are you to learn a foreign language?
5. ___ How stimulating are the subjects in this school to learn English?
6. ___ How stimulating is to be taught by this school teachers?
7. ___ How much do you like learning with your classmates?
8. ___ How much do you wish to do better than your friends in English?
9.____ How useful is the teaching you get from your teachers in relation to your goals in acquiring English?
10.____ How attractive is the teaching process at this institution?
11.____ How much do you rely on your abilities to obtain good results in English?
12.____ How much are you stimulated by the organization of a good lesson?
13.____ How stimulating and attractive do you find lesson organization by your teachers in general?
14.____ How much does the experience of feelings affect your school results (e.g. exams, tests, participation etc.)?
15.____ How much does your active class participation contribute to a successful lesson?

**Questionnaire 3**: Psychological, (meta)cognitive, affective and social factor in SLA. Answer the questions given below. Choose from 1, the lowest score, to 4 the highest score. Please do not write your name.

1. It is always the teacher and not the student who must decide what is useful to be taught in a foreign language. ____
2. The linguistic knowledge obtained at school is enough for my linguistic level. ____
3. The learner himself/herself must undertake the process of foreign language acquisition. ____
4. The learner can undertake no personal actions regarding autonomous learning. ____
5. How confident are you to undertake the process of SLA (that is, without the help of a teacher)? ____
6. How prepared are you to lead yourself to SLA? ____
7. How capable are you of following your needs in SLA? ____
8. It is the learner who must set his/her own goals in learning. ____
9. The results obtained in the process of SLA are advisable to be measured by the learner himself/herself. ____
10. Self-assessment is indispensable for the learner’s achievements. ____
11. Class collaboration among classmates is necessary. ____
12. The higher the collaboration with the teacher, the better the results. ____
13. Communication is very important in a foreign language class. ____
14. It is beneficial for the learner to express himself/herself in the foreign language in class and to avoid using his/her native tongue. ____
15. Poor performance during a conversation in the foreign language diminishes your linguistic abilities. ____

**Questionnaire 4**: Assessing the level of LA. Choose from 1, the lowest score, to 4 the highest score. Please do not write your name.

1. Do you hesitate to undertake the initiatives for your learning, that is, to go beyond your teacher’s assignments? 4 3 2 1
2. How confident are you about your academic work? 4 3 2 1
3. How motivated are you to learn English in this school? 3 2 1
4. How cooperative are you with your classmates? 3 2 1
5. How willing are you to participate in the lesson in class? 4 3 2 1
6. How ready are to talk about your progress? 3 2 1
7. How ready are you to adapt yourself to:
   a. new methods of learning and teaching 3 2 1
   b. new facilities 4 3 2
   c. new friends 3 2 1
8. Have you ever thought about your learning goals? Yes  No
9. How do you prefer learning?
   a. Listening passively 3 2 1
   b. Reading 4 3 2
   c. Discussing with classmates after class 3 2 1
   d. Discussing with classmates during the lesson 3 2 1
   e. Working in group 3 2 1
   f. Talking to the teacher 4 3 2
10. How often do you use the following teaching resources in SLA?
    a. The school library 3 2 1
    b. The town library 4 3 2
    c. The materials assigned by the teacher 3 2 1
    d. Published resources (e.g. books, dictionaries, grammar books etc.) 3 2 1
    e. Electronic resources (e.g. television, radio, computer etc.) 3 2 1
    f. Human resources (e.g. native speakers, teacher, classmates etc.) 4 3 2 1
11. Have you ever thought about self-assessment? Yes  No
    If yes, how objective is your self-assessment? 3 2 1
    Is it difficult to self-assess? 3 2 1
12. How clear is to you the concept of the LA in SLA? 3 2 1
13. Have you ever tried to ‘build’ your own autonomy as learner?
   Yes   No
14. How motivated are you to learn English?          4
   3   2   1
15. Are you satisfied with teaching at your school?  4
   3   2   1
16. How satisfied are you with the teaching resources used in class?  4
   3   2   1
17. Would you like new teaching methods and resources to be used in class?  4
   3   2   1
18. How helpful has your teacher been to you so far?  4
   3   2   1

**Interview**

1. When does the process of foreign language learning take place?
2. Describe your ideal environment for language learning.
3a. In what circumstances do you grasp more easily?
3b. In what circumstances do you grasp more strenuously?
4. What is your reason for learning in class?
5a. Describe your ideal lesson.
5b. Describe your least useful lesson.
6a. What is the role of teaching in the process of language learning?
6b. What is the role of the learner in the process of language learning?
7. How do you learn a foreign language?
8. Why do you study English?
9. What is the most fruitful way to learn a foreign language?
10. What strategies or ways do you follow when you study?
The seeds for this paper were sown when I was re-reading Black Elk Speaks, the memoir of a Native American visionary as told to John G. Neihardt. I was particularly struck by a comment Black Elk made when discussing how his tribe was made to live in little, gray log houses: “there can be no power in a square” (150).

Although the idea was not new to me, Black Elk’s vision of the world as a “hoop” began to haunt me, for I have long been troubled by the Euro-western view of the world as a plane upon which to build civilization. Under this construction, the wetland becomes a two-dimensional swamp rather than a multi-dimensional ecosystem that begins at the edge of our atmosphere and continues to the bedrock. As such, it can be paved over for a big box store and accompanying parking lot or it can be tiled and drained for massive monocrop agriculture that purports to feed the starving millions, but in reality, leads to their starvation.

I began to look anew at the plane, the boxes which sit upon it, the lines leading to the doors in the boxes, and all the points along the way when we could have chosen differently. I began to perceive the irony that, while those who made the squares seem to have all the power, they suffer from illusion, for our quest for power has pitted us against the very mother who sustains us.

So I wish to make a point, or rather several of them: about points. About the lines made up of points, the angles made when lines meet, and the squares formed of angles. But I don’t wish to address geometry, but rather reasoning, logic, argumentation, and the epistemology that underlies what the Euro-western world considers to be rational.

An argument consists of points. Points exist along a line. Or do they? Implicit in the notion of linear movement is movement forward, which is seen as progress. With regard to reasoning, we don’t consider movement up or down, which is to remain in constant position to the plane below, that is, to remain static. Indeed, we often belittle those with whom we disagree by saying, “She’s not even on the same plane as we are. Neither do we consider movement sideways, which is to leave the beaten track, thus entering the realm of lunatics.

We expect individuals to “toe the line,” that is, to do what is expected; to “get in line,” or “fall into line,” meaning to conform; and to “be in line with” us, that is, to agree. So the job of the authority is to keep us in line. Heaven forbid, anyone step out of line.

In terms of communication, we often speak of lines of transmission. The question arises: Is this an analogy for speech drawn from the movement of electricity or is our analogy for electricity drawn from speech? Clearly the former makes no sense, for electricity doesn’t move in lines, but in circuits. Neither
does the latter, as anyone can observe from observing the constant digression and disruption of any common conversation.

And yet, we claim that she who is circuitous is she who deviates; but perhaps she merely detours around the point, perhaps the point of no return. Indeed, we refer to a circuitous argument as tortured, but what is more torturous than nailing your point home?

Paradoxically, to bring your argument full circle is contrary to talking in circles, but why? We chastise those who circle around the point. But why is the point so important? Because it exists on a line. And lines move forward. Yet in the process of hovering around the point, one observes many perspectives. Indeed, the “Aha!” moment at which one arrives may be precisely that there is no point or that all points are equally valid depending on your position in orbit. Clearly, a revolution in thought does not occur by moving from point to point, but by circling about, by revolving. Thus all or most points must be acknowledged for the revolution to be fully operable.

Oddly enough, the wheels of your brain must turn so they may arrive at a point, a stopping place, a fixed idea. All too often this means the wheels stop turning.

One may also pivot upon a point, but the point remains. Thus, we refer to some points as pivotal, as if they spin about an axis. Yet to spin about an axis is to go nowhere, even though that axis rests upon a point.

We say, “I’m going to go through this point by point.” Then as we do so, someone may suggest, “You missed something.” When that something doesn’t follow along our line, we dismiss it as irrelevant, for without the line, we feel as though we have no direction.

Which brings me to angles: when we meet someone of whom we are uncertain, we wonder, “What’s his angle?”; meaning of course, his angle of attack. For we hold tight to our lines of reasoning, protecting them. We also suspect that he may be out of line, at an angle, crooked, that is. And so, we angle for his point, fish for his thoughts. We angle him on, give him the bait. We suspect he may be biased, operating on the diagonal. We don’t trust his slant. From there, everything is downhill.

So we try to corner him, keep him from going off on a tangent. We square off; draw a line in the sand. We look each other squarely in the eye. Then we circle about until one of us crosses the line. We exchange points, try to find the gaps in each other’s lines of reasoning.

But of course, we want him in our corner. And once we get him in our corner, we square accounts and figure he must be a square shooter. We trust him to give us a square deal—until he makes a pointed remark. Then we go back to our corners and re-evaluate our line of reasoning—until we square off again.

**Expertise and Progress**

My purpose in engaging in wordplay is to demonstrate that a geometric model of reasoning is clearly embodied in the idioms English speakers use to describe argumentation. But this is not mere wordplay, for language is thought and thought, language. Indeed, our idiom reflects a view of rationality the aims to rise above the messy world of human affairs to arrive at universal truths that can then be applied to real-world problems—a view that has its roots in the Euro-western tradition from Plato onward. However, the Euro-western view of rationality has limitations, which often lead to unlooked for and undesirable consequences.
One such consequence is the notion of expertise and the power circumscribed therein. The expert, we are told, is one who can rise above emotional concerns, what the Greeks called *pathos*, to objectively calculate right outcomes which can then be passed down to the inexpert audience. As the truth, or *logos*, at which the expert has arrived is rationally correct and purely objective, proper *ethos*, or ethics must necessarily follow. At bottom, the Euro-western preference for linear, calculative rationality assumes that the expert has epistemological purposes that take precedence over any social purposes, that is, that the expert aims for the unerring truth of the matter, which, once discovered, can be justly applied without further thought to the lives of real people. Failure to heed the expert’s advice is thus a sign of cognitive weakness or evidence of emotionalism, a failure to get in line. Such a view is not only paternalistic, but potentially dangerous, for such distanced calculation may fail to perceive genuine risks to people and to our planet.

A case in point: in a study of public participation in the 1991 International Joint Commission’s (IJC) Great Lakes Water Quality hearings, rhetorician Craig Waddell examines the problem of expertise, bringing to attention four models of policy-making that are relevant to my observations:

- **The technocratic model**, in which experts simply make decisions without input from and unanswerable to concerned parties;
- **The one-way Jeffersonian model**, in which expert knowledge is imparted to concerned parties in the belief that once educated they will see the light;
- **The interactive Jeffersonian model**, in which expert knowledge is passed down to concerned parties, while values, beliefs, and emotions are passed upward to experts, with both parties adjusting their positions accordingly; and
- **The social constructionist model**, which acknowledges the role that “the values, beliefs, and emotions of experts in science, engineering and government” play in policy formation, as well as the flow of technical information in both directions (141-142).

The flaw in the first model is fairly clear: the assumption that the public has nothing at all to bring to the table, that their knowledge, values, beliefs, and emotions are subjective, thus irrelevant. The second model offers little more. While on the surface it appears to acknowledge the impact of decision-making on human beings, it operates under the assumption that the public will bring their values, beliefs, and emotions in line with objective, rational experts once they understand the truth. Waddell quickly rejects both models outright as ineffective and ethically dubious. Yet he also dismisses the interactive model as implicitly paternalistic, in that it assumes that “the values, beliefs, and emotions of the public cannot truly be considered legitimate until those of technical experts are also acknowledged” (144). He then asserts that the social constructivist model plays out at the IJC hearings—which were convened to address concerns about organochloride contamination. Of particular interest to my discussion is the way in which emotional appeals became the subject of discussion, dismissal, and ultimately, persuasion.

Waddell notes that while experts did not necessarily dispute the substance of citizens’ concerns, they did, indeed, caution against their emotional appeals, one such expert stating explicitly that the commission could not “afford to be swayed by emotion from any angle” (149). Meanwhile, participant citizens felt the need to justify or apologize for their emotional appeals, often pointing out that they had no other recourse. (150). Yet experts also presented their cases with equal
emotional appeal, without apology, as if their concerns were grounded upon more rational thinking. For example, Ron Hohenstein, superintendent of environmental engineering for the Board of Water and Light in Lansing, Michigan, spoke in opposition to a ban on chlorination of water supplies by creating an emotionally-laden scenario of "naturally evolved microbial life forms . . . waiting to devastate vast numbers of human beings" (qtd. in Waddell 149). While the substance of his concern was based on rational science, i.e. *logos*, his concerns were grounded in emotion, i.e. *pathos*, and delivered with the intent to strike fear into the hearts of his audience. Moreover, the emotional concerns of citizens testifying in the hearings were likewise rationally grounded, as the US Environmental Protection Agency has since indicated that organochlorines may be implicated in breast cancer rates (EPA "EDRI"), immuno-suppression (EPA "Comparative") and a host of other health problems—concerns which were at the root of the Joint Commission. Moreover, all parties involved were concerned with the ethics of the situation; they merely perceived different sets of risks to the population, as well as the ecosystem. Waddell further points out that the engagement of commissioners' values, beliefs, and emotions was essential to the public's success in persuading them that action was needed to stem organochloride contamination (158). Thus his analysis suggests that any notion that rationality moves linearly without emotional and socio-ethical considerations is likely illusory.

Waddell therefore concludes that the social constructionist model serves as a "description of emerging public practice" (158) in US environmental policy formation and proposes it as a prescription for future endeavors. Yet in some ways these hearings suggest that the interactive Jeffersonian model was still in play, for the hearings continued to appear marked by the assumption that experts are capable of rising above emotion to achieve rational objectivity while public reaction is merely emotional. In fact, upon being persuaded that organochlorines were cause for action, commissioners indicated that public testimony "only confirm[ed] what they already believ[ed] based on scientific evidence" (148). Moreover, commissioners displayed bias against emotional appeals regarding environmental concerns, such as loss of biodiversity, in favor of appeals regarding human health, thus indicating that only certain appeals to *pathos* are acceptable (155). Such a bias suggests that fears about harm to people are somehow more rational and ethical than fears about harm to the environment which sustains us—evidence of paternalism.

Moreover, while the Joint Commission represents a context in which the public's concerns were given hearing, all too often decisions are made under the technocratic model, in which the affected citizen has no voice at all. Under this model, experts observe economic, environmental, or social situations from a distance, apply their allegedly rational calculations, and implement a plan or enforce a policy.

**Linear Rationality and Economics**

Economic theory has been particularly susceptible to the assumptions of objective, linear rationalism, for upon the assumptions that human beings are rational economic actors, that human needs are endless, and that rational experts can determine objective and unerring policies, lies another string of assumptions—that economic growth is inherently progress, thus that economic development inherently results in social improvement (Elshtain 13). Of course this ideology of progress rests upon the notions that the market is indeed free
and that human beings are rational agents of choice in an environment which is equally self-regulatory and rational. But as the market is regulated from multiple directions, the real question becomes who these regulations benefit. Moreover, an abundance of evidence suggests that the market is not rational, but subject to the exuberance and hesitation of speculators—as the current global economic crisis illustrates.

At any rate, under this set of assumptions, even the most basic needs of people—food, water, even “belongingness”—have become products in the global market. As human beings are reduced to producers and consumers of goods, the virtue so prized by the ancient Greeks, that of self-sufficiency, becomes impossible. The undesired outcome is movement away from a way of life that was good for people, in which individuals and family units produced the materials to meet their basic needs, toward a way of life that is good for products, in which human beings purchase these materials from large producers, thus producing profit, i.e. economic growth (Quinn).

To take food production as an example: the twentieth century witnessed a move away from local production of healthy nutritious foods toward monocrop commodity agriculture, the futures of which are traded on the market to provide profit for speculators far removed from the land. The former, while labor intensive, relies on natural cycles. Livestock grazes, consumes a diet of insects or human food waste, and produces manure, which is returned to the soil where it provides nutrients for crops which are grown to feed people in the family or local community. The latter reduces the labor required to produce crops but depends on huge amounts of fossil fuels to operate agricultural machinery, to produce fertilizer, and to transport crops vast distances at great economic cost for some, profit for others. In short, it becomes a linear supply chain. Moreover, monocrops become targets for insects, requiring massive use of chemical pesticides which may endanger human health, as well as that of the ecosystem, including insects beneficial to agricultural production. In short, a cyclical view of agricultural considers the ecosystem in its entirety, including the individuals who will consume agricultural products, while a linear view considers only crop yields and the profits which will emerge from higher yields—profits not only from sale of the product, but from machinery manufacture, artificial fertilizer and pesticide production, transportation, etc.

No doubt modern agriculture has increased production. But while increased production should mean greater ability to feed the earth’s population, the starving millions remain. Indeed, much of the increase in consumable grains, for example, has gone to feed livestock, which once found their food sources within the natural cycles of the farm, in large animal confinement feeding operations (CAFOs). The meat, in turn, is largely consumed by relatively rich people. The problem is not merely a problem of distribution, for wherever one finds starving people, one also finds a class of well-fed people, for the motivation behind increased production is not to feed the world, but to increase profits in the name of progress, namely economic growth (Quinn If 31-36). Food has become a commodity rather than a basic human right and, as a commodity, it is locked away from people (Quinn Ishmael 37), and thus they must produce some other commodity or service in order to obtain it. In short, we cannot feed the starving millions because we have separated them, not only from the indigenous ways which sustained them, but from local control of their economies, under the notion that “development” can only proceed under a macroeconomic model dominated by the interests of multi-national corporations.
One specific arena in which this model has often resulted in dubious consequences are the economies of less developed countries (LDCs). While the stated aims of lending and regulatory agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are altruistic, their assumptions have been that the only means to bring prosperity to these countries is to restructure LDC economies under the liberal, capitalistic model which they hold responsible for the success of wealthier nations. In doing so, they have often imposed macroeconomic analyses without regard for microeconomic and social conditions (Elson 1). It bears repeating: under macroeconomic assumptions, economic security rests upon economic growth, i.e. more stuff moving around the globe, which means that economic development consists of increasing export production into the free market.

We need only examine the African continent to see the effects. From 1966-1970, Africa exported 1.3 million tons of food each year, while feeding local populations. Today, 25% of Africa’s food is imported, while over two dozen African countries suffer from famine. A significant cause is the structural adjustment programs required by the IMF and the World Bank in return for assistance in servicing the external debt of LDCs. The expectation was that, by removing the state apparatus from agriculture and introducing a “free market” paradigm to the continent, African agriculture would become more profitable (Bello), a macroeconomic assumption.

Unfortunately, risk as state expenditures were reduced, the private sector perceived greater risk and investment did not follow. Indeed, while these private sector experts employed what they perceived as rational calculations of risk, they reacted both rationally and emotionally to the consideration that they could lose profit. Meanwhile, many of the private sector investors sought to acquire huge tracts of land from which they could collect rents, pushing traditional agriculture, that which fed people, off much of the best land, exacerbating microeconomic concerns. The Bank also required governments to channel supports to export agriculture, such as cotton and cocoa, further forcing production of food crops onto more marginal land. In addition, several economies were encouraged by the Bank to turn their attention to the same export crops, leading to overproduction and price collapses. Against this backdrop, subsidies to agricultural products in the EU and the US allowed producers to sell their products to world markets at prices unsustainable by African producers (Bello), despite arguments that African producers would do better under a free market. In short, Euro-western economic experts exported a model of agriculture, which presumed an epistemological purpose, namely, that increased export production is progress, which proved catastrophic to the social and ethical purposes of feeding the population of Africa.

Of course economic engineering is only one factor, albeit a large factor, in the food crisis facing Africa. Monocropping and the long supply chains created by the globalization of agricultural production are also thought to contribute to climate change, which may be a significant factor in devastating droughts, not only on the African continent, but around the world. Australia, for example, is suffering its sixth year of drought. Severe drought is also expected to persist across the United States in California, Florida, Georgia, Nevada, and Texas, with smaller patches in other states over the 2009 growing season (NOAA). In the meantime, huge swaths of Argentina, Brazil, Eastern Europe, and the Mideast continue to suffer catastrophic droughts (UCL).

Indeed, the United Nations climate panel predicts that global temperatures are at risk of rising from 3.5 to 8 degrees Fahrenheit by 2050 if carbon
emissions are not drastically reduced (Audubon). Meanwhile, the US Energy Information Agency predicts global energy demand to rise 54 percent by 2025 (EIA). As the global economy looks for energy alternatives to reduce our dependence on oil, bio-fuels increasingly compete with food. For example, 30% of the US corn harvest went into ethanol production in 2008 (Runge and Senauer).

While the causes of climate change are many, climate experts suspect that they are human in origin and that carbon emissions are a major factor. The United States ranks at the top, accounting for 25% of annual global emissions as of 2004, despite only housing 4% of the global population (USCUNDP). The diet of the average US citizen alone accounts for 2.19 tons of carbon emissions annually (Scribd). A gallon of diesel fuel contains 2.8 kg of CO2 (Global Climate Fund). Thus, a single one-way trip by semi-truck from Florida to Michigan for delivery of produce yields 812 kg of CO2, nearly a metric ton (1000 kg).

Another concern is methane, which the US EPA has indicated is “20 times more effective in trapping heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide (CO2) over a 100-year period.” Livestock production ranks fifth in US methane emissions, particularly when manure is held in the lagoons and holding tanks which characterize CAFOs (EPA “Methane”). Under a cyclical, localized paradigm of food production, this manure returns to the soil where it fertilizes other food crops. Under the linear high-efficiency globalized food paradigm, it is held for long periods of time, often leaks into waterways, and, when applied to soil in liquid form, often runs off into waterways.

The paradox is that the consequences of the ideology of progress and its reliance on an excessive view of distanced expertise are not linear, but cyclical. Economic development in agriculture is perceived as requiring monocropping and confinement feeding, resulting in long supply chains, each of which require huge amounts of fossil fuel. CAFOs and the burning of fossil fuels release greenhouse gasses, which likely lead to climate change. Climate change devastates agricultural regions, halting economic development and politically destabilizing societies.

**Geometry Revisited**

Returning to my wordplay: we can note that one who refuses to rest upon a point is said to vacillate, but could she not be seen to oscillate, which, in a word, is to reciprocate, that is, simply to concede the validity of another’s perspective without wholly surrendering her own?

Meanwhile, we say that brilliant people have brainstorms, but what is linear about a storm? Storms circle, they sometimes erupt from nowhere, they often blow off course.

Of course, to argue is to discuss matters. But even matter is uncertain, as I will explain. We speak as though points exist along lines, but points also exist across planes and in multidimensional space. Indeed, points are merely metaphors. One cannot find a point, for the point is in constant movement.

Take the simplest atom, for example. The sphere which represents the movement of the electron around the nucleus is simply the realm of probability in which you are likely to locate the electron. Said electron has two particular properties: location and speed. Due to speed, one can only measure the location of the electron within a certain degree of accuracy. Were one instead to attempt to measure the location of the electron, the speed can only be measured within a certain degree of accuracy. In short, the more you focus on one property, the
fuzzier the other becomes. Thus, according to Heisenberg, even physical reality exists only in states of probability. Given this realm of probability, linear argumentation is no more than the packaging of a position in a way which closes off other probabilities.

Indeed, we can further note that the above model of rationality takes its metaphors from the assumptions of Euclidean geometry, in which points exist along a plane. As an alternative, we can take a look at non-Euclidean geometry, in which points may exist upon spheres or in any number of configurations. I’ll begin with an observation clarified by Douglas R. Hofstadter in his examination of the music, art, and mathematics of J.S. Bach, M.C. Escher, and Kurt Godel, respectively: Proofs are only definitions within fixed systems (18).

While Hofstadter was working within formal, mathematical systems, he provides a powerful analogy for any system of rationality, including what may be called “life systems,” those cultural narratives which make up perceptions of “the way things are.”

If we consider cultures to be systems of rationality, we can apply a basic principle of mathematics: To be internally consistent, every theorem must become a true statement (95).

In verbal discourse, we can translate this principle to mean that every thesis must be consistent with a shared narrative.

However, in both mathematics and verbal discourse, an internally consistent system may not be externally consistent, that is, it may not be consistent with the proofs of other internally consistent systems rationally based on alternative narratives. So, just as Euclidean and non-Euclidean geometry are internally consistent but externally inconsistent with one another, so are cultural rationalities to an extent. For example, cultures of the East place value on knowledge gained through transcendence in a way that Euro-western cultures do not. Yet we do not reject either Euclidean or non-Euclidean geometries in the way the economically dominant Euro-western world has often dismissed the systems of other cultures.

At bottom, deliberation must begin with recognition of the internal consistency of cultural rationalities, a process which requires parataxis, a non-hierarchical laying out of the interests of all parties concerned with a particular problem or opportunity. By contrast, the ideology of progress has proceeded by virtue of hypotaxis, a discourse structure which is two-dimensionally “vertical and visual . . . ‘hypo’ suggesting an organization ‘from under’” (Jarratt 27), in which the individual forming the arguments works to justify a prefigured conclusion. Parataxis, by contrast, operates outside hierarchical confines, allowing options to be laid out in a narrative structure which accounts for social purposes. Rhetorician Susan Jarratt argues that “the point is not exposing or uncovering the unknown, but rearranging the known” for the purposes of “revaluation” (28).

Indeed, if we return to the roots of Euro-western argumentation, we find that Aristotle seemed to recognize these social aims. Significantly, the term Aristotle most commonly use for wisdom is phronesis, or practical wisdom, rather that sophia, a term which came to represent, in Platonic terms, universal, immutable truth. For Aristotle, phronesis is a process of deliberation which culminates in krisis, or judgment (Rhetoric 1377b21), “the starting point of action (proairesis)” (Nichomachean Ethics 1139a31), “deliberate choice . . . directed to an end” (1366a1). Krisis is not action but a point in time, a moment of decision which must yet be realized in action (1113a10-11). Action is opposed to a wish, opinion, appetite, or passion—which may be held while not acted upon. So, if the
end of deliberation is action, as Aristotle posits, then the end of deliberation is not merely epistemological, it is social and, therefore, ethical, representing action aimed toward solving shared problems.

Moreover, while Jarratt describes parataxis as linear and aural, we might better think of it as web-like and aural, the presence of many voices and the viewpoints they embody. Parataxis describes a conversation about shared concerns, collaborative deliberation toward satisfactory solutions rather than a hierarchical eristic of individual viewpoints. No conclusion is prefigured, for the aim is not “to know” but “to act” in ways that best benefit all or most.

Unfortunately, the geometric idiom also reveals a suspicion of webs. We worry about being trapped in someone’s web or drawn into their net, snared, so to speak. We speak of webs of deceit. Webs are spun and we are angered by spin. “Web” may also refer to a piece of woven fabric, consisting of weft and warp. But to “warp” is to “cause to be abnormal or strange; to have a distorting effect on.” So the English poet Alexander Pope writes of tangled webs. But webs do not tangle, they thread from all directions or cease to exist altogether.

Similarly, we look with suspicion upon individuals who embroider their language, for to do so is “to alter so as to mislead”; it is to exaggerate, to “represent (something) as being larger, greater, better, or worse than it really is.” Perhaps it is no mere coincidence that these idioms are drawn from traditionally feminine pursuits, for in the cosmology of Euro-western thought, sin began with woman. Were it not for woman, we would still inhabit Eden, and there would be no need for civilization. Indeed, such gender bias often marks the application of expert opinion drawn upon distanced, linear rationality.

For example, economist Diane Elson points out the gender bias in economic structural adjustment in Africa, a bias which I would argue is a feature of the Euro-western rationalist view of objective truth in its essence. Of primary concern to my discussion is the feature of structural adjustment programs in less developed countries (LDCs) which motivate production of internationally tradable goods while shifting resources from goods which are not internationally tradable. The fine details of how tradability is determined are beyond the scope of this paper. However, for my purposes it is sufficient to note that among non-tradable goods are subsistence crops which are grown to feed one’s family or to sell in local markets. As Elson points out, “[t]he prices of internationally tradable goods are assumed to be determined on international markets . . . beyond the control of any one LDC . . . taken as externally given. The prices of non-tradables are determined by supply and demand within the LDC economy” (2). Development, according to World Bank, IMF, and WTO economists, depends on increasing production of tradables and decreasing production of non-tradables. To manipulate production in the desired direction, they implement an array of policies which raise the market price of tradables to encourage greater production for export and to discourage internal consumption (2).

However, Elson points that these assumptions treat human resources as easily transferable from one form of production to another, as it is assumed that laborers will quickly catch on that more income is to be had from producing tradables (2). A number of socio-cultural factors are overlooked in the process, such as “sexual division of labor” (2), “reproduction and maintenance of human resources” (6), and “gender divisions and household expenditures” (9).

Sexual division of labor takes on a particular cast in sub-Saharan agriculture. While variations exist across the region, some crops, namely those grown for export, are considered “men’s crops,” while some crops, namely subsistence crops, are considered “women’s crops.” Labor is generally allocated according to
gender as well. Men prepare the land for women’s crops, while women transplant, weed, and assist with the harvest of men’s crops as well as their own. Use of the crops is gendered as well, with men controlling profits from their crops and women primarily using their crops to feed the family, though they may sell surpluses in the local market (Elson 5). One concern that arises is the allocation of labor in the face of increased demand for internationally tradable crops. On the one hand, women may be coerced into laboring for production of their husbands’ crops at the expense of directly providing food for the family. On the other hand, women may resist neglecting their subsistence crops, reducing the productivity of crop land used to produce cash profit (6). In either case, as income from men’s crops tends to remain under the control of men, Women may end up with insufficient resources to feed their families.

Reproduction and maintenance of human resources, i.e. childbearing and rearing, pose other concerns, as the labor required is not taken into consideration in macroeconomic models. While space prohibits full analysis of the implications of this neglect, it is sufficient to say that women’s time is not infinitely “elastic” (8).

Gender divisions and household expenditures come into play as well. While Elson identifies three common theories used to describe family structures, she notes that each treats the family as if it is a unity (9), “an institution which maximises the welfare of all its members” (10). Thus it is assumed that the household “pools” and “shares,” enabling them to “absor[bing] any transitional costs of adjustment” (10). But conflict and inequality are also features of households, and these features are highly gendered, not only in LDCs, but in much of the more developed world as well. Indeed, the discretion afforded a man tends to be how much of his income will be passed on to the family, while the discretion of a woman tends to be how to spend the income so allocated.

Although I have barely touched the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the complexities of women’s economic lives under the policies of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO, a good body of research exists to demonstrate that women experience greater risk when their homelands are subject to structural adjustments. The bottom line is that the policies initiated have operated from a internally consistent fixed system which is in many ways externally inconsistent with the internally consistent fixed systems of the LDCs they purport to help. At the root of this oversight is a vision of rationality which assumes that objectivity is achieved through one or another form of linear calculation that rises above emotion to arrive at ethical solutions. Such an assumption not only conflates logos with ethos, while negating the rational element of pathos, it in turn, ignores the value of mythos, or story, for macroeconomic solutions fail to recognize the stories of real people in their environmental, social, and microeconomic environments.

The Sustaining Power of Story

In the Euro-western view, stories, or mythos, have been posited against logos, as non-rational and personal, rather than rational and public. However, it is often through personal narrative that individuals come to know and make sense of the world. Moreover, only through the personal narratives of individuals affected by policy can we measure the real impact of such decisions.

Indeed, it is fair to say that a conflict of narratives is behind failure to solve real-world problems, for if we examine the economic philosophies which
privilege development over sustainability, we can locate a mythos that goes something like this:

Creation exists to serve human beings; we are the consumers of the world. The world is a harsh place, which must be subdued. Thus humans must compete with each other for scarce resources and subdue the natural world. As the story of survival is one of success in this competitive environment, we must take what we can get. Weak actors are crushed in this environment, leaving the strong to build a better civilization. Interference with competition disrupts the level playing field and encourages weak actors (Quinn).

But suppose we imagine a different mythos:

Creation exists in a harmonious cycle, a hoop, which balances the needs of all creation. Some resources are finite; some are occasionally limited but ever renewing, so long as we care for the land. So as the story of survival is cooperation with nature and with one another, we must leave what we don’t need. Humanity flourishes, building a sustainable civilization. Competition invites greed, disrupts the harmony and encourages total destruction (Quinn).

Of course these myths are simplistic, but the question is not which one is right, but whether they can coexist and, in coexistence, be modified toward a more sustainable vision of the future. My argument is that they can.

To return again to my wordplay: while embroidered language can be seen as deceitful and manipulative, embroidery consists of stitches and to stitch is to heal, as is to knit. In the old country culture from which my family came, men knitted. On the Norwegian fishing boats, they knitted nets to bring home food; they knitted sweaters, caps, and mittens to keep themselves warm. They spun stories to keep their hearts warm. In their knitting, they created patterns of beauty to break up the monotony of the endless sea, images of the complexity of the world they left behind. These stories, like stories in all cultures, created a view of the world that was compatible with the environment in which they found themselves. As these idioms demonstrate, possibilities do exist for reworking the way we speak about truth.

The dominant English idiom which I have described throughout this paper posits reasoning as a product of positionality rather than interests. But when negotiators come to the table with positions already established, each assumes that the problem has only one solution, theirs. Given that other players in the negotiation will also bring their positions to the table, negotiations can be rendered inefficient, as negotiators haggle, dig in their heels, and try to persuade. Moreover, such positionality closes off possibilities that may not have been considered by anyone at the table. Above all, it positions the people involved as opposed to one another, rather than as involved in a shared concern (Windle and Warren).

The alternative to positionality is to come to the table with the purpose of sharing interests. Interests differ from positions in that they express concerns about outcomes, reveal needs that must be met, and provide motivation for solutions (Windle and Warren). For example, “I want organochlorines banned” is a position, while “I’m afraid my child will get leukemia” is an interest. Likewise,
“I don’t want organochloride banned” is a position, while “The banning of organochlorines may lead to bacterial contamination” is an interest. Indeed, one feature of negotiation that marked the IJC hearings as represented by Waddell, is that interests were expressed, despite the fact that they were often seen as overly emotional—which is just the point. Expressing interests rather than positions allows negotiators to get to the underlying emotions that have led to the positions, in this example, substituting fear of personal or community harm, which may be addressed, for anger toward someone’s position, which leads to failure in negotiation. Expressing interests also opens up the possibility of shared interests, which can be employed in seeking solutions. Moreover, interests are subject to more than one solution, while positions assume only one solution. Thus the sharing of interests paves the way for brainstorming, the opportunity to see possible solutions never before considered.

The point is not to substitute interests for objective data, facts, and information, but to share perceptions of data, facts, and information, recognizing that every conflict has two components, emotion and substance, and that the emotional component must be addressed before the parties can address the substantive component (Windle and Warren). To do so is to recognize that stories bring reflection to the rational process, whether they be stories about the personal consequences of the way things are or stories about the personal consequences if things don’t change or change in ways which are harmful. As a result, problems hold hope of being solved collaboratively.

Clearly, I am advocating a model of problem-solving that reaches down to the grassroots. However, to suggest that positionality is the product only of those in power would be disingenuous. All parties engaging in collaborative problem-solving, therefore, must reconsider the ways in which we measure justice, taking into account the entire web of overlapping concerns in a given context. The Center for Whole Communities, initiated by environmentalist Peter Forbes, offers a template for measuring the justice of decision-making which takes into account the complexities of such webs and is guided by a set of principles and values that recast the dynamics of power relationships.

Honed by a multidisciplinary panel of social scientists, biologists, urban planners, writers, and land conservationists, the guiding principles include valuing process as much as product, reflecting and articulating vision and values, engaging in dialogue, inspiring rather than demanding action, and respecting and honoring “the capacities and assets of all people” (Whole 10). Underlying these principles is a set of key values:

- “Whole thinking” – recognizing “critical interdependencies” and educating people about them
- “Respect, honor, and nurture” for “peoples’ values and passions for place”
- “Integration of healthy land and people” – viewing life as “one healthy whole”
- “Honor for all life and the natural systems upon which we depend”
- “Reciprocity of success” – understanding that success need not be a zero sum game
- Fairness – including people “equitably as full participants in the social, political, and economic process of our communities”
- “Understanding of our connection to land” – recognizing land as “the foundation for our sustenance and survival”
Balance of “specialization and integration, growth and natural cycles of life and death . . . the health of the city and . . . the country
“Shared power”
“Stewardship for future generations”
Humility (11).

Upon these values and principles, The Center for Whole Measures has established a set of rubrics which measure “justice and fairness,” “relationships between land and people,” “community building,” “healthy ecosystems,” “healthy habitat for people,” “stewardship,” “economic vitality,” “community resilience,” “power of story,” and “being in service” (12-13). While these measures were originated to deal with land conservation, the principles and values they represent open up the view of land as a means of production, as well as the view of human beings as mere producers and consumers. Doing so, they offer possibilities for enhanced deliberation and results in all matters of community justice, for they account for intertwining of economic, social, and environmental needs. They do, in fact, begin the change the idiom with which one thinks and speaks about argumentation and deliberation.

Fortunately, we have leaders among us who recognize that the key to understanding these webs of interest lies in the power of stories and the microeconomic contexts out of which they arise. Among these leaders is Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus of Bangladesh. An economist and banker, Yunus understood that a small amount of money for tools and materials could make an enormous difference in the ability of individuals to make a living. He reached into his own pocket, loaning small sums of money to 42 Bangladeshi women basket-weavers, relieving them from the usurious interest rates of unscrupulous moneylenders. Their increased profits allowed them not only to better provide for their families, but to reinvest in their businesses, further increasing their prosperity. Yunus recognized as well that the focus of these efforts needed to be directed at women, for he knew full well the power dynamics that existed between men and women in the homes of his people. In short, he perceived a narrative unseen by bankers far removed from the daily life of villagers (“Biography”). Since his first small efforts, his micro financing model has served as inspiration in over 100 developing countries, spreading even into the developed world, including the United States (Fairbanks).

Nobel Peace Prize-winner Mangari Maathai also stands as an example of a leader who brought the power of story to bear on world problems. Maathai knew the stories of Kenya first-hand and refused to see the troubles of her homeland from a distanced, objective viewpoint. Recognizing that environmental and socio-economic justice go hand in hand, she worked collaboratively at the grassroots to plant more than 40 million trees across Africa, reducing erosion in sensitive watersheds, restoring forests rich in biodiversity, providing cooking fuel, providing paid work for women, and teaching women and families to stand up for their rights. She also provides a new idiom for rational problem-solving that resonates with the cases I present in this paper: “The planting of trees is the slanting of ideas” (“Green Belt”).

In her fashion, we can begin to think of rationality as sowing seeds of thought which address the interconnections between environmental and socio-economic justice. Seeing the earth and humanity as a whole, as a world hoop, we can move forward in a mindset of stewardship and nurturance, plowing the
fertile soil of many minds, harvesting every kernel of truth in our efforts to create a more sustainable future.

Food for thought.

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The Challenges of Quality Assurance in Distance Education: The Case of the University of South Africa (UNISA)

Victoria Pholoso Seemela
University of South Africa
Department of Public Administration and Management

Abstract

Distance learning challenges the academic work of colleges and universities as well as the politics of institutional self-regulation. This, in turn, places significant responsibility on the accrediting community. Government must take the initiative in defining the difference that distance learning makes to teaching and learning in order to sustain the quality of the higher education experience. Distance-based teaching and learning must respond the same expectations that have such a long and respected tradition in the site-based community (Eaton 2001). This paper reviews Unisa’s present challenges in terms of quality assurance and further explores appropriate policies and strategies that can be used for implementing a quality management system corresponding to different cultural contexts, stages of development and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

Introduction and background

Many governments, believing that a large corps of highly educated people is essential for the prosperity of society, are committing a large percentage of public funds to higher education in order to provide places in degree and diploma courses for increasing numbers of students. With the increase in funds comes an increased concern on the part of the government regarding three issues: - Firstly, are the higher education institutions explicitly planning and organising to produce the graduates required by society, in other words, are their objectives appropriate? Secondly, is the money being spent well, that is, are the higher education institutions operating efficiently? Thirdly, are the higher education institutions producing the desired graduates, that is, are they operating effectively? These concerns have led to new interpretations of the concept of quality. Traditionally, the word ‘quality’ was associated with ideas of excellence or outstanding performance. Much has been written in recent years on the evolving meaning of quality in higher education and many definitions have been suggested (Harvey & Green 1993), but the most commonly accepted meaning now is ‘fitness of purpose’. This allows institutions to define their purpose in their mission and objectives, so quality is demonstrated by achieving such objectives. This definition allows variability in institutions, rather than forcing them to be clones of one another. At least, that is the theory, whether it is actually achieved depends on the culture of the institution. Although there seems to be no consensus on the definition of ‘quality education’ the common understanding is that it means excellence in education, that is, education that
meets or exceeds customer needs and thus provides satisfaction; education that brings about freedom from deficiencies; and education that one might call ‘fit for its purpose’ (Steyn 2000; Mok 2000 in Sukati, et al., 2007).

Over the past two decades, the issue of quality education has become important internationally. UNESCO (2004:37) recommends a comprehensive framework for quality education that encompasses access, teaching and learning processes and outcomes in ways that are influenced by both context and the range and quality of available inputs. OECD (1999) supports this notion by indicating that quality assurance thus encompasses policies, attitudes, actions and procedures necessary to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced. It may include approaches such as audit, assessment, accreditation and quality improvement. Educators and higher education institutions are now more concerned about the quality of their education and how to make certain that a measure of success is achieved. The main goal is to first seek advice and make improvements where necessary. Recently, educators have set up quality assurance and accreditation systems and mechanisms to make sure that they continuously monitor the quality of their educational systems. Such systems are important because, according to Mugridge (2006:48), the improvement of quality in education does not simply happen but requires constant attention. For example, Unisa, as one of the largest providers of tertiary education, had to re-examine its role and service to its learners and thus explore ways of changing and expanding the character and nature of its tuition model. It must be noted that whereas Unisa, as one of the mega-universities, had pioneered the expansion of access to university education both in South Africa and internationally, it was necessary for it to improve the quality of its course materials and student support (Daniels 1995 in Nonyongo & Ngengebule 1998).

From the above discussion, quality assurance (QA) can thus be defined as a data-driven system, which means that institutions need to establish quality improvement and quality assurance procedures; they also need to include a feedback loop in this system. Data on whether the institution is achieving its outcomes must also include assessment such as surveys, for example students currently studying, students completing studies, alumni and employers, as well as statistics on completion and retention rates, for example benchmarking nationally and internationally against other higher education institutions. However, South Africa needs to avoid some of the mistakes that have been made internationally. Morrison, Magennis and Carey (1995) warn that universities are being encouraged to report simple, readily available quantitative measures at the expense of complex qualitative assessments of the quality of higher education, based upon professional judgements.

This tendency has also led to an unfortunate ‘ranking’ of institutions in other countries. It is, therefore, laudable that the focus of institutional audits in South Africa is development and not accountability as such, given that the country is looking at collaboration with a view to improving the whole system rather than competition to see which university is ‘the best’ (Kilfoil 2005:11). It is also important for university staff to volunteer to train as peer evaluators to ensure that good practices are shared in a collegial way. A further problem, internationally, is the perceived threat to university autonomy in external quality assurance measures. The planned system allows universities to guard their autonomy by moving towards self-regulation and quality improvement and gaining self-accreditation status.

Peer-driven audit and accreditation can make a difference to the quality of education if implemented judiciously. It will have most benefit for those
institutions that take the process seriously, involve as many people on campus as possible in the self-study and then use the results of the accreditation to improve the institutions. Involvement in the system is important to ensure that there is a contextualised quality assurance regime that meets the needs and brings about continuous improvement in the country’s system.

Kilfoil (2005) indicates that large, dedicated distance education providers are in the best position to understand the systems that make open distance learning (ODL) different from contact delivery. It is these providers that have the expertise that allows for the creation of a quality management system that works for dedicated distance providers, but which might not work as well for institutions that offer only niche courses through distance or use purely online approaches as opposed to blended approaches.

Factors that continue to affect the quality of distance education (Unisa)

Sukati et al., (2007) indicates the following factors that may cause lapses of quality in the delivery of educational services.

- Course material design and development
  Course materials are important components of all higher education institutions (HEIs). The design of materials can stimulate self-directed learning and thus influence the quality of the system as a whole. Therefore, if a student’s profile is not taken into consideration, it might have a bad influence on the content, language, teaching mode and technology used.

- Lack of technology-based education
  Information and communication technologies have revolutionised communication systems throughout the world. Through the increasing influence of educational technologies, education and training systems all over the world are adopting new models of teaching, learning and student support.

- Feedback on students’ work
  For the purpose of continuous assessment or evaluation, students are periodically given work and forms of assessment that are intended to promote two way communication. These forms of assessment allow the lecturers to evaluate students’ comprehension of the course materials and to motivate the students by providing detailed comments. Students must receive effective feedback, in the form of detailed comments, to gauge their level of understanding of the subject matter; such comments allow students to correct their mistakes and improve their skills. However, according to reports by students at Unisa, many lecturers fail to give detailed comments when correcting the continuous assessment work. The reasons cited for not making comments on students’ assignments were: the large number of students; time constraints due to work overload; and lack of remuneration for marking assignments and tests.

  When lecturers are unable to write didactic comments, the value of assessment is greatly reduced, which undermines the purpose of distance education and affects the quality of education offered at Unisa.

- Telephone network
One of the interpersonal communication networks is the telephone system. The telephone is used in distance education to provide support to students and enables them to seek clarification from lecturers, tutors and Unisa support staff.

- **Student support services**
Distance learners have various needs which are influenced by their socio-economic background and the use of the distance education delivery mode.

**Critical issues and key challenges ahead**

The overview of quality assurance in South African higher education shows that the existence of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) since 2001 has facilitated an accelerated focus on quality across the system. In structural terms, this has entailed a shift from an ad hoc and uneven system to a situation in which the HEQC is generating and applying national QA frameworks and criteria across a coordinated system. In doing so, it is giving effect to the key quality-related goals of national policy, namely to establish quality as one of the key elements in the relationship between the state and the higher education sector, and to support planning and monitoring, consistency of provision and effective management in public and private institutions. As the HEQC shifts from systems-building to implementation, a range of challenges lies ahead (CHE 2004).

Firstly, from a systemic perspective, and especially in an environment of system restructuring, it is clear that explicit strategic and operational links between planning, funding and QA must be developed and sustained in ways that reinforce the goals of policy, while also enabling HEIs to achieve the benefits of those linkages.

Secondly, there is a range of difficulties for the QA system that can be defined broadly as the difficulties of a system in flux. They include the ongoing delay in finalising a new academic policy and, associated with this, the delay in the resolution of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) implementation review process; the complexities of academic programme and QA integration associated with mergers; and the difficulty of knowing how to determine quality standards in untried institutional environments for example universities of technology and comprehensive institutions.

Thirdly, it is a key concern for the system and for HEIs, that institutional autonomy be safeguarded in the presence of an external QA dispensation. The intentions of the HEQC are to balance improvement and accountability roles, and to build a culture of self-managed evaluation to support self-accrediting institutions. However, despite a laudable set of objectives, there may yet be risks and unintended consequences of the perception of checklist compliance, or an excessive and expensive bureaucracy.

Fourthly, the equity and/or quality debate remains an important one. The new funding formula does not reward under-capacitated institutions and these HEIs have to find ways of delivering quality despite their disadvantages. The throughput focus of the new funding formula leverages the tension between equity and quality in that it may suggest a trade-off is necessary between standards and throughput. Pressure for throughput poses a challenge, for example for academic development programmes.

Fifth, a developed and implemented policy framework for QA is not enough in itself to secure quality. Academics, management and students must be successfully engaged in, and committed to, the QA process the voices and
needs of both must be heard; and the quality of their interactions in the context of actual programmes must be fully interrogated if real transformation in higher education is to be achieved.

Finally, and crucially, the institutionalisation of internal quality management and continuous improvement within HEIs remains to be achieved, and a common understanding of QA remains to be instilled in public and private providers alike (CHE 2004).

Unisa’s way forward on implementing a quality management system (QMS)

The University of South Africa’s mission is to establish a quality management system (QMS). Swanepoel (2008) suggests that the university can achieve this by having the necessary documentation in place, such as a portfolio document that can be used for audit visits; the 2015 strategic plan which addresses the agenda for transformation; the Unisa’s institutional operational plan 2008-2010; as well as Unisa’s integrated quality management framework. From the above-mentioned documents, areas that are likely to be covered in terms of QMS would include the following:

- planning process; leadership and management development;
- performance management, student involvement in decision making;
- regional structure and collaboration; communication of policies and decisions;
- delegation of authority that includes clarifying roles and responsibilities for teaching and learning research;
- community engagement; academic and personal support for students;
- support for staff such as induction and professional development,
- rewards recognition and feedback from parties involved in the process.
Recommendations: A comprehensive approach to improvement of Unisa’s quality assurance

Because the existing performance patterns in the institution are embedded in the long-standing systematic conditions, changing them calls for a multi-faceted and multi-level approach, including the following key element:

Establishing effective frameworks for teaching and learning

The evident ineffectiveness of the traditional curriculum structures in South African higher education serves as an example of how an inappropriate framework restricts achievement. The need for effective frameworks applies not only to structures within which formal teaching and learning take place, but also to professional development and capacity building in higher education. Without effective frameworks, effort and resources are not well utilised. Existing frameworks are usually embedded in the system and are consequently resistant to change. However, being prepared to examine them and change them as necessary is particularly important in the South African context, where inherited systems and approaches have some significant shortcomings in relation to contemporary conditions and can, in themselves, be an obstacle to development. It is ultimately the responsibility of the state to establish effective frameworks, but given the nature of higher education, the involvement and expertise of the sector are critical.

Conclusion

This paper reviewed Unisa’s present challenges in terms of quality assurance and further explored appropriate policies and strategies that can be used for implementing a quality management system corresponding to different cultural contexts; stages of development and the HEQC. However, the notion good practice is constantly changing, therefore distance education institutions must commit themselves to the following: conducting continual research; benchmarking nationally and internationally to establish good practice using a variety of standards to give multiple perspectives on their own systems and processes; and becoming learning institutions. In many ways the HEQC is correct in assuming that most of their generic indicators can be applied to distance education, although, space must be created in the audit and accreditation processes to explore and evaluate what is unique in the distance education environment as well.

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'I do not know how the native accents sound like but I like them': Preferences and attitudes towards English accents in Thailand

Chanpreeya Boonyarattapan
School of Humanities, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce
Bangkok, Thailand

Abstract

In listening comprehension teaching, the relevance of a standard native accent as a teaching and testing model needs to be reconsidered to respond to the changing face of English. This study used a verbal-guise experiment that involved rating different accents to test attitudes towards the native and non-native English varieties of 30 university students. The results show a preference for native accents. Although 63% of the participants stated that they could differentiate between native and non-native accents, only 23% of the respondents correctly identified the speakers’ origin. The mismatch suggests that EFL learners have a strong belief in the norm of native speakers even though they do not actually know how the native accent sounds like. The results are discussed with reference to the stereotypes Thai learners have about English accents. This finding suggests a need for further deliberation of international English in language classrooms.

Introduction

It is accepted that growing number of people who use English to communicate allows English to act as a language of wider communication for variety of purposes. The majority of uses of English occur in the contexts where it serves as a lingua franca, far removed from its native speakers’ norms and identities (Seidlhofer, 2001; McKay, 2003). Fundamental issues to do with global spread and use of English have become an important focus on research in language studies, and yet the practices of most listening comprehension tests seem to remain untouched by this development. The fact that most listening tests rest on assumptions that were developed and tested with reference to the learning of English in the Inner Circle countries, with little input from the learning of English outside, has reflected in the use of only native speakers’ accents as listening stimuli in the tests. Whereas, in reality, the great majority of the world’s English users are nonnative users who learn and use English outside the Inner Circle circumstance. For instance, Thai users of English are likely to encounter accents of nonnative users other than native speakers of English. Morrison and White (2005) added that institutions often overlook the resource available in their environment, focusing learner attention on Englishes provided by member of the Inner Circle. Global listeners must also be reminded to recognize the validity of varieties of English. Increasing exposure to English varieties is one step. If listening comprehension tests are limited to native speakers of English, they are not representatives of the range of listening situations Thai students will encounter in the country.
It is widely known that attitudes towards different varieties influence comprehension. Major et al. (2005) stated that positive attitudes aid comprehension, while negative attitudes interfere with comprehension. It seems that stereotypes regarding nonnative accented speech exist as perceptual constructs in the mind of both native and nonnative speakers of English, and these attitudes may have strong influences on listening comprehension. Further, Hiraga (2005) reported that only a few works within language attitude studies have been presented since the end of the 1970s and most of these published since the 1980s used data gathered from previous studies. It was also noted by Jarvella et al. (2001) that there were not many attempts that have been made to examine reactions to varieties of English of nonnative speakers. As a result, the study to investigate EFL listeners’ attitudes towards varieties of English is beneficial and worthwhile to conduct with the intention to fill in the lack of further study in the field of language attitudes towards English varieties. Given this, the study examined of listening comprehension test takers’ attitudes towards accent varieties of English.

Listening comprehension is a complex construct, comprising a range of processes and responses on the part of the listener. In a listening comprehension test, a test taker’s performance is seen to be a function of three variables: his or her language ability, the test methods, and the nature of listening input. Further, listeners’ attitudes are also proved to contribute to the nature of comprehension. Research indicates that listening comprehension is supported when a listener has no negative attitudes towards a particular variety of English (Major et al., 2005). The implication of the present study would be best for choosing appropriate English varieties as listening test input to accommodate EFL test takers in a similar situation in order to minimize bias and raise fairness among test takers who possess different ability and belief. Most of all, the use of the results would contribute to the validity of the test construct which is the heart of all kinds of assessment works.

**Studies Concerning Attitudes towards Varieties of English**

It is widely known that attitudes towards different varieties influence comprehension. Positive attitudes aid comprehension, while negative attitudes interfere with comprehension. Mackey and Finn (1997) emphasized that untrained native-English-speaking listeners rate nonstandard native English dialects as less natural sounding than standard speech and native nonstandard English dialects as more natural sounding than nonnative accented speech. Also, in 1994 Gill reported that native English students rated standard accents more favorably than nonnative accented speech.

In a study on language attitudes conducted a the University of Puerto Rico, Toro (1997) asked 152 students which voice they would like their English professor to have and which they would most like to imitate. Students mentioned Standard American English most favorably, followed by nonnative Greek-accented English, then Puerto Rican English, and finally Southern American English. These results suggest that an accent to which listeners have had no exposures, such as nonnative Greek-accented English, might
appear more exotic and hence more attractive than more familiar accents that stereotypically have negative social associations or connotations.

ESL learners also have biases against nonnative English. Pihko (1997) found that Finnish ESL learners accepted native varieties as ‘real English’, whereas nonnative speech was perceived as ‘strange English’. Dalton-Puffer et al. (1997) conducted a study to test attitudes towards native and non-native varieties of English in Austria. A language attitude study was undertaken with 132 university students of English. The subjects evaluated three native accents RP (Received Pronunciation), near RP and GA (General American) and two Austrian non-native accents of English. The results confirmed the low status the non-native accents have among their users and the overall preferences for the three native accents. El-Dash and Busnard (2001) who investigated Brazilian attitudes towards English also found out that Brazilian subjects in their study rated English-speaking guises more favorably than those of the native Portuguese in terms of status dimension. Not only did the students have this rigid belief in native accents but teachers of English shared the same attitudes too. In Jenkins’ interview study (2005), eight NNS teachers of English were interviewed and it was reported that these teachers wanted NS English identity as expressed in a native-like accent. Native accents, according to Jenkins’ study participants, were “good”, “perfect”, “correct”, “proficient”, “competent”, “original and real”. Whereas nonnative accents were perceived as “not good”, “wrong”, “incorrect”, “not real”, “fake”, and “deficient” (Jenkins, 2005). It seems that stereotypes regarding nonnative accented speech exist in the mind of NNSs of English, and these attitudes may have influences on listening comprehension. Generally, the respondents rate the accent best with which they have become familiar at school or during stays in English-speaking countries. However, EFL students can also have biases against some varieties of English produced by its native speakers. In 2001, Jarvella et al. investigated the language attitudes of advanced Danish students of English as a foreign language. The speech samples were all from native speakers from Ireland, Scotland, England and the USA. The speech of the Englishmen was rated as being the most pleasant of the four varieties heard, and the speech of the Americans was rated as being the least pleasant. Jarvella et al. (2001) stated that there is a more widespread positive feeling about non-American accents among young Europeans. This attitude is confirmed by another study done by Cenoz-Garcia and Lecumberri in 1999. In their study, Spanish and Basque university students rated American pronunciation less favorably not only than RP, but also than other British accents and Irish English.

On the contrary, according to Giles (1970), British people rated British regional varieties spoken in industrial conurbations such as Birmingham and Manchester much lower than American English in terms both of pleasantness and prestige. Hiraga (2005) re-examined Giles’ report by using a similar technique. Sharpening the focus of Giles’ study, Hiraga’s experiment (2005) also found that only Standard American was significantly more favored than British regional varieties. Bayard et al. (2001) reported that the American accent seemed well on the way to equaling or even replacing RP as the most prestigious or at least preferred variety in New Zealand, Australia and some non-English-speaking nations. It is, then, very interesting to investigate whether this attitude is similar for Thai listeners.
Research Methodology

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the participants’ attitudes towards varieties of English accents and their preferences towards using accent varieties as the input in a listening comprehension test. This study was designed to provide preliminary answers to the following question:

*What are the test takers’ attitudes towards accent varieties of English and their preferences towards using accent varieties as listening comprehension verbal input?*

Participants

The participants in this study was the second-year English major students who enrolled in the Listening Comprehension Course in the second semester of 2007 academic year during November 2007 to February 2008 at the University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce (UTCC) in Bangkok, Thailand. The total population number was 318. The participants were homogeneous in terms of nationality and background knowledge as they are all Thai students in the same university. Most of them were about the same age and we could assume that they have similar culture, interest and educational background. In order to gain more in-depth information from the students concerning their attitudes and preferences towards accent varieties of English, semi-structured interviews were conducted a week after the students had participated in the listening comprehension test. Thirty participants who took the test were invited for the interview. These 30 participants were randomly selected from 8 groups of students.

**Table 1**
**Demographic Data of Thirty Interviewees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Test Scores obtained (full scores=40)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 – 30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 40</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Retrospective Semi-Structured Interview Questions**
To investigate the attitudes of the subjects towards varieties and their preferences towards using English varieties as the listening input, the semi-structure interviewing was used. This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics. These questions were typically asked to each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but the interviewer was allowed freedom to probe beyond the answers to the prepared structured questions. The present study uses retrospective inspection to increase specificity. Here, the interviewees were supported in recalling a specific situation by playing some part of the conversations they had heard for the listening comprehension test, then they responded to the interview questions.

The term ‘semi-structured’ suggests a certain degree of standardization of interview questions and a certain degree of openness of response by the interviewer. All interview questions were structured with the purpose of the research question set to investigate attitudes and preferences of the test takers.

The selected 30 subjects were recalled by listening to short speech samples of each variety, and they corresponded to the interview questions concerning attitudes and preferences. The present study used the traits studied by Hiraga in 2005 to investigate the participants’ language attitudes in the questionnaire. Hiraga’s choices of adjectives were chosen not only because her study is the latest in the field but also she had extensively revised all adjectives proposed to evaluate language attitudes in the preceding research studies and concluded with a list of ten very concise adjectives to study ‘status’ and ‘solidarity’ traits. Hiraga (2005) employed Factor Analysis to verify that the various adjective words were clearly divided into two response dimensions as shown in Table 1.

The Modified Matched-Guise Method

For most language attitude studies, the matched-guise technique is the most frequently used (Hiraga, 2005). The major principle of the matched-guise technique is to examine only actual language varieties and to avoid control of other variables such as the voice quality of speakers, the content of texts, or the personality of speakers in the experiment situation. This technique requires that the passages be read by the same speaker who can pronounce all varieties correctly. However, the present study with its emphasis on subjects’ reactions to target language accents suggests the use of a modified matched-guise technique, the ‘verbal guise’ method (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997). Instead of one speaker assuming different guises, several speakers were used on the stimulus tape. In the present study context, it is practically impossible to find speakers who are equally convincing in several guises. This means that variables like voice quality could be controlled only minimally.

There were 14 speakers for the seven varieties. This means there were two people who represented each variety. The purpose of having two people from each variety was to check whether the respondents had consistency in responding to the same accent. The subjects were given instruction without identifying which varieties were included. The speakers were asked to read a short text on the same topic which was emotionally neutral and which also tied in with the university setting of the study. The participants were told that the test was done in the interest of finding the most appropriate English teacher. In reality, people react to speech in specific situations and the same voice or speaker may well get different evaluations in different contexts (Giles, 1992).
was more than likely that the subjects would construct a context for themselves if a specific situation was not provided, and this could lead to misinterpretation of the subjects’ attitudes evaluation. The selected 30 subjects listened to 14 speakers who spoke the same dialogue:

"I help students pass university entrance exams. I sometimes worry about them and their futures because they don’t know what they want to study in college, or what kind of job they want in the future. A lot of my students go to college because their families expect them to. Many of them think that once they pass the entrance exam their future is guaranteed. That’s a mistake. I tell them, ‘Passing an entrance exam is just the beginning. To find a satisfying career you have to be able to answer the following questions: What do you want to learn about? What lifestyle do you want? What are your goals?’"

The stimuli were presented one at a time because previous work indicated that ratings of accentedness might become slightly harsher with repeated hearing of an utterance (Munro et al., 2006). Upon hearing an utterance, each participant was instructed to respond to the 10 questions starting with ‘do you think this person is sociable?’ by giving the answer in rating scales.

After these ten adjectives questions, another seven questions concerning their preferences when varieties of English existed as the test stimuli were followed. The questions asked were:

1. Are you able to recognize different varieties of English?
2. Which varieties do you find easy or difficult to comprehend?
3. Do you find different accents equally pleasing?
4. Do your judgments depend on the voice of the speakers or the content of the utterance?
5. Do you like the listening comprehension test to incorporate varieties of English?
6. Does the inclusion of English varieties make you uncomfortable?
7. Does the inclusion of English varieties make the listening test more difficult or easier?

The content validity of the interview questions were validated by three experts. The experts consist of one native speaker who holds a master’s degree in teaching English and has taught listening and speaking English for more than 15 years. The other two content specialists hold a doctoral degree in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. The three experts found the interview questions acceptable and valid.

Selection of speakers’ countries

The study required the test takers to encounter a range of English varieties; however, the experimental design limited the number of accents that could be tested. Given these limitations, three countries of the English native speakers were chosen and four countries of the nonnative speakers of English were selected. These countries were chosen according to statistics reported by the two government offices – the Board of Investment (BOI) and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) through their websites in 2006 (BOI, 2006; TAT, 2006). The goal of the study is to examine the influence of English spoken by people from different parts of the world on listening comprehension. Therefore, the people from the countries that the study participants who are Thai are likely to encounter were selected according to the amount of their investment in Thailand and their arrivals to the country.
From the statistics provided by BOI and TAT, the major foreign investors were from Japan, Europe, Taiwan, American, Hong Kong, and Singapore. This information agreed with the amount of the foreign arrivals to Thailand reported by Immigration Bureau. Three countries of English native speakers were reported to visit Thailand the most. They were from United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia, consequently, people from these countries were chosen for Test A. For Test B, people from Japan, Malaysia, China were included in the test as they were the major investors and account for the top of the tourist number. However, considering the amount of the investment in Thailand, Singaporeans has invested a large sum of money in the past three years. They were second to Japan in terms of investment amount in Thailand. Therefore, Singaporean variety was also included. The accent varieties that were chosen for the study are as follows:

Native speaker varieties (NS)  \hspace{1cm}  Non-native speaker varieties (NNS)
1. United States of America  \hspace{0.5cm}  1. Japan
2. United Kingdom  \hspace{0.5cm}  2. Malaysia
3. Australia  \hspace{0.5cm}  3. China
4. Singapore

Results and Discussion

Investigation of the test takers’ attitudes towards English accent varieties

The sampled interviewees were asked to listen to the recorded speech and gave instructions without knowing which varieties were included. The 14 speech samples - 2 voices for 1 accent variety- lasted about 30 seconds each. The 7 varieties, which were from the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Japan, China, Malaysia, and Singapore, were arranged to be heard at random. While listening to each speech sample, the interviewees were asked to give their opinions on a four-point scale rating according to the answer sheet with the ten adjectives. All interview parts and instructions given were conducted in their native Thai language so that the participants had a clear explanation of the meaning of adjective words used. The higher the score, the more positive the interviewees felt for that adjective word.

The next step was to analyze the data. First, attitude differences among seven varieties for the solidarity and status dimensions were investigated. The mean scores for each dimension were ranked. The mean scores of the five adjectives for solidarity dimension and the other five adjectives for the status aspect are demonstrated in Figures 1-2 and Table 2.

| Figure 1: The Solidarity Means | Figure 2: The Status Means |
Table 2: Mean Scores Ranking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Varieties</th>
<th>Solidarity Dimension</th>
<th>Status Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varieties</td>
<td>Mean Scores</td>
<td>Mean Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of solidarity dimension, the American variety was rated the highest and the Malaysian variety was rated the lowest. Also, the American variety was ranked the highest in the status dimension. The responses given by the 30 test takers showed that the American variety is the most acceptable accent in both solidarity and status aspects. Further, a hierarchy on the basis of attitude ranking and the total mean scores (NS mean = 2.90, SD = .222; NNS mean = 2.50, SD = .120) reveal that, on average, native speakers’ varieties were rated higher than nonnative speakers’ varieties, except on the aspect of solidarity that the Japanese variety received a higher score than the Australian’s. Among native accent varieties, the American variety is the most preferred accent while the Japanese accent received outstanding attitude scores among nonnative accents. It can be concluded from the data that the test takers have more positive attitude towards the native speakers’ accent varieties than the nonnative speakers’ accent varieties of English.

The investigation of the test takers’ preferences towards using accent varieties of English in a listening comprehension test

After listening to 14 speech samples and expressing their attitudes on the English varieties, the 30 participants were interviewed individually to find out their preferences towards using varieties of English accents as stimuli for a
listening comprehension test. Seven questions were asked. The information gathered is presented in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and Answers</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Are you able to recognize different accent varieties of English?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Which accent do you find it difficult to comprehend?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native speakers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonnative speakers</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do you find different accents equally pleasing?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do your judgments depend on the voice of the speakers or the contents of the utterance?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you like the listening comprehension test to incorporate accent varieties of English?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does the inclusion of English accent varieties make you uncomfortable?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From Table 3, the percentage of sampled interviewees who indicated that they were able to recognize different accent varieties of English is 63.3%. About 36.7% of the test takers admitted that they could not recognize different English accents used in the test. There were a lot of the interviewees who thought that they were able to recognize English accent varieties but not all of them could give correct varieties. A crosstabulation was conducted to investigate the results of correctness. The results of the crosstabulation reveal that there were 19 people who mentioned that they were able to recognize the varieties of English but only 7 of them could correctly identify the speakers’ place of origin. The number 7 out of 30 accounts for 23.3% of the total. This means that only 23.3% of the respondents could tell the origin of the speakers.

Most of the test takers (80 %) agreed that nonnative varieties were more difficult to comprehend, and more interviewees which are about 86.7% thought there were some varieties that were more pleasing to hear for them. Further, a lot of interviewees (19 out of 30 participants) revealed that they made their judgments on the voice rather than the content of speech they heard.

When asked if they wanted the listening comprehension test to include different varieties of English, about two third of the interviewees, which was 66.7 %, disagreed with the idea to include different varieties of English as listening stimuli in the test. The reason was disclosed by their answer to question seven, when 86.7% of the test takers thought that inclusion of English varieties made the test more difficult. It can be concluded from the data that the test takers expressed stronger preference to use the native speakers’ accent varieties as the voice stimuli in the listening comprehension test. However, in the answer to question six, more than half of the interviewees did not feel uncomfortable when listening to different English accents.

**Discussion**

Concerning listeners’ affective reactions to the varieties of English, attitudes and preferences towards these accents were investigated separately in the semi-structured interview. The answer for these questions is rich of information and the result could be discussed in three main topics:

**Native varieties are prestige varieties**

The responses showed that, on average, native varieties were rated as having more positive attitude than nonnative varieties. In status dimension, particularly, American, British and Australian English received much higher scores than those of Malaysian, Japanese, Singaporean and Chinese varieties. Taking a closer look at the adjectives describing ‘status’, the words —elegant,
educated, intelligent, wealthy and successful - convey prestige of varieties. The findings concur with the classic pattern of such research that reflects the tradition that prestige accents score highly in power/status variables (Bayard et al., 2001). For Thai students in this present study, this means that a person who sounds like a native speaker would be perceived as having ‘prestige’. This claim is confirmed by some responses provided by the interviewees when asked about their preferences towards varieties. There were 13 respondents who mentioned directly that a person, who sounded like a native speaker looked smarter, more educated, and had a better personality than a person who did not sound like a native speaker. Definitely, native varieties of English are the prestige varieties for the respondents.

**Stereotype on varieties**

The study revealed an apparent result that nonnative varieties of English are more difficult for the test takers to comprehend. Further, this is confirmed by the interview part, 80% of respondents inferred directly that nonnative varieties are harder to understand than the other three native English accent varieties.

Although the test takers could distinguish between native and nonnative English, not many of them could tell the difference between each English variety. They, especially, did not really know the difference between general American and British English. For instance, when they said they liked the British variety, instead they gave examples of American people and sometimes an Australian. This might be because of the fact they have been provided with a mixed exposure of native English varieties. At UTCC, a lot of commercial textbooks and teaching materials used are examples of mainly British and American English, and these materials are taught by a mixture of native English lecturers from the UK, the USA, Australia and a few from Canada, and New Zealand. However, the students have not been exposed to a particular variety long enough to tell the difference among native speakers, and they might not even pay attention to this matter. This might lead to their inability to name correct native varieties of English. A number of respondents mentioned that they loved to listen to British English and some of them even said they wanted to sound British but actually they just meant they wanted to be native-like. This is the evidence that native speakers of English were often stereotyped as British people for the respondents.

The discussion above reflects the respondents’ fixed stereotype of the native speakers’ utterance. There are still a number of students who are influenced by British imperialism. Although Thailand was not colonized by UK in the past, it cannot reject that once dominant power such as British English which had exercised control over a colonized area of Thailand’s neighbors and a number of countries worldwide also has a strong impact on some Thai people’s preference for British English. This claim is well-supported by a lot of respondents’ opinions (eight of them), when asked the reason for their preference of British English, all of them said, “British English is original because British people are the owners of the language. It is very prestigious to sound like an English person.” However, it is important to note here that this is their personal believes. In reality, as stated in the findings, most of the respondents did not really know how the British accent sounds like. This was revealed by the matched-guised technique that actually they preferred the American accent more than the British accent.
In terms of nonnative varieties, from the interview findings, it was revealed that a number of respondents had stereotypes about the accent varieties in that they found they were hard ‘to catch’. When asked whether they could recognize the varieties used in the test stimuli, about one third of them were certain that Indian English was included in the test (actually, there were no Indian speakers in this study). From the crosstabulation, the results showed that most of the test takers were unable to recognize the difference among accent varieties. Therefore, this means that Indian English accent was stereotyped as a hard-to-understand accent by the test takers. This rigid stereotype was mentioned again when the respondents were enquired to name any English varieties that they found difficult to comprehend. The Indian English variety was ranked in the top by six respondents. Perhaps, they might think that the voice examples from Malaysia were Indian English.

However, the participants, who have had experience English in native environments, responded to these questions a little differently. They seemed to be open-minded on varieties. All of them were more capable in distinguishing the difference between American and British accents, and none of them expressed special favor for British English or strong belief about Indian English. It is interesting to note that those who mentioned the British English as their model (without knowing how real British English sounds) have not been in an English-speaking country. This confirms the result from Dalton-Puffer et al.’s study in Austria (1997) that the evaluations of the students with EFL experience reflect rather rigid stereotype, while those students who have spent some time in English-speaking countries reveal more individualized, situation-linked attitudes.

**Native speaker accents were preferred for listening comprehension tests**

Because of their familiarity and positive attitudes towards native English varieties, two third of the respondents insisted that they wanted only native varieties to be included in the test. On the other hand, another 33 % of respondents thought that a listening comprehension test should incorporate varieties both from native and nonnative speakers. They realize that in real world there are more nonnative speakers and they wanted to expand their comprehension ability to include these different English accents. Some of them mentioned their excitement and amusement when hearing varieties. It is obvious that those students who agreed with the idea of incorporating nonnative speakers’ voice were more advanced students, and they did not care much about their performance on the test. On the contrary, the participants who scored lower were more worried about not being able to comprehend unfamiliar utterance which would affect their test scores. These lower-scores participants did not want to score low in the test, whereas those who were more advanced were more concerned in the test authenticity and wanted to be challenged by something new in the test.

Another interesting point to discuss is the fact that more than half of the respondents were not uncomfortable with accent varieties in a non-test situation. Some respondents, who disagreed with the idea of incorporating nonnative speakers’ voice with the test, proposed they would love to have more practice in listening to nonnative varieties in classroom. One respondent stated clearly that she thought if she had been prepared to listen to nonnative varieties more in class, she could have scored higher in test version B. This leads to the
idea that nonnative varieties will be more acceptable if the test takers are provided with more chance of exposure. Familiarity, as stated previously, still plays a significant role in the test takers’ attitudes towards using varieties of English as listening comprehension test stimuli.

**Conclusion**

The authority to create Standard English no longer resides solely with its native speakers. Lowenberg (1993) indicated more than 10 years ago that there were potential cases where the control of the future use of English would be passed to nonnative speakers. This is indeed the case in many areas of the English-speaking world. Jenkins (2006) called for a major rethinking of English language goals and the overhaul of English language testing due to the recent changes in both users and uses of English around the world. There is an attempt in conducting the standard framework for English for international uses, for instance, as seen in a work done by Nakano (2007) and many other more. Language testers are facing the changing face of English. However, the stakeholders of tests can be fairly conservative as it can be seen from the present study results and other studies. Jenkins (2005) found out that teachers from the expanding circle did not really wish to use their accented English to express their L1 identity. Nemtchinova (2005) also reported that ESL students in the USA prefer to be taught by native speakers. This is concordant with the present study findings that the EFL students or the test takers still have strong belief in the norm of native speakers. This might gradually change, but not suddenly, because the people’s past experience in classroom teaching, media, and social association combines to affect their attitudes to English at the deeper level. As it is noted by Taylor (2006) that over the next 10 or 20 years, emerging Englishes including EIL may well grow in status and take on a role as pedagogic and assessment models for English learners. While we are waiting for this change, it is recommended for English teachers to nurture listeners by increasing familiarity and appreciation for world Englishes because it is obvious from the present study results that familiarity and appreciation of varieties could lead to better listening comprehension. In the listening classroom, teachers can provide resources to create a greater understanding of the concept of international English among students and this can then be passed on to the listening test situation.

**The Author**

Chanpreeya Boonyarattapan holds a Ph.D. in English as an International Language from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand. She has been working as an English lecturer for more than 10 years and currently works at the Department of English for Business Communication, School of Humanities, University of the Thai Chamber of Commerce. Her areas of interest are language assessment and evaluation, second language listening, varieties of English and culture.

**References**


The Recognition and Production Question Forms of English Intonation by Turkish First Year Students of English in Language Education Departments

Dr. Mehmet DEMİREZEN
Hacettepe University, Dept. of ELT, Ankara, Turkey

Abstract

Intonation training is a challenging aspect of in ELT/EFL studies, that’s why it is the most difficult topic in foreign language learning and teaching because it depends on a specific training of stress, pitch and juncture, which are collectively called intonation. In this research, it is assumed that the question form of intonation, produced by the auxiliary verbs in a pitch level of /233/ and tag questions, cannot be properly acquired by the first year Turkish students of English Language education Department at Hacettepe University, Turkey and many of Turkish English teachers who are on-the-job. About one hundred first year student subjects will be handled first by a pretest, and then they will be taught the recognition and production of the question intonation via related intonation teaching activities eight weeks, three hours per week. In addition to this research, 30 randomly chosen Turkish English teachers will be tested through 42 sample sentences (see the appendix). Then they will be given a post test so as to measure the expected intonation acquisition by the subjects. Thus, the causes and the results of the difficulty of acquiring the question intonation by the first year students will be disputed and evaluated in the end.

Difficulties in Intonation Education

A lack of precision in describing intonation is still a serious problem. The term intonation is a fishy case because it is mostly confused with prosody. Intonation is a broad term used by phoneticians to describe the effects of contrastive pitch movement (Crystal, 1987: 423). According to Johnson and Johnson (1999: 176), “intonation refers to the meaningful changes in pitch of voice in speech.” The difficulties in intonation rest on its multi-leveled relationship with the following parameters:

Intonation and Prosody Relations

It is a suprasegmental term and “refers to the metrical patterns found in lines of poetry” (Crystal, 2007: 74). It is also termed as the study of speech rhythms.

Intonation and Rhythm Relations
Rhythm "is the regular repetition of stress in time (Seaton, 1982:1559. According to Crystal (2007: 75), pitch, loudness, and tempo combine to make up a language’s expression of rhythm. English uses stressed syllable provided roughly at regular intervals of time in fluent speech and separated by unstressed syllables. Pitch, loudness, and tempo together enter into a language’s expression of rhythm Crystal (1987:161).

Intonation and Tempo Relations

It is the relative rate of speech habitually used by the native speakers. As it is often realized in the practice of discourse analysis variations in the study of tempo, which are like speeding up or slowing down in tempo, can create different meanings in the spoken discourse. It is possible to speed up or slow down the rate of the rate at which syllables, words, and sentences are produced, to convey several kinds of meaning (Crystal, 1987: 169).

Intonation and Melody (Music) Relations

Prosody-and intonation in particular-has often been called ‘melody’ ‘or music’ of speech (Crystal, 2007:78). It is the linguistic use of pitch, loudness, tempo, and rhythm (Crystal, 1987:429). It is also called as prosody because of having similar ingredients in its nature and composition.

Paralinguistic Relations of Intonation

Such paralinguistic features, which convey cultural trait, like whispered speech, rounding lips, proxemics, and kinesics are truly universal, but function differently by giving life to many different meanings. Because many of the paralinguistic features are language specific, they are very hard to be learned by the nonnative speaking teachers, who need real further education in them.

In brief, no matter the languages possess the same language typology or not, prosody, rhythm, tempo, paralinguistic features, and melody (music) of a language are parameters of intonation, making each language different from each other to a greater extent. It is them that make the learning and teaching of a language very difficult job.

The Elements of Intonation in Relation to Prosody

Intonation and prosody are treated under the term suprasegmentals. A careful analysis of each of them is a must because many people confuse them with each other. The ingredients of these terms can be given as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intonation (Music)</th>
<th>Prosody</th>
<th>Rhythm</th>
<th>Tempo</th>
<th>Melody</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitch</td>
<td>pitch</td>
<td>pitch</td>
<td>the relative rate of speech</td>
<td>pitch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>stress</td>
<td>stress</td>
<td>tempo</td>
<td>stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juncture</td>
<td>tempo</td>
<td>tempo</td>
<td>tempo</td>
<td>tempo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The intertwined intersection of the intonation with prosody and paralinguistic features can be summarized as follows:

It must be noted that the term called juncture does not take place in books anymore. This is a great handicap for the nonnative teacher of English because it belongs to a trio which consists of stress and pitch that make the term intonation. It is the juncture that divides the stream of speech into word groups and tone units through the language specific pausing. If it is not studied in a foreign language class properly, the nonnative speaker is bound to divide the words, phrases, and sentences in accordance with ones in this mother tongue. Thus, the absence of word grouping is likely to result in non-fluent speech, with pauses occurring in unnatural places to facilitate the solving linguistic problems, rather than to serve the purpose of signaling intonation structure Jenkins (2005:45).

Research 1:

Introduction

It must be noted that it is not easy to cope with the distinctive features of English intonation for the non-native speakers of English. The purpose of this research was to examine intonation production on question note and tag question tone of the Turkish students and teachers of English language. So, the aim is to identify their intonation problem in picking of the question intonation.

Purpose

The experiment is based on auditory recording of 12 test sentences which were uttered by 100 students. These subjects had a phonetics course of 14 weeks and know transcription. The aim of this research is to discover whether the subjects would associate the required intonation contour with the related meaning of the utterance. The second aim of this research is to find out how the students went astray in using the question intonation contour in their utterances.

Research Questions

The questions of this research can be stated as follows:
1. Turkish students of English Language Education Department (of the year 2008) have a serious problem in producing the rising question intonation tone in relation to checking information to make sure.
2. Turkish students have fossilization in intonation.
3. Intonation Teaching is a difficult area in teacher education.

Methodology

100 Turkish students, who have finished a-year training in English at the prep school, of English Language Education in the first year were involved in this experiment. So the subjects constituted a homogenous socio-linguistic group with regards to such variables as age, education, exposure to training in English phonetics. We audio-taped the test questions of 100 subjects with an audio-cassette recorder as a pretest. There are 12 test questions as given below:

1. Did the shop close down? 
2. Did you have a car? 
3. Are all slides in order? 
4. Did they offer you the job? 
5. Have you been to London? 
6. Was the king happy? 
7. Were they present at the party? 
8. Did you tell Jennifer about the party? 
9. Could I ask you a couple of questions? 
10. Should I wear my grey dress? 
11. Shall I turn on the air conditioner? 
12. May I borrow your pen?

These questions actually require answers to YES/NO cases checking information to make sure, which mainly depends on the basis of a stereotype pattern of intonation requiring a rising tone at the end of the utterance. In the pretest, all of the subjects read out the 12 test questions with a falling tone. According to Hewings (2007:92), we can use a fall-rising tone or a rising tone with little difference in meaning. However, a fall-rising tone often sounds more polite than a rising tone. All of the students in the pretest gave a falling intonation to the test questions without being aware of being polite. It must be noted that being polite changes from culture to culture. In particular, a fall-rising tone is often preferred in questions for social reasons, that is, mainly to be polite and friendly, rather than to check information (Hewings, 2007:92). The students are not consciously aware of the being polite and checking information to make sure difference.

The subjects had a seven-week term of training in an intonation study which is composed of pitch, stress, and juncture on English phonetics. In addition, the related exercises of the book of Martin Hewings called *English Pronunciation in Use* (2007 with CD) are used. After a training of 7 weeks in general intonation practices within 21 hours along with pitch, stress and juncture, the subjects read out the same 12 test sentences and were audio-taped again. A comparative analysis of the pretest and posttest results (n=100) can be stated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pretest Questions</th>
<th>Correct Answers (Giving the rising tone “to make sure”)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Was the king happy?</td>
<td>10 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have you been to London?</td>
<td>9 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did you tell Jennifer about the party?</td>
<td>8 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did the shop close down?</td>
<td>7 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Were they present at the party?</td>
<td>7 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Could I ask you a couple of questions?</td>
<td>6 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Should I wear my grey dress?</td>
<td>5 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did you have a car?</td>
<td>4 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Are all slides in order? 5 students
10. Did they offer you the job? 3 students
11. Shall I turn on the air conditioner? 6 students
12. May I borrow your pen? 2 students

**Posttest:**

The number of students that gave the answers in the wrong falling tone is very high. The order of difficulty in sentences can be stated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Students Wrong</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Was the king happy? 90 students wrong (90%).</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have you been to London? 91 students wrong (91%).</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did you tell Jennifer about the party? 92 students wrong (92%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did the shop close down? 93 students wrong (93%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Were they present at the party? 93 students wrong (93%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Could I ask you a couple of questions? 94 students wrong (94%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Should I wear my grey dress? 94 students wrong (94%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did you have a car? 94 students wrong (94%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Shall I turn on the air conditioner? 95 students wrong (95%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Are all slides in order? 95 students wrong (95%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Did they offer you the job? 97 students wrong (97%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. May I borrow your pen? 98 students wrong (98%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is seen, the results are distressingly negative, emphasizing the validity of the hypotheses of this research. There are many reasons behind the difficulty of teaching and learning intonation. For example, shortness of the intonation teaching period; Turkish is a syllable-timed language as opposed to English which is a stress-timed language; Turkish students cannot hear the stress difference in relation to tonic stress between content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and function words (conjunctions, prepositions, and articles).

**Research 2:**

This is a shortened form of a presentation given at a symposium on "Perspectives on Teaching Pronunciation: Where Theory Meets Practice," 21 November 2008, Ankara-Turkey in Bilkent University in the School of English Language under a title like "Tag Questions and Intonation Problems for Turkish English Language Teachers

**Introduction**

The utterance of the question tag intonation of English language constitutes a serious problem for the Turkish teachers of English. Difficulties experienced while learning the intonation of the target language must be seriously handled especially in foreign language teacher education. Certain types of fossilized intonation patterns, one of which is question tag intonation of
English language, play a disproportionate role by harming the accuracy, intelligibility, and fluency of the nonnative speakers. Such a situation will harm the communicative competence of the non-native English language teachers.

**Purpose**

Intonation training is a very crucial but a neglected issue in Turkey. Intonation instruction is not appropriately emphasized in the curricula of English language departments in Turkey. The aim of this research is to explore the efficiency of Turkish English teachers on the intonation of tag questions and their related factors like mother tongue interference, language typology, and the curriculum inadequacy, which seem to contribute to the learning of intonation.

**Research Questions**

1. Turkish teachers of English have a partial success in achieving the question tag intonation in the target language.
2. Turkish English teachers have an accent.
3. They have a high degree of intonation fossilization.
4. They also have very serious pronunciation problems, negatively influencing the 1-2-3 research questions.

**Methodology and Data Gathering**

Subjects are 30 randomly chosen Turkish teachers of Turkish Ministry of Education. 3 males and 27 females, with an age range from 22-32, from 1 year to 10 years of teaching experience. 15 of them had a course of Phonetics in English. 5 of them had a phonetics course of two terms. None of them had courses on intonation analysis studies.

The subjects were given 42 sentences (see the appendix, all of which are recorded on a CD that can be listened to) which were taken from the book called “English Pronunciation in Use” by M. Hewings (2007), and they were asked to read out these 42 sentences by paying attention to English intonation; while they read out these sentences, they were audio-taped. Their recorded utterances were analyzed in the light of following rules that are presented here:

**INTONATION RULES OF QUESTION TAGS**

1. We use a falling tone for question tags when we expect the hearer to acknowledge that what we have just said is correct, for example, when we are giving our opinion:
   
   *They didn’t play very well, did they?*
   *
   *Great film, wasn’t it?*

2. We use a rising tone when we invite the hearer to say whether what we have just said is correct or not, for example, when we are not certain that something is true:

   *Japanese, isn’t it?*
   *
   *Not on a diet again, are you?*

3. Question tags usually have a falling tone when the statement is obviously correct:
You’re not well, are you?
Hot, isn’t it?

4. We use also a falling tone when we want the hearer to admit that something they may not have accepted before is, in fact, correct:
Wrong again, weren’t you?

5. Question tags can also follow exclamations and these tags usually have a falling tone:
   A: He could have been killed crossing the road like that.
   B: What a stupid thing to do, wasn’t it?

6. When both the statement and the question tag are positive, the question tag usually has a rising tone:
   You’ve finished, have you?

7. Question tags (usually will you, can’t you, won’t you, would you, or shall we) can be added to imperative sentences. These tags usually have a rising tone and are often used to soften a request or commend:
   Let’s get the earlier train, shall we?
   Take care of these, would you?
   (Hewings, 2007: 88).

Analysis

After an analysis of intonation patterns it was discovered that these Turkish English teachers could not utter a single test sentence in forms of question tags correctly through acceptable intonation patterns in the English language. Obviously, intonation subject matter, as a further education issue for Turkish English teachers of the Ministry of National Education, is a must to be taken up very seriously in Turkish foreign language education programs.

The result of the research was very distressing. There are many difficulties that pave the way for such a conclusion. One of the reasons is that Turkish and English have different typologies in which English has a stress-timed rhythm while Turkish has a syllable-timed one: this is the basis of mother tongue influence. A second reason is the absence of courses on teaching Intonation in the curricula of departments of English language Education. In addition, the lack of juncture studies in the target language invites many errors in connected speech for the Turkish students and English language teachers.

The Stress-timed Nature of English as a Difficulty

The typological difference between English and Turkish is the most problem-causing case in Turkish students’ failure of intonation learning. Celce-Murcia, et al (1996:152) give the following example to demonstrate the stress-timed nature of English:

- **CATS** have **CHASE** MICE.
- The CATS will **CHASE** the MICE.
- The CATS have been **CHASING** the MICE.
- The CATS could have been **CHASING** the MICE.
It must be noted that even though the above given sentences are different in the number of syllable, they are equivalent in the number of stressed syllables. Therefore, the time needed to utter these sentences is roughly equivalent as well. The first sentence has the fewest syllables, but each of them is longer. In the following syllables, however, there are more syllables with unstressed syllables that are shorter than the stressed ones. "In addition, the stressed syllables of these sentences are also slightly shorter than the stressed syllables of the first sentence in order to accommodate the extra unstressed syllables (Celce-Murcia et al (1996:152). In stress-timed languages, it is as though the unstressed words must be sandwiched together in order to allow the stressed syllables to recur at regular intervals (Avery and Ehrlich, 1992:74).

The reduction of vowels into schwa in this sandwich style, as seen in figure below, cannot be perceived by the students whose language is base on syllable-time rhythm. Such students often assign equal weight upon each syllable in speaking in English, subconsciously by not paying attention to the syllables whether they are stressed or unstressed. This may give their speech a staccato-like rhythm that can adversely affect the comprehensibility of their English (Avery and Ehrlich, 1992:74).

In English, stressed syllables are produced with more muscular effort, and are louder and longer than the unstressed syllables (Davenport and Hannahs,1988:115). The stress-timed nature of English signifies that the length of an utterance does not depend on the number of syllables, whereas, it does in Turkish since it is a syllable-timed language, just like in Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Arabic, French, Cantonese, Polish, and some African languages. “Maintaining a regular beat from stressed element to stressed element and reducing the intervening syllables can be very difficult for students whose native tongue has syllable-timed rhythm patterns. In these syllable-timed languages (such as French, Italian, Japanese and many African languages), rhythm is a function of the number of syllables in a given phrase, not the number of stressed elements “Celce-Murcia et al (1996:153).

As a result of these differences in stress level and syllable length, learners from syllable-timed language background tend to stress syllables in English more equally without giving sufficient stress to the main words and without sufficiently reducing unstressed syllables (Celce-Murcia et al (1996:153). ESL students who speak a syllable-timed language will often assign equal weight to each syllable in English sentences, regardless of whether the syllable is stressed or unstressed. This may give their speech a staccato-like rhythm that can

| /θ/ | magic-magician, valid-validity |
| /ʌ/ | idiotic-idiot, paradigmatic-paradigm |
| /e, e/ | able-ability |
| /ɒ/ | suspect(n)-suspect(v), suspicion-suspicious |
| /ɑ:/ | photograph-photography |
| /u/ | hand-handful, care-careful |
| /ɒ/ | observation-observe, orator-oration |

Figure 2: Vowel Reduction in English (Demirezen, 1986:74)
adversely affect the comprehensibility of their English (Avery and Ehrlich, 1992:74).

Certain Paralinguistic Features of Intonation

Examples of paralinguistic differences among cultures depend on cross-cultural differences. A few of these differences given below are truly universal:

- People all over the world express their anger by speaking with increased loudness, raised pitch height, and faster speed. That behaviour may well be universal (Crystal, 2007:75).
- (For example) a breathy’ or ‘husky’ tone of voice conveys deep emotion or sexual desire in many language, but in Japanese, it is routinely used as a way of conveying respect or submission (Crystal, 1987:169)
- A ‘creaky’ or ‘gravelling’ tone of voice is often used in English to convey unimportance or disparagement; but, in Finnish, it is a normal feature of many voice qualities, and would not have this (the English) connotation (Crystal, 1987: 169).
- And there is no equivalent in English to the use of strongly nasalized speech to convey a range of emotional nuances in Portuguese (Crystal, 1987: 169).
- One of the clear examples of speech is the whispered speech. As a paralinguistic feature, “whispered speech is used in many languages to add ‘conspirational meaning’ to what is said” (Crystal, 2007: 169).
- Traditional brides in Anatolia (Turkey) speak in whispered speech in the presence of father-in-laws and mother-in-laws.
- German speakers often use falling intonation while Americans would use rising intonation, so the Americans may come away with the impression that their German conversational partners were peremptory or curt. Conversely, Americans’ tendency to end sentences with flat or rising intonation may give Germans the impression that they are tentative or uncertain (Fasold and Connor-Linton: 2006:345).
- Latinos, Arabs and African-Americans speak relatively in high volumes.
- Arabs use silence to establish privacy; Peruvian and Brazilian Indians become silent when a guest enters.
- In Japan, a hiss is a sign of approval; in America it is a sign of contempt or disapproval.
- East Indian workers in England are often misjudged because their different intonation is interpreted as rude by natives.
- Recently hired Indian and Pakistani cafeteria staff working at a British airport were perceived as ‘surly and uncooperative’ purely on the basis of their intonational patterns. For instance, when offering gravy, they would say the word ‘gravy’ with a falling tone instead of the rising tone normally adopted by the L1 speakers of English when making offers of this sort (Jenkins, 2005:45). So their wrong intonation was interpreted as an indication of indifference, rather than the engagement involved in taking the offer.
- Another paralinguistic feature is the lip rounding used by some adults to babies or animals, which is a universal trait.

These above-mentioned examples signify the fact that intonation features of languages convey deep-rooted cultural traits.
Conclusion

According to the results of this research, the Turkish subjects have serious problems in learning the features of English intonation. The results of the two researches are very distressing. The students’ and Turkish English teachers’ inability in identifying and producing the rising intonation tone during the pretest is coupled with the interferences from the mother tongue, which gets to be almost inevitable if the target language and the students’ mother tongue do not share the same language typology. During the professional education, shortness of intonation teaching period, lack of intonation teaching courses in the curricula as a nationwide case, Turkish students and teachers’ inability in hearing the stress differences in relation to tonic stress between content words and function words are the main areas of faulty intonation. Moreover, the studies on junctures are totally being neglected. Apparently, Turkish is a syllable-timed language while English is a stress-timed one, and this dichotomy between English and Turkish is a prime reason in the explanation of the failure of Turkish students and Turkish English language teachers in failing in picking up the rising intonation.

The fact must be widely noticed that in teacher education classes in the present two researches the teaching of intonation occupies a minor position of 21 hours of teaching intonation patterns. This is obviously not enough at all. In teacher education intonation training is a very deep matter, requiring longer periods of time. In addition, it is an apparent fact that intonation teaching is either largely neglected in most EFL and ESL textbooks or mentioned very briefly. Students and Turkish English teachers on-the-job must fight their faulty intonation. Technical equipments can come to their rescue and they can be autonomous learners. Then, the situation is not hopeless after the widespread use of computer. There are various recommendable electronic and computer mediated systems that have been developed to make the non-native teachers and students autonomous learners, including WinPitch LTL I and II by Pitch Instruments Inc. (http://www.winpitch.com); BetterAccent Tutor (http://www.betteraccent.com/) provides audio-visual feedback of intonation, stress and rhythm in American English; the public domain software Praat (available from http://www.praat.org) can be used for the grammatical functions of intonation in English with the aid of visual displays. Consequently, it must be noted that not only the nonnative-speaking teachers but also the native-speaking ones must be educated in the area of intonation studies.

References

APPENDIX

The following tag question items were read loudly by 30 subjects and all of the utterances were all audio-taped. All of these sentences are recorded on a CD that can be listened to.

1. A: We’ll have to wait ages for the bus.  
   B: But they come every ten minutes, don’t they?
2. A: But we are at the top, aren’t we?
3. A: Where shall I leave you?  
   B: Drop me in front of the station, could you?
4. A: Did you see the eclipse yesterday?  
   B: Fantastic, wasn’t it?
5. A: Football is so boring isn’t it?  
   B: Yeah, I know. I hate it.  
   A: Golf’s much more fun, isn’t it?
6. A: You’re not tired, are you?  
   B: Exhausted. Give me some water, will you?
7. A: Great film, wasn’t it?
8. A: Hot, isn’t it?
9. A: I can’t quite remember, you need 40 points to win, don’t you?
10. A: I really like the town square.  
    B: Lovely, isn’t it?
11. A: I’m not sure. He was from Brazil, wasn’t he?
12. A: It was interesting meeting the education minister yesterday, wasn’t it?
13. A: It wasn’t a very interesting game, was it?
14. A: Japanese, isn’t it?
15. A: Let’s get the earlier train, shall we?
16. A: Not on a diet again, are you?
17. A: Of course, you know Dartmond well, don’t you?
18. A: I can do that easily.  
    B: Oh, you can, can you?
19. A: Where do you want these boxes?  
    B: Put them over there, would you?
20. A: Ray’s put on a lot of weight, hasn’t he?
21. A: She isn’t a very good swimmer, is she?
22. A: She ran well, didn’t she?
23. A: She works at St. Mary’s, doesn’t she?
24. A: So you think you’re clever, do you?
25. A: Sounds really good, doesn’t it?
   B: Fantastic!
26. A: Take care of these, would you?
27. A: Tennis is so boring, isn’t it?
28. A: There’ll be a lot of people, will there?
29. A: They didn’t play very well, did they?
30. A: They’re yours, aren’t they?
31. A: Wait a sec., will you?
32. A: We can’t turn round now, can we?
33. A: What a hideous shade of purple, isn’t it?
34. A: What a stupid thing to do, wasn’t it?
35. A: Wonderful view from up here, isn’t it?
   B: Great!
36:   A: Wrong again, weren’t you?
37. A: What a boring lecture!
   B: Yes, dull, wasn’t it?
38. A: You aren’t hungry are you?
39. A: I think there is something wrong with the printer.
   B: You broke it, didn’t you?
40. A: You didn’t tell your parents what you’re going to do, did you?
41. A: You haven’t seen my glasses anywhere, have you?
42. A: Your brother’s a doctor, isn’t he?
   B: No, my father is a doctor.
43. A: Can I get a discount on these tickets?
   B: You are a student, are you?
44. A: You’re at fifty-seven, aren’t you?
   B: We live at fifty-nine.
   B: You’re not a rock music fan, are you?
46. A: You’re not well, are you?
47. A: You’ve finished, have you?
48. A: You’ve lost your handbook, have you?
The Image of Italy in Ernest Hemingway’s Short Stories: a Unifying Locale of Loss and Gain

Silvia Ammary
John Cabot University

Ernest Hemingway is one of the most famous American authors of the twentieth century. His name is internationally recognized, even by many people who have never read any of his books. He is highly anthologized and taught in secondary schools, community colleges, and four-year college classrooms around the world. Most students have already read something by Hemingway, and they come into class with preconceptions. They usually either love him or hate him and try to pin labels rather than give his work a new reading. As a professor who teaches literature to American visiting students who come to study for a semester in Italy, I try to create a bridge linking my specialization in American Literature and my knowledge of Italian language and culture in an attempt to create a cross cultural encounter and thus a new approach for studying Hemingway. Teaching becomes very interesting when it transforms itself into a cultural bridge which connects peoples, cultures and experiences. Hemingway lends well to this kind of approach since he has travelled widely around the globe and had many diverse experiences in different domains of life. I will attempt a new critical reading of Hemingway which takes a cross-cultural methodology of teaching and which brings new horizons to the teaching of his fiction, especially his short stories.

Ernest Hemingway, like many numerous American authors such as Nathanial Hawthorne, Henry James, Margaret Fuller and Edith Wharton, fell under Italy’s spell and beauty. Italy was second only to his Upper Michigan in stimulating his lifelong passion for geography and for local expertise. Hemingway knew the particulars of the region of northern Italy very well, and his love extended into the foreign culture itself: the language, food, custom, architecture, paintings, music and literature (Stoneback 131). Most of the Italy that he experienced and recorded in his writing functions as an important element in his fiction and becomes like “the other”, an alien culture that was sufficiently different from his American roots, and yet this otherness serves him first to fulfill his psychological needs to grow up and learn and become one of the initiated through suffering, whether it involves himself or the loss of other people around him. It was in Italy where he became a man, and it was to Italy that he (re)turned for restoration. “They say everyone loves Italy once and that it is well to go through it young,” Hemingway wrote these words in 1931, proclaiming his love of Italy, which became an important setting for his early stories and his second masterpiece A Farwell to Arms (Galley 78).

Hemingway’s first encounter with Italy is a mixture of contrasts: romance and violence; love and war, close friendship and a complete sense of foreignness; in Italy he plunged into the world of adulthood and learning, feeling
separated and freed from the constraints of a Midwestern protestant family and a puritanical mother. Italy meant freedom for this Midwestern lad; a life of discovery, adventure, camaraderie and passion. Italy is the place where this young man will change and develop sexually, emotionally, and intellectually, but as in a typical bildungsroman, our nascent hero will go through these stages of experience through physical and psychological suffering and pain.

The Italian stories that I will discuss in this paper all come from In Our Time, first published in 1925. This book is more of a collection of fictional fragments than short stories. Like the modernist poetry and the imagist poems of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, these stories seem more like epiphanies or vignettes, about Nick Adams, a semi-autobiographical character who appears in many of Hemingway’s short stories. Hemingway found in Nick the vehicle for expressing his vision, his hope and his suffering. A lot of the stories in this collection take place in Italian locales. Such a setting enables the protagonist to understand himself better while away from home. He can meditate about his life back home and evaluate his experiences from a distance, thus gaining a new perspective of himself and his surrounding. The stories are: “A very Short Story”, “Cat in the Rain”, “In Another Country”, and “A Way you’ll Never Be”.

“A Very Short Story” (written between June-July in 1923) is one of Hemingway’s most autobiographical pieces which echoes the love relationship that he had with a nurse in Italy while he was serving as an ambulance driver during World War I. An eighteen-year old Ernest Hemingway was taken to a Milan hospital after an explosion badly injured his leg. In that hospital, he met one of the great loves of his life - Agnes von Kurowsky, a twenty-six year old American nurse who cared for him as he recuperated. Hemingway was infatuated with von Kurowsky from the start, and for a time she seemed to have feelings for him as well, though she later said she merely "liked" him and that their relationship was nothing more than a "flirtation." Hemingway wanted them to get married, but von Kurowsky - because of the age difference and her belief that Hemingway was immature and aimless - rejected the idea.

In a similar manner “A Very Short Story” is about the love affair of an unnamed soldier and a nurse named “Luz” during a war (probably WWI), and how their relationship disintegrates after the war and eventually ends. Luz writes the soldier a letter when he returns to America, and she starts working in a hospital in Pordenone: “Living in the muddy, rainy town in the winter, the major of the battalion made love to Luz, and she had never known Italians before, and finally wrote to the states that theirs had been only a boy and girl affair. She was sorry, and she knew he would probably not be able to understand, but might some day forgive her, and be grateful to her, and she expected, absolutely unexpectedly, to be married in the spring” (CSS108). The words “only a boy and girl affair” suggest that Luz has finally met a man; not a boy. The words before “and finally” are the narrator’s explanation to himself for Luz’s behavior. It is thus important to know what he means by “she had never know Italians before,” because from this quote it seems that the narrator is tacitly admitting that the young woman’s love for an American boy has quickly dissipated in the presence of an ardent Italian lover. And that is by itself a logical justification.
According to Nancy Comley in “The Italian Education of Ernest Hemingway”, Hemingway had acquired a cultural knowledge and appreciation of “Italians” even before going to Italy. To him, Italians meant high culture, art, opera, *Romeo and Julie*; Italian men like: Casanova, Lothario, Romeo or Don Giovanni, were great lovers who were used to describe fast or faithless lovers (43). In fact, “the major did not marry Luz in the spring, or any other time,” (CSS108), and so while Luz was discovering the glories of Latin love, the American boy decides to smite the beautiful girl by looking for a love that cannot be consumed a *L’italien* since it is devoid of any romanticism and leads him to “contract gonorrhea from a sales girl in a loop department store while riding a taxicab through Lincoln Park” (CSS108). The boy becomes the victim; wounded both physically and psychologically by Luz. From the bed in Padua to the back seat in Lincoln Park, our American hero is carried from wound to wound. The salesgirl from the loop merely administers the literal blow to his already figuratively damaged sexuality which was taken by the Italian major. This man's relationship with Luz also serves to reveal the youth of the American nation. America was just coming into power on a global scale. The First World War went a long way to proving its viability as a major player in world affairs. However, America remains much younger and more immature than the European nations. Therefore, when the Italian general proves to be more of a man than the American soldier, Hemingway is indicating that America is still a young and immature nation.

Another story where the Italian man becomes a foil to the American one is “Cat in the Rain” (written between February 1923 and March 1924). The story is about a young American couple who is presented alone in a hotel room in Italy. They are rich enough to afford a sea view room overlooking an empty square. It is raining continuously throughout the story. From the hotel window, the wife sees a cat crouching under a rain dripping garden table. She declares that she will go down and fetch the “poor kitty”. The husband lying on the bed reading offers to do it but does not rise. She looks for the car, but her mission fails as the cat disappears, and she is then brought back to the room by the maid. She is suddenly feeling unfeminine and looks at herself in the mirror yearning for longer hair and for so many other objects including a cat, but she is finally silenced by her husband’s “Oh shut up and get something to read”. There is suddenly a knock at the door, and the maid appears with a big tortoise shell cat sent by the padrone of the hotel. Carlos Baker says that the story is derived from a rainy day Ernest spent with Hadley in February at the Hotel Splendid in Rapallo, and that the characters are derived from Hemingway, Hadley and the manager and chambermaid (Baker 133). Jeffery Meyers says that the story is based on the marital dissatisfaction with Hadley (Meyers 144). However, beyond these interpretations, what stands out is the way Hemingway creates a foil to the American husband through the character of the padrone, who seems to enact the role model or the code hero figure. Hemingway’s code hero is a man who is usually an older foreigner, but more importantly, he is a man with experience, maturity and endurance. He is a man who is already initiated and has already fathomed a way to live in the world gracefully and stoically.

The padrone provides a sharp contrast to what the husband does not do in the story. Diametrically opposed to the position of the husband who is sitting comfortably on the bed “lying propped up with two pillows”; probably one of the
pillows is the wife’s; the padrone is standing up at his desk doing his work. While George, the husband, is busy reading disregarding his wife’s wishes and ignoring even to look at her when she is speaking to him and offering occasional flippant and mean-spirited remarks, the padrone “bowed” to the wife “as she passed the office”. By bowing to the woman, the padrone assumes the role of the Italian ardent lover making a conventional romantic gesture; a lover hungry to cater for his lady’s every whim. The padrone’s only dialogue to the wife “si, si signora, brutto tempo. It is very bad weather” shows the contrast between him and the husband. Not only does he stress the “si” twice, but he also gives the English translation “it is very bad weather”, a very lively and passionate response as opposed to the cold one offered by the static husband. The padrone is characterized as an admirable man, and although briefly sketched, he is Hemingway’s earliest role model. Each of the padrone’s qualities corresponds to the qualities of the role model as he later appears in Hemingway’s fiction; a man of dignity, will and commitment. The padrone has dignity, and he lends dignity to his professions: he likes “being a hotel keeper” (CSS 130). His “will” is demonstrated in the “deadly way in which he receives any complaints,” (CSS 130) and his commitment to his profession as a hotel keeper is shown in his efforts to “serve” the wife who is his guest at the hotel. The only two descriptions we are given by the narrator in the story is that “he was an old man and very tall” (CSS 129). Since these are the only two traits we have in this terse short story, we assume they carry meaningful emphasis. The age is related to the values that have been proven by experience over time; certainly George, the American husband lacks these values that have shaped the padrone’s personality. The padrone belongs to the mature generation of Italian men, and Hemingway pictures them as polite, mature, and having the old values in them. The padrone belongs to the older generation, not “the lost generation” who do not have these values anymore. “Very tall” signifies also the stature of his character rather than his physical height. We see the padrone through the wife’s eyes, and this means that these attractive qualities that the wife sees in the padrone are the qualities that George lacks.

Through the padrone, the wife experiences a moment of epiphany where she realizes the indifference of George and his rejection of her rightful place in the relationship. The effect this creates is an extreme sense of isolation and homelessness, similar to the condition of the cat in the rain. They are both dripped on and need a warm shelter where they feel wanted and fulfilled. We see the narration focalized through the consciousness of the American wife. We are over her shoulder, seeing what she sees and watching the “cat crouched under one of the dripping green tables” and “trying to make herself compact that she would not be dripped on” (CSS 129). Although the wife is standing away from the cat, she calls her with the female designation “kitty”, which refers to the animal as a fluffy creature needing help and protection. The symbol of the cat remains ambiguous in the story as it can stand for the many things that the woman lacks, but from the feelings aroused from the padrone, it seems that the cat stands for the woman’s femininity, sexuality and womanhood and her sense of individualism and identity which are totally absent from the unfulfilling relation to George. The passage which mostly reveals the effect that the padrone has on the American wife is “As the American girl passed the office, the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentous feeling of being of supreme importance” (CSS 130). The
padrone is causing the American girl to experience a strong attraction towards his masculine qualities that initiate them. In Hemingway's description in the story, the girl's feelings pass through three stages; tight inside, important and of momentary supreme importance, and these stages reflect a correspondence of sexual desire and intercourse (Bennet 249). In fact, when the girl goes back to her room, her feminine sexual feelings are transferred to George. She first sits on the bed, then goes in front of the mirror and examines her hair and face "studying the back of her head and neck". Instead of responding to her needs, George keeps on reading, and when she tells him that she wants to let her "hair grow out", George’s response is "I like it the way it is"; like a boy’s hair. George’s response is condescending as he expects his wife to suppress her female sexuality and womanhood; he wants her to look like a male; to look inferior; probably an inferior version of himself. At this point, the wife launches into a desperate listing of the things she "wants"; I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her. And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and some new clothes" (CSS 131).

Although the list is a list of objects that the wife wants: silver, candles, spring, kitty and new clothes, what really is important here to notice is that it becomes the cry of recognition for a place in her marriage. It is an awakening into her life of illusion with George. Although the American wife is given a tortoise shell cat sent to her by the padrone through the maid, and her wish fulfilled, the cat will only bring her temporary happiness. We see her in the same position as we first saw her at the beginning of the story, "his wife was looking out of the window" (CSS 13). It is darker, and it is raining harder at the end of the story. The darkness is literal and symbolic of her sexual frustration and George' rejection of her demands to be a woman and an individual. The American wife and her husband are two tourists without tourism. They are unreasonably early for the tourist season; they are stripped from everything in a foreign land, and they seem to be gripped with a deep sense of aimlessness and purposelessness. However, it is in this setting that the American wife through the encounter with the Italian padrone that she experiences a moment of greatest happiness and a moment of awakening to the reason of her marital unhappiness: the woman has to have the courage to venture into the rain and find her own cat, just like Henry Frederic walks in the rain after saying goodbye to the dead body of his beloved Catherine in A Farewell to Arms.

The third story "In another Country" (written from September to November in 1926) echoes the feelings of alienation and helplessness we encountered in "Cat in the Rain". The title exemplifies these feelings. The narrator feels alienated from the comfort of the familiar. He is an American in Italy, and a patient with a serious handicap; he is also a new comer to the Italian language. We are told that the Italian major spends much time "correcting his grammar" (SCC 208), so "we took up the use of grammar, and soon Italian was such a difficult language that I was afraid to talk to him until I had the grammar straight in my mind" (SCC 208). He is not only lonely because he is geographically separated from his country; civilians abuse him as he is a soldier among civilians who do not understand what he faced: "the people hated us because we were officers, and from a wine shop some one would call out, "A
basso gli ufficiali!” as we passed” (SCC 207). The bond that links him with the other soldiers whom he identifies with “we” after he starts his narration with the singular pronoun “I” is the dislike and dishonesty or discourtesy of the people in the streets and satisfying their appetites at the Cova: “we were all a little detached and there was nothing that held us together except that we met every afternoon at the hospital. Although as we walked to the Cova through the tough part of town, walking in the dark, with light and singing coming out of the wine-shops, and sometimes having to walk into the street where the men and women would crowd together in the sidewalk so that we would have to jostle then to get by, we felt held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked us, did not understand” (SCC 208). Later, these same officers drift from him because they discover that some of his medals are for being an American while their medals were given for feats of bravery, and so he feels like a frightened soldier among genuine heroes and an outsider from their circle. He even confesses to the reader: “I was very much afraid to die, and often lay in bed at night by myself, afraid to die and wondering how I would be when I went back to the front again” (SCC 208).

After admitting that he “was not a hawk” although he “might seem a hawk to those who had never hunted,” he drastically alters the form of the story from summary and reflection about himself, and focuses the remaining of the narrative on an Italian major who has also wounded his hand at the front, but whose cynicism toward bravery does not alienate the narrator from him. Only recently married since he did not want to make his wife a widow, the Italian major loses his wife unexpectedly to pneumonia. Nick realizes that nothing of value will last in this world and that true heroism is not the traditional kind of heroics, the kind that wins medals, displayed by the brash young Italian officers who are seemingly proud of their naïve bravado. Heroism means to be able to deal and cope with a world characterized by death and destruction. Having lost everything of consequence in his life, the Italian major becomes an important exemplar of Hemingway’s code of conduct. Three days after the death of his beloved wife, he returns “at the usual hour, wearing a black band on his sleeve of his uniform” (SCC 210). Despite the great pain he experienced at the shocking news at the unexpected loss of his wife, the Italian major’s return to the hospital signifies his willingness to survive, even with his new awareness of the chaos in the world and his inability to prevent being touched by it.

The story ends with the major refusing to look at the pictures of all sorts of wounds that were cured by the machines. “The photographs did not make much difference to the major because he only looked out of the window” (SCC 210). What the major sees in the window is life’s vast emptiness, that life carries with it a sense of its own meaninglessness; his discovery that nothing can protect him from this loss, not even his military precision. The Italian major has stoically resigned himself to the harsh reality. He knows that these technological machines and the whole rehabilitation therapy are useless. Seen against the ineffectiveness of the machine, the major’s behavior seems to offer an example of the only “therapy” possible in a world of wounds and machines.

The major’s intelligence, his discipline, and finally his courage as he battles despair all make him an appealing character. Like the padrone in “Cat in the Rain”, the Italian major is an older companion of war who offers advice and perspective. Like the American wife who experiences a moment of awakening
into her self as a result of her meeting with the padrone, Nick also learns from this code hero how to be an existential survivor, one who chooses to go on with dignity and pride, even after all verities around him crumble. After the death of his wife, he learns that life cannot be controlled; that it is filled with arbitrary tragedies, even off the battlefield for which one may be unprepared for. He may have been prepared for his own death like any good soldier, but his wife’s sudden passing away leads him to confront life with dignity. Although the final image in the story is that of the major undergoing treatment for his ruined hand while stoically “looking out the window”, the reader is also mindful of the narrator who has been so carefully observing the code hero reminiscing about the events from a point of view of a person who has outlived them.

Hemingway brings Italy to the fore in this story. The narrator recounts the walks through the streets of Milan to the hospital, the number of bridges that mark the possible routes, the routines of going and coming back. We walk with him the streets of Milan with several wounded soldiers as they make their way to the hospital for treatment, and we feel the cold of autumn and the pleasure of the warmth of a charcoal fire when the narrator pauses to buy roasted chestnuts. The description of this Italian setting is so vivid that we readers are lulled into a complacency and do not realize that the story is really about bravery, courage and death. Again, in the Italian setting, there is a fusion of loss and gain. The alienated soldier is learning to become a man through the encounter with suffering, pain and loss.

The fourth and final story is “Che Ti Dice La Patria? This story was written between April and early May 1927, a period that marked significant changes in Hemingway’s life. Professionally, Hemingway enjoyed the success of The Sun Also Rises, and his "fame was clearly growing among the reading public"(Baker 181). In his personal life, however, Hemingway was in the midst of turmoil. His "hundred days" separation from Pauline was over and, on 27 January 1927, his divorce from Hadley became final. Hemingway was at a point where he had to deal with both the failure of his marriage to Hadley and his impending marriage to Pauline. Just before writing "Che Ti Dice La Patria?", Hemingway took a trip to Italy to obtain documentation enabling him to marry Pauline Pfeiffer in the Catholic Church, invalidating his marriage to Hadley Richardson. Essentially, Hemingway had to come to terms with the implicit hypocrisy of this act. While he may have desired solace from romanticized memories of his old front and the youthful love he experienced with Agnes von Kurowsky in Italy, Hemingway knew that those days were gone forever and that they had been replaced by fascism. It is out of this experience that Hemingway created the travelers in "Chi Ti Dice La Patria?" As the story implies, these travelers are seeking something meaningful in Italy. Unfortunately, after numerous negative encounters with the Italian people, they are forced to confront the reality that all exists under an umbrella of deception generated by fascism. Guy Hickok and his wife Mary, who “watching over Hadley’s welfare in Paris” (Baker 182), were keenly aware of the details of their friends’ breakup. Hickok wanted to visit Italy to write about Fascism there, and so he extended an invitation to Hemingway to ride along. Hemingway accepted first because of his emotional longing for those days of recuperative and uncomplicated love, but also lurking behind the romantic notion was a more practical concern. The self-serving behavior of the Italian fascists, disturbingly parallel to Hemingway’s renunciation of his first marriage
for personal motives, gives a shadowy significance to the story: nothing redeeming is to be found in duplicity.

The Italian title translates as: “What Do You Hear from Home?”, and it is an account of ten day expatriate tour of northern Italy. Despite the critics’ lack of interest in this short story, it is important nevertheless in offering historical insight into how American travel writing constructed images of “Italianicity” in the 1920s. The most obvious image has to do with food and the use of cuisine to index native character. The disdain for Italian cuisine is not typical of Hemingway who usually describes the pleasures of expatriates eating in precise detail. In “Che ti Dice la Patira”, however, the narrator describes an unpleasant spaghetti luncheon. His unnamed narrator and his traveling companion, Guy, are struck by the lowliness of the restaurant they visit in the little village of Spezia: the kitchen and dining room are separated by nothing more than a curtain, and the waitresses have an odd habit of silhouetting their bodies in the threshold of the doorways. The narrator reminds his friends, “You wanted to eat some place simple” to which Guy responds, “This isn’t simple. This is complicated” (CSS 255). And indeed, the men soon realize that the restaurant actually fronts a whorehouse, a deception made necessary, as the narrator reports that it is because “Mussolini has abolished the brothels” (CSS 226). The whores’ obvious lack of kitchen proficiency not only ruins the expatriates’ hope for a satisfying mean, but their attempts to sell themselves to the travelers also intrude upon the men’s fraternal good humor. “Spezia is my home and Italy is my country,” one homely prostitute says, as Guy admits with un concealed sarcasm, “It looks like her country” (CSS 226). Later, they sit for a better meal in Sestri. While the pasta asciutta, beefsteak, and fried potatoes are filling, the restaurant lacks both heat and a restroom, again making the dining experience terrible. “Do you remember what we came to this country for?” Guy asks after a waiter leads him to a nearby private residence to use the facilities. “Yes,” the narrator answers, “but we didn’t get it” (228).

However, there is a reason why Hemingway looks at this Italian experience from a negative perspective. At the time the story was written, Italy was under the control of Mussolini and the national Fascist Party which started ruling Italy since 1922, and so Hemingway sees a different environment than the one he envisioned in the previous stories. Hemingway might imply from these negative feelings he has that Mussolini’s ascension has dampened Italy’s festive spirits. He suggests that the boorishness of the Fascist mentality has infected even the most basic of local pleasures, rendering the Italy he previously knew “what we came to this country for” a thing of the past.

In the opening sequence of “Che Ti Dice la Patria”, the narrator and Guy are accosted by a young fascist demanding a ride to a nearby village. Because the expatriates’ Ford coupe is small, their passenger must travel on the running board. The Americans are both amused and offended by the young man’s sense of entitlement and arrogance. He “asks” Guy and the narrator for a ride to Spezia, but it is clear that he will refuse to take no for an answer: he brushes aside their attempt to refuse and passes a mysterious bundle into the car while two confederates lash his suitcase to its back. Once this is done, he gives the command to start. The Fascist also shows indifference to his own safety in riding outside the two-seater over a dangerous mountain road, especially when, whenever the car rounds a turn, he throws out his weight, nearly pulling the car
over on its side. “You can’t tell him not to,” the narrator insists. “It’s his sense of self-preservation” (SCC 224). That nationalistic slight, however, is contradicted in subsequent paragraphs, when the pair bid their guest farewell. Although the narrator kindly declines to charge him for the ride, the fascist offers only a plain “thanks”, “not thank you or thank you a thousand times, all of which you formerly said in Italy to a man when he handed you a time-table or explained about a direction. The young man uttered the lowest form of the word “thanks” and looked after us suspiciously as Guy started the car” (225). The word formerly implies the existence of a more genteel, civilized Italy now supplanted by the brutal affronts of Fascism, and so if Hemingway was against fascism, he was still admirable of the Italian character.

As the narrator and Guy leave Genoa, a Fascist officer stops their car to fine them twenty-five lira for the dirt covering their license plate. The narrator blames the dirt on the sorry state of Italian roads; offended, the fascist raises the fine to fifty lire. The narrator demands a receipt, so the officer happily provides a receipt of twenty five lira, which means the officer will keep the remainder to himself. The narrator demands to see the sum recorded in the man’s register, but he is told to move “before your number gets dirty again” (CSS 229). Hemingway repeats the word dirt to emphasize just how Mussolini’s men have sullied Italy. This corruption is further underscored through an unfavorable contrast to the French border city of Mentone, which the narrator in closing describes as “very cheerful and clean and sane and lovely.” The last line also embodies Mussolini’s rule as an aberration: “the whole trip had taken only ten days. Naturally, in such a short trip, we had no opportunity to see how things were with the country of the people” (CSS 230). The image is very different from the one we have in Hemingway’s other stories about depictions of Italians. In Farwell to Arms, for example, Frederick’s close friendship with Rinaldi and the priest exemplify the comradery that has developed between American Frederic and the Italian officers, so we have to assume that Hemingway attributes the corruption to Fascism as a system which imposes vice on the Italian’s natural virtues; so he looks at Italy from a romantic perspective which idealizes a pre-fascist Italian era where there was no corruption and more fraternity. John Diggins, in his book Mussolini and Fascism: The View from America, gives an assessment of expatriate writings from this period: “Americans were hopelessly bewitched and bothered by Italy. While they praised Italians for their non-American virtues, they bemoaned their un-American vices” (21).

In each of these four stories, Italy becomes a locale, where the protagonists feel afraid, confused, and lost, but they also exhibit a keen sense of observation and a personal sense of place and of things around them that there is always something positive that comes out of this sense of loneliness and alienation. Their interaction with the new setting always teaches them a new thing about themselves, so their journey into a foreign land becomes an inner one where they discover the ingredients of maturity and growth while in the strange land; Italy, thus, becomes a unifying locale of loss and gain.

Works Cited

Economic strain and foreign language attainment: an empirical study

Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel
Opole University
Poland

Abstract

The developmental period of adolescence places specific demands on young people. Most of them are connected with inevitable psychological and social turmoil. As well, in this specific period the individual’s stress levels can be notably augmented by financial pressures experienced by their families. It can thus be expected that an adolescent worried about their serious money problems may not be apt to pursue their academic development, and shows signs of withdrawal and indifference in the academic context. Consequently, their foreign language (FL) learning process may be seriously threatened, leading to lower perception of their FL abilities, as well as final grades.

The aim of the paper is to report the results of empirical research devoted to the exploration of the relationship between economic strain and FL attainment in the context of the Polish secondary grammar school. For this purpose, first the concept of economic strain and its consequences for different spheres of the adolescent’s life, as well as for the foreign language learning process, are put forward. Then the research method is outlined, followed by a presentation of the study results and discussion.
1. Introduction

Adolescence is marked by physical and psychological maturation, as well as by changing social roles and environments (Meadows, Brown & Elder Jr., 2006). Due to bodily changes and hormonal upheavals, accompanied by intellectual growth, the individual’s stress levels and maladaptive behaviour, such as the emotional excitability of the adolescent, impulsivity, or lack of stability are seriously elevated (Hampel & Petermann, 2006).

As a time of rapid change and transition, adolescence can certainly be stressful and difficult, drawing on all of one’s resources (Sung, Puskar & Sereika, 2006). As a result, it is not surprising that one of the features of the sensitive adolescent period is the prevalence of stress and anxiety, due to adolescents’ developmental immaturity, lack of skills in resolving conflicts, limited resources, and struggles in identity formation (Compas, 1998).

Financial circumstances have a significant influence on the quality of life and well-being of adults and their children. In other words, the individual’s health, happiness and prosperity are related to economic deprivation, which may also strain family relationships (Conger, Conger & Elder, 1993). Adverse economic conditions, such as low income, high debt, job disruptions, or income loss affect individual distress and family relations through the daily strains or pressures they create in a family’s economic life (Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz & Simons, 1994). These pressures may increase one’s preoccupation with financial matters, and produce frustration, anger and family demoralization. When parents are unable to provide for their children’s material expectations due to a decline in the family’s economic resources, serious family and social stresses occur.

On the whole, economic strain contributes to emotional problems in adolescents, such as symptoms of anxiety, depression and antisocial behaviour. The direct connection between economic stresses and anxiety (Elder, Conger, Foster & Ardelt, 1992) is caused by feelings of economic insecurity and the lack of safe and decent standards of living, which require great sacrifices in day-to-day needs. In such circumstances, the students’ families are unable to save, do not have resources to fall back on in the event of an emergency, and may easily go into debt.

In view of its classical definition, the term economic strain is described as the level of difficulty people believe they have in acquiring the basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing and shelter (Pearlin, Lieberman, Menaghan & Mullan, 1981). For the purpose of this paper the term is understood as perceived financial stress or one’s worries about financial problems, which may be a serious obstacle in the adolescent’s everyday activities. Following the literature of the field (Shobe & Boyd, 2005), it will be used interchangeably with perceived economic hardship, material deprivation and material hardship.

Economic strain puts various demands on the whole family, especially on adolescents, who are extremely sensitive due to their special developmental period (Wadsworth & Compas, 2002). For them, money problems can be a significant environmental stressor, strongly influencing their physical, psychological, cognitive, and social functioning (de Anda et al., 2000). They limit the individual’s capacity to plan a meaningful future and contribute to a decline in psychological health (Fryer, 1986). Moreover, they are related to reduced functioning later in life (Lynch, Kaplan & Shema, 1997).

Obviously, the impact of financial constraints affects various spheres of the adolescents’ lives, including their education, because scarce income constrains a
family’s educational investments. A poor financial situation of the family forces them to primarily reduce investments in different forms of cultural practices, such as visiting museums and/or taking extracurricular classes (Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997). Such cutbacks may in effect deprive adolescents of a chance to develop cultural skills and preferences rewarded in school, and, consequently lead to lower school attainment. Last but not least, as research shows, poorer youth have lower expectations for their academic future (Cook et al., 1996). It is then very likely that learning problems may arise when parents are unable to invest in educational resources or hire tutors (Skowron, Wester & Azen, 2004).

The ability to manage personal finances also seems of key importance in the case of the second language learner, because the process of acquiring the foreign language demands certain economic investments. In order to ensure better contact with the language, for example, via course books or access to the Internet and extra contact hours (arranging private tutorials or foreign language courses), certain financial investments are needed. Hence, in the case of families with lower incomes, the acquisition of FL teaching aids, private tutors and newspapers may be drastically limited. In consequence the FL learner may be deprived of many opportunities for language development, and this may foster an array of negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger and aversion. In such a case it can be proposed that the student’s economic hardships are not only related to general school achievement, but also to lack of FL proficiency, calling for deeper contact with the language.

As a result, it may be presumed that self-perception of financial stress is correlated with the individual’s assessment of different forms of FL attainment. In other words, self-perceived evaluation of the four independent FL macro-skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), as well as global FL abilities, will be negatively correlated with the adolescent’s level of economic strain. For the purpose of this study, the following hypothesis is adopted: Students with higher economic strain have lower self-assessment of their FL skills.

2. Method

This part of the paper is devoted to a description of the study participants, instruments, procedure and analyses.

a. Participants

518 adolescent students (N=518) from 16 classes of the six secondary grammar schools in Opole, Poland, took part in the study. The sample comprised 164 boys and 354 girls, whose average age was 16.7 (min. 15 and max. 18 years of age). They all attended classes with an average program of English with 3-5 hrs a week, while their level of English could be estimated to be intermediate. Apart from that, it is worth mentioning that English was their other compulsory foreign language, with French or German being the first, at advanced level.

On the basis of the Economic Strain Scale (Mills et al., 1994), the sample was divided into 3 groups. The lower quartile (≤ 5 points) comprised 138 students with a low level of economic strain (LES), while the upper quartile (≥ 9 points) comprised 137 students with a high level of economic strain (HES). The remaining group of students (middle quartiles) was excluded from further analysis.
b. Instruments

The basic instrument applied in the research was a questionnaire. It included items exploring the participants’ bio-data with items devoted to their gender (male/female).

The next part of the questionnaire comprised self-assessment of FL speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. It was arranged on a 6-point Likert scale (1 – very poor, 2 – poor, 3 – sufficient, 4 – good, 5 – very good, 6 – excellent).

The next scale assessed the level of difficulty of tasks implemented in the English class, adopted from Schneider (1999). It focuses on self-perceived difficulty of reading (silent and aloud), pronunciation of words, writing essays, understanding the teacher and others who are speaking English, and remembering vocabulary, etc. The scale followed a four-point Likert answer format, ranging from 4 – very difficult to 1 – very easy. The minimum number of points was 12 and the maximum 48. The scale’s reliability was estimated by means of Cronbach’s alpha (α = .96).

Also utilised was a scale exploring global FL abilities. It consists of 18 items exploring self-perceived assessment of the students’ ability to pronounce, to speak with others in class, to notice differences between sounds, to listen and understand the teacher, others and recordings, to repeat what the teacher says, to read silently and aloud, and to write notes and essays. Students also estimated their note taking in English, spelling, understanding of grammatical rules explained by the teacher or elaborated by oneself, remembering words, and in-class concentration (adopted from Schneider, 1999). A 6-point Likert scale from 1 – very poor to 6 – excellent was used with the minimum number of points being 18 and the maximum 108. Its reliability was very high: (α = .92).

c. Procedure

The data collection procedure took place in December 2003, when the participants were in the second grade of the three-grade secondary grammar school. After obtaining consent of the headmasters, in each class/group the students were asked to give their consent, as well, and then the questionnaire was distributed. The time slotted for the activity was 15-45 minutes, depending on the speed at which they worked.

The study’s design is descriptive, because its aim is to characterize the phenomena in a quantitative manner. It is also cross-sectional, because the data were collected at one point of time. Apart from this, the design can be described as differential, comparing two or three groups on a dependent variable (Graziano & Raulin, 1993). In this case it was a comparison between the groups who perceived their economic strain at a lower level (LES) and at a higher level (HES) on the measurement of their FL skills.

There were three main kinds of variables identified in the study: the independent variable, the self-perceived level of economic strain, and the dependent variables, self-assessment of the four macro-skills, and global FL abilities. The third type of variable, the moderator, is the level of difficulty of FL tasks. All variables were operationalized as questionnaire items.

d. Analyses

The data were computed by means of the statistical program STATISTICA,
with the main operations being descriptive and inferential statistics.

The descriptive procedures that summarised the characteristics of the sample were: means (arithmetic average) and standard deviation (SD), showing how far individuals vary from the mean. The inferential statistical procedure applied in the study enabled a computing of the probability of obtaining a particular pattern of data. There was the student’s t-test, a test of mean differences between two groups (Graziano & Raulin, 1993). The t-test for independent groups shows differences between two groups on the measurement of a dependent variable (the between-group variation), for example: differences in language anxiety levels in boys and girls. It is worth mentioning here that the positive or negative direction of the t value does not influence the interpretation of the result.

3. Results

As far as the measurement of FL macro-skills is concerned, the skills assessed at the highest level by both groups was reading (LES: M=4.40, SD=.95; HES: M=4.08, SD=.93). The skill assessed at the lowest level was speaking in the case of the LES group (M=3.95, SD=.93), as well as speaking (M=3.68, SD=.98) and listening (M=3.68, SD=.98) in the case of the HES one. The t-test revealed that the assessment of all the macro-skills is significantly higher in the LES group (t FL speaking=2.01*; t FL listening=1.90*; t FL writing=2.48*; t FL reading=2.86**).

In the case of the participants’ global FL abilities, the results are also dissimilar (LES: M=73.94, SD=14.46; HES: M=67.02, SD=15.20). Again, significant group differences were identified (t=3.87***). As far as the self-perceived level of FL task difficulty is concerned, the HES assessment (M=28.74, SD=6.65) turned out to be significantly higher when compared to the LES data (M=25.23, SD=6.22), giving the following result: t=-4.52*** (see Table 1 for the summary of results).

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4. Discussion

The hypothesis adopted for the purpose of the research – Students with higher economic strain have lower self-assessment of their FL skills – can be fully corroborated with significant group differences identified in all kinds of FL attainment.

Economic strain may be a serious obstacle in one’s everyday activities. It includes a variety of financial problems concerning the daily routine (limited shopping habits or cancelling holiday plans). It also involves cutting down on culturally relevant expenditures, like going to the cinema or buying books and magazines. What is more, it not only places a burden on the individual, but seems to take away resources for coping with other stressors (Wadsworth, Raviv, Compas & Connor-Smith, 2005).

In addition, financial hardships involve limited educational investments (e.g., restricting school supplies). It follows that the overall academic performance of children in families experiencing economic hardship declines as a result of financial deprivation, inducing reduced educational expectations, further increased by limited attention span caused by emotional problems.

Other academic consequences of economic strain comprise difficulties in social competence with peers and adults, which involve the ability to get along with others, follow instructions, work independently, conform to rules, and navigate successfully in social situations (Mistry, Vandewater, Huston & McLoyd, 2002). The experience of economic strain impedes the growth of social skills and contacts, leading to social deprivation and anxiety in the educational and social contexts.

Financial insecurity, inducing anxiety as well as other negative emotions and behaviors, is a serious threat for overall educational achievement; hence the quality of the process of language acquisition is also bound to suffer. Learning a foreign language is a lengthy process, requiring a lot of effort, conscientiousness, and, quite regrettably, financial investments. This is the
reason why the impact of the inability to invest in educational resources fostering linguistic development, such as attending additional language courses, access to the Internet, or buying FL magazines, leads to limited chances of language experience and growing levels of negative emotions.

Indeed, the study results demonstrate that students who experience high economic strain self-assess their global FL abilities at a significantly lower level than their peers who experience low economic strain. They are convinced that they have not fully mastered most aspects of their FL learning process (i.e., pronunciation, speaking, noticing differences between sounds, listening and understanding the teacher, others and recordings, repeating what the teacher says, reading silently and aloud, writing notes and essays, taking notes, spelling, understanding grammatical rules explained by the teacher or elaborated oneself, remembering words, and concentrating in class). Obviously, language learning requires a lot of effort and time, so economic expenditures aiming at intensifying contact hours or familiarizing the student with FL culture can only facilitate it, and smooth its progress. Needless to say, learners with no prospects for financial support in this field will regard themselves as lagging behind their more competent peers, which is also supported by the research in the field (e.g., Wadsworth et al., 2005). It is also worth adding that applying such an assessment tool enables us to view FL abilities from a more universal perspective, so its measurement can be treated as more objective, in contrast to self-perceived assessment of individual macro-skills.

As far as self-assessment of FL speaking is concerned, both groups estimate it at the lowest level in comparison to the remaining skills. It seems clear that, irrespective of their level of economic strain, all students perceive themselves as less competent when communicating orally in the foreign language in comparison to their self-assessment of other macro-skills. There can be several explanations for this finding. The most important reason is connected with the standing of the skill in the context of FL acquisition – speaking is undoubtedly the most influential ability at a time when the Communicative Approach prevails. As well, it is also hardest to acquire (Horwitz, 2001). It certainly demands an immense deal of practice, inevitably connected with financial expenditures. Even so, lower levels of economic strain connected with longer language exposure do not appear to prevent a student from assessing his speaking abilities at a lower level, which certainly confirms the stressful impact of oral communication.

When it comes to FL listening, in the opinion of students suffering from high economic strain it is assessed equally low. The finding can be attributed to the communicative value of listening, supplementing speaking in the communicative acts. This is the reason why students deprived of substantial FL practice and assistance may feel threatened by its interactive challenge. Still, students who do not experience strong economic strain manage listening more effectively; hence their language experience appears more reliable.

Again, the students’ self-assessment of their writing skill shows another significant discrepancy. It seems that the skill is difficult for all the respondents due to the specificity of the writing process that is predominantly product-oriented, and requires individual work, feedback support, and long, well-planned practice, which may be treated as a significant stressor. In such a situation inexperienced FL learners may feel deprived of help, support and encouragement. Like the previous language skills, writing also demands experience, hence its low self-assessment – especially in those who perceive themselves as underprivileged.
Similarly to listening, the skill of FL reading is receptive; hence, unlike the productive skills (speaking and reading), it does not require active performance. Accordingly, its estimation should reveal the highest values, which is the case in this study’s results. Still, the group comparison shows the greatest discrepancy between self-assessment scores. This finding can be ascribed to several reasons. First of all, this seemingly easy skill may pose a serious threat to an inexperienced student due to its individualized nature, isolating the student from the group. It evokes a significant threat in a person who feels lonely and abandoned, giving way to growing feeling of incompetence. Moreover, even though reading does not require any performance demands, it is a complex process requiring not only letter and word recognition, but also decision making about meaning and strategy use. In effect, someone who perceives themselves as less able than other peers may have a good reason to fall behind them even in this aspect, due to their insufficient language practice.

The FL learning process is connected with working on tasks with varying levels of difficulty. The interplay of task difficulty and economic strain implies lower ability and performance, together with lack of success. When tasks are too difficult, language success appears unattainable, because difficult and intellectually demanding tasks provoke the competition of task-irrelevant with task-relevant thoughts for limited cognitive resources in working memory, ultimately causing performance deficits. Difficult tasks interact with anxiety, decreasing learning performance. Actually, according to the research carried out in the academic setting, apart from lowered performance and expectations of success, the exposure to tasks that are too difficult results in lowered rates of on-task behavior, and increased rates of disruptive and other problem behaviors, such as anxiety. Consequently, an individual is likely to report higher levels of anxiety when task difficulty leads to low levels of general self-efficacy and lower perception of control (Endler & Kocovski, 2001; Umbreit, Lane & Dejud, 2004). Against this background, it can be concluded that FL learners experiencing high economic strain assess FL task difficulty at a high level as a result of their low self-perceptions in the context of FL learning and expectations of failure.

Generally speaking, the student who suffers from high economic strain may be likely to perceive the FL learning situation as dangerous, because they may be aware of the fact that they will not get substantial information support when such a need arises. With lowered expectations, their self-efficacy beliefs decline, leading to mounting confusion and alienation. Such a vicious circle of negative convictions, supported by experiences of financial, social and educational deprivations, has a crippling effect on the learner. The controllability of the learning process is beyond the student’s power, which has a serious, demotivating effect, bringing on feelings of learned helplessness, not only in the field of FL acquisition. With their low expectations, negative future thinking and low assessment of own abilities, such students are also threatened by negative emotions involved in foreign language acquisition, which are rooted in the requirement of using a language in which they are not fully proficient. The FL learning process requires students to perform in front of others, which may often lead to avoidance on the part of such a student at the prospect of appearing foolish, or their lack of interest in the lesson, inevitably connected with their withdrawal from tasks beyond their control. Unfortunately, such behavior can rarely lead to success in the FL classroom, because a conscious focus on oral performance is constantly required. Most importantly, students with a high level of economic strain may be deprived of chances of future success. Their low
opinion of their language abilities may be considered a powerful indicator of their worse future prospects, because professional careers requiring proficient use of a foreign language may be beyond their reach.

The main findings of the study can be concluded in the following points:
- Economic strain significantly impedes the SLA process
- It deprives students of opportunity for more language contact
- It is related to a high level of tasks difficulty, impeding their successful operation
- It evokes feelings of inferiority and uncontrollability in the language learning process
- It also denies future job opportunities

5. Implications and recommendations

Financial insecurity connected with cuts in educational investments is inevitably connected with lower school attainment and, consequently, FL mastery. A student who is under severe economic strain may feel deprived of direct, as well as indirect, resources facilitating their management of the learning process. Nevertheless, it may appear that a FL teacher cannot do much in order to alleviate the negative consequences of economic strain, because it is beyond their control. On the other hand, it still seems possible for the teacher to take successful action aimed at facilitating the learning process, although such intervention cannot address the economic strain effects in a direct manner.

The first fundamental step should focus on identifying learners who have serious problems with the language acquisition process (non-achievers), and then to detect the true causes of their failure. Obviously, economic strain may be extremely difficult to recognize, because students may not easily disclose details of their private experiences. However, consulting the school pedagogue or psychologist may shed more light on the economic situation of the students’ families. It follows that the whole school staff should work as a team in order to support the socioeconomically disadvantaged student who might be especially vulnerable to educational failure.

In the next step it would be appropriate to consult the family to gain insight into the student’s economic situation and the possible family support they are able to receive. Furthermore, it should be proposed that parent participation and involvement in school activities may function as a valuable source of student and family satisfaction with education in terms of personal growth, motivation and academic performance.

Most of all, it is necessary to find out students’ opinions about their own language abilities and their feelings identified in the FL learning process. It is then possible to gain insight into the learners’ true feelings. In this way students vulnerable to FL failure can be identified, so that the teacher might offer them additional attention, instruction and support. This assistance needs to be flexible enough to address the concerns and needs of each individual, varying in their levels of financial concerns and needs attributable to the FL learning process.

Students suffering from serious economic strain would certainly benefit from direct teaching techniques suitable for their language level. Aside from direct attention and concern on the part of the teacher, other strategies supporting the teaching and learning process might appear equally effective (borrowing English books or magazines, engaging students in English language projects, etc.). It is expected that additional provisions offered by the teacher may compensate, at least partly, for the missing resources that are unaffordable outside school.
This study has several limitations that should be addressed. First, the research design is cross-sectional, i.e., the study takes place at a single point in time. This is why only plausible inferences can be drawn. A longitudinal design, involving a series of measurements taken over a period of time, provides greater confidence in the temporal ordering of constructs. Apart from that, self-assessment of independent macro-skills may appear too biased and narrow, so more objective and versatile skill-assessment tools are needed. One of them should be an instrument that objectively measures students’ FL proficiency, as well as their final grades. Moreover, confronting self-perceived levels of economic strain with socioeconomic status (SES) in the sample researched may give a clearer picture on the matter.

In spite of these shortcomings, it is believed that the present findings provide a basis for understanding and possibly minimizing the negative impact of economic strain on forms of FL attainment, in the hope of preventing long-term difficulties that might bring about the socioeconomically disadvantaged student’s educational failure.

References


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The interpretation of culture: a methodology into practice

Sheila Gies – Manchester Metropolitan University - UK

Abstract

Purpose – This research aims to assess the material culture method of investigation devised by Jules David Prown for the study of any object as cultural evidence when applied to contemporary fashion design specifically. This method
was selected to use garments as source of information about a culture rather than only illustrations.

Methodology approach – Primary and secondary research by means of literature review on the issues of culture, fashion, fashion design and material culture. The material culture approach was made through the Jules Prown method as a research tool for quantitative data collection from 14 garments, and the interview technique with seven designers for the generation of qualitative data as a resource for the assessment of the method.

Findings – The Jules Prown method has proved to be an effective way of interpreting cultural issues imbued in contemporary fashion design elements such as shape, colour and texture; however, the method can be improved with the addition of three more steps: firstly, the identification of the garment; secondly, the visual representations of the garment by means of drawings and/or photographs; and thirdly the introduction of the interview technique for qualitative data collection. As a result of these additional steps, the method provides ways for building a deeper and more reliable knowledge on contemporary fashion design.

Research limitations – The research was based on a single researcher analysis, which necessarily implies a limited view. However, it is believed that the results are important to furthering knowledge in this significant area of fashion design and culture.

Originality/value – The research comes from a detailed analysis of 14 garments and seven interviews, thus providing more realistic and richer insights in the use of the method developed by Prown, making it a more valuable methodological tool for fashion design studies as cultural evidences. Scholars interested in culture and fashion studies could use this research as a new insight into the theme; it is also found helpful for fashion design students, for raising awareness on the significant role played by a conscious choice of design elements in the planning of a fashion item, for professionals who want to enlarge their scope of action and reach global fashion market, and other professionals such as fashion journalists for a more practical and realistic basis in the production of written texts on the field.

Keywords – material culture, research method, Jules Prown, fashion design.

This paper is part of the research developed by the author as a candidate for a PhD degree in Fashion and Material Culture at the Department of Clothing Design and Technology, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. Many thanks to Mareu Nitschke for the interview, drawings and photographs. Photograph of garment details were made by the author. All illustrations of this article may not be reproduced without author’s written permission.

Introduction

It was during the 70’s and 80’s that objects became seen as part of social worlds and since then this field has developed significantly. Attfield (2000 p1) considers that “It is already apparent that what started as a small offshoot is developing into a healthy growth from which new lines of research will hopefully develop and flourish.” This work explores the field of fashion design under the focus material culture, which is detailed as follows.
Material culture

Material culture study is the process of discovering through objects the values of their makers and users (McVeigh, 2000; Schiffer, 1999). According to Glassie (1999 p41) the study of material culture uses objects to approach human thought and action. Material is the subject matter, the content, and the understanding of culture the goal of the study. From this view point, human beings are seen as creators in the middle of certain circumstances, or context, as historical performers. Miller (1998 p19) sees the eclectic potential that material culture studies offers and states that “Material culture is often the concrete means by which the contradictions held within general concepts such as the domestic or the global are in practice resolved in everyday life.”

The term ‘material culture’ seems contradictory in its composition, as ‘material’ has significance associated with pragmatic, practical, substantial things, whilst ‘culture’, a set of beliefs (Jenks, 1993) has its meaning related to abstraction, concepts and ideas. Materials, which are usually called artefacts in terms of material culture theory, are perceived by the senses and have one or more physical properties, and they are opposed, in their nature, to what is spiritual or mental (Prown, 1982). However, the term material culture has the advantage of summarizing what can be known about culture through what can be perceived by the senses. According to Bourdieu (1977 p91) the relationship between objects and mind is that artefacts are the tangible result of how a mind works: “the objective universe is made up of objects which are the products of objectifying operations structured according to the very structures which the mind applies to it.” This establishes material culture as a particular way of looking at any designed object in relation to their cultural circumstances, which is the sense the present work intends to carry out when looking at fashion design exclusively.

Material Culture and fashion design

McCracken (1990 p83) says that “Clothing, transportation, food, housing exteriors and interiors, adornment, all serve as media for the expression of the cultural meaning according to which our world has been constituted.” Thus, every design is material culture, but not every material culture is design. Fashion design, as the making of a dress, designing it, takes place in a particular place, at a particular time, and it is subject of a lot of influences. However, fashion design, as a product, has particularities that are not completely shared with other objects of everyday life. One of the most obvious differences is that people dress in clothes, and as clothes cover the body (in direct contact with the body), this is part of the presentation of the person as an individual in his/her social context. Because of this, the capacity clothes have to bring out feelings in the wearers and observers is powerful, more than any other object. Clothes are always in evidence, as Veblen (1925) observed, due to their constant display, and they can provide an indication of the wearer’s social standing to all observers at first glance. Lipovetsky (1964 p29) also sees the conspicuousness of fashion as the most important means of demonstrating a person’s social traits and inner values and says that as “The first major mechanism for the consistent social production of personality on display, fashion has aestheticized and individualized human vanity”.

In general terms, the understanding of fashion as material culture detaches the concept of fashion from the common assumption in traditional fashion studies
that fashion is noticeably a modern western occurrence. Gronow (1997 p76),
quoting Craik (1994 p18), shows an awareness of the signs that the traditional
western concept of fashion is no longer expressive of fashion nowadays and says
that the basic dissimilarity between contemporary times and the non western
cultures is the rhythm of fashion changes and not the phenomenon of fashion
itself. Consequently, the differences are more in the quantity of changes rather
than in the quality or nature of such changes. Goodrum (2005 p21) also argued
that other aspects of the classical view of fashion studies were also in need of
revision in addition to the cultural aspect. The way in which fashion spreads
nowadays is also peculiar and more dynamic than has been traditionally
understood, and Goodrum states that "Fashion no longer solely trickles down
from an élite to the majority but bubbles up and across from all manner of
different and diverse cultural spheres" concluding that the keyword for the
contemporary fashion marketplace is "difference". Therefore, in the middle of so
many and constant changes in fashion, it is crucial to be able to see, identify and
comprehend such differences in the diversity of cultural realms in order to better
understand the conceptual nature of fashion in the present days, and a method
of analysis which encompasses such changes is certainly valuable. Hence, the
adoption of a material culture viewpoint and methodology to comprehend
fashion design as one of the most significant means of embodiment of shared
values in contemporary times.

Since objects started to be taken into account as culturally embodied ideas,
substantial works in the clothing area have been carried out by authors such as
Adrian Aileen Ribeiro (1998, 1999), Christopher Breward (1998), Daniel Miller
(1998, 2005), Elizabeth Wilson (1999), Grant McCracken (1990), Judy Attfield
(2000), Jukka Gronow (1997), McVeigh (2000), Susanne Küchler (2005) and
Valerie Steele (1998) amongst others. These works face dress as object, its
meaning and use as a way of producing knowledge. Since 1997, the journal
"Fashion Theory" has given very important contributions to the critical analysis
of fashion as cultural production. According to Prown (1982 p5) "An investigation
that ignores material culture will be impoverished", therefore the construction of
knowledge using dress as the source of information has a valuable, enriching
and consistent contribution to the body of knowledge and should be taken into
account in any approach of dress study.

One of the most important studies which is directed related to this present
research has been carried out by Miller (2005 p1), who sees an integration
between the distinct material of clothes and the social sphere. Miller states that
"the dissection of clothing into pattern, fibre, fabric, form and production is not
opposed to, but part of, its consideration as an aspect of human and
cosmological engagement." These remarks, more than reinforcing the usefulness
of the material culture as a tool for critical analysis based on concrete forms for
the study of fashion, narrows the generality of the topic to the specifics of
fashion design, directing the attention to what is important to look at the
garments under study in any cultural context. Miller (2005 p1) also declares that
"The sensual and aesthetic – what clothes feel and look like – is the source of
their capacity to objectify myth, cosmology and also morality, power and
values." The sensual relates clothes to the senses of the wearer and the
aesthetic to both wearer and observer, while the constructs of social instances
are made visible or understood. Vivienne Westwood said that the power fashion
design has as a way of expression is unlimited: "You can say everything you
want to say through tailoring" (McDermott, 1999 p18). Therefore, if one properly
examines a garment, it is also possible to gather meaningful information.
For the significance presented above, Jules Prown (1982) devised a particular object-based method which embraces all kinds of objects, founded on their importance as "indexes of culture". Although his concern was not directed specifically to fashion, it contemplates fashion as well, as he referred to fashion as a "particular rich vein for material culture studies". The basic premise of Prown method is that every effect observable in or induced by the object has a cause. Therefore, the way to understand the cause (some aspect of culture) is the careful and imaginative study of the effect (the object). This premise is reasonable in that it states "the effect observable or induced"; it does not consider the object alone but considers that the researcher's role as observer and perceiver of what can be induced is as important as the object itself, a good balance between the material and the cultural.

One of the most well known researchers to use Prown’s method is Valerie Steele (1998 p332). Chief curator of the museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology and the Editor of journal ‘Fashion Theory’, Steele relates that one of her findings was that “simply by measuring dozens and dozens of corsets in a variety of collections, I was led to question whether the proverbial 16-inch waist was at all typical of the nineteenth century.” Steele examines specific garments, like the corset, in its design elements such as waist measurement, in order to investigate cultural values. Nevertheless, Steele’s research differs from the present work because she searches for new insights about historical garments, mainly in the American culture, while the present work is focused on any cultural context, and her work is restricted to some values of a culture, while the present work aims to identify any value associated with any item under analysis, in any cultural context.

As a historian, Steele also employs the standard historical research method, as she affirms she was led to question previous knowledge about the measurements of the nineteenth century corset waist, a common assumption not questioned before, and this was only possible due to her own examination of the corsets from that certain period using the material culture methodology. The Prown method allowed her to collect primary quantitative data that was not compatible with the existing data on the same subject under investigation, making it possible to improve and enlarge historical knowledge on cultural aspects of fashion on gender and sexuality. This finding is also significant enough to open a gap in the trustworthiness of written sources of knowledge in fashion history that do not take into account the cultural evidence garments may provide, and be meaningful enough to draw attention to how important object-based research is in allowing consistent insights in the study of fashion. Although Steele emphasises the reliability of the information using the Prown method in order to build consistent knowledge, Steele has not mentioned any ways of improving the method devised by Prown. The following section gives an account on the steps of the method and its particular use for the interpretation of contemporary fashion design.

The Jules Prown Method

The method devised by Prown is built on the proposition that “artifacts are primary data for the study of material culture, and, therefore, they can be used actively as evidence rather than passively as illustrations” (Prown, 1982 p1), and aims to provide a means for the interpretation of culture from objects. It was applied to the study of 14 garments in the Brazilian cultural fashion context, and from that the method was found a very helpful instrument of research for
providing a systematic way of generating insights for the analysis of Brazilian contemporary fashion design. Although embracing the Brazilian cultural context while assessing the method, this present work is limited to the evaluation of the method in order to keep the focus.

According to the Prown method’s guidance, “The analysis proceeds from description, recording the internal evidence of the object itself; to deduction, interpreting the interaction between the object and the perceiver; to speculation, framing hypotheses and questions which lead out from the object to external evidence for testing and resolution” (Prown, 1982 p7). The method takes into consideration that the researcher and the object may belong to different cultures, and in order to reduce possible biases due to this diversity in backgrounds it is suggested that the three phases “must be undertaken in sequence and kept as discrete as possible” (Prown, 1982 p7). Although differences in culture between the object and the researcher are not pertinent to this study, as the researcher and the designs under focus are Brazilian, this shows the flexibility the method encompasses.

Description, the first step in the Prown method, is a depiction of the material the object is made of, its physical measurements and fabrication. Prown makes it clear that this stage “is restricted to what can be observed in the object itself, that is, to internal evidence”, from general towards particular elements. Prown advises that it is essential to “guard against the intrusion of either subjective assumptions or conclusions drawn from other experiences” (Prown, 1982 p7). The description is about the object reading and state at the moment of analysis. The advice is to use an accurate nomenclature and use technical terms only if they can be comprehended. This is an important recommendation, as it helps to construct the trustworthiness of the information being collected and also because it makes the data comprehensible to researchers of other areas of study that may use this knowledge afterwards. It is also an indication that the study requires certain previous knowledge in the area. In the fashion design area, the first step of description is a simple and basic step, as what is usually observed in clothing is the material fabric, although it is possible that some alternative material was used in the construction of the garment, what should also be equally mentioned.

Before taking the first step, it was found important to identify and name each garment in order to ensure the uniqueness of every contribution, situating the source of information in accordance to the aims of the research, and this is not established by Prown. The identification was made according to the designer’s and design’s name, followed by the date of manufacture, country of origin, date of the analysis and research location. Author, time and location are especially important information due to the changeable nature of fashion.

In addition, according to the method, Description should contemplate the Substantial analysis, the Content and the Formal analysis. The Substantial analysis is an inventory of the measurements taken from the object and should be as precise as the investigation requests. The substantial analysis is an account of the physical dimensions, material, and articulation of the object. The measurements should be as many as the research requires, with certain accuracy. Such measurements may be useful in the subsequent steps if the research needs quantification, especially if a series of objects is under study. “Next comes a description of the materials – what they are, how extensively they are used, and the pattern of their distribution throughout the object and finally, the ways in which the materials are put together in the fabrication of the object, the articulation, should be noted” (Prown, 1982 p7-8). It is inferred in this initial
step that a certain previous knowledge in the area the object belongs to is desirable for the consideration of what is important to measure or not, and also the need for the appropriate use of specific tools to extract data from the object. For the specificity of fashion design, the main points found were:

a) Measurements: these could be taken by using a tape measure, a simple tool, but the point is to be aware of what measurements should be taken to be meaningful or discarded as unimportant in the context. Normally, the main measuring in clothes are bust, waist, hips and length, as these are present in most clothes. It is not easy to identify how many measurements should be taken; however it is important to take such measurements, as they could be unique to a particular design. At this stage, some lists of measurements became too long. In order to relate the measurement list to the garment it was found helpful to make some drawings, front and back, in order to indicate where the measurement was taken from. In addition, the garments were photographed to help to evaluate the preciseness of the drawings, as description is possible by words and images. Photographs were taken in all the cases in this study, showing front, back and, in some cases also the side, when complex and considered meaningful, including details. Photographs were also important because clothes are deeply rooted to visual appearance; therefore images are crucial to the study. Prown do state the use of infrared photographs, along with ultraviolet lamps, X-ray diffraction machines, microscopes and so on, but as a way of enhancing one’s ability to perceive and take the measure of the physical properties and dimensions of the object (Prown, 1982 p8). However, in this case, photographs worked as a tool for the accuracy of the record of internal evidence, and not only as illustrations as usual in fashion studies; these also differ from usual glamorous fashion photographs due to the circumstances of the research, not always ideal in questions of light and space. The size of a garment, when shown in the garment’s tag, is also important information taken into consideration, to check possible discrepancies which may be revealing of some cultural particularity. Measurements and size are very important indicators to delineate the body silhouette, maybe defining an ideal body shape and possibly revealing of fashion design distinctiveness.

b) Description of materials: The Prown method states as an example that in the case of fabrics the weave is a point to look at when analysing a garment, a good point for a method designed for all sort of objects. The weave, together with the fibre, helped to define the texture of the fabrics when the information about the weave was not available on the garment. According to Prown, a consideration of Content comes after the substantial analysis. It is the visual image, the obvious representation of the object, the subject matter, which Prown admits to be related more often to works of art or objects for decoration. "Content may include decorative designs or motifs, inscriptions, coats of arms, or diagrams, engraved or embossed on metal, carved or painted on wood or stone, woven in textiles, moulded or etched in glass“ Prown (1982 p8). This level of observation is more accurate and the degree of detail is increased, in a brief but logical line of movement from the first step of the substantial analysis. This step of the method can be extremely meaningful in relation to cultural expression in clothes, as the incorporation of decorative details, or the lack of these, can convey endless meanings. It can express gender, as many details are typical of masculine or feminine clothes, it can show sophistication, vulgarity or uniqueness, which is very much related as individual
culture value. Drawings and photographs were important to register details as well, due to their importance as presented above.

The final step of Description is the Formal analysis. According to Prown (1982 p8) this is the “analysis of the object’s form or configuration, its visual character” and it is recommended to describe firstly the two-dimensional organization, which are lines and areas, with their uneven surface; and secondly the three-dimensional organization, even when only pictorially represented. Elements such as colour, light, and texture come together into the consideration, taking into account their character, amount and rhythm, “as in the case of the initial description of materials”. Again it is stated that the quantity of detail depends on the judgment of the investigator. It can be noted that progress from one step to another is logical and, in some extension, it allows for familiarity with the object. This first step is from the general to particular and a complete action, as it embraces the material’s texture, shape and colour. The method requires the object to be described as it is at the moment of analysis, and Prown (1982 p9) says, in the case of historical items, at least some of what it was will still be present. Some garments analysed had more than one colour mixed in a way that is difficult to describe, and photographs are also helpful in such cases. The first stage of the method was fundamental because it provided the means of scrutinising each garment in its totality. When the garments were examined in the way Jules Prown indicates, the design features were in focus and helped the researcher to be aware in detail of design elements such as texture, colour and shape. Examining a garment without any external influence, such as images or texts, was important because external elements could be loaded with other cultural values associated with the objected after its fabrication (Barthes, 1967) and these would be likely to influence the insights the researcher would have. The analysis of the object itself ends here.

The second step is Deduction. According to Prown, this is a move from the object itself to the interaction between the object and the observer. Deduction links the world represented in the object to the experiences the analyst has had. It is an interpretation shaped by the researcher of what was done in the previous stage, a sensory experience with the object. Prown (1982 p8) encourages the observer to have an empathetic link with the object of study and says that “If the conditions permit, he handles, lifts, uses, walks through, or experiments physically with the object.” This step of the analysis should take the object into consideration in the way it is at the moment of study; even if there is a difference from what it was when it was made, which in its turn is related to how the analyst is at the moment he/she is doing the analysis. This is an interesting aspect noted by Prown (1982 p9), who considers that “Ten years hence the researcher might respond differently to the object because of different interests and a different mix of life experiences near the surface of conscious awareness.” What Prown also considers is that this interaction may not be as complete as if it were done when the object was created, but it would still give some evidence and therefore build the deduction, “The object may not testify with complete accuracy about its culture, but it can divulge something”. The job of the analyst is crucial in this stage; it is his/her duty to decide what can be informed by the object and also it is his/her responsibility to consider what the object may not tell.

Handling, lifting, interacting with the garment made the experience personal and provided rich insights, fuelling the imagination, as the senses of the researcher were stimulated by the materials of the garments, their features and general appearance. It was sensed that when the garment was taken with the
purpose of being discovered as a carrier of values, it was not simply an object anymore; it became a source of emotions which inspired thoughts; it created a link between the garment and the observer.

Sensory engagement is the first step in the stage of Deduction. Whenever possible, the researcher should touch the object to sense its texture and also hold it to have a feeling for its weight. “Where appropriate, consideration should be given to the physical adjustments a user would have to make to its size, weight, configuration, and texture”. If this is not possible, the suggestion is that the researcher should do the sensory engagement with imagination and empathy and “record what he would see, hear, smell, taste, and feel” (Prown, 1982 p9). If conditions do not allow, the researcher suggests as an option for an analysis of contemporary garments the possibility to find a similar fabric and tough it instead. The sensory experience, as described, is very important in clothing design due to the sensations it may trigger in the wearer, and should not be overlooked.

The method states that this stage remains synchronic, the garment should be analysed in the way it is at the moment of the investigation, and it could be noted, as this was an analysis which contemplates contemporary fashion items, that the bias is decreased, as the differences in value due to time are not so expressive, and still fresh in the memory. Prown method encourages the researcher to “record what he would see, hear, smell, taste, and feel” (Prown, 1980 p199). Any part of the composition of an object has an important play and “these elements were of sufficient importance to the maker...to make the effort worthwhile” (Prown, 1980 p199). To be able to transport the mind into a sensory engagement with an object deserves all the effort an analyst may put into the process, as it is the researcher’s insights that empower the analytical process. If the same garments are analysed by other analyst, certainly some insights would be similar; however, the individual background and aims of research would still provide new or differing insights.

The second step in the stage of Deduction is intellectual engagement. It is a consideration of what the object does and how it does it. The order of steps here is not so strict, as it is possible that an intellectual engagement may need to be done before or at the same time as the sensory engagement. The knowledge and experience of the analyst is in check, as some objects may be too complex and require some expertise to be understood. “It is unnecessary to ignore what one knows and feign innocence for the appearance of objectivity, but it is desirable to test one’s external knowledge to see if it can be deduced from the object itself and, if it cannot, to set that knowledge aside until the next stage.” If it is an illustrative object, considerations should be made as if the observer could enter the represented world. The guidance is to look for hints such as time of the day, season of the year, effects of heat, cold, or pull of gravity, what is going on or what will come next (Prown, 1982 p9).

When applied to clothing studies, a first consideration is their function to cover the body, like most garments do, a sign of the power clothes have when on the body. This is more objective than recording feelings, as the functions of clothes are many, are typical and are usually known. Previous knowledge is desirable in order to evaluate what can be deduced from the garment or not. However, how this is done is the major issue. Prown informs that bias may appear due to the difference in functions that an object may have according to its culture and the culture of the researcher, and it is possible that the investigator will not be aware of this. Although a garment may trigger different sensations,
any feeling it may give rise to would be somehow understood by the observer. If this was not completely understood, it may be better comprehended in terms of external data.

The last step of the Deduction stage is Emotional response. It is the analyst’s emotional reactions that are now under study. Although subjective and different, emotions are not particular to one person only. “Reactions vary in kind, intensity, and specificity, but it is not uncommon to discover that what one considered a subjective response is in fact widely shared...it is instructive in regard to understanding one’s own cultural biases, one’s own cultural perspective, to mark those assumptions that remain undetected the longest in the descriptive stage. These are often the most deeply rooted cultural assumption”. For the emotional response, Prown’s insistence in the empathy between the researcher and the object is fundamental to shape the deduction and can be considered very pertinent, as material culture is not only about values embedded in objects, but also those felt by individuals (Prown, 1982 p9). This factor is particularly important as feelings are not part of what is defined as culture; feelings are inherent in human nature (Jandt, 1995; Richardson, 2001), and this could decrease latent bias. On the other hand, how a person feels when facing certain object varies not only from person to person but extensively according to his/her cultural values. In general terms, it means that clothes that would make some Africans feel good would possibly cause different feelings if worn by Europeans. These would not necessarily be better or worse, only different. If for any reason it was not possible to take insights from the garment these were not strong enough, external evidences would be sought.

The strength of this stage of analysis is the awareness it brings of the power clothing has to trigger feelings in anybody, in any culture. In addition, the cultural perspective of the investigator also comes into play, an enriching and exciting process, especially for those who may not have had the opportunity to be in contact with or to interact in different cultures. Although feelings are not part of a culture, this step is stirring, as this emotional response is a culturally embedded conjecture, for people feel the same feelings but in a different context, according to their culture. Prown (1982 p9) states that “A particular object may trigger joy, fright, awe, perturbation, revulsion, indifference, curiosity, or other responses that can be quite subtly distinguished.”

This phase leads to the consideration that, more than a step to interpret cultural values imbued in the design elements, such action has the potential to be a very useful activity for fashion students regarding their choice of design elements when planning a new garment. It raises the awareness that each choice they make may be loaded of cultural meanings and therefore such choices should be considered not only in the designer cultural viewpoint, but also to the targeted consumer culture.

The third and last stage of the Prown method is Speculation. The methodology moves from the object itself to an interaction with the researcher; and from there to the mind of the analyst. Prown (1982 p10) says that “What is desired is as much creative imagining as possible, the free association of ideas and perceptions tempered only, and then not too quickly, by the analyst’s common sense and judgment as to what is even vaguely plausible.” After a review of the descriptive and deductive phases, the researcher develops theories and hypotheses that might explain what could be observed and felt from the object. What is built in the two first stages is an achievement with the power to stimulate the latest stage and the researcher should formulate a hypothesis based on what was developed in the two previous stages.
The second step of the Speculation phase is the Program of research, an academic plan of investigation to search for external evidences of the questions presented by the evidences taken from the object. According to Prown (1982 p10) “This shifts the inquiry from an analysis of the internal evidence to the search for and investigation of external evidence”. He adds that in this phase methodologies and techniques of various disciplines may be considered given the nature of the questions formulated and the abilities and tendencies of the researcher. The object is still under consideration after these three steps are completed and it is suggested that the research goes back and forth over the steps according to any further need for description, or if any other hypothesis needs to be checked accordingly. What becomes clear at the end of the two previous steps in the methodological process is that, although not complete, some understanding of cultural values through clothes is facilitated when the method is followed. The ease by which a garment becomes perceived in its features, and how such features might raise emotions in the wearer according to the culture in which it belongs or is perceived is greatly improved by following the sequence of the method steps. Certainly, the researcher would be conscious of the results of such an enriching experience, and the understanding of a culture through clothing design would turn out to be a more familiar task, leading to further questions and consequently the search for answers. As Prown (1982 p10) says, “This is the time of summing up what has been learned from the internal evidence of the object itself, turning those data over in one's mind, developing theories that might explain the various effects observed and felt.” According to Prown (1982 p10) the divergence of cultures makes it impossible to respond to and interpret the garment in the same way as the society which has made it. However, similarities in culture would make it easier to provide insights into the cultural values of another society and the differences would allow some other aspects to be seen. If the impossibility to respond and to interpret the object more precisely is due to the difference in societies, as stated by Prown, an effective way of improving reliability in contemporary studies would be to search for information about the object in the society in which it originated. The aim Prown attempts to achieve is the recovering of some beliefs of the societies under study. It is possible that in contemporary studies there are not so many beliefs to be recovered, but any underlying beliefs are to be identified and registered in the study.

After all the quantitative enriching insights which generated the tasks for deepening the study, the search for complementary primary qualitative became clear. Qualitative data is any kind of data that produces findings not obtained by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification, such as the list of numbers found when the designs were measured. Corbin and Strauss (1990 p19) say that “One might use qualitative data to illustrate or clarify quantitatively derived findings”. Thus, the use of qualitative data in association with the quantitative data already generated in the previous stages of the methodology is potentially significant to the completion of the methodology. The adequacy of qualitative data to this study can also be confirmed by Gillham (2000 p10), who states that the search for qualitative information is adequate when the issues under study are focused on what people do and what they tell us they do in order to comprehend the cultural meanings of their activities.

One of the most effective ways of generating qualitative data is through interviews. Interviewing is essentially a meeting for questioning and receiving answers. It is an interaction between the researcher and the person interviewed (Bell, 1999). Undeniably, Prown’s method has provided proficient ways of
quantitative data collection through the description of the object’s features. What lay in the designs that could not be openly observed should now be searched. Hughes (1996 p169), quotes Patton (1980 p196): “The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind. We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.” This is a direct relation to the main aim of material culture, which is the analysis of an object in order to understand the mind of the maker, as mentioned early in this article (Glassie, 1999). The interviews will then be useful in order to have an appreciation of the values in mind of the designers when planning and constructing the garments analysed, and some of those possibly not apparent in the garment. It is believed that the interview method will allow a balance between the values observed in the object, the researcher’s feelings and assumptions, and the maker as the living culture. The interview was designed to encourage direct answering of the central questions raised from the object analysis in order to obtain valid and reliable information, a way of enlarging the analyst’s single view and also checking for biases.

As mentioned previously, the assessment of the Prown method was done while researching contemporary Brazilian fashion design as a way of expression of Brazilian culture and values. The extension of the data collected is too massive to be totally presented here; however, one of these garments’ data is summarized and used as an example of how rich the material culture approach was, especially the use of Prown method, in order to bring about latent Brazilian cultural issues which probably would not be revealed in other ways. Brazil, in fashion terms, is relatively a new country, where there is the impact of those who come from abroad and bring their traditions and ways of adapting to Brazilian conditions. There are now in Brazil many fashion designers with their expressiveness recognized in the country and abroad. One of these and who had his work studied by the researcher is Mareu Nitschke, born in 1963, in Porto Alegre, the capital city of the Rio Grande do Sul state. His father is the third generation of the first immigrants who came from Germany to Brazil in 1850 and his mother is Italian descendant. His father, a representative in a textile industry, had an office at home and “That was the environment I grew up in”, says Mr Nitschke.

The garment which illustrates the use of the improved method discussed in this article is named “Tapestry female fitted jacket”, from 19/11/2004, Summer 2004 Collection, analysed on the 20th of December 2005, in Sao Paulo, SP Brazil. The garment was chosen randomly, and so were the other 13 designs studied. The design has an intricate and unique cut, made of two differing fabrics in an interesting and particular way and has a good fit. The use of two fabrics in a garment, without making the traditional combination of patchwork, and the very intricate cut are evidences of Nitschke skills and creativity.
Figure 1 – Jacket front and back view

Figure 2 – Shoulder detail
According to Nitschke, this jacket is part of the collection planned when the Gulf War took place for the second time and Nitschke saw its image on TV, which "touched me and made me cry. I felt I wanted to join Orient and Occident in the whole collection in an interlaced way, tied, as if one could not be detached from the other and had to live together compulsorily." French sculptor Jacques Gouchet, who makes tri-dimensional tapestry, inspired the design interlaced parts, holding and sustaining each other, as a way to represent interdependence. "I took Oriental elements and Occidental elements and constructed the garments in a similar way Gouchet constructs his tapestries; there are lots of bindings."

This garment can be interpreted as a sartorial representation of the designer’s view on the equality of races and cultures, an acknowledged Brazilian cultural value: "These two pinkish fabric patterns are similar and on the same level of design significance because differences do not make one more important than the other. It was constructed as if there were two forces acting on each other, making them interdependent. I love this concept", states Nitschke.
Conclusion

The Prown method was detailed with a reasoning of its use when applied to fashion design specifically. The Jules Prown method has proved to be an effective research tool for interpreting cultural issues imbued in fashion design elements such as shape, colour and texture; however, the method can be improved with the addition of three more steps: first, the identification of the garment; secondly, the visual representation of the garment by means of drawings and/or photographs; and thirdly the introduction of interview technique for qualitative data collection. These steps also reduce a single researcher vision bias. As a result of these additional steps, the method has provided ways for building a deeper and more reliable knowledge on contemporary fashion design.

References

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Why Guided Imagery?

The notion of connecting with childhood memories, or as some may call it “the child who is inside the adult”, is of course of great value when considering that the more we understand the child we are teaching, the more effective our teaching will be. Needless to say, if the adult is able to connect with her own past experiences and feelings as a child, she is more likely to be able to empathize and truly understand the child she is facing.

The tool of guided imagery is one that is fairly commonly used by pedagogical advisors, particularly when aiming to create a certain degree of identification and empathy in their students towards children they are working with. “Close your eyes and try to remember your first day of school” is the direction you might hear being given to the students, and after the students obligingly keep their eyes closed for two or five minutes, they will share their
memories with the rest of the class. Under the conditions described here, I believe that the memories the students recount could have been reported without having closed their eyes for several minutes.

In the first part of this article, I would like to present a brief review of the literature that gives substance to the need for a tool such as guided imagery in the field of education. I will also discuss some of the views that might make us hesitant regarding the use of such a tool in the field of education.

In the second half of this article, I will share some of my insights and experiences regarding the structure of guided imagery sessions, and will offer a detailed example of one such session.

The third and final section will hold some examples of student responses to one particular imagery sessions I led in one of my classes, and attempt at giving some insight regarding the extent to which such connections to ones childhood memories might be useful in teacher training.


Aside from the undisputed significance that this reunion with ones’ inner child has with regard to creating a deeper understanding of ourselves and of the children we teach, there is yet another good reason to engage in this walk down memory lane. I am referring to the notion that most if not all our actions, as teachers and as private people alike, are influenced and often triggered or motivated by our past experiences.

In Dewey’s (1938:68) discussion of purpose, which creates impulses upon which one acts, similar to the notion of beliefs that lead to certain action, he noted the importance of reflection and awareness of the past:

“...In unfamiliar cases, we cannot tell just what the consequences of observed conditions will be unless we go over past experiences in our mind, unless we reflect upon them and by seeing what is similar in them to those now present, go on to form a judgment of what may be expected in the present situation...”

Dewey had used the term ‘reflection’ as early as 1938, where today in teacher education it is more than just a key word. Without imparting the feeling that teacher training need become another form of psychoanalysis, we come upon the term ‘reflection’ over and over again, as a way of describing the act of looking inside oneself while comparing present experiences with similar ones from ones past. Richardson (1996:104) uses this term, when quoting the study of Bussis, Chittenden and Amarel (1976), who had conducted some research on teachers’ personal constructs of the curriculum and of children: “Significant teacher change can only occur, they concluded, if teachers are engaged in ‘personal exploration, experimentation, and reflection’.”

While Richardson discussed the issue of creating change and progress in teachers already in the field, Britzman’s (1991:3) comments were aimed at those still in the process of becoming teachers. She came to a conclusion similar to Richardson’s, but worded it somewhat differently with her focus on what she called the ‘dialogic’ aspect of teaching:
“Teaching must be situated in relationship to one’s biography, present circumstances, deep commitments, affective investments, social context, and conflicting discourses about what it means to learn to become a teacher.”

The next step would be, of course, to try to find ways to best help students engage in this act of reflection on their biographies, circumstances and commitments – in short, all that forms the connections between their past histories (their childhood) and their present work with children. If James’ thoughts from the turn of the century are in fact true, that ‘human passions... are stronger than technical rules’, then it would be most advisable not to invest all one’s energy in lecturing about teaching techniques and curriculum building, but to find a way of bringing the students’ attention to their passions and to the times and places in their biographies, where they had been first shaped.

Mitchell and Weber (1999:4) present the challenge as follows:

“Aask the question: How does our past experience play into who we are and how we teach today? How can we revisit or use that past to study and reinvent ourselves as teachers?”

In their answer to these questions, they suggested encouraging students to write their memoirs, along the lines of keeping a personal diary of the past. They suggested writing about memories of ‘playing school’, memories of teachers, and memories of painful learning episodes, among other focal points. The keeping of a diary or journal is commended and recommended by many, and in my work as a pedagogical advisor I have found it a necessary continuation to guided imagery sessions, if these sessions are to be as effective as they potentially can be. Journal entries that followed guided imagery sessions were different than any other writing that took place in class. Since the guided imagery sessions were perceived as a clearly non-academic activity, the entries tended to be more personal and reflective than any other form of note taking that the students engaged in.

Mitchell and Weber offered one particular technique for reaching and reflecting upon memories. The notion that the act of remembering can be practiced and improved in quality is suggested by Jackins (1982). He even provides useful techniques for that matter, noting that the person’s attention to such memories and their impressions that they have left on him will be clearer, if starting with ordinary, rational, and pleasant memories, and only later moving on to less pleasant, possibly tension-filled memories. One of these techniques that I used most frequently in the guided imagery sessions was to change the type of memory from one session to the next, thus avoiding getting stuck in one area that may be so tension-filled as to block out other memories.

My choice of doing guided imagery sessions with students is based on the understanding that this tool has been proven to be very effective in accessing parts of the subconscious, where so many of our childhood memories lay hidden. As Lortie (1975) along with several other researchers, has noted, students arrive at their teacher training programs already well equipped with their own rich repertoire of internalized teacher models, which they have collected and assembled during their long experience as pupils. Before one can begin developing or possibly changing these models, they need to be brought into the
students’ consciousness, this process being what the imagery sessions aimed at facilitating.

Mitchell and Weber (1999:55) quote Kotre’s (1995) definition of ‘lived experience’, in order to explain this approach:

“Phenomenologists who study memory speak of the body as a ‘memorial container’. You must touch old objects, they say, smell old aromas, hear old sounds, stoop down to the level of a little person to recapture the experience of childhood. And you will experience your memories more deeply if they are embodied in gesture and movement.”

However, not all find this attempt at soul searching and memory retrieval something that should be approached so enthusiastically and even light-heartedly, and they give a word of caution.

Looking into the unconscious is a daring project, since we can never be completely sure what we might find. While on one hand commenting on researcher’s awareness of how powerful an influence these images have on educational beliefs, Pajares (1992:324) also notes how Buchmann and Schwille (1983) warned that

“These vivid experiences and images can be irrelevant for purposes of developing professional judgment and argued that individuals should often be protected from the effects of early experience, for it has no monopoly on truth, reason, or subsequent reality.”

There certainly has been enough research done to show the relevance of examining experiences and images of the past within the context of teacher education, but the notion that we need to ‘protect’ individuals from the effects of these experiences is a troubling one. Guided imagery as a tool for enhancing memory recall should definitely be used cautiously, without overstepping the boundaries that would lead into the realm of psychoanalysis.

2. How Do We Do This?

In my search for guidelines in building guided imagery sessions that would serve the goal of connecting to childhood memories I found several very useful sources.

The first of these sources was a book by Grinder and Bandler (1981), who come from the field of neuro-linguistic programming, and who discuss the structure of hypnosis. In order to avoid the common stereotypes associated with hypnosis, I prefer to think of the process as ‘the altering of one’s state of consciousness’, a term used analogously by the authors and a more exact description of what the guided imagery sessions set out to do. Grinder and Bandler describe in great detail the components of the guidance that must be given, when trying to help someone alter their state of consciousness. I will refer to some of their techniques later on in this section.
In Samuels and Samuels’ (1975) discussion of the different kinds of visualizations that exist, they note that the most common kind of visualization is memory. They put forth that ‘memory images’ may be experienced spontaneously or may be summoned and evoked by a sensory impression, such as smells or a familiar visual surrounding, much like mentioned above in the quote by Kotre regarding lived experience. The way of summoning these memories that I am describing here is clearly more suggestive and expressly choreographed than in their definition.

Samuels and Samuels (1975:66) gave a general definition of what visualization is, which pointed me into the direction of how to begin the guided imagery sessions:

“Visualization is an inner state of mind. In order to visualize effectively people have to put themselves into a state in which they can be aware of inner processes... [This entails] finding a quiet physical space as well as a quiet mental space...”

The next suggestion they gave matched the instruction formulated by Grinder and Bandler (1981), where they noted that several researchers had found that physical relaxation helped the flow of internal images.

Some of the relaxation techniques that I have found useful and would like to recommend here are taken from Grinder and Bandler’s book about ways to alter one’s state of consciousness, in order to gain access into the world of internal representations and memories. While their ultimate goal was to practice some form of hypnosis, the exercises and cues regarding relaxation are very useful for the initial part of a guided imagery session. Other exercises and ideas for imagery come from Maureen Murdock’s book (quoted below) and a wonderful book by Gay Hendricks called “The Centered Teacher” (1981), which I will talk more about later.

First of all... Relax!

There are many different versions for relaxation exercises, but what they all have in common is the connection between ones’ cognitive awareness, ones’ physical state and ones’ breathing. In all cases, it is recommended to find a comfortable position to sit or lie in. And now you can begin. This relaxation exercise is taken from the book “Spinning Inward” by Maureen Murdock (1987:20).

Close your eyes and sit (or lie down) very quietly. Take a couple of moments and notice how your body feels. Are you holding your breath, or do you breathe evenly? Notice if you feel any tension or stress in any part of your body. Now you’re going to relax your body as you relax your breath.

Breathe in... and...out...and...in ... and ... out, and allow yourself to let go of any thoughts or worries. Gently continue to breathe in... and...out... and focus your attention on your feet. Just notice your feet, nothing else. Notice how they feel. It may be the first time that you have put all of your attention on
Now focus your attention on your legs – just your legs, nothing else – and notice how they feel. Now breathe in as you squeeze the muscles in your legs... hold it... and now release the tension in your legs as you breathe out. (Pause)

Now focus your attention on your bottom and pelvic area... [Continue same as above]

Now focus your attention on your abdomen... (...)

Focus your attention on your chest... (...) on your shoulders...(...) on your arms and hands, and when you squeeze the muscles in your hands, actually make a fist with your fingers, and then very slowly open your fingers when you release the tension. Breathe in as you squeeze the muscles in your arms and hands... hold it... and relax. (Pause)

Now focus your attention on your jaw and facial muscles, noticing how they feel. Breathe in as you squeeze the muscles in your jaw and eyes, nose and mouth... hold it... and now relax, letting go of any tension that you may carry in your jaw and facial muscles. (Pause)

Now focus your attention on your forehead and your head. Breathe in as you squeeze the muscles in your forehead and head... hold it... and relax. And now focus your attention on your breath... breathing gently and calmly... and enjoy the relaxation of your body.

This relaxation exercise should take approximately five minutes. It is worth taking the time, and not simply telling students to “close their eyes, breathe deep, and try to remember...”. When we are completely and deeply relaxed, we are more likely to be able to let our minds move farther and farther back into areas of the subconscious, which hold more memories than we can fathom.

I would like to point out some possible pitfalls to look out for, when leading a guided imagery session. Grinder and Bandler mention the necessity for giving exact and true descriptions, as well as the importance to preserve natural sequences in the instructions given (e.g. moving from one end of the body to the other, without skipping body parts or naming them in the wrong order). Furthermore, they noted the need for matching oneself (as the instructor) to the behavior of the person in whom you are trying to induce an altered state, for example when you see a smile on the person’s face, you would relate to the possibility that the memory or image might be a pleasing one. And finally – this being most relevant to non-native Hebrew speakers like myself – by mispronouncing a word, the person’s concentration is likely to be disrupted.

So now that we are completely relaxed, it is time to move on to the next step.

**Next: Finding Memory Lane**

It was in the book “The Centered Teacher” by Gay Hendricks (1981) where I first read about guided imagery. Hendricks called them ‘guided fantasies’, and
considered them an integral part of what she referred to as ‘curriculum for consciousness’. The guided fantasies that she outlined in her book are intended for teachers to use with the children in their classes as well as with themselves. Most of these fantasies have very little to do with memory recall, but rather focus on imagery, and the development of a person’s skill to become more conscience of her thoughts and feelings. But there is great similarity between this type of altered state of consciousness, as to the one necessary for deeper memory recall, and so the process of both guided fantasy and guided imagery is the same. In both cases those being guided need to be helped at first to find relaxation for both body and mind, and only then can the instructor continue with the guided imagery itself.

Relative to the instructor’s creativity, there can by many different ways to guide the mind into childhood memories. As mentioned above, we may take advantage of a particular smell to encourage the other person to try to remember where and when they first encountered it. A person’s sense of smell is said to be the sense that is connected to the earliest memories, the first one being the scent of one’s mother.

Aside from smells, Samuels and Samuels mention how familiar surroundings may have a possible effect on the person’s ability to remember, this being a situation many of us have probably experienced. Surely you have walked past a street or a park or a building that makes you think of something or somebody that caused an emotional event to take place just there.

It is difficult (though not impossible) to summon up a particular smell while sitting in a classroom, but the creation of a visual impression – in your mind’s eye - is definitely attainable when using the tools of guided imagery. Consequently, after creating the necessary degree of relaxation, the guided imagery will often begin with an open-ended description of the physical surroundings in which the imagery will take place. This might sound something like this:

“Imagine you are outside on a wonderfully warm day, the sun is shining, there is a gentle wind blowing, and you are sitting in a park, looking at the trees, the grass, the people or children who might be there too – or maybe you are alone in the park.”

This could be the beginning of a guided imagery session that will encourage the student to reconnect with playground memories, or simply time spent outside in an open space as a child. After allowing the students to place themselves into this setting, the imagery might continue in a manner that will help the student focus on a particular occurrence worth remembering:

“Imagine yourself as a child in this park or playground, see yourself walking around and choosing the spot that you are most attracted to ... are you alone or with a friend? ... What are you choosing to do? ... Are you having fun? ... What are you feeling? ...”
And now that you have established the setting and maybe even the event of this imagery session, it is important to give the students time to let the mind takes its course. After some moments of silence, you can continue with some more guidance:

“As you are in the middle of whatever it is that you are doing, you see somebody in the distance coming closer and closer, and in the end actually coming up to you. It is somebody you know and are happy to see ... you welcome them and invite them to join you ... [after some moments] ... now the person needs to leave, but before they go, they give you something, a present ... it is something that makes you feel good ...”

And now it will be time to bring the session to an end –

“... You hold on to what they gave you, and now you can rest and concentrate once again on your breathing ... feel how your chest and stomach rise with each breath you take, and how they sink when you breathe out ... try to feel the places where your body is touching the chair you are sitting on ... move your toes and your feet a little bit ... move your head from side to side ... open and close your hands ... and when you are ready, you can open your eyes.”

At the end of the session it is advisable to encourage the students to write up whatever occurred in their imagery, possibly using an ongoing journal that is dedicated to this use. You can help them focus by asking questions pertinent to the session: “Try to describe the space where your imagery took place. Were you alone or with a friend? What were you doing in the park? Who came to join you? What did he or she give you?” Once everybody had some time to write down the images while they were still fresh, you can ask for volunteers who are willing to share their imagery with the rest of the class. Such sharing can be very useful in helping others remember even more by association to the story told.

3. From My Own Experience...

A guided imagery session such as the one described above will not necessarily evoke the memory of a specific event, but it will most probably contain details and characters that have a place in the person’s past history as we will see in the example below. When writing up the imagery that came to mind, the student can be encouraged to ask herself what the meaning might be behind those particular characters and events, and why they were the ones to stick out in the session. In a complete relaxed state of body and mind, when following the instructions of a guided imagery session, it will be ‘the first thing that comes to mind’, rather than a particular, consciously chosen picture that is conjured up into the imagery.
It is this notion of allowing images to come to mind, as opposed to the creating of images, where the role of the unconscious comes into play. Samuels and Samuels (1975:180) explained it in the following way:

“... Theories of creative imagination hold that images exist and are stored in the unconscious mind, and that the conscious mind can become aware of them... Once an idea comes to awareness a person works to complete his vision and give it form...”

If in fact these images have been formed in the past and stored in the unconscious mind, this being a rather accurate definition of memories, guided imagery might indeed be one way to access these images or memories. In the next step, we may find that these early memories can give us (and our students) insight into our actions, perceptions and beliefs regarding children. This achieved awareness can make it possible to bring about conscious and effective change in the quality and adequacy of our interactions with and around children. For me Calderhead and Robson (1991:8) say the final word to this idea with regard to our work at the Teacher's College:

“... Once we better understand the nature, development, and use of student teachers’ images, imaging itself could perhaps be usefully integrated into the teacher education curriculum.”

I would like to share some of the responses to one specific guided imagery session that I led with my students, in an endeavor to demonstrate the personal growth and reflection such a session can provoke.

In the particular imagery session that I am referring to, the students were asked to search their minds for a memory of themselves at play, for example on a playground or at the beach. I suggested they could make changes to the memory, for instance by adding anybody they chose to have in that situation with them, or by allowing themselves to win or succeed at that particular play situation.

At the end of the session I asked my students to write about the session in their journals, and following are some excerpts from those journal entries. It is particularly interesting to observe the difference in experience, as the students compare between how they felt about the events as a child, and how they look upon it now that they are adults.

M.’s entry was straight and to the point:

“I remember that at some age (I don't remember when) my sister and I had a bunk-bed. (My father had simply put one bed on top of the other. Today, looking back, it seems really dangerous.)

One afternoon my father taught us how parachutists jump out of a plane, and how he tumbles as he falls to the ground in order not to get hurt.
That was a very fun afternoon that I remember having a really good time, and I also remember having been very proud of my father for knowing those things.”

S. took advantage of the opportunity to make a change or add something to the memory, connecting completely to herself as a child:

“... I entered into an experience that I had when I was nine years old by the beach (...) I could really hear the sounds of the ocean. Afterwards I went down to the ocean side and found a little internal pool, set off by stones from the ocean, and found part of a shell, shiny with colors on the inside; I had found a treasure and was very happy and I looked for the second half and couldn't find it (until this very day...). In my mind I imagined that I found the second half, which until this very day I’ve always searched for at the beach and haven't found.”

The incident described by J. stood out not only because of its traumatic character, thus confirming the theory that the memories most likely to be remembered are ones related to traumatic events, but also because of her wishes regarding the changes she would make. It is in these changes that she shows empathy for the experience from the child’s point of view (“nobody would have been angry with me”) as well as some hindsight regarding her behavior at the time:

“Lag Ba’omer at the beach when I was in second grade... we made a bonfire with all the parents and the children and the teachers. At some point I wanted to go over to the bonfire of a group of different children in order to help them light the fire, so I took fire over to them with a piece of nylon and I burned my leg. We ended up spending the night at the hospital, and everybody was angry with me.

If I could fix this, maybe I wouldn’t have moved over to the other bonfire, and we could have spared ourselves the trip to the hospital. And maybe nobody would have been angry at me.”

This last example by yet a different student, holds by far the most critical reflection. This particular student also mentioned in an interview that she found herself doing memory exercises on her own, similar to the guided imagery sessions we would do in class.

“I remembered an imaginary game that I had played with my father and a number of uncles, in our house, still before we had moved to the city. Generally I won, that is most of the time – and I would show off my victory full of pride in front of my father, and he would join me in my happiness, and I'd really feel in heaven.
And then, at some point, my father went off to make some coffee, and I continued to play with my uncles. And I would yell to him ‘Daddy, I won!’ and he was happy. And when I’d lose... well, of course I wouldn’t say anything, and my uncle always teased me: ‘what? When you lose you don’t tell you father?’

So I want to change the scenario so that, also when I’d lose I’d have to come to terms with that – just as I do today. I wouldn’t change the story in such a way that I would win all the time, since that’s not realistic.

Nowadays of course I know how to lose like a good sport. I guess this is a process that every child goes through and feels.”

Aside from the emotional aspects of these memories, the notion of the guided imagery sessions serving as a form of internal observation came up more than once in the interviews with some of the students. They described how they felt themselves being connected back to their childhood, given a chance to analyze experiences from the past, to choose the positive ones they want to take with them and the negative aspects they want to leave behind.

Many of the memories and images brought up additional thoughts in the students during the sessions themselves, often causing some struggles with following the instructions, and often tapping into wells of emotion that had lain uncovered for some time. In some cases the emotional reaction to the memories made the sessions less enjoyable, as G.’s entry illustrates rather vividly:

“... This imagery session was very difficult for me. It brought back all kinds of things that I didn’t believe I was capable of going back to. I really went back into the feelings and sensations that I had in the past... I am writing this today, a relatively long time after the actual session, because it is easier to write about it all now that I am no longer right in the midst of it. It’s easy to write about it, as though it is over and forgotten, but when I was in the session I couldn’t write because my thoughts were running all over. And now I’m not so sure anymore that the guided imagery sessions are so much fun and relaxing. I know that this is a way of running away and not dealing, but it’s easier for me.”

At this point I would like to emphasize once again just how careful and sensitive we have to be in doing guided imagery. I don’t believe that we can actually master the skill of guided imagery to the point where we would find ourselves doing some form or hypnosis or deep psychotherapy, and therefore I don’t believe that we can do harm to any of our students by encouraging them to participate in guided imagery and memory recall. In fact, I have found that I can rely on the students’ defense mechanisms to sufficiently protect them from diving into areas of their subconscious that hold information that is too difficult to handle without the support of a therapist or psychologist. Nonetheless, we must choose our topics and imagery wisely, and not become reckless or overly ambitious in our attempt to uncover pictures of the past.
Some Final Thoughts

Not all students enjoy or succeed at doing guided imagery. Some have trouble following the directions, getting sidetracked by other thoughts or outside distractions. Most students disconnect at some point from the words of the guide, getting lost in other thoughts or associations, and then return to what the teacher is saying. Some students fall asleep. Others don’t want to close their eyes. There will always be students who love to share what their imagery was, while others shut down completely in front of the class.

Not all teachers feel comfortable using such a technique with their students. I am sure there are other ways of working on memory recall. This article should serve as an encouragement to work on memory recall, to dedicate time to remembering and talking about childhood stories, and hopefully offer a useful tool to those who choose to try their luck in this particular way.

References


The Relationship between Assertiveness and Foreign Language Achievement: The Question of Linguistic Construct

Hasan Iravani
Payam-e-Noor University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

It is observed that although some foreign language students are proficient enough to communicate, they are unable to transfer messages. However, some learners with less FL knowledge are successful in expressing themselves. In this study the hypothesis is that this inability of the former group may be partly due to low Assertiveness. The correlation between the assertiveness and FL achievement was found to be highly significant and also assertive students scored the highest; the aggressive and submissive groups were second and third in the ranking respectively. The subjects were randomly selected from Payam-e-Noor University majoring in English translation and attending a free conversation/discussion extracurricular course in English as a foreign language.

From the theoretical stance, the conclusion is that firstly assertiveness as a psychological construct has a direct influence on language construct, though high correlation does not necessarily mean causation, and secondly language is not a unitary factor. From the practical perspective, special workshops can be planned to enhance students’ assertiveness before and throughout Foreign Language Education.

Key words: Assertiveness, Aggressiveness, Submissiveness, Passiveness, Second or Foreign Language Education and Achievement

Introduction

To be assertive is to be aware of the fact that each person has deep-seated human rights to be observed and respected. Passive/submissive responses lead to the negligence of such rights. In contrast, when behaving aggressively, the
rights of others are abused. What are considered personal rights will fluctuate from person to person; however, a rough list of general assertive rights may embrace the following (Townend, 1991, pp.7-8):

- The right to feelings, opinions and values;
- The right to express what I want or how I feel;
- The right to change my mind;
- The right to make decisions;
- The right to say "I don't know" and "I don't understand";
- The right to say "no" without feeling bad or guilty;
- The right to be non-assertive;
- The right to be myself;
- The right to privacy, to be alone and independent.

From old ages more intelligent members of our species understood that human beings are dissimilar in many aspects. They will behave differently from time to time and from one condition to another. These differences play significant roles in the success of human beings in different kinds of learning. Difference in learners' performance may be due to a variety of reasons. Individual differences and personality factors can be one of the latent reasons for learners' different behaviors in language learning context. Crozier (1997) claims individual differences may lead to academic success or failure in the area of foreign or second language learning. The idea that language learning varies with personality traits may advocate that some of these traits are favorable for learners, i.e. those learners who possess these traits may be more successful in language learning. Certain personal characteristics are consistently related to successful language learning (Strong, 1983). Crozier (1997) cites some important personality traits with regard to individual differences among learners: anxiety, motivation, self confidence, shyness, aggressiveness, etc.

Are We Asking the Wrong Question?

The numerous intricacies around the concepts of “proficiency” and “competence” is the first drive which led to this paper. What may be regarded as a construct or mental faculty in different domains of knowledge has been a long point of debate in record of science and evaluation. The most problematic aspect of defining EIL remains the notion of “competence” (Nunn, 2005). When we ask ‘What is language knowledge?’ we are uncertain whether we are targeting the knowledge itself or the performance or manifestation of that knowledge. As theoreticians, we mostly crave for the former and as practitioners we deal with the latter.

Within the territory of second/foreign language teaching and learning practitioners and teachers are taking the position of theoreticians. Instead of looking for the performance - the manifestation of mental faculty - they chiefly deal with the mental faculty. They assume that if language construct is theoretically supposed to encompass the skills of reading, writing, speaking (including phonetics and prosody) and listening, the only way to enhance FL knowledge is to promote these skills.

The purpose of this research is to encourage teachers to look beyond the mere knowledge and see to the ways to promote the performance. Assertiveness (in contrast to aggressiveness and submissiveness) is hypothesized to be a coordinate of language construct. First let’s have a look at the language construct itself.
One of the preliminary theoretical frameworks for linguistic competence is a consequence of the Structuralist school of linguists maintaining the observation that learning a second language implicated mastering its elements or components (Fries, 1966). Early models distinguished listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and knowledge components, but did not clearly indicate whether skills manifested knowledge or whether they had different relations with knowledge components.

Chomsky (1965) initiated the radical process in the 20th century by assuming a fundamental distinction in his theory of transformational generative grammar. Hymes (1971) put forward the concept of communicative competence to include not only grammatical competence but also sociolinguistic competence. For instance, Campbell and Wales (1970) suggested that appropriacy of language is even more important than grammaticality. Oller (1976) made a postulation that pragmatics was elemental. He suggested one underlying factor – “global language proficiency” / “expectancy grammar,” thus presenting “proficiency” as a unitary construct.

Cummins (2000) made a distinction between two components of “proficiency”: “basic interpersonal and communicative skills” (“BICS”) and “cognitive/academic language ability” (“CALP”). Cummins also suggested that students need different lengths of time to grasp PICS and CALP with CALP taking longer to arrive at. Canale (1983) distinguished four key types of “competence”: “grammatical” (emphasis on language code), “sociolinguistic” (emphasis on appropriate use and understanding of language in different sociolinguistic contexts / appropriateness of both meanings and forms), “discourse” (emphasis on combination and interpretation of meanings and forms as well as the use of cohesion devices to relate forms and coherence rules to organize meanings), and “strategic” (emphasis on verbal and nonverbal strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication).

Bachman and Palmer (1982) also argue that language is not a simple enough phenomenon to be described by only one general factor. They empirically hold up “linguistic,” “pragmatic” and “sociolinguistic competences” as the components of so-called “communicative proficiency.” Bachman and Palmer suggest that a model should comprise both a general factor and one or more specific factors to make available a better account for the concept of proficiency. Taking empirical evidence as groundwork, Bachman (1990a and 1990b) describes proficiency in terms of competence in a redefined way, suggesting organizational competence that includes morphology, syntax, vocabulary, cohesion, and organization and pragmatic competence, that includes Bachman and Palmer’s sociolinguistic competence and abilities relevant to the functions that are worked out through use.

How to “prepare students for advanced and competent use of a foreign language both within and outside an academic setting” was one of the major themes in language teaching (Freed, 1989, p. 57). The step toward solving the problem would be to classify the terms derived from an overabundance of viewpoints and raising a myriad of questions. Probably Chaos Complexity theory can show us the proper way. Is proficiency the same as mastery of a specific language? Knowledge? The four skills? Is proficiency the same as competence? What constitutes to both? Is it merely competence which can assist students to develop functionally useful foreign language skills? The vocabulary for describing these notions has not always been agreed upon by different experts.
Rethinking the validity of construct

Although proficiency is commonly associated with knowledge, Ingram (1985) puts forward that proficiency is more than knowledge – rather the ability to apply it in specific communication contexts. Stern (1983) maintains that a concept of L2 proficiency has had several interpretations but has not achieved a satisfactory ending. In the same vein, Lantolf and Frawley (1988) point out a lack of even an approximately clear, reasonable and unified theory.

With regard to testing, we infer that communicative testing deals not only with knowledge and ways of using this knowledge, but the demonstration of this knowledge in performance. Assertiveness as a personality factor may play an important role in the ability to display this performance-oriented proficiency, especially when it comes to spoken discourse. Spolsky (1989) asserts that a test should make it possible to describe proficiency as the ability to perform some defined tasks that employ language.

How valid are the scores in determining one’s proficiency? Different learners demonstrate various performances on different tasks they are asked to carry out. From my personal teaching experience, I have found that one may demonstrate a high performance outcome on one task whilst failing on a task of different nature. At this point a question arises whether one, according to various degrees of performance, has different proficiencies.

In this article an attempt is made to add another aspect to language proficiency at the level of performance or testing.

Assertiveness Rights and Foreign Language Setting

Is what they learn solely based on what we teach? In order to see how assertiveness affects or correlates with foreign language learning, a self-perception questionnaire was used in this study. This 80-item questionnaire was introduced by Townend (1991) in his book entitled "Developing Assertiveness". She used this questionnaire in several case studies, especially for managers. The questionnaire was first translated in 1995 by Ghasemzade and Jalali in Iran and was validated and used in a PhD dissertation by Jalali (1995).

Townend (1991) classifies people into two groups of assertive and non-assertive. Non-assertive people are also grouped as aggressive, submissive and passive. Consequently the questionnaire includes four sub-scales of assertive, aggressive, submissive, and passive. Each of these sub-scales is assigned 20 questions that are shuffled. After reading each item, the testee needs to examine the particular questioned behavior introspectively; if the questioned attribute is present in his behavior with high degree of frequency he should answer "yes", otherwise he should choose "no". Actually the answer sheet displays a binary choice.

As mentioned before the four sub-scales of the questionnaire are indicators of an assertive behavior, and 3 non-assertive behaviors namely aggressive, submissive, and passive. The items of the questionnaire are related to features and characteristics which determine each of these four kinds of behaviors and personality traits and try to evaluate the testees with regard to each of these features. Townend (1991) summarizes the features as follows:

- Assertive. An assertive person is recognized by positive thoughts, feedback and feelings about others and himself. He respects his own and others' rights and needs. In whatever he does he acts in a skillful way and he is self-confident. With high self-esteem he usually acts as a leader. He
is responsible and welcomes criticism. He doesn't refrain from asking, apologizing, appreciating and admitting his own mistakes. He gets involved in businesses and he is innovative. He negotiates with others and listens to them. He is not reactive and doesn't get annoyed at hearing "no". He feels free to express his emotions without being worried or stressed. He is articulate.

- Aggressive. The person in this category has negative and hostile thoughts, feelings and feedback about others. He doesn't respect others' rights and needs. He is angry, violent and seeks power. He considers no rights for others' decision. He is selfish and doesn't tolerate criticism. He is impatient with the other. He is unwilling to admire others. He always blames people and doesn't stand when someone say "No". He acts recklessly. He is reactive and suffers from the feeling of superiority.

- Submissive. A submissive person has negative and unpleasant thoughts, feelings and feedback toward others and himself. He is not trusting, confident, and he is weak in interactional relationships. He behaves doubtfully when makes decision and acts. He is hostile and anxious. He has unstable behavior. He is recluse and retired. His mind is occupied with aggressive fantasy and daydreaming. He evaluates himself and others lower than their human dignity.

- Passive. The person in this category has negative and unpleasant thoughts, feelings and feedback about himself. He has a weak self-esteem. He is dependant and submissive. Moreover he is always a follower. He is hesitant in decision making. He is incapable of rejecting unreasonable requests and saying "No" to others. If he rejects a request, he feels guilty, worried and stressed. He worries about the way the others evaluate him. He is easily irritated and he is sensitive and reactive. He succumbs in a passive way. In social interactions he suffers from feeling inferiority.

As the last two traits, passiveness and submissiveness, are very close in features and since the distinction between the two was not one of the purposes of the study, the students falling in the two categories were regarded as members of the submissive group. Hence, three main groups are generated through the research.

Each testee obtains a score on each of these subscales. Each score ranges between 0-20. The highest score of each testee indicates his behavioral and characteristic features or the predominance of that feature in his behavior and character. Thus he would be assigned to a group characterized as that particular subscale.

The subjects (170 students of Payam-e-Noor University, Tehran, Shahriar branch), as a result, had three scores in the three subcategories. They attended a free discussion/conversation course voluntarily, so the researcher had intact groups, the subjects formed a random sample of the population voluntarily attending the course and for the purpose of the present research. Actually, they were not aware that the study was going to be run in the course. After collecting the data, 33 of the questionnaires were put aside since they were not filled out appropriately. Assertive, aggressive and submissive groups comprised 43, 38, and 56 members respectively. An achievement test was devised based on the items discussed in the course, mainly taken from the Interchange series Third Edition, volumes: Intro to 3 by J. C. Richards. The general correlation between assertive scores of the subjects and their scores on an achievement test targeting their communicative knowledge showed a high and significant
coefficient (.81 at $\alpha = 0.01$), while the correlation between aggressive and submissive scores and the achievement scores were low and non-significant.

The Analysis of Variance, comparing the three groups, with $F=72.9$ significant at $\alpha = 0.01$, showed that the groups performed differently with regard to the achievement test. The results showed that assertive students performed the best, and the aggressive and submissive students were the second and third in ranking.

**Adding the Fifth Dimension**

The intention of this paper is not to convince the teachers that focusing on the four skills in the tradition of TEFL has been wrong, but to add another dimension. The new dimension is human dimension in contrast with the material dimensions including reading, writing, speaking and listening. We all know that people respond differently to the same situation. They employ different approaches toward communicating with others, responding to questions and solving the problems they face. People also behave differently in learning context; each of them practices a special kind of learning style (Brown, 2000). Dörnyei and Skehan (2005) consider learners' differences such as aptitude, styles and strategies as sub-areas of second language acquisition. They also quote from Oxford (1990) that language learning strategies reflect learner's active contribution to enhancing the effectiveness of his or her learning. Five-Factor Theory (FFT) formulated by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (1999) is an explanatory account of the role of the Big Five Factors in personality. Srivastava (2006) explains that Five-Factor Theory includes a number of propositions about the nature, origins, and developmental course of personality traits and about the relation of traits to many of the other personality variables.

According to McCrae & Costa (1999), the Big Five factors are typically labeled:

- Extroversion (talkative, assertive, energetic)
- Agreeableness (good-natured, cooperative, trustful)
- Conscientiousness (orderly, responsible, dependable)
- Emotional Stability versus Neuroticism (calm, not neurotic, not easily upset)
- Intellect or Openness (intellectual, imaginative, independent-minded)

Srivastava (2006) states that "The Big Five structure was derived from statistical analyses, of which traits tend to co-occur in the population, but the underlying correlations are probabilistic and thus, expectation is possible" (p. 4). For example, talkativeness and assertiveness are both traits that are related to Extroversion, but they do not necessarily go together: you could think of somebody who is assertive but not talkative. However, numerous studies show that people who are assertive are typically also talkative (and vice versa), that is why they go together under the broader factor. Despite the similarities and differences in these definitions, all of them have one thing in common. They all refer to assertiveness as the ability to express oneself and one's rights, without violating the rights of others. Cangelosi and Peterson (1998) present seven strategies of assertiveness:

- Fogging: repeating and/or agreeing a criticism. ("You are stupid." "I sure could be smarter.")
- Negative assertion: admitting a mistake ("why are you so late?" "I know I'm late.")
• Negative inquiry: questioning a criticism to exhaust the tormentor ("You are stupid." "What is it about me that is stupid?")
• Self-disclosure: revealing your own personal feelings ("You're late again!" "I'm sorry; my car wouldn't start.")
• Positive assertion: agreeing with a criticism using word like "yes", "You're right", "you've got my number alright!" ("You are ugly." "You're right. I am ugly.")
• Workable compromise: coming up with a middle ground proposal to resolve a problem or conflict ("you're late again! What's wrong with you? Can't you just get to work on time?" "What if I call you next time when I know I'm going to be late?")
• Broken record: repeating your opinion in the face of opposition or manipulation ("I want to borrow your sweater. I have let you borrow my clothes before." "You have let me borrow your clothes before, but I'm not lending you my sweater.")

Similarly, Barnette (2000) has introduced some techniques of assertiveness for difficult situations:
• Broken record: Keep repeating your point, using a low level, pleasant voice. Don't get pulled into arguing or trying to explain yourself. This lets you ignore manipulation, baiting, and irrelevant logic.
• Fogging: This is a way to deflect negative, manipulative criticism. You agree with some of the fact, but retain the right to choose your behavior. Fogging is great for avoiding fights and making people stop criticizing. With significant others, when you need to keep living together, it's best to quietly hear them out, then assertively give your response.
• Content to Process Shift: This means that you stop talking about the problem and bring up, instead, how the other person is behaving right now. Use it when someone's not listening or trying to use humor or a distraction to avoid the issue. "You're getting off the point. I'm starting to feel frustrated because I feel like you're not listening."
• Defusing: Letting someone cool down before discussing an issue. "I can see that you're upset, and I can even understand part of your reaction. Let's talk about this later." Also, if they try to stay with it, you always have the right to walk away.
• Assertive inquiry/stop action: This is similar to the content to process shift. "Let's hold it for a minute; something isn't working, what just happened? How did we get into this argument?" This helps to identify the real issue when the argument is actually about something bigger than the immediate topic.
• Summarization: This helps to make sure you understand the other person. "So what you're trying to tell me is ..."
• Specificity: It's really important to be very clear about what you want to be done. This helps prevent distractions. 'The thing I really wish is that you'd pick your clothes up off the floor.'

Is Assertiveness Teachable?

Scott (2006) claims that assertiveness comes naturally to some, but for others it is a skill that can be learned and developed. In this regard, Hall (2003) has examined the use of problem based learning (PBL) in an actual counseling session and its effects on the students' assertiveness skills. Hall (2003) concluded that treatment utilizing the PBL methodology was effective for
increasing assertiveness skills among these seventh-grade students. Bandura (1973) considered aggression as behavior patterns that are learned, mostly through reinforcement and modeling which can be intentionally directed toward harming others.

Assertive behavior encourages our listeners to attend and respect our messages. As Lombana & Pratt (1978) state, an assertive behavior will not "guarantee that your needs will be met or your thoughts and feelings will be understood" (p. 97). However the chance of gaining your aim is greatly increased by communicating assertively (Lombana & Pratt, 1978).

In a study Klug (2000) investigated the relationship between the degree of parental assertiveness and the extent of adolescent antisocial behavior. This study was conducted to measure the effects of whether a mother's participation in a Toughlove program (an assertiveness training program) improved her child's behavior. Within six months, most of the mothers scored significant gains in assertiveness. Over the same period of time, their children’s antisocial behavior declined to a significant degree.

**Workshops: Strong Version versus Weak Version**

After this rather lengthy discussion, my recommendation is that assertiveness can be promoted and enhanced in nonassertive participants and workshops can be devised for that purpose.

In the strong version I recommend that special courses be devised apart from the main subject area course just to teach how to be assertive. In the weak version, the teacher, while performing his main task in teaching a foreign language, acts as a counselor with regard to the issue of assertiveness.

The latter view is better, in my viewpoint, because making a separate course for the advancement of assertiveness may make some avoid the experience since we are normally afraid of being labeled as nonassertive. In most educational cases treatments with no or low interference have better results. However, the teachers are to be trained to enhance assertive behavior and reward that in classes. To see how a typical in-class weak version workshop may look like, let's go back to Townend's feature list (1991) and see how we can apply them in a FL setting:

- **The right to feelings, opinions and values:** students should feel free in expressing their thoughts no matter how ridiculous and unearthly they may sound. In order to reduce peer pressure, special topics can be devised to ask for just absurd and silly replies as in 'Assume you are arrested by aliens and you want to play tricks on them to let you go, what do you tell them?' or urge them to tell the silliest joke or the most unbelievable story possible.

- **The right to express what I want or how I feel:** students have to feel free in expressing their ideas about the activities, assignments and exercises they are assigned. They should not be forced to do assignments. For that reason there should be a pool of tasks to perform within and outside the class for students to choose from.

- **The right to change my mind:** in the middle of discussion, students should have no fear in changing ideas or even rejecting others’ with extreme openness. Teachers may even encourage and reward non-conformist and radical views.

- **The right to make decisions:** a-posteriori syllabi are preferred since they give maximum freedom to students about what to do and what not to do.
This freedom goes from choosing classes, teachers, exercises and outside class activities. Students select their partners and groups in team work activities.

- The right to say “I don't know” and “I don't understand”: errors are not to be looked down upon and saying “I don't know the answer” or “Please repeat that” should be considered very routine and common sentences in the class. The teacher must not look at the students with eyes wide open when they say these sentences. Being able to express one's lack of knowledge is as valuable as expressing knowledge about something. Declaring ignorance is the gate to overcoming it.

- The right to say “no” without feeling bad or guilty: if confronted with hard situations or problems or even tasks, students should have freedom to say “I am not in.” If you ask them to work in pair with somebody, it is their right to say “no, I want to work with a different person.” Most teachers believe that acting out in front of peers is fun but for many students it is like acting on a scene and their blood pressure goes up rapidly and some say they experience Near-death Experience in such situations. Students are to be let free to act out whenever they feel relaxed with that. Stage fright is not just for novice actors.

- The right to be non-assertive: At times even highly assertive people choose to be non-active for a while and this should be respected. Sometimes our biology or unknown environmental issues supersede our lifelong personality traits. Usually assertive students need not be always bombarded with requests by the teacher to be like that. This leads to fatigue.

- The right to privacy, to be alone and independent: in some skills, we strictly direct students to follow rules as in writing essays. This is to be avoided, at least for the beginners. Strictly directed writing is a poison for writing ability. Great writers did not follow rules and regulations; they followed their senses and talents. If some students learn to write with liberty and enjoy the liberty of writing, teaching them the rules will not be a Herculean feat.

Finally yet importantly, let your students enjoy doing and acting, then they become ready and even eager to receive and assimilate rules and orders. This is the first rule in fun-based education.

References


Knowledge of diverse learners: evaluating pre service teachers’ perspective and practice

Fadzilah Abd Rahman
Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract

Although Knowledge of Diverse Learners (KDL) has come to be seen as important, details of its development, depth and quality among pre service teachers (PSTs) has remained something of mystery, as has the capability of PSTs to adapt and employ KDL into their actual teaching. As an effort to draw coherent understanding of the feature of prospective teachers regarding KDL, this paper addresses three questions. First, to what extent are the PSTs prepared for KDL as they are finishing the teacher education programme? Secondly, how do the PSTs apply the KDL in their teaching practices and thirdly, how PSTs reflect on their practice in undertaking the elements of KDL during the teaching practices? This paper illustrates the results of a study involving a sample of 74 PSTs at a university in Malaysia. At the beginning of the study, each PST was given a questionnaire. Some PSTs have been observed and interviewed. Result indicates that PSTs were able to develop KDL and show their understanding of it; yet not readily apply such knowledge in modified situations.

Keywords: Diverse Learners, Pre service teachers, teacher education
1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity is a nature of the human species, and students are and always have been different from each other in a variety of ways (Banks et al., 2005). Recent research studies into effective teaching tend to generate that teaching is not any longer considered as a linear process of transmitting knowledge from the teacher to students, or from educational materials to students. In turn, the demands on teachers mean that not only do they need to be able to keep order and provide useful information to students, but they also need to be increasingly effective in enabling a diverse group of students to learn ever more complex material and develop a wider range of skills (Arends, 2004; Ferguson, 1991; Rivkin et al., 2000; and Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997; Barnes, 1989). Clearly, in today’s school, teachers must be prepared to teach a diverse population of students.

Why knowledge to deal with diverse group of students such an important element in teaching? Linked to the idea of a knowledge base for teaching, Shulman (1987) asserts that in order to teach, one needs a breadth and depth of knowledge of teaching, a rich factual knowledge base with many interconnections which represents a much more thorough understanding than that which is achieved purely as curriculum learner. He refers to this as pedagogical content knowledge, that is, an understanding of how particular teaching, subjects, topics, problems, or issues are organized, presented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction. This can be seen that teachers have always needed to address the diverse learning needs of their students; current and projected demographic trends prompt many educators to believe that awareness and sensitivity to diverse learners have become even more pressing needs (Gay, 2004).

In existing classroom situations, pedagogical content knowledge is recognized as an essential component in assessing pre qualified teachers (PQTS) or in establishing 'quality teaching'. Moreover, pedagogical content knowledge has been described as a component of the important 'knows how' that PSTs should develop during their teacher education programme. Carpenter, Fennma, Peterson, and Carey (1988) claim that pedagogical content knowledge was positively linked to the student’s achievement. Teachers with stronger pedagogical content knowledge were found to represent content more accurately (Gudmundsdottir, 1987 and 1990; Wilson and Wineburg, 1988). Calderhead and Shorrock (1997, p. 13), stressed that developing pedagogical content knowledge not only requires an understanding of the subject matter, but also an understanding of children, their abilities and interests and how they tend to respond to different situations, an appreciation of different teaching strategies and how various types of classroom activity might be managed. Thus, it can be considered that teachers have always needed to address the diverse learning needs of their students. Even current debates prompt many educators to believe that awareness and sensitivity to diverse learners have become even more pressing needs (Gay, 2004).
2. Examining Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Although teachers have always needed to address the diverse learning needs of their students, current and projected demographic trends prompt many educators to believe that awareness and sensitivity to diverse learners have become even more pressing needs (Gay, 2004). Despite the fact that there is often a disparity between the cultural background of students and teachers, this disparity in background can be problematic unless teachers are knowledgeable regarding the commonalities and differences among their students. We now know that students do not bring the same ways of knowing, language, family expectations, or strategies for learning to school (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Heath, 1983; Heath & Mangiola, 1991), and there is often a mismatch between ways of learning at home and ways of learning at school. This mismatch contributes to students falling behind and failing to meet their potential as learners (National Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence Report, 2003; Viadero, 2004). Effective teachers recognize differences among their learners and have the capacity and willingness to understand the impact of dissimilar backgrounds and abilities on learning.

As an effort to draw coherent understanding of the feature of knowledge of diverse learners (KDL) among prospective teachers, this paper addresses three questions. First, how well are the PTS prepared for KDL as they are finishing the teacher education programme? Secondly, how do the PSTs apply the KDL in their teaching practices and thirdly, how PSTs reflect on their practice in undertaking the elements of KDL during the teaching practices?

3. METHODOLOGY

The overall purpose of this study was to provide a coherent understanding of the nature of knowledge of diverse learners (KDL) among pre service teachers (PSTs) towards the end of their teacher education programme from various perspectives. This was achieved by identifying PST self ratings about their KDL perspective, examining their practices of KDL, determining how PSTs reflected on their practice in relation to KDL, and describing how PSTs developed their KDL. Thus in this section, PSTs self rating of KDL performance, PST practices of KDL and PST reflections of their KDL practices will be discussed.

The selection of the samples in this study was based mainly on purposive sampling to build up a sample that was satisfactory for specific purposes, that is, a group of PSTs chosen on the basis of their programme, teaching experience and information that they responded with in the questionnaire. In order to be more focused, the research sample was narrowed to the PSTs from a specific Bachelor of Education programme, namely Teaching Malay as a First Language. The programme of Teaching Malay as a First Language has been chosen due to researcher background and experiences in dealing with the PSTs in that programme. Out of 74 respondents who answered the questionnaire, 11 were selected and agreed to participate in further observations and interviews.
4. FINDINGS

4.1 Self-Rating of Knowledge of Diverse Learners

Addressing student diversity was one of the two sub components in the KLS, and results are shown in Table 5.10.

Table 1: Pre-Service Teachers’ Addressing Students’ Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching goals that address the diversity of students' ability</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching strategies based on learners' learning styles</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material matching students' interests</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching material matching students' background</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment are significant for all students</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall was the easiest way for the PSTs to address diversity (M=4.0), while teaching strategies based on learners’ learning style (M=3.6), teaching material matching students background (M=3.6), and designing assessments that are significant for all students (M=3.7) presented more of a challenge. Thus, we can conclude that PSTs were able to develop teaching goals that were related to differing student ability levels, but less able to transform those goals into specific strategies, materials, and assessments.

4.2 Practices of Knowledge of Diverse Learners

For practices of knowledge of diverse learners, observations were based on the following scale:

- 3=considerable application inferred – PST displays thorough knowledge of students characteristic, their approaches to learning, interest and background; and assessment criteria and standard are clearly communicated to student and feedback usually gained
- 2=moderate application inferred – PST displays understanding of students characteristic, their approaches to learning, interest and background; and assessment criteria and standard are clearly communicated to student
- 1=low application inferred – PST displays generally knowledge of student characteristic; and assessment criteria and standard have been developed, but they are either not clear or have not been clearly communicated to students
- 0=could not be detected – PSTs display minimal knowledge of students characteristic and assessment that proposed contains no clear criteria or standard
Observations related to knowledge of learners and self-practices are summarized in Table 2. There were six specific areas of interest within this category: learner background, learner interests, learner capabilities, learning style, multi-level questioning, and using various assessments.

Table 2: Summary of Observation Regarding KLS Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Learners Background</th>
<th>Learners Interest</th>
<th>Learners Capabilities</th>
<th>Learning Style</th>
<th>Multi-level Questioning</th>
<th>Various Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 = Considerable Application Inferred</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 = Moderate Application Inferred</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 = Low Application Inferred</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 = Could Not Be Detected</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the highest performance was in terms of learners’ background and learners’ interest, with six PSTs receiving ratings of moderate application inferred (the only categories with more than 2 PSTs in this category or higher). The lowest performance was in the area of multi-level questioning, using various assessments, and learning styles, with 6, 5, and 4 PSTs receiving the lowest ratings, respectively.

4.3 Reflection on Knowledge and Practices of Knowledge of Diverse Learners

In this section of the interview, the interviewees survey responses were examined, and specific questions about their responses were asked. Therefore, there were different questions asked of each PST, although there was some overlap in terms of the questions asked. The survey responses of ten of the eleven interviewees led to a question regarding multi-level questions in the classroom. Many of the students who were asked about this felt that they did not adequately present questions in a multi-level format, with one noting that “I normally ask low level question because students could not understand high level question” (Alin).

While other noted that the stated course objectives were more strongly tied to the low level questions, and therefore that “I rarely applied them [the higher level questions] because probably I was afraid that the objective wouldn’t be able to be achieved” (Muis).

Seven of the eleven interviewees noted that it is important to assess their students’ current level of knowledge before teaching a lesson. For example, one
Interviewee noted that it is important to “Think of the students’ abilities is the most important element” (Alin).

While another indicated that “We have to observe whether the students have been exposed, if they haven’t, than we need to give the basic knowledge about that subject” (Muis).

In addition, four interviewees indicated that they were satisfied with the way they controlled the class. Three interviewees indicated that they were most satisfied in how they had gotten to know their students on an individual basis, while two indicated that they were very good at developing student motivation.

5. Discussion

In the interpretation of results, this section first discussed PSTs’ perspectives on KDL performance, followed by an interpretation of PST practices of KDL. The final subsection focuses on consistency between PST perspectives and their KDL practices to determine if the vision and the reality blend together or are two separate entities.

KDL in general had been developed by all PSTs and almost reached the mean average level. Teaching practices in general showed, for example, that the PSTs related good values during the lessons were able to write a complete daily lesson plan and were familiar with the current teaching syllabus. They were less knowledge in gathering feedback from the assessments given and asking multi-level questions to the students.

Thus it was shown in the literature that teachers had acquired basic abilities but had lesser knowledge in applying more complex tasks and asking complex questions of their students. The most challenging practices for the PSTs were applying teaching strategies based on learners’ learning style, teaching material matching students’ background, and designing assessments that were significant for all students. Perhaps this was because the teaching process for the PSTs centered more on knowledge transmission rather than on learning facilitation. As Gow and Kember (1993) have explained, those who function under the knowledge transmission orientation focus on content delivery. This does not allow them to perceive teaching as a facilitative process which assists students in developing problem solving skills and critical thinking abilities.

KDL practice scores also showed that PSTs had developed teaching goals that related to student ability levels, but could not convert these goals into specific materials and approaches to help students improve. Of the more important general KDL dimensions, PSTs scored lowest in class management and pupil motivation and highest in teaching approach and strategy.

Practices also showed that PSTs were able to match the terminology and language they were using to the students’ attainment level and to make comparisons between the subject matter and student experiences, but were having problems creating additional examples related to the subject matter.

Reflection on practices is an important part of constructing KDL. Reflective practice, as explained by Kane et al. (2002) allows an examination of teaching theories and a review on the part of the teacher to reconsider the difficult problem or experience in light of new or revised knowledge. As previously noted, reflective practice requires persistent and careful consideration of the problem or issue in the light of constructed knowledge and beliefs (Noffke and Brennan, 1988). It requires reflecting on the problem with an attitude of open-mindedness, taking responsibility for whatever the outcome of the reflection. The process starts when the PST encounters a complex and difficult experience.
or classroom event—one that cannot be adequately addressed immediately and requires time for resolution. In this context,

**Conclusion**

The best performance was in terms of learner background and learner interests, while the lowest was in the areas of multi-level questioning, using various assessments, and learning styles. Other area of integration relates to the types of tasks that the PSTs were able to do, and the results across data sources indicated that the simpler tasks and responsibilities were being addressed adequately, while the more complex tasks and responsibilities presented more of a problem. For example, results from the survey indicated that multi-level questions presented a problem for these teachers as was demonstrated in both the survey data and the observational results. In fact, some of the lowest ratings that the PSTs received for any of the items on the observational data were for multi-level questioning. The interview results similarly confirmed that the PSTs were much more likely to ask direct, low-level questions rather than multi-level or high-level questions.

There were two conditions in relation to the consistency of PSTs’ perspectives and practices of KDL have been revealed from this study. First, there is a condition where PSTs perspectives were compatible with their practices. Second, a condition where PSTs believed they had developed a good KDL whereas their perspectives not compatible with their practices. In other words when PSTs believed they are good in certain dimension it is not necessarily true in actual practices.

In relation to the first condition, from the perspectives of the PSTs, their perceptions as related to their practices were closely aligned. Specifically, as pertained to their self-ratings versus their actual practices, their perceptions indicated that the PSTs felt least confident in their proficiently to deal with student diversity presented more of a challenge. This was demonstrated in their practices, through the observations as well. In summary, the consistency between PSTs’ perspectives and their practices of KDL were very much in line with each other.

On the other hand, referring to the second condition, it was clear that they believed that had developed a good knowledge but this was perception was higher than the reality. While their scores were good, they were still a little below the average in practices.

**References**


Problem-Based Learning for an Undergraduate Course in Medical Physics

Konstantin Lozhkin, PhD
University College London and University College London Hospitals, London, UK

This paper is presented in a dialogue form, inspired by Socratic dialogues by Plato.

Persons of the Dialogue
Konstantin                Friend

Good morning, Konstantin, nice to see you!

Good morning.

I see you are reading Plato!

Yes, I am working on an enquiry how to improve my teaching and reading Socratic dialogues to get to the routes of all enquiries.

How interesting! Tell me, what is your enquiry about?
It is about improving teaching for one of my courses, an interdisciplinary one-semester course “Treatment with Ionizing Radiation” at the Department of Medical Physics and Bioengineering of University College London. I am lecturing on this course for the sixth year together with two other lecturers. The course is taught to a class of about thirty to forty 3rd year undergraduate students, about half of which are medical intercalated students and the rest are physics students. Currently the teaching on the course is done via traditional lecturing with no regard to different backgrounds and prior knowledge of medical and physics students. However, the fact that these students, taken together, possess both the knowledge of physics and medicine needed for the course can be used to the advantage of their learning. I am going to explore the possibility of introducing problem-based learning (PBL) for this course.

What are your students going to gain in the long-term by taking your course?

My course is really an introduction to treatment of cancer and other diseases with ionizing radiation and is meant to leave the students with a general understanding of the subject. It is the result of diffusion of many techniques from different disciplines. Those students, who will choose to specialize in radiotherapy, will subsequently have a lot of advanced courses and years of training before becoming radiotherapy practitioners. For them, an entertaining introductory course might serve as a good motivation for future studies. However, most of my students are aiming at other careers, and it would be nice to make the course memorable for them for the spirit of discovery. I would prefer their learning to be done, in Montaigne’s words (1991:168) “not for external advantages, but rather for those which inwardly enrich and adorn” them.

So what qualities do you want your students to develop?

I would like my students to understand how to seek knowledge and understanding and to develop a long-lasting critical and adventurous curiosity in the causes of things and events and a desire for continuous critical learning. As Rousseau (1997:349) wrote in “Émile”, “your scholars only know things by heart, while mine knows how to use his knowledge”. I am convinced that “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (Freire, 1998:30). Problem-based learning might be of great help in this respect.

How do you define problem-based learning?

In problem-based learning, a small group of students decide for themselves what they need to study after discussing in depth some trigger material, such as a written real-life problem. After a period of extensive self-study, they meet to share, compare and relate what they found to the original problem and to see if they have covered enough ground. Thus in the process of acquiring knowledge, students also develop a number of skills and attitudes that are relevant to their professional life: problem-solving, communication with peers, working in teams, developing initiative, sharing information and having regards for others.
I can give you a good trigger problem. "A 1st year medical student faints at the sight of blood. What are the underlying mechanisms that caused his/her fainting?"

Ha-ha.

So why do you think that PBL will be good for your course?

I can find several reasons for that:

a). PBL is well suited for interdisciplinary courses like mine because real-life problems do not respect disciplinary boundaries. PBL is certainly likely to require students to integrate knowledge from different fields within disciplines" (Pawson et. al., 2006:105). As Montaigne (1991:172) noted, "mixing with people is wonderfully appropriate" for learning;

b). my course needs to become more engaging. And many studies have shown that in PBL most students enjoy active participation and consider the process to be relevant to their learning needs, stimulating and fun (Albanese and Mitchell, 1993);

c). PBL enhances students’ motivation and helps the development of interpersonal skills (Biggs, 2005:234);

d). PBL fosters self-directed learning skills, which are likely to lead to graduates becoming life-long learners. As Montaigne brilliantly wrote, “learning must not only lodge with us, we must marry her” (1991:199). And for Rousseau, “it seemed a fine thing to keep on learning to my last hour” (2004:222);

e). I always want to encourage deep learning styles. And PBL promotes deeper rather than superficial learning (Biggs, 2005:233);

f). the learning environment created by PBL reduces traditional barriers between students and teachers. This will increase the appeal of the course for students and teachers likewise. “In problem-based, tutorial program, the students are observed and challenged at close range, and a clearer sense of their strengths and weaknesses emerges” (Kaufman, 1985:259).

What do educational theories say about PBL?

The processes at work in PBL can be theorized from different perspectives.

1). Behaviorist theories provide an understanding of improvement of learning by learner’s motivation, through feedback, clear goals and practice (Thorndike, 1910).

2). There are also cognitive theories. In cognitive tradition is Vygotsky’s (1978) idea of a Zone of Proximal Development. This zone can be extended in PBL because of the guidance of experienced facilitator and collaboration with peers, thus learning can exceed the original expectations of teachers and students. There are also cognitive ideas of deep and surface approaches to learning (Marton and Säljö, 1976) that connect well with PBL where students are expected to use higher cognitive level processes (e.g. explaining, relating, theorizing) typical of deep approach to learning (Biggs, 2005:4) in preference to low-level activities (e.g. memorizing and describing).

3). Constructivism views “reality as personally constructed” (Cooper, 1993:16). There are numerous constructivist theories and models, for example:

a). Biggs’ theory of constructive alignment (Biggs, 2005:28) which can be successfully applied to PBL: curriculum objectives of the PBL course (to
hypothesize, theorize, generate new ideas, solve problems) should be aligned with the self-, peer- and teacher-controlled teaching/learning activities and the assessment of the students entirely through the products of their work on each of the problems;

b). the model of a reflective cycle of learning from experience (Cowan, 1998:34). In PBL, students are actively using this cycle: they have questions to answer, reflect on their experience, generalize (look for patterns and underlying principles), test their conclusions and apply the knowledge to problem-solving;

c). the growing theory of teaching (Fox, 1983:157): PBL gives students an opportunity to make their own significant contributions to the style and direction of their learning and allows true exploration of the subject. The tutor accepts the role of resource provider, a “gardener” (Northedge, 1976) who is cultivating student’s personality as a professional.

Sorry for a long answer. You can see now how dull can I be while lecturing.

From what you have said I understand that the theories seem to embrace PBL with both arms as a beloved child. But the child may be kicking! What are the shortcomings of PBL?

There is a lot written on this subject. Pawson et al. (2006:107), who implemented PBL in geography, have summarized the literature sources on the risks and benefits of PBL relative to traditional learning methods for 3 main groups of people involved: students, tutors and faculty managers. The main points to consider are:

a). “the commonest concern is the higher delivery costs of the PBL curriculum, both financial and in staff time” (Clark, 2006:722);

b). PBL increases students’ time commitment. As Rousseau (2004:227) wrote, the chief disadvantage of being one’s own teacher “is the incredible labour involved”;

c). the PBL approach is highly dependent on the functioning of small groups (Barrows, 1994:51);

d). PBL requires to have effective tutors who should be experts in facilitation rather than in subject matter (David et al., 1999:88);

e). in the long-term, there appears an effect of ‘facilitator burn-out’, when tutors become tired, bored and dissatisfied with facilitation (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:163). This seems to occur most in tutors who initially enjoyed PBL and I am wondering whether it will affect me.

How widely is PBL used nowadays?

All ‘learner-centered’ teaching is “widely valued (although largely not practiced) in higher education” (Rowland, 2000:76). Throughout the world, PBL is now mainly used at medical schools, where there is strong dissatisfaction with the efficacy of traditional curricula based on memorization rather than independent thinking and reasoning while solving patient problems. PBL has now been adopted in the majority of UK medical schools (Clark, 2006:722). In non-medical disciplines PBL is used to a lesser extend.

Are students usually specially selected for PBL?
In North America, medical schools are all graduate schools and applicants for PBL are selected to ensure that they possess attributes necessary for adult learning. In other countries, PBL medical schools take mainly school leavers, but these are also required to demonstrate attributes of mature learners as a condition of entry. In other disciplines, choosing mature learners for PBL courses is more difficult to achieve, partly because the demand for these courses is not as great as for medical ones. For my course, I will not be able to choose students.

_Do you mean that PBL may not work for all students?_

“In theory, problem-based learning should be suitable for anyone and everyone” (David et al., 1999:85). However, transition to PBL may be difficult for very dependent students, who rely almost totally on teachers’ instruction and also for very bright students (like my Oxbridge students) who may be unable to cope with the lack of direction and uncertainty of PBL course.

_Is it proven that in practice PBL is better than traditional teaching?_

Not really. There were lots of studies that tried to compare the outcomes of PBL and traditional teaching, mainly in medical education, where hundreds of thousands of students have used PBL for the last three decades. Four main reviews (Smits et al., 2002; Albanese and Mitchell, 1993; Berkson, 1993; Vernon and Blake, 1993) cover about 90 papers studying the outcomes of PBL. These reviews show that objective comparison with conventional teaching is very difficult and none of the studies (small-scale or large-scale, including four randomized controlled trials), can be regarded as definitive.

_Why is the objective comparison so difficult?_

Comparison of PBL and traditional students is usually done via formal written examination, while the assessment of PBL should really be done in alignment with this learning/teaching method (Biggs, 2005:237), and written examination is certainly not the best way to assess the outcomes of PBL. Also double-blinded randomized controlled trials, the golden standard for evaluations, may not be the best method to study PBL (Clark, 2006:722) since in comparison of formal assessments "students are not blinded to the intervention and factors such as motivation or enthusiasm are likely to influence the outcome" (Norman, 2002), which would bias any results.

_So, looking very promising in theory, PBL does not fully deliver?_

Well, the PBL method never promises that when students chose themselves what to learn they will learn exactly the parts of curriculum that were planned for them. In this sense PBL does not improve the retention of knowledge. “There is no consensus of evidence to support the superiority of PBL over traditional methods of knowledge acquisition” (Clark, 2006:723).

_I would then say is not it amazing that PBL students are learning not worse than students on a traditional course!?_

Yes, and they manage to do it with a relative lack of direction!
Surely PBL students must gain in problem-solving skills?

Of course, as expected, PBL students are found to score better in these skills (Albanese and Mitchell, 1993; Vernon and Blake, 1993). Summarizing the attempts to evaluate the outcomes of PBL, Clark (2006:723) concludes that “there is evidence that PBL is popular with its students, is associated with better clinical and problem-solving skills, that it promotes lifelong learning skills and probably does not sacrifice important areas of knowledge”.

Do you need to have a certain faith in PBL when you implement it?

Absolutely, you must be convinced that PBL as a high-risk alternative method of teaching is good for your course. PBL needs an enthusiastic team of idealists who believe in its effectiveness and are prepared if necessary to struggle for its survival.

And, as a medical patient, would you rather be treated by a doctor who was taught using PBL?

Yes. If a patient problem is unusual and there is no sufficient clinical information, reflective judgment and problem-solving skills to crack it from the first principles will be needed, and a PBL-trained doctor will have a better chance of doing it. I would also hope that such a doctor will be a true enthusiast of lifelong learning and will be aware of the new developments in the medical field that can help my diagnosis and treatment.

So the doctors’ guides will be, in Plato’s words (1953:299), “knowledge and true opinion”.

And how much can you draw on experience of medical implementers of PBL?

The subject of my interdisciplinary course is semi-medical, so medical PBL experiences are very essential for me. Certainly, best examples of the use of PBL are in medical education. I have recently observed a very stimulating PBL tutorial given by Dr Elizabeth Muir at the School of Medicine of Imperial College London and have learned a lot from this experience. For an isolated PBL course like mine, it is also important to draw on experiences of other disciplines who introduced PBL.

What about other disciplines?

Engineering is a non-medical specialty where PBL has been implemented most widely because of the industry requirements for problem-solving and “a growing dissatisfaction amongst employers with graduates’ professional skills” (Mitchell et al., 2005:41). A good overview of PBL in technical and humanitarian disciplines before 2003 is given by Savin-Baden and Major (2004:17-22). There are more recent examples of PBL in engineering (Polanco et al., 2004; Mitchell et. al., 2005; Ribeiro and Mizukami, 2005; Lau et al., 2006; Fink, 2006; Hansen et al., 2006), physics (Elliott, 2003; Bowe et al., 2003; van Kampen et al., 2004), mathematics (Maree and Molepo, 2005), geography (Drennon, 2005; Pawson et al., 2006), aviation (Padfield, 2006), Information Technology (Linge and Parsons, 2006; Massey et al., 2006), and economics (Maxwell et al., 2005).
“PBL has almost as many forms as places where it is introduced” (MacDonald, 2001:1).

What about the cost of a PBL course?

Albanese and Mitchell (1993) estimate, that for fewer than 40 students, as in my case, PBL once set up can be equivalent in cost to traditional teaching.

How are you going to design problems for PBL?

First of all, we need to have insight into students’ knowledge prior to taking the course; this is where former students might help. “Problems need to be tailored to their position in a course and the sequencing of material within the course (David et al., 1999:29). It must be understood that it will be impossible to cover all the material in the subject curriculum, the view to be challenged by traditional teachers (Mitchell et al., 2005:43).

How are you going to make problems really engaging for students?

Problems can be presented as Case Studies, detective stories, dialogues, puzzles, mysteries, dramas with a high degree of imagination to make them as interesting and engaging as possible, using different types of media presentation, video clips, answer-machine messages etc. “A relevant realistic problem arouses curiosity, is intrinsically motivating for students and will encourage further study activities” (David et al., 1999:36). Situations from real life should be used, “otherwise students will feel that they are being manipulated into learning rather than stimulated to explore their own agendas” (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:69). Problems should attempt to leave a vivid image that “will serve as a key to open the door of more specific recollections” (David et al, 1999:36). It will be a real challenge to design these problems in numbers and to test them on colleagues and students.

Do you have any problems in mind for your course?

Of course. Real-life situations, some widely publicized by the media, make a big impression on students when they can be analyzed in a scientific way. Examples for my course may include radiation treatment for different types of cancer, treatment with different types of ionizing radiation (alpha, beta, gamma, neutrons, protons), tragic cases of patients overexposed to radiation due to mistakes in radiotherapy planning (ICRP, 2002), mysterious cases of fatal radiation poisoning (New Scientist, 2006:5), radiation syndromes during war combat (Enserink, 2003) or during space missions (Rust, 1982). Other real-life problems can be introduced using hospital visits, demonstrations, meetings with specialist clinicians and radiotherapy physicists (e.g. tasks to design biological shielding for radiation treatment rooms or to develop ‘empathy’ writing (Lea and Street, 2000:39) for non-specialist audiences).

What size of students’ group are you aiming at?

A group size from 8 to10 students is usually recommended for medical PBL (David et al., 1999:43). If the group is much larger, then it is impossible for all individuals to participate adequately, if the group is much smaller then there will
be too little of an important ingredient of PBL— the prior knowledge of the group. Savin-Baden and Major (2004:77) write that “most people using PBL would suggest that teams of eight are ideal”.

Where are you going to have your PBL tutorials?

As Montaigne (1991:184) wrote, “any place and any time can be used to study”. In practice we will probably have several groups sharing a big auditorium during tutorials.

How are you going to conduct the tutorials?

The primary role of a PBL tutorial group is to study the problem systematically, using steps such as “The Seven Jump” discussion process (David et al., 1999:7) widely accepted in PBL:

- Step 1. Clarify unfamiliar terms;
- Step 2. Define the problem;
- Step 3. Brainstorm possible hypotheses;
- Step 4. Arrange explanations into a tentative solution;
- Step 5. Define learning objectives.
- Step 6. Gather information and individual study. This step occurs between the tutorials.
- Step 7. Share the results.

The rationale for the stepped process is “to remind students to stop and think reflectively about each learning situation prior to proceeding with the discussion” (David et al., 1999:45).

Most excitingly, during PBL, there can unexpectedly occur precious key moments, team epiphanies, when “a problematic situation or issue suddenly becomes clear and the team or individual member is able to see how to resolve it” (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:158).

What role do tutors play during PBL tutorials?

“The most important task of the teacher is to develop an atmosphere or an attitude in which students seek” (Rowland, 2006:109). “Tutors have been involved in designing the problems and stand back to keep a watchful eye on progress” (David et al., 1999:88). PBL tutors should really be facilitators; their role during PBL tutorials is to provide encouragement and guidance. The facilitator should at all costs resist the temptation to slip into the old habits of didactic teaching under the guise of helping the group. If the group gets stuck, the facilitator can usefully intervene during group discussions, but only to ask a constructive question in order to get the discussion started. “The tutor who says just enough to show that he/she is on the students’ side may be seen as very supportive” (David et al., 1999:89).

Do facilitators need to be experts in the field? As Plato (153:290) wrote in his dialogue “Meno”, “if we wanted Meno to be a good physician, to who should we send him? Should we not send him to the physicians?”

For facilitating PBL, tutors do not need to be content experts. What is really needed is “a tutor with a well-formed, rather than well-filled brain” (Montaigne,
Kaufman and Holmes (1998) discovered that content experts found it more difficult to maintain a facilitator role than non-experts.

**Are you mentally prepared to be a facilitator?**

Not yet, it is a difficult role, I have never played it before and I feel that I am not yet morally ready for it now. An ideal facilitator needs to “have the sympathy that makes a great teacher” (Mills and Huber, 2005:15). This all leads to the subject of love that “represents the most significant form of human commitment possible” (Rowland, 2006:111). Do I love my teaching enough to risk introducing an alternative teaching method at a high cost of time? Do I love my students enough to succeed as a facilitator and patiently witness at the tutorials how they make foolish mistakes, have no real progress, get stuck, disillusionsed and angry, quarrel and complain? How can I then reassure and encourage myself in this role of a facilitator? What is the limit to my patience and tolerance?

I also know that “the move towards becoming a facilitator invariably demands recognition of a loss of power and control” (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:94). How am I going to take the sacrifice of control during facilitation, the control that is an important aspect of my current lecturing?

**Do you have any good examples of facilitators in mind?**

I can recall examples of excellent facilitators as portrayed in art. Michael Kutuzov, the commander-in-chief of the Russian army during the war with Napoleon in 1812 was a great facilitator. His role shortly before the surrender of Moscow to Napoleon is portrayed by Leo Tolstoy (1943:915) in his great novel “War and Peace”:

“Kutuzov got out of his carriage and sat down on a bench by the roadside. A great crowd of generals gathered round him.... This brilliant company separated into several groups who all discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the position, the state of the army, the plans suggested, the situation of Moscow, and military questions generally. Though they had not been summoned for the purpose, and though it was not so called, they all felt that this was really a counsel of war... And all these groups, while talking among themselves, tried to keep near the commander-in-chief (whose bench formed the centre of the gathering) and to speak so that he might overhear them. The commander-in-chief listened to what was being said and sometimes asked them to repeat their remarks, but did not himself take part in conversations or express any opinion. After hearing what was being said by one or other of these groups he generally turned away with an air of disappointment, as though they were not speaking of anything he wished to hear.”

*This is a real facilitator at work! Another example of a facilitator is Nestor from Homer’s “The Iliad”; he had a unique role at the war counsels of Achaians. Why do you think these examples are military ones?*

Probably because the highest pressures of team work, problem solving and decision making are during war counsels, when so much is at stake and when wise facilitation can really win battles.
Yes, under these circumstances facilitation comes close to courage, which is "a knowledge of the fearful and of the hopeful" (Plato, 1953:96), and makes facilitators real heroes!

Coming back to earthly matters, is there any organized training for PBL facilitators?

Yes, “one would not expect someone to become a problem-based learning tutor without attending one or more staff development sessions” (David et al., 1999:59). Usually an initial one-day training programme (but is one day really enough?) is followed by a continuing programme of staff development in PBL. I will need to attend a workshop like this, observe several real PBL tutorials and reflect on other facilitators’ experience.

How are students expected to self-govern their study?

There can be several rotating team roles for students in PBL to conduct discussions in an orderly form (David et al., 1999:43); the two main roles are the Chairperson who is leading a group discussion and the Secretary who is note-taking. Students might also be encouraged to develop a sort of a team-learning contract (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:87), this will help them to take more responsibility for their work in a team.

How are you going to do students’ assessment?

This is worrying me a lot. “Assessment appears to be a major pitfall in sustaining PBL because the approach demands that we ensure that there is alignment between what students are learning (as opposed to being taught) and the assessment” (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:164). According to constructive alignment approach (Biggs, 2005:240), the students should be assessed entirely through their work on each of the problems. In PBL, process and content are linked, thus what is learned is significantly determined by how it is learned, and therefore it is important to evaluate these both components (David et al., 1999:66). Thus Barrows (1994:95), the pioneer of medical PBL, writes that “assessment must reinforce the objectives of a PBL curriculum and assess problem solving, the application of facts to a patient problem and self-directed learning”.

What are the assessment methods compatible with PBL principles?

Savin-Baden and Major (2004:172-176) describe several of these methods, including group presentation, individual presentation, case-based individual essay, portfolio, viva, reflective journal, reports, self-assessment and peer-assessment. These methods mainly rely on reflective writing and also, importantly, on students’ comments on their own performance and that of their peers.

Yes, as Plato (1953:297) wrote, “we have to look to ourselves, and try to find someone who will help in some way or other to improve us”. What about written examinations?

Traditional written examinations are not considered to be a proper assessment method for PBL. This is because PBL is student-centered with a
major emphasis on self-directed learning, so students are expected to determine on their own what they need to learn. However, the content of the external formal examination has to be set by teachers and therefore would dictate what students should learn. If examinations ask for memorization of facts, students will try to determine what may be expected of them to know and will begin to memorize facts. This will seriously diminish their attention to PBL and self-directed learning. Montaigne (1991:169) gives a vivid analogy to the limitations of testing memorized factual knowledge: “spewing up food exactly as you have swallowed it is evident of a failure to digest and assimilate”.

So how do people deal with written examinations?

Some people do not try to avoid them. A usual argument is: “If we are to convince our colleagues that PBL is a viable methodology, it is essential to demonstrate that students can perform in a standard exam setting” (van Kampen et al., 2004:833). For example, in a PBL module in Information Technology at the University of Salford, written examination contributed to 80% of the final mark and individual PBL assignment to 20% (Linge and Parsons, 2006:6). In another case, the final grade for a PBL module in physics at the Dublin City University consisted of 50% PBL assessment and 50% examination (van Kampen et al., 2004:833). This type of assessment is certainly less effective in achieving the alignment of PBL objectives, teaching/learning activities and assessment, and if students get most of their marks from written examinations, they will never take PBL seriously enough.

What about avoiding written examinations completely?

A good example of this can be found at the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering of UCL (Mitchell et al., 2005:45) where PBL is implemented in a theoretically justified way, in accordance with the theory of constructive alignment (Biggs, 2005:25-31), and assessment is done by a portfolio consisting of a description of group efforts to solve the problem (60% of the marks) and an individual narrative reflecting on the content and process of students’ learning (40% of the marks). Also students formally evaluate each other; however this information does not influence the markings. Finally, for authentication of assessment, students have a short viva, which is also not marked. Thus the final mark is entirely based on the portfolio. This is a good example to follow.

Will your Department allow it?

I do not know. There is a long-standing tradition for written examinations. An assessment by a portfolio with a mandatory viva for authentication will be a novelty for the Department. However, if the Department insists on a written examination, marks can be divided between PBL assessment and a written examination which may consist of short Case Studies to analyze.

How are you going to deal with sceptics of PBL at the Department?

Savin-Baden and Major (2004:111), following Moore (1999) and Rogers (1962) suggest the following kinds of reactions of colleagues to an educational innovation: enthusiasts, early adopters, pragmatists, conservatives and sceptics.
PBL implementers must be enthusiasts or early adopters because any innovation attempts “can succeed only when teachers concerned are committed to them and, especially, when they understand, as well as accept, their underlying principles” (Kelly, 1999:9). Of course, sceptics will be difficult to deal with.

And how are you going to persuade the Head of Department?

The official objective of my course is the acquisition of knowledge and nothing else. This is also true for other undergraduate courses at the Department (DMPB, 2007). In this sense, the Head of Department may say that PBL is not worth implementing. However, I can point out to him that according to the overall undergraduate curriculum of UCL Medical Physics (UDP, 2007), the offered degrees must “give a good grounding for entry into the medical physics and medical engineering professions in hospitals, universities, and industry. The multidisciplinary nature of ... degrees also provides a firm foundation for careers in many other related areas”. Surely the preparation for successful work in all these areas cannot be achieved without acquiring skills and attitudes relevant to professional life: problem-solving, team-working, life-long learning and initiative. Currently undergraduate courses at the Department are not structured to teach these skills and so may not fit their purpose in the overall curriculum. A change in the teaching methods is needed, and PBL might be a good solution.

And how are you going to deal with possible complains from students?

This is a painful issue that prevents people from introducing new or experimental teaching methods. As Savin-Baden and Major (2004:164) rightly observed, “it is not the nature of assessment that people are worrying about but student failure. Students who fail complain, give us bad feedback, and sob quietly as we try to console them”. To be able to manage possible students’ complaints I need the backing of the Head of Department and also need to reassure the students that their “experience would not, in any way, be disadvantaged through employing a PBL methodology” (Linge and Parsons, 2006:6).

What does literature say about common mistakes in implementing PBL?

“There is often a tendency to believe that, if considerable time and effort is spent in designing and implementing a PBL programme, thereafter it will merely require minimal tweaking here and there. This is not the case” (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004:161). For the students, PBL is not a short-cut to knowledge, so for them “the single most common error is quite simply failure to work hard enough” (David et al., 1999:95).

It looks like you have learned a lot during your enquiry!

Oh, yes! During the whole enquiry I was driven by intellectual love that “provides an excellent basis for academic enquiry. ...It suggests a continuing and developing interest rather than one which becomes exhausted once the initial question has been answered” (Rowland, 2006: 110). I am less optimistic now about PBL for my course than I was at the start of this enquiry. The more I learn about PBL, the more problematic it seems to me. Do I fully understand the method? Will it work for my students? “An awareness of one’s own ignorance,
like the realization of one’s own error, is perhaps the most crucial moment of learning (as Plato had indicated through his Socratic dialogues). It creates the intellectual space for new knowledge” (Rowland, 2006:110). It all proves the fact that “the deeper the enquiry, the enquirer realizes the less they know and understand” (Bolton, 2005:15).

Very well. You seem to be on the right track, if, as Socrates would add, summing up an enquiry, “we are at all right in our line of argument” (Plato, 1953:30). When we meet next time, do not forget to tell me about your progress. Good afternoon, Konstantin!
ONE YEAR LATER

Nice to meet you, Konstantin! How is your problem-based learning project?

Very much alive! Thank you for asking. We have introduced PBL at the end of the lecture course. Each of the 6 groups of students (consisting of medical intercalated students and physics or engineering students) was given a different engaging problem to study during a 5 week period. The PBL project is replacing three former (boring!) pieces of individual coursework, so it counts as a coursework and thus is worth 20% of the mark for the whole course (other 80% of the course mark come from a written examination of the lecture material). This arrangement avoids getting any permission from the Faculty for changing the course. In the future, after several years of PBL experience, we plan apply for converting the whole course into PBL with an assessment scheme by a PBL portfolio and individual reports with no written exam and a possible viva.

What trigger material did you finally chose to use?

The trigger material for each group was a letter from an imaginary producer of popular TV drama series requesting scientific and creative advice on a suggested scenario of cancer treatment using ionizing radiation. A one-page trigger letter from the producer was asking to provide:

a). a portfolio of scientific evidence, supported by scientific publications in referred journals, on the suggested case (this included calculations of prescribed radiation doses);

b). a guide for scriptwriters of TV drama series suggesting a plot based on a likely behavior of the patient and the medical personnel;

c). suitable suggestions for comic relief;

d). information on alternative treatments (surgery, chemotherapy etc.).

This is a type of letter that many professionals may dream to receive.

How did you make these cases really dramatic?

I have added complicating circumstances. For example, in one case a patient who had cancer of the neck and was treated by high energy X-rays, was 3 months pregnant and was desperate to save the baby. In another case, a patient who had thyroid cancer and was given a very large dose a radioactive iodine to kill the thyroid, was going to travel on a long haul flight to Australia 3 weeks after the treatment, while radioactive iodine has not yet decayed in her body. In the third suggested case, a patient who had prostate cancer and was treated by implanting lots of radioactive seeds into his prostate to kill the tumor, dies days after the treatment, greatly complicating his funerary arrangements.

These cases seem to be truly nightmarish for any Radiotherapy Department! They probably required extra facilitation on your side?

Not really. In fact, facilitation turned up to be easier than I expected, but I have still to learn a lot how to do it. I have given the students a lecture to introduce them to PBL and to “The Seven Jump” discussion process, they then had 5 PBL sessions with facilitators (once a week), and I also gave them a tour of the Radiotherapy Department.
And have you made up your mind how to assess them?

We have largely followed the example of Mitchell et al. (2005:45) from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering of UCL. Assessment of the PBL project was done by a 2,500-word portfolio of collective work (60% of the mark) and a 500-word individual student’s report reflecting on his/her contribution. Students also filled peer-assessment forms which we later used to justify the mark when in doubt. For authentication of assessment, each group made a 10-minute presentation to all other groups about the studied problem and their findings. This was followed by a 5-minute question and answer session. These presentations (all in PowerPoint) were attended by radiotherapy physicists who commented on the subject and asked questions.

So, how many of your students will now become scriptwriters for soap operas?

Who knows? At least two suggested plots were very dramatic and funny. Most of the students were very committed to the PBL project, some volunteered to take more tasks and responsibility. The groups met regularly, not only during the scheduled PBL sessions, but also on other days:

a). One group set a Wiki web page that could be edited by all group members;

b). a member of another group specifically travelled from London to Clatterbridge near Liverpool to visit to the only UK facility for proton–beam therapy;

c). another student went to the Radiotherapy Department and interviewed patients there about their experiences, which, of course, should not be done without prior ethical approval;

d). students mostly used scientific papers and medical publications as their source of information, the use of Wikipedia was small;

e). one group had a conflict within the group with one student getting unhappy about the teamwork and PBL itself;

f). everybody in the class benefited from 6 final presentations on different types of radiotherapy treatment, that were all done in a very professional way;

g). all 37 students except one were satisfied with the PBL process, as their reports show.

Very good! Did your students have any problem with completing their projects on time?

No, in fact the projects were completed rather early. In the future, additional creative tasks from ‘the producer’ could be given to students 2 weeks after the start of the project; this will allow them to study such topics as misuse of ionising radiation, radiation incidents, radiation syndromes and occupational exposures.

This all sounds very interesting! Good luck with this project in the future, Konstantin.
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**End notes**

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http://www.medphys.ucl.ac.uk/teaching/undergrad/index.htm
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e). all 37 students involved in the PBL project in 2008.

New Technologies in Improvement of Higher Education Quality – Polish Atudents’ Experiences

Aleksandra Radziszewska
Czestochowa University of Technology (Poland)
Faculty of Management

Abstract

The adoption of technologies in education has created new opportunities for interaction in teaching and learning activities. The paper describes different learning methods: traditional learning, e-Learning, Blended Learning and personalized learning. Advancements in technology have led to a paradigm shift from traditional to personalized learning methods. New technologies have created flexible approaches to learning for students who in the past lacked such opportunities. Development and possibilities of the Internet application in higher education will be presented. The paper discusses different aspects of successful distance learning implementation. This problem study is based both on literature studies and the questionnaire research. The paper presents result of conducted analysis and indicates the determinants of students’ satisfaction connected with the Internet application in higher education processes.

Introduction

The importance of information and communication technology, especially of the Internet, has greatly increased in recent years. It forces universities to look for new ways to make themselves more competitive and to attract educational offer. ICTs technologies provide the opportunity of communication, information transfer and knowledge sharing. e-Learning is a concept derived from the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to revise and transform traditional teaching and learning models and practices has evolved in the past decade. This evolution has resulted from the emergence of the information
society and has greatly impacted on the global economic and socio-cultural development.

The growth of online education is due to increases in student population and development and possibilities of the Internet application in higher education. In addition the population growth of non-traditional students, those with work and family responsibilities that preclude them from attending face-to-face classes full time, play a major role in the growth of online education (Heagy, Revere, Rust 2007). Higher educational costs, lifestyle requirements, a large population of adult learners have resulted in development of online education (Shea, Motiwalla, Lewis 2001). There are some key advantages that e-learning provides to students. The long-term costs of online learning are significantly less than traditional learning (Smith 2007). Distance education provides many benefits for students, including: flexibility in time and location, participation opportunities for the public speaking challenged, increased written communication experience and increased experience with technology (Smith 2001). Students attending traditional courses gain an advantage over online students through the institution’s reputation and involvement in the cultural interaction on campuses. A traditional institution’s reputation includes intangibles such as the quality of the professors, the quality of the education, job placement success, and the respected name recognition of the university. Students also benefit from the cultural and dynamic experiences that exist on campus life at traditional universities. Traditional learning experience resonates from the face-to-face contact between students and professors as well as from the social interaction that take place among students in an academic community. Students carry these invaluable interpersonal skills with them for the rest of their professional careers (Smith 2007).

**Learning methods**

E-learning is one from learning methods. Learning methods are referred to as ways through which instructors deliver instructions and learners access these instructions. Several learning methods have been described in literature, including (Kahiigi 2007):

- traditional learning,
- e-Learning,
- blended learning,
- mobile learning,
- personalized learning.

Distance education has been defined as „the arrangements for providing instruction and transmitting educational materials through print or electronic media to geographically dispersed students in a place or time different from that of the instructor“ (Moore, 1990). E-Learning refers to the use of ICTs to transform and support the learning process. Instructions are delivered via all electronic media including the internet, intranet, extranet, satellite broadcasts, interactive TV, and CD-ROM (Engelbrecht 2003). It is distance education using the Internet or other information technologies (Watanabe 2005). E-Learning has been defined as learning facilitated by Internet and www technologies that creates connectivity between people and information and creates opportunities for social learning approaches (Meredith and Newton 2003).

Traditional learning refers to face-to-face sessions, through which the teacher delivers course material to students in the same place and at the same time.
The learning method is teacher centred, where the teacher focuses on providing the learning information to the students (Kahiigi 2007). In traditional classroom, learners and instructors have to finish teaching within a limited time in a prearranged schedule. In e-learning, learners can conveniently finish learning and teaching in cyberspace. Faraway learners can ask questions, give comments, arrange works, recommend good articles, develop projects, conduct group discussions and browse well-recommended websites. However, those learners need to learn with one another to fully understand the materials of virtual classrooms by mass reading and good dialogue processes, or even propose suitable discussing issues (Yu 2007). Each e-learner needs to keep sharing and discussing with other learners to fully understand and learn from the required material. The aim of online learning is knowledge sharing. A platform that lacks interactive communication might hardly make knowledge sharing work (Isaacs 1996).

Blended learning makes use of a combination of various learning methods that include face-to-face classroom activities, live e-Learning, and self-paced learning (Valiathan 2002). This learning method encompasses a variety of tools for simulating and maximizing the learner’s learning potential. Some have suggested that the provision of a learning process with a variety of methods, through which learners can acquire knowledge and improve their learning potentials (Lubega and Williams 2003).

Mobile learning is defined as learning or delivery of content that is facilitated by the use of portable technologies such as mobile phone or iPods (Wagner 2007).

Personalized learning is a learning approach that facilitates and supports individualized learning. Each learner has a learning path that caters for learners learning needs and interests in a productive and meaningful way. One of the attributes of personalized learning is the ability to dictate the students’ learning. The students learning styles are vary in the online classes, in direction of personalized and individualized learning. Learning styles are highly individualized. Because of this, online instructors must carefully consider the delivery, content, assessment, and administration of online courses to assure clarity, facilitate learning, and create communication. The online course must be flexible to allow students to adapt their learning styles to the virtual environment. Online education and new technologies allows for the dynamic creation of a personalized learning. Students have the ability to select course materials. Online learning allows students to select content based on their existing and growing level of understanding and uses adaptive technologies to personalize materials based on individual student achievement (Heagy, Revere, Rust 2007). There are two constructs important in online courses: online teaching and online learning. Online teaching focuses on the instructor’s delivery of the course content and online learning focuses on the learner’s cognition of the information (Keegan 2002). Learning theories explain the learning process through which learners are able to acquire knowledge, but there is no single learning theory that can fully explain all types of learning. Consequently, several theories coexist and complement each other during a learning process (Kahiigi 2007).

**E-Learning technologies**

There are several e-Learning technologies in use that dictate how actual learning will take place depending on the environment in which they are
implemented. These technologies include TV, CD ROMs, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Content Management Systems (CMS), Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS).

CD-ROM media have been used to deliver learning material to students on distance programs. It supports learning content in text or multimedia formats. This tool is commonly used for Computer Based Training (Kahiigi 2007).

Learning Management Systems (LMS) are a whole range of information systems and processes that contribute directly or indirectly to learning and to the management of that learning (Mayes and De Freitas 2004). They are primarily developed to provide online learning services for students, teachers, and administrators. Content Management Systems (CMS) as are developed to facilitate the collaborative creation of content, organization, control and to manage the publication of documents in a centralized environment. Learning Content Management Systems (LCMS) are mostly web-based systems that combine the management and administrative functionalities of LMS and CMS to author, approve, publish, and manage learning content. An example of such technologies is the Macromedia Course Builder (Kahiigi 2007).

Ways of distance learning can be divided into online and virtually face to face learning. The e-learning platforms are categorized into synchronized and non-synchronized platforms. The synchronized platform is live talk; the non-synchronized platform is formed with course participation or group discussion. The applied technology systems are not only virtually face-to-face discussion between instructors and learners, but also with Bulletin Board System (BBS) functions, electronic book or chat room (Yu 2007). It is possible to use many different tools, which aim to improve knowledge sharing and knowledge transfer in distance learning:

- **Electronic book** - this is a simple form for students to submit comments about online course. Through this online form students can report their experiences.
- **Surveys** – can be used to get feedback and other information from students. Surveys can be used to track the trends and changes in students’ expectations. They can help improve a quality of courses and are an important information source.
- **Interactive chat** - enables students to participate in a real-time conversation,
- **Electronic newsletters** - enable distribution of information to students by means of publishing an electronic newsletter on the website. The newsletter allows students to know about new information.
- **Bulletin boards** - these are special areas on e-learning platform for students to post messages for anyone to read. Students to share their experiences, knowledge and information can use them.

The interactivity of the whole online platform influences the interactions between learners and the platform’s resources, which instructors, material literature, the environment of other learners and supporting platforms create. Learners can only true learn and then use what they have learned by participation, discussion, interaction among themselves and the instructors and proposing questions about the course content (Precup, O’Sullivan, Cormican, Dooley 2006). A heavy investment in technology (computers, servers, learning specific hardware, learning systems, acquiring authoring development tools, delivery tools and collaboration tools) is required for online classes. Also, specialists (multimedia instructional designers, web designers, and
technologists) are needed to develop, run and integrate online courses (Smith 2007).

**Quality of online education**

Students in high-tech programs face a number of unique challenges, including: difficult communicating with team members, less spontaneity in discussion, a lack of experience with oral presentations and the temptation for less motivated students to disappear for extended periods of time (Smith 2007). The lack of student-to-professor and student-to-student interactivity are the major factors affecting the quality of online education (Wagner 2007).

The concept of quality is not strictly defined and it has also evolved over time. An analysis of the current literature allows identifying a lot of different definitions of the concept of quality: excellence, exceptionality, perfection, conforming to specifications, meeting customers’ needs, providing added value, fulfillment of customer expectation. There is lacking a systematic methodology to measure and ensure quality of online education.

The most common tools for gauging quality are surveys and course evaluations in which instructors, learners, or sometimes administrators provide their perceptions, opinions, or experiences (Milani 2008). Data collected from surveys or course evaluations only touch on some aspects of a course’s quality (mostly issues related to teaching and learning, such as how an instructor performs in class or how the learning experience affects learners). Often, aspects not obvious to faculty or learners are ignored, such as instructional design, course development, and the use of technology (Chao, Saj, Tessier 2006).

There are two types of quality assurance: internal and external, among which three mechanisms can be distinguished: quality audit, quality assessment and accreditation. The first and the last one are external mechanisms, while quality assessment could be both internal and/or an external mechanism (Harvey 2004; Milani 2008):

- Quality audits examine whether an institution has a system of quality assurance,
- Quality assessment involves evaluating the quality of higher education processes, practices, programs.
- Accreditation is a process that usually results in the award of a recognition status for a limited period. Accreditation is the most widely used method of external quality assurance.

The online course must be flexible to allow students to adapt their learning styles to the virtual environment. Students have the ability to select course materials. Online learning allows students to select content based on their existing and growing level of understanding and uses adaptive technologies to personalize materials based on individual student achievement. The quality of distance education is dependent on following areas:

- flexible approaches to learning
- interactivity
- opportunities for social learning approaches
- individualized and personalized learning style
- economical and cost factors
- knowledge and experiences sharing in virtual communities
- use of advanced technology
This problem study is based on the questionnaire research. The results of conducted analysis indicate the determinants of students’ satisfaction connected with the Internet and new technologies application. The research was conducted in the period between Mai and October 2008 in form of questionnaire investigation. The questionnaire has been filled by hundred adult non-traditional students, which work or have family responsibilities. The investigated student group doesn’t have experiences in distance education but their expectations are connected with this form of education.

The significance of following factors has been taken into consideration:

- student-to-professor interactivity
- student-to-student interactivity
- communicating with student team members
- interactive communication and knowledge sharing
- low costs of online education
- flexibility in time and location
- flexible approaches to learning
- the ability to select course materials
- the possibility to select content based on existing and growing level of understanding
- highly individualized learning style
- additional educational materials
- online consultations - additional contact with teacher

Influence of these factors on student’s satisfaction level has been checked by means of \( \chi^2 \) - test. In case of all considered factors the value of \( \chi^2 \) statistic was higher than the critical value. All considered factors have significant influence on quality perception.

**Conclusions**

The most important are factors connected with flexibility of distance education in time and location and flexible approach to learning in form of ability to select course material and course content. Other important students’ expectations are connected with interactivity of online courses and ability to knowledge and experiences sharing and communications with professors and other students. There are some key provides to students: increased experience with technology, flexibility in time and location, increased written communication experience and highly individualized learning style. The long-term costs of online learning are significantly less than traditional learning. Learners can conveniently finish learning and teaching in cyberspace. They can ask questions, give comments, arrange works, recommend good articles, develop projects, conduct group discussions and browse well-recommended websites. Online education and new technologies allow for the dynamic creation of a personalized learning. Students attending traditional courses gain an advantage over online students through: traditional university reputation, the face-to-face contact between students and professors and the social interaction that take place among students in an academic community. Students benefit from the cultural interaction and dynamic experiences that exist on campus life at traditional universities and carry invaluable interpersonal skills.

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Playgrounds for Young Children across the World

Elizabeth Landerholm, Ed.D
Joanna Pawlina, B.A
Teacher Education Department
Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois

Introduction

The research questions for this study were: How does the culture effect what kind of recreation is available for families and young children? How do families and young children use these community resources?

The researcher first asked these questions in the Netherlands, when she noticed that in the community parks, there were playground equipment (swings, climbing structures) next to a café where parents could drink coffee and keep watch on their children. In the US, playgrounds were structures for children where parents (usually the mother) took their children to play and there might or might not be some benches for mothers or fathers to sit on. The cultural idea in the Netherlands was to have playspaces to accommodate both parents and children. Keeler’s book (2008) went on to expand the idea of culture effecting playspaces as he found while living in the Netherlands that community playgrounds usually included art and nature and also were unique as each community helped build the playgrounds using community materials and community artists, carpenters, or other adults willing to be part of the design and building process. Other cultures (Jamaica and Puerto Rico) used natural resources such as beaches for most of their family recreation. What playgrounds were available were lightly used while the whole extended family spent time at the beach, the adults cooking, talking, eating, and swimming while the children swam and played in the sand. Ireland had the added cultural practice of meeting and strolling on the beach while Italy had the cultural practice of the stroll in the community.

Parent and Community Involvement

Research from the onset of the Headstart program in the United States in the 1960s through current research has provided substantial evidence that children’s academic achievement is linked to their parents’ involvement in their education.
Involvement of parents in the educational programs of their children has shown to produce positive results in terms of child outcomes, increased parent skills, and improved educational programs (Berger, 1991, Fruchter et al, 1993). In Japan, many sources indicated that Japanese mothers are highly involved with their children’s education (Wood, 1993). Parents who are more highly involved with their children’s education also are better able to access and use educational community services available for children and families such as parks, beaches, museums, zoos, playgrounds, fairs, theaters, festivals, as well as early schooling resources such as daycare centers and preschools. The resources available in each community will vary, but all produce an informal community curriculum. In a rural area or in a city, children observe different aspects of nature and community life. Children learn from persons in the neighborhood. How much learning children gain from others depends on how much association they have, how safe the neighborhood is, and how many community services and agencies parents use. Every community has service agencies, political establishments, social-cultural agencies and business enterprises. Just as schools and homes provide their curricula, so do community agencies. The efforts, products and resources of each agency all provide formal, informal and hidden curricula similar to the school environment (Barbour and Barbour, 1997). The cultural attitudes of not only the local community, but the national culture also affect the types of recreation and playspaces for families and young children.

Keeler (2008), an American who designed play equipment in Europe and the United States for the Danish play equipment manufacturer Kompan (bigtoys in the U.S.) while living and working in the Netherlands says: “While living in the Netherlands, I was surrounded by beautifully designed public spaces filled with interesting sculpture, attractive architecture and water fountains of all kinds.” During that period of time, he made three discoveries that he later incorporated into the idea of developing what he called “Natural PlayScapes.” He found that in the Netherlands playspaces involved 1) Art, 2) Nature and 3) were unique as each community built their own. He said “Wow I thought, children should have beautiful art for play in their own spaces.” In addition to art, he also saw one of a kind community play environments in the neighborhoods in the Netherlands. Each space was different because each space was created by the community residents, artists, carpenters, gardeners, using community materials. And finally, when he visited kindergartens and schools in Europe, he found that there were always natural elements of nature for the children to play in (Keeler, 2008).

**The Environment as the Third Teacher**

The discovery of the Reggio Emilia learning approach in Reggio Emilia, Italy by educators in the United States, according to Greenman (2001) has reinvigorated the progressive approach to early childhood education, brought attention to the details of the environment and has inspired early childhood professionals. Because of the philosophy of the environment as the third teacher, the focus on art, the community and nature is well implemented in the Reggio Emilia approach in Italy both for their indoor and outdoor environments. Reggio Emilia uses many ways to involve art, nature and the senses in the curriculum and in the indoor and outdoor environment.

Senses— touch and sight: Reggio Emilia teachers provide collections of the natural world in the indoor environment, such as rocks, twigs, acorns, and leaves to sort in baskets and other containers.
Light and color—Reggio Emilia classrooms are provided with light boxes with natural objects to sort on top of the light box. Color is everywhere, in the paints and other art materials, in wall hangings and table cloths and real dishes in the housekeeping corner, in displays in the hallways.

Taste: teachers provide a garden growing outdoors as part of the playground and activities such as composting, digging, picking fresh vegetables to make a salad; picking berries, cherries, and apples for eating or baking.

Looking and listening; children have birds, squirrels, other animals and plants to observe in their outdoor playground (Guilio Ceppi and Michele Zini(1998).

Even ants are observed. During a recent conference in Chicago, Leila Gandini,(2006) told a story of how in a Reggio Emilia school, the children had a problem with ants eating the school candy, so the children problem solved by making a house for the ants outside so that they won’t come in the school and eat their candy. This way of using the critters in the environment as part of the school curriculum is typical of Reggio Emilia’s philosophy. Reggio Emilia’s focus on childcare centers as places of beauty has literally shed light on the concept of children’s environments (Greenman, 2001, 1998).

According to Albrecht (996,2003) the four key ideas in the Reggio Emilia approach are:

1) interdependence of parents, teachers and children, each contributing toward the child’s education,
2) the competence of the child,
3) the power of the environment,


Community Involvement in Learning

Current research supports schools involving parents and communities as partners in supporting learning. (Landerholm, Gehrie, and Jennings, 2004; Landerholm, Harrelson and Shabat, 2004.). Still, many schools only regard volunteering as legitimate “parent involvement.” Because of this tendency, Lowitzer (1989), found that families from low socioeconomic status groups were rated by teachers as less involved with their children’s programs than parents from higher income groups. Furthermore, these low income families had fewer community resources and sources of support available to them. Neighborhood parks and playgrounds may not be safe or may not have usable equipment. Parents may not know how to access these resources or that these resources are important for their children’s learning (Honig, 1992). Landerholm and Lowenthal (1993), Landerholm and Karr (1988). Gehrie and Landerholm (1995-2003) found that support type activities such as food, family entertainment, family field trips, child care, were important in building rapport and a first step in getting parents involved in their children’s education. These activities were also useful in introducing parents to educational resources available in the community. Later volunteering and leadership activities could be introduced. Building rapport and
providing support was particularly important in low income, multicultural populations of parents and children and parents of children with special needs (Landerholm, E. and Gehrie, C. 2005, Landerholm, et al, 2002, Asher, 1988, Cochran and Dean, 1991). In Japan, the concept of support for parents is not as comprehensive. Parent involvement is seen more as parents helping the school by being involved in programs such as bake sales, helping at the carnival or sports’ day and helping their children with school work. (Landerholm, 1995)

Hugh B. Price (2008) in Mobilizing the Community suggests that all agencies in the community can be involved in helping children succeed, and that community involvement is as important as parent involvement. It is especially important in low-income communities that community agencies get involved in helping children to succeed. Such agencies as the public library, churches, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, boys and girls clubs, the YMCA, city parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, afterschool programs, businesses, mentoring programs and any other agencies can provide learning experiences for children. Price goes on to say that communities are underappreciated and untapped resources for helping minority children (Price, 2008). Often when school personnel think about improving school achievement they only think about school tasks such as reading. They do not think that groups involved with more social activities such as playgrounds, parks, sports, scouts, 4H clubs, YMCA programs could be helpful for raising achievement. Yet, families and communities working together help children have fun, feel important and feel like they belong. These feelings give rise to wanting to achieve and be successful in school and in life.

Cultural differences in providing for family well being in the community

Stress factors regarding the community environment appear to be less in Japan than either Europe or the United States. Japan shares with Iceland and Sweden the world’s lowest infant mortality rate, and virtually no Japanese children suffer from malnutrition, low birth weight or other health problems associated with poverty or environmental pollution (UNICEF, 2009). In 2007 in the United States, the Children Defense Fund reported that more than thirteen million children in America live in poverty or 1 out of every six children. Between 2000 and 2007 the number of poor children increased by 1.7 million. Poverty effects children’s health, infant mortality, food security, early development, school attendance and graduation and the home, family and community environment. Home and family activities differ by income as well. One study that compared kindergarteners from families in the bottom fifth of the socioeconomic distribution, to children from the top fifth, found that children from the top fifth of all families have three times as many books at home, are read to more often, watch far less television, are four times more likely to have a computer in the home, and are more likely to visit museums or libraries (Children’s Defense fund, 2008).

Finally, the safety of the environment is affected by violence and guns. In 2005, 3006 children and teens were killed by firearms which is the first increase since the US Congress allowed the assault weapons ban to expire in 2004. (Children’s Defense fund, 2008). The safety issue in many neighborhoods makes it impossible to take children to any type of playground. Counties in Europe, England and Japan do not have as high rate of violence or poverty as the US does and neighborhood and school playgrounds are more of a resource for the community.
Cultural attitudes affecting school achievement in various cultures

Stevenson, H., Lee, S., 1990; Stevenson, H., 1992, in their studies of Japanese, Chinese, American parents’ involvement with school and their children’s education found that Japanese mothers stressed hard work over ability, spent more time and money setting up a good environment for the child to study at home and had higher expectations for their children’s grades that did American mothers. Holloway et al, (1990) found that children’s achievement in the U.S. and Japan was affected by social class and by individual parent behaviors. Competent children in both countries had mothers who displayed positive affect toward them, took an active role in managing the learning process, and communicated accurately. Tanaka, M. (1990), found that Japanese mothers who took STEP training changed their attitude toward their children, and the children of mothers who scored higher on attitude change showed more independence in solving their own problems. Tanaka, (1990) found that 90% of preschool children often play in their living room in the 1st-5th floor or above the 5th floor. In the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education in Italy, the child is viewed as competent. Teachers and parents view the child as being able to solve problems and research ideas—even young children. In the Reggio Emilia approach, the environment is viewed as the third teacher and children can learn without adult intervention but through exploring a rich interesting environment (Albrecht, K. (1996,2003) Haigh, K.(2003)Hendrick, J(2004), Edwards,C.et al,(1998), Edwards, C. et al, 1993).

Community Arrangements for children with Disabilities

Playgrounds are created and constructed mainly for the children. Many cultures fail to remember about the parents. But are all playgrounds suitable for all children? Can children with disabilities play along with their typically developing peers? Based on the observation of many neighborhood parks and school playgrounds around Chicago and also based on the available research in the field, the answer is no. These playgrounds are suitable, stimulating and engaging for typically developing children, but unfortunately their peers facing challenges can not enjoy the play at the same level.

Before we go into detail about a suitable playground for all, we should investigate why this kind of play is important in terms of human development. Why do we want our children to spend time at the playground? Studies have proven that playtime is not only beneficial in terms of physical development, but also aids other areas such as emotional, social and cognitive (Hall, 2007). Many professionals in the field of childhood development, stress that a “good motor, perceptual and social development are critical for learning basic academic skills” (Ensign, 1993).

While at the playground, children are usually independent. They are being supervised by adults often from a distance. This setting gives them a sense of freedom. It allows for practicing their social skills. This is the time when children learn how to cooperate with each other, how to problem solve and effectively communicates with their peers. According to Ensign “through such play activities children develop social maturity” (1993). Many children with special needs require more support in this area of development than their typically developing peers. Thus, ability to take part in playground activities is especially important for this group of children.
The most visible benefits received from playground activities are in the physical development area. Playgrounds offer equipment which promotes practice of their gross and fine motor skills. Special needs children, depending on the severity and nature of their disability often are lacking abilities in this area of development. When presented with appropriate environment they can strengthen and further their abilities. Inadequately equipped playgrounds further the disadvantage of children who already face challenges. By not being able to take part in outdoor play, these children are being blocked from their right to develop fully. It is not only the disabled child who is being restricted in his development. A typically developing child needs opportunity to play with his special needs peer. Through these early interactions of children with different abilities we promote a world with fewer barriers.

Statistics show that 10 percent of all children living in the United States have some form of disability which prevents them from taking part in playground activities, which are such an important factor in any child’s development. In the book “The Secret of Childhood,” Maria Montessori wrote “…childhood constitutes the most important element in an adult’s life, for it is in his early years that a man is made. The well-being of the adult is intimately connected with the kind of life that he had when he was a child. Our mistakes fall upon our children and make an indelible impression on them.” Thus it is time to look at our mistakes and make the necessary corrections.

**Purpose of the Study:**

The researcher spent two months in Japan in 1994 to conduct the previous study (Landerholm, 1995) and eight years directing the McCosh Even Start after school program in Chicago which developed learning centers and community field trips in the afterschool environment (Landerholm, 2000, 2004.) This study of community and school playgrounds and community resources involved a period of several years visiting Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, England, Japan, Korea, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico in order to observe, videotape and describe the use of school and community environments, playgrounds and other learning environments by teachers, parents and children across the world.

**RESEARCH methodology**

**Sample and Procedure**

In the 1995 Japan study, fourteen schools in the following categories: kindergarten (public and private), early childhood special education, daycare centers and preschools, were observed and videotaped. Principals, teachers and parents were interviewed. Parents and children were also observed at community gatherings and holidays. Upon return, tapes were viewed and coded. The tapes were coded and compared related to materials and equipment available, types of family recreation available and types most frequented, presence of fathers and mothers and other family members, types of equipment and materials available. In the United States, the researcher directed a Even Start Family Literacy after school program in a Chicago Public School for eight years and with C. Gehrie, videographer, documented the use of the classroom learning environments in the after-school program with videotapes, interviews, and photo documentation (Gehrie and Landerholm, final reports 1995-2003).

For this study, the researcher videotaped, and took photos over five years (2002-2008), of playgrounds and community spaces in Europe, Puerto Rico,
Jamaica, Korea and Japan. Currently the tapes and photos from the new study and the previous studies are being coded and compared in terms of school and community playgrounds, unique features, nature, art, public spaces, and cultural focus.

**Preliminary Results**

The research questions for this study were: How does the culture effect what kind of recreation is available for families and young children? How do families and young children use these community resources? Preliminary results from observations, photos and notes are as follows. Further detailed coding will be completed at a later date. The researcher first asked these questions in the Netherlands, when she noticed that in the community parks, there were playground equipment (swings, climbing structures) next to a café where parents could drink coffee and keep watch on their children. In the US, playgrounds were structures for children where parents (usually the mother) took their children to play and there might or might not be some benches for mothers or fathers to sit on. The cultural idea in the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden was to have playspaces to accommodate both parents and children. Keeler’s book (2008) went on to expand the cultural ideas of community involvement in constructing playspaces, and including art and nature as part of these constructions.

**Playgrounds in Europe**

In Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands, community playgrounds included provisions for adults as well as children. Playgrounds were park of larger parks. Cafes for parents were close by so parents could sit, drink coffee, talk to friends while their children played on the swings and slides and climbing equipment. Playground equipment was also found in the midst of zoos, again with the café close by. In Oslo, Norway, the Vigeland Sculpture Park is part of the larger Frogner Park containing fantastic sculpture of adults and children doing all sorts of everyday things. In the park, people look at the artwork, exercise, walk their dogs, play on playground equipment, have picnics, eat at cafes, etc.

In Italy with the emphasis on the child being competent, there was not a lot of emphasis on having soft playground materials in case the child might fall as there is in the U.S. That would show a belief that the child would fall. Families and children helped out in building school playgrounds including fountains and building bird houses. In the Reggio Emilia programs, art and nature were very important and parents helped in building the playgrounds.

**Community Recreation in Europe-unique features**

Besides the large parks and zoos which included playgrounds, Italians have the custom of strolling with the whole family on the piazzas in the evening and the Irish like to stroll with the whole family along the beach. Of course in the summer, families everywhere like to go to the beach.

**Japan and Korea**

Japan and Korea had many large parks which included playgrounds, climbing equipment, swings and slides and riding equipment. In Korea some schools
continued the Froebel tradition of having live animals and plants for the children to learn to care for as well as an emphasis on large natural spaces to run and play. In Japan school playgrounds were all provided for by the National curriculum and schools were required to have the right amount of space and materials before they opened up the school. The playgrounds have climbing equipment, swings and slides, sandboxes and shovels and large play spaces. Thus, there was not as much variability in school playgrounds as in the United States where some schools have very poor playgrounds or none at all. Both Korea and Japan place more value on physical fitness and exercises than the U.S. does.

The Caribbean: Jamaica and Puerto Rico

Jamaica and Puerto Rico are islands. So in those areas close to the beach, the families are at the beach rather than at the playground. The whole extended family spends time at the beach, cooking, eating, talking, swimming and playing in the sand. With the weather nice all year, this is a wonderful way for families to spend time together. The community playgrounds that were available, at McDonalds, school playgrounds after school and playgrounds in parks were not used as often as the beach. In Ocho Rios, Jamaica, the community built a park called Turtle Park which had swings, slides for the children and benches for the parents, also had structures for whole families to cook and picnic while the children played on the equipment. This park was well used by the community.

In Jamaica the school playgrounds were not well furnished as money was tight. Some schools did raise animals and plants as a teaching tool similar to the Froebel tradition. Often playgrounds were large empty spaces where children played with found objects. At a preschool near Ocho Rios, the education supervisor worked with parents to paint squares and circles on the playground for learning games and used old tires for climbing structures.

Summary

Community involvement in constructing playspaces and including art and nature in the playspaces that was evident in Norway, Sweden and Netherlands, was also evident in the Reggio Emilia school playgrounds in Reggio Emilia, Italy.

Other cultures (Jamaica and Puerto Rico) used natural resources such as beaches for most of their family recreation. What playgrounds were available were lightly used while the whole extended family spent time at the beach, the adults cooking, talking, eating, and swimming while the children swam and played in the sand.

Some cultures also had the cultural practice of the whole family going out strolling together. Ireland had the cultural practice of meeting and strolling on the beach, while Italy and Puerto Rico cultures strolled in the community.

Playgrounds in the US culture because of the emphasis on safety and law suits, tend to include soft materials on the ground by the slides and swings in case the child will fall. In Italy, the child is viewed as competent so having soft materials would suggest that the child will fall. Thus, playgrounds don’t automatically include soft ground materials.

In Korea and Jamaica, schools adopted the ideas of Pestalozzi and Froebel to include growing plants and having animals to care for on their school playgrounds. In US during Dewey’s time, progressive schools included plants and animals based on Dewey’s ideas and the earlier ideas of Pestalozzi and
Froebel, but then abandoned that practice later on. Currently some schools are beginning to include gardening and composting as part of the green curriculum. Also more recently, a few schools have designed playgrounds specifically to meet the needs of children with disabilities.

Currently global ideas have spread from one place to another. Big recreation parks like Disneyland have spread from the US to countries in Europe and Asia. McDonalds has playgrounds with its restaurant and these have sprung up across the world. The new Millennium Park in Chicago adapted the fountain idea which is so prevalent in Italy in parks where children and families play. Millennium Park also included art and nature which is so prevalent in Europe.

In conclusion, through observing playgrounds across the world, the researcher noticed that parents and children have favorite places to play together. Some places are culturally determined, while other good ideas for playspaces in one country often spread across the world.

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Practical Issues behind the Research on Motivation

Blanka Frydrychová Klímová
University of Hradec Králové, Faculty of Informatics and Management
Czech Republic

1. Introduction

Motivation has always been a pivotal concept in the study of language learning. Unfortunately, there are not many studies on its research in the Czech Republic. Therefore, this paper is devoted to a description of pioneering research on motivation in learning English at the Faculty of Informatics and Management of the University of Hradec Kralove in the Czech Republic.

Before the research itself, we had to provide ourselves with some profound theoretical background and expertise in the field, such Deci and Ryan (1985), Dörnyei (2005; 2008), Gardner (2001), Ushioda (2001; 2008), or Weiner (1992). According to Dörnyei (2005), the history of L2 motivation research has undergone three key developmental stages so far: the social psychological period (1959-1990), the cognitive-situated period (during the 1990’s) and a mixture of new approaches (past decade). However, for the purpose of this paper, the most important period is the past decade, which is explained in length in the following paragraph in order to understand our research.

2. A Mixture of New Approaches and the ‘L2 Motivational Self System’

A mixture of new approaches (past decade) in L2 motivation research are characterized by an interest in the motivational change and in the relationship between motivation and identity/self. The best-known concepts are as follows: process-oriented conceptualization of motivation (based mainly on dynamic character and temporal variation of motivation); motivation as investment; and
ideal and ought-to L2 self. The last concept has brought about a radical change in the research on motivation. In 2005 Dörnyei proposed a new approach to the understanding of L2 motivation, conceived within an L2 Motivational Self System, which attempts to integrate a number of L2 theories (e.g. Gardner 2001; Ushioda 2001) with findings of self research in psychology.

Over the past two decades there has been an interest among psychologists - self theorists in the active, dynamic nature of the self-system. First introduced by Markus and Nurius (1986), the concept of the possible self represents individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. That is, possible selves are specific representations of one’s self in future states, involving thoughts, images and senses, and are in many ways the manifestations of one’s goals and aspiration. From a motivational point of view, two types of possible selves, the ideal self and the ought to self, seemed particularly relevant (Higgins 1987). The former refers to the representation of the attributes that someone would ideally like to possess (i.e. representation of hopes, aspirations or wishes), whereas the latter refers to the attributes that one believes one ought to possess (i.e. a representation of someone’s sense of your duty, obligations or responsibilities) and which therefore may bear little resemblance to desires or wishes. The motivational aspect of these self-guides was explained by Higgins’s (1987, 1998) self-discrepancy theory, postulating that motivation involves the desire for people to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal/ought selves.

This self research gripped Dörnyei’s attention in 2005. He immediately spotted a new challenging opportunity for motivational research. Moreover, he proposed a new approach to the understanding of L2 motivation, conceived within the ‘L2 Motivational Self System’, which attempts to integrate a number of influential L2 theories (e.g. by Gardner 2001; Ushioda 2001) with findings of self research in psychology (e.g. Higgins 1987; Markus and Nurius 1986). He suggests three main components of the L2 Motivational Self System:

- Ideal L2 Self, which is the L2-specific facet of one’s ‘ideal self’: If the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the ‘ideal L2 self’ is a powerful motivator to learn the L2.
- Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes.
- L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situated motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success).

Consequently, there exist six conditions for the motivating capacity of the ideal and ought-to selves, which are true only if 1) the learner has a desired future self-image; 2) this self-image/ future self-image is elaborate and vivid; 3) the self-image/future self-image is perceived as plausible and is in harmony – or at least does not clash – with the expectations of the learner’s family, peers and other elements of the social environment; 4) the self-image/future self-image is regularly activated in his/ her working self-concept; 5) the self-image/future self-image is accompanied by relevant and effective procedural strategies that act as a roadmap towards the goal; 6) the self-image/future self-image also contains elaborate information about the negative consequences of not achieving the desired end-state.

3. Research Study
At the beginning of the research we asked three questions:

1. **What do we want to examine?**
   - The subject of our research is obviously university learner’s motivation for studying English language.

2. **What kind of research method shall we use?**
   - Both the quantitative and qualitative methods are employed as we included in the questionnaire 8 open-ended questions. The Likert scale for attitude measurement is used for the closed-ended items.

3. **What kind of research instruments/tools shall we employ?**
   - A format of questionnaire which includes 10 statements and 10 questions asking about the reason for learning English, their likes and dislikes about learning English.

The format of the questionnaire is as follows (please refer to Appendix 1):

**Title**
- Just like any other piece of writing, a questionnaire should have a title to identify the domain of the investigation, to provide the respondent with initial orientation and to activate relevant background knowledge and content expectations.

**General introduction**
- The ‘opening greeting’ usually describes the purpose of the study and the organization conducting/sponsoring it. Further important functions of this section involve emphasizing that there are no right or wrong answers; promising confidentiality or anonymity and requesting honest answers; and saying ‘thank you’.

**Specific instructions**
- These explain and demonstrate (with examples) how respondents should go about answering the questions.

**Questionnaire items**
- These constitute the main body of the questionnaire. They need to be very clearly separated from the instructions. This is where different typefaces and font styles are useful.

**Additional information**
- At the end of the questionnaire you may include a contact name (for example, the researcher’s or an administrator’s) with a telephone number or address and some explicit encouragement to get in touch if there are any questions. It is a nice gesture (unfortunately too rarely used) to include a brief note promising to send the respondent a summary of the findings if interested. Sometimes questionnaires can also end with an invitation to volunteer for a follow-up interview.

**Final ‘thank you’**
- It is surprising how often this is omitted!

**Length**
- The questionnaire should be 3-4 pages long at maximum and the completion should not exceed 30 minutes.

**Layout**
- The questionnaire has to be short; ideally a two-page A4 format or a four-page A4 booklet at maximum.

**Item sequence**
- Item sequence is a significant factor because the context of a question can have an impact on its interpretation and the response given to it. We have to follow four principles of sequencing the items:
• mixing up the scales so that the respondents will not repeat previous answers;
• opening questions should be neutral;
• factual (or ‘personal’ or ‘classification’) questions, such as asking for name, address, marital status, or number of children, religion should be left at the end of the questionnaire; otherwise, they might create some resistance in the respondents;
• open-ended questions should be placed at the end or near the end rather than at the beginning of the questionnaire since they usually demand more work; again they could create resistance in the respondents to continue in the questionnaire. (For further reference see Dörnyei 2001, 2007.)

4. Evaluation of the Questionnaires

At the beginning of the winter term of 2008/09 the mock questionnaires were filled in and submitted by 25 first year’s students of Management of Travel Industry (MTI) out of which 1 student was male, 23 students were females and 1 student did not answer. Their age range was between 19-22. With respect to their nationality, 22 students were Czechs, 1 was Slovak, 1 Algerian and 1 did not answer. Surprisingly, only 4 students have been for at least three months abroad. Nevertheless, at least 17 students have had native speakers during their studies of English.

As far as the first 12 close-ended items are concerned, students more or less agree with all the suggested statements (Appendix 1). They even look forward to English classes although many of them only slightly. Nevertheless, the respondents are evenly divided on the issue of nervousness and confusion when speaking English in classes. It suggests that there are a lot of students who do not feel relaxed in classes where they are expected to talk.

Responses to the open-ended questions 13 - 20 (Appendix 1) are as follows:
13. English is seen as the most important language of the day. It is indispensable for business as well as leisure time activities.
14. Students’ expectations are high. We can see it as an obligation to fulfil.
15. Students expect they will learn a lot, but probably mainly outside classes. Students’ exchanges are therefore extremely important. It is true that a lot of our MTI students frequently meet their foreign counterparts.
16. Students believe speaking should be the most important part of English classes. In classes only few really participate in discussions, though.
17. This question has not brought any reasonable outcome. Students mentioned a lot of various things (such as teachers speak English all the time, opportunity to participate in students’ exchanges, making presentations, having a native speaker . . .) but their answers differed.
18. They use English especially when talking to foreign friends and working on a computer.
19. Our first year’s students plan to find jobs in which they will use English on a daily basis. Therefore, they want to be able to speak fluently.
20. Students say they hate grammar but it is important if they want to be fluent and get jobs in which English is necessary.

To discover some similarities and differences in students’ attitude to studying English, at the end of the winter term of 2008/09 mock questionnaires were filled in and submitted by 14 third year’s students of Management of Travel Industry (MTI) out of which 2 students were males and 12 students were
females. Their age range was between 21-24. All respondents were Czechs and have had native speakers during their studies of English. Out of 14 students 6 students have been for at least three months abroad.

As far as the first 12 close-ended items are concerned, students once again more or less agree with all the suggested statements (Appendix 1). As students of MTI, they consider English their priority although they admit not improving their English regularly outside the school. Moreover, the respondents are still evenly divided on the issue of nervousness and confusion when speaking English in classes.

Responses to the open-ended questions 13 - 20 (please refer to Appendix 1) are as follows:

13. English is seen as a tool of socialising for them, such as meeting different kinds of people, travelling or having fun.
14. A vast majority of students decided to study at FIM since they like travelling and, therefore, they wanted to study tourism together with English as one third states. In addition, they do not have to study maths.
15. Among the most useful learning strategies reading books, listening, speaking in English and learning new vocabulary seem to be most beneficial to students.
16. Students believe that teachers should encourage them to speak in classes.
17. Although students were not quite clear about this question, they find business English classes useful for their future careers. Furthermore, they would welcome more their classes in English.
18. They use English mainly when meeting foreign people, in their jobs and when working on the Internet.
19. Almost all students would like to be fluent in English, use English in their future jobs or in their private lives. 3 of them aim to pass a CAE certificate.
20. Students do not really like learning vocabulary and grammar even though both are a must for mastering their English.

5. Conclusion
We might conclude that both the first and third year’s students seem to generate their Ideal L2 Self: they are determined to expand a lot of effort to study English although only slightly outside their English classes; moreover, English is their priority. Furthermore, their Ought-to L2 Self is also generated: they are motivated by the others, particularly by other people’s expectations from them. However, their L2 learning situation should be carefully considered, such as teaching strategies or creating a friendly, home-like, and supporting atmosphere which would make students less nervous to speak English during their classes. Thus, the L2 Motivational Self System seems to make learners keener on doing things, but on the other hand, it makes them more responsible for their successes and failures. Furthermore, it works with positive learning experiences.

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize that the sample of the research study was limited. Thus, the results can not be conclusive and other comparative research will proceed, this time with two sets of the third year’s students of Management of Travel Industry since the first year’s students tend not to have well-defined view on certain aspects of their studies, such as question 17.

References
Dear students,

Learning English or any other subject is deeply influenced by both students’ and teachers’ motivation. It is common knowledge that highly motivated students improve much faster and easier than others. All this said, you can understand why the FIM UHK English language teachers are considering ways how to increase your motivation to study English.

The questionnaire is designed to help us find ways how to further improve the standard of English language teaching at our faculty and hopefully elsewhere, too.

This questionnaire is not a test so there are no “right” or “wrong” answers and you do not even have to write your name on it. We are interested in your personal opinion. The results of this survey will be used only for research purpose so please give your answers sincerely to ensure the success of this project.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

We would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by simply circling a number from 1 to 6. Please do not leave out any of items.

Appendix 1

Dear students,

Learning English or any other subject is deeply influenced by both students’ and teachers’ motivation. It is common knowledge that highly motivated students improve much faster and easier than others. All this said, you can understand why the FIM UHK English language teachers are considering ways how to increase your motivation to study English.

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Thank you for your kind cooperation.

We would like you to tell us how much you agree or disagree with the following statements by simply circling a number from 1 to 6. Please do not leave out any of items.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Ex.) If you strongly agree with the following statement, write this:
I like chocolate very much. 5 6

1. English is the lingua franca of the current world.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I would feel ashamed if I did not know English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

3. It makes the people I love (parents, partner, etc.) proud of me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

4. The situation I am in seems to demand my sound knowledge of English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

5. It is my deeply felt personal dream to be fluent in English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

6. I am sure I have a good ability to learn English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

7. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

8. I always look forward to English classes.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

9. I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English.
   1 2 3 4 5 6

10. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.
    1 2 3 4 5 6

11. To what extent is the English language your priority as a student of Management of Tourism?
12. Do you regularly do anything to improve your English outside classes?
   a. If yes, what do you do?
   b. If not, why?

13. What do you like most about learning English? (You can mention more things.)

14. What main reasons made you decide to apply for studying the Management of Tourism at the University of Hradec Králové?

15. Which learning strategies do you find important when studying English and why?

16. Which teaching strategies do you consider useful when studying English and why?

17. What do you find useful, or miss, when studying English at the faculty?

18. Outside classes, what do you usually use your knowledge of English for? (e.g. social networking website, contact with English speaking people, etc.)

19. What is your goal at learning English, i.e. what do you imagine to be able to use it for?

20. What do you like least about learning English? (You can mention more things.)

Please provide the following information by ticking (✓) in the box or writing your response in the space so that we can interpret your previous answers better.

- Male    Female
- Czech    Non-Czech (Please specify: __________________)
- Your age (in years): _______
- Have you ever had or do you have now a native English-speaking teacher?  Yes  No
- Have you spent a longer period (at least a total of three months) in English-speaking countries (e.g., travelling, studying)?  Yes  No

Note:
The results of the questionnaires will be carefully assessed, thoroughly discussed, and published by our team. If you are interested, we promise to send you a summary of the findings if interested.
The world is getting smaller and smaller through globalization which requires interaction and integration among people, companies, and nations. This process has some effects on the environment, culture, political systems, economy and education around the world. Besides, as Spolsky (2004:76) states English language has gained superiority over other world languages as a language of science, technology, sport, computers, popular music, commerce and trade in a global framework.

Turkey, being aware of the importance of knowing a foreign language, made some changes in the policy of foreign language teaching. With the acknowledgement of the eight–year compulsory education in 1997, foreign language teaching started at 4th and 5th grades as a compulsory course in elementary schools. As is known, elementary school students are children. In terms of cognitive, language and personality development, children differ from adults.

According to Jean Piaget, children pass through the following stages, as shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 : Stages of Intellectual Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensorimotor Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoperational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Preconceptual or symbolic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Intuitive or Perceptual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete Operational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal Operational</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sensorimotor Period is the one during which the child is incapable of establishing object permanence. In this period the infant’s world is entirely egocentric. According to Russell (1991:12), “During this period the most important thing for our consideration is to plant the seed of reading, to encourage the handling of books, to establish story times.”

Once children have established the concept of object permanence, the second period, preoperational period, which Piaget further subdivides into two stages, comes into being. The most significant advance during this period is the development of the symbolic function. “Something is represented as an object, event or conceptual schema by what Piaget refers to as a signifier” (Piaget and Inhelder 1969:51). At this stage, a child can represent something which is not present by using words, mental symbols. About at the age of four they arrive at what Piaget termed the Intuitive or Perceptual Stage. At this age, the child can give reasons for his actions and for his beliefs. The third period, the period of Concrete operations, is the longest period of the all. It covers roughly the ages of seven to twelve. This is when children begin to use rudimentary logic and problem solving. They begin to understand time and spatial relationships. Almost all primary school children are in this period. The school-age child is eager to learn many things. As reading starts at this period, as Sharp (1975:37) clarifies, “…we should take account of children’s natural interests, relate their school work to the world as they see it.”

The fourth is the period of Formal operations which starts at twelve and concludes at about fifteen. During this period, since full cognitive maturity is supposed to be established, children become capable of using formal logic, exchanging ideas, comprehending the viewpoints of others, and understanding the world as a social phenomenon which requires human interaction. This period is a period of adolescence.

Whereas young language learners are said to be passing through their cognitive maturity and metalinguistic awareness, adult second language learners already have. However, young language learners can be said to be more successful in second language learning than adults because of the accessibility of the innate language acquisition.

Between the age of 18 moths and 11 or 12, all normal children except for mentally retarded acquire a language to which they are exposed. “It has been hypothesized that there is a critical period for second language acquisition just as for first language acquisition.”(Lighthbown and Spada 2008:68). They describe the Critical Period Hypothesis as a “time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning.”(Lighthbown and Spada 2008:68). Thus, the developmental stages of the brain affect the nature of language acquisition and language learning. In addition to cognitive differences, there are also other differences between young and adult learners in terms of learner characteristics and learning conditions. The following Table, where the presence or the absence of the learner characteristics and learning conditions for four types of learners is shown by – and + notations, gives these differences appropriately.

**Table 2: Differences between Young and Adult learners according to learner characteristics and learning Conditions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FIRST LANGUAGE</th>
<th>SECOND LANGUAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Child</td>
<td>Young Child</td>
<td>Adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescents</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As is seen in the above chart, second language young learners differ from second language adult learners in many ways. However, second language acquisition theories aim at explaining the aspects of language acquisition that are common to all second language learners and contexts.

1. Second language learners already know at least one language.
2. Second language learners are cognitively mature. They are able to engage in problem solving, deduction, and complex memory tasks.
3. Their metalinguistic awareness is already developed.
4. Their general knowledge of the world is said to be extensive.

Among the first language acquisition theories, behaviourism is said to be influential on second and foreign language teaching. Nelson Brooks (1960) and Robert Lado (1964) are two pioneers of the development of audilingual teaching materials and in teacher training. Mimicry and memorization form the base of classroom activities, such as dialogues and sentence patterns memorized by students. According to behaviourism, language development is viewed as the formation of habits. Thus, “behaviourism was often linked to the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), which was developed by structural linguists in Europe and North America” (Lightbown and Spada 2008:34). According to CAH, there are similarities between the first and target language structures. When differences appear, second language learners have difficulty.

By the 1970s, CAH was seen incomplete in explaining second language acquisition from the innatist point of view. According to the principles of Universal Grammar (UG), children acquire first language during a critical period of their development. Thus, White (2003) claims that a second language learned within this period is acquisition. However, according to Schachter (1990), UG does not explain the acquisition of a second language, especially by learners who have passed the critical period. However, according to some researchers, such
as Schwarts (1993) and White (1991), UG affects the second language learners’ use of language not the underlying systematic knowledge of the new language. Learners’ first language knowledge may affect learners’ second language performance.

Chomsky’s theory of first language acquisition influenced Stephen Krashen’s Monitor Model (1982), which Krashen describes in terms of five hypotheses, such as acquisition-learning, monitor, the natural order, input and affective filter hypotheses. Through these hypotheses respectively, in short, Krashen points out that there is a difference between conscious and subconscious learning; when a learner has a plenty of time, he is concerned about producing correct language, and has learned the relevant rules. He is able to monitor his learning; the acquisition order of morphemes in second language acquisition is almost the same as that in first language acquisition; when a learner is exposed to comprehensible input, which consists of i+1, acquisition occurs; feelings, motives, needs, attitudes, and emotional states play an important role for learners in language acquisition.

Some current psychological theories which see language from cognitivist point of view present information processing and transfer appropriate processing. In ‘information processing model’, it is discussed that how much information a second language learner can pay attention to when compared with a proficient language user who can give his full attention to the overall meaning of a text or conversation. In ‘transfer appropriate processing’, according to Blaxton (1989) information is best retrieved in situations that are similar to those in which it was acquired.

According to connectionism, repeated situational and linguistic contexts are more important than any specific innate knowledge in the learner. It is because learners gradually build up their knowledge of language through exposure to the thousands of the linguistic features they eventually hear.

According to the competition model, second language acquisition requires not only rule learning but also language meaning and language use. Another second language acquisition hypothesis which has been effected by cognitivist point of view is the interaction hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, learners not only need the simplification of the linguistic form but rather an opportunity to interact with other speakers for mutual comprehension. Richard Schmidt (1990, 2001) proposes the noticing hypothesis which discusses the importance of learner’s attention to what is being learned. According to this hypothesis, nothing is learned unless it has been noticed.

From sociocultural point of view, social interaction is very important in language acquisition. According to this perspective, speaking and thinking are tightly interwoven. Speaking and writing mediate thinking. Speakers can internalize a language paying attention to what they say to others and to what others say to them.

As is seen in above given second language acquisition theories, while some of them give primary importance to learner’s innate capacity, others emphasize the role of situational or linguistic contexts, attention and social interaction. Additionally, as Krashen indicates in Affective Filter Hypothesis, second language learners’ attitude towards language can be considered as a factor of determining their level of proficiency in the language acquisition.
1. **Aim of the research**

   The aim of this study is to find out Turkish young language learners’ attitude towards English in Turkey, to determine their second language awareness, language consciousness, language performance, their problems in English, and their priorities in English.

2. **Statement of the problem**

   There are several factors affecting second language learning, such as intellectual development, motivation, attitude, aptitude, sex, language environment, language input, affective factors and learning styles. Attitudinal factors may have a significant effect on one’s second language acquisition. If learners develop a negative attitude towards a second language, they may never achieve a full command of language.

3. **Research questions**

   1. Do the pupils in Turkey show a positive or a negative attitude towards English?
   2. Does the attitude of the pupils towards English differ according to the macro and micro language skills?
   3. Do the pupils show a positive attitude towards the language materials, the coursebook and activities?

5. **Method**

   In order to find out young language learners’ attitude towards English in Turkish elementary schools, two questionnaires have been developed. Whereas 30 items in the first questionnaire have been prepared to check the pupils’ attitude towards English outside the classroom, 41 items have been developed for their attitude towards English inside the classroom. The first Questionnaire, the Cronbach Alpha of which is .73, consists of macro and micro language skills in English, authentic materials, language activities, language awareness and types of motivation. The diversity of the statements for each category is provided in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Statements</th>
<th>Skills In English</th>
<th>Types of Motivation</th>
<th>Language Awareness</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second Questionnaire, the Cronbach Alpha of which is .81, consists of the items checking for language skills in English, types of motivation, linguistic competence, coursebook, materials and language learning activities. Table 4 shows the diversity of the statements for each category in Questionnaire II.
Table 4: The Diversity of the Statements for Each Category in Questionnaire II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills In English</th>
<th>Types of Motivation</th>
<th>Linguistic Competence</th>
<th>Coursebook</th>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Statements</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Then these questionnaires were given to 551 fourth graders at the age of 10 in 14 schools chosen randomly in seven big cities, such as Adana, Ankara, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Izmir, Malatya, Samsun from seven diverse regions in Turkey throughout the second semester of the academic year 2006-2007. Questionnaire I and II were given separately to the fourth graders during the lessons by the school teacher or the researcher.

6. Evaluation of the data

SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) has been used for the analysis of the data collection.

7. Data analysis and discussion

The data have been discussed in accordance with the research questions. In the discussion of the responses within the agreement scale, strongly agree and agree; strongly disagree and disagree are evaluated together.

7.1. Pupils’ Attitude Towards English and the Comparison of Pupils’ Language Attitude according to Skills

As is aforementioned, the aim of this study is to determine the pupils’ attitude towards macro and micro skills in English, materials, the coursebook and activities. The below given Table illustrates the mean scores of the responses given to the statements about these categories in Questionnaire I and II. Macro and micro skills are presented in the order of the priority of their language attitude.

Table 5: The mean scores of the responses given to the items about macro and micro skills, materials, the coursebook and activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6,2</td>
<td>466</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>14,9</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>15,4</td>
<td>1181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>17,4</td>
<td>3030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>19,6</td>
<td>1474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>28,1</td>
<td>936</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the findings in Table 5, the pupils’ attitude differs at a significant level of $p<0.05$ depending on the skill ($df=12$; $x^2=298,400$; significance $=0.000$). The responses of the pupils to the questions about macro skills have revealed that more than half of the pupils seem to be positive towards macro skills in English. Initially, the skill which has the highest percentage of positive attitude seems to be grammar (84.6%). This may be an outcome of the possibility that we internalize the underlying system of rules, that is to say competence prior than performance. They seem to be least undecided in their attitude to grammar with 9.3%. Next, the skill with the second highest score in terms of the positive attitude seems to be vocabulary (71.8%). Therefore, it can be deduced that pupils are motivated to improve their proficiency in grammar and vocabulary. Thirdly, the percentage of the positive attitude towards listening skills (71.4%) seems to be slightly lower than vocabulary. Hence, the language skill with the third highest percentage of the positive attitude is listening skills. Three receptive skills rank first in the young language learners’ attitude towards English. Writing skills (68.7%) have the fourth highest percentage of positive attitude. The pupils seem to be less positive towards writing skills than grammar, vocabulary and listening. This productive skill may be discouraging for the learners. As for pronunciation, it has the fifth highest percentage of positive attitude, which is 66.9%. Lastly, as is illustrated in Table 5, reading and speaking skills have the lowest percentage of the positive attitude, which is 56.6. It is because the learners find written instructions difficult, and English story books at their level of English may be difficult. Among all the macro skills, the young language learners seem to be most undecided towards speaking skills. It is because they are not conscious about the fact that in language acquisition performance comes later than competence. Therefore, this incompetency may have affected their approach to the speaking skills.

In addition to micro and macro skills, mean scores of the items related with materials, the coursebook and activities show that more than half of the pupils are positive towards them. The percentage of positive attitude towards these categories are respectively 56.8, 85.4 and 66.8. As to negative attitude, 26.5% of the pupils are negative towards materials, while only 6.2% of them seem to be negative towards coursebook and 20.4% of them seem to be negative towards activities. Finally, 15.8% of the pupils are undecided about materials, 8.3% of them are undecided about their attitude towards the coursebook. The items related with activities revealed that 12.8% pupils seem to be undecided. All in all, the mean scores in the above given table reveals that 68% of the pupils seem to be positive towards the categories of micro and macro skills, materials, the coursebook and activities.

### 7.2. The Pupils’ Attitude Towards Materials, the Coursebook and Activities

#### 7.2.1 The Pupils’ Attitude Towards Materials

The number and variety of materials available for language teaching has increased over the years. Therefore, in order to investigate the pupils’ attitude towards language learning and teaching materials, five statements related with materials have been given in Questionnaire I and Questionnaire II.
Table 6: The Pupils’ Attitude Towards Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of the Questionnaire</th>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>33,5</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>48,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>184     33,5</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>48,2</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>18,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>12,3</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>74,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>24,1</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>60,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>42,1</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>37,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>521     23,6</td>
<td>1347</td>
<td>61,1</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>15,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Scores of Questionnaire I-II</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>25,6</td>
<td>1612</td>
<td>58,6</td>
<td>436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statement one in Questionnaire I is “I learn English to catch up with screen and print media.” The statistical analysis of this item indicates that 48,2% of the pupils show positive attitude towards the item, whereas 33,5% of them are negative, and 18,4% of them seem to be undecided. As is seen in the above given Table, nearly half of the pupils seem to be motivated to watch the news and read newspapers in the target language. Hence, it is necessary to draw the pupils’ attention to informal learning contexts, such as radio and television broadcasts and raise their awareness about how much they can profit from such an experience.

As Table 6 shows, 76,4% of the pupils agree on the statement one- “I would appreciate it if puppets are used in English classes.” The percentage of disagreement is 12,3, and 12,9% of the pupils stated that they are undecided about it. The next item is “I enjoy using computers during English classes.”, and ranks the second in terms of positive attitude. Accordingly, 72% of the pupils stated their agreement on the statement two, whereas 16% of them seem to have disagreed, and 12% of them have been undecided. As is seen, majority of the pupils seem to be eager and motivated to use computers in the classroom. Next, statistical analysis of the responses given to the statement three, “I have difficulty in labelling the objects given in the pictures.”, has shown that 24,1% of the pupils find it difficult to label the pictures, while 60,3% of them have stated that they do not. The percentage of undecided responses is 15,6. As is clearly seen, majority of the pupils seem to be positive towards labelling the pictures and do not have difficulty with the tasks which require them to label pictures. As the responses given to the first and the third items imply, majority of the pupils show a positive attitude towards visual materials, such as pictures and puppets. Lastly, the fourth statement is “I’d enjoy it if my voice is tape-recorded during English classes.” The responses given to this statement reveal that 37,2% of the pupils seem to be positive about the statement, whereas 42,1% of them have been negative, and 20,3% of them have been undecided. In other words, only a small percentage of the pupils are positive towards using a tape-recorder to record their voice. This may result from pupils’ unfamiliarity with tape-recording or the anxiety it may cause on the side of the pupils. However, tape-recording can provide pupils with certain advantages. To sum up, the mean scores of the
statements in Questionnaire I and II reveal that 58.6% of the pupils seem to positive towards the materials used in classes; therefore, it can be deduced that Turkish young learners are positive towards language learning and teaching materials.

7.2.2. The Pupils’ Attitude Towards the Coursebook

Coursebooks are one of the most frequently used materials in foreign language teaching. Therefore, four statements investigating pupils’ attitude towards materials have been included in Questionnaire II.

Table 7: The Pupils’ Attitude Towards the Coursebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of the Questionnaire</th>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Negative F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Positive f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Undecided f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Total f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>88.9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2204</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first given statement related with the pupils’ attitude towards the coursebook is “I find activities in the coursebook entertaining.” As is seen in the Table above, a great majority (88.9%) of the pupils show a positive attitude towards the activities used in the coursebook. Namely, the responses of the pupils to the statement one indicate that the activities presented in the coursebook appeal to their interests as well as engaging them. The statement two is “I am interested in the topics in the coursebook.” The statistical analysis of the responses given to this item shows that 84.9% of the pupils agree on the statement, while 6.7% of them disagree, and 8.3% of them have been undecided. The third statement “I appreciate the use of cartoon characters in the coursebook.” indicate that 84.2% of the pupils are positive about the use of cartoon characters, whereas 7.1% of them are not. 8.7% of them stated that they are undecided about item four. Based on the pupils’ responses to statement two and three, it can be said that most of the pupils enjoy the range of topics and the cartoon characters used in the coursebook. Finally, the fourth statement has the lowest percentage of positive attitude and investigates their opinion about these types of activities. 83.7% of the pupils have responded positively to the statement four which is “I like the art and craft activities in the coursebook.” However, 7.3% of the pupils have responded negatively, and 9.1% of them have been undecided. All in all, the mean score of the responses given to the items discussed above indicate that 85.4% of the pupils are positive towards the activities, topics and illustrations used in the coursebook. As Table 7 illustrates, it has the fourth highest percentage of positive attitude; in other words, 84.9% of the pupils enjoy art and craft activities. The results may indicate that the majority of the pupils find art and craft activities enjoyable and have fun when they are doing them.

7.2.3. The Pupils’ Attitude Towards Activities

Pupils’ attitude towards the classroom activities matters; therefore, four statements have been included in Questionnaire I to determine pupils’ attitude
towards activities. In Questionnaire II, six statements are related with classroom activities have been given.

Table 8: The Pupils’ Attitude Towards Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of the Questionnaire</th>
<th>Item No</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F  %</td>
<td>f  %</td>
<td>f  %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire I</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36 6,5</td>
<td>472 85,7</td>
<td>43 7,8</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>86 15,6</td>
<td>376 68,2</td>
<td>89 16,2</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>73 13,2</td>
<td>405 73,5</td>
<td>73 13,2</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>240 43,6</td>
<td>227 41,2</td>
<td>84 15,2</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>435 14,7</td>
<td>1480 67,2</td>
<td>289 13,1</td>
<td>2204 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>139 25,2</td>
<td>299 54,3</td>
<td>113 20,5</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62 11,3</td>
<td>420 76,2</td>
<td>69 12,5</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54 9,8</td>
<td>455 82,6</td>
<td>42 7,6</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>328 59,5</td>
<td>151 27,4</td>
<td>72 13,1</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31 5,6</td>
<td>486 88,2</td>
<td>34 6,2</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>74 13,4</td>
<td>391 71</td>
<td>86 15,6</td>
<td>551 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td>688 20,8</td>
<td>2202 66,6</td>
<td>416 12,6</td>
<td>3306 100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean Scores of Questionnaire I-II</td>
<td>112 3</td>
<td>20,4</td>
<td>368 2</td>
<td>66,8</td>
<td>705 12,8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first and the second statements in Questionnaire I are about singing in English and learning through songs. The first statement “I want to sing in English.” ranks the first with 85,7% of agreement. The percentage of disagreement on this item is 6,5%; the percentage of pupils who stated they are undecided is 7,8. On the other hand, the responses given to the second statement “I want to learn English through songs.” indicate that 68,2% of the pupils seem to be positive towards learning English through songs; however, 15,6% of them have been negative, and 16,2% of them have been undecided. Accordingly, the second item has the third highest percentage of positive attitude, and the majority of the pupils show a positive attitude towards learning English through songs. Table 8 also illustrates that the percentage of pupils who are eager to sing in English is higher than those who seem to be positive towards learning the target language through songs. Such a difference between the percentages may indicate that fewer pupils recognize songs as a language learning activity. Next, the third statement in Questionnaire I is “I want to learn English through games.” The percentage of pupils who agree on this statement is 73,5% which is the second highest percentage of positive attitude. The percentage of negative attitude and undecided pupils is 13,2. Finally, in Table 8, the last statement is “I learn English to understand computer games.” According to the statistical analysis of this item, 41,2% of the pupils agree on the statement, and 43,6% of them disagree; therefore, it can be said that understanding computer games seems to be a source of motivation for less than half of the pupils.

In Questionnaire II, statement one and two investigate pupils’ attitude towards pair and group work activities. The first statement is “We work in pairs in English classes.” According to the results given in Table 12, 54,3% of the
pupils agree on the statement, and 25.2% disagree. 20.5% of the pupils have been undecided about this item. The statement two is “we work in groups in English classes.” Statistical analysis of this item has revealed that 76.2% of the pupils agree, and 11.3% of them disagree on the item. The percentage of undecided pupils is 12.5. As the results indicate, more than half of the learners have stated that they are engaged in pair or group work activities in English classes. Accordingly, it can be said that the pupils benefit from numerous advantages of group and pair work activities which give the pupils the chance to interact in a small group, and thus create a positive learning environment that motivates pupils to communicate in the target language and develop a positive attitude towards English. The third statement aims at investigating pupils’ attitude towards art and craft activities which are frequently used throughout their coursebook. The analysis of the responses given to the third statement –“I enjoy art and craft activities in English classes.” has revealed that 82.6% of the pupils agree on the item, whereas 9.8% of them disagree, and 7.2% of them have been undecided. Based on the pupils’ responses to item three, art and craft activities can be said to be useful in terms of developing children’s proficiency in English. Another activity which all children definitely enjoy is games. Therefore, the statement four “We play outdoor games in English classes.” investigates the use of outdoor games in English lessons. According to the responses given to this item, only 29.4% of the pupils agreed on the item, which may indicate that outdoor games are not so common in language classes. However, using outdoor games may have various advantages, such as promoting pupils’ cultural understanding (Rixon 1991: 44). The statement five is “English classes are fun.” As is seen in Table 8, 88.6% of the pupils agree on the idea, whereas 5.6% of them disagree. For statement five, the percentage of undecided pupils is 6.2. Namely, a great majority of the pupils are positive towards English lessons and enjoy them. Finally, the last statement is “I’d appreciate if stories are used in English classes.” The statistical analysis of this item reveals that the majority of the pupils (71%) show a positive attitude towards reading stories in English classes. Only 13.4% of the pupils have stated that they disagree on the item, and 15.6% of them have stated that they are undecided. Consequently, as the mean scores in Table 8 show, 66.8% of the pupils show a positive attitude towards the activities used in English classes. 20.4% of them are negative, and 12.8% of them are undecided.

8. Conclusion

This study discusses Turkish young language learners’ attitude towards English and English lessons in Turkish elementary schools. Findings have shown that Turkish young language learners’ attitude towards English is positive. They are conscious about the discrepancy between Turkish and English. They know that Turkish and English differ from each other in terms of spelling and pronunciation. However, their attitude towards English differs significantly according to the macro and micro skills. They give importance to macro and micro skills in the order given below:

- Grammar: Majority of young learners show a positive attitude towards grammar.
- Vocabulary: Depending on curiosity of knowing more words in English, they are positive in learning vocabulary.
- Listening Skills: A great majority of the young learners are willing to understand spoken English. As long as listening activities are presented
according to their level of English, listening activities do not seem problematic for them.

- **Writing Skills:** They seem positive to writing skills when they are given a chance to have fun with English through writing activities. They prefer controlled writing activities due to their limited command of English.

- **Pronunciation:** Children are aware of the importance of pronunciation to improve their speaking skills and language proficiency.

- **Reading:** Majority of the young learners are enthusiastic about reading in English, being aware of the importance of reading in expanding their linguistic and cultural knowledge. However, the problem for them is understanding written instructions in activities.

- **Speaking:** They are aware of significance of speaking in second language communication. They are not so positive as they are for other language skills. The reason behind this lies in the fact that they have difficulty in speaking English outside the classroom whereas they do not find speaking English difficult in classroom.

Last but not least, the young language learners show a positive attitude towards language materials, the coursebook and language activities. They like the topics in their course books and they enjoy being exposed to the cartoon characters. They find art and craft activities in their course books enjoyable and have fun when they are doing them.

**9. Suggestions**

1. In vocabulary teaching, teachers should consider their cognitive development;
2. To create an anxiety free environment in classroom, school teachers should present speaking activities in accordance with young language learners’ interest and linguistic competence;
3. Written instructions in activities should be simplified or in young learners’ mother tongue;
4. In beginning classes teachers should give free activities less than controlled and guided writing activities;
5. Young learners should be given a chance to work in pairs or groups to lower their anxiety;
6. Authenticity should be taken into consideration by school teachers in class to help young language learners to relate their English to outside world;
7. Different course books can be prepared for each region, taking the young language learners’ needs, interests, language styles and social backgrounds;
8. Teachers of English in elementary schools should be informed about first and second language acquisition theories through in-service training in coordination with foreign language departments at universities every year;
9. Young language learners’ attitude towards English lessons should be checked by teachers before and after teaching. As an example the following “Language Attitude Form” may be used by school teachers; In each school year, teachers should take young language learners’ attitude towards English into account in the preparation of the language curriculum.
PUPILS’ ATTITUDE FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Like</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Dislike</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Songs and Chants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pairwork Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groupwork Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art and Craft Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


APPENDICES

Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE I

Age:                                                                 Class:
Gender: Female/ Male       City:
School:
This questionnaire has been prepared in order to measure attitude of the 4th
graders in Turkish elementary schools towards foreign languages (English).
Thank you for answering the questions truly and sincerely.

A. Please indicate your response by using the following choices.
Strongly agree: 5     Agree: 4     Undecided: 3     Disagree: 2
Strongly Disagree: 1
<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I want to read books in English.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I pay attention to the spelling of English words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I want to correspond with foreign people who can speak English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I want to speak English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I have difficulty in speaking English outside the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I want to understand spoken English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I pay attention to the pronunciation of words in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I am learning English as I like playing with new sounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am curious about the meaning of words in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am curious about the meanings of English words I encounter in my daily life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I enjoy memorizing words in English.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Learning English is very difficult.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Learning English is necessary.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Learning English is a waste of time.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I want to visit countries where English is spoken as a native language.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I want to meet my peers who can speak English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I want to improve my English.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I should have started learning English in pre-school age.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I walk away when people start speaking English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>My family wants me to learn English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>It is early to learn English at 4th grade.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I learn English as it is a different way of speaking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I learn English to find a good job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I learn English to go abroad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I learn English to marry a foreign person.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I learn English to catch up with screen and print media.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
27 I want to sing in English.
28 I want to learn English through songs.
29 I learn English to understand computer games.
30 I want to learn English through games.

B. Please write down your opinions and suggestions about English Courses.

Appendix 2

QUESTIONNAIRE II

Age: Class:
Gender: Female/ Male City:
School:
This questionnaire has been prepared in order to measure attitude of the 4th graders in Turkish elementary schools towards foreign languages (English). Thank you for answering the questions truly and sincerely.

A. Please indicate your response by using the following choices.
Strongly agree: 5 Agree: 4 Undecided: 3 Disagree: 2 Strongly Disagree: 1

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I don’t understand the written instructions given at the beginning of the activities.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I don’t care about the spelling of English words.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I have difficulty in completing sentences.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I like unjumbling letters to write words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I have difficulty in expressing my thoughts in written English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I pay attention to the punctuation marks when writing in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I have difficulty in writing words in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I have difficulty in speaking English inside the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I have difficulty in understanding listening exercises from the tape recorder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I have difficulty in listening to words in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I don’t care about the pronunciation of English words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I have difficulty with the pronunciation of English words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I have difficulty in naming abstract objects in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I have difficulty in naming concrete objects in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I like unjumbling words to make sentences.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>It is easy for me to learn English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>English lessons are very difficult.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>English lessons are really boring.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Two hours of English per week is not enough.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I get bored in English lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I revise what I have learned in English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>I want to answer the questions asked in English lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I learn English because it is in the curriculum of the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The teacher always corrects my mistakes/errors in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>The teacher should give the instruction in English during English lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The teacher should give the instructions in Turkish during English lessons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I can’t relate English lessons to my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I find the activities in the coursebook entertaining.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>I like the art activities in the coursebook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I am interested in the topics in the coursebook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I appreciate the use of cartoon characters in the coursebook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I have difficulty in labeling the objects in the pictures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>I’d appreciate it if puppets are used in English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>I enjoy using computers during English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>I’d enjoy it if my voice is recorded during English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>We work in pairs in English classes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>We work in groups in English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>I enjoy art and craft activities in English classes.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>We play outdoor games in English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>English classes are full of fun.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>I’d appreciate it if stories are used in English classes.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**B. Please write down your opinions and suggestions about English Courses**

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**The Practical Utilization of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development and Bruner’s Scaffolding**

J.L. Kemp, Psy.D.
McKendree University

Preparing students as productive members of a global society requires educators to enhance the learning environment by accommodating or assimilating their pedagogical (teaching) style. This change can be simple or complex, but it must incorporate the use of a theory that delineates a clear and concise approach to achieve maximum results. Also, the teacher must be cognizant of learning styles and design classroom instructions to meet those needs. At this point, the question to answer is “How do I choose a theory that fits the specifics of the learning environment?” This paper will discuss the practical steps I used to select theories that enhanced students’ acquisition and application of knowledge.

First, I determined goals, objectives, and outcomes that were necessary for student success at the undergraduate level while simultaneously preparing them for graduate school or the work world. It is important to set in place competencies that will facilitate the students’ move to their next level. This step is the lesson plan and can be adapted to the grade level.

Second, I assessed my load and decided to design the classes around a theme that linked to a capstone course. For instance, as a psychology professor, I focused on theory conceptualization and writing skills; students must understand theory and demonstrate that knowledge. As a result, each course had an assignment that involved the application of at least three theories used to describe information received from an interview with a culturally different individual; assignments changed in intensity and requirements depending on the
level. The final course combined previous learning which provided data necessary to evaluate student competency.

Now that the path had been clearly defined, I had to choose a theory to implement my goals, objectives, and outcomes. At this point, the tenets of the theory and its impact on the learning environment became the impetus for choosing the theory of best fit. Weigh all advantages and disadvantages of a theory; in other words, research, research, and research.

Finally, I selected Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development and Bruner’s Scaffolding to attain the desired outcomes. At the core of these theories lies the concept of social constructivism as defined in Eggen and Kauchak (2004) which is learning that begins with the environment and is incorporated into the individual’s experiences, thus constructing one’s knowledge base. With this thought in mind, it seems important that a learning environment must begin with the world view of the student and further encompass a plethora of information or tasks provided by the teacher that will broaden the student’s knowledge base. This idea is a strong step to begin the development of a positive student learning environment which makes it an appropriate choice.

Understanding the tenets of these theories and their impact on the goals, objectives, and outcomes for my classes made them viable choices as the building blocks for the course design. I chose Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) which states that “when children are able to benefit from the experience of interacting with a more knowledgeable person, they are in the zone” . . . They further defined the zone as “a range of tasks that an individual can not yet do alone but can accomplish when assisted by a more skilled partner” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004, p. 59). One thing that worked well for my choosing the concept of ZPD was that as the teacher, I would be the more skilled partner in the learning experience.

Further investigation of Vygotsky’s instructional strategies crystallized his theory as an excellent choice to meet the design for my courses; his techniques are as follows:

- “Embed learning activities in a context that is culturally authentic.
- Create learning activities that involve students in social interactions.
- Encourage students to use language to describe their developing understandings
- Create learning activities that are in learner’s zone of proximal development
- Provide instructional assistance to promote learning and development” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004, p. 58).

As a requirement of the assignment, students had to interview a person from another culture which takes into account the above first two bullets. To demonstrate acquisition of the theories taught in class, the students had to write a paper using theory specific language. The learning activity consisted of composing a PowerPoint presentation of the data obtained from the interview, and I provided assistance that promoted a positive learning environment. Also, students were instructed to seek guidance from other students who had taken previous classes with me.

The last guiding point that I used to choose an appropriate theory was my knowing that providing assistance was not enough; I needed to given guidance “only if” students needed my help. Of course, Vygotsky’s work implied that you should give help only when needed, but Bruner’s work that further developed on Vygotsky’s ZPD stated it more explicitly. Bruner coined the term “scaffolding” which means “assistance that allows students to complete tasks they cannot

In conclusion, it is not difficult to teach a course that is theory based; the instructor needs to first of all think in a practical, logical, and sequential manner. In order to do that, the teacher must first delineate clear goals, objectives, and outcomes. Know what you want to do, why you want to do it, what impact it has on the learner, and how will you know when you have met your benchmarks. These are things that you learned when you were an undergraduate. Once you are clear about the particulars of the course, then you must tease out each phase of the class as discussed in the aforementioned paragraphs. Past research and previously tested theories can provide a strong basis on which to design your course.

References


University Language Teachers and Learner Autonomy: Preparing for the Next Century?

Dr Faiza Bensemmane, University of Algiers, Algeria

Abstract

The concept of learner autonomy came to emerge in the literature on language learning in the late 1980’s. Since then, autonomy has become a buzzword and a concept largely contested as it is almost invariably linked to different sets of values and interests, and may be interpreted differently in different contexts. If not defined properly, the use of this term may lead to potential misunderstanding.

The aim of this paper is to see how this slippery concept is interpreted by university language teachers and how it is represented within the Algerian culture of English language teaching whose implicit aim is to develop autonomy through teaching and the curriculum.

The present study attempts to answer three questions relating to EFL instruction at university:
1. What are the teachers' beliefs and attitudes to learner autonomy?
2. What type of learner autonomy might be an appropriate educational goal in Algerian culture?
3. How do university language teachers define their autonomy and how do they prepare for the next century?

Defining Learner Autonomy

One of the earliest studies on learner autonomy is Holec's (1988) who defines it as an "ability" or a "capacity" that needs to be acquired. Learner autonomy is thus viewed as "learning how to learn", "self-directed learning" or "self-regulation" (Ryan 1991). But according to Dickinson (1987), self-directed learning refers to the "potential" to accept responsibility for one's learning, and autonomy is regarded as the complete responsibility for one's learning carried out without the involvement of the teacher or pedagogical material. It may also be mentioned that autonomy is a capacity which is rarely, if ever realised in its ideal state because of the essential human needs to interact with others. On this point, Little (1991:5) writes: 'The freedoms conferred by autonomy are never absolute, always conditional and constrained'. Furthermore, autonomy cannot be seen as a steady state as an autonomous learner may well choose teacher direction at certain stages of his learning, or he may be likely to be autonomous in one situation, but not in another.

In certain educational or cultural settings, self-directed learning is often equated with 'adult learning outside of formal education'(Candy 1991) and is therefore inappropriate. For instance, some studies with South East Asian learners have raised questions about the appropriateness of self-access centres and self-directed learning projects to develop learner autonomy (Jones 1995). But other studies have disagreed with the fact that cultural obstacles may hinder learner autonomy (Nunan 1988) arguing that traditional practices and cultural traditions may actually contribute to the development of learner autonomy (Hu and Crookall 1995).

One of the most discussed views of learner autonomy is expressed by Benson (1997) who describes it from three perspectives:

a) a "technical" perspective emphasising skills and strategies for "unsupervised" learning of language (For e.g.: specific kinds of activity or process- see Oxford 1990) and autonomous learning is viewed as independent use of language

b) a "psychological" perspective focussing on learner attitudes and abilities which enable him to take responsibility for his own learning. In this perspective, autonomous learning is regarded as "independent learning" (not independent use) of language

c) a "political" perspective emphasising empowerment or emancipation of language learners by giving them "control" over the content and process of their learning. An autonomous learner is thus viewed as a fulfilled and effective citizen in a democratic society.

Littlewood (1996)'s distinction between "proactive autonomy" and "reactive autonomy" is worth considering for this study for its potential to account for university language teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards learner autonomy in Algerian higher education.

"Proactive autonomy" is full individual autonomy with no outside help. It is similar to "self-directed learning" and is often referred to as "collaborative learning". Littlewood (op.cit.) argues that proactive autonomy is a concept
usually discussed in the West in relation to learners being able to take charge of their own learning, to determine their objectives, to select their own methods and techniques for learning and to do self-evaluation wherein they can set up their personal agenda for learning (Holec 1981). It is evident that to develop successfully, proactive autonomy requires contexts that support it, and non-western countries may not be equipped with the supportive means.

Littlewood’s second type of autonomy is "reactive autonomy" which is the ability to fulfil responsibility put on someone by an organisation, either directly or through the teacher or the curriculum. It is also described as "cooperative learning", and given certain conditions, reactive autonomy may lead to proactive autonomy.

In reactive autonomy, the students do not create their own directions but these are initiated by the teacher or the curriculum. They can then organise their resources autonomously to reach their goal, by working on their own or with peers, and studies reported in Asia demonstrated that reactive autonomy is quite high among students (Littlewood 2002). In this type of autonomy, learners do not feel totally independent but "interdependent" as autonomy seems to develop most effectively in an "interpersonal" or "facilitating" environment which provides help and resources, involvement from significant others, and opportunities to make choices. Similarly, Little (1994:435) remarks that 'learner autonomy is the product of interdependence rather than independence'. Interdependence is the ability of learners to work together for mutual benefit and to take responsibility for their learning in accordance with the sociocultural theories of learning (Vygotsky 1978) and studies of Second Language Acquisition (Lantolf 2000).

Boud (1981) and Brookfield (1986) also outlined the Vygostkyan value of interdependence and stressed that learning occurs through interaction between people and with 'learning materials which "scaffold" learning and act as "mediating objects"' (Bruner 1979).

**An exploratory study**

The present study addresses university language teachers primarily and explores learner autonomy as a phenomenon involving a relation between the learner, his learning and his learning environment. As a preliminary exploration of this phenomenon, it was felt important to view this question from the teacher's perspective and to see the extent to which teachers are sensitive to this relation and how willing or ready they are to understand it and make it easy for the students to acquire autonomy.

The inquiry was conducted with fifteen Algerian teachers who answered a 50-item questionnaire: 48 items to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale (from 5: strongly agree to 1: strongly disagree) and 2 open questions. The 48 items included questions on the relationship between learner autonomy and self-esteem, motivation, rational thought, error making, educational background and teacher's views of their own autonomy. The questionnaire was handed out to senior and junior teachers in the English department and was collected a few days later.

Regarding the university teachers' qualifications, the majority hold a Master's degree or Magister degree in Anglophone Literature and Civilisation or in Linguistics and Didactics while five teachers have a Doctorate (PhD or Doctorat d'état). The majority of participants are female and their experience
ranges from 2 years to 30 years: eight teachers have between 2 and 8 years experience and seven teachers have between 9 and 30 years experience.

An analysis (quantitative and content) of the teachers’ responses was done and two trends have emerged quite clearly from the data: a proactive view of learner autonomy with a largely shared belief that students should "learn on their own" and a reactive view of learner autonomy underscoring a strong desire to prepare students for life after university, as is discussed below.

A proactive view of learner autonomy or 'learn on your own'

The majority of teachers believe that students should take responsibility for their own learning and should set themselves learning goals (13 teachers out of 15). But they also argue that some learner assets are necessary to help foster autonomy, such as self-esteem. Thus, 12 teachers respond that students with high self-esteem have higher aspirations than students with low self-esteem.

Motivation is also seen as an important factor in the development of learner autonomy. 11 teachers believe that there is a direct relationship between a motivated student and an autonomous student. Rational thought and love of learning are considered as determinant in fostering autonomy by all teachers (15/15). All of them also point to the existence of factors that often undermine the students' interest in their studies and their desire to become autonomous such as pressure for good grades, mastery of content and academic achievement. Many teachers (13/15) acknowledge that they regard these goals as a priority, even more important than autonomy.

The majority of teachers also insist that self-learning and self-assessment are critical to learner autonomy (14/15) and point out that students need to develop "metacognitive awareness" systematically in order to have a language for talking about learning (and enable self-evaluation). On the other hand, only half of them believe that they should equip students with self-learning and thinking skills. But it is interesting to note that 5 teachers only believe that teaching some strategies and techniques to students and giving them materials (like self-access centres) would promote individual self-development because autonomy seems to lay outside the domain of teachability (Pennycook 1997). This point was also stressed by Palfreyman (2003) who regards autonomy as a personal characteristic rather than something to be taught.

Along the same line of thought and with respect to students' errors, 11 teachers out of 15 agree that learning is an active process of meaning making requiring from the learners a personal interpretation of experience and the construction of their own knowledge. As Swann (2007:38) rightly remarks, '(...) in learning, all new expectations and other ideas are created entirely from within the individual, that is, by the learner' (original emphasis).

A reactive view of learner autonomy or learning with others

The second perspective which emerges from the study is 'reactive autonomy' and involves learning through interaction. 12 teachers think that being autonomous is collaborating or learning with others after the directions have been set by the teacher. It is worth noting that the number of teachers who do not share this Vygotskyan view of learning is relatively small (3 teachers only). These are generally traditional (older) teachers who want to maintain
control over teaching and syllabus and view learner autonomy as a threat to their status.

With respect to the students' earlier educational experience (from primary school to university) which is based on much rote learning and memorisation, all teachers agree that this school learning background is likely to impact negatively on the students' attitudes towards learning. They blame the parents and family for supporting and encouraging this form of learning, thereby preventing them or reducing their capacity to become autonomous. But few teachers (9/15) believe that it is the role of the teacher to intervene and redress the balance so as to enhance the students' need to think, and they confess that it becomes a difficult task when they realise that not all students want to become autonomous, whether by themselves or with the help of the teacher.

When questioned about their awareness of recent research and literature emphasising collaborative learning and classroom tasks that develop autonomy, the majority (13/15) point to the inadequacy of some activities such as keeping a portfolio of the students' own productions, because of the students' poor preparation for individual work or private study before entering university. One teacher only believes that asking students to keep a portfolio or a learning diary could help them do self-assessment of their performance and acquire autonomy. It is worth reporting the recurrent comments made by many teachers about the Algerian student being non-western and not educated to rely on his own critical judgement for any decision he would make regarding his learning. In their additional comments, teachers stress the difficulty of developing an appropriate methodology that would assist students to reach this goal: 'how to help students at university before it is too late? Is a question often asked.

**Autonomous interdependence prepares for social integration**

Student transition from school to university is difficult, especially focus on how to learn in order to integrate socially and to acquire transferable learning skills for use after university. 10 teachers acknowledge that they do not always explain clearly to students what type of learning is required at university, but they also point out that learner autonomy is an "ethnocentric" concept (Palfreyman 2003) whose application might meet with difficulties given the social nature of learning (Dam 1995). According to many of them (12/15), parents do little to "scaffold" their children in the construction of their autonomy as early as the primary school, and learning critical skills at university is often too late. Many students fail or drop out during the first two years of the English degree course because of their inability to cope with the academic demands of the teachers and the courses at large.

Teachers believe that university prepares for life in society and agree that an autonomous learner has more chances to adapt to a changing society; 14/15 teachers think that an autonomous learner will become an effective citizen in a democratic society while a few teachers only (6/15) fear that individualistic feelings may appear to turn autonomy into an inappropriate goal in the Algerian context.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the majority of teachers (14/15) suggest that dependence on the teacher as well as dependence on oneself is the best way of fostering student autonomy in the Algerian context of higher education. "Autonomous interdependence" as suggested by Littlewood (2002:29) would give way to interactive learning and this could take place in a context where the direction of activities would be set by the teacher. The
students would then organise their resources autonomously, on their own or with others. The teacher would provide students with appropriate orientations and act as a mediator in the performance of an activity. The majority of teachers (13/15) do contemplate developing projects with their students which can be done in pairs or in small groups, outside of class, as a way of enhancing their autonomy and preparing them for social integration.

**What of teachers 'autonomy?**

To the question posed to the teachers about their own autonomy, most responses are rather general but stress that an autonomous teacher is effective and has control over pedagogy and assessment. Teachers also believe that an autonomous teacher not only promotes students' intellectual or academic development, but also enhances their conduct or moral behaviour. They remark that a good language teacher should have academic competence, subject knowledge and also morality, personal qualities, be able to cope with large classes and be a good team worker who shares ideas and knowledge with his colleagues. This multidimensional nature of the teacher's professional identity is recurrent in most responses, although a few point out that professional development - which they hardly get at university - is a minimal requirement to become autonomous.

When asked about their levels of autonomy, 13 teachers state they have a high level of autonomy in class and are free to make choices about their own teaching. Some teachers add that developing autonomy in their students can give them more confidence in their teaching style.

Concerning the teachers' degree of job satisfaction, 6 teachers out of 15 seem to be weakly satisfied with their job on account of too many testing and marking tasks and a demoralising number of poor achievers; very few students demonstrate high standards and can lift teachers' spirits!

**Conclusion**

This study, conducted with fifteen university lecturers teaching English language /skills and content courses in the English department of the university of Algiers was meant to uncover their beliefs and attitudes about learner autonomy. Through their responses to a survey, has emerged a concept of learner autonomy with multiple perspectives, from individual to social, as well as the feeling that they live through a paradox and seem to be torn between the desire to let students develop their own language, learning and personal management skills and their need to direct them in some sort of project work reached through collaboration with peers in class or out of class to enable them to acquire autonomy and integrate socially. But on the whole, learner autonomy seems an ineluctable goal despite the difficult learning conditions that many students experience (large size classes, poor study conditions in under-equipped libraries, etc.) and that may affect this objective. Most teachers believe that the challenges of learner autonomy are worth pursuing for the benefits that would result at a societal level.

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Higher Education Administrators’ Perceptions of Accelerated Mechanisms in Teacher Education

Ruth C. Slotnick, M.Ed.
University of South Florida, Tampa

Abstract

The Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney (1999) policy continuum is applied to inter-segmental collaboration between high schools and institutions of higher education. Teacher preparation policies in Florida and Texas are evaluated and compared to determine their overall policymaking performance using accelerated mechanisms such as dual credit, dual enrollment, and advanced placement courses to expand the teacher workforce. This paper concludes with a discussion exploring which state does a better job: Florida or Texas.

Introduction

Teacher Preparation and Policymaking in Florida and Texas

It is increasingly apparent that the United States’ future leadership in global markets is far from certain. Accordingly, expectations have increased for postsecondary education to produce highly skilled workers. “The transition to a knowledge-based economy is fueling the demand for well-educated, technically proficient workers – in all sectors, across a wide range of occupations and even for entry-level position” (Krueger, 2006, p.1). This renewed interest in P-16, coupled with concern over future economic hegemony, has caused a wave of educational policy changes within the states. A dire problem faced by state policy makers in meeting this demand, however, is the national teacher shortage. The latest projection forecasts that 4 million teachers will be needed in 2014 (Hussar & Bailey, 2006). However, a teaching career is, by far, not the top choice among freshmen entering college in 2007. Only nine-and-half percent indicated an interest in education, with most of those students favoring elementary education (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2007). Very few students expressed an interest in the critical shortage areas of math, science, bilingual, and special education.

How will states like Florida and Texas, with burgeoning minority and migrant populations, and rising costs of education, meet the demand for a highly skilled workforce? New attention has been placed on the role of secondary educators to meet this need. “The goal of high school is, of course, to graduate students with the skills and knowledge they need to be productive citizens” (Martinez & Bray, 2002, p. 5). Unfortunately, diminishing public perceptions of teachers (Cushman, 1977), the rise in teacher retirements, issues of teacher retention (Ingersoll, 2003), as well as a continued national shortage of mathematics, science, bilingual, and special education teachers may hinder public education in meeting this incipient goal.

As a result most states have created alternative certification (AC) pathways and Associate’s degree in teaching (A.A.T.), while others continue to look to high schools for new recruits. High school dual enrollment programs, which
encompass teacher education courses, may be the next wave of teacher preparation policy making. Problems loom, however, in any of the above choices where “Policy makers are interested in solving immediate problems in the teacher labor market, using whatever tools are available to increase supply” (Chin & Young, 2007, p. 74). This kind of impulsive policymaking ignores “what it means to prepare teachers in specific ways for particular contexts” (p.74). Inter-segmental collaboration, the pairing of high school with postsecondary institutions to meet teacher demand, will be the focus of this paper.

Framework

The Richardson, Bracco, Callan, & Finney (1999) continuum of government design serves as tool to compare the functionality and performance of state higher education systems. As Martinez (2002) states “The framework was intended to aid policymakers and higher education leaders in determining if a state’s policy priorities and the role it assumed aligned with higher education structure” (p. 350). The continuum requires three major steps for analysis: (1) to identify the predominant governance design as federal, unified, or segmented, (2) to determine policymaking roles as providing, regulating, consumer advocacy, or steering. In some instances a state can be a blend of designs and roles, (3) to evaluate the higher education performance by examining the four major work processes: budgeting, program development, articulation and collaboration work processes. Finally, each state policymaking environment is uniquely shaped by politics, economy, geography, and demographics. Once policy is fully analyzed in terms of the continuum, it is possible to critique the complex policymaking structures that lie beneath.

Purpose

The Richardson et. al. policy continuum of government designs is applied to inter-segmental collaboration and teacher preparation policymaking in Florida and Texas. To see how teacher preparation and inter-segmental collaboration intersect, a brief literature review is conducted here, with an eye towards policymaking practices. Both states are compared to see if current polices are working to meet teacher demand.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer four major questions:
- In light of teacher preparation, is inter-segmental collaboration working?
- What entities are driving inter-segmental policymaking in Texas and Florida?
- Who is doing a better job? Florida or Texas?
- Is high school dual enrollment for teacher preparation a good or bad idea?

Methods

Journal articles, reports, briefs, books on teacher preparation, dissertations, electronic and web-based documents were sourced to write this paper. To glean policymakers’ perceptions of inter-segmental collaboration and teacher preparation, telephone calls were made to state-level and institutional policymakers involved in dual enrollment policymaking. A telephone interview protocol was developed and adapted from studies conducted by Barrett (2003)
and Ignash (1994) (see Appendix). A semi-structured interview approach was used to direct the interviews, but deviated from its original format to explore issues germane to the topic. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for themes.

Related Literature

History of Accelerated Mechanisms

Combining high school with college-level courses is not new. Koo’s 6-6-4 model proposed that college-level work be included in last two years of high school (Kisker, 2006). While Koo’s model never took hold, Early College High School (ECHS), Middle College High School (MCHS), Career Academics (CA), Advanced Placement (AP), and the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs have grown. Today, dual enrollment is one of the fastest growing programs in the country (E. Kim, 2006).

The literature base for dual enrollment is also growing. Some studies examine the historical underpinnings of dual enrollment (J. Kim, Kirby, & Bragg, 2006; Kisker, 2006) while others focus on issues of access and quality, (Bragg, Kim, & Rubin, 2005; Hunt & Carroll, 2006; J. Kim et al., 2006; Kisker, 2006). There have also been a number of studies addressing administrators’ perceptions of dual credit (Bartlett, 2003) as well as national, state and local, case studies of dual enrollment (Boswell, 2000, 2001; Bragg et al., 2005; Jordan, Cavalluzzo, & Corallo, 2006; Martinez & Bray, 2002), policies and practice (Bragg et al., 2005; Bueschel & Venezia, 2006; Kirst & Venezia, 2001; Krueger, 2006), and high school dual enrollment as a predictor of college success (Brake, 2003; J. Kim, 2005).

Ironically, given the rich inquiry into dual enrollment, there is a paucity of research examining dual enrollment to meet teacher demands. This may be due to the fact that some “policymakers and researchers see dual enrollment as diluting quality, while others see a system that shuts out low-income and low achieving students” (Krueger, 2006). Field experience is another potential area of concern as it relates inter-segmental collaboration. A recent review of the A.A.T found that few community colleges require fieldwork in the lower-division education classes (Ignash & Slotnick, 2006). This finding is particularly troublesome given that the field experience is the ultimate “ground truthing” for teacher aspirants. High school students who dual enroll in lower-division education courses in a community college can use field experience to test the teaching waters. This misalignment of community colleges and high schools is an example of how inter-segmental policymaking may be failing students. Taken together, policymakers must carefully consider what role, if any, dual enrollment will play to meet teacher demands.

Policy Environment

As previously mentioned, a state’s policymaking role is shaped by its politics, economy, geography, demographics, and history. Florida and Texas share more similarities than differences: both are southern states that have large numbers of urban and rural communities, are devoid of a state income tax, have growing minority and migrant populations, and are states are in dire need for teachers.

By 2025, Texas will be the second most populous state in the union with 27.2 million people (Campbell, 1996). Florida will be third with 20.7 million people
(Campbell, 1996). While dozens of other states will see major enrollment declines in K-12 by 2015, Florida and Texas will see dramatic increases in public school enrollment and high school graduation rates (Hussar & Bailey, 2006). Florida’s immigrant population, however, will surpass that of Texas by nearly one million people in the next fifteen years with sizable increases in its Hispanic population. Texas will top Florida in its percentage of youth (30%) compared to Florida (21.4%) in 2025 (Campbell, 2006). These numbers depict the considerable growth facing each state over the next 18 years.

Given the extensive population growth in Texas and Florida, both states will need to bolster their teaching force to increase the technical proficiency of the American workforce. For example, a recent report rates Florida as a “D” in academic achievement and postsecondary and workforce readiness (U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2007). Texas was rated a “D” in truth in advertising on proficiency. Apparently students were not scoring as well in math and science as the state had reported. As evidenced by these statistics, both Florida and Texas need to improve inter-segmental collaboration. Under pressure to meet larger societal demands, how are each state’s governance structures leveraging this change?

Governance Systems and State Policy Making Roles in Florida and Texas

In 2000, a move to unify all educational systems in Florida under one board, otherwise known as a K-20 super board, failed. A proposed bill adopted by state voters in 2002 passed to keep the eleven State University System (SUS) separated from the community colleges, private institutions, and K-12. The SUS was granted its own board of governors and a chancellor, but all positions were governor appointed. The 28 community colleges, private institutions, and the K-12 system, remained unified. Because of this change, Florida’s higher education system lost some of its power to the Florida state legislature and governor. As a result of these changes, the work processes of information management and articulation and collaboration are unified, budgeting and program development remain split between unified and segmented. This disjointedness allows the SUS system to vie for control on certain fronts via its individual institutional board of trustees, which can bridge and buffer for its own interests at the state-level.

Texas is a system-of-systems that combines both federal and segmented designs. The 1999 Richardson, et. al. analysis categorized the governance structure of Texas as federal system with a state policymaking role of regulating. However, a fresh look at Texas reveals that the state is trying to steer its segmented higher education system to align with its federal goals via the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). Two former state-level administrators believe that the THECB has little, if any, meaningful control over the higher education system. This sentiment was extended to the role of the governor as well. As one former community college administrator notes, “institutions of higher education also have parallel systems in place that address all four of the work functions over which neither the THECB nor any other state agency exercises any control” (personal communication with state-level administrator, April 6, 2007).

Work Process: Inter-segmental Collaboration and Dual Enrollment

Inter-segmental collaboration between high school and institutions of higher education has a variety of names including P-16 or K-20, as is the case with
Florida. It encompasses a wide range of policies and procedures that include accelerated mechanisms like dual enrollment.

Both Florida and Texas have established dual enrollment-type programs. A major reason that most states develop dual enrollment programs is to “allow students to take high school courses that prepare them for and connect to their future postsecondary coursework” (Hughes & Karp, 2006, p.7). Other reasons may include accelerating time-to-degree rates, increasing opportunities for high school students to earn college level credit, expanding upper-level course options for academically advanced students, and providing alternative routes for students who under-perform in a traditional classroom setting. Further still, states may create dual enrollment programs to foster inter-segmental collaboration, enhance the efficiency of the K-12 and postsecondary systems, and reduce the number of student in remediation courses (Krueger, 2006, p.2). Academic dual enrollment is most popular for courses like Mathematics, English, and humanities where college credit can be applied to an associate or baccalaureate degree upon high school graduation.

Florida, however, has taken teachers preparation a step forward. State legislated articulation agreements guarantee the transferability of three lower-division education courses: Introduction to Education, Teaching Diverse Populations, and Introduction to Technology. Students can dual-enroll at most Florida community colleges to take these classes. Texas, on the other hand offers dual credit. Dual credit is different than dual enrollment in that a credentialed high school teacher or an adjunct university or community college faculty member usually teaches a college level course on the high campus. Unlike its counterpart, Texas offers no dual credit courses specifically in teacher education.

In both states, the legislature controls dual enrollment by statute whose rules are carried out by state-level articulation and coordination committees. Florida state statute 1007.271 (2006) and Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 4, subchapter D (2003), specify the eligibility requirements, weighting systems, course availability, where and when courses are taught, number of dual courses a student can take, costs, funding structures, transferability of credit, and the faculty credentialing, selection, supervision and evaluation of dual enrollment programs.

In Florida, the Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC) is comprised of state-level policymakers and administrators from both four and two year institutions. In Texas, dual credit programs rules are administered through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board of Higher Education. By statute, these committees are instructed to communicate, regulate, administrate, and collect data on dual enrollment programs.

Results

In light of teacher preparation, is inter-segmental collaboration working? Telephone calls to state-level policymakers were used to glean perceptions of the strengths and weakness of inter-segmental collaboration and teacher preparation. Major issues and barriers were also discussed. Since Texas does not have a teacher preparation pathway as an option for dual credit, policymakers had to discuss hypothetical scenarios.

The primary strengths of high school dual enrollment and teacher preparation programs as identified by state-level policymakers include: early exposure to the teaching profession, the opportunity to complete lower-division education
courses making room for more focus on their teaching specialization in college, and the unique opportunity to ground theory into practice with early field experiences.

A major weakness across the board, however, was a concern about the maturity level of students. Concerns included (1) high school students feeling locked in to a career track “when they are too young to decide” (personal communication with state level administrator, March 13, 2007), (2) field placement experiences on the secondary level may be problematic or “awkward to place high school student in a high school classroom” (personal communication with state level administrators, March 15, 2007), and (3) high school students might not possess life experiences necessary to deal with diversity issues.

Access was identified as the most serious barrier. Students who do poorly in a dual enrollment class might get discouraged about pursuing postsecondary education at all. Low grades are also a permanent feature on an academic record and may create future problems with admissions to subsequent programs. Texas policymakers mentioned that rural communities face access barriers due to limited high schools and community colleges partnerships. Florida found that school administrators have the ability to limit the list of dual enrollment courses available for high school students to take because they may perceive dual enrollment courses to be less rigorous than their advanced placement and international baccalaureate counterparts. A state-level policymaker states: “We have a dual enrollment equivalency list. It says right on top of the list that it [Introduction to Education] counts as an elective. But sometimes schools get confused and limit the list of dual enrollment classes that student can take” (personal communication with state-level administrator, March 13, 2007).

Discussion

What entities are driving inter-segmental policymaking and dual enrollment programs for teacher preparation programs in Texas and Florida?

**Florida:** Florida’s inter-segmental collaboration for teacher preparation programs is being driven by the state. Higher education institutions are forced to cooperate by state articulated agreements. Teacher shortages in Florida for fall 2006 indicated a critical need for instructors in mathematics, sciences, reading, exceptional student education programs (ESE), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), foreign languages, and technology education/industrial arts. According to a recent report, these shortages have remained steady for the last six years and will continue into 2008 (Florida Department of Education, 2007). This report also highlights the fact that current teacher preparation sectors are not producing enough teachers to fill the void.

Efforts to boost Florida’s workforce have also increased. In 2006, the state legislature passed House Bill 7087 (Florida House of Representatives, 2006), effective fall 2007. This bill, more commonly referred to as the A++ plan, requires all public middle school students to select a major area of interest (MAI) to explore during their high school years (Florida statutes 1003.4156). A total of eight elective credit hours can be selected from 440 state approved MAI courses. Two core areas of interest are available to high school juniors and seniors who want to explore a career in teaching. The three lower-division education courses
are available (EME 2040: Educational Technology, EDF 2005: Introduction to Teaching, and EDG 2701: Teaching Diverse Populations) for dual enrollment.

**Texas:** While Texas does not currently offer dual credit for teacher preparation programs, it has responded to its teacher shortages by increasing alternative certification programs and the development of a state articulated A.A.T. Who’s doing a better job? Florida or Texas? In the absence of data it is impossible to know whether or not dual enrollment is an effective way of dealing with teacher shortage.

**Hypothesis One: Dual Enrollment is a Good Idea**

Dual enrollment may prove to be a way to recruit new teachers “These days, children are settling on career paths as early as middle school. At Teacher Prep, students can get started in their careers more quickly by earning high school and college credit at the same time” (Bland, 2007). Some school administrators may see recruitment as a viable tool to entice academically gifted students to enter the teaching field, especially in areas such as math, science, special education, and ELS programs as way to alleviate teacher shortages. Another advantage dual enrollment might hold is its potential to accelerate the time-to-degree completion, allowing students to shoot through the teacher pipeline quickly to meet teacher demand. “Grow-your-own philosophies” are attractive, as, at least in theory, they will that encourage a “crop of multilingual educators who are both motivated to teach close to home and familiar with diversity they’ll see filling rows of desks before them” (Cech, 2005). This kind of philosophy may provide a role model for minority students.

Alternatively, for students who do not perform well in a traditional classroom setting, dual enrollment offers the chance to earn college level credit in a non-traditional setting. “Educators and policymakers have come to understand that not all high school students are interested in the traditional definitions of high school—some students feel lonely and alone, even in high schools with excellent reputations and dozens of activities” (Koszoru, 2005). Finally, early field experience can cement a student’s interest in a teaching career. “Dual enrollment classes can give students a vision of their own future...notion of the culture of their potential discipline...what it would mean if they were to become teachers themselves” (personal communication with state-level administrator, March 15, 2007). Some school districts take this notion even further; “After finishing their senior years with a college-level practicum, students are sent to partnering area colleges on full-ride scholarships to study education and intern at local schools. When they emerge, degree certification in hand, they’re guaranteed first pick of the district’s available teaching jobs” (Cech, 2005). If this the case, Florida is doing a better a job and Texas appears to be lagging behind.

**Hypothesis Two: Dual Enrollment is a Bad Idea**

The problem may not be training; instead, the problem may be retention. As a Texas policymaker noted: “We have 270,000 teaching positions; 40,000 vacancies, over 600,000 trained teachers. Many qualified teachers are not teaching” (personal communication with state-level administrator, March 15, 2007). Moreover, expanding the teacher pipeline by railroading a large population of students through a dual enrollment program may serve to increase
the number of teachers leaving the profession. Additionally, sixteen and seventeen year old students may lack the maturity level for early field placement experiences through dual enrollment. Instead of enrolling students in a dual enrollment program, public school systems could offer opportunities for high school students to observe or assist an elementary or high school teacher. If this is the case, Texas is wise not to have a teacher-focused dual enrollment program.

Conclusions

The Richardson et. al. (1999) policy continuum of government design was used to assess the governance structures, policies roles, and performance of the inter-segmental collaboration for teacher preparation programs in Florida and Texas. While efforts in states are increasing to collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of dual enrollment in subjects like math, English, and other liberal arts classes, no longitudinal data exists for teacher preparation programs. Arguments on both sides are cogent. States wishing to include teacher preparation courses for dual enrollment should do the hard work necessary to assess their benefit and resist the impulse to create such programs merely for market demand. Just as it does not make sense to repair a leaky pipe by adding more water, it does not make sense to alleviate the teacher shortage by simply training more teachers. “While demand has increased and many schools have had hiring difficulties, the data do not show, contrary to the conventional wisdom, that there is overall an insufficient supply of teachers being produced” (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 7). Perhaps time is better spent on developing policies that increase teacher retention and seek innovative ways to improve the quality of public schools as a successful pathway to college.

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Appendix

Telephone Interview Questions:

Process

What do you perceive to be the strengths of dual enrollment for educator/teacher preparation programs?

What do you perceive to be the weaknesses of a dual enrollment educator/teacher preparation?

What issues/barriers need to be resolved to develop and maintain strong dual enrollment partnerships for educator/teacher preparation programs?

What role do you perceive dual enrollment playing as a possible solution to responding to the demand for teachers/educators brought on by the growing student population?

Product

What outcomes measures of the effectiveness of dual enrollment programs for teacher/educator preparation do you have available?

With respect to dual enrollment graduates that were enrolled in educator/teacher preparation programs are any data being collected?

If yes, are copies of these data available and what offices collect them?

Is there anyone else you think I should speak with at your agency/institution/school regarding dual enrollment and teacher/educator preparation?

*Questions 1–4 are adapted from a study conducted by Bartlett (2003). Questions 6 and 7 incorporate questions used in a study conducted by Ignash (1994).
Teaching More Than Technology:
The Liberal Arts in a New Renaissance of Learning

By Bruce C. Swaffield, Ph.D.
Regent University (Virginia, USA)

Painting during the height of the Renaissance, Raphael could hardly imagine that The School of Athens (1510-1511) would make such an impact throughout the centuries. For almost 500 years, scholars and art historians have marveled at and contemplated the meaning behind this classical composition of 57 figures. For the most part, Raphael’s thinking and design remain shrouded in mystery. Although he lived nearly a decade after finishing The School of Athens, he failed to offer any insight into a possible theme or the meaning behind his choice of subjects. Many researchers have labeled the work as little more than a representative gathering of ancient philosophers and scientists. Some have even tried to explain the painting by pointing to books or artists that profoundly influenced Raphael’s choice of subjects.

It might be entirely possible, though, that this fresco in the Stanza della Segnatura of the Vatican actually represents much more than the various interpretations have allowed. Perhaps Raphael was trying to demonstrate and reveal what was at the true core of this current rebirth of learning and living. The present age was derived from and built on the past, but the time had now come for society to move beyond mere development of the mind and the intellect. All aspects of life suddenly were becoming important: ethics, philosophy, oratory, art, architecture, music, social conduct and even writing. Such an emphasis on humanity is obvious in The School of Athens, not only from the figures but also by the dual nature they represent. We see Plato, but he looks like Leonardo da Vinci. Heraclitus looks like Michelangelo, and Diogenes appears to be Socrates as well. These pairings, along with the multiple disciplines they symbolize, may help us see Raphael’s painting in a new light – one that better reflects the essential spirit of what eventually became known as the Renaissance.

At first glance, we may wonder what to make of all these men in robes who appear on stage like “simultaneous interactive groups of actors as in a drama” (Joost-Gaugier, Raphael’s, p. 85). Exactly who are they and why are they all gathered together in one place? The painting almost defies a cursory look because of the many faces: a few are familiar while others vaguely so. Many are unknown except for their interests. Here and there, scattered across a landscape of learning, the figures are in groups. Some stand alone, however. But all are deeply engaged in learning, exploring, discovering. In Lives of the Artists, Giorgio Vasari explained what little he knew about the origin and meaning of the painting in the private library of Pope Julius II.

Then Bramante da Urbino, who was in the service of Julius II, being distantly related to Raffaello and of the same district, wrote to him that
he had been using his influence with the Pope to obtain for him leave to display his powers in certain rooms of the palace. The tidings pleased Raffaello, and leaving his works at Florence unfinished, he departed for Rome, where he found that many of the chambers of the palace had been already painted, or were being painted, by other masters. Being received with much kindness by Pope Julius, he began in the chamber of the Segnatura, and painted a picture of the reconciliation between Philosophy and Astrology, and Theology. He enriched this work with many figures, and finished it in so delicate and sweet a manner that Pope Julius caused all the pictures of the other masters, both ancient and modern, to be destroyed that Raffaello might have all the work of the chambers. So Raffaello painted the ceiling of this chamber with the figures of Knowledge, Poetry, Theology, and Justice, and on the walls represented Parnassus with the Poets, and Heaven with the Saints and Doctors of the Church, and Justinian giving the laws to the Doctors, and Pope Julius the canon laws. And the Pope, being satisfied with the work, gave him the second chamber to paint. (Seeley, p. 179)

Even Goethe had difficulty when he saw the painting for the first time. On November 7, 1786, he described his own confusion. “[I]t is like studying Homer in a partly obliterated, damaged manuscript” (Goethe, p. 109). A contemporary scholar contends that “the question of how this painting is to be understood has often been formulated in terms of whether, and if so how, it is to be read. [T]he aesthetic appeal of the elegance and vivacity of its colors and forms stands in remarkable tension with the cognitive challenge the figures and their dramatic activity seem to pose” (Most, p. 145). The viewer demands to know more both about each one of the figures as well as their relationship with one another, not to mention the related occupations and fields of study. “Enjoying the fresco’s beauty seems not to be enough; instead it seems to invite us to try to understand it by reading it as an enigma we are supposed to solve” (Most, pp. 145-146).

The enormous fresco almost defies interpretation, yet its diversity and composition offering intriguing and interesting possibilities. Groups of teachers and learners are engaged in various disciplines. They conduct their study in concert with others around them. The tension and interaction among the figures are obvious both within and without. In each small cluster, at least one member appears to be looking beyond the intimate circle toward those in another area, perhaps to suggest that learning – at least that considered important during this time – occurs within the context of the whole and not in isolated study. Such subtle glances impart energy and lend movement to the work because they emphasize the true spirit of Italian humanism: that one must look everywhere for knowledge and wisdom. The past was important, but so was the present. The current age was the best of both worlds. By building on antiquity it might be possible to recreate the “golden age” and make it wholly and entirely new.

The humanist tradition – that is, the recovery first of Latin texts and the literature of Roman civilization, then of Greek texts and their philosophical revelations – brought with it a new intellectual energy and excitement about the importance of classical antiquity. It is this aspect of the Roman Renaissance that, unexplored to date in relation to the Stanza della Segnatura, will help us to understand the context in
which Raphael worked and to look at the works he produced upon his arrival in Rome in a different way, that is, as demonstrations of the intellectual foundation of Cinquecento Rome. (Joost-Gaugier, Raphael’s, p. 3)

No doubt Raphael recognized the renewed focus on life and learning. As in the days of Cicero, the study of all cultures and philosophies were important. This rebirth of the past becomes a central theme throughout the various layers of society. As in antiquity, the notion is that exploring all of the various disciplines will lead to a greater understanding, perhaps even the discovery, of the essence of life itself. According to Most,

Some of the figures shown in The School of Athens can easily be interpreted as practitioners of some of the seven liberal arts. A geometer and an astronomer are prominently displayed in the right foreground. [...] If we wish, we can also locate arithmetic and music in the tablet held up for Pythagoras in the left foreground. (p. 153)

In a separate study of the painting, Christiane Joost-Gaugier found importance in the connections and relationships among the disciplines represented.

My interest was not restricted by the definitions of one discipline or another but rather was dedicated to seeking the links that connect the thought of the Renaissance not only with its ancient and medieval sources but also with its contemporary visualization in this extraordinary commission. (Raphael’s, p. xii)

She concludes that each figure in the painting was specifically selected. Each individual “hero” was chosen by Raphael because of the “intellectual activity” represented. His intent seems to be to provoke a discussion about the connection from one branch of learning to another.

Thus, through its scrupulously selected heroes each scene of the Stanza della Segnatura explains, defends, and glorifies its particular intellectual activity, citing its own genealogy and examining its character to discover the affinities and differences it has with its counterparts. (p. 16)

 Appropriately, the painting also forces one to consider an additional element – that of religion within the broader context of philosophy and other sciences. No doubt Pope Julius II was influenced by the papal library in Avignon which was sectioned into four parts: theology, philosophy, law and literature. He wanted his own library in the Vatican to reflect much the same: in style, design and content. In fact, Raphael used all four walls of the Stanza della Segnatura, including the ceiling, to set forth a more thorough study and exploration of the topic of humanism.

Throughout The School of Athens, there is harmony and balance from the top of the painting with its classical arches and coffered ceiling to the stage below with various collections of scholars assembled in active discourse. Despite the four steps, all of the figures are placed on a linear plane from left to right. No particular group dominates the scene. All are important; one is no more
significant or higher than the other. Each depends on the other to complete this re-presentation of great learning.

Although the grand allegories of philosophy, theology, poetry, and law constitute subjects that reflect the great divisions, or fourfold classification, of humanistic learning as well as the broad repertoire of Roman humanism, the program of the private library of Julius has no precedent in the history of art. [...] [T]he heroes of the Stanza della Segnatura are represented in the process of demonstrating their mental activity as well as the unfolding of their associations with each other. (Joost-Gaugier, Raphael’s, p. 16)

Such was the intent and aim of the period which we now call the Renaissance. All subjects and disciplines were essential. As Peter and Linda Murray have suggested, “Humanism in the Renaissance was humanitas, a word adapted by Leonardo Bruni from Cicero and Aulus Gellius to mean those studies which are ‘humane’ – worthy of the dignity of man” (p. 10). In fact, we can go one step farther and recall Cicero’s definition of education from the Greek word paideia, which he translated into the Latin words humanitas and civitas (a sovereign and independent community). Both parts are essential in the process of education: the individual and the community. One is no more or less vital. The two together are necessary in every society. The community in The School of Athens contains individuals from all walks of life and study. Clearly, Raphael wanted to reflect what was going on in his age by re-creating the “golden age” of antiquity. His was a new day, a new time where ancient values, ideals and principles were being reborn and given new purpose.

Plato and Aristotle dominate the painting. They are at the very center, visually and philosophically. The two are engaged in dialogue as they enter the hall to join their peers. Plato, bearing the countenance of Leonardo da Vinci, holds the Timaeus in his left hand and points towards the heavens with his other arm.

With his right hand Plato gestures upwards, indicating that the eternal verities and forms, such as the ideals of Beauty, Goodness and Truth, are not in or of this world of space, time and matter, but lie beyond, in a timeless, spaceless, realm of pure Ideals. (Socrates, p. 2)

The curious combination of these two men, Plato and da Vinci, blends together the ethereal with the physical. There is Plato with his Timaeus, which explores the creation of the universe, in the guise of da Vinci, who embodies the true spirit of the Renaissance. He is living proof of the Socratic discussion found in Timaeus, for da Vinci had many abilities: scientist, inventor, painter, sculptor, architect, writer and engineer.

To the right of Plato (da Vinci) is Aristotle, who also carries a text: Ethics. The student of Plato motions downward with an outstretched hand, indicating the more tangible “world of physical science and practical reason” (Socrates, p. 2). Together, the two philosophers represent the constant search for truth both ethereal and ephemeral.

Plato and Aristotle are neither lost in thought nor reading, as they appeared in other libraries. Rather they are actively engaged in orating. In this sense the focus of the fresco may be considered to be
a praise of classical oratory, a ‘triumph’ of oratory in its imagined archaeological setting, suggesting the strong influence of Cicero. Attendant activities show figures engaged in thinking, writing, demonstrating, and reading – appropriate accompaniments to oratory.

The acting in which Plato and Aristotle are engaged reveals an important humanist preoccupation. [...] The two offer a balancing of opposites, distinguishing Plato as the authority in divinis and Aristotle as the master in naturalibus. (Joost-Gaugier, Raphael’s, pp. 86-87)

The great debate throughout the period revolved around the quest for knowledge and truth. Did the answer lie in philosophical or empirical understanding? The crux of the Renaissance, of course, was a renewed interest in classical texts, but also learning that was informed by new discoveries in science as well as contemporary advances in art, culture, politics, philosophy and religion. The School of Athens presents the possibilities and potential for greater learning, perhaps even being able to surpass the ancients. Such a “school,” with students and teachers from all walks of life, could create a more enlightened golden age.

Arrayed on either side of Plato or Aristotle are the main thinkers of the classical world. The philosophers, poets and abstract thinkers are allied on Plato’s side. The physical scientists and more empirical thinkers are on the side of Aristotle. Only a few of these ancient thinkers can be identified with much success. But the fresco’s great variety is constructed out of many discrete groups of figures, each group with its own center and focal point. And within most of these, the central thinker is identifiable. (Socrates, p. 3)

We see philosophers, poets and “abstract thinkers” side by side with “physical scientists and more empirical thinkers.” This community of diverse thinkers and intellectuals is what a school or university should be all about. John Henry Newman, writing more than 300 years later, explained that all kinds of knowledge are important.

If I were asked to describe as briefly and popularly as I could, what a University was, I should draw my answer from its ancient designation of a Studium Generale, or "School of Universal Learning." This description implies the assemblage of strangers from all parts in one spot;—from all parts; else, how will you find professors and students for every department of knowledge? and in one spot; else, how can there be any school at all? Accordingly, in its simple and rudimental form, it is a school of knowledge of every kind, consisting of teachers and learners from every quarter. Many things are requisite to complete and satisfy the idea embodied in this description; but such as this a University seems to be in its essence, a place for the communication and circulation of thought, by means of personal intercourse, through a wide extent of country. (Newman, p. 6)

All subjects are necessary to complete the whole process and picture of learning. There are connections among the varied disciplines, and one field complements another.
One figure, in particular, who symbolizes the fulfillment of education and learning is that of Heraclitus. He sits alone at the bottom center of the painting; his eyes are cast down, perhaps in contemplation, and he is at work on a written script. “The pose and the way he supports his head with his left hand sets the mood for the contemplative quality of not only the thinker himself but the tone of much of the entire scene” (Beck, p. 84). Heraclitus is best known for his profound interest and work in cosmology. His deepest desire was to understand the creation of the universe as well as the purpose and meaning of the soul.

Like his fellow Ionian Anaximander before him, Heraclitus was, despite his obscurity, clearly concerned with the generation of the universe, whose intelligible system is the primary subject of the cosmology presented by Plato in the Timaeus. The ideas of Heraclitus are also related to those of Pythagoras. Like Pythagoras, he was interested in the soul. (Joost-Gaugier, Raphael’s, p. 100)

Raphael uses another contemporary here to add allusion to the painting. Heraclitus looks like Michelangelo. In fact, it appears as if Michelangelo himself painted the figure because it is done in the heavy hand of mannerism which came years later during the High Renaissance. But Michelangelo and Heraclitus share a common concern in both the soul and the universe. As seen in the Sistine Ceiling and The Last Judgment, Michelangelo explores these two themes in minute detail. Many of Michelangelo’s sonnets also focus on the soul and his relationship with the Creator.

To the right of Heraclitus (Michelangelo) is Diogenes, a philosopher who “spent his nights wandering from house to house with a lantern, knocking on peoples doors to find out if there was ‘an honest man inside’” (Lahanas, p. 4). As Michael Lahanas points out, some scholars consider Diogenes to represent Socrates because of the symbolism of the cup he is holding to Socrates’ cup of hemlock. There is no denying, however, that the face and beard, even the balding head, of Diogenes is very similar the extant sculptures of Socrates. Both individuals had a strong philosophical bent toward exploring the self and the significance of life. Socrates believed that man came to a better understanding of himself by realizing and admitting what he did not know. He was constantly exploring and always asking “why” in order to discover greater truth and knowledge. Who can forget his words and teaching in Phaedo on the immortality of the soul and the higher virtues of this world that continue into the next?

Moving to the far left of Diogenes (Socrates) and in the forefront, the figure of Pythagoras is writing in a large book as two men lean over his shoulders. Pythagoras, often called the first mathematician, was much more. He was responsible for inventing a system of numerical intervals that would eventually lead to the organized development of music.

Explaining musical intervals through ratios and combinations of ratios became the defining feature of the Pythagorean tradition of inquiry in music theory and acoustical science. [...] Arithmetic operations were used to calculate combinations of intervals: the addition of intervals was computed by multiplication of their ratios, while the subtraction of intervals was computed by their division. (Nolan, p. 274)

Lahanas adds that, “we recognize his most important discovery of harmony theory (music) and the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 which added together give the
sacred number 10 (X)” (Part II, p. 1). With the inclusion of Pythagoras in the painting, all of the elements of the quadrivium are present: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy or cosmology. When coupled with the trivivium (grammar, rhetoric and logic), they form the seven liberal arts that were established by the ancients and given new shape in the Renaissance.

Cicero advocated that the study of all disciplines and subjects were important to the individual and to the community. “A mind without instruction can no more bear fruit than can a field, however fertile, without cultivation,” he said in Tusculan Disputations II (p. 159). The mind is much like a field; it must be cultivated, nurtured and developed. Otherwise, it will become fallow and useless. A worthwhile education means studying many disciplines, not just “majoring” in one or two areas. Every subject is important, though arguably some may be more critical than others.

The new trends in education today depend heavily on the foundations and traditions of yesterday. It is important to remember and re-discover the fundamentals of teaching and learning that have guided us through the ages, from antiquity to the Renaissance to the present. Along the way, the platforms and tools of education have changed. But not the basic process and premise. What was true in classical Greece and Rome also was true in Raphael’s day. The School of Athens prompts us, 500 years later, to once more give serious consideration to the academy and its purpose. The painting challenges us in many ways, most of all to continue to explore and understand the world in which we live. As we discover in The School of Athens, only a holistic approach – where every field and discipline contributes to the whole meaning of education – will enable us to discover the answers we seek in this 21st century renaissance of learning.

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Teaching Women of the World: Two Strategies

Melody McMurry, Ed.D.
Portland Community College

Strategy One: Women of the World

In 2002 an opportunity to develop a course for Women’s Studies, “Women of the World,” was presented to me. This was a second course in an introductory series intended to extend knowledge of feminist activism and/or women’s issues globally. I jumped at this chance although I had not taught a Women’s Studies course for twenty years. I saw it as a way to complete the work on a course called “Women and Development” I envisioned in 1983 but had no chance to finish. A casualty of the 1980’s reduction in enrollment, I entered a doctoral program in Higher Education; and afterwards, to teaching introductory Sociology classes throughout the 1990’s. As non-tenured faculty I had limited my involvement with Women’s Studies to developing a course, The Sociology of Gender, at the request of a college dean, so until this time had no interest in drawing attention to myself by returning to teaching Women’s Studies. But when Women of the World course appeared, my son was nearing high school graduation, and with dissertation completed and many years of teaching an introductory series of Sociology classes, I jumped at the chance for a new research project.

The course had been developed initially by an anthropologist, so reflected her discipline. It also had the intended course outcomes of: developing critical thinking skills, enhancing cultural awareness, facilitating self reflection, facilitating a sense of community service, facilitating environmental responsibility, and developing written, oral, and collaboration skill. Since these were compatible with a feminist perspective, and since the college was also encouraging learning communities during the same time, I partnered with English faculty teaching Introductory Women Writers in hopes of linking our courses. When the budget realities at our campus would not fund a partnership, I continued with teaching the course alone. Since my disciplinary training is in
Sociology and Women’s Studies plus adult learning/equity education, the course became more organized around the theme of “Transnational Feminism”. I had a rewarding time rediscovering the university feminist institutes, whose intentions in the 1970’s had become realities by the 1990’s. Even more exciting was finding that newer web sites of transnational organizations of feminist leaders, journalists, politicians had joined the old standards such as WILPF (Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom). All of these became research resources for my students of the 2000’s. I was pleased when small but talented groups of students enrolled for the course during the next four years. With the requirement of annotated bibliographies for each student to complete on a nation or cultural area (which were shared at term end and incorporated into a class document), I continued to learn more about “Women of the World.”

In order to include community involvement, I discovered more about international women’s issues in this rural to suburban community (Oregon’s high-tech corridor) than I knew existed. Several immigrant communities had shaped their own culturally-specific feminist organizations: The South Asians Women’s Awareness and Empowerment Resource Association served the domestic violence needs of women from India and Pakistan, who accompanied engineer husbands to Oregon on visas attached to employment in Washington County. The women from Oaxaca and Michuacan had organized from an adult education and child care model into an Adelante Mujeres small business, and now teach organic and sustainable gardening practices as well as provide a farmer’s market in nearby rural community, Forest Grove. The metropolitan-based African Women’s Coalition made time for our class while busy planning the African “Day of the Child” in the near-by city, as numbers of immigrants from both Ethiopia and Somalia enrich our suburban college campus each year.

After two successful years teaching Women of the World, our Oregon International Education Consortium Program recommended the course for teaching Oregon Study Abroad students in London in 2005. These students had the added opportunity to conduct interviews with first, second, and third British women as class projects, while discovering the different immigrant communities of the British Commonwealth. Because the University of London sits geographically in the middle of the world’s most diverse student population, this was not a difficult project for students to complete. While we had fewer community resources available to us in that location (as unknowns to them), exhibits, museums and home stays were opportunities for multicultural experiences for these students.

At the college location in Portland, some past students from Pakistan and Vietnam had been guest speakers in the class, as had my faculty colleagues from China, Palestine, Singapore and Turkey. A Nigerian librarian spoke in the first class on female genital mutilation, prior to her retirement from the college. A nearby Graduate Institute engineer in computer science from Beijing spoke on women in the sciences. Finally, those international students enrolled in each course from Iraq, India, Japan, Mexico, Russia, and Venezuela enriched each course with personal experience from other cultures through their own visits with family, extended family experiences, or military tours. While I have now passed on the teaching of the course to one of our younger, international faculty to improve and enjoy, it remains my fondest teaching memory these thirty years with students.
Strategy Two: Internationalized Curriculum

In 2006, Portland Community College provided the first opportunity for faculty to experience international training with anticipated “Internationalized Curriculum” as a result of CIEE (Council for International Education Exchange) summer experiences for approximately 15 faculty and managers. After my London 2005 Study Abroad experience, as well as these great years teaching Women of the World, I gladly applied for the experience, was accepted, and returned to the UK in 2006. My colleague above visited Japan the same summer. The next two summers’ programs accumulated an academy of faculty and staff who returned from various parts of the world ready to design and implement global connections and assignments to their courses at the community college. This effort engineered by the college International Education Office, has resulted in a faculty-driven effort to internationalize the curriculum to meet the needs of future college students, and later employees in our global economy. I have focused upon internationalizing the core courses I teach: Sociology 204: The Sociology of Everyday Life (2006), Sociology 205: Social Change (2006), Sociology 206: Social Problems (2005), and a few years later, Sociology 218: The Sociology of Gender (2008).

Now nine years later I am in my final years of teaching at PCC and have come full circle in attempting to teach with a global perspective in my continuing introductory sociology series of classes. Once again I have been hearing about “women of the world” from students in their sociology group class projects. The Social Change “international social movement simulations” have produced stories/programs regarding women’s lives through research on Amnesty International, regarding human trafficking, child labor, microfinance, disaster relief, and global warming. The Sociology of Everyday Life students have produced family ancestor migration maps which tell of grandparents migration to the US through Canada, about parental and family disapproval of “mixed-marriages,” of families seeking employment who do not share their ethnicities with their children, of international exchange students from different continents who meet in Californian universities, marry and have children who represent several cultures to their fellow students and teachers at PCC. These new projects are not about feminist theory, nor do they refer to feminist ideology or intentions. They do not reflect some of the caution I try to insist upon in doing research on the internet. These students choose the flashy and sensational images to attract attention. Still they are their discoveries about “women of the world”, and because they are their own discoveries rather than mine, frame their understanding of women of the world in ways I do not yet understand. I left this presentation on Teaching Women of the World posing a question for faculty who attended the presentation at the Worldwide Forum on Education. Which of these strategies for teaching Women of the World is best?

Assessment Plan

During the coming year, our plan is to assess the four year population of students who have completed the Women of the World course. We plan an initial web survey followed by in-depth interviews with those most willing to elaborate on how the experience may have particularly had impact on their lives. The study will be conducted with assistance of students who have completed the course at the community college, and are now graduate students in Sociology at local Portland State University. The initial web survey will focus on the course
intended outcomes in regard to community service, cultural awareness, as well as further interest, research, or travel which may have inspired by reading and research, speakers, or activities introduced in the course. Items constructed to gather this information will be informed by works such as Carolyn Musil’s (2006) work: Assessing Global Learning: Matching Good Intentions with Good Practice. We would like to share of the outcomes of the study at a future Worldwide Forum on Education.

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Their Voices, Our Ears: Looking For Ways to Encourage Success

Joanne Bakker
Jocelyne Briggs
Donna Putman
Niagara College, CANADA

Introduction

In 2008, the Management at Niagara College engaged in an active search for strategies that would support student retention. Our role in developing this project was to bring forward our students’ voices and reflections to the policy makers and staff at this College.

Assumptions, Context and Product

Collecting source input from constituent groups has become the standard for policy development in this decade. Developing policies "with”, as opposed to "for” our students and teachers results in a clear, accurate interpretation of the issues, as well as an appreciation for the values of the stakeholder groups.

Our premise in this project was that student transition to and success in college can be described by students themselves. Our assumption was that if we could capture their reflections on who they are; what works for them as students; what hinders their learning; what makes them leave and stay, we could begin to assist them academically and personally. The project collected the stories of the student experiences in college with the purpose of identifying the factors that contribute to student success and retention.

The project was driven by the voices and reflections of our students and was carried out as a partnership between the academic programs and the Counselling Office. Using media allowed us to develop a product produced by our students, which gave voice to the student experience and allowed us a glimpse into the reflections and insights of our stakeholders. Using the themes that emerged, we wove together film footage, survey statistics, focus group input, and personal private interviews into a 60 minute film which helps us understand when and how students succeed and when and how students leave our College and change the courses of their lives. All of the words, screen titles, captions and voiceovers are the words of our students.

Methodology

Research was conducted on one campus of Niagara College. Niagara College is a mid-size college (7,100 full time students 6,300 part-time) which operates through the province of Ontario’s Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It is a Diploma and Applied Degree granting institution which delivers programs in such areas as Hospitality, Environment and Horticulture, Engineering Technologies, Business, Photonics, Human services, Health Sciences, Justice Studies, Media and has the only College teaching winery in Canada. For five
years running, Niagara has earned the distinction of being rated #1 in Student Satisfaction in the provincial College system.

We worked with students in several ways to document their insights on the student experience. Students were invited to participate using a menu of approaches that they could choose from based on their comfort level. They felt someone was listening to them --not just us asking our own questions. The following methods to collect student input were used:

1. 350 in-class surveys covering each division on one campus of Niagara College, conducted in the 2008 winter semester. Questions were mainly open-ended to encourage individual insights. Statistics were compiled by College staff and collated by program and total aggregate. Statistics in the film represent the total aggregate numbers.

2. 12 hours of individual on-camera studio film interviews. Students were asked to “tell us...” regarding several topics such as: starting College; what encourages them; what makes them stay; what discourages them; what it feels like to fail, etc. Questions were not given out beforehand. *The filming and production team consisted of three 2nd year Broadcasting students and Counsellors Jocelyne Briggs and Donna Putman.

3. 3 hours of facilitated sessions with classes and key campus groups such as our student government. Sessions invited input on student success, retention and barriers students face in achieving their goals.

4. Individual off-camera interviews with students willing to share their insights. Many of the quotes and voiceovers in the film come from this source.

5. Weekly “people on the street” on-camera questions with students about the services offered on Campus.

**Emerging Themes: What they told us**

After working with the information collected from all the sources, clear themes emerged from the student stories and responses. Those became the organizing structure for the film, its content and our learning. Student voices led to conclusions, many of which surprised us. The following are sample quotations collected and these can be heard as part of the narrative within the film. They are our student voices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>STUDENT QUOTES</th>
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| **We are your students.** Students describe who they are, why they come to college, their hopes and challenges. | • “I’m a family man and it takes me 3 hours on a bus to come to school and get home...I find it very difficult to come to school every day.”  
• “I have one son and no transportation. I get groceries on my bicycle each week.”  
• “I live in a women’s shelter. How do I stay motivated in school?”  
• “I wanted to go to a psychic and not a counsellor because she would tell me what was going to happen and I could just sit and wait for it.” |
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<th><strong>How big is our community</strong> focuses on the scope of the community connections that students bring with them to our college.</th>
<th>• &quot;My best friend bought me the Niagara College T-shirt; that’s why I ended up coming here.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Our goals** provided insights into the diverse goals of our students and the role these goals play in student retention. | • “Keep your eyes on the [graduation] stage....”  
• "My ideal job would be communications public relations work in a corporate environment; really, really nice office building, like I’m talking all glass with a really nice administrative assistant when you walk in, free coffee.” |
| **Connecting and reaching our students** explores the kinds of connections that are important to students | • "No one wants to do it alone; we all need a shoulder to cry on... we need first aid.”  
• "[It’s important] when a professor tries to understand my situation; I was sick and she noticed and approached me.” |
| **Supports. Students tell us who their supports are and the important role these supports play in their College life.** | • "...friends and family; when they stay in touch, are interested and say things like ‘you can do it’.”  
• "I decided to leave the program I loved. There was too much stress and not enough support.” |
| **Family and Friends. We learn the importance of these supports in our students’ lives and how they impact on our students’ success.** | • “Things that encourage: Mom, Counsellor; success in classes.”  
• "It was the first time away from family – I had responsibility for everything – discipline, self reliance, self determination, no supports in laundry, food, planning my own activities, social responsibilities – everything is on you alone.”  
• "If you don’t have any connections you’re not gonna want to come to school, you’re not gonna want to go to class because you don’t have anybody there that you can associate yourself with.” |
| **Services. Students talk about the impact of their interactions with campus staff and service areas.** | • “I’m too shy to go to the job centre... I’ve never walked into a job centre before.”  
• "The website doesn’t want me to go to College... I called and spoke to a human and it totally made a difference.” |
**Why we leave** explores what discourages student success.

- "Teacher support is important; I dropped a class because of a professor. I don’t need someone to treat me like that."
- "I worked hard; did not get good marks; was not enjoying it; didn’t understand the material; I was dedicated, but I didn’t fit in."
- "Stress took its toll. I was so negative on myself. I felt beat down to the ground with people pounding on me. My self-confidence was so low."
- "I developed an eating disorder. Things were so stressful and there was so much work, I thought that if I didn’t take the time to eat, I might be able to do my homework. Soon I was weak and sick and I looked like a ghost."
- "If someone at the College had reached out, I would have accepted the help."
- "Money is a make or break issue; some students don’t have books. Working to afford college can be an impossible barrier to success."

**Failure.** Students indicated this factor as the most emotionally damaging issue they face at college.

- "Failure: sucks; puts you farther behind – add depression – you give up."
- "Failure: people panic and get paranoid."
- "My friend in my program failed her placement. She was really upset [about] failing placement (but everybody who fails it is) and she dropped out because of the placement. She called me and tried to give away some of her things to me. I realized the seriousness; and she said she was going to kill herself...."
- "Achievement; if you don’t do well, you don’t want to be here."

**Classroom issues** explores the influences in the classroom environment that impact students’ decisions to leave.

- "Workload, deadlines are unreal; I stay up till 3 or 4 a.m. I lose sleep."
- "I need to see, feel, touch, do. It works for me when teachers show me and then let me do it."
- "I called my teacher the day after my test to ask if I could have a re-take. I’d had an epileptic attack the night before the test and couldn’t even remember coming to school the next day to write the test."
Why we stay gives insight into the factors and influences that support student success at college.

- "The relationship between profs and students is important: when they know me and know something about us – name, what we do etc – that makes a difference."
- "The basic is the staff and the teachers making it very, very comfortable for you."
- "Some of the teachers, some who came out very positive the very first day; those are the people, their classes I never failed."
- "From day one, for us the motto was, 'keep your eye on the stage.'"
- "What gets me through everything is what I am getting out of it."
- "I was lucky; I had somebody telling me where to go, what to do; I was lucky; otherwise I would have been lost."
- "The social aspect is probably the most encouraging thing for me to come to class."

Classroom Success. Students voice their reflections on how and why they succeed and stay at college.

- "Here people smile and this is encouraging and makes me relax."
- "Thanks so much for calling me: you’re a real person."
- "I’m finally getting the courage to live my dreams."

Results and Discussion: What we learned

It was clear by the seriousness and insightfulness of the student responses in all the formats that students want to tell us their stories and that they enjoyed the chance to participate in a collaborative project. In addition to compiling some valuable statistics, we have synthesized some of our learning into the following points:

1. Starting College is surprising and terrifying. More than 50% of our students did not have a sense of what college and college classes would be like. Students entering the college system are vulnerable. At this point in time "our voices" ring very loudly in "their ears."
2. Career is the #1 reason to be in College. Reported four times more than any other reason to be here, career and job contributes to the vision students have of themselves and their futures. Students also state that career and job is the most important factor that encourages their learning at the classroom level.
3. College Life: Many students reported that the social experience is as important as the academic learning experience for them. In class, after class, in the cafeteria, at social events, they want ways to involve themselves in a college life – to develop a college identity.
4. Connecting and supports: Our students are clear that College includes extended friends and family. The surprise to us came when we learned about the link between these community members and our students’ academic success and retention. Specifically, students ranked family and friends as the most important factor in helping them stay in college and as the primary support they use when they may not be doing well in the classroom.

5. People are so important at Niagara College. Every interpersonal transaction in or out of the classroom can become the thing that motivates, encourages, or pushes a student away. Statistically, people-related transactions are the #1 factor in feeling pushed out, and also the most important factor in helping students stay.

6. Failure is the most consistently reported statistic. 99% of students responded with an emotionally negative response to academic failure including “end of the world”; “gut wrenching”; “I’ve lost all hope.”

7. Reach out to us. Woven into all the feedback was the need to be heard and for someone to help them when they are in need. A “hello” in the hall, even in the shopping mall counts, and for someone - especially their professor - to reach out and offer help is a powerful key to their success as students.

Project Statistics:

- Only 33% of students surveyed rank College as the number one priority in their lives.
- The positive impact of people ranks highest in what students value about their College experience.
- Reasons students attend College:
  - 60% Career/Job
  - 15% Diploma
  - 11% Time to grow up
  - 11% Parents
  - 3% Financial Aid
- More than 50% of students said that walking into their classes for the first time was overwhelming, intimidating, stressful and terrifying.
- Who do students go to if they are not doing well in College?
  - 62% Friends & Family
  - 28% Professors
  - 10% Service Offices
- Students rank family, friends and services as the #1 factor in helping them stay in College
  - Positive learning ranks 2nd
  - Career goals rank 3rd
  - Money ranks 4th
- What makes students vulnerable to dropping out?
  - 38% Teaching/learning
  - 30% Personal
  - 12% Money/work
  - 11% Goal
  - 9% Motivation
- The four top reasons students leave College:
  - Classroom issues identified 2 times more than any other factor
  - Failure 2nd
  - Social 3rd
Money 4th

- What helps students stay in College?
  - 39% Support systems
  - 34% Teaching/classes
  - 19% Career goals
  - 8% Financial goals

**Conclusions:**

- Students have lots to say. We learned that students have few opportunities or tools to express their stories, insights and issues about being a college student. Students need a podium; students need to have a say.
- Each student is a universe. We need to provide intentional outreach to hear who our students are in order to help them.
- In order to meet students where they are, we need to explore techniques such as using technology, film, outreach methods and interactive methods. These are important to hearing the student voices.
- Students aren’t who we think they are. We discovered there was a gap in our perceptions of who they are and the reality of their stories.
- Data collected was so diverse and unique but identified recurring themes. We need to ask our students what they value.
- We need to suspend our assumptions about student behaviours and ask for the real story.
- Policy decisions need to be informed by student voices, stories and reflections.
- Staff and faculty respond to the voices of the students when it is presented to them. The stories move them to new understanding and to new ways to interact with their students in the teaching-learning process. As one of our professors stated of transformative learning: “Teachers begin to experience transformation when they start listening and responding to students’ needs, hopes and dreams…. When I listen, I change.”

**Follow Up:**

Student voices are so powerful that each member of our college needs to hear them. Our ongoing work is to bring the film research to every department in the College – academic, service and administrative. We have begun that process and this now becomes the work of how their voices are beginning to change us.
Spanglish in US-Highschools: Dealing with the code-switching of bilingual children in class

Carolin Patzelt
University of Bochum (Germany)

1. Introduction

As is common knowledge, the number of Hispanics in the United States is increasing rapidly, and so is the use of Spanglish, the much debated mixture of English and Spanish language elements. Apart from its use in private, informal communication, such as within the family or among friends, Spanglish is also spreading into more formal communication, e.g. it is more and more heard at school. This fact raises the question how teachers are to cope with the use of Spanglish among students. At present, the reaction towards Spanglish is commonly a negative one, and teachers as well as outsiders are eager to abolish or at least restrict the use of Spanglish at school as well as in formal communication in general. This article adopts a different position and approach: Instead of looking for ways to abolish the use of Spanglish in the classroom or trying to sort out (single) acceptable items of Spanglish, it regards Spanglish as a linguistic reality of today’s US-classrooms and raises the question what benefit teachers and students may be able to get out of this linguistic reality rather than complaining about it. In a first step, the article analyzes the most frequently mentioned reasons for the bad reputation of Spanglish and looks at how justified this bad reputation seems. In a second step, selected linguistic as well as cultural aspects of Spanglish and the people that speak it will be discussed with regard to the question: Are there ways teachers can cope with the presence of Spanglish in a rewarding way? And if so, how can bilingual and perhaps even non-bilingual students be made to benefit from the integration of Spanglish into the (language) classroom?

2. Spanglish as evidence for `incomplete language acquisition`?

As has already been mentioned in the introduction, the connotations typically associated with Spanglish are (exclusively) negative ones. The following quote by Acosta-Belén sums up the most prominent prejudices against Spanglish and its users:

“Speakers of the non-defined mixture of Spanish and/or English are judged as `different`, or sloppy speakers of Spanish and/or English, and are often labelled verbally deprived, ailingual, or deficient bilinguals because supposedly they do not have the ability to speak either English or Spanish well.” [Acosta-Belén 1975:151]

Possibly, this negative and pejorative way of assessing Spanglish derives from language switches such as in the following situation, in which the speaker
seems to be unable to recall the appropriate words in English and therefore switches to Spanish:

“Look at her lunar (mole). My brother´s got one on his nalga (buttock).”  
[Zentella 1997:98]

Zentella calls switches like this “crutching”, because “like a person with impaired use of one leg who depends on a crutch to keep walking, a bilingual who is stumped in one language can keep on speaking by depending on a translated synonym as a stand-in.” [Zentella 1997:98] This quote vitally reflects the assessment of Spanglish as a deficient way of expressing oneself. However, the question is whether it is always this “crutching” that triggers code-switching. The following conversation serves as a counterexample, because the speaker obviously knows the words bullfighting / corrida de toros and to laugh at somebody / reírse de alguien in both English and Spanish, since he is able to interchange them:

“Her suegros are from Tennessee y los van a traer y quieren llevarlos a una corrida de toros. So (...) she wrote to me yesterday and asked me to find out if there is a bullfight.” [Valdés 1982:219]

“And he was laughing cause he saw me coming in. Se estaba riendo de mí, you know.” [Valdés 1982:222]

As a result, the code-switching in these sentences cannot be attributed to mere “crutching”. Instead, as Zentella shows, “crutching” is only one among a whole set of functions code-switching is used for. Other frequently found functions include:

- topic shift: “Vamos a preguntarle. It´s raining!”
- quotations: “El me dijo, `Call the police!`, pero yo dije (...).”
- role shift: “Mi nombre es Lourdes. Now we´re going to my sister.”
- clarification: “¿No me crees? You don´t believe me?”  
  [Zentella 1997:94]

Contrary to “crutching”, these other functions are strategies of language change which do not seem to occur unconsciously or result from a limited proficiency in one language. Rather, they are used on purpose and to achieve a specific goal. For instance, a shift in topic may often trigger a shift in language, too, so as to re-direct the listener´s attention away from one topic and towards a new one. Emotions may also serve as a powerful trigger of language switches, e.g., bilingual Hispanics may refer to their home countries in Spanish and to their current home in the USA in English, or they may deliberately refer to their home country in English so as to demonstrate their complete identification with the USA. Especially strategies such as ‘clarification’ seem to be essential for bilingual speakers, because what monolinguals hope to accomplish by repeating their utterances louder and / or slower, bilinguals may accomplish by switching languages.

As has become obvious, there is both functional and non-functional code-switching. But what does this mean for language use at school? Should teachers allow functional code-switching and prohibit non-functional switches? If so, how are they to decide in spontaneous speech which of the students´ switches are functional and which are not? Apparently, this kind of differentiation is
impossible, and the situation is further complicated by a second crucial point Spanglish is constantly criticized for: The lack of a norm.

3. The problem of variation in Spanglish

Although the term `Spanglish` has become commonly used and accepted, it is still unclear what exactly it comprises. Generally speaking, Spanglish — also known as espianglish, ingleñol, espan'glés, jerga fronteriza or Tex Mex — refers to a wide range of language-contact phenomena that appear in the speech of Hispanics living in the USA, where they are constantly exposed to both Spanish and English. Apparently, these contact phenomena result from close border contact and large bilingual communities all over the USA. However, Spanglish is not a linguistic term. Rather, it groups together various linguistic phenomena such as code mixing, code switching or borrowing. As a result, many phenomena labelled Spanglish are not comparable to each other. For example, the speech of a fully bilingual Spanish and English speaker in the U.S., who spontaneously switches between Spanish and English in mid-sentence, is fundamentally different from a monolingual Puerto Rican Spanish speaker whose native vocabulary just contains a number of English words and expressions.

Lipski (2005:1) distinguishes between the language switches of (i) fluent bilinguals, (ii) Spanish-speaking immigrants who learned English in adolescence or adulthood, and (iii) native speakers of English who have acquired Spanish as a L2. The first group, according to Lipski, makes constant use of intrasentential code-switching for pragmatic purposes, whereas the second group is more noted for switching at major discourse boundaries only. English-speaking students of Spanish, contrary to the first two groups mentioned, switch to English primarily when their abilities in Spanish do not meet the demands of a communicative task. The switches these different groups of bilinguals may use include the following boundaries:

- full sentences: Pa, ¿me va(-s) (a) comprar un jugo? It costs 25 cents.
- independent clauses: You know how to swim but no te tapa.
- subordinate clauses: Because yo lo dije.
- prepositional phrases: I’m going with her a la esquina. [Zentella 1997:118]

As a result, it seems impossible to give an exact definition of what `Spanglish` actually consists of or what it sounds like. However, can this variation and lack of norm be a (justified) reason for the bad reputation Spanglish suffers from? Should one, maybe, accept certain kinds of switches, among certain groups of people, and prohibit others? – At this point one should bear in mind that language variation in the USA is not restricted to the mixture of English and Spanish, but that the Hispanic culture in the US is also and especially dominated by the existence of different varieties of Spanish (Mexican, Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish, to name only the three most dominant groups of Hispanics in the USA).

These regionally used varieties of Spanish have been recognized to constitute an essential part of people´s cultural identity. With regard to language varieties used and accepted at school, it has even been claimed that the significance of these regional varieties for Hispanics and their self-esteem tends to be underestimated:
“By insisting that students need to develop skills in reading, writing, and composition, and that they must increase their Spanish vocabulary in formal contexts, we are giving them an implicit message: that a dialect is opposed to the norm, and the dialects and variants they employ at home and with friends are not valid for communication in Spanish.” [Aparicio 1999:186]

In other words, the different regional varieties of Spanish should be fully recognized, even at school. It has also been stressed that the importance of Standard Spanish – in addition to the problematic cultural implications just mentioned – has always been overestimated for US-Hispanics and does not really match their linguistic needs in everyday life:

“Because of the linguistic division inherent to the social contexts, due to the need to employ English at work, at school and in the public arena, many Latinos (...) do not find themselves in circumstances in which they need to speak Standard Spanish. They listen to newscasts in Spanish, they read Spanish newspapers, but in their daily lives they may limit English to work, and they may use Spanish, English and Spanglish in family interaction.” [Aparicio 1999:186]

In other words, it is mainly the use of English at work and the regional varieties of Spanish at home that characterizes the language of Hispanics living in the USA. They hardly come into contact with Standard (European) Spanish in their everyday lives. Aparicio (1999) recommends US-high schools should react to this fact by introducing new teaching methods that enable schools to integrate the regional varieties of Spanish into language classes. Instead of merely promoting Standard (European) Spanish as the one and only acceptable norm, students should “approach the Spanish language in terms of contexts and functions, and not based on vertical and hierarchical values” (Aparicio 1999:187). In other words, teachers are to differentiate between language choice in different settings, and thus can include variations such as Caribbean lexicon and pronunciation as well as the Central American varieties of Spanish, which are full of indigenous elements. The classroom becomes a space for cultural knowledge from which students with different cultural and linguistic background can benefit: Comparative lexical exercises, e.g., make students list and define colloquialisms from their country of origin, while the class discusses and evaluates these expressions, which are grouped into different categories. While this type of language class is quite demanding in that it requires teachers to possess at least a substantial knowledge about the major cultures represented in the student body, it may certainly be an effective way of cutting down misunderstandings and prejudices among Hispanic students of diverse background, as well as between Hispanics and Anglo-Americans. The first group is particularly important, because an increasing diversification of the Latino community can be observed lately. Thus it is no longer only the Mexicans in the Southwest, the Cubans in Florida and the Puerto Ricans in New York that teachers have to cope with, but the different Latino communities begin to mix, providing schools with a complex mixture of Mexican, Cuban, Dominican or Colombian students. We will return to this point and the problems arising from it later on. In any case, for Latino students born and raised in the USA, this new teaching concept provides an important opportunity to learn about the history and linguistic reality of their country of origin.
It is striking that, compared to the regional varieties of Spanish, Spanglish shows exactly the same characteristics: (i) It obviously forms part of the speakers’ (bilingual and bicultural) identity, and (ii) it is increasingly used in public surroundings and the media. For instance, Espinosa (1975:105) gives examples from local Spanish newspapers such as “haga fuerza venir” [from the English expression “make an effort to come”] or “si gusta” [“if you please”], that promote obvious calquing from English as acceptable “Spanish” and thus reveal the advancing integration of Spanglish into everyday life. The ongoing rejection of Spanglish in more formal or even written communication may, at least partly, be due to the concept of panhispanicity promoted by the Real Academia Española (RAE), which claims that:

“Las Academias desempeñan ese trabajo desde la conciencia de que la norma del español no tiene un eje único (...), sino que su carácter es policéntrico. Se consideran, pues, plenamente legítimos los diferentes usos de las regiones lingüísticas, con la única condición de que estén generalizados entre los hablantes cultos de su área (...).” [www.rae.es]

[The Spanish language academies believe that the Spanish language does not have one single center (...). It is therefore legitimate to use the different varieties of the linguistic regions, as long as they are of common usage among the educated speakers of a respective area (...)]

In other words, the RAE does recognize that the Spanish language is pluricentric, and thus it is legitimate to use different varieties of linguistic regions. However, the RAE requires that these varieties `be of common usage among the educated speakers of a respective area`. Since this is obviously not (yet) the case with Spanglish, it is no officially accepted language variety, and members of the RAE as well as other language purists continue to campaign against its use. For instance, Ángel Martín Municio, assistant director of the RAE, declared during the 1st International Congress of the Spanish Language (Congreso Internacional de la Lengua Española) that Spanglish constituted a threat to the Spanish language and was a sign of bad education (Ramos 2000:266). Nonetheless, a considerable amount of literature in Spanglish is emerging, and the linguistic reality in the USA suggests a positive future for the spread and acceptance of Spanglish. Even the RAE has already begun to – carefully – accept anglicisms for integration into their dictionary. As a result, it is to be expected that, instead of disappearing, Spanglish will continue to spread into everyday speech, and possibly even into more formal communication. How, then, can teachers sensibly cope with their students´ use of Spanglish in class? The following chapter will present some rewarding points of discussion a teacher can integrate into language classes in order to sensitize students to the complex phenomenon of Spanglish.

4. Integrating Spanglish into language classes
4.1. The position of Spanglish within the linguistic varieties present in the USA

It has been shown that Spanglish is widely despised due to its association with incomplete language acquisition. In addition to the fact that this is not justified, since there is a vast amount of functional code-switching, there is another point that needs to be emphasized. Not always is it possible to clearly
separate Spanglish terms from English or Spanish ones: Borrowings such as “londri” (from English “laundry”), which are characteristic of Spanglish, are also frequently used by monolingual speakers who are often completely unaware of the fact that they are using a loanword. As Espinosa (1975:103) already stated in the 1970s, “words that are once adopted and which become phonetically Spanish, become a part of the New Mexican-Spanish vocabulary and no one is cognizant of their English source.”

Equally, more and more borrowings from English, such as the verb “chequear” (to check) or the noun “computadora” (English: computer, Standard Spanish: ordenador), become officially accepted into Standard Spanish and thus must no longer be regarded as “bad, sloppy speech”. In addition to the advancing spread and acceptance of English borrowings, there are also a lot of words which are regarded as Spanglish and “sloppy”, especially by speakers of European Spanish, but which also exist in Latin American countries. A good example is the verb “rentar”, which Spanglish borrowed from English and uses as an equivalent of the Standard Spanish “alquilar”. However, “rentar” is also a common verb in Mexico and parts of Central America. Likewise, “clutch” is the Spanglish as well as Mexican and South American term for the gear-shifting device of an automotive transmission (“embrague” in Standard Spanish). As a result, both monolinguals and Latin Americans frequently use terms that are typically classified as Spanglish – consciously or not – and thus must not despise bilinguals for using these terms. The classification of such terms as “sloppy, inappropriate” seems even more questionable if we take into consideration that it may often remain unclear whether a term is actually used as a “Spanglish” expression or whether the speaker has acquired it in his or her (Latin American) home country and is thus speaking “pure” Spanish.

The linguistic facts just mentioned give teachers the opportunity to work against widespread prejudices among students by showing them how closely Spanglish is related with the speech of monolinguals. Moreover, the teacher can give students an insight into how intense and permanent language contact triggers typical stages of language change. For instance, it can be shown that the integration of borrowings from English words into Spanish does not occur arbitrarily, but that certain systematically applied strategies can be observed, e.g. in the transformation of vowels: English accented ŭ becomes o in Spanish (buggy > bogue, lŭnch > lonchi, fŭn > fon etc.), English accented ô usually becomes u in Spanish (cŏat > cute) and so on (Espinosa 1975:108). By doing so, the teacher shows his students that the use of Spanglish among bilingual students in the USA is guided by natural and systematic principles, which are not restricted to English-Spanish language contact. Instead, the phenomenon of contact languages has quite a long history in the USA: For instance, one hybrid that appeared at the end of the 19th century was a mix of Norwegian, Danish, Finnish and English, called Finglish. However, while the speakers of these Nordic languages came from far away and only in small numbers, the immigration from Latin American countries is still ongoing and people come to the USA in large numbers, due to the proximity between the countries (Wilson 2008:3). As a result, the dominance of Spanglish as a contact-induced variety has nothing to do with Hispanics being less willing or able to learn proper English than other groups of immigrants. It is rather the geographical and social circumstances which set them apart from these other groups and provide a different basis for code-switching.

As for the concept of Pan-Latinity Aparicio (1999) suggests for implementation in language classes, it can simply be expanded by adding
Spanglish to the regional varieties of Spanish: For example, the teacher can start off by discussing the emergence and acceptability of the Spanglish words "carro" (from English "car", Standard Spanish "automóvil) or “troca” (from English “truck”, Standard Spanish “camión”) and can then ask for corresponding terms in different varieties of Spanish. Hispanic students of Mexican origin, for example, will then remark that, in Mexican Spanish, “camión” is an equivalent of “autobús”, not a truck, as in Standard Spanish. Likewise, the word “trailer”, in Spanglish, is used to refer to the entire tractor-trailer vehicle, not just the trailer. In Standard Spanish, the correct term for a semi-tractor truck is “camión”, whereas “remolque” designates the trailer. Finally, truck drivers are “traileros” in Spanglish, whereas in Standard Spanish they are referred to as “camioneros”. However, here again it has to be noted that “traileros” is not a typical – “sloppy” – Spanglish expression, but that it also appears in Mexican Spanish.

It becomes obvious from these examples that a systematic integration of Spanglish items into language classes can help to achieve several important goals: Hispanic students from different backgrounds as well as monolingual US-American students learn how the different language varieties they all speak are interrelated with each other. Different terms are used in different varieties, and sometimes with divergent meanings in the respective varieties, so if students think another person has said something offending to them, they may bear in mind the possibility of a different meaning in a different variety of Spanish next time. Moreover, by learning the corresponding expressions in other varieties of Spanish, students get interested in the language and culture of fellow students from a different background and may thus develop a more positive attitude and more tolerance towards them. The teacher may even go on to confront students with the prescriptive norms of the RAE – where, for instance, the word “tráiler” appears in the dictionary, whereas the American “trailer” does not – as opposed to the linguistic reality, where even the famous Spanish newspaper EL PAIS regularly uses “trailer” without the required accent. Thus students note that language change is something natural and difficult to stop by rules imposed from the outside. As a result, a deviation from the (written) norm may not necessarily indicate “erroneous” language use. The social situation and widespread bilingualism in the US may accelerate the integration of anglicisms into Spanish, but also in Spain a clear deviation from the (traditional) rules of “pure” Spanish can be observed in everyday life. As Ramos (2000:266) puts it, “El lenguaje se forma y desarrolla en el home, en el trabajo, between friends, frente a la tivi y escuchando la radio. No en los diccionarios.”

4.2. Discussing the acceptability of different kinds of Spanglish items

Another point teachers can work on with their students, and which is closely related to the ones mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, is the acceptability and efficiency of different Spanglish items, which can be classified and discussed with the students. At least three different groups of items should be mentioned here:

(i) the borrowing of English vocabulary, such as “chequear” (to check, Standard Spanish “verificar, comprobar”), “computadora” (computer, Standard Spanish “ordenador”) or “pichear” (to pitch, baseball). Here, teachers can discuss with their students whether a borrowing is culturally necessary or not, and if they consider it legitimate and sensible to adopt specific borrowings. By doing so, teachers make students reflect on their own
language use and choice of vocabulary. Making people reflect upon why and how to use specific Spanglish items is certainly a more efficient way to restrict the excessive influx of English or Spanglish into US-Spanish than simply telling them not to use the respective items, because some authority considers them inappropriate. Moreover, the students note that anglicisms, which are often heavily criticized by language purists or the media, do not always represent something bad and superfluous, but that they may become necessary to designate culturally unknown items, as in the case of “pichear”, which is a term from baseball, a typical US-game.

Likewise, the “Diccionario panhispánico de dudas” (2005) includes the term “esnob” and defines it as

“Adaptación gráfica de la voz inglesa snob, ‘[persona] que imita con afectación las maneras, opiniones, etc., de aquellos a quienes considera distinguidos’.” [www.rae.es]

[Graphic adaptation of the English word ‘snob’, which denotes a person who imitates the manners (...) of a person he or she considers ‘distinguished’.]

“Esnob” was obviously borrowed from English, because the Spanish language does not really dispose of an equivalent term. On the other hand, it is questionable and can be passionately discussed in class, whether it makes sense to borrow terms from English if there is already a corresponding term in Standard Spanish, as in the case of rentar (Standard Spanish alquilar, English to rent) or parquear (Standard Spanish estacionar, English to park). (ii) A second category of Spanglish items which is quite common is the calquing of English idiomatic phrases to Spanish, such as the often heard “llamar para atrás” (English: to call back), instead of Standard Spanish “devolver la llamada”. This calquing is particularly common among Puertoricans. But why do they use it, is it because they are less capable of learning two languages properly than other groups of Hispanics? Here again, the discussion of Spanglish in class can help to abolish prejudices: Since the island of Puerto Rico belongs to the USA and it is easy for Puerto Ricans living in the USA to return to Puerto Rico and vice versa, the contact between English and Spanish in everyday life is much more intense for them than for other Hispanics. And the more intense the language contact an individual experiences, the more likely he or she is to develop a mixture of both languages, independent of intelligence or language ability. (iii) Finally, there is also a group of items which exist both in Spanglish and Standard Spanish, but which have altered their meaning in Spanglish, under the influence of English. A good example is the verb “vacunar”, which in Standard Spanish means “to vaccinate”, whereas in Spanglish it denotes “to vacuum”, which is evidently derived from the English “vacuum cleaner”. Likewise, the noun “éxito” means “success” in Standard Spanish, but is used in the sense of “exit” in Spanglish. Such “false friends” may serve as a departure point for discussing in how far the use of Spanglish can and will change, enrich or deteriorate the Spanish language in the USA. For instance, will simplifications such as the use of “boiler” for both “calentador de agua” and “hervidor” or “chequear” for both “verificar” and “comprobar” make the Spanish language more efficient? Or will it rather lose its richness of vocabulary? By discussing such questions in class, teachers help students to
watch their own language carefully and, at the same time, to adopt a more
differentiated look at the phenomenon of Spanglish, since there seem to be
parts of it that are completely unproblematic or even necessary, while others
may indeed be regarded as problematic.

4.3. The cultural implications of Spanglish

As has already been mentioned in 4.2., among the different groups of
Spanish speakers in the USA different kinds of Spanglish can be observed, such
as the variety spoken by Puerto Ricans who tend to make more use of code-
switching than other groups, due to their constant circulation between Puerto
Rico and New York City. Since other groups of Hispanics are often not very
familiar with the social situation of their fellow Hispanic neighbors, linguistic
differences can easily trigger social conflicts. Thus, for instance, the many Puerto
Ricans living in New York are not only widely despised by Anglo-Americans, but
also and especially by other groups of Latin American immigrants who claim that
the `Nuyoricans` are lazy and dirty people: Since Nuyoricans practice an
extreme form of code-switching, they are regarded as betraying their own
culture by using a `dirty` mixture of languages (Henze 2000:18). As a result, if
they do not care about cultivating their identity and language, they must
constitute an inferior group of Hispanics. This is a good example of how linguistic
particularities can easily lead to social conflicts and prejudices, a fact that
students should be well aware of. Teachers should point out that the true
explanation of such specific linguistic features can often be a very different and
simple one, as has been shown with regard to the Puerto Rican immigrants.

In order to illustrate the value and significance of Latino culture in the USA,
two points should be particularly stressed: a) The presence of Puerto Ricans and
Chicanos in US- music, literature and universities. Anglo-Americans that look
down upon Hispanics should remind themselves of the success of a musical like
Westside-Story or films such as Salsa. Moreover, the subject Puerto Rican
Studies has become very popular at US-universities and is not only studied by
Hispanics of Puerto Rican origin, but also by young Anglo-Americans. b) The
culture of each group of Hispanics has to be considered and respected as a
culture of its own, not as a mere addition of US- and Latin American elements.

As Henze (2000:46) observes with regard to Puertoricans in New York, in
addition to US- American and Hispanic elements, the Nuyorican identity is
influenced by the history of the European colonization of Puerto Rico, the
oppression of the indigenous population, a massive immigration from India as
well as the incorporation of African elements in both Puerto Rico and New York.
Likewise, the Chicano culture, dominant in the Southwest of the USA, consists of
more than just Hispanic and US-American elements, i.e., it implies elements that
are specifically Mexican. Therefore, in order to develop an appropriate
understanding of the respective groups of students, their diverse cultural
background has to be taken into consideration. At the same time, however, the
different groups of Hispanics are joined together by an exceptional linguistic and
cultural identity that finds its expression in the use of Spanglish. As Illan
Stavans, author of the Spanglish version of “Don Quijote”, states:

"More than anything else, it [Spanglish] is proof that a new civilization is
emerging before our eyes. A civilization that is part Hispanic, part Anglo, and
in those two categories, it includes all sorts of other roots, to Africa, and to
England, to parts of Europe, to the far East, and I think that what we are
witnessing with Spanglish is the way people communicate verbally and otherwise, as they try to put together or negotiate the tension between these two cultures or these two ways of being, being a Hispanic or a Latino and an Anglo. And the result is a hybrid middle ground that is really the Spanglish way of being.” [cited in Wilson 2008:3]

5. The significance of Spanglish within the concept of Pan-Latinity

The integration of Spanglish into the concept of Pan-Latinity is important, because the constant language contact between English and Spanish affects all Latinos living in the USA, no matter what their country of origin is or for how long they have been living in the USA. However, the different groups of Latinos show different attitudes towards Spanglish, and these may cause problems.

Aparicio (1999:192) first and foremost distinguishes between Latino students born and raised in the USA and those who were born in Latin America and came to the USA as a school kid or adolescent. Regarding the linguistic development of the students’ Spanish, this distinction is essential, because many of the students who were born and raised in Latin America have benefitted from formal training in Spanish, whereas Hispanics born in the USA usually only dispose of a good oral command of Spanish. Moreover, according to Aparicio, “a major difference between the U.S. Latino students and those born in Latin America lies in their attitudes towards language and in their cultural loyalties and identities. The Mexican students tend to be more ‘purist’ toward the use of Spanish (...). Furthermore, they do not identify with the bilingual and bicultural realities that permeate the daily life of Latinos. A Mexican student once declared in class that ‘Chicanos do not possess a culture of their own’.”

Considering what has just been quoted, the increasing mixture of Hispanics in different parts of the USA constitutes a source of potential conflicts. As states Aparicio (1999:183), “we have witnessed a gradual diversification of the Latino community. This circumstance (...) suggests new pedagogical problems for those of us who teach Spanish to bicultural Spanish speakers. Today one cannot speak of only three Latino communities in this country: the Mexican Americans, the Puerto Ricans and the Cubans. Among their members there exist differences in regards to attitudes towards English and Spanish, ethnic identification, degree of assimilation and cultural resistance (...).” In order to encourage mutual respect and understanding among these different groups, teachers should indeed integrate both linguistic and cultural aspects of Spanglish into their language classes, since it has become obvious that the “Hispanics” in the USA are far from constituting a homogeneous group.

6. Conclusion

The constantly increasing presence of Spanglish in US-society cannot be denied, and attempts to abolish the use of Spanglish at school or in more formal communication do not seem too promising in the long run. Therefore, this paper has focused on two different goals: controlling the excessive spread of Spanglish and anglicisms in US-Spanish on the one hand, and working towards a better understanding and acceptance of Spanglish and its significance for bilinguals on the other hand. Now, how can schools contribute to achieving these goals? –

First of all, it has been shown that a systematic discussion of the linguistic and cultural implications of Spanglish in class can help students to understand the close interrelation between Spanglish and the different varieties of (Latin
American) Spanish used in the USA. This can help to improve mutual understanding and tolerance between Hispanics and Anglo-Americans, but also and especially between the different groups of Hispanics living in the USA. Since the United States is currently experiencing a movement of Pan-Latinity, this point becomes even more relevant. - The existence of functional code-switching and the cultural significance of using it clearly challenge the widespread evaluation of Spanglish as a bad, deficient way of talking. Nonetheless, encouraging students to adopt a critical, differentiated view of Spanglish is certainly helpful, since there are phenomena which seem to be positive or even necessary, whereas others may indeed be regarded as threatening the fundamental structure and richness of (US-) Spanish. By dividing Spanglish items into different groups and discussing them in class, teachers can raise their students’ awareness of both their own choice of language and their judgment of other people’s perception of Spanglish, especially of the often polemic attitudes towards Spanglish promoted by the media.

References
The Early Study Abroad Trend: Global Education and Culture

Vernice Cain, Ph.D.
Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Abstract

This study investigates the premise that, more and more, a growing number of Southeast Asians and Asian Indian students are coming to the United States as teenagers—and in some cases, even younger—in the hope of gaining entry into American universities. The primary focus of the research is Southeast Asian students in American colleges and universities. That focus was eventually narrowed to South Korean Early Study Abroad (ESA) students living in America in Illinois. As a result of South Korean ESA students’ middle school and secondary education experiences in America, ESA students mature earlier. Naturally, such early study is difficult for these young international students because the average age is 14 years old. Yet, the research findings show that they are enriching America with diversity, academic competition, and perhaps, new challenges for 21st Century global education. The research findings, also, suggest that this new phenomenon or trend requires further cross-disciplinary study in the United States and in other English-speaking countries in order to determine its various dimensions, its broader contexts, and its impact on secondary and higher education.

Key words: Early Study Abroad, South Korean, education, international students, research.

Introduction

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania is an “open door to the world’s different cultures and ethnicities.” Here, international and non-international students share cross-cultural experiences and a good liberal arts education. Currently, at Slippery Rock University, we serve 150 international students from 55 nations. Additionally, over 250 Slippery Rock University students and professors are currently involved in 40 study abroad programs in 19 countries. Needless to say, Slippery Rock University, as well as other American colleges and universities, are committed to the “internationalization” of post-secondary education. Yet, some of these international students at Slippery Rock University and other American colleges and universities consist of early-study-abroad international students.

Research Procedure and Data Collection

The primary objective of the research project was driven by the researcher’s curiosity, interest, and intuition about Asian ESA students. Then, research topic
was narrowed to South Korean ESA students. The following information was sought: the financial and emotional costs, the effect on the family, the effect of the pre-college experience on South Korean students’ identity and personhood, the differences—if any—between South Korean EAS students who began their pre-college experience in middle school as opposed to those students who began their pre-college experience in high school, and lastly, the impact of South Korean ESA students on American schools and universities.

First, a literature review was conducted. One article in Diverse magazine (2008) was located. At the University of Illinois, six dissertations are currently in progress about choqi yuhaksaeng, the name given to the ESA students by second-generation South Koreans. One dissertation concerns the kirogi kajok or “geese families.” In 2008, an Illinois conference about South Korean ESA students was held.

Data was collected from 12 individuals representing 12 families. Exploratory research in the form of field work was required. The interview and questionnaire were the basic research tools. The questionnaire was designed to ask closed-ended questions and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions provoked the following information: oral histories, reflection, social connections, and introspection. “Confessional” is the one word that best describes the interviews. Surprisingly, the interviewees wanted to tell about their pre-college and undergraduate experiences in America.

The Confluence of Multiple Interlocking Factors

The ESA students, namely the children and teenagers who exit South Korea for study prior to college, is escalating and are changing the face of Korean diasporas communities in America. According to a South Korean study, the EAS trend was a $550 million industry in the first quarter, 2004; these figures had doubled from the 2002 figures. Just as remarkable, a more recent South Korean national survey revealed that, if given the opportunity, one out of four parents would like to immigrate to America for their children’s education. America was their first choice. Any English-speaking country was the parents’ second choice.

In a March 28-29, 2008 conference, South Korea’s Education Exodus: Risks, Realities, and Challenges, was held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies (EAPS) sponsored the conference. The conference explored the consequences and realities of this growing American “immigrant” population. The conference, the first of its kind, addressed the following compelling questions about the EAS movement from South Korea to America:

- Why do middle class citizens of an economically prosperous and democratic society desire and decide to support the education exodus of their children at such a remarkable rate?
- What can the early-study-abroad exodus teach educators about new forms of and desires for global citizenship?
- What are the personal, familial, educational, and societal costs of the education exodus?
- What challenge does this exodus pose to the children and teenagers who are participating in the new trend?
- How can American educators and other school officials meet the needs of these early-study-abroad international children?

Looking Backward: A Historical Perspective
The changing face and social reality of South Korea is a primary and relevant theme. So, it is important to note that, in 1988, democratic elections began in South Korea. During the 1990s, the middle class South Koreans faltered in the aftermath of the “IMF Crisis.” The enormous “Asian debt” accumulated caused South Korea to become, at the time, the largest “IMF bailout.” Following the bailout, South Korea, then, aggressively democratized its economy, as well as relaxing its political, social, and educational policies. Another relevant factor is the strong influence of a women’s movement in South Korea. The Korean Educational Development Institute (KEDI), sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science of Mongolia, developed and still sponsors the Korean Institute for Gender Equality Promotion and Education (KIGEPE). The mission statement is “When women and men become equal, we all become happier.” The institute has opened up a new world through “gender equality education.”

All of this said, however, observers remain somewhat perplexed by the extent, costs, and risks of this ESA phenomenon. In recent years, South Korean middle class families are sending and accompanying their pre-college-aged children and teens abroad for education at “remarkable” rates. Research findings reveal that many of the teenagers come to America alone, while others, attending elementary and middle school, come with one parent—most often, the mother. Chicago, Illinois, USA, is one place where the new immigrants are coming to. As a result, some high schools in the northern suburbs of Chicago have large concentrations of the new immigrants. Today, many of these students are placed in the schools’ growing ESL programs. In this area, many academic families host or are parents to these students. The private schools, in the area, report that the new South Korean immigrant population is the largest Asian ethnic group. At the University of Illinois, among the over 1,000 Korean American undergraduates, over 200 of them are ESA students. These students report that they either came alone to America or with one parent, again, usually the mother, during either middle school or high school.

Not unexpectedly, American college and university officials are baffled, and even disturbed, by what is called the “drop and run” pattern of Southern Korean visiting scholars and undergraduate men who “drop” their families in America, and then, return to their jobs in South Korea. Meanwhile, there is the growing trend of what was described as “geese families.” In a “geese family,” the father lives and works in South Korea to support his wife and children who live and study abroad in America.

Not surprisingly, a recent South Korean national survey revealed that “if the opportunity presented itself, one out of four South Korean parents would like to come to America or, secondarily, to any other English-speaking country. Another significant statistic from the survey was that 80% of elementary students in South Korea are enrolled in some form of after-school private English educational program. Despite the great financial costs, parents willingly pay the enormous costs of supplementary education.

In Their Own Voices: WHY South Korean ESA Students Want to Study in America

The results from the survey revealed that, in EAS students’ opinions, their parents bring or send them to America for the following reasons.
1. Their parents’ “obsession” with one word and one phrase: “global” and “good schools.”
2. “Hellish Korean school exams” that cause extreme emotional trauma that lead to suicide.
4. Responses--“reputation” and “status”--were cited equally.
5. “Positive self-worth.”
6. “They do not have to work as hard in United States schools.”

Interestingly, there seemed to be a conflict between South Korean ESA students who attended American schools beginning with middle school and those who attended American schools beginning with high school. The result is intra-ethnic strife or conflict.

There was much personal guilt about the financial burden bore by their parents, as well as personal guilt regarding a parent’s divorce and family separation.

When South Korean ESA students were asked if their American education was worth it? Unfailingly, without hesitation, the students responded with a resounding “yes!” Then, they gave multiple reasons why. A frequent response is the flexibility of the United States education system and its way of education. ESA students were surprised that American schools sponsored extracurricular activities such as sports and clubs. As a result, the ESA students were able to build “comfortable” relationships with different people. Students also noted the “humanity” reflected by American professors who did not punish students as in South Korea. Individual characteristics of the students were obvious: Self-motivation, self-confidence, gratitude to their parents and siblings, and personal responsibility.

Looking Forward: A Futuristic View

In the last portion of the research, South Korean ESA students were asked this question: What happens when you graduate from an American graduate school? There were three main responses that are listed below in the order of their frequency of occurrence:
1. They may return to their native country, vowing to make a difference.
2. They may stay in United States and become citizens, if they are not already citizens by birth.
3. They may work in other Asian countries. Japan was the most popular choice, followed by Hong Kong.
4. They may work in a European country where English is spoken.

Conclusions, Implications, and Reflection

First, allow me to acknowledge what I believe is the obvious: Immigration to America for education benefits is not new. Here, we see it with regards to Puerto Ricans, Haitians, Jamaicans, Mexicans, South Americans, and many other ethnic groups. Often, we are informed that immigrant families come to our geographic area seeking improved educational opportunities for their children. Nor is the ESA trend of the middle class or the very rich from foreign societies new. The Hong Kong’s “parachute kids” is an example. Nor are split households of transnational families in which women or men migrate to America to support their children back home new.
However, what is remarkable about the present South Korean embrace of educational globalization is the widespread extent of the middle class participation in this early-study-abroad trend. Meanwhile, the phenomenon of “brain drain” has been and is being studied with regards to the migration of the rich elite from various countries to America and to other English-speaking countries globally. Nevertheless, rarely did middle-class families participate in educational migration and family reorganization. Thus, the personal, marital, and familial costs are significant. Hence, it is important that American educators, researchers, university officials, service professionals, and social scientists should examine the trend of middle school and high school aged children living in boarding houses alone or with relatives and hosts other than mothers or fathers. We should examine the circumstance of parents who often become functionally, and in some cases, legally divorced. Lastly, we should explore the financial costs on middle-class families that is said to be tremendous.

Indeed, The South Korea’s Educational Exodus Conference suggests that this phenomenon reflects a complex confluence of a multitude of factors, namely, the “mobility desires of a Korean middle class jockeying for global citizenship and the advantages that it confers.” Then, there is Koreans’ “waning faith” in South Korea’s economic and social future of its remaining citizens. Also, there is the parent and student rejection of South Korea’s excellent but highly competitive schooling. Finally, the conference acknowledges “the global citizenship project” that is spear-headed by ESA parents. Research shows that “aggressive” mothers are the real leaders of the project. When surveying ESA students, the mothers seem to be no more globally aggressive than the aggressiveness of their native country or the fathers. However, the South Korean survey suggests that South Korea’s aggressive globalization is equally shared by the state and its citizenry.

The results of the questionnaire indicated that the South Korean ESA students, while in middle school and high school, had received intensive English language instruction, thereby, gaining English language fluency. The questionnaire revealed that ESA experiences affects students’ attitudes and behavior with regard to language learning and career choices. The questionnaire showed a positive change in self-perception and in ESA students’ desire to live, study, and work in cross-cultural contexts. When asked are you a South Korean citizen, a South Korean-American citizen, or an international citizen of the world. Most students identified with the third response, an international citizen of the world.

A most relevant factor is that, in South Korea, English is considered the “international language of the world.” EAS students strongly suggested that the United Kingdom and the United States no longer have “ownership” of the English language; “it belongs to the world.”

The bottom-line is that the local realities that currently exist in Chicago are probably replicated in major American cities and university towns. This point is salient because Thomas Friedman’s book, The World is Flat, states that Asians, South East Asians, Japanese, and Asian Indians place a strong emphasis on education, in particularly on science and engineering, as well as other hard sciences. According to the National Science Board, the number of Americans, 18-24, who received science degrees, has fallen to 17\textsuperscript{th} in the world, whereas, 30 years ago, Americans ranked third in the world. In 2003, of the first 2.8 million first university or bachelor’s degrees granted worldwide in science and engineering, 1.2 million were earned by Asian students in Asian universities,
830,000 were granted in Europe, and 400,000 were granted in the United States.

What do these figures imply? They imply that, unlike Friedman, who is willing to rely on American creativity, we should also develop ways to harass the early-study-abroad trend to America’s advantage. Already, Asian Americans, second-generation immigrants, at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, make-up 45% of the freshman class—a plurality. At this school, there are more Asian Americans than any other ethnic group, including European Americans. Because they are good at math and science, this Asian American ethnic group is “filling up all of the science and math magnet schools!” Thinking smart, America can cultivate the next technological Cultural Revolution.

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The Narration of Trauma: 
The Guerra Sucia in the Argentinian Novel and Film

Lucia Buttaro, Ph.D.
Adelphi University
Garden City, New York

The years between 1976 and 1983 constitute a very painful era in the history (and memory) of Argentina. The events that took place in this period constitute what is now commonly known as la Guerra Sucia, or the “dirty war.” This period of Argentinian history is marked by the vicious repression and brutal intimidation of the opponents and of the “subversives” at the hands of the military government. The state authorities, confronted with the political resistance of the Marxist-Leninist guerillas, unleashed a campaign of terror against the citizenry with impunity, a campaign which saw the capture, torture, disappearance and death of thousands of people. Most of those subjected to the
military regime’s terror tactics were innocent victims. In the face of widespread state sponsored torture and repression, self-censorship and exile – both inner and outer – was the price that many people, especially the intellectuals, paid for survival, since “the least hint of opposition could result in “disappearance” (Skidmore, 99). Discourses on the guerrilla sucia multiplied especially after the end of the dirty war. Violence, repression, torture, rape, abduction, disappearance, self-censorship, and exile are some of the key words that are associated with the guerrilla sucia.

The events of the guerrilla sucia and its aftermath were cloaked in an atmosphere of denunciation and fear which left a profound impact on society. Thomas Skidmore and Peter Smith write that “the repression and subsequent search for justice would leave a deep scar on Argentinian society” (102-103). While the guerrilla sucia and its aftermath saw the emergence of an atmosphere of denunciation and fear, the events have also influenced the nation’s culture as part of their legacy as evidenced by some of Argentina’s post dirty war cultural production. The influence is especially tangible in the field of literature and cinema. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, the celebrated Colombian author, is known to have said that in Latin America it is them and women of letters who write the truth, not the historians. It is therefore no surprise that the exposition of the truth, the denunciation of the abuses, and the preoccupation of many writers and filmmakers in the years following (and even during) the guerrilla sucia.

In this paper, I examine some of the literary and filmic narratives from Argentina that make the dark and somewhat obscure terror filled era of the dirty war their subject. My objective is to highlight and clarify certain elements and features of these discourses that, more often than not, implicitly and indirectly evoke the trauma of the period and address the sociopolitical experience of this part of the Southern Cone as it relates to violence, repression and exile. In this paper, I first discuss the phenomenon of forgetfulness that prevails in these narratives and the manner it is tied to the idea of censorship. In the second part of this paper, I focus on the discernable influence of French critical theory on the chosen dirty war narratives. I highlight the manner in which Argentinian writers and movie makers draw from French critical theory to narrate the dirty war.

Amnesia and Silence

One of the films that take up the theme of disappearance is La Historia Oficial ("The Official Story") which won the Oscar in 1984 for the best foreign film. Set in the final years of the military dictatorship, it depicts a well off history professor from the bourgeois class who, although a sterile woman, is the mother of an adopted girl thanks to her husband who has ties with the military. Alicia, the protagonist, begins to gain cognizance of the truth when she begins to have suspicions about her husband’s dark deeds when she stumbles upon what is possibly a torture session. Another turning point is when she meets a grandmother searching for her little missing granddaughter just like all the older women in search of their missing loved ones that congregate in the Plaza de Mayo, in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. Circumstances, her investigations, and her quest for the biological mother of her daughter make her reconsider the “official story” and she learns what has really happened in her country.1 A student in her class declares that history is written by assassins who hide the truth. As Damien cannon points out, it is her students who are
“routinely disbelieving of written records,” and contest the history written by assassins (the military) while to the “bourgeois and protected Alicia these actions are incomprehensible” (webpage). While she awakens to the truth ultimately, it is ironic that she is depicted as a history professor who has no memory/knowledge of the recent past. These kinds of contextual elements are significant because what is implied is that history is nothing more than memory and that memory is very important for a society because if there is no memory then there is no real history. Memory, or rather its binary opposite, oblivion, is a key thematic element in this film which reminds us that society needs to remember and keep its memories alive for the sake of the truth.

In *La historia oficial*, individual oblivion (Alicia’s) perhaps serves as a symbolic substitute for the amnesia of the elite social class. Such a sociological interpretation makes all the more sense if one considers Skidmore’s assertion that the anti-guerilla campaign had the tacit and often explicit support of the influential middle class (99). Similarly, in *Soy paciente*, a novel by Ana Maria Shua, whose ambiguous title may be translated as “I am Patient” or alternatively as “I am a Patient”, we encounter more instances of the loss of individual and collective memory. A nameless patient stays in a hospital without knowing why he is there. He is told by the doctors that they do not know what his illness is. In the beginning, the patient wishes to go away and thinks about characters like James Bond who have the ability to escape from any situation but eventually becomes resigned to his fate. He realizes he may never escape and surrenders to the doctors. This novel was written during the era of the military dictatorship and is interpreted as an allegory with the metaphor of a sick society that is ministered to by an authoritarian government.

The text represents oblivion as a survival strategy. At the time of the narrator’s interview with the director and his secretary, they inquire why he wants to leave the hospital and ask him to enumerate three reasons. But the poor narrator who is also the ingenuous and innocent protagonist has already undergone a slow process of degradation by then and cannot recall a single reason. He finds his head to be empty (132). The text does not make it definitive whether his memory failure stems from self-imposed censorship and the inner exile to which he has taken recourse in order to survive or whether it stems from an external censorship exercised by his persecutors. What is clear is that it is dangerous for him to speak. He sense danger and is aware that he feels he is under threat. Moreover, the question of who is going to listen compounds the situation. Forgetfulness for the narrator-protagonist in *Soy Paciente* occurs in a repressive setting and as a victim there is no exit for him. He finds himself in a Kafkaesque situation and his loss of memory serves as the only available expedient for survival.

*Guerra sucia* narratives depict yet another manifestation of self-censorship in the form of desire for the loss of memory which occurs *ex post facto* when the characters want to forget the past as in Julio Cortazar’s short story tiled *La escuela de noche*, “The Night School.” At the very outset we see the traumatized narrator who is haunted by his memories begin his story by declaring the following: “De Nito ya no se nada ni quiero saber. Han pasado tantos anos y cosas, a lo major todavia esta alla o se murio o anda afuera. Mas vale no pensar en el …” (Of Nieto I don’t know anything any more and neither do I want to know. So many years have passed and so many things have
happened. Maybe he is still there or maybe he died or maybe he is roaming somewhere outside. It’s better not to think about him...” (website). This kind of self-censorship is thematically further developed in the film Un Muro de silencio, “A Wall of Silence,” which has historic reconstruction as its theme. The film portrays the character of Sylvia whose husband has disappeared during the dictatorship. An Englishwoman, in other words a foreigner, arrives in Buenos Aires to make a film on the historic period. Since the protagonist of this film is to be based on Sylvia, the English director begins to delve into Sylvia’s past. Sylvia now has a new husband. Everyone wants to forget the past but is forced to remember due to the nature of the project: a film based on past events. The foreign director asks troubling questions and everyone has to help her put the pieces together. Bruno, Sylvia’s new husband accuses the English moviemaker in the end that his wife was happier earlier but isn’t anymore because the painful memories have come back. She had lost her first husband but had erased the memories and the pain. Everyone had forgotten the traumatic past and had voluntarily abandoned memory. In this film, the silence of all the characters represents their loss of memory. It is interesting that the reconstruction of history takes place with the intervention of a foreigner because of the total collective loss of memory— that of Sylvia and her entourage (Argentinian society). It is the presence and the curiosity of someone from the outside—the gaze of the foreigner—that resuscitate memory and the truth despite the reluctance of the Argentians to do so for themselves.

The examples included in this discussion indicate the prevalence of an overarching thematic constant in the Argentinian guerra sucia narratives, namely the loss of memory. Oblivion comes across in these texts as the apotheosis of self-censorship, a coping mechanism in the face of trauma. Anthropologist Antonius Robben writes:

There is a common assumption that individual and societies alike need to repress Traumatic events for extended periods before they are able to confront and mourn them. Psychoanalysis states that people resort to repression or dissociation to protect themselves from memories too painful and destabilizing to admit to consciousness (Brett, 1993; Freud, 1920, p. 12-18; Mitchell and Black, 1995, p. 118-122). Similar ideas have been expressed about genocides, massacres, and especially the Holocaust. “The traumatic event is repressed or denied and registers only belatedly (nachtraglich) after the passage of a period of latency. This effect of belatedness has of course been a manifest aspect of the Holocaust. (p. 123).

Studies such as those conducted by Robben on accounts of terror and violence in Argentina show that “there is a similarity with contemporary accounts of the Jewish Holocaust” (76). He also asserts that the problem with accounts of violence is that “traumatic experience can only reach us through the distortion of words” (75). In other words, they are difficult to convey directly. However, while for the victims and survivors of the Holocaust, memory, remembrance, and the desire to tell and make known the experience were of capital importance as Elie Wiesel indicates in “The Holocaust as Literary Inspiration,” the Argentinian victim, as depicted in the Argentinian novel and film, does not exhibit this trait but rather finds refuge in silence that is voluntary. We thus find the guerra sucia text displaying a curious paradoxical characteristic: at the narrative level—at the level of the characters—silence, oblivion, and amnesia stand out as
dominant elements although that is not the case at the level of the author, who, through the silence, oblivion, and amnesia of the characters, is denouncing the dirty war and its ravages as a witness.

Invariably, the authors and cineastes who have dealt with the theme of the dirty war are committed intellectuals with a cause. Their objective is the representation of truth: the trauma of the dirty war. Their works are their reaction to the brutality of state repression. The author-intellectual is not silent or forgetful.

Embedded Theories

In the second part of this paper, I investigate another aspect of guerra sucia narratives. A closer look at the novels and films reveals that these narratives share a certain affinity with French postmodern theory. Flora Schiminovich argues that “unas de las tendencias de nuestra época es la de valorar las obras literarias por la mayor o menor cantidad de planteamientos teóricos implicados en la lectura de esas obras. A su vez, la teoría se nutre de la literatura para poder manifestarse” (“one of the tendencies of our present era is to value literary works to the degree that theory may be developed in the reading of those works. Theory, in turn, derives sustenance from literature in order to manifest itself”; 136). It appears that Argentinian intellectuals who have created dirty war narratives reflect a certain propensity for French critical theory. In this portion of my paper, I discuss the manner French critical theory finds its parallels in the literary and cinematographic works of these intellectuals. My aim is not necessarily to prove the influence of French postmodern theory on Argentinian cultural production but rather to reveal how it can inform our understanding of the methods used by Argentinian writers and filmmakers to represent the atrocities of the dirty war.

As a first example I wish to draw attention to the correspondence between the ideas propounded by Micheal Foucault and Eliseo Subiela’s film, a so-called science fiction thriller entitled Hombre mirando al sueste ("Man Facing Southeast") in which a patient in a mental hospital claims to be extraterrestrial. This film is really a commentary on three categories of illness: mental, social and statal. The mental hospital that is the setting of the film is charged with symbolic value. The mental asylum serves to reflect the state of the country. The madness of Rantes, the protagonist, is a form of subversion because it threatens the order desired by the psychiatric establishment as exemplified in the climatic scene of the concert in the park where the codes and protocol are subverted as rantes, “suddenly infected by human feelings, takes over the orchestra and conducts Beethoven’s Ode to Joy as the audience and hospital patients break into a Dionysian dance” (Schuman). In fact, it is nothing but his difference, his divergence from the norm that constitutes his madness—a norm established by and belonging to the authorities. While Rantes is a patient, a lunatic for the authorities of the establishment, the spectator finds that Rantes does not have the characteristics of a deranged person but in fact incarnates Christ-like compassion. In an environment filled with repression and psychological violence, he is the only one who has compassion, feelings and understanding for others. He is the only one who has insight into the insanity of “normal society” and into the terrifying reality of the human condition. His “madness” is depicted in terms of positive qualities. In the film we see Rantes
helping others, giving food to the hungry, offering his own coat to a fellow inmate, etc. His madness represents his denunciation of a society wherein “human stupidity” reigns supreme. As he says, the mental hospital is the best place for him to tell the truth because outside, nobody is likely to believe him. He also tells Julio, the doctor “treating” him and giving him his medications that the patients are the sane ones because they do not “subscribe to the blatant stupidity of the so-called normal people” (Schuman).

Micheal Foucault, who in *Madness and Civilization* traces the history of madness as a social construct, reports that the seventeenth century “houses of confinement” were “houses of correction” – places where a mixed group of people, such as the vagabonds, the unemployed, the sick, the criminals and not just the insane were sent. Their confinement was a “massive phenomenon” because as marginal groups they posed a risk to social order. “no differentiation was made between them” (Sarup, 61). Such asylums, designed to suppress the potential sources of social disorder evolved into instruments of moral uniformity – juridical spaces where one was accused, judged and condemned (Sarup, 63). We have the same concept in *Hombre mirando al sudeste* where Rantes, because of his ideological divergence (his lucidity about the insanity of “humans” [the establishment] and his marginality (he claims he is “an extraterrestrial alien”), is held captive so that he can be treated for his insanity. He does not belong in “sane” society and poses a risk to the order that the authorities have imposed. The film madness to divergence and dissidence, reminding us that during the guerra sucia dissidents were often dispatched to mental hospitals.

Attribution of madness is also present in *Un muro de silencio*. The film depicts the mothers looking for their “disappeared children”. Skidmore writes that:

The only protestors who managed to defy the generals were a small group of older mothers who met spontaneously every afternoon to march around the Plaza de Mayo in downtown Buenos Aires prominently displaying the names and pictures of their missing children. Hesitant at first, they courageously stood their ground when police and military harassed them with threats and intimidation. By some miracle the women were allowed to continue. Were these men, normally so ready to brutalize any suspect, now afraid to attack mothers, the supreme symbol of the values they claimed to be defending? (99)

The plaza, as the foal point of political life in Buenos Aires, is a masculine space that represents masculine power. The mothers represent resistance against the repressive order. They organize protests in the Plaza de mayo and in doing so effect a transgression by invading a masculine space. As the mothers subvert masculine power, they get labeled locas, “mad women”. According to Jacques Lacan, “madness is a discourse, an attempt at communication, that must be interpreted. We have to understand rather than give casual explanations ... We cannot separate a person’s psychology from his or her personal history” (Sarup 7). The mothers of the plaza are communicating the disappearance of their children, a fact that the authorities deny. They are, however, viewed as insane for the same reasons as Rantes: they are marginal and subversive.

This brings us to the second example that demonstrates how French critical theory finds echo in the Argentinian dirty war literary and
cinematographic narratives. There seems to be a parallel between Jean-François Lyotard’s ideas and Louisa Valenzuela’s writing and descriptive styles. Her short story “Cambio de armas,” (“Other Weapons”) is recounted through the consciousness of a woman who is the captive sex slave of a man, a military officer, who claims to be her husband. She does not have any memory of the past including that of her own identity. She refers to herself as the so-called Laura because that is what she has been told her name is. Held prisoner and suffering from induced amnesia, she is repeatedly subjected to abjection and violation which she can only narrate synchronously in language which for her has broken down and which she has trouble accessing. His visits are for her a source of both pleasure and humiliation. The text depicts the female body as the site where power and oppression are exercised. A distinguishing feature of this narrative is the effect that is produced through fragmentation. Laura Sesana writes that by subverting the language accepted by an oppressive and patriarchal society to talk about feminine sexuality, Valenzuela also violates and transcends political censorship and represents that which is prohibited (5). The structure of the text itself is fragmented consisting of distinct parts with titles such as “words,: “the concept,” “the photograph,: and “the well,” each one an allegory that renders the reading a decoding. There is symbolic value in each category and its decoding provides access to the experience of the woman who is being subjected to diverse forms of destruction and degradation. Madan Sarup writes that “rejecting totality, Lyotard and other postmodernists stress fragmentation – of language games, of time, of the human subject, of society itself” (147). He also argues that the purpose of rejecting organic unity and the espousing the fragmentary is the deliberate dissolution of unity (147).

The text displays fragmentation in mise-en-abyme style. As the organic unity of the narration is destroyed, there is also a fragmentation of the representation of the body of the female character and of her experience. The technique provokes the reader to distance herself and reflect on the text as it describes an unspeakable experience. Fragmentation of narration and representation is a technique that Louisa Valenzuela may have found more effective as an author to articulate trauma which perhaps wouldn’t otherwise be rendered so powerfully if narrated directly.

Valenzuela also seems to reflect the ideas of Lacan. As already mentioned, in “Cambio de armas,” the male perpetrator symbolizing the military dictatorship is depicted destroying the identity and psyche of the female through torture, drugs and sequestration. One of the ways he degrades the woman is with mirrors on the ceiling. He commands her, “abri los ojos y mira bien lo que te voy a hacer porque es algo que merece ser visto,” “open your eyes and look carefully at what I’m going to do to you because it is something well worth seeing” (122). He wants to dominate her completely with his power. For Laca, “one can only see oneself as one thinks others see one” (Sarup 13). While the woman has no recollection of her identity or memory, she resists her psychological degradation. She uses her victimizer as a mirror to construct an identity. Lacan believes that we try to reduce the other to an instrument – a mirror (Sarup 13). According to him, the first articulation of “I” occurs in the mirror stage as it prefigures the whole dialectic between alienation and subjectivity (Sarup, 8). Laura, in “Cambio de armas,” reconstructs herself and her identity with the help of the mirrors on the ceiling that “multiply and destroy” the image of her persecutor (124). As Lacan states, “our fantasies are
symbolic representations of the desire of wholeness” (Sarup 16). The character of Laura reflects this idea.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, my examination of *guerra sucia* narratives reveals that loss of memory is a recurring theme in these narratives, a simulacrum of the collective amnesia that was imposed on the people during the dirty war and is part of the Argentinian sociopolitical experience. Oblivion or the loss of memory is linked to exile – both inner and outer, to (self)-censorship, but also to denunciation, torture, terror, and violence. It is driven by trauma as well as by aspirations for freedom. As literary narratives, these narratives are also rich for the way they permit engagement with theory, particularly French critical theory. There is another level of richness contained in these works. Catherine Boyle reports that according to Ana Maria Shua whose *Soy paciente* used a “brutalized hospitalization as a metaphor for the country, writers inside the country were “the kings of euphemism,” their language “made out of allusions,” (757). The authors and cineastes who have addressed the topic of the dirty war have used various strategies and devices such as humor, caricature, irony, allegory, symbolism, grotesqueness, and spatial and temporal metaphors to distance themselves from the direct articulation of trauma, to overcome censorship and to give voice to the oppressed. The examination of these devices constituting the literary richness of these works would have to be the object of another study. Conflating history with function, these narratives are first and foremost political commentaries by literary craftspeople.

**Notes**

1 Thomas Blommers writes: “Marguerite Feitlowitz in her exhaustive study of the period of the Dirty war, *A Lexicon of Terror*, notes that most pregnant detainees were killed after giving birth and their babies were sold to families of the military or police. She states that, “The baby’s biological ties and family identity had to be erased, lest it fulfill its “genetic destiny” and become a guerilla” (p. 67).

2. I have adapted the condensed synopsis from the following online source: [http://es.shvoong.com/books/novel/1617866-soy-paciente/](http://es.shvoong.com/books/novel/1617866-soy-paciente/)

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Can Theory Coincide With Practice? The Experiential Learning Model

Ann Whitaker
Northeastern Illinois University
College of Education, Chicago, Illinois

Abstract

The focus of this paper will be on (adult) learning from the behaviorist and humanistic perspectives, concrete experience, internal learning, external learning, and self-directed learning.

Student learning “experiences” will be presented to support and imply a need for a paradigm shifting to accommodate “different” ways of learning, understanding, processing information, transmitting knowledge, and connecting theory with practice to enhance the learners’ educational perspectives.

Experiential Learning

A young female college graduate was working in a preschool classroom in New York and wrote an article, which was published in Redbook Magazine, entitled, “Learning is a Lonely Place”. She describes a preschooler raising her hand in class for “show and tell” and the teacher calls on her. The girl stands up and says, “I saw a man get killed in my building last night”. The teacher quickly says, “Oh no, no we can’t discuss that. Go and stand in the corner”. The preschooler stood in the corner for the entire day; hence the title ‘learning is a lonely place’.

Hong, a college student, states that he needs to talk with his Sociology teacher. The teacher, thinking that Hong did not understand the lecture that was presented, invites him into the office. Hong immediately says, “My roommate date different girl every Friday. Me no understand”. Despite the teacher’s explanation that in this culture people date different people until they decide which person would make a suitable (wedding) mate, Hong could not understand his roommate’s behavior. “In Japan I already betrothed. My roommate date different girl every Friday. Me no understand”.

Hunter was a tall husky, strong, blond haired college student. He was often quiet in class and sometimes took notes. He advised that he was a bartender in the evening at a suburban bar. On a recent occasion a couple came into the bar and walked up to the counter and ordered drinks for himself and his girlfriend. Hunter stated that he could look at the girl and see she was underage. When he
asked for her identification, her boyfriend went into his pocket, pulled out his police badge and placed it on the counter. He served the couple their drinks and collected the money due. Hunter stated that he was furious, as he could have lost his job for serving alcohol to an underage minor.

Apps (1985) maintains that there are distinctions between the behaviorist and humanistic positions. For example, the behaviorist position emphasizes a cause-and-effect relationship between teaching and learning. The humanistic position suggests that teaching may have outcomes quite different from what was intended and sometimes the outcomes may be negative.

Another distinction between the two positions has to do with learning. Learning for the behaviorist is viewed as an accumulation of something that is external to the learner and can be expressed through learner performance. For the humanist, learning is an internal activity specific to the learner.

One could raise questions about these distinctions. For example, does learning have to be either behaviorist or humanistic? Can it be both? Can intended and unintended outcomes occur simultaneously? Is there a relationship between teaching and learning? Who benefits when learning is external? What is the teacher’s role in the learning process? What is the learner’s role in the learning process? Who decides what learning is—the teacher? the learner? both?

The above stories of the preschooler, Hong, and Hunter are examples of learning from a humanist perspective and may answer some of the questions raised above. We can see the implications of learning in all three examples and perhaps identify the role of the teacher and the learner by suggesting that learning occurs on the part of both the learner and the teacher.

Kolb’s (1973) approach to learning seeks to integrate cognitive and socioemotional factors into an “experiential learning theory”. The experiential learning model is an integration of cognitive development and cognitive style. This is a model of the learning process that is consistent with the structure of human cognition and the stages of human growth and development. It conceptualizes the learning process in such a way that differences in individual learning styles and corresponding learning environments can be identified.

Experiential learning emphasizes the important role that experience plays in the learning process. The core of the model is a description of the learning cycle—of how experience is translated into concepts, which, in turn, are used as guides in the choice of new experiences.

Kolb (1973) suggests that learning is conceived as a four-stage cycle (Figure 1). Immediate concrete experience is the basis for observations and reflection. One uses these observations to build an idea, generalization, or “theory” from which new implications for action can be deduced. These implications or hypotheses then serve as guides in acting to create new experiences. If the learners are to be effective, four different kinds of abilities are needed:

- Concrete Experience abilities (CE),
- Reflective Observation abilities (RO),
- Abstract Conceptualization abilities (AC), and
- Active Experimentation abilities (AE).
**Concrete experience**

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They must be able to involve themselves fully, openly and without bias in new experiences (CE); they must be able to observe and reflect on these experiences from many perspectives (RO); they must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (AC); and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and sound problems (AE).

Upon closer examination of Kolb’s four-stage learning model the indication is that learning requires abilities that are polar opposites, and the learner must continually choose which set of learning abilities to bring to bear on various learning tasks. More specifically, there are two primary dimensions to the learning process. Dimension one represents the concrete experiencing of events at one end, and abstract conceptualization at the other. Thus, in the process of learning, one moves in varying degrees from actor to observer, from specific involvement to general analytic detachment.

These two dimensions represent the major directions of cognitive development as identified by Piaget. In his view, the course of individual development from birth to adolescence moves from a concrete view of the world to a constructivist (abstract) view and from an egocentric (active) view to a reflective internalized mode of knowing.

Each individual develops a unique learning style. And, according to Piaget, there is a general tendency to become more analytic and reflective with age. In essence, individuals seem to develop consistent and distinctive cognitive styles.

Concreteness represents the immersion in and domination by one’s immediate experiences. Yet, the circular, dialectical model of the learning process would imply that abstractness is not exclusively good and concreteness exclusively bad. Witkin’s (1962, 1976) extensive research on the related cognitive styles of global versus analytic functioning has shown that both extremes of functioning have their costs and benefits; the analytic style includes competence in analytical functioning combined with an impersonal orientation, while the global style reflects less competence in analytical functioning combined with greater social orientation and social skill. Similarly, when we consider the highest form of learning—through creativity insights—we note a requirement that one be able to experience anew, freed from the constraints of previous abstract concepts.

Bruner (1966), in his essay on the conditions for creativity, emphasizes the dialectical tension between abstract and concrete involvement. For him the creative act is a product of detachment and commitment, of passion and decorum, and of a freedom to be dominated by the object of one’s inquiry.
Best practices instructional method based on decades of educational theory and research maintain that learning is a cycle based on the ways people perceive and then process new material. A cycle of learning has four parts. First, we “take it in”. Then we order and name it. Next we do something with it. And then we create something new with it and “express it”. Once we perceive with sensing/feeling we process reflectively what we take in. As we order and name it we literally perceive with thinking. We process actively when we do something with this newness. Then we create something new and express it.

The cycle of learning (ways people perceive and then process newness) is similar to Kolb’s experiential learning model (concrete experience, observations and reflections, formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, and testing implications of concepts in new situations). We see similarities also with Piaget’s cognitive theory whereby the infant/child moves through stages (sensorimotor/age 0 to 2; preoperational/age 2-7; concrete operational/age 7-11, and formal operational/age 11+) from concrete experiences of events to abstract conceptualizations.

What then do we know about learning? What was the above preschooler’s cycle of learning regarding “what she took in”? We know that all children (and adults) learn differently. No two children learn the same way. As Piaget so aptly points out, “not all children at the same chronological age are at the same cognitive stage”. We know that learners need to be engaged. We know that knowledge is connected to concepts and to learners. We know that practice is purposeful en route to performance. We know that authentic performance guarantees retention.

It is of utmost importance that teachers connect concepts to learners. This means that the teacher has to start with a strong concept and essential question(s). Let’s consider the preschooler mentioned above. What external learning could have taken place if the teacher had asked several questions of the child regarding the event she witnessed? What connections might have been made regarding colors (ambulance, fire truck, police car, and policeman’s uniform)? What sounds were heard? What time was it? How did the child feel? What did the child learn internally? Can we connect learning with experiences? Can this experience lead to self-directed learning? Should this experience be placed into a theoretical framework?

Answers to some of the above questions may be reflected in the following story. A graduate student advised that her husband was working as a psychologist at a well-known hospital. On this specific day he was in his office conferencing with one of his students. The telephone rang and the party on the other end stated that one of the student’s patients had hung himself and he needed to come down stairs. The teacher delivered the message to the student and they both rushed down stairs. The husband told his wife that when they rushed into the room they saw the patient hanging by the neck as several students donned in white lab coats stood in a circle turning the pages in their textbooks trying to determine from the textbook what to do if someone hangs himself (or herself). The teacher/psychologist immediately cut the noose and laid the man on the floor.

Perhaps rather than answer some of the above questions with this example we may want to suggest that this example reflects the difference between common sense and “book” sense; between theory and practice. What can be stated about the students’ response to this real live situation?

What practical experiences do the collective students have? Do they have a clear (practical) understanding of what has occurred literally before their very
eyes? Did they know how to process medical information in “real” situations? What has their (collective) experience taught them about transmitting knowledge? About connecting theory with practice? What is the concrete learning experience here? What is the practical learning experience here?

Learning (book or experience) does not always occur in a “formal” setting such as a classroom or in a brick building. Much of what the learner brings to the classroom is education/learning obtained in other settings———home, church, social interaction in social/cultural settings. This point is clearly seen on the examples mentioned above. “Learning” outside the classroom cannot be excluded from the learning process and must be included as interaction with the environment forces a paradigm shift.

As educators we need to:
(1) let learners apply their previous knowledge to solve new problems;
(2) focus on evidence for useful learning trajectories;
(3) demonstrate the value of a variety of learning activities;
(4) allow people to actively interact with their environments and receive feedback; and
(5) understand how the value of a variety of experiences can enhance learning.

Teachers learn from students and students learn from teachers. Students (and teachers) also learn from their interaction with the environment. In the process of learning we need to consider the perspective of the learner as well as a paradigm shift. Kuhn (1962) in his book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, points out that a paradigm is a model or common body of belief; an accepted pattern. He further maintains that when the scientific community becomes dissatisfied with the prevailing methodology, various worldviews of the proper scientific community compete, with one finally prevailing and thus becoming the new paradigm. This change constitutes a scientific revolution!

Perhaps we can use the scientific revolution model to pursue an educational revolution (model) by encouraging teachers to question the fundamental assumptions of the (old) paradigm and simply shift their point of view. As the learner assists in his or her learning the teacher makes a paradigm shift by asking questions about the learner’s perception and interpretation of environmental information.

This shift may encourage teachers to adhere to Dewey’s view regarding teaching to the students’ interests and thus enhance our understanding of what intrinsic and extrinsic values occur in learning.

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A cross cultural study on compliment responses

Assist. Prof. Dr. İ lkı nur İ stifç i
Anadolu University, Eskişehir / Turkey

1. Introduction

A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some ‘good’ (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer (Holmes, 1988:446). Compliments reinforce solidarity when they are used appropriately and their absence can cause misunderstandings. Non-native speakers of English often face difficulty in using compliments when they are interacting with native speakers of English.

Compliments in American English have been found to be formulas like greetings, thanks, and apologies and they represent a social strategy in that the speaker attempts to create or maintain rapport with the addressee by expressing admiration or approval and compliments are typically addressed directly to the person being complimented (Wolfson, 1983, 1986; Manes 1983; Manes & Wolfson 1981). Due to the fact that compliments can be threatening to the addressee’s face as they are an act of judgment on another person, people may feel uneasy, defensive, or even cynical with regard to the compliments they receive, and thus may have trouble responding to such compliments appropriately (Knapp, Hopper & Bell, 1984).

Compliment responses are worthy of study because they are very common, yet frequently problematic speech acts. (Yu, 2003). Responding to a compliment poses a dilemma for speakers (Pomerantz, 1978) because they have to balance two diametrically conflicting conversational principles: to agree with one’s conversational coparticipants and to avoid self-praise (Herbert, 1989).

Studies on compliment responses indicate that compliment responses may serve different functions. As Herbert (1989) states compliments and compliment responses fulfill a similar solidarity-negotiating function and they are an interesting object for study since there is relatively strong agreement within the speech community as to what form constitutes a ‘correct response’ and virtually all speakers of English, when questioned on this matter in general or particular terms, agree that the correct response is ‘Thank you’. According to Herbert (1989), one would expect that competent speakers of English should say thank you when complimented but many speakers still claim to be embarrassed by compliments and to feel discomfort when they respond to compliments; speakers know that the correct response is ‘Thank you’, but on the other hand, they don’t know what to say.

A number of studies about compliments and compliment responses (Wolfson, 1983, 1986; Manes, 1983; Manes and Wolfson, 1981; Johnson, 1992; Holmes and Brown, 1987; Knapp, Hopper and Bell, 1984; Ylanne-McEwen, 1993; Chen, 1993; Holmes, 1988; Ernawati, 1996; Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols, 1996; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Golato, 2002; Yu, 2003; Huth, 2006) have been carried out. Some of the studies have investigated compliments and compliment
responses cross-culturally, and some studies have placed emphasis on a single culture. Cross-cultural studies have revealed that for compliment responses, the practice in American culture, which places special emphasis on agreement in discoursal activities, appears to be for the speaker to respond to compliments with acceptance forms. By contrast, the practice in Chinese society, which attaches a high value to relative power and modesty in spoken interactions, seems to be that the speaker will respond to compliments with non-acceptance forms.

Politeness is one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others’ feeling, establish a level of mutual comfort and promote rapport (Hill et al., 1986:349). As Brown and Levinson (1987) state, there are two types of politeness: positive and negative. Positive politeness anoints the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects Speaker (S) wants Hearer (H)’s face. Positive politeness strategies, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), emphasize common ground between speaker and hearer, make use of in-group markers, presuppose cooperation, and are less concerned with minimizing imposition on the hearer. Negative politeness, on the other hand, is oriented mainly towards partially satisfying H’s negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination, and it reflects a desire to maintain social distance, unhindered freedom of action, and lack of imposition. As a result, negative politeness is more conventionally indirect, with more hedging and avoidance.

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1989), the Brown and Levinson politeness taxonomy would appear to make a contribution to cross-linguistic studies by helping to characterize different cultures as well as subcultures within societies. For Cohen and Olshtain positive positive politeness cultures may show a tendency toward placing high value on directness, matter-of-factness, friendly back-slapping, and the like, negative politeness cultures, on the other hand, may value the maintenance of social distance and face-saving.

In expressing politeness, speakers may use verbal and non-verbal devices to do what is intended in communication. These devices are called ‘acts’. In social interaction, we come across situations in which we have to do some acts which intrinsically threaten ‘face’ (Ernawati, 1996:9). Brown and Levinson (1987) call these acts as ‘face threatening acts’ (FTAs) and they propose that all acts are inherently face threatening to the speaker (S), hearer (H), or to both; they divide them into two kinds: FTAs that threaten negative face, by wanting their own actions to be unimpeded by others, and FTAs that threaten positive face, by wanting to be desirable to at least some others.

According to Ernawati (1996), the central idea of Brown and Levinson’s theory of politeness is that since all acts are intrinsically threatening to the face and face is vulnerable to FTAs, it is politeness that blesses their performance to reduce their sharpness, so that face is made less vulnerable; to reduce the threat, each community develops a set of specific linguistic strategies and utilises them to govern the relationship among the members of community. These linguistic strategies are called ‘politeness strategies’. Brown and Levinson’s model have been criticized as being inadequate when studying non-Western cultures, such as the Chinese (Gu, 1990) or the Japanese (Matsumoto, 1988), in which the notion and the weight of face is significantly different (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001).

In contrast to Brown and Levinson, Leech (1983) (cited in Chen, 1993) is concerned with normative aspects of politeness and his Politeness Principle has 6 maxims: Tact Maxim (a. Minimize cost to other, b. Maximize benefit to other),

Having compared Brown and Levinson’s and Leech’s Politeness Principles, Chen (1993) states that Leech’s Politeness Principle maxims offer an adequate theoretical framework for accounting for differences of compliment responses across the two cultures and Pomerantz’s (1978) conditions for compliment responses, ‘agree with the speaker’ and ‘avoid self-praise’ which have been widely cited and proven to be largely correct (Wolfson 1983, 1989, Wolfson and Manes 1980, Manes 1983, Manes and Wolfson 1981, Holmes 1987, Herbert 1989) are equivalent to Leech’s Agreement Maxim and Modesty Maxim respectively. American conventions do not make it favorable to disagree with compliments made by others to oneself. This would indicate that in parts of the English-speaking world, the maxim of agreement takes precedence over the maxim of modesty (Leech, 1983).

2. Purpose of the study

Compliment responses were selected for cross-cultural study for two reasons. 1. Although a few studies have been conducted on compliment responses in English-speaking countries, there are few studies on compliment responses in a Turkish-speaking country and no study comparing Turkish and Italian learners of English. 2. Compliment responses are useful for learners to know about and they serve as important social strategies in creating or affirming social relationships. They provide an invaluable but under-utilised insight into speakers’ reactions to external appraisals of their personal and social identity (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). As Soenarso (1988; cited in Ernawati, 1996:3) states, compliment behaviour is a reflection of culture. Therefore, it is likely that Turkish and Italian students have different ways of complimenting and responding to compliments compared to English students.

On the basis of the above findings, this study tried to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the compliment response strategies of Turkish EFL learners?
2. What are the compliment response strategies of Italian EFL learners?
3. Are there any similarities and differences among Native English speakers, Turkish EFL learners and Italian EFL learners in responding to compliments?

3. Methodology

3.1. Subjects
Native English speaker data is collected from 25 university students (aged 17-25) in Oxford and Leeds Universities in England, Turkish EFL data is collected from 100 students (aged 17-25) at Anadolu University, Education Faculty, and Italian EFL data is collected from 14 students at Orientale Institute in University of Naples (aged 18-28) and 26 students at Alberghiero Institute in Catania (aged 17-19). The selection of university students as subjects is based on the contrastive nature of the study since the three sets of subjects are very comparable in age and education background.

3.2. Instrument and Data Collection Method

The instrument is a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which was originally developed for comparing the speech act realization patterns of native speakers and learners. The Discourse Completion Test is used because it can gather a large amount of data in a short time and the data can be used to identify the types of compliment responses used by the learners.

This test is adapted from Ernawati (1996) and then developed by the researcher. In Ernawati’s test there were four situations used to elicit compliment responses in terms of appearance, possessions and work achievement. The test in this study was prepared in terms of three dimensions such as appearance/attire, performance/ability and possession which are found to be used mostly in everyday interaction by Wolfson, 1983, 1986. In each situation, contextual factors such as status of the complimenter and details of where the events take place were provided (see Appendix).

All the subjects were given a Discourse Completion Test which consisted of 10 compliment situations and they were asked to write suitable responses in the blanks. Of these 10 situations, 4 of them were about performance/ability, 3 of them were about appearance/attire and 3 of them were about possession. It was given to 25 native speakers of English to obtain English data, 100 upper-intermediate level Turkish EFL learners and 40 upper-intermediate level Italian EFL learners. The aim was to find similarities and differences between the two languages, to find whether Turkish and Italian EFL learners approach native English speaker norms in using compliment responses.

3.3. Data Analysis

In two versions of the test, compliment response strategies were analyzed in terms of Ernawati’s (1996) categorisation which was originally developed by Chen (1993) and adapted by Ernawati in 1996. According to his categorisation, there are four super strategies; accepting, returning, deflecting and rejecting. These four super strategies were then divided into eleven subcategories: Super Strategy A. Accepting
1. Thanking (only): A verbal acceptance of the compliment such as ‘Thanks’, ‘Thank you’.
2. Agreeing: Addressee accepts the compliment by expressing a statement such as ‘Thanks, I love it myself, too’.
3. Expressing gladness: Addressee accepts the compliment by expressing gladness that the object is liked, e.g. ‘Well, I’m glad you like it’.
4. Joking: Addressee accepts the compliment by using a ‘joke’ as a means of responding to compliments (e.g., Hey, I make everything look good, don’t I?).
Super Strategy B. Returning

5. Returning the compliment: The addressee agrees with the compliment and the praise is returned to the first speaker (e.g. So is yours; You look good too).

6. Offering the object of the compliment: The complimentee accepts the compliment and in return he/she offers the object of the compliment or offers help (e.g., You may wear it sometime; I can help you sometime).

7. Encouraging: Addressee returns the compliment by encouraging the first speaker that he/she could manage to get or do the same thing (e.g., Well, you can get one too if you want).

Super Strategy C. Deflecting

8. Explaining: The addressee deflects the compliment by giving some sort of explanation of the object of the compliment, or the complimentary force is transferred to a third person (e.g., My brother gave it to me; Thanks, I’ve worked hard for it).

9. Questioning: Instead of agreeing or rejecting, the addressee questions the sincerity of the compliment (e.g., Do you really think so?, Do I really look that great?).

Super Strategy D. Rejecting

10. Disagreement: The addressee asserts that the object of the compliment is not worthy of praise (e.g., I hate it, No, it’s old).

11. Denigrating: The addressee qualifies the original assertion but tries to scale-down or minimize the compliment (e.g., It’s all right, but it’s too expensive) (Ernawati, 1996:12).

The distribution of the responses in terms of the above mentioned 11 categories was calculated for all the data and their frequencies were found in order to draw conclusions. In data analysis, every category was coded (e.g. Thanking is coded as strategy 1) and transferred to the computer data base in SPSS. In order to compare all the three groups Kruskal-Wallis Test and each two group (native Turkish-native English data, native English-EFL learner data) Mann-Whitney Test were used.

4. Results

In order to make an overall comparison of all the data Kruskal-Wallis Test was used. According to the statistical computations, some statistically significant differences (p<0,05, df=2) were found among the three groups and these differences occurred in situations 2 and 9 which contained compliments about possession and appearance, 1, 5 and 10 which contained compliments about ability and possession.

4.1. Comparison of Turkish EFL Learner and Italian EFL Learner Data

In order to compare Turkish EFL learners and Italian EFL learners, Mann-Whitney Test (2 tailed) is used. As Figure 1 below shows, there are similarities and differences between these groups. In situations 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 the responses of the students in these groups seemed similar. However, in situations 2 and 9 statistically significant differences were observed. In situation 2, Turkish EFL learners used ‘Thanking’ 18%, ‘Agreeing’ 12% categories e.g. ‘You can wear it if you like’ (Returning the compliment; 16%)

e.g. ‘I can give it to you’.
e.g. I bought it last week. (Explaining, 29%)

On the other hand, Italian EFL learners used ‘Explaining’ (63 %) category.
e.g. It is my granny’s. I do love vintage style.
e.g. It is new, I bought it yesterday.

In situation 9, Turkish EFL learners used ‘Returning’ and
‘Disagreement’ categories mostly.
e.g. You look beautiful too. (Returning; 13%)
e.g. It is the beauty of your eyes. (Returning)
e.g. I don’t think so. (Disagreement; 11%)

However, Italian EFL learners used ‘Thanking’ 30% and the
compliment’ 38% categories.
e.g. You too. (Returning; 38%)
e.g. I may say the same of you my dear…. You look wonderful.
e.g. You look amazing, too.

**Figure 1**

The results of statistical analysis between Turkish
EFL learners and Italian EFL learners

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**4.2. Comparison of Native English, Turkish EFL learner and Italian
EFL Learner Data**

In order to compare Turkish EFL learner and Italian EFL learner data with
Native English speaker data, Mann-Whitney Test (2 tailed) is used. Italian EFL
learner data were compared with Native English speaker data first. It was seen
that there were no statistically significant differences between the groups (see
Figure 2). However, there were statistically significant differences when Turkish
EFL learner and Native English speaker data were compared. The differences
were observed in situations 5 which included a compliment about ability and 10
which included a compliment about possession (p= 0,018 for situation 5, p=
0,015 for situation 10, α=0,05). For situation 5, Turkish EFL learners mostly
used agreeing (19%), thanking (20 %), joking (7%), returning the compliment
(14%), explaining (24%) and denigrating (9%) categories. However, Native
English speakers used thanking (36%), agreeing (28%) and denigrating (16%).
For situation 10, Turkish EFL learners mostly used thanking (16%), agreeing (12%), encouraging (21%), explaining (25%) and denigrating (19%). Native English speakers, on the other hand, used thanking (11%) and agreeing (11%) categories.

Figure 2.

As it was stated before, there are some similarities and differences among the three groups. The results suggest that Turkish EFL learners and Italian EFL learners tried to use a wide range of strategies but native English subjects insisted on using some strategies more than others because of the formulaic nature of compliments and compliment responses in English. Among all strategies, all subjects used strategy 1 (thanking) but the percentage of native English data was higher than other data because for native speakers of English ‘Thank you’ is an enough response to a compliment. It can be said that Leech’s Agreement Maxim is the overriding motivation for native English speakers.

When the data of Italian EFL learners and Turkish EFL learners were compared, it was seen that both groups preferred Explaining category. It may be because of their norms in their L1. As Bruti (2006) states, Italian native speakers try to find a balance between Agreement and Modesty Maxim. The results of this study supports her findings. According to Leech’s Politeness Principle, ‘Deflecting’ is a compromising strategy between the needs to adhere to the Agreement Maxim and the Modesty Maxim. By using strategy 8 ‘Explaining’, the responder offers explanations to shift the credit or to lightly downplay the object of compliment. She also expresses doubts about the
praiseworthiness of the object of compliment, indicating that ‘I agree with you, but I don’t want to praise myself’ (Chen, 1993:63).

In terms of Joking category, Italian and Turkish EFL learners seemed to use jokes in their responses more than native English speakers and their jokes had some similarities. This may possibly be because of being a part of Mediterranean culture. Turkish EFL subjects seemed to translate some jokes and expressions they use in their first language. They translated the jokes they use in Turkish into English such as ‘Who chose it?’, ‘What am I? Am I a Kasparov?’ which were commonly used jokes among Turkish people and may surprise native speakers of English and may even cause misunderstandings.

Italian EFL learners seemed to employ Returning category more than Turkish EFL learners. Italian EFL learners employed strategy 5 (returning the compliment) more than Turkish EFL learners. It can be seen as a direct result of the indebting nature of compliment. It helps the responder to get out of the debt by returning the verbal gift to the complimenter and it is motivated by the Approbation Maxim ‘maximize praise of other’ (Chen, 1993:58). Turkish EFL learners, on the other hand, used Strategy 6 more which is a clear indication that the responder interprets the compliment as an expression of envy or want, therefore she offers the complimenter the object of the compliment. When the object of the compliment cannot be offered to the complimenter, the responder offers to help the complimenter to obtain it or offers encouragement to satisfy the complimenter’s envy.

Italian EFL learners were found to approach native English speaker norms in the use of Thanking category. Italian EFL learners used Thanking category in their responses and their responses were like the responses of American English speakers. Turkish EFL learners, on the other hand, did not use Thanking category as much as native English speakers since a simple ‘Thank you’ is not an enough response in Turkish and it needs to be supplemented by other words or expressions. Turkish EFL learners can be said to employ negative transfer from their L1. Turkish EFL Learners’ less use of ‘Thanking’ strategy can be explained by the differences of social values between the two cultures. The norm of English society is to receive the compliment ‘gracefully’, however the norm of Turkish society is to be modest. When Turkish people are offered compliments, they try to appear humble and they generally lower themselves in responding to compliments. Thus, Turkish EFL learners who are affected by their social values of their culture use ‘Thanking’ strategy less than English speakers.

Native English subjects and Italian EFL learners did not use Rejecting category (strategies 10 and 11) as often as Turkish EFL learners. Turkish people try to lower themselves or the object being complimented and reject the compliments. For example; in response to a compliment about a flat most of the subjects chose strategy 11 (denigrating) by either mentioning how expensive the flat is or by mentioning how noisy, small or uncomfortable it is. For native speakers of English it is unnecessary to talk about the qualities of the flat and in the case of responses like the ones mentioned above, they may be shocked. These findings are in harmony with the findings of Chen (1993) who found out striking statistical differences between American English speakers and Chinese speakers’ use of Rejecting strategy. His study revealed that Chinese speakers used Rejecting strategy more than American English speakers. He pointed out that ‘Rejecting’ is a clear case of a Modesty Maxim application, the responder gives no weight to the Agreement Maxim. According to İstifci (1998), Turkish people appear to be humble and lower themselves in responding to compliments by disagreeing ‘It is too small’, ‘It is an old flat’ (Modesty Maxim). Researchers
agree that native speaker of Japanese typically respond to compliments with
denials or avoidance (Barnlund & Araki, 1985; Daikuhara, 1986; as cited in
Saito & Beecken, 1997).

As Leech (1983) states cultural differences affect the use of politeness; some
cultures give ‘Agreement Maxim’ more weight, some others to ‘Modesty Maxim’
and some cultures give equal weight to both of them.

Turkish people use formulas and routines which serve to fulfill certain
functions during the course of interactions. Among the routines, routines which
involve the word ‘God’ are frequently used by Turkish people. Turkish EFL
learners employed formulas and routines which involve the word ‘God’ in their
English responses such as ‘I hope God (Allah) will give you one in the future’,
‘God will help you buy a flat like my flat in the future’.

It was also found out that some responses of EFL learners were more like the
responses given by English native speakers. This indicates that the learners
applied the native patterns of the target language. In other words, they avoided
the negative transfer of sociocultural patterns used in their native language.

This study revealed that Turkish EFL and Italian EFL learners use compliment
responses more differently than native English speakers. The responses they
gave contained formulaic expressions, metaphors and the responses conveyed a
good sense of humour in most of the situations. The originality of compliment
responses was also observed in the responses of Italian and Turkish EFL
learners. The EFL learners in both groups seemed to be affected by their L1 and
the cultural norms of their society.

6. Implications

Knowing a language does not only mean knowing the structure of that
language but also knowing the sociocultural norms of that society.

As Cohen (2006) states, given gaps in knowledge about sociocultural and
linguistic norms for the given speech community, L2 speech act performance
may reflect negative transfer from L1 norms and L2 speakers may take years to
perform according to norms of speech act behavior for given speech community
(Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Barron, 2003). Thus, instruction in the use of
speech acts have been found to be useful. Strategy instruction for enhancing the
learning and use of speech acts may play a valuable role in moving the action
along (Cohen, 2006).

Instruction on the learning and use of speech acts can help learners to
improve their pragmatic performance and ability to communicate with native
speakers (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

Many rules for polite interaction depend on an understanding of the social
distance norms of the community. Being polite in another language is not just a
matter using a perfect native accent and correct grammar. It also involves
knowing the relative weight that the community puts on different kinds of social
relationships, and how this is appropriately expressed (Holmes, 1992).

Acknowledgements

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References


APPENDIX : QUESTIONNAIRE ON COMPLIMENT RESPONSES
Directions:
You are in the following situations. Please write down your response to each one of them.

1. You gave a presentation in one of your classes. After the presentation, one of your classmates came to you and he said: ‘That was really an excellent presentation, I enjoyed it very much. You were so well-prepared’. You would reply:

2. You went to school with your new jacket. One of your classmates said: ‘Your jacket is nice, is it new?’ You would say:

3. You invited one of your friends to dinner. After dinner, he liked the food and said: ‘You are a very good cook. The meal was delicious’. You would reply:

4. You have been going to aerobics classes for the two months. You see one of your friends at a party. He says: ‘You are looking very fit’. You would say:

5. You were the winner of chess tournament at your school. Your close friend came near you and said: ‘Congratulations, you played well’. You would reply:

6. You wore a new wrist watch. A friend of yours saw it and he said to you: ‘Wow, what a nice watch’. You would reply:

7. You have just returned from a holiday and you have a good suntan. One of your friends at school sees you and says: ‘You look very brown!’ You would reply:

8. You went to disco with your friends. One of your friends who watched your dancing said: ‘You dance very well’. You would say:

9. You meet a friend you haven’t seen for a long time at a supermarket. He says: ‘You look very beautiful’. You would say:

10. You invited your friends from school to your apartment. They liked it and one of them said: ‘Wow, you’ve got a great apartment!’ You would reply:
Language Through Geography and History: Essential Cultural and Linguistic [Dis]connections and [R]evolutions

Dr. Tonia Tinsley
Missouri State University

In our digital world, students access much of the authentic language, history, and geography of a second language through virtual means. Authentic input is at their fingertips from the very beginning of the second language acquisition process. The educational community has a new responsibility to identify contextual indices which help to evaluate points of view, possible bias, and potential reliability of information. Many resources which support and guide the second language learner are written from points of view indirectly influenced by their historical and geographical relationships to the language itself. Having a solid knowledge of geography and history expressed in the second language is vital to the development of both traditional and digital literacy in the language learner. This paper explores literacy development while examining the French language and its relationship to selected Francophone cultures through Colonization, Regional Identities, and Popular Culture.

The Web brings pure or real language and culture to use through the click of a mouse. This language is current, fluid and real, not in a book but on a screen. Language use via the Web allows students no time to think or ready themselves for understanding. Crucially, teachers need to realize that the intermediate preparatory step may not enter automatically into the minds of Digital Natives, as a direct manifestation of the need that this generation of students has for “instant answers”. These students are becoming digitally literate in English, but in some ways they are becoming disconnected from words; teachers can teach them how to use this somewhat contradictory literacy to navigate a second language and bring them back to unity of thought, and not just words, through a step-by-step process to enter and assess Websites in L2. We know that by expanding our students’ knowledge and appreciation of the context in which language is used, we also expand their ability to think critically about what they are viewing. The speed at which the language and culture are brought to them can be intimidating though, since there is no time to “ease into” reading the text. They can find it in the blink of an eye, but they panic when they get there, because ALL of the language is there. At first glance, none of it is recognizable. The challenge is that both linguistic and cultural content arrives instantaneously and unfiltered—both in vocabulary and in reliability. The students instantly face new/unfamiliar words and cultural references. Firstly, to decipher the words, the students do have to focus more on what they are viewing, so the focus goes to straightforward reading strategies centered on word recognition and inferring meaning. Using the very familiar layout of a Web page in English provides them easier entry into Web page content in the second language, because the written word can be paired with all the extra-lingual content of pictures, images and icons. Importantly, however, part of the learning process has to involve the students becoming aware that the discourse between the writer and the viewer
of the Web page may be articulated differently in the second language than in English. This is analogous to the difference in association of products in different cultures. Concretely, think of the layout of a phone directory or of the supermarket in other countries; the information is often organized differently based on the language and culture of origin. The metadiscourse involved to organize and navigate spaces is one “that people use not to expand referential material, but to help their readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate and develop attitudes towards that material‖. Students’ learned associations in English give access to the page, but also lead to discussions of different cultures’ associations. The most readily available example is the use of the British flag to indicate English on most European Web sites. On one level the students are practicing a literacy that has already been developed; on the other, they are engaging in “extracting some specific language or culture-specific knowledge, awareness or insight from a cultural media sample”\(^\text{ii}\). They begin to realize that the international symbol for English is not American...Another example is from the French post office Web site, where they have a slogan that reads “I Love L.A”, not referring to Los Angeles, but to the Livret A savings account. It is essential when approaching L2 and C2 that the student come to realize that the frame of reference, the culture load, is different from L1 and L2. Regardless of whether L2 and C2 are known qua quantities in the abstract (e.g. French, German), L2 and C2 students have to take a step back, and the easiest way to bring them to this realization is to have them look at an item like the 2 mentioned and make their conclusions, then the teacher explains the perspective. As students acquire more information about the C2, they will be able to use their knowledge to decode symbols and underlying meanings.

One of the most obvious and versatile entry points towards the realization of cultural emphasis or bias remains a Map, or some other extremely familiar cultural iconic entity, such as an embassy or government service. Young people all over the world grow up in and, therefore, integrate into their vision certain images of their individual countries. These associations become unconscious; students need to become newly aware of them. For example: US consulate sites for Paris, Berlin, Rome, or Beijing are always interesting because they pre-sort the information for US citizens and non-US citizens for that country, and usually provide a parallel site in the native language of the country. Now, honestly, the information will be very complex, so not easily employable linguistically, but just clicking the translation button moves the student immediately into a different place/perspective in his/her viewing.

In the design and production of maps, manipulation is inherent, for one readily recognizes that “No map can contain all the information that is out there in the real world [...]. Thus, any map represents only selected information”\(^\text{iii}\) and from a French cartographer who is also the author of the site http://www.atlas-historique.net/ “La carte n’est donc pas une image neutre. C’est une image construite. Elle dresse un décor, situe les acteurs, nous aide à réfléchir, en tant qu’outil de communication, elle contribue aussi à créer des représentations mentales du monde” \(^\text{iv}\). So one could take the Map (intentional capitalization) as an analogy for the Web, not neutral, always constructed from a particular point of view, presenting only selected information, but inviting its audience/viewers to THINK. Where? When? Why (For Whom?), What?. As Terry Royce puts it, “by adopting a questioning approach, almost any image type can be analyzed in terms of what it presents, or its subject matter. A visual can also be considered in terms of who it is being presented to (the expected target audience), how the audience is being addressed (asked questions, given information, etc), and
whether there are relations of power or inclusion/exclusion being expressed.‖ Often in Web sites, there may be an “insider-outsider” opposition that is either implicitly or explicitly stated. The question approach combined with the consciousness of ‘metadiscourse’ brings out such elements in any site. Because many Western students are now ‘digital natives’, there is also an exponentially increased number of potential sources that they may want or expect teachers to evaluate more rapidly than before. Foreign-language educators have to employ the “questioning approach” on their feet, because the student’s learning is ‘self-directed’ in two ways: 1) the student can go to the site by him/herself outside of class time; and; 2) the item that piqued a student’s interest can send him/her in a different search direction from others in the class. Teachers want to choose the entry point initially to expose the students to key information relative to L2 or C2. If initially the student is given too much freedom to self-direct, he or she may navigate away from the building-block information vital to understanding the point of view of a resourcevi. Instructors model the behavior, showing some examples of connecting the information on the screen to make a whole meaning, or inferring from certain symbols, or by asking guided questions to arrive at an appreciation of the bias of the Web site. This can all happen in the target language (easier with languages with cognates) or in the native language of the students. In a second visit to the same site, the students can engage in what is truly the sea change in formal education— multi-modal self-directed learning—in which the control still belongs to the learner, but the information is communicated through both written and visual means. vii Now, the traditional skill being used, of course, is reading—and reading has always been a source of self-directed learning (“the reading activity itself creates a student-centered environment that can take place independently of the teacher”viii). The sea change is, again, the speed at which students expect to understand—in order to change gears, navigate to a “more useful” site for the stated purposes, and the speed at which instructors are expected to react. The second language student has always focused on “keywords”, as if knowing that one word or phrase will instantly express a thought comprehensible to a native speaker of L2. With the arrival and expansion of online search engines, however, this aspect of second language learning has been magnified many times over. There is now little concern for context as the student scans for ‘keywords’. However, keywords rely on context, an understood historical/geographical context that may be missing for second language learners. How does one assess the reliability of a source when the references are missing? Educators must ‘provide pre-reading guidance or fill in background knowledge.’ix The pre-reading guidance could take many forms, and is essential, since our students may lack the tools to successfully assess the importance or relevance of the information. Students “Google” and see words on a screen and assume that the Truth is inherent. x Students must learn to read critically, and practice the skill, because the Internet “can give you any version of the truth you are looking for. Not only does information expand and change every day, the rules for finding information also change. It is paramount for students to have the ability to think critically about information [...] Information literacy is the ability to access and handle massive amounts of information. It’s about how to think critically about information, separate fact from fiction, and understand [...] the grammar of the Internet”xi.

This idea of the grammar of the Internet is very expressive in relation to languages. To help sort the information, students need to apply 5 questions in approaching each Web site—What is the content? Who wrote the content? Why (for Whom)? When? And Where?. Finding the answers involves 4 types of
reading skills: skimming, scanning, reading for comprehension and critical reading. For example, students can skim some of the information from the tag of the Web address—country suffixes are simple and recognizable by scanning the URL, for example. A Web site that ends in .fr will be French; .be= Belgian; .ch==Swiss. Another example is the university identifier in web addresses. Students can learn "gouv.fr" or "univ...fr" as equivalent suffixes to “mo.gov.us” or “edu” in the US. This simple yet important step in the initial Web site selection process can eliminate questionable sites even for students at the novice level.

The geographical links may bring students to a greater realization of the origins of the information that they have found before they engage in the more analytical work involved in reading for comprehension or critical reading. The combination of: Why? What? When? For Whom questions mirrors the structure of a complete thought and can help the student determine the reliability of, or bias behind, online content. If the indicators of bias/perspective are not in the search tag, then they may be embedded in the text, and thus will involve the last two sets of reading skills.

The EU portal has a treasure trove of information that can be presented and analyzed by the students in any of the languages of the EU itself, including French, Spanish, German, and English, just to name a few. The most accessible page for the student initially might be the interactive map of the Union, from which the students can click on a country and learn main facts that are visually appealing and enhanced. The map itself is both familiar and unfamiliar in that European geography is not entirely unknown, but each country name is given in the official language of that country. In practical terms, therefore, Belgium has two, and Switzerland, although not a member of the EU, has 3. This is not the typical map of Europe viewed by students. However, “unfamiliar maps...may be startling, but they are no less correct that the ones we are accustomed to seeing, and they lead to new insights about the world.”

Linguistically, this map is useful as well, since there is a function where students can view the flag and listen to samples of different languages of the EU. Once a student clicks on a country, a drop-down menu appears from which they can select a region of the country and then the map zooms in. The map is useful on three levels of comprehension and learning: 1) students become aware of the linguistic variation which exists in close proximity within the EU (which can lead to discussions about the US and its boundaries/neighbors/languages); and; 2) students can instantly visit a region of a chosen country, simply by choosing it from a pull-down menu in the target language. Thirdly, the EU website is written from the perspective of the European Union nationals, but it is subtle language use. Advanced students might be able to pick up on the clues individually, or the teacher could point it out and have them find examples to confirm the statement. For example, the page “L’Europe est à vous” details information about EU citizen rights in terms of travel and study in different member states. Information is globally circulated, but is not necessarily globally applicable. That specificity cannot be entirely ignored, however. Language does not happen in a vacuum. There is a culture of reference for it.

Web sites with multiple language versions, like that of the EU or most government Web sites in Canada for French and English, make very good resources for cognate recognition exercises, because the students can undertake a directed reading (1-2 paragraphs preselected by the teacher to start) in the target language; they read the text, list the cognates that they identify and then state what they think to be the main idea of the text. Next step, they go to the English version of the text, read the same text in English, and consult the list of
cognates, noting any language changes in that list, and looking for any non-verbal, or visual-only changes (like the French flag sometimes to denote language choice). Then they propose a main idea in English and compare it to what they understood in French. The other advantage of bilingual or French-only Web sites is that they place the students in historical and geographical reference frameworks that apply to French and Francophone countries in the world, so they are looking at a sort of parallel universe to what they know.

Courses are increasingly being taught, if not exclusively online, then in a blended format with part of the course content being communicated via Course Management Software (such as Blackboard or Web CT). Initially, the teacher can and should act as a primary filter until the students get more skilled at making Web site selections for research or information. This skill develops as the students’ knowledge of the target culture (names, places, events) increases and allows them to narrow the field of possible sites. Teachers are encouraged to use previously-identified sites and have the students answer the 5 Questions of Who wrote it? Why (for Whom)? When? And Where? Based on the answers, students can classify the 10 most reliable sites and explain why. Broader themes will give several different possibilities for origin. The site search with some foreign language entries is something that they all have experienced, but they must pay attention to the words, and not just gloss over them. By going to the Google.fr sites, they realize that Google targets different audiences. By taking the Web site pre-visit, they may begin to realize how they can be manipulated.

In the digital world, and especially on the Web, “[c]hildren are participants in their media consumption,” which makes them different from previous generations. They regularly make and post digital documents themselves, but seem to suspend their skepticism when they search for information. This suspension of criticism includes their use of online translators to obtain that immediate response. The understanding gleaned from such a resource is fleeting and brings little to their language development. With the use of the online exercises described here, they gain the reading skills themselves of word recognition, inferring meaning, visual cues (on Web sites), and constructing meaning in L2. This takes them along the path of “visual communicative competence” and eventually towards an ability to read for different purposes, two essential skills identified by Sacco and Marckel. The post-exercise comments received from beginning-level students anecdotally bear out their ability to use what they know of the digital context to identify initial meanings. Then careful reading, combined with basic words, makes some facts decipherable. Obviously, the more vocabulary and grammar a student knows, the more he or she will be able to develop the capacity to successfully determine reliability of sources. By repeatedly visiting Web sites designed FOR speakers of French and not ABOUT speakers of French worldwide, the students can also fully appreciate the difference in “metadiscourse” between cultures.

To illustrate the application of these ideas, the individual themes of (Pop) Culture, Colonization and Regional Identities in France prove useful, because on the one hand, they form an integral part of the French identity, and on the other hand, they inspire strong feelings of rejection that lend themselves to the exercise of assessing bias.

If one were to identify 3 pillars of French popular culture, currently they would most certainly be: Music, Literature, and the European Union. Until December 31, 2008, France holds the revolving presidency of the European Union, and has emphasized its place in, and adherence to, the Union. This emphasis flies in the face of internal French resistance to the idea of a political
and monetary union in which France loses some of its sovereignty. The government goes so far as to acknowledge such communities and feelings on the Prime Minister’s Web site, saying on its English-language version “This means making the French Presidency of the EU a popular event by rallying support from representatives of civil society, in particular (associations, businesses, local politicians and unions).” The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Pierre Jouyet, has said “What we need now is to break out of the closed circle of people who are involved or pro-European already. So, I will be touring the regions and visiting schools, factories and farms, to talk with the people of France who have a lot of questions on their minds. We need to listen as much as explain,” in Paris, on 28 August 2007. To emphasize the different audience, this same article does not appear on the French-language version of the same Web site. In essence, the French government expresses its attitude towards an internal plan for its time in the EU presidency on a part of its own Web site destined for another public. While the EU portal itself emphasizes the diversity included under one political UNION, the French website(s) articulate two perspectives of ONE individual country within that Union.

For Music and Literature as part of Popular Culture, two sites stand out as being of particular use for second-language learners in appreciating metadiscourse and bias. Firstly, the Bibliothèque nationale de France has linked its archives and catalogue through literature and voyage on www.gallica.bnf.fr. Students can read about authors and works of literature through a thematic lens such as “Paris en capitales” or access the catalogue through geographic means, by clicking on a particular region of a map of France, or selecting the name of the region or department from sidebars. The bias here is not so straightforward as in the case of the EU-related sites, but the frame of reference is overwhelmingly Franco-centric. Students will be viewing the Web site without all of the cultural knowledge that the French education system would instill in their counterparts, and therefore they will become hyper-aware of a different national heritage and perspective. This is especially true with regards to the geographic access to the catalogue, since it relies heavily on the names of French departments. To further a student’s appreciation of the baccalauréat, and also to emphasize further different perspectives on such questions as Civil Rights in America or the events of Mai 1968 in France, the blog at www.bricabrague.unblog.fr not only contains illustrative music clips and videos from a variety of sources, but also presents links to actual test questions for the baccalauréat content areas. Students can view the commentaries in French on the blog, listen to the music selected because it presents an illustration of the social issue, and view (with a little searching) sample questions from the baccalauréat exam itself. The songs and issues are international in nature, and move students out of their own “point of view’ into a different space from which to understand the truly global connections and disconnections on social themes or political events. An example could be War and Protest, since the French nation regularly wrestles with its past actions in Algeria, as does the United States with the legacy of the Viet Nam Conflict.

Colonization and prevailing attitudes of the French regarding former colonies represented an important social issue in the most recent presidential campaigns between 2005 and 2006, and will continue to be so as France re-examines its past. Many recent current events have either had at heart the colonial question, or had it as a contributing factor. Some examples of this are a campaign speech made by Nicolas Sarkozy and the subsequent reaction, or the question of retirement benefits for the ‘harkis’ and ‘pieds noirs’, or the student riots of 2005-
2006. Visual content for virtually any social event in the media may be easily accessed at the Institut national de l'audiovisuel. The excerpts are from French television and radio stations, and not only provide the full context for the events, but also can allow for an appreciation of the evolution of attitudes in French society through comparative listening exercises related to the content. Visits to this site can be focused to fulfill two purposes of equal value to the student’s competencies in French: 1) Students can access the ‘soundbites’ that form the cultural backdrop of language; and; 2) they can listen to authentic language in authentic use by native speakers.

To view French maps and analytical demographic information regarding French colonies specifically, and colonization of Africa more generally, students can use the site http://www.atlas-historique.net/. This site would provide the background information to install the knowledge base necessary to fully appreciate the weight of the excerpts. Maps of the time definitely communicate the balance of power in the world and also bring a greater understanding of current spheres of influence.

One of the seminal events in modern Europe was World War I; it had profound effects on world politics for generations. Yet, it is a conflict of which Americans have generally a superficial appreciation. An effective way to illustrate and communicate the depth of experience and emotion that is associated with this conflict in Europe is to devise reading exercises and projects around the Canadian Veterans Affairs Web sites in French and English, and combine that with the works of art presented in the UNESCO-sponsored exhibit marking the 80th commemoration of the Armistice. Colonial influences can be discussed there as well, since students can view memorials to Commonwealth soldiers in Europe and Asia. Lastly, in France, there have always been very strong regional identities. One can choose to think of the more anodine examples of North/South division in accent and cuisine, or continue to the extreme of the Corsican, Basque, or Breton separatist movements. The regional identities can be linked to colonization if one considers ‘les pieds noirs’ of Northern Africa or the different components and articulations of Créole in the world. In any case, to provide the background information, educators need to establish basic pools of thematic vocabulary, a general chronology of events, and a list of governmental organizations, associations and resources that serve the need for cultural reference points. This is not a “quick” task, but it is THE necessary one to allow students to experience the digital environment in all its shades of meaning.

Many teachers currently in the classroom are not of the digital generation, that is to say, they are ‘Digital Immigrants.” The thoughts and examples expressed here are for them, because the students’ references, reflexes, activities and futures are shaped by the ubiquitous presence of digital information. That has caused me to think very hard about the medium and its usefulness in second language learning. Students now go to the Internet for everything, and need to be shown that they truly can get an appreciation for the whole world by going there, but that they need to critically think about what they see, both in relation to the L2, to the C2 and to their own language, culture and values.

References


End Notes


ii Hoyt, Kristin and Jacque Bott VanHouten “Choices in Language Learning: an Imminent Call to Respond to a New World Need” The Year of Languages: Boyles, Peggy, and Paul Sandrock, eds. The Year of Languages: Challenges, Changes, and Choices. 2005 Report of the Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages:


iv Balavoine, Guillaume. http://www.atlas-historique.net/site.html. The site is organized both historically and thematically, and provides many excellent maps from a French perspective. The home page can be found at http://www.atlas-historique.net/accueil.html.


vi And yet, youth has a tendency to appropriate quickly the navigational control in new media, since the format itself allows “for a degree of freedom and autonomy for youth that is less apparent in a classroom setting. Youth respect one another’s authority online, and they are more often motivated to learn from peers than from adults. Their efforts are also largely self-directed, and the outcome emerges through exploration, in contrast to classroom teaching that is oriented toward set, pre-defined goals” Ito, Mizuko, Heather Horst et al. “Living and Learning with New Media: Summary of Findings from the Digital Youth Project” The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Reports on Digital Media and Learning. November 2008: 2.


ix Preparatory strategies for teachers as listed by Sacco and Marckel.

x The suspension of criticism may be an extension of the ‘respect for each other’s authority’ online mentioned in Note vi.


xii 4 types of reading skills identified by Clarke and Silberstein and quoted in Sacco, Steven and Beverley G. Marckel “Beyond Reading: Developing Visual Literacy in French” ERIC: ED 238 278: 69.

Jenkins, Henry. “Game On: the future of literacy education in a participatory media culture” Knowledge Quest pp. 30-31

“Beyond Reading: Developing Visual Literacy in French” ERIC ED 238 278

Since the conference at which this paper was presented, the presidency has passed to the Czech Republic.


http://w1.ina.fr/archivespourtous/. From the homepage, searches on particular themes or events can be made.

The excerpts in the Archives are not all free, but this site is a priceless resource.