

# **Investigations into Professional Practice Learning from Action Research Projects Australia & Southeast Asia**



**Edited  
by  
Kevin Laws, Lesley Harbon & Christabel Wescombe**

**Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia**

**DEPIA  
Monograph no. 4**

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Learning from Action Research Projects  
Australia & Southeast Asia**

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**Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia**

**DEPISA**

**Monograph no. 4**

**University of Sydney**

**&**

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# **Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia**

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## **Introduction**

In July 2016 the tenth meeting of members of Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia (DEPISA) will be held at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University in Thailand.

DEPISA is an Australian initiative which provides professional development support and opportunities for school teachers and university teachers in eight countries in Southeast Asia and the Asian region.

DEPISA grew out of an Australian Government grant in 2010, which was supplemented by funding from the University of Sydney. The generosity of supporting universities in Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam has allowed DEPISA to continue functioning.

DEPISA has enjoyed support from the following universities which have hosted meetings and provided funding for the publication of conference proceedings and four monographs:

Can Tho University, Vietnam  
Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, Thailand  
Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, Thailand  
National University of Laos, Laos  
Phranakhon Rajabhat University, Thailand  
Suratthani Rajabhat University, Thailand  
Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia.

DEPISA continues to grow and has over two hundred individual members on its mailing list from educational institutions in China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

Kevin Laws  
Lesley Harbon  
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*Sydney, July 2016*

# **A Developing Community of Practice within DEPISA: What Can We Claim So Far?**

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## **Abstract**

It is claimed that our DEPISA (Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia) group is a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that has positively impacted a number of scholars in the region who, in turn, have been empowered to assist other colleagues' development in wider professional, academic networks (Laws, Harbon & Wescombe, 2013).

The community of practice that began as a smaller group of teacher education academics in 2009/2010 has grown over a six year period to include many more professionals from a wide variety of academic disciplines, who are also keen to professionally develop and extend themselves. Whether or not this professional academic development in DEPISA members would have occurred without the input of DEPISA activities can never be tested. Yet we would do well to examine the intricacies of claims of transformation (Watson, 2013a; 2013b) associated with this higher education activity we have called DEPISA.

This paper will pose questions and suggest answers in regard to higher education transforming academic lives. Examined, following Watson's (2013a, 2013b) frame, will be the authors' consideration of notions such as personal development, social and political engagement, technical competence, professional acculturation, and networking and the perceived role of DEPISA within the transformation process.

## **Introduction**

It is claimed that our Developing Educational Professionals in Southeast Asia (hereafter DEPISA) group is a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) that has positively impacted a number of educational professionals who in turn have been empowered to develop their own networks of colleagues in wider professional, academic contexts (Laws, Harbon & Wescombe, 2013). There are many such communities of practice in all disciplines in higher education contexts throughout the world. Many of us claim membership of more than one of these communities of practice because our scholarly activity crosses the boundaries of a number of disciplines and sub-disciplines.

We are introduced to these communities of practice in a variety of ways. Some of us get to know these professional communities through word-of-mouth and recommendations about membership from our colleagues. Others of us read information about the products of these communities' scholarly activities such as conferences and journal publications. In higher education contexts throughout the world today it is perhaps the case that scholars are very willing to join these communities as the link to professional learning and career development is significant.

The DEPISA community of practice that began as a smaller group of teacher education academics in 2009/2010, has now grown over a six year period to include many more professionals from a wide variety of academic disciplines who are demonstrably keen to

professionally develop and progress their careers.

Whether or not professional academic development in DEPISA members would have occurred without the input of DEPISA activities can never be tested. Yet we would do well to examine the intricacies of claims of ‘value creation’ (Wenger, Trayner & de Laat, 2011) and ‘transformation’ (Watson, 2013a; 2013b) associated with this higher education activity we have called DEPISA.

In this paper I first trace DEPISA’s timeline relying heavily on the work of my colleague, Kevin Laws (2014), whose passion for the establishing the DEPISA community of practice has been evident from the start. Second following Wenger et al.’s frame (2011) I examine how we might view the value creation involved in what we have achieved with DEPISA. Then with Watson’s (2013a; 2013b) frame, I examine notions such as personal development, social and political engagement, technical competence, professional acculturation, and networking and the perceived role of DEPISA within the transformation process.

In my final remarks I pose many questions and suggest a number of answers in regard to higher education transforming academic lives. This is due to my belief that what is essentially involved here is the ephemeral nature of life transformation, which is larger in scope than is possible to consider in this paper.

### **DEPISA timeline**

According to Laws (2014, pp. 1-3), the group we now know as DEPISA began under a different name in 2009, with two Sydney academic staff members embedding plans for a future activity via a grant application – a first five-nation workshop in Sydney, Australia – in November 2010.

Australian Government funds were sourced for the participants to gather for the first time, and friendships and professional collaborations began in earnest. Subsequently meetings of the group have been held in: Can Tho city, Vietnam (June 2011, December 2013); Jakarta, Indonesia (December 2012, December 2014); Vientiane, Laos (June 2012); Suratthani, Thailand (December 2011, June 2014); Phranakhon, Thailand (June 2013); Nakhon Pathom, Thailand (June 2015) and Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand (July 2016).

Although attempts have been made to secure funds from central sources such as ASEAN, the individual participants now self-fund their participation.

### **Community of practice?**

Laws (2014) argues that we label DEPISA a ‘community of practice’ (Wenger, 1998). A community of practice involves ‘mutual engagement around a joint enterprise... for the creation of knowledge’ (Wenger, 1998, p. 214). Certainly, the group met together for the first time with a common concern about teacher continuing professional development. Soon this developed to suit a wider group, one concerned with developing all educational professionals. In this line of argument we would have to acknowledge that DEPISA is a ‘community of practice’.

We originated from, and now participate in DEPISA activities in, different geographical locations (ASEAN nations plus Australia). At first we were university teacher educators and school teachers. We now more broadly represent professional activity in wider contexts than universities and schools (see Laws, 2014). Our participation in the two key DEPISA activities – the bi-annual meeting or the annual Monograph publication – varies, due to

personal schedules for attendance, as well as to the question of whether our scholarly writings are ready to be published.

Yet it has to be said that we are a 'community' and we are concerned about the 'practice' in our work. Although not explicitly set in a formalised, ratified constitution as yet, we agree at each meeting that we are concerned with moving our practice forward. Our 'social learning activities such as sharing information, tips and documents, learning from each other's experience, helping each other with challenges, creating knowledge together, keeping up with the field, stimulating change, and offering new types of professional development opportunities' (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 7), indicate we are in the business of 'value creation'.

### **Value creation**

Those activities listed above, seen by Wenger et al. (2011) as 'value creation' activities, do not represent an exhaustive list. I would, for example, take the example from our own DEPISA, and state that other activities for the list are regular formalised meetings and collaborative publication production. Examples from other communities of practice to which I belong include scholarship funding for research, short-term international programs, mentoring, leadership opportunities as well as opportunities to move into executive administrative and governance roles in the organisation.

The chief reminder in Wenger et al.'s (2011) value creation framework, is, however, about the importance of tracking and monitoring data about the community of practice's activities. Data collected can be analysed by the community itself, and by other communities needing to move forward themselves. As is suggested by Laws (2014), the individuals making up the community would best document their personal and collective stories to assist the narrative building for value creation (Wenger et al., 2011, p. 8). This builds strength, conviction and self-understanding among members of a community, stabilising and affirming the community.

After those personal and collective stories are captured, and the value documented, any change or 'transformation' (Watson, 2013a; 2013b) can be observed and tracked. It is expected that communities moving forward will encounter change: what is important is how they embrace the change characterised by uncertain times.

### **Transformation**

In a similar train of thought to Wenger et al.'s (2011) value creation, Professor Sir David Watson wrote on the notion of higher education in general having the potential to change/transform lives (Watson, 2013a; 2013b).

Claims of what higher education is, and does, for students include these notions:

*set ... around conscience ...; the second around character as formed through 'liberal' higher education; the third combines calling, competence, and craft as in the zones of professional and vocational higher education; the fourth involves citizenship as in respective obligations to civil society, the state and global responsibilities; and the final set introduces capability, or the role of higher education in inculcating life- skills, including employability.*

(Watson, 2013b, p. 1).

Improvements to a person's life through their involvement in communities of practice in higher education settings can occur relating to belief, to character, and 'by giving you marketable abilities, by making you a better member of the community, or simply by being capable of operating more effectively in the contemporary world' (Watson, 2013b, p. 2). Watson concludes, 'in this way, higher education's purposes come together in terms of self-creation and the authentic life, the habit of thinking deeply, and the capacity to connect with others empathically'. Life changing experiences provided by what can be encountered through higher education's communities of practice are even further enhanced if the individual and collective learning occurs in these social situations.

Among other notions, Watson's (2013a; 2013b) framing of the transformative aspects of participation in the activities of communities of practice, include the aspects of what *personal development* can occur, what *social and political engagement* can occur, what *technical competence* can result, what *professional acculturation* might result, and what *networking* is involved. A closer examination of these aspects is now presented, each in turn, before final comments about the claims we might make and the questions we still must ask, about DEPISA as a community of practice, transforming and moving professionals forward.

### ***Personal development: Frame aspect no. 1***

Watson's (2013a; 2013b) frame conceptualising the relationship between higher education and personal development, I believe, is very relevant to what we intend from DEPISA. Officially we know that DEPISA activities, chiefly the bi-annual paper presentations at our meetings, and submitting to the annual monograph publication, have allowed individuals to both participate in higher education academic processes, as well as develop their personal traits and skills. Anecdotally I have observed DEPISA community members demonstrating they have learned to interact in new ways, for example, communicating in a more forthright manner in order to be heard, or communicating in a softer fashion to 'fit in' with the refined manner of new friends. I have watched from the sidelines as new DEPISA members try to work out how to read the humour in cross-cultural situations. I have heard DEPISA members as they have argued for inclusions in our future constitution.

As DEPISA is about people interacting with people – about people making meaning with other people – personal behaviours are at the forefront of what we do. It is not surprising to realise, then, that Watson (2013a; 2013b) claims that our personal side is developed in such communities of practice as DEPISA.

### ***Social and political engagement: Frame aspect no. 2***

There is also evidence that our DEPISA community of practice has engaged our participants/attendees socially and politically. By social we might mean that participants/writers/attendees have become involved in electronic communications, passed the time of day with each other, expressed greetings of all sorts with each other, tried out each others' languages. By political we do not necessarily mean party-politics, electioneering or government-related activity. Instead the political activity that has been a part of the DEPISA community's activity has included negotiating permissions, obtaining information, applying for competitive funding to travel to DEPISA meetings, advocating for something or someone, arguing a particular case. Such a higher education activity as DEPISA, then, focuses on the social and political engagement in which all of our participants might thrive and grow.

### ***Technical competence: Frame aspect no. 3***

For many DEPISA community members, participating in DEPISA activities has involved them learning the technical competencies required to prove their competence to participate. DEPISA community members take part chiefly in our two annual activities: that is, first, presenting research papers at one or both of our two annual meetings, or second, preparing a chapter which is submitted for inclusion in our annual monograph. Such participation in those two specific activities and the more technical skills involved is not insignificant.

In Monograph no. 1, 32 authors either had sole or joint-authored chapters published. In Monograph no. 2, 29 authors either had sole or joint-authored chapters published. In Monograph no. 3, 22 authors had sole or joint-authored chapters published.

Many more of our members have listened to colleagues' papers at our meetings, and read the published versions of our research. This too requires a set of technical academic skills to be operationalised: we read (surface/skim reading or deep/comprehensive reading); we synthesise; we judge; we evaluate; we respond with our own verbal questioning or written texts. Such technical skills and behaviours are modeled, learned and refined in our DEPISA community of practice.

### ***Professional acculturation: Frame aspect no. 4***

Each DEPISA meeting is held in turn in either Australia, Indonesia, Thailand, Laos or Vietnam. To keep costs for participants affordable, the meetings have mostly been held in Vietnam or Thailand. The rich programs offered by the hospitable hosts take on local cultural flavours, not only due to the different languages being spoken and the different foods prepared for sharing at mealtimes, but also due to the programs taking on either the formality or informality of process and diplomacy of each host country. At the first meeting in Sydney, Australia, we first learned to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land prior to making presentations. After our paper deliveries in Thailand we learned to hold our hands in prayer-like formation as we say *Sawadee* [greeting or farewell]. In Indonesia we have learned in Indonesia to apologise for any shortcomings prior to offering up our academic work.

Importantly as members of our DEPISA community of practice I believe we have taught each other to be valuable critical friends, engaging with our colleagues' scholarly ideas, and providing questions and feedback according to scholarly methods.

We can name all of these local and more global practices mentioned above as academic activity that we practice – and learn to practice – through processes of being together and professional acculturation. We have an international set of 'global' academic traditions and professional nuances. Then there are the 'localised' traditions overlaid on top. We may perhaps be able to call ourselves 'global' as we professionally acculturate into the DEPISA community of practice.

### ***Networking: Frame aspect no. 5***

Related to both the personal development and social engagement frames is the networking aspect of Watson's (2013a; 2013b) frame: that is, the communications and interactions between two, four, and more of our community members in our home contexts, as well as the communities we visit. We might, for example, have met one set of new colleagues at the first DEPISA. In turn, we met a next set of colleagues and their colleagues at the following DEPISA. After that, we keep meeting and networking with the next and next sets of colleagues. Before we know it, DEPISA's community of practice is a complex series of networks. (As an aside, I recall at a Bangkok DEPISA meeting standing between three

young academic women: one who had completed her doctorate under my supervision in Sydney in 2007; one who was then being supervised by me in Sydney; and the third who was applying to study for her doctoral project under my supervision next year. I fondly called them ‘my past, my present and my future’!) Multiply this kind of networking over and over, between one hundred or more people, and what results is a large, interrelated complex network, with common threads of interest in moving their scholarly activities forward for the greater good.

### **The perceived role of DEPISA within the transformation process: What exactly can we claim?**

The comments in the sections above have argued that the DEPISA community of practice is about ‘value creation’ (Wenger et al., 2011) and life transformation (Watson, 2013a; 2013b). DEPISA, we can claim, is a vital and valuable set of scholarly activities for its members.

DEPISA is, whether we have realised it yet or not, in the business of value creation (Wenger et al., 2011), and transformation will take us forward as we continue to develop as educational professionals.

Claiming more than that, however, is risky. Questions about what is next for DEPISA involve notions of sustainability, formal incorporation and competition.

- How can we continue to sustain the level of activity involving our bi-annual meetings and our monograph publication?
- Who is able to spend the time and energy to move the community forward through formal incorporation processes, which in turn involves budget considerations.
- How do we, and who will, advocate for DEPISA in a higher education climate where such communities of practice appear in competition with each other for members’ attention and participation?

I believe we can now only truly rely on our personal and collective narratives, as Laws (2014) suggested, to push forward through uncertain times, allowing those narratives to feed and sustain our passion for a scholarly activity that we know has made a difference to us all.

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# Reflection and Learning through Action

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*By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is the noblest; Second, by imitation, which is the easiest; Third, by experience, which is the bitterest.*

*Confucius*

*We do not learn from experience ... we learn from reflecting on experience.*

*John Dewey*

## Abstract

Since its establishment in 2010 DEPISA has been involved in the professional development of educational professionals in universities, colleges and schools throughout Southeast Asia and nearby countries. Its main activity has been to encourage members to research their own practice with the aim of improving their own understanding, and their students' and colleagues' learning. This has been done through Action Research projects, or what I call Learning through Action.

During DEPISA's existence four monographs containing over sixty papers by members have been published. I, with the help of my two Sydney-based colleagues, have read and edited all of these papers so they might be shared with all DEPISA members. As well, we have read and edited many more abstracts of research that members have submitted to present at DEPISA meetings. It is very gratifying to observe how members who have contributed regularly have gained in confidence, attempted new approaches to research and teaching and been prepared to share their experiences with other members.

This experience has led me to reflect upon the abstracts and papers we have read. I have become aware of an issue that has been lacking in many papers, the issue of reflection. In many approaches Action Research is seen as a cyclical process involving four stages: plan, act, observe, and reflect. In the Learning through Action process reflection is a key element. In this paper I will outline my approach to Learning through Action, investigate what might be involved in reflection, and advocate how and when reflection might be expected to occur.

## DEPISA and learning

DEPISA is a professional learning community network with an approach to learning based upon Etienne Wenger's social theory of learning (1998, 2010). Wenger argues that a central aspect of human learning is based on the fact that we are social beings. He believes that knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to aspects of living and being that are important to humans, and that learning is produced through humans' experience of the world and their ability to meaningfully engage with it. He identifies four components in this approach to 'learning as social participation': 'learning as experience' through which individuals develop personal meaning, 'learning as becoming' through which individuals develop an identity, 'learning as belonging' to a community, and 'learning as doing' and in doing so develop knowledge and improve practices. Each of these components has formed

part of the approach adopted in DEPISA to facilitate the learning of the participants involved in the on-going project.

The overarching objective of DEPISA is to provide support to university and school teachers in their professional life within the fields of teaching and learning, and in administrative practices which support effective learning and teaching. It also aims to develop individual skills and knowledge in order to change teaching practice and help members prepare for educational reforms. In undertaking these tasks DEPISA contributes to the quality of education in members' schools and universities by developing sustainable and context-specific models of professional development through the provision of professional learning opportunities for members.

The approach to professional development adopted by DEPISA is to provide encouragement, opportunities and support for members to undertake Learning through Action projects, and to share the results of their research and the processes they adopted through presentations at annual meetings and in the monographs produced. Learning through Action is concerned with the acquisition of practical knowledge, empowerment through participation, collaboration through participation, and to some extent, social change.

Action Research is a term that is widely used in educational and community settings. It is considered to be a cyclical process in which some specified actions are followed by reflection. It is claimed that Action Learning can promote change in practice and greater understanding at the same time. Action Learning is more often applied to organisational settings, such as corporations and government bodies. Action Learning is usually undertaken in a group with group members coming together at reasonably frequent intervals and to share their thoughts and practices (i.e. their learning) with each other with the intention of improving their overall performance. The idea behind Action Learning is that the learning is based upon actual experiences in the workplace.

In thinking about Learning through Action it is useful to consider the three modes of Action Research outlined by Grundy (1982) and apply them to the DEPISA model. Grundy distinguished between technical, practical and emancipatory modes of action.

The aim of the technical approach was to make practice more efficient. Usually this means that an outsider, who was considered an expert, would provide the technical expertise to practitioners who would apply it to their context. This leads to practitioners placing emphasis upon the product (e.g. the outcomes of the implementation of a new teaching or learning strategy) (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 183) and having less opportunity to develop their own capacity to reflect in or on practice. In the papers published in the monographs there are a number which fall into the category of a technical mode of action. However, in a number of instances it is the DEPISA member who is providing the technical expertise to others who implement the practice. In most of these instances the 'expert' has encouraged those with whom they are working to join them in reflection.

In the second mode, the practical mode, the improvement of practice was achieved through the practical judgements and personal experiences of the practitioners. This mode emphasises both the process as well as the end product of the inquiry. This approach is likely to assist practitioners to develop a reflective approach, and identify issues appropriate to their professional context (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 183). Many monograph papers fit into the practical mode with individual members and groups investigating their own practice. The groups involved in these papers illustrate the benefits of collaborative work when reflecting upon the process and the product of their research.

The third mode, the emancipatory mode, has as its purpose ‘the emancipation of participants in the action from the dictates of compulsions of tradition, precedent, habit, coercion as well as from self-deception’ (Grundy, 1982, p. 358). Such an approach adds another stage to the original four stage Action Research model, so that critiquing joins planning, acting, observing, reflecting to the contexts of teaching and learning (Leitch & Day, 2000, p. 185). Critique questions the acceptance of instrumental approaches to the improvement of teaching and learning currently regaining favour among educational authorities in many parts of the world.

### **The Learning through Action process**

The model of Learning through Action process I initially proposed in 2013 (Laws et al., 2013) now has been modified to consist of the following elements, although the purpose of the process remains the researching of practice.

- Identifying an issue
- Preparing for action
- Implementing the plan and gathering data
- Interpreting data
- Acting on evidence
- Evaluating results
- Reflecting on the process
- Sharing

In the following sections each element is briefly discussed.

#### ***Identifying an issue***

All educators and educational managers experience times of frustration in their work when what has been done in the past does not seem to address the issue confronting them anew. Such an issue arising from some aspect of every day work is most appropriate for a Learning through Action project. Possibly the issue involves the teaching and learning process, but it may also relate to administrative or organisational activities. This means you should select an issue upon which you can act. You must be able to implement some action which you think will result in an improvement in your practice.

- What should the main focus be of Learning through Action undertaken in educational settings?

These could be summarised as:

- Teaching practices
- Learning strategies
- Organisation and administrative processes aimed at supporting teaching and learning

#### ***Preparing for action***

Before actually undertaking some action in an attempt to improve the situation you should investigate what others have found out about the issue you wish to act upon. This most likely will involve a search of previous studies utilising databases and reputable journals reporting empirical studies. This phase may suggest to you a number of different ways in which you can investigate the issue you have selected.

### ***Implementing the plan and gathering data***

Once you have selected an issue and undertaken some reading related to it you should consider the following:

- What information is most appropriate to the issue and the question?
- Is the information easy to collect?
- Are there information sources already available?

There are many different ways in which data may be generated: interviews, journals, diaries, field notes, photos, videos, questionnaires, surveys, anecdotal records, checklists, case studies, minutes of meetings, student records, including test results, samples of student work, pre-test/post-test.

### ***Interpreting data***

Some data may be quantifiable, as in the case of test results, surveys and some data from questionnaires. Various statistical procedures can be used to assist in the analysis of these types of data.

Other data (e.g. opinions, attitudes, checklists) may be summarised in tabular form. If you use qualitative data collected through interviews, samples of student work, checklists, photos, anecdotal records, field notes, diaries or journals the first step in analysis is to identify major recurring themes.

However, it is important to remember the words of the sociologist William Bruce Cameron 'Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts' (quoted in Patton, 2015, p. 14).

### ***Evaluating results***

The important step of evaluating the effects of the new or changed practice now should take place to determine whether a change has occurred. In reflecting upon the performance of actions implemented through a Learning through Action process we need to be sure that it was a particular action that actually brought about a change in performance. If you are convinced that there is evidence to support the contention that the implemented action resulted in a worthwhile change then it is worthwhile changing your practice.

### ***Reflecting on the process***

This is a most important aspect of the Learning through Action process, but it is often neglected. It is important to reflect upon each of the elements in the process, and how you undertook the project as a whole. It is recommended that reflection is best undertaken with colleagues because this can provide a range of opinions and interpretations, and this can overcome the problem of drawing false conclusions.

### ***Sharing***

It is important to share your findings and your reflections on the process you adopted orally, and also in writing. This is an integral part in the DEPISA process. Sharing also can be an important part of reflection.

### **What is reflection and what does it involve?**

A key author on reflection, Donald Schon, wrote in 1983 that professional knowledge had been virtually ignored because it was considered that such knowledge was not as 'rigorous'

as knowledge generated through traditional 'scientific' research. Since that time many things have changed, including there is now an acceptance that professional knowledge is valid and valuable. Learning through Action, Action Research and Action Learning epitomise the importance of professional knowledge gained through experience of and actions concerning professional practice.

Educators of teachers, nurses or those involved in other professions are encouraged to involve their students in reflecting upon their practice. It is in this way that they learn through their experiences. However, this paper is concerned with practitioners, including teachers, reflecting upon their own work, teaching and learning practices.

In popular usage 'reflection' has been considered as reasoning, thinking, problem solving, inquiry or reviewing.

Schon argued that reflection involved 'diagnosis, testing and belief in human causation' (Schon, 1983). By this he meant that diagnosis involved making sense of a professional situation through integrating professional knowledge, past experiences, the specific setting or context, and the people involved. Once the diagnosis has been made the reflective practitioner 'experiments' to test possible solutions, and then have sufficient courage to act by implementing the 'solution'.

Schon identified two varieties of reflection: 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'.

Reflection-in-action 'acknowledges the tacit processes of thinking which accompany doing, and which constantly interact and modify practice in such a way that learning takes place' (1983, p. 68). He considers reflection-in-action as the 'artistry' that good teachers sometimes display in their everyday work (1987). In his 1987 presentation to the American Educational Research Association he said:

*Reflection-in-action is tacit and spontaneous and often delivered without taking thought, and it is not a particularly intellectual activity. And yet it involves making new sense of surprises, turning the thought back on itself to think in new ways about phenomena and about how we think about these phenomena.*

The second type of reflection, 'reflection-on-action', involved 'teachers' thoughtful consideration and retrospective analysis of their performance in order to gain knowledge from experience'. Whereas reflection-in-action involves the practitioner rethinking and redesigning what was planned while they are actually doing it, reflection-on-action involves turning information into knowledge through a process which occurs after the action has been completed. This may involve spending time thinking about why we reacted in a particular way to what was happening at a particular time. Through this process questions and ideas about our activities and practice are formed (Smith, 1999).

Schon also spoke about 'reflection-on-reflection-in-action' which he identified as an intellectual business, which requires verbalization and symbolization (1987). Through this type of reflection experienced practitioners reflect afterwards upon the instantaneous thoughts or reflections which resulted in changes made during their implementation of work practices as they were taking place.

Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985, p. 18) saw reflection as 'a form of response of the learner [i.e. the professional] to experience' involving both thoughts and feelings. Reflection was 'an important human activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull over it and evaluate it' (p. 43).

They wrote:

*... reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciation. It may take place in isolation or in association with others.*

Boud et al. 1985, p. 19.

Boud and colleagues outline ‘the outcomes of reflection may include a new way of doing something, the clarification of an issue, the development of a skill, or the resolution of a problem’ (p. 34). According to them reflection begins with an ‘experience’ or event. Their concept of reflection approximates Schon’s ‘reflection-on-action’ as can be seen in their three steps:

- Recall the salient events in the experience. These may be behaviours, ideas, or feelings.
- Return to the experience and identify feelings associated with it. The positive feelings and attitudes should be retained and used, and negative feelings that may cause an obstruction should be removed or restricted, before re-evaluating the experience.
- Re-examine the experience in the light of intent and existing knowledge and in doing so develop new perspectives, new knowledge and change in behaviour and integrate these into an existing conceptual framework.

### **Suggestions to facilitate reflection**

A number of different approaches to assist in the reflective have been published. The three step approach of Boud et al. summarised above is one of these. Some others will be presented in the following section in an attempt to assist you in your reflecting at different times during your practice. This section concludes with an integrated approach to reflection and reflecting developed for the Learning through Action process.

A very simple model for reflection-on-action consists of a sequence of questions:

- What worked well? Why?
- What did not work well? Why not?
- What will I do the same next time?
- What will I do differently next time?

Gibb’s (1988) model of reflection involved a six step reflective cycle based upon key questions:

1. What happened? Give a description. [Description]
2. What were your feelings and emotional responses. [Feelings]
3. What was good? What was bad? Responses to these questions can be subjective. [Evaluation]
4. What sense can you make of the situation? It may be necessary to consult source material to assist in this step. [Analysis]
5. What can you conclude generally from the experience? What can you conclude specifically about your individual response? [Conclusion]
6. What will you do differently in the future? [Action plan]

The approaches outlined above relate to reflection-on-action, which is probably the most researched and used form of reflection. However it is possible to think of a number different forms of reflection which are dependent upon when the reflection occurs within the Learning through Action process.

We might identify four forms:

- Reflection-before-action.
- Reflection-in-action (which is really Reflection-on-reflection-in-action).
- Reflection-on-action.
- Reflection-about-reflection.

These forms can then be linked with the various elements outlined in the Learning through Action model outlined earlier.

### ***Reflection-before-action***

This form of reflection occurs when you, sometimes together with colleagues, are thinking about an issue that may be worth investigating through a Learning through Action process.

Perhaps you are concerned about some aspect of teaching, learning or administration which does not appear to be as effective as it should.

You may ask:

- What issues of professional practice are causing concern to you or to your department?
- Which issues are the most important to deal with first?
- Is it possible to do anything about these issues? (If the answer is NO, do not waste your time investigating this issue).
- What can I find out about this issue from people who have experienced a similar issue? What did they find out? How might their context been different to my context? How did they research the issue? Do I think this is an appropriate way for me to research the issue?

### ***Reflection-in-action***

Reflection-in-action occurs while you are involved in the action, so it is unlikely that you can stop what you are doing and try to reflect. Experienced practitioners invariably make decisions while they are involved in an action (e.g. such as teaching). They might deviate from their planned actions because of feedback from the students that is occurring while the class is in operation. Perhaps the students are bored. Perhaps they are having difficulties understanding what you are trying to teach them. If you are dealing with an administrative matter there may be the possibility to reflect-in-action, but usually this is not the case. What is usually involved in this form of reflection is *Reflection-on-Reflection-in-action*. In this case it is appropriate to ask similar some questions to those in the Reflection-on-action with some modifications:

- What did I do differently to what I planned?
- What happened that made me adjust my plan?
- Did the adjustment work as hoped?
- Will I use this changed approach next time?

### ***Reflection-on-action***

Asking yourself, or discussing the following questions with colleagues, may assist in this process of reflecting-on-action:

- What was planned to occur?
- What actually occurred?
- What was different between what was planned and what actually occurred?
- Why was there a difference? (There are usually multiple reasons for the difference).
- What worked? What didn't work? Why?
- What would you do differently next time?

### ***Reflection-about-reflection***

This form of reflection can be best associated with an emancipatory mode of Learning through Action. It may lead to a questioning of the assumptions behind a requirement set by authorities, an approach advocated by 'experts', a reform which has been introduced. The results of this form of reflection may lead to social change, but often, because many requirements are mandated by government, educational or professional authorities, it may not be possible to do very little about it.

However, if it is possible and appropriate, perhaps you could ask yourself the following questions:

- What reasons are there for authorities mandating these policies, reforms, approaches?
- Are they appropriate for my context?
- What are my assumptions about the policies, reforms, issues?
- If there are difference between your assumptions and those of authorities, what, if anything, can you do about them?

It is possible to link the elements of Learning through Action with the forms of reflection in the following way:

Identifying an issue	Reflection-before-action
Preparing for action	Reflection-before-action
Implementing the plan and gathering data	Reflection-in-action
Interpreting the data	Reflection-on-action
Evaluating the results of the action	Reflection-on-action
Reflecting upon the process	Reflection-about-action
Sharing	Reflection-on-action and Reflection-about-action

### **Conclusion**

Learning through Action, Action Research and Action Learning are associated with investigations into professional workplace practices. This paper has acknowledged the importance of reflection in projects investigating the planning, implementation and findings

of professionals working in the wider educational field at primary, secondary and higher education levels.

An updated model of a Learning through Action process consisting of the following elements has been presented: Identifying an issue; Preparing for action; Implementing the plan and gathering data; Interpreting data; Acting on evidence; Evaluating results; Reflecting on the process; and Sharing.

Four different forms of reflection were identified: Reflection-before-action; Reflection-in-action; Reflection-on-action; and Reflection-about-action. Each of these forms was then linked to one or more of the elements in the Learning through Action process.

It is now important to conduct projects to determine how appropriate it is to consider whether the four forms of reflection actually can be identified as being different processes. If these forms can be accepted the next step is to implement the approaches to reflection outlined to determine whether the approaches are helpful, or need to be modified in any way. These tasks can be the focus of future Learning through Action projects conducted by DEPISA members.

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# **Enhancing Pre-service Teachers' Skills in Observation, Feedback and Reflection during Micro-teaching Practice: A Case Study at the School of Education, Can Tho University, Vietnam**

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## **Abstract**

Micro-teaching has been introduced to the teacher education program as a compulsory course for all of the pre-service teachers (PTs) in which they develop skills in observation, feedback and reflection. This course provides PTs with opportunities to simultaneously experiment and reconstruct their existing theories of effective teaching in order to adapt themselves to practice conditions (Marland, 2007).

This paper reports the effects of approaches on developing the PTs' skills in observation, feedback and reflection which have been found to be lacking. Fourth-year PTs majoring in Vietnamese Literature and Linguistics Education participated in this study. Data including teaching videos, observation- and reflection-oriented sheets, interviews and minutes of post-class discussions were collected for qualitative analysis.

The research findings indicated positive impacts of the newly introduced approaches on enhancing skills in observation, feedback and reflection for PTs during micro-teaching practice. Lessons from this research would be applicable in reforming the micro-teaching model throughout Vietnam and elsewhere.

## **Background**

In the framework for teacher competence approved by OECD countries (Tonya and Peter (2012), skills in reflection, observation and feedback were put at the centre to ensure quality teaching. It can be argued that by observing other students teaching and their own practice (through video recordings), teachers in general and PTs in particular, will be able to identify elements of effective teaching. In addition, it is likely that appropriately responding to other students' practice will help them become more confident and willing to detect their own weaknesses. These two skills are inter-connected and act as the backbone for teachers' professional competence. Without observation skills, teachers cannot give effective feedback to others; while it is impossible for them to make on-going progress unless they come to practice reflectively.

The significance of these skills poses an urgent need for training future teachers. These factors motivated us to undertake this research in order to form skills in observation, feedback and reflection for the fourth year student teachers during micro-teaching practice.

## **Research questions**

This research investigated two questions:

1. What was the effect of using the observation-oriented sheet and teaching recorded videos on developing PTs' observation and feedback skills?
2. What was the effect of using the reflection-oriented sheet on developing PTs' reflective skills?

## **Literature review**

### ***Observation***

Bandura and McClelland (1977) wrote that most of behaviours of human beings can be learnt through modeling. Based on observations, we become aware of how a new behaviour can be formed. Then, our subsequent behaviours and actions will be instructed by what we had observed.

Learning through observation is a process that allows learners to perceive new behaviours without experiencing trial-and-error learning which poses high risk of failures. Observational learning influences cognitive thinking, and observers can learn to adjust their future behaviours. Observational learning impacts both observers and observees.

Surgenor (2011, p. 2) regarded observation as:

*A tool that enables lecturers to improve the standard of their teaching, a method of gaining feedback to improve your teaching skills that involves discussing your teaching, particularly areas you feel you need help with, an opportunity for two or more lecturers to learn from each other through a process of observation.*

In addition to observing peers' teaching, teachers need to be able to observe their own practice for reflection. 'Good teachers are those who are able, at critical points, to distance themselves from classroom activities, to see themselves as others see them, and to adjust their actions accordingly' (Adelman & Walker, 2003, p. 4). Thus, as a compulsory task of observers, teachers are required to not only take note of what happened in classes but also transform what they learned through observing effective practice for themselves.

There are seven key aspects teachers need to cover when observing including: variety and pacing of instruction; presentation skills; clarity; content knowledge; instructor-student interaction; use of technology; and discipline/program specific teaching behaviours (Central Piedmont Community College, 2010).

In this research, observational skill was defined by a certain number of characteristics including:

1. The understanding and ability of identifying the central focus that guided observation;
2. The ability of analysing and assessing the most relevant issues in the lessons;
3. The attempts of proposing solutions in order to improve teaching effectiveness;
4. The habit of drawing lessons for oneself.

These aspects acted as the criteria for assessing the level of PTs' observation skills.

### **Feedback**

Feedback exists as a taken-for granted part in all professions and practice. Nevertheless, the nature of feedback is far more sophisticated than is usually believed. Price, Handley, Millar,

and O'Donovan (2010) conceptualised feedback as 'a product as well as a process; and has a content as well as a relational dimension'.

Teaching effectively is a process of not merely conveying knowledge and information to learners, but it is also a practice of offering feedback with a wider focus on ongoing learning rather than assessment and marking.

To initiate a feedback process, three essential questions that both teachers and learners have to answer are:

*'Where am I going? How am I going? and Where to next?'* (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 90).

Based on these three questions, the authors categorised feedback according to four different levels: Feedback about the task; Feedback about the processing of the task; Feedback about self-regulation; Feedback about the self as a person.

## **Reflection**

Improving teaching practice is an ultimate goal of all dedicated and responsible teachers. To achieve that goal, teachers are in an urgent need of becoming reflective practitioners (Cowan, 2006; Ross, Bondy, & Kyle, 1993; Schön, 1983). Reflection has been extensively applicable in a number of professions, and thereby attracted substantial attention of scholars to capture a comprehensible and precise perception of its nature. As defined by Dewey (1933), reflection incorporates 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' (p. 9).

In a more recent educational setting, Marland advocated the following definition:

*Reflection is the process of deliberately, systematically and rigorously examining one's teaching plans and actions to arrive at new ways of understanding oneself, students and classroom events and of building more effective models of practice for enhancing student learning* (p. 109).

Van Manen (1977, cited in Marland, 2007) divided reflection into three particular levels including: technical reflection, practical reflection and critical reflection.

At the technical level, reflection 'focuses on the means that teachers use to achieve certain ends or goals and is concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of those means' (p. 111). Practical reflection emphasises 'the goal (or ends) of the activity, the assumptions underlying the practices (or means) and the actual outcomes of the activity' (p. 111). The final level is critical reflection with its focus on 'ethical and moral issues to do with fairness, equity, attention to individual needs and respects for students' (p. 112)

In this research, the aim of reflection was to develop PTs ability to be capable of:

*Determining the features to which they will attend, the order they will attempt to impose on the situation, the directions in which they will try to change it. In this process, they identify both the ends to be sought and the means to be employed.*

(Schön, 1983, p. 165).

To achieve the above mentioned aim, the reflection-oriented sheet was designed to cover two major areas: the focus and the productive process of reflection.

The reflection-oriented sheet included eight key points upon which to focus that were based on the findings of Marland (2007) and Central Piedmont Community College (2010). As

claimed by Marland (2007), when commencing their first teaching practice, PTs tend to reflect on issues related to the effectiveness of using teaching skills that are more likely to arrive at the technical level of reflection. Secondly, to ensure an effective process of reflection that could occur to each PT, the reflection-oriented sheet followed Rolfe's model of reflection (2001) (cited in Bishop & Blake, 2007, p. 11).

This model presented a three What-question-based process including:

What? (describing the action), So what? (bridging theory and action) and Now what? (action planning).

In general, the reflective skill of the PTs was investigated from five bases:

1. Using the instructions in reflection-oriented sheets to self-observe and evaluate their own classes;
2. Indicating specific examples to support their own comments;
3. Raising questions to trace what was effective or ineffective in their teaching;
4. Relating their practice to theories for in-depth analyses and explanations;
5. Planning for applicable adjustments and improvements.

### **Objectives of micro-teaching**

Micro-teaching has been perceived and implemented contextually differently in teacher education programs. Regardless of the approach, the objectives of micro-teaching are almost the same. Belt (1967, p. 2) indicated five objectives of micro-teaching:

1. To provide the trainee contact with the referents-teaching, role development, and behaviour analysis.
2. To provide the trainee with teaching practice in a controlled situation.
3. To provide the trainee with immediate feedback on his performance.
4. To provide the trainee with an opportunity to observe himself in action in a teaching situation and to discuss his observations with a supervisor and with the pupils he has taught.
5. To provide the trainee with an opportunity to plan for correction of specific weaknesses and to carry out these plans in practice and re-teaching sessions in the miniature classroom.

### **Research implementation**

The micro-teaching process in this study was organised into three stages:

Stage 1: Orientation to observation, feedback and reflection skill prior to micro-teaching.

Stage 2: Teaching in small groups with video recording.

Stage 3: Whole-class discussions.

The first stage was to provide PTs with knowledge of the objectives and evaluation methods in the micro-teaching course; skills in making lesson plans, using smart phones to record;

skills in observing and completing the observation and reflection oriented sheets, and feedback skills.

In the second stage, PTs undertook micro-teaching and recorded their classes in small groups of 10-15 students. All of the recorded videos were shared with the whole class via Google. PTs were required to view all videos and complete either the observation-oriented sheets for their peers' sessions or the reflection-oriented sheets for their own practice.

The third stage occurred one week later when video clips had been shared.

In post-class discussions, PTs gave comments on their teaching before others' feedback. Then, teacher educators (TEs) raised questions to encourage more reflection from the whole class. After discussions, PTs adjusted their lesson plans, and then the cycle was repeated for a second and third stage.

### **Data collection**

The participants in this research were fourth-year PTs divided into three separate micro-teaching groups together with their instructors. These PTs were encoded as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2, instructed by three TE A, B and C respectively.

<b>Source of data collection</b>	<b>Total number</b>
Videos	70
Teaching plans	17
Minutes of post-class discussions	84
Observation oriented sheets	199
Reflection oriented sheets	12
Interviews	12 (before and after the experiment)

### **Data analysis**

#### ***Changes in the PTs' observation skills***

When observing classes, almost all of the six PTs set up the criteria to assess the success in the observed teachers' performance. The data extracted from the observation sheets presented four most frequently observed foci in the order of importance: effectiveness of using questions; effectiveness of group discussions; interaction between teachers and students; and verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

As standards for effective questions, PT A1, B2 and C1 were interested in the supports of questions for 'developing students' cognitive ability, interactive learning and learning by themselves' while B1 and C2 concentrated more on 'the role of questions in accommodating students to learning by discovery' and 'how to ask questions that fit with students' competence'.

In terms of group discussions, this activity scrutinised the following: 'stimulating students' thinking, exploring knowledge and increasing teamwork skills' (PT A1, B2 and C2), 'the appropriate seating arrangements that teachers organised' (PT B1), as well as 'promoting

students' creativity, providing opportunities for students to interact and exchange ideas with others' (PT B2).

With regard to teachers' communication skills, PTs identified that 'lecturing is a very important skill to attract students' attention and engagement' (PT B2), 'good lecturing needs to be brief and coherent' (PT C2), and 'the use of exact words' (PT A1).

At the same time, the observers also established the standards for teachers' communication with students. For instance, teachers were expected to 'communicate with students instinctively, keep eye contacts and rephrase the lessons in a creative and amusing way' (PT C1), 'display a sense of humour that brings an atmosphere of relaxation and fantasy to the whole class' (PT B1).

As a result of the focused observation, the PTs performed the targeted ability of detecting the most relevant areas that needed to be taken into consideration for further improvements. When observing peers' teaching practice, the observers simultaneously worked as both teachers and students who were searching for concrete evidence for feedback. The observation sheet of PT A2 noted that:

*The observed teacher only asked the students to discuss in groups to identify and correct mistakes in the given examples without any request for clarification. Consequently, the students could deal with mistakes separately, but they became far from generalising theoretical lessons for other similar situations.*

PT A2 in the example above illustrated a systematic analysis based on the theory of the knowledge acquisition process from specific phenomenon to generalised concepts before assessing the scale of her peer's teaching effectiveness.

As the observers, the PTs considered their purpose was to not only trace the shortcomings but also arrive at solutions in order to assist their peers in making their practice improve as well as deducing practical lessons for themselves. The following can be seen as convincing evidence for such a multi-purpose practice of observation:

*'Teachers need to identify the lesson objectives prior to their teaching, and regularly check to ensure that these will be turned into practice. They should also make the purpose of group discussions specified and allocate appropriate time for each discussion.'*

(Observation sheet, PT A2).

The data from the in-depth interviews was relatively similar to the findings addressed above.

When answering the question of 'During and after observing and viewing video clips, what concerned you most?' all of the six PTs confirmed they highly valued 'skills in raising questions and organising group discussions'. It was also noticeable that half of them stated they became aware of connecting what they had learned in theory to the reality of the classroom.

This finding strongly supported what had been stated as the top priorities of their observation. Moreover, six PTs agreed that the observation oriented sheets acted as a supporting means for identifying the most noteworthy issues in classes on which they were required to provide feedback. More particular, PT C1 shared that 'Observation oriented sheets helped me identify the criterion for observing classes' while PT C2 highlighted 'Observation oriented sheets instructed the observers to create new and creative teaching methods'. It was noticeable that video recording and viewing supported PTs in covering essential aspects that they possibly missed during observation.

In this study, feedback skills of PTs were assessed in three categories:

1. Giving direct feedback with the focus on relevant issues of teaching effectiveness;
2. Effectively using the PMI feedback strategy that starts with strengths followed by weaknesses and ends with the most interesting point;
3. Utilising reflection-oriented feedback for seeking solutions.

After experiencing the process of micro-teaching practice, the PTs arrived at a higher level of awareness of the post-class discussions. Interviewing these PTs after the experiment revealed that two thirds of them considered feedback as ‘a fantastic opportunity for both the givers and receivers to learn teaching methods, communication skills and how to respect others’ whereas prior to the experiment, the same figure presumed that only the receivers could benefit from feedback. Such a development in the PTs’ perception towards feedback resulted in their focus of attention and practice. All of the six student participants claimed that they relied on notes contained in their observation sheets to offer feedback on their peers’ classes as ‘the observation sheets included the most relevant issues to be concerned’ (PT A2).

The feedback of all participants generally concentrated on three areas including: questions; group discussions; and the interaction between teachers and students.

Specifically, the most frequent feedback focused on questions of the teachers. For instance, ‘That was a well-designed system of questions developing students’ cognitive ability’, PT C2 commented. This reflects that PT C2 linked the theory of using questions to examine the quality of questions raised in the observed teacher’s practice.

Besides feedback on questions, another concern addressed focused on group work organisation skills. ‘You should not give so many tasks in one group discussion’ and ‘Instead of that, there should be more detailed instructions to students’ commented by PT C1 and B2 respectively.

The in-depth interviews with six PT participants revealed that they held different perspectives on the focus of each lesson and therefore gained different priorities in their feedback on their peers’ practice. In a whole picture, the focus of their feedback was consistent with that of the suggested areas in the observation sheet with two dominated areas involving the content of the lesson and pedagogical knowledge and skills of the observed teachers.

The most frequent mode of feedback employed by all PT participants was direct comments. All of them strictly followed the rule of focusing on what had occurred in classes rather than on the personality of the observees. In addition, the PTs offered feedback in an indirect way by using questions to stimulate the receivers’ reflections. In terms of quantity, reflection-guided questions were far less popular than the direct form of feedback.

Among six PTs, C1 and C2 applied most frequently the indirect approach into giving feedback. In the case of PT C1, several models of questions were ‘What purpose of your teaching method was?’, ‘That was an effective way of teaching, isn’t that?’, ‘Whether we should do’, ‘Do you have any more thinking about your teaching?’. Noticeably, the interviews with six PTs revealed a corresponding result of popularity between the direct and indirect feedbacks.

The direct feedback received the strongest support by half of the PTs as it was ‘much more obvious’ (PT C2) and ‘more instructional to the feedback receivers’ (PT B2). Only two of them agreed that the indirect feedback should be used with two persuasive reasons that

‘giving feedback indirectly allowed the receivers to continue their thinking and examining’, and ‘that absolutely avoided hurting or disappointing others’ (PT A2).

The tendency of adopting two contrasting modes of feedback was attributed to the purpose of giving feedback to others as a chance for them to ‘reply or explain more about their experience’ (PT B1), and ‘reflect on what happened in their classes’ (PT B2). Nevertheless, such a feedback strategy was not applicable to all cases of PTs in this study as PT C1 became more flexible in giving feedback. ‘Feedback could be in a direct or indirect manner depending on different characteristics of the receivers. To the quick-minded ones, for example, it is more appropriate to offer indirect feedback and vice versa’. This displayed her expertise of psychological background and communicative skills.

Another crucial aspect of PTs’ feedback skill was their expertise of how to select one or two most relevant issues when doing feedback practice. Such a restriction in the number of issues in each feedback resulted in PTs’ increased awareness and ability of detecting the most significant issues in classes for improvements. Feedback focusing on weaknesses of the peer PTs’ practice was generally more than that on strengths. Almost all of the feedback concentrated on two top interests in the scale of appropriateness and lucidity of the questions and instructions given to students. An example for that was the case of PT A2 who indicated that:

*When guiding students to correct Vietnamese language using mistakes, the teacher ignored to ask the students to draw conclusions about the rules. Consequently, they responded to the question of what was the theoretical lesson generalised from the task by reading the notice available in the course books.*

Another dimension of PTs’ improved feedback skill was their practice of comparing and contrasting the evidence between the first and second classes in order to identify progress. A2 pointed out ‘In the second practice time, the teacher was still unable to replace the example in the previous class with another more detailed one’. That displayed the PT’s on-going interests and attention to the teaching progress the observed teachers made through two times.

Overall, the six PTs in this research made a significant progress in their feedback skills shown in two aspects: the content and modes of feedback.

### ***Changes in the PTs’ reflective skills***

A majority of the PTs looked back on their action by systematically and rationally comparing what they had performed in classes with the criteria proposed in the reflection-oriented sheets.

Analysis of twelve reflection oriented sheets disclosed that five out of six PTs identifies the inappropriateness or the lack of activities as required by theories of effective teaching. These self detected weaknesses focused on issues related to time allocation, using inappropriate teaching methods, class management, communication skills, insufficient demonstration and explanations, on-time feedback, opportunities for practice, integration of humour into teaching.

Contrary to appraisal from other peers recognising that ‘nothing wrong in your teaching’, PT C2 responded cautiously that ‘I honestly dissatisfied with my later teaching session as it was not good as the former. I think that I need to try much more if I have another chance’. Such a dissatisfied feeling reflected higher goals the PT established to make her teaching improve over time as well as a positive sign of professional development.

The level of frequently reflecting on what they had performed, however, varied among different PTs and between the first and the second time of teaching practice. There was a similar trend that all of six PTs pointed out their weaknesses in the later session less than in the former. It was unclear whether in the second session, either, the detected issues in the first session were resolved successfully and no longer affected the PTs, or, if to identify the most relevant areas for further adjustment required a higher and deeper level of reflection. The current level of the PTs was lower than was expected.

From detecting the areas for reflection above, the PTs continued to seek solutions to issues facing their quality teaching. A detailed analysis unveiled a total of fifty-one records students intended to make changes to in their subsequent practice. The most common areas of improvement consisted of ‘more contacts with students in a friendlier manner, finding more persuasive approaches to introduce the lessons, more effectively using visual aids to help students summarise key points of the lessons’. Most of these intentions were short-term solutions which aimed at coping with issues in the case of their occurrence.

Nevertheless, the case of PT C1 was an exception as she could propose a long-term solution that was strongly related to professional development for teachers. She recognised that ‘As a lifetime responsibility, teachers need to expand knowledge and guide students to learn by exploring’.

In general, this study indicated that the PTs formed initial characteristics for becoming reflective practitioners. They became accustomed to practising under reflective examinations by using the instructions from the reflection-oriented sheets and pursuing adaption for more effective teaching.

## **Discussion**

The micro-teaching model applied in this research positively resulted in forming and enhancing the expected skills for PTs in observation, feedback and reflection. These three skills facilitated PTs to self-study as well as create a collaborative environment which achieved professional development through interaction with their colleagues.

Five of seven crucial characteristics advocated by Villegas-Reimers (2003, pp. 13-14) as a pre-condition for successful professional development showed in this research.

1. It is based on constructivism rather than on a ‘transmission-oriented model’, teachers are treated as active learners;
2. It is a long-term process;
3. It is a process that takes place within a particular context;
4. A teacher is conceived of as a reflective practitioner;
5. Professional development is conceived of as a collaborative process.

This research re-examined and reinforced these characteristics to some extent. Over the period of three months of micro-teaching, all six PTs were capable of actively learning to optimise their own teaching capacity, and became engaged into constructing a constructive environment for collaboratively developing professional capacity. In terms of personal professional development, most of the PTs stepped into the process of learning to improve teaching through three common courses: their in-class practice; observing their peers’ practice; and self-observing their own classes under the light of reflection.

With regard to co-operative professional development, both observation and reflection skills created opportunities for pre-service teachers to increase the quality of their feedback on their peers' classes, and to construct beliefs and a constructive atmosphere in order to exchange ideas in an open-minded manner.

Furthermore, most encouragingly, the PTs learned not only the way to observe, to give feedback and to reflect, but they also accumulated a fundamental foundation of research skills involving observing, analysing and evaluating the research data. These will play a vital role in driving them into conducting action research into their own teaching in order to improve it in the future.

The research findings on the enhanced observation, feedback and reflection skills of the PTs proved that the experimented micro-teaching model could satisfy the top priorities of all PTs who were entering teaching as beginners. As Marland (2007) claimed that 'in your [pre-service teachers'] early teaching experiences, your main concern might be the development of your teaching skills such as questioning, motivating, explaining or reacting to student answers. At this time, the effectiveness and efficiency of your use of these skills may be the focus of your concerns...' (p. 113).

Indeed, the PTs in this research were trained in the skills of observation, feedback and reflection to discover, explain and learn lessons on the most relevant aspects to quality teaching. This research found out that making questions, organising group discussions, interaction between learners through teachers' instructional language dominated the top focus of the PTs.

Generally, observation was employed as a tool to improve the standard of PTs teaching (Surgenor, 2011, p. 2). The PTs also presented the ability of using two levels of effective feedback defined by Hattie and Timperley (2007) including 'Feedback about the task, Feedback about the processing of the task' (p. 90) in order to focus on the most crucial issues for improvements. Particularly, the PTs were capable of 'suggesting further specific study tasks, promoting the development of generic skills by focusing on evidence of the use of skills' to support their peers in 'correcting errors, developing understanding' (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004, pp. 20-21).

A combined activity of doing micro-teaching twice rather than only once, viewing video clips and completing the reflection oriented sheet led the PTs to 'active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' which was conceptualised as reflection by (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). However, most of the records of reflection produced belonged to two levels of technical reflection and practical reflection (Van Manen, 1977).

Finally, as a limitation of this research, it concentrated on exploring the effects of skills development-oriented strategies in observation, feedback and reflection while not covering the impact of the developed skills on improving their teaching capability. Additionally, the role of lecturers as instructors and facilitators in orchestrating the PTs to arrive at 'deep learning' was not taken into consideration. These issues will be the central focuses in the subsequent study in order to continuously refine the micro-teaching model aiming at professional development for PTs.

## **Conclusion**

The positive effects of the approaches to fostering skills in observation, feedback and reflection were well tested in this research. These selected approaches incorporated videoing

teaching, completing the observation- and reflection-oriented sheets, orienting feedback skills. Over the period of fifteen weeks, the PTs took advantage of both their own teaching and peers' practice to acquire the expertise of effective teaching while they actively engaged into supporting others' professional development. Noticeably, the enhanced skills associated with observation, data collection and analysis as well as reflection prepared the PTs for possibly undertaking action research on their future practice.

The research, therefore can contribute both to a theoretical background and practical experience to reconstructing an effective micro-teaching model in teacher education.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Reflection-Oriented Sheet

Name of teacher: .....  
 Name of class: .....  
 Session of teaching (the first/ second): .....  
 Date of teaching: .....

Please completing this sheet by putting an appropriate mark  (for “yes”) or  (for “no”) into **the section from 1 to 7** and providing more information if necessary prior to your submission.

#### 1. Preparation and instruction

I realised that I...	What should I change if the method was used ineffectively?
<input type="checkbox"/> read many relevant reference sources	
<input type="checkbox"/> clearly identified the lesson objectives	
<input type="checkbox"/> used a variety of instructional methods	
<input type="checkbox"/> allowed adequate wait time when asking questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> responded to wrong answers constructively	
<input type="checkbox"/> drew non-participating students into activities/discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/> prevented specific students from dominating activities/discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/> asked probing questions when student answers are incomplete	
<input type="checkbox"/> guided the direction of the discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/> refrained from answering own questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> mediated conflict or differences of opinions	
<input type="checkbox"/> allowed sufficient time to complete in-class assignments	
<input type="checkbox"/> specified how learning tasks will be evaluated (if appropriate)	
<input type="checkbox"/> provided opportunities for students to practice what they have learned	

## 2. Efficiency and effectiveness of using teaching methods

I used the following teaching method ...	How was the teaching method compatible with the lesson objectives?	How did the teaching method contribute to developing students' thinking ability?	What should I change if the method was used ineffectively?
<input type="checkbox"/> pair work			
<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5 student discussion			
<input type="checkbox"/> oral presentation			
<input type="checkbox"/> questioning			
<input type="checkbox"/> study games			
<input type="checkbox"/> others...			

## 3. Presentation skills

I realised that I...	What should I change in the next teaching?
<input type="checkbox"/> communicated audibly and clearly	
<input type="checkbox"/> established and maintains eye contact with students	
<input type="checkbox"/> varied pace and tone to keep students alert	
<input type="checkbox"/> used a presentation style that facilitates note-taking	
<input type="checkbox"/> used positive and appropriate humor	
<input type="checkbox"/> incorporated various instructional supports (film, diagrams)	
<input type="checkbox"/> responded to changes in student attentiveness	
<input type="checkbox"/> others .....	

## 4. Clarity

I questioned myself whether I ...	What should I change in the next teaching if relevant?
<input type="checkbox"/> noted and explained new terms or concepts	
<input type="checkbox"/> elaborated or repeats complex information	
<input type="checkbox"/> used examples to explain content	
<input type="checkbox"/> paused during explanations to ask and answer questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> related new ideas to familiar concepts	
<input type="checkbox"/> others .....	

### 5. Content knowledge

I questioned myself whether I ...	What should I change in the next teaching if relevant?
<input type="checkbox"/> explained the knowledge accurately	
<input type="checkbox"/> went through references from various fields and resources...	
<input type="checkbox"/> cited authorities to support statements	
<input type="checkbox"/> presented divergent viewpoints	
<input type="checkbox"/> provided hints to help students research and broaden the issue	
<input type="checkbox"/> others .....	

### 6. Teacher - student interaction

I questioned myself whether I ...	What should I change in the next teaching if relevant?
<input type="checkbox"/> attended respectfully to student comprehension or puzzlement	
<input type="checkbox"/> asked questions of students that challenge them to think more deeply	
<input type="checkbox"/> invited student participation and comments	
<input type="checkbox"/> incorporated student responses when appropriate	
<input type="checkbox"/> encouraged students to respond to their peers throughout the discussions	
<input type="checkbox"/> treated students with respect	
<input type="checkbox"/> used positive reinforcement to encourage student participation and intellectual risk-taking	
<input type="checkbox"/> encouraged students to interact civilly/respectfully with each other	
<input type="checkbox"/> addressed potentially disruptive behaviours before they impact learning environment	
<input type="checkbox"/> others: .....	

**7. Use of technology and visual aids**

I used the following teaching aid...	How was the teaching aid compatible with the lesson objectives?	How did the teaching aid contribute to developing students' thinking ability?	What should I change if the teaching aid was used ineffectively?
<input type="checkbox"/> images			
<input type="checkbox"/> maps			
<input type="checkbox"/> tables			
<input type="checkbox"/> video clips			
<input type="checkbox"/> black board presentation			
<input type="checkbox"/> others (please specify).....			

**8. Self-assessment**

What level your own teaching can be ranked?	Why do you match it to that ranking?

**Appendix 2: Observation-Oriented Sheet**

Name of the observer: .....  
 Name of the observer's group: .....  
 Name of the observee: .....  
 Session of teaching (the first/ second): .....  
 Date of teaching: .....

Please completing this sheet by putting an appropriate mark  (for "yes") or  (for "no") into the section from 1 to 7 and providing more information if necessary prior to your submission.

### 1. Preparation and instruction

I discovered that the observee...	Relevant proof(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> read many relevant reference sources.	
<input type="checkbox"/> clearly identified the lesson objectives	
<input type="checkbox"/> used a variety of instructional methods	
<input type="checkbox"/> allowed adequate wait time when asking questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> responded to wrong answers constructively	
<input type="checkbox"/> drew non-participating students into activities/discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/> prevented specific students from dominating activities/discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/> asked probing questions when student answers are incomplete	
<input type="checkbox"/> guided the direction of the discussion	
<input type="checkbox"/> refrained from answering own questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> mediated conflict or differences of opinions	
<input type="checkbox"/> allowed sufficient time to complete in-class assignments	
<input type="checkbox"/> specified how learning tasks will be evaluated (if appropriate)	
<input type="checkbox"/> provided opportunities for students to practice what they have learned	

### 2. Efficiency and effectiveness of using teaching methods

The observed used the following teaching method...	Why did the observee use this activity?	How was it relevant? Why?
<input type="checkbox"/> pair work		
<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5 student discussion		
<input type="checkbox"/> oral presentation		
<input type="checkbox"/> questioning		
<input type="checkbox"/> study games		
<input type="checkbox"/> others...		

### 3. Presentation skills

I discovered that the observee...	Relevant proof(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> communicated audibly and clearly	
<input type="checkbox"/> established and maintains eye contact with students	
<input type="checkbox"/> varied pace and tone to keep students alert	
<input type="checkbox"/> used a presentation style that facilitates note-taking	
<input type="checkbox"/> used positive and appropriate humor	
<input type="checkbox"/> incorporated various instructional supports (film, diagrams)	
<input type="checkbox"/> responded to changes in student attentiveness	
<input type="checkbox"/> others .....	

### 4. Clarity

I discovered that the observee...	Relevant proof(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> noted and explained new terms or concepts	
<input type="checkbox"/> elaborated or repeats complex information	
<input type="checkbox"/> used examples to explain content	
<input type="checkbox"/> paused during explanations to ask and answer questions	
<input type="checkbox"/> related new ideas to familiar concepts	
<input type="checkbox"/> others .....	

### 5. Content knowledge

I discovered that the observee...	Relevant proof(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> explained the knowledge accurately	
<input type="checkbox"/> went through references from various fields and resources...	
<input type="checkbox"/> cited authorities to support statements	
<input type="checkbox"/> presented divergent viewpoints	
<input type="checkbox"/> provided hints to help students research and broaden the issue	
<input type="checkbox"/> others .....	

### 6. Teacher - student interaction

I discovered that the observee...	Relevant proof(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> attended respectfully to student comprehension or puzzlement	
<input type="checkbox"/> asked questions of students that challenge them to think more deeply	
<input type="checkbox"/> invited student participation and comments	
<input type="checkbox"/> incorporated student responses when appropriate	
<input type="checkbox"/> encouraged students to respond to their peers throughout the discussions	
<input type="checkbox"/> treated students with respect	
<input type="checkbox"/> used positive reinforcement to encourage student participation and intellectual risk-taking	
<input type="checkbox"/> encouraged students to interact civilly/respectfully with each other	
<input type="checkbox"/> addressed potentially disruptive behaviours before they impact learning environment	
<input type="checkbox"/> others: .....	

**7. Use of technology and visual aids**

The observe used the following teaching aid...	How was the teaching aid compatible with the lesson objectives?	How does the teaching aid contribute to developing students' thinking ability?
<input type="checkbox"/> images		
<input type="checkbox"/> maps		
<input type="checkbox"/> tables		
<input type="checkbox"/> video clips		
<input type="checkbox"/> black board presentation		
<input type="checkbox"/> others (please specify).....		

**8. Level of compatibility with the lesson objectives**

What were the lesson objectives?	How well did the observee match teaching activities to the lesson objectives? Why?
..... ..... .....	..... ..... ..... .....

**9. What experiences do you learn from your peer's teaching?** *(please address briefly by visualising if possible)*.....

**10. How do you intend to apply the already learnt lesson (s) into your own teaching?**  
 .....

**11. Overall assessment for the observee's teaching performance:**  
 .....

### Appendix 3: Feedback instruction guideline

As an observer giving feedback...	As the teacher receiving feedback...
<p><b>Focus on behaviours, not the individual.</b> Describe what you see and what you hear. What does the teacher say or do? Remember: you are providing feedback on the teaching performance, not the person.</p>	<p><b>Be sincerely open to all comments.</b> As soon as you invite someone’s opinion, you need to be prepared to hear it! If you hear what you perceive to be negative comments, separate the comments from yourself as a <i>person</i> and focus on what could be changed next time to improve your <i>teaching</i>.</p>
<p><b>Be specific.</b> Identify a specific comment or behaviour and describe how it affected you. Link your comments to specific moments in the teacher’s lesson. Whenever possible, offer concrete strategies for addressing particular concerns.</p>	<p><b>Avoid being defensive.</b> Try to react positively to comments. The observers providing you with feedback will need positive reinforcement, too! Saying ‘That’s great advice, I hadn’t thought of it that way’ opens up a dialogue with your observers.</p>
<p><b>Be positive and constructive...and honest!</b> Always offer a positive observation first. However, try to avoid insincere praise. Follow up constructive comments with your ideas for improvement or things to try.</p>	<p><b>Specify the feedback you’re looking for.</b> If you would like feedback on your voice production or time management or clarity of examples or your introduction ... say so! Be specific when asking for feedback.</p>
<p><b>Check your ego at the door.</b> This process isn’t about you, and showing off all you know about teaching. This process is about the teacher you are observing. Avoid grandstanding or one-upmanship.</p>	<p><b>Confirm your understanding of the feedback provided.</b> If you need to ask for clarification of a particular comment, feel free to do so. Ask an observer to rephrase a comment or paraphrase back to the observer what you think she/he is saying.</p>
<p><b>Offer options and alternatives.</b> Don’t just point out areas of difficulty. Remember, you’re not providing a summative evaluation of this person’s teaching—you’re helping the teacher identify what to try next time.</p>	<p><b>Share your reaction to the feedback.</b> Once you’ve heard all the verbal feedback, reflect back on your self- assessment of your lesson and think how your own assessment of your teaching compares with the observations of your colleagues. What have you learned?</p>

**Avoid prescriptive language.** Instead of saying ‘You should do this...’ or ‘Don’t do that...’, phrase your suggestions as stemming from your own observations: ‘I’m wondering if you tried X, what might happen...’; ‘I’d like to see you try Y’; ‘I would have benefitted from a clearer explanation here, could you try this...’.

**Don’t demand unreasonable change.** Avoid pointing out challenges the teacher cannot reasonably change or address.

**Be concise.** Too many comments will overload the listener. Focus on one or two key points.

Adapted in part from Verderber & Verderber, (1983), In Leptak, J. (1989). Giving and receiving constructive criticism. *Lifelong Learning* 12(5), 25-26.

Also, Giving and Receiving Constructive Criticism. Handout from McGill University.

# **Improving Pre-service Teachers' Critical Thinking through Micro-Teaching within a Learning through Action Model**

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## **Abstract**

The five step model of Learning through Action (LtA) (Laws, et al., 2013) was applied to elementary teacher education students (PTs) at Can Tho University who were studying Science, with the aim of improving their critical thinking.

Two research questions were examined: To what extent does implementing an adapted micro-teaching procedure enhance pre-service teachers' critical thinking? and, What are participants' perceptions towards the adapted micro-teaching procedure in Science teaching practices?

Evidence of the PTs' critical thinking capacity was taken from the instructors' classroom observation filed notes and the PTs' portfolios. The PTs' perceptions of the use of the micro-teaching procedure were collected from interviews.

Results from the interviews showed that the PTs held a positive attitude towards the contributions of the micro-teaching procedure to their thinking skills and teaching practices. Overall results indicated that the micro-teaching procedure also contributed to the PTs improved critical thinking dimensions.

## **Introduction**

The ever-changing and challenging world requires students not only to build their professional knowledge and skills, but also to develop their higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, the PTs involved in this research will become elementary school teachers in the near future so their capacity for high-level thinking plays an important part in motivating the abilities of elementary school students. The OECD (2013) report emphasised the importance of high-level thinking skills for teachers in the twenty-first century and embraced creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.

However reviewing many standard outputs for elementary teacher education Bachelor programs of some major pedagogical universities in Vietnam, shows there is very little emphasis placed on critical thinking as an essential graduate competence. The design and implementation of teaching strategies that enhance critical thinking among students are a considerable challenge for most teachers. In the pedagogical university context, Paul and Elder (2014) claimed that PTs are able to acquire critical thinking skills through learning experiences planned by their teacher educators. For this reason, it is crucial for teacher educators to design teaching activities and implement student-centered teaching methods to improve the critical thinking of PTs.

The School of Education of Can Tho University is a major pedagogical institution in Vietnam which produces highly qualified teachers for the whole country. It is a demanding mission for the School of Education to train future teachers so that they can satisfy the teacher competencies to meet both Vietnamese standards specifically and OECD standards in general.

## Literature review

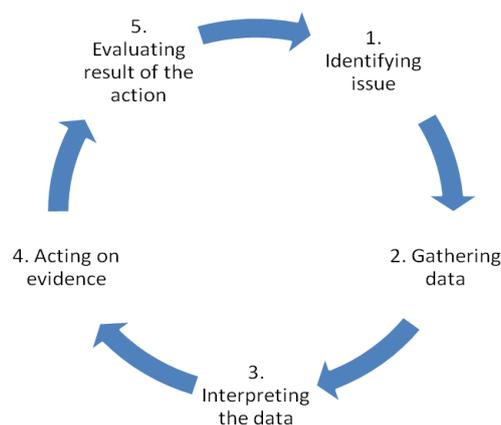
### *Learning through action*

Laws, et al., (2013) proposed the term Learning through Action (LtA) which is an effective strategy for teacher education and professional development. LtA may be used by an individual, but is more likely to produce better results if it involves the views of colleagues about the results of actions, especially in the reflection phase.

In this research, we used a praxis approach which emphasised the importance of the practice/action aspect of the learning. It minimised the emphasis on research, and focused more upon the actual practices.

LtA is a familiar procedure which may be integrated into an instructors' daily teaching work. In the first step, the instructors identify issues relating to their teaching and educating quality, and state how they desire to improve these issues. Next, they gather data about the issues that concern them, and interpret these data. This information can influence approaches to the next steps in the research cycle. The instructors, maybe together with their colleagues, discuss the strategies to act on their evidence. In the fifth step, the instructors evaluate the results of action and consider implications for the next application of LtA.

These steps are illustrated in Figure 1, below:



**Figure 1. Laws' praxis five-step procedure of LtA**

### ***Critical thinking***

Teacher educators who aim to improve the critical thinking skills of PTs should first determine PTs' critical thinking characteristics. The teacher educators should then define strategies to integrate critical thinking teaching activities into the context of pedagogical courses in teacher education programs.

According to Facione and Gittens (2013), critical thinking dispositions include truth-seeking, open-mindedness, analyticity, systematicity, self-confidence, inquisitiveness, and maturity. Hager and Kaye (1992) suggested that critical thinking can be taught, while Aرسال (2015) wrote that critical thinking of PTs can be improved when they experience student-centered learning as in micro-teaching.

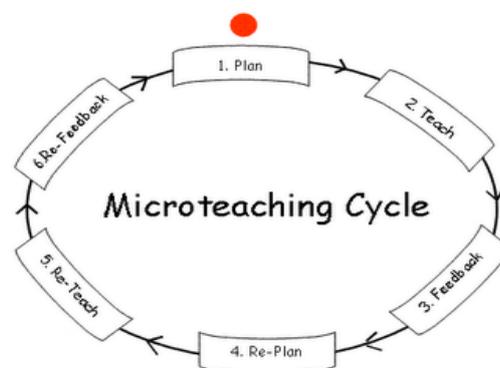
The micro-teaching model is highly compatible with the teaching for thinking perspective. When being taught to think within the micro-teaching model, PTs gradually establish a desire to find knowledge by asking questions and following evidence (truth-seeking), they also become tolerant of different views (open-mindedness).

When being taught thinking, PTs interact with each other to practise their critical thinking skills: such as identifying and solving problems in an organised way (systematicity); trusting his or her reasoning skills to make a good judgment (self-confidence); seeking to learn new things (inquisitiveness); and having the cognitive maturity to realise that many questions and issues have many different aspects to them (maturity). Repetitive practice, individually and in groups, with teacher educators' frequent feedback will improve PTs' growth toward becoming strong critical thinkers.

### ***Micro-teaching***

Micro-teaching is an effective teaching method that is used for the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers (Fernandez, 2005). Popovich and Katz (2009) claimed that micro-teaching was a valuable tool for assisting students in developing communication, critical thinking and problem solving skills. Allen and Ryan (1969) stated that micro-teaching improves the teaching skills of PTs by reducing the complexity of the authentic classroom environment and limiting content, time, and the number of students.

The original model of micro-teaching developed by Allen and Ryan in 1969 consists of six interrelated stages as follows:



**Figure 2: Allen and Ryan's six-step micro-teaching cycle**

Micro-teaching can affect PTs' teaching skills, self-efficacy beliefs and critical thinking skills. Binker (1995) stated that discussion in groups and in the whole class enables students to think critically. Furthermore, PTs' self-reflection and the instructors' feedback, as well as the sharing of ideas with other PTs during the criticism stage, might contribute positively to improving student teachers' critical thinking skills.

In this study, micro-teaching was used with students studying Science. This is one of the compulsory modules in the primary teacher education program of the School of Education. The aim was to train and develop the PTs' knowledge, skills and principles about teaching practices of Science in primary education.

Every student teacher is required to master designing lesson plans, prepare teaching materials, develop Powerpoint presentations, and conduct lessons under the observation of the instructors and other students. Students select content from all subcategories of Science such as, Natural and Social Environment, and History and Geography. Together with professional preparation, student teachers also practise pedagogical skills such as organising learning activities for children, managing a primary classroom, and developing their own pedagogical approach. PTs have the opportunity to move from teaching in a 'simulated class' to teaching in 'real situations'. Solving issues that arise in these contexts helps student teachers to enhance their professional capacity.

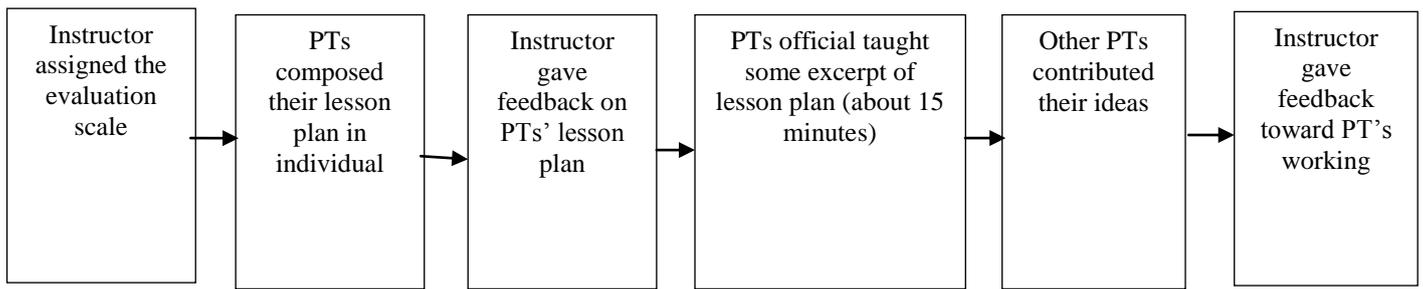
Allen and Ryan's six step micro-teaching cycle (1969) had been adapted when it was integrated into the LtA model. We called it 'adapted micro-teaching procedure'. To create the collaborative and active environment in the class and to encourage PTs to interact closely with each other, PTs worked in groups (about 5 to 6 members) from the time of composing lesson plans until to their official teaching. The adapted micro-teaching procedure was also characterised by collaborative, self-reflective and open discussion activities.

The differences between the normal procedure applied in many former semesters and the adapted micro-teaching procedure are clarified in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

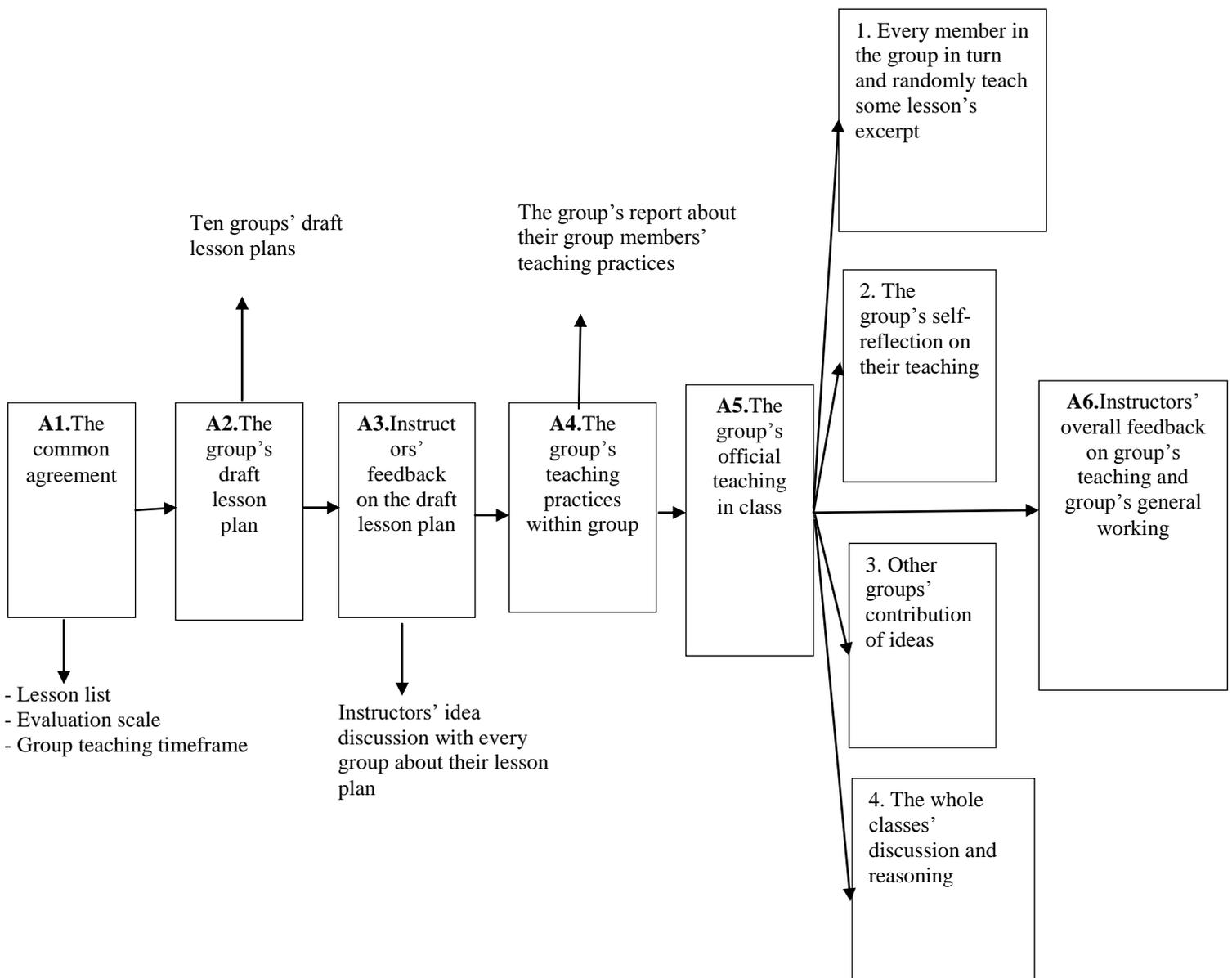
### **Research questions**

In order to investigate the impact of implementing the adapted micro-teaching procedure on pre-service teachers' critical thinking, this study attempted to find out the answers to the two following questions:

1. To what extent does implementing the adapted micro-teaching procedure enhance pre-service teachers' critical thinking?
2. What are participants' perceptions towards the adapted micro-teaching procedure in Science teaching practices?



**Figure 3: The normal micro-teaching procedure**



**Figure 4: The adapted micro-teaching procedure**

## **Participants**

Two instructors utilising the LtA procedure had worked together for many years sharing the same subjects of the primary teacher education program. The class of PTs consisted of 54 students (9% males and 91% females) registered for the subject Science Micro-teaching. Almost all of them were third year students who had completed six semesters and were going to experience a teaching practice period in the primary schools. In their seventh semester, they would attend many courses about teaching methodologies and classroom management in the program which qualified them as teachers in elementary schools in Vietnam. They were divided into 10 groups and were instructed by the instructors about applying the adapted micro-teaching procedure in Science.

## **Applying LtA procedure**

### **The first step: *Identifying the issue***

For a number of years the instructors had identified that PTs possessed low levels of critical thinking dimensions including truth seeking, open-mindedness, analyticity, systematicity, self-confidence, inquisitiveness and maturity.

### **The second step: *Collecting data***

A qualitative approach was used to collect data. The capacity of PTs' critical thinking dimensions was drawn from: the instructor's classroom observation and filed notes; student teachers' portfolios, including lesson plans and group teaching reports; and the PTs' perceptions towards the adapted micro-teaching procedure. Data was gathered through the instructors' interviews with PTs.

### **The third step: *Interpreting the data***

The instructors' class observation field notes and PTs' lesson plans showed that PTs were reluctant to discuss issues with other class members. They rarely raised their own questions but simply answered the instructors' questions. In the critique phase of micro-teaching, PTs usually focused on formative aspects of teaching procedure such as the way they did presentations. It was noticed that PTs had the idea that in the critique phase, they were to simply point out the weak sides of their colleagues' teaching from their perspectives. As a result, their ideas did not contribute positively to a serious and effective discussion.

PTs had the tendency to not accept other PTs' ideas or other adjustments. PTs also shared that this was the first time they took the role of a primary teacher and deliver their lesson plans. The stress associated with remembering the content of lessons, teaching procedures and the use of teaching materials prevented them from being confident in their teaching practices. The normal micro-teaching procedure applied before (Figure 3) seemed not to help them with their teaching practices.

To sum up, by collecting data of PTs' critical thinking dimensions, the instructors found that PTs' critical thinking dimensions were at a low level. Therefore, the instructors desired to improve PTs' critical thinking dispositions.

### **The fourth step: *Acting on the evidence***

The instructors adapted and applied the micro-teaching procedure within the Science class to motivate PTs to be confident in their teaching, to be involved actively in the class, to collaborate well with their partners, and to establish an open-mind manner. The adapted micro-teaching procedure focused on creating an active-learning environment so that PTs

could be involved actively in their teaching work. This procedure played the part of ‘an action’ in the fourth step of LtA, ‘Acting on the evidence’ which included 6 steps (6A) as in Figure 4.

The fifth step, Evaluating the result, is mentioned in this paper under, Results.

## **Results**

### **Stage A1. *The common agreement***

The PTs worked in a democratic atmosphere when they discussed the working timeframe and evaluation scale. They were also free to choose the lesson list from Science which their group would teach following the timeframe. This might be a bit different from Vietnamese culture classes where the instructors decided all such issues. In this way, the PTs became more *confident* in their whole work.

### **Stage A2. *The group’s draft lesson plan***

The PTs worked in their groups to compose a common draft lesson plan. This was a chance for every member to share their experience and knowledge with each other. Group working continued through all the stages. Miri, et al. (2007) argued that group working has a positive influence on critical thinking dispositions. Group discussion may produce a considerable increase in critical thinking elements such as *acquisitions, open-mindedness and self-confidence*, and might also help develop listening skills and reasoned thinking.

### **Stage A3. *Instructors’ feedback on the draft lesson plan***

The instructors’ function was to consider PTs’ draft lesson plans including the lesson objectives, content, evaluation scale and learning activities. The instructors also discussed and suggested ways of active learning. This contributed to adjustments made to the next stage which saw PTs continue to think about new and maybe better strategies for their teaching.

The instructors’ action motivated PTs’ truth seeking and acquisitiveness when they continued to include different teaching strategies in their lesson plans. In comparison with PTs’ draft lesson plans, their official lesson plans were characterised by active teaching activities. Because this was the first time PTs composed and taught their lessons in primary education, they tended to choose teaching methodologies such as lecturing, explaining, question-and-answer and discussing. When they were encouraged and prompted by the instructors, their lesson plans had considerable changes in teaching strategies. They designed more active methodologies during their teaching practices, such as group discussion, role-play games, project-based learning, mini-experiments or reasoning between groups.

### **Stage A4. *The group’s teaching practices within groups***

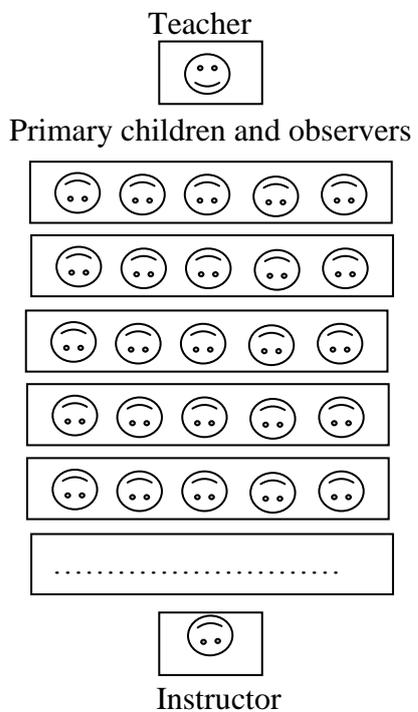
The PTs practised teaching in groups. All group members in turn taught the same lesson plan. The 10 reports described the process of teaching practice of every member in the group, the ideas contributed among them, and some strengths and weaknesses of every member in their teaching. These activities brought the inquiry-based experience in teaching to PTs. Qing, et al., (2010) mentioned that inquiry-based experience is effective in increasing PT’s critical thinking. PTs had more than one chance to practise their teaching and improve their work. This also provided opportunities for PTs to become more mature in their professional practices. In other words, the repetition of teaching practices in a group enabled PTs to be self-confident in their pedagogical knowledge and skills.

**Stage A5. The group's official teaching in class**

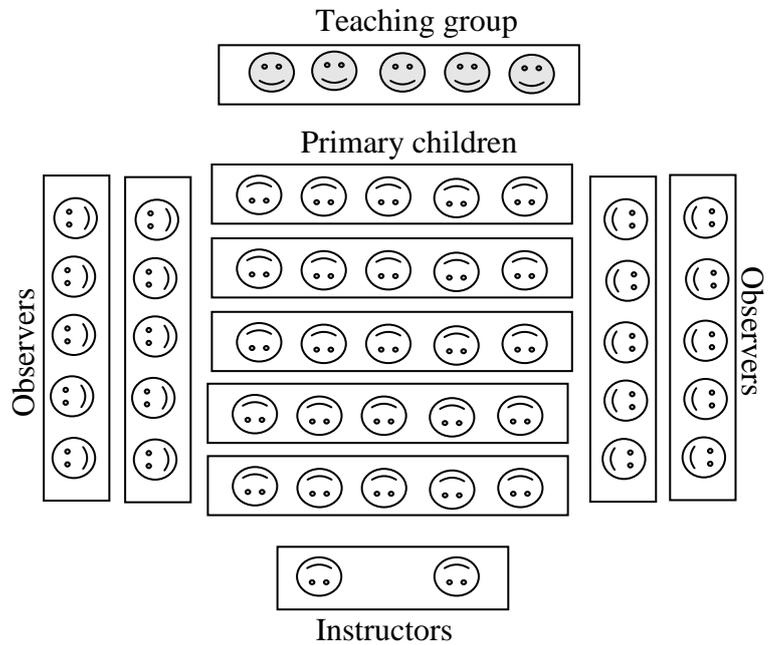
(A5.1) .The instructors invited a member of each group to teach in turn in order to make sure that every member had firmly mastered the lesson. This required every group member to collaborate with each other. They composed lesson plans together, prepared teaching materials and agreed on presentation forms. The lesson was conducted as co-teaching among members in groups. In other words, co-operation and sharing were features of this period.

Fernandez (2015) reported that the micro-teaching experience was beneficial for PTs' critical thinking through collaborating and sharing their experiences with each other. The PTs' class in the adapted micro-teaching procedure was organised as in Figure 6 in comparison with the normal organisation. There was frequent role exchange between groups of primary children and groups of observers. In this arrangement PTs had many chances for interacting and discussing. The role exchange motivated PTs to consider different issues and different aspects. The exercise especially helped them to feel excited about involvement in the class activities.

(A5.2). After each group's teaching, it was time for the group's self-reflection on their teaching. PTs had time to self-reflect on designing and implementing a lesson plan consisting of teaching activities, materials, and classroom management. Through such an interactive mastery experience, their teaching self-efficacy might be increased. In other words, their critical thinking might be also improved. Buck (2002) stated that people who have high self-efficacy have higher critical thinking dispositions.



**Figure 5: Class organisation as normal**



**Figure 6: Class organisation in adapted micro-teaching procedure**

(A5.3). In the critique stage of micro-teaching, other groups taking the role of the primary children and the observers, contributed their ideas about teaching. Many issues and questions were raised placing the teaching group in the position of problem-solvers. During this process, PTs experienced different ways to express their ideas, to listen to others' opinions and to respect each other. Besides, the teaching group had a chance to provide reasonable explanations, undertake systematic problem solving and truth seeking. Thus these dimensions of critical thinking were increased among PTs.

(A5.4). The whole class had a discussion under the instructors' direction. The teaching group responded to other groups' ideas, questions and issues. They were encouraged to give their reasons for their group's opinion. However, they were ready to change their ideas if they were convinced by other groups' reasons. During this process PTs experienced becoming tolerant of different views. This enabled interaction with each other resulting in the practice of critical thinking skills such as identifying and solving problems in an organised way, and having the cognitive maturity to realise that many questions and issues were multi-dimensional. A critical thinking person would possess these traits.

#### **Stage A6. Instructors' overall feedback on group's teaching and group's general working**

After other groups contributed suggestions, the instructors gave feedback as well as providing a summary for the teaching group. There might be more questions or issues raised by the instructor with the teaching group. This would enable the participants to deepen and widen their capacity in the lesson to show pedagogical knowledge and thinking skills.

The instructors also provided the groups with feedback reports which commented more about the teaching procedure. Fernandez and Robinson (2006) reported that the instructor's feedback in micro-teaching is useful for enhancing the teaching skills of genuine teaching activities. PTs systematically revised their lesson plans in the light of the feedback from the instructors. As a result, the feedback in micro-teaching from the instructors contributed to the development of the PT's systematic analytical thinking as a sub-dimension of critical thinking dispositions.

#### **Participants' perceptions of the adapted micro-teaching model**

This study also focused on finding out the participants' perceptions towards the use of the adapted micro-teaching procedure. As a result, the question interview aimed to investigate the PTs' attitudes towards the adapted micro-teaching procedure in Science teaching practices. The PTs' responses revealed the considerable influence of the adapted micro-teaching procedure on both their critical thinking and teaching practice ability.

*When being attended on making common agreement on evaluation scale, teaching timeframe..., I feel more self-confident in my teaching work. I am also aware of my responsibility more clearly...*

(Ngon from Group 1)

The PTs indicated that the six steps of the adapted procedure in micro-teaching supported them in training both their critical thinking skills and teaching practice capacity. Benefits of the adapted procedure included composing lesson plans in groups, teaching practice in groups, collaborative teaching, self-reflection, discussing and reasoning, and frequent feedbacks. The interviewees showed that these techniques helped them experience different skills.

*... We work in group to compose a lesson plan. There are more useful shares of knowledge and skills than when I compose myself. I learn how to listen other members' ideas, how to reason or persuade...*

(Linh from Group 2)

*I feel satisfied when the instructors help my group recognize our mistakes in lesson planning, the instructors also motivate us to more different strategies for our teaching...*

(Nhr from Group 4)

*I like the way my group had a chance to self-reflect on our teaching. We recognize more obviously our weakness and strength in teaching. I feel myself become more mature and self-confident in teaching.*

(Trang from Group 7)

*During the period of opening discuss and reasoning, it is really challenge for my group. We learn consider many issues at different aspects to understand other group idea contribution. Sometimes, I think their ideas are unsuitable but sometimes I feel they contribute many useful and great ideas for us.*

(Mang from Group 10)

The participants showed a better attitude towards the adapted procedure in micro-teaching.

*The way the instructors celebrate for us learn is very interesting and effective because it helps me have more chance to practise my teaching, improving my teaching and experience different thinking skills.*

(Truc from Group 8)

When the participants were asked to provide other general comments about the adapted micro-teaching procedure, all of them preferred learning teaching practices by this procedure. They found the stages and techniques applied in the lesson very useful for the development of their thinking skills and teaching practice ability.

*I like the way we use various strategies for the lesson, experience different concepts from my classmates. We reason in respectful way, especially, we learn to consider the issue in both strength side and weak side. The instructors' feedback is also useful for me to look back the whole my working.*

(Muoi from Group 6)

The results from the interviews indicated that regardless of the PT's initial critical thinking dispositions, after the study, the PTs demonstrated a positive attitude towards the implementation of the adapted micro-teaching procedure. The procedure had been used within the LtA model in Science teaching practices.

## **Conclusion**

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that implementing the adapted micro-teaching procedure within the LtA model, to a certain extent, enhances the PT's critical thinking dispositions by:

- Establishing a desire to find possible knowledge by asking questions and following evidence (truth-seeking).
- Becoming tolerant of different views (open-mindedness).

- Enabling interaction with each other to practise their critical thinking skills such as identifying and solving problems in an organised way (systematicity).
- Trusting his or her reasoning skills to make a good judgment (self-confidence).
- Seeking to learn new things (inquisitiveness).
- Having the cognitive maturity to realise that many questions and issues need to be acknowledged as multi-dimensional (maturity).

Critical thinking is considered to be a vital attribute of teachers because critical thinking teachers can create critical thinkers in future citizens. Therefore, it is essential to improve PTs' critical thinking especially during their apprenticeship. However, promoting critical thinking requires the selection of effective strategies.

The adapted micro-teaching procedure used within the LtA model of this research offers PTs a range of opportunities to develop the dimensions of critical thinking. These dimensions include truth-seeking, open-mindedness, systematicity, self-confidence, inquisitiveness and maturity. They are regarded as indispensable competencies for teachers in the twenty-first century.

Also, the findings are most influential in reforming micro-teaching and teaching practice subjects in the teacher education program of the School of Education, Can Tho University. The findings may also be applicable to many parallel cases in both Vietnam and elsewhere in the ASEAN region.

After the study, participants demonstrated a strong positive attitude towards the implementation of the adapted micro-teaching procedure used within the LtA model. All participants preferred this kind of adapted procedure to normal procedure due to its effectiveness in improving both their critical thinking dispositions and teaching practice capacity.

### **Recommendations**

From these findings, it is highly recommended that:

- LtA model should be integrated into teacher education and professional development.
- Applying the LtA model might be more fruitful when there is greater collaboration among teacher educators.
- The adapted micro-teaching procedure needs to be introduced more effectively for teacher educators to implement because it is in line with teacher educators' concern to improve PTs' critical thinking dispositions which are key characteristics of teachers in the twenty-first century.
- The adapted micro-teaching procedure can offer PTs the opportunity to develop their self-efficacy in teaching.

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# Implementing Dialogue to Reform a School Organisation

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## Abstract

Organisations are today faced with changing and volatile environments and increasing demands for detailed information regarding the social and environmental impact of their organisation's activities. In response to these demands, school organisations have increasingly instituted a process of dialogue to increase trust and responsibility, and provide better processes of communication regarding the school's activities. Schools often experience communication failures and cultural misunderstandings that can create conflict situations, strong debates, members' misbehaviour, and an uncomfortable work environment. This often occurs because individuals or groups form a range of interpretations of facts and circumstances that may not even be fully understood by the groups themselves.

Dialogue places teachers and administrators in collegial and intellectual environments in which they identify their fundamental work problems, and changes practices in ways which serve intellectual and democratic ends. Team members require ability with dialogue because it encourages and sustains the high level of openness and trust that describe a healthy, developing organisational culture. Although there are many barriers to implementing dialogue in an organisation, individuals and groups realise that dialogue enhances organisational learning and has a positive impact on the progress of an organisation.

Using observations and interviews, this study revealed that the implementation of dialogue was successful when delivered through a professional development program. The program assisted educators in understanding ideas behind fundamental school reform.

## Introduction

Schein (1993) describes that through developing language, communities or groups develop their subcultures by defining themselves and setting their psychological boundaries. Groups tend to force their status and identity and cling to thoughts that can block communication (p. 49).

From my work experience in an Indonesian school, school communities need to make a serious effort to create a trusted learning community in order to create a favorable social environment. In my work place, the school educators consist of expatriate teachers from different countries including America, Australia, Philippines, China, and England, and Indonesian teachers from different parts of Indonesia such as Java, Sumatra, and Jakarta.

I can observe that cultural differences amongst teachers influence their communication. American and Australian teachers tend to be explicit and direct in communication. For example, they state their opinion directly even if they disagree. All instructions are clearly explained and nothing is left to chance. They are also generally relaxed in communication. Punctuality is very important for them in relationships, but emotions and feelings are not so important.

In contrast, among Filipino, Chinese and Indonesian teachers, communication tends to be implicit and indirect. A lot of information is left unspoken and is understandable only within their context. For instance, they do not act openly if they disagree with others' points of view, because they think it can embarrass them or others in front of a group. Being polite in any meeting is essential for them. Punctuality, however, is not really important.

Furthermore, Indonesia itself is an enormously diverse nation which has its own languages, history, and customs. For example, the Javanese emphasise refined behaviour in speech, they do not stare directly when they are speaking with older people, and also they are not allowed to argue, especially with older people. The Batak, however, may be considered crude because they generally use directness in speech and demeanor and can be argumentative in interpersonal communication. Also, most Indonesians will describe themselves locally and form their subcultures. This can lead to boundaries among group members caused by communication differences.

Much school organisation is determined by short-term thinking, often because people who work in schools do not possess organisational learning skills. As a result, they often experience communication failures and cultural misunderstandings that can create a conflict situation, strong debate, members' misbehaviour, and an uncomfortable work environment. In many cases, individuals or groups tend to hold their own positions and disparaging views of the opposing sides and this can lead to a deterioration in communication and relationships. It is clear that organisations have to be more creative in improving their thought processes, and communicate well in order to encourage individuals to innovative and to be proactive in regard to change.

Hale (1995) states that to provide opportunities for members to develop effective organisational learning, a higher order form of communication, the practice of dialogue is necessary as a vehicle for organisational learning. Through dialogue, individuals might change their collective thought processes and find solutions to problems without being misled by their assumptions. Team members require an evolving ability in dialogue because it encourages and sustains the high level of openness and trust that describes a healthy, developing organisational culture (p. 1).

Although there are many barriers to the implementation of dialogue, I believe that dialogue can be applied in the school where I work provided that all levels from top to bottom are willing to change their mindsets when interacting with others. Dialogue is a key to organisational learning and can have a positive impact on the progress of an organisation.

The purpose of dialogue is: to explore and listen to other's view without defending the differences and avoiding evidences; to influence individuals' collective thought processes and find solutions to problems without being misled by their assumption; and to develop school cultures in order to reform the organisation.

### **Research aims**

This research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways can dialogue strengthen teachers' collaboration and foster a learning community?
2. How does using dialogue lead to reform of a school organisation?

## Literature review

### *Theory of dialogue*

According to Isaacs (1993, p. 3) dialogue is a ‘sustained collective inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties that compose everyday experience’ (cited in Hale, 1995, p. 3). In his view, the purpose of dialogue is for people to learn how to think together, analyse a problem, and gain knowledge of how different assumptions might cause misunderstandings.

Hale (1995, p. 3) writes that dialogue is a ‘process that evolves and unfolds as groups practice it’. This means that in dialogue all participants are involved in the sharing of meaning and experiences. It is clear that dialogue could encourage a group of people to attend collectively, to take new perspectives, to learn to watch for and experience unspoken processes in action.

Schein (1993) illustrates that there are two basic paths of form of talking together, before the dialogue occurs. First, participants will start with conversation where they bring their own experiences, assumptions, and perceptions. Participants often respond with resentment and anxiety. From that point they have a choice to either move along a path that focuses on competing, and convincing which leads to debate, or, take the other path which leads to ‘suspension’ that emphasises internal listening, accepting differences, and building mutual trust. This path leads to dialogue where individuals can confront their own assumptions with others, reveal feelings, and build culture without fear and anxiety. As a result, all participants can think and feel as a whole group and enhance new shared assumptions and culture (pp. 45-46).

Senge (1994, pp. 361-363) identifies four phases of dialogue:

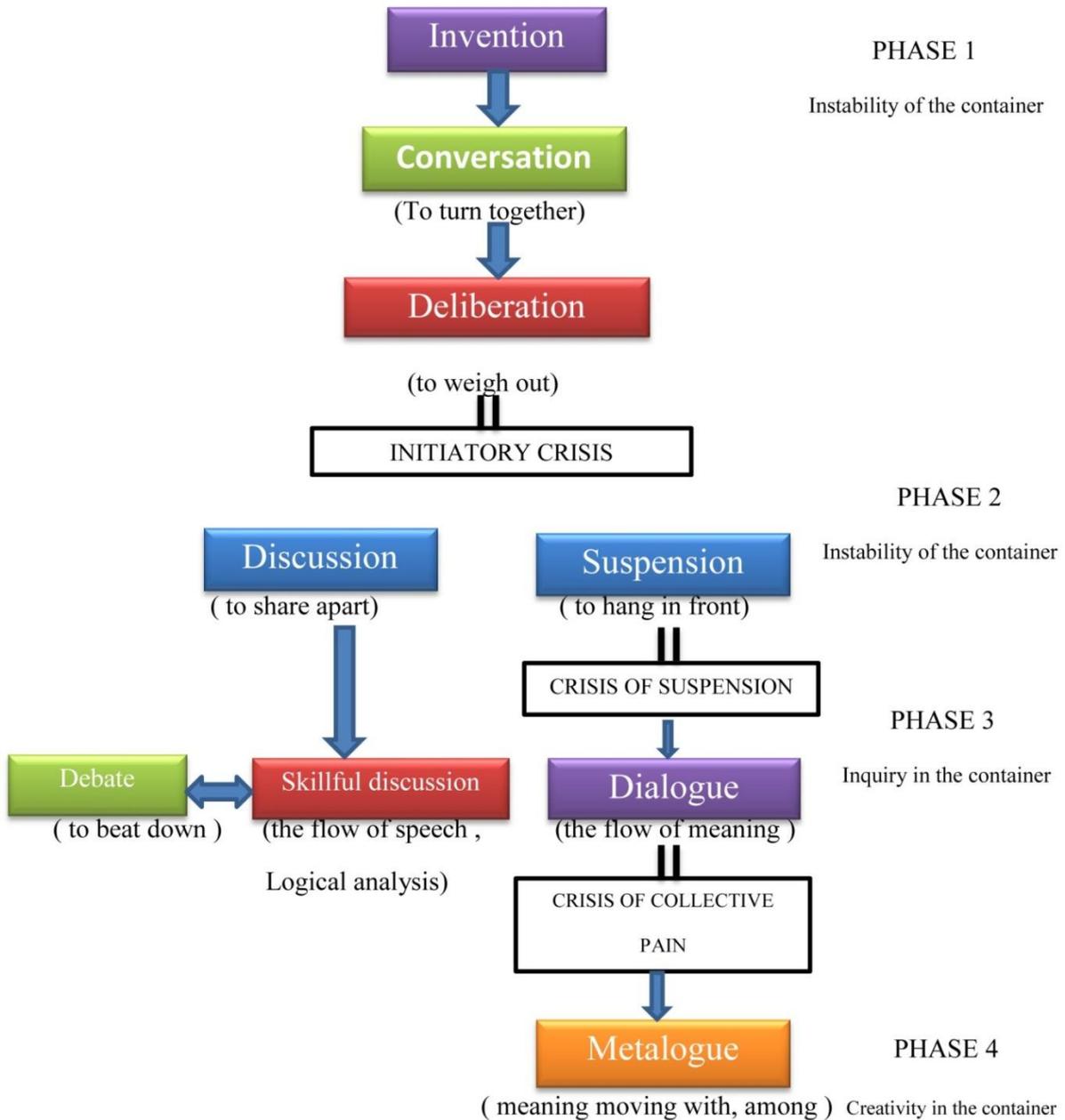
**Phase I: *Instability of the container.*** In this phase, groups of individuals come together with their own perspectives, assumptions, and beliefs. In this phase, people face the first crisis. They can choose either to defend their point of view or suspend their point of view and start to listen without making conclusions regarding the views being presented. Groups of people will move towards dialogue if they are willing to let go of their grip of certainty about all views, including their own.

**Phase II: *Instability in the container.*** Having chosen to deal with uncertainty in situations, groups begin to oscillate between suspending views and discussion. In this stage, people feel frustration because the underlying assumptions in everyone’s thoughts begin to appear. This can lead to a second crisis that can arouse strong defenses, including withdrawal.

**Phase III: *Inquiry in the container.*** A new level of awareness among the group appears if the second crisis can be navigated. In this stage, people realise that they begin to inquire together as a whole and respect differences. This can lead to another crisis where people gradually sense their separateness, impose their own thoughts and actions. This crisis can lead to the transformation of essential patterns of relations, and to important changes at both the individual and group level. The benefit of experiencing this crisis is successful dialogue in many respects.

**Phase IV: *Creativity in the container.*** If the third crisis can be navigated, awareness among group members is lifted to new levels. In this stage, thinking takes on a diverse beat and pace. As a result, inflexible and embedded thought patterns are released, and a new level of intelligence and creativity emerge.

## Evolution of Dialogue



### Features of dialogue

According to several authors (Schein, 1993, pp. 44-45; Bohm, Factor & Garret, 1991, pp. 6-8), there are several features of dialogue:

1. Dialogue emphasises the natural flow of conversation. The members of groups learn together and share the enthusiasm of discovering.
2. Dialogue works best with between twenty and forty people seated facing one another in a single circle.

3. Participants should feel relaxed, equal, and have the motivation to work together.
4. The best length of the dialogue session is two hours and roughly two-to-three weeks between sessions.
5. Dialogue does not seek to resolve differences, only to clarify them.
6. There is no leader or facilitator, no fixed rules, nor is there any fixed agenda or specific goals.

## **Implementation**

Considering the differences of culture in my work place, we need to develop strategies to overcome difficulties, and modify the features of dialogue based on the school culture.

The obstacles of implementing dialogue in my school:

1. Language barriers such as different languages, dialects, and pronunciation, and the use of improper words or expressions can result in misunderstanding and confusion.
2. Individual barriers including an individual's perceptions, personal anxieties, defensiveness, and closed mindedness, can inhibit dialogue.
3. Interpersonal barriers such as lack of trust, lack of knowledge, fear of losing power or control can interfere with dialogue.
4. Cultural barriers such as popularity, personality, social status, education, age, beliefs, gender, suppositions, aspirations, and priorities can divide one person from another and generate a barrier.
5. Emotional barriers such as resentment, hostility, and fear could be a barrier to communication.

Several strategies were applied to overcome communication gaps between multicultural members.

- Firstly, members were given opportunities to discuss their culture and customs of communication in their country or society. Videos, newspapers and magazines were used to discuss the social norms of members' societies.
- Secondly, members discussed together the characteristics of good communication from their point of view. Members agreed to implement good communication in their daily activities.
- Finally, because hierarchical relationships in Indonesian culture are respected, emphasised, and maintained, the people who have status or position in schools should be role models for implementing good communication.

These strategies helped members to eliminate their fears to communicate with others, especially with the top level of their school.

## **Methodology**

Four groups of teachers applied the dialogue process in training sessions and with their learning community. Observation of every process of dialogue was done during the training session by anecdotal records. Interviews with groups of teachers were designed to know how they implemented the process of dialogue in their learning community. After gathering data in every stage, reflection was used to improve and develop the quality of communication.

Data collected were mainly qualitative in nature. The data collected were analysed and discussed after each phase to determine progress and whether the actions or activities would be continued to the next stage.

## **Research results**

### **Research question 1: *In what ways can dialogue strengthen teachers' collaboration and foster a learning community?***

Teachers were divided into groups of ten to twenty, varying in age, background and position. To start the dialogue, members in groups seated facing one another in a single circle. Members should feel as equal as possible. Initially, the task of the group was to explore the dialogue process and to gain some understanding of it.

In the first meeting most participants did not really become involved in dialogue, especially if they were a new teacher. The participants were confronted with a new challenge. I can see in this stage, a wide range of tactics and unexpressed differences in perspectives were evident. Some participants tended to avoid conflict by keeping silent. Experienced teachers seemed to defend their point of view and the others expressed their assumptions without providing evidence. In this case, a facilitator had to become involved in order to release friction between contrasting personal assumptions.

I analysed and reflected on anecdotal records taken from each groups' observations and found participants still lacked understanding, listening, and communication skills. Only formal conversation occurred at this time. Based on reflections the decision was made to stay in this stage for the next meeting and to change the strategies of communication. After three meetings most participants felt comfortable and more reflective. They began to realise that listening to others was crucial to identifying the distortions and bias in their own thinking.

In the next phase, participants still faced challenges of uncertainty. Members of groups began to move to suspend discussion. I recorded that some teachers seemed frustrated. Cultural backgrounds influenced their actions in stating opinions or ideas. If misunderstanding and misinterpretation continued this would lead to disagreements, questioning, and arguing.

In contrast, when members took suspension, they tend to be more calm in showing their reactions. They said that they had time to reflect during suspension, so they could understand others' ideas more clearly. This group built a shared set of meanings that developed mutual understanding and mutual respect amongst themselves. The group accomplished this phase without facing the second crisis and moved to Phase III. The group that still struggled to solve the issues in this phase suggested to stay at this stage until they accomplished the goals. Although the duration of accomplishment at this stage was different, every group moved to Phase III.

In Phase III the level of awareness among members of the groups begins to appear. Relationships and collaboration between members increased and developed. This can be seen through communications, reactions, giving opinions and ideas, and the enthusiasm of participants in the learning community. They inquired, investigated, and solved problems together as a whole. They also helped each other in creating lesson plans and developing assessment tools and learning activities. They gave positive feedback to each other in order to increase their competency in teaching. The dynamics of the group developed in parallel with the conduct of the dialogue process. The group was participating in a pool of common meaning and this was capable of constantly transforming the dialogue.

In this stage, miscommunication and misinterpretation still occurred among members. These situations lead to another crisis where participants seemed to articulate their own thoughts, but they were conscious that it was necessary to find the root of the problem. The group was encouraged to improve mutual understanding and have respect for each other.

The group that successfully passed the third crisis went onto Phase IV. The group attitude had changed. They became more engaged and motivated to collaborate in implementing the school program of activities. The school leader gave the group more challenging tasks and responsibilities. Most of them shared their successful and unsuccessful experiences with their colleagues without doubt and fear.

### **Research question 2: *How does dialogue lead to reform of a school organisation?***

The answer to this question not only depends on the results of activities reported above, but also on the involvement of the hierarchy within the school organisation.

Reform of an organisation can come from the top and the bottom level. The ideal action to change organisations is to have action from both levels, but in many cases the executive level tend to force their own thoughts on the lower level, because of their power.

The implementation of regular dialogue among school members, regardless of their status and position, led to all members of the school feeling equal in practising dialogue that can reform the school.

I can see that the dialogue approach undertaken by some schools has led to changes in school organisation. For example, the level of miscommunication between the top and lower levels decreased, and the level of understanding and interpersonal skills among members increased significantly. However, the communication process within the executive level of school organisation should involve further dialogue as different levels in a school often operate under different assumptions. The dialogue across hierarchical positions in school management is essential because it is easy for higher levels of management to encourage and influence the learning of lower levels.

### **Discussion**

Four stages of dialogue were implemented. If all members are able to engage in such a dialogue feeling relaxed and comfortable without evasion and anger, and the flow of communication proceeds naturally, a facilitator can begin to provide participants with guidance to help move forwards. It is realised by personnel that it takes time to deal with these differences among members, especially at the executive level, because participants take a lot of time to work issues out and deal with their thoughts.

I believe the process of dialogue will flow naturally among all participants if the majority are willing to make a commitment. The commitment will let new opportunities for transformation and creativity to appear. Bohm (1985) stated his experiences indicating that in the beginning people held fixed positions and tended to be defensive. Later it become obvious that to continue to have positive feelings in group relationships was more essential than to hold onto any position of status. The groups thus begin to become involved in new dynamic relationships and explore the possibilities of dialogue that will result in friendships and collaboration (p. 145).

The research results showed that dialogue had positive and negative impacts on the group of teachers.

### ***Positive impacts of dialogue:***

1. Participants have opportunities to explore the assumptions, beliefs, and feelings that form their interactions, and contribute to dialogue successes. They discover how concealed values and purposes can control people's behaviour.
2. Participants learn to pay attention to their feelings, suppositions, thinking, and try to control them in order to listen and understanding others.
3. Participants gain a new insight from different cultures and learn to understand the ways of thinking of other people.

### ***Negative impacts of dialogue:***

1. Participants are often involved in conflict because they come from different backgrounds and have different fundamental values and assumptions. This can cause participants to withdraw from groups and not be willing to be involved.
2. In dialogue, differences of culture can lead to an uncomfortable situations for all members. If this situation is not resolved, participants might offer their resignation letter to the organisation.
3. Because hierarchy plays a great role in Indonesian culture, participants tend to be quiet and fear to give responses and opinions. This can lead to rumors being spread.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it can be seen that knowing and understanding the theory and practice of dialogue can help individuals, teams, groups, and organisations to enhance the quality of their communication, thinking, and interpersonal relationships. The dynamics of dialogue have a strong influence in assisting the creation of deeper and richer understandings of organisations, and the processes of organisational learning. Dialogue can assist teachers to learn, explore, and improve performance and co-operation across cultural boundaries. Reactions such as frustration, defensiveness and negative emotions are common in any dialogue everywhere. With patience and practice participants are able to overcome these situations.

It is clear from this study that if dialogue is done properly the fruitful exchange of ideas flow smoothly. Mutual trust and understanding emerge, cross-cultural issues can be solved, and environments will be safe and free for learning.

The executive level of the school, which may be reluctant to engage in dialogue, has a responsibility to develop organisational learning in order to gain a better and harmonious culture. It is hoped that mutual understanding, respect, and trust will assist in implementing and continuing the processes of dialogue in school organisations, and also lead to lasting transformation and innovation.

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# **Improving English Teaching Quality Using Action Research: Mekong Delta Teachers' Perceptions**

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## **Abstract**

Action research in English language teaching has taken a central role in empowering English language teachers, as well as contributing to their professional development. It not only meets the needs of teaching practice but also enables research continuity in terms of a spiral process which includes planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the context of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, however, there has been little documentation on issues relating to action research in English language teaching.

As one of such attempts, this paper examines the perceptions of English teachers in the Mekong Delta about the role of doing action research to improve their teaching quality. The participants include 60 English teachers from 13 provinces in the Mekong Delta who have been trained in how to do action research. Data were collected with a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and interviews.

The findings of the study shed light on English teachers' perceptions of action research in relation to their teaching improvement. Possible measures were also proposed to enhance further implementation of action research to improve English language teaching quality.

## **Introduction**

In recent years, improving English language teaching (ELT) has been considered one of the important objectives in the journey of the overall educational reform in Vietnam in accordance with the trend of global integration (The Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam, 2014). In order to achieve such an objective several different measures in ELT have been promulgated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam. These include such things as innovative English teaching programs and textbooks, new assessment procedures, varied teaching methodology, and the implementation of English classroom research.

As one of the reforms, action research (AR) has recently been popularised by the National Foreign Language Project 2020 with emphasis on training workshops for most English language teachers throughout Vietnam. The intention was for new research knowledge gained from AR to help teachers achieve improved teaching quality.

In the Mekong Delta over 90 English language teachers from 13 provinces were involved in training workshops. It cannot be denied that the knowledge on AR has been proven to enhance English language teachers' capacities as well as contributing to their professional

development (Burns, 1999). It not only meets the needs of teaching practice but also enables teachers' research continuity (Freeman, 1998; Richards & Farrel, 2005). In the context of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam, however, there has been little documentation on issues relating to AR in ELT.

Thus, the co-researchers of this paper were motivated to explore the Mekong Delta teachers' perceptions on improving English teaching quality using action research through the following research questions:

1. To what extent do English teachers in the Mekong Delta understand action research?
2. What are their perceptions on the influences of action research on the improvement of their teaching quality?

### **Literature review**

There are many different definitions of AR. This paper aims to examine the views of action research underpinning ELT as indicated through the workshops as the motivation behind this study. In particular, AR is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in order to improve their own practices (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). However, Nunan (1999) clarified that AR is not just a reflective process but the results of this process must be published in forms of a print publication or a presentation at a conference. More specifically, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) suggested that the terms 'action' and 'research' are highlights of the method. It means trying out ideas in practice as a means of improvement, and increasing knowledge about the curriculum, teaching and learning. This is considered a way to link theory and practice or ideas-in-action. The model of action research identified four elements, namely plan, action, observation, and reflection.

Nunan (1993), Burns (2000) and Kis (2014) indicated that through conducting AR, teacher researchers can gather information about how they teach and how well their students learn. This can help them develop reflective practice and create positive changes in their teaching through AR as a professional development activity. Although it is apparent that AR plays an important role in professional development generally and teaching quality improvement in particular, there are certain challenges of AR implementation for AR researchers. These include such things as a heavy workload, time constraints, lack of research knowledge, lack of motivation, lack of on-going support, fear of being revealed as an incompetent teacher, fear of publication, and so on (Nunan, 2006; Burns, 2000; Rainey, 2000; Pati, 2014).

### **Research methodology**

This study was based on a triangulated methodology. The study employed the survey questionnaire and individual interviews. For the survey, this study used the researcher-developed questionnaire with both closed and open sections, because questionnaires are considered as useful tools for collecting data from a large number of respondents (Hinds, 2000) (refer to Appendix 1). The closed section of the questionnaire follows a five-point Likert scale as follows: 5- Strongly agree; 4- Agree; 3-Moderately agree; 2- Disagree; and 1- Strongly disagree.

The questionnaire consisted of four parts:

- Part I drew out the demographic profile of participants.
- Part II was aimed at the teachers' knowledge.
- Part III sought the teachers' perceptions.

- Part IV explored the readiness of the teachers to conduct action research along with the challenges hindering its implementation.

The objective of the interviews used in this study was to allow for an exploration of issues and to gain insights into the research questions. As Merriam (1998) stated, interviews are the best way to find out what other people think. The researchers conducted qualitative semi-structured individual interviews with teachers to find out their perceptions on the readiness and challenges of action research implementation in different contexts (refer to Appendix 2). The interviews were conducted after initially analysing the survey questionnaire results.

### **Participants**

The participants were 60 English teachers including 17 teachers teaching English at high schools in the Mekong Delta, and 43 teachers teaching English at colleges and universities in the Mekong Delta. Most the participants attended the training workshop on action research organised by the National Foreign Project 2020 at Can Tho University in August 2015. Some participants were both teaching at high schools in the Mekong Delta and following a Master’s program in ELT at Can Tho University. Their teaching experiences varied from 5 and to more than 15 years.

Administration and distribution of the research instruments were done by sending emails and asking for voluntary participation. The interviews were conducted with 10 English teachers, including 4 teachers working at high schools and 6 from colleges and universities in the Mekong Delta.

### **Research findings and discussions**

This section summarises the teachers’ overall perceptions of improving English teaching quality using action research. The questionnaire data were categorised into three groups based on the research questions, while the results of the interviews are presented in the key themes identified in the survey results and the literature review.

#### ***The results of the survey questionnaire***

The level of teachers’ perception in action research knowledge is indicated in Table 1. The figures disclosed that most teachers showed their positive views on the knowledge of action research. In particular, over 90% of them agreed with the explanations of action research concepts, stages of action research processes, and aims of action research. This indicates that the teachers do understand what action research means, how to conduct it, as well as what its outcomes can be.

**Table 1: Level of teachers’ perception in action research knowledge (N= 60)**

No	Statements	Frequency	% of agreeing
1	Action research means learning by doing.	56	93
2	Action research requires teachers to collect information systematically for changes and improvements.	54	91
3	Action research is connected to English teachers' professional development.	59	98
4	Action research is a spiral process including planning, acting, observing and reflecting.	58	96

Table 2 indicates the level of teachers' perceptions of the influences of action research on the teaching quality improvement in terms of its value to learners. The table shows that most participants agreed that action research can enhance teaching processes. Teaching methodology can be adjusted to achieve positive outcomes and hence influence the rate of a learners' development. In particular, most teacher respondents agreed that action research allows teachers to create interactive classes for learners to become more actively involved. The same number of teacher respondents agreed that action research is a good way for learners to be more concerned, and for teachers to keep up with their students' academic progress. Respondents mostly indicated that action research encourages teachers to develop higher expectations of their learners' capacities. The results also indicated that about half of the teachers believed that action research motivates teachers to involve learners in making decisions in classroom affairs and curriculum issues.

**Table 2: Level of teachers' perceptions of the influences of action research on their teaching quality improvement in terms of its value to learners (N= 60)**

No.	Statements	Percentage of agreeing (%)	Percentage of neutral response (%)	Percentage of disagreeing (%)
1	Action research helps learners to be more concerned by their teachers.	77	13	10
2	Action research encourages teachers to develop their higher expectations of their learners' capacities.	76	19	5
3	Action research motivates teachers to involve learners in making decisions in classroom affairs and curriculum issues.	53	38	9
4	Action research allows teachers to create interactive classes for learners to be more actively involved.	82	13	5
5	Action research helps teachers to keep up with students' academic progress.	77	18	5

Table 3 shows the teachers' perceptions of the influences of action research on the process of teaching and learning in terms of its value to teachers themselves. The data revealed that most respondents shared positive views on action research as a valuable model for themselves in the process of teaching and learning. In particular, most teachers agreed that action research helped them to look at teaching in a more analytic and focused way. Most teachers indicated that action research helps teachers to adjust teaching techniques to classroom reality. Many respondents agreed that action research helped to develop teachers' confidence. They also thought that action research helped develop collaborative work among teachers.

**Table 3: Level of teachers' perceptions of the influences of action research on the process of teaching and learning in terms of its value to teachers themselves (N= 60)**

No.	Statements	% agreeing	% neutral response	% disagreeing
1	Action research helps to develop teachers' confidence.	83	15	2
2	Action research helps teachers to look at teaching in a more analytic and focused way.	92	7	1
3	Action research helps to develop collaborative work among teachers.	67	27	6
4	Action research helps teachers to adjust teaching techniques to classroom reality.	90	10	0

The results indicated that the teacher respondent also raised their concerns about their readiness for implementing action research and meeting its challenges. Respondents shared that it was quite possible to conduct action research in their classroom contexts. Internal and external factors were identified as challenges for conducting action research.

In terms of external factors, the results showed that the heavy workload and the time taken to undertake action research hindered action research implementation. Some other difficulties included inappropriate school policies, shortage of facilities for carrying out research, and lack of financial support. In terms of internal factors, the teacher revealed that there were some issues stemming from themselves. These included such things as lack of experience in implementing individual action research, and limited knowledge of how to conduct action research, as major causes for them being less confident in conducting action research.

### ***The results of individual interviews***

The ten individual interviews emphasised the teachers' perceptions of the readiness and challenges of action research implementation. In particular, the first question aimed to discover participants' views of the possibility of action research implementation. The results showed that seven of them shared the same view that action research could be conducted in their school contexts. The participants further revealed that action research could be implemented in any of the classes in English skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening, or even in English grammar classes. The second question explored the teachers' challenges to the implementation of action research.

These challenges can be grouped into two main categories.

### ***Challenges for the Mekong Delta high school teachers***

All participants claimed that a heavy workload was the main factor hindering their action research implementation.

One participant stated:

*Each semester I must fulfill different tasks such as 21 weekly periods of teaching and academic advisory work for students, making weekly and monthly reports, attending 5 meetings per month. Also, I am required to make at least 5 types of visual aids annually, as well as join other school extra-curricula activities.*

The participants felt that the school regulations also limited their implementation of action research. As they explained, the school asked them to follow the procedure of making Vietnamese reports on what is called the ‘experience initiative’ using different Vietnamese documentation forms. This partly hindered their motivation.

Three out of four participants revealed poor quality teaching equipment as another challenge:

*It is hard for high school teachers to implement action research because of the lack of hi-tech facilities such as computers, projectors, or video recorders.*

Most participants further indicated other issues, namely lack of motivation, lack of confidence, lack of students’ support, lack of colleagues’ collaboration:

*When I tried to do something new, my students were not interested to cooperate with me.*

*It is better to have other teachers do it with me because I do not feel confident enough to do it alone.*

### **Challenges for the Mekong Delta tertiary teachers**

Tertiary participants also claimed that a heavy workload and the amount of time action research took limited their motivation in conducting action research. One teacher explained:

*I must do many duties... Every week, the total number of my teaching periods is between 20 and 25. I am also responsible for other tasks such as academic advisory work, doing research and other extracurricular activities...*

*Action research takes me a lot of time, so I am afraid of not completing my teaching plan.*

The participants further indicated other issues such as limited research training, and large class sizes as constraints to their implementation of action research:

*I think I need to attend more workshops or training to gain confidence in doing action research.*

*My class is so crowded... 40 students... I am afraid I can’t implement AR well.*

Four participants revealed that the procedure for publication of action research was considered another challenge:

*I worry about the procedure for publication to share my research results...I do want to implement, but it’s better to be able to publish my research then.*

*Action research is beneficial to my teaching process, but how can I publish my research results...it wastes my time.*

### **Conclusion**

The study sought to explore to what extent English language teachers in the Mekong Delta understand action research. The findings showed that most teachers surveyed thought they had a good knowledge about the nature of action research. It can be concluded that these teachers may have gained the knowledge from in-service training courses or from their Master’s program.

The study also revealed that most teachers agreed that action research will help them improve their teaching quality, but they will face different challenges once they implement changes to their teaching. The perceptions of such challenges are in line with studies by Nunan (2006), Kis (2014), Pati (2014), and Rainey (2000).

## Recommendations

After a careful review of the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

In terms of external factors, the following are recommended.

1. It is recommended that School Principals implement supportive policies on the use of action research. In particular, the school managers should consider balancing teaching hours among staff in order to encourage them to spend their time implementing classroom research. For the high school context particularly, forms for the reporting of action research projects in English should be adapted. Further, regular rewards for action research implementation or action research publications should be offered to teacher researchers to motivate their research continuity.
2. Regular staff meetings should be held. There should be a meeting amongst teachers and with teachers and the School Head or the School Principal every fortnight, or every month to enhance staff collaboration, and to share experiences of action research implementation among staff.
3. International co-operation development needs to be established so as to offer teaching staff more training workshops and conferences on research in general, and action research in particular. Thanks to such international co-operation, researchers can easily seek appropriate sources for their research publications.

In terms of internal factors, the researchers recommend the following issues for the consideration of teacher researchers.

1. It is recommended to ELT teachers that they should raise their awareness of the importance and influence of action research in their teaching processes so as to enhance their passion for action research implementation.
2. It is required that teachers recognise their responsibilities in regards to continuing professional development, and increase their motivation towards conducting action research.
3. Teaching staff should be encouraged to confidently express their needs for the implementation of action research projects.
4. Teachers should be encouraged to work collaboratively in order to gain confidence for action research involvement.

Further research needs to be undertaken to increase the number of high school teacher participants who have a deep understanding of how action research can influence teachers in high school contexts, in the Mekong Delta. In addition, follow up research should be undertaken to propose models of enhancing action research implementation for high school teachers and tertiary teachers in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Survey questionnaire

#### A survey on Mekong Delta teachers' perceptions on improving English teaching quality using action research

This questionnaire is designed to investigate Mekong Delta teachers' perceptions on improving English teaching quality via action research. This study aims to gain insights into the perceptions of English teachers in the Mekong Delta on action research in relation to their teaching improvement. Possible measures are proposed to enhance further implementation of action research to improve English language teaching quality.

Many thanks for your participation!

1. Please choose the most applicable option for you:
  - A. I am an English teacher at a college/ a community college in the Mekong Delta
  - B. I am an English teacher at a high school in the Mekong Delta
  - C. I am an English teacher at a university in the Mekong Delta
  
2. Your teaching experience ...
  - A. Less than five years
  - B. From six to ten years
  - C. From eleven to fifteen years
  - D. More than fifteen years
  
3. I think action research means the person undertaking the action is learning by doing.
  - A. Completely disagree
  - B. Disagree
  - C. Neutral
  - D. Agree
  - E. Completely agree
  
4. I think action research requires teachers to collect information systematically as a basis for changes and improvements.
  - A. Completely disagree
  - B. Disagree
  - C. Neutral
  - D. Agree
  - E. Completely agree
  
5. I think action research is connected to English teachers' professional development.
  - A. Completely disagree
  - B. Disagree
  - C. Neutral
  - D. Agree
  - E. Completely agree
  
6. I think action research is a spiral process including planning, acting, observing and reflecting.
  - A. Completely disagree
  - B. Disagree
  - C. Neutral
  - D. Agree
  - E. Completely agree

7. In my opinion, action research will help teachers adapt their syllabus to meet the students' needs.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

8. In my opinion, action research will help teachers change their teaching techniques to make their lessons more interesting to students.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

9. In my opinion, action research will help me develop my confidence in teaching.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

10. In my opinion, doing action research helps teachers to look at their teaching in a more analytic, focused and in depth way.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

11. Doing action research will help teachers to be more likely to talk with colleagues about their teaching and being part of an action research group convinces them of the importance of collaborative work with other teachers.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

12. Doing action research helps teachers to be more convinced of the importance of talking to my students and listening carefully to them.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

13. Doing action research develops teachers' higher expectations for what their students know and can do as a result of closely studying them in their action research.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

14. Doing action research helps teachers be more willing to let their students participate in decision making about classroom affairs including curriculum issues.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

15. Doing action research helps teachers create more interactive classes where students are more actively involved.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

16. Because of habits acquired during their action research, teachers can keep much more detailed documentation about their students' academic progress.

- A. Completely disagree
- B. Disagree
- C. Neutral
- D. Agree
- E. Completely agree

17. In my opinion, is it possible to implement action research in English teaching in your school context?

- A. Yes
- B. No

18. Some difficulties prevent me from doing action research include... (Choose more than one if applicable).

- A. My heavy work load
- B. It's time-consuming nature
- C. My lack of experience in doing action research
- D. My lack of knowledge in doing action research
- E. Others: .....

## Appendix 2: Interview schedule for individual teacher interviews

### Questions:

1. Do you think it is possible to implement action research in your school context?
2. Have you ever conducted action research in your context? In what ways?
3. In particular, what classes can action research be most appropriately used?
4. What challenges are you facing with implementing action research?

# Why Mentoring Matters

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## Abstract

The demands on academics in 21st century universities are most challenging: keeping up with rapidly changing technology for teaching and learning; meeting demands for even greater research productivity; community engagement; and many more. It is essential for early career academics to understand their roles in meeting the needs and expectations of society. More than ever, academics need ongoing professional development. A PhD is just the start.

This paper explores the support and development of early-career academics through mentoring and aims to highlight the key features for an effective mentoring system. Its importance as a key feature of academic staff development emerged through listening to interviews, reading participant narratives and writing case summaries.

The patterns portrayed in the current rapidly changing higher educational environment challenge the traditional assumption of mentoring systems as one simply of knowledge acquisition and intellectual development. Expectations for high quality research and teaching suggest the creation of a new type of mentoring system emerging alongside a traditional professional development program. A key finding was the need for individual professional mentoring, rather than a 'one size fits all' approach. This study offers evidence for the changes that are necessary for professional development policies for higher education institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Introduction

Working at a university is not as comfortable as many people believe anymore. After achieving a Ph.D. degree and gaining some experience of teaching and publishing research papers, what is the next step towards being a successful lecturer? When considering the new environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century universities, the most challenging tasks for lecturers is keeping up with rapidly changing technology and the requirements from society. Many lecturers become exhausted and give up in the end. However, there are some lecturers who complete their goals and meet all requirements. How can they do that?

For many years most lecturers have had to learn from their own experience, although they might have some supportive colleagues to guide them. Currently, professional development programs have been introduced to improve teaching techniques and to increase the publications for early-career academic staff. Few of them are able to get through all the difficult tasks without any support, but many of them still cannot achieve anything apart from the feeling of frustration and punishment from their performance review.

It is essential for early career academics to understand their roles in meeting the needs and expectations of society. If they cannot achieve what is required through the professional development program at the university, how can they survive in their new environment?

Many universities have invested in human resource management by promoting a mentoring system (Florence, 2007) as an important technique in supporting professional development, and creating a positive long term relationship between senior and junior academic staff (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Higgins & Kram, 2001).

### ***What is mentoring?***

It has been accepted that academics need ongoing professional development even after a PhD and learning by doing is one way to learn from their own experience. Typically, the process of mentoring is to have someone who has more experience help another to perform or learn more (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Clutterbuck & Ragins, 2002; Ng, 2012).

Mentoring involves mentors and the mentees. Generally, a mentor provides help, suggestions, and support to a mentee (Masalimova, Schepkina, Leifa, Shaidullina & Burdukovskaya, 2014). Many universities have provided formal programs such as early career researcher training, career development for lecturers, and a key performance achievement index (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007). However, other universities might set up informal programs where mentors and the mentees meet and discuss issues in their free time, or through e-mentoring, online mentoring, virtual mentoring, and peer support groups, to share knowledge, teaching techniques and political systems of universities (Bierema & Merriam, 2002; Ensher, Heun, & Blanchard, 2003; Hasselbring & Glaser, 2000; Megginson et al., 2007).

Generally, the mentoring concept involves mutual learning, understanding, and an exchange of experiences from both sides (Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992; Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005; Timperley, 2001; Stowers & Barker, 2010). This enables academic staff to help each other both in their own careers and in their own minds by creating good relationships and increasing self-confidence. It obvious that the mentoring relationship has been based on trust, knowledge and sharing among those professionals working in the universities (Griffiths, Thompson and Hryniewicz, 2010; Major & Dolly, 2003).

According to Douglas (1997) there are many types of mentoring but the majority of mentoring programs involve an experienced mentor providing advice and sponsorship to a young mentee (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Harvey, McIntyre, Heames, and Moeller, (2009); Higgins & Kram, 2001). Moreover, knowledge is passed downward from a mentor to a younger and less established mentee.

Ng (2012) and Yariv (2009) suggests that mentoring is more than helping someone to perform their work better, but it is broader, improving their skills through their own mind-set and emphasising their understanding and willingness to learn. It includes changes in their behaviour for their continuous professional growth (Tolhurst, 2010).

### ***The mentoring model***

Crisp and Cruz (2009), Jacobi (1991), Kanter (1977), Kram's, (1985), Levinsion, Darrow, Klein, Lavinson and McKee (1978), Haggard, Dougherty, Turban and Wilbanks (2011), and Harvey et al., (2009) have all researched the use of mentoring. Jones and Brown (2011) suggest that it is possible to identify three mentoring models: the traditional model, the reciprocal model, and emergent models.

The traditional model focuses on a process of matching willing senior faculty staff who have more knowledge, skills and experience, to provide direction and share information and experiences with the young faculty (Sriwichai, Meksamoot, Chakpitak, Dahal & Jengjalean, 2014).

The reciprocal model involves faculty members who have similar knowledge and experience collaborating with each other. The relationship in the reciprocal model is not focused on top down management. The reciprocal model balances the power of the relationship and both mentor and mentee benefit Bell-Ellision & Dedrick, (2008); Bryant & Terborg, (2008); Harris, Freeman & Aerni, (2009); Higgins and Kram, (2001); Langer, (2010); Pololi & Knight, (2005); Ragins & Kram (2007).

Jones and Brown (2014) suggest that there are many types of emergent models, such as reverse mentoring (Harvey et al., 2009), peer mentoring (Bryant & Terborg, 2008), multi-mentoring (Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007), community mentoring (Anderson & Shore, 2008), team mentoring (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007) and mosaic mentoring (Mullen, 2009). Most of these mentoring concepts focus on multiple stakeholders (Kram, 1985; Mavrinac, 2005). Moreover, the mentees seek information and knowledge through social networking.

## **Methodology**

In this study the three mentoring models were implemented in an attempt to understand the relationship of the mentors and the mentees. Five participants were involved in this study, one from Australia, two from Vietnam and two from Thailand. The five participants were selected because all of them had experienced the roles of both mentors and mentees but with different partners. At the beginning of their careers, five of them had experienced being a mentee and receiving a lot of training and advice from their mentors. However after working at the universities for a number of years, they have taken turns to become a mentor for the others. These five participants could not only tell stories of being a mentee but could share the journey of being a mentor also.

This paper was guided by the following research questions:

- Is there a professional development program which you need for your career growth at the university?
- Have you been in a mentoring relationship? How?
- What are the successful models of mentoring that you applied?

The data were obtained through in-depth interviews, and analysis of individual journeys in professional development programs.

## **Major findings**

### ***Professional development program for career growth***

The data from in-depth interviews and review of published academic papers found that mentoring is important for learning and professional development, and the nature of mentoring relationships tends to be collaborative and mutually beneficial from both mentor and mentee sides. As one participant from Vietnam stated:

We are friends, but I can ask him about everything, and I always do that. He knows better than me about the rules and regulations of the university. Apparently, I always discuss that information with him. ... those discussions help us both. Because many times after I was asking and discussing with him, we found that we both understood more than we thought in the first place.

The data of academic staff training programs and promoting workshops for achieving successful careers at the universities in Australia, Vietnam and Thailand are not different. All the participants agreed that their universities have provided this kind of support since they began their careers at the universities, and moreover, those workshops and all the training

programs have been created in order to respond to the new environmental change in higher education.

The evidence from the in-depth interviews indicated that typically mentors share their personal life and work experience through their conversations during both face-to-face meetings and on social networks. This was especially the case when they had problems on moral issues or political conflict in the faculty and with their colleagues. For example, one participant from Bangkok stated:

*When my dean called me to meet with him after work, I felt like there might be some problems and he wanted to questions me. He started our meeting by telling his past experiences at the faculty and how he managed to solve his problems with his students. I knew that I had the same problems as he had told me. He did not tell me what to do but after listening to him, I know what to do to solve this problem. I felt relief after meeting with him and knowing that my dean understood and supported me.*

The majority of the mentors showed a willingness to participate with the mentoring programs and accepted both formal and informal approaches. Maintaining a good relationship with the mentees helped them to understand and perform better in their own careers as well. As one Australian faculty member stated:

*I felt important when I can help and motivate my colleagues to achieve more. I want to share my experience with them and I love the friendly environment at work. We are creating a supporting environment among our students too. It is good for the university and it is good for everyone who is living here. I don't think I can separate my personal life from my work life. It is part of me. If we can help othes develop in their careers, it surely helps us too.*

It can be seen that the mentoring programs are the major factors for successful academic growth. The traditional, reciprocal or emergent models are working well with the mentoring systems. Academic staff need many forms of relationships, such as the hierarchical forms of transferring knowledge from the top to the bottom, or the collaborative mentoring relationship of friends to friends, or from a younger to older academic staff member (Hemmings, Hill & Sharp; 2013). It depended on the situation and the environmental of mentors and mentees. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach that is needed. It requires an individual to figure the best mentoring that is appropriate for them.

### ***What is my mentoring relationship?***

Themes were developed from the in-depth interviews with five academic staff. It was found that the opportunity to create the mentoring relationship with others is a particular situation in which individual aspects interrelate with specific actions and circumstances.

When working at a university it was found that academic staff need to adapt themselves faster in order to deal with the changes of social expectations. The higher requirements from the government and the hard-hitting key performance index have induced us to seek help and support from each other in order to survive. The university needs to provide the professional development programs as much as they can. Academic staff need to learn and perform better as fast as they can. The communities and societies need to support them to achieve what is good for their students and the future of the country.

The in-depth interview by the Vietnamese staff says that:

*To use English in our classrooms as the only one language for communication is very difficult. When this policy was announced, it was criticized by many universities' lecturers, because most academic staff and cannot fluently use English. However, we accept this as this*

*is important for improving quality educational standards. Our government has invested a lot of money for English language training workshops for all academic staff, and motivating lecturers to use English textbooks in their classrooms. It is slowly changing the environment of teaching and learning, but it is moving toward a higher quality at the end.*

In this case, the mentoring model implemented has been from the top level of government to the administrators of universities. The Deans and the head of the departments have implemented many training programs to improve the English proficiency of their staff. Moreover, a reward system has been established by the universities for academic staff who can achieve these goals. This is motivating change and the mentoring model is supporting the changed behaviour of all the academic staff.

In the case of Thailand, many universities want to increase the number of published research papers in high impact journals, and to reach higher ranking university standards when comparing research outcomes with other universities. However, this is a big obstacle for senior lecturers who are used to teaching having accumulated many years of teaching experience to become expert in teaching techniques. It is important for the universities to provide some help and support for these lecturers by setting up a research team with young academic staff who have experience in research publications.

In an in-depth interview with a senior lecturer in Bangkok it was stated:

*I have been working here more than 30 years. ... Many things are changing, especially the value of being a good teacher. ... Recently, the university wants more research publications to promote you to get the higher salary. It is becoming the part of my teaching now. I have no idea what to do until one of my former students who just came to work at this faculty invited me to be part of their research team. It is solving my problem and I felt lucky that I work with my former student. Even though she is a lot younger than me and just started her career here, but our relationship as a mentor and a mentee is going well and I have learnt a lot from her.*

Apart from this case, it is assumed that the mentoring relationship has happened when the willingness of learning and supporting between the mentors and the mentees are ready. It cannot be identified how and when but it can be recognised when it does happen. When collecting the data from in-depth interviews it was found that the participants have contacted other academic staff who are working in other countries and shared their information and knowledge with each other.

Sometimes cultural differences might lead to misunderstandings, but the benefits from sharing and supporting each other outweighed this. The common problems such as how to conduct research, how to increase their publications, or how to apply teaching and learning technologies or new software into classrooms are global issues for most of the academic staff. These issues can be shared and discussed among the academic faculty everywhere in the world.

### ***What are the successful models of my mentoring?***

When asked this question, the participants considered that there are many models. It is not just one answer for them. It is a combination of many supportive techniques and relationships. For example, professional development workshops need to be based on the mentoring relationship models, but for these particular mentors and mentees there are a variety of mentoring systems that they have implemented.

The suggestion from one Australian participant says that:

*To maintain a high performance in any knowledge-based professional culture, we need to create a collaborative system and motivate mentoring programs to every faculty member. The university is an organization which introduced a competency – based performance management system but it is not doing much if an individual working alone. The transferring of information and knowledge from previous generations will be lost if those organization ignore the mentoring system. People learn from each other all the time. We know that we will do better from other people experience and having a mentoring system will establish a solid professional culture.*

In the Vietnamese and Thai context, the traditional mentoring model has played a significant role in professional development. However, global changes in higher education during the past two decades demand research assessment exercises to rank institutional performance and use English language as a medium of instruction. Academic staff who are working in Vietnam and Thailand have found that it is vital and necessary to move and change in the same direction as higher education in Australia and in the UK.

Mentoring systems that are suitable have been based on those of multiple stakeholders many of whom have Western knowledge. It is much more beneficial to have mentoring relationships with stakeholders from English speaking countries. This not only shares working experience and knowledge of research outcomes, but strengthens English proficiency with mentors also.

## **Conclusion**

Expectations for high quality research including publication in high impact academic journals and also the maintenance of excellent teaching suggest the necessity for the design of a new type of mentoring system, together with a traditional mentoring model. In this study, creating a multi-stakeholders' mentoring system rather than retaining only a traditional or reciprocal approach has been advocated for a rapidly changing higher education sector.

The research offers suggestions for the changes that are necessary for professional development policies for higher education institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The fundamental factors for any successful mentoring model are mutually respect, and partaking and supporting friendly relationships between both parties. Sustainable professional development is based on the understanding of the mentors and the mentees in any given circumstances, and the expectations of society.

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# Enhancing English Teachers' Ability to Conduct Classroom Action Research

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## Abstract

Teachers are encouraged to develop their research skills to solve English learning problems. However, for most teachers research is an esoteric realm which tends to be avoided due to its complexity, rigor, and the amount of time required.

This study aimed to identify problems encountered by teachers in designing classroom action research in a multi-site classroom action research and co-researching project. The extent to which multi-site research and co-researching assisted in addressing some of the issues of English learning, and led to the improvement of teachers' ability to conduct classroom action research, was also investigated.

The findings show that the problems encountered by teachers in designing classroom action research include: identifying researchable problems; formulating a title and the problem; and designing the plan to implement the intervention.

The problems of English learning potentially solved by multi-site classroom action research and co-researching using teachers as researchers, were listening and writing. The study improved teachers' abilities to conduct classroom action research in the sense that they managed to design and implement a piece of empirical research.

## Introduction

Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a compulsory course in Teacher Professional Training and Education (PLPG) at the State University of Jakarta since 2008. It was introduced to enhance the quality of teacher competence and as a requirement for the award of a professional teacher license.

The teachers in PLPG were incompetent to conduct CAR due to the following: an inability to understand the nature of English language teaching (ELT) problems feasible to be researched; difficulty reasoning through the problem, literature review, research methodology, results, and conclusion; and a failure to comprehend the methodological aspects and elements when designing CAR because of research complexity, rigor, and the amount of time required (Iskandar, 2012).

These observations confirm the investigation on the constraints of action research by McKerman (Burns, 1999, p. 46) in the USA, UK, and Ireland in 1993. These constraints should be addressed with practice (more than a one-day course in PLPG), and action in which

the teachers are involved from scratch in identifying real problems feasible to be studied in CAR, and the writing of the research report. Co-researching and multi-site research are assumed to be effective ways to cope with the hurdles.

### **Research question and methodology**

The research question is: ‘How does using co-researching and multi-site research methodology with English learning problems enhance teachers’ ability to conduct classroom action research (CAR)?’

The study seeks to find the problems encountered by teachers in designing CAR to solve English learning problems, and the extent to which co-researching and multi-site research assist in this process. Discussions were held with twelve junior high school teachers and English Department lecturers using CAR proposals and reports as data sources. Participant observation, focus group discussion (FGD), observation, and document study were used to collect the required data. The study was conducted from May to October 2013 in Jakarta.

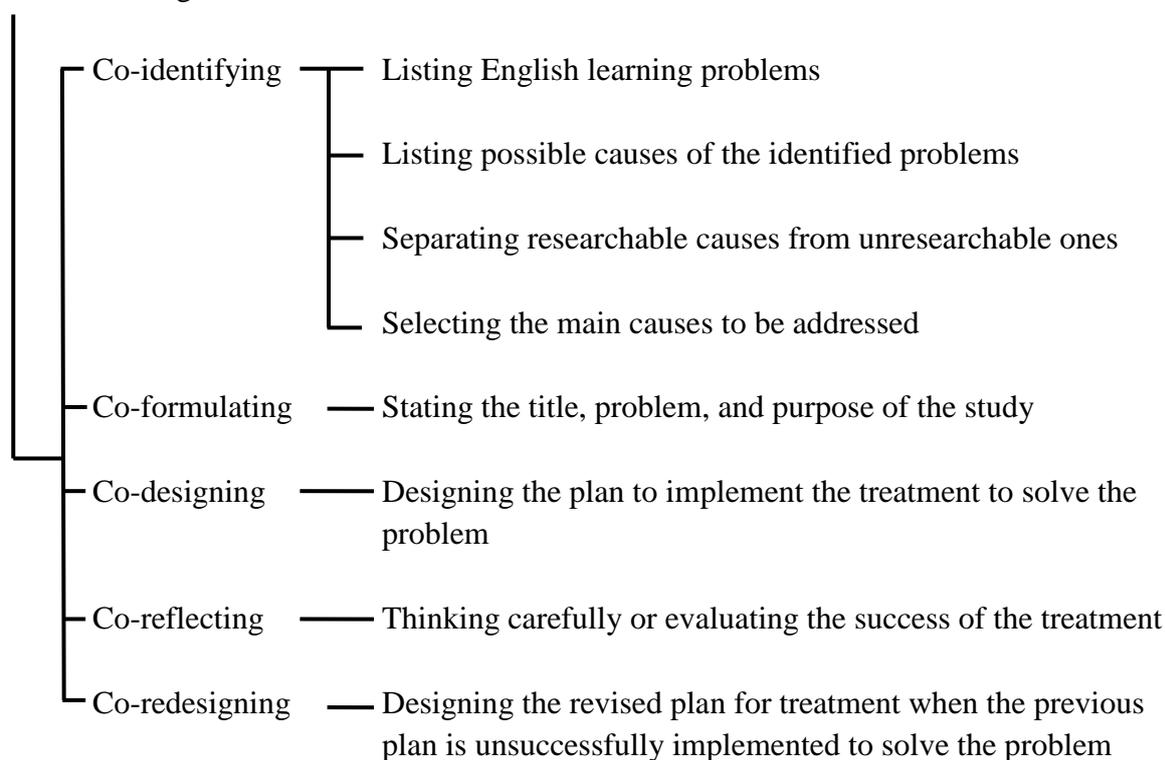
Co-researching on multi-sites was used to improve teachers’ ability to conduct classroom research in English learning in twelve junior high schools: four schools in Rawamangun, East Jakarta; four schools in Tanjung Priok, North Jakarta; and four schools in Rawasari, Central Jakarta. Each location experienced three similar issues:

- To what extent do tailor-made listening materials promote English listening proficiency?
- To what extent does improving students’ English pronunciation promote English listening proficiency?
- To what extent does activating schemata promote English listening proficiency?

### **Co-researching**

The co-researching comprises co-identifying, co-formulating, co-designing, co-reflecting, and co-redesigning as illustrated below.

## Co-researching



## Research ability and classroom action research

Quality research, according to the National Research Council of the United States as quoted by Shavelson and Towne (2002 in McMillan and Wergin, 2010, pp. 2-3), is characterised by:

- Significant questions.
- The relevance of research to theory.
- Relevant research methodology.
- A coherent chain of reasoning between research question, literature review, methodology, results, and conclusion.
- Replicability and generalisability.
- Scrutiny and critique through open dissemination.

## Problems encountered by teachers designing classroom action research

Problems encountered by teachers in designing classroom action research to solve English learning problems include an inadequate capacity:

- To differentiate between problems of ELT in general or research problems in ELT.
- To differentiate between problems or root of problems in ELT.
- To identify the reasons to select a problem of CAR.
- To differentiate between the formulation of research problems in ELT in general or of research problems in CAR.
- To identify the relevant theory in the literature review.
- To identify data and data source based on the research problems.

- Capacity to predict relevant instruments to collect data.
- To predict possible answers or solutions to research problems.
- To predict possible conclusions based on research problems.
- To identify reasons to have a cyclic process in CAR.
- To identify reasons to move from one cycle to the next cycle in CAR.
- To identify differences between one cycle and other cycles.
- To identify reasons to end the cyclic process in CAR.
- To identify reasons to have collaborators in CAR.

In the beginning of the FGD, most participants do not know what a research problem is, how it differs from a problem in ELT, and how to formulate a research problem from symptoms, difficulties, or problems they encounter in the classrooms. Very few participants could transform the problems into a CAR research problem even though they had been exposed to the discussion of CAR, the proposal and the reports. It is possible that they are not able to identify feasible research problems due to their lack of exposure to research in general. Most don't recognise data, instruments, variable or focus, let alone methodological and technical aspects of CAR. There is, however, another factor that is probably pertinent to a person's understanding of a problem's appropriateness to be researched and is complained about by all instructors, low proficiency in English.

### **Issues in English learning can be potentially solved through co-researching and multi-site classroom action research**

The issues are grouped on the basis of four language skills.

In *Listening*, the problems include:

- discriminating sounds
- distinguishing word stress and intonation
- understanding the meaning of a word
- understanding the meaning of a sentence
- distinguishing boundaries between words
- identifying names of person/ country/ language
- recognising word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.)
- understanding the grammar: tense, pluralisation, elliptical forms
- distinguishing literal and implied meanings
- recognising main topics
- getting the main idea
- getting supporting details
- inferring meaning
- deducing causes and effects

In *Speaking*, the problems include:

- pronouncing words including reduced forms of words/contraction
- using word stress and sentence intonation
- using word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.)
- using tense, agreement, plural forms, numbers
- using strategic devices-pauses, fillers, self-corrections

- backtracking-to enhance the clarity of the message
- speaking fluently

In *Reading*, the problems constitute:

- understanding word meaning in context (including idiomatic meaning)
- distinguishing literal and implied meanings
- identifying subjects and verbs in sentences
- getting the meaning of a sentence
- getting the main idea
- understanding generic structure of texts
- inferring

In *Writing*, the problems range from:

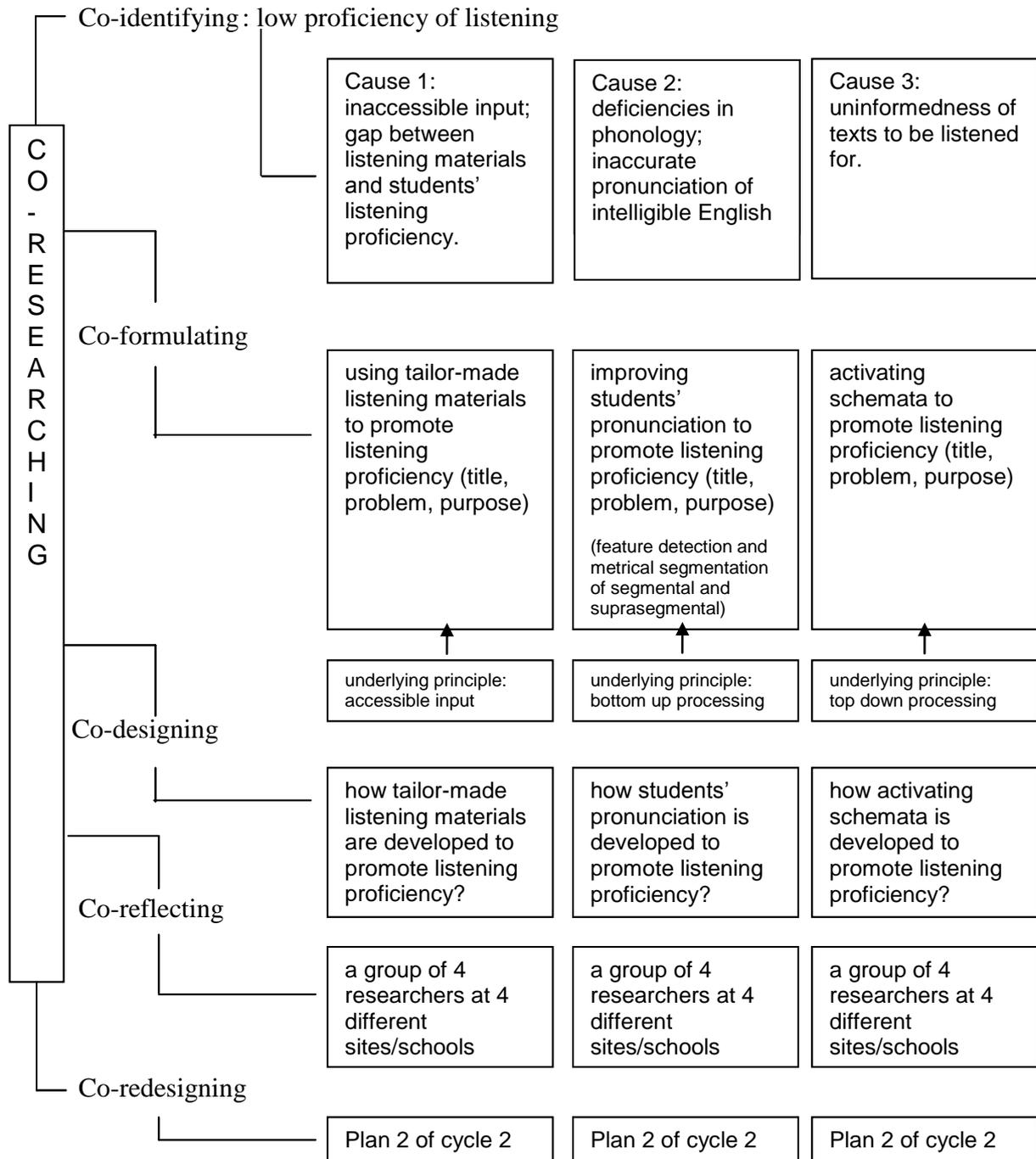
- using grammatical sentences (tense, agreement, pluralisation), word class, word order
- using punctuation
- using cohesive devices
- achieving unity and coherency
- developing ideas, to
- writing a good paragraph

Out of the four groups of issues identified, Listening seems to be the one with potential to be solved through co-researching and multi-site classroom action research by teachers as researchers.

The problem of low proficiency of Listening may occur because of:

1. Inaccessible input, gaps between listening materials and students' listening proficiency.
2. Deficiencies in phonology, inaccurate pronunciation of intelligible English.
3. Lack of knowledge of issues to be listened for.

## Multi-site research issues in English learning



## Conclusion

The study generated the following findings.

First, the problems encountered by teachers in designing classroom action research to solve English learning problems are inadequate research experience, and lack of skills ranging from identifying feasible research problems to technicalities in conducting CAR.

Second, the problems of English learning potentially solved through co-researching and multi-site classroom action research using teachers as researchers, are identifiable as the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, it is indicated that listening is considered the most intricate and problematic one.

It can be concluded that co-researching and multi-site research can improve a teacher's ability to conduct classroom action research in English learning. The teachers design and carry out classroom action research together with their colleagues to cope with real problems they encounter in their classrooms.

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# Enhancing Student Teachers' Learning Outcomes: A Case Study

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## Abstract

In Thailand, university lecturers are required to follow the Thailand Qualification Framework1 (TQF-1), which encourages the application of a student-centered approach and the use of higher order thinking in all lesson plans. Though the TQF-1 is officially established, the result of student teachers' learning outcomes is still in question.

This case study presents the results of a second round classroom action research project on the development of students' learning outcomes in a Curriculum Development course. The study seeks to evaluate the level of students' learning outcomes as well as the activities corresponding to the learning outcomes. The target groups were two classes of eighty-two students. The Participatory Action Oriented Research (PAOR) approach was implemented to better understand the students' development of their learning outcomes. The research instruments were the course syllabus and a self-assessment form.

Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, and content analysis. Results from the self-assessment form suggested that more than ninety percent of the target group had successfully achieved overall course learning outcomes ( $\mu=4.11$ ,  $\sigma = 0.40$ ). Among the four learning outcome domains, the Interpersonal skills and responsibility domain had the highest mean score (4.31, 0.44). The Cognitive skills domain received the lowest mean score (3.95, 0.49). Content analysis indicated that the student-centered activities improved the students' learning outcomes.

The results suggest that an integration of thinking skills and an application of scaffolding to the learning activities are significant for the development of students' learning outcomes.

## Background of the study

Learning activities affect students' learning outcomes. Student-centered learning activities greatly benefit students' learning. The activities help them to think critically, solve problems, learn collaboratively, and practise. Therefore, teaching and learning in higher education must focus on student centeredness, including student involvement and hand-on learning activities.

In addition, the instruction should identify clear learning tasks, which are meaningful, offer inside and outside classroom learning, and evaluation based on lessons' learned. With this instructional design, the expected outcomes based on the Thailand Qualification Framework in Education (TQF1) and the learning outcomes of the course can most likely be accomplished. To develop students' learning outcomes according to TQF, the instructor needs to have a syllabus containing objectives aimed at what students should learn according to learning outcomes mentioned in the course curriculum.

The Teacher Education Curriculum (revised B.E. 2555) of Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University has mandated the Curriculum Development course into the teacher training curriculum. While teaching this course since 2010, I have continuously conducted classroom

research and applied the results to improve the learning activities so that they are suitable for students in each group.

Results from the previous classroom research on group activities and dialogue to elevate students' cognitive skills suggested that students increased their confidence and self-expression. The students improved their critical thinking skills and were able to connect ideas to prior knowledge effectively. The overall result also indicated that students were highly satisfied with the course which was conducted by having positive group activities and creating dialogues (Saripa, 2012). Based on results of my classroom studies, I proposed the design of the learning tasks to enhance students' learning outcomes according to TQF. The model consists of five learning activity characteristics as follows:

1. Learning tasks engage students through collaborative and constructive learning environments, i.e. respectful, understanding, caring, and helping – teachers have a key role in shaping concerns about these values.
2. Students are provided opportunities to explore theory and practices about principles of learning management through multi-learning activities and sources. There has to be more focus on free and assigned group work, lectures, demonstrations, discussions, printed and online document reviews. Students have a key role in constructing their own learning.
3. Students visit schools and are assigned group work. They are required to report on their assigned work and to write-up journals. This assists them to incorporate their new knowledge into what they already know. They then propose recommendations based upon their observations.
4. Students are assigned to work in the same group to create a teaching plan and try it out in a real class setting at the school they visited.
5. The task provides an authentic assessment. Teachers have to assign students to evaluate their own tasks product - teaching practices. School teacher and learners have to co-operate with student teachers to assess teaching plans and practices. The student teachers analyse the result of their work, make a presentation using media, and provide a document report.

The results received from my classroom research have increased my interest to learn whether students have developed more or less in terms of their learning outcomes. Also, students' opinions and contributions to solutions that may suggest a future direction provide an authentic way to improve methods of teaching and evaluation.

### **Research objectives**

The objectives of this research project were:

1. To analyse students' learning outcome and learning activities.
2. To find ways to improve students' teaching and learning outcomes in the Curriculum Development course.

### **Scope of the study**

The target groups were two classes of eighty-two students, who were in the first semester of the 2013 academic year in the Faculty of Education.

## **Literature review**

### ***Higher education instruction design***

Technological advancement has greatly become an influential factor in our daily lives. Being able to get online wherever they are, allows students to instantly search for unanswered questions and knowledge. With this paradigm shift, teachers have to adapt their teaching style, as well shift their roles to become a facilitator and let students direct their own learning.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century's curriculum should emphasise learning more and teaching less. The teacher also designs classroom lessons, which go beyond subject matter with an emphasis on self-directed learning, project base learning, co-operative learning, and team learning (Panich, 2009).

Creamers (1999) agreed that the 21<sup>st</sup> century learners have to be able to reflect on their own learning. Students' knowledge can be measured and evaluated. The teacher should use teaching methods such as reciprocal teaching, coaching cognitive apprenticeship, and modeling to help students learn. With these teaching methods, students learn and later become independent learners.

However, in higher education, there are no specific teaching methods or theories that guarantee the best results. A learner's attitude, the subject content, and classroom environment can influence learning and teaching outcomes. Therefore, the teacher plays a crucial role in choosing an appropriate instruction method to meet objectives of the course. Teachers should implement multiple teaching methods and strategies to their teaching in each class (Tephasadin Na Ayudhya, 1999; Timpson, 2006). Tephasadin Na Ayudhaya suggests that before deciding on the teaching methods, teachers should consider these followings:

- what the course objectives are
- who the students are
- what kinds of content are included
- what are the appropriate teaching methods to transfer knowledge
- how to evaluate students' knowledge

Timpson (2006) believes in empowering students to take control of their own learning. He discouraged teachers from the use of lecturing as a main instructional strategy. A higher order thinking instructional approach such as projects and presentation should be emphasised when planning instructional design for higher education.

### ***Characteristics of student-centered teaching and learning curriculum***

Khammanee (n.d.) adds that higher education instructional design should emphasise student-centeredness. Instructional methods such as self-directed learning, project based learning, co-operative learning, team learning, and beyond subject matter learning should be implemented in classroom teaching. Using such instructional methods, students are encouraged to move away from the traditional memorisation learning method to an integration of higher forms thinking, such as analysing and evaluating. Polsaram (n.d.) believes in allowing students to become more autonomous in their own learning. According to Polsaram, a sound instructional design should highlight the following characteristics.

1. Utilising a group work activity to encourage students' co-operation, create a positive outlook, develop critical thinking, improve problem solving skills, and create in-depth understanding of the subject.

2. Encouraging collaborative learning among students of diverse backgrounds by providing opportunities to share ideas, discuss opinions, and compromise differences in order to complete a task.
3. Stimulating interaction between students text book/documents and provide group evaluation.
4. Offering distance learning to give students more flexibility with time and convenience.

### ***Course teaching and learning development***

As indicated above there are many effective pedagogical tools teachers can use to improve their teaching and students' learning outcomes. However, factors such as class size, content area, and student demographics play a role in the effectiveness of the selected teaching method. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is recommended by many educators as an effective way to improve teaching and learning (Cross, K. P., and M. Harris Steadman, 1996; Suwannakhetneekhom, 1995; Nilson, 1998). CAR encourages teachers to undertake small projects, which may be a part of a larger research project, in a single semester.

### **Research methodology**

This case study employed Kemmis (1988) format of, Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect.

PAOR operational cycle: At the P (Plan) stage, the researcher reviewed the course lesson plan and designed learning activities that yield the learning outcomes according to TQF1. At the A (Action) and O (Observe) stages, the researcher implemented the course lesson plan and observed student teachers' performance of the learning tasks while they were doing the tasks in group activities, discussion sessions, and task presentations. Task products were examined at these stages as well. At the R (Reflection) stage, the researcher reviewed the teaching and learning activities and the assigned tasks. The findings were used to make some changes in the next lesson plan, on the method of teaching, learning activities, and evaluation process.

### **Data collection and analysis**

Data were collected from the course syllabus/lesson plan and a questionnaire. Content analysis and theme categorising were applied to identify characteristics of the effective learning activities, and to find guidelines to improve learning outcomes according to TQF1. Then, means, standard deviation, and content analysis were utilised to analyse students' learning outcomes.

### **Results**

Results showed that more than ninety percent of the students had successfully achieved the overall course learning outcomes. The student-centered activities significantly improved the students' learning outcomes. See Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

**Table 1. Pre-test/post-test of course content knowledge/level of understanding**

<b>Pre-test</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Course content. Knowledge/level of understanding.	Least	11	14.3
	Less	47	61.0
	Moderate	15	19.5
	More	2	2.6
	Most	2	2.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.00</b>
<b>Post-test</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Course content. Knowledge/level of understanding.	Moderate	4	5.20
	More	51	66.20
	Most	22	28.60
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1, suggests that prior to starting the course, most of students did not have much understanding of the course content (75.30%). However, by the end of the course, the students had shown more understanding on the course content (94.80%). Responses from students indicated that they agreed that the implementation of variety of learning activities increased their understanding of the content and motivation to learn.

**Table 2. Students' learning outcomes from the Curriculum Development course**

<b>Categories</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D.</b>
Morality	1. Showing moral behaviours and code of ethics. Having moral values, showing empathy, and being a role model.	4.18	.64
Knowledge	2. Having a good understanding and adequate knowledge to develop effective curriculum for the 21st century.	3.92	.64
	3. Understanding curriculum development theories, which are relevant to the 21st century and Thai society.	4.06	.59
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.99</b>	<b>.51</b>
Cognitive skills	4. Being able to analyse, search for information, synthesise, and evaluate knowledge related to the curriculum. Being able to apply results to develop and design curriculum effectively.	4.03	.69
	5. Having skills to conduct researches and being able to understand and analyse data to use in developing a curriculum	3.95	.56
	6. Having an ability to solve complicated problems, find proper solution by using theories and experience as a guideline.	3.87	.66
	7. Having leadership skills and vision and being able to present creative curriculum ideas that is suitable for the 21st century.	3.99	.72
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>.49</b>
Interpersonal skills & responsibility	8. Having empathy and being optimistic, and showing high emotional intelligence.	4.27	.70
	9. Being helpful and putting an effort to solve problems within their own group and between groups.	4.38	.488
	10. Having leadership skills, good personal skills with learners, and social responsibility in terms of economy, social, and environment.	4.29	.56
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>.44</b>
	<b>Overall mean score</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>.40</b>

In Table 2, the overall result of the level of students' learning outcomes is very satisfactory as a part and as a whole.

When analysing each sub-category, the means scores suggest the three highest ranking are as follows: being helpful and putting an effort to solve problems within their own group and between groups (4.38); having leadership skills, good personal skills with learners, and social responsibility in terms of economy, social, and environment (4.29); having empathy and being optimistic, and showing high emotional intelligence (4.27); and understanding curriculum development theories, which are relevant to the 21st century and Thai society (4.06).

The three lowest means scores of the sub-category of students' learning outcomes are: having an ability to solve complicated problems, find proper solutions by using theories and experience as a guideline (3.87); having a good understanding and adequate knowledge to develop effective curriculum (3.92); and having skills to conduct research and being able to understand and analyse data to use in developing a curriculum (3.95).

**Table 3. Learning activities which increase students' learning outcomes**

	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Behaviour/learning outcomes</b>
Morality	School site visit, group work, role play, oral presentation.	Be more generous, punctual and collaborative. Understand teacher' roles and ethics.
Knowledge	Oral presentation, spontaneous response, site visit, study classroom worksheet, teacher's lecture.	Able to explain knowledge learned, present opinions, analyse reading text, and have better understanding of theories.
Cognitive skills	Report project, self-study in the library, school site visit, internet searching, exhibition, present opinion individually.	Inquire problems, carefully plan a project, practise analysis and evaluation, be creative in project presentation design, have self-confidence, show leadership skills, present ways to solve problems based on current school situation.
Interpersonal skills & responsibility.	Role play, exhibitions, knowledge exchange, group work, classroom presentation, school site visit.	Become more thoughtful to group members, acquire better skills in expressing themselves, show empathy while working in group, work systematically, be able to delegate tasks among group members, be responsible and collaboratively work to solve problems, show leadership traits – respect others.

In Table 3, the result shows that learning activities which increase students' learning outcomes according to TQF are school site visits, group activities, independent study, formal and informal (group/ individual) presentations, and spontaneous response to questions.

In addition, the study's findings suggest guidelines for further developing the course. The study suggests that students favored certain activities, such as a role play, a school visit, a presentation, spontaneous response to questions, independent study, group activities, and formal and informal (group/individual) presentations. These activities were found to improve

students' knowledge and cognitive skills, improve morality, and increase interpersonal and responsibility skills. In addition, school visits, spontaneous response to questions, and group works improve overall students' learning outcomes. A role play and independent study increase students' knowledge while classroom and formal and informal (group/individual) presentations improved students' cognitive skills.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Well-designed learning tasks have proven to increase students' learning outcomes (Panich, 2009; Tepasadin Na Ayudhya, 1999; Timpson, 2006). This study's findings confirm previous research on autonomous learning activities and learning outcomes.

To accelerate students' learning outcomes, teachers should emphasise developing students' critical thinking skills. The effective learning activities such as independent/group research, school site visits, and tri-fold presentation should be implemented. Next, teachers should prepare students to be familiar with the course's learning activities. The teachers themselves should also be trained to gain more understanding on how to implement student-centered learning activities to appropriate groups of learners. Class size, individual student personalities, students' learning differences, and teachers' teaching styles should be considered as well.

The study suggested that students were frustrated with activities which required more time to complete such as spontaneous response, group work, role play, report projects, and group/individual research. Therefore, by allowing more time for students to finish the tasks, rotating members of the groups, and including supplementing fun activities between learning tasks can lessen students' stress and increase their learning outcomes.

In addition, to increase students' learning outcomes, the assessment tasks should be carefully planned. A summative evaluation could include portfolios, oral presentations and interviews. Teachers should also use results of the learning outcomes to continue to conduct classroom research for the course's future improvement.

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# Implementing a Project-based Learning Approach in a Vietnamese Secondary School

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, considerable efforts have been made to address the need for more innovative teaching and learning to prepare learners to meet the changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Project-based learning (PBL), a teaching methodology that utilises learner-centred projects to facilitate student learning (Mergendoller et al., 2006), is considered superior to traditional methods in improving problem-solving and thinking skills, and engaging learners in their learning (Thomas, 2000).

Numerous studies revealed that PBL was an effective means of teaching both content information and related skills, and that learners in project-based classrooms exhibited greater gains in content knowledge than their traditionally taught peers (Stepien et al., 1993; Tretten & Zachariou, 1995; Boaler, 1997; Shepherd, 1998; Penuel & Means, 2000; Mioduser & Betzer, 2003; Belland et al., 2006; Mergendoller et al., 2006; and Brush & Saye, 2008).

In this study, with a one-group pre-test and post-test design, 26 English major tenth graders in an upper-secondary school in Can Tho City, Vietnam, were required to work in groups to complete seven 10-theme projects over a six-month period. A reflection was then used to elicit learners' opinions about the implementation of the PBL approach.

In this paper, the procedures for conducting the PBL approach will be described in detail, and the results of the study will be presented. Finally, some recommendations will be made.

## **Introduction**

What inspired me to conduct this study arose when I attended the summer training course on *Innovation in Testing and Assessment* organised by the Ministry of Education and Training, Vietnam at the beginning of the academic year 2014-2015. During 10 three hour sessions of the training course, I was introduced to different forms of competence-based assessment during learners' learning process in general and in English language in particular. What most interested me as a reform in testing and assessment is Project-Based Learning (PBL), which refers to the organisation of the pedagogical principle of 'learning by doing' (Dewey, 1897), was that, learners' acquisition of knowledge is conducted through the process of experiencing, or doing something new (Kotti, 2008).

Thomas (2000) conducted a comprehensive review of PBL research and found that there is some evidence that PBL, in comparison to other instructional methods, has value for enhancing the quality of learners' learning in subject matter areas. This led to the tentative claim that learning higher-level cognitive skills via PBL is associated with an increased capability on the part of students to apply those learnings in novel, problem solving contexts.

Researchers have largely supported the impact PBL has on engaging learners in an enriching educational experience that allows them to have ownership over their learning. Researchers claim that studies using PBL instructional techniques boost learners' motivation to learn and retain knowledge. There is also ample evidence that PBL is an effective method for teaching students' complex processes and procedures such as planning, communicating, problem solving, and decision making.

Although the research claims are overwhelmingly supportive of its effects on learning, PBL has not been widely implemented in the context of upper-secondary schools in Vietnam. Therefore, this study was conducted in order to investigate the impact of implementing the PBL approach on learners' academic achievement in an upper-secondary school for the gifted in Can Tho. It attempted to find answers to the two following questions:

1. To what extent does implementing the PBL approach enhance learners' academic performance?
2. What are learners' perceptions towards the PBL approach?

### **What is Project-based Learning?**

Project-based learning (PBL), a teaching methodology that utilises learner-centred projects to facilitate learning (Mergendoller et al., 2006), is considered superior to traditional methods in improving problem solving and thinking skills, and engaging learners in their learning (Thomas, 2000). Instead of following a rigid lesson plan that leads learners down a specific path of learning outcomes and objectives, PBL allows in-depth investigation of a topic under discussion (Harris & Katz, 2001).

Through PBL, learners have more autonomy over what they learn, maintaining their enthusiasm and motivating learners to take greater responsibility for their learning (Wolk, 1994; Tassinari, 1996; and Worthy, 2000). In addition, by giving control to the learners, they could maximise their opportunity to utilise their prior knowledge and experience in finding solutions to the problems (Morgan, 1983).

In order to implement PBL effectively, teachers play a vital role in motivating learners and creating a learning environment conducive to learning (Yam & Burger 2009). Collaboration among learners, teachers and the others in the community is of great importance so that knowledge can be shared and distributed to the members (Houghton Mifflin, n.d.). In addition, learners' progress should be observed so that problems can be detected early (Winn, 1995).

Therefore, teachers' close rapport as well as constant tutorials with learners is imperative to sustain their motivation in the PBL process (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). For example, teachers can help by providing access to information, and support learning by scaffolding instructions to make the tasks more manageable. It is argued that teachers should break down tasks to make them manageable, coach learners in formulating strategies to solve problems, and gradually release responsibility to the learners (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

### ***Benefits and challenges of PBL***

PBL has the potential to enhance deep learning as learners have to acquire and apply concepts and principles to solving authentic problems. Also, it promotes critical and proactive thinking as learners have to formulate plans and evaluate solutions (Blumenfeld et al., 1991). Furthermore, PBL moves learners from passive to active learning and is able to improve their knowledge retention and their ability to apply prior knowledge to creating their final products (Felder et al., 2000). As well as enhancing learners' participation in the learning process (active learning and self-learning), PBL also helps to improve learners' communicative and collaborative skills which are important in their working life later (Hadim & Esche, 2002).

Numerous studies indicate that PBL has a positive effect on learners' learning in terms of content knowledge, increased learning motivation and engagement, and developed collaborative, critical-thinking and problem solving skills. Compared to traditional classes, learners in PBL classes performed better on assessment of content knowledge (Stepien et al., 1993; Boaler, 1997; and Penuel & Means, 2000), especially learners with average to low verbal ability, and learners with little prior content knowledge (Mioduser & Betzer, 2003; Mergendoller et al., 2006).

PBL also has resulted in high levels of learner engagement (Belland et al., 2006; and Brush & Saye, 2008) and had a positive effect on student motivation to learn (Bartscher et al., 1995). In addition, some studies proved that learners who participated in PBL also benefited from improved critical-thinking and problem solving skills (Tretten & Zachariou, 1995; Shepherd, 1998; and Mergendoller et al., 2006). In particular, one study of PBL showed a positive effect on low ability learners, who increased their use of critical-thinking skills including synthesising, evaluating, predicting, and reflecting by 446% while high ability students improved by 76% (Horan et al., 1996).

Furthermore, PBL has been shown to benefit a variety of learners in developing collaborative skills. For example, low ability learners demonstrated initiative, management, teamwork, and conscientiousness as they worked in groups (Horan et al., 1996). Therefore, learners enjoyed PBL because it gave them opportunities to interact with their friends and make new friends through co-operative projects (Belland et al., 2006; and Lightner et al., 2007).

Despite numerous benefits, PBL presents several challenges for the teachers. These include teachers' content knowledge, students' lack of experience in PBL, and their preferences for traditional-structured approach which emphasises passive learning.

Moreover, the organisation and administration of PBL can be very time consuming (Frank, Lavy & Elata, 2003; Helle, Tynjala & Olkinuora, 2006). However, the aforementioned challenges can be overcome. Teachers could propose some factors to be considered in project design to ensure that the intended outcome is attainable. These include whether learners could find their project interesting and worth doing, whether they could fulfill their project, and whether they could focus on their learning rather than on grades.

For learners who are inexperienced in collaborative learning environments, teachers could provide support for group work and conflict management to facilitate the learning process. Due to the constraint of time and resources, all projects need to be feasible and manageable for both teachers and learners (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).

## **Participants**

The participants in the study were 26 English major tenth graders in an upper-secondary school in Can Tho, Vietnam, and 7 teachers of English, including one researcher of this study. PBL requires a long-term commitment (Thomas, Michaelson & Mergendoller, 2002) during which monitoring each group is needed; thus, each teacher participant was assigned to supervise one group to ensure that the different work of the implementation of the PBL approach was happening in a sensible way.

## **Implementation of PBL**

Chard (2001) states that there are three phases in making a project: initial planning; the middle phase; and the last phase.

- During the initial planning phase the teacher selects the topic of study, brainstorms using his/her own experience, knowledge, and ideas and presents them in a topic web. Also, the teacher discusses the topic with learners to find out what experiences they have had and what they already know (Moursund, 1999; and Blumenfeld, 2000). Learners present their own experiences and show their understanding of concepts involved by explaining them. The teacher then helps them develop questions their study will answer.
- In the second phase, the construction of the project, learners have opportunities to do research and work with experienced teachers. The teacher could provide or guide them to find materials for their projects. Learners take the initiative in presenting what they have studied. The teacher may help them be aware of different work being done through group discussions and documents their project progress via the topic web designed earlier.
- During the last phase, the project presentation and evaluation, the teacher organises some sessions during which learners can share what they have studied with their peers. The teacher helps the students select materials to present and in doing so they could have a closer look at their studies and initially evaluate their own projects. Finally, the teacher uses learners' ideas and interests in order to make a meaningful transition between the conclusion of their project and the topic of study for the next project.

In the densely arranged curriculum for upper-secondary school learners in Vietnam, it is hard to implement the project because of the pressure associated with examination performance. Therefore, in the scope of this study, Chard's (2001) phases were adapted to suit the context and the purpose of the study. Specifically:

- Stage 1: After learners had taken a summer course (16 45-minute sessions) and a preliminary test of content knowledge in early September 2014, one researcher of this study arranged an informal discussion for them to openly share what difficulties they ran into in a new learning environment.

Students freely stated what they had already learned, what they expected to study, and what they should deeply engage in studying. At the end of this session, an agreement was reached, under which the class was divided into 7 groups of three or four learners in order to make sure that all learners could get involved actively in their projects. Ten project themes related to various areas of English language learning were identified and the student groups selected the following:

- Group 1: (1) Inversion in English and (2) the Use of modal verbs
  - Group 2: (3) Types of adverbial clauses
  - Group 3: (4) Relative (adjectival) clauses and (5) Noun clauses
  - Group 4: (6) Active and passive voice structures
  - Group 5: (7) The reported speech and (8) the Articles and determiners
  - Group 6: (9) The subjunctive mood
  - Group 7: (10) The Verb tenses, Verb forms and Subject and verb agreement
- Stage 2: Seven teachers from the English Department were assigned to work as supervisors of the seven groups of learners in order to ensure that they could set up and execute their projects in a sensible way.

The teachers' presentations should include: the rationale to carry out the project; what problem(s) to be solved in the project; and theoretical framework and types of practical exercises that could be of great help for learners' advanced examinations.

Each project was broken down into a series of smaller tasks to make the overall project manageable. In the groups, learners assigned each other to different work and reported their progression to their supervisors periodically, and in the meanwhile, asked for advice if required. The project implementation lasted three months from early September to the end of November. It was done uniformly between timetables of intra-and extra-curricular activities in order not to affect the learning of learners and the teaching of school. The work was done under the indirect and periodical supervision of teacher participants.

- Stage 3: Each group presented their first draft project in class and received feedback or comments from their peers as well as from other teachers in the English Department in terms of project presentation and quality. Then, each group modified their project under their supervisors in a 2 week period.
- Stage 4: After taking the first semester examination, in January 2015, each group shared their own project in the form of self-study materials with the other groups for the purpose of learning from each other's projects as an extra-curricular activity at home. In this way, learners could, to some extent, evaluate their own projects as well as their peers, and more importantly, they could learn a great depth of content knowledge from their peers' projects.
- Stage 5: After two months of self-study, each group presented and evaluated their final project product and in the meanwhile, evaluated their peers. Also, each group received comments as well as evaluations from their own supervisor and other teachers in the English Department. During this phase, learners' ideas, interests and suggestions were taken into consideration by teachers as a solid foundation for learners' topic of study for their next project.

### **Data collection and analysis**

With a one-group pre-test and post-test design, this study employed achievement tests, and learners' reflections as sources of data.

- Pre-test to test learners' background knowledge before the implementation of PBL approach;
- Post-test to test learners' academic achievement after the implementation of PBL approach; and
- Learners' reflection to gain more insights into learners' perceptions towards the implementation of PBL approach.

The pre-test and post-test have the same content in order to evaluate learners' learning process. There are 100 multiple-choice items relating to the ten project themes. Each correct answer received one mark, with no mark for incorrect answers.

After the termination of the projects, learners were encouraged to share their feelings as well as their suggestions about the implementation of PBL approach. Due to time constraints, this was done through a reflection written by participants in fifteen minutes in class.

The reflection focused on the following main points:

- What content knowledge and skills learners have learned from carrying out their projects;
- What problems they still have to confront; and
- What they would like to suggest for future studies.

These reflections could be written in either English or Vietnamese to ensure these participants could express their feelings freely.

## Results

### *The extent to which implementing the PBL approach enhances learners' content knowledge*

Data gained from pre-tests and post-tests of 26 learner participants were subjected to the *Statistics Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 11.5 for data analysis. First, the *Descriptive Statistics Test* was run to gain results of the participants' performance before and after the projects. The results of these tests are reported as follows in Table 1. Next, the *GLM Repeated Measures Test* was used to check for the mean difference in participants' before and after the projects.

**Table 1: Participants' performance before and after the study**  
**Descriptive statistics for pre-and post-tests**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPRE	26	47.00	78.00	62.7692	8.67321
SUMP	26	50.00	83.00	66.8462	8.52616
Valid (listwise)	N 26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	SUM	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SUM	Linear	216.077	1	216.077	13.644	.001
Error(SUM)	Linear	395.923	25	15.837		

From these two tests, it can be seen that participants’ academic performance changed after their experience with PBL. The mean score of participants’ performance after the study ( $M_{post} = 66.85$ ) is higher than that of the same participants before the study ( $M_{pre} = 62.77$ ). This mean difference ( $F(1,25) = 13.644, p = .001$ ) is statistically significant. The result indicates that there is a significant change in participants’ performance. It can be concluded that after the study, learner participants’ performance has been significantly improved after participating in the PBL project.

The *Descriptive Statistics Test* was also run to gain results of learner participants’ ten project themes. These test results show signs of significant improvement in only two themes - Inversion in English and Adjectival clauses (Tables 2 and 3) but not in the themes: The use of modal verbs; Types of adverbial clauses; Noun clauses; Active and passive voices; Reported speech; Articles and determiners; Subjunctive mood; and Verb forms and subject and verb agreement. The figures (Table 2 and 3) below summarise participants’ performance reported in the achievement tests for Inversion and Adjectival clauses. The results of the statistical analysis for the other eight themes are found in the Appendix.

**Table 2: Participants’ performance of inversion in English before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for inversion in English**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMP1	26	4.00	9.00	6.3077	1.40767
SUMP1	26	4.00	10.00	7.5385	1.50282
Valid (listwise)	N 26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	19.692	1	19.692	16.798	.000
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	29.308	25	1.172		

**Table 3: Participants' performance of modal verbs before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for modal verbs**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPRE2	26	3.00	10.00	6.3462	1.87494
SUMP2	26	3.00	9.00	6.8846	1.72805
Valid N (listwise)	26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	3.769	1	3.769	2.924	.100
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	32.231	25	1.289		

From these tests, it can be seen that there is a significant change in learner participants' performance in terms of Inversion and Adjectival clauses. However, no statistically significant change was found in tests of the other themes: Modal verbs; Adverbial clauses; Noun clauses; Voices; Reported speech; Articles and determiners; Subjunctive mood; and Verb forms and subject and verb agreement. The theme Subjunctive mood was below the mean score on the scale of 10 before and after the study.

***Learners' reflection***

In order to gain more insights into the impact of PBL approach on learners' achievement, the participants were encouraged to share their feelings about the conduct of the projects. Twenty-six reflections were collected, analysed and interpreted focusing on the following main points:

- What content knowledge and skills have the students learned from carrying out their projects;
- What problems do they still have to confront; and
- What would they like to suggest for future studies.

In general, all reflections were positive. All participants stated that the theoretical content knowledge in the projects was specific with clear examples, and that such varied exercises as multiple-choice, written and error-identification exercises were vital as their self-study materials. The theories from all projects were collected, analysed and synthesised from different and reliable sources and useful tips on how to do a test effectively were also suggested. All these things could help participants solve their previous problems of these grammar points common in their tests and examinations but difficult to understand, resulting in the fact that participants could do their exercises faster with a higher level of accuracy.

In addition, participants agreed that because all projects focused on advanced knowledge of ten project themes which they often have to deal with in examinations for the gifted, they felt more confident in their own content knowledge after conducting their projects as well as learning from their peers. Interestingly, special attention was paid to the themes Inversion and Subjunctive mood as these two grammar points were not deliberately taught to these participants in lower secondary education.

Regarding skills learners have gained after conducting their projects, all participants stated that their communicative and collaborative skills improved considerably. They said that after the project work, they knew that being a team member entailed certain obligations and that most of them developed skills for solving in-group conflicts and learned to be responsible for the work assigned to them. Specifically, they knew how to divide different tasks among group members in a compromise agreement, and knew how to share and assist each other in fulfilling their tasks.

In addition, in partnership with each member, participants learned how to select, analyse and synthesise reliable sources of knowledge under teachers' supervision, and were able to suggest some useful tips to facilitate their learning process. Also, participants' computer skills improved, mainly the ability to use the Internet to search for information, to share their work via the special feature of a so-called *Google drive*, and to manipulate some available software as a tool to organise and present their materials in a sensible way.

Concerning problems learner participants still have to confront, some of them shared that they had not yet known how to select a body of knowledge they studied from various documents in a scientific way. Different presentations and interpretations of the same grammar point in different reference books, to some extent, confused these learner participants in identifying the most useful information. Consequently, in some cases, they provided too much lengthy information of the same issue without condensing it, which complicated the self-study materials and made it hard for participants to study at home.

In addition, because there were no answer keys to the exercises designed in these self-study materials, participants were not sure whether they did the exercises correctly. Specifically, due to the constraint of learning time and overload of school work, participants admitted that they could not devote themselves to studying their peers' projects in a thorough way.

From their stated comments, learner participants suggested that in the future, they should be given project themes and allowed to make their projects in a more suitable period of time, preferably in the summer months. In this way, learners could invest more effort and time in their own projects and could share theirs with their peers at the beginning of school year. Their self-learning could, thus, be more effective.

## **Discussion**

The results of the study showed that implementing the PBL approach could enhance learners' academic performance, increase learning motivation and engagement, and develop collaborative, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

One possible explanation for these findings is that making a product of their own increases learners' attention level and their desire to work, thus their achievements improve. Conducting a project enabled learners to have an opportunity to learn how to combine the knowledge gained from school lessons with the knowledge acquired from their own studies.

Working in groups helped learners learn their responsibilities, provided them with motivation to learn, and enabled them to acquire knowledge by sharing and receiving different ideas as well as understanding others' points of view. Therefore, the knowledge learners acquired was made through the process of building ideas, forming groups, cooperating, using authentic information sources, processing and evaluating, taking initiatives and making decisions.

In addition, when carrying out the project work, learners shared a common goal of accomplishing various tasks, thus enhancing the interaction among learners, their ability to communicate, their motivation to work and their creativity. These results are consistent with those of the studies conducted previously in different contexts by Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Stepien et al., 1993; Bartscher et al., 1995; Boaler, 1997; Felder et al., 2000; Penuel and Means, 2000; Hadim and Esche, 2002; Belland et al., 2006; and Brush and Saye, 2008.

In this study, there was no significant difference in the project themes relating to: The use of modal verbs; Types of adverb clauses; Noun clauses; Active and passive voices; Reported speech; Articles and determiners; Subjunctive mood; and Verb forms and subject and verb agreement. This could be explained by the fact that the participants' initial level of understanding of these themes was high compared to the mean score on the scale of 10. Therefore, after the study, although there was an improvement in the scores of the post achievement tests, the test results were not statistically significant. However, these participants showed improvement within themselves.

These results are consistent with those of the studies conducted previously in different contexts by Horan et al., 1996; Belland et al., 2006; and Lightner et al., 2007. As for the project theme *Subjunctive mood*, although learner participants' post level scores were higher than their initial level, this result was not statistically significant and below the mean score. This could be explained in terms of the level of difficulty in this grammar point. While in English, *Subjunctive mood* is one of the categories of verb use that expresses facts, orders, questions, wishes or conditions, in Vietnamese there is no verb use. Also, there are too many special rules to be memorised for participants to remember and apply to their tests. This is consistent with participants' comments in their reflections.

## **Conclusion**

From the results of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the PBL approach enhances learners' academic achievement and results in their positive perceptions towards this approach.

The review of teaching and learning theories shows that innovative approaches should aim to promote learners' reflective, creative and critical-thinking, not just disseminate information to them. Moreover, learners also learn better when their diverse approaches to learning and thinking are considered by their teachers (Sternberg, 1998). According to Duch, Groh and Allen (2001), traditional approaches like lecture-based learning which have been used in most classes in conventional education often fail to encourage learners to become active learners.

Realising the need for more innovative teaching and learning to prepare learners to meet the changing demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Vietnamese government has expressed its concerns about this educational problem and encouraged teachers to seek ways to educate learners to become high-quality learners who can effectively learn in a wide range of working environments (Pham & Fry, 2004).

The results of this study indicate PBL has significant potential to transform teaching from a dull and mundane process of passive learning to one where learners actively engage with the material, resulting in deeper learning and significant other outcomes. The findings of this study show that the PBL approach should be widely adopted in the context of Vietnamese secondary education because the implementation of a range of communication methods in PBL increases the interaction between teachers and learners as well as between learners.

Therefore, PBL is useful to enhance learners' learning motivation and engagement, develop collaborative, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, and especially improve learning outcomes.

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## Appendix

### Tables 4 to 11.

**Table 4: Participants' performance of adverbial clauses before and after the study**

#### Descriptive statistics for adverbial clauses

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPRE3	26	5.00	10.00	7.4231	1.23849
SUMP3	26	5.00	10.00	7.5769	1.44701
Valid N (listwise)	26				

#### Tests of within-subjects contrasts

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	.308	1	.308	.391	.538
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	19.692	25	.788		

**Table 5: Participants' performance of adjectival clause before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for adjective clause**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPRE4	26	3.00	9.00	6.8462	1.68979
SUMP4	26	4.00	10.00	7.5385	1.36325
Valid (listwise)	N 26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	6.231	1	6.231	9.878	.004
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	15.769	25	.631		

**Table 6: Participants' performance of noun clause before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for noun clause**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPR5	26	3.00	10.00	6.3462	1.85348
SUMP5	26	3.00	10.00	6.5769	1.62906
Valid (listwise)	N 26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	.692	1	.692	.684	.416
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	25.308	25	1.012		

**Table 7: Participants' performance of voices before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for voices**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPR6	26	2.00	9.00	5.9231	2.18949
SUMP6	26	3.00	9.00	6.1154	1.65715
Valid (listwise) N	26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	.481	1	.481	.222	.641
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	54.019	25	2.161		

**Table 8: Participants' performance of reported speech before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for reported speech**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPR7	26	5.00	9.00	7.1154	1.27521
SUMP7	26	5.00	10.00	7.3846	1.38786
Valid (listwise) N	26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	.942	1	.942	1.205	.283
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	19.558	25	.782		

**Table 9: Participants' performance of articles and determiners before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for articles and determiners**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPR8	26	4.00	10.00	7.0000	1.46969
SUMP8	26	4.00	10.00	6.9615	1.77721
Valid (listwise)	N 26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	.019	1	.019	.029	.866
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	16.481	25	.659		

**Table 10: Participants' performance of subjunctive mood before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for subjunctive mood**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPR9	26	1.00	8.00	3.4231	1.44701
SUMP9	26	1.00	6.00	3.7692	1.17670
Valid (listwise)	N 26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	1.558	1	1.558	1.259	.273
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	30.942	25	1.238		

**Table 11: Participants' performance of verb forms and subject and verb agreement before and after the study**

**Descriptive statistics for verb forms and subject and verb agreement**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
SUMPR0	26	2.00	9.00	6.0385	1.58697
SUMP10	26	4.00	8.00	6.5000	1.20830
Valid N (listwise)	26				

**Tests of within-subjects contrasts**

Measure: MEASURE\_1

Source	FACTOR1	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
FACTOR1	Linear	2.769	1	2.769	2.083	.161
Error(FACTOR1)	Linear	33.231	25	1.329		

# **Applying Community and Project-based Approaches to Strengthen Cultural Competency and Partnerships in Nursing Education and Practice**

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## **Abstract**

Changing demographics and increasing diversity of the Thai population are transforming nursing education and practice.

Establishing partnerships with community stakeholders is a community-based approach to strengthen cultural competency in nursing education, practice, and research. The community health nursing practicum syllabus was designed for 4<sup>th</sup> year nursing students to practise in a real situation by using the community as a classroom. This course lasts for nine weeks, three days a week. Fifty-four nursing students were divided into six groups, nine students per group. Each group was assigned to work as a partnership with stakeholders in a 100 household-community. Four groups of students practised and stayed at a District Health Promotion Hospital in the community which focused on collaborative approaches to community-based participatory research (CBPR).

The project-based design involved community and stakeholders in aspects of assessment, priority setting of problems, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects that targeted their communities. A high level of trust and mutual respect for diversity were established as a result of the continuous communication and recognition of benefits and outcomes of partnership work. There were also opportunities for students and teachers to interact with each other informally outside of patient and nurse encounters which augmented more traditional service learning formats.

It was found that CBPR focusing on community involvement not only contributed to the process of cultural competence for nursing students, but also to better health outcomes for people in the community.

## **Introduction**

Public health nursing involving a community is designed for health promotion and illness prevention by planning, implementing, and evaluating services and research projects. The combination of community and project-based approaches through the partnership with community and stakeholders is essential for strengthening cultural competency in nursing education, practice, and research (Anderson, Calvillo, & Fongwa, 2007). The academic institution and community benefit through collaboration and satisfying the needs of community participants/clients (Ross, 2012).

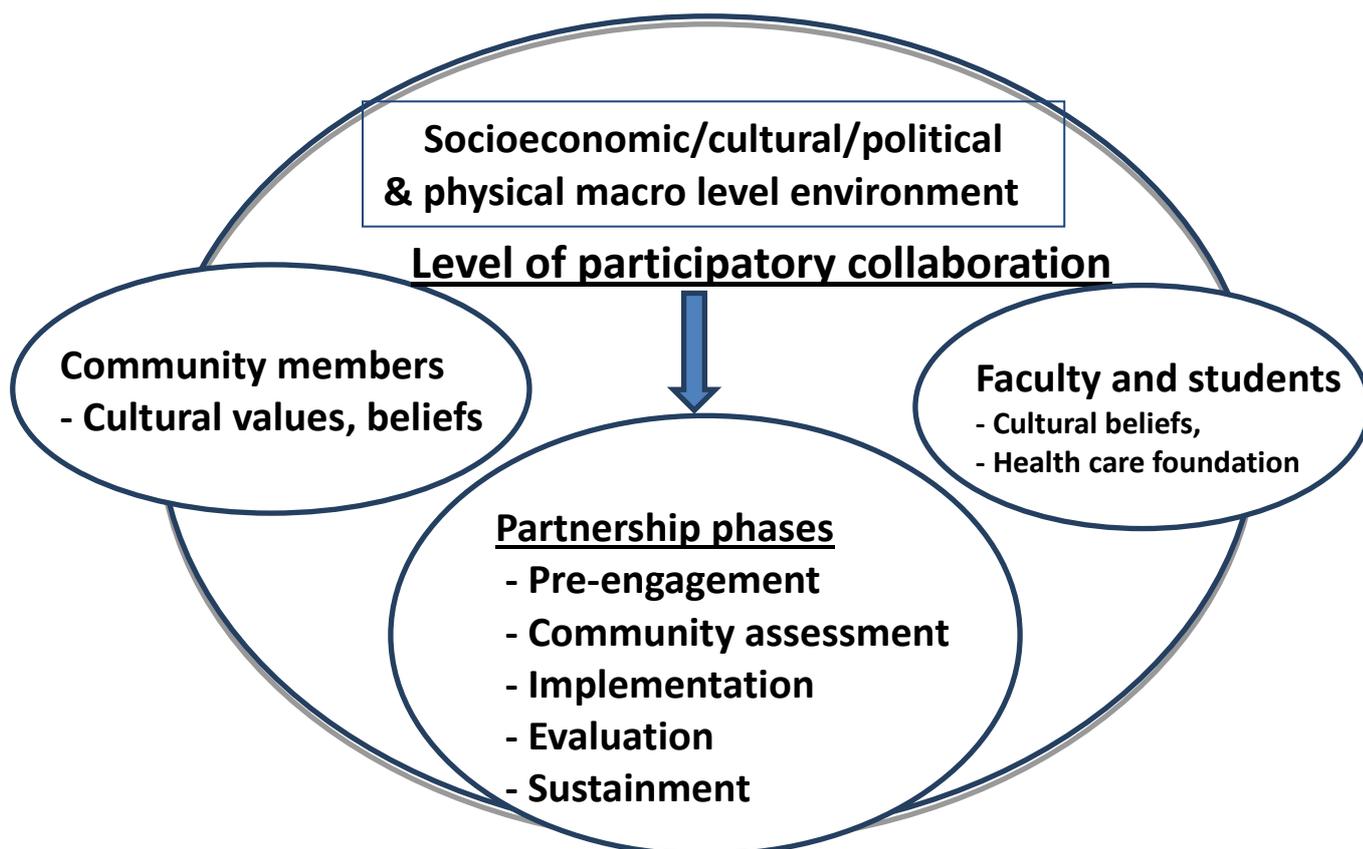
The benefits for nursing students are that they: develop skills in understanding community needs; apply academic, social, and personal skills to improve the community's health; grow as individuals; gain respect for peers; and increase community participation (Kaye, 2004). Project-based learning (PBL) is also suitable for nursing students working to solve real

community health problems. Students can also improve their responsibility, independence, and discipline from PBL (Bell, 2010).

Anderson's partnership model in community health (Figure 1) helped inform the research.

**Figure 1. Partnership model in Community Health Nursing Practicum**

(Adapted from Anderson, 2005)



The Faculty of Nursing, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, has a strong vision as the educational institute which is joined to the local community for sustainable development. Nursing students and faculty members always join community events and invite stakeholders from the community to participate in university activities.

The social structure of Thailand is comprised of many ethnic groups of people, including Chinese, Laos, Cambodian, Burmese, Hill tribes and Vietnamese, all of which are different in culture, language, religion, beliefs, and way of life. The Thai Song Dam ethnic people originated from Dien Bien Phu, in Vietnam. They have been moved and lived in the central and southern part of Thailand since 1700s. Thai Song Dam people have a very well-preserved culture, including language, writing, rituals, remedies, clothes, songs, calendar, foods, herbs (Peterson, 1974). Moreover, they respect their ancestors, and they teach their children to have pride in their culture. Thai Song Dum ethnic people have lived in the Sakatiem sub-district, Moo 9, Nakhon Pathom for many decades. This was the assigned area for nursing

students to practise community health nursing as a no-wall classroom in the real life situations.

Faculty members and students worked collaboratively with people and stakeholders in the Thai Song Dam community to implement culturally sensitive and responsive health care to the community by identifying community strengths, resources and health problems; planning a health promotion program; and implementing, evaluating, and disseminating a sustainable healthy program.

### **Research question**

How does a project-based approach in community health care strengthen cultural competency and partnerships in nursing education and practice?

### **Methodology**

This study was a qualitative study using Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) in combination with Project-Based Learning (PBL). Focus-group interviews and written self-reports of nursing students and in depth interviews with stakeholders were used to produce data.

The community health nursing practicum course syllabus was designed for the 4<sup>th</sup> year nursing students to practise in a real situation by using the community as a classroom. This course lasts for nine weeks, three days a week. Fifty-four nursing students were divided into six groups, with nine students per group. Each group was assigned to work as a partnership with stakeholders in a 100 household-community. Four groups of students practised and stayed at a District Health Promotion Hospital in the community which focused on collaborative approaches to Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR).

Each group of students learned through collaboration with the stakeholders in the community. They were involved in community assessment, priority setting for health problems, planning projects, implementation projects and activities, and evaluation of health promotion projects. At the conclusion of the course groups made presentations and handed over the health promotion projects to the stakeholders in the community for continuing implementation and evaluation.

The requirements for nursing students in each group were as follows:

- creating a community mapping of health and resources
- collecting health data determinants for about 80 % of people for community assessment
- visiting chronically ill people at their homes at least 5 times for individual case study
- conducting a health assessment for students in a primary school
- providing health promotion program for school students
- producing a health exhibition for promoting health awareness for people in the community

During a relatively short period of time the nursing students learnt to develop partnerships with the five stakeholders in the community, the health care providers, community leaders, officers at district administration organisation, monks at the temple, and youths, so as to complete all requirements.

## Results and discussion

The reflections of participants in the project are as follows:

### **Reflections on CBPR:**

The importance of community-based nursing education is observed in the partnership between nursing education requirements and the community's needs (Van Ort & Townsend, 2000).

The reflections from participants are as follows:

*From students:* Many students commented that experiences in the community helped them to understand the concept and process of community health nursing which they did not understand when learnt in classes at the university. All students preferred to stay in the community rather than at a dormitory in the university, and this assisted in the building of closer links with the community. They made the following reflections:

*I love to work with people in this community. They helped us to understand trust and sincerity more than I expected and I think it's hard to find out in the other places...*

(Student no. 3)

*I will never forget these experiences about this community and Thai Dum culture...they seem like my family and I will be back to visit them again.*

(Student no. 5)

*From stakeholders:* The healthcare providers commented that university students should come and learn from people in the community to understand and join with people to improve better quality of life. Some of them reflected as follows:

*Students learned from the real life of people in community to understand the situation...why this patient didn't take medicine, why he didn't go to see the doctor at hospital....and how did he live in the wretched house with their family.....then how can we be an advocate for them... as the professional nurse in community.*

(Stakeholder no. 6, Health care provider)

*We feel very happy to work with nursing students for the better health of our community...I hope that the projects that we created will be last long forever....*

(Stakeholder no. 10, Community leader)

*If our people in this community are concerned about their health, for example, how to eat right, how to exercise appropriate, and how to control the mind to be happy, we can delete some illnesses. Nursing students and teachers who come to work in our community make us more aware of our health. However, the lifestyle of people is very hard to change.*

(Stakeholder no. 13, Head monk at the Buddhist temple)

### ***Reflections on cultural competency***

This study showed that the experiences of working in a community setting where the students had direct contact with the people of a different culture to the students lead them to an understanding of the culture in that community.

*From students:*

*When I wore Thai Song Dum dress in black skirt and blouse which was given to me by the family that I visited whose husband who suffered a stroke from hypertension, I felt like a part of this community. We are Thai Song Dum family and everybody accepted us as their daughters or nieces.*

(Student no. 8)

*I have never known that there are Thai Song Dum in this area...until I practice community health nursing... I'm so interested in the language and writing...I will tell my family about this experience....*

(Student no. 36)

*We were so glad to see people in community joined the activities that brought them together, for example...they brought several kinds of Thai Song Dum herbs from their home to plant in the Thai Song Dum's herbs garden at the temple for children to learn. We learned the benefits of these herbs from older people and monks. We made a book about Thai Song Dum's herbs. We also created a sign for the garden in Thai Song Dum language. The community leaders helped us to dig the ground for planting and making the hole for the sign. Every evening, some volunteer students from the school near the temple, happily run to help us water the plants in the garden.*

(Student no. 35)

*From stakeholders:*

*I hope that students can learn Thai Song Dum culture which is rare to find the next generation.... I so glad that our community still keeps good things for students to learn...*

(Stakeholder no. 13, Head monk at the Buddhist temple)

*...indeed...we won't give our Thai Song Dum clothes to others to wear, but in this case students seem like our family. So we can dress in Thai Song Dum for the health project exhibition. Actually, we will arrange a similar exhibition once a year in Thai Song Dum New Year which is in April...*

(Stakeholder no. 17, Community person)

*We never let other people see how to do the ritual of giving food for ancestors of our family. In this case, the teacher asked us to explain the Thai Song Dum culture for nursing students to understand our beliefs, our way of life. It is great benefit for nursing students when they work in hospital and community to understand individual's beliefs and lifestyle, not only his/her illness.*

(Stakeholder no. 14, Community leader)

## Conclusion

This study confirmed the model displayed in Figure 1. Nevertheless, the benefits of community projects such as this will not necessarily be sustained if they are only conducted for a short period of time. A high level of trust and mutual respect for culture diversity were established as a result of the continuous communication and recognition of benefits and outcomes of partnership work. The CBPR focusing on community involvement contributed to the process of cultural competence for nursing students and better health outcomes for people in the community.

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# The Effects of Active Learning in the Community Nursing Process

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## Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate students' active learning in terms of happiness, satisfaction, behaviour, and learning achievement. Forty-nine junior nursing students (46 females and 3 males) from the Faculty of Nursing, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University were involved.

Data were obtained through systematically recording observations after class, and in group discussions. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics and content analysis.

The main findings found that: a high happiness ranking put students in the top range for learning; satisfaction in the learning process was at a good level; and students were becoming more confident in discussions. The higher the students' happiness the more knowledge they gained from active learning. Moreover, they can achieve more through team work, team managing, problem solving, asking questions, expressing their perspectives, and understanding the main concepts in each step of the community nursing process.

## Introduction

Teaching by 'talking, informing and saying' cannot develop students to bring knowledge learnt in class to be put into practice effectively. From surveying university students in the subject Community Nursing we found that they lacked critical thinking ability because they are not able to analyse the needs of the local community. They need to know how to: conduct a survey; diagnose community needs; prioritise needs, and draft an effective project to solve the health issues in the community. The students thought that they needed greater emphasis on putting the process of community nursing into practice rather than just learning theory. Therefore, it was necessary to adjust the type of teaching strategy so that students could find information, and then understanding it by themselves (Bundit Tipakorn, 2007). It was considered necessary to redesign the teaching in the course Community Nursing to develop the students to be critical thinkers.

It was decided that students would learn through being presented with a case study. Firstly, students read the case study and then analysed and shared in groups some opinions about how to address the issues identified. Finally, students make presentations to the whole class based on group discussions, and conclude by keeping journals or logs.

## Objective and methodology

The objective of this research was to evaluate students' active learning in terms of happiness, satisfaction, behaviour, and learning achievement, in the community nursing process through the use of case studies. This research, 'The effects of active learning in the community nursing process', was done as classroom research in the subject Community Nursing.

Active learning is learning through actions so that students can gain knowledge through their own experiences. Active learning is more than just listening. Students must do things and simultaneously think about the work done and the purpose behind it so that they can enhance their higher order thinking capabilities. Active learning should transform students from passive listeners to active participants.

Forty-nine junior nursing students were participants in the study.

Data were collected from:

- Systematically recording observations after class is finished.
- Focus group discussions (interview guidelines were developed to assist).
- Evaluation forms to determine students' happiness, and satisfaction.

## Results and discussion

The results are described in three parts:

### Part I: *General data*

Most of the students are females (91.94%). They have an average GPA 3.05, with the majority of students falling between 2.50 and 3.49, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1. General data**

<b>General data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Sex		
Male	4	8.16
Female	45	91.84
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.00</b>
2. GPA		
> 3.50	2	4.08
3.00 -3.49	25	51.02
2.50 – 2.99	21	42.85
< 2.49	1	2.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Part II: *The level of active learning and satisfaction with the learning process in terms of happiness, satisfaction, learning behaviour, and achievement.***

The main results found that the happiness ranks of students were in the top level ( $\bar{x}=8.43$ , S.D.=0.82). Satisfaction with the learning process was at a good level ( $\bar{x}=7.98$ , S.D.= 0.43).

**Part III: *Lessons learnt***

The evaluation of the learning process found that all students understood the community nursing process better than when we used a lecture style. Active learning empowered students and they were successful in completing assignments by themselves. Moreover, students could achieve more through team work, team managing, problem-solving, and asking questions. They could express their perspectives and understanding of the main concepts in each step of the community nursing process.

Acknowledgement and praise from the instructor is important in the process of developing the students' confidence in participating in discussions.

It was found that if students are happy and contented they can gain more knowledge through active learning.

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# The Development of a 'Self-learning by Assignment' Strategy for Second-Year Accounting Students

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## Abstract

This research investigates the development of a self-learning by assignment strategy used in the Business English 2 course by second-year accounting students at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University.

The assignments consisted of finding 40 to 50 new technical words in book chapters and in homework exercises. A pop-up quiz and classroom activities were used to assess the students' ability to utilise English skills related to the content of each chapter.

The results indicated that homework exercises varied with a student's understanding of self-learning and their basic knowledge of English. Vocabulary development had a similar result. Students with less basic knowledge of English and students with a better basic knowledge of English could get full marks on vocabulary pop-up quizzes. The students said that they could learn new vocabularies by themselves, but in relation to homework exercises some of them still needed guidelines and motivation.

## Introduction

Understanding specific business related words and phrases is essential for students of accounting in a Business English course. To facilitate this understanding test exercises are conducted by the teacher for different levels and aspects of business subjects. Specific vocabulary for each exercise and an answer sheet are provided. Students are familiarised with key vocabularies before they commence the exercise. Each exercise is read out twice by the teacher and time is allowed for writing answers.

Experience of teaching the Business English 2 course confirmed the students had many problems such as: they found it very difficult to understand technical terms; they didn't like learning English language; they had trouble listening to English; they struggle with spelling and vocabulary; and they didn't understand Business English content. They usually achieved a Grade C or D. I always adjusted and developed strategies for teaching the Business English 2 course, but the students rarely reviewed the prepared sheet before study. They found it hard to discipline themselves to do homework, and they had a poor attitude to Basic English. They felt bored and didn't attend all the classes.

I thought that I could develop a self-learning by assignment strategy appropriate for second-year accounting students. Self-assessment is the process of looking at oneself in order to self-assess aspects that are important to one's identity. In practice, self-learning is manifested in the active monitoring and regulation of a number of different learning processes: the setting of, and orientation towards learning goals; the strategies used to achieve goals; the management of resources; the effort exerted; reactions to external feedback; and the products produced. Self-learning is one of the motives that drives self-evaluation, along with self-verification and self-enhancement.

## **Objective**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the development and implementation of self-learning by assignment as used by second-year accounting students in the Business English 2 course.

## **Literature review**

Over the last two decades, there has been a shift in the way teachers and researchers write about student learning in higher education. Instead of characterising it as a simple knowledge acquisition process based on teacher transmission, learning is now more commonly conceptualised as a process whereby students actively construct their own knowledge and skills (Barr and Tagg, 1995; De Corte, 1996; Nicol, 1997).

Students interact with subject content transforming and discussing it in order to internalise meaning and make connections with what is already known. Terms like ‘student-centered learning’, which have entered the lexicon of higher education, are one reflection of this new way of thinking. Even though there is disagreement over the precise definition of student-centered learning, the core assumptions are active engagement in learning, and learner responsibility for the management of learning (Lea, Stephenson and Troy, 2003).

Self-assessment is the process of looking at oneself in order to assess aspects that are important to one's identity. It is one of the motives that drives self-evaluation, along with self-verification and self-enhancement. Sedikides (1993) suggests that the self-assessment motive will prompt people to seek information to confirm their uncertain self-concept rather than their certain self-concept. At the same time people use self-assessment to enhance their certainty of their own self-knowledge. However, the self-assessment motive could be seen as quite different from the other two self-evaluation motives. Unlike the other two motives self-assessed people are interested in the accuracy of their current self-view, rather than improving their self-view. This makes self-assessment the only self-evaluative motive that could cause a person's self-esteem to be damaged.

Motivation is critical to the learning process. Without motivation it is very difficult for students to learn. There are four factors that can affect the motivation of students according to Keller (1983): relevance; interest; expectation; and satisfaction. A student's motivation can be increased if they consider the work to be relevant or if they are interested in it. Likewise, if they expect to succeed and/or feel satisfaction in their achievement it can be motivating. Unfortunately, students can also be de-motivated if they have problems with the work, if it is too hard, if they cannot meet the expectations, or if they have had a bad experience previously.

## **Methodology**

In this qualitative research the assignments used were:

- Finding 40-50 new words or phrases in each book chapter.
- Homework exercises.

The assessments used to measure achievement were:

- Pop-up quizzes.
- Classroom activities.

*First trial:*

- Ask students to find 20 new words or phrases and draw a picture of their meaning.
- Some students misunderstood the Thai meaning of the new word.
- Many students asked not to draw a picture as they thought it took too much time and some words could not be described in a picture.

*Second trial:*

- Asking students to find the meaning of 40 new words or phrases (no drawing required) and randomly chose 10 to 15 for a pop-up quiz.
- Students should demonstrate a business conversation in front of the class.
- Pre-test in the classroom every week to measure students' understanding of vocabulary and grammar.

## **Results**

General data: The samples comprised three classrooms of second-year accounting students who enrolled in the Business English 2 course. They studied every Friday in the morning or the afternoon.

### ***Results of development of self-learning by assignment strategy***

Before the start of the class students were required to sign a memorandum of understanding. I told them that the purpose of the activity was to develop their self-learning. The students were expected to read and review the assignment before coming to the class. Every week I would give an assignment to them to find 40-50 new words or phrases in each book chapter. Before starting the class I pre-tested the students' vocabularies. I reviewed what the students' learnt in the class using pop-up quizzes. I designed varied classroom activities and after the class I gave homework exercises.

*First trial*

The first trial of finding 20 new words or phrases and drawing a picture of their meaning was very effective for learning in other chapters. Some students made errors because they did not associate the new vocabulary with Business, because they were thinking of the common, direct meaning. The students said that they could not draw pictures as they thought it took too much time and some words could not be described as pictures.

*I felt difficulty to think about the word because I don't like Basic English. When I were young, all my grade of English were very low... memo of vocabulary is still less and couldn't recognised.*

Student 001

*I thought assignment for drawing the vocabularies is more homework exercise, on the other hand it helped learning other chapters more quickly.*

Student 002

*Teacher tried to tell the meaning of content twice and translate in Thai language. I saw high attempt of her I thought I must be learning by themselves and more self-learning with her assignment.*

Student 003

Observations and results recorded indicated that high potential students learn better and more quickly than low potential students. The high potential students completed all assignments and well understood the business content. I really wanted to engage the low potential students in a second trial.

#### *Second trial*

In the second trial I gave more assignments and was more critical of the students and their motivation to self-learning. I was very strict about homework and recorded the scores every week. My assignments were to find the meaning of 40 new words, no drawing required. I randomly chose 10-15 words for a pop-up quiz and required students to present a Business conversation in front of the class. I found the students attended better in the class. A pre-test every week measured the students' understanding of vocabulary and grammar.

I found that the students with less basic knowledge of English could still gain full marks on vocabulary pop-up quizzes, as did the students with a better basic knowledge of English. However, the development of vocabulary and homework exercises varied with the students' understanding of learning and their basic knowledge of English.

#### **Discussion**

There are diverse learning styles in the students. Some could learn vocabularies by themselves. Some needed guidelines or group sessions to do homework or practices. Many needed motivation to study English. Congruently the meaning of self-regulated learning is an active constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning, and monitor, regulate, and control their cognition, motivation, and behaviour, guided and constrained by their goals and the contextual features of the environment (Pintrich and Zusho, 2002).

Self-learning assignments in Business English and monitoring the students' interactions with the task and the outcomes generates internal feedback at a variety of levels. It is these comparisons that help the student determine whether current modes of engagement should continue as is, or if some type of change is necessary (Nicol and Macfarlane, 2006).

#### **Limitations**

Checking answers in homework exercises isn't continuing in the class because some students do not submit their homework exercises. I need to change the way of checking answers and provide more time for individual reflection.

#### **Conclusion**

It is necessary to consider the students' learning preferences and basic knowledge of English before they start learning Business English.

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## **The Awakening Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

The awakening classroom has two main principles based upon one of the nine virtues of Buddha: the application of the four ‘foundations of mindfulness’ (Satipatthana) which includes body, feeling, mind and mind-object; and the evaluation by the ‘four developments’ (Bhavana) which include physical, social, mental and wisdom.

Each of the four ‘foundations of mindfulness’ can be practiced in all teaching and learning activities in a classroom. It is argued that the classroom that continually applies the principles of the ‘foundations of mindfulness’ will enable both the learner and teacher to be ‘awakened’ together.

This action research project aimed to develop the state of holistic awakening of the students. It used qualitative and participatory research methodology composed of four steps: planning; learning and teaching; measuring and evaluating; and developing.

The research subjects were the learners and teacher of four classrooms studying ‘Religions and Peace’ in the first semester of the 2014 academic year.

The results revealed that the ‘awakening classroom’ actually occurred at different levels of being awakened. The level that was achieved depended on four factors: learner, teacher, leaning and teaching activities, and circumstances of the classroom.

### **Introduction**

Education as a transforming process, should integrate the dimensions of teacher, students, subject matter and body and mind together for individual, social and environmental welfare. The Buddha invited us to utilise his sermon on the four foundations of mindfulness which enabled the practitioner to attain enlightenment.

This research is an attempt to experiment with an alternative management of classroom through an application of the four foundations of mindfulness.

This research aimed to develop the state of holistic awakening of the learners and teacher of four classroom studying ‘Religions and Peace’ at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, Thailand.

## **Definitions**

*Awakening* (Buddha in Pali) involves:

1. viewing self and surroundings as they are, which is the awareness of the acting, feeling and thinking of oneself and that of classmates;
2. being able to learn from all surroundings, which is the connection of the subject with one's own career and living; and
3. having a positive attitude and behaviour toward all, which is the appreciation of and creative responses toward oneself, surroundings and classmates.

*Foundations of mindfulness* (Satipatthana in Pali) means the four bases of mindfulness, namely: body and movement (which is learning activities); feeling; thinking; and the present state (which is the subject or knowledge).

*Developments* (Bhavana in Pali) means the four developmental dimensions of the Satipatthana-based practice, namely:

- physical: health, ability, personality and environment;
- moral: rule and norm, morality, good friendship, and sharing and learning;
- mental: happiness, loving kindness, aspiration and concentration; and
- wisdom: realisation, application, integration and innovation.

*Deliverance* (Vimutti in Pali) means the five developmental levels, namely:

- passive, ready to receive;
- active, ready to respond;
- selective, making the best decision;
- integration, connecting everything together; and
- innovation, developing new content and/or structure.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The 176 students in four classrooms studying 'Religions and Peace' and the instructor, and the researcher in the first semester of the 2014 academic year were the participants in the study.

### *Tools*

The research tools were as follows:

1. The 'learning report' was used for noting each student's learning. It was composed of three parts: introduction (class preparation); middle (learning activities); and end for conclusion (reflecting the four dimensions of awareness).
2. An analysis form, used for: a) arranging the structure, process and components of the teaching and learning management; b) grouping the data according to four awakening

behaviors: physical, feeling, thinking and knowing; (c) four awakening results: individual, social, mental and wisdom; and (d) five awakening levels: passive, active, selective, integrative and innovative.

3. A synthesis form was used for compiling, linking, composing and reporting the analysed data.

### ***Tool construction***

There were six steps to build the tool as follows:

- Step 1: Review the body of knowledge relating to the awakening, and the teaching and learning management from the concerned literatures, Pali canon and Pali commentaries.
- Step 2: Analyse and synthesise the information obtained from Step1 into two parts, the awakening and the learning and teaching management.
- Step 3: Apply the body of knowledge obtained from Step 2, together with the Satipatthana-based awakening and the learning and teaching standards which complied with the Thailand Qualification Framework-3 (TQF-3) for the subject 'Religions and Peace'.
- Step 4: Construct the drafts of the three tools.
- Step 5: Edit those drafts in compliance with the results obtained from Step 4.
- Step 6: Use the tool for research.

### **Data collection**

There were three channels for collecting data as follows:

- Channel 1: Collect information from the learning reports sheets that the students had noted down for 15 weeks.
- Channel 2: Collect from the social media (Facebook accounts for each class) sharing between the instructor-students and students-students.
- Channel 3: Collect information from the students' subject report.

### **Results and discussion**

The results were as follows:

- Students were aware of the advantages and disadvantages toward oneself, others and principle of learning itself according to the principle of the path of success (Iddhipada) (Phra Dhammapitaka (P.A. Payutto, 2003; Wiwasukh, 2012).
- The instructor initially established conditions in the classroom suitable for awakedness and contemplation. The cycle of awakening then, consecutively occurred in compliance with the e process of correct views (Sammaditthi) (Phra Brahmaganabhon (P. A. Payutto, 2010).
- The four awakening behaviours occurred in the class:

- physically, knowing about one's own actions; what, with whom and how in the past, present and future;
- emotionally, knowing about the feelings;
- psychically, knowing about the thinking; and
- knowingly, knowing about the subject content; what, with whom and how (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 1996: 372-405).

The four awakening effects occurred in the class: 1) individually, as seen in the improvement in the learning and living activities; 2) socially, as in the generosity in the class and life; 3) mentally, in loving kindness and determination; and 4) in wisdom, understanding the relationship between all, ready to live and make advantage in all situations (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, 1996: 144-146).

Three of the five awakening levels occurred in the class i.e. passive, active and selective levels. The students were ready to perceive all from the instructor, to act and to select. The last two levels were yet to occur i.e. integration and innovative (Phra Brahmaganabhon (P. A. Payutto, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The awakening classroom resulted from the development of suitable surroundings and individual contemplation. It was an application of the Buddha's teaching about the four foundations of mindfulness which is the only way to attain enlightenment in class management. The key principle of class management is to be aware that the class should be human-centered, not subject-centered. The awakening classroom is possible in the former, but not the latter. This is because, the former is composed of mind i.e. feeling, thinking and wisdom which can be developed and awakened.

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# Developing a Health Vocabulary for Nursing Students Using Critical Thinking Processes

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this study was to investigate the use of a critical thinking process in the development of a health related vocabulary for forty-five students enrolled in the Health Promotion Nursing course at Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University.

Data were obtained from: an assessment of students basic English levels; journals containing articles on nursing related health promotion; weekly memo records of vocabulary showing that 60 new words had been recorded; and reflections based on critical thinking development used in classroom activities. A final examination was used to assess the students' new vocabularies.

It was found that the vocabulary development of the students varied with their critical thinking abilities and their ability to use English. Drawing images that represented words and memo recording were found to be excellent strategies to develop English vocabulary skills related to the content in health promotion nursing.

Reflections of the students indicated that they found the process exciting, it increased their love for learning English, and it could be useful to memorise vocabulary to understand the content of the health promotion course. The process of drawing pictures allowed wonderful ideas and thoughts related to content to emerge.

## **Introduction**

Interview data from three years ago indicated that first year nursing students had low basic English skills, although their high school English grades were good. They were unable to read nursing articles fluently, they struggled with pronunciation during conversation, and they had difficulties translating vocabulary related to health.

According to the curriculum plan, nursing students will be gradually introduced to core courses in nursing each year. Therefore, the courses that the students have to attend will involve technical terms and academic vocabularies in English which require a good basic knowledge of English. However, in their second year of study it was found that students still had a weak basic knowledge of English and were not motivated to gain knowledge. The previous course evaluation indicated that nursing students did not do the journal translation assignment the way it was intended. They used the Google translation program to translate the journal and copied the sentences without rewriting them or making them more understandable.

The objective of this study was to investigate the use of a critical thinking process, based on an active learning model, in the development of a health related vocabulary of forty-five students enrolled in the Health Promotion Nursing course.

### **Literature review**

Active learning is a model of instruction that focuses the responsibility of learning on learners. It was popularised in the 1990s by its appearance in the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Report (Bonwell & Eison 1991). The report outlined a variety of methodologies for promoting 'active learning'. The authors cited literature which indicated that to learn students must do more than just listen: they must read, write, discuss, or be engaged in solving problems. In particular, students must engage in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Active learning engages students in two aspects, doing things and thinking about the things they are doing (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). In an active learning environment learners are immersed in experiences within which they are engaged in meaning-making inquiry, action, imagination, invention, interaction, hypothesising and personal reflection Cranton (2012).

Vocabulary retention has been defined as 'the ability to recall or remember things after an interval of time. In language teaching, retention of what has been taught (e.g. grammar rules and vocabulary) may depend on the quality of teaching, the interest of the learners, or the meaningfulness of materials used (Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

In vocabulary learning, the problem is not just in learning second language words, being able to remember them is essential. Bahrick (1984) states that how well people remember something depends on how deeply they process it. Therefore, various procedures have been recommended to facilitate vocabulary retention. Concentration on features of the new word and its contextual environment is supposed to facilitate retention. Learning in context depends on repeating, re-cycling, and re-presenting vocabularies as well as re-noticing them by the learner. It has been suggested by Hedge (2000) that retention is related to the condition in which the meaning is inferred and the greater the level of analysis involved, the better the retention.

There is another aspect of inferring meaning of words which enhances vocabulary retention. That is, retention depends in some way on the amount of mental and emotional energy used in processing a word. Readers use certain strategies that could assist emotional and mental processing such as meta-cognitive strategies. Critical reading strategies might be another option for boosting the level of mental and emotional involvement of learners with the word meaning. Readers should try to analyse the author's values and beliefs and evaluate them against their own.

Jiang (2004) asserted that adult L2 learners could draw on the mature conceptual and lexical systems of their native language (L1), in part because target vocabulary items usually have corresponding words in L1. It has been suggested that if target vocabulary items are provided with equivalent pictures and written annotations the new words can be learned more efficiently. The creation of images while one reads a text serves as an aid to understanding

and remembering (Sadoski, Goetz, & Kangiser, 1988). Individuals asked to create mental images of events described in sentences learn two to three times as much as those who just read the sentences aloud.

In addition to the various vocabulary-teaching strategies used in this study the ESL proficiency levels of individual students need to be taken into consideration. That is, whereas pictures and L1 equivalents and controlled fill-in tasks are more appropriate at the beginning and intermediate levels, less controlled tasks such as compositions and retellings may be more suitable for the advanced level students.

The creation of images while one reads text serves as an aid to understanding and remembering. Individuals asked to create mental images of events described in sentences learn two to three times as much as those who just read the sentences aloud (Anderson & Freebody, 1981). The images serve as one of the codes in dual coding theory.

### **Research methodology**

Data were obtained through the students' English test results from the University's Language Centre. Other data came from the students' utilisation of nursing journals related to health promotion, the new vocabulary each week, and the students' log which reflected critical thinking development from classroom activities. A mid-term and final examination were used to assess the students' new vocabularies.

The research cycles were:

#### *1. First cycle*

The assignment was to find articles about health promotion from the *Journal of Nursing*. The students were required to find at least 60 new words throughout the course. Each week, they had to translate at least four new words and write down what they had learnt. Their vocabulary development would also be assessed throughout the course by pop-up tests, and mid-term and final examinations. Many students stated that they would not be able to remember the new vocabulary after the examination. The technique then had to be adjusted.

#### *2. Second cycle*

The 'drawing picture of vocabulary meaning technique' was used in this cycle. A few students asked not to draw pictures as they thought some words could not be described in a picture. A drawing contest was used as a motivation tool and there was a reward for the best descriptive pictures.

### **Results**

The results will be described in three sections: general student data; critical thinking; and picture drawing.

## ***General data***

The sample was comprised of 45 second year nursing students, 43 females and 2 males, with average GPA between 2.75-3.78 (as shown in Table 1).

**Table 1. General data**

<b>General data</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Sex		
Male	2	4.44
Female	43	95.56
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.00</b>
2. GPA		
>3.50	10	22.22
3.49-3.00	28	62.22
2.99-2.50	7	15.56
<2.49	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## ***Critical thinking processes in the development of a health related vocabulary***

The critical thinking processes had two cycles:

### *1. First cycle*

From observing and assessing the students' behaviour and their reactions to learning English, it was shown that students had an enthusiasm to do the given assignment but had a little knowledge of basic English.

Assessment: The assignment was to find a research article about health promotion from the *Journal of Nursing* and submit it to the instructor for approval. Most of the students chose articles about illnesses and diseases which did not deal with the focus of the course on health promotion. It was necessary to post examples of health promotion articles on LMS and Facebook. After identifying an appropriate article, the students had to:

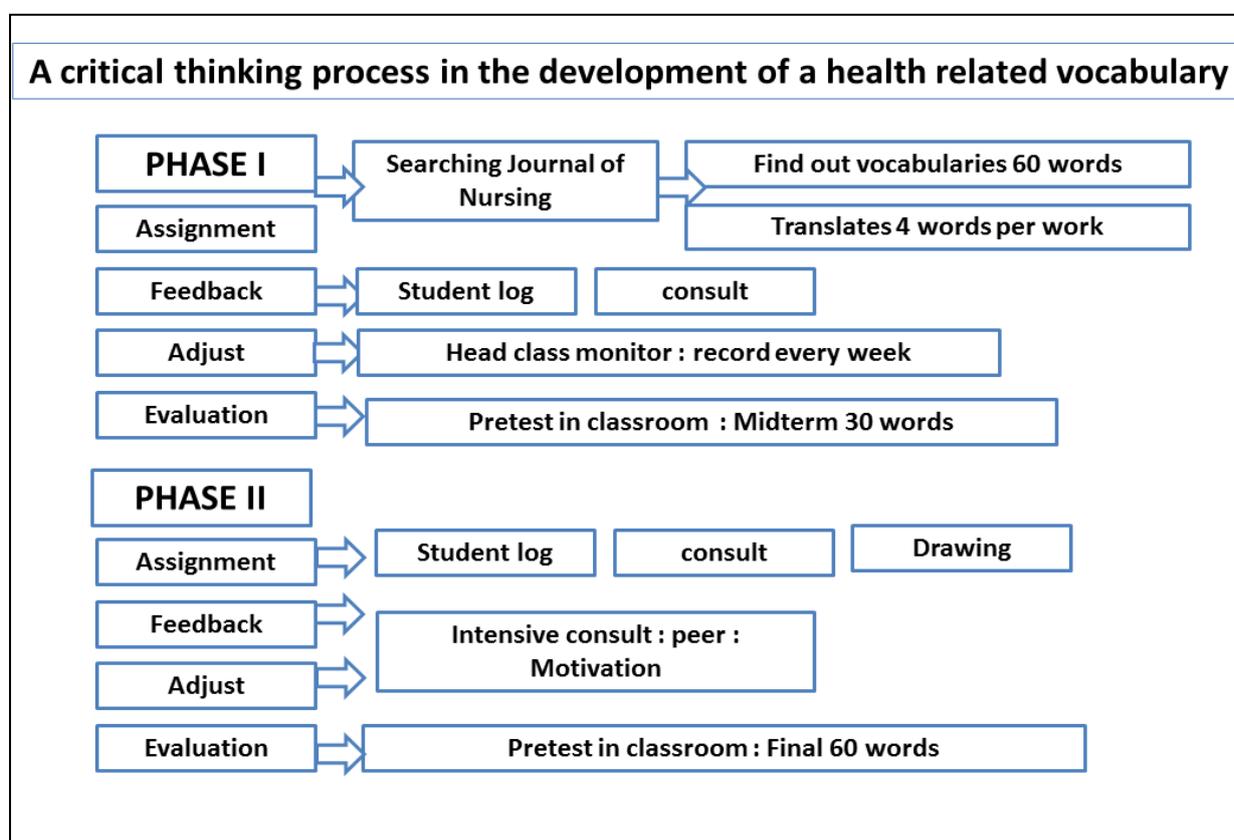
- Find four new words per week (60 words throughout the course);
- Give the Thai meaning of each word by drawing a picture and recording the word, its meaning, and the picture in their diary;
- Submit their diary to the lecturer every week;
- Vocabulary knowledge was tested each week during classroom activities; and in the mid-term examination (30 words).

Students reflected that they were unable to memorise their new vocabularies after class. Some of them mentioned that the drawing technique was time consuming and

some words could not be described as pictures, but the mid-term examination results showed otherwise, as many of the students' scores were above 80 percent.

## 2. *Second cycle*

The drawing contest was used as a motivator to encourage the students to participate more in the learning process. A reward would be given to the best picture. This was determined through a vote of the students. This technique revealed that the students could recall the vocabulary meaning better, even so, there was one student who was unable to describe the meaning of new vocabulary as a picture. A peer sharing technique was adopted for this student to assist them to convert the word to a picture. The final examination results were impressive as the scores were above 93 percent.



### The lesson learnt

It was found that the vocabulary development of the students varied with critical thinking abilities and their ability to use basic English. Drawing images that represented words and the students' log were found to be excellent strategies to develop English vocabulary skills related to the content in health promotion nursing.

Ninety-three percent of students passed the vocabulary final examination. Reflections of the students indicated that they found the learning process was interesting and increased their

enthusiasm to learn English. Also it could be useful to memo all vocabulary to understand the content of the health promotion course. They were able to identify their own ability in vocabulary development when they looked at other students' memos. They emerged with varied critical thinking abilities which assisted their use of new English words. The strategies of drawing images and concepts of words facilitated new vocabulary acquisition as did memo recording. It was found that the assignments were excellent strategies to develop students' English vocabulary skills as they were related to health promotion nursing.

## **Discussion**

The effectiveness of the approach adopted in this study is reflected in the results that ninety-three percent of students passed the vocabulary final examination. As in language teaching, retention of what has been taught may depend on the quality of teaching, the interest of the learners, or the meaningfulness of the materials (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Reflections of the students indicated that they found the process exciting, it increased their love for learning English, and it could be useful to memorise vocabulary to understand the content of the health promotion course. The process of drawing pictures allowed wonderful ideas and thoughts related to content to emerge.

## **Suggestions**

As a result of this study it is suggested that the following points be considered:

1. Promote critical thinking processes in the development of a health related vocabulary in other nursing classroom practices and student learning situations.
2. Enable opportunities to apply various active teaching strategies and skills within the critical thinking model to develop a health related vocabulary.
3. Promote successful collaborative professional development in classroom pedagogy across a range of school subject areas.
4. Engage students more actively and directly in their own learning and classroom activities.
5. Instructors should convey results to academic committees of faculty so evaluation of language skills becomes part of the nursing curriculum.

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# Promoting Physical Education Student Teachers' Achievement Motivation in a Learning Management Course

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## **Abstract**

Achievement motivation is an important factor in determining a learner's success. It can inspire learners to try hard in their learning. It is suggested that the higher the achievement motivation of learners, the more the learner will be successful. Achievement motivation characteristics include a clear learning goal, an awareness of the benefits of learning, a sense of responsibility, and an awareness of the role of effort to reach desired goals.

Some concepts that can be applied in the design of learning activities to promote students' learning achievement could be: goal setting and increasing the students' desire for success; the provision of appropriate lesson and learning materials; a learner-centered teaching approach; good interactions in the classroom; the provision of feedback; and learning empowerment.

The above concepts were used to plan 15 lessons for the 67 student teachers who enrolled in the Learning Management course. At the end of the course, the students were asked to complete a self-evaluation questionnaire about any changes in their achievement motivation strategies.

## **Introduction**

Achievement motivation is an important factor in a learner's success. Achievement motivation consists of the need for success, the probability of success, and the value of the success task (Atkinson, 1964). Learners should have high achievement motivation to be successful in their learning at all levels.

In the teacher education curriculum at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, the Learning Management course is a compulsory course for all students. In this course, they learn about basic concepts of teaching and learning management before going into depth in their major teaching subject.

Generally, it is claimed that Physical Education student teachers tend to pay more attention to their major subject than other academic courses. This will have an effect on their learning achievement motivation. At the start of the course some undesirable behaviours were noted with Physical Education students, such as coming to class late, talking in the class, and late submission of required assignments. When students' needs were assessed at the first week of the semester, it was found their grade average points were between 2.0 and 2.9 out of 4.0. They informed me that they would like to develop their personality, self-confidence and communicative skills. This showed that they still would like to be successful in their learning. As the teacher I decided that I should provide more effective lessons to support and promote their achievement motivation.

From a related literature review, it was noted that there are several ways to promote achievement motivation based on behaviouristic theory and humanistic theory. Different theories suggest different approaches can be applied in the classroom to such areas as teaching methods, activities, techniques, materials, and also classroom management.

### **Research objectives**

Observations and personal reflections led to the following research questions:

1. What type of classroom activity can promote students' achievement motivation?
2. What are the results of the designed activities on students' achievement motivation?

### **Theoretical background**

#### ***What is motivation?***

Generally, motivation is defined as a feeling or need to apply effort to achieve a goal successfully (Henson & Eller, 1999; Eggen & Kauchak, 2004). Motivation can be influenced by internal and external factors, depending on the applied theory. Cognitive theory and humanistic theory focus on internal factors such as the need for success, the task value and so on, but behaviourist theory focuses on external factors such as praise, feedback, and reward. Students with strong or high motivation tend to be self-reliant, responsible for their actions, take calculated risks, plan prudently, are self-confident, persist on difficult tasks and conserve time (de Charms, 1976 cited in Henson and Eller, 1999, p. 378).

#### ***Learning theories and motivation***

*Behaviourist learning theory* suggests that a student's achievement motivation is partially influenced by classroom incentives and it can be increased, decreased, maintained and extinguished by external consequences (Henson & Eller, 1999, p. 373). However, the need to perform well occurs in order to obtain reinforcement or to avoid punishment. So according to behaviourist theory motivation is influenced from outside. This is called extrinsic motivation, and involves rewards, good grades, social pressure, feedback, praise, and even punishment.

*Cognitive learning theory* suggests that students exhibit motivation when attempting to perform well on something because of interest, curiosity, desire to understand, and need to obtain information. This is called intrinsic motivation (Henson & Eller, 1999, p. 376). However, there are some sub-theories in this approach such as attribution theory, achievement motivation theory, and social cognition theory (Henson and Eller, 1999). Eggen & Kauchak (2004) suggested that there are many cognitive theories of motivation including expectancy-value theory, self-efficacy theory, goal theory, attribution theory and self-determination theory. These theories focus on the relationship between success, failure, locus of control, level of motivation, and the nature of learning tasks.

*Humanistic learning theory* focuses on students' attempts to fulfill their total potential as human beings (Eggen & Kauchak, 2004, 350). Students take pride and satisfaction in their own work and accomplishments. The main concepts associated with motivation in this theory emphasise Maslow's need theory. Maslow emphasises an individual's physiological and psychological needs including safety needs, love needs, and need for self-esteem and self-actualisation. A person should satisfy a need at a lower level before aspiring to a higher level need. Students are more eager to learn in an environment that is comfortable and secure, both physiologically and psychologically.

### ***Classroom motivation and classroom application***

Since motivation can influence student's learning achievement it should be applied in the classroom at all educational levels. Some suggested applications are as follows:

- *Behaviourist theory perspectives* establish clear and explicit classroom rules. Expect the best of students' work, establish an appropriate social and academic atmosphere in the classroom, minimise failure, express best wishes and concern in relation to students' behaviour and learning, and provide various reinforcements and punishments.
- *Cognitive theory perspectives* suggest a variety of assignments at different cognitive levels. Assignments should: match the student's ability, motivation and interests; promote personal responsibility for performances; show appreciation for a student's work and recognise accomplishments; provide group leaning and practice activities; give students some autonomy to work and learn; determine an evaluation procedure appropriate to learning objectives; arouse students' curiosity; and make use of novelty lessons.
- *Humanistic theory perspectives* (Woolfolk, 2004, p. 383) require a supportive teacher who makes tasks worthwhile for the student: build confidence and positive expectations by beginning work at the students' level; make clear, specific and attainable learning goals; focus on self-comparison; show the value of learning by connecting the learning task to student need; make fun learning tasks; explain connections between present learning and later life; help students stay focused on the task by modeling motivation to learn; avoid heavy emphasis on grading; provide opportunities for students to create a finished product; reduce task risk without oversimplifying the task; and share the completed work in pairs or small groups.

From the literature review, some concepts and guidelines for classroom applications were chosen and synthesised into six concepts for this research. They are:

1. Asking the students to set their learning goals and write about a role model in the teacher profession.
2. Providing lessons and assignments that are appropriate to the student level.
3. Providing a variety of learner centered activities and leading them to learn through practice, and from other students in the group.
4. Giving respect to students, accepting their ability, providing opportunities for the students to respond.
5. Providing feedback on assignments, and use praise and rewards.
6. Providing learning empowerment, by making students feel more confident in their ability, and communicate that academic ability is improvable.

These concepts have been applied in designing learning activities as in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Learning activities designed using six main concepts**

Main concepts	Alternative activities
1. Learning goal setting and desired success based on role model.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drawing a picture of their goal in the teaching profession.</li> <li>2. Write an essay about an admired teacher and ways to improve oneself.</li> <li>3. Discuss a successful person who graduated in the Physical Education field.</li> </ol>
2. Simplify the lessons and learning materials.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide hand out, work sheet and exercises.</li> <li>2. Use IT materials: Teacher TV programs and other teaching videos.</li> </ol>
3. Student centered approach.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Practice CIPPA, co-operative and other teaching models.</li> <li>2. Group discussion.</li> <li>3. Self-study.</li> <li>4. Teaching practice.</li> <li>5. Classroom observation.</li> </ol>
4. Promote good relationship/interaction in the classroom.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sharing study results in small groups.</li> <li>2. Group working.</li> <li>3. Class room attendance record.</li> <li>4. Using song/game.</li> <li>5. Asking questions, some small talk.</li> </ol>
5. Feedback precision.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grading assignments.</li> <li>2. Positive feedback.</li> <li>3. Extra score for expected behaviour.</li> </ol>
6. Learning empowerment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-reflection.</li> <li>2. Self-evaluation.</li> <li>3. Self-improving plan.</li> <li>4. Lesson learnt and journal writing.</li> <li>5. Mid-term and final test.</li> </ol>

### **Research methodology**

The target group was 67 second year teacher students in the Physical Education program who enrolled in the Learning Management course in second semester in 2013.

The Kemmis and McTaggart's PAOR (Plan, Act, Observe, Reflection) cycle of action research was applied. This research was conducted according to four steps as follows:

Step 1. **Plan**, 15 lesson plans based on 6 concepts of motivation promoting teaching materials such as hand outs, content sheets, assignment sheets and a self-evaluation form were prepared.

Step 2. **Act**, 15 lesson plans and teaching materials were devised for practice in the classroom 4 hours each week for 15 weeks.

Step 3. **Observe**, qualitative data in the form of classroom behaviour observations, reflections in journal writing, and quantitative data such as assignment gradings, and mid-term and final test results were collected.

Step 4. **Reflection**, discussion activities after the class and at the end of the course, and journal writing were scheduled.

### Results of data analysis

According to the students' evaluations, the designed activities based on the six concepts could promote students' learning achievement motivation at different levels.

The following designed activities could promote students' achievement motivation at the highest level.

Designed activities	Mean	S.D.
1. Classroom teaching practice	4.65	0.60
2. In-class interaction	4.64	0.56
3. Recognition of students	4.62	0.53
4. Students' concerns	4.57	0.50
5. Classroom observations	4.56	0.64

The results of comparing arithmetic mean of students' motivation level before and after the course were as follows:

Learning achievement motivation	Mean	S.D.
Before the course	3.64	0.79
After the course	4.46	0.62

Percentage of change was 22.39%

Students reflected that the learning activities could promote their learning willingness, assist them to have clearer learning goals, improve their personalities, assist them to be more confident and have better communication skills, and have a good chance to practise teacher profession skills.

### Findings

The six concepts could be applied in designing classroom activities for promoting achievement motivation. The designed activities could increase students' achievement motivation at 22.39 percentage of change when comparing the motivation scores before and after the course.

### Discussion

This research presented the effects of designing activities based on learning theories for student teachers' achievement motivation. Findings were positive due to the following factors:

1. The activities were carefully designed and based on learning theories. Considered were: praise and feedback taken from behaviourist theory; learning through practice, establishing goals for success and role modeling taken from cognitive theory; and positive interaction among students taken from humanistic theory.

2. A learner centered approach was applied in designing the classroom activities. Then a variety of activities including individual work, paired work, and small group work were applied to meet the students' different abilities.
3. Maslow's need theory was applied to pay attention, give feedback, and support for students' improvement both in academic and social behaviour. This made students feel good and encouraged them to try hard to improve.

## **Conclusion**

As achievement motivation is an important factor in learning success, teachers should realise this and try to promote student motivation continuously. Various teaching/learning activities that are based on learning theories can promote student motivation and assist students to meet goals successfully. Students' success will directly point to quality teaching and education.

The alternative activities that are presented in this research are some examples that can be applied in the classroom to increase students' achievement motivation. Teachers can design other activities that are suitable for students and the context of their classrooms. These activities will help teachers improve their teaching, and benefits from improved teaching will impact positively on the teaching profession as a whole.

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# **Developing Attitudes of Nursing Students towards the Volunteer Spirit through Extra-curricular Activities**

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## **Abstract**

A volunteer spirit is a virtue that society expects from members that engage in a nursing career. The positive attitude of students towards volunteering is a significant characteristic that leads to a successful career in nursing.

This research aimed at establishing extra-curricular activities to help to develop a volunteer spirit in nursing students. Ninety-five nursing students were required to be involved as volunteers by taking general care of patients in a provincial hospital, taking care of the elderly at various homes, and assisting health volunteers to assess members of communities.

Through group discussion, all students were asked to identify their areas of activities, and reflect on their experiences and attitudes as related to the volunteer spirit.

The findings revealed the positive attitude towards the volunteer spirit that the nursing students experienced after participating in the various activities. All of the participants were satisfied with the extra-curricular activities. It was shown that the nursing volunteer spirit helped promote self-esteem, empathy and altruistic behaviour.

## **Introduction**

A volunteer spirit is one of the virtues that society expects from the members of society involved in service sectors especially those that undertake a nursing career. A volunteer spirit is the realisation of wishing to offer to do something to serve others in society, in terms of giving without repayment, and being happy to do activities without harm to others. Volunteering appears to play a positive role in any society and is also expected as part of Thai culture. The Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University mission is to produce graduates to serve the local community. Therefore, it has encouraged and promoted students to have a volunteer spirit and to help with the development of the local community.

The Thai concept of volunteer spirit is developed on knowledge, self-esteem, social experience, training and interacting with people or society (Wattradul, Khasemophas, Lerwitworapong, Sombatkaew, & Thitisak, 2012; Wanchaitanawong, Thanasuwan, & Pipatthanawong, 2008).

In order to achieve the mission of the University, the Nursing Faculty aims to produce graduates with knowledge, skills and virtues coupled with both ethical and moral behaviour. The nursing curriculum at the University includes the elective subject 'give for life', related to the volunteer spirit shown by students. The various activities in the subject may be coupled

with other curricular and extra-curricular activities which also are benefiting both nursing students and the university mission generally.

### **Research question**

The research objectives were to develop the volunteer spirit of nursing students by way of promoting empathy, self-esteem and altruistic behaviour, through extra-curricular activities.

The research question was:

How does establishing extra-curricular activities affect attitudes towards the volunteer spirit of nursing students?

### **The project**

The volunteering project was launched during April 2012 and concluded in June, 2012 and was conducted at the Nakhon Pathom Provincial Hospital and in the communities of Watsatian, Wang Taku, and Srakatiem. Prior to the project, students were given relevant explanations and information. The identity of individuals was kept confidential. Students had the right to refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the project at any time without having to provide a reason, and with no adverse effect to their welfare.

### **Implementing the project**

There were three main stages in implementing the project.

#### 1. Preparing stage

After the meeting and delegating tasks for the researchers and the target group, the researchers co-ordinated with stakeholders such as nurses, health personnel, health volunteers and community leaders.

#### 2. Practising process

- The researchers divided 95 participants into four groups. Each volunteer group consisted of 9 first year students and 14 or 15 of the second year students, and a nursing instructor was assigned as a facilitator for each group. The participants were asked to complete the orientation class and each provided informed consent.
- The participants were involved in group discussions with both activities and responsibilities being assigned. They were asked to prepare materials and resources necessary for the relevant service activities. These materials and supplies were provided by the Nursing Faculty.
- The participants were assigned to provide general care in the provincial hospital, to provide general care for elderly at home, and to assist health volunteers in various communities to assess needs including preparation of community maps. Each participant needed to complete activities in the hospital and community, the latter involving both the elderly and health volunteers.

#### 3. Evaluation process

The data were self administered by the students. Project satisfaction (involving questionnaires), and three focus groups were conducted at the end of the project. Group

discussions were recorded and transcribed, and themes were identified through content analysis. The quantitative data analysis was undertaken through descriptive statistics.

## **Methodology**

### ***Research design***

This study used a research approach utilising quantitative and qualitative approaches.

### ***Instruments for collecting data***

The Project Satisfaction Questionnaire contained ten items with a five-level Likert rating scale. The scores ranged from 0 to 5 indicating very poor through to strong satisfaction. It was decided that a mean score of over 4.5 would indicate that students were very satisfied with the project.

Open questions were used in the group discussion, including three main questions as follows:

- How many of you have ever volunteered your time to help somebody else?
- What are the activities you have done?
- How do you feel after taking such action?

## **Results and discussion**

The questionnaire was submitted to 95 participants and 87 questionnaires were returned. The confidentiality and human rights of the participants were protected at all times. Eight students were unable to complete the activities, and were therefore excluded. Finally, the sample size was 87 participants.

### ***Characteristics of the students***

The mean age of the students was 20.03 years of age, and most of them were female (95.40%). Thirty four students (39.08%) were from the first year and fifty three (60.92%) from the second.

### ***Student satisfaction with the project***

The participants' satisfaction with the project was 4.88 out of 5 on the rating scale. 84 participants (96.55%) were satisfied at the strongest satisfaction level. The items of most satisfaction for participants included: being happy to do activities; having a chance to give without receiving payment; and receiving facilitation from researchers and stakeholders.

### ***Extra-curricular activities***

Extra-curricular activities were divided into the community and hospital activities as follows:

#### ***The community activities***

Three focus groups were conducted with 29 participants each time. Participants were involved with extra-curricular activities including primary health assessment, assisting the health volunteers to assess the community needs and drawing a community map in this regard, home visiting, cleaning houses, environmental management, sharing and listening to stories, assisting the elderly to do activities involved with daily living and cooking, encouraging family members to grow herbs, computer training, and so on.

### *The hospital activities*

Extra-curricular activities in the hospital included helping guests and relations with information, transferring patient cards and taking them to the various points of service, taking care of dietary needs, patient cleaning needs, environment and bedside management, recreation with sick children, and so on.

### ***Attitude towards the volunteer spirit***

It was found that the attitude towards the volunteer spirit as exhibited by the students was very positive. They felt happy to do helpful activities, without harming others and were pleased to have a chance to give without receiving repayment. All of the participants reflected a positive attitude towards volunteering, and some of the statements provided were as follows:

*I feel happy to taking care of sick children in the outpatients' recreation room. The children and the parents seem to be relaxed when they had someone assisting. I believe this is a chance to give without payment.*

(Student no. 11 told in the group discussion)

*I feel good, very much. I had a chance to practise giving without payment. Thank you very much for doing this project.*

(Student no. 8 told in the group discussion)

### ***Volunteer spirit results***

Volunteer spirit results took into account three themes including empathy, self-esteem and altruism. The results took cognisance of the activities and the experiences during the students' times in the hospital, homes, and in the community generally.

#### *Empathy*

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. Some of the participants told about their feelings as follows:

*There were a lot of services to be done and people did not know what to do, how to do and where the service section is located even when they have the direction. If I were a service staff I will help them to decrease their discomfort by giving clear information and providing someone to assist them.*

(Student no. 21 told in the group discussion)

*When I went to take care of the elderly at home, I found that seniors do not communicate fluently. They would like to do daily activities quickly but cannot, that made them feel unhappy. The elderly physical conditions are unfavorable. From this lesson gained more understandings of elderly feelings and will help them when I have a chance.*

(Student no. 1 told in the group discussion)

*Working in the community is very discomforting, during daytime the weather is very hot, but we need to interview and draw the community map. Some house has a dog that harm to us.*

*The rough road in the community hurt our feet. Right now I exactly understand difficulties the health volunteers faced.*

(Student no. 56 told in the group discussion)

### *Self-esteem*

Self-esteem is as the evaluation that individuals make and customarily maintain with regard to themselves. It expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval towards one's self (Rosenberg, 1965). The participants reflected their self-esteem including being satisfied with themselves as follows:

*While starting to do activities in different places, I feel that the activities are beneficial even when I feel tired and so hot, but when I saw the elderly people happy that makes me happy too. I was thinking of my grandparents at my home town, so I assisted them with cleaning house and cooking as I did at my home town. I love to have this opportunity and like to have the younger generation or junior nursing students to do the same for next year. On the whole, I am satisfied with the activities and myself.*

(Student no. 1 told in the group discussion)

*I am satisfied with myself that can calm down my feelings. I had assisted an elderly patient to go to a laboratory at the outpatient department of the hospital. She was very worried about blood test and me too. I am a first year student and this was the first time for me to go to the blood test room. It scared me. Exactly, I was being in the room with supported elderly and able to do these as well as other students.*

(Student no. 87 told in the group discussion)

*I do have much to be proud of our group. We assisted the health volunteer to complete the community survey questionnaires and also complete the community map. We took four days to draw and colored it. The head of the health care centre gave a reward for a very nice map. It made me feel that I possessed a number of good qualities.*

(Student no. 12 told in the group discussion)

### *Altruism*

Altruism was defined as the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others (Hoffman, 1981, p. 124). Altruism is determined by two criteria: the exclusiveness with which behaviour is directed toward benefitting others, as opposed to the self, and the amount of benefit intended in an act (Krebs, & Hesteren, 1994, p. 104). The participants reflected their altruistic beliefs as follows:

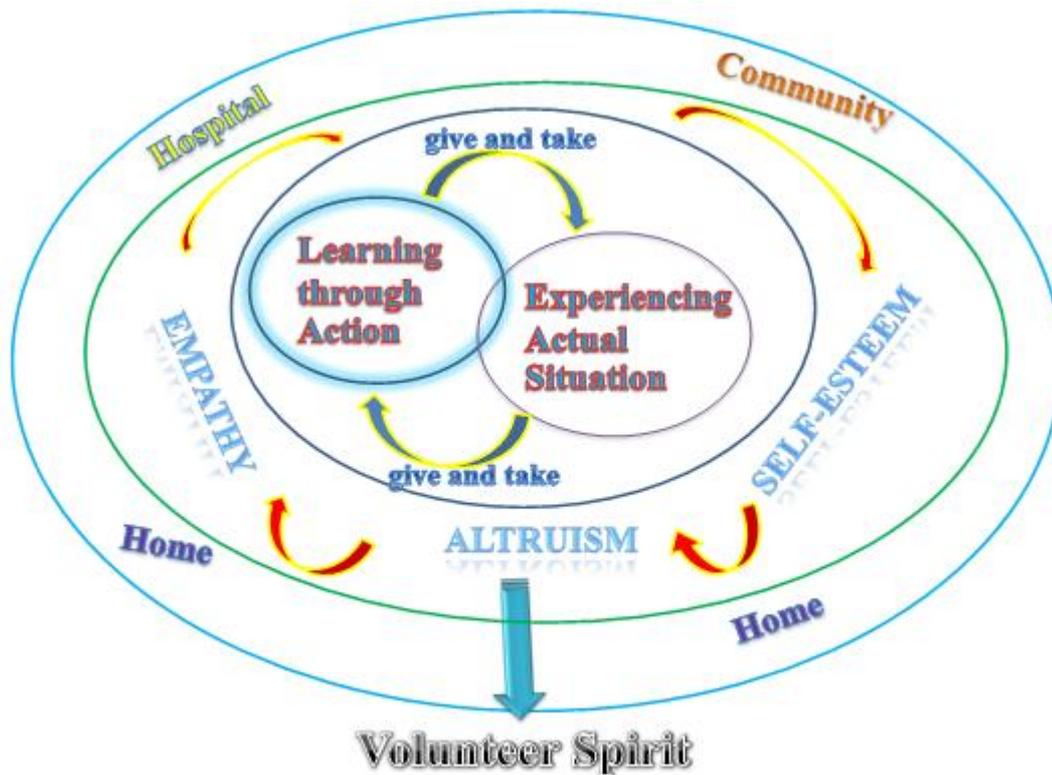
*During the summer break, I would like to visit my parents in my home town, but you asked me to join the activities, as a volunteer. With my honest, I did not like to join. It was a time to relax after I studied hard for a whole semester. My friends said that these activities can reflect our university mission, volunteering and community development, then I decided to engage with the program. However, after finishing the project I am very proud of our faculty that can make elderly to be happy.*

(Student no. 34 told in the group discussion)

*The outpatient department nurse told me that she very grateful to our group members in term of sharing time to be a volunteer. In general, teenagers like to spend time at the shopping mall, cinema, or computer room, but we were being in the hospital with assisted staff to take care of patients.*

(Student no. 2 told in the group discussion)

As a result of this project, the researchers were able to develop a conceptual model of the volunteer spirit of nursing students as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: A conceptual model of the volunteer spirit of nursing**

### **Conclusion**

Extra-curricular activities such as volunteering at hospitals, in homes for the elderly and at community centres can act as a very healthy boost in assisting nursing students to develop empathy towards others, increase self-esteem for themselves, and develop altruistic behaviour generally. These activities can also promote a positive attitude towards the general spirit of volunteering.

Such extra-curricular activities should be part of the strategy to further develop the identity of nursing students in the Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat Nursing Faculty and foster the mission statement adopted by the University. The positive attitude received from participating in these activities could be used to great benefit during a student's future nursing career.

## ***Acknowledgement***

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# **A Solution to Motivating English Foreign Language Students Studying English Literature**

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## **Abstract**

Finding an effective way to motivate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to love literature can be challenging. As a way of facilitating the interest of second-year students in the course, An Introduction to Literature, I tried a task-like activity by asking them to create a special low-cost gift after studying the story, *The Gift of the Magi*, written by O. Henry.

The results seemed quite satisfactory since the students enjoyed showing off their creativity, their ability to apply communicative strategies in dealing with presentations, and they became keen on self-expression. The small game took just one class session but positively influenced students since they overcame the fear to learn the difficult subject. The activity has shown that teachers can create a suitable context to promote students' capacity in not only language use but also personal development.

## **The project**

While literature is widely considered a piece of art, fully comprehending a literary masterpiece is very difficult. Hence, teaching and learning literature in English is much more challenging to a number of EFL teachers and undergraduates in the Vietnamese context. My second-year students, in their sharing at the beginning of the course often confess their fear when they have no way to escape from a compulsory subject named, An Introduction to Literature. What should be done to release their stress?

It is not reasonable that the course be excluded from the syllabus. Actually, there are many good reasons for this subject to be included in the EFL four-year syllabus for English majors. It is beneficial to the learners' linguistic development since literary texts provide rich linguistic input in terms of grammatical structures and lexical resources. In addition to giving opportunities to practise the four communicative skills, literature can act as effective stimuli since learners are able to enhance their awareness of cultural differences, enrich their understandings of universal themes such as love, war and loss, as well as being able to express their independent critical thoughts.

Why do students feel stressed by the study of literature instead of being motivated? As many have complained, they have to struggle with the large amount of new vocabulary in long

reading texts to discover the true value or message of a story or a poem. Reading between lines is not as easy as doing multiple-choice questions in a reading classroom.

Students get nervous to confront not only obstacles of technical form and language, but also strange cultural contexts and different schools of criticism. Another problem is being afraid of not being able to read the instructor's mind for reasonable answers. Admittedly, in a traditional school system dominated by exam results, students are really under pressure to pass tests with high scores. Last but not least, they are not encouraged to develop intensive reading habits. They gain little joy out of spending time sitting at one place for hours reading something quite complicated. Fostering the love for literature among students, therefore, is a challenge for EFL teachers.

My ambition is to help students learn to love literature. Since I am not only an English language teacher but also responsible for teaching English literature, my main concerns are to inspire my students to love foreign literary works, to sharpen their critical thinking through reader-response lenses, as well as to absorb different living values.

I attempt to introduce my students to many valuable works and upgrade each lesson with some kind of extra activities to meet their needs as much as possible. In terms of analysing important elements of a fictional work, the course book includes various short stories, one of which is *The Gift of the Magi* by a famous American author, O. Henry. It tells the story of a poor young couple who sacrifice their most precious possessions to buy their beloved a special gift on Christmas Eve. Ironically, both of the expensive presents become useless. Whether we should call them the fools or the Magi is an interesting question that O. Henry sent to his readers.

I introduced a very simple activity to try to motivate my students. Previously, after applying formalism (a literary theory mainly dealing with structural purposes of a particular text) to comprehend the story, the class would start a discussion about different topics related to offering and receiving gifts, especially expectations associated with meaningful gifts. Some students would also be invited to act out a situation in order to show their talents in drama performances. To give them more food for thought, in this semester (at the end of 2015), I added another post-task activity.

As a part of the homework assignment, I required the 36 students to create a gift for the one they loved. The requirement was that the maximum cost of the gift would be no more than 40,000 Vietnam dong (less than \$2.00). This was the same amount that Della, the wife in the story, had before Christmas. The purpose was to encourage students to brainstorm for an interesting idea of sending true love messages without having to spend very much money. The gifts were supposed to be finished within one week and would be displayed in the coming class session. The gift makers would interpret the meaning of the gifts in front of the class, and a vote for the best one which satisfied the criteria of low cost, great creativity and value would receive a special gift from the teacher. Those who took part in this task were to be awarded 10% for their homework assignment.

The day came with 20 impressive presents orderly arranged on the tables in the middle of the class. Class members went around, observing and admiring each product by ticking a 'like' on the available evaluation sheet. There were so many creative ideas, from a photo frame made from hard paper, a greeting card decorated with dried flowers, a bunch of hand-made roses, a drawing of a beautiful sunset, a vase from a used bottle, a bracelet with names scripted, and so on. After 15 minutes, in front of the class, the owners clearly explained their 'gift stories' and answered any questions from the audience. It took about two periods for exchanging information and evaluating the 'price' of each gift. The class ended in a happy atmosphere when the winner shared his candy award as an expression of his great thanks to friends' votes.

## **Discussion**

Can such a follow-up activity act as a source of motivation to the scared learners? It was seen that not all class members participated in the extra activity because the time was so limited. Also, some students felt they were not skillful enough to design something special. Instead, they could go to a souvenir shop and easily decide a meaningful gift among various choices.

On the other hand, I appreciate the enjoyable time we had together. As mentioned before, the purpose of my teaching literature is not just focusing attention on the content and form of the literary work, but also on stimulating the active readers to reveal their text-related performance in creative ways. Taking the Personal Growth Model (Savvidou, 2004) into consideration, I have integrated quite successfully three factors to make literature an effective tool for language teaching and learning.

First, the story is seen as a cultural artefact to help learners understand the tradition of offering gifts among religious Westerners; second, the reading text itself is used as a focus for analysing literary devices; and finally, the story theme is the stimulus for personal growth activities. It is evident that the students were encouraged to connect their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in the text.

Both the participants and the audience underwent the feeling of expressing their deep love to the one they cared about. Gifts are not just for material values, but a wonderful sensory input to bring hearts closer together. Furthermore, giving more opportunities for students to tell their own life stories and responses brings them more confidence in public speaking skills. Last but not least, by comparing different items, students could improve some sub-skills related to critical thinking, persuading and problem-solving.

I learned from the gift design activity one appealing way that makes literature accessible to learners with different learning styles as well as contributing to their linguistic competence. It seems to me that there are many other interesting activities (either individual or teamwork) that can be used to motivate a literature class. It can be a kind of competition when students work in groups, creating a love song for such a topic. They can also depict any story by painting a page cover. Collecting famous quotations or similar stories in their native language

related to the themes can call for more participants because these activities look simple. It is certain that when there is a way to touch students' hearts, they will try their best to co-operate with their teachers, not really for marks but for self-evaluation.

Teachers and students, we both experience the win-win benefits. The extra tasks help learners develop linguistic knowledge and creativity along with stimulated social interactions. Likewise, instructors feel proud of their professional techniques to gain students' support. Therefore, I strongly recommend some productive activities to ELT teachers to assist their students to find literature motivating and to promote EFL learner-centredness.

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# Enhancing Learning Effectiveness through the Promotion of Student Satisfaction towards Learning Facilities

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## Abstract

This research was conducted to determine the correlation between student satisfaction and learning facilities for learning achievement. The correlation between the two variables is useful to see how learning facilities might be used as a tool to measure learning effectiveness. For that purpose, an instrument measuring students' satisfaction towards learning facilities has been developed and validated ( $r = 0.60$ ).

The research reveals that student satisfaction towards learning facilities and learning achievement are significantly correlated ( $r_{\text{obs}} 0.585 > r_{\text{tab}} 0.333$ ). In addition, students who are satisfied with the learning facilities get high scores of grade point average (GPA) ( $t_{\text{obs}} 4.147 > t_{\text{tab}} 1.697$ ).

## Introduction

In any educational institution good learning facilities appear to be an important pre-condition as far as student satisfaction is concerned. Decaying environmental conditions such as peeling paint, crumbling plaster, non-functioning toilets, poor lighting, and inadequate ventilation, can affect learning as well as the health and the morale of staff and students. Such conditions, in turn, might affect students' achievement (O'Sullivan, 2006).

There is little research dealing solely with the relationship between school facilities and student satisfaction in learning. Some however, have investigated school facilities focusing on building conditions in relation to other intermediate factors, such as a student's attendance, health, or behaviour, and related them with learning achievement (Cash, 1993; Chan, 1980 & 1996; Earthman, Cash & Berkum, 1995). Recent research data are showing that physical facilities are fundamentally important to both a student's attendance and achievement (Schneider, 2002). In addition, other aspects of college life such as an adequate number of staff and funds remain important to students.

Uka (2014) writes that satisfaction with physical facilities is important to note as far as learning achievement is concerned. Duran–Narucki (2008) reported that students studying in schools with poor facilities attended less days on average, and had lower scores on standardised tests in English language arts and mathematics. Similarly, Earthman (2002) claimed that students who received instruction in buildings with good environmental conditions achieve test scores up to 17% higher than scores for students in substandard buildings. In addition, Boese and Shaw (2005) who investigated school facilities and suspension due to students' health and attendance, reported that schools with better building conditions have up to a 14% lower student suspension rate.

With regard to the discussion above, some generic questions raised are:

1. What is meant by learning facilities?
2. What is satisfaction?
3. What is the mechanism that explains how learning facilities and satisfaction relate to achievement?

### ***Learning facilities***

‘Learning facilities’ refers to tools that can be used to perform, develop and or achieve learning goals (Arum, 2006). Similarly, Arikunto (1987) defined learning facilities as facilities needed and used during the teaching-learning process, so that the learning goals can be achieved in an orderly, smooth, effective and efficient kind of way. In line with these two definitions, there is a formal consensus commonly practised by secondary schools in Indonesia to define learning facilities. This is a legal requirement published in documents by the Directorate-General of Secondary Schools. In this regard, learning facility in general is defined as all facilities that support the whole teaching-learning process in order to achieve the learning goals as stated in the curriculum. This definition seems to limit the meaning of learning facilities to supporting tools in the process of learning to achieve learning goals.

Schlossberg (1989) stated that five criteria must be fulfilled as far as learning facilities and student satisfaction are concerned. These are:

1. Learning-orientedness
2. Learner-centeredness
3. Flexibility
4. Collaboration
5. Community-building

Learner centeredness focuses on student needs, preferences and work patterns. Flexibility means being responsive to the changing needs learners have for resources and support. Collaboration deals with the integration of different learning support areas in the college. Community-building relates to a hub or center for physical and virtual interaction for staff and students.

Based on the above criteria, learning facilities in this context is defined as tools or facilities that can be accessed by both students and teachers to support the learning process in such a way so as to ensure that learning goals can be achieved.

### ***Satisfaction***

To define student satisfaction in learning, it is possible to refer to a definition of consumer satisfaction in the field of marketing management. Satisfaction in this context can be defined as circumstances felt by a person who has experienced a performance that has fulfilled his/her expectations (Kotler & Clarke, 1987). It might be conceptualised as either an emotional or cognitive response (Giese & Cote, 2002). In addition, Loundon (1988) more specifically explains that satisfaction as a kind of stepping away from an experience of one or some similar performance and evaluating it. This definition explains that satisfaction is a holistic process that involves feelings, needs, and expectations related to experiences.

How are the three factors, satisfaction, learning facilities, and learning achievement related to each other?

A research finding on job satisfaction and motivation noted that motivation and satisfaction play similar important roles as the driver of the whole process of learning. Motivation increases with the increase of learning satisfaction. This is to say that motivation and satisfaction are positively correlated (Singh & Tisari, 2011).

Based on the above discussion, a specification for learning facilities that might create student satisfaction could be made as presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Specification of student satisfaction towards learning facilities and indicators**

No.	Component	Indicators
1	Tangibility	Physical notion of the facilities been good; infrastructure is available.
2	Utility	Useful to fulfill student's need; effective to produce best outcomes.
3	Accessibility	Accessible for every student; location is reachable.
4	Flexibility	Responsive to the changing needs.
5	Safety	Equipment is safe and secured.
6	Comfort	The structure, and the conditions are comfortable.
7	Learning orientedness	Focuses on student needs, preferences, and work patterns.
8	Learner centeredness	Focuses on student needs, preferences and work patterns.

## Methodology

Using the above components, a questionnaire of student satisfaction towards learning facilities was developed using the Likert Scale. Included were five options for respondents to choose from, ranging from, Strongly Agree down to Strongly Disagree. Initially there were 39 items but after theoretical validation through a panel discussion six of them were deleted. The 33 item questionnaire was then empirically validated using Factor Analysis methods. The study confirms that the attributes are all valid.

In the validation two factors were extracted based on the exploratory method of Principle Component Analysis (PCA) with cumulative percentage 84%. This means that 84% of total variance was generated from the two extracted factors.

The internal consistency of reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha formula and it obtained an index of reliability of 0.60, which means the factors are significantly reliable. Therefore, the components of the two extracted factors can be used as the core components of the questionnaire to measure the degree of student satisfaction with learning facilities.

The questionnaires were distributed to 40 students randomly chosen from five classes in the Department of English and Literature at Universitas Negeri Jakarta.

To determine the correlation between student satisfaction with learning facilities and learning achievement a Pearson Product Moment formula was used. In addition, to find out the

difference in learning achievement between students with high satisfaction towards learning facilities and those with low satisfaction, a t-test was used.

## Results and discussion

This research confirms that the null hypothesis could be rejected ( $r_{\text{obs}} 0.585 > r_{\text{tab}} 0.333$ ). It means that there is a positive correlation between student satisfaction with learning facilities and learning achievement. In addition, students who are highly satisfied with the learning facilities in the English Department of Universitas Negeri Jakarta show higher achievement than those with low satisfaction ( $t_{\text{obs}} 4.147 > t_{\text{tab}} 1.697$ ).

The results suggest that student satisfaction is very powerful in raising students' motivation to learn and therefore plays an important role in learning achievement.

In this research eight characteristics (Table 1.) associated with learning facilities were commented on by students. It should be noted that it is not necessary for facilities in an education institution to be modern, high tech, or of a high quality for student achievement or satisfaction to occur.

The characteristics of satisfaction may vary, but satisfaction with learning facilities (as well as academic life and institutional services) is of prime importance to students. This is the reason why learning facilities were chosen for this particular research.

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## Appendix

Please put a cross (X) in the column in response to each statement below based on your personal impression. The description of acronyms is listed in the legend below.

Legend

SDA = Strongly Disagree      DA = Disagree      DB = Doubtful      AA = Agree      SA = Strongly Agree

No.	Statement	Your response				
		SDA	DA	DB	AA	SA
1	It is comfortable for me to study in the classrooms available in English Department (ED)					
2	Rooms in ED are built in a proper location to reach					
3	Physically learning facilities in ED appear to be modern and up to date					
4	Physically learning facilities in ED create learning atmosphere					
5	It is easy to reach the locations of learning facilities available in ED					
6	The classrooms in ED are old fashioned and out of date					
7	Learning facilities in classrooms are bad and cannot be utilized					
8	I feel secured to utilize learning facilities in ED					
9	Collection of books and other printed materials as well as learning media are sufficient and complete					
10	Collection of books and other printed materials as well as learning media are useful					
11	Collection of books and other printed materials as well as learning media are up to date in line with learning development					
12	I can use the learning facilities in ED any time in line with my learning schedule					
13	The classrooms in ED are dirty					
14	The atmosphere and the supporting infrastructure of learning facilities are secured					
15	The media and apparatus in the learning facilities are in a good condition					
16	Rooms are inadequate to support learning process					
17	I feel uncomfortable to study in the rooms available in ED					
18	Infrastructure and apparatus in the laboratories are not secured for students					
19	The apparatus in the laboratories are in bad condition therefore cannot be used					
20	The learning facilities in ED are beneficial and useful					
21	The apparatus in the laboratories are old and out of date, therefore, cannot be used.					
22	The temperature in rooms is not suitable to study					

23	The paint of the rooms is blur and bad					
24	The rooms in ED are noisy, therefore it is not comfortable					
25	The cables and sockets that support the electrical devices in the laboratories are dangerous for students					
26	The utilization of learning facilities in ED are specifically arranged to satisfy ED students					
27	Learning facilities in ED are continuously updated to respond to the advancement of modern technologies					
28	Learning facilities in ED give significant contribution for me to finish my tasks in learning					
29	Learning facilities in ED are specifically designed to fulfil student needs in learning					
30	Special requirements are needed to utilize learning facilities in ED					
31	I do not see significant advancement of devices in the laboratories					
32	I do not see significant cares contributed by ED management to satisfy student needs in learning					
33	Learning facilities in ED significantly support learning process					

# Understanding the Motivations, Attitudes, and Expectations of Foreign Speakers Learning Indonesian

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## Abstract

Learning Indonesian for foreign speakers (BIPA) is a course which has been carried out by the government and various private institutions in Indonesia. Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) offers BIPA courses for IPB students who learn at the level of S1 and S2. Learners doing the BIPA courses at IPB are dominated by IPB students who have to take a one-semester course before attending classes. This is because college classes are more likely to use Indonesian than any other language.

In this study, the following questions were investigated: 1) What were the real motivations of the foreign students who take BIPA?, 2) What were their attitudes towards BIPA learning? and, 3) What are their expectations after completing BIPA study?

The population of this research was foreign students who study Bahasa Indonesia at IPB. The data were collected through questionnaires and observations. BIPA students have a positive motivation to participate in BIPA learning, have a good attitude to learning, and hope to be able to teach Indonesian when they return to their home countries.

## Introduction

Foreign students learning Indonesian in Indonesia (called BIPA, Bahasa Indonesia untuk penuntut asing) at Institut Pertanian Bogor (IPB) are prospective students for admission to IPB through the IDB (Islamic Development Bank) and KNB (Kemitraan Negara Berkembang) – Partnership of Developing Country. Before these students are permitted to enroll in their department or major subjects, they have to attend Indonesian classes for one semester. This is intended to help them understand the lessons given by the professors. The mastery of Indonesian for them is very important because Indonesian is used as the instructional language in every university in Indonesia. This is in accordance with the government regulation Number 4, Article 29, Paragraph 1, 2009, where it is stated that Indonesian is to be used as the language of instruction in the system of national education in Indonesia.

Since the Indonesian language is something that must be learnt by foreign students who wish to study at Indonesian educational institutions, we can ask what kind of stimulus can trigger students to learn Indonesian, and whether they learn Indonesian as an obligation or is there some other motive.

## Research objectives

There are three aims of this research:

1. To know the real motivation of BIPA students in learning Indonesian.
2. To understand the attitudes of BIPA students when they learn Indonesian.
3. To know the students' expectations after they finish learning Indonesian.

## Method

This research is quantitative analytical descriptive research. The participants in this study are BIPA students at IPB. They are foreign students accepted through the KNB track. The researchers grouped the students based on the entry year, i.e. from 2012 to 2014. This research was carried out in April-June, 2015.

## Literature review

Brown (2008) said that motivation can take the form of global, situational, or task oriented. Learning a foreign language uses these three levels of motivation. In this study motivation was examined in accordance with intrinsic and extrinsic motives. Intrinsic motivation is motivation caused by factors coming from within oneself or attached to a task that is still being done. Extrinsic motivation is motivation caused by external factors and is not related to any task (Ormrod, 2008).

Motivation is energising. This means that it directs and sustains the students. A student's motivation is considered an individual investment, having cognitive, emotional, and attitudinal implications with the school's involvement (Fredricks & Blumenfeld quoted in Ormrod, 2008). Motivation is the result of interaction among three factors: rewards; performances that can produce something expected; and an assumption that achievement will create something. Meanwhile, attitude is a pattern of behaviour and can be adjusted in social situations. Attitude is affective, and can be positive or negative.

## Results

The results concerning motivation, attitude, and expectation for BIPA students are presented in the following table:

**Table 1. Students' motivation in learning BIPA lesson (%)**

No.	Statement	Choices				
		5	4	3	2	1
<b>Motivation</b>						
1	Speak Indonesian	77	23	0	0	0
2	Write Indonesian	77	23	0	0	0
3	Understand Indonesian passage	77	23	0	0	0
4	Know Indonesian culture	62	31	0	0	0
5	Have Indonesian friends	38	54	0	0	8

Explanation: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=doubt; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree.

From Table 1, it can be concluded that the motivation of BIPA students in learning BIPA lessons is very high. As mentioned in the introduction, IPB BIPA students are foreign students who come to Indonesia for the first time. They have neither heard nor spoken Indonesian previously. This increased their motivation to speak Indonesian in their daily life. The results show that 77% of IPB BIPA students strongly agreed that they wanted to be able to speak, write, and understand Indonesian, while 23% of them agreed.

Mastering a language relates not only to speaking, writing, reading and listening, but also to understanding the society and culture of the native speakers. This drives respondents to learn Indonesian enthusiastically. Most of the respondents agreed that they learnt Indonesian so they could make many friends in Indonesia. However, 8% of respondents strongly disagreed with that statement. BIPA students at IPB have very good ability in communicating in English.

Students with high motivation after they had BIPA lessons found their attitude was significantly influenced also. This can be seen from the following table.

**Table 2. Students' attitudes towards BIPA learning (%)**

No.	Statement	Choices				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Learn Indonesia seriously	46	54	0	0	0
2	Read the modul of BIPA	15	69	0	0	0
3	Ask questions	31	69	0	0	0
4	Serious	69	31	0	0	0
5	Finish the tasks on time	46	46	0	0	0
6	Do the tasks to improve	77	23	0	0	0
7	Speak Indonesian in the classroom	54	46	0	0	0
8	Practise after the class	54	46	0	0	0
9	Arrive on time	54	46	0	0	0
10	Come to the class	77	23	0	0	0

Explanation: 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Often; 4=Very often; 5=Always.

From Table 2, the data shows that the attitudes of IPB students towards BIPA were positive. Most stated that they learned Indonesian with all their heart.

Fifteen percent of respondents said that they always read the module that had been prepared by IPB, while 69% said that they often read it, and only 8% said that they rarely read it.

Thirty-one percent of respondents said that they always asked when they did not understand the subjects. This was supported by 69% who said they often asked.

BIPA students in IPB had a high responsibility and they always finished their tasks well. When they were asked whether they always finished their tasks on time, 46% of respondents answered *always* and 46% answered *often*. However, there was 8% of respondents who did

not answer. As many as 77% of BIPA students who were also respondents in this research said that they always did the tasks to improve their ability in Indonesian. Moreover, 23% of respondents said that they often did the tasks.

In this BIPA learning and teaching, 54% of respondents said that they always used Indonesian and 46% of respondents said they often used Indonesian in the classroom.

Outside the classroom, 54% of respondents said that they often practised speaking and writing, while 54% of respondents said that they always came on time and 46% of respondents said that they often came on time. Therefore, 77% of respondents answered that they always came when they learnt Indonesian and 23% of respondents said that they often came.

The expectations of BIPA students at IPB was based on Vroom's concept. According to Vroom, motivation is the result of interaction among three factors: how large is the desire of a person to get a reward; the deed or effort that always produces something; and estimation that achievement will produce acquisition (Jamaris, 2010).

**Table 3. Students' expectations attending BIPA class (%)**

No.	Statement	Choices				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	Write paper/ thesis in Indonesian.	8	54	31	0	8
2	Do the tasks, understand the teacher's explanation, and answer the quizzes, mid/final tests.	46	46	8	0	0
3	Read Indonesian books.	62	38	0	0	0
4	Teach Indonesian after graduate.	0	77	15	0	8
5	Research with Indonesian researchers.	62	31	8	0	0

Explanation: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=doubt; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree

From Table 3, it is shown that expectations of BIPA students at IPB is very high. They expected that after attending BIPA classes, they could write a paper in Indonesian. Their expectation was that they wanted to be able to do the tasks, understand the explanation of the teacher, answer a quiz, and mid and final tests in Indonesian.

Most respondents answered that they expected to be able to teach Indonesian after they graduated from IPB. They said that they could either work as an employee with the educational background that they have, or teach Indonesian to the people in their own country. However, 15% of respondents doubted they would be able to do this. Most also hoped that they could work with Indonesian researchers.

In the table below are the supporting factors that indicate BIPA students at IPB have a high motivation to learn Indonesian. They have positive attitudes and high expectation when attending BIPA lessons. The following external factors contributed to student motivation.

**Table 4. External factors in BIPA learning and teaching (%)**

No.	Statement	Choices				
		5	4	3	2	1
<b>External factors</b>						
1	Facilities and infrastructure	54	31	15	0	0
2	Learning time	46	54	0	0	0
3	Lecturer	46	46	0	0	8
4	Teaching method	38	54	8	0	0

Explanation: 1=strongly disagree; 2=agree; 3=doubt; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree.

From Table 4, it can be seen that eighty-five percent of respondents said that the facilities and infrastructures were very adequate or adequate. However, 15% of respondents did not think the facilities and infrastructure provided for learning and teaching was not supported by multimedia.

All respondents said that the time allocated for learning and teaching Indonesian was suitable or really suitable.

Over 90% of respondents agreed that the lecturers teaching BIPA at IPB really supported the students patiently and kindly.

The respondents really agreed that the activity of BIPA learning at IPB was supported by good performance from the lecturers because they used interesting methods that could attract students' interest. Learning and teaching used in BIPA at IPB emphasised communicative learning and teaching methods, and over 90% of respondents thought that this was appropriate.

## **Conclusion**

BIPA students at IPB have a high motivation to learn Indonesian. They have both external and internal motivation. They want to be able to speak, write, and understand Indonesian texts. They agreed that they wanted to be able to teach Indonesian in their country after they graduated from IPB. Positive attitudes were shown by BIPA students at IPB. BIPA students have a high motivation to attend the BIPA lessons because of the adequate facilities and infrastructures. Moreover, the activity of BIPA learning and teaching was supported by good performances by the lecturers. They used interesting methods that can attract students' interest to learn Indonesian.

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### Appendix

#### Understanding the motivations, attitudes, and expectations of foreign speakers learning Indonesian

Sex            1. Male       

                  2. Female     

Age            1.  17-20    2.  21-25    3.  26-30    4.  31-35

Entry Year to IPB    1.  2012    2.  2013    3.  2014

Department       

Faculty            

Country of origin  

**Direction:** Put cross (X) within the column whether you: Strongly agree; Agree; Doubt; Disagree; Strongly disagree.

#### Questionnaire A. Students' motivation in learning Indonesian

No.	Statement	Choices				
		SA	Agree	Doubt	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree
<b>Internal motivation</b>						
1	I want to be able to speak Indonesian.					
2	I want to be able to write Indonesian.					
3	I want to be able to understand Indonesian passage.					
4	I want to know about Indonesian culture.					
5	I want to have many Indonesian friends.					
<b>External motivation</b>						
7	Adequate facilities and infrastructure.					
8	Suitable learning time.					
9	Kind and patient lecturer.					
10	Interesting teaching method.					

**Questionnaire B. The attitudes of foreign students towards Indonesian teaching and learning**

No.	Statement	Choices				
		Always	Often	Rarely	Some-times	N e v e r
1	I learn Indonesian seriously.					
2	I read the modul of BIPA.					
3	I often ask questions during the process of teaching and learning.					
4	I am always serious during the process of teaching and learning.					
5	I finish the tasks given by the lecturer on time.					
6	I do the tasks to improve my Indonesian.					
7	I try to use Indonesian in the classroom.					
8	I practise to speak and write Indonesian after the class.					
9	I always arrive at the class on time.					
10	I always come to my Indonesian class.					

**Questionnaire C. The expectations of foreign students towards Indonesian learning**

No.	Statement	Choices				
		Strongly agree	Agree	Doubt	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree
1	I hope I can write paper/ thesis in Indonesian.					
2	I hope I can do the tasks, understand the teacher's explanation, and answer the quizzes, mid/final tests of Indonesian.					
3	I hope I can read Indonesian books.					
4	I hope I can teach Indonesian in my country after I graduate.					
5	I hope I can do some research with Indonesian researchers.					

# **Learners' Communicative Strategies in Recorded Conversations in an English Foreign Language Setting**

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## **Abstract**

The relationship of three main ideas is investigated in this paper: communicative strategies (CS); recorded conversations; and a foreign language (FL) setting.

Communicative strategies can take the form of reduction and achievement strategies (Wei, 2011) and strategy markers and retrospective comments (Franch, 1994). Communicative strategies in second language (L2) learning consists of topic avoidance, message abandonment, approximation, word coinage, circumlocution, literal translation, language switch, appeal for assistance, and mime (Ellis, 1994).

In an attempt to build communicative strategies learners are affected by their foreign language setting which can impede the development of CS. Therefore, it is necessary to record the conversations in order to promote learning output. Recording can assist learners with self-reflection and feedback.

## **Introduction**

Developing communication in a second language (hereafter L2) differs from developing communication in a foreign language (hereafter FL). They have different language settings and L2 learners already have knowledge of L1 (the first language of a person). However, there are similarities which possibly rely on communicative strategies (hereafter CS) which can easily be tracked in recorded conversation. In an English Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) setting, recording conversations should seriously be considered because it helps track the development of learners' ability to speak English. The development can be detected from learners' attempt to scaffold, repeat, and revise their utterances. In this way a teacher can track learners' English development, especially inter-language errors.

## **Objectives**

The aim of this essay is to identify and investigate the use of communicative strategies in recorded conversation as applied by L2 learners of English in interactions with others. This research also may reveal the contribution of recording on learners' ability to speak English.

## **Previous research**

Xamani (2013) investigated the progress of participants' oral communicative competence in an English Foreign Language setting. Data were obtained from diagnostic tasks, projects, writings, oral presentations, and pronunciation activities. The study found that increasing the use of achievement strategies was better than using avoidance strategies.

Lin Wei (2011) studied the relationship between Chinese English learners' attitudes toward the use of communicative strategies and the reported frequency of using them in actual communication. She found that Chinese learners of English tend to use reduction strategies most often, but they seldom use achievement strategies. Finally, Lin Wei stated that CS are influenced by three interrelated factors: the learner; the learning context; and the communicative context. Cervantes and Rodrigues (2012) research collected data using observations and interviews and found that the dominant CS applied during teacher-student interaction is a language switch. They identified three interrelated factors effecting CS: class size; seating arrangements; and learning activity type. Franch (1994) found that the complexity of the topic sequence analysed has a positive correlation with the amount of CS.

These research studies focus on CS in natural settings. However, none of them focuses on CS in recorded conversations which is the concern of this study.

### **Communicative strategies in recorded conversation in a foreign language setting**

The purpose of communication is to share information which can be in the form of ideas or knowledge, or non-verbal signs. Strategies are procedures used in order to achieve objectives or goals.

#### ***Types of communicative strategies***

A study on CS leads to two approaches: the interactional and the psycholinguistic approaches (Ellis, 1994). Ellis (1994, 397) described each type in Appendix 1 of Ellis.

Dornyei in Brown (2000,128) explains that CS can be classified into avoidance strategies and compensatory strategies. The former can be identified as syntactic or lexical avoidance, topic avoidance, or phonological avoidance. The latter covers circumlocution, approximation, use of all-purpose words, word coinage, prefabricated patterns, nonverbal signals, literal translation, foreignising, code switching or language switching, appeal for assistance, and stalling-time-gaining strategies.

#### ***Recorded conversation***

Conversation can be generally defined as an exchange of information taking a form of oral communication (hereafter OC). Although it is OC, nonverbal communication such as gestures and facial expressions support OC in order to convey meanings. In other words, in a situation where L2 learners do not know how to say words in L2, it is mostly possible that nonverbal language is applied to convey meanings.

Recording conversation helps build L2 learners' spoken abilities in a way that differs from conversations in natural settings. Naturalistic principles are characterised by being learner centered, involving indirect repetition, informal questions and answers, and fluency. In contrast, recorded conversation helps build learners' ability to speak in English in a way that provides opportunities for repetition, scaffolding, and learners' autonomy. Repetition can occur at the level of words, phrases and/or expressions.

Scaffolding (i.e. the gradual release of responsibility) can assist L2 learners in developing speaking abilities. Scaffolding can bridge learning gaps by providing L2 learners with a framework for breaking tasks into smaller more manageable parts, thinking aloud, co-operative learning, coaching, cue cards or modelling.

Recorded conversations can help build L2 learners' autonomy or independence in applying self-evaluation to their communicative strategies. These attitudes consist of self-reflection and self-direction in their utterances, through activities such as identification, revision, and feedback.

### ***English foreign language settings***

Ellis (1994, 12) states 'foreign language learning takes place in settings where language plays no role in the community and is primarily learnt only in the classroom'. In other words, EFL is closely related to instructed L2 learning where a target language is formally learnt.

### **Method**

This research was a qualitative case study in which twelve students from a non-English speaking department at the Faculty of Education at State Institute for Islamic Studies in West Kalimantan participated.

### ***Participants***

Participants were 6 pairs of university students ages 18-19 years old who were registered in the third semester in 2015 academic year. They were from a non-English department where English was taught for two semesters. They learnt English for survival. Their ability to speak English was considered as basic.

### ***Instrumentation***

Data were gathered through recorded conversations. The conversation took the form of an interview that utilised question-answer responses (QAR). The participants asked questions and the interlocutors answered them. Three different kinds of interlocutors were the object of the interview. The interlocutors were friends from other classes, seniors, and lecturers on campus. The topic assigned for the interview was personal information and included name, address, hobby, and daily activities.

### ***Data collection***

Data consisted of 404 utterances taken from transcriptions of 15 dialogs. The dialog contained information following the rule of thumb started by greeting, followed by name, address, hobby, daily activity, and ended with farewell. For hobby and daily activity, the participants regulated their conversations using 'what', 'why', 'where', 'when', and 'with whom' questions.

### ***Data analysis***

Data were analysed using Tarone's typology of CS consisting of five categories: avoidance; paraphrase; conscious transfer; appeal for assistance; and mime (see Appendix 2). Avoidance consisted of topic avoidance and message abandonment. Paraphrase consisted of approximation, word coinage, and circumlocution. Conscious transfer consisted of literal translation and language switch, repetition, revision, and scaffolding strategies.

### **Results and discussion**

#### ***The use of CS in recorded conversation in EFL settings***

Data indicated 86 out of 404 utterances contain CS which fall into Tarone's categories of message abandonment, approximation, word coinage, literal translation, language switch, and appealing for help (see Appendix 1).

### ***Message abandonment***

Two kinds of message abandonment were found: complete and partial abandonment. The former is represented by (58) in the passage below:

A: Why are you a teacher? (57)

S: *Ehm...ehm....*(58)

A: Why are you a teacher? (59)

S: Because this is my dream (60)

Partially message abandonment is found in (87)

A: *Where do you...daily activity everyday?* (87)

S: I usually in IAIN Pontianak (88)

### ***Approximation***

Approximation occurs at the level of words, phrases, or sentences. The extracts (17) and (18) indicate approximation in the level of a word.

A: Where you buy *material* for cooking, E?(17)

E: I always buy *material* for cooking in the market (18)

Approximation is also identified in the level of phrase indicated in (82)

F: Why do you like reading? (81)

S: Because reading is...ehm...because reading is...I like reading...ehm...because I love book. (81) because book...is very-very help...much information and much much...*a knowledge founding* (82)

Finally, approximation is identified in the level of a sentence (389)

W: Okay, next *what is your brother?* (389)

M: I have 2 brother? (390)

### ***Word coinage***

Word coinage is identified in the level of phrases. Forming a compound word in English differs from Indonesian structure as it applies a formula: a noun(s) + adj. (370) gives an example of this formula.

I: That's all my interview with one of my lecturer in *the house mother HN*. Ok that's enough...see you (370)

H:.....(371)

### ***Literal translation***

Literal translation occurs in the level of words, phrases, and sentences. (74) provides an example of literal translation in the level of a word.

F: My name is F and she is my friend. (72) Her name is A. (73) What is your name, *sir?* (74)

Literal translation occurs in the level of a phrase (40)

F: May *I and my friend* interview you? (40)

Finally, literal translation is also identified in the level of a sentence (53)

F: Where do you reading? (52)

S: *In everytime if I want.* (53)

### ***Language switch***

The data indicated Indonesian and Arabic were used as the language switch to solve problems whenever communications breakdown. Indonesian is a mother tongue for the participants and Arabic is a language for their religion. The data also indicated that most of the time, they switch to Indonesian whenever they encounter a breakdown, for example to state streets, names of housing complexes, and specific areas. They also switch to Indonesian as discourse markers. Arabic is used for certain utterances such as religious terminologies, for example 'isya' means an obligatory evening prayer for moslems.

### ***Appeal for help***

Appeal for help is marked by parts of expressions occurring repeatedly as is indicated in (81) below.

F: Why do you like reading? (80)

S: *Because reading is...ehm...because reading is...I like reading...ehm...because I love book.* (81) because book... is very-very help...much information and much much...a knowledge founding (82)

### ***The contribution of recording in English development: Repetition, revision, and scaffolding***

Recording allowed for the identification of the contribution of repetition, revision, and scaffolding in learners' conversations. The study found repetition as a communicative strategy in the following utterances.

F: Why do you like reading? (80)

S: *Because reading is...ehm...because reading is...I like reading...ehm...because I love book.* (81) because book...is very-very help...much information and much much...a knowledge founding (82)

Extract (81) describes a strategy to maintain communication and avoid silence. It shows a step-by-step development of thought starting from looking for an idea to completely getting the idea and uttering it.

In addition, the study reveals the role of scaffolding in order to maintain conversation.

A: Where do you live? (11)

E: I live in *Parit Husin* (12)

Extract (12) provides evidence of the importance of L1, as background knowledge is used to solve communicative breakdowns in order to produce appropriate and accurate utterances. Extracts (11) and (12) indicate that scaffolding is promoted by stimulus-response and question-answer strategy. Extracts (11) and (12) indicate that scaffolding is developed by conducting a collaborating question. This type of question requires interlocutors to share the same ideas to come up with understanding.

The study also identified that revision as a choice for a communicative strategy is indicated in (93)

A: When do you teach? (92)

S: Teach...in Faculty of Tarbiyah...after shalat ashar (93)

Extract (93) indicates a human innate capacity to automatically filter and correct mistakes or errors as soon as mistakes are realised. (93) describes an immediate change in the interlocutor's mind from 'place' to 'time'.

### **Conclusion**

This qualitative case study of 404 utterances found that 86 utterances contained communicative strategies. These utterances consist of six types of CS: message abandonment; approximation; word coinage; literal translation; language switch; and appeal for help. In an attempt to deliver messages, it is found that one utterance can contain one or more CS.

This study revealed that recorded conversation showed repetition, revision, and scaffolding as alternative communicative strategies. Repetition takes a form of self-repetition and occurs spontaneously. Repetition benefits the learning process in that it is a reflection of the thinking process. Scaffolding is affected by background knowledge. Question-answer strategies contribute to scaffolding.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Results of data analysis: Tarone's communicative strategies in recorded conversation

Communication strategies	Description of strategy
1. Avoidance a. Topic avoidance b. Message abandonment	Avoiding reference to a salient object for which learner does not have necessary vocabulary. The learner begins to refer to an object but gives up because it is too difficult.
2. Paraphrase a. Approximation b. Word coinage c. Circumlocution	The learner uses an item known to be incorrect but which shares some semantic features in common with the correct item (e.g. 'worm' for 'silkworm'). The learner makes up a new word (e.g. 'person worm' to describe a picture of an animated caterpillar). The learner describes the characteristics of the object instead of using the appropriate TL item(s).
3. Conscious transfer a. Literal translation b. Language switch	The learner translates word for word from the native language (e.g. 'He invites him to drink' in place of 'They toast one another'). The learner inserts words from another language (e.g. 'balon' for 'balloon'). NB Subsequently, Tarone (1981) refer to this as 'borrowing'.
4. Appeal for assistance	The learner consults some authority – a native speaker, a dictionary.
5. Mime	The learner uses a nonverbal device to refer to an object or event (e.g. clapping hands to indicate 'applause').

**Appendix 2. Tarone's typology of communicative strategies**

No.	Typology of communicative strategies	Number of examples
1	Topic avoidance	--
2	Message abandonment	3
3	Approximation	8
4	Word coinage	1
5	Circumlocution	--
6	Literal translation	35
7	Language switch	14
8	Appeal for assistance	3
9	Mime	--

**Appendix 3. Brown's scoring guide of spoken English**

No.	Rating scale/ category	Description of criteria
1	60	Communication almost always effective, task performed very competently, speech almost never marked by nonnative characteristics.
2	50	Communication generally effective task performed competently, successful use of compensatory strategies, speech sometimes marked by nonnative characteristics.
3	40	Communication somewhat effective task performed somewhat competently, some successful use of compensatory strategies, speech regularly marked by nonnative characteristics.
4	30	Communication generally not effective, task generally performed poorly, ineffective use of compensatory strategies, speech very frequently marked by nonnative characteristic.
5	20	No effective communication, no evidence of ability to perform task, no effective use of compensatory strategies, speech almost always marked by nonnative characteristics.

**Appendix 4. The results of placement test**

No.	Students (Initial)	Scores
1	F and A	30
2	F and Y	30
3	R and A	30
4	H and E	30
5	M and I	30
6	E and W	30

# **The Implementation of a Web-based Learning Activity to Enhance Students' English Speaking Proficiency and Confidence**

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## **Abstract**

Hesitation when speaking in English commonly occurs amongst Indonesian students because many feel anxious about their personal ability to speak in English. They are concerned about their sentence structure and even their diction while they are speaking English. They require practice in applying their English learning in real contexts but they do not have many opportunities to do this.

The use of the web to link Indonesian students with students in another country is an alternative way that provides opportunities to speak English. It is thought that if Indonesian students are linked with native-English speaking students in another country through teleconferencing in order to work co-operatively on a shared project, their English speaking can be improved.

The results of this research show that using a web learning activity results in the positive effect of improving students' spoken English. The results of a questionnaire administered to students indicated that they were enthusiastic, interested and satisfied with this approach to learning. It was also found that students were more creative and more likely to elaborate on their ideas about speaking English. However there can be barriers for participating schools involved in this type of research. When teleconferencing for example, differences in respective countries' time zones and seasons of the year have to be taken into account.

## **Introduction**

Promoting a new activity for language learning is a challenging thing for an English teacher to do, especially when encouraging students to be more active in speaking. Many speaking activities can be boring and monotonous for the students, especially when they are based only on the textbook. The teacher needs to find out what activities can encourage students to speak. It is important not only to speak good English but also for the students to experience an authentic speaking context.

In my class accelerated students meet in groups to discuss topics and participate in role play activities. In group discussions most of the students do not want to speak English but discuss in *Bahasa* language instead. However when I am present they start to speak in English. There are not many active students who are confident in speaking English in the class hence there is little overall encouragement for the rest of the class to speak in English.

Role play is a well organised activity and is advocated in many textbooks. In a role play session students firstly obtain an outline of topics to be used. When they are asked for their own ideas on for example, the topic of making conversation they find they are restricted by

their vocabulary and expressions. As a result the students resort to using textbook structures and instructions.

The students are not really active in their speaking because they hesitate if their English or even the English words they use are not correct, and they are worried if they use incorrect grammatical rules. Because the students do not have authentic speaking contexts to practise in they speak less English and have little motivation. While they are accelerated students, their background knowledge of English requires improvement.

To overcome these problems, I would like to connect my students to students in an English speaking country so that they will apply their English, and be attracted to communicate in order to increase their speaking confidence. In this case, I will link my students with students in the Maryland Secondary School in Maryland, USA. Both groups of students are around the same age, 12 and 13 years old, and there are about 20 students in a class. As part of the activity I will involve the students in using the web as a tool to support the connection of both countries so that the students can be in touch each other. The web-based links used in this study are email, DropBox, Edmodo and Skype.

### **Web-based learning**

Using technology in the classroom is not something recent. It is a challenging activity for teachers as long as they know that the usage of it can motivate the students' eagerness to learn. Computers and the internet are technologies that can be applied to enhance the learning process since the internet, with its sophisticated features, provides various materials and sources of learning.

Some reasons for teachers using the internet in the classroom are as follows (Dudeney & Hockly, 2007):

- Teachers can find ideas and select appropriate activities for their students easily and quickly. The internet offers various materials and the latest techniques can inspire teachers to create an alternative way of learning for their students.
- Teachers can integrate the technology into the teaching-learning process, for example, students may do an essay or project using word processing or video-recording and send or post it through email or the web.
- The internet is easily accessed by both teachers and students so that students can practise their English and even do tasks simply at home or anywhere they have access to a computer connected to the internet.

The web as a learning tool includes learning objectives that are in line with students' needs and curriculum demands (Hadjerrouit, 2010). It also has re-usability elements that can be applied not only to one subject but also to two or more subjects in different settings as part of integrated learning. For example, an English teacher can collaborate to integrate one or two subjects with another teacher's non-English subjects into a project by using the web to support the activity.

### **Research goal and the significance of this study**

The objective of the research is to investigate the use of the web in order to improve the students' confidence in speaking English. The study has both theoretical and practical implications. The findings may offer additional support to existing studies which indicate the advantages of web-based activities in learning to speak English. The study is important in a

practical way for teachers who are willing to use the web as an alternative activity in order to gain students' interest in speaking.

The use of web learning in this study is restricted to the use of email, DropBox, Edmodo and Skype.

- Email is very handy for the students to communicate individually or as a group, as they can easily send files or photos.
- DropBox which has a large capacity, can be used to collect files, pictures and videos. It is like a saving box that can be seen by a person or a group.
- Edmodo is a kind of forum that can be used by teachers to announce or post materials so that students can monitor their assignments. It can also be used as a chat room where students can ask questions about the materials and can submit their assignments as well. Teachers can give feedback and grade the assignments so that students can reflect on their own progress. Edmodo is also a forum for teachers around the world to share ideas and to discuss many educational issues.
- Lastly, Skype is used to conduct person-to-person communication among students around the world. They can discuss and share the work they do together, and even may discover what students in other countries like.

However, to succeed in the use of the web as part of the learning process requires both teachers' and students' understanding about how to use it wisely. They must be familiar with how to utilise it according to the objectives of the learning. Teachers must be concerned about how students behave when using the web as once students become involved with this world-wide media the use of filters for their protection should be considered.

### **The cycles of the study**

The project ran for four months, from August until November 2014.

#### ***The first cycle***

I was connected with Maryland Primary School in Maryland, USA, in August 2014. We discussed a project that could be conducted by students in our two schools.

As an initial activity the students were set the task of writing email messages to each other in which they introduced themselves. After they exchanged emails, the students made videos of their daily activities such as telling about their hobbies and their weekend activities. To facilitate this activity, the teachers used DropBox and set up the folder for this. Then the students could post their videos while they were watching the others' videos. In the class, the teacher discussed the videos and asked the students to talk about their impressions of their friends in Maryland. The students were excited to watch the videos and tried to remember their American friends' names that sounded so unfamiliar to them.

The teacher set the students the task of doing a teleconference and the plan was to talk about themselves and the school's activities. The teachers of the two schools agreed to arrange the teleconference in the morning America-time and at night Jakarta-time. The teachers and the students gathered in the library with a big screen, a computer, and an internet connection using Skype. The teacher in Jakarta was assisted by the IT teacher, the home teacher and three parents. It was around 7 pm. Jakarta time when the teacher tried to connect to Maryland.

The students could connect with each other but it was only for a few minutes when the connection dropped out. Bad weather in Maryland had caused the lost connection. Because it was difficult to connect with Skype, the teachers of both schools connected using Facetime. The activity was done at about 9 pm. Although it was late at night for the students they were satisfied with the activity.

### ***The second cycle***

The teachers evaluated the previous activity and planned for the next activity. The teachers set up an Edmodo account and got the students to sign up. In Edmodo, the teacher discussed with the students which topics could be of interest for them to talk about. Meanwhile the students kept actively posting their videos of their daily activities including what the teachers were doing. There was discussion about the general elections in Indonesia.

The students chose culture and music for the topics to discuss and they prepared material on some traditional Indonesian musical instruments and handicrafts. While the students were preparing the teachers set up the second teleconference and came up with different schedules and settings. It was decided to hold the next session early in the morning Jakarta-time and late afternoon Maryland-time with the hope of clear weather in Maryland.

The second teleconference ran smoothly. It took more than one hour with the result that all the students could communicate with each other. The students in Jakarta showed traditional handicrafts such as fans and masks and demonstrated how to play angklung. The students in Maryland at that time had a music concert in their school and they proudly showed their students playing a flute, saxophone and drums. Both schools were satisfied with the activity, especially the students because they could see what life was like in Maryland and how the students speak in America.

### **Results and findings**

Data were collected using *Survey Monkey* to administer a questionnaire. Nineteen students answered the 14 questions with the results as follows:

1. Question 1 was about whether they like having friends from abroad, 94.74% or 18 students liked and only 5.26% or 1 student disliked.
2. Question 2 was about whether they use English very often in their daily life, 57.89% or 11 students use English and 42.11% or 8 students never use it.
3. Question 3 was about whether English is their favorite subject, 52.63% or 10 students admit English is their favorite subject, and 47.37% or 9 students do not prefer English as their favorite subject.
4. Question 4 was about whether they liked the activity of making videos about self-introductions, 52.63% or 10 students liked and 47.37% or 9 students disliked.
5. Question 5 was about whether they enjoy watching videos of self-introductions from Maryland, 100% students enjoy but 1 student skipped.
6. Question 6 was about whether they liked reading emails from Maryland, 100% liked but 1 student skipped.
7. Question 7 was about whether they try to tell everything when they write emails to Maryland, 94.74% or 18 students tell everything and 5.26% or 1 student didn't.
8. Question 8 was about whether teleconference is a very new activity for their learning experience, 68.42% or 13 students answer yes and 31.58% or 6 students answered no.

9. Question 9 was about whether they are excited to watch their friends' school environment in Maryland through teleconference, 100% students were excited and none skipped.
10. Question 10 was about whether it does not matter that there are different times for Jakarta and Maryland, 89.47% or 17 students answered yes and only 2 students or 10.53% students answered no.
11. Question 11 was about whether this activity can improve their English, 100 % students answer yes and none skipped.
12. Question 12 was about whether this activity should be conducted longer, 63.16% or 12 students answer yes and 36.84% or 4 students answer no.

From the results above, although some students do not really have English as their favorite subject and do not use it in their daily life, they were excited with the activity. They have new experiences having friends from Maryland, and they can communicate and see what their life is like. They can also practise their English with the students in an English speaking country. Some barriers exist however, especially the difference in the time between Maryland and Jakarta (about 12 hours), and the internet connection is difficult when one area has bad weather. However, mostly students do not see the time difference as a barrier and are still excited with the activity, especially in the first cycle.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

It is concluded that accelerated students were interested in using the web for their speaking activity and involved themselves in this activity very well. Because the topics chosen were the students' own choice they were eager to speak to the students in Maryland on these topics. The students themselves were interested to read the Maryland emails and watch the videos, and they felt confident in speaking with their friends in Maryland.

The suggestion was made to hold similar activities for a longer period in order to increase students' motivation and achieve better results. It is suggested that a similar study be applied with a different sample, for example with regular students, to find out how the use of the web improves the students' English speaking.

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# **Investigating Students' Practices and Perceptions of the Podcast Learning Project**

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## **Abstract**

This action research investigated a podcast learning project which is integrated into an English communication 1 class. The study's aim was to promote students' extensive listening practices outside the classroom.

The study collected data through questionnaires, students' podcast diaries, and semi-structured interviews to examine students' practices and their perceptions of the use of podcasts for pedagogical purposes.

Results showed that the students had positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of the podcast learning project. There were linguistic competence improvements and an enhancement of motivation to learning. The convenience of being able to listen to podcasts at any time and in any place was noted. However, the students also experienced frustration with podcasts delivered at a fast speed and containing a lot of new words, which hindered their full understanding.

Overall, the benefits gained from the podcast learning project outweighed its drawbacks. The project showed its considerable potential for educational purposes in EFL/ESL teaching and learning contexts.

## **Introduction**

During this semester, I have been responsible for teaching my students the Listening and Speaking 1 course. In spite of the fact that Vietnamese students spend a lot of years studying English, from school to University, they are not capable of listening and speaking fluently in English. According to Rubin (1995), for second language/foreign language learners, listening is the skill that makes the heaviest processing demands because learners must store information in their short term memory at the same time as they are working to understand the information.

More importantly, with the targets of the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project, university education has changed. Students majoring in English need to obtain a C1 (V-step of Vietnam) certificate in English prior to their graduation to fulfill University requirements. However, the current English proficiency of my English major students in the Mekong Delta is poor. It is really hard for students to achieve the required standard studying only materials in the course books.

Therefore, the students need to work hard and build up the habits of having extra learning activities outside the classroom such as the podcast learning project, in order to complete their university studies successfully. Incorporating podcast learning into the curriculum to improve students' linguistic competencies provides opportunities both inside and outside the

classroom for students to access significant listening input. The more listening students do the better, and sub-skills will take care of themselves as they become automatised (Ridgway, 2000).

It is also strongly perceived that podcast learning is an effective tool to improve students' language skills because it provides time flexibility, enhances learning's autonomy, and meets the learners' needs or interests (Hew, 2009). Learners can access learning materials available online whenever they have free time on their own personal mobile devices, such as mobile phones, personal media players, or laptop computers. In addition, the students can freely choose any podcasts which suit their interests and level because there are many authentic podcasts with a variety of topics. This effectively bridges the gap between formal English which dominates in most language classrooms and the informal English used in real life.

For these reasons, I was eager to carry out action research with the purpose of investigating the students' practices of podcast learning and their perceptions of its benefits and drawbacks.

This led to my research question:

What are the students' practices and perceptions of the use of the podcast learning project for educational purposes?

## **Literature review**

### ***Definition of listening***

Listening has been defined differently by different scholars. In the context of EFL/ESL teaching and learning, Brown and Yule (1983) defined listening comprehension as a person understanding what he has heard. O'Malley, Chamot & Kupper (1989) stated that listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener construes meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge. This definition is quite clear and easily accepted as listening is not just a passive but an active process of constructing meaning which takes into consideration context and a learner's background knowledge.

### ***Importance of listening skills***

Rost (1990, 141-142) summarised the importance of listening in second language learning as follows:

- Listening is vital in the language classroom because it provides input for the learner. Without understanding input at the right level, any learning simply cannot begin.
- Authentic spoken language presents a challenge for the learner to understand language as native speakers actually use it.
- Listening exercises provide teachers with a means for drawing learners' attention to new forms (vocabulary, grammar, new interaction patterns) in the language.

Thus, in a language classroom, listening ability plays a significant role in the development of other language skills. It is a foundation providing input for other learning activities to take place, such as speaking, writing, reading or simply building new words and grammar.

### ***Definition of podcast***

According to Walch & Lafferty (2006), podcasts are a series of digital audio and video recordings uploaded on the web with the aid of Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. There

are many types of podcasts available online, such as television podcasts, radio podcasts, classroom podcasts, and individual or group podcasts. Podcasts can be categorised into two main types: ‘radio podcasts’ and ‘independent podcasts’. Radio podcasts are existing radio programs turned into podcasts. ‘Independent podcasts’ are web-based podcasts produced by individuals and organisations. They have great potential for ELT because they can suit the needs of different learners (Sze, 2006).

### ***Podcasting pedagogy***

For educational purposes podcasts provide learners with various content choices of authentic oral language materials, portability, and time shifting opportunities. Research studies on podcasting have acknowledged the podcast’s potential. There is much documented evidence that podcasts can greatly help develop learners’ language skills, especially in developing learners’ speaking and listening skills (Ashton-Hay & Brookes, 2011; O’Brien & Hegelheimer, 2007). Podcasts offer language learners samples of real language and authentic materials (Thorne & Payne, 2005). Besides, students can use podcasts as a supplement to their textbook materials (Stanley, 2006).

### ***Related studies***

Hawke (2010) developed an independent listening pilot course based on podcasts to examine effects on science students’ English listening skills. The findings showed that students’ post-test scores were significantly higher than the pre-test scores. It could be concluded that podcasts helped learners pay attention to the podcast content and encouraged them to listen both from top-down and bottom-up perspectives.

Similarly in 2011, Istanto designed five podcast units as supplementary materials to develop learners’ listening skills and grammar knowledge. A questionnaire was administered at the end of the semester to 20 undergraduate students who learnt Indonesian as a foreign language. The results showed that the application of podcasts enhanced students’ listening skills and grammar knowledge, as well as knowledge of the culture of the target community.

Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2009) also employed survey questions to examine learners’ perceptions of listening to online podcasts. Most of the participants (76%) showed positive attitudes to the use of podcasts to develop listening skills. Similarly, Chan et al., (2011) investigated two podcast projects conducted at a university in Singapore. The results showed that the participants had significantly positive attitudes towards podcasts and were also found to be interested in podcast-based learning.

Ashton-Hay and Brookes (2011) conducted action research to find learning strategies created by students using podcasts. Participants created a web page in the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS), where podcasts, story transcripts, and student photos were uploaded. The findings indicated that the use of various types of learning strategies could facilitate the learning of a language.

### ***Design and methodology***

This study was conducted with 22 students in an English Listening and Speaking 1 course. None of the students had used podcasts for English learning purposes previously.

Data were collected through the students’ podcast diaries and questionnaires, and seven semi-structured interviews.

At the beginning of the course, I explained the podcast listening project to the students and provided some sources, a podcast diary sample, and timetable for reporting their experiences.

Once a week, the students were assigned to listen to any podcast three times, each podcast lasted at least 30 minutes. In a class meeting the students shared their experiences from what they noted in their diaries including the links they used. They also shared information on podcasts they found interesting to listen to, as well as improvements they gained and difficulties they faced. This documentation ensured that the students took the podcast learning project seriously.

At the end of the project a four-part questionnaire was conducted to investigate the students' podcast current practices, including the links they used, factors affecting students' podcast subscriptions, and supplementary or follow-up activities that students performed to facilitate podcasts. A 5-point Likert scale to measure the students' perceptions on the use of the podcast learning project was also used. Interview questions also covered areas investigated in the questionnaire but in a deeper way to triangulate the data.

## Data analysis and results

### *Questionnaire findings*

The questionnaire surveyed the students' current podcast learning practices and included factors in choosing a podcast, activities they did during and after listening, and the students' perceptions on the use of the podcast learning project for educational purposes.

Regarding the factors affecting a student's decision to subscribe to a podcast, Table 1 shows that 'speaking speed' of the podcast was found to be most important, followed by content difficulty, language, and accent. The format of the podcast was the least important factor for the students.

**Table 1. Factors affecting the students' decisions to subscribe to podcasts**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Episode length	2.2	1.31
Speaking speed	3.6	.53
Interest in the subject	2.7	.83
Content difficulty	3.2	.67
Accent (British, American, or others)	3.0	1.32
Format (audio or video)	1.7	1.12
Transcript (with or without	2.6	1.23
Language (English or bilingual)	3.1	1.05

The questionnaire also examined follow-up activities the students performed during or after podcast listening. The results indicated that the students conducted multiple activities to facilitate learning from podcasts (Table 2), which showed their serious efforts to learn using the podcast learning project. It can be seen from the table that the most frequently performed activity was learning new words. Next were looking up the dictionary and repeating listening

(which shared the same percentages). The least done activity was searching for more information about the podcast.

**Table 2. Follow-up activities to facilitate podcast learning**

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>%</b>
Learning new words	9	100%
Looking up dictionary	8	89%
Repeating listening	8	89%
Taking notes	6	68%
Searching information	3	33%

In terms of the students' perceptions of the use of the podcasting project, as can be seen from Table 3, the students showed positive attitudes towards all aspects investigated. In particular, the students strongly agreed about the effectiveness of listening to podcasts on the improvement of their linguistic competencies, in which pronunciation ranked first, followed by listening ability, vocabulary enrichment and speaking competence. It is also observed that the activity enhanced the students' world knowledge and learning motivation. Additionally, most of the students found it easy to find a podcast and convenient to listen at many times and places.

**Table 3. Students' perceptions of the benefits of the use of the podcast learning project**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Linguistic competence	4.3	.23
Convenience	3.7	.29
Motivation	3.8	.26
Knowledge	4.0	.23

Appendix B, Part B, items 11-13 explored the students' perceived difficulties of using podcasts for language learning. It is observed from Table 4 that in terms of technology, approximately 22% of the students found it difficult to learn to use podcasts. Regarding the long episodes which contributed to the students' tiredness and difficulty in following the speakers' speaking speed, the students seemed to be quite indecisive. Over half of the students indicated that they were unsure about how to address issues of tiredness and speaking speed.

**Table 4. Students' perceptions of the difficulties of the use of the podcast learning project**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Long episodes	3.1	.39
Speakers' speaking speed	3.6	.24
Technology	2.0	.40

### ***Interview and podcast diary findings***

Analysis of interviews and podcast diaries provided further information about the students' learning practices, experiences and beliefs. It was found that the most useful podcasts named in the diaries were:

- English we Speak
- BBC World Service
- Six Minute Vocabulary
- 100 Daily English Conversations
- [www.listen-to-English.com](http://www.listen-to-English.com)
- [www.esl-lab.com](http://www.esl-lab.com)
- [www.English class 101.com](http://www.English class 101.com)

It was also reported by one student in the interview that other links were rather complicated to access. Some sites required subscribers to follow many steps and some others asked the students to pay money. In fact, the above websites were quite useful and suitable for the students since they entirely targeted ESL and EFL learners.

The students provided reasons for their podcast choices, including the speakers' speaking speed, difficulty levels, medium length episodes, and interesting podcast topics. Some students selected podcasts about sports, while others chose entertainment or education with the explanation that they were interested in these topics.

Regarding follow-up activities the students did during and after listening to podcasts, the interview data showed that students did various activities such as repeated listening, learning new words, and looking up the dictionary. Also, students reported been able to recognise a podcast if the podcast did not have a set script.

Considering the students' perceptions of the benefits of the podcast learning project, data from the student diaries and interviews revealed language improvement as a major advantage of podcast learning. Most of the students reported that they could improve their listening ability day-by-day. One student wrote 'My listening skill improved a little this time'.

Another advantage of the project was that the number of the students' new words increased significantly. All students interviewed said that they could review and learn a lot of new vocabulary when listening to podcasts. Pronunciation improvement was also another benefit that the students gained from this project. One student said: 'I could learn the correct pronunciations, the intonations and contracted forms from native speakers. As a result, I could catch up the speakers' ideas and improve my pronunciation'.

The students could improve their knowledge of the world, as well. One student wrote that they could learn about British history. Another student wrote ‘I could know more about the society, culture and people all over the world’. Convenience was also viewed by some students as a big advantage of this project. They could download and listen to podcasts ‘at any time and place’. In addition, the students appreciated the impact of podcast listening on their learning motivation. Many students wrote ‘it was fun’, ‘it suited my interest’, ‘amazing experience’ and so on.

In terms of difficulties in using podcasts, many students complained that the speech was fast and that a lot of new words contributed to the students’ lack of understanding. In particular, one student reported feeling frustrated when she could not understand the content even after repeated listening. Another student complained that his surrounding environment was too noisy to listen well since he lived in a boarding house with some other students.

The students had no difficulty in using technology to listen to podcasts. This could be explained by the fact that right from the beginning, I required the students to prepare their laptop, desktop computer, mobile phone for listening activities inside and outside the classroom.

## **Discussion**

### ***The students’ podcast learning practices***

Most of the web sites the students subscribed to were programs entirely introduced by me in the orientation. The students had no ideas about podcasts available online for educational purposes, which emphasises the need for an appropriate orientation.

Regarding factors affecting the students choosing a certain podcast to listen to, several generalisations can be made. The speakers’ speaking speed and short episodes with easy or moderate difficulty levels were apparently very important to these elementary English learners. As long as the students could catch up with what they listened to, they became engaged and motivated in what they did.

In addition, the students’ interests in the podcast topics accounted for podcast selections. It was easy to understand that the students just listened to what they were fond of as they had freedom to choose any podcasts for listening practices. Thus, this project effectively served the learners’ needs and interests. However, the format of the podcasts (audio or videos) was not important for the students when subscribing to a podcast. The students were all adult academic learners so they did not care much about the format of podcasts whether they were audios or videos as long as they served the students’ learning effectively.

In addition, the findings indicated that the students did multiple follow-up activities during and after listening to podcasts, which showed their carefulness and seriousness in doing this podcast learning project. However, they did not mention searching supplementary information related to podcasts they listened to, which shows their low awareness of learning autonomy.

### ***The students’ perceptions of the use of the podcast learning project for educational purposes***

The data showed that the podcast learning project was generally successful in terms of the students’ improvement of linguistic competence, enhanced motivation, convenience in learning, and increase of their world knowledge.

As a whole, the students showed positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of listening to podcasts for listening comprehension improvement. This finding was quite harmonious with the study of Artyushina et al., (2011), Kavaliauskienė and Anusienė (2009), and Chan et al., (2011).

Interestingly, pronunciation was found to be the most improved linguistic competence by the students, which can be explained by the more the students' listened to authentic material of native speakers, the more correct pronunciation the students gained. This effectively bridges the gap between the formal English which dominates most language classrooms and the informal English used in real life.

Vocabulary enrichment was also one of the great advantages the students reported, especially learning new words according to subjects, and reinforcing existing vocabulary.

In addition, the data from the questionnaires and interviews revealed that the students could also review and understand grammar used in oral forms. Listening to podcasts allowed the students to not only review grammar but appreciate how speakers used grammar in daily conversations. These findings were also supported by Istanto's (2011) finding that podcasts enhanced students' listening skills and grammar knowledge as well as knowledge of the culture of the target community.

The students did not have any major difficulties using the technology. This finding was quite different to Yeh's (2013) study in which students complained that technical problems hindered their listening of podcasts.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Podcast diary format

Name of the podcast:

Duration: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes per episode

Language: English? Bilingual (English plus Chinese)?

Category: Education? Music? News? Others?

Difficulty: Easy? Medium? Challenging?

This week's podcasting experience (50-200 words):

- Benefits
- Drawbacks
- Activities you apply while/after listening

### Appendix B: Questionnaire on the students' practices and perceptions on the use of the podcast learning project

#### Part A: The students' podcast current practices

##### 1. Factors in choosing a podcast

How important are the following factors in your choosing a podcast to subscribe to?

Factors	Not at all important	Slightly important	Fairly important	Very important
Length of each episode.				
Speaking speed.				
Interest in the subject.				
Content difficulty.				
Accent (e.g., American, British, or others).				
Format (audio or video).				
Language (e.g., English or bilingual).				
Transcript (with or without).				

## 2. Podcast learning follow-up activities

What learning activities do you do during or after listening to podcasts? Check all that apply.

- Looking up dictionaries
- Taking notes
- Searching for supplementary information online
- Learning new words
- Repeating listening
- Doing nothing
- Others

### Part B: The students' perceptions on the use of the podcast learning project for educational purposes

Please indicate () whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Listening to podcasts improves my English listening ability.					
2. Listening to podcasts increases my English learning motivation.					
3. Listening to podcasts enriches my world knowledge.					
4. Listening to podcasts increases my English pronunciation.					
5. Listening to podcasts increases my English vocabulary.					
6. Listening to podcasts increases my English speaking skills.					
7. It is easy for me to find podcasts that suit my interest.					
8. It is easy for me to find podcasts that suit my level.					
9. Listening to podcasts is an enjoyable experience.					
10. It is convenient for me learn at any time and any place.					
11. The long episode makes me tiring.					
12. I cannot follow the speakers' speaking speed.					
13. I do not have technology to practise.					

### **Appendix C: Interview questions**

1. What websites did you often subscribe to? Why?
2. What factors affecting you most and least in choosing a podcast to listen to? Why?
3. What learning activities did you do when (or after) listening to podcasts?
4. How did the podcast learning project improve your linguistic competences?
5. What other benefits/advantages did you gain from the podcast learning project?
6. What problems did you encounter while doing the podcast learning project?

# **The Potential of Montage Applications in Educational Video Production**

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## **Abstract**

Multimedia is a technique that conveys information in a multi-sensory manner. Montage production for education involves the use of textual, graphic, audio and video materials to convey information to the user, who interacts with it by reading, listening and observing the still and moving images.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the combination of multimedia elements in montage and video productions and to see which elements are able to assist teachers in achieving learning objectives in the classroom.

Video is a powerful tool in today's classroom. Nugent (2005) writes teachers use video for introducing a topic, revising content, providing opportunities for rehabilitation and also for enrichment. Video can be used in all environments such as in the classroom, small group or in individual learning. It can lead students to go beyond the classroom. Video can be used with almost all topics and with all types of students, and can be combined in a variety of teaching techniques (Smaldino et al., 2012).

Montage can be defined as a combination of sound and visuals produced using Movie Maker software, Ulead Video and others. The use of montage as a teaching aid provides a new experience for some students. Montage can be used for set induction, and can provide an initial overview of a topic. If it is used at the end of a lesson the montage can provide reinforcement for students so that they can better understand a topic.

## **Why montage?**

Students have various learning styles. Some students learn better from visual images, while others prefer the auditory channel. Video materials (montage) are multi-sensory and can meet both the requirements of visual and auditory stimulation.

The nature of montage allows it to be used in different forms:

- As a graphic it can be used to explain concepts that cannot be explained by text.
- As audio it can add atmosphere with music or sound effects to enhance the communication of ideas.
- As a video it can show real objects.
- As text it can be used in the headline content and instructional topics.
- As action it can revive the project in a realistic environment.

Now days, students are very visual learners. With the availability of broadband internet access the use of video in the classroom is much more reliable. Video is a medium which is

replacing printed materials. It is changing both the way we learn and the way we interact with each other.

The montage technique used in this study involving video production is 'stop motion'. Stop motion is an animation technique that physically manipulates an object that appears to move on its own. The object is moved in small increments between individually photographed frames, creating the illusion of movement when the series of frames is played as a continuous sequence.

### **Purpose of this study**

To evaluate the combination of multimedia elements in montage and video productions and to see which elements are able to assist teachers in achieving learning objectives in the classroom.

### **Method**

Fifty-eight undergraduate participants (42 females, 16 males) in their fourth semester of teacher training, undertaking the course of Technology in Teaching and Learning, participated in the production of montage, and its viewing.

The instruction design model, ASSURE, used a six-step approach to provide effective teaching in this assignment. The six steps are:

1. Analyse learners.
2. State objectives.
3. Choose methods, media and resource.
4. Utilise media and materials.
5. Require learners' participation.
6. Evaluation.

The model is also used to integrate the use of technology and media in order to enhance students' learning (Nugent, 2005).

Students were assigned to groups consisting of 4 to 5 students. The 12 groups were given the following tasks:

- Using the ASSURE model, plan a 1 hour lesson based on a number of options. Before producing educational videos, students must plan well so that all aspects of the produced video meet the lesson plan objectives.
- Using video editor software, produce a video presentation to use as a teaching aid in your lesson plan. The video produced should contain the following elements:
  - montage (1-2) minutes using stop motion technique
  - pictures
  - graphics (such as logos, frames and patterns)
  - video (acting)
  - text
  - background audio
  - various techniques of shots
  - various techniques of camera movement

## Results

The montage presentation was evaluated with the assessment being carried out during a show-casing performance. The various elements of multimedia including video smoothness were matched with objectives of group members, who showed co-operation amongst themselves.

- Four groups produced 'Excellent' montage educational videos, and the rest were in the 'Good' category.
- It was found that the application of montage in teaching and learning helps students in their written reflections.

Insights gained from reflections of students after the screening of an educational video montage are:

- Montage can be used to produce teaching aids to provide new experiences for students.
- Easy to use.
- Montage can be used as a source of information for students to learn a new topic.
- Montage does not take the place of a teacher, but it is effective as a channel to deliver information in effective ways.
- Montage can arouse a lively atmosphere in the classroom, and help gain students' attention.
- Montage can help students gain a better understand of a topic.
- Montage has the potential to improve communication in the classroom.

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<http://www.nourishlife.org/teach/how-to-use-video-in-the-classroom/>

## Appendix

### Evaluation rubric developed for montage and video production assignment

Group assignment	Criteria				
	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Pass	Fall
	41-50	31-40	21-30	11-20	1-10
Multi-media learning package 50%	<u>Technique</u> Able to apply at least 5 shooting techniques (e.g.: <i>bird eye view, high angle, low angle, eye level, frog level, panning, dolly, tilting, tracking</i> ).  Able to apply at least 5 types of shots (e.g.: <i>under shot, overhead shot, medium shot, close-up, extreme close-up, long shot</i> ).	<u>Technique</u> Able to apply at least 4 shooting techniques (e.g.: <i>bird eye view, high angle, low angle, eye level, frog level, panning, dolly, tilting, tracking</i> ).  Able to apply at least 4 types of shots (e.g.: <i>under shot, overhead shot, medium shot, close-up, extreme close-up, long shot</i> ).	<u>Technique</u> Able to apply at least 3 shooting techniques (e.g.: <i>bird eye view, high angle, low angle, eye level, frog level, panning, dolly, tilting, tracking</i> ).  Able to apply at least 3 types of shots (e.g.: <i>under shot, overhead shot, medium shot, medium shot, close-up, extreme close-up, long shot</i> ).	<u>Technique</u> Able to apply at least 2 shooting techniques (e.g.: <i>bird eye view, high angle, low angle, eye level, frog level, panning, dolly, tilting, tracking</i> ).  Able to apply at least 2 types of shots (e.g.: <i>under shot, overhead shot, medium shot, close-up, extreme close-up, long shot</i> ).	<u>Technique</u> Able to apply at least 1 shooting technique (e.g.: <i>bird eye view, high angle, low angle, eye level, frog level, panning, dolly, tilting, tracking</i> ).  Able to apply at least 1 type of shot (e.g.: <i>under shot, overhead shot, medium shot, close-up, extreme close-up, long shot</i> ).
	<u>Visual</u> Very suitable and very satisfactory video quality.	<u>Visual</u> Suitable and satisfactory video quality.	<u>Visual</u> Quite suitable and quite satisfactory video quality.	<u>Visual</u> Less suitable and less satisfactory video quality.	<u>Visual</u> Not suitable and poor video quality.
	<u>Audio</u> Very suitable and very satisfactory audio quality.	<u>Audio</u> Suitable and satisfactory audio quality.	<u>Audio</u> Quite suitable and quite satisfactory audio quality.	<u>Audio</u> Less suitable and less satisfactory audio quality.	<u>Audio</u> Not suitable and poor video quality.
	<u>Text</u> Text selection is very appropriate and satisfactory.	<u>Text</u> Text selection is appropriate and satisfactory.	<u>Text</u> Text selection is quite appropriate and satisfactory.	<u>Text</u> Text selection is less appropriate and satisfactory.	<u>Text</u> Text selection is not appropriate and satisfactory.

Multi-media learning package 50%	<u>Continuity / smoothness of video</u> Appropriate quality and very satisfactory.	<u>Continuity / smoothness of video</u> Appropriate quality and satisfactory.	<u>Continuity / smoothness of video</u> Appropriate quality and quite satisfactory.	<u>Continuity / smoothness of video</u> Less appropriate quality and less satisfactory.	<u>Continuity / smoothness of video</u> Inappropriate quality and not satisfactory.
	<u>Content appropriateness</u> The content is very suitable and meets the objectives.	<u>Content appropriateness</u> The content is suitable and meets the objectives.	<u>Content appropriateness</u> The content is quite suitable and meets the objectives.	<u>Content appropriateness</u> The content is not quite suitable and not quite meets the objectives.	<u>Content appropriateness</u> The content is not suitable and did not meet the objectives.
	<u>Creativity</u> Have elements of very high creativity.	<u>Creativity</u> Have elements of high creativity.	<u>Creativity</u> Have elements of quite high creativity.	<u>Creativity</u> Have elements of low creativity.	<u>Creativity</u> Have elements of very low creativity.

# **Education for Sustainable Development: Teaching Practice for Environmental Education in a Korean Primary School**

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## **Abstract**

A basic meaning of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is development that can meet a need for both current and future generations and which is subject to continuation from past to future. Sustainable development can be defined as economic development with environment preservation and the maintenance of justice in society.

Korea has made efforts to teach education for sustainable development since 2005. However, teaching sustainable development in an education system that focuses largely on college entrance is difficult. The ideal teaching style is experience-centered, and this applies to school-sustainable development education. With the necessity and urgency of education for sustainable development growing, there are many pedagogical issues to resolve.

In this study ideas are shared about education for sustainable development from an environmental viewpoint, with an emphasis on trash, water, energy and bio-diversity.

## **Education for sustainable development**

After World War II there was an emphasis on industrialisation to increase productivity, but pursuing worldwide industrialisation in a short time caused many problems such as severe environmental pollution, and a drain upon our country's resources. These environmental problems have brought every living thing including human beings to a crisis. Also, inequality between nations and between the various classes has been growing because of the rapid change in the environment. Economic prosperity has become the most important goal in the world with materialistic affluence associated with industrialisation.

Experiencing environmental, social, and economical problems made people think that the usual resource-intensive development method can bring richness of life in the short run, but it is undesirable for future generations in the long run. Therefore the need for a future-oriented and long-term approach to development has been raised (Connolly & Prothero, 2008). As a result, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) introduced a definition of sustainable development as development that can support social justice with an ideal combination between the environment and economic development simultaneously.

In terms of ecosystem capacity, sustainable development is development that is not damaging to future needs in order to fulfill our necessities. Sustainable development involves economic growth, maintaining environmental conservation and social justice, as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Definition of education for sustainable development**

In Table 1 the importance of sustainable development is expressed by some world leaders.

**Table 1. The related analects of education for sustainable development**

<p><i>“We hold the future in our hands, together, we must ensure that our grandchildren will not have to ask why we failed to do the right thing, and let them suffer the consequences.”</i></p> <p>– Ban Ki-Moon (UN Secretary-General)</p> <p><i>“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”</i></p> <p>– Nelson Mandela (former president of the Republic of South Africa, human rights activist)</p> <p><i>“Choosing a type of education means choosing a type of society.”</i></p> <p>– from Delors Report (1996)</p> <p><i>“I am convinced that Education for Sustainable Development based on the interdependence of environment, economy, society and cultural diversity, is the key to a better and more just world of the 21st century.”</i></p> <p>– Irina Bokova (UNESCO Director-General)</p>
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In the past, people associated environmental problems with the words ‘sustainable development’. Nowadays people make the association with physical elements such as earth, environment, and resources, and social problems such as disease, hunger, and the gap between rich and poor. Also, with materialistic affluence being associated with social and economical development, sustainable development can be defined as economic development with environmental preservation, and maintaining justice in society (Moh, 2010).

As bio-diversity is important for maintaining balance in nature, cultural diversity is very important for maintaining relationships within mankind. Cultural diversity including tolerance, open-mindedness, multi-cultural competence, and cultural identity is recognised by the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001, UNESCO. Sustainable development revolves around environmental, social, and economical issues, and shares elements which help to make harmony amongst these issues. (2005, United Nations 2005 World Summit).

### **Understanding education for sustainable development (ESD)**

Sustainable development is seen by many to be the responsibility of all of society. Education can help people understand, value, and have positive attitudes towards ideas associated with sustainable development. The United Nations emphasised the importance of education declaring a 10-year education plan for sustainable development, from 2005 to 2014. In other words, education for sustainable development involves knowledge, values, actions and life-styles, which are needed by all people to be part of a sustainable and developmental society (UNESCO, 2005).

**Table 2. Understanding rules for education for sustainable development**

Generational equity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The development which is not damaging future needs and fulfills our necessities.</li> <li>2. Natural resources/pleasant environment/various social conflicts - create stable social groundwork.</li> <li>3. Inter-generation/between generations - consider fairness.</li> </ol>
Improving quality of life.	<p>Healthy environment.          Developing individual's potential power; satisfaction of workplace.          Pleasant residential environment.          Safe food.          Stable income.          Social stability.          Health maintenance.</p>
Social cohesion.	<p>Community spirit - industrialisation (competitive society).          Equalise social wealth.          Cognition of social relations.</p>
International responsibility.	<p>Problems of ultra-nationalism.          Think globally.          Concerns about earthquake, typhoon, radioactive contamination, climate change, infectious disease, financial crisis etc.</p>

### **Key issues in education for sustainable development**

Education for sustainable development can be considered from three perspectives: social, environmental, and economic.

- *Social perspective*: Human rights, peace, safety, unification, cultural diversity, social justice, health, food, governance, public participation, gender equality, media, ICT, globalisation, internationalisation.
- *Environmental perspective*: Natural resources (e.g. water, air, soil), energy, climate change, bio-diversity, environment problems, sustainable food production, sustainable rural areas and cities, decline in disaster prevention, traffic.
- *Economical perspective*: Sustainable production and consumption, sustainability of companies, market economy, narrowing gap between the rich and the poor.

In the past, Korea included fundamental concepts of sustainable development in its education system. However, with Korea's increased speed of economic development, competition in education content has been growing more fiercely. Examinations have become the most important method to assess human achievement. In line with global trends, Korea has made efforts to teach education of sustainable development since 2005. However, teaching education of sustainable development in an education system that focuses only on college entrance is very hard. In addition, education for sustainable development comes a long way down the list of priorities (Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 2008).

In this study, trash, water, energy and bio-diversity are used to introduce ESD teaching practice in a primary school in Korea.

The most appropriate teaching style for school-sustainable development education is experience-centered teaching. With the necessity and urgency for education for sustainable development growing, there are many pedagogical issues to resolve.

### **Education for sustainable development teaching practice and plan**

Education for sustainable development should be taught in elementary, middle and high schools in a systematic way and be entirely integrated through the whole curriculum. In this way children can learn not only knowledge, but also skills to think about sustainable development. For this to occur the following elements are recommended.

- Studies should be approached in an integrated way.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving ability should be emphasized.
- Diverse teaching methods should be utilized.
- Decision-making should involve all our members.
- Start with subjects that have regional connections.

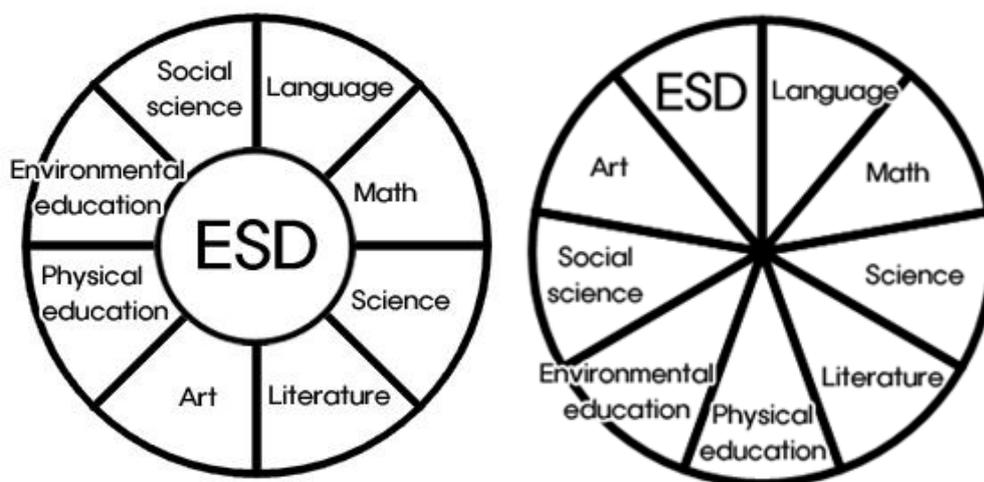
(Korean National Commission for UNESCO, 2007).

*Values and education roles*

**Table 3. Fundamental values and education roles for education for sustainable development**

Fundamental values of ESD		Educational roles for ESD	
Respect for human rights.	Respect for human rights all over the world. Demand justice socially and economically.	Reinforce ownership mindset.	Affirmative active thought and actions.
Respect future generation.	Respect for future generation's human rights. Take responsibilities between generations.	Reinforce abilities.	Acknowledgement of social problems. Move vision of a society to reality to make it change.
Respect ecosystems.	Preserve ecosystems. Respect community of life.	Valuable actions, change in living modes.	Life with many positives and self-development through change of actions.
Understand cultural diversity.	Understand cultural diversity, tolerance, nonviolence peace, etc.	Future-oriented thinking.	Future-oriented thinking and judge future by present point.

*Strategies for teaching*



**Figure 2. Strategies for teaching education for sustainable development**

The circle on the left indicates that ESD is integrated into all other subjects. This is preferable to having ESD as a separate subject in the curriculum as shown on the right.

## ***Activities***

In the following section activities that can be used with primary school children to assist them to understand the importance of ESD are outlined.

### **Trash education**

1. What is the meaning of trash and who decides what is trash?
2. Find out and understand the best method to reduce trash.
3. Think about methods to reduce trash that center around things which are used around us.

### **Water education**

1. Check distribution patterns of water on earth and know the importance of water.
2. Measure the amount of water that people can use in one day/one week.
3. Think about the ways to save water yourself.

### **Energy education**

1. Check definition of energy and understand about energy.
2. Help people know about energy use by using the energy bingo game.
3. Think about alternative energy and the way people conserve energy.

### **Bio-diversity education**

1. Understand that living things have worth and people can't decide on the value of them.
2. Understand the relationships between living things and know that they are interrelated.
3. Understand that there are no non-useful creatures and think about co-existence with all living things.

## ***Teacher's learning plan***

*Aim of this course:* To make a case for supporting sustainable development, and develop positive attitudes to sustainable development. Illustrate with cases and examples.

*Class:* 5

*Date:* 11/11/2015

*Instructor:* J. H. Kim

*Text:* Social subject

*Unit of study:* Sustainable environment (86-88); *Period:* 9-10/11/2015

**Table 4. Learning guidance & assessment plan for education for sustainable development**

**1. Learning guidance**

<b>Step (Time)</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Teaching and learning activity</b>	<b>Aids</b>
Introduction (6)	An ecological footprint measurement.	<p>An ecological footprint measurement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let's measure the size of the ecological footprint. What results did you get?</li> <li>• My ecological footprint index is 4 ~ 6ha. We need to do our best to slow down the ecological footprint.</li> <li>• Ecological footprints of our country: Korea's ecological footprint index has increased.</li> <li>• Why is the ecological footprint index increasing in our country? This is because people are using resources indiscriminately.</li> </ul>	Study materials (Assessing the ecological footprint and ecological footprint index).
	Display to think of learning contents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The last time, I tried to find the meaning and the need for sustainable development.</li> </ul>	
	See learning activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let's look at an example of sustainable development. Case of Sustainable Development</li> <li>• See learning activities: [Activity 1] To explore practices of social, economic and environmental science. [Activity 2] Make up teams with your friends. [Activity 3] To make sustainable development proposals.</li> </ul>	
	To divide up role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let's identify different areas for each group that you want to study more.</li> </ul>	

Exploring (27)	To investigate cases in each area.	<p>[Activity 1] To explore practices of social, economic and environmental science. Aim: To investigate cases in each area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let's examine each expert in sustainable development practices.</li> <li>Let's record results on a worksheet, and notify all of the survey results. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social: Investigate the case that improves the lives of poor people in order to reduce inequality (as represented in the media).</li> <li>Economic: Investigate the case that land development practices, considering the environment, and saving resources and using practices etc., (as represented in the media).</li> <li>Environmental: Investigate the case of the current generation and next generation living together in good environments. Give examples.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>A handbook from each field &amp; smart phone.</p> <p>A professional journal from each field.</p>
Learning to teach each other (13)	Learning to teach each other, and report back to original teams.	<p>[Activity 2] Make up teams with your friends. Aim: To disseminate results of investigations, and report back to the team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let's go back to the original teams, and talk to each other about cases examined in each area.</li> <li>Let's note the newly learned information or questions on the worksheet.</li> </ul> <p>N.B. If you do not address the questions share a story with the teacher.</p>	A professional journal from each field.
Presentations and organise (34)	Making proposals for each group.	<p>[Activity 3] To make sustainable development proposals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let's make sustainable development proposals.</li> <li>Let's make sustainable development proposals based on the information learned from each expert.</li> </ul>	Proposal (octavo drawing paper and pens etc.).
	<p>Proposals presentation. To organise what you study.</p> <p>What to study the next time.</p>	<p>Proposal presentation for each group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Let's present proposals for each group. To organise what you study.</li> <li>Let's say the study content today. To make sustainable development must utilise sustainable energy such as solar power, wind power, and so on. Governments and citizens efforts are required for sustainable development.</li> <li>What to study next time We will need to know what attitude to sustainable development at next time.</li> </ul>	

## 2. Assessment

Area	Achievement standards	Standard for valuation	Scale	Time	Method
Understanding	Know the meaning of sustainable development. This can be understood by looking for examples.	Study the meaning of sustainable development. It can be understood by consulting cases & examples.	High	In class.	Observation method.
		Study the meaning of sustainable development. It can be understood by consulting cases & examples.	Medium		
		Study the meaning of sustainable development. It can be understood by consulting cases & examples.	Lower		
Function	It can be explained by examining the practices of sustainable development.	It can be explained by examining the cases of various sustainability studies.	High	In class.	Observation method.
		It can be explained by examining the practices of sustainable development.	Medium		
		It is insufficient to investigate the practices of the various sustainable development studies.	Lower		
Attitude	It has an interest in sustainable development and an attitude of mind.	Have an interest in sustainable development and an attitude to working actively.	High	In class or after class.	Observation method or self assessment.
		Have an interest in sustainable development as an attitude of mind.	Medium		
		Attention to sustainable development is weak, but the attitude of trying.	Lower		

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