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**The Change Laboratory in CLIL settings:
Foregrounding the Voices of East Asian Students**

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Abstract

I propose that the Change Laboratory is an underutilized intervention research methodology that can be used to foreground the voices, needs and rights of East Asian students taking English Medium Instruction classes predicated on the Western Socratic learning habitus. In particular, I relate the Change Laboratory methodology to a specific type of EMI pedagogy known as CLIL, Content Language Integrated Learning. What separates CLIL courses from content-based language learning and other forms of EMI, is the planned integration of the ‘4Cs’ of content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice (Coyle et al., 2010). CLIL pedagogy aims to motivate and empower students in learner-centered classrooms. However, student voices have not often been foregrounded in research. The Change laboratory (Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013) is an intervention research methodology that can empower students with regard to course design. It applies a “Vygotskian developmental approach in real-world, collective, organizational settings” (Bligh and Flood, 2015) and is therefore in accordance with CLIL pedagogy underpinned by the constructivist ideas of Bruner, Vygotsky and Piaget. There is much potential for the Change Laboratory to be used in course design as it focuses on how “institutional forms actually unfold locally” (Bligh and Flood, 2015) and has the ability to “develop the transformative agency of marginalized voices in higher education” (Bligh and Flood, 2015). Thus, I argue that Change Laboratory interventions can reduce linguistic imperialism, or perceptions thereof, in English Medium Instruction or CLIL settings in East Asia. They can help investigate the perception of cultural habitus – Confucian and Socratic – that may affect learning dispositions and in doing so redesign courses that better fit the needs of learners.

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Keywords: Change Laboratory, Activity Theory, CLIL, Intervention Research

Introduction

In this article I will argue that the Change Laboratory is an underutilized intervention research methodology that can be used to foreground the voices, needs and rights of East Asian students taking English Medium Instruction classes predicated on the Western Socratic learning habitus. In particular, I relate the Change Laboratory methodology to a specific type of EMI pedagogy known as CLIL which stands for Content Language Integrated Learning. First, I will review some of the pertinent literature on Socratic and Confucian learning. I will then describe CLIL from its inception in the European Union to its uptake in East Asia. Finally, I will describe the Change Laboratory methodology and show how it can be used to enhance East Asian rights in the classroom.

Confucian and Socratic Learning

In his famous book on cultural psychology, *The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently -- and why*, Nisbett (2004) provides empirical evidence that human behavior and perception can differ markedly depending on the cultural software one downloads. The different philosophies, structures and educational systems of ancient Greece and China have led, he argues, to East Asians having a more holistic world view, characterized by interrelationships, and represented by the calligraphic circle on the front cover of his book. Conversely, Westerners are represented by a straight line which denotes their focus on objects (nouns) and people, and the use of formal logic. Similarly, Tweed and Lehman (2002) highlight the cultural differences that differentiate learning in East and West. They use the terms “culturally Western” (Socratic) and “culturally Chinese” (Confucian) to reiterate that it is not race or ethnicity that determines these differing conceptions. Their Confucian-Socratic framework attempts to categorize the ideals exemplified by each philosopher and educate the reader on why there may be differences in learning behavior seen in the classroom. Essentially, the Socratic framework derives from individualistic culture, while the Confucian framework stems from collectivist culture.

Socrates advocated for private and public questioning of perceived wisdom, evaluation of others beliefs, and self-generated ideas. Culturally Western students and educators report a preference for self-directed learning. These dispositions assert the independence of the individual in terms of society and cognition. Questioning of authority and evaluation of other’s ideas and beliefs is perceived positively early in the learning process even though such doubt can harm social harmony (as Socrates’ death attests). Believing that knowledge resides in the individual self rather than the collective, supports an entity theory wherein the self is seen as relatively unchangeable. Evidence shows that culturally Western students tend to prioritize inherent traits or good teaching, over effort or strategies, as being responsible for success or failure, meaning failure can lead to more anxiety. Many Western instructors, inspired by Dewey (1916), believe education should be its own goal. Consequently, culturally Western students pursuing high grades report less intrinsic motivation toward learning and mastery. Finally, the individualistic preference of culturally Western people means that it is one’s attitudes rather than authority that

dictates morality.

Criticisms of the Socratic framework point to the potential disruption of learning that can occur when overt doubt or skepticism is not reinforced with sufficient evidence. Socrates was himself widely read, and those who follow his method should be likewise. Nonetheless, when expertly facilitated, Socratic questioning allows students to enter a zone of proximal development by which they can deepen their understanding and develop higher thinking.

In contrast, Confucius encouraged respectful, diligent and practical attainment of knowledge and virtue through emulation of individuals identified by the collective as virtuous characters. Culturally Chinese students and educators do not value early questioning of others' beliefs or assertion of one's own. This would go against the Confucius statement that he transmits rather than innovates and that learning and thinking are different. It would also violate the conception of the ideal scholar as one who is humble and devoted to learning from respected authority. Tied to this notion is the preference culturally Chinese students have for appointed tasks and more structure in learning. For example, one study showed that peak motivation occurred in Asian American children when activities were chosen for them by trusted peers or authority figures (Tweed and Lehman, 2002). Effort rather than innate ability is prized. Confucius believed that people are essentially the same, meaning that effort can lead to success. This supports an incremental theory in which ability is seen as changeable through diligence, meaning that poor results are seen as a consequence of lack of effort or poor strategies. However, once essential knowledge has been dutifully attained culturally Chinese students are expected to question authorities and posit their own hypotheses. The steps in the learning process have been identified as (1) memorizing (2) understanding (3) applying (4) questioning or modifying. Thus, criticism comes at the end of the learning process and not during it. Finally, pragmatic goals are traditionally valued. Education is a means to an end -- attaining the civil service job while at the same time becoming a virtuous person. It is not one's attitudes that dictate virtue, but the norms embodied in the collective culture.

Criticism of the Confucian framework often results from misapprehension. Western educators mistake the reticence to question and speak out in class for passivity, rather than the respectful mode students are used to. The greater acceptance of Hofstede's (1983) power distance in East Asia also means students are less confident about questioning their teacher. Furthermore, pragmatism does not exclude intrinsic motivation as many Western educators believe. A combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is reported in the literature. Finally, the stereotype that Asian students are primarily concerned with surface rather than deep learning is not borne out in research (Samuelowicz, 1987). Against his expectations, Bigg's (1987) Study Process Questionnaire when applied to high level Cantonese students found them high on the deep subscale and low on the surface scale. Memorization of material is not the same as rote-learning. As one student put it: "Every time I repeat the words, I gain more understanding." If we understand the importance of emulation of exemplars and Confucius's command to acquire essential knowledge, memorization is seen as a path to this attainment.

It is important to note that the above is found only in group means. There is much individual variation and people would expect to find themselves along a spectrum from the Confucian to the Socratic in their learning dispositions. Nonetheless, with the globalization of the academy there is a need for bicultural fluency. In some contexts, a more Confucian approach would be desirable; in others a more Socratic approach. I propose that the pedagogical principles found

in Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) can help East Asian students acquire the Socratic approach many will be expected to adopt in English Medium Instruction institutions.

Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL stands for Content Language Integrated Learning. It has been succinctly defined as “a dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language” (Coyle et al. 2010, p.1). The additional language is the target language that the student is trying to learn. Generally, English predominates in this role (Dalton-Puffer, 2011). David Marsh coined the term CLIL in 1994 and defined it as a general “umbrella” approach similar to content-based instruction (CBI) and language immersion (Marsh et al., 2001). To date, CLIL has mainly been employed in primary and secondary education in the European Union, with content teachers rather than language teachers delivering the lessons, and ideally with language teachers working with content teachers to create lesson plans and materials. Such lesson plans and materials find their genesis in communicative methodologies (Graddol, 2006, Lorenzo, 2007). Indeed, CLIL has been described as “the most recent developmental stage of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach” (Georgiou 2012, 495). The EU states that CLIL “can provide effective opportunities for pupils to use their new language skills now, rather than learn them now for use later” (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, 8). In other words, CLIL is said to meet the need of a globalizing knowledge economy in which the educational paradigm has changed. While the traditional language classrooms teach the nuts and bolts of language for ‘use later’, CLIL classrooms teach learners how to build things using these nuts and bolts ‘now.’ In less idiomatic language, the shift is toward “learning of content, cognitive engagement, problem-solving and higher-order thinking” (Coyle et al, 2010, 101).

We see in the literature a pragmatic economic rationale for the introduction of CLIL. The European commission advocates using trained teachers who are competent if not native users of the target language and highlights that this approach “provides exposure to the language without requiring extra time in the curriculum” (p.8), meaning that stand-alone language classes may not be required. CLIL also fulfills the need to have students be exposed to target languages for longer per week since traditional language classes were not felt to be meeting often enough (Coyle et al., 2010, 38). The uptake of CLIL in tertiary education has been growing in Europe as bilingual secondary schools feed students into the university setting. And it has also found growing popularity in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan as university English teachers and specialist content teachers collaborate to deliver CLIL courses.

CLIL can help East Asian students feel comfortable in exhibiting the learning behaviors valued by Western institutions if this is necessary for them. CLIL builds on the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach using authentic materials and tasks to facilitate ‘real’ communication in the classroom. It provides greater motivation because of its use of real communication driven by the needs of a content syllabus leading to a progression in knowledge and skills.

What separates some, but certainly not all courses that claim the CLIL title, from content-based language learning, or forms of bilingual education, is the planned integration of content, cognition, communication and culture into teaching and learning practice (Coyle, 2002, 45).

1. Content references the progression in knowledge, skills and understanding related to

specific elements of a defined curriculum

2. Communication involves using language to learn whilst learning to use language
3. Cognition refers to developing thinking skills which link concept formation (abstract and concrete), understanding and language
4. Culture exposes students to alternative perspectives and shared understandings, which deepen awareness of otherness and self.

In terms of language, there is language of learning which refers to the content, cognition and culture being addressed. For instance, this could include genre specific conventions or the Academic Word List. Then there is language for learning which develops students' discussion skills, research skills and effective group work skills e.g. debating and asking questions. Finally, there is the language through learning, which refers to the incidental new language that is developed through the learning process. In Japan, Watanabe (2011) points out that this results in genuine communication, as English is seen as a tool of communication, rather than a subject in itself to be learned through the traditional grammar-translation method. Furthermore, the pedagogy of CLIL helps learners "create new knowledge and develop new skills through reflection and engagement in higher-order as well as lower-order thinking (Coyle et al 2010, 54). In an ideal CLIL learning cycle then, there would be a progression from lower order thinking skills of remembering, understanding and applying lexis and concepts, to the higher order thinking skills of evaluating and analyzing texts and concepts, and students creating materials. We see here an opportunity for East Asian students to engage in Socratic learning once they have remembered and understood the content and language involved.

Learners' voices and institutional Change in an EAP Setting

The theoretical lens of Critical English for Academic Purposes (CEAP) (Benesch, 1996, 1999, 2001a) has been employed to conduct needs, or rights, analyses of EAP learners in a small number of studies. However, in most institutional settings Pragmatic EAP (Harwood and Hadley, 2004) is employed to teach dominant discourses and conventions, and has been criticised as marginalizing student voices (Dudely-Evans and St John, 1998). The criticism is that Pragmatic EAP involves teaching to students' perceived developmental level (their needs or deficiencies) and not their strengths, potentialities and possibilities (Belcher, 2006; Vygotsky, 1980). This focus on needs diverts attention from structural causes of poor performance, maintains hierarchical and unequal power distribution (Benesch, 2001a; Pennycook, 1997), and leads to accommodation to imposed demands and institutional structures (Chun, 2009; Pennycook, 1997). Thus, pragmatic EAP contravenes Freire's (2004) conception of situatedness, the dependence of meaning on sociohistorical, cultural and geographical determinants. If education only focuses on transferring knowledge, the students are necessarily dehumanized. Critical linguists believe there should be questioning, negotiation and ultimately the implementation of more democratic learning environments (Belcher, 2006). Building on Freirean notions of critical pedagogy, Benesch (2001a) argues for a dialogic approach based on consultation with teachers and students. The Change Laboratory is an underutilised intervention methodology that can accommodate these concerns

The Change Laboratory Intervention

The Change Laboratory is a method and set of instruments for a work community to carry out expansive learning that is needed for concept-level change of their joint activity (Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013). I propose its use with East Asian student participants in order to foreground their voices in interrogating Western teaching practices in English Medium Instruction tertiary education. In particular, my research focuses on Japanese students' views on the CLIL pedagogy employed in their Academic English classes, and their induction into Socratic teaching environments.

The Change laboratory applies a Vygotskian developmental approach in real-world, collective, organizational settings and accords with CLIL pedagogy underpinned by the constructivist ideas of Bruner, Vygotsky and Piaget. There is much potential for the Change Laboratory to be used in course design as it focuses on how “institutional forms actually unfold locally” and has the ability to “develop the transformative agency of marginalized voices in higher education” (Bligh and Flood, 2015). The method was developed by Prof. Engeström in the early 1990s on the basis of the Developmental Work Research methodology. It is based on two fundamental principles:

- (1) double stimulation (Vygotsky, 1987)
- (2) ascending from the abstract to the concrete; related to the idea of development through remediation of contradictions (Ilyenkov, 1982; Davydov, 1990)

Double Stimulation is Vygotsky's principle of how people can intentionally break out of a contradictory situation, change their circumstances, or solve difficult problems. For example, the first stimulus is a challenging problem such as “I don't want to get up. I have to get up” or “As a student I am very quiet in class”. The second stimulus is an external artifact which the subject turns into a psychological tool, by filling it with a meaning that is related to the situation: “I will get up on the count of three” or “As a student I will speak when I want the teacher to clarify a point ...”. With the help of the second stimulus the subject gains control of their action and a new understanding of the situation. Usually the first Double stimulation is an Activity triangle representing six nodes where we might find contradictions (see Figure 1). The subject could be teachers or students; the instrument could be the tools or signs used to teach; the object could be something like get an A-grade or develop intercultural competence; the division of labor might be salient to student group work or the role of the teacher with the students and administration; the community includes students but also other stakeholders; and the rules are those of the university and also the culture. Out of this we plan new procedures or mediations to achieve the object.

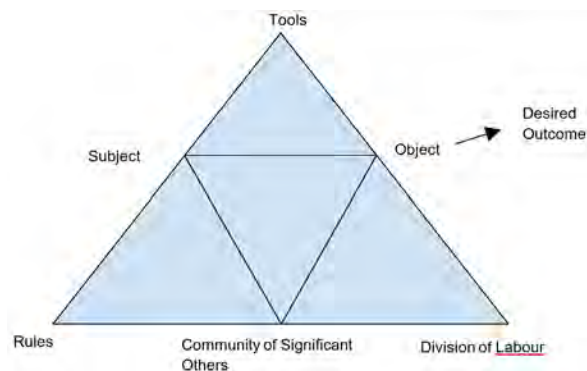


Figure 1: Model of Activity System, (Engeström, 1987, p.78)

In group sessions with a number of student participants, we evaluate teaching methods, tasks, assessments and rubrics by using such Activity systems for each. Figure 2 shows how the Change Laboratory is set up for a group session.

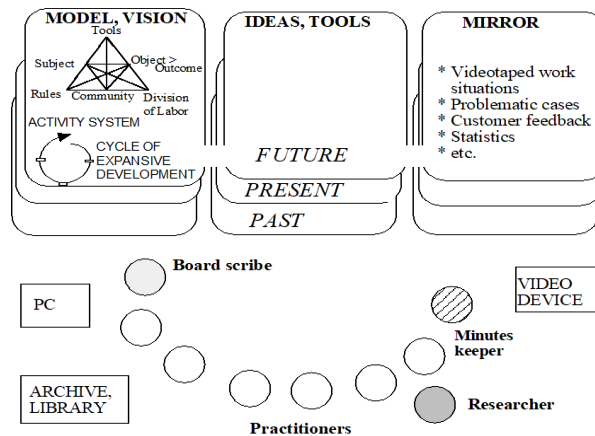


Figure 2: The Change Laboratory (Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013)

The First-Stimulus will focus on the tasks, assignments and rubrics of the course and how these affect learning dispositions. The Second-Stimulus will take the form of Activity System representations on flipcharts with documents outlining the meaning of terms. The social organization will be semi-circular so that everyone can interact and see the flip charts.

Mirror data will take the form of an understanding of Socratic and Confucian learning frameworks, transcripts of teacher interviews, summaries of course evaluations from previous courses, summaries of focus group sessions, transcripts of observations, video recordings of student work and ‘live mirrors’ – students from previous cohorts who will attend some of the CL sessions. Documentation will take the form of “lab books” that follow the planned flow of the CL sessions. Discussion and recordings will take the form of note-taking in “lab books” and writing on flipcharts. Whole group discussions will be audio-recorded and small group discussions will be asked to feed back to the group with their summaries being audio-recorded. In a fifteen-week semester, we would expect four to six two-hour sessions.

Ascending from the abstract to the concrete involves identifying a contradiction in a system, finding a mediator that resolves it, and generalizing the use of the new form. It occurs through expansive learning actions as seen in Figure 3.

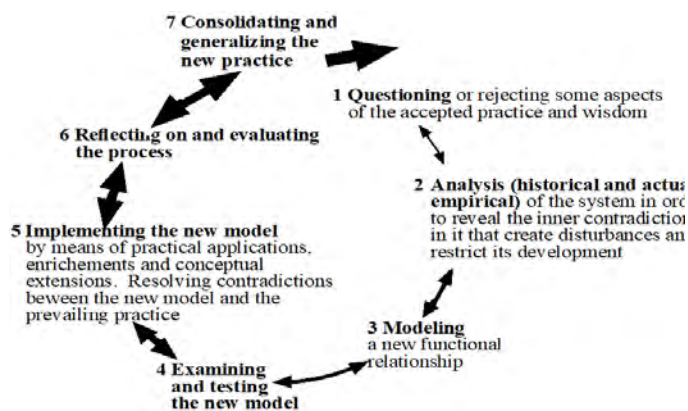


Figure 3: Cycle of Expansive Development (Virkkunen and Newnham, 2013)

Conclusion

The potential of the Change Laboratory for students and teachers to work together to assess curricula, propose new mediators, and to engage in shaping their learning practices has been under-utilized in Higher Education. CLIL pedagogy was designed as a European Communicative approach to learn both content and language at the same time. Transplanted into East Asia, some of its aspects may require more scaffolding. This is probably related to the contradictions between Confucian heritage culture of East Asian students and the Socratic heritage culture of Western educational systems. Using the Change Laboratory with students as researcher interventionists to interrogate CLIL pedagogy and their own liminal position between Confucian and Socratic frameworks may not only engage and motivate learning, but also deepen an understanding of the importance of developing bicultural fluency and place student rights at the centre of the process.

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