

How can I foster non-English majors' interest and motivation?

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1. Background of the Project

Before I conducted the AR project, I had had only one term's teaching experience. As an inexperienced teacher, I have confronted many difficulties when dealing with problems that have occurred in the classroom. During my teaching practice, though efforts were made to apply the Communicative method in the class setting with enthusiasm, but the result was always disappointing. So many times, I felt depressed and frustrated after these attempts. Two reasons may account for my frustrating experience. In the first place, the traditional Grammar-Translation teaching method has been deeply rooted in my mind after so many years of exposure to it and the second reason is that the CCT is a completely new notion for me and the application of the method is a challenge despite the fact that I had accepted it as an alternative to the traditional method. I experience the "Living contradiction" described by Jack Whitehead (Whitehead, 1989). Some actions needed to be taken to change the situation. However, who should I turn to and in what way?

When wandering at a crossroad, I met with "Action Research"— To put it simply, action research is 'learning by doing' (McNiff, 1993) ----a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts are, and, if not satisfied, try again. Action research can be defined as a combination of the terms "action" and "research." Action research puts ideas into practice for the purpose of self-improvement and increasing knowledge about curriculum, teaching and learning. The ultimate result is improvement in what happens in the classroom and school (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) I was deeply attracted to the new concept. Thanks to my tutor's suggestion and recommendation, I participated the AR project in Guyuan at the beginning of 2004, during which I work under the guidance of Dr. Moira Laidlaw, attending the meetings that are held weekly for action researchers, having discussions with them and observing their classrooms. Fortunately, I was offered the opportunity to take a class----a personal experience of AR. Now I'd like to share with my colleagues the whole process and my insights from the project.

2. Process of the project

1) Class description and an my inquiry

After May Day, I took a small class of non-English majors in GTC. Of the 13 students, eight are girls. The textbook was New Horizon English Book 4, a course book that is widely accepted by colleges or in the south. After two weeks of careful observation, a problem surfaced---- the students tend to be unresponsive and avoid interactions with the teacher. The questions I prepared for them often met with no response. Before I had had any close contact with the class, a teacher in the department described it as "a hard-nut to crack". The quick surfacing of the problem helped me narrow down my focus in a short period of time. I further explored the issue by first having an objective evaluation of the textbook----the New Horizontal English, characterized by adapted articles, most of which are originals that have been selected from influential journals. I reflected on this issue by presenting myself the question: Is the textbook appropriate for my students' present English level? Admittedly, the course book has no problem in itself: the materials are "fresh", and are well organized, reflecting social realities of modern society. Nevertheless, the

are well organized, reflecting social realities of modern society. Nevertheless, the vocabulary and the complex sentence structures in the textbook are overwhelming for the students, which was later confirmed by their persistently basic grammatical errors in their writing. I was later told that when the students enrolled in this college, their English level was beyond the requirements of the curriculum ----in such a remote, poverty-stricken region, it is not uncommon that the majority of them enter the college with fairly lower marks compared with those of the students in more developed regions. Therefore, I assume that for them the large amount of vocabulary is an insurmountable task, in addition to confronting them with the long, complex structure, which makes a high demand on reasoning. However, I was well aware of my obligation of completing the teaching assignment, that meant flexible use of the textbook can go so far as choose other teaching materials and leave the teaching syllabus unfulfilled.

Another reason for students' passivity is that though the college is already in the process of shifting from the traditional method to a student-centered one---the Communicative Method ---- the traditional method still has its own place. Having long been exposed to a teacher-centered environment, the students' active style and initiative will inevitably be impeded. Therefore, they prefer their teacher to give them a lecture rather than presenting questions. With these hypotheses in mind, I made some further investigation through the means of a questionnaire. The investigation consisted of five open-ended questions addressing learners' interests, motivation and confidence.

- Are you interested in English learning?
- Is learning English of importance to you?
- What do you think of the textbook we are learning?
- What do you intend to learn in the English class?

After making an analysis, I classified the feedback from my students into 4 categories:

	Categories	The number of students	%
1	having no interest but knowing its significance (instrumental motivation)	1	7.6
2	seeing English learning as a burden and having no intention of studying the subject	6	46.2
3	having both interest and motivation	3	23.1
4	having some interest but lack of motivation of any kind	3	23.1

My original intention for the AR inquiry was to captivate students' interests in English and further foster their motivation. However, among the large amount of information I gathered, two students' feedback attracted my attention, largely because their views were apparently representative.

Su Zhiwei wrote, *“Nearly all specialities have included English as its compulsory subject. But few of them find it useful in their later professional development. For this reason, as far as I am concerned, I don't see any necessity to learn English and have lost interests in it.”*

Another girl student mentioned,

“English doesn’t appeal to me but I have realized that it is of importance to my future career.”

Before the start of AR, I took for granted that interests is at a lower level and motivation stems from interest. However the feedback suggests that there exist a between-state, that is, the possibility of having motivation but showing no interest in English learning. Besides, the review of literature and teachers’ reports show that interest, motivation and other non-intellectual elements are such complicated factors that they cannot exist in isolation.

Taking these factors into consideration, I determined to change my inquiry into, “How to improve students’ English learning interests and motivation”? Based on the two students’ change of behaviour and beliefs during the whole process, I began my AR research and different degree of concern was given to students of different categories. With regard to the fourth category-- having some interests but lack of motivation, the solution was to motivate students by taking advantage of their interest? However, to what degree the issue could be solved was hard to anticipate for the reason that I only have 7 weeks to conduct my research.

2) My hypothesis and means of solution

With the final aim of changing the passive classroom learning context into an active one, I presented some ways to tackle the issue from three different perspectives: captivating interests in learning by ensuring students’ dominant role, designing classroom activities of different kinds to build an active learning atmosphere, alleviating anxiety by tolerating mistakes learners make in their performance; motivating students’ learning through emotional education. All these imagined solutions point to the New Curriculum, which is scheduled for National implementation by 2005. The New Curriculum emphasises the students’ affective domain by stating that students’ leaning interacts with their interest, motivation, confidence and other affective factors. Language learning will be greatly facilitated when these affective factors are developed and strengthened. (New Curriculum, 2002)

● Changing the traditional roles of teachers and learners

I gained the inspiration after an observation of another action researchers’ class. The class she was teaching was of the poorest class in grade one. By poorest, I mean they were enrolled in the English department with the lowest scores in the College Entrance Examination. Since being streamed into this class, most of the students have developed a sense of self-contempt. They lack initiative in their study and always put their teacher in an awkward situation by giving no response to questions. But an amazing change took place after the adoption of the student-centered teaching approach. In many classes I observed, four or five students worked as assistant teachers and they seemed quite comfortable with their new roles. The average time teachers spent for instruction accounted for less than 20%. In this sense, it was the students themselves who dominated the class. As an observer, I sensed the relaxed and active atmosphere that pervaded the classroom. Another thing that impressed me was that many of them were capable of presenting their own understanding of the text and questioning their classmates with relatively fluent oral English. They used expressions like *“Today, I will introduce some sentences which can be used to ask*

permission”, “*I think that’s everything I want to say*”, “*What is the implied meaning of the word ‘...’ in the context?*” and other classroom-management English to make their delivery smooth. This is amazing considering the fact that they are merely English majors in grade one. Can this approach find its way into a non-English majors’ class? With this in mind, I chose one text that is comparatively easy to understand and encouraged my students to explain collaboratively with each group being responsible for one part. To my delight, the activeness and initiative of students were really being motivated. One girl student even used group work to elicit students’ deep thinking about a social problem. The topic for discussion is “*Suppose you are the author, what would you like to end the story?*” When circulating in the classroom, the most frequently used expression is: “*I think...*” “*I cannot agree with you because.....*” The following is a reflection after the class:

Now I reach a fully understanding of the statements in the New Curriculum ‘Language learning is most effective when students’ interest, motivation and attitudes are taken into consideration. (NC, 2002)’

My students are now in the position of taking responsibility for their own learning, as a result of their increasing interest in language learning. What a progress they are making! They are now confident enough to question the points that they are uncertain, which was a headache for me when my question always met with no response. Despite that they are more likely to involve themselves in critical thinking in equal learning environment (students as teachers), this is a good start for their life-long learning process.

Also, I am experimenting on the task-based approach which is ‘learning by doing and by using the language’. I set them a task of making meaning out of a text, and then they work cooperatively to “experience the language, learn the language by self-discovery, participate in discussion and negotiation activities...(NC, 2002)”

With the adoption of activities of this kind, I found that more students were gradually feeling free to ask me questions, which suggested that they were encouraged to have a deep understanding of the text. In addition, they seemed more willing to respond to my questions. Now I found myself preferring to ask for “Any volunteers?” rather than calling a name.

On May, 25, Yang Xiaopinn, the girl answered a question on her own initiative. Though there was room for the answer to be improved, I saw this as a good starting- point for her long journey of development. At the same time I noticed that the boy (Su Zhiwei) was not in the least motivated by a heated atmosphere of discussion, just sitting there in a state of absent-mindedness. The boy’s behaviour aroused my curiosity and urged me to have an interview with him after class. Far from being an introverted student, he is friendly and talkative, except for his reluctance to give any reasonable explanation of his uncooperative behaviour in the class. I inferred that his absent-mindedness might have something to do with his attitude towards the practicality of English.

- **Build active atmosphere via various interesting classroom activities.**

In a discussion with Dr. Moira Laidlaw, she suggested that:

“Many students don’t have interest in English at all. They come to English class, hoping it will be over soon. If they come to your class, knowing that something

different is going to happen, they'll get better and better".

I was greatly inspired by these words and set out to include each lesson at least an activity that would maintain their interest. My efforts were rewarded. Take my new way of dealing with the vocabulary for instance. Students' attention was attracted and focused on memorizing the new words. I reflected in my journal:

"The study of English will come to an end in a month, what can I do with their English in such a short period of time? To foster their interests in English learning may be the best choice. Suppose I teach vocabulary in a way of group competition, helping them to overcome the pressure that large vocabulary has imposed on them, the effect will be far-reaching, not just the few words that kept in their memory. " (Journal, June 19, 2004)

My new method of teaching vocabulary went like this: After making sure that all the words had been pronounced correctly, I required them to demonstrate in groups the words listed in vocabulary - as many as possible. While demonstrating, the students in other groups had to do their utmost to guess what the word was. Acting as a scorekeeper, I recorded the points each groups gained. My colleague and critical friend also tried this method in her class and stated:

"A good method indeed and easy to motivate the student interest in leaning."

What impressed me most is that the boy took an active role in this activity. A quick learner as he was, he helped his group win the competition, which greatly encouraged me. However, what happened afterwards proved that the situation was even more complex than I had anticipated.

● **Taking a correct attitude toward oral mistakes to lower learning anxiety**

At first, the students' performances in communicative activities were not satisfying. They stood there in an extremely restrained and unnatural manner and murmured to their partners in their role-plays. I thought that by pointing that they were performing like a "reciter" rather than performer, I might see some improvement. But I didn't. What's more, the sentences they produced were replete with errors and mistakes of all sorts. I touched upon the issue with great caution for I was fully aware of the fact that accuracy might be achieved at the expense of fluency and the students' confidence! Consequently, I introduced them some linguistic theorists' attitudes towards oral mistakes "No mistakes, no progress" and in the meantime I showed my tolerance towards mistakes to minimize their anxiety, telling them that I would not over-correct the mistakes in their oral work. I noticed that Liu Xiang and some other students nodded, suggesting that to some extent their uncertainty of the issue had been eliminated. Later on, in most of the classroom activities he became a particularly active participant. With his permission, I copied out one paragraph from his journal as evidence of his improvement:

"At the beginning, I reluctant to participate in oral activities, fearing that being mocked at by the classmates. Even if I had to saying something in some cases, I rehearsed the sentence in my mind several time before I uttered it. How I envious of those people who can speak with fluent English..... Now I know 'no mistakes, no progress' and to my surprise, I am making progress in spoken English these days. As a result, my interest in English is growing."

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Another student spoke of his true feeling about the present English class during a break:

“I feel at ease when making mistakes. Now I see myself as a capable person with the potential to learn English well.” I appreciate the changes that my class is undergoing especially when seeing them act out confidently before class with louder voice and more natural facial expression. ”

It seems that many signs point to my success in restoring their confidence and interests in English by means of lowering their learning anxiety.

● **Building students’ achievement motivation together with emotional education.**

Being a teacher, I am fully aware of the influence a teacher may have on his/her students. Therefore, far from taking a negative attitude towards my students and hurting their sense of self-esteem, I prefer encouraging them. My practice is what my colleague Tao Rui termed as “emotional motivation”.

“By emotional motivation, I mean teachers’ encouragement and conscious attention to some students, particular the poor, may motivate them to learn” (Tao Rui, 2004).

“The New Curriculum lays much emphasis on the students emotion, aiming at captivating their interest in English learning, helping them acquire a sense of achievement and confidence” (NC, 2002)

When appropriate, I motivate them with some personal successful experience of English learners such as the founder of “Crazy English”, Li Yang. I perceive it as a supplementary way to educate emotionally.

Sometimes, I was inclined to develop students’ achievement-motivation by stressing the progress they were making. I once provide Yang Xiaoping (the girl who show some instrumental motivation but no interests in English) with the opportunity to give a three-minutes’ duty report. In her report, the girl taught us some expressions about making and answering a ‘phonecall’. What impressed me most is that she performed confidently without referring to her notebook. I expressed my appreciation for her great performance by saying:

“I’ll keep these useful expressions in memory because I learn them from my student.”

Actually, I was conveying the message that everyone in this class has something to share and that none of us is omnipotent to the whole class. I made eye-contact with the girl who seemed then flushed with excitement and shyness with shining eyes.

At other times, I attempted to give them a sense of achievement. For instance, asking the winner to stand up as a kind of praise and encouragement after the completion of a group competition activity. The classroom atmosphere then would, I figured, suddenly reach a climax at that moment with sweet smiles and warm

applause in every corner. Maybe it meant nothing for a good student, but for the poor ones, it might just contribute to the building of their confidence.

4) Evidence of improvement

During the process, I collected some data as evidence of improvement. The data-collecting methods included observation, colleague's comment and students' journals. Since some of the evidences have already been presented, what I intend to mention here is the two pieces of evidence that I haven't yet touched upon. One is constituted by the comments given by an English expert—Dr. Moira Laidlaw and the other---- the outcome of a questionnaire conducted at the end of this term.

During the AR, I invited Moira to observe my class and these are extracts from her comments: *“They are all waiting for you and keen to learn. I can see this because of their open books, their shining eyes and their friendliness to you” “I think this class is much more successful than you led me to expect. I think you have done wonders with them, because they really are keen and want to learn. You are using new methods with some success. The students are happy to have you as a teacher.”*

Before the term came to a close, a questionnaire was distributed for gaining more data, which could count as evidence. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements with 5 scales (Strongly Agree(5 points), Agree(4 points), Not Sure(3 points), Disagree(2 points), Strongly Disagree(1points)). These statements are designed to get a general idea of students' opinion of the new English class and their attitudes towards English learning. To present the outcome of the investigation in a systematic and academic way, I get the following results with the help of a Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Descriptive Statistics

N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
13	46.00	48.00	94.00	72.7692	10.8178

Despite that the mean achieved a relatively high score of 72.7, the SD (standard deviation) is comparatively large, indicating that although the majority of the students in my class were in favour of the new teaching method, a few of them still held a negative attitude towards it. For the purpose of getting more valuable information from the investigation and have a comprehensive analysis of the whole AR process, I eventually identified the students who got the lowest score as Su Zhijie, the boy who showed no interests in English. His distinctive reactions to the new approach in different stages of the research and the feedback of the questionnaire confirm that little evidence can be presented to prove that his interest and motivation have been fostered. In his response to one of the open-ended questions---- *“Do you see any changes in your interest or motivation to English learning before and after the May Day?”*, he wrote:

“I make no progress this term because my English is too poor. I give it up for many reasons. And what I want to advice here is that the teacher should not see a poor student as odd and treat him in a special way.”

Did I ‘treat him in a special way’? Yes, to some degree. I named him to answer

questions and I checked his homework frequently. When he failed to complete his assignment, I said: “You are a brilliant student. Don’t be so lazy! Please work harder and you can do well!” I don’t think these are harsh words for a student. Well-intention now meets with frustration, which urged me to draw something out of it:

Being involved in an AR, the subjects could not avoid being treated slightly differently from other students. The point is that some of them may feel uncomfortable about it. During the process, I chose not to tell them about my AR for I thought Chinese students are more sensitive of being subjects. But I neglected another important thing---their feelings about being given too much concern. Two points can be draw out of the case: First, everyone is unique and students’ individual difference should be respected. Second, teacher-researchers need to get permission from their subject before conducting a research. Consequently, I partly attribute my frustrating experience to the violation of one of the moral rules of AR:

“Get permission from the people you hope to work with to involve them in your research. Keep them involved and informed. Invite them to do their own action research. (McNiff, J., etc., 2002) ”

3_ Conclusion

By tracing my students’ behaviour in the process and the analysis of the questionnaire, I have the inclination of seeking for practical application within given context and presenting my own “theory” (McNiff, 1993). I’d like to expose my findings to discussion and criticism.

1) Significance to actual language teaching.

From the very beginning of the research, I found in the two groups that “having both motivation and interests” and “without motivation and interests” take a percentage of 69 in my class. My original intention was that by focusing on the “without” group, I might be able to foster students’ motivation through captivating their interests in English learning. And this might help learners who already had some interests but no motivation. However, with the progress of the AR, I identified a third group, which had the instrumental motivation to learn but failed to see anything of interest in the subject.

It seems to me now that instructors are more likely to meet resistance when managing to motivate the “lacking interest and motivation” group. Therefore, an alternative way would be to show more concern over the other two groups: a) having no interests but showing instrumental motivation and b) having some interests but lacking motivation of any kind. The case study of the boy student Su Zhiwei illustrates this point. His changing of attitude---starting from no interests to show some precious interest and finally returning to the starting point---- manifested the difficulty of stirring up his interest and motivation. In contrast, the girl student, Yang Xiao Ping’s interest in English could be clearly observed during the process.

The following is the feedback of the final investigation from this girl::

“My interests in English is improving. In addition, the realization of taking responsibility of my learning or becoming a autonomous learner help me to build confidence in making further progress in this subject.”

The case study of Yang Xiaoping has some implications to the teaching of non-English majors. For one thing, those students with motivation are more easily to be motivated. For another, Action Research starts from a changeable problem in classroom.

“There can be a big difference between the scope of your work and the scope of your action research project. Even though the area may not be small, the study itself should focus on one aspect of the overall picture so that it is always clear that you are reseaching.” (McNiff, J.& Whitehead, J., 2002)

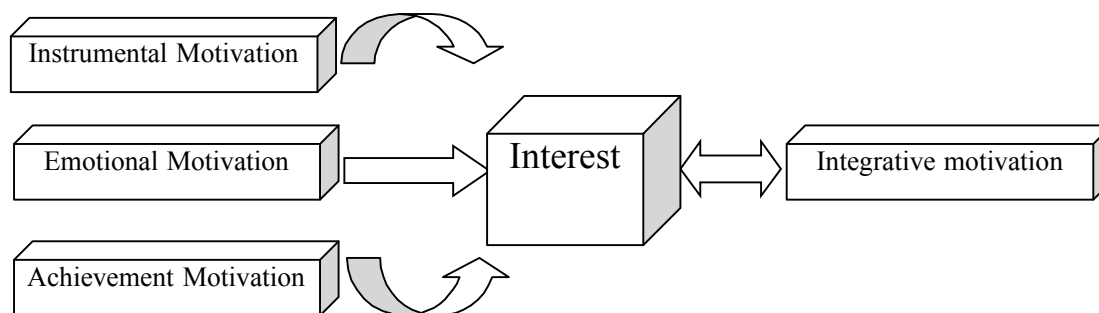
Take the two factors into account, why don't we language teachers identify students of this category (students with motivation) and try to improve their learning. Furthermore, it makes the work for AR beginner easier. Only after that research cycle, a further enquiry “How to improve the learning of students without either interest or motivation?” should be put forward. This is my suggestion and my next AR focus as well.

2) Contribution to theory building.

What is necessary is that teachers should be encouraged to develop their own theories of education from, and through, their own practice: that is, they should be encouraged critically to exam aspects that they feel need improving, and to work systematically to think how to carry out the improvement. What is crucial is that teacher themselves form theories about their own practices. This process of theorizing – that is, forming and reforming theories – is an integral part of good practice. (McNiff, 1988)

Concerning the relationship between motivation and interest

It might be widely accepted that integrative motivation or intrinsic motivation are hard to achieve, and that next comes instrumental motivation. My own experience also proved the point - that after seven weeks' efforts little evidence points to the students' acquisition of any intrinsic motivation. Apart from these two types, there exist two other types: emotional motivation and achievement motivation. By “achievement motivation” I mean giving students a sense of achievement by confronting them with questions of differing degrees of difficulty. Actually, achievement motivation together with emotional motivation work well in facilitating students' learning and fostering language learners' interest. With the increasing of motivational types, the relationship between interests and motivation becomes more complicated and it can be roughly illustrated in the following chart in accordance with my understanding of the interactions between them:



The chart indicates that to foster language learners' interests, three types of

motivation - instrumental motivation, emotional motivation and achievement motivation - play a significant role. Besides, I believe that interest in language learning may lead to integrative motivation and integrative motivation might be the source of everlasting interest in English learning. Therefore, it is appropriate to view fostering intrinsic motivation as the final goal of a language instructor, without which the new trend of cultivating autonomous learners will be reduced to an empty slogan. At this point, my understanding proves to be consistent with a requirement from the New Curriculum:

“Teachers are supposed to foster and strength learning interest of students, and then shepherd them to a more steady form of motivation.” (NC, 2002)

On the one hand, the four types of motivation and interests interact in such a complex way. In my view, motivations and interests are intimately interacted by nature and any attempt of exploring them respectively will disclose merely one aspect of the situation and not the whole picture. Then an understanding of the relationship between motivation and interests becomes obvious: though a language learner might not strictly follow the sequence, to some degree, this chart provides a possible outlet of fostering students’ interests as well as motivation, which is especially meaningful for non-English majors. What I have done is the

Emotional motivation and “Whole person education”. Recently, I received a message left by a former student of mine. The message read,

“Mrs Fang, I miss you! This term I failed in my final English exam partly because I skipped class very often. I don’t like the new English teacher. I seldom did that in your class.”

Frankly speaking, being a novice in teaching at that moment, I felt flattered by these words. This event urged me to associate emotional motivation with “whole person education”. Apart from the intelligence factor, many other elements are working together to determine a student’s achievement, among which emotional factors play a significant role. Broadly speaking, emotional motivation can be a few encouraging words, a thoughtful eye-contact, which may have the effect of changing a student’s life.

“Students are not passive language receptors who need to be treated as a whole person. The process of learning is the process of a combination of personal knowledge, experience, self-esteem and confidence.” (Journal, June 22, 2004)

On the other hand, being teachers of “whole person” students, they should be a “whole person” themselves. Although profound knowledge and flexible teaching skills are regarded as a must, qualities such as professionalism and moral character have not been endowed with enough importance in my opinion. Therefore, a more important thing than imparting some knowledge to students is helping them bring their full potential into play and achieve development in all aspects. With all these in mind, I was always entering into the classroom with high spirit and merely two weeks later I perceived the change this class was taking place: they greeted me with beautiful smile. From their expectant looks, I know what they are expecting is not a tiresome English lecture but a fifty-minutes class that can show their intelligence, confidence and the honour of collectivism. By collectivism, I mean the

and the honour of collectivism. By collectivism, I mean the students do not study as individuals in their group work. Working both collaboratively and cooperatively, they are more concerned about the honour of the small group than themselves. An honour of collectivism can be perceived as the source of patriotism, without which the students are not likely to develop a spirit of patriotism. Again, this points to the New Curriculum- “to educate students in the spirit of patriotism”(NC, 2002).

4. Reflection on the tools for my professional development

The conduction of action research is a process of breaking the routine, during which I personally experience the following means for my professional development.

Keeping journals. Through reflection, Action Research encouraged me to reflect on the practices in my classroom as well as equipping me with the methods to challenge deep-rooted opinions. Through reflection, the insufficiencies in my teaching surfaced and, unconsciously, I formed the habit of questioning the routines instead of taking them for granted and went in search for alternatives. Some teachers might argue for reflection but against the way it should be presented: journals or diaries. My personal view of this argument is that to achieve a systematic analysis of the work you have done, keeping a journal is a productive way. We all have the experience that some sparkling of ideas will sometimes come to our mind but usually in the form of fragments. Without keeping them in a written form, they will soon disappear. Only once transformed into a written form, are we capable of storing these sparkles and sorting them out in a systematic way then provide a fuller explanation of a certain phenomenon. Furthermore, after conducting action research over a period of time, one needs to give an comprehensive overview of the whole research-process. And the assignment could not be completed without referring to those notes.

Enlightenment through discussion. Though action research can be done individually, a platform on which teachers can exchange ideas and solve problems is needed. Otherwise, their research will be reduced to “research in isolation” and this is not good for a teacher’s sustainable professional development. The following constitute some insights I gained from the action research meetings that were held twice a week.

On June 8, 2004, in an action research meeting, my attention was attracted by a teacher’s new way of data-collection---the use of photographs. The visual form of evidence can well illustrate the point for the reason that pictures are more realistic and convincing than descriptions”. Because of this, during the second stage of my research, I photographed in real time the performance of my students as evidence for their increasing interest in English. (Notes: To protect the students’ identities, I choose not to use these photos in this AR report.)

In another action research meeting, the issue of identifying the scope of subjects for research is presented which is informative to my own research. Despite there only being 13 students in my class, observation of all these students’ classroom behaviour was a heavy burden. Furthermore, action research has a qualitative nature, objective descriptions of facts and phenomena are more preferable. To make sure that the description is specific and problem-oriented, in most cases we are advised to narrow the subjects of the research-focus down to a couple of students. In addition, the subjects chosen for research ought to be the typical and representative ones. Taking advantage of the results of this discussion, I determined to trace the behaviour

advantage of the results of this discussion, I determined to trace the behaviour of two problematic students in my class and develop my own living theory on interest and motivation.

Teaching theory and teacher's action research report. Teaching theory is accumulated by several generations' efforts and is still a source of my inspiration. In a sense, my research is the validation and development of these theories. Working in a teaching environment within a similar background, I found that these action research reports are informative and their findings replicable. References to these teachers' reports have broadened my vision into becoming capable of approaching the problem from various perspectives. With different starting points, confidence or motivation, each perspective aims at the students' involvement in classroom activities, and hopefully, changes their traditional role of receiving knowledge passively. The application of some of these methods, such as emotional education and formative evaluation, suggest that they are effective measures. In addition, the replication of these methods in a different situation itself is a supplement to and development of existing teaching theories.

In short, action research increases reflexivity and adds to my confidence as a researcher and it increases student-involvement in the teaching/learning process. Therefore, based on the familiarity and my own experiences with action research, I have concluded that action research is a meaningful option for professional teacher-development.

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